

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's world, English holds a significant role globally. People across various sectors such as business, technology, tourism, and especially education actively use English as a means of international communication. In education, learning English helps students understand academic material, but also prepares students for future career challenges. Permana asserts (Fitria, 2023) that the success of learning English depends on one's ability to write and communicate in the language. As a result, teaching language skills requires communicative exchanges that incorporate the use of many language abilities. Vocabulary acquisition is regarded as both a problem and a crucial component of learning English (Fitria, 2023).

A solid grasp of vocabulary is regarded as a crucial component in the successful acquisition of English as a foreign language. Effective language learning can be achieved when learners possess a deep understanding that enables them to interpret meanings accurately. These results are consistent with the findings presented by Ghalebi et al. (2021), in which vocabulary knowledge was found to support effective communication and enhance learners' performance in major areas of language learning, including oral interaction, listening comprehension, reading skills, and writing proficiency. Moreover, a solid vocabulary foundation contributes significantly to future language development and effective use in everyday situations. According to (Wijaksono S and Siddik,

2022) when learners possess adequate vocabulary, they are more capable of comprehending instructional input from teachers and are likely to strengthen their overall language proficiency. This implies that language mastery not only supports academic achievement but also equips students with the skills required to meet professional demands.

For Vocational High School students, particularly those majoring in Hospitality at SMK Negeri 1 Bintan Timur, mastering English vocabulary relevant to the hospitality industry is crucial. This vocabulary includes terms related to guest services, reservations, food, and beverages, which are essential for professional communication in the field. However, many vocational students struggle with vocabulary mastery due to several factors, such as low motivation, traditional memorization-based teaching methods, and a lack of interactive and contextualized learning strategies. The absence of engaging learning media makes it difficult for students to retain and use new vocabulary effectively.

Therefore, creative strategies for vocabulary acquisition are essential to boost learners' motivation and strengthen their capacity to comprehend and retain unfamiliar words. One effective method involves utilizing interactive educational tools like crossword puzzles that help make the learning experience more enjoyable and efficient. According to Hornby (Wijaksono S and Siddik, 2022), a crossword puzzle is a wordplay or puzzle in which the words must be written in the square's vacant spaces, either vertically or horizontally, about numbered clues.

Crossword puzzle not only make vocabulary learning enjoyable but also encourage active learning through repetition and association. Research has shown their effectiveness in various educational contexts. Utami et al. (2022), found that crossword puzzle significantly helped junior high school students retain vocabulary. Similarly, Pratolo and Hafizhah (2022) demonstrated that crossword puzzle effectively improved vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students. Additionally, Bella and Rahayu (2023) confirmed that integrating crossword puzzles into vocabulary instruction enhanced students' achievement at the senior high school level. The findings indicate that game-based learning media serves as an effective approach in facilitating vocabulary instruction.

To determine the impact of crossword puzzles on vocabulary mastery, this study focuses on eleventh-grade Hospitality students at SMK Negeri 1 Bintan Timur. The vocabulary explored centers on hospitality-related terms. Through the integration of game-based learning strategies, the researcher expects students to enhance not only their vocabulary acquisition but also their critical thinking, collaboration, and creative skills. The outcomes of this research are projected to contribute meaningful recommendations for improving vocabulary learning methods, particularly in vocational school settings.

1.2 Limitations of the Study

Based on the background, this study is limited to the effectiveness of crossword puzzles on the vocabulary mastery of eleventh-grade Hospitality Management students at SMK Negeri 1 Bintan Timur.

1.3 Research Question

Based on the limitation of the problem above, the research question in this research is: Is the use of crossword puzzles effective in improving the vocabulary mastery of eleventh grade hospitality management students.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of crossword puzzle implementation in the English vocabulary mastery of eleventh-grade Hospitality Management students at SMK Negeri 1 Bintan Timur.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Benefits

Theoretically, this study contributes by illustrating the effectiveness of crossword puzzles as instructional media in enhancing students' vocabulary skills. It broadens the perspective on the use of educational tools and reinforces cognitive development theories related to language learning. Moreover, it offers valuable insights into the acquisition of specialized vocabulary within vocational education, especially in the field of hospitality management. The present research is expected to become a useful source for subsequent investigations related to the application of innovative learning media, while also offering direction to educators in implementing appropriate instructional tools within the learning process

1.5.2 Practical Benefits

- a. For students

Students master vocabulary relevant to the hospitality industry, improve communication skills in an international work environment, and critical thinking skills, and make learning more fun.

b. For teachers

Teachers can provide interactive learning methods to increase student motivation and reduce learning boredom.

c. For future researchers

It is anticipated that future scholars may benefit from the findings of the present research as a foundation for developing interactive learning media aimed at improving vocabulary mastery in vocational education.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In order to provide a clear understanding of the essential terms employed in this research, the following definitions are presented:

1. Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the extent to which predetermined targets are successfully achieved, particularly in the learning process to attain educational objectives.

2. Crossword Puzzle

A crossword is a word puzzle in which players fill empty squares with words based on given clues. It serves as an interactive tool for enhancing vocabulary learning.

3. Vocabulary Mastery in Hospitality Management Vocational Schools

Vocabulary mastery in hospitality management vocational schools refers to learners' capacity to comprehend and appropriately apply domain-specific

terms related to the hospitality sector, both within educational settings and real-world professional environments.

