CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study by presenting the background and context in which the research is conducted. It outlines the research problem and identifies the main focus of the study. This chapter includes the formulation of the research questions, the objectives of the study, and the significance of the research. It also defines the scope and limitations of the study, clarifies key terms, and describes the definition.

A. Background of the Study

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill for English language learners, serving as the foundation for academic and professional success. It enables students to engage with texts critically, extract meaning, and apply knowledge effectively. In academic settings, reading comprehension is particularly crucial, as learners are frequently exposed to complex materials that demand deep understanding and analytical skills. At the early stages of language learning, developing reading speed is also essential, as students are expected to read quickly and efficiently to benefit from new information.

Among the key components of reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery is a cornerstone. A robust vocabulary allows learners to decode text, understand main ideas, and connect various concepts, making it an indispensable tool for effective comprehension.

However, many English learners encounter significant obstacles in reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary mastery. The lack of vocabulary proficiency is recognized as one of the primary challenges students face in understanding English texts (Chawwang, 2008, as cited in Guna, 2023). These challenges manifest in various ways, such as difficulty inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words, understanding complex sentence structures, or engaging with technical and academic texts. Researchers emphasize that a rich vocabulary is essential for enhancing learners' ability to process text, infer meaning, and engage with complex ideas.

This study focuses on the perceptions of English students at UNIPDA regarding vocabulary and its influence on reading comprehension. UNIPDA offers a unique context due to its specific curriculum requirements and pedagogical challenges, making it an ideal setting for exploring how vocabulary impacts reading comprehension. Understanding the students' perspectives is crucial, as their insights reveal the practical implications of vocabulary mastery within their academic journey. Positive perceptions of the classroom environment can foster higher levels of participation and motivation, which are vital for academic success (Edgerton & McKechnie, 2023). Moreover, analyzing their experiences can provide educators with

valuable information about the strategies students employ and the barriers they encounter when developing their reading skills. According to Guna (2023), students' perceptions can significantly influence their ability to comprehend texts and help them achieve their reading goals.

This study draws on established theoretical frameworks, including schema theory and theories of second language acquisition, to guide its analysis. Schema theory posits that comprehension depends on the interaction between prior knowledge and new information, emphasizing the role of vocabulary as a tool for activating relevant schemata. In the context of second language acquisition, vocabulary is considered a fundamental component for decoding linguistic input and constructing meaning. These theories offer a solid foundation for exploring how students perceive the role of vocabulary in reading comprehension, providing a framework to understand their cognitive and linguistic processes more deeply.

Despite extensive research on vocabulary and reading comprehension, a significant gap remains in exploring student perceptions within the specific context of UNIPDA. Much of the existing literature primarily addresses the cognitive aspects of these skills, often overlooking the lived experiences and viewpoints of learners. By addressing this gap, the present study aims to offer a deeper understanding of how students perceive the role of vocabulary in reading comprehension. Focusing on learners' perspectives provides valuable insights into their challenges and successes

in reading comprehension, helping educators tailor their approaches to better support students' learning needs.

The primary objective of this research is to understand how English students at UNIPDA perceive the role of vocabulary in reading comprehension and to identify the factors that shape these perceptions. The findings from this study can help educators develop targeted interventions to enhance students' reading comprehension skills, addressing specific challenges identified through students' perspectives. Ultimately, this research contributes to improving English language education at UNIPDA, ensuring that students are better equipped for both academic success and future professional endeavors.

B. Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the writer formulates a research question as follows:

1. How do English students at UNIPDA perceive the role of vocabulary in understanding reading texts?
2. What factors influence students' perceptions of vocabulary mastery in reading comprehension.?

C. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explore how English students at UNIPDA perceive the role of vocabulary in understanding reading texts.

2. To identify the factors that influence students' perceptions of vocabulary mastery in reading comprehension.

D. Significances of the Study

1. Significance for English Language Teaching:

   The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for educators on how students perceive the role of vocabulary in reading comprehension. The findings of this study can guide educators in creating classroom activities and materials that emphasize vocabulary development as a key component of improving reading comprehension.

2. Significance for English Language Learning:

   For students, this study highlights the importance of vocabulary in enhancing their reading comprehension abilities.

3. Significance for Future Research:

   This study contributes to the growing body of literature on vocabulary and reading comprehension by addressing a specific context at UNIPDA. Future researchers can use the findings as a reference point for exploring similar topics in different educational settings or with larger participant groups.

E. Scope and Limitations

1. Scope of the Study

   This research focuses on exploring the perceptions of English students at UNIPDA regarding the role of vocabulary in reading

comprehension. The subjects of this study will consist of English major students at UNIPDA at semester 6 academic year 2022. The study will primarily focus on students' subjective experiences, insights, and perspectives.

2. Limitation of the Study

   a. The research is limited to a single institution (UNIPDA).

   b. The study relies on qualitative data collection methods.

   c. The findings are dependent on the subjects' willingness to share their honest opinions and reflections.

   d. The study focuses only on students' perceptions, not include teachers' perspectives.

F. Operational Definition

To ensure clarity, and prevent misinterpretations, the researcher defines the following key terms in the research:

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the collection of words and their meanings that are used for communication within a language. It involves knowing the meanings of words and how to use them appropriately in communication.

Vocabulary encompassing both the words actively used in speaking and writing (active vocabulary) and those recognized or understood but not regularly used (passive vocabulary). It forms a fundamental part of language and communication, enabling people to express ideas, emotions, and information effectively.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers to the cognitive act of reading, comprehending, and analyzing written texts. This skill is made up of three parts: literal comprehension, which focuses on understanding the text's explicit meaning; inferential comprehension, which allows students to make inferences and draw conclusions based on the information presented; and critical comprehension, which requires analyzing and evaluating the text to understand the author's purpose and perspective. Reading comprehension is not a singular skill but a complex interaction of various cognitive functions; it can be evaluated through standardized reading comprehension assessments, cloze exercises, or written summaries of texts.

Perception

Perception is the way that people order and make sense of the raw information that they get from their surroundings. It involves recognizing, selecting, and making sense of stimuli received through the senses, such as sight, hearing, and touch. Perception basically determines how we see and engage with the world around us.