

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Vocabulary is one of the most essential elements in language learning. When students learn English as a foreign language (EFL), vocabulary becomes the foundation that allows them to understand what they read, express what they think, and communicate in both spoken and written forms. Simply put, without enough words, students cannot build sentences, follow a conversation, or make sense of a text no matter how well they understand grammar rules. This is why many language experts argue that vocabulary is not just one part of language learning but it is at the main important point (Nation, 2001; Nasrullah, 2024). In Indonesia, where English is foreign language at the senior high school level, they still fell struggle with learn english vocabulary. This issue happens because some reason such as monotonous teaching method, the lack of practive and the lack of feedback aftar mistakes.

Some researchers state although vocabulary is very important, the vocabulary learning prosess it is not easy, especially for students in Indonesian EFL classrooms. There are two main reasons for this. First, there is a gap between how English words are written and how they are actually said. Unlike Bahasa Indonesia, which has clear and consistent spelling and pronunciation, English does not follow clear rules a word like "knife" or "through" can be confusing for students who try to read it the way it is written. This confusion makes it harder for students to remember new words, use them correctly when speaking, or recognize them when reading. Second, the way vocabulary is taught in Indonesian schools also adds to the difficulty. Many teachers still use traditional methods, asking students to copy word lists, memorize meanings, and do repeated translation exercises (Ningrum, 2015; Rosyada & Apoko, 2023). These methods may help students remember words for a short time, but they rarely make learning feel meaningful or fun. As a result, many students feel bored, unmotivated, or even anxious when doing vocabulary tasks. What is often missed, however, is that these problems are not the same for every student. Each

learner has their own background, learning style, and emotional response in the classroom, which means the experience of struggling with vocabulary can look very different from one student to another something that deserves more attention in research.

To help students overcome these difficulties, many teachers and researchers have turned to technology as a way to make vocabulary learning more engaging and effective. One approach that has received growing attention is Game-Based Learning (GBL) a method that brings game elements such as competition, rewards, and immediate feedback into the learning process. When students learn through games, they tend to be more active, more focused, and less stressed compared to conventional classroom activities (Plass et al., 2015; M. Qian & Clark, 2016).

Games create a low pressure environment where making mistakes feels natural rather than embarrassing which is especially important for language learners who may feel anxious about using English. With the development of digital technology, GBL has evolved into Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL), where games are delivered through digital platforms that are easily accessible in the classroom. DGBL tools allow teachers to design interactive vocabulary activities, making them practical and time efficient for everyday classroom use. One platform that has become increasingly popular among EFL teachers is Baamboozle. It is an online game platforms that lets teachers create team-based quiz competitions in just a few minutes. Its simple design, wide range of customizable content, and ability to handle large groups of students. (Alimova, 2023).

Several of studies have explored how digital game-based tools support vocabulary learning in EFL contexts, and their findings offer a useful backdrop for the present research. the cognitive effects of game-based learning environments and found that when vocabulary is practiced through games, students engage more deeply with the material because

the game context makes words feel relevant and memorable (Plass et al., 2015). There is study from eltahir conducted a study on DGBL in an EFL setting and reported significant improvements in both vocabulary scores and student motivation, so digital games can be effective not only as engagement tools but also as learning instruments (Eltahir et al., 2021). In terms of Baamboozle, the other researcher state about the examined that use in an EFL classroom and found that students showed higher levels of participation and better short-term vocabulary skill when using the platform, it is also because the team competition format encouraged students to help one another and stay actively involved (Alimova, 2023).

In the Indonesian context, researchers found that game-based activities helped reduce students' language anxiety and increased their willingness to take part in classroom tasks. These studies are highly relevant to the present research because they demonstrate that Baamboozle and similar tools have real potential in EFL vocabulary learning, particularly in contexts where motivation and engagement are ongoing challenges (Rosyada & Apoko, 2023). However, what these studies share in common and what also limits their contribution is their reliance on quantitative measures such as test scores and motivation questionnaires, which capture outcomes but still view studies talk about how students actually experience the learning process from the inside.

