CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teaching English to Young Learners

Teaching English to Young Learners refers to the process of teaching English with unique pedagogical approaches because children learn differently from adults; they rely more on sensory input, imitation, movement, and meaningful context. In the Indonesian context, TEYL is increasingly important as English is introduced early to build vocabulary foundation and exposure. Therefore, understanding how young learners think, learn, and respond in English classrooms is essential for teachers to design effective learning, especially when integrating multimedia tools such as YouTube.

1. Definition of Young Learners

Children between the ages of 5 and 12 who are still developing cognitively and linguistically are generally referred to as young learners (Pinter, 2018). Fahriany (2018) believes that the critical age for language learning is still a matter of speculation in society. Young learners are students in primary schools who are learning a second language. She states that the age of children learning a second language starts from five to twelve years old. They have a natural ability to learn new languages through exposure and hands-on experience. When learning a foreign language, children and adults have different perceptions because they have different characteristics. There are many factors that influence children's maturity: for example, their culture, their environment (urban or rural), their gender, the expectations of their peers and parents (Phillips, 1993). Thus, learning environments that are engaging, participatory, and meet the developmental needs of this age range are very beneficial.

2. Characteristics of Young Learners

The characteristics of young learners play a significant role in shaping their learning process, particularly in language acquisition. Understanding their

cognitive, emotional, social and linguistic characteristics is essential for designing teaching methods that meet their developmental needs and create an engaging learning environment. Musthafa (2010) mentioned that children have short attention spans. This means that unlike adult learners who can concentrate on their studies for a longer period of time, children who have a short attention span can only concentrate on their studies for about twenty minutes. Kuchah (2013) stated that they like to use participatory activities such as drawing, storytelling and listening to music. Children are more enthusiastic than adults. In addition, they like to please their teacher, but they can easily lose interest in the given materials because young learners are different social beings with their own cultural norms (piccolo, 2010). Cameron, (2001) stated that children have a number of characteristics that teachers of English need to bear in mind when planning activities. This means that the teacher should have different teaching techniques for his activity in class to avoid boredom on the part of the students.

According to Thomas and Armstrong (1998), below are the characteristics of young learners:

a. The ability to learn indirectly: Children naturally absorb language through experience and context without direct instruction. This is part of the way they learn things more naturally.

b. Active imagination: A well-developed imagination is one of the key characteristics of young learners. This enables them to engage in creative activities such as storytelling, role-playing or visualisation.

c. Creativity in communicative situations: Children are naturally very creative in communication. They are able to adapt and express themselves despite their limited vocabulary.

d. Ability to understand the gist of the message: Children are able to grasp the gist of a message even if they do not understand all the details. This shows how they process information through the context available.

e. Enthusiasm for speaking: Children's love of speaking is one of the most important characteristics. They have an innate interest in communicating verbally and interacting with others.

B. Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important component of language learning, and vocabulary teaching needs to be implemented as early as possible, starting in primary school, as vocabulary comprehension supports students' ability to communicate effectively. Without a good command of vocabulary, the meaning or message to be conveyed will not be well received (Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, Ibrahim, & Mustafa, 2018; Olinghouse & Wilson, 2013). Therefore, in addition to focusing on grammar, teachers must also be able to develop students' vocabulary skills. In developing students' vocabulary skills, teachers need to use innovative teaching strategies. Teachers should also be aware that teaching vocabulary to primary school students is different from teaching vocabulary to adults (Cahyati & Madya, 2019; Habibi & Sofwan, 2015; Juhana, 2014). Videos with word pronunciation and vocabulary use in concrete contexts help students understand the meaning and use of words in everyday life, and strengthen their memory.

1. How Young Learners Learn Vocabulary

Considering the importance of vocabulary learning for young learners, Rahmadhani (2015) stated that young learners should have been taught vocabulary early because it is an important item in language learning. Children are very good at learning language through activities that they find fun. Using YouTube content to teach young learners vocabulary is an effective strategy as it combines visual, auditory and interactive elements to maximise children's interest and attention.

