

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses six points related to the research introduction. The first point is background of the research explaining the reasons why this research is conducted. The second is statement of the problems which elaborates some problems that appear in the use of vocabulary.com. The third is delimitation of the problem in which the researcher limits the scope of this research. The fourth point discusses the research questions. The fifth point states objectives of the research. The sixth point elaborates the significance of the research.

### **Background of the Research**

Vocabulary is important because it is the core element of language. Vocabulary mastery is an important aspect for language learners. According to Mukoroli (2011), vocabulary mastery has an important role for language learners since it can affect their language skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Moreover, vocabulary is more important than grammar. According to Krashen, students bring their dictionaries instead of grammar books when they are going abroad (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015). Further, Sedita (2005) argued that vocabulary knowledge is crucial since it covers every single word that we have to know to state our ideas, communicate properly, and also access our background knowledge.

Students are likely to be failed in language learning if they do not master an adequate amount of vocabulary learning. According to Nurweni and Read (1999), university students are expected to find difficulty in reading English text if they do not have enough vocabulary knowledge. Sedita (2005) also stated added that vocabulary is also related to the academic achievement. Students who have more vocabulary knowledge tend to be more successful than those who have limited vocabulary knowledge. Further, vocabulary is also the core element of language. It has a vital role in every language. If students only master the basic vocabulary knowledge like the root words, they would be confused by the more complex words. Thus, lacking of adequate vocabulary knowledge will bring negative effects for the students in learning language.

Inputs are very important in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. Listening is one of some methods that can be done to get those inputs. In non-English speaking countries, it is hard to acquire English vocabulary through listening since it is rare to find somebody who speaks English in daily life. There are some other alternatives like songs and movies, however, listening to authentic media are quite challenging for them. Those media are not required to match the level of the listener. Besides, there is no limitation on what they hear from songs or movies. There are some inappropriate words that the students may accidentally acquire from them.

Further, reading is another receptive skill that can provide vocabulary inputs for students. Books and other written sources are commonly used to

enhance their vocabulary knowledge. However, students nowadays are mostly digital natives surrounded by technologies and internet. Books are beaten by the gadgets. Students are glued to their smartphones all the time which make the printed sources are less favored. Learning vocabulary from books seems like an old-fashioned to them.

In order to solve the problems above, vocabulary.com website is created in order to help the students who are surrounded by technologies and gadgets to learn vocabulary. The website facilitates the users to improve their vocabulary by doing some exercises. Moreover, it is specially designed to help them learn vocabulary in an easier way. It combines dictionaries and adaptive learning game. One of the features in the website also requires them to monitor their progress in learning vocabulary. In addition, the website can be accessed through smartphone so that the users can practice their vocabulary anytime and anywhere.

In addition, the researcher is experienced in joining a course called “Capita Selecta on Grammar 2” which required the students to use vocabulary.com to improve their vocabulary. The researcher attended the course in English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta during the even semester of 2016. The students were required to practice their vocabulary by using the website during the semester. They were asked to collect scores from the website and submit them at the end of the semester by sending screenshots of the scores. The lecturer used the students’ vocabulary.com scores to measure how far and how frequent the students learning vocabulary.

Based on the above background, the researcher is interested to conduct a research entitled “Students' Perceptions on The Use of Vocabulary.com towards Their Vocabulary Mastery”. The importance of vocabulary becomes one of the reasons why the researcher wants to conduct this research. Further, students nowadays who are mostly digital natives need a tool in learning vocabulary that suits their character. Vocabulary.com is a website where students can practice their vocabulary in an interesting way. Since the researcher is also experienced in using the website in learning vocabulary, it strengthens the eagerness to conduct this study.

### **Statements of the Problems**

Vocabulary is the core of language, thus it is important for language learners. In order to facilitate them in learning vocabulary, vocabulary.com is created. It provides some features that can help them learn vocabulary in more interesting way. It also combines smart dictionary and adaptive learning exercise. Some studies have also showed that the website is good for vocabulary learning. Abrams and Walsh (2014) found that the game-like features and the integrated dictionary of the website provided an effective hybrid teaching tool that honored independent and flexible learning opportunities. Thus, the website can be one effective tool for the language learners to master their vocabulary which should be recognized by the language learners to help them learn vocabulary.

However, there is a knowledge gap that makes some language learners do not recognize the website. In a private university in Yogyakarta, for example, the website was introduced to the students by the lecturer in a course called Capita

Selecta on Grammar 2. There are no other courses that required them to use the website, so they recognized the website only from that course. Previously, they had no idea about vocabulary.com that can facilitate them to learn vocabulary in an interesting way. The researcher was one of the students from that course who also knew the website after joining the course. Students who have not taken the course are probably unfamiliar with the website. Considering the features and the benefits offered by the website, it should be more recognized by the language learners.

During the course, the students shared their experience in using the website, some of them thought that website was beneficial but some of them found that it was challenging to use. However, there were further explanation about what kind of benefits and also challenges that the students got from the website. In order to solve it, the research questions of this study aimed to find out about the benefits and also the challenges of using the website as perceived by the students. The findings are hoped to be a consideration for the lecturers to introduce the website to other students who have not known it so there will be less knowledge gap about the website.

### **Delimitation of the Problems**

There are so many aspects which can be identified in vocabulary learning by using online vocabulary exercise. The researcher will only focus on the benefits and the challenges of the website in helping the students improving their vocabulary. There are some particular reasons why the researcher will not conduct

research about other aspects involved in the vocabulary learning. The first reason which is the first obstacle is the time constraint. The researcher does not have plenty of time to cover all of those possible problems in this research. Studying more about other aspects related to vocabulary learning will make this research be more significance but it will take more time. The second reason is because of the limited fund that can support the research.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the problems of this research as follows:

1. What are the benefits of using vocabulary.com towards the students' vocabulary mastery as perceived by the students?
2. What are the challenges of using vocabulary.com towards the students' vocabulary mastery as perceived by the students?

### **Objectives of the Research**

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this research are:

1. To explore the benefits of vocabulary.com towards students' vocabulary mastery.
2. To identify the challenges of vocabulary.com towards students' vocabulary mastery.

## **Significances of the Research**

The research is aimed at giving benefits to several parties. The parties are the teachers, the students, and future researchers.

**For the teachers.** This research can be used as guidance in helping the teachers to decide whether the website is suitable for the students or not. By knowing the student's perceptions of the website, it will help the teacher in making the most out of the website.

**For the students.** By knowing the benefits and the challenges of the website, the students will have a review about the website. They can use this research as a guide for them in using the website. The students also can see the other benefits of the website they have not yet met and use the website to be optimally beneficial for them.

**For future researchers.** This research helps future researchers in conducting their researches by giving them ideas on topics for research. They can also take benefits from this research by using it as one of their references when conducting similar studies. The findings of this research can be used as additional information for them who focus on conducting research in the same field.