CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a description of the study. In this chapter, the background of the study and formulation of the problem will be explored to provide insight into the context and urgency of the issue under study. Following this, operational definitions, the aim of the research, and its significance will be discussed, thus clarifying the research objectives and the benefits derived from this study.

A. Background of the Study

Vocabulary is one of the most important keys for learners to master any foreign language, and English is no exception. Vocabulary mastery is not limited to memorising sets of words; it involves understanding how words function in context and how they support meaningful communication. A wide range of vocabulary helps English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners develop the four major language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Asyiah, 2017; Yudha & Mandasari, 2021). Vocabulary also enables learners to interpret messages accurately, express ideas more clearly, and participate more confidently in various communicative tasks. Research by Nation (2013), further emphasises that extensive vocabulary knowledge facilitates reading fluency, listening comprehension, and speaking accuracy, highlighting the central role of vocabulary as the foundation of effective language learning.

English has been a compulsory subject in Indonesia for many years at the junior and senior high school levels (Aswad et al., 2019). However, in the context of elementary education, the subject was removed from the national curriculum due to several challenges, such as limited instructional time, insufficient teacher qualifications, and a lack of supporting materials suitable for young learners (Herlambang & Adri, 2024). Although this policy change applies only to elementary schools, several studies indicate that it has indirectly affected students' readiness and proficiency when they enter junior high school. For example, Ryan et al. (2024) and Salam and Nurnisa (2021) found that many Indonesian EFL learners, especially at the junior high level, struggle with vocabulary-related issues

such as pronunciation, spelling, memorisation, and interpreting unfamiliar words. They also face motivational and confidence-related challenges that hinder effective vocabulary learning. These issues were similarly identified in the seventh grade of a selected private junior high school in Tasikmalaya, forming the basis for the present study.

Baamboozle is an online game specifically designed for educational purposes by integrating instructional content with game-based elements to promote interactive learning (Nandhini & Rasyidah, 2024). Previous research shows that Baamboozle is enjoyable for learners (Arini & Suwarso, 2024), stimulates their competitive nature, and increases learning motivation (Winaningsih et al., 2022). Its team-based features also encourage discussion and collaboration, allowing learners to interpret better and apply vocabulary (Nandhini & Rasyidah, 2024).

Several studies have explored Baamboozle as a teaching medium. A Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted by Muhajirin et al. (2022) found that Baamboozle improved students' engagement in learning English. Experimental research by Rajendran et al. (2025) revealed that Baamboozle supports vocabulary and grammar learning by increasing students' participation and motivation, which leads to better academic performance. Similarly, Sáez & Espinoza (2023) confirmed that Baamboozle effectively enhances learners' willingness to communicate. Although these studies demonstrate Baamboozle's positive effect on motivation, engagement, and overall learning performance, most of them focus on general skills rather than explaining how Baamboozle specifically supports the teaching of vocabulary in an EFL classroom. Therefore, there is a need to investigate Baamboozle's role more deeply within a vocabulary-focused Classroom Action Research, especially at the junior high school level.

A pilot study that I have conducted at the selected private junior high school in Tasikmalaya revealed several vocabulary-related issues. The preliminary data were collected through classroom pre-observation, a semi-structured interview with the English (homeroom) teacher, and a vocabulary pre-test. The observation and interview showed that learners struggled to interpret word meanings and apply vocabulary in daily activities. While some students were quick to memorise words,

they were still hesitant to use them in real-life communication. Differences in motivation were also noticeable: a few students were actively engaged throughout the lesson, whereas others appeared less confident, especially during speaking tasks. The English teacher explained that pronunciation difficulties often made students shy or afraid of making mistakes, resulting in passive participation. The pre-test findings further confirmed these issues. The assessment identified four main difficulties: misspelling, interpreting words in context, choosing appropriate verb forms, and mispronouncing several words. Only 4 students managed to reach the school's relatively high Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 85, while the class average was only 64.9. These results indicate that students' vocabulary mastery was still below the expected level and required targeted intervention.

Although previous studies have shown that Baamboozle can enhance students' motivation, particiextenpation, and overall learning performance (Muhajirin et al., 2022; Rajendran et al., 2025; Sáez & Espinoza, 2023). Most of them focus on the *outcomes* of using the platform rather than explaining how teachers actually integrate Baamboozle into vocabulary instruction. Existing research rarely documents the step-by-step implementation, instructional decisions, or teaching strategies involved in using Baamboozle in real classroom settings, especially for young EFL learners. Therefore, there is still a gap in understanding how Baamboozle is integrated pedagogically, including how the teacher embeds it into lesson stages, adapts activities, scaffolds learning, and uses it to address specific vocabulary challenges. This study attempts to fill that gap by examining how the teacher integrated Baamboozle games to support vocabulary teaching through Classroom Action Research.

B. Formulation of the Problems

1. How did the teacher integrate Baamboozle games to support the teaching of vocabulary to EFL young learners?
2. To what extent did Bamboozle games improve students' vocabulary mastery?

C. Operational Definitions

1. Baamboozle Games

This term refers to *Baamboozle*, an online game-based learning platform that allows teachers to create customizable, interactive quiz-style games. In this study, Baamboozle is integrated as a supplementary medium to support vocabulary teaching for 7th-grade EFL learners.

2. **Teaching Vocabulary**

This refers to the process of helping learners understand, remember, and appropriately use English vocabulary in both spoken and written contexts. This study includes the use of interactive media to support instruction.

3. **EFL Young Learners**

This term refers to 7th-grade students, aged 12–13, in a private junior high school in Tasikmalaya, West Java, who are learning English as a foreign language.

D. **Aim of the Study**

Based on the formulation of the problem mentioned above, this study aims to investigate how the teacher integrated Baamboozle games into vocabulary teaching to support EFL young learners' vocabulary development.

E. **Significance of the Study**

The following points are the reasons why this study is carried out:

1. **Theoretical use**

This study contributes to a clearer understanding of how Baamboozle can be integrated into vocabulary teaching, especially within the framework of constructivist learning and game-based learning.

2. **Practical use**

The results of this study may offer insights for teachers on how to maximise game-based media, such as Baamboozle, to create more engaging and supportive vocabulary learning experiences.

3. **Empirical use**

This study provides an example of classroom action research in using Baamboozle games to support vocabulary teaching, including how data were collected and analysed to reflect learners' responses and progress.