CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction to the research, including the research background, research identification, research limitations, research questions, research objectives, and research significance.

1.1 Background of the Research

Vocabulary is an essential component in mastering English as a foreign language. As mentioned by Kamal and Faraj (2015), vocabulary is one of the most important components in learning and teaching a foreign language because it allows students to access all forms of oral and written communication. In line with this, many studies have emphasized that a well-organized vocabulary is essential for successful language acquisition (Biseko, 2025). Syamsiyah and Ma'rifatulloh (2023) also support the idea that students will find it easier to read, write, listen, and speak a language if they have a strong vocabulary foundation. Moreover, Dakhi and Fitria (2019) noted that the importance of vocabulary as the basic for communication, as the reflection of social reality, as an emotion booster, and as an academic ability predictor. Given its vital role in language learning, helping students build a strong vocabulary foundation should be the primary focus of English language learning.

According to English Language Teaching Today by Renandya and Widodo (2016), vocabulary learning in an EFL context is challenging due to the limited exposure to English outside the classroom. As a result, most vocabulary learning happens only in classroom instruction. Alahmadi et al. (2023) also showed that a common problem among EFL students is the lack of vocabulary, making it more difficult for them to understand and use English in conversation. Likewise, having

1

a small vocabulary has long been associated with poor language skills, making it difficult for students to speak and write fluently and correctly (Alahmadi et al., 2023). Marianca et al. (2022) found that many students had difficulty understanding texts and answering questions because they knew only a few words. They often fail to recognize keywords, making it difficult to grasp the meaning of texts. These challenges are even more prevalent in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language and is not commonly used in daily interactions (Dilago et al., 2022). Therefore, vocabulary learning should incorporate appropriate learning media to enhance students' vocabulary knowledge and retention effectively (Hamer & Rohimajaya, 2018).

Learning media is a tool to deliver educational content, stimulating students' thoughts and motivation, thereby improving the learning process. The field of education continues to develop various learning media to enhance the teaching and learning process (Liando & Martha, 2021). Julaiha et al. (2022) argue that traditional media like books are inherently unappealing to students, particularly of learning English. The prevalence of lengthy sentences and monotonous verbal explanations in these books poses challenges for students who are still during the early phases of language acquisition. As a result, learning media should captivate students' interest in acquiring new vocabulary because it serves as a valuable tool for teachers to achieve teaching goals and learning objectives while facilitating command over the teaching-learning process (Andriani, 2008). Furthermore, English teachers consistently require learning media and supplementary teaching materials to aid students in conceptualizing their nations. Consequently, these additional resources can inspire learners, enhancing their ability to retain information and stimulating brain activity. Zulkifli (2019) argues that visualization

is the most effective method for teaching new vocabulary across all subjects.

Visual media, regarded as one of the most pivotal forms of vocabulary instruction, facilitates easier learning and information retention for students (Laraswati, 2016). Through the utilization of visual aids, teachers can effortlessly convey information to students, enhancing comprehension by providing direct visualization of concepts (Syandri, 2015). Consequently, this approach not only aids teachers in achieving instructional goals and learning objectives but also supports as a valuable medium for commanding students' attention in the process of teaching-learning (Andriani, 2008). Furthermore, research indicates that visual media effectively enhances students' vocabulary mastery (Dini, 2018). Moreover, through visual media learning vocabulary becomes more fun and not stressful (Tamara et al., 2022). Therefore, teachers are encouraged to use visual media in teaching vocabulary because it not only simplifies the delivery of material but also helps students remember the meaning of words for a longer time.

