CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an explanation of the research, including the background of the study, research questions, research purposes, research significance, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Background of Study

Vocabulary is the most essential thing when learners begin learning a language. It is also important for EFL students to learn English because knowledge of vocabulary is the foundation for understanding the language and is related to all language skills. Knowledge of vocabulary, including spoken and written vocabulary (Kamil et al., 2008:13). Vocabulary is understanding the meaning of words. Expanding students' vocabulary knowledge bank is crucial to mastery. The higher the vocabulary knowledge of the students, the easier it is to understand the text, said Marie Laurent (2004:2). In her book, Widyaningsih (2006:4), it has been shown that people who have a fascination with words (vocabulary) will improve their listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. According to Bean (1996:129), among the four language skills, reading is considered one of the most challenging skills for students to master, as many students currently lack reading skills. Additionally, according to Bromley's research (2004:3), vocabulary knowledge enhances academic achievement, reading comprehension, fluency, critical thinking, and communication. However, the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary size is complex and dynamic (Hu & Nation, 2000, p. 403). Vocabulary often involves understanding individual words, whereas comprehension usually refers to understanding a larger part of the text. A fundamental aspect of comprehension, according to Scott (2007:2), is being able to deal with unfamiliar words encountered in a text. The purpose of this statement is to emphasize the importance of vocabulary in reading activities. Those statements suggest that reading requires much vocabulary. This study examines the relationship between

vocabulary and reading comprehension, as understanding the meaning of words also requires familiarity with their usage and context.

While teaching English in Indonesian schools focuses on improving students' oral and written skills, the primary competence is Discourse Competence (Depdikbud, 2004:6). This indicates that students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills need to be enhanced. However, in this case, many students in Indonesia still lack mastery of vocabulary and reading comprehension skills (Syahruni, 2021, p. 107). Reading can be challenging for students because they lack sufficient vocabulary knowledge, and second, because students do not practice reading in-depth. Nilfouroushan (2012, p. 164) stated that vocabulary is the most essential part of learning and using language. Teachers must focus on students' vocabulary mastery as the goal of teaching reading in senior high schools, which is to teach students how to extract information from English-language books. In addition, Olmos (2009, p. 5289) stated that learners are more likely to know words if they occur frequently; however, when words occur less frequently, students will also know them less. The students' internal factors—such as their interest, motivation, intelligence, and limited vocabulary—as well as external factors—such as the limited learning facilitations—influenced the students' scores.

Meanwhile, learners are easily distracted by things apart from studying. One of them is games, especially digital games that can be played on mobile phones, computers, PlayStation, and other modern devices. Several studies have shown that digital games are now an integral part of everyday routines, especially for students and adolescents (Ito et al., 2008:17). Typically, digital games use English as the default language. Alternatively, students and teachers can use this method as one of the alternatives to learn English, as 74% of teachers in a 2013 nationally representative sample of grade 8 teachers reported using technology games. In total, 80% of teachers stated that this was for educational purposes. They mainly use Games and applications (Taeuchi and Vaala, 2014:5). For instance, Sarlita D. Matra (2020:50), in her research, showed that Duolingo

application (which is one of the English digital games) is practical in helping students' vocabulary mastery. Many recent studies have shown that the various technologies and digital games teachers use can be influenced by their comfort with the technology and resources available in the schools where they teach. The researcher conducted this study to determine whether students use English digital games to enhance their vocabulary and improve reading comprehension.

The researcher was interested in studying EFL students who play English digital games to learn vocabulary for reading comprehension. The researcher conducted this study on the students of SMAN 1 Pangalengan, Pangalengan, Bandung. The learning conditions of the school's facilities are satisfactory, while students' English test results varied significantly, ranging from poor to well-developed English vocabulary. Additionally, students require guidance to improve their English comprehension, while the chapter study should continue to progress so that they can better understand the material, following the Merdeka curriculum of the Ministry of Education. Since 2022, SMAN 1 Pangalengan has been implementing the Merdeka curriculum, which is applied equally to all classes. Currently, students have access to mobile phones, which are necessary for supporting their learning needs in class. While the students are more into gaming, they were quite enthusiastic when learning through games. The researcher conducted the study at SMAN 1 Pangalengan, focusing on the condition titled "Utilizing English Digital Games for Learning Vocabulary in Reading Comprehension of EFL Students."

B. Research Questions

The researcher is intended to answer these two following questions:
a. What are the students' problems during learning vocabulary in reading comprehension?
b. How are the students' perceptions about utilizing English digital games for learning vocabulary in reading comprehension?

C. Research Purposes

From the research questions above, this study aims to obtain these two following purposes:

a. To find out the students' problems during learning vocabulary in reading comprehension.

b. To find out the students' perceptions about utilizing English digital games for learning vocabulary in reading comprehension.

D. Research Significances

The significance of research anticipates that the results of this study will be theoretically significant and have practical applications.

Practical Significances:

Practically, this study is anticipated to provide a significant contribution to:

a. For students

1) Enrich their vocabulary through English digital games.

