

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter consists of some theories and important aspects taken from experts and prior studies to support this research. There are several points being discussed in this chapter. The first point discusses the vocabulary in general. The second point explores the importance of vocabulary mastery. The third point identifies the online vocabulary learning in general. On the next point, the researcher elaborates the vocabulary.com website in detail. This chapter is also followed by the review of related studies and the conceptual framework.

Vocabulary

There are various definitions of vocabulary as proposed by some experts. According to Linse (2005), vocabulary is a group of words which are known by a person. Another definition of vocabulary came from Kamil and Hebert (2005) who stated that vocabulary is knowledge of words and its meaning in both spoken and written language, whether in receptive and productive form. According to Alqahtani (2015), vocabulary is a knowledge field in language which has an important role for learners to acquire a language. Alqahtani (2015) emphasized that vocabulary plays a great role for someone in acquiring language. Similar to previous experts' definitions of vocabulary, based on Cambridge Dictionaries Online (2016), vocabulary is all the words known and used by a particular person. Thus, from the definitions of vocabulary taken from some experts above, it can be

concluded that vocabulary is a collection of words known and used by an individual.

Types of Vocabulary. Some experts distinguished vocabulary into two categories, receptive vocabulary, and productive vocabulary. Haycraft (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015) differentiated vocabulary into two groups, namely receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. Moreover, Shepherd (as cited in Setiawan, 2010) also identified vocabulary as two kinds, receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. The description of receptive and productive vocabulary is elaborated in this following paragraph.

Receptive vocabulary. According to Syarifudin (2016), receptive vocabulary is the vocabulary that the learners know and understand in some context, but they do not use it for speaking and writing. In addition, Zhou (2010) added that receptive vocabulary knowledge is the ability to recognize and understand a word when it is heard or seen. Further, Arifiani (2017) stated that receptive vocabulary is words which are known when someone is reading or listening.. It can be concluded that receptive vocabulary is the vocabulary that the learners use in receptive skills, which consists of listening and reading.

Productive vocabulary. Productive vocabulary is the words that learners use in productive skills including speaking and writing. According to Arifiani (2017), productive vocabulary is the words that the learners use in speaking and writing. Another definition of productive vocabulary came from Alqahtani (2015) who stated that “productive vocabulary is the words that the learners understand

and can pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing” (p.25). Learners understood and can correctly use productive vocabulary in speaking and writing. When learners can produce a word correctly, even if they do not really know the context, then the words they produce belong to productive vocabulary.

The Importance of Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary is one of the language areas that is very important for language learners. Vocabulary is the core element of language which makes it become the most important aspect needs to be learned by language learners. This part of this chapter covers some experts statements related to the importance of vocabulary. Alqahtani (2015) stated that vocabulary is very crucial since the meanings of the new words are frequently emphasized whether it is in the classroom or in the books. Alqahtani (2015) also stated that vocabulary is very essential for language teaching and it is very important for language learners. Tozcu and Coady (2004) added that vocabulary is important for second language and foreign language acquisition, academic achievement and also for comprehension and proficiency level. If a learner has a lack of vocabulary mastery, he will automatically find difficulties in reading comprehensions since there will be a lot of strange words.

Vocabulary mastery has an important role for language learners because it affects their language skills including reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Mukoroli, 2011). According to Mukoroli, vocabulary mastery influences

students' language skills. Vocabulary learning is important because when a learner has good vocabulary mastery, it will also bring positive impacts for his/her language skills. Karshen stated that students carry their dictionary instead of grammar books while they are traveling (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015). This statement indicates that vocabulary is more important than grammar. It is more crucial for language learners to learn vocabulary rather than grammar. Since vocabulary is the core element of language, language learners can survive with a lot of grammatical errors, but they would not survive with a lack of vocabulary.

In order to convey something, vocabulary is more needed than any other language aspects. Wilkins argued that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015, p.22). Willkins emphasized that even if someone can produce a sentence in a perfect grammar structure, the sentence will have no meaning if he/she does not know the proper vocabulary (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015). On the other hand, even if someone produces a sentence in bad grammatical order, the meaning can still be conveyed if he/she knows the proper vocabulary. In this case, vocabulary learning is very crucial for language learners since language is very dependent on vocabulary.

