

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE CHALLENGES IN LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to find out challenges in learning English vocabulary and to described factors that influences students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary at SMP N 40 Medan. Researcher conducted this research for eight-grade students at SMP N 40 Medan. This research has been carried out of using qualitative methods. The object of this research was from grade VIII-D students at SMP N 40 Medan which had 27 students. In collecting data, researcher used observation, interview and questionnaires. After collecting data, the next step stage carried out by the researcher was analyzing the data. Which in analyzing the data Miles and Huberman (2014). After analyzing the data, researcher found that students at SMP N 40 Medan did have a problem in difficulties in learning English vocabulary, especially in pronouncing and spelling vocabulary correctly (40,7%), feeling less confident in using English vocabulary in speaking (88.9%), and having difficulty in understanding the differences between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in English (70.4%). In addition, students also felt that the English vocabulary learning method in the classroom was ineffective (81.5%). This study has implications that teachers and schools need to improve English vocabulary learning methods and provide better support to students to overcome their difficulties in learning English vocabulary.

Keywords: Student's Perception, Challenges, English Learning, Vocabulary

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui tantangan dalam mempelajari kosakata bahasa Inggris dan mendeskripsikan faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi kesulitan siswa dalam mempelajari kosakata bahasa Inggris di SMP N 40 Medan. Peneliti melakukan penelitian ini pada siswa kelas delapan di SMP N 40 Medan. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Objek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas VIII-D di SMP N 40 Medan yang berjumlah 27 siswa. Dalam pengumpulan data, peneliti menggunakan observasi, wawancara dan kuesioner. Setelah mengumpulkan data, tahap selanjutnya yang dilakukan oleh peneliti adalah menganalisis data. Dalam menganalisis data tersebut menggunakan Miles dan Huberman (2014). Setelah menganalisis data, peneliti menemukan bahwa siswa di SMP N 40 Medan memang memiliki masalah dalam kesulitan mempelajari kosakata bahasa Inggris, terutama dalam mengucapkan dan mengeja kosakata dengan benar (40,7%), merasa kurang percaya diri dalam menggunakan kosakata bahasa Inggris dalam berbicara (88,9%), dan mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami perbedaan antara kata benda, kata kerja, kata sifat, dan kata keterangan dalam bahasa Inggris (70,4%). Selain itu, siswa juga merasakan bahwa metode pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris di kelas kurang efektif (81,5%). Penelitian ini berimplikasi bahwa guru dan sekolah perlu meningkatkan metode pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris dan memberikan dukungan yang lebih baik kepada siswa untuk mengatasi kesulitan mereka dalam mempelajari kosakata bahasa Inggris.

Keywords : Persepsi Siswa, Tantangan, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Kosakata

INTRODUCTION

One of the essential elements to mastering a foreign language is Vocabulary; English would

never be successful without learning and understanding vocabulary. Human existence depends on language; without it, there might be no human life. According to (Sinaga, 2022), language makes it easier for someone to unite perceptions with others because whatever activities we undertake require communication using appropriate and correct language. Having a vocabulary and a good knowledge of vocabulary supports mastering the four English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For aspects of English, English, being a foreign language to Indonesians, neither serves as their primary nor their second language (Trisnawati et al., 2019) Vocabulary and another aspect of English are essential. An important thing is because vocabulary is words that can stand alone and have a meaning or a collection of words whose meaning is known; it is undeniable that vocabulary is an essential point that plays a vital role in the English learning process. So, it is clear that vocabulary has a crucial role in language (Muzdalifah, 2018).

Asyiah (2017) stated that vocabulary is the main link between the other four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, expanding vocabulary mastery is essential for students who want to achieve English fluency. In this context, vocabulary mastery is crucial in strengthening students' English skills. In education in Indonesia, especially at the junior high school (SMP) level, vocabulary is essential for students to master language learning materials in Indonesian and foreign languages such as English (Kasno, 2004 in Pramesti, 2015). Good vocabulary mastery affects not only students' ability to speak but also their ability to absorb information conveyed by teachers and other learning resources. With sufficient vocabulary, students can express their opinions, ideas, and feelings verbally and in writing

. These skills include reading, listening, speaking, and writing (Rianti, 2017).

Despite its importance, many junior high school students in Indonesia encounter substantial challenges in learning English vocabulary. Nurhayati (2020) notes that a solid vocabulary base is vital for acquiring higher-level language skills. However, numerous students struggle to comprehend, memorize, and apply new vocabulary effectively, leading to suboptimal learning outcomes. These difficulties often stem from internal and external factors, significantly influencing students' vocabulary acquisition processes (Lumabi & Maleon, 2022).

