

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the background of the study which explains the importance of vocabulary mastery in English learning and the problems faced by students in mastering vocabulary. This chapter also discusses the identification of problems and research limitations, research questions, research objectives, research benefits, scope of the study, and the definition of key variables used in this research.

A. Background of Study

Vocabulary mastery is one of the essential aspects of learning English. Vocabulary plays a crucial role in supporting the mastery of other language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the context of language learning, vocabulary serves as a foundation that enables learners to understand meaning and convey ideas effectively and accurately. Without adequate vocabulary mastery, learners' ability to interpret spoken and written messages will face significant obstacles. This limits their ability to communicate effectively in English, both in academic and non-academic contexts.

Therefore, improving vocabulary mastery needs to be a top priority in the English language learning process. Success in overall language skills depends heavily on the extent to which student's master relevant and contextual vocabulary. In the context of educational research, focusing on vocabulary development can be an effective strategy for improving the quality of English language learning holistically. Thus, systematic efforts to enrich students' vocabulary need to be designed in a planned and continuous manner through appropriate approaches, methods, and learning media.

According to Schmitt, vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner¹. From this statement, we can know how important mastery of vocabulary is as a foundation in learning English. Mastery of vocabulary is also an initial ability that must be mastered in order to learn other skills in English, this is supported by a quote that explains, vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking, and writing ².

However, in practice, many students face various obstacles in improving vocabulary mastery. At the junior high school level, some common problems that are often encountered include low student motivation, limited use

¹ N. Schmitt, *Vocabulary in Language Teaching* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

² I S P Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

of interesting learning media, and monotonous and less contextualized learning approaches. These conditions cause students to have difficulty in understanding and remembering new vocabulary, and are less able to use it in real communication contexts.

To overcome this problem, it is necessary to use learning media that can attract students' interest and support the vocabulary comprehension process effectively. Creative and fun learning media, such as stories, are proven to increase student engagement and strengthen memory of the vocabulary learned. Stories presented in a contextual and repetitive manner provide opportunities for students to understand the meaning of vocabulary in real situations and expand their ability to use it.

One type of story that has the potential to be used as learning media is fable, which is a short story that generally involves animal characters and contains moral messages. Fables have a simple story structure, easy to understand vocabulary, and repetitive language, making them suitable for junior high school students. In addition, fables also have their own charm because they often contain elements of humor, life values, and are related to local and international cultures, which can increase students' interest in participating in learning.

In addition to linguistic suitability, fables are developmentally appropriate for junior high school students who are undergoing the transition from concrete to formal operational thinking, as proposed by Piaget's theory of cognitive development. At this stage, learners begin to engage in abstract reasoning and moral evaluation. The moral content embedded within fables aligns well with students' emerging capacity for ethical judgment, thus making the learning experience more relatable and cognitively stimulating. This alignment between textual content and learners' developmental stage enhances both engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in vocabulary retention and application.

The following research shows the use of fables as learning media in vocabulary mastery. Wisnu Widagdo with research entitled "The Effectiveness of Aesop's Fables to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery" which shows the results that the use of Aesop's fables is effective in mastering student vocabulary, this is indicated by the increase the student scores before and after the use of Aesop's fables³, and the other research Nurul Alfi Hidayani that shows the result that the use of fables as learning media proved to be effective in improving students' reading comprehension of narrative text⁴. This

³ Wisnu Widagdo, 'The Effectiveness of Aesop's Fables to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery' (Universitas Negeri Semarang, 2020) <<https://lib.unnes.ac.id/38652/>>.

⁴ Nurul Alfi Hidayani, 'Improving the Students' Reading Comprehension on Narrative Text by Using Fable at Eighth Grade of MTs Al-Manaar PTPN I Pulu Raja', *Bright Vision Journal of Language and Education*, 2.2 (2022), pp. 178–93, doi:<https://doi.org/10.30821/brightvision.v2i2.2906>.

improvement can be seen from the evaluation results as well as observations of student activities during the learning process.

Although several previous studies have demonstrated the potential of fables in supporting English learning, the majority of them focus primarily on reading comprehension rather than explicit vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, few investigations have been conducted in the context of rural Islamic junior high schools in Indonesia, where instructional resources and learning environments differ significantly from those in urban or private institutions. This presents a gap in the literature, particularly in terms of evaluating the practical effectiveness of fable texts in improving vocabulary mastery among students with limited exposure to engaging and contextually relevant learning materials. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by providing empirical evidence within a specific rural educational setting.

Based on the background above, the researcher wants to conduct a study entitled “The Effectiveness of Using Fable on The Ninth Grade Students' Vocabulary Mastery at MTS PSM Tanen”.

