

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

English is widely regarded as the most important language for facilitating cross-cultural communication on a global scale. This perspective aligns with the findings of Sari, Pinkan, and Salmawati (2024), who contend that the presence of English in a globalised world can influence a nation's cultural development. Mastery of the English language is regarded as a long-term investment, as it enables individuals to engage in international activities. According to Holidazia and Rodliyah (2020), achieving proficiency in a new language necessitates an understanding of one's previous linguistic competencies. Vocabulary skills, therefore, play a pivotal role in the language learning process.

Knowledge of vocabulary is essential for attaining proficiency in a foreign language (Jumiarti, 2010, as cited in Yudha et al., 2021). A limited vocabulary can restrict a person's ability to construct sentences, choose fitting words, and express ideas clearly (Khaeriza, 2024). Therefore, vocabulary acquisition is an essential element for enhancing various skills, such as reading comprehension, writing proficiency, and effective communication in a second language (Rahmi and Syukur, 2023, as cited in Khaeriza, 2024).

According to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), language proficiency is divided into six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. These six levels are further divided into three main categories: beginner, intermediate, and proficient. The CEFR is considered a tool to measure educational achievements and goals for both teachers and learners. Based on the 2024 Applied Foreign Language curriculum, which adopts the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach, second-semester Applied Foreign Language students at Diponegoro University are at the intermediate level, or B1.

Based on the results of the oxford online placement test focusing on vocabulary proficiency, 27 out of 63 second-semester students in the Applied Foreign Languages Program majoring in English remained at the A2 level, despite

the program's expectation that students achieve the B1 level by the second semester. This gap is particularly significant because the transition from the A2 level to the B1 level poses considerable challenges in expanding vocabulary, necessitating the use of suitable learning materials (Jeon, 2025). Complex material, or material presented in a boring manner, often reduces a learner's interest in participating in the learning process (Jabu et al., 2025). This assertion is supported by data collected by the researcher through the distribution of a likert scale questionnaire, which indicates that second-semester Applied Foreign Languages students majoring in English exhibit a greater interest in learning English when learning materials are presented in the form of games.

Digital game-based learning is a medium for achieving specific educational goals through the elements and mechanisms of digital games, using problem-solving methods and challenges that provide a sense of accomplishment to actively engaged learners (Qian and Clark in Krath et al., 2021). Furthermore, the concept of digital game-based language learning, frequently referred to as DGBLL, has emerged as a significant pedagogical approach in contemporary language education. Dixon, Dixon, and Jordan (2022) consider digital game-based language learning a suitable method for promoting vocabulary acquisition. Digital game-based learning presents a variety of modalities, one of which is a memory matching card game. Sivakumar (2022) asserts that the memory matching card game serves as an educational tool, promoting the development of various cognitive skills, such as attention and concentration. This assertion is corroborated by the findings of a study conducted by Nevyta, Purba, and Hutagalung (2023), which demonstrated that post-test results following the implementation of the memory matching game to enhance German vocabulary comprehension were significantly superior compared to the results prior to the game's execution. That study demonstrates that memory card games have the potential to serve as a medium for language learning, with the objective of enhancing vocabulary retention and fostering increased student interest.

The researcher offers a solution in the form of a memory matching card game designed to assist learners in mastering vocabulary. This application was

made to help A2-level learners move up to the B1 level or learn on their own. This matching card game is designed to facilitate the mastery of functional vocabulary, including conjunctions and prepositions, quantifiers, and modal verbs. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the B1 level requires learners to integrate various language components into a coherent body of knowledge. Consequently, the memory matching card learning application was developed using a scaffolding approach consisting of three learning categories: translation, synonyms, and blank sentences.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, it is necessary to discuss the research questions as follows:

1. How to develop an educational game to increase English vocabulary, especially in terms of visual elements and gameplay features?
2. What are the needs and responses of the second-semester Applied Foreign Languages students regarding the development of this learning application?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are formulated as follows:

1. To develop a memory matching game application by focusing on its visual elements and gameplay features.
2. To identify the needs and responses of the second-semester Applied Foreign Languages students regarding the development of this learning application.

1.4 Research Benefits

The results of this study are expected to provide the following benefits:

1. For the Researchers

The benefits of this study for researchers enable them to attain a more profound understanding of the process of curating and carefully

assembling vocabulary items. Additionally, this research aims to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical skills in developing interactive learning media, specifically by applying digital language teaching principles to a functional educational game.

2. For the Learners

The benefit for learners is that this study provides an interactive matching card learning tool designed to enhance vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, this learning tool includes a blank sentence feature aimed at helping learners apply the vocabulary they have learned in previous mode. It is hoped that learners will be able to expand their vocabulary through this learning tool.

3. For the Institution

This study has several benefits for the university, including its potential use as a resource for self-directed English language learning at the university level. Additionally, it can supplement the repository for the development of language teaching technology. It can also serve as a reference for future researchers.

1.5 Research Output

This study produced LexiFun, a digital memory-matching card learning tool designed to improve functional vocabulary proficiency, especially among A2-level learners. The vocabulary selection generally aligns with CEFR A2 proficiency standards, although some words extend to the B1 level. The game enhances users' memory and serves as a self-directed learning tool. LexiFun is accessible through a link and is specifically developed for the Android platform, allowing learners to conveniently access and use the application on their Android devices.