

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general description of the paper. It covers the background of the study, the statement of the problems, the aims of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of terms and the organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

English as a foreign language has been seen as the important language to be learned in many countries since it has been treated as the international language. English language proficiency is meaningful in order to support people's life nowadays. It can help people to widen their knowledge, facilitate them to communicate effectively and also to access information easier.

Based on its necessities, the English language learning has been introduced from the early age in many countries. As in Indonesia, English subject is taught since the elementary school level. But, it seems that this policy is going to be replaced since there will be some changes in the curriculum development 2013 as the decree of Ministry of Education and Culture (November, 2012) has proposed the plan of curriculum structure for each education level.

As in elementary school level, there will be some changes in the curriculum. Some school subjects, including English which is treated as one of local subjects in the latest curriculum, *KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan)*, will be removed since it is considered that the number of the subjects has given too much burden to the students. It is also stated that the learning process will be based on the theme-based teaching to provide more contextual learning for the students.

Cameron (2001) states that in theme-based teaching, the curriculum is designed under theme that will be integrated among subjects without being separated into particular areas. The English subject may be deleted as the school subject in elementary level but it might still be treated as the additional subject or it can be said as the extracurricular. Eventhough the English subject is treated as

the additional subject, it will be interesting to see how the theme-based teaching that has been planned to be implemented in the curriculum development 2013 is also applied to teach English to young learners.

In the implementation of theme-based teaching, the teachers might be challenged since they need to be able to design their own materials in which text books are only for additional sources. As Cameron (2001:181) states, “...*the theme-based teaching required teachers to choose a theme or topic and then to plan a range of teaching and learning activities related to the theme*”.

In designing a range of teaching and learning activities, teachers are not only required to plan it as the theme chosen but also they need to think of some aspects needed in learning foreign language. In the early stage, vocabulary seems to be essential in foreign language learning since it will be useful to improve some other skills. As it is supported by Cameron (2001:72), “*building up a useful vocabulary is central to the learning of a foreign language at primary level*”. 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 recycled so the young learners will meet the words over and over again that might help them to have broad meaning of the words. Pinter (2006:85) argues that “*recycling and revising both vocabularies and structures is important in TEYL classrooms*”. She also highlighted that the recycling method needs to be varied so that the children can enjoy the activities.

Vocabulary learning process has been found as a problem in English as a Foreign Language based on the researcher’s observation in SD X, Bandung. The main problem is that how the children were being introduced to English vocabulary. It seems that they tended to be taught by translating the English vocabulary into Bahasa Indonesia and memorizing the vocabulary without having the real context of the vocabularies. This method might not be appropriate for young learners since they might forget the vocabulary easily that will cause failure in their learning. Cameron (2001) proposes that learners might fail to learn, or forget a lot of vocabularies because of some difficulties in vocabulary learning

which caused by inadequate recycling activities that do not relate to the learners' real lives.

In line with that, the implementation of theme-based teaching is expected to be an answer of this learning problem. As Cameron (2001:191) states, "*theme-based work is likely to introduce new vocabulary items, with the theme providing support for understanding and recall*". Since the learning will go around theme, there will be more opportunities for the learners to meet particular words in different context that might give broader meaning of the words. Moreover, the implementation of theme-based teaching seems also beneficial for teaching children as it has been found by Yang (2009) in his study that the children were very positive towards theme-based teaching. The majority of them thought that teaching activities and tasks are more integrated and organized with the implementation of theme-based teaching. Considering that there will be opportunities for children to develop their vocabularies through theme-based teaching, as it has been planned to be implemented as the method in the curriculum development 2013, the present study tries to investigate how theme based teaching improves young learners' English vocabulary.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problems**

This study was conducted to answer two questions:

- 1) "How does theme-based teaching improve young learners' English vocabulary?"
- 2) "What are the students' responses towards the theme-based teaching that is implemented to improve their English vocabulary?"

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

This study is aimed to find out how theme-based teaching improves young learners' English vocabulary and to find out students' responses towards the theme-based teaching that is implemented to improve their English vocabulary.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The result of this study is expected to be a beneficial contribution not only for English language teacher but also for institutions concerned with teaching English for young learners. It is also expected that the theme-based teaching can help the students to learn English mainly in improving young learners' vocabulary.

#### **1.5 Clarification of Terms**

Here are several terms used that are clarified to avoid misconception and misunderstanding:

- Theme-based teaching in this study refers to the approach that is used to teach English in order to improve students' vocabulary. Theme-based teaching is an approach in which the learning activities are designed under a theme that will be linked based on the content. (Cameron, 2001)
- Vocabulary in this study refers to all the words that the students learn in order to communicate effectively involving word identification, word meaning, and word use.
- Young learners in this study refer to students in fifth grade of elementary school aged ten to eleven years old who learn English as a Foreign Language.

#### **1.6 Organization of the Paper**

This study is organized into five chapters as follow:

##### **Chapter I Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the introduction of the research that gives information about the background of the study, the statement of the problems, the aims of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

##### **Chapter II Theoretical Framework**

This chapter focuses on some theories and literature that related with the topic of the study. It will mainly discuss about theories and relevant studies about theme-based teaching, the concept of vocabulary, the characteristics of young learners, and the theme-based teaching in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

### **Chapter III Research Method**

This chapter explains about methodology that is used in the study. Research methodology consists of research design, research site and participant, data collection and data analysis.

### **Chapter IV Findings and Discussions**

This chapter presents the results of the study and discusses about the findings of the study based on the collective data.

### **Chapter V Conclusions and Suggestions**

This chapter presents the entire conclusion of the study and also provides suggestions as a contribution for further learning and research.

