CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Learning is one of the primary activities of students in the classroom. In the area of language learning, it is found that the effectiveness of using learning strategies gives a great support towards the success of learning. Brown (2001) confirms that successful mastery of the second language will be due to a learner's own personal "investment" of time, efforts, and attention to the target language in the form of battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language.

One of the most difficult aspects of learning a foreign language, particularly in an EFL context, is the retention of vocabulary. Vocabulary is the central of language teaching and learning. It plays an important role in the four language skills. It gives contribution to the learners to perform or practice their skills better. It means that by mastering the vocabulary, the learners will able to produce so many sentences easily either in spoken or written one. It is impossible for the learners to perform their English well if their vocabularies are very poor. They will find any difficulties in expressing or mastering their language skills because of having too limited vocabularies.

In learning a foreign language, vocabulary plays an important role. It is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together. In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately.

Even though students realize the importance of vocabulary when learning language, most students learn vocabulary passively due to several factors. First, they consider the

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teacher's explanation for meaning or definition, pronunciation, spelling and grammatical functions boring. In this case scenario, language learners have nothing to do in a vocabulary learning section but to listen to their teacher. Second, students only think of vocabulary learning as knowing the primary meaning of new words.

Therefore, they ignore all other functions of the words. Third, students usually only acquire new vocabulary through new words in their textbooks or when given by teachers during classroom lessons. For example, learners find many new words in a text and then ask the teacher to explain the meanings and usages. Forth, many learners do not want to take risks in applying what they have learnt. Students may recognize a word in a written or spoken form and think that they already "know the word", but they may not be able to use that word properly in different contexts or pronounce it correctly.

Therefore, it needs strategy to help students learn language, especially vocabulary to be more interesting and worth doing. The teacher also needs to create a method or an activity that can stimulate the students to be active, not passively learn by heart. One of the activities of teaching and learning vocabulary which is believed to be the best way of teaching and learning vocabulary is through game. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The students want to take part and in order to do so, they must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information.

There are so many games that can be applied by teacher concerning to how to improve the students' vocabulary mastery, such as the alphabet game, the word guessing game, word search and so on. These kinds of activities help both teacher and students in

the process of teaching learning. Teacher is able to create a situation in which the language or the vocabulary will be used. However, in order to achieve the most from vocabulary games, it is essential that suitable games are chosen. In addition, teacher's attention, creativity and ability are needed.

By seeing the advantages of using these games, the researcher tries to apply the game for teaching English in SMP Bakti Bangsa Bandung. The researcher uses "finding word" game as one of the activities to improve the students' vocabulary mastery.

In this research, the researcher tries to find out the use of "finding word" game in learning vocabulary. The researcher will investigate how to implements "finding word" game, to figure out the reasons behind the use of the game and to get a description about teacher's and student's perceptions on the use of the game.

B. Theoretical Framework

1. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the basic element in the language. It becomes the thing that is used as a tool to access the background knowledge, express ideas, and learn new concept. Vocabulary is one of the important parts in learning English, particularly, in reading comprehension especially for the beginners. The main reasons for these are: firstly, vocabulary is used as the main tool to understand forms, phrases, sentences and texts in one or more paragraphs; secondly, it functions to convey the meaning of the words in a text.

Vocabulary has a significant role in language. Basically, learning language is a matter of learning vocabulary of that language. A research has shown that vocabulary

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knowledge plays a critical role in students' literacy development (Scott, Jamieson- Noel, & Asselin, 2003).

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, vocabulary means:

(1) the total number of words in a language; (2) all the words known to a person or used in a particular book, subject, etc; (3) a list of words with their meanings, especially one that accompanies a textbook in a foreign language. (2005, p.1447)

Moreover, Longman Dictionary stated that vocabulary is "all the words that someone knows, learns, or uses." (2002, p.580)

Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. In general, vocabulary can be described as oral vocabulary and reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print. (Partnership for Reading, 2001)

2. Vocabulary learning

Vocabulary learning is a hard task which can sometimes be frustrating especially for students. Many learners of English think of learning vocabulary are learning a list of new words with the meanings without application in real context. Thus, working this way, after a short period of time, many learners may find out that learning vocabulary in lists does not satisfy themselves, and they think the cause for it is just their bad memorization, Gnoinska (1998:12).

