# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 The Background of the Study

Based on the 1984 English curriculum for SMA, the elements and skills of English to be taught are structure vocabulary, reading, conversation, and composition (Kurikulum SMA 1984, bidang studi Bahasa Inggris:28). It is also stated that the main purpose of English teaching at high school is to enable the students to read English texts. Therefore, the students, among others, should have sufficient vocabulary.

It is difficult to comprehend a reading passage without knowing the vocabulary. In other words, vocabulary is the important part in comprehending a passage or the key of success in learning to read besides mastering the structural patterns.

From her experience carrying out her PPL at SMAK St. Stanislaus, she found that SMA students lack vocabulary. They get difficulties in comprehending English passages because their vocabulary is limited. They can only comprehend the passages with short stories consisting of simple words. They are in difficulties comprehending the passages with long stories consisting of complex words

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or unfamiliar vocabulary.

During her PPL, she asked her advisors about how they taught vocabulary in their class. She also asked an English teacher at St. Louis about the same problem. They said that explanation of new words usually preceded the understanding of the reading passage. While other teachers did not explain the difficult words because they gave them a list of words to memorize, or they could look up the words that they did not know in a dictionary.

The teacher usually teaches vocabulary by giving a list of words to the students to memorize. By memorization, in fact, the students can keep these words for a few days but they are in difficulty keeping these words in mind for a longer time (Device, 1981:20). If the teacher just provides a list of words, the students are getting difficulty in comprehending the meaning of the words in context.

The fact that SMA students lack vocabulary has been proved by Quinn (1980), who once made a study on the English mastery of University entrants at Satya Wacana University, Salatiga with special reference to the mastery of vocabulary. He reported that their average vocabulary was about 1.000 words, which was only one quarter of the required amount of vocabulary items to be mastered by SMA graduates as stipulated by the De-

partement of Education and Culture.

An SMA graduate is expected to master about 2500-3000 words; this expectation is still below the amount of vocabulary to be acquired by high school graduates in English speaking countries. According to Lado and Thorndike, a student is required to have a mastery of vocabulary at least 7.000 to 10.000 words respectively (Lado, 1964:117).

From the explanation above, it is clear that SMA students should have enough vocabulary to comprehend the reading passages. In reality, however, vocabulary teaching at SMA has a little attention from English teachers. Paulston et al.(1976:168) claims that the study of vocabulary is the most neglected area of all in language teaching.

In order that the students are able to keep the words in mind for a longer time and the process of teaching learning vocabulary is successsful, the teachers should teach vocabulary through contextualized explanation in reading passages because words get their full meanings in contexts (Dewi, 1984:22). Reading passages are contextualized because they contain messages put in logically related sentences in which words play an important role as symbols of meanings. This implies that a word gets its exact meaning in a meaningful context.

Without meaningful context, sentences, phrases and words become ambiguous and open to many interpretations.

Since a reading passage is meaningfully contextualized, the teaching of vocabulary through contextualized explanation will enable the students to grasp the meaning of the words. And the students can keep these words in mind for longer time.

Being interested in this case, the writer decided to suggest teaching vocabulary through contextualized explanation in reading passages.

## 1.2  Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of this thesis, the problem of this study is as follows:

How is students' vocabulary developed using contextualized explanation in reading passages?

## 1.3  Objective of the Study

This study is to describe how students' vocabulary is developed using contextualized explanation in reading passages.

## 1.4  The Significance of the Study

The writer expects that this suggested teaching technique can be applied as an alternative of teaching vocabulary to SMA students.

## 1.5  Scope and Limitation of the Study

Being aware of how broad the topic of this study will be and how limited the time given to finish it, the writer finds it necessary to limit the scope of the study. The vocabulary material is limited to the vocabulary for SMA students while there are some difficult words that can explained through contextualized explanation using four contextual-clues.

The discussion of teaching vocabulary through context is limited to the four types of contextual clues, namely: definition, experience, antonym and synonym. Because this four contextual-clue helps the students to understand the meaning of the words easier.

## 1.6  Definition of Key Terms

It is necessary for the writer to explain briefly the following key terms to avoid misunderstanding.

1. Contextualized Explanation:

   Contextualized Explanation is words that come before and after a word, phrase, statement, etc helping to show its meaning (Hornby, 1974:185).

2. Sign Post-Questions:

   Sign Post Questions are questions that are given to the students as a clue for them to find the meaning of the words.

3. Experience:

Experience is a process of gaining knowledge or skill by doing and seeing things (Hornby, 1974:299).

## 1.7 Research Metodology

This study is a library research where the writer reviews statements from experts discussing the theories and techniques of teaching vocabulary through contextualized explanation. Finally she gives the steps of how to teach vocabulary through contextualized explanation using the four clues and suggests these steps in application for classroom use.

## 1.8 Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I is the introduction. It deals with the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, the definition of key terms, research metodology, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents the cognitive theory of reading and vocabulary which consists of cognitive theory, cognitive theory and vocabulary teaching, the role of vocabulary in reading, the role of vocabulary in communicative approach to language teaching, kinds of words, and

summary. Chapter III is about the techniques of teaching vocabulary. It deals with some techniques of teaching vocabulary, and summary. Chapter IV concerns with the application of teaching vocabulary using contextualized explanation. It deals with preparation of teaching vocabulary and presentation of teaching vocabulary. The conclusion and the suggestion are presented in the last chapter, Chapter V.