According to the researcher's observation, eighth-grade students at SMP N 40 Medan face various challenges in learning English vocabulary. These challenges include difficulties understanding the meaning of words, pronunciation, and using new words in the proper context. These difficulties hinder students' communication skills and reduce their learning motivation. Therefore, this study aims to dig deeper into these problems and find practical solutions.

One of the main challenges is understanding the meaning of words. Many students have difficulty connecting new words with their meanings. For example, when introduced to the word "ambiguous," students may not immediately understand that the word means "unclear" or "various." This is often due to a lack of exposure to examples of the word's use in relevant contexts. Students who are only given a list of words without adequate explanations or examples tend to have difficulty remembering and using them in conversation. For this reason, teachers need to use more contextual teaching methods, such as reading texts or dialogues relevant to everyday life (Tanjung, 2020).

Pronunciation is also a big challenge for students. Pronunciation together with the vowels, consonants, stress, and intonation patterns that are segmental features (Sinaga, 2023). Many students are afraid of mispronouncing new words, such as the word "thorough," which is often mispronounced. This fear can make students feel embarrassed and hesitant when speaking. Mispronunciation not only hinders communication but also lowers their self-confidence. To overcome this problem, teachers can provide regular pronunciation exercises and utilize technology, such as language learning apps, that help students hear and imitate correct pronunciation. In this way, students can learn independently and become more confident using new vocabulary.

Another challenge is the difficulty of using new words in appropriate sentences. Students

often do not know how to apply new words in different situations. For example, the word "meticulous," which means "thorough," may be difficult for students to use without concrete examples. Teachers can help by providing examples and asking students to create their sentences. This approach allows students to understand the word's meaning and how to use it in the proper context, making it easier for them to remember and apply the vocabulary they are learning (Sulistiyawati et al., 2021).

Not only that, Students' difficulties in learning english vocabulary are influenced by various factors. According to Nurhalimah et al. (2020:74), internal factors include age level, cognitive and language abilities of children, and motivation to learn English. External factors include the family environment and school environment. Support from the family, interaction in the family environment, and the quality of teaching and methods used in schools play an essential role in children's vocabulary development.

One of the main factors is the student's educational background. Students with previous experience learning English, such as taking courses or having parents who speak English, usually have an easier time understanding new Vocabulary. They are already familiar with the language structure and correct pronunciation, making the learning process in class more manageable. In contrast, students without such experience often find it challenging to follow lessons, leading to frustration and lower learning motivation (Intani, 2012).

The teaching methods used by teachers also affect students' difficulties. If teaching only focuses on memorizing words without context, students will have difficulty understanding how to use new vocabulary in everyday life. For example, if teachers only give a list of words without explaining the meaning or example sentences, students may have difficulty remembering or using the phrase. Therefore, teachers must use more enjoyable and contextual teaching methods, such as language games, group discussions, or audio-visual media. This approach can help students understand and remember new vocabulary more efficiently, increasing their interest in learning. "A qualified teacher has the knowledge and skills to teach their students effectively, can meet students' needs, and can create a positive learning environment and relationship with " (Manurung, 2023)

The learning environment also affects students' abilities. An unsupportive environment, such as a lack of learning facilities or access to additional resources, can hinder the learning process. students who do not have internet access or additional learning materials will have difficulty finding information to understand new vocabulary. An unconducive classroom atmosphere, such as noise or lack of attention from teachers, can also disrupt student concentration. Therefore, schools need to create a supportive learning environment by providing a complete library, internet access, and comfortable classrooms (Isterya, 2019).

Social and psychological factors also play an essential role. Students who lack confidence or are afraid to speak English are often reluctant to actively participate in class, which hinders their development. On the other hand, support from friends and family can increase students' motivation and confidence. With a supportive atmosphere, students will be more courageous in practicing and learning new vocabulary. To overcome students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary, conducting an in-depth analysis of these factors is necessary. We can design more effective strategies by understanding students' educational backgrounds, teaching methods, learning environment conditions, and social and psychological factors. Teachers training in interactive teaching, improving learning facilities, and student social support can help them overcome these challenges.

