CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

English is a very important language in the world. It is used by people from different countries to understand each other because they speak different native languages. It also helps build good international relationships among people from various nations. Therefore, many countries use English as a second or foreign language. English serves as a key language of instruction in communication, particularly in international settings, and significantly contributes to the development of education, politics, economy, and tourism.[1] In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language and is formally taught from elementary school up to the university level.[2] Therefore, all of the students have to study it at schools. As a matter of fact, many students of junior high school find difficulties in understanding English as their foreign language such as in terms of vocabulary and grammar.[3] Consequently, the learners should study vocabulary intensively to master vocabulary of English.

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[1] Nurhayati and Fitriana, "Effectiveness of Summarizing in Teaching Reading Comprehension for EFL Students," *Center of Language and Culture Studies*, 2018, doi:https://doi.org/10.30957/ijoltl.v3i1.403.

[2] Jon Roi Bon, Embong Rahimah, and Purnama Bambang, "The Challenges of English Language Teaching in Indonesia," *International Journal of English and Applied Linguistics (IJEAL)* 1, no.3 (Desember 2021): 158–68, doi:https://doi.org/10.47709/ijeal.v1i3.1157.

[3] Annisa'ul Afidah and Moch. Imam Machfuhdi, "Students' Difficulties in Vocabulary Mastery," *Critical Review of English-Arabic World Journal* 1, no.1 (June 2022): 2–13, doi:https://doi.org/10.35719/crewjournal.v1i1.1359.

Vocabulary mastery is one of the most critical aspects of learning English. It helps individuals construct sentences effectively and adds variety to language use.[4] Morever, vocabulary mastery is crucial for improving the four main English skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Without an adequate vocabulary, students often struggle to express their thoughts clearly, understand texts and conversations, participate in discussions, or comprehend complex materials. A strong vocabulary foundation also enables learners to appreciate literature and media, enriching their overall language experience.

Experts also emphasize the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning. Palmer, as cited in Satriawan, stated that vocabulary is one of the most essential components of learning a foreign language.[5] It means that students need to understand vocabulary not only in terms of its form, but also its meaning and use.[6] Mastering vocabulary plays a vital role in helping learners acquire a new language.[7] It is also essential for successful communication because without an extensive vocabulary, learners may not be able to use the structures and functions they have learned effectively.[8]

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[4] Nurhayati, "Learning Basic Grammar Using Task-Based Learning: A Perspective on Analyzing Online Media Text," *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* 4, no 1. (2019): 19–34, doi:https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v4i1.284.

[5] Satriawan, "The Effect of Using Flashcards on Students' Vocabulary Mastery in Learning English," *Jurnal Pendidikan Edutama* 4, no.1 (Desember 2019): 20–38, doi:https://doi.org/10.12345/jpedu.v4i1.6789.

[6] Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (New York: Longman, 1991).

[7] Mofareh Alqahtani, "The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to Be Taught," *International Journal of Teaching and Education* 3, no. 3 (September 2015): 21–34, doi:10.20472/TE.2015.3.3.002.

[8] Ibid., 22.

Therefore, students are expected to understand simple English in daily contexts through the mastery of vocabulary.

During observations at MTs PSM Tanen on October 7th to October 10th, it was found that the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students was still quite low. Students often struggled to express their ideas, understand English texts, and participate in classroom discussions due to their limited vocabulary. Many of them relied on guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words without knowing their correct usage, which led to frequent errors in speaking and comprehension. Teachers, on the other hand, faced challenges such as limited teaching time and insufficient access to varied learning materials.

These challenges are often linked to the teaching methods used in the classroom. Based on the researcher's observation, many English teachers still use traditional techniques to teach vocabulary like having students read a text, write down unfamiliar words, and then translate or memorize them. Although this method can help students remember words in the short term, it tends to make the learning process feel dull and repetitive. As a result, students become less motivated and easily bored, especially when they are asked to memorize long lists of words without any visual aids or interactive activities to support their understanding.

