

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

The current development of technology and communication is progressing rapidly. This accelerates globalization, allowing information from various parts of the world to spread within seconds. Nowadays, English has become highly essential as it serves as a lingua franca for communicating with people from other countries. By mastering English, opportunities for success and a career in the international arena will open up wider. In Indonesia itself, English has begun to receive significant attention, both in the school environment and in daily life. The goal is to enable Indonesian society to compete globally (Panggabean, 2016). Nevertheless, the reality is that English proficiency in Indonesia is generally still considered low. According to Panggabean (2016), this occurs because English is rarely used for daily communication, and its usage remains limited to specific times or certain circles only.

Online games are a type of game that utilizes an internet connection so they can be played by multiple people simultaneously through technological devices (Affandi, 2013). Because it uses an internet network, this type of gaming allows players to connect and interact with people out there, even if they are far apart or just staying inside their rooms (Safitri, 2020). This advantage is what makes online games highly popular across various age groups, ranging from children to adults (Hanifa & Hidayat, 2022). According to the results of the JAKPAT Survey Report (2019), there are many reasons why people enjoy playing online games. Apart from

being an affordable entertainment to relieve stress and pursue a hobby, online games also serve as a means to build self-confidence, expand friendships without geographical boundaries, and some can even generate money.

Online games are constantly changing in line with the times; hence, games that were popular in the past are not necessarily in demand today. For instance, a few years ago, games such as Arena of Valor (AOV), Point Blank (PB), Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CSGO), and Clash of Clans heavily dominated the market. Today, however, that popularity has shifted to newer games like PUBG Mobile, Free Fire, Mobile Legends, and Roblox. In this study, Roblox was chosen as the primary focus based on several key considerations, namely: (1) Roblox utilizes a virtual world (metaverse) concept that resembles the real world (Sopiandi & Susanti, 2022). This concept transforms Roblox into a borderless playground, allowing students to meet, chat, and befriend players from various other countries (Indarta et al., 2022; Sopiandi & Susanti, 2022); (2) Roblox allows its players to create their own games. To design these games, players must possess at least a basic understanding of English, which serves as the primary medium of instruction on the Roblox platform; (3) Because players can create their own games, the choices of games within Roblox have become vast and diverse. This is precisely what makes many students highly interested in playing it; (4) Most games in Roblox feature missions that must be completed collectively. This demands active cooperation and communication among players. This is where the challenge arises: players who only master a single language will find it difficult to blend into the metaverse world because they will inevitably encounter foreign players from other countries.

On the other hand, playing games often serves as a medium for players to inadvertently learn a foreign language, particularly English. This process falls under informal education, where students absorb knowledge directly from their surrounding environment. On the Roblox platform, students can utilize various in-game terms to enrich their vocabulary. Furthermore, the necessity to chat with other players using English automatically trains their language skills as well (Safitri, 2020). This phenomenon aligns with a study by Iswan and Kusmawati (2015) in their journal article titled "The Influence of Online Games on Children's Language Development." They explain that online games exert a tangible impact on students' language development. This occurs because the language learning process during childhood focuses more on what they experience directly from language behavior, as well as how they respond to the existing stimuli (stimulus and response) within the game. From the various theories mentioned above, it can be concluded that the vocabulary found in online games is highly instrumental in expanding a child's vocabulary, specifically in understanding English. In accordance with the directives of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbud, 2023), elementary and secondary school-aged students generally learn English to be able to engage in simple communication across various situations. Therefore, the vocabulary they absorb from games is usually non-formal and highly suitable for daily conversation. To provide a clearer view, the following is a classification of vocabulary from the online game Roblox, which separates general words (usable in the real world) from specific terms that exist exclusively within the Roblox universe.

