

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Problem

In this era, English is one of the most important languages that have to be learned as it is the most used language in the world. Most international media use English to deliver their means or purposes. English is believed to be still the most common language in the world in the future, therefore modern people are required to be able to speak English well. English is not an easy language to learn in a short term, hence learning English is necessary. To learn English, mastering the vocabulary is compulsory before being able to access the other English skills.

According to Lestari (2019), vocabulary mastery is needed to develop the four aspects of communication as follows: listening, speaking, reading and writing. So, vocabulary is a very important step in the process of learning to learn English. Vocabulary should be learned early on because learning vocabulary is the most basic thing in learning English. Vocabulary is very important in communication both verbally and written. Nowadays, parents are aware that English will be beneficial for their children and vocabulary is the first step that should be learned as a basic component in the process of learning to speak English. We have to teach simple vocabulary to young learners so that when they grow up, their English skills will improve because they have already learned English since they are children.

Children have a different way of learning from teens or adults. Children tend

to be more difficult to learn because they are not always in a condition that they want to learn. As cited from the British Council webpage, children have much shorter attention spans than adults. A child's maximum attention span is about two to three times his age, so a five-year-old child would have an attention span of, at best, fifteen minutes. But on the other hand, children are more deeply motivated to study than adults. As suggested by *Brumfit (1991)* which states that young learners are keen, enthusiastic and motivated learners, who can be easily stimulated. Children can have big motivation to learn if they are interested. Young learners are children that have curiosity and imagination, and they are also playful (Slattery and Willis, 2001). Children, with their distinguished characteristics as natural language acquirers, cannot be exposed to serious learning all the time; thus, teachers need to keep modifying their lessons to fit this type of learners. So in this case, teachers play an important role in teaching vocabulary to young learners. The teacher should be more creative in choosing activities that are interesting for children in the learning process. In teaching vocabulary for young learners, the teacher can use various techniques and provide various activities that encourage children to learn. In other words, the teacher should be able to facilitate the students with communicative activities and they should be able to create a pleasant learning atmosphere in the classroom. One of the techniques that is suitable for children is by using games.

Once, a friend of the researcher told a story about how hard she was teaching vocabulary to her daughter. The mom was a young mother aged 27 years old while her daughter was 3 years old. The mom struggled in teaching her daughter

vocabulary as the daughter was unable to memorize well, tired easily, unfocused fast, and sometimes she even had a temper tantrum. Until one day the mom tried games to teach the daughter. Surprisingly the daughter enjoyed the session. The session did not feel like a learning session, it was more of a fun session. The result showed that the daughter was able to understand and memorize the vocabulary well. Moreover, there was no more temper tantrum. This event has proved Constantinescu's statement (2012) mentioning learners can improve their understanding of written and spoken English via games. Games help learners learn words and structures in a context using correct pronunciation and spelling.

Games are believed to benefit learners in a variety of ways ranging from the cognitive aspects of language learning to more co-operative group dynamics (Lengeling & Malarcher, 1997). They have always been known as the pure symbol of fun, involvement, cooperation, and competition (Yahoui, 2012). To further support this, El Shamy also clearly stated in her book that: Game is a competitive activity played according to rules within a given context, where players meet a challenge to achieve an objective and win (2001, p.15). This explanation shows that games can affect the students' achievement. With this technique, students are expected to more easily accept the lessons and enjoy the lesson. Therefore, the use of techniques that are suitable for students can reach the learning goals which students can improve their vocabulary achievement through Games. Learning vocabulary is not just about knowing and remembering words' meaning but also understanding and applying the word so that they are able to use it in their daily life, therefore it is important to facilitate children with various activities that are

enjoyable and meaningful.

1.2 Statement of the Problem/ Research Problem

In line with the discussion above, a research question of this study is: *What are the teachers' experiences in using games to teach vocabulary to young learners?* The core concern which will be addressed in this paper is; the advantages, the disadvantages, the challenges, and the impact of implementing games to teach vocabulary to young learners.

1.3 Objective of the study

This study aims:

- 1) At exploring the advantages of using games in teaching vocabularies to young learners based on the teacher's experience.
- 2) At exploring the disadvantages of using games in teaching vocabularies to young learners based on the teacher's experience
- 3) At exploring the challenges found by the teachers when they are using games in teaching vocabularies to young learners based on the teacher's experience.
- 4) At exploring the impacts of using games in teaching vocabularies to young learners based on the teacher's experience.

