

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides general explanations of what the researcher will discuss in this research. The introductory part contains several subheadings such as background of study, research question, objective of study, scope of the study, significance of study, and organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of The Study

English is one of the most frequently used languages by many people both at school, in the office and in daily communication. In addition, not a few products of necessity use English terms. In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language since it is not spoken in society, its accuracy is the main focus of learning English (Setiyadi, 2020, p.16). The most basic thing in the process of learning English is vocabulary mastery. With good mastery and understanding, learners will easily find suitable words to explain their opinions, ideas, and expressions. This is justified by the fact that vocabulary is the foundation of all language skills. As Richard and Renandya point out, the core component of language proficiency and the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read and write is the role of vocabulary. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learner will face difficulties in understanding input and producing output effectively.

Schmitt (2000, as cited in Huang & Eslami, 2013) suggests that vocabulary learning strategies are a means of enhancing vocabulary learning. Learners can use several strategies, such as using a dictionary, receiving help from the teacher or peer, or parsing the meaning of a word from its context, to facilitate the learning of new words (Harley & Hart, 2000, as cited in Huang & Eslami, 2013). Meanwhile, one potential learning strategy that is predicted to be widely used is using a dictionary.

Dictionaries are a source of information to enrich vocabulary. Vocabulary is considered as the 'building block' of language without which a

message would be difficult to convey (Amirian & Heshmatifar, 2013). McCarthy (1990, as cited in Amirian & Heshmatifar, 2013) states “*Without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way*”. As the basis of communication, understanding is often considered a source of problems for second or foreign language learners. In English Language Learning (ELL), vocabulary plays an important role both at the elementary and college levels. When foreign language learners find words

that are not familiar or are not known, one possible strategy is to consult a dictionary. Aitchison (2003, as cited in Rachmawati, 2017) stated that words are all about how we learn, remember, understand, and find the appropriate ones to use them. Schmitt (2000, as cited in Huang & Eslami, 2013) suggested that language learners need a vocabulary size of 2,000 word families to maintain a conversation, and at least 10,000 word families for reading comprehension of academic texts. Without a question, vocabulary is the initial factor to all the language skills, and a person with a limited vocabulary might find difficulties in speaking, writing, reading or understanding in a second language or foreign language learning (Halilah et.al, 2014, as cited in Rachmawati, 2017).

Along with the development of the era, in this era, human life is inseparable from the ease of obtaining information, technology, and communication. As for the education sector where extraordinary progress in computer-mediated tools makes it easier to obtain various types of learning resources. Various types of learning resources produced in print or conventionally are slowly declining and turning into electronic or digital reference materials, such as E-Library, Digital Classes, Virtual Classroom, as well as Digital Dictionary which can be utilized in improving the teaching and learning process. In this case, digital dictionaries play an important role in learning for foreign language learners. In addition to easy use, accessible anywhere and anytime, digital dictionaries create more options to overcome unknown or partially known words. Unlike paper dictionaries that take longer to search for words, digital dictionaries have the advantage of a more efficient

search speed. In addition, accuracy in the translation process, even phonetics, is considered effective as a media or tool in learning English. According to Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013, as cited in Nugraha et.al, 2019), a digital dictionary is an electronic aid that offers immediate access to reference information with a clear and direct return path to the target information.

Digital dictionaries as a tool for acquiring vocabulary will really help students in the language learning process. Digital dictionaries that complement ordinary print dictionaries serve as additional assets in learning new vocabulary. These dictionaries can be accessed via various electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and computers. They offer a variety of features that were previously absent from paper dictionaries. According to Nesi (1999, as cited in Rezaei & Davoudi, 2016), that digital dictionaries offer unprecedented advantages with features such as ease of access, high speed, multimedia environment, co-references, and a non-leaner approach in giving vocabulary knowledge to the language learner. This provides a positive perception of the use of technology including digital tools to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. With the help of electronic learning tools such as digital dictionaries, researchers want to know EFL students' preferences and needs on digital dictionaries in their vocabulary acquisition.

