

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

One of the most important subjects in the educational system is English. Harmer (2007) state that English has become a universal language and is essential for worldwide communication, science, technology, and education. Since English is seen as a crucial foreign language, it is taught in Indonesian elementary schools from a young age to give students a foundational understanding of the language (Efendi et al. 2025). Asdar (2024) explain that since students at this age have strong cognitive flexibility and are more open to learning new languages, studying English in elementary school is thought to be important. Early introduction to English helps students become familiar with words, sounds, and basic expressions, which will help them learn the language at higher educational levels.

According to Nisa (2020) early learning of English is important to give elementary school students a strong foundation in the language so they will continue their studies more effectively at higher education levels. Furthermore, Mai and Yip (2022) state that students who learn English at an early age tend to develop better pronunciation, greater confidence in using the language, and more positive attitudes toward English learning compared to those who start learning at a later age. Students may struggle in junior and senior high school when English becomes more complex if they don't have this early foundation.

In addition, Handayani (2024) emphasizes that there are three components in learning English, such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Students have to learn those components so that they can understand in learning language. In the process of learning a language, these elements are connected and helpful to one another. Handayani (2024) also explain that grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are important aspects of

learning a language, among these components, vocabulary plays a crucial role as it becomes the primary element in communication, enabling learners to express their ideas effectively. The first thing students need to comprehend and use English effectively is vocabulary.

A key component of learning English is mastering vocabulary. Without vocabulary, students can't speak, write, listen and read (Andriani 2019). For elementary school students, who often struggle with learning, understanding, and pronouncing new English words, vocabulary development is crucial (Ndraha et al. 2023). These difficulties are commonly caused by limited exposure to English in daily life, lack of practice, and the use of less engaging instructional strategies. Baharudin et al. (2024) state that students' vocabulary learning problems are influenced by limited language environment and teaching methods that do not actively involve learners. As a result, students may lose interest, become passive, and quickly forget the vocabulary they have learned. In order to improve students' vocabulary at the elementary school should be designed with an emphasis on enjoyment, active participation and meaningful learning activities.

The researcher visited two elementary schools to get permission to conduct the research. However, due to institutional issues and the volume of active research activity, one of the schools was unable to support the study. As a result, the researcher was given permission to carry out the research at SDN 3 Tanjung.

Based on the preliminary research conducted through interview with an English teacher at SDN 3 Tanjung, it was found that one of the difficulties faced by students in learning English is vocabulary mastery.

'The students still struggle when learning vocabulary, because the vocabulary rarely used and limited so that they still finding the difficulties when learning new vocabulary.'

The teacher said that students still have limited vocabulary knowledge, which makes it difficult for them to understand new English word. This problem is also influenced by the fact that students rarely use English in their daily communication, so they are not familiar with English vocabulary.

In addition, the teacher mentioned that the teaching method commonly used in the classroom is the teacher centered method, where the teacher provides vocabulary and asks students to memorize it. For homework, students are usually given new vocabulary and asked to find the meanings at home. This passive method makes it hard for students to remember words because they only memorize them without knowing how to use them in real situations. Consequently, young learners cannot understand the new vocabulary deeply (Hidayatullah et al. 2025).

Furthermore, another difficulty faced by students is their lack of confidence during classroom interaction. Most students are not brave enough to answer questions because they are afraid of making mistakes. This happens because when the classroom focus is only on memorizing words instead of practicing how to speak, students become too afraid of making mistakes. As a result, they lose their confidence and do not want to speak up in class (Amalyasari et al., 2025; Mai & Yip, 2022). However, they only ask questions when they are having difficulties in completing tasks.

