

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. Vocabulary

##### 1. Definition of Vocabulary

Many people will relate vocabulary with words. According to Nation & Newton (1997) vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings. However, vocabulary is more complex than knowing the words and its meanings. Vocabulary is also associated with understanding how the words sound and how the words are used in the context. Knowing and understanding words mean knowing their form (how they sound, how they spell, grammatical change) and their meaning (their conceptual content, and how they relate to other words and in particular types of language use (Cameron, 2001).

Pikulski and Templeton in Jannah (2014: 8) explains that vocabulary as the sum of words that are used by people when they speak and write, and understood by people when they read and listen. Furthermore, Jannah cited Hornby in her thesis (2014: 9) that vocabulary is : (1) all the words that a person knows or uses, (2) all the words in a particular language, (3) the words that people use when they are talking and (4) a list of words with their meanings, especially in a book for learning a foreign language.

Vocabulary in this study refers to a set of words which a person knows or uses associated with knowing their forms and understanding their meanings with the intention of using it for communication.

## **2. Vocabulary Knowledge**

There are two dimensions of L2 vocabulary knowledge which is worth to mention. The first dimension which is known as the breadth dimension refers to knowing only the dictionary meanings of a number of words. The another dimension called as the depth dimension refers to the knowledge concerning different facets of target words, such as different meanings, collocations, and connotations (Bardakci, 2016: 239). In addition, Shen (2008: 136-137) stated that breadth of vocabulary knowledge refers to the number of words that the person knows. While vocabulary depth focuses on the idea of high frequency words that the learners need to have more than just a superficial understanding of the meaning.

Haynes & Barker in Kameli and Baki (2013) stated that the most important obstacle for L2 readers is not the lack of reading comprehension practice, but the inadequate comprehension of English vocabulary. Nation (1990) in Bardakci (2016: 239) suggests that 80% of the productions in the English language are actually made up of about 2.000 words. In other words, there are 2.000 high frequency words that may appear repeatedly in every possible context.

Over two decades, researchers have suggested that breadth test of vocabulary knowledge can well predict success in reading, writing, general proficiency, and academic achievement (Kameli and Baki, 2013). Furthermore, Meara in Kameli and Baki (2013) stated that researchers have been able to confirm that the breadth or size of one's vocabulary seems to be a determining factor for second language learning.

Studies concerning language learners' vocabulary size are generally related to what minimum number of words that international students need to know for their studies (Sutarsyah, Nation & Kennedy in Bardakci, 2016: 240). Nation (2006) in Bardakci (2016: 240) suggests that EFL learners need a vocabulary size between 6.000 and 7.000 for listening, 8.000 and 9.000 for reading. For oral communication, the most frequent 2.000 words in the English language seem to adequate most of the time (Schonell et al. in Bardakci, 2016: 240).

Based on those necessity and advantages, estimating the one's vocabulary knowledge can be taken as the initial step in learning a language. According to Shen (2008: 136), an estimation of total vocabulary size can be obtained in two ways. The first is based on sampling from dictionary (conventionally), and the second is based on the corpus-derived lists of word families grouped by frequency.

The dictionary sampling method involves selecting dictionary contains of words that the learners are expected to know, and testing those

words. But this methodology is somewhat problematic as many dictionaries cannot provide frequency information for the lexical items. Meanwhile, the second method is to select word families according to their frequency in a corpus. Usually, those words are grouped into the first 1.000 most frequent words, the second 1.000 most frequent words, and so on.

As we know that having good vocabulary knowledge is a basic matter in learning a foreign language. We cannot speak, write, and understand what we read and listen without knowledge of vocabulary. Based on the statement above researcher concludes that without vocabulary knowledge someone cannot take a part in learning foreign language, because without sufficient knowledge of vocabulary we cannot express our idea and communicate effectively. Therefore, knowing the extent of vocabulary knowledge through testing the students' vocabulary size is expected can help them to develop their efforts in learning English.

