

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Vocabulary is a fundamental element and an important component in English language learning. For EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners at the basic level, vocabulary is a crucial tool for successfully using English (Ling & Abdul Aziz, 2022; Gavharoy, 2024; Rasulova, 2023). A strong understanding of vocabulary helps students engage in conversations, comprehend readings, and write more effectively.

Vocabulary forms the foundation for all other language skills, such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary mastery, students will struggle to understand and use English in various communication contexts (Hestiana & Anita, 2022). Moreover, vocabulary is a collection of words used to communicate, express feelings, opinions, and criticisms. The ability to use vocabulary accurately is essential for effective communication.

Students who lack vocabulary cannot fully understand and communicate their views and ideas (Ling & Abdul Aziz, 2022; Alhebshi & Gamlo, 2022). Therefore, having a broad and deep vocabulary is essential for success in learning English. Mastery of vocabulary helps students communicate

effectively and better understand learning materials, enhancing their overall language learning experience.

In addition to vocabulary mastery, student engagement in learning also plays a crucial role in improving learning outcomes at all educational levels (Li & Xue, 2023). Student engagement is a multidimensional concept that encompasses various aspects of involvement, such as behavior, cognition, and emotion (Yang et al., 2023). When students are actively engaged in the learning process, they are more likely to be motivated and focused, which can improve their understanding and retention of the subject matter.

Student engagement includes active participation in class activities, attention during the learning process, and positive emotional involvement with the lesson content and learning environment. Research shows that students who are cognitively engaged have a deeper understanding of the material and the ability to apply knowledge in different situations (Yang et al., 2023). Additionally, behavioral engagement, such as consistent attendance and participation in class discussions, contributes to a more meaningful learning experience.

The importance of student engagement has gained significant attention in recent years as a crucial determinant of learning outcomes in higher education (Yi et al., 2024). Studies show that students who are engaged are more likely to

achieve higher academic results, have a positive attitude toward learning, and develop critical thinking skills. Therefore, creating a learning environment that supports student engagement is essential for the success of English language learning and other subjects.

Research on English vocabulary teaching has been a major focus in the field of language education over the past few decades. Many researchers have sought to identify various methods, strategies, and techniques suitable for vocabulary learning in English classrooms. This study reveals that students' attitudes toward vocabulary learning are diverse, influenced by their linguistic backgrounds and individual learning preferences. The findings provide practical recommendations for educators to optimize vocabulary teaching by recognizing the diversity of students' linguistic backgrounds and learning preferences (Nurillo, 2024; Almosa, 2024; Назарова & Иброхимова, 2024; Chundru & Manipatruni, 2024).

Furthermore, the research focuses on the use of effective methods, strategies, and approaches to enhance vocabulary in English language teaching. Various methods and strategies have been implemented to improve students' vocabulary mastery, which ultimately impacts their overall English language proficiency (Gulomovna & Solidjonov, 2023; Fauziningrum et al., 2023; Ali Mansoor et al., 2023; Hu &

Luo, 2024). This study shows that innovative approaches, such as the use of technology and digital media, are often more effective compared to traditional methods.

Previous studies have also attempted to compare various vocabulary learning approaches, including traditional and innovative methods, as well as the performance of specific platforms, to identify the most effective approach. Researchers have explored the potential input of methods, approaches, strategies, and media in vocabulary learning, and the findings indicate significant differences in learning outcomes related to English language learning and students' vocabulary retention levels (Teng, 2023; Bi, Javadi, & Izadpanah, 2023; Kashefian-Naeeni et al., 2023; Lai & Chen, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Research on student engagement in learning has focused more on exploring the factors that influence student involvement in language classes, both offline and online, which ultimately affect their performance. Factors such as poor study habits, social interactions with peers and teachers, and social presence have been found to influence student engagement in offline classes (Çelik & Baturay, 2024; Qureshi et al., 2023; Kianinezhad, 2024). Meanwhile, factors affecting student engagement in online language classes include limited access to personal computers or smartphones, lack of internet access, poor study habits, lack of technological skills, and

unfamiliarity with technology (Werang & Leba, 2022; Suppasetseeree, Kumdee & Ho Minh, 2023).

Furthermore, many studies explore how various teaching methods, including interactive and participatory approaches, can enhance student engagement in the classroom. Research findings show that interactive learning models have a significant impact on student engagement in class (Putri & Setiyawati, 2023; Al Mamun & Lawrie, 2023; Nagale & Khandare, 2024; Tasheva, 2024).

Vocabulary research for young learners still has many gaps. Many studies focus more on adolescents and adults, leaving a lack of in-depth understanding of the most effective methods for children. Additionally, research examining specific methods and strategies designed for young learners is still limited. For example, interactive activities specifically designed for children have yet to be widely explored in the context of vocabulary.

Research on student engagement for young learners also shows several gaps. There is a lack of research exploring specific factors that influence young students' engagement in English language learning. Factors such as developmental needs, learning preferences, and social interactions in children need further investigation. While many studies address student engagement in the context of online learning, there is little

focus on how technology can be adapted to effectively enhance young learners' engagement.

Additionally, there is a lack of integration between vocabulary and student engagement in research. Studies that integrate vocabulary learning with student engagement, particularly for young learners, are still limited. Research exploring how high engagement can influence vocabulary learning in children is much needed. Although interactive learning models have proven effective in increasing student engagement in general, few studies explore how this model can be specifically applied to vocabulary learning for young learners.