This condition indicates that students need learning activities that can help them understand and remember vocabulary more effectively. If students continue to experience difficulties in mastering vocabulary, it may affect their ability to learn other English skills in the future. Therefore, teachers need to apply teaching techniques that are able to increase students' motivation and encourage them to participate actively in the learning process. (Putra, 2026)

The Make a Match technique is suitable for resolving vocabulary problems because it changes passive memorization into an active and physical game where students must move around to find their pairs (Rusman, 2017). This process creates a fun learning environment because it allows young students to learn through movement and social interaction, which helps reduce their fear of making mistakes (Lie, 2008).

According to Huda (2017) Make a Match is a cooperative learning model that encourages students to actively find matching pairs through interaction and teamwork. In the classroom, this activity may reduce passivity

and boredom by increasing student participation and engagement. As a result, Make a Match emphasizes student-centered learning and can help students improve their vocabulary in a more meaningful way.

This study uses Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the research design in order to achieve the goals of improving students' vocabulary and exploring students' perceptions. CAR is suitable because it emphasizes on solving problem in classroom through a cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. CAR is carried out in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning procedures in the classroom (Arikunto, 2015). The Make a Match technique is applied in this study using CAR, and the impact it has on students' vocabulary are observed.

In addition, this study also investigates how students respond about the application of the Make a Match method. Students' perceptions are important because they reflect students' reactions, engagement and interest throughout the learning process. Slameto (2010) state that students' responses to learning exercises can show how much they comprehend and participate in the process. The researcher can determine students' motivation, participation, and challenges when using the technique through analyzing their perceptions.

Therefore, this study not only focuses on improving students' vocabulary mastery but also examines students' perceptions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Make a Match technique in the classroom.

Several previous studies have shown that the Make a Match technique is effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery. According to Prayuda et al. (2023), the application of the Make a Match technique in Classroom Action Research (CAR) improved students' vocabulary understanding, as evidenced by a notable rise in students' mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test. Similarly, Fitriana, (2018) reported that students' showed enthusiasm and enjoyment during vocabulary classes with the Make a Match method increased their vocabulary proficiency. Additionally, Purwanti, (2025) the application of the Make a Match learning model at SD Negeri 2 Maparah have

significant and beneficial affected students' vocabulary achievement, as shown by an improvement in learning mastery from 62.5% in Cycle I to 93.75% in Cycle II.

However, most previous studies have focused on the effectiveness of the Make a Match method in improving vocabulary, but they involved different research subjects and different teaching materials. Consequently, the students' responses and engagement in each study are likely to vary. This variation indicates that the impact of the Make a Match method may depend on the specific context, including the characteristics of the students and the material being taught. This study is different because it focuses on Grade 5 students at SDN 3 Tanjung and explores students' perceptions about the technique. By observing students' behaviours in this specific classroom, this research aims to understand more precisely how Make a Match improve vocabulary learning in this particular context.

This research is considered important due to several reasons. First, vocabulary plays a fundamental role in mastering English skills, yet many elementary school students still experience difficulties in understanding and using vocabulary effectively. Second, the teaching methods commonly used in the classroom tend to be less engaging and do not actively involve students, which may lead to low motivation and limited participation. Third, although the Make a Match technique has been proven effective in previous studies, there is still a need to explore its implementation in different contexts, particularly among Grade 5 students, as well as to examine students' perceptions toward the learning process. Therefore, this study is essential to provide practical solutions for improving students' vocabulary mastery and to offer insights into how engaging learning techniques can enhance students' participation and motivation in English learning.

Based on this information, the purpose of this study is to improve students' vocabulary and to find out the students' perception of using Make a Match method at SDN 3 Tanjung. To achieve these objectives, this study employs Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the research design.

This research is expected to contribute to improve the quality of English language learning, particularly in vocabulary mastery, and to provide practical insights for teachers in implementing engaging and effective learning techniques in elementary schools. Furthermore, this study is expected to serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in vocabulary learning and the application of cooperative learning techniques in English language teaching.

