

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the current research, which covers the background, problem identification, limitation, problem formulations, objectives, significances, and key terms.

1.1 The Background of the Research

Nowadays, the English language has taken an important role as an international or universal language. It has been spoken all over the world. Although there are various countries, cultures, traditions, regions and even languages, English is still the most common language among human beings. Rao (2019) mentioned that the English language has been used in many aspects of everyday life, including education, industry, entertainment, tourism, technology, and many others. Remarkably, people use the English language to communicate, interact, and socialize with other people from different countries (Apriliana, 2018). It becomes a connecting language for every country. Therefore, it is necessary to master English because it significantly influences society's communication.

In Indonesia, the English language has been taught since an early age. It is done to introduce English as a second or foreign language to young learners. Teaching the English language to young learners is designed to provide them with the basic knowledge of English itself. Moreover, it also intends to prepare them to be ready to learn the English language at higher levels of education (Suharno, 2017). (Hashemi & Azizinezhad, 2011) also

explained that English language learning is highly needed for the students who want to immigrate to other countries to be capable of studying abroad or interacting socially. In addition, teaching English language to young learners has another purpose: to offer them extensive exposure and experience of the English language in non-native speakers' environments. Accordingly, it is indispensable to introduce and even teach the English language to young learners.

In learning the English language, vocabulary plays a fundamental part in young learners' language development (Deni & Fahriany, 2020). According to Anggraini (2018), having extensive vocabulary knowledge allows the students to acquire a particular language faster. It is because vocabulary mastery is a primary foundation for constructing the language, without exception English. Deni & Fahriany (2020) stated that teaching vocabulary to young learners enables them to reach the major skills of learning the English language. It means vocabulary helps them achieve four skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Furthermore, vocabulary mastery is needed for delivering ideas and understanding other people's utterances (Susanto, 2017). The limitation of vocabulary leads the students to have difficulties in neither language production nor language comprehension. Thus, mastering vocabulary is one of the right ways to be a starting point to acquire the English language.

Unfortunately, in facts, there are many issues in learning English vocabulary. Under an observation at one of the elementary schools in north Bali, SD Dana Punia Singaraja, the writer discovered an issue that the

students are still having difficulties becoming competent in vocabulary mastery. In this case, the students have laziness in word memorizing and lack interest in learning vocabulary. It occurs since the teachers continue to use traditional techniques, in which only textbooks are provided to the students. Moreover, the teachers are having less creativity because the same method is being applied every time teaching vocabulary, which is monotonous. It drives the students to quickly become bored and unmotivated. This statement is in line with (Cahya et al., 2018), one of the causes that the students in Indonesia struggle to learn vocabulary is the lack of motivation. Needless to say, a new way of learning vocabulary should be provided for the students to help them to learn vocabulary.

To overcome that issue, the teachers are demanded to find a suitable technique in order to strengthen students' interest and draw their motivation to learn vocabulary. Among many methods, gamification has attracted the writer's interest, who in the last times have been exploring its potential in improving the students' learning outcomes. Studies about the effectiveness of gamification are promising, with variable to positive results. In education, games maximize enjoyment and engagement in learning by capturing the students' interest (Chang & Hwang, 2019). It leads to a more exciting learning experience that facilitates better knowledge retention. In other words, gamification has advantages over ordinary textbooks, which are commonly monotonous.

Gamification in the twenty-first century moves along with the changing times. The rise of new digital technologies over the last decade has

considerably changed the experience of performing games in language teaching contexts. One such way to run games in a second or foreign language classroom is through digital game-based language learning. According to (Yordming, 2017), in a language teaching context, advanced technologies turn ordinary games into favorable activities in the form digital game-based language learning. It intends to stimulate the students to be vibrant in the teaching and learning process. As digital games nowadays gain so much interest from young adults and adolescents (Godwin-Jones, 2014), language educators should acknowledge the utilization of digital game-based language learning for teaching the students, particularly for young learners who habitually use technology in their daily lives. Thus, the implementation of digital game-based language learning is highly recommended to be considered in order to facilitate the teachers in teaching and enhance the quality of the learning.

With the demand for innovative teaching techniques along with the emerges of technology, various digital game-based language learning has been developed; one of them is Educandy. In essence, Educandy is an instructional-based application with a motto "*making learning sweeter*". It is used to create educational vocabulary games. Educandy has three main features: *words list*, *matching pairs*, and *quiz questions*. With Educandy, it helps the teachers to create interactive exercises to be carried out in the classroom. Since young learners prefer compelling tasks instead of paper-pencil activities, utilizing interactive exercises in teaching vocabulary can be the right solution.

Lately, many pieces of research have been conducted scientifically concerning the implementation of game-based language learning for teaching vocabulary. The students were motivated towards the implementation of Plickers for learning vocabulary (Hassan & Hashim, 2021). Anjaniputra & Salsabila (2018) claimed Quizlet made the students persistent and enjoy learning vocabulary. Then, Kahoot increased motivation and improved the vocabulary acquisition (Medina & Hurtado, 2017). Nuralisah & Kareviati (2020) showed an improvement in students' scores and interest to learn vocabulary after using Memrise. Ajisoko (2020) stated that the students had positive responses to Duolingo; they memorized the words quickly and had no boredom in learning vocabulary. Bal (2018) resulted that the score of the students in vocabulary had enhanced slightly using Quizizz. Last, Ni et al., (2020) claimed Pear Deck had improved the students' vocabulary; they were also encouraged to learn more vocabulary as well. Those studies have proven that digital game-based learning applications and platforms provide positive impacts for teaching vocabulary.