2) Understand the instructions and stories in English digital games.

3) Motivate EFL students to be more interested in learning from the media they like, one of which is digital games.

b. For teacher

The teacher will find suitable strategies and methods for teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension to students.

c. For future researchers

This research is expected to provide additional information for other researchers to conduct further research in the related field.

Theoretical Significances

Theoretically, the results of this study could assist researchers in gathering information about:

a. The research can answer the research questions based on previous studies and the current study.

b. Reading comprehension could be improved by enriching vocabulary.

c. Vocabulary learning among EFL students remains in the basic to intermediate range, and words commonly used in everyday life can be found in English digital games.

E. Conceptual Framework

Here, the researcher focused on learning their vocabulary and reading comprehension. It is considered that knowing and understanding English vocabulary, along with its meaning, is the most fundamental aspect of learning a language. Reading comprehension relies heavily on vocabulary. It is also believed to be a challenge that can hinder learning English as a second language, particularly in terms of reading comprehension. When a reader of a text in a second language with a limited vocabulary attempts to interpret it or understand it well, they will encounter some struggles. As a result, it is anticipated that mastering vocabulary will improve reading comprehension.

Figure 1. 1 Conceptual Framework
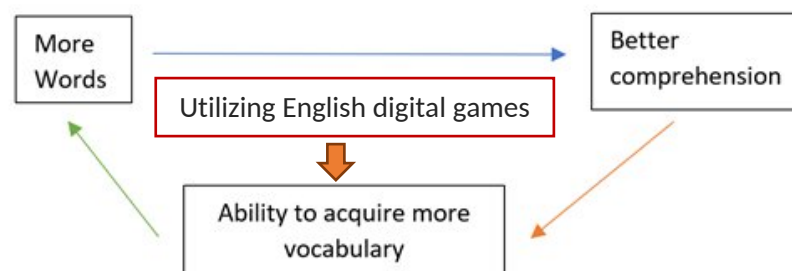
Students often divert their attention to things that are entertaining rather than educational, such as playing games on their cell phones or other electronic devices. The existing digital games always feature a visual display that is not boring, and sometimes, some games require strategy or mental acuity to play. Then, every digital game must have a storyline; otherwise, it would always have instructions on how to play it, and the language used is usually English, as it is the

default language. Students cannot help but learn the meaning of English vocabulary, which indirectly increases their knowledge.

The researcher examined 10th-grade students, as their psychology is generally starting to form and fits the scope of this research. Then, using qualitative data in this research. First, the study employed observation to assess their abilities in vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, identify their difficulties in learning vocabulary, and determine whether other media are necessary for learning vocabulary in reading comprehension. Second, a questionnaire was used to gather data on each learner's preferences and knowledge of digital games. If there are well-known digital games, the researcher can recommend some that help learners improve their English skills. After that, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews to explore the contents of the collected forms, asking more detailed questions. All the above were done to find solutions to existing research problems, one of which is by using their preferred media, namely digital games. Besides being entertaining, they can also provide indirect knowledge of the English language.

F. Previous Studies

The first previous study, entitled "Video-game Based Instruction for Vocabulary Acquisition with English Language Learners: A Bayesian Meta-analysis" (2020), is from Educational Research Review, Volume 30, by Christopher G. Thompson. The study reveals a moderate effect on English language learning among video gaming users compared to non-video game users, specifically in two areas where video gaming users' English language learning is improved. Besides, the study has focused on the use of commercial bookshelves and examined how literature can influence digital game learning in second language development and vocabulary learning.

The second study conducted at SMP N 8 Pontianak by Wahyu Ningtias was titled "Improving Students' Vocabulary in Descriptive Text by Using Climbing up the Ladder Game" (2017). According to the findings, students'

vocabulary, as well as their ability to spell and understand the meaning of words, increased as a result of playing the climbing up the ladder game. Mean scores for students increased from 66.67 in the first cycle to 81 in the second cycle and 82.28 in the third cycle, demonstrating their progress. As a result, the students improved their vocabulary and achieved a KKM score in the second and third cycles.

The third study is "Duolingo Applications as Vocabulary Learning Tools" by Sarlita D. Matra (2020) in Journal of English Literature, Linguistic, and Education Vol. 1. The purpose of this study was to describe the effectiveness of *Duolingo* application in teaching vocabulary, it found that students performed well in vocabulary mastery after being trained with *Duolingo* application.

The last study is "Digital Game-based Language Learning for Vocabulary Development" by Mahjabin Chowdhury, et al (2024) in Journal of Computers and Education Open Vol. 6. The findings of this study on DGBLL for L2 vocabulary learning indicate there were statistically significant improvements from pre-tests to post-tests in both vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. The unique method of network analysis acknowledges the complexity of learning experiences, and the findings suggest that DGBLL settings can offer students a more engaging and less stressful environment, which supports effective vocabulary development.

On the other hand, this study differs from all the previous ones mentioned above. It focuses more on the influence of digital games in helping EFL students to enrich their vocabulary and relate to the development of their reading comprehension as well.