Even if the vocabulary is the most important aspect in language, the learners consider it to be the biggest source of problems in learning the language. Meara stated that the biggest problem found by language learners is not grammar, but vocabulary (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015). In this case, vocabulary learning

becomes more important because some language learners assume it as their biggest problem. Thus, vocabulary learning is crucial to help the learners face their biggest problem in learning the language.

Online Vocabulary Learning

In this modern era, internet plays an important role in every aspect of life. In education, the internet has been applied by most of the educational institutes to facilitate them in teaching their students. Some web developers and programmers take advantages from internet to create online language learning. Rambousek (2014) stated that programmers do not only help the learners to learn the whole language, but there are also some programmers who focus on particular aspects of language. There are some programmers who specifically focus on pronunciation, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and so on. In the vocabulary field, there are some famous websites which developed to facilitate the learners, including Vocabulary.com, Visuwords.com, Online Etymology Dictionary, and many more.

Online vocabulary learning is invented to make vocabulary learning become more interesting and practical as the developing of technology. According to some experts, there are some benefits that can be taken. According to Mustafa, Razak, and Sain (2012), students have a better understanding of vocabulary when they learn it through the internet. They achieve a higher score of vocabulary test after they have been given online vocabulary learning. This also relevant to Mustafa et al. (2017) who stated that “The interface of the website could have great effects on learner’s performance in understanding the vocabulary” (p.28).

Further, online vocabulary learning is created in order to match the native of the students. Most of the students are digital natives. They were born and raised with internet and technology around them. According to Kwan and Yip (2006), students who were born in digital age perceived vocabulary learning as a boring thing. However, their study proved that students who learnt vocabulary from selected websites performed better than those who learnt vocabulary from regular activity-based lessons.

Students can also facilitate their own learning when they learn vocabulary through technology like internet. Riasati (2012) stated that using technology, teacher-centered learning can be changed to student-centered learning. Internet encourages the students to facilitate their own learning, they have control over everything they learn and they do not depend on learning from the teacher. This is good since they are supported to construct their own knowledge. Moreover, Motteram (2013) assumed that technology can help language learners to improve their language skills. The language learners can practice their language skills by using technology more effectively.

Even if there are a lot of benefits that can be taken from online vocabulary learning, there are some challenges that may occur. Riasati (2012) said that internet connection can be one of the barriers. The use of technology depends on internet connection, which means that the teaching and learning process would not run very well with the poor internet connection. In order to use internet to enhance

the vocabulary learning, a good internet connection is needed. The learning process can be disturbed, or even stopped, by the poor internet connection.

Another challenge of online vocabulary learning also comes from Riasati (2012) who stated that “Many researchers believe that lack of knowledge and practice are factors that prevent the successful use of the internet as a learning tool” (p.27). Sometimes the vocabulary learning website is very advanced but the problem comes from the human itself. Some students may still have lack of knowledge in using online vocabulary website to improve their vocabulary mastery. In order to start the online vocabulary learning, students need to learn the features at first. It could take an extra time until the students master the website.

Vocabulary.com

In vocabulary learning, there is a website called vocabulary.com that specifically helps the language learners to improve their vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary.com is a website created by Marc Tinkler which combined smart dictionary and adaptive learning exercise that helps the users mastering new words in a short period of time. The mission of vocabulary.com is extending access to understanding and education by using vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary.com is helping the students to practice their vocabulary based on their current level. The learners can also monitor their vocabulary mastery progress using the website. They believe that it's not only about the words but also about improving literacy.

Features in vocabulary.com. Ever since the website is aimed to provide interesting vocabulary learning, vocabulary.com has some features to support the users to learn vocabulary in various ways. The features can be seen by clicking the three lines symbol on the top right of the screen and see the “For Everyone” section. The features are “play the challenges”, “dictionary”, “vocabulary lists”, and “choose your words”. Those features are described in the paragraphs below.

Play the challenge.