Considering the relevant research above, implementing Educandy as digital game-based language learning application seems to be an alternative way to assist the students be more engaged and motivated during the educational process, particularly in learning vocabulary. In light of previous research, the current research attempts to examine the implementation of the Educandy application. It is because the research on Educandy is extremely rare. That is to say, the novelty of the current research entirely lies in the application, Educandy. With this consideration in mind, the writer put his

point of focus on the implementation of Educandy as a digital game-based language platform in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

1.2 The Problem Identification of the Research

SD Dana Punia Singaraja is a private elementary which is newly established. Unfortunately, this school is dealing with difficulties in teaching vocabulary to young learners. It is because the English teachers use the same techniques every time they teach vocabulary to the students. They just provide an English textbook to the students and ask them to read aloud the vocabulary contained in the book. It causes less technique variety for the instructional activities, which increases students' boredom. The lack of enthusiasm, motivation, and interest in the students, resulting in lousy learning outcomes in their vocabulary achievement. The problem does not stop there, during these twenty-first century days, the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process is still limited in this school. In light of the matters, the writer is favorably interested in implementing Educandy as a digital game-based language learning application for teaching vocabulary since digital game-based language learning is proven to have positive effects in education. Therefore, the writer mainly seeks to know the effect of implementing Educandy in the classroom and students' opinions when Educandy is combined within the instructional activities.

1.3 The Limitation of the Research

Considering the amount of time and the available resources, the writer decides to set limitations for the current research to make it more specific and explicit. For this reason, the present research focuses on the effect

of Educandy as a digital game-based language learning application in teaching vocabulary to third-grade students at SD Dana Punia Singaraja. Furthermore, it also intentionally attempts to explore students' opinions toward the implementation of Educandy for learning vocabulary.

1.4 The Problem Formulation of the Research

Deriving from the background of the study, the writer has formulated the problem of the current research as it is mentioned below;

- a) Is there any significant effect of Educandy on third-grade students' vocabulary mastery at SD Dana Punia Singaraja?
- b) What are the opinions of third-grade students at SD Dana Punia Singaraja towards the implementation of Educandy for learning vocabulary?

1.5 The Objectives of the Research

Based on the problem formulation, the objectives of the current research can be determined along with these lines;

- a) To analyze the significant effect of Educandy on third-grade students' vocabulary mastery at SD Dana Punia Singaraja.
- b) To investigate the opinions of third-grade students at SD Dana Punia Singajara toward the implementation of Educandy for learning vocabulary.

1.6 The Significances of the Research

The current research results are designed to provide theoretical and practical significances to the field of English language Education.

A. Theoretically

In terms of theoretically, the current research is expected to support the theories dealing with the development of digital game-based language learning and provide scientific insight that may be a relevant literature.

B. Practically

In terms of practically, the current research is expected to give valuable contributions to the wider communities such as; young learners, English teachers, and other writers.

a) For young learners

The current research can be a support in promoting their learning experiences, significantly enhancing their achievement and motivation to learn vocabulary.

b) For English teachers

The current research can be supplementary knowledge for teachers to create a more attractive teaching and learning process. It provides an alternative application that might enrich teachers' ways in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

c) For other researchers

The current research can be a reliable reference for other writers to carry out further investigations on different aspects but in the same field of study. It also provides empirical evidence to support their researches.

1.7 Key Term of the Research

In order to avoid misconception and confusion on the parts of the readers concerning the key terms that are used in the context of the current research, the writer needs to operationally define the following terms:

A. Educandy

Conceptually, according to www.educandy.com, Educandy is defined as an instructional-based application for creating interactive vocabulary exercises in the form of games that allow the teachers to make and build their own fun and simple vocabulary games for the students.

Operationally, Educandy is a digital game-based language learning application for creating interactive games as exercises and practices for teaching vocabulary in the English language. Educandy plays a role as the independent variable in this research.

B. Digital game-based language learning

Conceptually, as stated by Hung et al., (2014), digital game-based language learning refers to the use of a variety of digital games for learning and teaching a second or foreign language.

Operationally, digital game-based language learning is the use of digital games for learning English as a second or foreign language. In this research, digital game-based language learning is applied as a learning approach.

C. Vocabulary Mastery

Conceptually, based on Hornby (1995), vocabulary can be defined in three ways; the whole words in a certain language, the overall words

that people know and use, and the inventory of words along with their meanings.

Operationally, vocabulary mastery is the students' expertise to recognize and understand English words. In the present research, vocabulary mastery is the dependent variable.

D. Young learners

Conceptually, based on (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990), young learners refer to the five to ten years old students.

Operationally, young learners are the elementary students who are studying English as a second or foreign language. Young learners are used as the subject in the present research.

