

**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

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## Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

In today's world, everything moves faster and faster. Everything seems to work fast and easy compared to the old days. However, the faster and easier life seems to be, life is also becoming more and more complicated. Competitors are everywhere and the need of qualified people is getting higher. In the present century, people are looking for qualified education. Everybody wants their children and they themselves to be well-educated and intellectual person. There are several reasons why people must be well-educated.

The first reason is because people believe that education is very important for the success of one's life. Below is a result of polling about education and the relation with the success in life.

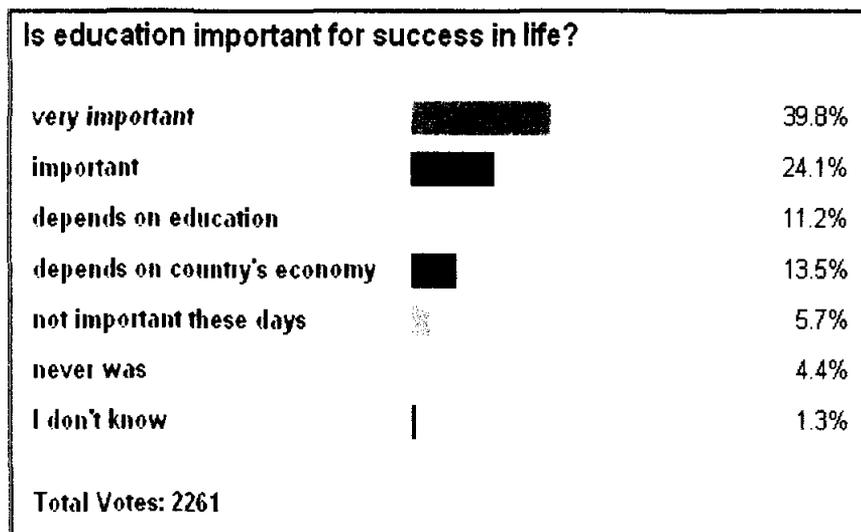


Fig.1 Polling: is education important for success in life?

Taken from: Internet Cruiser Poll (2003)

Based on the polling done by Internet Cruiser Poll on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003. to 2261 people, around 39.8% people believe that education is very important for the success in life. Others, around 24.1 % agree that it is important. From this polling it can be concluded that 63.9 % of the people agree that it is necessary to be well educated to gain their success.

The second reason is stated by Chaynee Wong. Wong stated her opinion about the importance of education in the form of an article in New Strait Times 2 on May 12, 2001. She wrote that education is a fundamental component of skills training which will not only produce numerous well-educated, skilled and highly motivated workers, but will also produce citizens with high moral and ethical values. In other word, the education that the people have does not only function for shaping skills but also shaping their personalities. People will not only be successful in the future but they will also be morally good.

In terms of education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also stated some reasons why education is very much essential. One of UNESCO's statements is that education is a catalyst of human life. The meaning of a catalyst of human life is use of education as the tools and knowledge people need to participate in today's world. Moreover, it is also stated that education will improve one's quality. It enhances the ability of households to cope with health problems, nutrition, childcare and plan for the future.

In addition, education is vital for economic development, and political stability and democracy. It helps people to be productive, responsible and informed citizens. Regarding this idea, then, they declared the Article 26 of The Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948. The article states that education along with other

necessities such as food, shelter, and water as a fundamental human right. In other words, education is a human right. For these reasons, it can be concluded that nowadays, people realize that education has become part of their life. Education is very important especially to face their real life.

Education is closely related with the subjects being offered. One of the most important subjects that the students must learn and appears in every report card is definitely language. Language has always been one of the most important subjects that people need to learn to enable them to communicate with others (spoken or written). Without language, people cannot give or even share any information. However, from all of the languages, which spread out in every part of the earth, English might be the most influential language of all.

