CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Vocabulary is the basic element in learning English that should be mastered by the students. Dellar and Hocking in Thornbury (2002: 13) said that if you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English will not improve very much. You will see most improvement if you learn more words and expressions. You can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words. In line with that, Finocchiaro (1974) states that messages between speakers and listeners, in other words communication, must include meaningful words, a content of shared referents, shared experiences, and shared culture.

According to Huyen and Thu Nga (2003: 2) vocabulary is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together. In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately. By learning vocabulary hopefully the students are able to master English adequately and able to use it in communication.

As the basic element in learning English, vocabulary has been learnt since very beginning. The function of teaching vocabulary is to improve the basic skill in English. Thus, a teacher has very crucial role within the teaching and learning vocabulary process. However; there are still many problems found
in teaching and learning vocabulary. As an English teacher candidate, we have a responsibility to investigate and to find out the reasons for the students’ failure of learning vocabulary which is then being analyzed to provide the solution. Those problems are some teachers still use conventional method such as translation method to teach English vocabulary. It makes the students bored with the lesson because the method just merely involves the students to see and remember the words that are presented by the teacher. Meanwhile, the students themselves also have some difficulties in learning vocabulary. They felt difficult in memorizing, understanding the meaning, and spelling a new word they got. Those problems are the reasons why they were not interested in following the teachers’ instruction during the lesson and reluctant to learn a new vocabulary.

Actually, teaching and learning vocabulary can be done in a various interesting ways. One of the ways is by conducting fun learning atmosphere through games. Game is very useful to create interesting lesson to the students. It brings relaxed atmosphere, the competitiveness and the motivation to the classroom. This is because students have a chance to "use their imagination and creativity" during activities like games in the classroom; therefore they are motivated to learn, Domke in Huyen and Thu Nga (2003: 8). Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful, Wright (1997). In line with that, Vossoughi (2009) states that games are associated with a feeling of happiness. For this reason, most learners
appreciate games and enjoy to participate in them even if they are not familiar with their rules.

One of the games that can be used is snake and ladder puzzle. Snake and ladder puzzle is a word puzzle which uses the rule of snake and ladder game all together with provided clues in completing the missing words. This is a simple but attractive game in which the students can play in the classroom. In each game, it is completed with clues which provide the meaning of the words in context by giving its definition, synonym, or antonym within a sentence which still correlated with the material given. It is also very helpful to review students’ vocabulary because it belongs to one type of games, so the teacher finds it is less threatening to be used in the review session than those of other tests.

Based on the explanation above, it is implied that snake and ladder puzzle can help the students to reinforce their vocabulary. Therefore, the writer decided to conduct a research entitled “The Use of Snake and Ladder Puzzle to Reinforce Students’ Vocabulary Mastery”.

B. Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The reasons for choosing the topic are:

1. The lack of students’ vocabulary mastery. They still find difficulties in understanding the words, spelling, and memorizing the new words they have got.
2. The teacher still uses conventional teaching method that creates a boring learning atmosphere among the students. S/he should provide innovative teaching technique such as puzzle game for reviewing their new vocabulary to make the students motivated which then makes them find it easier in acquiring new vocabulary.

C. Problem of the Study

To make a systematic approach to solve the problems, the writer formulated the problem as follows: “Is snake and ladder puzzle effective to reinforce students’ vocabulary mastery?”

D. Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to know whether snake and ladder puzzle effective to reinforce students’ vocabulary mastery.

E. Contribution of the Study

This study will give contribution that can make a betterment, both for teacher and students, within the process of vocabulary teaching and learning.

1. For the teacher

It gives the solution in solving vocabulary teaching’ problems by providing a new game which will increase the students’ motivation and mastery in learning vocabulary.
2. For the students

It gives an experience of learning vocabulary by using innovative different way from the conventional one. It also provides a good learning atmosphere for them so that it increases their motivation during the lesson.

F. Clarification of the Terms

To make the topic clear, the writer wants to give the definition of the terms based on the title “The Use of Snake and ladder Puzzle to Reinforce Students’ Vocabulary Mastery”.

1. Snake and ladder puzzle

Snake and ladder puzzle is a word puzzle which uses the rule of snake and ladder game all together with provided clues in completing the missing words.

2. Reinforce

In this research, reinforce means the idea of making vocabularies that the students had learned better established in their minds.

3. Vocabulary mastery
   - Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the total number of words which have been mastered by students to produce a language in communication (Hornby, 1973: 959). In this research, vocabulary is a set of words that have ever learnt by the students at school.
- Mastery

Mastery means the state of having control over something; eminent skill or thorough knowledge (Pei, 1976: 586). In this research, mastery means the students’ thorough knowledge over vocabulary that they learnt during the learning process.

- Vocabulary mastery

The students’ thorough knowledge over a set of words which they have ever learnt at school during the process of teaching and learning.