

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

In her book "Teaching English As a Second Language", Finocchiaro states, "The aim of the English-Teaching program should be to develop in the learner the four basic aspects of communication: understanding, speaking, reading and writing."¹ In attempting to develop those four aspects of communication, of course, vocabulary cannot be ignored.

How can we speak well without knowing or understanding the words to be used? How can we like reading without having the ability to determine the meaning of the words? How can we express our ideas in the form of writing if we do not know the words that should be used? It is clearer when Saville in his book "Foundation For Teaching English As a Second Language" says, "We could have had no such success with basic grammatical constructions, even flawlessly pronounced, if

¹Mary Finocchiaro, Teaching English As a Second Language, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969, p.8.

we had not had words in that language for things we needed to express."² Then Brown maintains that word power is thought power and therefore should be given more attention throughout both formal and informal education."³ Therefore there is no doubt that vocabulary plays a vital role in learning a language, in this case English.

From her experiences that she has got from some private courses, the writer finds out that the SMP students' mastery of English vocabulary is not quite sufficient for their level, though, according to curriculum 1984, they are expected to master 1,500 English words after graduating from SMP. Based on this fact, we can say that vocabulary is a problem to them. Of course, it will produce a question "Why have most of the SMP graduates not mastered the English vocabulary well as what is expected?" This question motivates the writer to study something dealing with the teaching of English vocabulary to SMP students.

²Muriel-Saville-Troike, Foundation For Teaching English As a Second Language, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976, p. 87.

³James I. Brown, "The Bases Of Vocabulary Development", in Comprehensive High School Reading Method, ed. David L. Shepherd, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973, p. 39.

The writer realizes that there are actually several factors which seem to be the cause of the students' weaknesses in vocabulary. Shepherd states in his book "Comprehensive High School Reading Method",

that reasons for the weaknesses may be several such as: 1) the students' association with people who use a meager collection of words, and seldom discuss it; 2) the students' narrow interest; 3) faulty habits: skipping over difficult words, failure to use context, sole dependence on others or on class discussion for word meaning, Finally, of course, low intelligence may be the cause.⁴

But in this study, the writer sets aside those factors, as she wants to focus on how English teachers teach the subject or present the materials to their students. Having done the PPL (Field Practice) for three months at "SMP PETRA II" in Surabaya, and considering the experiences that she has got from some private courses, the writer is dissatisfied with the technique used by the English teachers in teaching vocabulary to their students. The usual way of the teaching is just giving the students a list of isolated words with the meanings in the native language which should be memorized. This way of teaching is not very sound since it does not enable the students to understand the words in their relations to the other words as they commonly happen in language

⁴David L. Shepherd, Comprehensive High School Reading Methods, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., Ohio, 1973, p. 38.

always grows, a person never stops increasing his vocabulary. He can neither write nor speak nor even think with words that he does not understand. On the other hand, he may achieve a success in learning the four language skills when he is able to understand and to use words properly. The more words he knows, the more easily he masters the language skills. Based on those reasons, the writer thinks that vocabulary problem is so important to be studied. How can the students' vocabulary be enlarged in scope and in precision? The teacher should be able to create a strategy and technique in teaching new English words. The use of pictorial contexts can be one of the media that help the success of the English vocabulary learning and teaching. Why do they, as English teachers, not apply it in teaching vocabulary to their students?

1.2. Reason For Choosing The Topic

The technique which the writer suggests for teaching vocabulary to the students is using pictorial contexts. There are, of course, some reasons in choosing such a technique. Firstly, teaching vocabulary through pictorial contexts can provide the situation in which students are motivated and are interested in learning the meanings of the words. As a result, their attention,

unconsciously, is attracted to the subject being taught. Secondly, since the word has several meanings, it is better to put the word in a context. From the context, students will get the exact meaning. And finally, students will have a better understanding of the word meanings, if they practice to use the word in various contexts.

1.3. The Objective Of The Study

This study is made to contribute a technique of teaching English vocabulary which may enlarge students' English vocabulary in scope and in precision.

1.4. The Significance Of The Study

Closely related to the reasons for choosing the topic, this study is trying to present a technique in teaching vocabulary to SMP students.

Hopefully, the result of this study can be of some help to English teachers, especially those who teach vocabulary at Junior High School to improve their way of teaching vocabulary to their students. And, if it is proved to bring a good result as what is expected, hopefully too, they would take this into consideration and apply it in the teaching learning process.

1.5. Methodology

In this study the writer does not make a field research, but she just makes a library research. Therefore in achieving the validity of this study and in getting the information, she reads books and articles on the teaching of English as a foreign or second language, especially on the teaching of vocabulary. The titles of those books and articles are listed on the bibliography.

1.6. The Scope And Limitation Of The Study

Teaching vocabulary through pictorial contexts can be given to any students. In this study, however, the writer finds it necessary to limit the scope of this study. She will limit her study on the difficulty of the third grade SMP students in interpreting the meaning of English words precisely. Then, how the SMP English teachers should improve their way of teaching of vocabulary to their students in order to overcome such difficulty.

Since it will only concern with the teaching of English vocabulary to third grade SMP students, it is important to bear in mind that the students have known the basic grammar and simple English vocabulary that they have got before.

And since the technique proposed here is meant to be used in teaching third grade SMP students, the examples chosen and used will also be the ones which are suitable with the ability of third grade SMP students.

1.7. Definition Of Key Terms

For the clarity of this study, the writer is going to define the following terms as used in this study.

- Vocabulary : the total number of words which makes up a language, in this case English words.
- Pictorial : having or represented in pictures.
- Contexts : what comes before and after a word, a phrase, a statement helping to fix the meaning of a word a phrase, a statement.
- Pictorial Context : Contexts which are provided with pictures, so that the meaning of the words in those contexts can be interpreted by the students clearly and exactly.

1.8. The Organization Of The Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One talks about the background of the study, the reason for choosing the topic, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, methodology, the scope and limitation of the study, the definition of key terms, and the organizations of the thesis. Chapter Two deals with the opinions of many linguists and language teaching experts which support the writer's idea. The next Chapter, Chapter Three, about the use of pictorial contexts in the teaching of English vocabulary. And the benefits of using pictorial contexts in the vocabulary teaching either the teacher for the students can be found in Chapter Four. Finally, the summary of the whole study will appear in the last chapter, that is Chapter Five.