

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Vocabulary learning has become the topic of interest for many EFL practitioners throughout the world. The more vocabulary an EFL learner acquires, the better communication he/she will have. In the onerous process of learning a foreign language, learning the vocabulary part of the target language has always been problematic, difficult, and bewildering to the EFL or ESL learners. Teachers and learners have always been seeking easy ways to master the vocabulary of the English language. As it is evident from the title, this study wants to investigate the vocabulary learning strategies employed by the undergraduate and postgraduate EFL learners, and it also seeks to figure out the motivation of the learners when it comes to selecting the vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary plays a very important role when it comes to learning a foreign language. From the late 1980s, vocabulary was an area that has drawn the researchers' interest within the domain of second language acquisition (Nation, 1997).

For language skills, four skills must be mastered by students, namely speaking, reading, writing, and listening. In speaking, vocabulary helps the students to explain their ideas orally. In reading, vocabulary influences their ability to understand and comprehend a text. In writing, vocabulary helps the students to expand their ideas based on the topic sentence that they want. In listening, vocabulary influences their understanding of the teacher's speech, class discussion,

and other speeches. In consequence, vocabulary is the aspect that is not to be left to be learned by students.

Cameron (2001) stated that building up a convenient vocabulary is central to the learning a foreign language. It means to build a suitable vocabulary it is not only a matter of allowing the students to know and then memorize the words but also providing the students with knowledge to comprehend and apply the words in an actual context. The students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use the words correctly. Harmer (2007) states that teachers need to spend time understanding how their students think and operate. Every student has different way or strategies in learning as Macaro (2003) states that learners probably have their own strategies in learning vocabulary outside the classroom. So, it is a task for teachers to think productively in teaching vocabulary to find activities which provide a fun and enjoyable situation.

Vocabulary learning strategies are important for students; students need to apply the appropriate strategy, as Oxford (1990) states learning strategies taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more selfdirected, more effective and transferable. Schmitt (2000) also states that vocabulary learning strategies can empower learners and attract learners' attention in learning language in a way that will improve the learners' vocabulary development. Vocabulary need to be learnt by applying active strategies as it enables learners to understand the concepts of unfamiliar words, gain a better number of words, and use words successfully for communicative purposes (Cahyono, 2008). So, employing effective strategies in learning vocabulary will have positive contribution to students' vocabulary growth which in turn will affect their language skills.

Many students in Junior High School have a very restricted vocabulary. The students cannot speak English well, write a text and translate the meaning of words. They have a different vocabulary that can be taken in from their English score and achievement. In teaching English, the teacher usually teaches using same method or strategy but for the learning achievement every learner is different. It means, it is useful for some learners but that is not successfully used by others. This difference may be because of learning strategies applied by students. The students who have good vocabulary usually used their strategies to improve their vocabulary, while students who not have good vocabulary do not have specific strategies or lack to do the strategies to improve their vocabulary. Hence, students need vocabulary learning strategies to help them improve their knowledge of vocabulary.

In curriculum 2013, the target of learning English in Junior High School is the students can reach a functional level that is students can communicate with each other by oral and written in daily communication. Students are required to have sufficient vocabulary and to be able to use them in their conversation to achieve the target

Vocabulary is considered to be one of the most important elements in comprehending lesson materials, especially when learning a foreign language. Heidari et al. (2012) states that vocabulary is the core of language and the cornerstone of language learning. Through comprehending foreign words, students will understand the meaning of the words. Wessels (2011: 46) believes that knowledge of vocabulary is essential to student's academic success. "If students do not understand the meaning of the words in the text, they will have difficulty

understanding the content''. therefore, comprehension of the meaning of words can help students understand the materials and the reading texts.

However, as one of the core elements of language learning, vocabulary comprehension presents various obstacles (Zhi-liang, 2010). Students tend to be passive during English classes because they lack vocabulary which effects their behavior in learning English. Fan (2003) notes that vocabulary is neglected in language learning in Asia because vocabulary is given little priority and learned incidentally. In addition, Goulden (1990) as cited in Olmos (2009) explains that the measurement of vocabulary size, particularly the size of academic vocabulary, is an important indicator of the ability of second language learners to achieve academic success. VLS are therefore important for junior high school students, because they help students to understand new words and increase their wealth of vocabulary, and encourage them to become independent learners. However, English lessons in junior high school do not provide specific classes on technical vocabulary. As such, the students cannot always rely on their teachers. They need to master their own strategies of determining the meanings of unknown words independently so that they can better understand their class materials.

Hence, this study aims at investigating the VLS used by junior high school students when they learn English. This study seeks to answer the research question: What are the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) used by junior high school students? This study could be useful for language students, especially junior high school students who encounter problems in comprehension of vocabulary in their language learning. Furthermore, teachers could use this study as a reference to help

learners who find difficulty understanding the meaning of vocabulary in their English learning.

Students' came to understand that many of learners' difficulties, both receptive and productive, result from an insufficient vocabulary, and even when they are at high levels of language competence, they still feel in need of learning vocabulary. Wilkins (1972), describes the importance of vocabulary in his quote, "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Language learning strategies in general have been very popular in the last few decades in ELT. Mastering vocabulary is one of the tasks that EFL students must face during learning. Therefore, students feel the need to find ways to improve their vocabulary. Thus, the importance of learning strategies for developing vocabulary knowledge should be given sufficient attention by teachers and take into account individual differences in terms of, for example, gender, level of proficiency, or the environment in which learners learn and live. Vocabulary learning strategies may not be planned exclusively for that purpose but can be taught effectively in combination with regular classes (Mizumoto and Takeuchi, 2009).

The problem is not only the material that makes some students feel bored but also the strategy of teaching. The teaching process will not produce a good result if the way of teaching is not suitable for the student's conditions. At last, the thoughts above led the writer to do research entitled ***"A STUDY OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL"***

1.2 Research Problem

What a learning strategies do students at SMP Negeri 2 Takari?

1.3 Aim of Study

The purpose of this research is to find out what learning strategies are Vocabulary in Junior High School Students.

1.4 Significance of Study

The benefits obtained in this study are as follows:

1.4.1 Application

1. The benefits for teachers are providing experience and helping students to improve the learning carried out at school, especially in comparative studies of vocabulary learning strategies for students in different language learning.
2. The benefits for schools can be used as a reference in creating interesting activities, so that they can improve the quality of learning and the quality of education in schools along with comparative studies of vocabulary learning strategies for students in different language learning.

1.4.2 Implications

This study expected to support the theory of Nation (2001) believes that a large amount of vocabulary could be acquired with the help of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) and that the strategies prove useful for students of different language levels.