CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

English is a global language that serves as a vital means of communication across diverse cultures and regions. Originating from the British Isles, English has evolved over centuries, influenced by various historical, social, and cultural changes. Today, it is the primary or secondary language in many countries and is widely recognized as the international language of business, science, technology, and diplomacy.

The significance of English extends beyond its native speakers; it is the most studied second language worldwide. Proficiency in English opens numerous opportunities in education, employment, and global interaction, making it an essential skill in the modern world. The widespread use of English in media, literature, and the internet further cements its status as a dominant global language.

As a language of instruction and communication, English bridges gaps between people from different linguistic backgrounds, fostering understanding and collaboration on an international scale. This widespread adoption underscores the importance of English language education, which equips learners with the tools to participate fully in an increasingly interconnected global community.

English language skills encompass the essential abilities required to communicate effectively in English, including listening, speaking, reading, and

writing. Mastery of these skills is crucial for personal, academic, and professional success in an increasingly globalized world. Proficiency in English language skills enable individuals to understand and convey information accurately, engage in meaningful conversations, and access a vast array of knowledge and resources. Developing these skills not only enhances communication but also opens doors to numerous opportunities in education, employment, and international interactions.

Vocabulary is essential for language proficiency, significantly influencing effective communication, understanding, and expression. It encompasses the words that a person knows and uses, including their meanings, forms, and uses in context. A rich vocabulary allows individuals to articulate thoughts, understand others, and engage with texts across various domains. The mastery of vocabulary is particularly significant in language education, as it directly impacts reading comprehension, writing skills, and overall language competence.

The significance of vocabulary in language learning is immense. Without an adequate vocabulary, learners are unable to comprehend others or convey their own thoughts. As Wilkins famously observed in Thornbury (2002), "While grammar allows for limited communication, without vocabulary, no communication is possible." This statement underscores the idea that while grammatical structures provide the framework for language, it is vocabulary that fills this framework with meaning.

Vocabulary acquisition is a complex process influenced by various factors, including frequency of exposure, context of learning, and the use of effective learning strategies. Both incidental learning through exposure to language in use,

and intentional learning through focused study, contribute to vocabulary growth. Moreover, vocabulary knowledge is multi-dimensional, involving not just the breadth (number of words known) but also the depth (understanding of word meanings, usages, and relationships).

Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of vocabulary acquisition can inform effective teaching practices. Theories from behaviorism, cognitivism, and socio-cultural perspectives offer insights into how vocabulary is learned and how it can be taught most effectively. For example, behaviorist theories stress the significance of repetition and reinforcement, while cognitive theories underscore the importance of mental processes and schema development. and socio-cultural theories focus on the social interactions and contextual factors that facilitate vocabulary learning.

Furthermore, vocabulary development influences academic achievement across subjects. A broad vocabulary facilitates learning in science, mathematics, social studies, and other disciplines by allowing students to comprehend specialized terminology, understand complex concepts, and engage in critical thinking.

Educators employ various strategies to support vocabulary development, including explicit instruction of new words, teaching word-learning strategies, promoting wide reading, and providing opportunities for meaningful vocabulary practice. By incorporating vocabulary instruction across different content areas, educators can reinforce word knowledge and facilitate the transfer of vocabulary skills into various contexts.

Several studies have analyzed students' vocabulary mastery, including those by Syarifudin (2014), Novianti (2017), and Yuliastuti (2009), which revealed that the sample's performance ranged from poor to average. In contrast, Andriani (2019) found that although students' vocabulary mastery was good, they faced challenges with certain aspects like grammar and spelling.

In this light, this research aims to explore the various dimensions of vocabulary mastery, examining key theoretical perspectives and practical strategies for students' vocabulary mastery. By understanding the complexity of vocabulary acquisition and the factors that influence it, educators can better support learners in developing a robust and functional vocabulary, essential for their overall language proficiency and academic success. Therefore, the researcher interested to conducted this research entitled, "**A Study on Students' Vocabulary Mastery in using Antonyms and Synonyms at English Language Education Study Program Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji**."

1.2 The Limitation of The Research

The study focuses on students enrolled K-2 Class in the English Language Education Study Program UMRAH. It assesses vocabulary mastery through a quantitative descriptive research method, including vocabulary tests.

1.3 Research Question

From the above explanation, the researcher formulates the problem statement as follows; "What is the level of the students' vocabulary mastery in using antonyms and synonyms?"

1.4 Purpose of The Research

The goal in this study is to formulate the issue as it has been articulated; to find out the students' vocabulary mastery in using antonyms and synonyms at English Language Education Program Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji.

1.5 The Significance of The Research

There are some benefits/advantages of this research that can be taken. The following presents some ways;

1. Theoretical significances

In theory, this study offers a useful and relevant contribution to the understanding of students' proficiency with synonyms and antonyms in vocabulary. This study holds significant value for several stakeholders:

   1) **Students:** Understanding their vocabulary strengths and weaknesses can help students focus their learning efforts more effectively.

   2) **Teachers:** Insights from this research can inform teaching practices, leading to more effective vocabulary instruction.

   3) **Researchers:** This study adds to the amount of information currently accessible on vocabulary learning, offering a specific case study within the Indonesian educational context.

2. Practical significance

   1) **For the students:** This study should demonstrate how proficiently students use synonyms and antonyms in their vocabulary.

2) **For the researcher:** It is anticipated that the next researcher studying students' proficiency with antonyms and synonyms will find this study to be helpful as an extra guide or as a source of reference.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To evade misconception, clarifications on several key terms are needed to be established. They are as follows:

1. Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the collection of words and phrases that an individual possesses and understands in a particular language. It encompasses the range of words a person knows, including their meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and usage.

2. Vocabulary Mastery

The extent to which a student has acquired and can use a set of vocabulary words effectively in communication.

3. Antonyms

A term that has the opposing meaning of a different phrase is called an antonym. For instance, the antonym of 'tall' may be 'short.'

4. Synonyms

A synonym is an expression or idea that, when used in the same language as a distinct term or expression, has an equivalent meaning. These synonyms can often be substituted for each other in various contexts without substantially altering the sentence's meaning.