From this problem, if this research is not conducted, the impact could be significant. First, without a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students in learning English vocabulary, teachers and educators may fail to recognize the importance of adopting more effective and relevant teaching methods. As a result, students will likely continue to encounter the same difficulties,

potentially reducing their interest and motivation to learn English. Second, students who struggle to understand and use new vocabulary may feel frustrated and isolated without the support this research aims to provide. They might perceive learning English as a challenging and unpleasant experience, which could lead to losing confidence or even abandoning their efforts to learn the language altogether (Fridayanti et al., 2021). This situation could negatively affect their future communication skills, which are crucial in today's globalized world. Third, this research has the potential to improve curriculum design and teaching methods in schools. Without it, opportunities to enhance the quality of English education in Indonesia may be missed, leaving many students unable to meet the demands of global communication. Furthermore, many students already face significant challenges in learning English. For example, they often find it difficult to understand the meaning of words and to speak them fluently (Simarmata, 2023). Students frequently struggle to express their ideas and are afraid to talk (Sinaga, 2019). These difficulties hinder their ability to learn and lead them to perceive English as unnecessary, further decreasing their willingness to engage with the language."

The study aims to explore the perceptions of eighth-grade students at SMP N 40 Medan regarding their difficulties in learning english vocabulary, which is influenced by various interrelated factors and challenges. Collaboration among teachers, schools, and parents is crucial to address these difficulties. Creating a supportive learning environment and employing effective teaching methods can help students better understand english vocabulary and develop essential communication skills for their future (Rohmatillah, 2014). Therefore, this research seeks to understand students' challenges and find practical solutions that can enhance vocabulary learning, improve students' confidence, and contribute to their success in mastering English as a global language.

METHOD

The design of this research adopted a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The research method was determined based on the data collection type, ensuring that the study addressed the formulated research problems effectively. The descriptive research method was employed in this study. According to Bernard (as cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 90), "Description means making complicated things understandable by reducing them to their component parts that fit together according to some rules." This indicates that descriptive research simplifies complex phenomena by organizing their components systematically in accordance with theoretical frameworks or established rules (S. K. Sari, 2017).

This research aimed to provide an in-depth explanation of students' perceptions of the challenges they will faced in learning English vocabulary. The data collection techniques that were used in this study included observations, interviews, and questionnaire that were distributed to the students. In this context, the eighth-grade students of SMP N 40 Medan served as the primary focus of the study. The research sought to understand how they faced and responded to challenges in learning vocabulary and aimed to identify factors influenced their perceptions, such as the family environment, motivation to learn English, and age level (Pertiwi et al., 2022).

In research, the researcher identified data sources that are appropriate and relevant to the research problem. As Nainggolan et al.(2019:7) explained, the term "data source" refers to the entity from which data could be obtained. The data were words containing" Students perception of the challenges in learning English Vocabulary. The sources of data were collected of the eighth-grade students At SMP N 40 Medan. The researcher choose from class VIII-D.

The instrument of collecting data is a tool that is selected and used by researchers in their activities to collect data so that these activities become systematic and made easier. To answer the problems formulation, instruments are used to help in obtaining the data. In this research, The data collection technique used in this research were observation, interviews, and giving questionnaires to students. The research was used to collect the data from the students to gain information about

Student's perception of the challenges in learning English vocabulary (A. S. P. Sari et al., 2022).

The technique of collecting data is a method used by researchers in collecting data, in this study the researcher used data collection techniques by means of interviews, observations, giving questionnaires. The data analysis technique used in this study was the Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (Octoberlina & Anggarini, 2020) data analysis, which included three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The researcher performed several procedures during the study. The technique of collecting data was the way the researcher collected the data empirically and objectively. The technique of collecting data was the most crucial step in the research because the primary purpose of the research was to obtain the data. To collect the data, the researcher used observation, interview, and giving questionnaires with the students (Erlinda, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data

This chapter described and analyzed the results of a survey conducted by Students' perception of the challenges in learning English vocabulary of the eight grade students at SMP N 40 Medan. This chapter also described the results of interviews and classroom observation. This qualitative study aims to explain students' perception of the challenges in learning English vocabulary. Here, each the students gave their opinion on the challenges in learning English vocabulary, explains the factors that influence students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary (Liando et al., 2022). The Observations were made by researcher who entered classrooms and observed teachers and students during the teaching and learning process. The interview was translated into Bahasa Indonesia in order to make students easier to understand the question. The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia in order to make students easier to understand the questionnaire (Tarigan & Stevani, 2020).

Data From Observation

Observations were conducted using field notes. Two observation sheets, teacher observation, and student observation. Observations were conducted in one class, namely VIII-D.

