

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Research Background**

English is an international language that plays an important role in education, global communication, and many other aspects of life. English is used by millions of people around the world as a cross-cultural communication tool. Its ability to bridge language differences and enable interaction between individuals from diverse backgrounds makes it a highly influential language in many fields.

In the world of education, English is not only a subject taught in schools, but also the main language in many academic literatures and research journals. Many scientific works, especially those related to the fields of science, technology and medicine, are written and published in English. This makes mastering English a must for students and academics who want to access the latest information and contribute on a global level. In many cases, higher education institutions in various countries place English as the language of instruction in international study programs, providing students with the opportunity to acquire knowledge relevant to global developments. Therefore, a good command of English is an important asset for students in facing academic and professional competition in the future.

For students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL), limited vocabulary can be a major obstacle in various aspects of language, such as reading academic texts, writing essays, and speaking and understanding everyday conversations. According to Nguyen (2021), a good command of vocabulary allows students to express ideas more clearly and understand interlocutors better, thus

improving their overall language proficiency. Therefore, vocabulary learning should be a top priority in language education, so that students can actively participate in an increasingly globalized academic and social environment.

Despite its crucial role, English vocabulary acquisition is often a challenge for EFL students. Many students experience difficulties in acquiring, remembering and using new words in everyday life. This is due to various factors, such as limited exposure to English, lack of opportunities to use vocabulary actively, and uninteresting learning methods. If vocabulary learning is not done effectively, students tend to have difficulty in retaining and applying the vocabulary they have learned.

Research conducted by Salamun et al. (2022) shows that one of the causes of students' low motivation in learning English is the lack of vocabulary and the teacher's less innovative teaching style. This shows that interesting and innovative learning strategies are needed so that students are more motivated in learning and using English vocabulary. If the teaching methods used are monotonous and less interactive, students tend to have difficulty in understanding and retaining the vocabulary they have learned. Therefore, a more interactive and effective approach is needed to help students overcome difficulties in learning vocabulary, one of which is by utilizing technology as a tool in learning.

Along with the development of technology, various innovations in language learning have been developed, one of which is the utilization of digital technology in vocabulary learning. The use of technology in the classroom as a learning aid has received much attention in recent years. The combination of technology and

modern teaching techniques creates new opportunities to increase student engagement and motivation in learning.

One method that is gaining popularity is the use of games as learning media. Games can be an attractive alternative as they present a more enjoyable and interactive learning experience compared to conventional methods. According to Baimbetova's (2020) research, games can create a fun learning atmosphere and support students' success in mastering vocabulary, even from an early age. In the context of language learning, games not only help students memorize new words, but also give them the opportunity to use them in more contextual and meaningful situations. Thus, the use of games in vocabulary learning not only improves students' memory, but also helps them understand how the words are used in daily communication.

Online games have become one of the most popular forms of games for students. Many online games indirectly involve the use of English, either through instructions in the game, interaction with other players, or through the text and dialog in it. This makes online games a potential medium for language learning, especially in improving students' vocabulary acquisition. With the interactive element, students not only passively recognize new vocabulary but also actively use it in the communication that takes place during the game.

Online games are increasingly used in vocabulary learning. Gamification in learning environments can increase students' active engagement and accelerate their vocabulary acquisition (Yang et al., 2024). One aspect that makes gamification effective is the competition mechanism in the game which can increase students' motivation to learn. When students feel challenged in a game environment, they are

more motivated to understand the English terms used in the game. Chen et al. (2019) explained that the competition element in the game can help reduce the vocabulary gap between students and accelerate their learning process. In addition, Aulia et al. (2024) highlighted that online game provide an immersive and fun learning environment, which not only encourages students' interest but also contributes to the improvement of their English skills. Thus, online games can be an effective tool in supporting language learning, especially for students who find it difficult to memorize and use vocabulary in academic contexts.

One online game that has the potential to be an effective medium for vocabulary learning is Mobile Legend. Mobile Legends: Bang Bang or known as MLBB is an online game developed by Moonton in the genre of multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA). Mobile Legends is one of the most popular online games among teenagers, including high school students, which offers an interactive gaming experience in a competitive environment. In this game, players must work together in teams, communicate effectively, and understand various terms in English, such as character names, game strategies, as well as technical terms used in the game. Unlike conventional learning methods which are often passive, the interaction in Mobile Legends encourages students to use English in real and meaningful situations. This is possible because players will meet players from other countries and require players to communicate to achieve team goals. In addition, players can also gain new vocabulary from listening to words spoken by Mobile Legends heroes repeatedly during the game.

According to Husna et al. (2024), the interaction that occurs in team-based games can help players develop their language skills, including English vocabulary

acquisition. Through interactive gaming experiences, students not only passively learn vocabulary, but also actively use it in communication with their teammates. When students are faced with situations where they need to understand instructions, convey strategies, or discuss with other players, they are encouraged to use English naturally and functionally. Thus, Mobile Legends not only acts as entertainment, but also as a learning tool that can help students improve their vocabulary in a fun environment that is relevant to their daily lives.

