

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

English is positioned in the Merdeka Curriculum as a basic skill that students should possess, particularly by the conclusion of Phase D, when they should be able to comprehend, interact with, and produce simple texts in situations they are familiar with (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). A solid vocabulary foundation is essential to meet these learning objectives because it helps students understand the course materials and communicate their ideas in an understandable and efficient way (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2010). The curriculum also emphasizes students' access to various learning resources, including international materials that broaden their knowledge and perspectives (Indrawati et al., 2021; Omolu et al., 2022). This focus on competency development aligns with Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, which highlights meaningful learning experiences and the gradual development of essential skills as the core of the Merdeka Curriculum (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). Therefore, understanding how vocabulary mastery relates to learning motivation becomes relevant for evaluating how successfully students meet the required learning objectives.

Vocabulary is recognized as a fundamental part of English learning in the Indonesian curriculum because it helps students understand and express meaning in

reading, writing, speaking, and listening. If students have limited vocabulary, they find it difficult to communicate effectively, which supports Wilkins' well-known Thornbury's claimed that "limited information can be communicated without grammar, and without vocabulary nothing can be communicated" (Münch & Oliver, 2015). A stronger vocabulary also allows students to access more learning materials and information (Indrawati et al., 2021), while exposure to English texts helps broaden their knowledge and perspectives (Omolu et al., 2022 Indrawati et al., 2021). This focus on developing students' abilities is consistent with Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, which emphasizes meaningful learning experiences and competency development in the Merdeka Curriculum (Kemendikbudristek, 2024).

Vocabulary mastery is a common challenge for students in Indonesian junior high schools because many of them are learning English formally for the first time (Omolu et al., 2022). As a result, students often do not understand word meanings and struggle to convey their ideas clearly in both oral and writing formats. (Putra, 2020). Even though students today have easier access to information through the internet (Lauder, 2020), limited vocabulary still makes it difficult for them to understand texts and use English with confidence. English proficiency is also important because many learning resources, both printed and digital, are written in English and widely used in education around the world (Sitepu, 2025). Since vocabulary is essential for understanding lessons and communicating ideas, students with limited vocabulary will naturally face difficulties in reading, writing,

speaking, and listening. The better their vocabulary mastery, the easier it becomes for them to use English effectively.

Although Efl in Indonesia, it still holds an important role in society, as Indonesia is part of the expanding circle where English is widely used (Jon et al., 2021). English proficiency presents both challenges and opportunities for Indonesian learners (Alrajafi, 2021), especially because many struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure (Putra, 2020). Even though it is not the national language, English is commonly used for international communication and is becoming more visible in education, public life, and professional settings (Rahmah et al., 2023). Its growing presence shows that English is increasingly important in Indonesia, making vocabulary mastery essential for students to participate confidently in various learning and communication contexts.

Moreover, Dayanti (2015) Defined that vocabulary is one of the most crucial components to grasp when studying English because it forms the basic knowledge students require to articulate their ideas.. Vocabulary is also widely recognized in applied linguistics as a key element of language learning. Due to its importance, schools are encouraged to help students expand their vocabulary (Wardani et al., 2020). This is reflected in many school activities and learning materials, where textbooks and exercises from junior to senior high school commonly include tasks designed to improve vocabulary acquisition.

Yuan & Zhen, (2021) states that vocabulary Mastery is necessary for language competency because it allows students to comprehend input, convey

ideas, and communicate successfully. However, many students still struggle with limited vocabulary, which prevents them from using English fluently and meaningfully. This difficulty often reduces their confidence and motivation. According to Dörnyei, (2001), motivation is a key factor that influences learners' effort and persistence. When students repeatedly fail to remember or use new words, their motivation tends to decrease, and they become more dependent on passive recall rather than active language use (Yuan & Zhen, 2021). This cycle weakens both vocabulary growth and sustained motivation, showing the importance of addressing the two aspects together to support successful and engaging language learning.

Motivation is an important factor that helps students succeed in speaking English. Highly motivated pupils are more likely to participate actively, take risks, and practice more frequently, which supports their speaking development (Rahayu, 2021). However, motivation alone is not enough when students lack vocabulary, because limited word knowledge makes it difficult for them to express their ideas clearly (Barri, 2022). Research also shows that motivated students achieve better fluency when they have a strong vocabulary base (Rahayu, 2021). Other studies found that motivated learners continue to develop their vocabulary, which improves clarity and confidence in communication (Barri, 2022). On the other hand, low motivation can slow vocabulary growth and create reluctance in using English (Daryanti, 2015). These findings indicate that vocabulary knowledge and motivation work together to improve students' speaking competence and confidence.

Three key problems in students' English learning processes were identified through an observation sheet. First, many students have limited English vocabulary, which makes it difficult for them to understand lessons and express their ideas clearly (Omolu et al., 2022). Second, several students show low motivation to learn English, leading to weak participation and engagement during classroom activities (Wardani, 2020). Third, students often fear making mistakes when speaking or using English, which further reduces their confidence and willingness to practice (Putra, 2020). Based on these issues, this study aims to examine whether there is a significant correlation between junior high school students' vocabulary mastery and their motivation to learn English. Understanding this relationship can provide useful insights into how vocabulary development may support students' motivation to use English more confidently in classroom communication.

1.2 Identification of The Problem

Based on observation, the researcher has developed the following challenges for this study:

1. Many students still have a limited range of English vocabulary
2. Some students show low motivation in learning English
3. Students often feel afraid of making mistakes when using English

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

This study focuses solely on the relationship between vocabulary mastery and learning motivation among students in Grade IX at SMP Negeri 2 Tanjungpinang; it does not address any other issues.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the limitations of the problem stated, the following questions is the only topic of the study.

1. Is there any significant correlation between student's vocabulary mastery and their learning motivation at Junior High school?

1.5 The Study's Objective

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether there was a link between students' vocabulary mastery and learning motivation. The goal of this study was to investigate students' language competence and learning motivation.

1.6 The Significances of the Study

This study can be used theoretically and practically in ways that follow.:

1.6.1 Theoretically

This study is expected to provide theoretical significance by explaining how students' vocabulary mastery relates to their learning motivation. In theory, stronger vocabulary knowledge can increase students' confidence in learning, which then supports higher motivation. These findings contribute to the field of education by emphasizing the importance of strengthening vocabulary instruction to improve students' motivation and overall learning engagement.

1.6.2 Practically

a. For Teachers:

The practical significance is supposed to help teachers detect and improve students' speaking abilities throughout the teaching and learning process. b. For Students:

Students can enhance their speaking skills and become more aware of what they lack by understanding the difficulties they face.

c. For Readers:

This study aims to benefit readers, particularly those studying English education at Junior High School.

1.7 Key Terms Definition

1. Correlation

Correlation is a statistical technique for determining and describing the significance and direction of a link between two or more variables. It describes how changes in one variable affect changes in another. A positive correlation means that both variables rise or decrease in equal measure, whereas A negative correlation means that one variable increases while the other decreases.

2. Vocabulary Mastery:

Vocabulary knowledge in this study refers to students' ability to recognize and understand word meanings in simple sentence contexts.

3 Learning Motivation:

Learning motivation is the internal force that motivates students to pursue their goals through continuous learning.