CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the important elements needed to master a language because it is the stock of words in a given language. It is used to comprehend the meaning of words so that learners may understand a text and construct the organized sentences well. Using Context Clues and Mnemonics Techniques is considered as vocabulary teaching strategies to increase students' vocabulary mastery. They dealt with the process of guessing the meaning of words based on context and remembering the keyword of a sentence.

This study is intended to know whether context clues and mnemonic techniques significantly affect students' vocabulary mastery and which of these two techniques the most significantly affect students' vocabulary mastery is.

1.1 The Background of the Study

Giving attention to vocabulary is an unavoidable step in mastering a language. It has a very important role in learning a language including English because vocabulary is the total number of sets of words that make up a language (Hornby:1989:1425). The total stock of English words enables learners to master English proficiency as in Reading, Speaking, Listening and Writing skills well. Those four skills will be effectively learned by learners if they have words bank or broad vocabulary. Considering the importance of vocabulary in mastering English communicatively, the writer is interested to discuss this study related to the effort of increasing students' vocabulary mastery by applying some appropriate techniques.

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In addition, Wassman (1993:22) also divides vocabulary into two major types, they are Conversational and Formal Vocabulary. The first consists of those words we use every day in speaking and listening. The second type includes erudite words used in more formal reading and writing and in more formal speaking situations. Those words are less familiar and often have their roots in Greek and Latin. It seems very clear that vocabulary is the basis to master English proficiency effectively.

Dealt with the goal of English teaching and learning processes in Indonesia-based on the latest Curriculum, CBC (Competence Based Curriculum), students' English proficiency in mastering the four language skills, particularly in reading skill (besides listening, speaking and writing skills). As Wassman (1993) states that the broadest vocabulary needed is in the reading and listening skills. It means that vocabulary is used as the basic element to grasp those skills because it influences learners' ability to translate and construct a sentence to get the meaning of each words in English correctly.

Developing a superior vocabulary is extremely required to understand the whole text easily, particularly in English teaching and learning process for Indonesian foreign learners. Klare (1974:58) stresses the importance of vocabulary knowledge in learning English in order to enable students having the real meaning of a word successfully. If students do not know the meaning of a word, they will find some difficulties in both receptive and productive language. The process of oral and written communication is going to be late, even there must be misunderstanding of getting inferential meaning in the process of communication.
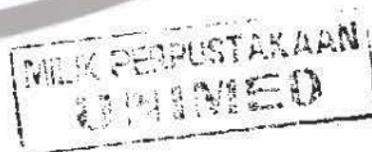
Nation (1990:1) also states that vocabulary is an essential element in studying English as like as grammar, pronunciation, spelling, structures, etc. Simply, increasing vocabulary is really needed to get learners do their language tasks effectively.

Recent Research (Nagy and Anderson:1984, Goulden, et al in press) finds that learners can obtain their vocabulary both by receptive and productive language. Receptive learning involves being able to recognize a word and recall it's meaning when it is met. Productive learning involves what is needed for receptive learning plus the ability to speak or to write needed vocabulary at the appropriate time. If learners study English in order to be able to read and understand lectures, a receptive knowledge of vocabulary is sufficient. If learners need to cover the whole range of language skills, then a productive knowledge of vocabulary of around 3.000 base words and a large receptive vocabulary is needed.

Unfortunately, learners face some difficulties to obtain their vocabulary successfully because vocabulary learning process in both receptive and productive learning are not effectively taught by English teachers in Indonesia. Yoshida (1978) finds that a second language learner should have 460 to 700 English words in his receptive and productive vocabulary after seven months of exposure to English. The research shows that the learner got his receptive and productive vocabulary of about 1.000 words in a year. This means a second language learner needs to master 1.000 words per year.

As the matter of fact, English foreign learners in Indonesia are lacking of their own English vocabulary. Learners usually have many problems in mastering English

words. They get limited vocabulary to comprehend the meaning of a text, they do not know the context of word use in a text, they cannot recognize the meaning of each words, they are not able to hear the English words from speakers, students cannot compose their writing task successfully and they get difficulty to state some sentences in English. Those problems cause them to be hard to communicate receptively or productively in English (Kompas:16 August 2005:54).

Those students' problems happened because of some reasons. First, many English teachers tend to stress teaching mostly in grammatical rules, English structures and answering questions of a text. They are not realizing that vocabulary is needed to teach first as the basic to understand English. Teachers tend to focus on reading comprehension without teaching the techniques or strategies on how to recognize an English word. They reject to teach the principles of vocabulary and its theoretical and experimental justification. Second, the learners must be interested in understanding the message (Krishen:1981). From the point of view of vocabulary learning, this interest creates a need to understand the unknown words in the message. This is teachers' duty also to create the text that interest students. Third, English teachers almost ignore the difficult words cause a problem. In this case, they need to give some attention to the unknown word appears in a reading passage and give clearer explanation about it to help students in recognizing the unfamiliar word well.

It is clearly explained that students' difficulties in mastering English vocabulary appear because teachers do not apply the appropriate techniques and strategies in teaching vocabulary in the classroom. This means English teachers are

required to be responsible to enable students increasing their own vocabulary by applying some significant techniques.