One visual media that can be used to teach and learn English vocabulary is flashcards. Flashcards are a popular learning media used at various levels of education. These learning media are simple two-sided picture cards, with pictures on the front and definitions or appropriate information on the back, making them an effective and easy-to-make learning medium (Aini et al., 2024). The contents of the flashcards can be modified according to the level of the students, whether they are elementary, intermediate, or advanced (Aba, 2019). One of their key advantages is their portability, as flashcards are lightweight and commonly sized around 25 × 30 cm, making them convenient for classroom use and beyond (Sarifudin & Rahayu, 2023). In addition, teachers usually hold and quickly move flashcards from the pile to the front, which may be the reason why these cards are

called flashcards (Erniwati et al., 2021). Flashcards are economical, as they can be self-made by teachers without requiring expensive materials (Richard & Schmidt, 2010 as cited in Elisa & Tuti, 2020). These cards also offer a fun and flexible learning experience, often used in games and other creative activities to support vocabulary retention and comprehension   (Maryanto & Wulanata, 2018). These characteristics, combined with their ease of use, make these cards a staple learning medium for young and adult learners (Elisa & Tuti, 2020).

In the context of teaching English vocabulary, initial observation results show that Singaraja Montessori School also uses flashcards as a learning media. However, the uniqueness of this school is the use of bilingual flashcards to teach English vocabulary, which sets it apart from other schools. This is because Singaraja Montessori School is one of the international schools that has implemented the Montessori method which focuses on individual learning, hands-on activities, multi-sensory experiences, and individual development of children's skills. This provides an opportunity to explore how this method affects children's vocabulary development, especially in the context of using bilingual flashcards. Besides that, at Singaraja Montessori School, bilingual flashcards are utilized across various levels, from kindergarten to grade 3. However, this study focuses on kindergarten students to find out how bilingual flashcards are implemented at an early age, recognizing that vocabulary development is a fundamental step in language acquisition. Therefore, this school uses bilingual flashcards because they offer promising benefits for vocabulary development, especially for young learners in a bilingual learning environment.

According to some literature, bilingual flashcards are an extension of traditional flashcards. The term bilingual refers to the ability to communicate in two languages, usually combining one's native language with a foreign language (Wong & Nunan, 2011 as cited in Artati, 2021). According to the book Bilingual Language Acquisition by Corvalán (2014), the word bilingual refers to someone who speaks two or more languages. Meanwhile, flashcards are visual learning media that are usually in the form of card-based learning aids that display images, words, or symbols on one side, and on the other side, there are descriptions, definitions, or appropriate information. Unlike monolingual flashcards, which focus on one language, bilingual flashcards present side-by-side translations or related terms using two languages, namely English and Indonesian. This helps young learners, learn new vocabulary more easily. By seeing both languages together, they can better understand the meaning of words and make connections between them. However, research consistently shows that bilingual children often develop better language skills than their monolingual peers, especially when exposed to both languages early on through meaningful interactions and ongoing support.

Several previous studies provide convincing evidence for the use of bilingual flashcards to teach English vocabulary. For example, the application of bilingual flashcards in 8th-grade class at MTs Mannilingi Bulo-Bulo Jeneponto can help the students remember vocabulary easily and improve vocabulary mastery (Wulandari, 2017). In addition, a study conducted by Tirtayani et al. (2017) at the level of early childhood education in six kindergartens in Bali was development research that revealed 'teacher-friendly e-flashcards' being effective media that can be used in bilingual teaching of children at kindergarten level in Bali. Apart from that, using a bilingual approach and using flashcards in teaching vocabulary is

5

highly recommended for young learners (Erniwati et al., 2021). Moreover, the use of flashcard media can achieve the learning objectives to improve the children's bilingual ability at Kamboja Kindergarten in Lamongan (Youhanita et al., 2023). Sarifudin and Rahayu (2023) also noted that the implementation of bilingual flashcards in the first grade of SDNU Sleman Yogyakarta makes it easier for students to master the vocabulary and the correct way to perform ablution. Based on previous research that examined bilingual flashcards, it can be seen that bilingual flashcards are an effective learning media in teaching English vocabulary, especially for young learners.

Unlike previous studies that have primarily examined bilingual flashcards in various educational settings and across different age groups, this study describes the implementation of bilingual flashcards in an international school, namely Singaraja Montessori School which follows the Montessori method. In particular, research on the use of bilingual flashcards in teaching English vocabulary using the Montessori method is limited, and even fewer studies have investigated teachers' opinions on the use of this media at the kindergarten level. By addressing this gap in research, this study describes how bilingual flashcards support vocabulary development in a bilingual learning environment, offering new insights into their practical application in early childhood education. Specifically, this study aims to describe the implementation of bilingual flashcards to teach English vocabulary and explore teachers' opinions on this learning media, using a descriptive qualitative approach in a kindergarten classroom at Singaraja Montessori School. The findings are expected to contribute to the field of English language education, particularly in the context of using bilingual flashcards to teach English vocabulary to young learners in a Montessori environment, while providing

6

valuable insights and practical benefits for future researchers, educators, and students.

