CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of this study. It covers the background of the present study, statement of the problem and aims of the study. In addition, this chapter provides a scope of study and brief account of the research method, significance of the study and the organization of paper.

1.1   Background

It is generally believed that in learning a foreign language, vocabulary plays an important role for young learners. It is one element that links the four skills of language (Nguyen and Khuat, 2003), including the reading skill. In a similar vein, knowing adequate number of words facilitate children to speak, read and write with confidently and effectively. Moreover, Juel (1989) determines that children, who begin to experiment with reading, need to focus on the vocabulary (Morrow and Dougherty, 2006). Research has indicated that rich vocabulary instruction can significantly enhance primary school students' reading comprehension (Adams, 1990; Morgan and Davis, 1992; Carlson and Foorman, 2004). Therefore, building children's vocabulary is extremely important.

Although vocabulary plays a central role in school-age children, most of primary schools still overrule the ways of vocabulary teaching. Zimmerman (1997)

points out that the teaching and learning of vocabulary has been undervalued in common of primary schools (He Ran, 2010). Consequently, the neglect of vocabulary instruction leads to the faulty assumption that the only way for students to learn vocabulary words is through conventional method. The conventional method of teaching and learning usually requires the students to highlight the words with lists, definition, written and oral drills (Brown, 2000). Moreover, conventional methods of teaching vocabulary may treat the students as passive learners and give them less opportunity to memorize. Therefore, vocabulary learning is seemed as boring and hard to engage in such a rote learning of vocabulary activities.

However, without sufficient vocabulary, students cannot communicate effectively. Having limited vocabulary is also a barrier that prevents children from learning four skills of language, including reading. Research has indicated that vocabulary mastery consistently predicts children's later reading comprehension (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997; Porche, Tabors and Harris, 2007 cited in Silverman and Crandell (2010)). Thus, finding ways to encourage the vocabulary mastery of young learners appears to be important (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, [NICHD] 2000 cited in Silverman and Crandell, 2010). In order to solve this problem, vocabulary activities which take children's characteristics into consideration are needed.

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By nature, games are fun and children love to play them. Playing games is a crucial part of growing and learning to children (Lewis and Bedson, 1999). Through games, children experiment, discover and interact with their peers. Thus, it is important to incorporate games in the EFL classroom.

The role of games in the teaching and learning vocabulary to young learners is undeniable. It has been shown in any research of teaching and learning vocabulary. Games will contribute to vocabulary learning if they give students a chance to learn and practice the English language in a pleasant atmosphere (Rivers, 1998 cited in Fellani, 2005). Regarding the vocabulary teaching, games can become one of techniques in teaching English.

It has been stated as well by many researchers that games can improve students' vocabulary mastery. Games are not only motivating but also providing excellent practice for improving vocabulary (Ellis, Brewster 2002; Oblinger 2004). They provide social and linguistic development since through repeated play students share and develop vocabularies (Hildebrandt, 1998). Recent study conducted by Huyen and Nga (2003) proved that 18 from 20 students claimed that they can retain the vocabulary longer in their mind through vocabulary hangman games. Moreover, Scrabble as one of the vocabulary board games gives children a chance to play with letters and develops their interest in words (Hastutik, 2009; Ella, 2010).

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One type of vocabulary games is Snake Path Game. Snake Path Game is a board game contains letters or words and pictorial cards. Besides, It is popular in language study because teachers think it provides motivation for low-achieving students (Peters, 1998) cited in Niecikowski (2005). As a vehicle for teaching English, snake path can stimulate learning through competition and creativity (Caldwell, 1998 cited in Niecikowski, 2005).

Based on the consideration above, this study will be focused on the use of Snake Path Game in teaching English vocabulary. It will investigate whether or not the use of Snake Path Game effective in teaching vocabulary. Moreover, this study will also explore the students' responses toward the use of Snake Path Game in enhancing students' English vocabulary.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

a.   Is the use of Snake Path Game effective in teaching vocabulary to young learners?

b.   What are students' responses toward the use of Snake Path Game in teaching vocabulary?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

In accordance with the research questions above, this study aims to :

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a.   Investigate whether or not the use of Snake Path Game effective in teaching vocabulary.

b.   Find out students' responses toward the use of Snake Path Game in teaching vocabulary.

1.4   Scope of the Study

It is known that vocabulary links the four integrated skills and the game makes into part of syllabus. Therefore, the study focused on teaching vocabulary in one of the skills which is the reading skill. In this study, vocabulary is limited to the theme-based teaching. In addition, the researcher attempts to find out students' responses toward the use of Snake Path Game. It was conducted in an elementary school in Bandung, West Java.

1.5   Significance of Study

This study is expected to provide theoretical, practical and professional benefits.

1. *Theoretical benefits*

   The results of the study are expected to enrich the theories and games in teaching vocabulary, particularly for primary school students.

2. *Practical benefits*

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Practically, this study presents a real picture on how Snake Path Game is used in classroom. This study expected beneficially useful for student in helping and motivating students to improve their mastery on English vocabulary. Also, the result will be beneficially useful for the improvement of teaching method of English for young learners programs, and also for the readers who are interested in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

3. *Professional benefits*

In professional perspective, the result of this study provides educators and school information on how Snake Path Game is used in the class. Therefore, it is expected that Snake Path Game can be used as one of alternatives in teaching vocabulary. Teacher can use it for their teaching and learning process in the class.

