CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section examines the research background, questions, objectives, significance, scope, conceptual framework, hypothesis, and previous studies.

A. Research Background

Vocabulary is crucial in the English language learning process. As Richards & Renandya (2002), emphasize that vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. It significantly influences students' proficiency in reading and comprehending content in English (Dewi et al., 2024). In this context, vocabulary mastery refers to an individual's proficiency in comprehending and utilizing words (Rahmah et al., 2023). This signifies that vocabulary mastery is the fundamental basis for enabling pupils to acquire English comprehensively, encompassing reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills.

Vocabulary mastery is widely recognized in today's globalized society, where English is a vital instrument for international communication. English is essential not only in educational settings but also as a means to foster cross-cultural contacts, expand perspectives, and improve competitiveness in the professional arena (Qizi & Baxodirovna, 2017). To compete effectively in this era, students must possess good English language skills, which cannot be attained without adequate vocabulary mastery.

However, English language learning in Indonesia still faces various challenges, particularly in terms of equitable access to learning opportunities. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language that begins to be studied intensively at the junior high school level. Meanwhile, at the elementary school level, English remains at an introductory stage and is not nationally mandated. In previous curricula, English was merely an optional local content subject in elementary schools, resulting in many schools lacking teachers with competence in teaching English (Oktavia et al., 2023). Consequently, not all students have equal

opportunities to become familiar with and master English vocabulary from an early age, which subsequently impacts their readiness to engage in learning at subsequent educational levels.

Based on preliminary observations at one of the schools in West Bandung, the seventh-grade students' limited vocabulary mastery and lack of motivation are significant obstacles to learning English. This was evident during lessons about "dates of birth" when students repeatedly asked about the English terms for numbers. Students also struggled to read basic number vocabulary correctly. Moreover, some students fell asleep during class and constantly asked about break time, indicating their disengagement from the learning process. These vocabulary gaps and motivational issues create a cycle where students become increasingly frustrated and disengaged. As explained by Kilic (2019), limited vocabulary can hinder learners' abilities in reading comprehension, speaking fluency, listening comprehension, and writing proficiency. Students find it challenging to participate effectively in many English learning activities without sufficient vocabulary.

Furthermore, these students' lack of motivation and vocabulary learning challenges are exacerbated by using the traditional teaching media that still dominate the learning process. Traditional media, such as books or images, typically facilitate a one-way communication model, wherein students acquire knowledge with limited opportunities for comprehensive visual or auditory engagement (Mazaimi & Sary, 2023). These traditional media often fail to capture student interest and do not fully meet the learning needs of the modern era. In addition, the lack of technology integration in English language learning leads to the underutilization of potential digital resources that could support vocabulary learning. Thus, innovative media from digital technology are needed to provide more interactive learning and support better vocabulary mastery.

In this digital era, students are intimately connected to technology and social media platforms. Social media is a global digital platform that is extensively utilized by students (Purwanto et al., 2023). YouTube, as a popular social media platform, has evolved into a valuable educational tool. According to Listiani et al. (2021) digital technologies are frequently linked to social media platforms like YouTube,

Instagram, and Facebook, which are readily accessible via personal devices. Among these platforms, YouTube stands out as an audio-visual medium that combines sound and visuals, making it highly effective for engaging learners. The utilization of audio-visual aids in English language Learning will help students better understand the issues or lessons presented, as listeners are encouraged to use their imagination and optimize their left and right brain functions (Maulida & Hadi, 2022).

The YouTube channel "Smile and Learn English" is distinguished as a practical resource due to its diverse topics and structured approach to learning. Each video follows a consistent pattern of introducing a basic concept, providing real-life applications, incorporating interactive practice sessions with intentional pauses for student responses, and concluding with a reinforcement of the notion. The systematic teaching style is suitable for seventh-grade students who require repetition of vocabulary. The channel's approach integrates storytelling elements, exemplified by employing a car racing scenario to illustrate the use of ordinal numbers. This facilitates pupils' connection of abstract concepts to tangible experiences. Additionally, each video attempts to provide pauses to create student engagement while ensuring comprehension through regular practice opportunities throughout each video.

Integrating YouTube videos into English learning is one of the appropriate media for modernizing a more student centered learning approach. This learning media is in line with the characteristics of generation alpha students, who are digital natives and responsive to multimedia-based learning such as podcasts, augmented reality, virtual reality, games, interactive electronic modules, powerpoint presentations, and videos (Adillah et al., 2023). Furthermore, educational YouTube videos can provide authentic language exposure and create a more dynamic learning environment.

