

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the general account of the present study. It covers the background of the study, identification of the problem, formulation of the problems, limitation of the research, aim of the research, and the significance of the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is an essential part of human life. It is used as a means of communication among people. Among languages in the world, English is one of the languages which are used by many people in a lot of countries. It is also recognized as the main language for communication with other people from different countries. Due to the importance of English as an international language, many people try to learn and master it so that they will not find any difficulties in communicating with people from other countries.

In Indonesia, English is considered as the first foreign language and the compulsory subject to be taught in secondary schools. It is also considered as an optional subject or local content materials to be taught in elementary schools (Depdikbud, 1994: 1). Thus, English mastery stands as a goal that should be achieved besides two other languages, namely Indonesian and vernacular language as a prerequisite subject to pass National Examination.

One of English components to be taught to the learners is vocabulary because it has a primary role for all language skills as Taylor (1990: 1) said “vocabulary may have special importance for adult learners, since it is the one area of the language learning that does not appear to be shaved down by age. Hence, in order to support the mastery of English skills as mentioned above, it is essential to learn vocabulary. Vocabulary is important in learning a foreign

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language. It is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together. According to Carpenter & Olson (2011), in an EFL classroom, vocabulary is needed for expressing meaning and conveying thoughts through both receptive and productive skills. Thus, there should be a strategy to help students learn vocabulary. She also further states that in introducing vocabularies, teachers need to design classroom activities in which the students will be able to participate and actively involved so they can experience the language by themselves. Moreover, the vocabularies also have to be used repeatedly so the learners will meet the words over and over again that might help them to retain the meaning of the words.

However, many students, especially for the beginners, face the problem of vocabulary mastery. They cannot comprehend and master it well. It was proven by the result of preliminary observation made by the researcher to the eighth grade students in a junior high school in Cipanas-Cianjur, where the writer also becomes the English teacher there. Based on the researcher's observation through conducting preliminary studies during teaching, learning English activity of the eighth grade students, the researcher found that many students had difficulties in learning English especially in relation with the vocabulary. It was proved by the result of the students' Pretest in preliminary study. The mean of the students' English score was 49.6. Meanwhile, the Minimum Mastery Criterion was 75.0. The result indicates that the students' English achievement was very low. Besides, it was supported by the result of the interview to the English teacher in preliminary study that the students' difficulties come from the weaknesses of students' vocabulary.

By considering the problems as were mentioned above, the writer conducted more observation to the students in the class to get more information. By doing so, the writer found some factors causing those problems. First, the

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teacher's way of teaching the material was conventional. Students were just asked to read, repeat and write all the times. It can also be said that teacher's teaching technique was less varied that made the students bored with the monotonous class' atmosphere. Second, the students assumed that English is a difficult subject. It makes their motivation at a low level.

After observing the instructional process at the eighth grade students, it could be identified that several problems occurred during the teaching- learning activity. They are: (1) The technique applied by the teacher was not appropriately related to the topic or material, situation and condition, (2) the teacher only focuses on the writing skill. The students were asked to remember the letter of words, write the words which were mentioned by the teacher, (3) the students have no more chance to grasp the meaning or less challenge in finding the meaning of words.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, it was concluded that the teacher applies a less varied teaching technique in transferring materials. It affected on the students' motivation in learning English. As a result, they are bored with the monotonous class. There are many techniques and methods of language teaching that can be selected for teaching vocabulary. One of the teaching strategies that were recommended by some researchers for motivating the students to learn English is by using games (Azar, 2012; Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011; Huyen & Nga, 2003). In line with the experts' recommendation, the researcher proposed a technique to solve the problems by using a game that is called a dominoes game. It is a kind of game that was expected to enhance the students to be more active in English class. It was also expected to increase students' motivation in learning English so that it can improve the students' vocabulary mastery.

The research about using Dominoes game in teaching vocabulary has been done by Khasanah, Chamdani, & Susiani. They conducted the research in an elementary school grade five in 2012. From their study, it was found out that the use of Dominoes game was very effective for increasing the students' vocabulary mastery. The Dominoes-cards that were used in the research were in the form of pictorial Dominoes cards.

The gap between this research and the previous one, which was done by Khasanah *et al.*, is that in this research the Dominoes-card shows not only picture but also some words or phrases which describe animals. This is in line with Lessard-Clouston (2013) who states that vocabulary can be defined as the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do.

Based on the background above, the researcher conducted a classroom action research entitled "**The Use of Dominoes Game in Teaching Vocabulary**"

1.2 The Formulation of the Problems

In line with the background of the research, the researcher formulates the research questions as follow;

1. Does the use of Dominoes game increase the students' vocabulary mastery?
2. How does the use of Dominoes game shape the students' learning involvement?