B. Identification of Problems and Research Limitations

1. Identification of Problems

The problems identified in this study include the limited exploration of fables as a medium for vocabulary learning in rural junior high school

contexts. Most previous research has primarily focused on reading comprehension, with fewer studies emphasizing vocabulary mastery through the use of narrative texts such as fables. Additionally, there is a lack of integration between the moral content found in fables and vocabulary acquisition strategies. Furthermore, there is insufficient empirical data from Indonesian Islamic junior high schools regarding the effectiveness of using fables to improve students' vocabulary mastery.

2. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it only involved ninth-grade students at MTs PSM Tanen as the research population, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the instructional media used were restricted to printed fable texts without any multimedia integration. Third, the scope of the research focused solely on vocabulary mastery and did not examine long-term retention or the use of vocabulary in speaking and writing skills. Lastly, the research was conducted within a limited timeframe, which may not adequately capture the long-term impacts of fable-based instruction.

C. Research Problem Formulation

Is there a significant difference between students' ability before and after treatment at Mts PSM Tanen?

D. Research Objective

To determine significant difference between students' ability before and after treatment at Mts PSM Tanen.

E. Research Benefits

1. Theoretical Benefits

This study aims to expand knowledge and provide scientific references on the use of fables in English language learning. In addition, it contributes to the development of effective methods for vocabulary learning, particularly by integrating moral-based narrative texts such as fables into English instruction.

2. Practical Benefits

a. For Teachers:

The findings of this research provide teachers with evidence that fable-based learning can effectively enhance students' vocabulary mastery. Teachers can adopt fables as an alternative and engaging teaching medium to create a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience. Through contextual stories, teachers are able to explain vocabulary in a natural way, encourage moral reflection, and increase students' motivation to participate actively in class.

b. For Students:

The use of fables as a learning medium helps students improve their vocabulary understanding and retention significantly. The interesting storyline and moral content in fables make the learning process more enjoyable and relatable. As shown in the study, students' scores increased remarkably after being taught using fables, indicating that this method supports both comprehension and long-term vocabulary memory.

c. For Schools:

This study contributes to the school's efforts to improve the overall quality of English instruction. By implementing fable-based learning, schools can promote innovative and character-based education that integrates language mastery with moral values. The proven effectiveness of this method can serve as a model for other teachers and classes, helping the school enhance its English learning outcomes in a sustainable way.

F. Scope of Research

1. Subject:

The subjects in this study were ninth-grade students at MTS PSM Tanen. The selection of subjects was based on the consideration that students at this level are in a stage of cognitive development that allows

them to accept and respond to learning strategies optimally, especially in the context of English language learning.

2. Focus:

The focus of this study is the effect of using fables on students' English vocabulary mastery. Fables were chosen because they contain interesting and contextual narrative elements, which make it easier for students to understand the meaning of words and improve their memory of the vocabulary they have learned.

3. Media:

The media used in this study were written fables adapted to the students' ability levels. This adaptation was intended to ensure that the material presented remained relevant and easily understood, thereby supporting the effectiveness of vocabulary learning and preventing obstacles in the text comprehension process.

4. Type of Research:

This type of research is quantitative research with a pre-experimental design. This design is used to observe the effect of a particular treatment namely, the use of fables on students' English vocabulary mastery, involving one group that is given the treatment without a control group. This design allows researchers to measure changes in learning outcomes before and after the treatment is given.

5. Instruments:

The instruments used in this study included a pretest, treatment, and posttest. The pretest was administered to measure students' initial proficiency in English vocabulary, while the treatment consisted of learning through fables. After the treatment, a posttest was administered to determine the extent of improvement in students' vocabulary proficiency after participating in the learning process.

G. Variable Assignment

1. Fable

A fable is a type of narrative story that features animal characters who behave like humans. In fables, animals are given the ability to speak, think, and interact like humans. These stories generally contain moral messages or life values that are intended to be conveyed to readers. Fables are often

used as a means of character education because of their ability to convey messages implicitly through simple and interesting storylines.

Nurgiyantoro state that fable is a fictional story that uses animals as the main characters, who act and behave like humans, and serves to convey moral lessons⁵. With its simple structure and universal themes, fables are a genre that is easily understood by various age groups, including students at the elementary and secondary school levels.

The use of fables in English language learning has become an effective approach in developing students' language skills, both receptive and productive. Through reading and analyzing fable texts, students are not only introduced to vocabulary and grammatical structures in a natural context, but are also encouraged to understand the content of the text in depth and develop critical and creative thinking skills.

2. Vocabulary mastery

Vocabulary mastery is the ability to know the words in a language, like how they look (form), what they mean (meaning), and how to use them in the right context (use). Vocabulary mastery is a basic and essential part of language skills, both for listening and reading (receptive) and speaking and writing (productive).

⁵ Burhan Nurgiyantoro, *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi* (Gadjah Mada University Press, 2005).

Nation states that vocabulary mastery includes the ability to recognize and use words in various contexts, as well as understanding lexical aspects such as synonyms, antonyms, collocations, and grammar⁶. Good vocabulary mastery enables a person to understand messages completely and express ideas effectively.

⁶ Nation. *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 2001).