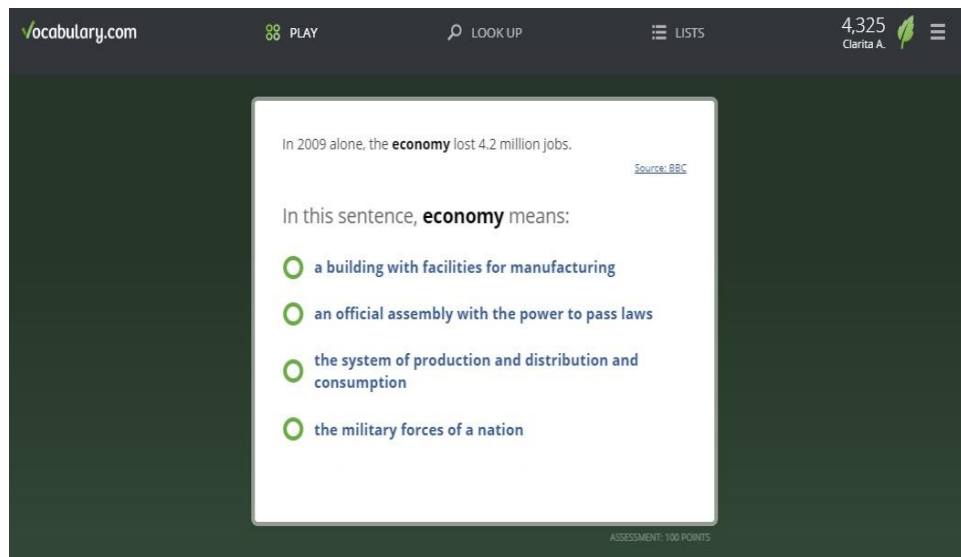


Figure 2.1

The feature allows the users to do a challenge given by the website. The user can click the “play the challenge” option to start the challenge, but it usually pops up automatically after the user signing in to the website. The challenge serves some questions in form of multiple choices that suit the user’s level. Figure 2.1 shows the example of “play the challenge” feature. There is unlimited chance to answer the question correctly, and the users have the right to do the question

until they choose the correct answers. They will get a score every time the question is answered correctly, and there is no score reducing for the wrong answers. Vocabulary.com also provides the explanation of the vocabulary that being asked after the user can answer the question correctly as shown in figure 2.2.

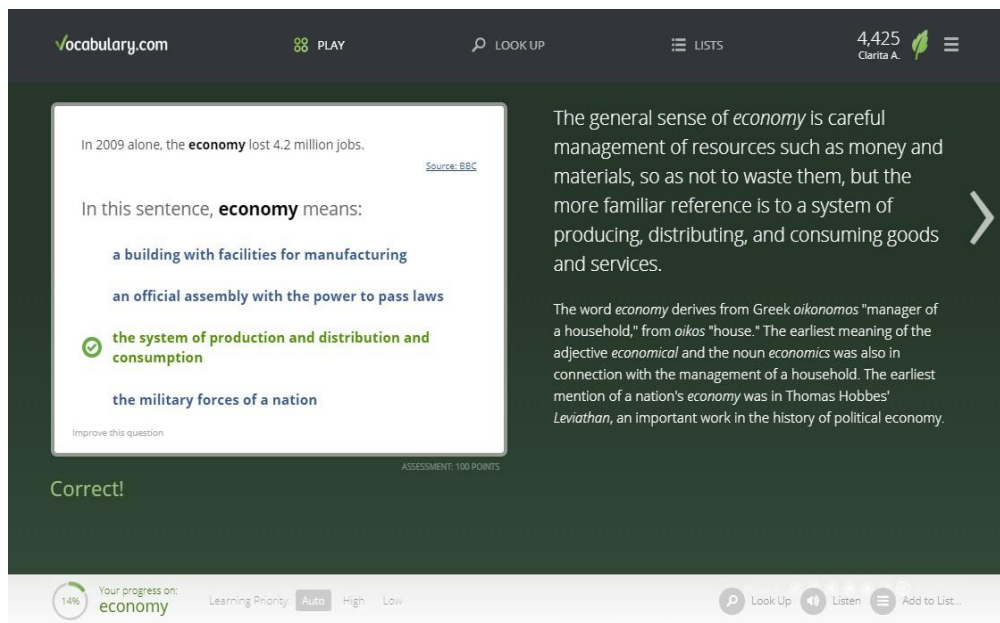


Figure 2.2.

