

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, English is used by a total estimation of 1.8 billion speakers (about 400 million of them being native speakers). In addition, the population of users of English has been multiplied by the factor 250. Today, English is spoken is every continent of the world, in both the northern and southern hemispheres.

English is one of the most popular international languages and everybody should master it; and so do the Indonesians. In Indonesia, English is regarded as a foreign language in some situations which has to be learned and mastered by the students. In fact, English is considered as one of the prerequisites to accomplish their study. In order to compete in the job market, job promotion and to continue study to higher level, English is also demanded. It proves that English is very important to be mastered. If someone has good ability in English in addition to his specialization or expertise, the chances to compete become greater compared to one who is not able to communicate well in English.

By having those facts, government has tried to increase the ability of Indonesian in English especially students. One effect has been done by the government concerning English as major subject is being compulsory subject taught at all levels of formal education. Moreover, English is one of the subjects included as the graduation standard in the National Examination.

Vocabulary is extremely needed as one of the important aspect in mastering English proficiency. It is the total number of sets of words that make up a language (Hornby: 1989). Those total stocks of English words enables students to learn English well in order to master English proficiency in four skills as in reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. English students will be helped accurately in using English as the tool of communication in their life if they have an adequate stock of words as the elements to form sentences. Realizing the importance of vocabulary as the stock of words in a given language, the writer is extremely interested in discussing this study related to some strategies of increasing students' vocabulary mastery by gender differences.

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 students may understand a text and construct the organized sentences well. Moreover, Nation (1990) also states that vocabulary is an essential element in studying English as well as grammar, pronunciation, spelling, structures, etc. Simply, increasing vocabulary is really needed to get students do their language tasks effectively.

In English teaching and learning processes, vocabulary is considered as a systematic and principled approach to enable students in mastering English (Nation: 1990). He adds that there are very strong reasons to judge vocabulary as it is. First, because of the considerable source we have good information about what to do about vocabulary and about what vocabulary to focus on. This means that our vocabulary work can be directed toward useful words and can give

students practice in useful skills. Second, there must be a good understanding of the way it deals with vocabulary, the principle behind it, and its theoretical and experimental justification. It is an effective approach of getting students to study lists of words out of context to face the implicit or explicit meaning of a word precisely; third, vocabulary has a systematic and principled approach in which both learners and teachers see vocabulary as being important, if not the most important, element in language learning.

In relation to the goal of English teaching and learning processes in Indonesia based on the latest Curriculum, Educational Unit-Oriented Curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan: KTSP), 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 a meaning of each word in English correctly.

Nagy and Anderson (1984) in Folse (1993), et al in press suggests that estimates of around 20.000 words for undergraduates are most likely to be corrected for the first language learners. They add between 1.000 and 2.000 words per year to their vocabulary, or 3 to 7 words per day. A study of a young second language learner by Yoshida (1978) in Bruton (1981) finds that the learner had about 460 to 700 words in his receptive and productive vocabulary of about 1.000 words in a year. This means that a second language learner needs to acquire 1.000

words per year in which English conducts two to three hours a day and his parents do not speak English at home.

Unluckily, this phenomenon does not happen in English foreign language learners in Indonesia. Learners almost face some difficulties to obtain their vocabulary successfully because vocabulary learning processes in both receptive and productive learning are not effectively taught by English teachers in Indonesia. Yoshida (1978) in Bruton (1981) 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 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 word, 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.

Those students' problems occurred 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 justification. Second, the learners must be interested in understanding the message (Krishen: 1981) in Folse (1993). 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.

Moreover, the 2006 English Curriculum for Senior High School does not cover the idea of teaching vocabulary effectively because it contains all the four language skills in reading, speaking, listening and writing. The problem occurs when reading becomes the main goal of teaching and learning process, the students are forced to know the meaning of whole words in the text, but they lack of vocabulary mastery.

Realizing the phenomena, Krishen (1981) in Folse (1993) believes that certain techniques must be applied for effective vocabulary learning to occur. Students need to find the meaning of an unfamiliar word easily so they can understand the whole text comprehensively. Students are usually aware of the important of words in a language and they also usually realize the fact that learning strategies can help them in their vocabulary mastery. Student's autonomy

can be enhanced by introducing the learner to different vocabulary learning strategies which can be used in developing the learning process. In addition, learning strategies help students to be more active and take more responsibility on their own learning.

Realizing the fact happened in the field that students who learnt English 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, such as “the effect of context clues and mnemonics techniques on students’ vocabulary mastery”, “the effect of semantic feature analysis, Fryer model and contextual redefinition strategies on students’ vocabulary mastery”.

Hardly and research has examined sex or gender as a predictor of variation in the knowledge and use of language learning strategies. Nevertheless, Jimenez Catalan (2003) points out that some differences in the use of language learning strategies between male and female learners have been identified. However, research has also provided evidence that language learning strategies may be associated with other individual factors such as type’s of memory, learning style, motivation or even culture. More research is needed in order to accurately describe the sex differences in vocabulary learning strategy use.

According to a study by Jimenez Catalan (2003), male and female students normally use the same strategies and are more alike than different. Yet, studies have shown that females often use a wider range of language learning strategies than males. Moreover, females usually employ social strategies which promote

communicative competence whereas males do not use social strategies as actively. A summary of studies on sex differences also shows that male students use translation strategies more often than female students. (Jimenez Catalan, 2003).

However, this study is primarily concerned with learning strategies in mastering vocabulary by different sex. Especially interesting is find out what kind of different strategies senior high school students' use in their study of English vocabulary and what the dominant strategy of students used, and why do they apply those strategies. In addition, I wanted to study the possible sex differences which may have an impact on strategy use.

