CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

Language is the primary and most highly developed form of human symbolic expression. Its symbols are constructed from sounds produced by the vocal apparatus and are organized into classes and patterns, forming a complex and symmetrical structure. The elements of language, such as symbols, possess meaning, but the relationship between the symbol and the object it represents is arbitrary and socially determined. The symbols of language serve as both substitute stimuli and responses, allowing discourses to become independent of immediate physical stimuli. The intricacy and organization of language enable speakers to make linguistic responses to any experience. In essence, language is a model of culture and a means of adapting to the world. As a uniquely human activity, the study of language is of great significance.

English is one of the most widely used languages in the world, as it is the official or dominant language in many countries and regions. English is also the language of international communication, especially in the fields of education, business, science, technology, and culture. Therefore, learning English is important and beneficial for anyone who wants to participate and compete in the global society.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) in the formal education system, starting from elementary school to university level. The curriculum of English education in Indonesia is based on the Kurikulum Merdeka,

which was launched in 2022 as a part of the Merdeka Belajar policy. The Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes the development of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Kurikulum Merdeka also integrates the values of character education, such as religious, social, and cultural values, into the English teaching and learning process. The Kurikulum Merdeka gives more autonomy and flexibility to the teachers and students to design and implement the learning process according to their needs and interests. In line with the emphasis on language skills development in the Kurikulum Merdeka, vocabulary acquisition plays a pivotal role in enabling students to effectively engage with English language learning. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of vocabulary offers numerous advantages in language acquisition and communication.

Vocabulary is a crucial component of language learning, as it is essential for conveying meaning and understanding the intended message. Goundar (2019) states that words serve as the building blocks of a language, as they label objects, actions, and ideas, making them indispensable for effective communication. Without a solid foundation of vocabulary, learners may struggle to comprehend spoken and written English, hindering their ability to practice and develop their language skills.

One important area of vocabulary that is often challenging for students is the use of expressions of likes and dislikes. These expressions are commonly used in everyday conversation to communicate personal preferences, opinions, and emotions. For eighth-grade students, mastering this aspect of vocabulary is

particularly important as it allows them to engage more naturally in dialogues and discussions. However, many students find it difficult to learn and use these expressions effectively, partly due to a lack of engaging teaching materials that relate to their interests.

Based on an interview with an English teacher, the teacher mentioned that the classroom situation is not conducive to the teaching and learning process. This is evident from students often playing and chatting with their friends during the lesson, students frequently asking for permission to go to the toilet, and some students appearing sleepy in class. These problems may arise from their perception that English is difficult. Therefore, students face difficulties in remembering words, understanding the meaning of English words, pronouncing words correctly, and writing words correctly. Thus, new and engaging media is needed to enhance students' vocabulary.

Based on the statement above, the researcher used flashcards based on Ariana Grande songs to improve the vocabulary mastery of the eighth grade students. As it is supported by Arsyad (2014:115), cards containing pictures (objects, animals, etc.) can be used to train students to spell and enrich their vocabulary. The cards serve as a hint and stimulus for students to respond as they wish. In line with Harmer (2007), flashcards are an effective teaching tool that fosters active learning and enhances vocabulary acquisition by engaging students visually and interactively.

Previous studies have explored the use of flashcards as a tool for vocabulary development among EFL learners. Nasution et al. (2022) developed and evaluated

flashcard media to enhance English vocabulary among fourth-grade students, demonstrating significant improvements with an 87.54% response rate and a 90% test completion rate in the second trial. However, a weakness in this study is the lack of a control group for comparison, which limits the ability to attribute improvements solely to the flashcard intervention. Without a control group, it is difficult to determine whether the observed improvements are due to the flashcards or other factors. Nurarisda et al. (2023) investigated the effectiveness of flashcards in improving listening comprehension, showing notable vocabulary gains with pre-test and post-test scores increasing from 44.28 to 71.60. Nevertheless, the study lacked diversity in terms of the types of assessments used to measure the effectiveness of the flashcard intervention, potentially limiting the robustness of the findings. The limited assessment types might not fully capture the improvements in vocabulary acquisition. Atmaja et al. (2023) conducted classroom action research with seventh-grade students using flashcards, resulting in substantial vocabulary improvements with pre-test scores of 57.50 and post-test scores rising to 87.50. Yet, the study did not explore the potential influence of other contextual factors, such as teaching methods or student motivation, on the effectiveness of the flashcard intervention. Without considering these factors, it is unclear if the flashcards alone were responsible for the improvements or if other variables played a significant role.

These weaknesses highlight the need for more comprehensive research that not only uses flashcards but also integrates engaging and relevant content to enhance vocabulary learning. The current study aims to address these gaps by

incorporating popular music, specifically Ariana Grande songs, into the flashcards. This approach is expected to make the learning process more engaging and effective for the students, particularly in helping them learn how to express likes and dislikes in English. This study will follow the R&D approach to develop and validate the flashcards, ensuring they are effective in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among eighth-grade students.

B. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher formulates the problem of the study as follows:

- How is flashcards based on Ariana Grande songs effectively develop the vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students, particularly in expressing likes and dislikes at SMP Al Washliyah 20 Medan?

C. The Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem of the study above, the objective of this research is as follows:

- To develop flashcard media based on Ariana Grande songs to improve the vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students, particularly in expressing likes and dislikes at SMP Al Washliyah 20 Medan.

D. The Scope of the Study

The scope of this study encompasses eighth-grade students at SMP Al Washliyah 20 Medan as the target participants. The research focuses on the development and implementation of Flashcards based on Ariana Grande songs to enhance vocabulary mastery. It includes the design, creation, and evaluation of digital flashcards, as well as their application in the classroom setting. However, the study does not extend to broader aspects of English language education beyond vocabulary acquisition.

E. The Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical:

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of innovative approaches to language learning by integrating popular culture, represented by Ariana Grande songs, into educational materials. It explores the effectiveness of using such media in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among students, thereby adding to the body of research on language education methodologies.

2. Practical:

The practical significance of this study lies in its potential to address existing challenges in English language education, particularly in vocabulary learning. By developing and implementing Flashcards based on Ariana Grande songs, the study offers educators a valuable tool for engaging students and improving learning outcomes. Furthermore, the findings can inform curriculum development and instructional practices aimed enhancing English language proficiency among students in similar educational context.