Young learners can build a meaningful understanding based on the objects they see and hear or when they touch and interact directly with these objects (Juhana, 2014). Teachers usually use songs, stories and dramas (Duisembekova 2014), such as games, guessing pictures, repeating words and

movements that are directly related to the words being taught, such as animal names, numbers, fruit names, family and objects around them. Audio visual media in early childhood effectively improves English vocabulary recognition (Saripah, 2016). Learning through stories and songs teaches vocabulary in a context that helps children understand its meaning. Children's songs on YouTube teach vocabulary through repetition in a fun format, making it easier for children to remember new words. Learning media that can be used in the English teaching and learning process, one of which is animated videos on YouTube educational content for teaching vocabulary to young learners (Nasrullah et. al. 2018). This is because young English learners tend to learn more easily and engage in activities through the use of media (Chaparro-Moreno et al., 2019; Laborar, 2020; Oktasari, 2020; Piolita, 2020). This approach is in line with the understanding that memorising vocabulary, grammar rules and translations provide language learners with valuable mental exercises that enhance their intellectual growth while improving their language acquisition.

2. **The Principles of Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners**

   With regard to the principles of teaching vocabulary, it is very important to explain what forms of vocabulary need to be taught and the principles of teaching them. In addition to teaching vocabulary according to the objectives and needs of the students, it is certainly necessary to consider the aspects of the vocabulary to be taught. To achieve this, Nation (2005) six principles in the teaching vocabulary are:

   a. Keep the lesson simple and clear without complicated explanations: the teacher does not need to explain complex definitions or features, just show pictures that match the vocabulary and use simple language for easy understanding.
   b. Link current teaching to previous knowledge: vocabulary teaching will be more effective if it is linked to what they already know, for example, the

definition of the word 'bad' is linked to 'good' which they may already know.

c. Use oral presentation: Explaining vocabulary with clear mouth movements can be supported by pictures.

d. Pay attention to partially known words: add vocabulary without giving young learners too much vocabulary, e.g. the word 'cat' is added with 'kitten' or 'pet'.

e. Informing young learners if there are high frequency words that need attention for future learning: Teachers should inform students that these words are very useful and important to learn further for everyday life. Examples of materials that teachers usually give are greetings, excuses, asking for help and thanks.

f. Failure to include other unknown or lesser known words such as close synonyms, opposite words: Teaching too many similar or related words (such as synonyms, antonyms) at the same time can confuse students. Instead, teachers should concentrate on the word to be taught.

C. The Use of YouTube in Teaching English Vocabulary to Young Learners

YouTube in English vocabulary teaching provides interactive visuals and audio that meet the needs of young learners. According to Almurashi (2016), the use of YouTube in English teaching plays a major role in helping students understand English lessons. It can be said that YouTube is one of the effective media because it contains many videos that can support us in teaching in the classroom. Recent research by Anggia and Nur (2025) confirms that the implementation of YouTube in teaching vocabulary to young learners significantly improves their mastery compared to those taught without it. Similarly, Tahmina (2023) found that using YouTube videos creates a significant difference in students' vocabulary understanding, as the visual and auditory inputs help them comprehend new words better than traditional methods. Haloho and Simanjuntak (2023) also support this, noting that YouTube channels offering psychological or educational content can effectively enhance students' vocabulary by making abstract concepts

easier to grasp. Through YouTube videos, teachers can teach new vocabulary by presenting a combination of pictures, animations and songs that help children to understand words more easily.

YouTube videos often combine visuals, animation, and sound to help young learners understand new vocabulary. For example, videos about emotions can show different facial expressions while saying the name of the emotion, such as "happy," "sad," or "angry," to help children associate words with their corresponding visual representations. Interactive greeting videos can also introduce different ways of saying hello in English, such as "Hello," "Good morning," and "How are you?" through simple, engaging conversations. Educational songs that include vocabulary about feelings and greetings can also enrich and reinforce student understanding in a fun and memorable way. Many YouTube videos are designed to actively engage children, for example by asking them to repeat words, answer simple questions or guess objects. In this way, YouTube provides an opportunity to introduce children to different English accents and cultures (Coşkun, 2022). This suggests that YouTube is an effective tool for improving young learners' vocabulary acquisition by combining interactive and engaging elements with cultural and linguistic exposure, making the learning process fun and meaningful.

