

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter includes the background of the research, the research questions, the research purposes, the research significance, the research scope, the conceptual framework, the hypothesis, and the previous studies.

#### **A. Background**

A solid command of vocabulary forms the essential basis of learning any language and plays a decisive role in enabling learners to communicate meaningfully. For students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary becomes even more vital because it underpins the growth of all core language skills speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Richards & Renandya, 2002). When learners lack an adequate range of words, they frequently face difficulties in comprehending messages and expressing their own ideas, which ultimately limits both their academic development and their ability to communicate effectively. Therefore, vocabulary instruction should be prioritized from the early stages of language acquisition to ensure learners are equipped with the lexical resources necessary for meaningful interaction. Hiebert and Kamil (2005) emphasize that effective vocabulary instruction must be comprehensive, structured, and engaging, involving exposure to a wide range of words through rich and meaningful contexts, rather than relying on rote memorization.

To further highlight the indispensable role of vocabulary, Valdez (2023) presents a compelling metaphor: grammar is like a string, and vocabulary is like copper coins. While the string is necessary, it is the coins that carry value, demonstrating that without vocabulary, grammatical structures lack communicative substance. Wang (2001) also highlights this idea, noting that grammar is limited, but vocabulary is infinite in scope. Recognizing this, Permana (2017) advocates for the early integration of vocabulary instruction in language education, especially for adolescent and adult learners. Although teaching strategies may differ by age group, the development of vocabulary remains fundamental across all levels. Learners with limited vocabulary knowledge often face challenges across all domains of language: reading, listening, writing, and speaking, which underscores the urgent

need for effective, engaging, and age-appropriate vocabulary instruction in EFL classrooms.

Based on the researcher's observation conducted in one of the senior high schools located in East Bandung, it was found that students in grade eleven encountered considerable difficulties in acquiring English language skills. These difficulties primarily stemmed from their limited mastery of vocabulary and a noticeable lack of motivation to engage in English learning activities. Such conditions serve as substantial hindrances to the overall language learning process, highlighting the need for more engaging and effective strategies to enhance students' vocabulary mastery and interest in learning English. To master English, students require a strong vocabulary base, low vocabulary mastery hinders student's capacity to effectively use the English language.

Richard and Renandya (2003:255) explain that learners who do not possess a broad vocabulary repertoire or effective strategies for learning new words tend to underperform and may become discouraged from engaging in valuable language-learning experiences, such as listening to the radio, interacting with native speakers, using the language in diverse situations, reading, or watching television. Consequently, strengthening students' vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in enabling them to learn and apply English more efficiently.

In addressing this issue, Permana (2017) defined that English teachers must offer alternative techniques, methods, or strategies for teaching vocabulary to facilitate an interactive teaching and learning process. The teaching strategies should be straightforward, enjoyable, motivating, and stimulating, and they should enhance students' capabilities. Numerous alternative strategies exist to involve students in vocabulary activities; one of the learning strategies that can be used in the teaching vocabulary process is to use games. Many types of games can be used in the teaching vocabulary.

The Chain Spelling Game is an instructional activity that requires learners to construct new words by using letters from previously given words, thereby engaging them in a process that supports the development of their understanding of vocabulary and spelling structures. As stated by Wetsley (2004), this game

functions not only as a practical exercise in word formation but also as an effective strategy for enhancing students' comprehension of spelling patterns and word construction. Beyond its impact on spelling, the Chain Spelling Game offers broader linguistic benefits, particularly in strengthening students' oral language abilities and enriching their vocabulary knowledge.

Through repeated practice and exposure to various word forms, learners become more adept at recognizing word meanings, using accurate pronunciation, and applying grammatical rules appropriately. Additionally, it promotes greater accuracy and fluency in spoken and written language. Supporting this view, Hemscott (2007:4) emphasizes that engaging in chain spelling activities not only boosts students' spelling capabilities but also ignites a deeper interest in exploring and understanding words. Therefore, the *Chain Spelling Game* serves as both an educational and motivational tool that can significantly contribute to language acquisition, particularly in vocabulary building and spelling proficiency.