Several prior studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of utilizing video media, such as YouTube, in English language learning. Research conducted by Hia (2021) the effect of using YouTube on motivation to learn English vocabulary for grade IX students shows a significant increase in motivation in students who use

YouTube as a learning medium. Moreover, the research conducted by Wintarsih and Herlina (2023) on the utilization of Easy English videos for vocabulary acquisition among seventh-grade junior high school students demonstrated a substantial enhancement in vocabulary proficiency, as evidenced by statistical analysis indicating that post-test scores surpassed pre-test scores. Another study, conducted by Alizadeh et al. (2022) demonstrated that students who learned vocabulary through BBC news videos achieved better results than those using traditional methods.

Although there have been many studies exploring the use of YouTube videos in English vocabulary learning, there is a significant research gap as none have specifically targeted the use of the YouTube channel 'Smile and Learn English' for seventh-grade students, particularly concerning vocabulary in aspect of pronunciation and spelling, comprehension of word meanings, and usage. By filling this gap, this research aims to address the vocabulary mastery issues faced by students and explore innovative ways to improve English language learning through the integration of YouTube media.

B. Research Questions

Based on the issues mentioned earlier, a set of research questions has been formulated:

1. What is the students' vocabulary mastery before using the "Smile and Learn English" YouTube video?
2. What is the students' vocabulary mastery after using the "Smile and Learn English" YouTube video?
3. How significant is the difference between students' vocabulary mastery before and after using the "Smile and Learn English" YouTube video?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the research inquiries, the objectives of this study consist of:

1. To find out the students' vocabulary mastery before using the "Smile and Learn English" YouTube video.

2. To find out the students' vocabulary mastery after using the "Smile and Learn English" YouTube video.

3. To determine the significance of the difference between students' vocabulary mastery before and after using the "Smile and Learn English" YouTube video.

D. Research Significance

The study has value for both theoretical and practical significance, as detailed below:

1. Theoretical Significance

By examining the effectiveness of "Smile and Learn English" YouTube videos, the study aims to demonstrate how multimedia resources can support vocabulary mastery among junior high school students. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the role of digital platforms in language education, offering a theoretical basis for integrating multimedia into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching practices and enriching the existing literature on technology-enhanced language learning.

2. Practical Significances

This research provides actionable insights for teachers on effectively integrating "Smile and Learn English" YouTube videos into their teaching strategies to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. It also provides students with an alternative and interactive method to improve their vocabulary skills independently and enjoyably.

E. Research Scope

This study examines the utilization of the YouTube video "Smile and Learn English" as a learning medium to improve English vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students in a junior high school in Bandung. The research concentrated on vocabulary relevant to current educational materials, covering form (spelling and pronunciation), meaning, and application in basic sentences.

F. Conceptual Framework

Lessard-Clouston (2013) defines vocabulary mastery as a complex ability that includes understanding word forms, meanings, and their use in various communication contexts. Good vocabulary mastery enables learners to express ideas, understand texts, and participate in communicative interactions more effectively. Vocabulary is a vital component in English language learning as it is the foundation of all other language skills. Fengyu (2023) asserts that without adequate vocabulary mastery, language learners will experience difficulties in understanding and expressing themselves in the target language. Lele (2018) identifies several factors that influence difficulties in vocabulary mastery, including the complexity of word meanings, differences in the context of use, and limited exposure to the target language. Traditional learning methods that rely on lectures and memorization often fail to provide optimal results because they do not consider contextual aspects and meaningfulness in vocabulary learning.

In response to these challenges, the use of appropriate learning media plays a crucial role in enhancing vocabulary mastery. Learning media, including both conventional and digital formats, serve as tools to support instructional delivery and foster student engagement. Kurniawan et al. (2022) state that effective learning media can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the learning process. Among the various media, YouTube stands out as one of the most widely used platforms offering diverse language-learning content that is easy to access and engaging.

According to Hanim (2021) YouTube should be utilized as a tool and platform to address the requirements of students and teachers, while enhancing engagement and accommodating diverse learning styles. YouTube offers several chances and efficient methods for learners to enhance the significance and independence of language learning and practice. YouTube can be essential in addressing learners' requirements for practical language use and their curiosity about the world (Sari & Bahara, 2022). The "Smile and Learn English" video is one of the learning resources that presents vocabulary material in an engaging and interactive format. Alqahtani (2015) asserts that using audiovisual media in vocabulary learning can improve comprehension and retention because it involves multiple sensory

channels in the learning process. Harmer (2007) highlights the importance of creating an engaging and purposeful learning environment to boost student motivation in language learning.

The "Smile and Learn English" video was chosen as the learning media due to several advantages. First, it presents vocabulary in an authentic context relevant to students' daily lives. Schmitt (2000) identifies several important aspects of effective vocabulary learning, including form-meaning connection, collocation knowledge, and contextual variation. Secondly, the combination of pictures, sound, and text helps students comprehend the significance of words more effectively. Third, an engaging and enjoyable educational approach can enhance students' enthusiasm for learning. The utilization of YouTube as an educational platform aims to create an enjoyable, engaging, and dynamic learning atmosphere (Widiantari & Dewi, 2023).