D. Students' Engagement through YouTube

Educational Engagement Theory emphasizes that the success of the learning process is largely determined by the level of student engagement, whether behavioral, emotional, or cognitive (Rachmad, 2022). This engagement can be seen from how students actively participate in classroom activities, showing positive expressions such as enthusiasm for effective learning experiences. According to Shearer and Park (2018), students achieve a deeper understanding when they collaborate with their peers by creating an environment that supports interaction and the use of technology in the learning process. The use of technology in vocabulary learning can further increase participation and support collaborative efforts.

According to Ebralidze's (2023) theory of engagement, there are three main types of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Behavioral engagement refers to the actions students take in class, such as attending class, participating in learning, paying attention to the teacher, raising their hands to answer questions, and completing assignments. Emotional involvement refers to the feelings students experience towards their learning experiences, such as pleasure, excitement, enthusiasm when singing, smiling, or clapping. Cognitive involvement refers to the level of mental effort students invest in their learning process, such as trying to spell words correctly, thinking critically, and remembering the material they have learned.

E. YouTube as a Multimedia Learning Tool in Vocabulary Instruction

YouTube can be viewed as an effective multimedia learning tool because it brings together visual, auditory and textual elements within a single learning environment. This is consistent with Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which suggests that learners comprehend and retain information more efficiently when verbal and visual information are presented together rather than separately (Mayer, 2009; Mayer, 2020). Young learners benefit from this dual-channel input as they rely on concrete visuals, sounds and repetition to construct meaning (Sevik, 2012; Brewster & Ellis, 2014). Furthermore, the use of images, songs and repeated exposure in YouTube videos reflects multimedia and modality principles which reduce cognitive load and facilitate the deeper processing of new vocabulary (Mayer, 2020). Therefore, YouTube functions not merely as a digital platform, but as a multimedia instructional tool that supports effective vocabulary learning in line with established multimedia learning theory.

F. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in Language Learning

According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, children learn through social interaction within a cultural environment. Learning is mediated by language and guided by adults or more capable peers through a process known as 'scaffolding', which enables learners to complete tasks within their 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). This theory posits that knowledge is actively constructed

through participation in meaningful activities and dialogue, rather than through the passive reception of information. Jones (2011) argues that this dialogic praxis is essential for transforming educational spaces into sites of critical thinking and cultural action. Therefore, interaction and guided support are crucial for young learners' vocabulary development. Shabani et al. (2010) further clarify that the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is not just a fixed attribute of the child but an emergent quality of the interaction between the learner and the mediator, emphasizing the dynamic nature of this support. Therefore, interaction and guided support are crucial for young learners' vocabulary development.

According to research by Byun et al. (2023) and (Demir & Birgili, 2024), interactivity and scaffolding are essential factors in maximizing YouTube's potential. These findings align with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept, which posits that children learn most effectively with the assistance of peers or more capable adults (Vygotsky & Cole, 2018). Teachers and parents can facilitate this learning by actively interacting with children, repeating words, providing examples, asking questions, and connecting new vocabulary with familiar everyday experiences (Fadeev, 2019). In this case, YouTube serves as a supported learning environment where digital and human interactions converge, not as a substitute for instruction.

Several studies (Niemi et al., 2014; Ottesen, 2006) have used Vygotsky's theory to understand how digital media can support learning. These studies focus on how images, sounds, and interactions in digital environments support communication, aid language development, and facilitate learning, particularly in terms of how students interpret various media, such as text, images, and sounds (Semetsky & Stables, 2014: 69–86). In digital learning environments, emphasizing that signs conveying new knowledge can be represented in various media is important. Fadeev (2019) expands on Vygotsky's concept of mediation, arguing that in digital environments, the simultaneous representation of text, image, and sound acts as a powerful "sign system" that shapes the learning process. This form of presentation allows students to internalize vocabulary through multiple sensory channels, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) foundational view that the

internalization of cultural tools (like language) begins with social engagement. This form of presentation is often found in digital learning and is known as transmedia education (Pence, 2012; Jenkins, 2010). In this approach, learning is designed using multiple types of media, such as text, images, videos, and other symbols (Ojamaa et al., 2019). Therefore, a comprehensive approach is needed when analyzing the learning process in a digital environment.