### **3. The Importance of Vocabulary**

As mentioned above, vocabulary is knowledge about understanding not only the words and its meanings but also how to use it. In a communication, it is impossible that one does not use vocabulary to express her or his intent. Besides, according to Rivers in Nunan (1991) as cited in Fardani (2014: 8), vocabulary is essential for supporting the study of the second language. No doubt that vocabulary plays an important role in

learning English as a second or foreign language, because without knowing the vocabulary, there is no possible for someone can master the language.

Considering this close relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language learning, one cannot deny the importance of vocabulary knowledge in general language ability, which is to have the necessary competences in a language. The fact that “vocabulary is the central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner”, is generally accepted in foreign language education (Kose and Karakoc, 2017). That’s why it is a fundamental needs to build up vocabulary knowledge especially in learning a foreign language. Someone who has a lot of vocabulary knowledge of foreign language, she or he could learn language easily. It is because vocabulary is all about words, and good mastery of vocabulary will helps someone to master the language.

Jannah (2014: 10) stated that someone will not able to communicate well unless they have an adequate supply of vocabulary. In order to communicate well particularly in foreign language, someone should acquires an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately.

Based on the explanations of the importance of vocabulary stated by experts above, then the researcher comes in a conclusion that learning vocabulary cannot be ignored because someone would not be able to

communicate effectively without it. By having good vocabulary knowledge, someone will not face difficulties in mastering a language.

## **B. Writing**

### **1. Definition of Writing**

Writing actually is a way to transfer information, message, or idea in sentences. A writer puts ideas in written form to convey purposes to the readers. In Thanh Huy (2015: 54), writing refers to the creative process and a process of meaning making because it is a process of reaching out for one's thought and discovering them. Meanwhile, Bromley as cited in Kurnia (2014: 7) explains that writing is a complex interaction of cognitive and physical factors. A complex interaction of cognitive means the writer needs some steps of working such as conceptual knowledge, knowledge of standard form and eye-hand coordination to get a product of writing. While physical factors means that writing is physical action to put some words or ideas to some mediums and at the same time our mental working to invent ideas, thinking how to express some words and arranging them into paragraphs.

Another definition stated by Thanh Huy (2015: 54), writing is a complex metacognitive activity that involves individual's knowledge, basic skill, strategies, and ability to coordinate multiple processes. Elbow (1973) in Brown (2000: 336) said that writing is a two step process. The first

process is figuring out the meaning and the second process is putting the meaning into language.

The process of meaning making produces several types of writing.

Weigle in Putra (2009: 13) generalizes three types of writing into:

**Type I** : Involves less cognitive burden as it only reproduces the information that is heard or read before, like in dictation or filling form.

**Type II** : Requires organization of known information, like in laboratory report writing.

**Type III** : Demands higher cognitive process of inventing new ideas, such as in expository writing or that is considered in academic settings.

Each type has a different level of difficulty. The level of difficulty sequentially needs higher writing skill from the first to the third type.

From the information stated above, the researcher comes into a conclusion that writing is a competence which needs some processes to generate and to organize idea, and also requires the writer's purpose to be conveyed in a written form in response to an assigned topic or task.

## 2. The Importance of Writing

Writing skill as described by Robert Todd Carroll in Thanh Huy (2015: 54) is the most important invention in human history because it provides a relatively permanent record of information, opinions, beliefs, feeling, arguments, explanations, theories, etc. Writing is not only about giving information, but also a way to communicate with people in the present and future times. Even though learning writing occupies the last place compared with the other skills, but it does not mean that it is least important.

Nowadays, writing is also the key to success in college and university. Writing is the central element in the language teaching setting as students need to write down notes and to pass written exams. Even in universities all over Indonesia, writing is used to examine a student's performance as the final requirement before one declared as graduate. Besides, one can deliver any messages to all kind of readers through writing because writing is the activity of being able to communicate with language through a representation of ideas.

Many students do not know the important of writing, so they only past it without desire to get a better written work. Indeed, having good ability in writing will bring many benefits for them. According to Thanh Huy (2015: 53), the benefits will be gained through writing are; first, writing is a good way to help develop students' ability of using vocabulary and grammar, increasing the ability of using language. Second, writing is an essential tool to support other skills, because students will speak and read

more effectively if they have good writing ability. Third, writing is a way to approach modern information technology as well as the human knowledge.

