

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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

Vocabulary is a crucial aspect of language proficiency, serving as one of the foundational components of English. Effective communication heavily depends on a strong vocabulary, as individuals with a vast vocabulary tend to understand and convey ideas more effectively.

According to Harmer (2001), the difficulties in learning English include understanding the foreign language between word form and meaning, drawing the correct connections, and differentiating between closely similar word meanings. Consequently, the development of the language depends on the simultaneous and intricate process of extracting and building utterances through the use of suitable word combinations. Additionally, the proficiency of a student's vocabulary may be a reliable gauge of their performance and acquisition of all language skills alike.

According to the aforementioned theory, learning English is defined as a challenge in comprehending vocabulary, which is linked to poor word pronunciation and spelling. In this instance, it is the reason why students struggle to learn English, particularly when it comes to comprehending their vocabulary.

Nation (2001) contends that language competency and usage can be strongly predicted by vocabulary knowledge and acquisition. Thus, students' language production vocabulary reveals their level of language proficiency.

While, Aristya (2018, p. 1) emphasizes that vocabulary plays a pivotal role in mastering foreign languages, often being a key focus in textbooks and classroom instruction. Therefore, acquiring vocabulary is an essential first step for students before learning English.

Thus, mastering vocabulary is a crucial prerequisite for learning English. Consequently, vocabulary comprehension needs to be enhanced, and one of the most important factors in helping students overcome their challenges particularly when it comes to comprehending vocabulary in class is their passion to study and their strong desire to learn English.

Humairoh and Amin (2023) define vocabulary as a collection of terms associated with a specific person, group, or language system. Similarly, Idham (2011) describes vocabulary as the basic element of language, forming the foundation for constructing sentences, paragraphs, and comprehensive texts. In essence, vocabulary encompasses all the words an individual knows and can utilize to create new sentences, as highlighted by these experts.

Despite their capacity to learn vocabulary, students often encounter challenges, particularly in areas like grammar and spelling, as noted by Andriani and Wahyuningsih (2019). While students may achieve progress, challenges related to grammar, spelling, word usage, and translation persist (Rahman, 2016). Such issues underscore the need to investigate students' difficulties in mastering English vocabulary. Previous studies have shown that grammar, spelling, and translation are common areas of struggle.

These challenges hinder effective vocabulary learning and leave fundamental problems unresolved. Consequently, this research aims to

delve deeper into students' difficulties with vocabulary acquisition and explore underlying factors.

Cameron in Gushendra (2017, pp. 45–55) identifies key indicators of vocabulary-related challenges, including pronunciation issues, spelling difficulties, and struggles with grammar and word comprehension. These challenges are commonly observed among students trying to expand their vocabulary.

Based on the aforementioned idea, it can be inferred that the majority of the difficulties we encounter are related to word construction, pronunciation, spelling, and sentence interpretation. It is therefore envisaged that this research would help identify other issues that may be a hurdle to learning English vocabulary.

Therefore, it is important for us to improve our vocabulary skills, such as pronunciation, spelling words, composing words or sentences, and understanding terms in sentences. As explained by the experts above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the main foundation of language, which is often used to communicate with people. English, especially when meeting foreigners, is therefore a problem often faced by students. Such as lack of motivation to learn, lack of students' understanding of English vocabulary, especially in mastering vocabulary such as pronunciation, spelling, word arrangement, and word translation.

The researcher's findings from earlier observations, which lasted roughly three days, showed that students struggled to communicate in English because it was a foreign language in the classroom. This study was conducted at SMPN 06 KAUR school to determine the difficulties pupils encountered in learning English vocabulary. To this end,

questionnaires were distributed to students.

Therefore, researchers are interested in taking a research location at SMPN 06 KAUR because not many researchers choose a research location, most of which take quantitative descriptive research about students' difficulties in understanding English vocabulary at SMPN 06 KAUR, and from previous research, most of them take research design with experimental research and quasi-experimental research; therefore, here the researcher is interested in carrying out this research with quantitative descriptive research so that there is a difference from previous research in other locations.

These findings prompted the researcher to investigate the topic further, culminating in the study titled, *"Students' Difficulties in Mastering Vocabulary in Eighth Graders at SMPN 06 Kaur."*

#### **B. Identification of the Study**

1. Challenges faced by eighth-grade students at SMPN 06 Kaur in understanding and memorizing English vocabulary.
2. Students' difficulties with word pronunciation and Grammar English.
3. Struggles in understanding word meanings, particularly within sentences.
4. Low motivation among students to learn English in class.

#### **C. Limitation of the Study**

This study is limited to investigating the challenges faced by eighth-grade students at SMPN 06 Kaur in understanding and memorizing English vocabulary.

#### **D. Research Questions**

1. What challenges do eighth-grade students at SMPN 06 Kaur face in mastering English vocabulary?

2. What factors contribute to these challenges in vocabulary comprehension?

#### **E. Objective of the Study**

1. To identify the difficulties encountered by eighth-grade students at SMPN 06 Kaur in mastering English vocabulary.
2. To examine the factors causing these difficulties.

#### **F. The Significance of the Study**

1. Theoretical Contribution

This research provides insights and motivation for students while offering an evaluation of English learning, particularly vocabulary studies at SMPN 06 Kaur.

2. Practical Contribution

The study is expected to enhance the evaluation of English learning practices, particularly in the use of learning media, and promote strategies like private lessons and remedial tests to improve vocabulary mastery among eighth-grade students.

3. Future Research

The findings can serve as a reference for future researchers investigating similar challenges, as well as provide valuable feedback for improving English instruction at SMPN 06 Kaur.

#### **G. The Definition of the Key Term**

1. Students' Difficulties

Refers to an evaluation of the obstacles students face in understanding English vocabulary at SMPN 06 Kaur, particularly in gaining knowledge and improving their vocabulary. Cameron in Gushendra (2017, pp. 45–55) identifies



key indicators of vocabulary-related challenges, including pronunciation issues, spelling difficulties, and struggles with grammar and word comprehension. These challenges are commonly observed among students trying to expand their vocabulary.

## 2. Vocabulary Mastery

Refers to the comprehension and usage of words within a language to communicate effectively. Vocabulary includes sets of words that individuals strive to memorize and apply for enhanced communication. As noted by Alqahtani (2015, p. 22), mastering vocabulary is essential for effective use of a second language and plays a key role in developing comprehensive spoken and written texts.