From the perspective of early childhood development, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory demonstrates the importance of social interaction and scaffolding for successful learning (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011; Gebhard, 2008; Silalahi, 2019). However, children still need the involvement of teachers and parents to understand vocabulary (Tohamba, 2025). Thus, using YouTube to learn vocabulary not only provides children with attractive visual and audio support, but it also requires guidance from more knowledgeable individuals so that language can be learned optimally in accordance with Vygotsky's ZPD principles.

In this study, Vygotsky's sociocultural principles are reflected in teacher–student scaffolding and interaction during pre-, during and post-activity sessions, as well as in the use of YouTube as a mediational tool providing contextual visual and auditory support for vocabulary learning. Therefore, this theory serves as the analytical framework through which the findings presented in Chapter 4 are interpreted.

G. Study of the Relevant Research

Over the years, Sabgini and Wiraatmaja (2023) from Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia, conducted a study with 30 students (15 boys and 15 girls) studying under the guidance of an English teacher in an elementary school. Data were collected through non-participant observation and document analysis. To triangulate the data, the researcher analyzed the data up to the saturation point and conducted lesson plan analysis. The student teacher's use of videos in vocabulary learning yielded positive results. Videos are used in the following main activities: role-playing, modeling, listen-imitate-do, stories, and singing. The teacher also used three video presentation techniques: freeze frame,

repeat and full. The response from the students was positive, with increased active engagement and an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. The videos proved to be effective for introducing, practicing and engaging students in producing new words, improving students' understanding and engagement in English vocabulary learning.

A study entitled "Students' Interest in Learning English through YouTube" was conducted by Shopia, Khilda, et al. (2022) at Sekolah Alam Cikeas Bogor. The researchers used questionnaires and interviews to investigate how YouTube attracts students' interest in learning English. The findings revealed that most students strongly agreed that YouTube is an attractive, enjoyable, and accessible medium that increases interest and engagement in learning. YouTube videos helped students visualize material and understand content that would otherwise be difficult to grasp from a teacher's explanation alone. They also fostered learning motivation. In conclusion, YouTube is an effective learning medium that enhances both students' interest and engagement in English learning. This study is relevant to my research because it focuses on student engagement in English learning through YouTube, although my research specifically concerns young learners at the elementary school level.

Hariyono (2020) conducted a study investigating the use of YouTube videos for teaching English vocabulary to young learners in a language course in Bogor. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method, using observation and documentation as instruments. Seven second-grade elementary school students participated in the study. The findings were classified into two main themes: students' responses to classroom activities and teacher instructions and their engagement with YouTube videos. The results revealed that most students were actively engaged and responded positively during the learning process. Furthermore, students preferred learning vocabulary through YouTube videos because they found it more interesting and enjoyable. This study strengthens the evidence that YouTube can enhance young learners' engagement in learning English vocabulary, which aligns with the focus of the present research.

Alhaj and Albahiri (2020), This study was conducted in Saudi EFL classrooms at King Khalid University with 48 students, who were divided into experimental and control groups. The study used a quasi-experimental methodology with a pre-test and a post-test. The experimental group uses YouTube videos as a teaching tool, while the control group uses traditional methods (audio recordings). The results of the study using YouTube videos show a significant increase in the English-language proficiency of the experimental group compared to the control group. Video aids in developing language skills through visual elements that enable students to understand both spoken and nonverbal communication. YouTube increases student motivation and engagement in learning and boosts self-confidence in communication. This study highlights the importance of visual elements in education to improve students' proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in all contexts.

This research makes practical contributions to primary school education. Although studies on the use of technology in language learning are available, few examine how YouTube can facilitate vocabulary learning and foster engagement and interaction among primary school students. Using a qualitative classroom research design, this study explores how young learners interact and engage with English vocabulary through YouTube integration. The findings offer new insights into how technology-based media can support vocabulary acquisition and enhance student engagement in a classroom setting. Furthermore, this research is expected to help teachers more effectively integrate digital media into their teaching practices for young learners.