

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study that shows the enhancement of English education at elementary schools, and how this education requires good teachers to teach with appropriate method. This chapter consists of some subchapters, namely the purposes of the study, research questions, scope of the problem, the significance of the study, research method, clarification of terms and research paper organization.

1.1. Background of the Study

The enhancement of education that gives priority to the elementary students' ability to master English as a result of this subject categorized as local content in the curriculum is responded positively by public (Yauri, 2007). Many parents ask their children to be taught English in their elementary schools like in others (Suyanto, 2004), as in the society as Istiqomah (2011) implies, English plays an important role not only as academic language but also as daily one, such as in computer, internet, banking, medic, tourism, flight, entertainment and radio. Moreover, Nunan (2003: 591) states, "In business, industry, and government, workers are increasingly expected to develop proficiency in English." Therefore, the parents want their children to learn English as early as possible so that they will take advantage from English as an important part of their academic and business career in the future (Sad, 2010).

This condition also encourages a number of elementary schools to implement English education based on the government policy (Sukamerta, 2011), *SK Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* (the Decree of Minister of Education and Culture) *No. 060/U/1993* in February 25, 1993. This policy states that it is possible to teach English as local content subject in Elementary school starting from the fourth grade (Suyanto, 2004).

In Indonesia, English is now introduced to children at the early age (Matondang, 2005). Even, public interest in English for Young Learners (EYL) has become enhanced (Musthafa, 2010) as there is a widely-held belief that younger second language learners do better than older learners supported by a theory of acquiring language called Critical Period Hypothesis (Ellis, 1996). This theory says that language could be acquired starting from roughly early infancy to puberty (Johnson & Newport, 1989). It means that according to Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1978: 1114), “One prediction of this hypothesis is that second language acquisition will be relatively fast, successful, and qualitatively similar to first language only if it occurs before the age of puberty.” It is clarified by Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow (2000: 9), that “children are generally considered capable of acquiring a new language rapidly and with little effort, whereas adults are believed to be doomed to failure.” Birdsong (1999) also highlights that one real advantage of having children start learning English at an early age is that they are better equipped to develop English language acquisition. As a matter of fact, it can be inferred that it would be advantageous for language learners to start studying English within a critical period - before 12 or 13 years

old - so that they can enjoy the developmental benefits of that period (Shin, 2006). Besides, Baker (2008), as cited in Fatmawati (2011), argues that in the present days, English is regarded as an important and prestigious language that many people in a particular domain may be exposed to it.

The process of teaching and learning English in elementary school, however, does not always run well (Yauri, 2007; Suyanto, 2004) as in this level it is relatively new in Indonesia, unlike in Malaysia, Philippines, etc. (Edisonyusman, 2011). Besides, teacher competency is as one of the obstacles (Yauri, 2007; Suyanto, 2004). The teachers mostly are not English teachers, but class teachers, and not all of them learn English as a major subject (Yauri, 2007; Suyanto, 2004; Edisonyusman, 2011). Consequently, they are not skillful in teaching English (Samudra, Kuswardono, & Idayanie, 1999). They are not supplied the concept of young learner psychology and theory of teaching and learning foreign language for young learner (Suyanto, 2004). They are professionally regarded not ready to teach English (Alwasilah, 2000: 80-81, as cited in Yauri, 2007). Edisonyusman (2011: 1) claims that “limited knowledge about the content of the teaching, in this case English, will mislead the students.” In other words, teachers should master English and language learning to be able to evaluate the accuracy of method, material and approach to help their students be successful (Suyanto, 2004) as well as create a classroom communicative context within which the students are motivated to share their ideas, feelings, perceptions and meaningful experiences (Liebling, 1984).

Substantially, according to Curtain and Pesola (1994), as cited in Suyanto (2004), children will learn foreign language well if the learning process is in the communicative context and conducive to them. In their opinion for children this context covers social and cultural situation, game, song, story, art experiences, handicraft and sport.

Teaching English to young learners or students of Elementary school, according to Shin (2006), is different from teaching adults as they especially have fun with movement and physical participation. He adds that the more fun the students have, the better they will remember the language learned. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990: 2) emphasize, “Children’s understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears, and the physical world is dominant at all times.”