Dictionary. When the user is willing to look for the definition of a word without having to play the challenge, s/he can click the dictionary option. The dictionary option is shown in figure 2.3. It shows how the dictionary feature looks like. When a user wants to look for a word, s/he can just type it in the search column. In this case, the researcher put the word “vocabulary” for the example. The website provides a deep explanation about vocabulary while most of the printed dictionary only gives a short one.

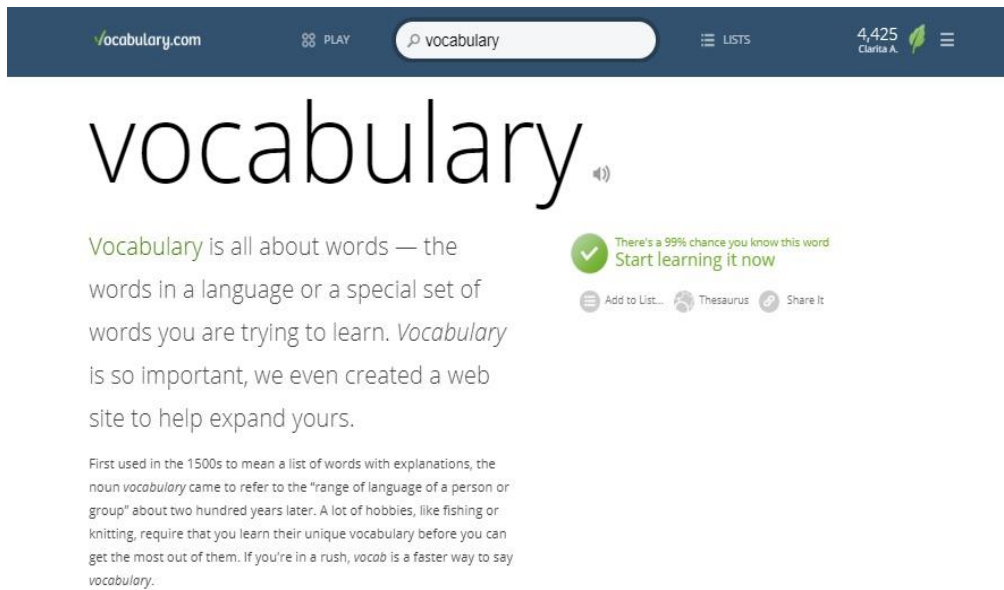


Figure 2.3

Vocabulary lists. The vocabulary lists feature in vocabulary.com enables the users to choose the lists of vocabulary that they want to learn. Vocabulary.com provides many options for the lists feature and the users can choose their own lists. Figure 2.4 shows the display of the lists feature. On the left side of the picture is the column of lists that the users can choose.

