

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the research study. It includes the background of study, problem formulation, operational definition, research objectives, and research significance.

1.1. Background of the Study

Vocabulary is a fundamental aspect of language learning and teaching, as it encompasses the understanding of word meanings, which is critical for effective communication. According to Hiebert and Kamil (2005), vocabulary knowledge is essential for acquiring the four primary language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. A robust vocabulary enables individuals to express their needs and ideas clearly, which is particularly important in educational contexts (Khan et al., 2018). Without sufficient vocabulary students struggle to comprehend and convey messages, hindering their ability to interact with others. A comprehensive vocabulary not only aids in understanding new concepts but also serves as the foundation for learning English effectively. Bai (2018) emphasize that vocabulary acquisition is vital for employing various English learning strategies successfully. Therefore, language classrooms must incorporate educational materials that facilitate vocabulary instruction to support both teaching and learning process.

Despite its importance, English teachers often encounter challenges when teaching vocabulary, particularly in one of the Junior High schools in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. For instance, when attempting to explain English material, the students tend to be passive or inattentive, indicating a lack of vocabulary and motivation to learn English. This is also in line with Ihsan (2024), who reported that teachers in Indonesian junior high schools frequently face challenges related to students' low vocabulary mastery and passive classroom participation. These findings confirm that vocabulary teaching challenges are a common phenomenon in Indonesian EFL classrooms. In this context, vocabulary teaching plays a crucial role in supporting students' language development, as it provides the foundation for understanding and

using English effectively. Alqahtani (2015) stated that vocabulary is one of the essential components of language knowledge and has a significant influence on learners' language acquisition. Therefore, effective vocabulary teaching is necessary to help students build their word knowledge and improve their ability to communicate in English.

Teaching English to junior high school students can be quite challenging. While the teacher is explaining the lesson, students often move from one chair to another, distract their friends, snack during class, or create noise, all of which disrupt the learning process (Ritonga, 2019). One of a reason teachers need to develop effective techniques and create a positive environment that engages students, maintains their interest in diverse activities, and supports their success in learning (OECD, 2009). In the context of teaching English vocabulary at the junior high school level, teachers often face challenges in delivering vocabulary instruction effectively. Students' limited exposure to English, as it is a foreign language in Indonesia, makes it difficult for teachers to introduce, explain, and reinforce vocabulary, particularly due to differences in pronunciation, word forms, and usage compared to Indonesian (Khan et al., 2018).

In the context of teaching English vocabulary, teachers must consider that students demonstrate varying levels of vocabulary mastery due to differences in prior knowledge, exposure to English, and learning experiences. These variations present challenges for teachers in designing and implementing effective vocabulary instruction that can accommodate diverse student needs. As a result, teachers are required to select appropriate teaching strategies, learning media, and classroom activities that can support students' vocabulary development and ensure that all learners can actively engage in the learning process.

Although many studies have investigated teaching vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, most of them focus on teaching techniques or the effectiveness of specific methods, such as using games, songs, or digital media, rather than exploring the real challenges faced by teachers and

students in junior high schools. According to Ihsan (2025), vocabulary teaching in Indonesian junior high schools often involves various instructional strategies such as translation, picture-based learning, and technology-assisted methods; however, these studies primarily emphasize teaching techniques rather than deeply exploring the challenges faced by teachers in real classroom situations. In the Indonesian context, particularly at the junior high school level, vocabulary mastery continues to be a persistent problem that affects students' ability to understand learning materials and participate effectively in vocabulary learning activities. Fathurizki et al. (2025) found that Indonesian EFL students continue to experience significant difficulties in vocabulary mastery, including problems with retention, pronunciation, and word recognition, which ultimately affect their ability to understand effectively in English.

The preliminary observation conducted at a junior high school in Tasikmalaya revealed that teachers still face challenges in teaching vocabulary effectively. For example, during classroom instruction, many students were unable to understand simple vocabulary presented by the teacher and often remained passive when asked to respond or participate. Even students who joined the English Class showed difficulties in using basic vocabulary in sentences and frequently relied on guessing meanings rather than understanding them. This indicates that the vocabulary teaching strategies implemented in the classroom may not fully address students' learning needs.

Previous studies have highlighted various challenges in teaching English in EFL contexts, particularly at the elementary level. Khulel (2021) found that teachers faced difficulties related to students' socio-economic conditions, school policies, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Widodo and Dewi (2019) identified issues such as students' lack of self-control, varying proficiency levels, limited parental support, and challenges in building English-speaking habits, along with several practical solutions. In addition, Mirzaakhmedova and Riskiboyeva (2022) emphasized pedagogical challenges including limited interaction opportunities, large class sizes, and

difficulties in implementing learner-centered instruction. However, these studies mainly focus on teaching English to young learners at the elementary level and broader instructional issues, rather than specifically addressing challenges in teaching English vocabulary at the junior high school level.

Furthermore, few studies have examined how teachers perceive and overcome these challenges in real classroom settings. There is limited discussion of practical solutions or adaptive strategies that teachers use to help students expand their vocabulary effectively. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating both the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching vocabulary and the solutions they apply in the junior high school context.

1.2. Formulation of the problems

Research questions addressed in the present study are:

- 1) What are the challenges faced by the teacher while teaching English vocabulary in Junior High School?
- 2) What are solutions to cope with the challenges while teaching English vocabulary?

1.3. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this study, as follows:

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| 1.3.1 Teaching English Vocabulary: | In the context of this research, teaching English vocabulary refers to the process of introducing, explaining, practicing, and reinforcing English vocabulary by junior high school teachers based on the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka. Vocabulary teaching is carried out through contextual and communicative activities that support students' learning objectives and encourage them to understand and use vocabulary |
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appropriately in classroom interactions. It also includes the strategies and adaptations used by teachers to overcome challenges and accommodate students' different vocabulary mastery levels.

1.3.2 Teaching Challenges and Solutions:

Some problematic situations are faced by junior high school teachers, and solutions are required to overcome those situations during teaching-learning vocabulary in English classrooms.

1.4. Aims of the Research

This research aims to investigate the challenges faced by the teacher during teaching English Vocabulary in the classroom and solutions to cope with these challenges.

1.5. Significance of the Study

1.5.1. Theoretical use

Theoretically, this research expands the approach to problems and teaching vocabulary activities.

1.5.2. Practical Use

This research offers the view of challenges in teaching English Vocabulary. Moreover, it will find better solutions to cope with the challenges, and it will be helpful as a model for teachers in the future.

1.5.3. Empirical Use

This research improves the researcher's capability to write academic research, and it provides essential information for the researcher on solutions to teaching English to young learners.