

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

English is a foreign language in Indonesia. As a foreign language, English is not used in daily communication, but it is only taught as the subject at school or university. Moreover, it is studied either for communication with foreigners, or for reading printed texts in the language. Therefore, for those who speak English will gain a good prestige in society. However, many people in our society do not speak English. Even many students at the university are still reluctant to speak English though they have studied it for years. It seems that studying at the university cannot guarantee someone to speak English well. Even though the students are good at grammar and vocabulary, but they still find it difficult to speak or communicate in English.

It is amazing if kindergarten students of four years old speak English. When we visit international standard schools or English speaking schools in Medan, we will see even the children of two or three years old begin to use English to express their feelings in the simple way. Furthermore, it surprises us if children of four years old can communicate in English. The English speaking schools use English as the communicative language, on purpose to help children to acquire that foreign language since their early age. Moreover, those schools provide the English speaking area which push children to acquire English better than other schools which still use Bahasa Indonesia as their communicative

language. In fact, the school environment supports the kindergarten students of four years old in acquiring English.

In the world globalization era, we cannot reject that English plays most important role. Nowadays, in Indonesia springs some international institutions, companies, schools, hospital, hotels, shopping centres, etc. It is of course English as the main language for them. The information and technology commonly use English. The computer and internet cannot be operated without having knowledge in English. Most of imported products which are sold in market are written in English. The tourism department needs people who are qualified in English. Moreover, trading era also requires English.

Therefore, we have to realize that English needs to be learnt. This reality inspires parents to enrol their children at the English courses or English speaking schools, such as national plus schools or international standard schools. This action is followed by many parents every year though it costs much. It seems that this effort works well. The children who are schooling at those schools have shown the great progress in acquiring English. At the early age they can almost acquire second language (in this case English) similarly with they acquire first language (their mother tongue).

The scholars and parents have fascinated at the rapidity of children language acquisition for years. Children acquire language rapidly at the age of three or four. Moreover, the controversy of 'nature' and 'nurture' has become the serious debate. The nativists maintain their nature theory that language is basically innate, that children were born with a special unique human talent that can acquire

the grammar of a language without adults' instruction or correction. On the other side, there is also argument about the role of nurture and claim that adults teach language to the children by using simple language and giving them correction when they have used the language well or bad.

Chomsky (1990: 75) defines children in a normal life from two until six years will acquire language with structure and vocabulary. This is possible because since the birth, they have been equipped with such a device, called Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The Language Acquisition Device lets children analyze the language they hear and extract the rules of grammar that allow them to create brand-new word. It is the reason why then adults or parents think that the early age is the good period for their children to acquire English. But the ability and speed in acquiring language is not relatively same among the children. There are some facts that in only a few years one child progress from at least no language comprehension or production to almost adult capacity. Some children acquire second language sooner and some later.

Moreover, according to Chomsky (in Echa, 2000: 301) that children language acquisition follows the genetic program. It means that since the child was born, she/he was equipped by innate properties which later on developed based on the genetic schedule of the children. Meanwhile, many other researchers agreed that children language acquisition is influenced and supported by the environmental factors. In additional, Chomsky (1999: 41) as quoted by Dardjowidjojo (in Echa, 2000: 302) also state that children language acquisition

happened *when provided with appropriate nutrition and environmental stimulation.*

Consequently, language acquisition can be seen as a natural process that will occur to every normal child. Each child will follow similar stages in language development although they have different speed. Language acquisition will be impossible when a child is not interacting with his environment. Through social interaction with the family members and those are in the community, the child will acquire the first and second language. Therefore, each child acquires language as part of natural process and as a result of social interaction in the community. Siburian (2002; 5) as quoted by Siregar (2008: 48) said that language cannot be developed in a vacuum and there is no society alive without language. It means that language is a resource that is available to everyone in society and a society can exist with the presence of language.

