

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents about background of the study, formulation of research problem, purpose of the research, significance of the research, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of The Study

Mastering vocabulary is essential for students to effectively understand, communicate, and engage with the English language.¹ For junior high school learners, developing strong vocabulary skills not only supports their academic success but also boosts their confidence in everyday communication.² Despite this, many students still struggle to memorize word meanings, recognize different word forms, and use vocabulary accurately in context.³ Personally, I choose this topic because I found that many students at MTsN 6 Tulungagung still experience difficulties in mastering vocabulary, especially in recognizing word forms and using them contextually. Therefore, I wanted to explore a digital based solution that could help them learn in a more practical and enjoyable way.

The rapid advancement of technology in education has opened new avenues to enhance language learning, especially through mobile-assisted

¹ Alqahtani, *The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to Be Taught*. International Journal of Teaching and Education, 7, No. 3 (2019): 1-10

² Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, (Cambridge University Press, 2016)

³ Schmitt, *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

language learning (MALL) applications.⁴ One such application, U-Dictionary, offers features like word translation, pronunciation guides, usage examples, and vocabulary games, which create an engaging and comprehensive environment for learners to improve their vocabulary.⁵

Several researchers have explored the impact of mobile applications on vocabulary acquisition. (Wasi'ani, 2022) discovered that U-Dictionary's contextual examples play a significant role in helping students grasp and retain vocabulary better.⁶ (Novita, 2021) emphasized the motivational benefits of mobile learning, which encourages students to be more involved and interested in their language studies.⁷ (Yuanita, 2019) found that students using U-Dictionary felt more confident and eager to practice speaking English independently, thanks to the app's pronunciation tools and vocabulary support.⁸ Similarly, (Listiani, 2020) noted that students appreciated features like "Word of the Day" and camera translation for assisting them in categorizing and understanding different types of words.⁹ Furthermore, stressed that vocabulary is fundamental to mastering all language skills, and

⁴ Kukulska-Hulme, *Mobile Assisted Language Learning: A New Paradigm for Language Learning?* In *Mobile Learning: A Handbook for Educators and Trainers*, (Routledge, 2020)

⁵ Dwi & Satria, *The Effect of Using U-Dictionary Application on Students' Pronunciation Mastery at the Eleventh Grade of SMK Negeri 1 Perbaungan*, CYBERNETIC Journal Educational Research and Social, 4, No. 1 (2023)

⁶ Wasi'ani, *The Effectiveness of U-Dictionary in Improving Vocabulary Mastery of Eighth Grade Students.*, *Journal of Language Learning*, 10, No. 2 (2022): 123-135

⁷ Novita, *The Impact of Mobile Learning on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes*, *Journal of Educational Technology*, 15, No. 3 (2021): 45-58.

⁸ Yuanita, *The Use of U-Dictionary Application to Improve Students' Speaking Skill*, *Edupro Journal*, 3 No. 2 (2019): 112-120

⁹ Listiani, *Students' Perception Toward the Use of U-Dictionary in Learning English Vocabulary*, Undergraduate Thesis, STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung, (2020)

that digital tools like U-Dictionary provide valuable assistance in enriching learners' lexical knowledge.¹⁰

Improving students' vocabulary mastery remains a challenge for educators, but studies suggest that incorporating diverse and interactive teaching methods can enhance learning outcomes.¹¹ Novita (2021) showed that interactive approaches increase student motivation and help them retain vocabulary more effectively. Harrison (2023) also argued that integrating technology in language instruction caters to various learning styles and offers dynamic resources that benefit vocabulary learning.¹²

Among these technological tools, U-Dictionary stands out as an effective application that supports vocabulary acquisition through its dictionary functions, translation services, and interactive exercises.¹³ Wasi'ani (2022) highlighted that the app's contextual examples help students better understand and remember new words.¹⁴ Moreover, Kukulska-Hulme (2020) pointed out that the interactive nature of the app promotes active learning, which is crucial for long-term retention of vocabulary.¹⁵

¹⁰ Alqahtani, *The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to Be Taught*. International Journal of Teaching and Education, 7, No. 3 (2019): 1-10

¹¹ Schmitt, *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

¹² Harrison, *The Role of Technology in Enhancing Vocabulary Learning: A Review of the Literature*. Journal of Educational Technology, 14, No. 1 (2023): 25-38.

¹³ Dwi & Satria, *The Effect of Using U-Dictionary Application on Students' Pronunciation Mastery at the Eleventh Grade of SMK Negeri 1 Perbaungan*, CYBERNETIC Journal Educational Research and Social, 4, No. 1 (2023)

¹⁴ Wasi'ani, *The Effectiveness of U-Dictionary in Improving Vocabulary Mastery of Eighth Grade Students.*, Journal of Language Learning, 10, No. 2 (2022): 123-135

¹⁵ Kukulska-Hulme, *Mobile Assisted Language Learning: A New Paradigm for Language Learning?* In *Mobile Learning: A Handbook for Educators and Trainers*, (Routledge, 2020)

Although these studies confirmed the usefulness of U-Dictionary in vocabulary learning, most of them were conducted in different contexts, such as focused mainly on speaking or general vocabulary use. There is still a lack of research that specifically integrates U-Dictionary into structured classroom treatment for seventh grade students, especially with emphasis on affixed and non-affixed vocabulary. This is the research gap that this study seeks to fill. Furthermore, the novelty of this research lies in combining various features of U-Dictionary such as “Word of the Day”, “Camera Translator”, and “Pronouncatoin Tool” within guided classroom activities focusing on morphological awareness of affixed and non-affixed word forms, which has rarely been addressed in previous studies.