This study is also supported by several previous studies related to the use of digital dictionaries. The first previous study conducted by Hakim, Abidin, & Bahari (2018), the study was conducted to investigate the effect of electronic dictionaries on students' vocabulary mastery at the tenth grade students of Senior High School Number 3 Bengkulu, Indonesia. Then, research by Wulandari (2018) analyzed the impact of using a pocket electronic dictionary on EFL students' vocabulary learning strategies. And also research conducted by Ambarwati & Mandasari (2022) which discusses the influence of the online Cambridge dictionary on students' pronunciation and vocabulary of students at Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia (UTI). In general, some of these studies only focus on the influence or outcomes resulting from the use of dictionaries, especially electronic dictionaries (digital dictionaries) on vocabulary learning for EFL learners.

Unfortunately, research regarding students' preferences and needs in using digital dictionaries are still rarely discussed. Some of the research mentioned above generally discusses the advantages, disadvantages and influence of digital dictionaries. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by conducting research on students' preferences and needs on digital dictionaries as a tool for vocabulary acquisition. This study aims to explore the experiences and beliefs of Indonesian EFL students about using digital dictionaries for their vocabulary acquisition.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on this background, the formulation of the research problem is as follows:

1. What are EFL students' preferences in using digital dictionaries as a tool for vocabulary acquisition?
2. What are EFL students' needs in using digital dictionaries as a tool for vocabulary acquisition?

## **1.3 Objective of The Study**

Referring to the research questions mentioned above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To explore the EFL students' preferences in using digital dictionaries as a tool for vocabulary acquisition.
2. To explore the EFL students' needs in using digital dictionaries as a tool for vocabulary acquisition.

## **1.4 Scope of The Study**

The scope of this study focuses only on the use of Indonesian-English or English-Indonesian digital dictionaries which aims to explore the experiences and beliefs of Indonesian EFL learners, as well as to find out the students' preferences and need on the use of digital dictionaries. In addition, the subjects of this study are domestic students as EFL learners at one of the universities in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia.

## 1.5 Significance of The Study

This study is intended to provide deeper information on the use of digital dictionaries for vocabulary acquisition based on the experiences and beliefs of Indonesian EFL learners in their English courses. Finding out in the form of a questionnaire or interview the reasons and views for Indonesian EFL learners using digital dictionaries as a media or tool in their vocabulary learning. In this regard, this study is expected to provide benefits to researchers to develop knowledge and provide awareness to other learners in an effort to maximize the use of digital dictionaries in English courses, and how it can be used as a strategy in vocabulary learning.

## 1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations, the researcher created several keywords to clarify terms related to this research:

### 1.6.3 Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is a part of vocabulary learning. Vocabulary learning is an essential part in foreign language learning as the meanings of new words are very often emphasized (Alqahtani, 2015). Jenkins (2023) defines that vocabulary acquisition refers to the process of learning and acquiring unfamiliar words and their meanings, either through direct instruction or through exposure to language in different contexts. Defining components of the vocab acquisition model are pronunciation (knowing how to pronounce words), definition (know the meaning of words), and use (knowing how to use words in the right context).

### 1.6.1 Dictionary Use

In foreign language learning, one of the identification strategies involved in vocabulary is to consult a dictionary. Dictionaries, which are reference sources, are not only a source for the meaning of a word contain a lot of information from spelling to pronunciation, grammar to the use of meaning (Gurlek, 2023). In this study, the term dictionary use refers to the experience and beliefs, as well as opinions of Indonesian

EFL learners regarding the use of dictionaries for their vocabulary acquisition.

### **1.6.2 Digital Dictionary**

A digital dictionary is a computer-controlled linguistic reference device. In general, a digital dictionary contains add-on memory cards for database storage, processing, expansion, and presentation (Nesi, as cited in Dash, 2017). Dash (2017) generally defines a digital dictionary as a resource that contains lexical information from one language, often presented in digital or electronic format, and sometimes accompanied by its equivalent or explanation in another language.

### **1.7 Organization of The Paper**

This paper is divided into three parts including Introduction, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology. The details are as follows:

#### **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the background of the study, research question, research objectives, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

#### **CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework and relevant studies related to the issues explored. Theories discussed in this study are vocabulary acquisition in language learning, digital dictionaries usage, and dictionary types.

#### **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter examines the methodology employed in this study, which are the research design, research site and participants, data collection, and data analysis.

#### CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides the result of the research. The discussion of the findings is also presented in this chapter.

#### CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the conclusion of the research.