

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the introduction of the research study which covers the background of the study, problem identification of the study, limitation of the study, research questions, objective of the study, significance of the study, and definition of key terms.

### 1.1 Background of The Study

English is an international language used by people in various countries to convey information and to build communication (Anggraini, 2019). In language learning, vocabulary mastery is one of the most important things, especially in learning English. This is because vocabulary is essential to language skills, making it possible for us to speak, listen, read, and write effectively (Rachmawati, 2017). Vocabulary can assist us share and understand other people's ideas. The one of English aspects that should be mastered by students is vocabulary. Oktaviani, (2017) stated that vocabulary is one of the sub-skills learned by students to help them understand the meaning of what they have learned. Students will experience learning difficulties if they lack mastery of vocabulary. That is because limited vocabulary can hinder communication and lead to misunderstandings of others' words. For students learning English as a foreign language, limited vocabulary can hinder their ability to express themselves, it is difficult to understand the meaning in reading, and it is difficult to understand what others are saying.

This means that students must understand and memorize the meaning of each word in the vocabulary.

All students need vocabulary that will help them produce and use in meaningful sentences. Therefore, vocabulary must be mastered. However, there are some groups of students who have problems in language and communication, which causes students to have limitations in learning English, especially vocabulary mastery, such as students with autism. According to the Diagnostic and statistical mental disorders (DSM-1V), the clinical symptoms of autism are communication challenges, social interaction, and limited interests and repetitive behaviours (Hidayah, 2017). In addition, this is in accordance with Mansur, (2016) who states that autism is a complex developmental disorder involving communication, social interaction and imaginative activity. Autistic children tend to be self-centered and ignorant of others and their surroundings. Autistic children will only do things that are interesting to themselves, even autistic children will do it repeatedly. Wijayakusuma, (2004) outlines several characteristics of autistic children, namely disorders in communication, socialization, behaviour, and sensory abnormalities. Wijayakusuma, (2004) also added that in terms of communication, children with autism have difficulty in speaking or language. Usually, communication can only be done using body language, in a short period of time. In socialization, children with autism experience obstacles because they tend to spend their time alone. They are less interested in socializing with the surrounding environment, and less in responding when invited to communicate.

Students with autism usually have difficulties in terms of language and communication, although each student speaks a different language (Mansur, 2016). Autistic children have a wide range of communication skills. Autistic children are often difficult to communicate verbally. This does not mean that the child cannot communicate. Children with autism may simply lack a way to communicate.

In addition, autistic children also have difficulty in speaking spontaneously. This can be seen from the understanding, pronunciation, and mastery of vocabulary that autistic children have less than normal children in general who are the same age as themselves (Arsalina et al., 2019). Furthermore, Arsalina et al., (2019) stated that the characteristics of autistic children based on problems in communication disorders experienced by autistic children are as follows: (1) Language development of autistic children is slow. Such children are difficult to hear, difficult to speak, difficult to understand meaning. (2) Sometimes the words used do not match the meaning. (3) Speech is not used as a communication tool, but often uses body language to communicate. (4) Babbling meaninglessly repetitively with language that cannot be understood by others. (5) Likes to pull other people's hands to do what he wants, for example when she wants something. (6) When autistic children like to imitate, they can memorize words or songs they hear without understanding their meaning (echolalia). (Puspitarini & Budiyanto, 2015) stated that autistic students can only imitate sentences, words, or even songs without understanding the meaning of the word, this is commonly called "echolalia".

Wiyani, (2014) states that normal children aged 4-5 years are characterized by: (1) using 1000-2500 words and starting to be able to tell stories, (2) expressing things to others, (3) expressing reasons for something desired or disagreement, (4) retelling stories that have been heard, and (5) recognizing vocabulary regarding adjectives and nouns. This is very different from children with autism who can only say a few words.

Based on the results of observations and interviews with one of the teachers at Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten on August 15, 2023, it was found that there were children with autism who had difficulties in language skills. One of the problems experienced by the child is having limitations in recognizing vocabulary and not being able to mention vocabulary properly and correctly. The subject's initials "S" is a 6-year-old child with autism. The child can recognize some vocabulary of objects but is still less precise in the pronunciation of vocabulary and sometimes mentions vocabulary not in accordance with the intended vocabulary. The researcher tried to do the introduction of object vocabulary, namely with the theme of parts of body. In the observation, it was seen that the subject knew some parts of body vocabulary, but there were errors in pronunciation and mentioned vocabulary that did not match the meaning. One example of the mispronunciation of vocabulary is the vocabulary "mouth" referred to as "mot", while one example of the incorrect mention of vocabulary is the vocabulary "finger" which is interpreted as "hand". The results of the interview conducted with "MT" as a teacher, obtained an explanation that sometimes the subject when invited to communicate and when participating in learning often performs undirected

behaviour, such as unfocused, unable to stay still, lack of enthusiasm, self-centered, and often have their own activities.

To help train vocabulary mastery in children, the right media is needed to support the success process in learning. The suitable media used to train vocabulary mastery in autistic children is visual media. According to Aaron & Gitten cited by Yuwono, (2012) it was argued that autistic children have a valuable condition, namely good rote memory, which is a condition of some children with autism show extraordinary achievement in remembering and learning by rote (visual learner). This can show that autistic children more easily understand information using visual media. Asik & Humaerah, (2016) stated that in teaching vocabulary to children with autism, teachers should employ more illustrations, employ read-aloud, use temporary boards, and present more instances of words.