This study addresses the topic of improving vocabulary mastery through the use of "Smile and Learn English" YouTube videos as learning media. The conceptual framework is illustrated in the subsequent diagram:
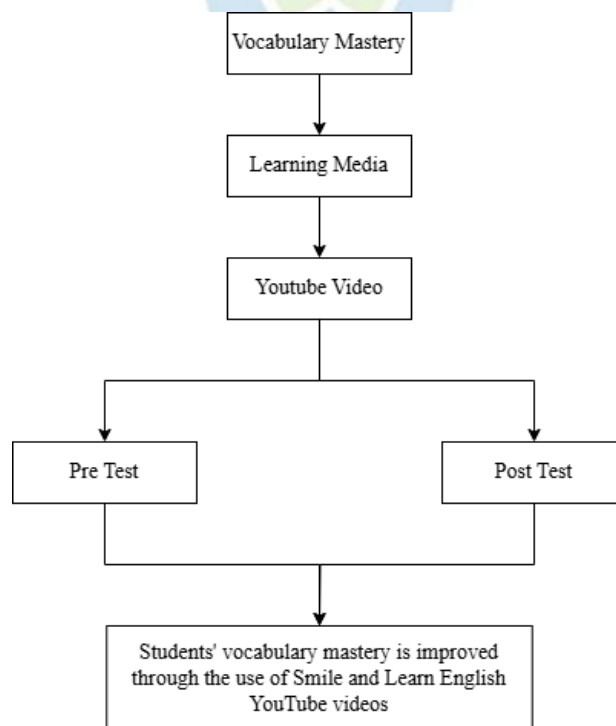
Figure 1. 1 Conceptual framework

G. Hypothesis

In quantitative research, a hypothesis represents the researcher's anticipated findings or expected outcomes from their investigation. Variables serve as key elements that help address and explore the study's research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study involves two main variables: The independent variable (X) is "Smile and Learn English" YouTube videos, while the dependent variable (Y) is students' vocabulary mastery. The hypotheses of the study are formulated:

H_0: Using "Smile and Learn English" YouTube videos does not improve students' English vocabulary mastery.

H_a: Using "Smile and Learn English" YouTube videos improves students' English vocabulary mastery.

H. Previous Studies

The topic of utilizing YouTube videos to improve vocabulary mastery has been explored in several previous studies. The first research was conducted by Wu (2024), a study focusing on the impact of using YouTube channels (Ray Du English and BBC Learning English) on vocabulary acquisition and self-directed learning motivation of non-English major students in Taiwan. This research aimed to enhance vocabulary proficiency and investigate the effectiveness of YouTube on self-directed learning motivation. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researcher involved 128 first-year university students from the communication and electrical engineering departments, with communication majors comprising the experimental group (n = 65) and electrical engineering majors comprising the control group (n = 63). The instruments used were a pre-test and a post-test using the national english examination vocabulary, questionnaires on YouTube-assisted learning attitudes, and focus group interviews. Results showed significant vocabulary improvement in both groups, with communication majors increasing from 42.83 to 51.54 points and electrical engineering majors from 42.41 to 54.05 points. This study concluded that YouTube-assisted vocabulary learning effectively improves students' vocabulary proficiency and self-directed learning motivation. Research gaps exist in the lack

of studies targeting younger learners, particularly 7th-grade students, and the absence of research on specialized educational channels, such as "Smile and Learn English". Additionally, limited research uses pre-experimental designs to measure vocabulary improvement through YouTube videos among junior high school students.

The second study conducted by AL-Ameri & Rababah (2020) focusing on the effect of using YouTube on developing elementary students' vocabulary in English as a foreign language (EFL) context. The research aimed to identify the importance of using technology, especially YouTube, in vocabulary development among elementary students and investigate whether modern teaching techniques play a constructive role in English language classrooms. The study employed a quantitative experimental design with pre-test and post-test methods, involving 30 fifth-grade female students from Al-Masharaa Public School in Jordan. The sample was equally divided into a control and experimental group, where the control group received traditional instruction, while the experimental group used YouTube videos. The instruments used were pre-test and post-test consisting of 10 items with a perfect score of 20. The study concluded that YouTube videos have great potential in developing vocabulary knowledge, with students finding them more interesting and motivational than traditional methods. Research gaps include limited sample scope (only female students from one school), focus on the fifth-grade level only, and lack of attention to specific educational YouTube channels like in this research use "Smile and Learn English" YouTube videos.