### **1.2 Problems of the study**

The problems in this study are formulated as in the following:

1. What strategies do students of different sex apply in mastering the vocabularies?
2. What is the dominant strategy used by students of different sex?
3. Why do they apply those strategies?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

In relation to the problems, the objectives of the study are:

1. to investigate strategies of students of different sex in mastering the vocabularies;
2. to derive the dominant strategies of students of different sex used;
3. to elaborate the reasons for those strategies.

#### **1.4 Scope of the study**

In line with the background of the study in the previous discussion, there are many factors related to some efforts in increasing students' 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). There are many strategies used in mastering vocabulary for students. But of course, it is not easy to be done. Therefore, students need to have their own strategies to reach the mastering of vocabulary.

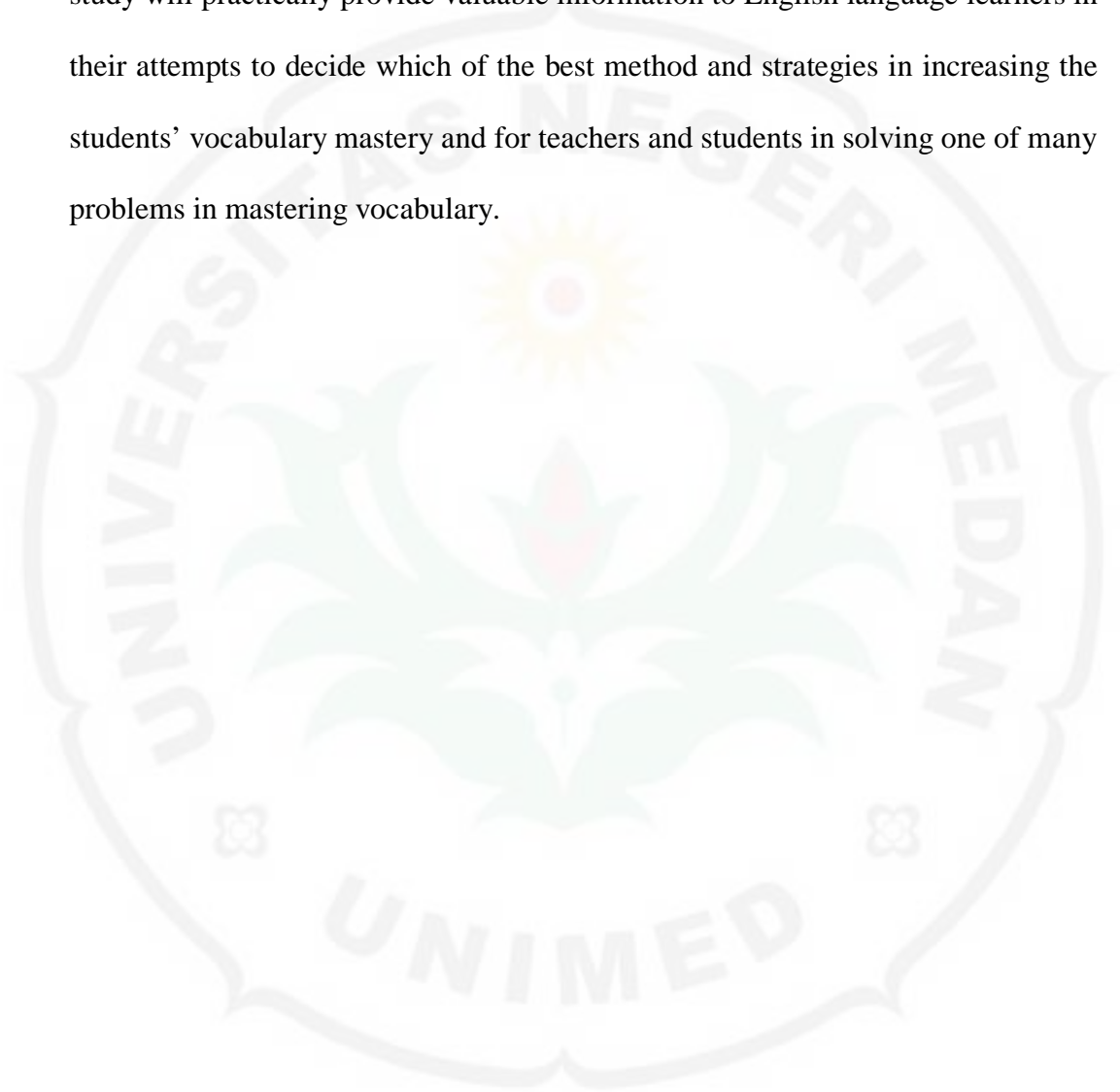
Considering the fact that vocabulary mastery is affected by many factors, there are some strategies can be used to increase students' vocabulary mastery. However, the researcher limits the scope of this study on discussion of learning strategies in senior high school by different sex in mastering vocabulary.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

Findings of the study are expected to be useful for English learners to apply the strategies in mastering vocabulary and also for other researchers in language use and strategies researcher. It is hoped to provide information, which may have practical as well as theoretical values for English language learner. Theoretically, the result of the study will hopefully add up what has been found in the area of English learning as foreign language. Meanwhile, the result of this



study will practically provide valuable information to English language learners in their attempts to decide which of the best method and strategies in increasing the students' vocabulary mastery and for teachers and students in solving one of many problems in mastering vocabulary.



THE  
*Character Building*  
UNIVERSITY