

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

English is one of the subjects that plays an important role in the world of education and global communication. One of the main components in mastering English is vocabulary, because without adequate vocabulary mastery, students will have difficulty in understanding, composing, and delivering sentences effectively, both orally and in writing. However, in learning practice, many students have difficulty in memorizing and using vocabulary appropriately, especially at the junior high school level. Therefore, an interesting and fun learning method is needed to help students master English vocabulary. One method that can be applied is a game-based learning method, such as “Whisper Down the Lane”, which is believed to be able to create an active, interactive, and fun learning atmosphere. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of this method on the mastery of English vocabulary of grade 7 students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung. This chapter will discuss several important parts as a basis for research, namely the background of the study, formulation of research question, objective of the reserach, research hypotheses, significance of the reserach, scope and limitations of the research, and definitions of key terms used in this study.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, English has become one of the most important subjects in education, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries like Indonesia. Among the essential language skills—listening, speaking,

reading, and writing—vocabulary serves as the foundation for mastering these skills. Without an adequate vocabulary, students often struggle to comprehend texts, construct sentences, and communicate effectively.

However, vocabulary acquisition remains a significant challenge for many students, particularly at the junior high school level. Traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on rote memorization often fail to engage students, making learning monotonous and less effective. Consequently, students may face difficulties retaining new words.

English language proficiency is a critical skill in today's globalized world, and its importance is underscored in the Indonesian educational system. However, many students face challenges in learning English because of a lack of involvement in conventional classroom environments. The monotonous nature of traditional methods often leads to passive learning, where students become disengaged and disinterested. This issue is particularly evident in junior high school students, who are at a crucial stage in their educational journey. As a result, innovative teaching methods are necessary to address these issues and create a more enjoyable and effective learning environment.

One promising approach is the implementation of game-based learning methods, which are believed to support greater student engagement. Among these methods, the game 'Whisper Down the Lane' offers a fun, interactive way to teach vocabulary. This game involves

collaborative activities that encourage students to focus on listening and speaking while internalizing new words.

"Whisper Down the Lane," also known as "Telephone," is a game-based learning activity that involves students passing a message from one to another, typically in a whisper, to ensure clarity and accuracy. This game not only engages students but also promotes active listening, speaking, and teamwork skills crucial for language learning. By integrating interactive activities like this into English lessons, teachers can foster a lively learning atmosphere.

Learning English, particularly vocabulary mastery, often presents challenges for junior high school students. One approach that has gained attention is the use of game-based learning methods, such as "Whisper Down the Lane," which aim to make the learning process more interactive and engaging. While this method has been suggested as a useful tool, empirical research on its effectiveness in classroom settings remains limited—especially among seventh-grade students.

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the game-based learning method "Whisper Down the Lane" on English learning achievement, with a particular focus on vocabulary mastery among Grade 7 students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung. By employing a quantitative research design, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the use of game-based learning in English language instruction and to offer insights for educators interested in adopting alternative teaching methods.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the existing literature on game-based learning in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts.

Several previous studies have investigate the use of game-based learning methods on students' vocabulary mastery. Yanti (2017) used the "Word Chain" game, Mariyah (2020) implemented the "Scrabble" game, and Putra et al. (2022) used "Word of Wonders", all of which showed positive results in vocabulary learning. In addition, research from Alhebshi & Gamlo (2022), Fikroni et al. (2022), and Karaaslan et al. (2018) put more emphasis on technology-based games, and the results were also quite effective. However, most of these studies focus on types of games that are visual or use digital media. Meanwhile, this study uses the "Whisper Down the Lane" game which emphasizes oral communication, listening skills, and group cooperation. Research related to this method, especially on grade 7 students in junior high schools in Indonesia, is still very limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill this gap.

In this study, the dependent variable is students' vocabulary mastery in English. This variable is used to find out how the "Whisper Down the Lane" game-based learning method may affect students' ability to understand and remember vocabulary. Vocabulary was chosen because it plays an important role in English learning, especially in relation to the school curriculum. By focusing on this variable, the research aims to explore

whether applying a fun and interactive game can support students in achieving better learning outcomes.