Nowadays, everybody; young, old, rich and poor; is encouraged to learn this language. By learning or mastering only this language, they believe that they can communicate with everybody throughout the world. This is not a wrong perception. In some countries, such as Singapore, English has already been the second language. It means, most of the citizens in the country can communicate in English. We can also hear people discussing about American English, Australian English, Singaporean English and still many others. Due to the increasing amount of people speaking in English and still many others. Due to the increasing amount of people speaking in English are increasing, the British Council in United Kingdom published their research about how many people speak English in British Council website ([www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)). Based on some sources, British Council stated that:

1. English has official or special status in at least seventy five countries with a total population of over two billion
2. English is spoken as a first language by around 375 million and as a second language by around 375 million speakers in the world

3. Speakers of English as a second language probably outnumber those who speak it as a first language
4. Around 750 million people are believed to speak English as a foreign language
5. One out of four of the world's population speak English to some level of competence; demand from the other three-quarters is increasing.

From the statement above, the writer can conclude that language, especially English, is the key to open the world. English is being used by a lot of people from different country with different way of speaking. The use of English has already spread worldwide that it is even used as the international communication tool.

Besides for communicating, there are also other reasons why people decide to learn English according to the British Council. It says that English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, diplomacy, sport, international competitions, pop music and advertising. Moreover, eighty percent of the world's electronically stored information is in English.

Because of the importance of learning English, our country, Indonesia, also put English as one of the main subjects in their education. Lately, in Indonesia, many international schools proliferate. All of the schools carry out their subjects by using English as the basis. Therefore, if the students are not encouraged to learn English, they will be left behind by their friends. However, without a good quality in the process of learning the language, it is difficult for the students to acquire the language.

Dealing with learning English, will relate us all with English skills. The skills of English are divided into four parts; they are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. According to Anderson (1968); the four skills are actually divided into two big parts. The first part is the receptive skills (listening and reading) and the second

part is the productive skills (speaking and writing). The main concern of this study is on the reading part with vocabulary as the main component.

Reading is activity characterized the translation of symbols, or letters, into words and sentences that have meaning to the individual. The main purpose of reading is to be able to understand written material, to evaluate it and to use it for one's needs. Before starting to speak and write in English, people have to learn how things are said in English. They do this by reading. A research from a group of researchers at the universities of Nebraska-Lincoln, Iowa State, New York, Columbia and Harvard, and from Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., which was published in Child Development journal (July/August, 2006), stated that English-speaking mothers who begin reading at the very early stage have toddlers with greater language comprehension, more expressive vocabularies and higher cognitive score by the age of 2 years old. Moreover, Spanish-speaking mothers who read to their children every day have 3-year-olds with greater language and cognitive development than those who aren't read to

In line with the group research, Maryland Business Roundtable of Education (MBRT, 2005) wrote that "Reading is the key to learning". Without reading, a person may not be able to excel in other subjects. Reading is one of the ways to improve knowledge and understanding. National research in 1999 showed that a person who reads more will be a good reader at school or throughout his life.

Although reading is very important, not all people enjoy reading. Some of them argued that they are lazy to read. This kind of paradigm must be changed immediately. One of the reasons that make them unwilling to read is because some are too difficult, too easy and the most important part, not interesting. In order to create a good reading habit, students must be stimulated with something interesting

that will later on trigger their mind to read much. There are several reading types that students such as; comics, short stories and novel. This present study focuses on short story.

The writer believes that everybody is aware that reading is closely related to vocabulary. When people read, what they see are vocabulary. By mastering vocabulary, students will have confidence in reading which will later on encourage them to read more and more (Alexander, F. 2006). Therefore, it is said that one of the most important parts of English mastery lies on students' vocabulary. Vocabulary is known as the word of language. Becker (1977) and Anderson and Nagy (1991) believe that vocabulary knowledge is very important for one's success at school and in general, especially related to reading comprehension. Moreover, the National Research Council (1998) recently added that vocabulary development is a fundamental goal for students in the early grades.

The statements above are in line with Alexander (2006) opinion about the importance of vocabulary. Alexander stated three reasons why vocabulary is important. First is improving comprehension. This is the ultimate goal of reading. Second, words are the currency of communication. Vocabulary will develop all areas of communication; listening, speaking, reading and writing. To improve students reading ability, students must be encouraged to read.

However, before giving students boring and difficult reading passages, it would be better if teachers encourage the students to read something which is less difficult but more interesting to the students. In an attempt to foster students' interest, the present study proposes short stories. Arguably, short stories with high proportion of familiar vocabulary, would be ideal to arouse students' interest.

