

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In the age of globalization, language plays a crucial role, serving not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for cultural and scientific knowledge exchange. Consequently, proficiency in foreign languages is essential for effective international relations. Language is a vital tool for daily communication, facilitating oral and written interactions among people. English is gaining greater significance in Indonesia due to its utilization in various specific contexts, including education, social interaction, and more. English is one of the most critical subjects in school, but there is still room to make English courses more engaging for students. Expanding one's tongue is a fundamental aspect of achieving fluency in English. English is considered a foreign language taught in elementary, junior, high, and senior high schools.

English curriculum focused heavily on grammar and tenses, which proved challenging for students, leading to a lack of motivation to learn. In addition, this approach resulted in students struggling to speak English fluently and having limited vocabulary. One of the most common challenges students encounter when learning English is mastering language components, including grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Understanding, remembering, and applying new vocabulary is often a significant obstacle for English language learners. Students must be proficient in speaking, writing, listening, and

reading. To acquire these skills, students need to be trained in vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, grammar structures, and pronunciation.

In English, vocabulary is one of the perspectives. It is therefore necessary to study English. The current state of youths' inadequate vocabulary mastery of English is a serious issue. Students' use of vocabulary is crucial for expressing ideas and thoughts. People cannot acquire language skills, namely, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, without a sufficient vocabulary. A person's vocabulary is a collection of words, phrases, and expressions they are familiar with and can utilize when speaking, writing, or interpreting a language. Put otherwise, vocabulary is a collection of meaningful words in a language. However, a lot of students mistakenly believe that studying vocabulary only entails acquiring words without understanding their context in the language. Therefore, learning challenging vocabulary affects one's ability to communicate in English. This may discourage students from learning English.

Vocabulary acquisition in English language learning plays a central role in developing language skills. Vocabulary mastery is vital in developing reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, essential for effective communication. Adequate vocabulary supports text comprehension and forms the basis for practical speaking and writing skills. However, learners often face challenges in expanding and recalling new speech. Therefore, this study aims to explore and measure the effect of an experimental method on improving vocabulary acquisition in English language learners at the secondary school level.

Many junior and high school students express dissatisfaction over their English language learning. Many are convinced that learning English will be challenging and lack interest. The English vocabulary is one of the things that they need help with since, in their words, it is hard to remember in terms of pronunciation and spelling. The irregularities observed in the spelling and pronunciation of English terminology lead to confusion among students, who perceive English as more challenging than their mother tongue. As a result, learning vocabulary challenges students just like learning grammar.

Learners who learn grammar without vocabulary find communicating what they want to say challenging. Harmer (2001) state about a learner who learns language, fair-examined text, or an open dictionary can say something. The following indicates that the vocabulary is essential to their area of study. Due to their limited language, the students need help comprehending the material, speaking English fluently, and putting their ideas in writing. According Edwards (2006), as a result of their limited vocabulary or need to pause and look up words in the dictionary, students with limited language skills read more slowly in the expansion. Expanding their vocabulary is one of the main obstacles that non-native language learners encounter when learning a language. Students who need more vocabulary find it challenging to convey their ideas in writing, reading, or speaking, and they require assistance in comprehending what can be stated. For communication in the language, students must have lexical knowledge of it. One of the most challenging aspects of learning a second language is expanding one's vocabulary.

Vocabulary mastery in an educational context is crucial as it affects students' comprehension, communication, and learning ability. Students with vocabulary mastery will find it easier to understand teacher instructions and lesson tasks and thus perform better. For students studying a foreign language, vocabulary knowledge is essential for communicating in that language. Vital vocabulary mastery will help students answer exam and evaluation questions and understand exam instructions better. The absence of strategies and methods in vocabulary instruction can contribute to students' lack of vocabulary. To increase accessibility and excitement in teaching and learning, appropriate forms of procedures are required. Engaging strategies and tactics speed up students' language acquisition. Teachers and students can use various methods to improve vocabulary acquisition in education, such as reading more, applying vocabulary cards, and discussing the meaning and usage of words. In addition, using technology, mobile phone apps, and online resources can help expand students' vocabulary.

Strategies must be used in the classroom to help with vocabulary instruction. Oxford (1990) asserts that language learners should be motivated to employ techniques along their educational journey. According to Nation (1990), the most crucial language learning approach is to be aware of and use vocabulary learning processes. This means that to teach and engage students, teachers need to develop hiring lesson plans. Thus, vocabulary instruction techniques must be engaging to engage pupils to learn English.

Teachers play a crucial part in helping students advance their learning process achievement. Teachers continually search for straightforward activities to assist students in acquiring foreign languages more easily. The teachers should recognize the current condition of the students. Students might like learning if the teacher uses a specific technique. Educators must employ suitable teaching strategies during the teaching-learning process so that students can easily acquire new vocabulary. One tactic to help students feel like they are learning is to play games. Students can play the game and pick up a new language simultaneously. Games are beneficial for expansion because they help students understand the importance of certain words (Allen, 1983). The students need those words to finish the game.

Previous research shows that crossword puzzles are an effective technique to implement in classroom learning activities. The first research article titled "The Effectiveness of Using Crossword Puzzle Games Through Student's Vocabulary Mastery" from Dwi Nur Hadiyansah Wijaksono and Ainun Habiba Ramadani Siddik in 2022 explores the impact of using crossword puzzle games on students' vocabulary mastery. The study was conducted with eleventh-grade students at Vocational High School 1 Banyuputih, using a pre-experimental design and quantitative research methods. The aim was to determine the effectiveness of crossword puzzle games in improving vocabulary mastery and to assess the differences in vocabulary mastery before and after using crossword puzzle games. The study found that the use of crossword puzzle games significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery.