Decarrico (2001) states that words should not be learnt separately or should not memorized without understanding. Moreover, "learning new words is a cumulative process, with words enriched and established as they are met again", Nation (2000, p.6).

Therefore, the "look and remember" way of vocabulary learning seems to be not very effective for learners of the English language.

Based on previous research (Graves, 2000; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002), the teachers organized their vocabulary activities to: 1) facilitate wide reading, 2) teach individual words, 3) provide word-learning strategies and 4) foster word consciousness. It is believed that one of the best word-learning strategies is through games. Learning vocabulary through games is one effective and interesting way that can be applied in any classrooms. W. R. Lee holds that most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms (1979:2).

3. Definition of Game

According The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 1967, Game is a competitive activity involving skill, chance, or endurance on the part of two or more persons who play according to a set of rules, usually for their own amusement or for that of spectators.

The definition of game people use today comes from the works of Johan Huizinga (Homo Ludens, 1938) and Friedrich Georg Jünger (Die Spiele, 1959) is any activity which is executed only for pleasure and without conscious purpose. In this definition every activity that brings pleasure is a game. For example, people dance, play musical instruments, act in plays, and play with dolls and model trains.

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4. The Importance of Games in Learning Vocabulary

Games is a technique that is important in learning vocabulary. According to Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen and Khuat Thi Thu Nga, "games have been shown to have advantages and effectiveness in learning vocabulary in various ways. First, games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus help them learn and retain new words more easily. Second, games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. These create the motivation for learners of English to get involved and participate actively in the learning activities. Third, vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way." (Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen and Khuat Thi Thu Nga, 2003)

Most of us recognize that play or game is an important way to learn all types of skills and knowledge. Play works as a way to learn for a couple of reasons. First, we are more motivated to do an activity if we are having fun doing it. Second, pleasurable activities get repeated and, therefore, give us more chances to practice the skill or recall a piece of knowledge. Word games are a great way to pick up new vocabulary and play with vocabulary that is already familiar.

Lee (1995:35) lists several main advantages when games are used in the classroom, including "a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class", "motivating and challenging" "effort of learning", and "language practice in the various skills." Ersoz (2000) holds that games are highly appreciated thanks to their amusement and interest. Teachers can use games to help their students practice more their skills of communication.

5. "Finding Word" Game

A "Finding word" game or "word search" is a word game in which the letters of a word in a grid, that usually has a rectangular or square shape. The object of the game is to find and mark all of the words hidden in the grid. The words may have been placed horizontally, vertically or diagonally. They may have been written backwards or not. Often a list of the hidden words is provided, but more challenging puzzles may let the player figure them out. Many word search puzzles have a theme to which all the hidden words are related.

Word searches are commonly found in daily newspapers and puzzle books. Some teachers use them as educational tools for children, the benefit being that young minds can learn new words and their spellings by intensively searching for them, letter by letter, in the puzzle.

C. Research question

The problem of this research can thus be formulated in a question below:

In what way can the use of "finding word game" improve students' English vocabulary mastery?

D. Aim of the Research

This study was aimed to find out the way in which the use of "finding word game" can improve students' vocabulary mastery. Specifically, the aim of this study can be delineated into several aims as described below:

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To ascertain the way in which the use of "finding word game" can improve students' vocabulary mastery.

E. Significance of Research

The result of the study can give some signification. Firstly, for the English teacher, this study can provide contribution for the teachers to apply another techniques and media dealing with the teaching learning process especially in teaching vocabulary. By considering the result of the study the teacher will not use monotonous method and change his orientation in teaching vocabulary.

Secondly, for the students, the result of the study will help them to memorize vocabulary better. By implementing finding word game, students are able to memorize vocabulary well. As a result, their vocabulary will much be better because using game will improve students' vocabulary mastery.