1.2   Problems Identification

Vocabulary is an important element of learning English because it builds the foundation for language development, especially for young learners. However, kindergarten students at Singaraja Montessori School face challenges such as having limited vocabulary and a tendency to get bored quickly during the learning process. These factors make learning English more difficult. Teachers have reported that many kindergarten students struggle to memorize and recall new words effectively, likely due to the abstract nature of language learning at their developmental stage. To address these challenges, it is imperative for teachers to adopt innovative teaching media and strategies that are aligned with the cognitive needs of young learners, not only to facilitate effective vocabulary retention but also to engage students and address issues such as boredom. Meanwhile, a study by Žutautienė (2023) showed that interactive and visual aids such as flashcards help children learn vocabulary by forming clear visual associations. Despite its potential, there is a lack of teaching media designed for young learners in Indonesia that support bilingual learning. Initial observations and interviews with kindergarten teachers at Singaraja Montessori School showed that bilingual flashcards were often used to teach English vocabulary. These findings led researchers to focus on two main areas, such as the use of bilingual flashcards as a teaching media for kindergarten students, and exploring teachers' opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual flashcards. This study aims to build on previous research regarding bilingual flashcards and their role in vocabulary development.

1.3   Research Limitation

This study focuses on describing how bilingual flashcards are implemented by kindergarten teachers to teach English vocabulary in Singaraja Montessori School, which is located in Banjar Dinas Lebahsiung, Panji Anom Village, Buleleng District, Buleleng Regency, Bali. It also aims to explore the opinions of three kindergarten teachers regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using bilingual flashcards. This current study employs a descriptive qualitative research design, using observation sheets, field notes, an in-depth interview guide, and an open-ended questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The subjects of this research include three kindergarten teachers who are directly involved in teaching English vocabulary using bilingual flashcards.

1.4   Research Questions

Based on the research problems, several research questions arise, including the following:

1. How are bilingual flashcards implemented by kindergarten teachers to teach English vocabulary to kindergarten students in Singaraja Montessori schools?

2. What are the kindergarten teachers' opinions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using bilingual flashcards as the learning media for teaching English vocabulary?

1.5   Research Objectives

Based on the research question above, this research was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To describe how bilingual flashcards are implemented by kindergarten teachers to teach English vocabulary to kindergarten students in Singaraja Montessori School.

2. To explore the teacher's opinions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using bilingual flashcards as the media for teaching English vocabulary.

1.6   Significance of The Study

Research significance means that the research carried out must be beneficial. The research significance of this study can be classified into the following two types:

1.6.1   Theoretical Significance

The results of this study are expected to add insight into learning media in teaching English vocabulary in kindergarten, especially related to its implementation and teachers' opinions regarding the advantages and disadvantages on using bilingual flashcards. In addition, this study also aims to support the theory of bilingual flashcards as the learning media in teaching English vocabulary, particularly for vocabulary development among kindergarten students using the Montessori method.

1.6.2   Practical Significance

1. For Students
   Students are expected to recall and understand English vocabulary more easily through engaging and visually appropriate learning media,

9

particularly using bilingual flashcards.

2. For Teachers

Through this study, the researcher hopes to motivate kindergarten teachers to effectively use bilingual flashcards as a learning media for teaching English vocabulary. By understanding the advantages and disadvantages associated with their implementation, teachers can develop engaging, structured, and interactive vocabulary lessons that align with young learners' needs.

3. For Other Researchers

This study can be used as a reference and provide valuable information for other researchers who want to investigate the use of bilingual flashcards as a vocabulary learning media for young learners and also find out teachers' opinions when using bilingual flashcards.