The third study, conducted by Syamsinar et al. (2023), examined the effectiveness of the YouTube channel "Joesin Translation" in improving vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students. The objective was to determine whether watching English learning videos from a specific YouTube channel could significantly improve students' vocabulary. This study utilized a pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The vocabulary focused on 50 words learned repeatedly through writing and speech. The research participants were 26 junior high school students, and the instrument used was a vocabulary test consisting of multiple-choice questions covering nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The

results showed an increase in the mean score from 39.99% (pretest) to 73.71% (posttest), and the t-test results confirmed a statistically significant improvement. The conclusion was that "Joesin Translation" YouTube videos, characterized by their clear pronunciation and translation capabilities, significantly enhanced vocabulary acquisition. Although the method and participants were similar at the junior high school level, the current research utilizes a child-friendly YouTube channel, "Smile and Learn English," which features animations, as seventh-grade students are still classified as young learners. The number of vocabulary words taught daily was also adjusted to children's abilities.

The fourth study was conducted by Nawir et al. (2022), focusing on the impact of the YouTube channel "Let's Talk Free English Lessons" in improving language proficiency among first-grade junior high school students. The objective was to determine whether this channel could improve students' vocabulary. The research employed a pre-experimental design with 23 participants, utilizing a pretest and a posttest as evaluation instruments. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in vocabulary scores after treatment ($p < 0.05$). This study concluded that YouTube videos are beneficial for vocabulary development. Nonetheless, the material included in this study was not specifically designed for young learners, and the language elements were not analyzed in depth. This contrasts with the existing study, which emphasizes form (spelling and pronunciation), meaning, and vocabulary usage.

The fifth study, conducted by Alizadeh et al. (2022), focused on the effect of BBC News lessons on the vocabulary learning of high school EFL learners. This research aimed to investigate the effect of listening and viewing BBC News lessons as a teaching and learning tool on vocabulary acquisition. Using a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test-post-test control group, the researchers involved 42 male twelfth-grade students from Iran, divided into an experimental group (n=19) and a control group (n=23). The instruments used were the KET test, Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS), post-test, and 8 BBC News video lessons. The experimental group learned vocabulary through BBC News lessons while the control group used traditional dictionary-based methods over eight sessions.

Results showed a significant difference between the experimental group (M = 23.68) and the control group (M = 18.52), t (40) = 2.06, p = .046. The study concluded that BBC News lessons are practical for vocabulary learning and can be recommended for English as Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Research gaps include the focus on twelfth-grade students using authentic news content. In contrast, the current research targets seventh-grade students using educational YouTube videos specifically designed for language learning, representing different educational approaches and age groups.

The sixth study conducted by Hasanah et al., (2025) focused on exploring students' experiences using YouTube as a medium for learning English vocabulary. This research aimed to explore students' experiences using YouTube for vocabulary learning and the challenges they faced. Using a qualitative approach with phenomenological design, the researchers interviewed 15 high school students who frequently used YouTube during and outside class sessions. The instrument used was a semi-structured interview. Results showed that YouTube increased students' motivation, engagement, and vocabulary retention due to its visual and contextual content. However, students also reported difficulties in accessing stable internet connections and identifying reliable channels. This study concluded that YouTube is effective when used in conjunction with teacher guidance. Research gaps lie in the lack of quantitative evidence measuring actual vocabulary improvement and the absence of focus on specific educational YouTube channels. The participants also differed, as this study focused on the junior high school level.

The seventh relevant study was conducted by Rini et al. (2024), the focus of their research was to investigate the effectiveness of using YouTube as a learning medium to improve vocabulary mastery among seventh-grade students. The main objective was to determine whether incorporating YouTube videos into classroom instruction could significantly impact students' vocabulary mastery. The research utilized a quantitative pre-experimental design featuring a one-group pretest-posttest structure. The participants consisted of 35 seventh-grade students, and the instruments used were vocabulary tests administered before and after the treatment. The findings indicated a notable enhancement in students vocabulary scores, with

the average rising from 66.67 to 81.11. The statistical analysis showed a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant effect. The researchers concluded that YouTube is an effective tool for enhancing vocabulary mastery and recommended its use as an engaging and accessible medium in English language teaching. However, the study focused on general vocabulary improvement and did not explore specific aspects such as spelling, word usage in context, or meaning of the word. The current research aims to address this gap by using the Smile and Learn YouTube channel and focusing on categorized vocabulary elements: spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and use within a junior high school setting.

Overall, prior research suggests that utilizing YouTube as an educational platform has great potential in improving students' vocabulary mastery. Nevertheless, most of these studies only assessed vocabulary improvement in general without examining specific aspects such as spelling, pronunciation, word meaning, and word usage in sentence contexts in depth. Additionally, most studies used general YouTube channels that may not necessarily be suitable for the characteristics and learning needs of junior high school students. Therefore, this research aims to fill these gaps by using an educational channel specifically designed for children, namely "Smile and Learn English". This channel provides interactive and educational visual content that is more age-appropriate and focused on developing vocabulary mastery for seventh-grade students.