Meanwhile, the researcher was interested to observe the acquisition of English lexical words by the children at the early age and to discover the factors which support it. Moreover, the researcher was curious how the school environment supports the Indonesian children in acquiring English at the age of four years old. The observation has done at 'To be Plus - National School' which is also considered as the English speaking school in Medan. This study will be focused on the acquisition of English lexical words by the kindergarten students of four years old and the supporting factors on it.

Thus, the researcher has observed the kindergarten students of four years old in acquiring English during the school time. These students' English words


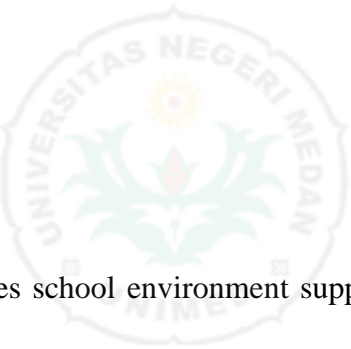
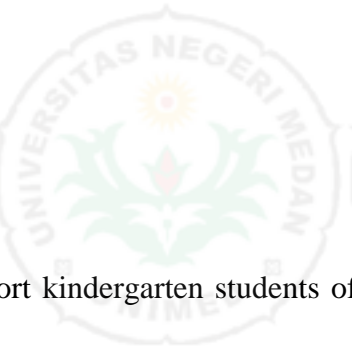

production was recorded for two hours everyday (Monday to Friday) by using a camera digital for the period three months which was started from March 7, 2011 until Mei 20, 2011. It has been chosen five Indonesian children from kindergarten-1 as the subjects in this study. Those five children will be representatives of their classmates who acquire English purely from the school. Then it would be discovered the factors which support this second language (L2) acquisition. Furthermore, the researcher also noticed everything concerns with the school environment such as its communities and facilities in order to find out what factors which support those kindergarten students in acquiring English purely from their school.

In this study the researcher use the theory of lexical words which is classified by Jackson (2000: 50), and the theory of qualitative data analysis which is defined by Miles & Huberman (1984: 21). The library research was also applied to deepen the knowledge in second language acquisition. Some theories concern with language acquisition and those that relate with this field of study was also used in this research as the sources of knowledge.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

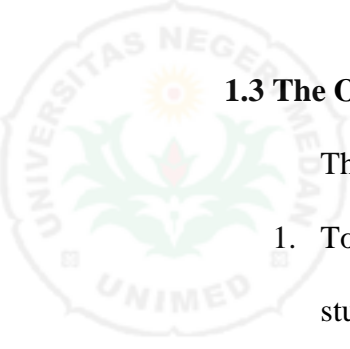
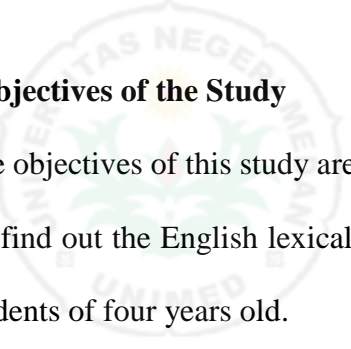
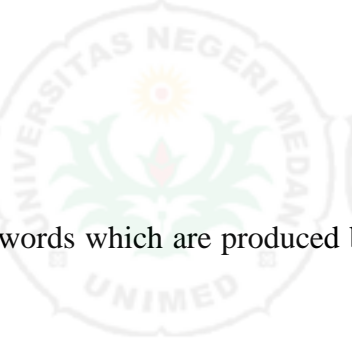

The problems of this study are:

1. What English lexical words are acquired by kindergarten students of four years old?
2. What supporting factors are for the English lexical words acquisition of the kindergarten students of four years old?