B. Formulation Of Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the following research questions are formulated to guide the investigation:

1. Is the use of U-Dictionary effective in vocabulary mastery of the seventh-grade students at MTsN 6 Tulungagung?

C. Purpose of the study

Based on the research question above, the purpose of this study as follow:

1. To know the use of U-Dictionary effective in vocabulary mastery of the seventh-grade students at MTsN 6 Tulungagung.
2. To examine the differences in students' vocabulary scores before and after the implementation of U-Dictionary as a learning tool.

D. Formulation Hypothesis

1. Null Hypothesis (H_0)

H_0 state that there is no significant difference on students' vocabulary scores between before and after taught using U-Dictionary

2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_a)

H_a state that there is significant difference on students' vocabulary mastery between before and after taught using U-Dictionary.

E. Significants Of the Study

1. For Schools

This research is expected to support schools in enhancing the quality of English learning through the integration of the U-Dictionary application. By using this digital tool, schools may help students achieve better outcomes in mastering vocabulary.

2. For English Teachers

- a) The findings of this study are intended to serve as a useful reference for English teachers in selecting effective strategies for teaching vocabulary to their students.

- b) This research is also expected to contribute to curriculum development by offering insights for planners and implementers, particularly in efforts to improve the teaching of vocabulary in junior high school settings.

3. For Students

- a) This study aims to foster students' interest, enthusiasm, and creativity in learning English vocabulary.
- b) It is also intended to provide a space for students to build confidence and become more courageous in using new vocabulary, especially in speaking activities.
- c) Ultimately, it is hoped that the integration of U-Dictionary can make English learning more enjoyable and engaging for students.

F. Scope And Limitation

To avoid misinterpretation of the objectives and direction of this study, the researcher sets clear boundaries so that the research remains specific and focused. The scope and limitation of this study are outlined as follows:

- a. This study specifically examines the use of the U-Dictionary application as a medium for teaching vocabulary in English language learning.
- b. The participants in this research are limited to seventh-grade students at MTsN 6 Tulungagung.
- c. The vocabulary acquisition assessed in this study refers to the extent to which students are able to memorize and comprehend vocabulary within appropriate context.
- d. The vocabulary aspects examined include noun and verbs, specifically divided into affixed and non-affixed forms.

G. Definition Of Key Terms

1. Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery refers to the ability to understand, use, and manipulate a wide range of words effectively in various contexts. It encompasses not only the knowledge of word meanings but also the ability to apply them appropriately in speaking, writing, reading, and listening.¹⁶

2. Improving Vocabulary Mastery

Improving vocabulary mastery involves employing strategies and methods to enhance students' understanding and usage of words. This may include interactive learning techniques, technology integration, and various instructional approaches aimed at increasing students' retention and application of new vocabulary.¹⁷

3. Affixed Vocabulary

Affixed vocabulary refers to words that include prefixes or suffixes, such as “sweetness” (from “sweet”) or “baking” (from “bake”).¹⁸ These words help students understand morphological patterns in English.

4. Non-Affixed

¹⁶ Schmitt, *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

¹⁷ Novita, The Impact of Mobile Learning on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes, *Journal of Educational Technology*, 15, No. 3 (2021): 45-58.

¹⁸ Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, (Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Non-Affixed vocabulary refers to base words that do not contain prefixes suffixes, such as “milk”, “boil”, or “salad”. These words represent basic vocabulary knowledge.¹⁹

5. U-Dictionary

U-Dictionary is a mobile application designed to assist users in learning and mastering vocabulary. It offers features such as a bilingual dictionary, translation services, example sentences, and interactive exercises, enabling users to enhance their vocabulary skills in an engaging manner (Wasi'ani, 2022).²⁰

6. Seventh Grade Students

Seventh grade students refer to individuals who are typically aged 12 to 13 years and are enrolled in the seventh year of their formal education, particularly in middle school. At this stage, students are often introduced to more complex vocabulary and language structures, making vocabulary mastery crucial for their academic development.²¹

7. MTsN 6 Kota Tulungagung

MTsN 6 Kota Tulungagung is a public Islamic junior high school located in Tulungagung, Indonesia. The school serves students in grades seven to nine and focuses on providing quality education that integrates religious and academic learning.

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Wasi'ani, *The Effectiveness of U-Dictionary in Improving Vocabulary Mastery of Eighth Grade Students.*, Journal of Language Learning, 10, No. 2 (2022): 123-135

²¹ Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, (Cambridge University Press, 2016)