

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Nature of Vocabulary

Vocabulary or lexis refers to the semantics of the language. A lexical item means an item of meaning. According to Kaur in his paper entitled *Lexical Competence Among Tertiary Students: Teacher-Students Perceptions*, stated that: with adequate lexical knowledge and competence, learners are able to cope with the English language because vocabulary acquisition is a requisite and determinant of the extent of learners' language literacy via the four language skills (Torres & Ramos, 2003; Nation, 2001).

Vocabulary can be defined as “the words we must know to communicate effectively: words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)” (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009, p. 385). Nation and Waring (1997) stated that “*Such as writing and reading, vocabulary knowledge is one of the components of language skills*”. *Vocabulary learning is a continual process of encountering new words in meaningful and comprehensible contexts* (Harmon, et al. 2009). Thus, vocabulary is important to be mastered by all level of students (from kindegarten to the college students). Not only mastering the vocabulary, they also have to know the meaning, how to use the word, and how to engage every word into a good construction of a sentence.

Sound, grammar, and vocabulary can be regarded as three principle components of language. Among these components, knowledge of the words, as the building blocks of language, plays an essential role in language learning. According to Anglin, Miller, and Wakefield (1993), word knowledge makes language production as well as language comprehension possible. Thus, it plays an indispensable role in L2 learning.

Ghazal (2011) stated that, word knowledge is an essential component of communicative competence (Seal, 1991), and it is important for both production and comprehension in a foreign language. Knowing a word involves knowing:

- a great deal about its general frequency of use, syntactic and situational limitations on its use,
- its underlying form and the forms that can be derived from it,
- the network of its semantic features and,
- the various meanings associated with the item.

(Richards, 1976)

L2 Lexical researchers have introduced different definitions of knowing a word as they have different concepts of what learners' word knowledge comprises, and of statistical counts of their vocabulary size (Daller, Milton & Treffers-Daller 2007). According to Nation (2001), "*Knowing a word*" is simply described as recognizing the form of a word. Yet, vocabulary knowledge might push beyond this basic notion.

Richards' framework explained more about the complex nature of lexical knowledge (Read 2000), as it included more than just recognizing the form of a word considering new characteristics such as register and word frequency. Building on this framework of vocabulary knowledge, Nation (1990) incorporated a number of aspects such as collocations and pronunciation to make it more comprehensive.

B. The Importance of Vocabulary

English has about 100,000 words. Researcher believes that he students need to have minimum 3,000 words and students wanting to have study in English Department at a university may need up tp 10,000 words (Corrales, 2011).

As the researcher said in the previous chapter, having a lot of vocabularies make you easier to engage with the global issues. Hence vocabulary is the based key to encounter the communicative era nowadays. It is agreed by Harmer, he said that "if language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh".

Vocabulary is a very important means to express our thoughts and feeling, either in spoken or written form. As John Dewey (1910) stated that vocabulary is critically important because a word is an instrument for thinking about the meanings which it expresses. It also endorsed by Nagy (2003) that vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension; one cannot understand text without knowing what most of the words mean.

Vocabulary is needed for expressing meaning and in using the receptive (listening and reading) and the productive (speaking and writing) skills. It is clearly stated by Stahl & Nagy (2006) that “*words divide the world; the more words we have, the more complex ways we can think about the world*”. Duin and Graves (1987) in Willingham (2009) said that “words embody power, words embrace action, and words enable us to speak, read, and write with clarity, confidence, and charm” (p. 312).

In short, word lists, teacher explanation, discussion, memorization, vocabulary books, and quizzes often are used in an effort to help students learn new words. But these methods ignore what research and theory tell us about word learning and sound vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary is a principle contributor to comprehension, fluency, and achievement.

C. The Teaching Learning Process of Lexical Study 1

Recent research, however, indicates that vocabulary instruction may be problematic because many teachers are not “confident about best practice in vocabulary instruction and at times don’t know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning” (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008, p. 315). One important finding from research suggests that vocabulary learning never stops (Smith, 1998); it is a natural and lifelong phenomenon.

The goal of teaching Lexical Study are to make the students enrich their knowledge about vocabulary, include pronunciation, meaning, spelling, and the variety of vocabulary, both simple and complex (based on The silabus of Lexical

Study at English Teacher Training Department). By knowing those objectives, the teacher should use the suitable method in teaching Lexical Study.

French Allen (1983) explained that the teacher should use three ways to show the meanings of vocabulary words:

- 1) Pictures,
- 2) Explanations in the students own language,
- 3) Definitions in simple English using vocabulary that the students already know.

French Allen (1983) also mentioned that, contrary to what is usually practiced by most teachers in second-language classes today, teachers should try to apply what has been discovered about acquisition of first language vocabulary, and offer their students some experience with an object for which the English word will be taught, before spending much time on drilling the English name for it. For example, teach about people and things in the classroom. Engage students in activities that require those words for the exchange of information or expression of personal feelings. Teachers must make time for having simple communication experiences in the classroom, for having meaningful use of the words.

Some studies has been searching and applying the certain method or approach to teach vocabulary to the students. Nevertheless, studies on vocabulary learning strategies in the early stage tend to focus on a limited number of strategies, such as guessing from context (Huckin *et al.* 1993) and certain mnemonics like the Keyword Method (Pressley *et al.* 1982).

Another study have been conducted by Gu and Johnson in 1996. 850 sophomore non-English majors participated in the survey by filling out a questionnaire composed of three sections: Personal Data, Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning, and Vocabulary Learning Strategies. Researchers correlated responses to the questionnaire with results on a vocabulary size test and a general English proficiency measure. It was found that there were significant positive correlations between the two metacognitive strategies (Self-Initiation and Selective Attention) and the two test scores, whereas mnemonic devices (e.g. imagery, visual associations, and auditory associations), semantic encoding strategies, and word list learning probably correlated highly with vocabulary size, but not with general English proficiency.

The other finding was given by Schmitt (1997). He investigated 600 Japanese learners from four different age levels — junior high school students, high school students, university students and adult learners. Schmitt also implemented a questionnaire to gather information about what vocabulary leaning strategies were used and how useful they were rated. A strong affinity for the bilingual dictionary was revealed in the study, with 85% of the sample giving a positive response to the use of a bilingual dictionary to discover word meaning. The second and third most-used strategies were verbal repetition and written repetition, probably owing to the fact that vocabulary is presented via word lists in the materials and in Japanese school contexts students are required to memorize English grammar and vocabulary usually through repetition.

Nation (2001) as cited in Khalifa (2015) divides strategies into three general categories: 'planning', 'source', and 'processes'; and each in turn is divided into a sub-set of key strategies. Vocabulary learning strategies are one part of language learning strategies which in turn are part of general learning strategies (Nation, 2001). Because of the importance of the vocabulary, many researchers have tried to find out an appropriate strategy to teach vocabulary to the students. It can be assumed that the students need certain mnemonics, suitable strategy and method in their vocabulary learning.

