

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

English has been understood as a language useful for opening opportunities for humans in real life. Various fields such as science, technology, and even entertainment have extensively used English in their applications (Winaldo & Oktaviani, 2022). To become proficient in English, learners are advised to master both language skills and component skills, where listening and reading skills are included in the receptive skills, while production includes speaking and writing skills (Chiriana, 2015, as cited by Yudha & Mandasari, 2021). Before moving on to those abilities, vocabulary is the most important part of a language that serves as the foundation for how learners can later speak, listen, read, and write, making mastery of vocabulary not an uncomplicated matter (Yudha & Mandasari, 2021). Thus, language mastery first starts with vocabulary learning so that learners can implement that vocabulary in other language skills.

Asyiah (2017) emphasizes that the role of vocabulary in learning a foreign language cannot be avoided because having a rich vocabulary greatly helps learners master the other four language skills. In her research, it is also explained that vocabulary affects the level of communication success, and it is appropriate that vocabulary learning receives a lot of attention in its teaching. Although considered important, vocabulary acquisition turns out to be a strong challenge for language learners. Many learners experience problems with pronunciation, spelling, and also the meaning of vocabulary (Oktarini et al., 2025). These difficulties, combined with the lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, cause language mastery to slow down and result in a lack of confidence in its use.

According to Kremmel et al. (2023), there is an influential framework called CEFR, which serves as a standard in explaining language proficiency commonly used in learning, skill certification, and education monitoring. CEFR describes language ability in basic, independent, and the highest level, which is proficient. Each of these levels has different descriptions of ability viewed from various aspects of language learning. Second-semester Applied Foreign Language

students at Universitas Diponegoro are expected to be at the intermediate level (B1). This target is based on the 2024 curriculum, which adopts an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach.

However, the results at the initial analysis stage indicate that the majority of second-semester students are still at the A2 level, with some still at the A1 level, which shows basic user proficiency. In the CEFR Companion Volume (2022), one aspect of language proficiency that develops is coherence and cohesion, which indicates that the transition from A2 to B1 involves not only vocabulary addition but also the ability to use functional vocabulary to construct meaning. Moreover, when learners are at the A2 level, the emergence of abstract vocabulary creates challenges, which can become more significant at the B1 level, thus requiring scaffolding methods to overcome existing difficulties (Jeon, 2025; Nguyen, 2024). According to Schmitt (2008, as cited in Jaiswal, 2024), several vocabulary learning strategies such as repeated memorization or word lists can be effective, but in some scenarios, this method is less suitable to accommodate students' learning styles. Additionally, the results of the student questionnaire showed an interest in learning English through games rather than books based on the questionnaire results.

Wang and Han (2021) stated that Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) has become popular along with technological advancements as a tool to help learning activities become more interactive. In this regard, many language educators use digital technology in learning, resulting in DGBLL or Digital Game-Based Language Learning, which combines language learning and games in one platform. Among the various types of digital games, one that can be used for learning vocabulary is the memory matching game, which helps learners remember vocabulary and its meanings (Qotrunnada, 2024). Several previous studies have also proven that memory card games are considered effective in acquiring and understanding vocabulary because they provide opportunities to learn and practice in a more enjoyable way (Agustina et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2019; Yudha & Mandasari, 2021). Nevertheless, previous research still has limitations in terms of vocabulary material and media which are still traditional.

Based on the actual condition of second-semester students of Applied Foreign Languages at Diponegoro University and previous research, this study offers a solution by developing a memory matching game application called LexiFun. This application is designed to help students recognize and understand three topics of functional vocabulary, namely conjunctions and prepositions, quantifiers, and modal auxiliary verbs. These topics were chosen based on their role in forming more coherent and cohesive sentences. Three learning modes, ranging from translation, synonyms, to blank sentences, are also implemented as a form of scaffolding method. The development of this game is expected to become a supporting tool that facilitates the transition from A2 to B1 level according to the users' needs.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions can be derived based on the background described previously:

1. How to create materials for educational game applications to help A2 learners learn English vocabulary?
2. What is the response of the second-semester Applied Foreign Languages students and experts towards the creation of this educational game?

1.3 Research Objectives

According to the research questions, the objectives of this study are the following:

1. To explain the process of creating game materials for basic English students to improve their vocabulary knowledge.
2. To evaluate how second-semester Applied Foreign Languages students and teaching experts respond to the creation of educational games for language learning.

1.4 Research Benefits

Some of the benefits are expected as a result of this study:

1. Benefit for the Researcher

This game helps to implement language theories like CEFR and vocabulary acquisition in practical digital applications. The creation of a memory matching game as a learning medium helped to understand how to connect basic language skills with more advanced levels. It enhanced professional competences in creating educational materials to overcome learners' difficulties in abstract vocabulary. This research is advantageous for future careers in English language teaching.

2. Benefit for the Learners

This game has the potential as a learning method for students to learn English functional words in a more engaging way. This game can help students overcome the difficulties of memorizing abstract terms by using memory matching methods. It focuses on developing the connecting word skills needed to reach the independent level. With three different modes, students can practice at their pace. This engaging approach transforms a language obstacle into an encouraging learning process.

3. Benefit for the Educational Provider

This game serves as a practical digital resource that supports the existing English materials. This game can be used as an additional tool to help learners improve their vocabulary knowledge outside the class. It helps educators by providing solutions for teaching non-concrete words. Institutions also can promote a more modern learning environment. This also ensures that the learning medium is aligned with CEFR, the international standards for language proficiency.

1.5 Research Output

This research resulted in developing an educational memory matching game called LexiFun, an Android-based application designed to support vocabulary learning. There are three topics of materials related to functional

vocabulary: conjunctions and prepositions, quantifiers, and modal auxiliary verbs. The topics in this game focus on introducing and reinforcing English vocabulary, particularly functional vocabulary. All vocabulary in this game consists primarily of A2-level words, with some A1 and B1-level words. The three topics are applied across three game modes: translation, synonym, and fill-in-the-blank sentences. These modes train students to recognize vocabulary and how to use it in sentences. There is also a word bank feature that players can study before playing the game. A level system is included to enhance the gaming experience within LexiFun. The hope is that students will find it easier to learn abstract vocabulary at a higher level.