A suitable visual media to teach English vocabulary mastery to autistic students is flashcards. The selection of flashcard as learning media in this study because they are in accordance with the visual potential of children, as well as practical and interesting to use. Through flashcard media, it is expected to focus the attention and concentration of autistic students. Flashcards are cards featuring words and pictures to help children remember new vocabulary easily. Flashcards can help students remember the meaning and form in learning vocabulary. It assists in making the teaching and learning process to be less boring and makes students more enthusiastic in participating the learning activities (Ma'rifah & Suhaimi, 2020).

Regarding to the previous explanation, theoretically using flashcards provides a relaxed and informal learning situation, free from tension and anxiety. The subject is involved to give responses and decisions. It can familiarize the subject to more easily express their ideas and strengthen their imagination. The flashcards media requires the subject to be more careful in matching the picture with the same or corresponding picture correctly, not only memorizing the pronunciation, but the subject also knows and understands the meaning of the picture. Considering the benefit of flashcards and the importance of students, especially autism spectrum disorder to train their vocabulary mastery, these variables are being investigated in this study. Based on the problems above, the researcher intends to conduct a study with the title "The Implementation of Learning Flashcards on Vocabulary Mastery of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Students".

## **1.2 Problem Identification of The Study**

This research is motivated by what is happening in the world of education, especially in mastering English vocabulary, which encourages students to have sufficient vocabulary to achieve the four aspects of language, including students with special needs. Teachers are also encouraged to apply learning systems using appropriate media in learning to produce more satisfying learning outcomes for students with an autism spectrum disorder. However, teaching English vocabulary mastery in schools, especially in kindergarten, still needs to be assisted by using innovative strategies using learning media in the form of flashcards. This research was conducted to apply

learning media in the form of flashcards for students with autism spectrum disorders. Flashcards can be used as a good solution for the problems faced by students with autism spectrum disorder in mastering English vocabulary.

Based on previous research that has been done related to the implementation of flashcards on vocabulary mastery, there are studies with samples of children with special needs, children with disabilities, and deaf children, not children with autism. Previous studies used classroom action research and quasi-experimental research designs that produced quantitative data. This study wants to see the implementation of flashcards on autistic children's vocabulary mastery using an ABA single-subject design that is more observational so the data obtained can be qualitative.

### **1.3 Limitation of The Study**

Based on the identification of research problems, due to limited time and resources in this study, the researcher focused on analyzing the use of flashcards as learning media in English language learning on vocabulary mastery of students with autism spectrum disorder taught in semester one. As a result of this study, the researcher also took students' responses regarding the implementation of the use of flashcards in the learning process of English vocabulary mastery. In addition, the researcher used vocabulary that is around students' lives, especially about family members and parts of body, with the aim of introducing things that are around students' lives.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

According to the background that has been described, the author proposes some formulas for the research problem in the following:

1.4.1 What is the effect of using flashcards in teaching English vocabulary mastery to autism spectrum disorder students?

1.4.2 How are students' responses to the implementation of flashcards in learning English vocabulary mastery?

#### **1.5 Objective of The Study**

Referring to the research question formulated by the research, the purpose of this study are as follows:

1.5.1 This study aims to analyze the effect of using flashcards in teaching English on vocabulary mastery of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) students.

1.5.2 This study aims to analyze the students' responses regarding the use of flashcards as a learning media in learning English vocabulary mastery.

#### **1.6 Significance of The Study**

This study was conducted to provide theoretical and practical importance to the process of learning and teaching English, especially for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) students. The result of this study is expected to provide a useful contribution both in term of theoretically and practically.



### **1.6.1 Theoretically Significance**

Theoretically, this study is expected to be able to strengthen theories related to the use of learning media, especially in the form of flashcards which are implemented on vocabulary mastery. In addition, this study aims to provide the knowledge and insight that can be helpful in the future.

### **1.6.2 Practically Significance**

Practically, this study is expected to generate valuable contributions for English teacher, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) students, and future researchers:

#### **a) For English Teacher**

It is hoped that this study can be useful for English teachers in using flashcards as a learning media in teaching English to train students' English vocabulary.

#### **b) For Autism Spectrum Disorder Students**

It is hoped this study can help the students with special needs, especially autism spectrum disorder students to support their learning process and train their English vocabulary by using flashcards.

#### **c) For Other Researcher**

This study is expected to be the next researcher in the field of similar research. This research is also expected to be empirical evidence that can be used to strengthen the research to be conducted.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

### 1. Vocabulary Mastery

#### a) Conceptual Definition

Kurniawati & Karsana, (2020) state that vocabulary mastery is the ability of students to recognise, understand, and use words contained in a language appropriately. When someone does not master vocabulary, they certainly cannot understand a meaning and cannot speak well.

#### b) Operational Definition

In this study, vocabulary mastery is defined as the ability to recognise and mention vocabulary on the topic of family members and body members owned by autism spectrum disorder students at Aura Sukma Insani Kindergarten after being given an intervention in training English vocabulary mastery using flashcards as learning media.

### 2. Flashcards

#### a) Conceptual Definition

Azhar Arsyad, (2002) cited by Matruty & Que, (2021) defines flashcards as small cards measuring 8x12 cm or the size can be adjusted as needed, which contain text, symbols, or images to make it easier for students to remember vocabulary and practice spelling. (Herlina, H., & Dewi, 2017) state that flashcards can be divided into a variety of topics, such as animals, fruits, colours, shapes, letters, numbers, occupations, and so on are only a small part of the series of images on flashcards that are categorized.

b) Operational Definition

In this study, flashcards are defined as a learning media that can support to train and memorize students' vocabulary, especially for autistic students. The size of the flashcards used in this study is 15x21cm or A5 paper. This study uses 16 family members flashcards and 22 body parts flashcards. The flashcards used contain pictures and accompanied by words as the meaning of the pictures. This can make it easier for autistic students to memorise and be interested in learning English vocabulary because autistic students are visual learners.