To understand the actual conditions of the teaching and learning process at SMPIT Khairunnas Kota Bengkulu, particularly in Grade VIII, the researcher conducted a preliminary study on February 13, 2025, through an interview. The interview results with the English teacher revealed that various teaching methods have been implemented to suit the needs and characteristics of the students. The English teacher at this school stated that the approaches used are varied and complex. One such approach is deep learning, which not only utilizes technology but also emphasizes meaningful activities that promote deeper understanding, such as drama. In practice, the drama method has been actively integrated into the learning process, especially when the material is relevant.

Students are involved in several stages, including understanding the storyline, identifying characters, memorizing dialogues, and expressing vocabulary through the roles they perform (found in Appendix 2).

Drama has become one of the learning media favored by students due to its enjoyable and interactive nature. Although some students face difficulties in understanding and memorizing vocabulary, the teacher addresses this through a gradual approach, such as translating words one by one before grasping the overall meaning of the text. The tactile learning method has been introduced through drama, and the teacher has observed a positive impact on students' activeness and self-confidence, including among those who were initially passive or reluctant to perform in front of the class (found in Appendix 2).

However, although the tactile learning method has begun to be implemented, its application remains limited and has not yet been carried out systematically or in depth. Therefore, this study is important to further explore the extent to which the tactile learning method within the context of drama can enhance students' English vocabulary comprehension and engagement in a more structured manner (found in Appendix 22).

The study titled *“Investigating Tactile Learning in Drama: Impact on English Vocabulary and Students’*

Engagement (A Case Study at Eighth Grade Students of SMPIT Khairunnas Kota Bengkulu)” holds significant urgency. Vocabulary serves as the foundation of English language mastery, and student engagement plays a central role in the effectiveness of the learning process. However, there remains a gap in integrating these two aspects, particularly within the context of young learners. The use of tactile learning through drama holds great potential to enhance vocabulary comprehension while also promoting active emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement among students. Given that the implementation of this method is still limited and has not been systematically investigated, this research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of innovative, interactive, and evidence-based teaching strategies aimed at improving the quality of English education at the junior high school level.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background described, the researcher identifies several key issues in the English learning process that need attention:

1. Students have an inadequate vocabulary and weak mastery of English.
2. Student engagement in learning tends to be low, which impacts their learning outcomes.

3. There are limitations in the use of Tactile Learning methods, especially in the context of drama teaching.
4. The effectiveness of Tactile Learning methods in the context of drama still needs further exploration.
5. The lack of teacher training in applying Tactile Learning methods also becomes an obstacle in improving the quality of learning.

C. Limitation of The Problem

In this study, the researcher limits the focus to tactile learning in the context of drama and its impact on English vocabulary and student engagement. This research specifically observes eighth-grade students at SMPIT Khairunnas Kota Bengkulu during the 2023/2024 academic year. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify how tactile learning methods can influence English vocabulary mastery and the level of student engagement in the drama learning process. These limitations are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of tactile learning in this educational setting.

D. Research Questions

In an effort to enhance the effectiveness of English learning among students, it is important to explore various teaching methods that can support vocabulary mastery and student engagement. Therefore, this study will focus on two

main research questions aimed at investigating the impact of tactile learning in drama activities on vocabulary mastery and student engagement among eighth-grade students at SMP. The research questions are as follows:

1. How does tactile learning in drama activities impact the English vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students at SMPIT Khairunnas Kota Bengkulu?
2. How is the level of engagement in drama activities impact the engagement of eighth-grade students at SMPIT Khairunnas Kota Bengkulu in English learning?

E. The Purposes of the Research

This study aims to explore teaching methods that can enhance the effectiveness of English instruction among students. One intriguing approach to be examined is tactile learning in the context of drama activities, which is expected to contribute significantly to vocabulary mastery and student engagement. The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the impact of tactile learning in drama activities on the English vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students at SMPIT Khairunnas Kota Bengkulu.
2. To measure the level of engagement of eighth-grade students at SMPIT Khairunnas Kota Bengkulu in English learning using tactile learning methods through drama activities.

This study is expected to provide in-depth insights into the effectiveness of tactile learning and its implications for vocabulary mastery and student engagement. The findings will offer valuable contributions to the development of more effective teaching strategies in the field of English language education.

F. The Significants of the Research

The significance of this research can be viewed from two perspectives: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of literature on tactile learning methods in the context of language education, particularly in English learning. It is expected to enrich scientific understanding of how tactile approaches in drama activities can influence vocabulary mastery and student engagement. Thus, this research strengthens language learning theories that focus on direct and multisensory experiences, while offering new perspectives in language education studies.

Practically, this research has significant implications for educational practices. It provides insights that can be directly applied by educators and curriculum developers to enhance the effectiveness of English language teaching in schools. By identifying and evaluating the effectiveness of tactile methods, this study serves as a foundation for developing more interactive and innovative teaching strategies, which in turn can improve students' vocabulary mastery and engagement in

the learning process. The implementation of this method is expected to enrich students' overall learning experiences.

Additionally, the findings of this research can be used as practical recommendations for improving the quality of English language teaching in schools. With a better understanding of how tactile methods can be integrated into drama activities, educators can develop more effective and responsive teaching approaches that cater to students' needs. Ultimately, this research not only contributes to improving student learning outcomes but also supports the development of a more innovative and holistic-oriented curriculum.

G. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

In this study, several key terms are used to provide clarity on the main concepts. The following are the operational definitions of these terms:

1. *Tactile Learning*: refers to a learning method that involves the use of physical touch to help students understand and retain information.
2. *Drama*: refers to role-based activities used in an educational context to explore language and enhance communication skills.
3. *Vocabulary*: refers to the set of English words mastered by students, used for communication and understanding texts.
4. *Students' Engagement*: refers to the level of active involvement of students in the learning process, including

attention, participation, and enthusiasm in learning activities.

