

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

As the first foreign language in Indonesia. English is taught for three years at the junior high school and three years at the senior high school. Although English is taught continuously for six years at school, it doesn't mean that the result of teaching in our country is satisfactory enough. This unsatisfactory result can be seen from the students' disability to use English correctly in communication. It means that they have low competence and performance. It is not surprises because there are obvious differences found in both language, Indonesia and English, so the differences make the students meet some difficulties in learning English, especially vocabulary.

According to Napa (1991:6), vocabulary is one of the components of language, and that no language exists without words. Vocabulary is the most importantly felt at the advanced level. Rahmadie (1986: 56) says that it does not matter how perfect your vocabulary mastery of the structural patterns really is, you will have problem in expressing your ideas and in comprehending other peoples' ideas, without sufficient stock of vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, the basic thing when we want to master the four skills in English (reading, speaking, writing, and listening) is vocabulary knowledge. River in Nunan (1991:117) states that acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is

essential for successful foreign language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structure and function we may have learned for comprehensible communication. Without vocabulary acquisition, it will be difficult for learner to comprehend oral and written forms. Vocabulary acquisition is really needed by English learners because vocabulary is one of the important elements in English.

In line with the importance of vocabulary knowledge, English has been taught to students of Junior High School. It is taught from the first to third grade students of Junior High School. The emphasis of English subject in vocabulary is the important element in English, because vocabulary is the first basic important thing in learning English. Nunan (1991: 81) states that development of vocabulary is an important element in acquisition of a foreign language. It has to be mastered more and more. It may be regarded as an issues in learning English as a foreign language, and it will be a question what the reason the children must get English earlier it, furthermore if the children are introduced or are taught English earlier it means that they have a good basic ability in English, so that when they enter higher school English is not strange anymore.

In this research, the writer wants to know how good or how sufficient the vocabulary that the students have in SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Purwokerto. It is because in mastery the four skills of English the students should have a lot of vocabularies. If the students have a lot of vocabulary they will be very easy in learning reading, writing, speaking, and listening using English

B. Reason for Choosing The Topic

The first year students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Purwokerto I Academic year 2011/2012 come from various backgrounds. Some of them have learned English since Elementary School, but some of them have not. Because of that, the writer wants to know how sufficient vocabulary knowledge the students have.

C. Problem of The Research

The problem that could be raised in this study was “How good is the students’ knowledge in English vocabulary?”

Based on the problem stated above, the aim of the research was to find out how good the students’ knowledge in English vocabulary.

D. Clarification of The Terms

The title of the study was “VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 1 PURWOKERTO IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2011/2012”.

The title above is quite clear for the writer, but it might be not as such the others. However, to avoid misunderstanding and to make one perception about it to anyone who reads this study, the key terms of the study are classified as the following:

1. Vocabulary

According to Napa (1991: 6), vocabulary is one of the components of language, and that no language exist without words. Moreover The Grolier International Dictionary (1976: 482) explains that vocabulary is the stock of words used by people or a list or collection of the word of language.

2. Knowledge

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1989: 238) describes that knowledge means information, understanding and skills gained through education or experience. Besides that, Davenport (1998: 5) explains knowledge as a fluid mix of framed experience, contextual information, values and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information.

3. Vocabulary Knowledge

From the definition of vocabulary and knowledge above, the writer concludes that vocabulary knowledge is information and understanding of the words gained by the students through education and new experiences.

Besides that, Kame'enui (1998:1) mentions that vocabulary knowledge is learningbased on the activity. Learners must have access to the meanings of words that teachers, or their surrogates (e.g., other adults,

books, films, etc.), use to guide them into contemplating known concepts in novel ways (i.e. to learn something new).