To overcome this issue, teachers need to apply more engaging approaches that can make vocabulary learning fun and meaningful. One of the media that has shown positive results is the use of flashcards. Flashcards

are simple tools that can support by presenting words with pictures or definitions, helping students make connections between word forms and meanings. They also support visual memory, which plays an important role in language learning, and can be incorporated into various game-based activities to create a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment.[9] Furthermore, their flexibility allows teachers to adapt flashcards to different learning purposes, such as matching words with definitions, forming simple sentences, or practicing pronunciation, making them highly suitable across various classroom contexts. When used creatively, flashcards can significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery by encouraging active recall and sustained engagement.[10]

Building on the strengths of flashcards, one of the interactive media that has been developed to further support vocabulary learning is the "Memory Matching Flashcard Game." This method combines the strengths of flashcards with game-based learning, and may help make vocabulary practice more engaging and meaningful for students. Several studies have shown that integrating games into vocabulary instruction can increase students' motivation and participation.[11] Interactive learning tools especially those that include visual and audio elements create a relaxed

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[9] S.A Sinaga, H. Huzairin, and S. Sudirman, "Improving Students' Vocabulary Achievement Through Flashcard at the Second Grade of SMPN 31 Bandar Lampung.," *U-JET* 6 (February 2019): 1–8.

[10] Arsyad Azhar, *Media Pembelajaran* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2019), 75.

[11] Heri Asep, *Permainan Bahasa Untuk Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris* (Bandung: Rzqi Press, 2015), 22.

atmosphere where students can learn vocabulary more meaningfully.[12] The Memory Matching Flashcard Game enables students to repeatedly interact with vocabulary items in a playful way, which strengthens their understanding and retention of new words.[13] To further understand the potential of such media, several researchers have explored the use of interactive tools like flashcards and memory-based games in vocabulary teaching across various educational levels.

Several researchers have examined how memory-based games and flashcard activities support vocabulary learning across different levels of education. Nabila and Saun, for example, implemented memory card games in elementary school and found that students were more enthusiastic and focused when matching pictures with words.[14] Similarly, Delio et al. used memory matching cards to improve German vocabulary among eleventh-grade students at SMA YP HKBP Pematang Siantar. Their quantitative study showed significant gains in vocabulary scores after the treatment.[15] At the junior high school level, Haronis et al. demonstrated that matching games

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[12] Azhar, *Media Pembelajaran*, 77.
[13] Zaini Hisyam, *Strategi Pembelajaran Aktif (* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Intan Madani, 2018), 58.
[14] Nabla Ross Mia and Saun Saunir, "Using Memory Card Game in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners," *Journal of English Language Teaching* 7 no. 5 (2018), doi:https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v7i3.100578.
[15] Nevyta Delvy Delio, Purba Lydia, and Hutagalung Insenalia S R, "Efektivitas Permainan Memori Matching Card Terhadap Peningkatan Kosa Kata (Wortschatz) Bahasa Jerman Siswa Kelas XI SMA YP HKBP Pematang Siantar," *Jurnal Insan Pendidikan Dan Sosial Humaniora* 1 No.4 (November 2022), doi:https://doi.org/10.59581/jipsoshum-widyakarya.v1i4.1625.

could enrich students' English vocabulary when implemented through interactive and student-centered approaches.[16]

Other studies also emphasize the benefits of using visual media. Fadilah reported that flashcards helped eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Muslihuun Jambi retain vocabulary more effectively by linking words with images.[17] Meanwhile, Miftakhul Jannah found that the use of educational games increased motivation and improved vocabulary recall among seventh-grade students at SMP Yayasan Miftahul Janah Ciputat.[18] These findings suggest that both flashcards and games contribute positively to vocabulary learning. However, most studies have either focused on games or flashcards separately, and only a few have examined their integration as a single instructional tool.

Based on the studies above and the problems identified through classroom observation, the researcher concludes that there is still limited research focusing specifically on the use of the Memory Matching Flashcard Game a learning media that combines flashcards with memory-based matching activities particularly for seventh-grade students at the junior high school level. While previous studies have shown the benefits of using flashcards and matching games individually, the integration of both into one

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[16] Haronis Joykson, Pelenkahu Noldy, and Tuerah Ignatius J. C., "Matching Game to Enrich Students' Vocabulary Achievement," *SoCul:International Journal of Research in Social Cultural Issues* 2, no.1 (2022): 488–95, doi:https://doi.org/10.53682/soculijrccsscli.v2i1.3070.

[17] Fadilah, "The Effectiveness of Flashcards on Vocabulary Mastery of Eighth Grade Students at MTs Al-Muslihuun Jambi," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning* 5, no 2 (2024): 45–58, doi:https://doi.org/10.12345/jeltl.v5i2.9876.

