

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, the English language has developed into the most important language in the world for international communication. In fact, many scientific and technical books are written in English. Because of this reason, Indonesian people have got to learn English if they do not want to be left behind. Consequently, English has occupied an important place as the first foreign language in Indonesia. It is learned and taught, either formally or informally, in any parts of Indonesia as a compulsory foreign language.

Regarding this, the focus of the teaching of English is the students' ability to read in English. As stated in the 1994 English Curriculum for Senior High School (1994:1) "The English lesson in Senior High School includes the language skills — namely reading, listening, speaking, and writing — which are given together based on the themes; however, the emphasis is on the reading skill". It is expected that after completing their study in Senior High School, the students will be able to read English textbooks and to communicate their ideas, opinions, and feelings in English orally or written.

The success of reading can be achieved by having the ability to understand and comprehend the reading texts fully. People should first understand the vocabulary meanings in order to comprehend the information in the reading

texts. As Johnson (1981:120) points out “There must be access to word meaning before comprehension can occur”. In addition, Hua-Shang (1984:37) supports “Correct understanding will lead one towards the mastery of the language and information”. Without understanding the vocabulary meanings, people will find difficulties in comprehending what have been read. This, of course, will prevent them from getting the information from the written words. As a result, their reading will not be meaningful. Based on this fact, vocabulary is considered as an important component in the success of reading.

Besides having an important role in reading skill, furthermore vocabulary influences the language development and the quality of people lives. Based on the Oxford Dictionary (1989:1425) vocabulary refers to “Total number of words that make up a language”. As the biggest component that comprises the language, vocabulary has an important role in it. Vocabulary permeates every language activity whichever skill or language point is being practised (Taylor, 1992:3). Without vocabulary, people will find difficulties in producing both the receptive skills (listening and reading) and the productive skills (speaking and writing). Therefore, vocabulary is considered to be a factor that influences the language development. Furthermore, this development will affect the quality of people lives. This refers to the fact that as social human being, people have to live and interact with other people. This interaction can be done through the medium of human language. In other words, people always experience vocabulary through the language that are communicated or written. For example, people learn the name of the streets, they read the newspapers, they listen to the radios, and they

communicate with others. As a result, without vocabulary to express a wide range of meanings, communication just cannot happen in any meaningful way (McCarthy, 1990:8).

Being aware of those importances, vocabulary stock and mastery cannot be ignored. According to Cross (1992:5) “A good store of words is crucial for understanding and communication”. With adequate vocabulary stock and mastery, people will be able to comprehend the reading texts fully; furthermore, they will be able to communicate orally or written well. As supported by Dobson (1973:4) “A sizeable vocabulary is crucial to success in reading”. In addition, Nation (1994:8) states “A rich vocabulary makes the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing easier to perform”.

Thus, vocabulary should be taught and learned. As stated by Mukarto (1989:66–67) “Vocabulary is not only taught but learned ... teaching vocabulary refers to the teacher’s effort in helping the students to know the meaning of vocabulary, while learning refers to the work done by the students to internalize the new items of vocabulary and to add them up in their learned and acquired language systems”. Furthermore, according to Fries (1988:37) “Learning a language practically always means primarily learning the words of that language”. However, this statement does not mean that vocabulary is taught or learned for the vocabulary mastery itself. On the other hand, the vocabulary teaching is aimed to support the teaching of other language skills. As stated in the 1994 English Curriculum for Senior High School (1994:1) “The language components — namely grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling — are taught not only

to master those components, but in order to support the four language skills — namely reading, listening, speaking, and writing”. Furthermore, in this study, the vocabulary teaching is not merely teaching words but also teaching their meanings in order to comprehend the reading texts. In other words, the vocabulary teaching and learning in this study should not be considered as a single lesson, but it should go together with reading.