Woolfolk as cited in Al-Zyoud et al. (2017), explains that the most important element effecting learning is what the learner already knows. According to Listyani (2018), there are two ways to become a good writer in general: write a lot, and read a lot. Aside from reading for pleasure, a good writer also reads to get an insight of improving their vocabulary knowledge and of course the better writing skill. In other words, what we learn as readers, we use as writers. The writer will compose all the things she/he has learnt and combines it into a written work with her/his own style. Thus, practising writing skill will help students get acquainted with new types of writing as well as increase their other skills.

Considering many benefits from writing, the researcher concludes that writing is very important because it is required in our educational life and most context of life demands writing as the bridge which is connecting times and knowledge as it is for the future invention.

### **3. Problems in Writing**

In the field of language teaching and learning, it is necessary to master four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The other language components such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are also taught to support the development of language skills. However, when being compared to other fundamental skills, writing is

considered as the most difficult skill for language learners because it requires someone's great knowledge in writing to fulfill the principles of organization in producing a good writing.

Students often think that writing is difficult as they want to start. Dollahite and Haun as cited in Listyani (2018), mention that writing starts not with a pen and a piece of paper, nor does it start with a computer. It all starts with thinking, reading, and discussing about a topic. According to Bram (1995: 7), to write means to try, to produce or reproduce written message, because through writing people can express their ideas, thoughts, feeling or another expression. In other words, writing is a tool of communication where the writer can deliver his/her purpose to the readers. To deliver the message, a writer should have the competence of writing, and develop it continuously even though for a professional one.

In fact, students think that writing is inevitable failure. They often have many basic mistakes in written works about spelling, grammar, punctuation, and organization. Hamadouche (2010) stated the fact that writing requires some criteria of acceptability which is related to different aspects of writing such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, spelling, punctuation and accurate capitalization and paragraphing makes writing becomes a very difficult task for EFL learners.

Huwari (2013) and Zahran (2015) as cited in Koura and Zahran (2017), also believe that the reasons behind the weakness in writing among

students are summarized up in lack of vocabulary register, structure, organization of ideas, grammar, spelling, and referencing. According to Nurgiyantoro (2001: 298-299), several problems commonly faced by students are;

a) Organizing idea

Students often do not know how to organize idea into sentences. It happens because they get difficulties in developing idea and sometimes they do not know what they want to write.

b) Lack of vocabulary

As we realize that vocabulary plays important role in learning language. Thus, without having enough vocabulary knowledge, the students will get difficulties in expressing their ideas.

c) Grammar accuracy

Students are trying to express their ideas well in writing as to be understood easily. In fact, they are usually not sure whether their sentences are grammatically correct or not.

Although considering the difficulty faced by most of students, it is undeniable that writing is an essential skill in our lives, particularly in learning English as a foreign language.

#### **4. Assessing Writing**

Generally, assessment is a process to get the information about the extent of students learning. According to Huba and Freed (2000) in Prasetyo (2016: 16), assessment is a process for gathering and discussing information in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experience.

There are many guidelines to assess students writing. Regarding the needs of this study, the researcher only examined three aspects: fluency, lexical variation, and the syntactic complexity. The following description define the three aspects and their measures according to (Polio, 1997 in Barkaoui and Knouzi, 2012)

1) ***Fluency***

Fluency refers to the amount of production and has been operationalized as either (a) the number of words per minute in timed writing tasks or (b) the number of words per T-unit. T-unit is defined as “an independent clause and all its dependent clauses”. In other words, T-unit called as sentence. This study assigned the number of words per minute in timed writing tasks as the method to assess the students’ fluency.

2) ***Lexical Variation***

Lexical variation is usually measured using Type-token ratio (TTR), the ratio of the types (the number of different words used) to the tokens (the total number of words used) in a text (Laufer and Nation,

1995 in Barkaoui and Knouzi, 2012). A high TTR suggests that the text includes a large proportion of different words (types), whereas a low ratio indicates that the writer makes repeated use of a smaller number of types.