1. Teacher Observation

In the observations conducted in class VIII-D, the researcher noted various important aspects of the ongoing learning process. One of the most striking was the way the teacher gave instructions to students. The teacher not only started the lesson with a prayer, but also invited students to reflect on the learning objectives of the day. In this way, students were expected to be more focused and ready to receive the material that would be taught. For example, before starting new material, the teacher often related the lesson to the students' daily experiences, so that they could see the relevance of the learning. This was very important in learning English, where understanding the context can help students remember the vocabulary they had just learned. The researcher also observed how the teacher delivered the introductory material. In this session, the teacher used various methods, such as questions and answers to encourage active student participation. For example, when discussing new vocabulary, the teacher asked students to give example sentences using the words. This approach not only made students more involved, but also helped them to practice speaking in English. The researcher noted that students who were initially reluctant to speak became more confident when they saw that their friends were also actively participating (Afzal, 2019).

2. Observation of Students

In this observation, the researcher wanted to see whether the students of class VIII-D showed that students have high respect for teachers and showed positive attitudes in learning. When teachers delivered materials in front of the class, students followed the previously given instructions well. For example, when the teacher asked students to open a book and look for new vocabulary, students did

it quickly without any hesitation. This showed that students were accustomed to the learning routine that had been set by the teacher. When students felt comfortable and confident, they were more likely to be actively involved in the learning process. The researcher also noted that students interacted with each other. It was seen that they helped and supported each other. For example, when one of the students had difficulty understanding new vocabulary, his friends patiently explained the meaning of the word and gave examples of its use in sentences. This shows that students are not only focused on individual learning, but also have a sense of concern for the progress of their friends. This kind of interaction was very important in creating a positive learning environment, where students felt safe to ask questions and share knowledge. However, although most students showed good behavior, the researcher also noted that there were some students who were sometimes less focused and distracted during the learning process. Some of them were seen talking to peers or playing around, which could disrupt the concentration of other students (Dzurotul Ilmi & Anwar, 2022). However, the teacher quickly dealt with this situation in a constructive way. For example, when seeing students who were not focused, the teacher would distract them with questions that sparked discussion, so that the students were re-engaged in learning.

Research Findings

After Analyzing data, Then from questionnaire sheet that students experienced obstacles such found that The challenges in learning English vocabulary and factors influenced students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary of the eight-grade students At SMP N 40 Medan were presented by the researcher in the table:

Table 1. Challenges In learning English Vocabulary

No	Statement	Results			
		SD	D	A	SA
1.	Difficulty in spelling and pronouncing English vocabulary correctly	3,7%	37%	37%	22,2%
2.	Students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking.	3,7%	7,4%	74,1%	14,8%
3.	Students have difficulty in understanding the differences between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in English.	7,4%	22,2%	63%	7,4%
4.	Students find it difficult to memorize new English vocabulary.	3,7%	14,8%	74,1%	7,4%
5.	Students find it difficult to understand the meaning of English words in certain contexts.	0%	22,2%	55,6%	22,2%

6.	Students are not confident in using English vocabulary.	7,4%	14,8%	25,9%	25,9%
7.	Students less motivated to learn English vocabulary because they find it difficult.	14,8%	37%	40,7%	7,4%
8.	English vocabulary learning method in the classroom has not helped them learn effectively.	0%	18,5%	63%	18,5%
9.	strategies or techniques to memorize English vocabulary easily.	3,7%	14,8%	40,7%	40,7%
10.	Students often forget the meaning of the vocabulary they have learned.	11,1%	7,4%	70,4%	11,1%

Table 2. Factors that influences student's difficulties in learning English vocabulary

No	Statement	Results			
		SD	D	A	SA
1.	School environment does not support learning English vocabulary.	3,70%	51.85%	40,74%	3,70%
2.	Students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking.	3,7%	7,4%	74,1%	14,8%
3.	Motivation	14,8%	37%	40,7%	7,4%
4.	Ineffective English Vocabulary Learning Methods In Class	0%	18,5%	63%	18,5%

The result of the Questionnaire in the challenges in learning English vocabulary

The researcher analyzes of the challenges in learning English vocabulary to determine of the student's perception scores learning English vocabulary , the reseacrher use this formula:

$$X = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Table 3. Result of Findings

No	Statement	Results			
		SD	D	A	SA
1.	Difficulty in spelling and pronouncing English vocabulary correctly	3,7%	37%	37%	22,2%
2.	Students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking	3,7%	7,4%	74,1%	14,8%
3.	Students have difficulty in understanding the difference between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in English,	7,4%	22,2%	63%	7,4%
4.	Students have difficulty in understanding the meaning of English words in certain contexts,	0%	22,2%	55,6%	22,2%
5.	Students have difficulty in using English Vocabulary due to ineffective learning methods.	0%	18,5%	63%	18,5%

For the result statement first based on the students questionnaire above, it could be seen that there were 6 students who strongly agree, 10 students agree, 10 students disagree, 1 student strongly disagree. The percentage of respondents experienced difficulty in spelling and pronouncing English vocabulary correctly was 40.7%.