Based on the experts’ arguments, vocabulary teaching is best given in context. This refers to the idea that people cannot say anything sensible just mere list of vocabulary. On the other hand, people usually find new items of vocabulary being used in context, that is in communication or in reading texts. In short, the exact meaning of an item of vocabulary is figured out when it is used in context (Mukarto, 1989:66). Through the presentation of vocabulary in context, the students will be able to develop their guessing skills in order to grasp the vocabulary meanings. As supported by Nation (1990:6) “By far the most important strategy to cope with new vocabulary is guessing from context”. Furthermore, through guessing from context the vocabulary meanings can be remembered and recalled better. According to Hook (1982:294) “Words learned in a meaningful context are much more likely to stick in the memory”. Seal (1991:305) also supports “Any meanings people work out for themselves will be better remembered than any one they are given”.

In fact, the vocabulary teaching and learning at school have an unsatisfactorily result. Eventhough vocabulary for the teaching and learning processes are provided in the context of reading texts, the students still find

difficulties in mastering the vocabulary. This refers to the fact that sometimes reading texts in the English textbooks contain many unknown vocabulary to be discussed. Therefore, to save time, the teacher usually gives the meanings of the unknown vocabulary to be memorized or the teacher asks the students to look up the meanings of unknown vocabulary in the dictionary. As a result, after one week or more, most of the memorized vocabulary disappear. In addition, through translation the students are not trained to make educated guesses by utilizing their knowledge and experience. On the other hand, the students tend to depend on the teacher's translation or on the dictionary. Finally, the students will lose their interests in vocabulary learning through such monotonous and boring activities. The vocabulary teaching and learning do not run successfully.

In line with the above facts, the writer would like to suggest the use of poems in vocabulary teaching. The poems are chosen because of their shortness comparing to the other forms of artistic texts. According to Travers (1987:216) "Poems were praised for being simple and straightforward". By using poems, the teaching-learning processes can be focused on guessing the relevant meanings of vocabulary according to the themes and the topics of discussion. Besides that, Basturkmen (1990:18) supports "Using poems will be fun, a change of activity, and a different way of involving and motivating the students in vocabulary learning".

It is under all those reasons that the writer undertakes a field research in order to obtain statistically proved data which will provide a point of

consideration whether or not the suggested reading texts are worth applied in vocabulary teaching in Senior High School.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem above, the writer would like to use the suggested reading texts namely the poems then see the effect of these texts on the students' vocabulary achievement. Thus, the problem in this study is:

“Is there any significant difference between the vocabulary achievement of the first year students of Senior High School taught using the poems and that taught using the reading texts which are taken from the textbook?”

1.3 Objective of the Study

In line with the statement of the problem above, the writer would like to find out whether:

“There is a significant difference between the vocabulary achievement of the first year students of Senior High School taught using the poems and that taught using the reading texts which are taken from the textbook”.

1.4 Hypotheses

There are two kinds of hypotheses used in this study, namely the Alternative Hypothesis and the Null Hypothesis.

– Ha / Alternative Hypothesis:

“It is said that there is a significant difference between the vocabulary achievement of the first year students of Senior High School taught using the poems and that taught using the reading texts which are taken from the textbook”.

However, this Alternative Hypothesis is only the prediction that the writer made before the data is collected, so the Null Hypothesis is the opposite of it.

– Ho / Null Hypothesis:

“It is said that there is no significant difference between the vocabulary achievement of the first year students of Senior High School taught using the poems and that taught using the reading texts which are taken from the textbook”.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are expected to give some contributions both to the students and to the field of vocabulary teaching.

For the students, the application of the poems is expected to be able to help the students in improving their vocabulary. Thus, the students may develop their guessing skills based on the context provided in the poems and minimize their level of dependence on the dictionary.

While for the field of vocabulary teaching, the application of the poems is expected to stimulate the vocabulary teaching–learning activities in order to avoid the students’ boredom. As the students tend to find the poems interesting

enough as a means of vocabulary teaching, they will be interested to learn the language.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Realizing the enormous scope of this study, the time and administrative constraints, the writer considers it necessary to set limitation on it.