1.6   Research Methodology

This research is a quantitative research. It was conducted by using quasi experimental as the research design. The quasi-experimental design was used because the purpose of the research is to test the effects of Snake Path Game on students' vocabulary mastery. The participants involved in this study were 70 students which were divided into two classes, one class as experimental group and the other as control group.
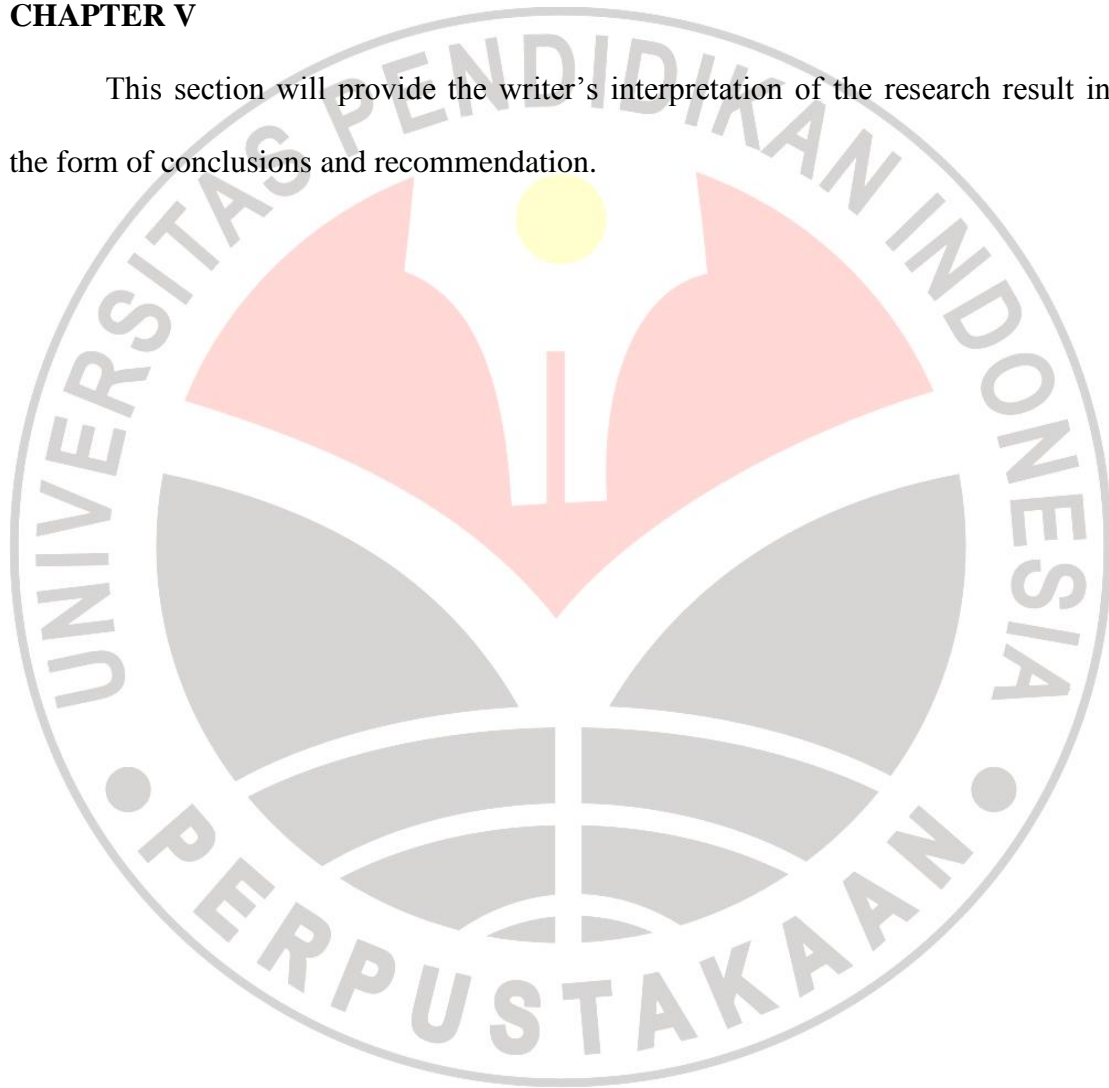
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The data collected on this study were based on the scores obtained from pre-test and post-test, the questionnaire filled by the participants, and the interview conducted. The data gathered through pre-test and post-test were computed one by one using t-test. While data from questionnaire and interview were analyzed based on the frequency of students' answers and then were calculated, interpreted into percentage and categorized the data into selected categorize.

1.7   Organization of the Paper

The chapter will be presented into five chapters:

CHAPTER I

Chapter one is introduction consisting of the background of the present study, statement of the problem, aims of the study, significance of study, a brief of research method, and organization of paper.

CHAPTER II

This chapter will present the theoretical framework. It contains all of the theories that related to vocabulary and Snake Path Game.

CHAPTER III

This chapter will present the research methodology that discuss the design used, the steps, and the procedures of the research, and the instrument of the research.

CHAPTER IV

This chapter will present the research result, whether the use of Snake Path Game is effective in students' English vocabulary or not. It also will explain students' responses toward the use of snake path in teaching vocabulary.

CHAPTER V

This section will provide the writer's interpretation of the research result in the form of conclusions and recommendation.