

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The primary objective of vocabulary instruction is to enable students to recognize the form of words, comprehend their meanings, and appropriately apply them within various linguistic contexts.

The form of a word refers to a system of symbols and signs utilized by a nation or distinct community as a means of communication. In other words, it represents a communicative system—spoken, written, or signed—based on meaningful symbols governed by specific structural rules.¹ In essence, vocabulary constitutes this system along with its conventions for combining linguistic elements. Once students have mastered the form of words, it is expected that they will be able to produce them accurately in both spoken and written expressions.

Furthermore, students must develop the ability to comprehend both the meaning and appropriate usage of the words they produce, as a lack of understanding in these aspects may hinder effective communication. Inaccurate interpretation or misuse of words can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication among speakers.

However, one of the most significant challenges in learning English is students' limited vocabulary. Based on observations conducted at the Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim Medan, the researcher found that the majority of students had difficulty understanding the teacher's instructions and explanations delivered in English.

Although the students have been exposed to English vocabulary since elementary school, their vocabulary mastery remains limited. When the teacher gave instructions in English, they often remained silent and unresponsive, primarily because they could not comprehend what

¹ John. W Santrock, Child Development Tenth Edition, (Dallas, University of Texas, 2004), p. 304

was being said. Similarly, when assigned tasks, many students were reluctant to complete them as they struggled to understand the reading materials and were uncertain about what to write. One contributing factor to these issues is the students' low level of vocabulary mastery.

The teacher's effort to enhance students' vocabulary mastery includes consistently motivating them to be more diligent in memorizing new words. However, despite these efforts, the students' vocabulary remains limited. Several factors may contribute to this issue, one of which is the use of less engaging or ineffective teaching techniques.

An effective teacher should be able to create an enjoyable and engaging classroom atmosphere, as both the learning environment and the teacher's instructional approach significantly influence students' achievement, particularly in learning English. This relates closely to the application of appropriate teaching methods. If the teacher fails to select a suitable method, students may become disengaged and lose interest in the learning process. In addition, patience is essential for teachers when delivering the material to ensure students' understanding. Therefore, teachers need to identify and apply the most effective techniques for their classroom context. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a technique is defined as "a way of doing an activity that needs skill"²; thus, a teaching technique can be understood as the specific way a teacher conducts the teaching and learning process.

There are two commonly recognized methods for teaching vocabulary, namely the Proprioceptive Method and the Mimicry Memorization Method. The Proprioceptive Method emphasizes word repetition, while the Mimicry Memorization Method focuses on grammatical structures and dialogue practice. Both methods are intended to encourage students to become more active participants in the classroom.

² Cambridge University Press. (2008). Definition of "[technique]". In *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press, p. 378

However, it is increasingly difficult to find students who are genuinely committed to studying vocabulary, as many perceive it as a challenging and monotonous task. Despite having learned vocabulary since elementary school, their mastery remains limited. This issue is evident among the students of Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim, Medan, where vocabulary proficiency continues to pose a significant problem.

A previous study conducted by Raudha Hayati (2012) investigated the comparison between the Proprioceptive and Mimicry Memorization Methods in improving students' vocabulary mastery. The findings revealed that the Mimicry Memorization Method had a more significant influence on students' vocabulary achievement compared to the Proprioceptive Method. This suggests that learning through structured repetition and dialogue practice enables students to internalize vocabulary more effectively. Nevertheless, considering that the educational context, student characteristics, and curriculum standards have evolved over the past decade, it is important to re-examine these methods in a current setting. Therefore, this research aims to verify and expand upon Hayati's findings within the learning environment of Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim Medan.

In light of the conditions described above, the researcher intends to conduct a study entitled: **“A Comparison Between the Proprioceptive and Mimicry Memorization Methods on Students' Vocabulary Mastery at Grade XI of Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim Medan.”**

B. Identification of the Study

Based on the background described above, several problems related to students' vocabulary mastery can be identified as follows:

1. Students' vocabulary mastery is still low, even though they have learned English since elementary school.

2. Students have difficulty understanding teachers' instructions or explanations given in English.
3. Students are less motivated to learn and memorize new vocabulary because they consider it difficult and monotonous.
4. The teaching methods used by teachers are sometimes less interesting and fail to engage students actively in the learning process.
5. There is limited empirical evidence comparing the effectiveness of the Proprioceptive Method and the Mimicry Memorization Method in the context of Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim Medan.

C. Limitation of the Study

To make the research more focused and manageable, this study is limited to examining the comparison between the Proprioceptive Method and the Mimicry Memorization Method in teaching English vocabulary to Grade XI students of Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim Medan. The study only focuses on students' vocabulary mastery, including their ability to recognize word forms, understand meanings, and use words appropriately in context. Other language skills, such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening, are beyond the scope of this research.

D. Formulation of the Study

Based on the limitation above, the research problems can be formulated as follows:

1. How is the students' vocabulary mastery after being taught using the Proprioceptive Method?
2. How is the students' vocabulary mastery after being taught using the Mimicry Memorization Method?

3. Is there a significant difference between the students' vocabulary mastery taught by using the Proprioceptive Method and those taught by using the Mimicry Memorization Method at Grade XI of Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim Medan?

E. Aim of the Study

In accordance with the formulation of the problems above, the purposes of this study are to:

1. Describe the students' vocabulary mastery after being taught using the Proprioceptive Method.
2. Describe the students' vocabulary mastery after being taught using the Mimicry Memorization Method.
3. Determine whether there is a significant difference between the students' vocabulary mastery taught by using the Proprioceptive Method and those taught by using the Mimicry Memorization Method at Grade XI of Modern Islamic Boarding School Nurul Hakim Medan.

F. Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the field of English language teaching, particularly in the area of vocabulary learning strategies. The findings may serve as additional reference material for future researchers investigating the effectiveness of various teaching methods in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

2. Practical Significance

- **For Teachers:** The findings can help English teachers identify more effective techniques for teaching vocabulary, thereby making learning activities more engaging and productive.
- **For Students:** The study may motivate students to apply the learning techniques that best enhance their vocabulary acquisition and improve their confidence in using English.
- **For Educational Institutions:** The results can serve as input for schools in developing innovative English teaching strategies that foster active learning and improve students' language proficiency.