Thirdly, for the school, the researcher hopes that the school can use this action research paper as the reference in teaching English especially in teaching vocabulary and it can be useful and gives some additional information.

Fourthly, for another researcher, this study gives the researcher understanding toward the implementation of finding word game in teaching vocabulary directly. By implementing finding word game to improve students' vocabulary mastery, especially in teaching vocabulary, it will provide useful practical experience for the writer himself.

Finally, this study is expected to be able to give practical contributions to the writer on how to improve the students' vocabulary mastery by using finding word game.

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F. Scope of the Research

To limit the research, it is necessary to focus the problem discussed in the research.

The problems are limited into:

1. The games used are only finding word game, matching word game and puzzle.

2. Improvement seen from the students' motivation in reading activity.

G. Research Method

This study employed an action research method. According to Joko Nurkamto (2010), there are three definitions of action research that are defined by Kemmis, Ebbutt, and Elliot (in Hopkins, 1993: 44 - 45). The first definition is given by Stephen Kemmis (1983), who writes:

Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations in which the practices are carried out. It is most rationally empowering when undertaken by the participants collaboratively, though it is often undertaken by individuals, and sometimes in cooperation with 'outsiders".

The second definition is delivered by Dave Ebbutt (1985), who not only gives a definition of his own, but also quotes from Kemmis. He writes that:

Action research is about the systematic study of attempts to improve educational practice by groups of participants by means of their own practical actions and by means of their own reflection upon the effects of those actions.

The third definition is from John Elliot (1991:69). According to him, action research is:

…the study of a social situation with a view to improve the quality of action within it. It aims at practical judgment in concrete situations, and the validity of the 'theories' or hypotheses it generates depends not so much on 'scientific' tests of truth, as on their usefulness in helping people to act more intelligently and skillfully. In action-research

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'theories' are not validated independently and then applied to practice. They are validated through practice.

From the three definitions about action research above, it can be concluded that some characteristics of action research as follows:

1. Action research is a research about class situation that is done systematically by following the procedures and steps.

2. The activity is urged by the problems that arise in a classroom and it must be handled by the teacher as a person who teaches the students.

3. The objectives of action research are to solve the problems that arise in a classroom and to improve the quality of class situation.

4. The effort in solving the problems or in improving the quality of class situation can be done by one person that is a teacher. But, the effort will be well done if the action research is done collaboratively by people in or around the school.

5. The success measurement in action research is based on the benefit in solving the problems and in improving the system quality in a classroom including the practice in it.

6. The validity of the 'theories' and 'hypotheses' are determined by the benefit in solving the problems. Therefore, the validity is examined using practical in a concrete situations, not using scientific tests of truth.

The model of the action research in this classroom action research used the model developed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1990:14). According to the model, the implementation of the action research includes four steps. They are plan, act, observe and reflect. The basic point is that the researcher cannot determine exactly how many times
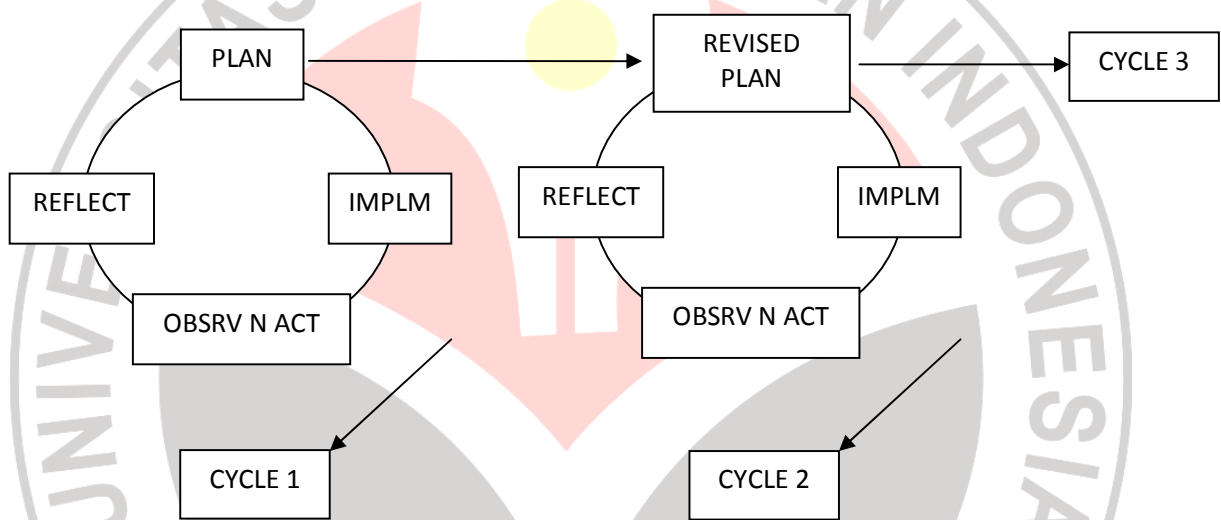
the spiral steps (cycles) must be done because it depends on the result of each cycle. In other words, the cycle is ended whenever the problems have been solved. This model can be visually illustrated as follows:

Figure I . Illustration of Action Research

The procedure described at the figure 1 show that the plan is made by considering the fact findings from preliminary observation. Then, the teacher as the researcher follows all the stages in each cycle in implementing the game in teaching vocabulary. The detail research description is explained as follows:

1. Planning

    After formulating the problem and analyzing the causes, the researcher plans the solution. The solution should be appropriate and based on the relevant theories. Besides, the researcher also has to consider the feasibility of the implementation.

2. Acting

In this stage, the researcher starts to implement what he has formulated in planning. The implementation is not as simple as the planning because in reality, it is usually more complicated than what has been planned. Therefore, the researcher should anticipate what is going on in the future.

3. Observing

Observing is the activity to monitor the effect of the implementation. The observation can be carried out while the researcher takes the action or sometimes after the action. To get the information, the researcher uses observation, interview, questionnaire, document analysis and test. The observation covers the events happened in the teaching learning process which can be noted down on the field note. The interview done in face to face interaction covers the teacher and students' perception and responses toward the implementation of game. It also covers the students' prior knowledge in learning vocabulary. In addition, document analysis covers all document collected relates to the implementation of game such as the students' observation form, students' questionnaire.

Meanwhile, the test covers the effect of the implementation seen from the score gained by the students.

4. Reflecting

Reflection is done in the end of cycle. It is started by analyzing everything in the implementation. It covers the process, effect, the successful plan, and unsuccessful plan which can be the input for making the revised plan for the next cycle.

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The researcher gives some reasons due to the use of Classroom Action Research (CAR) in this research. First, the characteristic of CAR is focusing on solving the problems in the class. Second, it allows the teacher as researcher to have self reflection. Third, the cycle will not be ended until the problems encountered can be solved. Fourth, it is one way to improve the students' ability in English.

H. Clarification of the Terms

There are some terms used in this research that need clarification to avoid misconception.

1. Game is a teaching method which used as tool to foster students' vocabulary mastery. The researcher uses finding word game. It refers to a game that is used by matching the word and the meaning in puzzle. Students are asked to match with its meaning. By doing so, the researcher hopes the students could understand the text.

2. Vocabulary mastery. In this research, it refers to the word that the students are expected to understand reading comprehensive text that is given by teacher.

I. Paper Organization

This research consists of three chapters as follow:

Chapter 1 : Introduction

This chapter deals with the background of study, explanation about the research, followed by the formulation of the problem, aim of study, scope of the study, significance of study, research methodology, clarification of the terms, and organization of the paper.

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Chapter 2: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings of the research based on the data collected, these findings will be analyzed and presented in a systematic way.

Chapter 3: Conclusions and Suggestions

It constitutes two parts, the conclusion parts, and the suggestion part. The parts respectively will draw the important things of this research; while suggestions will give some suggestions will open an opportunity to conduct a further research on some issue.