Despite this growing body of research, one important question has not been addressed are how do students themselves perceive the experience of learning vocabulary through Baamboozle? What do they find helpful? What do they find difficult? How do they feel during the game, and do they believe it actually supports their vocabulary learning?. These questions remain largely unanswered in the existing literature, which has focused far more on measuring what students achieve than on understanding what they perceive.

This gap matters because students' perceptions are a crucial piece of the puzzle. If teachers and researchers do not understand how learners

actually engage with a tool, what motivates them, what frustrates them, and what they value it becomes very difficult to use that tool effectively or improve it in ways that genuinely meet students' needs. Understanding student perception is important.

Therefore this study addresses that gap by taking a qualitative approach, putting students' voices at the center of the inquiry rather than reducing their experience to numbers and scores. So, this study entitled Students' perceived benefits and challenges of using the Baamboozle game for vocabulary learning: A case study in an Indonesian senior high school aims to explore perceptions of EFL students toward the benefits and challenges of Baamboozle for vocabulary learning.

B. Formulation of Problem

Based on the background above, the problem statement is formulated with:

"What are the perceived benefits and challenges of using the Baamboozle game for vocabulary learning as reported by eleventh-grade students at an Indonesian senior high school?"

C. Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions specify the observable and measurable characteristics of key variables in this study:

1. **Baamboozle Game:** An interactive quiz platform used as an educational tool. In this study, it is used as a vocabulary learning medium that incorporates game elements such as points, rewards, and corrective feedback to stimulate student engagement and motivation.
2. **Vocabulary Learning:** The process by which students learn, retain, and apply English words to support their

communication skills. In this study, vocabulary learning refers to students' engagement with English vocabulary through game-based classroom activities.

3. **Perceived Benefits:** Students' positive evaluations of using Baamboozle in vocabulary learning, including increased motivation, higher engagement, improved vocabulary recall, and a more enjoyable learning environment. Indicators include enhanced learning motivation, active participation, improved cognitive understanding, and positive emotional responses.
4. **Perceived Challenges:** Students' perceived difficulties or limitations when using Baamboozle in vocabulary learning. These may include time pressure, vocabulary complexity, technical constraints, and unequal participation among students. Indicators include feelings of pressure or frustration, reduced focus on learning, and difficulties in following the game flow.

D. Aim of the Research

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the perceived benefits and challenges of using the Baamboozle Game for vocabulary learning as reported by eleventh-grade students at an Indonesian senior high school.

E. Significance of the Study

This research is expected to generate beneficial results in three ways, which are ;

1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the literature on digital game-based vocabulary learning by providing a theoretical rationale for integrating reinforcement-driven game elements (such as points, rewards, and corrective feedback) to support student

motivation and engagement.

The qualitative findings, which focus on students' emotional responses, perceived benefits, and the drawbacks they experience while using the game, complement previous quantitative research and enrich the evidence on how reinforcement mechanisms operate within digital game environments to facilitate vocabulary learning

2. Practical Significance

- a. Teacher : This research helps English teachers use Baamboozle in a better way to increase students' motivation, support vocabulary learning, and make them more active in class by understanding how simple game rewards can encourage positive learning behaviors.
- b. Student : This research is expected to help students recognize the advantages of interactive learning supported by reinforcement. Such awareness can encourage them to develop a more positive attitude toward vocabulary learning and become more engaged in class activities.
- c. School : For schools, the results offer practical insights into how technology based reward strategies can be integrated into the curriculum. This can help create a more modern and engaging learning environment that needs of students.

3. Empirical Significance

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the perceived benefits and challenges reported by Indonesian high school students when learning vocabulary using Baamboozle. By identifying how reinforcement processes operate inside the context of digital learning, this research fills a gap in previous studies and encourages future empirical investigation into the effectiveness of reinforcement-based digital learning tools in EFL classroom.