1.4 Significance of the study

The main point of this study is exploring the teacher's experiences in using

games to teach vocabulary to young learners. The findings are expected to provide Primary School English teachers with valuable information about using games to teach vocabulary. In addition, this study may be a great precedent for other students in the English Education Study Program who are interested in doing research investigating different techniques to teach vocabulary to primary school students.

1.5 Limitation and Scope

Based on its research question, this study focuses on the teacher's experiences in applying Games to teach vocabulary to young learners. The topic concerns the advantages, the disadvantages, the challenges and the impacts of implementing games to teach vocabulary to young learners.

The research subjects are 5 respondents who teach English to young learners from five different primary schools. The selection is based on the following reasons; first, all of them are the teachers of the younger grade in which games are used actively in the learning process. Second, they come from the same pedagogical background as English educators. These reasons help the researcher to find out the experience of using games in teaching vocabulary.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

There are some theories used to support this study. The main theory of this study is Games.

As learners, children have been known to be more enthusiastic and lively. As suggested by McLaughlin (1978), basically, children are potential in acquiring

and learning a foreign language, and even they learn it more quickly than those who are learning the foreign language after puberty. Moreover, children are also self-motivated learners who have the habit of picking up a new language unconsciously. In addition to this, they seem to be always giving a try on an activity even when they do not fully understand why or how. But if we look again, in teaching vocabulary for young learners it is also difficult. Not all the students have a good understanding. Maybe some of them do not really comprehend it well. Some of them may face difficulties in the use of the word in communication or any difficulties that can occur in young learners. However, learning vocabulary is probably to be one of the greatest challenges for students. It is in line with Puspitasari (2014) that young learners got trouble in memorizing the vocabulary because there are so many vocabularies. Students have difficulties in determining the relevant vocabulary when writing. According to Zhi-Liang (2010) the lack of vocabulary will deter learners from expanding language skills like listening, reading and writing. As a matter of fact, the lack of vocabulary may cause students to be passive in class.

In the case of foreign language learning, it is absolutely necessary for teachers to get to know their learners (children) very well in order to find the best way to teach, to be precise, by knowing children's characteristics and instincts in foreign language learning. According to the report regarding characteristics of young learners, which was published by Guangdong Teacher College of Foreign Languages and Arts, young learners (children) normally imitate their teachers and tapes, interact with others, are willing to take risks, make mistakes, and play. It was

also found that the more interesting and entertaining the learning activity is, the more children will pay attention on and get involved in it. Among all the most entertaining and exciting ways to promote such learning, educational games (flashcards, competitions, races, so on, and so forth) could be counted as the best means to introduce and encourage active learning as well as help children to develop their social skills (Villarroel, 2015).

Using games for teaching and learning vocabulary has been very popular for several decades. In the learning process, games encourage students' enthusiasm and participation to be active during lessons in the classroom (Helingo, 2022). It can indirectly increase students' vocabulary mastery. Syakir (2020) stated in his study of *Developing Students Vocabulary at Elementary School by Using Words Game* that can increase students' vocabulary skills. Next, Wibowo and Syarifah (2018) revealed in their study research that Go Fishing Game can escalate students' English vocabulary. Then, Hadijah, Pratolo, and Rodiyah's study (2020) implied that teachers can use *Kahoot!* as an alternative to teach vocabulary and provide fun learning activities in the EFL classroom. Thus, vocabulary is a crucial factor in English as one of the languages for communication. The ways to teach it become important to explore. Therefore, the analysis of using games in learning vocabulary is needed to gain the best result for students in English learning which focuses on vocabulary mastery.

1.7 Definition of Key terms

- 1) Vocabulary: According to Hatch and Brown (1995), vocabulary is a list or set

of words for a particular language which can be used by an individual speaker of a language.

2) Games: Talak-Kiryk (2010) defines that games are fun activities that promote interaction, thinking, learning, and problem solving strategies.

3) Experience: the knowledge and skill that you have gained through doing something for a period of time; the process of gaining this (Oxford Dictionary)

4) Young Learners: A lot of theories that stated the definition of Young Learners. Some of them have different ideas on specifying the exact age of young learners.

- Young learners mean children from the first year of formal schooling (5 or 6 year old) to eleven or twelve year age.

- In this study, the definition of Young Learners refers to Rixon (1999) and Phillips (1993) defined young learners as those aged between five and twelve years old.

1.8 Organization of the proposal

This proposal consists of three chapters. The first chapter is about the introduction of the research. And the second chapter is about a related review of literature. The third chapter is about research methodology and then the last is references.