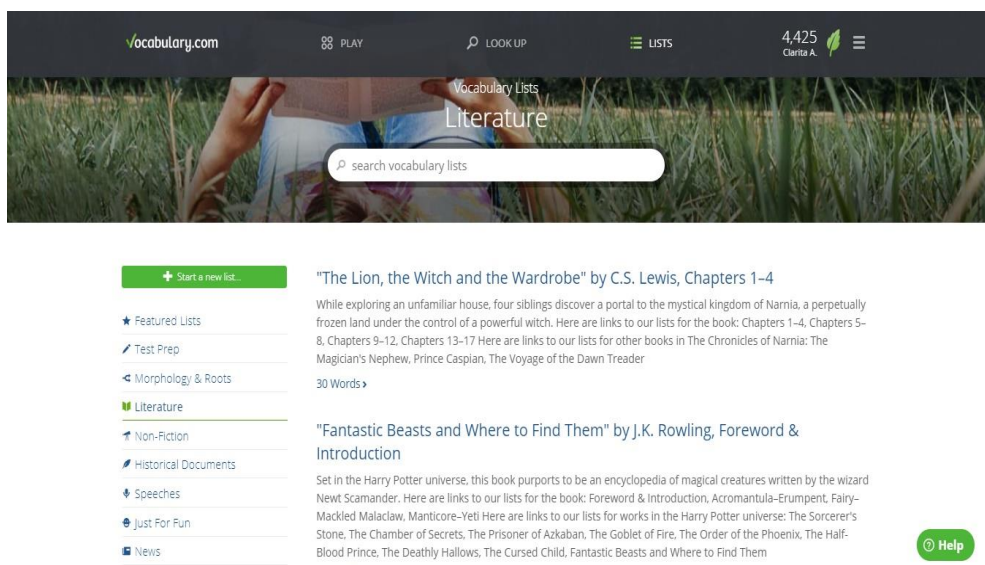
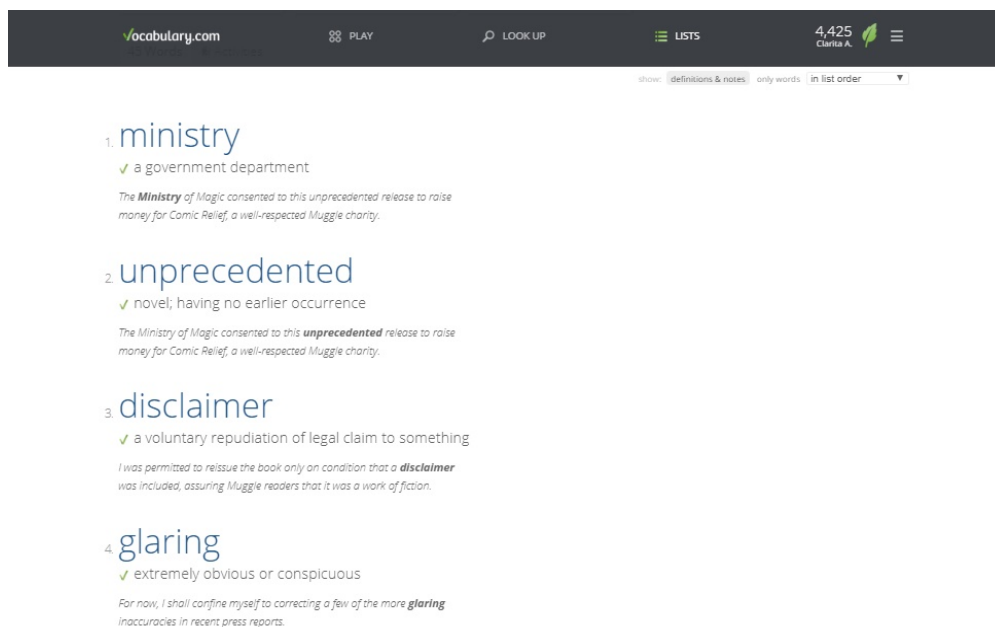


Figure 2.4

For the example, the researcher clicks the “Literature” on the lists. After choosing the “Literature”, some passages will appear on the right side of the picture. The passages are related to what option being chosen. In order to give more detailed information about this feature, the researcher choose the passage entitled “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them” by J.K.Rowling. After choosing this passage, the users will see some vocabularies from this passage. This following figure 2.5 is showing the lists of words that appear after choosing the mentioned passage above. Those words are explained briefly and there are examples of how to use them in sentences. After the users learn those words, they can practice by choosing one of the exercises given such as practice, spelling bee, and vocabulary jam.



vocabulary.com PLAY LOOK UP LISTS 4,425 Clanta A.

show: definitions & notes only words in list order ▼

- ministry**
✓ a government department
*The **Ministry** of Magic consented to this **unprecedented** release to raise money for Comic Relief, a well-respected Muggle charity.*
- unprecedented**
✓ novel; having no earlier occurrence
*The Ministry of Magic consented to this **unprecedented** release to raise money for Comic Relief, a well-respected Muggle charity.*
- disclaimer**
✓ a voluntary repudiation of legal claim to something
*I was permitted to reissue the book only on condition that a **disclaimer** was included, assuring Muggle readers that it was a work of fiction.*
- glaring**
✓ extremely obvious or conspicuous
*For now, I shall confine myself to correcting a few of the more **glaring** inaccuracies in recent press reports.*

Figure 2.5

Choose your words. This feature facilitates the users to differentiate the meaning of some words that sound or look similar. Figure 2.6 shows a brief explanation about each word so that the users will not be confused in choosing the words. The feature help the users to be able in identifying the words that frequently mistaken for the other ones.

