

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of The Study

English is an international language. Almost all countries have made English a compulsory subject at schools. Indonesian government has decided English is the first foreign language to be taught in Indonesian schools, beginning from primary schools up to university. People realize that teaching English at this level becomes very important and need much concern. As an English teacher, the teacher demands to explore effective techniques, method, and approaches. The students have to master the four basic language skills. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Beside such basic skill, the student has to master some vocabularies as well as possible.

Vocabulary is one important aspect in learning a foreign language. With a limited vocabulary, anyone will also has a limited understanding in terms of speaking, reading, listening, and writing. It is true that it might be impossible to learn a language without mastering vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the problems confronted by English language learners. Because of the limited vocabulary, the learners cannot communicate to others clearly. Sometimes it is difficult to group the idea transmitted to them. The acquisition of a large number of vocabularies can help the students read, speak, listen, and write. A good

vocabulary and ability to use words correctly and effectively can help the students make school work easier and more rewarding, and also many tests that they take in school include vocabulary questions. The more vocabularies they know the better their chance to do well on an English test. According to Tarigan (1986, p.2), kualitas keterampilan berbahasa seseorang jelas tergantung pada kuantitas dan kualitas yang dimilikinya maka semakin besar kosakata yang kita miliki maka semakin besar pula kemungkinan kita terampil berbahasa (The quality of language skill depends on the quantity and quality of vocabulary. The more vocabulary we have, the bigger possibility to have a skill to use the language).

Mastering vocabulary is the ability to get or to receive a lot of words. By having and mastering vocabulary we will know the meaning of vocabulary in the context. Measuring vocabulary helps to avoid making mistakes in understanding. On the other hand, foreign students learning English reading text, one lack of vocabulary, whereas in fact vocabulary is the most important thing in reading skill.

Nowadays, the ability to comprehend English is necessary for people and also to understanding English, people have to able to communicate English and also able to read many kinds of English text. The ability to read is crucial in contemporary society. People find many texts written in English, from holiday brochures to academic books, newspaper, advertisements, etc. Therefore, the ability to read English text in any form will give a great deal of advantages in our lives.

Reading is an important skill in life because it is a factor of great importance in the individual development and the most important activity in school. It is needed

in every level of field of study. Particularly in cases when students have to read English materials for their own special subject.

Being able to read in English is very important as it is known that success in reading is the most necessary because it is a basic tool of education. All the subjects in Elementary School such as mathematics, science, language, and others depend on the ability to read. In high school and college, reading ability becomes even more important. Through reading we acquire new ideas, obtain needed information, seek support for our ideas and broaden our interest. We can also get the message that the writer had expressed. The ability to read helps to distinguish human being and one of the purposes of teaching English of a foreign language to Indonesian people is that they can read, grasp the idea and understand the book written in English. To achieve those purposes, students need a lot of words of English to master. As Norbert (1997, p.40) said "vocabulary is one of the most important skills in a language". So to achieve the success in language teaching learning process especially English, vocabulary is one of important factors in all language teaching.

According to the researcher's experience from PPL (Program Pengalaman Lapangan), it was known that many of the junior high students have a limited number of vocabularies. The students always find that it is hard to express the ideas when the students meet the word that the students do not know its English word. As the result, the students mostly will stop to express their ideas in English. It can be seen when the students was asked to tell the direction from the students' house to school, the students cannot express their ideas, it is because the lack of the students' vocabularies.

And another example was seen when the students was asked to do the reading comprehension, many of the students did not understand about the contents of the text, so that the students could not do the reading comprehension well. In fact that occurred in Indonesia with regard to learning English as a foreign language that the students' vocabulary mastery is still lagging. According to curriculum 2006, each school has to pass English lesson on the KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal). It means that, the expectation of each school is every student should pass English lesson on the KKM. Due to lack of vocabulary mastery, it makes the students get gaps in learning English, for example, the students assume that learning English is difficult and they are not interested in learning English. According to the problems, it can be overcome if the schools introduce the lessons of vocabulary first before the other skills, so that the students can use the vocabulary to talk, to listen, to write and to do the reading comprehension.

In reading research, many studies demonstrate the strong relationship between vocabulary and reading. Thorndike (1973), in a study of reading in 15 countries (and with over 100,000 students), reported median correlations across countries and age groups of between $r = .66$ and $r = .75$ for reading and vocabulary. Stanovich (2000) has also reported on studies that support this relationship, and in his own research, he has reported strong correlations between vocabulary and reading for third- through seventh-grade L1 students ($r = .64$ to $r = .76$). In fact, Stanovich (2000) makes a strong argument for a reciprocal causal relation between reading and vocabulary. That is,

vocabulary growth leads to improve reading comprehension, and amount of reading leads to vocabulary growth.

Based on the description above, it shows that vocabulary and reading have close relation. Furthermore, the writer wants to carry out research to know whether there is a correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension at SMPN 146, East Jakarta.

B. The Problem Statement of The Study

Based on the background of problem, the research question is: "Is there any significant correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension at SMPN 146, East Jakarta?"

C. The Objective of The Study

The goal of this study is to find out the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension at SMPN 146, East Jakarta.

D. The Scope of The Study

This study is focused on the correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. This study describes; is there any significant correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension? The sample in this study is limited into two classes, class D and class E at the same grade that is the second grade students of SMPN 146, East Jakarta.

E. The Significances of The Study

After completing this study, it is expected that this study will be beneficially, theoretically, and practically to students, teachers, readers and further researchers.

1. To students, the result of this study will motivate the students to increase their vocabulary.
2. To teachers, the result of this study will motivate the teachers to facilitate and develop the students' vocabulary mastery through reading comprehension.
3. To readers, the result of this study will give the information to the readers that vocabulary can affect the students' achievement in reading comprehension.
4. To further researchers, the results of this study can provide a basis for conducting researchers on the same area.

F. The Operational Definition

For the purpose of the study, the following terms are defined operationally:

1. **Correlation:** Correlation is a mutual relation of two or more parts. It gives an understanding to the readers that, at least, two things or more are linked by a cause.
2. **Vocabulary:** Vocabulary is considered as the most important part in learning a language. It is impossible for the students to read, write and speak a foreign language without having enough knowledge of the vocabulary.
3. **Vocabulary Mastery:** Vocabulary mastery means the students having ability in understanding and using the vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery itself deals

with words and meaning. The students are not only hoped to know the words but also their meaning.

- 4. Reading Comprehension:** Reading comprehension is a process that requires how to decode through the development of an extensive repertoire of sight words. It represents how well readers understand literal comprehension which concentrates on explicit meaning and inferential comprehension which concentrates on implicit meaning in the reading text.