

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Vocabulary is a crucial part of mastering English, especially for students in English Education program who want to become foreign language teachers. Rahayu (2023), stated that vocabulary mastery plays a foundational role in enhancing students' speaking proficiency. Without sufficient vocabulary, students tend to struggle in expressing their ideas clearly and confidently in oral communication. However, many students still find it difficult to expand and use vocabulary in context, especially with thematic words related to topics like health, technology, or education. The problem of poor vocabulary mastery is often caused by monotonous learning methods that have been used for generations. This is also experienced by English students at Artha Wacana Christian University. Most students still rely on conventional methods, such as memorizing lists of words without understanding the context in which they are used. This causes them to quickly forget new words and have difficulty using them in real communication. Therefore, more contextual, interactive, and enjoyable learning strategies are needed so that students can acquire and retain vocabulary more effectively.

Vocabulary is also one of important factors in language learning and develops language skills. As Alemi and Tayebi (2012, p.1) state, vocabulary is the basic component of language proficiency, which provides the basis for learners' performance in other skills, such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing this idea also similar to Herdi and Ningsih (2018), they argue that students with limited vocabulary experience significant difficulties in comprehending texts, recognizing word meanings, and expressing ideas in English, which ultimately hinders their ability to communicate both receptively and productively. Based on the statements above, it can be seen that vocabulary is very important to master the four language skills, such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing, and additionally, vocabulary can help people to communicate with others.

There are many kinds of methods used by teachers to increase students' vocabulary understanding, such as games, flashcards, reading activities, and dictionary-based exercises. However, these methods often lack authentic context and fail to expose students to how words are naturally used in real communication.

One of the most promising learning media for improving vocabulary mastery is English-language video podcasts, particularly *6 Minute English* produced by BBC Learning English, as Nurislami et al. (2024) stated that consistent use of this podcast improved students' vocabulary recognition and ability to understand authentic speech in EFL classrooms. These video podcasts feature short conversations discussing various current and interesting topics, accompanied by explanations of the meanings and examples of how new vocabulary is used in real contexts. Through this medium, students not only learn the meanings of words, but also understand how to use them in natural communication situations. Each episode of *6 Minute English* focuses on a specific theme, such as health, environment, technology, or social issues, which allows learners to acquire thematic vocabulary in a structured and contextual manner. Furthermore, the audio-visual format of the podcast supports multimodal learning, enabling students to simultaneously develop their listening comprehension and vocabulary skills through authentic language input.

Based on the explanations above, this study is designed to investigate the effectiveness of using *6 Minute English* video podcast as a medium for improving the thematic vocabulary mastery of fifth-semester English Education students at Artha Wacana Christian University. It is expected that the use of this authentic and thematic media will not only enhance students' vocabulary acquisition but also increase their motivation and engagement in English learning. The findings of this study have contributed to the development of more innovative and technology-based learning approaches in the context of English language teaching in Indonesia.

1.2 Research Problems

This study raised several research questions :

1. Does the use of 6 Minute English video podcast effectively improve thematic vocabulary of 5th-semester English Language Education students?
2. What are the students' perceptions towards the implementation of 6 Minute English video podcast in improving their thematic vocabulary?

1.3 Aims of Study

The purpose of this study is as follows :

1. To determine whether the use of a 6 Minute English video podcast is effective in improving thematic vocabulary mastery of fifth-semester English Education students.
2. To determine students' perspectives towards the use of 6 Minute English video podcast as a medium for thematic vocabulary learning.

1.4 Significance of Study

Benefits gained from this research are as follows :

1. For Students

This research can help students improve their mastery of thematic vocabulary and listening skills through engaging an authentic learning media, such as a 6 Minute English video podcast.

2. Teachers, Educational Institutions, and Future Researchers

The findings of this study can provide valuable insights for English teachers in utilizing video podcasts as an alternative medium for teaching vocabulary and listening. In addition, the results of this study can encourage educational institutions to adopt innovative technology-based learning strategies. This study can also be a reference for future researchers who are interested in exploring the use of podcasts or other digital media in English language learning.

1.4.1 Implication

The results of this study benefited English language teaching practices, particularly in the context of TEFL. If the 6 Minute English video podcast proves effective in improving thematic vocabulary mastery, then this media can be utilized as an innovative alternative in teaching of listening and vocabulary in higher education. Nation (2001) argues that vocabulary knowledge is central to language learning and use. Students with a rich vocabulary are better to understand reading texts, engage in conversation, and express themselves clearly both orally and in writing. Factors such as exposure to new words, learning strategies, and motivation greatly influence vocabulary acquisition.

The use of video podcasts can also encourage students to learn autonomously through authentic learning resources available online. Lecturers can also integrate podcasts into project-based learning activities or listening comprehension assignments that emphasize thematic contexts. Mayer and Fiorella (2022) state that the use of multimedia by maximizing the functions of two channels, namely audio and visual, can increase the effectiveness of a person's information reception. Information reception from two channels will reduce the load on one channel by half, because each channel has its own capacity to receive information.

1.4.2 Application

The findings of this study can be applied to English language learning, especially in teaching listening and vocabulary. The 6 Minute English video podcast can serve as an effective tool for enhancing students' thematic vocabulary within context. Additionally, the results of this study can serve as a reference for educators and researchers in creating digital media-based learning strategies.