The screenshot shows a dark-themed interface for the 'Choose your words' feature. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the following elements: the logo 'vocabulary.com', a 'PLAY' button with a play icon, a 'LOOK UP' button with a magnifying glass icon, a 'LISTS' button with a list icon, and a user profile section showing '4,425' words learned, the name 'Carita A.', and a profile icon. Below the navigation bar, the content is organized into a grid of six word pairs, each with a brief explanation and a 'Continue reading...' link.

<p>adopt / adapt</p> <p>"Adopt, adapt, and improve," says the thief in a Monty Python skit when he robs a lingerie shop instead of a bank. <i>Adopt</i> is to take something over, and to <i>adapt</i> is to change something to suit your needs. It's helpful advice when you ask for money and get a pair of granny panties.</p> <p>Continue reading...</p>	<p>adverse / averse</p> <p><i>Adverse</i> and <i>averse</i> are both turn-offs, but <i>adverse</i> is something harmful, and <i>averse</i> is a strong feeling of dislike. Rainstorms can cause <i>adverse</i> conditions, and many people are <i>averse</i> to rain.</p> <p>Continue reading...</p>	<p>affect / effect</p> <p>Choosing between <i>affect</i> and <i>effect</i> can be scary. Think of Edgar Allan Poe and his RAVEN: Remember Affect Verb Effect Noun. You can't <i>affect</i> the creepy poem by reading it, but you can enjoy the <i>effect</i> of a talking bird.</p> <p>Continue reading...</p>
<p>afflict / inflict</p> <p>Both <i>afflict</i> and <i>inflict</i> cause pain, but <i>afflict</i> means to cause suffering or unhappiness, something a disease does, but <i>inflict</i> means to force pain or suffering, like if you smack someone upside the head.</p> <p>Continue reading...</p>	<p>aggravate / irritate</p> <p><i>Aggravate</i> means to make something worse, and <i>irritate</i> is to annoy. But if you use <i>aggravate</i> to mean "annoy," no one will notice. That battle has been lost in all but the most formal writing.</p> <p>Continue reading...</p>	<p>allude / elude</p> <p><i>Allude</i> is coy, to <i>allude</i> is to refer to something in an indirect manner. But <i>elude's</i> favorite thing to do is hide from the cops: it means to evade. Because the accent is on the second syllable in both words, it's easy to get them mixed up.</p> <p>Continue reading...</p>

Figure 2.6

My progress. In order to monitor their learning progress, the users can click the "My Progress" section. By opening this feature, users can see the vocabularies they learned. This section contains several options such as "Words I'm Learning, My Trouble Words, Words I've Mastered and My Achievements". This feature facilitates the users to monitor their achievements in learning vocabulary by showing the words that they have mastered. Moreover, in order to encourage the users to improve their vocabulary, the feature also provides the list

of some trouble words. In this case, they can push themselves harder in learning those trouble words

The Benefits of Using Vocabulary.com

Based on the description in the website, vocabulary.com combines smart dictionary and games which can help the learners to learn vocabulary in short period of time. The features in the website facilitate them to acquire vocabulary in more interesting way. The learners can take some benefits by using the website in learning vocabulary as presented by the following paragraphs.

Adaptive learning. There's a technology behind vocabulary.com that can adapts the level of the users, so they will not wasting time on learning vocabulary which is under or beyond their proficiency. It uses item responses theory (IRT) which is computerized adaptive testing that presents the appropriate questions to the test-takers. By learning vocabulary from this website, the learners can actually fulfill their particular needs. Zeiger (2018) stated that the adaptive system of the website gauge adolescences' vocabulary skill and challenge them by presented words design. Even if the website has adaptive learning formats, the words presented are still challenging for learners. According to the website, the more the learners play, the more it can adapt the proficiency level. Thus, the website can give its best benefit if the learners use it frequently.