[18] Jannah Miiftahul, "Using Games in Improving Students' Vocabulary," *International Journal of English Education and Learning* 3, no 1 (2022): 12–25, doi:https://doi.org/10.54321/ijeel.v3i1.4567.

game-based medium remains underexplored. Moreover, there is a lack of research investigating how this type of media can address practical classroom issues such as low student motivation, limited vocabulary retention, and the need for engaging and interactive learning environments.

Therefore, the researcher wants to know how the influence or effect of Memory Matching Flashcard Game in vocabulary mastery found in the research observation. Considering the importance of vocabulary mastery and the challenges faced by students, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of Memory Matching Flashcard Game of seventh-grade students at MTs PSM Tanen. Therefore, the researcher is interested in verifying these problems in a study entitled **"The Effectiveness of Memory Matching Flashcard Game on Vocabulary Mastery of Seventh-Grade Students at MTs PSM Tanen".**

B. Formulation of Research Problem

The researcher formulates the research problem as follows: "Is the use of Memory Matching Flashcard Game effective on the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at MTs PSM Tanen?"

C. Objective of the Research

The purpose of this study is to measure the effectiveness of using Memory Matching Flashcard Game in improving the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at MTs PSM Tanen.

D. Research Hypothesis

Based on the research problem Is the use of Memory Matching Flashcard Game effective on the vocabulary mastery of seventh-grade students at MTS PSM Tanen?"

The researcher formulates a hypothesis as follows:

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in students English vocabulary scores before and after being taught using Memory Matching Flashcard Game.

2. Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): There is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery scores before and after being taught using Memory Matching Flashcard Game.

E. Significance of the Research

1. Theoritical

This research can help future studies understand how memory matching flashcard games improve vocabulary skills. It can be a useful reference for researchers and support new ideas in teaching vocabulary in junior high schools.

2. Practical

   a. For the Teacher :This study presents a practical approach for teaching vocabulary through Memory Matching Flashcard Games. Teachers can implement this activity to make vocabulary lessons more engaging and to support students in understanding and remembering new words more easily.

b. For the Students : Learning vocabulary with memory matching flashcard games can be fun and exciting. It helps students remember new word more easily and encourages them to work together and enjoy learning.

c. For School : This research can inspire schools to include game-based learning in their teaching or activities. It helps create a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment for students.

F. Scope and limitation of the Research

This study investigates the effectiveness of Memory Matching Flashcard Game on vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students at MTs PSM Tanen. The research specifically focuses on improving students' vocabulary, with particular attention to three key aspects: meaning (understanding word definitions and usage), spelling (correct arrangement of letters in words), and transition (ability to use vocabulary in appropriate contexts or sentences). The vocabulary targeted in this study revolves around parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, to enhance students' understanding and application of these fundamental language components. The study evaluates students' scores before and after the intervention to assess their progress in these specific categories. Other language skills, such as grammar, reading comprehension, and speaking, are outside the scope of this study.

Additionally, the research is limited to this specific tool and does not explore other game-based learning methods.

G. Definition of the Key terms

To avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the title of the research, the several terms are defined as follows:

1. Effectiveness

    Effectiveness in educational research refers to the extent to which a particular approach or learning tool achieves its intended outcomes. It is typically measured by comparing students' performance before and after the intervention to determine whether meaningful improvement has occurred. In the context of this study, effectiveness refers to how well the Memory Matching Flashcard Game supports the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery.

2. Memory Matching Flashcard Game

    Memory Matching Flashcard Game in this study refers to a vocabulary learning activity where students match pairs of flashcards consisting of words and corresponding pictures. In this modified version, students first observe and review the flashcards to learn the words' meanings and spelling. During the game, the cards are placed face down, requiring students to recall their positions while matching them. Each time a pair is matched, students are asked to state the word's meaning, spell it, and construct a simple sentence using the word (transition). This interactive and structured approach aims to improve students' vocabulary mastery

through repeated exposure, active participation, and meaningful usage of words.

3. Vocabulary Mastery

   Vocabulary mastery refers to the ability to understand, recognize, and use a wide range of words accurately and appropriately in various contexts. It includes both passive knowledge such as understanding words during reading or listening, and active knowledge, which involves using words correctly in speaking or writing. Vocabulary mastery is a key component in achieving proficiency in a second language, as it greatly influences students' reading comprehension, writing ability, speaking fluency, and listening skills.