Table 1.1 Classification of Roblox Game Vocabulary

General Online Gaming Vocabulary	Roblox-Specific Vocabulary
Jump	Robux: The official virtual currency used to buy in-game items in Roblox
Shop	UGC: Custom avatar items and accessories created by Roblox players
Level	Obby: Short for "obstacle course," a popular game genre involving jumping and avoiding traps
Easy	R15: An avatar style with 15 body joints for smoother movement animations.
Setting	Admin commands: Special text codes used in chat to control or modify the game.
Vip	Gamepass: A premium ticket that grants players permanent perks in a specific game.
★ Enemy	Catalog: The online marketplace used to buy clothing and accessories for avatars.
Quests	Server: A virtual room where players connect to play a game together.
Chat	Tycoon: A game genre focused on building bases and earning in-game money.

However, like two sides of the same coin, Roblox does not only bring positive impacts on players' language skills. Based on the author's observations of several previous studies, it is shown that the Roblox application has a positive effect on students' vocabulary mastery and can be utilized as an effective supplemental tool in teaching English at the junior high school level (Hasani et al., 2025). On the other hand, a study by Ahmad Munawir states that when playing online games, children absorb negative language that adversely affects their speech (Munawir,

2019). Consequently, students often unconsciously use negative words when communicating in their daily lives.

Based on the primary references and several other studies used as sources, it can be concluded that the novelty of this research lies in the researcher's objective to examine the impact of using the Roblox application on English vocabulary acquisition. This is driven by the scarcity of research linking online games to the impact of English vocabulary acquisition; even when such studies exist, those focusing on junior high school students and the English-language Roblox game are even rarer. This study is considered essential to understand and analyze students' language development, specifically whether it exerts a significant impact on foreign language acquisition, namely English. Therefore, the researcher took the initiative to conduct a study titled "The Impact of Playing Roblox on Students' Vocabulary Acquisition: A Case Study at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang." This initiative stems from the researcher's observation that a significant number of 8th-grade students at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang actively play the international version of the Roblox online game.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the description in the background of the study, the problems can be identified as follows:

1. The limited opportunities for students to practice English proficiency outside the classroom.
2. The students' lack of English vocabulary mastery.
3. The impact of online games on students' English vocabulary acquisition.

1.3 Limitation of the Research

Based on the problems outlined in the background and the limitations of the researcher's knowledge, the focus of this study is restricted to the impact of English vocabulary acquisition through playing the Roblox online game among students at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the background of the study described above, the research question for this study is: "How does playing Roblox affect students' English vocabulary acquisition at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang?"

1.5 Research Objective

Based on the background of the study and the formulated research question, the objective of this study is to describe how playing Roblox affects students' English vocabulary acquisition at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang.

1.6 Significance of the study

1.6.1 Theoretical

The results of this study are expected to provide an overview of how playing the Roblox online game affects students' English vocabulary acquisition at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang.

1.6.2 For Student

This study helps students realize that the time they spend playing games can actually assist in enhancing their vocabulary acquisition skills in English in a fun and pressure-free manner.

1.6.3 For Teacher

Teachers can gain insights into the impact of English vocabulary acquisition through playing the Roblox online game among students at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang.

1.6.4 For School

This study contributes valuable input to elevate or improve the quality of English language teaching, which will ultimately influence the overall quality of the school.

1.6.5 For Future Researchers

This research expands the researcher's knowledge regarding Roblox online gaming among students at SMPN 16 Tanjungpinang and serves as essential preparation for a future educator in teaching English in the classroom.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1 Impact

Impact refers to the influence of playing Roblox on students' English vocabulary acquisition.

1.7.2 Roblox

Roblox is an online gaming platform that enables users to play and create games. In this study, Roblox refers to the platform through which students are exposed to English vocabulary while playing games.

1.7.3 Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is the process of learning and understanding new words. In this study, it refers to the English vocabulary acquired by students through playing Roblox.

1.7.4 Case study

Case study is a qualitative research approach used to investigate a phenomenon in depth within a specific context. In this study, it is used to explore the influence of Roblox on students' English vocabulary acquisition.