Emphasizes word comprehension. Vocabulary.com is more than just a regular dictionary, it also provides some words games for the learners to test their comprehension. According to the website, it exposes the learners with various

types of questions and activity that encourage the learners to understand the meaning of every word that they learn. Even if the learners have already mastered the words, the website will continue to reinforce them so that they can stay fresh in the learner's memory. Moreover, the given words are followed by the real-world examples so that the learners can properly use them in real life situation.

Self-controlled learning. According to Kumar (2016) learners can control their own learning by choosing a list in the "featured list". Learners can choose what words that they want to learn based on their own lesson or interest. They can control the list of words that they want to master, thus they do not get wasted on the list of words that they do not want to learn. Moreover, there is a "my progress" feature in website that facilitate the learners to monitor their progress. It shows the words that they have mastered, and also the words that they have trouble with. By monitoring their own progress, learners can be more focused on the words that they are lacking of.

The Challenges of Using Vocabulary.com

Besides the benefits of vocabulary.com, there must be some challenges which are found from the website. Even if there is no specific study about the challenges of vocabulary.com, there are some studies that found out the challenges of using online vocabulary learning. Technically, vocabulary.com is an online vocabulary learning website. Thus, these following challenges of using online vocabulary learning could give the general overview about challenges that may also be found in vocabulary.com

Lack of internet connection. Online vocabulary learning depends on the internet connection. Riasati (2012) said that internet connection can be one of the barriers in online vocabulary learning. The learning process can be disturbed, or even stopped if the internet connection is weak. It will take more effort for the students to find a good internet connection if they want to learn vocabulary online. They need to move to other spots every time the internet connection is weak. Moreover, when the website is reloading, it will spend more time. This technical problem is become one of the major barrier that can disturb the learning process.

Lack of technology knowledge. Learning vocabulary from internet requires some knowledge about the technology itself. Riasati (2012) stated that “Many researchers believe that lack of knowledge and practice are factors that prevent the successful use of the internet as a learning tool” (p.27). Even if vocabulary.com provides some amazing features, the users will find some troubles in using the website if they are lacking of technology knowledge. In order to maximize the potential of the website, the users need to have enough knowledge to operate it. Besides the lack of internet connection, the lack of technology is also one of the hard challenges that can disturb the learning process.

Review of Related Studies

There are several studies related to this research which conducted a study about the students’ perceptions on the use of online vocabulary exercise in improving their vocabulary mastery. Those two studies will be reviewed below.

The first study was conducted by Kilickaya and Krajka in 2010 entitled “Comparative Usefulness of Online and Traditional Vocabulary Learning”. The objective of his study was to know whether online vocabulary teaching would be more effective than traditional instruction. Their study was conducted under a quantitative approach by using an experimental design. There were 38 students as the participants taken from different departments in a private university in Ankara, Turkey. All of them were aged among 17-19 years old and studying English. The participants were divided into two groups, one group for the control group, and the second one for the experimental group. Both of those two groups were being asked to study the same passage but with different media. The control group was using traditional media like books and a dictionary, while the experimental group was using *WordChamp*. The treatment lasted for five weeks.

There were two results found in Kilickaya and Krajka’s study, those results were gathered from the data analyzing by using SPSS. The first result answered their first research question, “is online vocabulary learning more effective than the traditional instruction as measured by the learners’ post-test result?” The result showed that the experimental group studied vocabulary better than the control group. There was a significant difference between the two groups. The second result answered their second research question, “is online vocabulary learning more effective than the traditional instruction as measured by the participants’ follow-up post-test result?” The second result showed that was a significant difference between those two groups even if the follow-up post-test was given two months later. Thus, it can be concluded that *WordChamp* helped

the students acquired vocabulary in academic reading passage better when compared to the traditional instruction.