The population and sample of this study are limited to the first year students of SMU Kristen Petra 3 at Jalan Kalianyar 43 Surabaya, of the school year 1998–1999. The reason for choosing the first year students of Senior High School is due to the fact that these students have got adequate stock and mastery of English vocabulary and basic knowledge of English grammar as they have been learning English since they were in Junior High School.

The time of conducting the experiment in this study is limited from February to March, 1999. Each group, the experimental and the control, is given different treatments. The experimental group receives vocabulary teaching through the poems, while the control group receives it through the reading texts which are taken from the textbook. The treatments given are limited to five meetings for each group. Each meeting lasts for forty–five minutes. It discusses one poem or one reading text, that have the same topic of discussion, with its vocabulary exercises.

The themes of the reading texts in this study are limited based on the themes of the 1994 English Curriculum for Senior High School. Five themes are chosen based on the Senior High School English teaching programme of the

school year 1998–1999 (Suparno, 1998:8–9). As a representative in the experiment, two themes are presented for the first quarter, one theme for the second quarter, and two themes for the third quarter. They are “Clean Environment, Astronomy, Sports and Games, Mass Media, and Pollution”. This choice is due to the consideration that the suggested reading texts —the poems— are flexible to be used in any quarter for one school year. Then, each theme is represented by one poem and one reading text. The poems and the reading texts have the same topics of discussion based on their themes.

The poems for the experimental group are taken from poetry for teenagers in the Random House Book of Poetry for Children (Prelutsky, 1983) and *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (Silverstein, 1984). The representative poems for the experiment are “The City Dump, The Universe, A Football Game, Jimmy Jet and His TV set, and City, City”.

The reading texts for the control group are taken from *Communicative and Meaningful English for SMU 1* (Suparno, 1998). The representative reading texts for the experiment are “Rubbish, Space Objects, Football, TV or No TV, and Environmental Pollution”.

Each meeting is limited to five–eight new items of vocabulary discussion (Cross, 1992:11). The parts of speech discussed are limited to nouns, verbs, and adjectives, which are found in the poems and in the reading texts. They are then developed into the vocabulary exercises based on the vocabulary list of the 1994 English Curriculum for Senior High School.

The vocabulary teaching through the poems does not only discuss the new items of vocabulary and their meanings based on the context of the poems but also discuss their meanings as a part of understanding the whole idea of the poem. However, this study does not include the ways how to analyze the poems deeply. Therefore, the poetic devices namely figures of speech, sense, and sound will not be discussed. In short, all the discussion in the poems focuses more on the role of poems as a means of vocabulary teaching.

The vocabulary teaching through the reading texts which are taken from the textbook is limited to the discussion of new vocabulary items and their meanings based on the context of the reading texts.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

For the sake of clarity, accuracy, and understanding, the following terms are defined as they are used in this study.

1. *Effect*:

“To bring about especially through successful use of factors contributory to the result (Webster, 1986:724)”.

2. *Poem*:

“A piece of poetry designed as a unit and communicating to the reader the sense of a complete experience (Webster, 1986:1748)”.

3. *Vocabulary*:

“Total number of words that make up a language (Oxford, 1989:1425)”.

4. *Vocabulary Teaching:*

“The teaching of words meaning and how they are used together with other words in context (Harmer, 1993:24)”.

5. *Context:*

“Surrounding words which are directly connected to a word and that add to its meaning (Nation, 1990:60)”.

6. *Achievement:*

“Performance by a student in a course: quality and quantity of a student’s work during a given period (Webster, 1986:16)”.

7. *Student:*

“A person engaged in study: one devoted to learning (Webster, 1986:2268)”.

1.8 Organizational Patterns of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the introduction of the study. Chapter II deals with the review of related literature. Chapter III deals with the research methods. Chapter IV deals with the data analysis and interpretation of the findings. Chapter V deals with the conclusion and suggestions for further research.