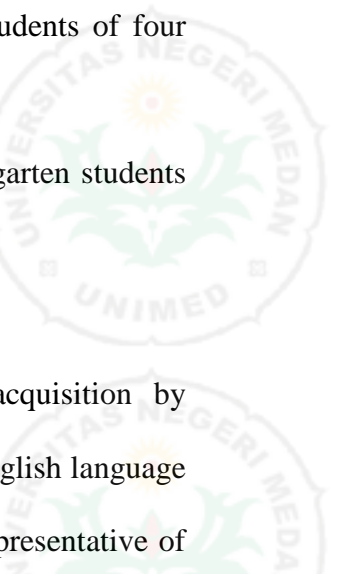
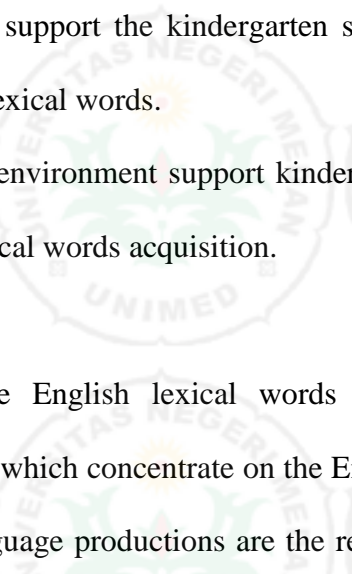
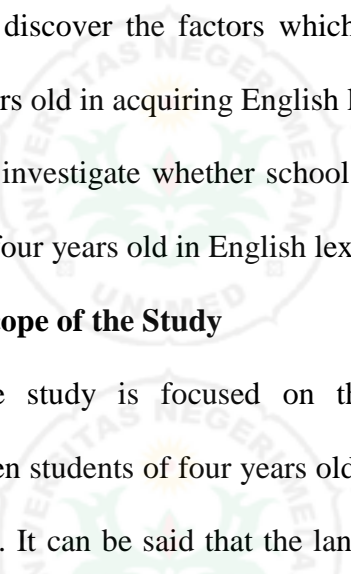
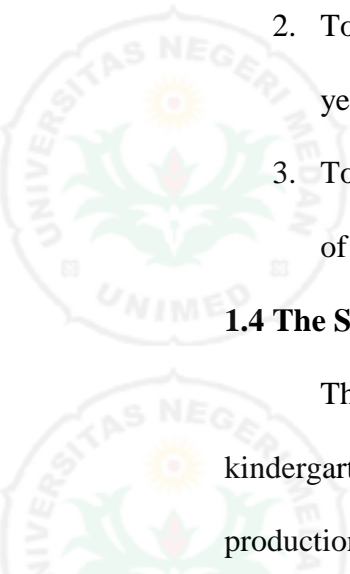
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3. Does school environment support kindergarten students of four years old in acquiring English lexical words?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

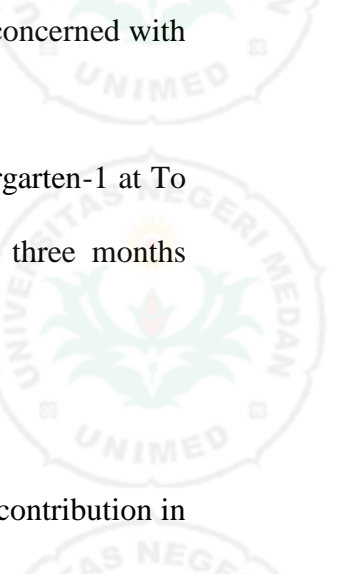
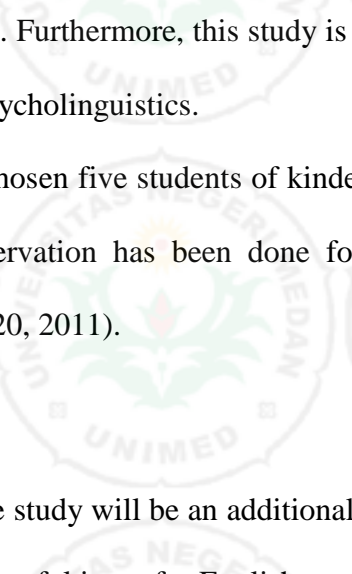
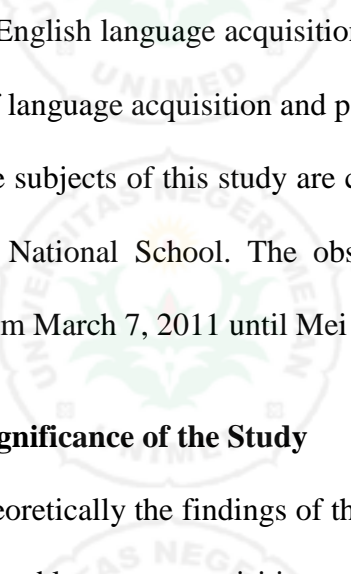
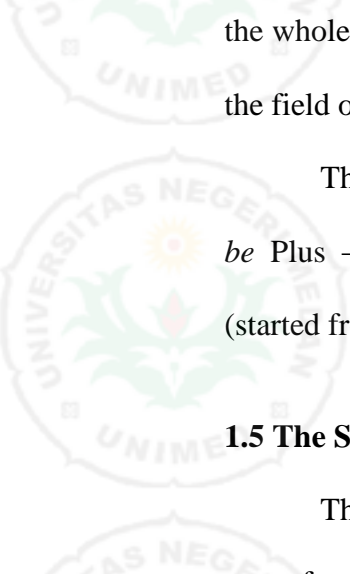
The objectives of this study are:

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1. To find out the English lexical words which are produced by kindergarten students of four years old.
 2. To discover the factors which support the kindergarten students of four years old in acquiring English lexical words.
 3. To investigate whether school environment support kindergarten students of four years old in English lexical words acquisition.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

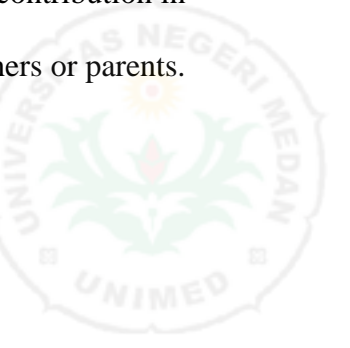
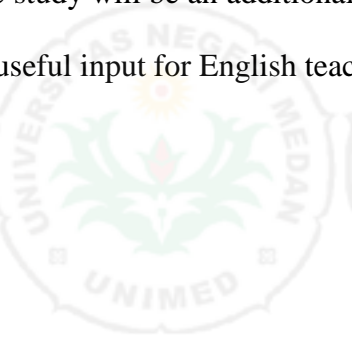
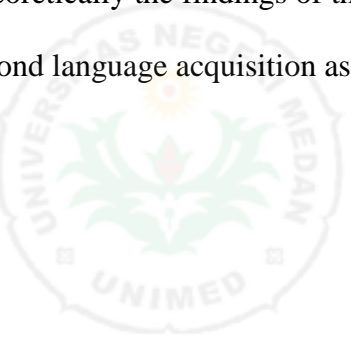
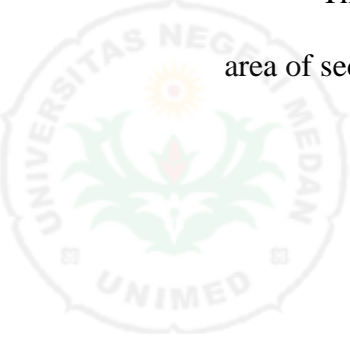


The study is focused on the English lexical words acquisition by kindergarten students of four years old which concentrate on the English language production. It can be said that the language productions are the representative of the whole English language acquisition. Furthermore, this study is concerned with the field of language acquisition and psycholinguistics.




The subjects of this study are chosen five students of kindergarten-1 at *To be Plus – National School*. The observation has been done for three months (started from March 7, 2011 until Mei 20, 2011).

1.5 The Significance of the Study



Theoretically the findings of the study will be an additional contribution in area of second language acquisition as useful input for English teachers or parents.

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Meanwhile, practically the result of this study will give information for the teachers or parents of kindergarten students who are interested in the English acquisition process to know how to accompany children during this process. Furthermore, the English acquisition for the kindergarten students can be better since the early age.