CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In recent years, multimodal activities have become increasingly embedded in the learning environment of English language learners. Students frequently interact with digital texts, images, videos, and interactive media, both inside and outside the classroom (Çakmak et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021). This shift aligns with global educational trends that emphasize digital literacy and the integration of multiple semiotic modes in instructional practices, especially in the era of eLearning 4.0, in which multimodal input is considered an effective means to support vocabulary development in second language learning (Li et al., 2022).

Although numerous international studies have highlighted the benefits of multimodal resources for vocabulary learning, research focusing on the practical implementation of multimodal texts in Indonesian junior high schools remains limited. Existing studies predominantly examine university students, digital learning platforms, or general EFL instruction, with little attention to the classroom level integration of multimodal texts in vocabulary teaching for younger learners.

Furthermore, few studies explore how teachers select, design, and utilize multimodal materials, and how students perceive the learning experience within the Indonesian educational context. Most studies only emphasize theoretical benefits without addressing the everyday realities of school practices, such as access to technology, teacher readiness, and alignment with curriculum demands.

The relevance of multimodal learning is further reinforced by the Kurikulum Merdeka, which encourages student-centered learning, digital literacy, critical thinking, and exposure to diverse text types. Multimodal texts including images, videos, interactive platforms, and digital

worksheets align with curriculum expectations for developing literasi baru (new literacy) and improving students' comprehension through varied modes of meaning.

Despite this curricular encouragement, it is unclear to what extent multimodal texts are currently applied in real classrooms, particularly in vocabulary instruction where teachers often rely on traditional textbooks and verbal explanations. This discrepancy between curricular aspirations and classroom practice highlights the importance of investigating how multimodal approaches are implemented at the school level. SMPN 40 Medan was chosen as the research site due to several contextual factors. First, preliminary observations indicate that teachers in this school have begun integrating digital and visual materials in English classes, yet there is no empirical study documenting the effectiveness or consistency of these practices. Second, the school represents a typical public junior high school in an urban Indonesian setting, making it a relevant and representative context for examining multimodal text implementation. Third, both teachers and students have expressed interest in developing more engaging and interactive English vocabulary activities, creating a meaningful environment in which this research can contribute practical insights.

Therefore, this study is necessary to explore how multimodal texts are used in vocabulary teaching at SMPN 40 Medan, how students and teachers perceive these practices, and which types of multimodal materials are considered most effective. Addressing these aspects will fill the current research gap and contribute to improving vocabulary instruction in alignment with national curriculum demands and modern learning needs.

1.2. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study, there are some problems of the study, namely:

1. What are the perspectives of eighth-grade students at SMPN 40 Medan concerning the utilization of multimodal texts in the acquisition of English vocabulary?
2. How do teachers at SMPN 40 Medan integrate various multimodal texts into their instructional practices to enhance vocabulary acquisition among seventh-grade students?

3. Which specific categories of multimodal texts (e.g., video-based, text-based with integrated visuals) are seen as most helpful for vocabulary learning by both students and teachers at SMPN 40 Medan (Cárdenas-Claros et al., 2023)?

1.3. The Objectives of Study

Based on the problems of the study, the objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the perspectives of eighth-grade students at SMPN 40 Medan concerning the utilization of multimodal texts in the acquisition of English vocabulary.
2. To investigate how teachers at SMPN 40 Medan integrate various multimodal texts into their instructional practices to enhance vocabulary acquisition among seventh-grade students.
3. To examine specific categories of multimodal texts (e.g., video-based, text-based with integrated visuals) are seen as most helpful for vocabulary learning by both students and teachers at SMPN 40 Medan.

1.4. The Scope of Study

This study focuses on analyzing how various types of multimodal texts are utilized to enhance vocabulary learning among seventh-grade students at SMPN 40 Medan. The research specifically examines the forms of multimodal resources used in the classroom, the ways teachers incorporate these resources into instruction, and how students respond to their use. The study does not evaluate the effectiveness of every multimodal tool available but limits its scope to those commonly applied within the English learning context at the selected school.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

The findings of this research are expected to provide practical insights for English teachers regarding the integration of multimodal texts in vocabulary instruction. The study will also contribute to curriculum development by offering recommendations on how multimodal learning

materials can support vocabulary acquisition in junior high schools. Additionally, this study may benefit future researchers by serving as a reference for investigations related to multimodal learning and vocabulary development. Policymakers and school administrators may also gain useful information to support digital literacy and modern learning approaches in English classes.

1.6.Literature Review

This chapter presents theories, concepts, and previous studies related to multimodal texts and vocabulary acquisition. In addition to defining key concepts, this review situates the current study within existing research and highlights the gap that makes this research necessary.

1.6.1. Multimodal Texts in Language Learning

Multimodal texts combine two or more semiotic modes, such as written text, images, gestures, audio, animation, and layout, to construct meaning. In language learning, multimodality has been shown to increase student engagement and provide richer contextual cues for understanding new vocabulary. Several studies have found that multimodal materials help learners interpret meaning more effectively and increase retention.

1.6.2. Theoretical Foundations

Theories such as Dual Coding Theory and the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning support the idea that learners process information better when verbal and visual inputs are combined. These frameworks argue that presenting vocabulary through multiple channels enhances comprehension and memory because learners can form both linguistic and mental imagery representations.

1.6.3. Previous Studies

A number of studies have examined the use of multimodal texts in EFL classrooms: Ho & Tai (2020) found that incorporating images and audio into vocabulary instruction significantly improved students' ability to recall new words. Calafato & Simmonds (2022) demonstrated that multimodal digital resources increased learner motivation and contextual understanding. Rahmanu & Molnár (2024) concluded that multimodality enhances vocabulary, writing, and speaking skills simultaneously. Wahyuningrum, et al. (2024) explored multimodal teaching practices among Indonesian teachers and highlighted the need for deeper understanding of how multimodal materials function during instruction. These prior studies consistently emphasize the value of multimodal input but vary in their specific instructional contexts.

1.6.4. Research Gap and Rationale for Topic Selection

Although multimodal learning has been widely discussed, there is limited research focusing on vocabulary instruction in Indonesian junior high schools, particularly within the context of SMPN 40 Medan. Most existing studies examine multimodal texts from a general EFL perspective or focus on university-level learners. No previous study has explored: how multimodal texts are used specifically for vocabulary learning in local junior high schools, students' and teachers' perceptions of multimodal materials in this context, which types of multimodal texts are perceived as the most helpful. Therefore, this study is necessary to fill these gaps. The increasing integration of digital tools in Indonesian schools further supports the relevance of analyzing multimodal resources in vocabulary instruction.