The second previous research with the title “*Efektivitas Permainan Teka-Teki Silang Terhadap Pengenalan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun Di Taman Kanak-Kanak Uswatun Hasanah Kota Padang*” from Hasnatul Aulia and Serli Marlina in 2023 discusses using crossword puzzle games to teach English vocabulary words to children ages 5-6. It conducted a study at a kindergarten in Padang City comparing an experimental class that used crossword puzzles to a control class that used picture guessing games. The study found that the use of crossword puzzles was more effective at improving the students' ability to recognize English words based on pre-tests and post-tests of both classes. It analyzed the results using statistical tests like the independent samples t-test. The paper concluded that crossword puzzles helped the students better learn English vocabulary compared to picture games based on the higher average scores and effect size of the experimental class.

The third previous research with the title “*Efektivitas Permainan Teka-Teki Silang dalam Penguasaan Kosa Kata Bahasa Inggris bagi Mahasiswa Universitas Bhineka*” from Yusuf Wijaya and Moh. Hanafi in the academic year 2022/2023 aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of using crossword puzzle games to improve vocabulary mastery among second-semester students in the English Education Department at Universitas Bhineka PGRI in Tulungagung, Indonesia during the 2022/2023 academic year. A quantitative research method with a pre-experimental design was used. Students were given pre-tests and post-tests to assess their vocabulary skills before and after treatment using crossword puzzles. The statistical analysis found a significant

improvement in mean scores from the pre-test to post-test, indicating a positive effect of the crossword puzzles on vocabulary mastery.

Many games can be used to educate the learning process. One kind of game is crossword puzzles. Through crossword puzzles, the students can learn new and progress their vocabulary. Agreeing with Edward (2006), some exercises will help build vocabulary by using words in conversation and doing crossword puzzles. Therefore, the researcher proposes a crossword puzzle for teaching language. Crossword puzzles can train the student's brain to review new words. In addition, the students will learn English by sharing it with their friends to wrap up the crossword puzzle. All over-explanation inspired the researcher to conduct experimental research. The researcher needs to know how far crossword puzzles can progress students' vocabulary mastery and meet the students in MTs Asy Syafi'iyah Gondang Tulungagung. So, the researcher does experimental research titled "The Effectiveness of Using Crossword Puzzles on The Eighth Grade Students' Vocabulary Mastery at MTs Asy Syafi'iyah Gondang Tulungagung" in the academic year 2023/2024.

## **1.2 Focus of the Study**

The formulated of the research problem is "Is there any significant different score in vocabulary of the students before and after being taught by using crossword puzzle of the eighth grade at MTs Asy Syafi'iyah Gondang Tulungagung?"

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to measure the effectiveness of using crossword puzzles on the eighth-grade students' vocabulary mastery at MTs Asy Syafi'iyah Gondang Tulungagung.

### **1.4 Formulation of Hypothesis**

Based on the research problem "Is there any significant different score in vocabulary of the students before and after being taught by using crossword puzzle of the eighth grade at MTs Asy Syafi'iyah Gondang Tulungagung?"

The researcher formulates a hypothesis as follows:

- 1.4.1 Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant difference in students' score after learning to use the crossword puzzles and before using the crossword puzzles.
- 1.4.2 Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): A significant difference exists in students' score before and after learning to use the crossword puzzles.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

#### **1.5.1 Theoretical Significance**

The findings from this study will be helpful for those who want to research whether the use of crossword puzzles can improve certain aspects of learning English. This study is likely to be another source for future researchers. In addition, this study is also



expected to increase students' vocabulary mastery in the classroom.

## 1.5.2 Practical Significance

### 1.5.2.1 For the Teacher

The researcher hopes that the teachers will be motivated by the findings of this study to be better at teaching English, especially students' vocabulary mastery. By utilizing crossword puzzles, the researcher also hopes that teachers can use the media more creatively as a teaching technique based on its effectiveness.

### 1.5.2.2 For the Students

The researcher also ensures students can boost their vocabulary mastery by using crossword puzzles and focusing on spelling, word comprehension, and vocabulary development related to the learning topic. Playing crossword puzzles can be fun and rewarding to exercise thinking power and knowledge. Students will benefit and experience gains in mastery by using crossword puzzles.

### 1.5.2.3 For the Researcher

By becoming a reference, the researcher thinks this study can help other researchers evaluate the effectiveness of crossword puzzles in increasing learners' knowledge of specific skills and training thinking and expertise from various perspectives.

## 1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This research only examines how well students can improve their vocabulary mastery by focusing on spelling, word comprehension, and vocabulary development related to the learning topic by using crossword puzzles. Students at MTs Asy Syafi'iyah Gondang Tulungagung eighth grade were the study subjects. To fully understand the usefulness of crossword puzzles in teaching English, especially vocabulary mastery, the researcher conducted the study until the end.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Researchers provide several definitions or explanations of key terminology in this study to avoid misunderstandings, as follows:

### 1.7.1 Crossword Puzzle

A crossword puzzle is a word game usually consisting of white and black squares forming a rectangular grid. Each white square has one letter; the player's goal is to fill all the white

squares with the corresponding words. The words are placed horizontally and vertically, and each word crosses. Crosswords are often used as learning or practice tools in educational contexts. In addition, crosswords can be a fun way to hone lateral thinking skills and stimulate creativity.

#### 1.7.2 Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery refers to a person's ability to understand, use, and remember words or terms in one or more languages. It involves mastering and using words appropriately in appropriate situations. Vocabulary mastery plays an essential role in all four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.