I choose to use short stories in this study because of several reasons. The first reason is because short stories are effective as educational tools. The effectiveness of short stories as educational tools is because they are believable, rememberable, and entertaining (Neuhauser 1993). Everybody, starting from a child till the older people love stories. Stories are relaxing and enjoyable. They can bring people to a new world. Because of this, people feel convenience and entertained during their reading. Furthermore, when the reading is enjoyable, it will also be rememberable. Not only that, we can learn many things from only one single short story; such as vocabulary, grammar, culture, social language and many more.

However, the most interesting of all, it is fun. Almost a year ago, one of my students asked how to improve himself. At that time, I could only say "read much". My answer here did not satisfy me at all. Therefore, I looked for many ways to let my students to read. "Most of the passages", according to my students, "are boring". I was thinking hard because I realized that they were forced to read and practice the social language activity which is being applied in the school. At this moment, I tried to change the passages but still related with the social language. The passages that I used were short stories taken mainly from the internet. The responses, that I got, were different. My students loved it; they said that it was challenging and interesting.

The second reason is because I found an interesting question in the internet that I found on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. A person wrote:

"Anybody knows any good novels for learning English? Could anybody recommend me something interesting and easy to read to improve my English? Does anybody know if there is any list of books for ESL?" (Anonymous: September, 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004)

This person is an English learner and wrote this small message in the Englishforums.com. These questions were responded by a lot of people. Some wrote to browse in the internet and figure it out after reading the necessary points of a good example of novels, and some gave a list of titles of novels. From this open forum, it can be concluded that many people are still interested to read. However, the one that they find more interesting is novels compared to the text books. In other word, short story and novels will be much more interesting to be read. However, reading novels may take a lot more time than short stories.

The third reason is because short story deals with human characters in social situation, in other words, man as a social being. By understanding this sentence, it can be concluded that short story is interesting because it can sometimes relate to everybody social situation. Some parts of the short story itself carry messages that can be applied in the real world with real situation.

According to Sternberg (1987) learning from context is very important that some studies suggest the learners to learn most vocabulary in this way. Extensive reading and simplified reading books can be a good way to enhance word knowledge and get a lot of exposure to the most frequent and useful words. In conclusion, besides short and fun, short stories are also beneficial for students to learn through the context. There are many vocabularies that students can find and this will help them to improve their vocabulary knowledge.

There are plenty of short stories in the world that we can choose and there are also many different genres in it. One of the genres is fictional detective stories and one of the most famous till today is "Sherlock Holmes" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is one of the famous authors for detective stories. His ingenious deductive reasoning in all of his works was based on his brilliant ideas. The

work that brought him to a success was the series of “Sherlock Holmes”. The reason for choosing three of Sherlock Holmes short stories is because detectives stories are exciting, provoking and motivating. Detective stories can urge students to read more and more to the ending.

By reading much, I believe that one can gain many information, including vocabulary. Therefore, I would like to expose my students with some short stories and determine their improvement. More specifically, the research is trying to find out whether students reading short stories in a regular basis will help students increase vocabulary mastery, which in turn increases their reading interest. The short stories that I am going to used are graded short stories that will have already been checked.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

1. Do students who are assigned to read short stories improve their mastery of 2000 – word level vocabulary which is found in the short story?

### **1.3. The Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study is to find out how short stories improve students mastery of 2000 – word level.

### **1.4. The Assumptions**

1. The students do the assignment seriously
2. The students utilize only the context of the stories to subconsciously learn the meanings of the words of the 2000 – word level

### **1.5. Scope and Limitations**

The scope of this study is the effectiveness of reading short stories in improving students' vocabulary. The short stories that I am going to use are three short stories taken from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories. The genre of the stories will be detective stories. They are "His Last Bow", "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley" and "A Scandal in Bohemia"

The subject of this study will be 16 out of 71 Prisma Profesional Institute students (five students majoring in School of Computing, five students majoring in School of Hotel and tourism, four students majoring in School of Business Management, two students majoring in School of Accounting). The students who are chosen are the ones who have just graduated from senior high school and the ones who managed to score 85 for the 1000 – word level test but failed to score 85 in the 2000 – word level test.

The design of the study will be one-group pretest and post-test design. This design is admittedly not a very strong design as it has several weaknesses particularly with regards to internal validity, randomization, and control group. However, limited time and administrative constraints compelled the writer to use this design. The students which have been chosen are going to be exposed to the short stories to master the 2000 – word level. They are going to be assigned to write journal everyday (vocabulary difficulties, retelling, and comments) for a week. After one week exposure on three short stories, the students are going to be given the post test.