Based on research conducted by Perkasa et al. (2022) entitled “High School Students' Perception of Mobile Legend Game in Vocabulary Mastery”, based on the results of the study four themes were found namely; Curiosity, Interaction, Obstacles, Confidence. It seems that although each child has different levels of interaction and challenge, they are all at the same level in terms of the themes of curiosity and confidence. It turns out that educational background has an influence in this study.

Not only that, some previous studies have also confirmed that Mobile Legends can play an important role in improving vocabulary acquisition among university students. Research empirically states that the game creates an engaging and interactive environment. This encourages players to learn and actively use new words. For example, Adha (2022) conducted a study on this subject. They found that students who played Mobile Legends showed an increase in vocabulary mastery at Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri 1 Kota Jambi. Similarly, Diantoro et al (2020) reported that tenth grade students at SMAN 1 Cluring experienced an increase in vocabulary through gaming as well. This evidence shows that fast-paced

online games effectively train vocabulary and this is done through repeated exposure and practical application in context.

In addition, the context in which students play the game also contributes significantly. This relates to their vocabulary development. The players will encounter various terms and phrases relevant to the game, strategy, and even communication with teammates. This allows for real-time vocabulary practice. Ta'uno and Poai (2022) stated that online games motivate students to explore language. In addition, Kobis and Tomatala (2020) said that students' perception of Mobile Legends as a valuable medium for learning English. This interactive experience not only entertains but also educates students. This allows vocabulary acquisition for EFL students to be more fun and effective. In addition, Dananjaya and Kusumastuti (2019) said that students viewed online games positively. This relates to vocabulary development and in turn will support their potential as an educational tool.

Then, research on the impact of online games such as Mobile Legends on vocabulary acquisition is important. The reason comes for several reasons. First, the current digital generation is increasingly familiar with technology. This status certainly makes game-based learning a relevant and interesting approach. Secondly, understanding how these games affect vocabulary learning can be beneficial to education stakeholders. It will inform educators and curriculum designers about effective teaching strategies. Although studies that have been conducted by Adha et al. (2022) and Ta'uno and Poai (2022), have explored this relationship, there are still research gaps. Namely in understanding students' perceptions and also their experiences with these games. By studying this topic further, students will gain

insight into how to integrate online games into the language learning curriculum effectively. This will maximize the educational benefits and improve students' vocabulary acquisition.

Based on the various studies that have been conducted, it is clear that the integration of online games in language learning can create a more engaging and effective learning environment. Students not only improve their vocabulary mastery, but are also more motivated to learn through methods that are fun and relevant to their lives. Therefore, this study aims to explore how high school students' perceptions of Mobile Legends games play a role in improving their English vocabulary acquisition. By understanding students' perspectives, this research is expected to provide new insights into the effectiveness of online games as a tool in language learning, as well as contribute to innovations in English vocabulary teaching in the digital age.

### **1.2. Research Question**

What are EFL students' perceptions of games online mobile legends to improve their English vocabulary mastery?

### **1.3. Research Purpose**

To find out the EFL students' perception of games online mobile legends to improve their English vocabulary mastery.

#### **1.4. Limitation of Research**

This research only focuses on Jambi University EFL students in the English education department who join the Ice-Sport organization especially the Mobile Legends division.

#### **1.5. Significant of Research**

##### **1.5.1. Theoretically**

This study is used to support the theories dealing with the use of game online Mobile Legends to improve EFL University students' English vocabulary. This study also enhances our understanding of the relationship between language acquisition and online gaming, with a particular emphasis on the use of online mobile games for improving vocabulary mastery of English. Furthermore, the findings of the study can contribute to the development of theories on the effectiveness of using online games in language learning, particularly in the context of EFL University students.

##### **1.5.2. Practically**

###### **1. For University**

By including online games into the EFL program, the research may assist the institution comprehend the possible effects. This may result in the creation of more interesting and successful teaching strategies, which would raise the standard of instruction offered by the institution.

###### **2. For EFL Students**

By better understanding how online games like Mobile Legends may be utilized as a tool to increase their command of English vocabulary, EFL



students can benefit from the research findings. This has the potential to boost academic achievement by making the learning process more efficient and enjoyable.

### **1.6. Definition Key Term**

To make the terminology in the title more understandable in order to prevent confusion with this study, the following is the definition:

1. Online games are defined as digital gaming facilities that can connect with dozens of people at once and with a variety of games that are interesting for players who like to compete (Adams, 2014).
2. Moonton is a game developer that created and published the game Mobile Legends. Both iOS and Android smartphones may be used to play this game. Since 2016, this MOBA game has been successful in drawing players' interest in Indonesia (Esportsnesia, 2018).
3. Vocabulary refers to a collection of lexemes, which includes individual words, compound terms, and idiomatic expressions (Vu & Peters, 2021).