1.2 Research Questions

Regarding to the background of the study above, the researcher managed to get some kind of questions. These are:

- 1.2.1. How can the use of Make a Match technique improve students' vocabulary at grade 5 of SDN 3 Tanjung?
- 1.2.2. What is the students' perception of using Make a Match at grade 5 of SDN 3 Tanjung?

1.3 Objectives of the research

Based on the problem finding, the primary objectives of this research are:

- 1.3.1. To improve students' vocabulary through Make a Match technique at grade 5 of SDN 3 Tanjung.
- 1.3.2. To find out the students' perceptions regarding the use of Make a Match at the grade 5 of SDN 3 Tanjung.

1.4 Significance of the research

There is a lot of hope that the researchers in this study can make a special contribution to making the Make a Match technique more effective in helping students learn vocabulary better. Researchers also hope that this research will be useful for teachers', students, for schools and for researchers as the following statement:

1.4.1. For Teachers

Teachers will be more careful when choosing teaching methods for their classes and can try new ways of teaching using the Make a Match technique. The results of this study are expected to help teachers teach vocabulary more effectively by using the Make a Match. Teachers can also improve their skills in creating innovative and efficient teaching strategies.

1.4.2. For the School

Specifically for SDN 3 Tanjung, the findings of this study are expected to give a clear and detailed description of the problem faced by students' and the teacher's way to solve problems related to the application of Make a Match method in teaching vocabulary.

1.4.3. For Students

The positive results of this study can help students to improve vocabulary. By participating in learning activities using the Make a Match technique, students can become more motivated, confident, and active in learning English, which may support their overall language development.

1.4.4. For Researchers

This research is expected to be a useful reference for future researchers who are interested in conducting studies related to vocabulary learning, cooperative learning techniques, or the Make a Match technique.

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research is limited to the improvement of students' vocabulary and the exploration of students' perceptions toward the use of the Make a Match

technique in English learning. The research is conducted at SDN 3 Tanjung and involves fifth-grade students as the research subjects.

The scope of vocabulary learning in this study focuses on basic English vocabulary that is appropriate for elementary school students, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives commonly used in daily contexts. The research does not cover the other skills such as listening, reading, speaking or writing skills, except where they naturally support vocabulary learning activities.

Furthermore, this research is limited to the implementation of the Make a Match technique as the main instructional strategy. Other cooperative learning techniques are not examined or compared in this study. Therefore, the findings of this research are to improve students' vocabulary and exploring students' perceptions of Make a Match specifically within the context of vocabulary learning for fifth-grade students at SDN 3 Tanjung and may not be generalized to other schools, grade levels, or learning contexts.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Several important terminology are explained in order to avoid misunderstandings and to give clear instructions for interpreting this study. These definitions serve to make clear the key ideas covered in connection to helping students expand their vocabulary and explore their perceptions using the Make a Match technique in classroom action research.

1.6.1. Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to students' ability to understand, recall, and use English words correctly in both spoken and written forms. As mentioned by Meisuri et al. (2025), strengthening students' vocabulary through active learning strategies plays a vital role in enhancing their overall language competence and academic performance.

1.6.2. Perceptions

Perception refers to students' thoughts, emotions and reactions about their educational experience with a specific approach. Students'

positive perceptions of game-based learning strategies are closely connected to higher motivation, enjoyment and participation in class activities (Prayuda et al. 2023).

1.6.3. Make a Match

Make a Match is a cooperative learning approach in which students use interactive card-based games to find matching pairings, such as vocabulary and its meaning or image. As emphasized by Huda (2017) *Make a Match* is a cooperative learning technique designed to improve students' participation and interaction through a card-matching activity that encourages collaboration and peer support.

1.6.4. Classroom Action Research

Classroom Action Research is a methodical and reflective strategy that teachers use to improve their own teaching practices. It involves cycles of preparing, acting, observing, and reflecting. Prayuda et al. (2023) state that by testing specific strategies, like Make a Match, in actual classroom settings, Classroom Action Research allows continuous improvements in student learning results.