Nattinger (1988:63) identifies that guessing vocabulary from context is the most frequent way of discovering the meaning of new words. Similarly, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) also reveal that guessing the meaning of an unknown word from context is the most useful vocabulary learning technique. It is advantageous to make learners do exercises and activities that focus their attention on vocabulary. Such exercises include word-building exercises, guessing words from context when it is done as a class exercise, learning words in lists and vocabulary games.

In relation to this study, increasing and establishing vocabulary mastery need some appropriate strategies. Nation (1990:160) offers two significant vocabulary teaching strategies, they are (1) Guessing words in Context, and (2) Using Mnemonics techniques to remember word meanings effectively. By considering those two strategies, learners are not only expected to understand the meaning of words in context, but also can communicate the words to other people well.

Guessing words in context is also known as Context Clues where the learners can guess the unknown words by considering some clues based on the context of a passage. These following examples elaborate the nature of Context Clues in detail.

A word "*bank*" has different meanings. Learners can predict each variety of meaning based on the context of each sentences.

1. I save my money at the *bank*.

   "*Bank*" is a place for saving money.

2. He lives at the *bank* near that river.

"*Bank*" means a place besides the river.

3. A plane appeared out of fog, *banked* and stopped.

"*Bank*" means to tilt and cause to turn.

Meanwhile, mnemonics techniques is also called as the keyword technique in which learners will discover the words meaning by connecting and visualizing one word to others. It concerns with word remembering.

For example: the word "*parrot*". Indonesia learners can associate this new word as *parit* (Indonesia), or *ditch* (English). Then, Indonesia learners may visualize the word *parit* in their mind in order to enable them to remember the meaning of that word in a longer time.

Realizing the fact happened in the field that English foreign learners in Indonesia face some difficulties in establishing and increasing their own English vocabulary, there were some previous researchers have already done the discussion of vocabulary mastery. However, this study is primarily concerned with teaching vocabulary by using Context Clues and Mnemonics Techniques as the strategies to overcome Senior High School Students' problems in increasing their vocabulary.

Consequently, this study is carried out to see whether those two vocabulary teaching strategies are effective to increase students' vocabulary mastery. Therefore, the title of this study is formulated as "Context Clues and Mnemonics Techniques as the Way of Increasing Students' Vocabulary Mastery".

1.1 The Research Problems

Based on the previous background of the study, Indonesia English learners face some difficulties in increasing their own vocabulary. Therefore, the problems of this research are formulated as follows:

a. Is there any significant effect of context clues on students' vocabulary mastery?

b. Is there any significant effect of mnemonics techniques on students' vocabulary mastery?

c. Are there significant effects of context clues and mnemonics techniques on students' vocabulary mastery?

1.2 The Objectives of the Study

In relation to the research problems, this study aims:

a. to find out the effect of context clues on students' vocabulary mastery.

b. to find out the effect of mnemonics techniques on students' vocabulary mastery.

c. to find out the effect of context clues and mnemonics techniques on students' vocabulary mastery.

1.3 The Significances of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be relevant and useful for English teachers and learners theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, the significances of this study are intended to be useful for:

1. Giving the valuable contribution for theoretical knowledge to teach and learn vocabulary effectively.

2. The trigger and grounds for further research in conducting a research related to the improvement of the students' vocabulary mastery.

Practically, the significances of this study are expected to be advantageous for:

1. English foreign learners in overcoming their problems and difficulties in establishing and increasing their vocabulary mastery.

2. English teachers can teach vocabulary effectively in the classroom by applying the significant strategies, both by using Context Clues and Mnemonics Techniques.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

Based on the background of the study that has been mentioned in the previous discussion, there are other factors that enable the students to increase their vocabulary mastery. Guessing words in context, using mnemonics techniques, using prefixes, roots and suffixes, using word parts, a personal word bank, using dictionary and thesaurus are considered as the potential sources to overcome students' difficulties in mastering English vocabulary (Nation:1990:160). Similarly, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) also reveal guessing the meaning of word from context is the most useful vocal learning technique. There are some other exercises to establish students' English vocabulary, such as word building exercises, guessing words from context, learning words in lists and vocabulary games. Krashen (1981) believes that certain conditions influence students' lack of ability to comprehend the meaning of a text.

namely: learners' interest in understanding the message, the message is not closely related to learners, and ineffective vocabulary teaching process.

In addition, there are some types of vocabulary also, namely: High frequency words, Academic vocabulary, Technical vocabulary and Low frequency words. However, the researcher chooses only one of those types of vocabulary in this discussion, it is high frequency words which is commonly occur in senior high school students' English text book. It is considered as the most important type of vocabulary should be mastered by senior high school students to master their own English proficiency.

Considering the fact that vocabulary mastery is affected by many factors, there are some techniques can be used to increase students' vocabulary mastery. However, the researcher limits the scope of this study on the discussion of using context clues and mnemonics techniques to increase students' vocabulary mastery which is related to the previous background of the study. There are ten types of context clues can be used to increase students' vocabulary mastery, they are: descriptions, opposites, synonym, cause and effect, purpose, too/enough, appositives, combination skills and sentence structures. However, this research limits the discussion on five of them only as the common context clues used in English senior high school textbook.