So far, however, English teachers have been experiencing difficulty in teaching children since the method used is less appropriate (Widodo, 2005; Samudra, Kuswardono, & Idayanie, 1999). Related to this issue, the researcher has met an English teacher in one Islamic elementary school in Cibiru Bandung. The teacher admits that it is difficult to teach English especially for the first graders because of many reasons. One of the reasons is the students still learn reading and writing Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian). Meanwhile, the way to read and write English is different from the way to read and write Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian). Besides, the students love making disturbance and it is not easy to keep them quiet and concentrating for long. Hence, the researcher endeavored to find out the effective method to teach them English and she tried Total Physical Response (TPR) as an alternative one. She was interested in investigating whether

using TPR method was effective in teaching English, especially English vocabulary to children. She assumed it would improve their English vocabulary mastery and this method was enjoyable and engaging as there are many positive research findings related to using this method in teaching English to children. Some of them are: TPR method was found to be effective to improve English preposition mastery of the fifth grader in one elementary school in Semarang (Nugrahaningsih, 2007); TPR method enhanced students' motivation and interests of elementary school in Taiwan in learning English (Hsu and Lin, 2012); TPR seemed to have been helpful to find a more economical way of helping students in one Japanese junior high school to learn English script, and to find more time when they were engaged in language activities touching on their personal experiences (Sano, 1986); TPR was a successful classroom management tool that teachers could easily implement at any stage of their lessons, or once they faced a management problem and it could be used in other grade levels as children in an elementary school in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, in general were active and they had fun in the English classroom (Sakhaweti, 2004). In addition, many researches show TPR method is also suitable for teaching other languages and many teachers use it alongside other tools. Cook (2001) suggests that teachers use TPR method as she reveals that teaching English through action (also in Spanish, French, German, Japanese, or Russian) has been highly successful with Beginning and Early Intermediate students/learners. She adds that 102 TPR lesson plans are widely used by both elementary and secondary teachers across the United States, and in 18 other countries. In her opinion, TPR is a suitable method to be used,

even if the beginner is enrolled in a traditional course. Moreover, Adam (2011) conducts his study about TPR in Latin class that seems to propose that TPR is one possible way of creating enthusiasm for languages. Furthermore, Glisan (1996, n.p.) reports his study dealing with TPR in Spanish class that “use of Asher's Total Physical Response strategy, through which students internalize meaning initially by physically responding to oral commands, results in better listening comprehension, speaking, and reading performance.” Besides, Mastromarco (n. d.: 5) reveals that “today, although TPR is still under-adopted in Europe, there is much literature on the topic and many university students choose to write their final paper on it.” He states that most importantly, more and more teachers decided to use TPR alongside other tools.

On one hand, using TPR method in teaching English to children is a lot of fun and enjoyable, does not demand many preparation or materials, is very effective for teenagers and young learners, is appropriate for kinesthetic learners to be active in the class, is memorable for students to remember phrases and words well, and works properly with mixed-ability classes (Sophaktra, 2009). Moreover, according to Maroto, Garrido & Fuentes (n.d.), it makes students obtain good pronunciation and memorize learnt things for long. On the other hand, Sophaktra (2009) mentions that there are cons of using this method such as: it makes students less creative to express their own thoughts, overuses the imperative form, can be ineffective to be used for long period of time, will be trouble to teach abstract vocabulary or expression, and causes boredom when teachers use the same style. Besides, teachers dislike it as it usually does not

happen in a desirable way and students are not aware they are in learning process (Maroto, Garrido & Fuentes, n.d.).

Meanwhile, vocabulary taught with the use of other methods, such as the grammar-translation method and FAIES (first aid in learning English) method studied by Renatha (2009), showed that: In FAIES (first aid in learning English) method, when the students asked about a vocabulary, the teacher was not able to give the meaning directly. They could not ask whole difficult words but only few words; In Grammar translation method, on the other hand, the teacher was able to give the meaning of the vocabulary directly and the students could also ask entire word which they did not understand. However, Yulianto (2009: 3) argues that in Elementary School 1 Ngadirojo, the researcher discovered that the teacher still employs GTM as teaching method and this causes the students feel bored because the teaching procedure is very monotonous. In addition, some other different methods (direct approach, and suggestopedia method) used for teaching vocabulary as Pribilova (2006) states, in direct approach, there are no translations. He states the mother tongue is never used, only target language is used in the classrooms and only complete sentences are used and culture is regarded as an important aspect. Meanwhile, he mentions that suggestopedia method is a very significant method in assisting learners to memorize words and stimulates the learner's brain by music while learning but nowadays this method seems to be left.