### **1.6. Theoretical Framework**

In every part of learning language, vocabulary competence always becomes one of the most important components that students must master. Without having

sufficient vocabulary learning language is very difficult. Vocabulary knowledge is just one of the components in language skills but it plays an important part in a language.

McKeown and Curtis (1987) writes that our vocabulary consists of the individual words we understand the meanings of. Our reading vocabulary consists of words that we understand as we read. It is possible to know the meaning of a word when we hear it spoken but still not be able to read it in print. For beginning readers, whose oral vocabulary is sometimes larger than their reading vocabulary, this is considered common. The depth of our knowledge for individual words can also vary. We may have a deep understanding of words that we use a lot, or check all of the different definitions given for a word in a dictionary. Our knowledge can also be shallow when we know only one of the several meanings for a word, or when we heard a word only a few times but have never used it or checked on its definition.

Actually, children and adults are the same. Mostly they use a small core vocabulary and a large fringe vocabulary (Vanderheiden & Kelso, 1988). Therefore, the small core vocabulary in some schools is mostly taught.

Traditionally, vocabulary used to be offered to learners in the form of lists. However, nowadays the tendency is to present the vocabulary in a form of a text. According to Greenberg, Ehri, and Perin (1997) adult readers' vocabulary growth may be dependent upon reading ability. In other word, although they have the experience and advantage in reading at the lower levels, these experience and advantage might disappear when they have to deal with the higher reading levels. This is in line with Nation, (1993b) statement saying that vocabulary knowledge facilitates language use, language use will also facilitate the increase of vocabulary knowledge,

and knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use.

Thornbury, S (2003) states that there are many advantages in using texts for building vocabulary compared to learning words from lists. The first fact is that by using words in context, there are chances for learners to appreciate not only their meaning but the typical environments; such as: the associated collocations or grammatical structures. Moreover, it is likely that the text will display topically connected sets of words (or lexical fields). Furthermore, research evidence suggests that words loosely connected by topic may be easier to learn than more tightly lexical sets.

As mentioned, vocabulary knowledge can be gained by reading and one of them through literature reading (extensive reading). According to Nuttal (1996: 128) the best way to improve the knowledge of foreign language is by living among its speaker and the next best way is by reading extensively in it. The benefits of extensive free reading to overall language proficiency have been investigated by Elley (1991), Hafiz & Tudor (1989), and Krashen (1993). These studies showed free reading alone to be as effective as other forms of instruction, or even more effective. In conclusion of these statement and studies, extensive reading is a very good way to improve students' language proficiency. Related to the statements, actually there are thousands and even million of choices for extensive reading and one of them is short stories.

Essberger (2000) explains that short story can be a good choice for English learning because they are short. He compares reading a whole book with short story which only has a few pages. The result shows that instead of reading a whole thick book, students find many excitements in reading a story which is short, consisting of 5,000 to 10,000 words, because they can finish it quicker. Moreover, short story may

be exciting, provoking and escapist (Greene, P; 2005). Greene in her study finds out that the three components of short story are educationally productive and fun for English learning.

In line with Essberger, Thornbury, S (2003) also agrees that short texts are ideal for classroom use because they can be subjected to both intensive grammatical and lexical study. Furthermore, using a short text will not overtax learners' attention or memory which can be the problem of a longer text. In his study, he also writes that learning to cope with short texts is a good preparation for independent reading and listening, including dealing with longer texts. Moreover, short texts provide useful models for student production, in the form of speaking and writing.

According to several research, there are millions of words in around 500 texts. However, the Cobuild Dictionary argues that there are only 15,000 words covering 95% of the running words of their corpus. Moreover, according to Schonell, Meddleton and Shaw (1956) with a vocabulary size of 2,000 words, a learner knows 80% of the words in a text which means that 1 word in every 5 (approximately 2 words in every line) are unknown.

