

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

In the study of English, the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be well mastered. These skills are expected to be well-taught to the students. Reading is one of important language skills for academic achievement, besides, listening speaking, and then writing. Successful reading performance is a strong predictor to the students' academic success. Reading ability enables the students to gain information and to improve their knowledge. This is the most important factor in the modern society that each individual has to search for information through the medium of reading because information, knowledge and technology are mostly found in written or printed materials. Thus, one of the language skills that the students can rely on is reading. Bowman and Bowman (1991:365) state that reading is an appropriate medium to promote life long learning.

Many types of written texts are available in the society and provide information. The type of written texts that one encounters in his daily life that is when he picks up and reads a non-fiction book, magazine, or newspaper article is expository text. The author uses expository writing to inform the reader about the topic. At school, students are required to submit school exams and research papers as a means for the teachers to grade the progress. At work, people are required to

produce business reports and memorandums to inform the superiors and co workers about the occurrences that take place at other levels of the company. In addition, oral exposition is primarily observed in oral academic presentation, business talks, and speeches that are delivered to a group of people. As each of these different cases illustrate, expository writing and speech surround the readers in every day life. It means that by understanding expository texts, the students that are obliged to do their academic tasks such as writing research papers, speeches, and other academic presentations will be helped.

For university students, reading expository texts is absolutely important. However, gaining information from printed materials is not as easy as an apple pie. Based on observations, most of students of English Department of Samudera Langsa University experienced difficulties in reading comprehension. Newman (2007) explains that an important goal of education is to assist students to read and write expository texts. Success in school work and society depends largely upon the ability to comprehend this type of text. However, there is ample research to suggest that many children are not learning to read and write expository texts competently. Researchers noted that establishing effective instructional frameworks for teaching students how to read and write this material remain elusive. Therefore, developing effective expository reading comprehension instruction should be a research priority. Reading is of course the process in mind. It is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface presentation encoded by a writer and ends with

meaning which the reader constructs. Thus, the ultimate goal in reading is to make meaning from text that is to comprehend the information conveyed by in the text. It means that the reader should gain some understanding of the message conveyed by the author. Not only that, comprehension should go beyond simply understanding the explicit message that is being conveyed by the author. To truly comprehend texts is to make connections between the information in the texts and the information in the reader's head to draw inferences about the author's meaning, to evaluate the quality of the message and possibly even to connect aspects of the text with other works of literature.

According to schema theory, proficient readers gain comprehension of a text by activating the prior knowledge (schemata). The prior or background knowledge is the knowledge achieved in previous readings or learning. One of the most important prior knowledge is the knowledge of vocabulary. It is undeniable that to be skillful in reading, one needs sufficient vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the important elements needed in reading because it is the stocks of words. Developing superior vocabulary knowledge is extremely required to understand the whole text easily. Freebody (1979) stated that the number of the words as a reader knows is a predictive of his ability to comprehend the text. That is to say that vocabulary gives high contribution to students' reading comprehension and it is important to prove the contribution by conducting a research i.e. investigating the correlation between vocabulary mastery and comprehension of expository texts.



Another important prior knowledge is the knowledge of grammar. Grammar in Indonesian schools is sometimes replaced by the term *structure*. The knowledge of grammar is important in mastering a language because grammar intersects and overlaps with the four language skills. The lack of knowledge of grammar will result in the grammatically incorrect sentences which can lead to misunderstanding of what one is saying or writing. Further, knowledge of grammar is important in comprehension because complexity of grammar can cause difficulty. A simple clause is easier to understand than a complex clause. If there are more complex clauses than simple clauses, the complexity of the text in term of grammar is high. Readence, Bean and Baldwin (1985) stated that reading a text is an interactive process of the grammar competence owned by the reader. It is also to say that grammar gives high contribution to students' reading comprehension as well. In this research, the researcher would like to investigate a type of written texts namely expository because researching comprehension of expository texts will give benefits to the students in achieving academic goals and surviving in everyday life. Therefore, the researcher would like to conduct a research on the correlation between the students' grammar and vocabulary mastery with their comprehension of expository texts.

1.2 Problems of the Research

Based on the research background, the research problems are stated in questions as in the following:

1. Does grammar mastery significantly correlate with the students' comprehension of expository texts?
2. Does vocabulary mastery significantly correlate with the students' comprehension of expository texts?
3. Do grammar and vocabulary mastery simultaneously correlate with the students' comprehension of expository texts?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research are:

1. to investigate whether grammar mastery significantly correlate with the students' comprehension of expository texts.
2. to investigate whether vocabulary mastery significantly correlate with the students' comprehension of expository texts.
3. to investigate whether grammar and vocabulary mastery simultaneously correlate with the students' comprehension of expository texts.

1.4 Scope of the Research

The language skills that should be well-mastered by the students are listening, speaking, reading and writing. This research only investigates one language skill that is reading. Since numerous written texts of different genre have been extended to classes of language use and communication in all areas of life, the genre discussed in this research is only expository text. There are so many factors affecting reading comprehension. In order that the research becomes more directive and clear, this research discusses only the main aspects relating to English reading comprehension ability. The main aspects are grammar and vocabulary mastery which are included in linguistic schemata.

Therefore, the writer puts the scope of the research to be studied only on (1) the correlation between the students' grammar and vocabulary mastery with their students' comprehension of expository texts. The comprehension intended is the ability to read the texts comprehensively, the grammar mastery is the mastery of formal rules of sentences including word form and arrangement in sentences and the vocabulary mastery is the mastery of a number of vocabulary arranged grammatically.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The result of this research is aimed at giving information to the improvement of reading instruction in helping students develop their reading ability in English. The research is to answer questions on the correlation between grammar and vocabulary independently and simultaneously to the students' comprehension of expository texts.

The result of this research is also expected to be an input for English teachers to enrich the horizon of knowledge especially in reading comprehension in relation to grammar and vocabulary mastery.

For researchers, the result of the research can be used as a consideration for further research especially concerning either the variable being studied or more complex variables in improving comprehension of expository texts.