Several prior studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of using a chain spelling game for mastery of English vocabulary. As found in research conducted by Amaliyah (2020) and Setyawati (2024) involving junior high school students, there was a marked distinction in vocabulary mastery achievements between those instructed through the word chain game and those taught without the use of such a method. Moreover, the research conducted by Agustine et al. (2023) revealed that the implementation of the Word Chain Game in vocabulary learning was positively received by teachers and students, as it fostered greater knowledge, mastery, engagement, and motivation. In another study conducted by Listyowati et al. (2023), the findings demonstrated that the use of the word chain game effectively enhanced students' vocabulary mastery compared to their prior performance.

Despite the growing number of studies on the use of games in vocabulary learning, there is still a research gap. Most studies do not focus specifically on the *chain spelling game*, especially for eleventh-grade students. In particular, few studies look at how this game can support students in improving their pronunciation, spelling, and understanding of vocabulary from English song lyrics. Since songs are familiar and appealing to many students, combining them with the

*chain spelling game* could make learning more interesting and effective. For this reason, this research aims to explore the use of *chain spelling games* based on English songs as a way to help students develop better vocabulary mastery.

## **B. Research Question**

The research investigates whether the use of chain spelling games from English songs can improve students' mastery of English vocabulary. Consequently, the researcher formulated the following three research questions:

1. What is the students' vocabulary mastery before using the *chain spelling game* from an English song?
2. What is the students' vocabulary mastery after using the *chain spelling game* from an English song?
3. Is there any significant difference in students' vocabulary mastery before and after using the *chain spelling game* from an English song?

## **C. Research Purposes**

Given the research background, this research has several specific purposes that can be formulated as follows:

1. To assess students' vocabulary mastery before using the *chain spelling game* from an English song.
2. To assess students' vocabulary mastery after using the *chain spelling game* from an English song.
3. To figure out any significant difference in students' vocabulary mastery before and after using the *chain spelling game* from an English song.

## **D. Research Significances**

The research holds both theoretical and practical significance, each of which will be described in detail below:

### **1. Theoretical significances**

The research contributes to the development of language learning approaches, particularly in the field of vocabulary acquisition. By integrating chain spelling games with English songs, the study introduces an alternative method for enhancing vocabulary mastery in a more engaging and contextualized way. It also reinforces the relevance of interactive and auditory-

based learning strategies within the framework of second language acquisition theories, which emphasize the importance of repetition, meaningful input, and learner engagement.

## 2. Practical Significances

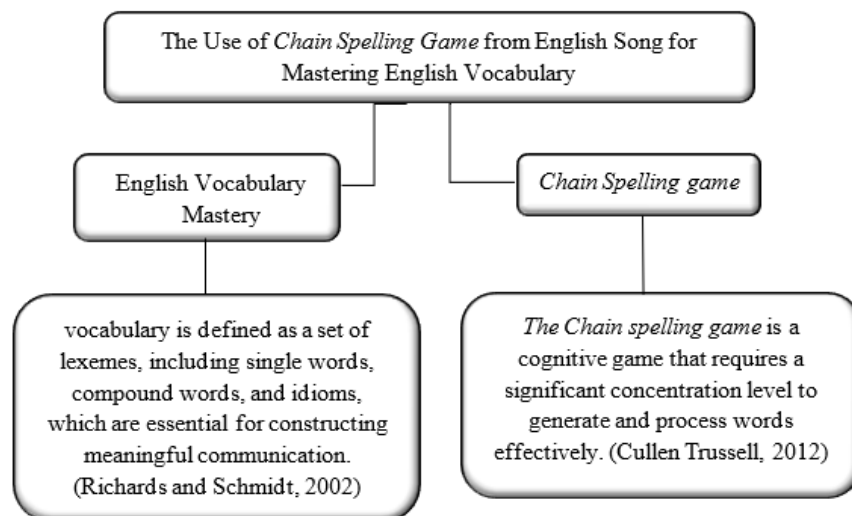
The research is expected to provide useful insights for students, teachers, and future researchers. For students, the combination of *chain spelling games* and English songs may provide a more enjoyable and less stressful way to learn new vocabulary, enabling them to become more engaged and motivated in the learning process. For English teachers, this method can serve as an alternative teaching strategy to make vocabulary lessons more interactive, helping to sustain students' interest and participation in the classroom. Moreover, the results of this research can be utilized by future researchers as a foundation for expanding investigations related to the application of instructional games and musical elements in language education, particularly in studies focused on vocabulary development.

## E. Research Scope

The research specifically focuses on implementing a chain spelling game using English songs to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. The study was conducted at SMA Mekar Arum and involved students from class XI B. The main emphasis is on students' vocabulary acquisition, particularly on how this method influences their ability to recognize, understand, and retain English words.

