

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The fast growing shipping industry increases the need of the numbers of seafarers. One of the qualifications to be a qualified seafarer is having capability in language. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has officially promoted English as the language of the sea in the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW 78/95 Convention and Code). It means seafarers especially those who work in multinational working environment are expected to master the language, that is Maritime English (ME), which is the language used on board (seaspeak). Many researches also indicate that most accidents at sea related to human error is because of communication problems, including the language problems used in communication. Many accidents are found to be due mainly to operational issues of improper procedure, maintenance and instruction which deal with the effectiveness of management resources in communication, rather than to improper implementation of regulations. And this effective communication can happen orally and/or in written.

Since the seafarers' language skill influences the safety of life, cargo handling, pollution prevention, operation of ship at sea, etc, they are expected to be proficient in understanding and using ME appropriately. To be able to master ME, the seafarers especially those who are working for the Deck Department should encounter a large amount of subject-specific core vocabulary. In cases

when maritime vocabulary is understood literally, the receiver may misinterpret the message and this may lead to breakdown in communication and/or endanger safety of the crew members and/or cargo. Many words and terminology in ME such as *list* – inclination of the vessel, *port* – left, *starboard* – right, *bow* – the foremost part of ship, *hold* – part of ship to stow cargo, etc also contain different terms and concepts. Some other maritime words and phrases such as *hatch cover*, *forecastle*, *hull*, *bollard*, and *quarter master* are unlikely to be used in any other spheres but maritime industry. Whereas those vocabularies are being a typical example of ESP-texts; Maritime English texts include a wide range of specialised vocabularies in which the seafarers should be able to differ and know their actual meanings. So that, one of the important skills that the seafarers need here is the ability to read comprehensively the information text, including the Maritime English texts. But many seafarers still encounter difficulty on comprehending such texts. Students and instructors' report showed that the student officers had difficulty with their comprehension such as understanding written instructions on everyday shipboard activities.

The knowledge to solve any reading comprehension of maritime English texts here demands the decoding of linguistic signals which is called *linguistic schemata* (Ostrowska and Ryan, 2009) which includes the learner's knowledge of vocabulary. To comprehend the larger units of text such as paragraph and stories, the seafarers should understand first the smaller word units, called vocabulary. In ME the vocabulary types can be divided into *core vocabulary type*, *semi-technical vocabulary type*, and *maritime and/or technical vocabulary type*. The seafarers

should know all the types of vocabulary because the knowledge of these vocabulary types may have great influence to the seafarers' comprehension to the texts and to use the language appropriately. In fact, most of seafarers have different ability in comprehending maritime English texts because of their different mastery on Maritime vocabulary types. Few of them had mastered the technical vocabulary type, some had mastered semi-technical vocabulary type, and some others only mastered the core vocabulary type. Moreover, many seafarers had not mastered the three types of vocabulary yet.

Most theorists and researchers in education have assumed that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are closely related. Nation (1983) states that vocabulary knowledge can be used as an important indicator to predict learners' overall readability, the result of which may reveal that the increase of lexical familiarity (vocabulary mastery) could improve one's reading performance. It can be said that weak vocabulary knowledge may handicap one's reading comprehension. That statement is supported by Hancock (1998, p. 69), who believes that in reading, "Comprehension involves understanding the vocabulary, seeing relationships among words and concepts, organizing ideas, recognizing the author's purpose, evaluating the context, and making judgments." In other word, the knowledge of vocabulary plays the essential role in reading. When seafarers posses the knowledge of vocabulary, they may be more aware of the register of the word (e.g. being able to differentiating the general English words from the Maritime one). Also, it can be concluded that the seafarers with large vocabularies are more proficient than those with limited vocabularies.

All the statements above show that when a reader has large vocabulary knowledge, he may master the vocabulary which will affect on his reading comprehension, so that for the seafarers. This is in line with Grabe and Stoller's statement that vocabulary knowledge is very essential in reading comprehension (Grabe and Stoller, 2011). They also stressed that students need to recognize a large number of words automatically to become fluent readers and advise teachers to explicitly teach the key words of the text to be read in class to help students better understand the texts they read. A study by Qian (1998) investigated the relationship between different aspects of second language (L2) vocabulary knowledge and academic reading comprehension. Specifically the study assessed the role of breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge in the comprehension of general academic texts in English. From the study, it was found that the depth of vocabulary knowledge by a group of adult Chinese and Korean speakers in two academic ESL programs in Southern Ontario could determine their reading ability in comprehending texts.

When a person wants to comprehend reading, s/he should have vocabulary mastery which means s/he has a large amount of knowledge of vocabulary. A recent study by Ratnawati (2006) showed that the coefficient correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension is 0.417. It means that there is a significant correlation between the vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. She also suggested that to have a good mastery of reading comprehension, a learner should have a good mastery of vocabulary. In this sense, the researcher believes that when seafarers are able to master all types of maritime

vocabulary well, they will have a great possibility to comprehend reading of maritime English texts well. But how does the vocabulary mastery affect the seafarers on comprehending maritime English texts? This question lead the researcher to conduct a study entitled “The Effects of Seafarers’ Vocabulary Mastery on Comprehending Maritime English Texts: A Case Study of Seafarers of Nautical Class”.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

In connection with the title and the background of this study, two research questions are raised as follows:

1. What types of maritime vocabulary have the seafarers mastered?
2. How does the vocabulary type mastery affect the seafarers in comprehending maritime English texts?
3. How is the seafarers’ comprehension on the maritime English texts?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Derived directly from the above mentioned problems, the objective of this study is to know the types of maritime vocabulary that the seafarers have mastered, how the vocabulary type mastery affects the seafarers in comprehending Maritime English texts and the seafarers’ comprehension on the maritime English texts.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the vocabulary mastery effects of seafarers on comprehending maritime English texts in which the result is expected

to give clear picture that vocabulary mastery is the fundamental component on comprehending texts, especially maritime English texts. The vocabulary mastery is expected to be able to predict seafarers' understanding during the process of comprehending maritime English texts.