The second related study was conducted by Mustafa, Razak, and Sain in 2012 entitled “Using Internet for Learning Vocabulary among Second Language Learners in a Suburban School”. Their research objective was to identify whether the use of the internet in vocabulary learning can enhance the students’ vocabulary understanding or not. They used the quantitative approach in their research under experimental design. The participants were 30 students of second language learners in a suburban school with an intermediate level of proficiency. They were divided into two groups, the control group, and the experimental group. The control group was given a treatment by learning vocabulary through the printed source, while the experimental one was given a treatment by learning their material from the internet. The treatment lasted for 3 weeks and the post-test was delivered 5 weeks after the treatment.

The test result analyzed by using SPSS showed that both groups had a better understanding of vocabulary after they had been given the treatments. However, there was a gap in their post-test scores. The experimental group performed a better understanding of vocabulary rather than the control group. In conclusion, the experimental group which got a treatment by using online reading task showed an increase in their post-test result compared to the control group who learned the vocabulary from printed material.

In some aspects, this research has some similarities with those two studies. Kilickaya and Kraja’s study aimed to find out the significance of online

vocabulary exercise through an experiment. This study aimed to elaborate on the benefits and the challenges of using online vocabulary exercise. Mustafa, Razak, and Sain did an experiment about the use of internet in vocabulary learning on students' vocabulary understanding. It has something in common with Kilickaya and Kraja's study. Compared to this research, their study used the website as vocabulary learning material, while this research used the website as vocabulary exercise.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, vocabulary is one of the most important components in language learning. Alqahtani (2015) stated that "vocabulary is an essential part of foreign language learning as the meaning of new words are very often to emphasized, whether in books or in classrooms" (p.21). Vocabulary is one of the important aspects of learning a foreign language. The lack of vocabulary knowledge can make the students feel difficulty in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary is important to communicate in daily life, especially in terms of language learning.

In the modern era, the internet can be used to help the language learners to learn the language more effectively. Rambousek (2014) stated that programmers do not only help the learners to learn the whole language, but there are also some programmers who focus on particular aspects of language. There are some programmers who specifically design the applications or websites which focusing on pronunciation, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and so on. In the

vocabulary field, there is a famous website developed to facilitate the learners to learn vocabulary called vocabulary.com.

Vocabulary.com is a website invented by Marc Tinkler which combined smart dictionary and adaptive learning exercise that helps the users mastering new words in a short time. The users can learn vocabulary by doing some exercise on the website. Based on the researcher's experience of using the website, there are some benefits and also challenges of learning vocabulary through vocabulary.com as mentioned previously. However, thus are taken from the researcher's experience. The researcher aims to explore what the college students' perception towards the benefits and the challenges using vocabulary.com in improving vocabulary mastery

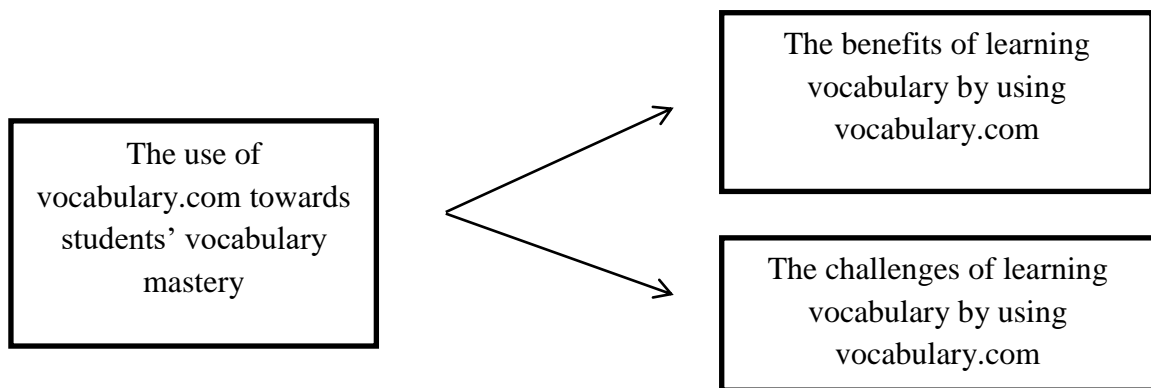


Figure 2.7.
Conceptual Framework