

# CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

## H. Background

In Indonesia, the integration of English into the academic curriculum has become increasingly significant, reflecting a broader global trend towards the necessity of English proficiency (Banjarnahor et al., 2022, p. 1). Within this educational framework, vocabulary acquisition emerges as a critical component, as the precise selection of vocabulary profoundly influences students' competencies in speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Consequently, effective vocabulary instruction is essential for English language learners striving for linguistic mastery (Pusparini & Ningrum, 2020, p. 2).

However, a critical discrepancy exists between the curriculum's expectations and the reality in the field. In the second grade of junior high school, students are academically mandated to comprehend complex genres, such as expository and recount texts. Ideally, at this level, students should have reached a "lexical threshold" that allows them to process discourse-level meanings. Nevertheless, at SMP Negeri 18 Bengkulu, the researcher observed a significant "learning gap."

Table 1.1 Students' Vocabulary Scores: Class VIII.5 vs Class VIII.11

No	Score (VIII.5)	Status	No	Score (VIII.11)	Status
1	78	Passed	1	78	Passed
2	87	Passed	2	77	Passed
3	75	Passed	3	78	Passed
4	76	Passed	4	74	Failed
5	84	Passed	5	78	Passed
6	82	Passed	6	76	Passed
7	84	Passed	7	76	Passed
8	72	Failed	8	77	Passed
9	76	Passed	9	74	Failed
10	75	Passed	10	73	Failed
11	70	Failed	11	80	Passed
12	86	Passed	12	79	Passed
13	82	Passed	13	78	Passed
14	75	Passed	14	75	Passed
15	70	Failed	15	77	Passed
16	98	Passed	16	85	Passed
17	79	Passed	17	75	Passed
18	78	Passed	18	77	Passed
19	76	Passed	19	77	Passed
20	79	Passed	20	77	Passed

21	80	Passed		21	78	Passed
22	82	Passed		22	80	Passed
23	80	Passed		23	90	Passed
24	75	Passed		24	90	Passed
25	75	Passed		25	77	Passed
26	72	Failed		26	78	Passed
27	75	Passed		27	80	Passed
28	75	Passed		28	80	Passed
29	80	Passed				
30	75	Passed				
31	78	Passed				
32	82	Passed				
33	76	Passed				

Based on the students' latest English daily test scores, the initial mastery of vocabulary requires significant improvement. Out of 61 students in the sampled classes, only 54 students (88.53%) reached the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. While the majority passed, Table 1.1 shows that 12.12% of students in Class VIII.5 and 10.71% in Class VIII.11 failed to reach the threshold. Furthermore, a substantial number of students achieved scores exactly at the KKM, indicating a "fragile mastery" and poor orthographic accuracy. This issue is primarily caused by conventional, teacher-

centered methods and monotonous dictionary lookups that fail to engage students, leading to low retention. To bridge this lexical gap, the researcher proposes and attempts to implement the Spelling Bee Game. The researcher hypothesizes that this competitive and interactive approach will provide a more effective solution for improving students' vocabulary mastery and decoding skills compared to traditional methods.

This issue is relevant not only to individual learning but also to the broader pedagogical challenge of bridging this gap. The prevailing instructional method at the school remains teacher-centered, often relying on monotonous dictionary lookup (Pusparini & Ningrum, 2020, p. 2). This traditional approach is no longer sufficient to address the urgent need for rapid vocabulary expansion. The urgency of this research lies in the fact that vocabulary is the fundamental "building block" of any text. Students cannot analyze a text if they are still struggling to decode the individual words within it. If this foundational issue is not addressed now, students will continue to face cognitive overload when encountering more advanced academic texts in higher grades.

Previous research underscores the potential of game-based approaches to foster engaging learning environments (Pusparini & Ningrum, 2020, p. 2). Specifically, the Spelling Bee game emerges as a sharp pedagogical tool that forces students to focus on the precision of word forms,

pronunciation, and meaning simultaneously. Unlike passive reading, the competitive nature of Spelling Bee provides the "positive pressure" needed to improve long-term retention.

Considering the documented failure of conventional methods at SMP Negeri 18 Bengkulu and the absolute necessity of vocabulary as a prerequisite for text comprehension, this research is dedicated to exploring the effect of Spelling Games. The goal is to provide a concrete solution to the students' vocabulary stagnation, ensuring they are linguistically prepared for the academic demands of the curriculum.

Accordingly, the researcher is interested in researching: "The Effect of Spelling Games Towards Students' Vocabulary Mastery in English Class (A Quasi-Experimental Study at Second Grade Students of SMP Negeri 18 Bengkulu)..."

## **I. Identification of problems**

Based on the observations conducted, this study focuses on several aspects related to students' English vocabulary mastery:

1. Low Vocabulary Retention and Accuracy: Students at SMP Negeri 18 Bengkulu exhibit poor mastery of English vocabulary, specifically in spelling and word recognition, as evidenced by their scores remaining below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM).

2. Lexical Gap in Text Comprehension: There is a significant gap where students are required to understand complex texts (expository/recount) but lack the fundamental vocabulary (lexical threshold) to process them.
3. Conventional and Monotonous Teaching Methods: The current English instruction relies heavily on passive dictionary lookup and teacher-centered methods, which fail to engage students' interest or improve long-term memory.
4. Lack of Interactive Reinforcement: The absence of competitive and game-based learning techniques in the classroom leads to low motivation and boredom, preventing students from practicing vocabulary in a dynamic way.

#### **J. Problem limitation**

In line with the background of the study, a research problem is formulated by the researcher below:

“Is there a significant effect of Spelling Games towards students' Vocabulary Mastery in English class. This research will be conducted in 8<sup>th</sup> classes in the second semester at SMP Negeri 18 Bengkulu City.”

#### **K. Research of Question**

In light of the background described above, the research question is formulated as follows:

“Is there a significant effect of Spelling Games towards students’ Vocabulary Mastery in 8th class in the second semester at SMP Negeri 18 Kota Bengkulu, in the even semester?”

#### **L. Objective of the research**

Based on the research problem, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of using the Spelling Bee Game in improving students’ vocabulary mastery in English classes.

#### **M. Significant of the research**

The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically, practically and to further research:

1. Theoretically

As teacher evaluation material in implementing spelling game in vocabulary learning and the results of the research are expected to add to the knowledge of researchers and readers.

2. Practically

Contribute to education and find a new learning method that is effective in this case and adding and enriching insight and knowledge for researchers.

3. The researcher expects that this study will serve as a reference for future research.

## **N. Definiton of key terms**

### **1. Spelling Bee**

In Mahendra's (2021, p. 343) view, a spelling bee constitutes a competitive activity that requires participants to demonstrate spelling accuracy across words of varying complexity. The Spelling Bee Game is adapted from this competition and may be implemented across different educational levels, including school, regional, and national contexts (Sebba, 2009, p. 18).

### **2. Vocabulary**

Mahendra (2021, p. 343) characterizes a spelling bee as a formal competitive activity that requires participants to spell words with varying levels of difficulty. The Spelling Bee Game is derived from this competition and can be implemented across multiple educational contexts, including school, regional, and national levels (Sebba, 2009, p. 18).