For statement two the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen that 4 students strongly agree, 20 students agree, 2 students disagree, 1 student strongly disagree. The percentage of respondents experienced 88.9% of students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking (Insani Nurchintyawati, S.Pd., 2022).

For statement three the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen 2 students strongly agree, 17 students agree, 6 students disagree, 2 students strongly disagree. The percentage of respondents experienced 70.4% of students have difficulty in understanding the difference between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in English.

For statement four the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen 6 students

strongly agree, 15 students agree, 6 students disagree, 0 students strongly disagree. The percentage of respondents experienced 77.8% of students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking (Hanafiah et al., 2022).

For statement five the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen 5 students strongly agree, 17 students agree, 5 students disagree, 0 students strongly disagree. The percentage of respondents experienced 81.5% of students feel that the English vocabulary learning method in class is not effective.

The result of the questionnaire of Factors that influences student's difficulties in learning English vocabulary

The researcher analyzes of the challenges in learning English vocabulary to determine of the student's perception scores learning English vocabulary , the reseacrher use this formula:

$$X = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Table 4. Result of Findings

No	Statement	Results			
		SD	D	A	SA
1.	Students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking.	3,7%	7,4%	74,1%	14,8%
2.	Motivation	14,8%	37%	40,7%	7,4%
3.	School environment does not support learning english vocabulary	3,7%	51,9%	40,7%	3,7%
4.	Ineffective English Vocabulary Learning Methods In Class	0%	18,5%	63%	18,5%

For statement one the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen 4 student strongly agrees, 20 students agree, 2 students disagree, 1 student strongly disagrees. The percentage of respondents experienced 88,9 % students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking.

For statement two the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen 2 students strongly agree , 11 students agree , 10 students disagree , 4 students strongly disagree. The percentage of respondents experienced 48.1% of students have less motivation in learning English vocabulary

For statement three the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen 1 student strongly agrees, 11 students agree, 14 students disagree, 1 student strongly disagrees. The percentage of respondents experienced 44.4% of students feel that the school environment does not support learning English vocabulary.

For statement four the results of the student's questionnaire above could be seen 1 student strongly agrees, 11 students agree, 14 students disagree, 1 student strongly disagrees. The percentage

of respondents experienced 81.5% of students feel that the English vocabulary learning method in class is not effective. These results were obtained from the analysis of questionnaire data filled out by grade VIII-D students at SMP N 40 Medan.

Discussion

The researcher findings proved that This research focuses on the challenges faced by eighth grade junior high school students in learning English vocabulary, while the research conducted by Ketut Asta Denny Sadewi (2024) "*Challenges Faced By English Education Students In Mastering.*" Although Ketut's study focused on university-level English education students and the context was online learning, both studies identified similar linguistic difficulties, especially in terms of pronunciation, word meaning, grammar, and the complexity of vocabulary. For example, in Ketut's research, 66.25% of students struggled with range, connotation, and idiomaticity, and 62.92% reported difficulty with vocabulary length and complexity. This can be compared to the 70.4% of junior high students in the current study who had difficulty distinguishing nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, and 77.8% who struggled to understand the meaning of English words in context. This indicates that semantic and grammatical complexity is a consistent challenge across educational levels. Another important point of similarity is the issue of pronunciation. In Ketut's study, pronunciation and grammar were reported as problematic by 57.08% of students. This closely corresponds to the 40.7% of junior high students in the present study who experienced difficulty with spelling and pronunciation. These findings suggest that regardless of age or educational context, phonological aspects of vocabulary learning remain a common hurdle for EFL learners. However, there are notable differences between the two studies as well. Ketut's participants, who were university students, identified connotation and idiomatic expressions as specific areas of difficulty—issues that were not reported by junior high students. This likely reflects the differences in vocabulary depth and complexity expected at the university level. On the other hand, students in the present study placed significant emphasis on ineffective classroom learning methods (81.5%) and lack of confidence (88.9%), which were not highlighted as central challenges in Ketut's research. This suggests that psychological and pedagogical factors play a more prominent role for younger learners in vocabulary acquisition. In conclusion, both studies highlight the multifaceted challenges in learning English vocabulary, including linguistic (pronunciation, grammar, meaning), psychological (confidence), and instructional (teaching methods) dimensions. While older students may face more advanced semantic and lexical challenges, younger students are often hindered by foundational grammar difficulties and instructional limitations. These comparisons reinforce the need for age-appropriate, engaging, and supportive vocabulary instruction that addresses both linguistic and affective needs of learners (Chung & Fisher, 2022).