### 3) *Syntactic Complexity*

Syntactic complexity refers to the extent to which writers are able to incorporate increasingly large amounts of information into increasingly short grammatical units (Polio in Khaled and Knouzi, 2012). Hunt (1965) in Barkaoui and Knouzi (2012) was the first who measure syntactic complexity by dividing the total number of clauses by the total number of T-units per essay or text. Many researchers regarding to the Hunt's ratio, assumed that the more clauses there are per T-unit, the more syntactically complex the writing is. This study also uses the number of clauses per T-unit as a measure of syntactic complexity.

By assessing the students' writing skill, we will know their competence. Association K.U. Lauven defined competency as the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make it possible to carry out an effective way. In order to categorize the students' writing skill, the table below will be used as the guidance:

**Table 2.1. category of students' competence (Arikunto, 2010: 319)**

Percentage	Category
<b>81 - 100%</b>	Excellent
<b>61 - 80%</b>	Good
<b>41 - 60%</b>	Fair
<b>21 - 40%</b>	Poor
<b>0 - 20%</b>	Very poor

### **C. Relevant Previous Studies**

Thornbury (2002: 3) stated 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”. Based on the statement, we can say that vocabulary is an important predictor of academic success in learning English. Learning English means learning its fundamental skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. When someone has intention to learn writing, it is undeniable that he or she should master vocabulary. In order to support the hypothesis made by the researcher, there are several studies in relation with vocabulary and writing skill.

According to Thanh Huy (2015: 54), although writing is an essential skill, many students at high school are not interested in it. The

article aimed to find out the problems affecting learning writing. From the result of the writers' observation, vocabulary is the biggest problem that most students usually have when they study writing skill. In one hand, it also affects the learning's results of other skills.

An interesting fact showed by Nurweni & Read (1999) as cited in Tschirner (2004), this relatively recent study found the average English vocabulary knowledge of a large sample of first year students at an Indonesian university is consisted of 1126 words and that very few students came close to the threshold of 3000 – 5000 words. It indicates that even in the university level, vocabulary knowledge should considered as a challenge.

Another study related to vocabulary knowledge and writing skill was conducted by Sariatun as cited in Muslikh (2009: 27) entitled *The Correlation between English Vocabulary Mastery and Writing Ability of the Eight Grade Students of SMPIT Rahmatan Lil 'alamin Seloaji Babadan Ponorogo in Academic Year 2009/2010*. The result of the study revealed that there was a significant correlation between the two variables being researched. In addition, there was a research entitled *Intensive Vocabulary Instruction as a Prewriting Technique* conducted by Ann Hill Duin and Michael F. Graves since there were few researchers, theorists, and practitioners have studied the effects of vocabulary knowledge on one's writing ability. The experimental method was used in the study. There were 80 participants and divided into three groups. Those three

groups were given three different treatments. The result of the study concluded that the students' knowledge of the words, the quality of their writing, and their enthusiasm for learning and using new words were different due to their different treatments. The group who got intensive instruction had any better quality of their writing instead of the ones who did not (Muslikh, 2009: 25).

#### **D. Basic Assumption**

Writing skill is not easy for some students, it is because of the conventions and such organization required in writing. In order to write well, the students must have great knowledge so that they can organize their ideas easily. As organizing the ideas, they have to express it into written form, and it must need adequate knowledge such as vocabulary knowledge. Great knowledge gained through experiences and a lot of information while reading and learning. By having a good vocabulary knowledge, students are also expected having a good skill in writing.

#### **E. Hypothesis**

In order to facilitate the direction of this research, hypothesis are formulated by researcher that if the students have poor vocabulary knowledge, they may not be able to write well, and if the students have good vocabulary knowledge, they may be able to write well.

- Alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) : There is a significant relationship between students' vocabulary knowledge and their writing skill.

- Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) : There is no significant relationship between students' vocabulary knowledge and their writing skill.