Based on the above purposes, the finding of this study is expected to give contribution to the teaching learning process of seafarers in learning vocabulary and reading Maritime English texts. For the learning process, the finding is expected to be able to become motivation for the learners in studying maritime vocabulary and comprehending texts in ME by knowing the factors that influence success or failure in comprehending ME. For the teaching process, the finding is expected to give contribution for the teachers in developing insights of how students use vocabulary to comprehend the texts by having better understanding of some difficulties that seafarers might encounter during the process of vocabulary use. Finally, the finding of this study is expected to give contribution to the further study.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This research is conducted on the basis of the theory of vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, reading strategy and schemata theory. Vocabulary becomes the most important aspect in acquiring a language and mastering the second language because it appears in every language skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing. Mastering vocabulary is very essential for learners who learn English as foreign language. A person is said to know a word if s/he recognizes and understands the meaning and knows how to use it in a

sentence context. If a person could master the related vocabulary, s/he will not probably experience difficulty in comprehending the message or information in texts. Grabe and Stoller (2011) emphasized that a person needs to recognize a large number of words automatically to become fluent readers in reading comprehension. While Nation said that in order to be successful in academic studies, it is necessary to be familiar not only with the high frequency words of English but also with the general academic vocabulary that is common to many academic disciplines (1993: p. 120).

If the reader is familiar with all the words in the text, s/he would be able to easily comprehend the text, on the other hand, if the reader does not know or has incomplete word meanings, s/he would be greatly difficult to comprehend a text. Nuttal stated that reading is activity to get the message what the writer intended; it is a transfer of meaning from the writer's mind to the reader's mind (2005, p. 3). Because reading comprehension is the process in which readers read a text and they try to understand what they read, so to comprehend a text, they should have vocabulary mastery, meaning they must have a large amount of prior knowledge of vocabulary. Since comprehending such texts is a complex process, various aspects of reading processes such as on cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics and development psychology are needed. Different readers may use different strategy to comprehend any texts.

Also, the schemata theory shows that prior knowledge will determine how the reader interprets the task to be learned, how s/he understands the information, and what knowledge s/he acquires. Schemata allows for the organization of

information in long-term memory (Widdowson, 1983 in Ajideh, 2006). Cook (1989, p. 69) in Ajideh (2006) stated, "The mind, stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context, activates a knowledge schema". So, the schemata covers the knowledge of the world, from general knowledge to very specific knowledge, knowledge of language structures, and knowledge of texts and forms they take in terms of genre, and organization. Lack of relevant prior knowledge may cause failure to link new information with existing information that could make.

1.6 The Scope and Limitation

This is a causal effect study within a delimited group of subjects which is chosen randomly among five classes of the same level in Merchant Marine Academy. The study itself is delimited to focus on the seafarers' vocabulary mastery types, the process of comprehending maritime English texts and the effects of seafarers' vocabulary mastery in their reading comprehension of maritime English texts.

Therefore, based on the purpose of the study, this study focuses only on the finding of the type of vocabulary that have been mastered by seafarers, the process of reading on comprehending maritime English texts – focusing on the strategy that seafarers chose and the vocabulary mastery effects. This study also limits the finding which is found on the seafarers (Pasis level V of merchant marine academy in the age range from 20 to 40 years old) who major in Nautical class. The vocabulary and texts discussed also limits only in *Maritime English for*

Deck Officers. Another factor that may influence the seafarers' reading comprehension is ignored.

1.7 The Definition of Key Term

To avoid misunderstanding, some key-terms are defined as follow:

1. *Maritime Texts*: a part of Maritime English which is also recognized as SEASPEAK (Tesol Journal, 2009, vol. 3) and the typical examples of ESP texts which consist of different types of vocabulary items.
2. *Maritime Vocabulary*: the words of language which have meaning and function that influence the language in particular linguistic and situational context especially relates with maritime world (Standard Marine Navigational Vocabulary, 1985).
3. *Vocabulary mastery*: a large amount of vocabulary knowledge which relates to word meaning, form and use that a person possesses and s/he knows how to maintain and apply it in certain context and situation.
4. *Seafarers*: people who work on board as ship's crew; in this study the seafarers are called *Pasis* (stands for *Perwira Siswa or Student Officer*) who have sailing experience for at least 2 years and continue their study to upgrade their education.
5. *Deck Officers*: seafarers who work on board at the Deck Department and who are responsible for navigational system and equipments.
6. *Reading comprehension process*: It is an activity to get the message what the writer intended (Nuttal, 2005, p. 3); more elaborately, it is a process in which the readers read the texts and understand the content of what they have read, as

proved by the ability to find out the topic, main ideas, supporting details, the author's purpose and conclusion.