Dealing with reading and vocabulary, Krashen (1993) states that almost any reading produce vocabulary growth. However, if the students consistently select texts below their current reading levels, even wide reading won't result in measurable vocabulary growth (Carver, 1994). Therefore, if the students want to improve their vocabulary, they should read for various purposes and read texts at various levels of difficulty. Moreover, students should read some text simply for enjoyment and some text that challenges them (National Reading Panel, 2000)

In his study, Stahl (1999) gives a simple example:

Much of a student's annual growth in reading can come from incidental learning.

- If Jacob, a grade 5 student, reads for one hour each day, five days a week (both in and out of school), at a fairly conservative rate of 150 words per minute, he will encounter 2,250,000 words in his reading over a school year.
- If 2 to 5 percent of the words Jacob encounters are unknown to him, he will encounter from 45,000 to 112,500 unknown words.
- If, as research has shown, students can learn between 5 and 10 percent of previously unknown words from a single reading, Jacob will learn, at minimum, 2,250 new words each year from his reading

From the example above, it is clearly stated that reading can help vocabulary growth for the students.

The value of using stories and the technique of storytelling has always been undisputed throughout the world. Now, many EFL teachers are using carefully selected stories from the world's literature. This happens because they are now aware of the acquisition-based methodology and because stories comply to the major objectives in most countries for foreign language teaching to young learners: linguistic, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural. EFL teachers use stories to supplement their core materials or to create self-contained units of work that constitute mini-syllabuses. In this way, a story can provide as the starting point and rich context for developing a wide variety of related language and learning activities creatively and actively in an all round whole curriculum approach (see Ellis and Brewster 1991 and 2002). However, implementing a story-based approach requires a great deal of energy, creativity and excellent classroom management skills and flexibility from teachers.

As mentioned in the background, before starting to speak and to write, people learn how to read. Therefore, it can be concluded that reading a lot, will improve comprehension which will later on may develop other skills.

### **1.7. The Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that this study would:

1. Give some information to English language institutions about the effectiveness of using short story in classes.
2. Encourage learners to learn English more through reading (short story)

### **1.8. The Definitions of the Key Terms**

#### **1. Reading:**

- Reading is an active process (not a product, like history) in which readers shift between sources of information (what they know and what the text says), elaborate meaning and strategies, check their interpretation (revising when appropriate), and use the social context to focus their response. (Walker, 1996)
  - Reading is the act of simultaneously reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines (Manzo and Manzo, 1993).
  - Three basic definitions of reading: learning to pronounce words, learning to identify words and get their meaning, learning to bring meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it (Foertsch, 1998).
2. Short story: a form of short fictional narrative prose. Short stories tend to be more concise and to the point than longer works of fiction, such as novels. Because of their brevity, successful short stories rely on literary devices such

as character, plot, theme, language, and insight to a greater extent than long form fiction ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short\\_story\\_author](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_story_author)).

3. Vocabulary: words and word meanings in both oral and print language and in productive and receptive forms. Specifically, we use *vocabulary* to refer to the kind of words that students must know to read increasingly demanding text with comprehension (Kamil & Heibert, *in press*)
4. Word frequency: how often the word occurs in normal use of the language (Nation & Waring, 2001)
5. Low-frequency vocabulary: infrequent words or the words which occur less frequent in a printed materials.
6. High-frequency vocabulary: the words that appear most often in printed materials.
7. Vocabulary knowledge: one component of language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). Moreover, knowledge of a word should also be viewed in terms of the extent or degree of knowledge that people can possess (Beck and McKeown, 1991). Vocabulary knowledge therefore enables language use and language use also enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge. Knowledge of the world will also enable the increase of vocabulary knowledge and so on. (Nation, 1993b)
8. Vocabulary growth: the growing of the word meaning in people's notion through learning from the first time they encounter with the word which is totally unknown, to a partial knowledge of the word, to richer and richer understandings of the meaning (Baumann & Kameenui, 1991; Beck and McKeown, 1991; Graves, 1986)

9. Extensive reading:

- It is also called “pleasure reading,” “sustained silent reading” (SSR), or “uninterrupted sustained silent reading” (USSR). (Krashen, 1985, p. 91; Krashen, 1988; Vaughan, 1982, p. 69)
- It is reading (a) of large quantities of material or long texts; (b) for global or general understanding; (c) with the intention of obtaining pleasure from the text. Further, because (d) reading is individualized, with students choosing the books they want to read, (e) the books are not discussed in class (Susser & Robb, 1990).