## F. Conceptual Framework

The research examines the implementation of chain spelling games, developed based on English songs, as a strategy to support learners in mastering English vocabulary. The researcher elaborates on the conceptual framework that underpins this approach below.



**Figure 1. 1 The Conceptual Framework**

Vocabulary is universally acknowledged as a fundamental component of language, serving as the foundation for effective communication and comprehension. As Richards and Schmitt (2002) define, vocabulary consists of lexemes, including individual words, compound words, and idiomatic expressions, which are essential for constructing meaning and communicating ideas. In the context of foreign language learning, vocabulary supports the development of the four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners may find it difficult to comprehend spoken or written input and express their ideas accurately. Satuna and Wardani (2015) further emphasize that vocabulary mastery is crucial for achieving fluency in English, while Humairoh et al. (2023) highlight its connection to learners' intellectual development and overall language competence. Similarly, Fachrozi et al. (2021) stated that vocabulary encompasses not just words but their meanings and functions in real communication.

Given its importance, teachers must be skillful in selecting appropriate instructional strategies that actively involve learners in vocabulary learning. One effective approach is the use of educational games. According to Davidovich et al. (2004), integrating games into classroom activities can enhance students' familiarity with the learning environment while providing enjoyable contexts for



vocabulary acquisition. Game-based learning fosters motivation, reduces anxiety, and encourages learner confidence, especially because students feel less pressure when making mistakes in a playful setting (Crookal, as cited in Davidovich et al., 2004).

Among the various vocabulary games, *the chain spelling game* has emerged as a particularly effective method. Kumar and Lightner (2007) note that games allow students to practice subject-specific vocabulary in engaging ways, while Trussell (2012) describes *the chain spelling game* as a cognitively stimulating activity requiring concentration and quick word recall. Ball (2012) similarly views word chain games as beneficial for developing vocabulary proficiency in a structured yet interactive manner. In this game, students construct a series of words in which each new word begins with the final letter of the previous one (e.g., *cat – tree – egg – glow – water*). Wetsley (2004) adds that this technique strengthens students' understanding of spelling patterns and word recognition. The activity not only reinforces vocabulary through repetition and association but also promotes active engagement, collaboration, and self-confidence.

Therefore, the researcher has chosen the topic of this study entitled "*The Use of Chain Spelling Game from English Song for Mastering English Vocabulary*" to explore how integrating an enjoyable and cognitively engaging technique supported by contextual input from English songs can improve students' vocabulary mastery in a foreign language learning environment.

### **G. Hypothesis**

A hypothesis functions as an initial assumption that guides the direction of a study by predicting the relationship between variables. It provides a basis for testing and analysis throughout the research process (Creswell, 2002). In quantitative research, identifying and defining variables is essential, as they help to frame the research questions and structure the investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research involves two key variables: The independent variable (X) is the use of a chain spelling game from English songs, while the dependent variable (Y) is students' vocabulary mastery. The hypothesis is articulated as follows:

1.  $H_a$ : There is a significant effect of using the chain spelling game from English songs on students' vocabulary mastery.
2.  $H_0$ : There is no significant effect of using the chain spelling game from English songs on students' vocabulary mastery.

#### **H. Previous Studies**

Numerous earlier studies investigated the use of chain word games as an instructional approach to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. One such study was conducted by Amaliyah (2020), entitled *"The Effect of Using Word Chain Game on Students' Vocabulary Mastery at Seventh Grade of SMP Ma'arif 1 Ponorogo."* This study sought to examine whether the use of the word chain game produced a notable improvement in students' vocabulary mastery compared to traditional instructional techniques. Utilizing a quantitative approach within a quasi-experimental framework, the research engaged two separate classes that were exposed to distinct instructional treatments: the experimental class learned vocabulary through the application of the word chain game, whereas the control class received instruction using the conventional discourse-based method. Cluster random sampling was used to select the sample from a population of 110 seventh-grade students, resulting in 43 students being chosen-22 in the experimental class and 21 in the control class. Data were collected through testing and documentation, with the primary data obtained via a series of vocabulary tests. The research procedure included a pre-test, treatment implementation, and a post-test. The collected scores were analyzed using the t-test formula with the assistance of SPSS version 16. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test, with an average score of 87.85 compared to 80.95. The t-test results indicated a significant difference, as the obtained t-value (3.482) exceeded the critical value (2.019) at  $df = 41$ . These findings led to the conclusion that the word chain game positively affected students' vocabulary mastery. However, Amaliyah's study was limited to younger learners and did not incorporate multimedia elements such as music. To address these gaps, the present research aimed to implement a chain spelling game using English song lyrics for eleventh-grade senior high school students.