Nadia Rebhi Husni Hasan (Temirbekova, 2022) entitled "*A Study on Students' Challenges and Problems in Learning English Vocabulary.*" The study, conducted at King Faisal University, also identified pronunciation, spelling, and comprehension as the major obstacles in vocabulary acquisition. Like the current research, these linguistic aspects were reported as major impediments to vocabulary mastery. In both studies, pronunciation and spelling were highlighted as significant issues. In Hasan's study, these aspects were central themes derived from student interviews and questionnaire responses, which is consistent with the 40.7% of students in the present research who reported difficulties in this area. Additionally, the challenge of comprehending word meanings appears in both datasets, indicating that this remains a consistent problem regardless of educational level or geographic setting. One notable feature in Hasan's study was the gender-based differences in vocabulary learning strategies, where male students performed lower than female students in both strategy use and vocabulary knowledge. While gender differences were not specifically addressed in the current research, it may offer insight into individual differences and motivation levels, which

aligns with the finding that 48.1% of students in this study had low motivation in learning vocabulary (Jannah et al., 2020). Furthermore, psychological factors, such as confidence in using vocabulary, played a central role in both studies. In Hasan's research, interviews revealed that lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes hindered students' vocabulary development. This is strongly echoed in the current research, where 88.9% of respondents reported feeling less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking. However, there are also differences in context and methodology. Hasan's research focused on university students in a Saudi Arabian context and utilized both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The present research, on the other hand, examined junior high school students in Indonesia, using primarily quantitative questionnaire analysis. Moreover, Hasan emphasized individual strategies to overcome vocabulary challenges, such as repetition, contextual guessing, and use of dictionaries, while the current study emphasized external factors like school environment and classroom methods, with 81.5% of students indicating dissatisfaction with existing vocabulary instruction approaches. In conclusion, both studies emphasize core linguistic and psychological difficulties in vocabulary learning, especially pronunciation, meaning comprehension, and confidence. However, while Hasan's study adds nuance by exploring gender-based and strategic differences, the present study provides insight into instructional and environmental factors that affect vocabulary learning among younger EFL learners. Together, these studies suggest that effective vocabulary instruction must address not only linguistic obstacles, but also affective and pedagogical challenges (Osipova & Bagrova, 2022).

Basori (Khasanova & Safarova, 2022), entitled "*A Case Study of EFL Students' Perceptions on the use of English songs in learning English Vocabulary*," Both studies aim to explore students' perceptions in relation to vocabulary acquisition, although the focus and methods differ. Basori (2024) found that students had a positive perception toward using English songs for vocabulary learning. The students reported that English songs helped them improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. However, Basori also mentioned that students experienced challenges, especially in understanding lyrics due to accents and pronunciation, which are also difficulties commonly found in traditional classroom methods. In contrast, this study focused on identifying the specific challenges students face in vocabulary learning, including spelling, pronunciation, part of speech recognition, understanding word meaning in context, and the effectiveness of classroom learning methods. The questionnaire data showed that: 40.7% of students experienced difficulty in spelling and pronunciation. 70.4% found it difficult to distinguish between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. 77.8% struggled to understand vocabulary meaning in context. 88.9% reported a lack of confidence when using English vocabulary in speaking. students lacked motivation, and 44.4% felt that the school environment did not support vocabulary learning. While Basori's research highlighted the benefits of using songs to engage students and make vocabulary learning enjoyable, this study uncovered that many students still face foundational challenges in vocabulary acquisition due to ineffective teaching methods and low confidence. Interestingly, both studies acknowledge pronunciation as a persistent issue—Basori's participants struggled due to unclear lyrics, while the students in this study had difficulty with spelling and pronunciation in general. In conclusion, both studies emphasize the need for more engaging, supportive, and effective learning approaches. While Basori's study shows that alternative methods like using music can enhance vocabulary acquisition, the present study supports this by revealing that students are struggling under current methods and may benefit from innovative, student-centered learning strategies that increase motivation and confidence.