The reason of the researcher chose this topic is because after reviewing several previous studies, such as the study conducted by Yanti (2017), Mariyah (2020), Putra et al. (2022), and others as the researcher mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is known that game-based learning methods are generally proven to be effective towards students' vocabulary mastery. The researcher chose the game "Whisper Down the Lane" because there has been little research that specifically examines the effectiveness of this game, especially in private schools or Islamic schools. Most of the previous studies were conducted in public or state schools. The researcher also believes that not all types of games are automatically effective in supporting vocabulary mastery, including the game "Whisper Down the Lane." If this game is proven to be effective in public schools, it is not certain that the same results will be found in Islamic private schools. Therefore, the researcher decided to apply this method at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung, a private Islamic school, to find out whether this game can provide similar results in a different context.

## **B. Formulation of Research Question**

1. How is the effectiveness of the game-based learning method 'Whisper Down the Lane' towards English vocabulary mastery of grade 7 students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung?

### **C. Objective of the Research**

1. To investigate the effectiveness of the game-based learning method 'Whisper Down the Lane' towards English vocabulary mastery among Grade 7 students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung.

### **D. Research Hypothesis**

There are two hypotheses used in this study, namely:

#### **1. Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ )**

The implementation of the 'Whisper Down the Lane' game-based learning method has no significant difference on students' vocabulary mastery in Grade 7 students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung.

#### **2. Alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ )**

The implementation of the 'Whisper Down the Lane' game-based learning method has a significant difference on students' vocabulary mastery in Grade 7 students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung.

### **E. Significance of the Research**

The results of this research were expected to be useful theoretically and practically.

#### **1. Theoretically**

Theoretically, the results of this research will answer questions on research problems and will contribute to the body of knowledge on game-based learning methods, specifically in language education.

## 2. Practically

- a. For the teachers, the findings of this research offer practical insights for English teachers on how to incorporate game-based learning methods, particularly "Whisper Down the Lane," into their teaching practices. By using this interactive game, teachers can foster a more engaging classroom environment.
- b. For students, especially those in Grade 7, this study can have a direct impact by providing a fun and collaborative way to learn English. Game-based learning not only makes the learning process more enjoyable, but it may also lead to improved academic achievement. By participating in interactive games, students are more likely to retain knowledge and apply it in real-life communication contexts.
- c. For Researchers

This research can act as a resource for other researchers interested in exploring the effects of game-based learning on students' academic achievement. It also opens the door for researchers to explore variations of the game or similar learning strategies in different learning contexts.

## **F. Scope and Limitations of the Research**

To prevent misunderstandings, this research would like to narrow the scope of the issue and will concentrate on the effectiveness of the game-based learning method 'Whisper Down the Lane' towards English vocabulary mastery. It includes:

1. Use of the game-based learning method "Whisper Down the Lane".
2. The research participants consisted of grade 7 students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung.
3. The variable observed is vocabulary mastery in English.

## **G. Defining of Key Terms**

In this section, several explanations related to the title discussed in the previous sections are provided. The title is “The Effectiveness of the Game-Based Learning Method ‘Whisper Down the Lane’ towards English Vocabulary Mastey of Grade 7 Students at MTs Aswaja Tulungagung.”

To prevent any misunderstanding among readers, it is essential to define the key terms as follows:

### **1. Game-based learning**

A learning method that uses game elements, such as challenges, competition, and interactivity, to increase student involvement and understanding in learning a particular concept or skill.

### **2. Whisper Down the Lane**

A method or game that involves participants passing information verbally from one person to another sequentially in a series, with the goal of comparing the information initially conveyed with the information most recently received.

### **3. English Vocabulary Mastery**

English vocabulary mastery refers to the ability to understand, recognize, and use a wide range of words accurately and effectively in



various contexts. It involves both passive knowledge (the ability to understand words when encountered in reading or listening) and active knowledge (the ability to use words appropriately in speaking or writing). Vocabulary mastery is essential for achieving proficiency in a second language, as it directly impacts reading comprehension, writing ability, speaking fluency, and listening skills (Nation, 2013).

4. Junior high school education.

The stage of junior high school education generally involves students in the age range of around 12 to 15 years, where they follow a curriculum program that covers various subjects with a certain depth.