

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

English has become the world's most extensively spoken and studied language, acting as a universal lingua franca. Its relevance is clear in a variety of disciplines, including worldwide commerce, science, technology, and entertainment. Crystal (2003) writes, "English is the global language, the medium through which the world communicates." This makes learning English not only useful, but also necessary for everyone seeking to participate on a worldwide scale. Learning English is really important in Indonesia. However, in several regions such as East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), students often face significant challenges in learning English. These difficulties stem from limited access to quality educational resources, lack of exposure to the language in daily life, and minimal opportunities to practice English in a meaningful context. As a result, many students in NTT struggle with basic English skills, particularly in vocabulary development, which plays a crucial role in reading, writing, and speaking. English acts as a bridge between Indonesians and the rest of the globe, given the country's varied linguistic environment. English proficiency is frequently seen as a critical aspect in educational achievement, allowing students to pursue higher education possibilities both domestically and abroad. Laufer (2008) also states that "English in Indonesia is a key to academic and professional success, as it provides access to knowledge, resources, and networks that are primarily available in English."

In English, there are four components of language skills that cover listening, speaking, reading, and writing that the learners should learn in a deep and appropriate manner. These four competences cannot be isolated, since they are incorporated. The participants in this research are identified as young learners, particularly those in elementary education. Young learners usually refer to children aged 5 to 12 who are in the initial phases of their mental and language growth. Cameron (2001) states, “Young learners are those between the ages of about five and twelve. They are often enthusiastic and curious learners, but they also require support and scaffolding when it comes to language learning” (p. 1). This definition is consistent with the focus of this study, which examines students at Catholic Rosa Mystica Elementary School in Kupang. On the other hand, vocabulary is an important sub skill that students have to learn. Improving our vocabulary has a good effect to our competence in language. It can improve our capacity to build our language as a whole (The Effect of Vocabulary Notebook on Students’ Vocabulary, 2020).

According to Susanto (2017), vocabulary mastery is essential for understanding the language and expressing ideas. Asyiah (2017) further emphasized that vocabulary must be treated as a crucial aspect in the practice of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Mastering vocabulary requires understanding not only the meaning of words but also their grammatical behavior, spoken and written forms, and appropriate usage contexts (Thornbury, 2002). Despite this importance, students still face challenges such as limited exposure, lack of motivation, and insufficient strategies to retain new words.

One of the current issues in vocabulary learning is the limited opportunity for students to actively engage with and retain vocabulary items in meaningful ways. Research shows that traditional methods often lack personal engagement and sustainability, leading to poor vocabulary retention (Amir, 2018; Achmad, 2013). Moreover, learners are rarely taught how to learn vocabulary independently, which results in passive learning and low motivation. Therefore, addressing this issue requires innovative and student-centered vocabulary learning tools. The vocabulary notebook, when used consistently and supported by engaging classroom activities, can be a promising solution to overcome common challenges in vocabulary acquisition.

To address this gap, the use of vocabulary notebooks has emerged as an effective and practical tool. Vocabulary notebooks serve as a medium for learners to record, review, and personalize vocabulary learning. As noted by Vela & Rushidi (2016) and Walters & Bozkurt (2009), vocabulary notebooks have shown positive impacts on vocabulary acquisition and learner autonomy, particularly among language learners who actively engage in self-directed learning and consistently review and organize new vocabulary. However, the gap in previous studies lies in the absence of a standardized model for implementing vocabulary notebooks across different educational contexts. Most existing research tends to emphasize adult learners, university students, or those studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where learners already have a certain level of language proficiency and autonomy. In contrast, there is still limited investigation into how vocabulary notebooks can be effectively applied to younger learners—especially those at

the primary school level—who may require more structured guidance and support in developing vocabulary skills.

Thus, the urgency of using vocabulary notebooks in classroom instruction is evident. Not only do they foster independent learning and autonomy (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995), but they also provide a structured, student-centered approach that encourages active engagement with language. They are especially valuable in contexts where students have minimal exposure to English outside the classroom. By integrating vocabulary notebooks into regular lessons, teachers can promote vocabulary retention, fluency, and learner motivation—all of which are crucial for long-term language development.

Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) provide guidelines for designing a vocabulary notebook, as well as a model program for incorporating vocabulary notebooks into classroom practice. Despite the fact that Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy lists keeping a vocabulary notebook as a single vocabulary learning method, it appears that the act of keeping a vocabulary notebook will need the use of a range of distinct vocabulary learning techniques. The importance of vocabulary and vocabulary mastery, however, is not sufficient to trigger the practice of ELT to give a greater emphasis on vocabulary teaching and vocabulary learning, as it was found that vocabulary teaching and learning appears to be neglected in learning English in the Indonesian context (Cahyono & Widiati, 2015).

Vocabulary notebook is known as an individual dictionary recorded by the students themselves. The notebook itself consists of new words that are considered its meaning, pictures, synonym, antonyms, and possible sentences of the word. Schmitt & Schmitt (1995) stated that vocabulary notebook can also improve the lexical competence,

develop effective learning strategies, promote student's autonomy and can outlive the class, because this is a way to obtain learning strategies that can be applied to other areas of knowledge. Vocabulary notebook is known as an individual dictionary recorded by the students themselves. The notebook itself consists of new words that are considered its meaning, pictures, synonym, antonyms, and possible sentences of the word (Nggolaon & Mombilia, 2021).

When the writer was still in junior high school, she found the vocabulary notebook approach was beneficial to support learning. This strategy could greatly enhanced the vocabulary mastery. Writing down new vocabulary, meanings, and sample sentences allows the researcher to evaluate and reinforce their comprehension on a regular basis. This strategy enables the researcher to monitor the researcher development and observe actual results over time. The act of arranging and customizing the researcher vocabulary notes makes the learning process more enjoyable and effective, hence improving the researcher ability to use and recall new terms correctly.

Based on the the researcher's observation, the majority of the elementary students particularity Rosa Mystica primary school students still lack of the vocabulary. They seem to easily get bored in learning vocabulary. Futhermore, they do not know how to improve their vocabulary and the school teachers does not have any specific strategies to help the student improve their vocabulary. Accordingly, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled “ The Use of Vocabulary Notebook to Improve students' Vocabulary Mastery In SDK Rosa Mistyca Kupang.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background, the problems of this research can be formulated as follows:

1. Is vocabulary notebook effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery?
2. What are the challenges faced by the students when using vocabulary notebook in vocabulary learning?

1.3 Objectives of Research

Based on the research question, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify whether the use of vocabulary notebooks effective in enhancing vocabulary mastery among students.
2. To explore the challenges faced by students when using vocabulary note books in vocabulary learning.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study's findings are likely to have significant implications for students, instructors, and researchers.

1. Students.

The study demonstrates how students may improve their vocabulary mastery using the Vocabulary Notebook. This study's results might stimulate students to learn vocabulary.

2. Teachers.

This may assist teachers in effectively preparing and presenting their subject, as well as help them create a fun classroom setting for learning vocabulary.

3. Researchers.

The results can provide valuable information for vocabulary study. In addition, it can assist the researchers to enhance her learning methods, particularly vocabulary learning.