Nguyen Thi Thu Hang (Brown et al., 2022), entitled "*EFL Adult Learners' Perception of Learning English Vocabulary through Pictures at a Private English Center*," While Nguyen's study focused on adult learners and utilized a visual learning approach, both studies share common themes

such as motivation, vocabulary acquisition challenges, and pronunciation difficulties. In Nguyen's research, learners reported increased motivation (mean score: 4.45) as a primary benefit of learning vocabulary through pictures. This contrasts with the current study, where 48.1% of students reported a lack of motivation in learning English vocabulary. This suggests that visual aids, such as pictures, may be more effective in sustaining students' interest and enhancing motivation, particularly for adult learners or those in engaging learning environments. Additionally, both studies reported pronunciation difficulties. In Nguyen's findings, pronunciation was identified as a significant challenge (mean: 3.31), which aligns with the current study's finding that 40.7% of students had difficulty in spelling and pronouncing English vocabulary. This similarity highlights that pronunciation remains a persistent challenge across different age groups and learning settings. Another notable comparison is the method of learning. In Nguyen's research, the use of pictures not only improved vocabulary acquisition but also enhanced memory retention. In contrast, students in the current study stated that the methods used in the classroom were ineffective (81.5%), indicating a potential need for more engaging and multimodal approaches, such as the use of images or visual aids, even for younger learners. However, Nguyen also reported challenges such as poor picture quality and difficulty in distinguishing between abstract and concrete vocabulary, which were not explicitly mentioned in the current study. This reflects a difference in learning materials and cognitive maturity, as adult learners might be more aware of such specific differences. In conclusion, while Nguyen's study emphasizes the benefits of using pictures for vocabulary learning among adult learners, the current research highlights how traditional methods may be insufficient for junior high school students. Both studies underline the importance of learner engagement, visual tools, and effective teaching methods in overcoming vocabulary learning challenges. These comparisons suggest that integrating visual-based techniques, such as using pictures or interactive media, might also help improve motivation, understanding, and retention among younger EFL learners.

Khasyi et al. (2024), entitled "*Analysis Of The Use Of The Wordwall Application In Learning English Using Chromebook For Vocabulary*," Their study employed a qualitative approach to explore both students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the use of the WordWall application in vocabulary learning through Chromebooks. They found that most students had positive impressions of the application; 25 out of 30 enjoyed the tool, 28 out of 30 felt more engaged, and 27 out of 30 reported an improvement in vocabulary understanding. Teachers also observed increased motivation and active participation from students. These findings contrast with the current research, which revealed that 88.9% of the students felt less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking, and 48.1% reported having low motivation in learning vocabulary. This indicates that without engaging and interactive tools, like WordWall, students may struggle with confidence and motivation. Moreover, 81.5% of the students in this study expressed that the vocabulary learning methods used in class were ineffective, which further supports the need for innovative and interactive digital tools in English teaching. This aligns with Khasyi et al.'s (2024) findings, where the use of the WordWall application not only improved students' engagement but also enhanced their understanding and retention of vocabulary. Although both studies identify challenges, the key difference lies in the learning environment and teaching tools applied. The current study highlights difficulties in the traditional classroom setting—such as limited engagement, lack of contextual understanding, and ineffective methods—while Khasyi et al. (Dickinson et al., 2019) demonstrate how digital tools like WordWall can positively transform vocabulary learning experiences. In conclusion, the comparison between the two studies emphasizes the importance of using digital and interactive learning platforms in vocabulary teaching. The contrast in students' motivation and engagement levels suggests that technology-enhanced learning environments can play a crucial role in addressing the challenges commonly faced in traditional English vocabulary instruction. Therefore, integrating tools such as WordWall could potentially improve student motivation, participation, and overall vocabulary

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acquisition, particularly in schools that still rely heavily on conventional methods.

Aldbea (2024), entitled "*The Difficulties That Faced Libyan Students in Learning English Vocabulary and Understanding Academic Texts.*" Aldbea's research, conducted among Libyan university students, identified that students faced major challenges in vocabulary development, especially in academic contexts, due to linguistic and cultural differences between Arabic and English. These differences hinder students' ability to find equivalent words, which in turn affects their comprehension and academic writing. One of the key similarities lies in the students' difficulty in using appropriate vocabulary—in Aldbea's study, 46% of students struggled to transfer vocabulary into academic writing, while in the present research, 77.8% of Indonesian junior high school students reported difficulty understanding English vocabulary in context. Both results indicate that understanding how a word functions or changes meaning in different usage is a common and significant challenge across educational levels and regions. Furthermore, both studies highlight the impact of ineffective instructional methods. While Aldbea's participants called for stronger institutional support and structured learning resources, the present study revealed that 81.5% of students believed that the classroom methods for teaching vocabulary were not effective. This emphasizes the urgent need for more engaging and adaptive teaching strategies that cater to learners' needs at both school and university levels. Another parallel is the importance of repetition and structured resources in helping students overcome vocabulary difficulties. Aldbea emphasized both traditional (dictionaries, flashcards) and modern techniques as beneficial, while the students in this study expressed a lack of effective vocabulary learning methods, which might suggest limited exposure to such resources or strategies in their current learning environment. While Aldbea's research was focused on academic vocabulary and writing at the university level, and included deeper causes such as cultural-linguistic mismatches, the present study focused on basic vocabulary acquisition difficulties at the junior high school level. Nevertheless, both findings reinforce the significance of building vocabulary regularly and providing pedagogical support to help students bridge the gap between vocabulary knowledge and language use. In conclusion, both studies underline the necessity for improved vocabulary instruction that goes beyond memorization and addresses contextual understanding, psychological readiness (confidence and motivation), and effective learning strategies. The similarities in challenges faced by Libyan university students and Indonesian junior high school students suggest that vocabulary learning difficulties are pervasive and must be tackled with a combination of institutional support, effective teaching strategies, and learner-centered resources.