Secondly, Agustine et al. (2023) explored *The Implementation of Word Chain Game to Teach Vocabulary in an Islamic Junior High School*. The study aimed to examine the teacher's strategies in implementing the game during vocabulary instruction, as well as to analyze both teacher and student perceptions regarding its use in the classroom. This qualitative case study was carried out with one English teacher and a group of 22 seventh-grade students at an Islamic junior high school in Tasikmalaya. The researcher gathered the data using three triangulated instruments classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The findings showed that the teacher applied the Word Chain Game by following a sequence of ten systematically organized stages. Furthermore, both the teacher and students expressed positive perceptions of the game's use in vocabulary learning, noting improvements in their vocabulary knowledge, mastery, engagement, interest, and motivation. Despite some students encountering challenges in participating in the activity, the teacher was able to effectively address these difficulties.

While the research conducted by Agustine et al. (2023) confirmed the potential of the Word Chain Game in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, it presented several notable limitations. The study only included junior high school students, did not incorporate multimedia elements like music, and used a purely descriptive qualitative approach. Additionally, the word chain activity used followed a traditional format without innovative enhancements. Addressing these gaps, the present research aimed to introduce a chain spelling game integrated with English song lyrics to offer a more engaging and auditory-driven learning experience. This study also targeted senior high school learners and utilized a pre-experimental design to obtain measurable evidence of the strategy's effectiveness in improving vocabulary mastery.

Thirdly, a relevant study was conducted by Listyowati et al. (2023) at MA Miftahul Qulub Polagan, which examined the use of the Word Chain Game to enhance students' English vocabulary mastery. The researchers identified that many students struggled with vocabulary acquisition due to monotonous instructional methods, which often resulted in boredom and low motivation. To address this problem, the Word Chain Game was implemented as an engaging

learning strategy. This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles to examine learning improvements. The study involved students of MA Miftahul Qulub Polagan Galis, with a sample of 30 learners from class XII PA2. Data were obtained through assessments, observations, and field note documentation. The results showed consistent progress, with 63% of students achieving the minimum score in the first cycle and rising to 87% in the second cycle. The class average also increased from 73 to 80. Overall, the findings suggest that the Word Chain Game contributed effectively to enhancing vocabulary mastery among senior high school learners. Nevertheless, the study did not integrate musical elements or explore innovative adaptations of the game format. The present research aimed to address these gaps by implementing a chain spelling game using English song lyrics through a pre-experimental design involving eleventh-grade students.

Then, a study conducted by Setyawati (2024), entitled *The Effectiveness of Crossword Puzzle and Word Chain Game in Teaching Vocabulary at MTs Al-Islam Joresan, Ponorogo*, explored the impact of two game-based learning strategies crossword puzzles and word chain games on students' vocabulary acquisition. Utilizing a quasi-experimental design, the research included both pre-tests and post-tests to assess students' progress. This research contrasted two cohorts: one group was taught through game-based activities, while the other received traditional instruction. Using a random sampling method, class VII F with 29 learners served as the experimental group, and class VII E with 28 learners functioned as the control group. The results showed that students exposed to the games achieved notably better gains in vocabulary mastery compared to the control class. The interactive and enjoyable nature of the games contributed to more effective learning and retention. Overall, the study emphasized that integrating educational games into vocabulary instruction could significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. However, the study did not incorporate multimedia elements such as music, was conducted at a lower educational level, and employed a quasi-experimental design. To address these limitations, the present research aimed to implement a chain spelling game using English song lyrics within a pre-experimental framework involving eleventh-grade senior high school students, with

the intention of providing a more engaging, contextualized, and innovative approach to vocabulary learning.

Overall, previous studies suggested that word chain games could enhance students' vocabulary mastery. However, most of these studies examined vocabulary development in a general context and did not specifically focus on aspects such as spelling, pronunciation, or word meaning. Moreover, the majority of them employed conventional word chain games without integrating other media, such as music. Therefore, the researcher conducted the present study to address those gaps by implementing a chain spelling game based on English songs to improve students' vocabulary mastery, using a pre-experimental research design.