In this case, this does not mean that other approaches, methods, or tools are without value (Asher, 2000). However, the researcher believes the TPR

method is the most suitable one to be applied to teach vocabulary to young learners as this method offers them enjoyable and active roles in the learning experience as one of the principles and best practices for teaching English to elementary learners (McCloskey, 2003). Therefore, the researcher was curious to prove it by doing this research.

Those all above are also the reasons that this study concerned with teaching English vocabulary to the first graders of elementary school using TPR method to know the effectiveness of TPR method in improving English vocabulary mastery of elementary school children.

1.2. The Purposes of the Study

The study is intended:

1. to investigate whether the use of TPR method is effective in improving English vocabulary mastery of elementary school children.
2. to investigate how the students respond to teaching English vocabulary using TPR method.

1.3. Research Questions

In compliance with the aforementioned purposes, this research will strive to address the following questions below:

1. Is TPR method effective in improving English vocabulary mastery of elementary school children?
2. How do the students respond to teaching English vocabulary using TPR method?

1.4. Scope of the Problem

This research only focused on investigating the effectiveness of TPR method in improving English vocabulary mastery of elementary school children in the first grade and their response to teaching English vocabulary using TPR method.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

This research will give some contributions as follows:

- It attempts to reduce the stress students feel at studying foreign language. This method also can motivate and make students ease to learn English.
- The teachers can use TPR method to enrich their teaching method so that they have a variety of methods to be applied in teaching English.

1.6. Research Method

This study used embedded mixed method, combining quantitative and qualitative methods (priority to the major form of quantitative data collection, and secondary status to the supportive form of qualitative data collection as additional to the primary form).

To find out the answer for the first research question, a quasi-experimental design was used, involving two groups (control and experiment) and employing pretest and posttest. Besides, to answer the second research question, qualitative research approach was employed conducting observation by field notes.

1.7. Clarification of Terms

In order to make the terms stated in this research be clearly interpreted, the researcher would like to clarify and specify each terms as follows:

- Effectiveness means the effect or result of TPR method in improving English vocabulary mastery of elementary school children which will be measured by independent t-test formula.
- Total Physical Response is as a language teaching method used as treatment to teach English vocabulary in experiment class.
- Vocabulary in this research refers to single word vocabulary items about numbers (1 up to 10), colors (red, yellow, green, blue, brown, black, purple, orange, pink and white), things in the classroom (chair, table, window, door, whiteboard, clock, broom, lamp and dustbin), animals (bird, cat, dog, monkey, rabbit, cow, fish, snake and horse). and fruits (apple, orange, grape, strawberry, tomato, avocado, banana, melon and watermelon).
- Elementary school children refers to the first graders of one Islamic elementary school in Cibiru Bandung
- Students' response refers to verbal and physical response of the students.

1.8. Research Paper Organization

The organization of the research paper consists of five chapters below is to present the readers the content of the paper.

Chapter I is introduction. It presents the background of the study that shows the enhancement of English education at elementary schools, and how this English education requires good teachers to teach with appropriate method. This chapter also consists of the purposes of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, research method, scope of the research, clarification of terms and research paper organization.

Chapter II is literature review. It deals with teaching method, total physical response (TPR), teaching English vocabulary, teaching English to children, teaching English to the first grade of elementary school, and related research findings.

Chapter III is research method. In this chapter, research method is briefly outlined for this study including research design, variable and hypothesis. This chapter also consists of population and sample, data collection, evaluating test instrument (instrument validity and instrument reliability with discrimination and difficulty index), data analysis (analyzing data on test score, pre-test, post-test, and from observation), treatment implementation and research procedure.

Chapter IV is findings and discussion. This chapter presents the findings of the research and further discussion about that. These findings were obtained from statistical computation using SPSS 15 for windows to know whether TPR method is effective in English vocabulary mastery of elementary school children. In addition, the findings were also obtained from observation using field notes to know how the students respond to teaching English vocabulary using TPR method.

Chapter V presents conclusion and suggestion. The researcher draws the conclusion taken from the result of the research about the effectiveness of Total Physical Response (TPR) method in improving vocabulary mastery of elementary school children, and proposes the suggestions for English teachers and for further research.