Rozhgar Jalal Khidhir, PhD (2022), entitled *Role of Feedback Comments on Online Posts in Learning English Vocabulary and Phrasal Expression*," The study found that students utilized social networks frequently for learning purposes (mean score of 3.84), although they were less active in producing content in English (mean score of 2.57). This suggests that while both groups of students engaged with English content online or in class, their level of active language production—such as writing posts or comments—was relatively low. A similarity between the two studies is the lack of student confidence in using English. In Khidhir's study, students showed reluctance to leave comments in English on social networks, which paralleled the 88.9% of students in the present study who reported a lack of confidence when using English vocabulary in speaking. Both sets of students show hesitation in actively engaging with the language, whether in speaking or writing, which suggests a confidence barrier in language use (Liu & Zhang, 2018).

Another common challenge noted in both studies is the ineffective teaching methods. While Khidhir highlighted that feedback on social networks could enhance vocabulary learning, the students in your study reported that 81.5% felt that classroom vocabulary learning methods were ineffective. This underlines a shared need for more engaging, interactive, and effective learning strategies that

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can motivate students to produce and apply vocabulary actively rather than passively consuming content. The study by Khidhir (Bai, 2018) also highlighted that feedback on social networks could play a significant role in vocabulary acquisition, yet students were less active in posting or commenting in English. This result contrasts with your findings, where students felt more confident in understanding vocabulary but struggled with using it in speaking. Both studies point to the fact that even when students engage with English in different contexts (whether online or in class), they often struggle with translating passive exposure into active language production. In conclusion, both studies reveal that students face significant challenges in applying English vocabulary, with factors such as confidence, engagement, and ineffective methods playing major roles in hindering their language learning. The results from both studies suggest that, in addition to passive learning tools, students would benefit from more interactive and supportive environments that encourage active participation, whether in the classroom or online spaces, to help overcome these barriers.

CONCLUSION

After conducting this study, significant challenges faced by eighth-grade students at SMP N 40 Medan in learning English vocabulary were revealed. The researcher found that students have a problem in learning English vocabulary. The data found that there are significant challenges in learning English vocabulary. The main challenges faced by students are difficulty in pronouncing and spelling English vocabulary correctly, lack of confidence when using English vocabulary in speaking, and difficulty in understanding the differences between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in English. Factors that influence students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary are lack of confidence, lack of motivation, unsupportive school environment, and ineffective learning methods.

The results of this study indicate that most students have difficulties in learning English vocabulary, with a fairly high percentage, namely 40.7% of students have difficulty in pronouncing and spelling English vocabulary correctly, 88.9% of students feel less confident when using English vocabulary in speaking, 70.4% of students have difficulty in understanding the differences between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in English, and 81.5% of students have difficulty in using English vocabulary due to ineffective learning methods.

Additionally, the researcher found several factors that influence students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary, such as confidence in using English vocabulary (77.8%), Confidence in using English vocabulary in speaking (88.9%), Motivation to learn English vocabulary (48.1%), School environment that does not support learning English vocabulary (44.4%), Ineffective English vocabulary learning methods in class (81.5%). From the explanation obtained, answers were found to the questions of what challenges do eighth-grade students at SMP N 40 Medan face in learning English vocabulary and what factors do influence students' difficulties in learning English vocabulary.

Suggestion

Based on the results of the analysis, here are some suggestions that can be done:

1. Teachers, Teachers should incorporate a variety of teaching methods, such as interactive activities, games, and multimedia resources, to engage students and cater to different learning styles. This can help make vocabulary learning more enjoyable and effective.
2. Students, Students should take an active role in their learning by participating in class discussions, asking questions, and practicing vocabulary in various contexts, such as speaking and writing.
3. For Another Researcher, Hopefully, it will be an improvement for the next research. It is possible to optimize many sectors of teaching vocabulary. They can use this study as a reference to conduct other researches in the same field.

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