1.3 The Scope of the Study

This classroom action research was conducted at a junior high school in Cipanas-Cianjur. The object of the research is a class of the eighth grades. The research was conducted in the first semester from August to November 2013.

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The problem is limited only to the vocabulary teaching dealing with descriptive text about animals, such as wild and domestic animals.

1.4 The Aim of the Study

The aim of this Classroom Action Research (CAR) is to improve the students' vocabulary achievement by using Dominoes game in the teaching and learning activities.

1.5 The Significance of the Research

1.5.1 For the teachers

The result of this research is expected to be useful for the English teacher as input and consideration, as follow;

- To overcome difficulties in improving vocabulary achievement among the learners of English;
- To add their experiences in the English teaching learning process.

1.5.2 For the Students

This research is expected to encourage the students mastering the English lesson. The students are expected to feel relaxed and full of joy in the learning activities and solve their problem in understanding the meaning of word in the sentence.

1.5.3 For other Researchers

The results of this research can be used by the other researchers as information or reference to conduct a classroom action research to another class which has similar problems to develop the students' vocabulary achievement.

1.6 Definition of key terms

In order to clarify the key terms used throughout this thesis, definition of these terms is presented.

1.6.1 Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery can be defined as a number of vocabulary (words) in a language which contains information about its meaning, form, and usage in context of communication. It is the basic knowledge that students should master first before mastering English. As Allen (2009) acknowledges that students must learn thousands of words that speakers and writers of English use.

1.6.2 Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC)

Mastery learning is a students' highest level of competency for a subject; the MMC is the minimum level of mastery learning that a student must obtain. The MMC is established by subject teachers in each school before the school year begins. These subject teachers consider three aspects: complexity (level of difficulty), facilities (schools and teaching materials) and the student intake (students' competence and background knowledge of the subject). The MMC of a subject at each year is decided by looking at the average score of learning indicators, basic competencies, and key competencies stated in the curriculum. The MMC, which is adjusted up each year, becomes the reference point when teachers are assessing students. They mark students' work and score it to determine whether the standards set by the school have been achieved or not. Although all schools utilize the same aspects in setting the MMC, each school has different MMCs to accommodate the different context, school standard (regional and national) and students' background.

1.6.3 Dominoes Game

Dominoes or domino is a class of popular table games for two to four players, played with a set of specially marked tiles. Each domino is a rectangular tile with a line dividing its face into two square ends. Each end is marked with a number of spots (also called pips or nips) or is blank. The backs of the dominoes in a set are indistinguishable, either blank or having some common design. A domino set is a generic gaming device, similar to playing cards or dice, in that a variety of games can be played with a set.

In this case, Dominoes game was utilized as a game which use card as the media made of any particular paper content of a word of target language on one side and the other side is the meaning of the word in the first language learner.

Using Dominoes game is a word learning strategy for independent learning in or out of class. On one side of the card is written the word to be learned. On the other side is the word's meaning, usually in the form of a first language translation (Nation, 1994: 20).

1.6.4 Students' Engagement

Early studies defined student engagement primarily by observable behaviors such as participation and time on task (Brophy 1983; Natriello 1984). Researchers have also incorporated emotional or affective aspects into their conceptualization of engagement (Connell 1990; Finn 1989). These definitions include feelings of belonging, enjoyment, and attachment. More recently, researchers have studied aspects of cognitive engagement, such as students' investment in learning, perseverance in the face of challenges, and use of deep rather than superficial strategies (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris 2004). Some have also included self-regulation (the extent to which students demonstrate

control over their learning actions) as a component of cognitive engagement (Pintrich and DeGroot 1990; Miller et al. 1996).

1.6.5 Classroom Action Research (CAR)

Classroom action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn (Mills, 2003: 5). It means that CAR is aimed to overcome problems in teaching learning process in order to improve educational practice.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis comprises five chapters. The first chapter explains the introduction which contains the background of the study, the formulation of the problems, the scope of the research, the aims of the research, the significance of the research, and the thesis organization.

The second chapter explains the theoretical framework, which divided into three sub-chapters. The first sub-chapter is about the use of games in teaching English. The second sub-chapter is about vocabulary, the kinds of vocabulary, vocabulary usage and the technique of teaching vocabulary. The third sub-chapter is about the use of the Dominoes game in teaching vocabulary, and the last sub-chapter is the action hypothesis.

The third chapter is Research Methodology. It contains the purpose of the research, research design, and subject of the research, the data collection and data analysis.

The fourth chapter is about the Research and Discussion which consists of the activity before implementing the action, the implementing of classroom action

research, after the implementing the action, the analysis of data, and the interpretation of data.

Finally, the fifth chapter is Conclusion and Suggestion. In this chapter, the writer describes a conclusion and giving suggestion dealing with the matter. The writer also encloses the appendices and bibliography completing her research paper.