CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

English is an important language to be learned because through English, one is able to increase his knowledge of science such as education, culture, technology and other developments. Since English is the most important language, many people learn and English is one of the compulsory subject at school.

There are four skills to be acquired in learning a language. The four skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In learning a language, a student is expected to have the abilities of speaking, reading and writing in the language he is learning. Actually the language skills cannot be separated from each other, one has relationship among the others.

Learning English cannot be separated from learning its vocabulary. Without enough vocabulary, one cannot understand what other people say (listening skill) he cannot understand the reading material, written in English (reading skill), he cannot express his idea well orally (speaking skill) and in written form (writing skill). For this reason, Richards and Theodore(1986:32)

say "Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning". From this statement, it is clear that vocabulary enrichment should be provided at alls level of English learning since the goal of English language teaching in the senior high school is the reading skill.

Barker (1974:47) states: "Your ability to comprehend and critically evaluate what you read depends on your knowing the meaning of large number of the words you see in print". While Pet (1982:17) points out that, "It has often said that one foreign language skill that students retain throughout their live is reading," and to be able to read and understand the reading passage, the students have to know the meaning of difficult words. The meaning of words depend on how words are used together in contexts or sentences. If one knows the meaning of the words, he will be able to have a clear notion of what the content is about. In other words beside mastering structural pattern vocabulary is the important part in comprehending a passage or the key of success in learning to read.

Finocchiaro says: "Words become meaningful only when studied and considered in context, that is with all the other words which are around them and which help give

their meaning" (1974:80). It means that students will easily understand vocabularies if vocabularies are not in isolation but in context. Through a context, students will learn to begin incorporate vocabularies into their own vocabularies, so that it will be better if first of all the teacher does not give the meaning of vocabulary directly to them. The students should be given chances to be able to guess or predict the meanings of the word from the meaning of the surrounding words. If words are given with their synonyms to be memorized, after one week or more, many of the memorized words will disappear easily.

In a real life, many students who have reading passages, have difficulties in understanding what they have read. On the other hand, increase in vocabulary mastery can only take place when students read a lot of reading. The more they read, the more words they will add to their vocabulary stock and the more words they know, the more successful they will be in their reading activities. Therefore, it is necessary to develop the students' vocabulary through the teaching of reading comprehension.

Interested in finding out how far the students' reading comprehension achievement has a relationship with their vocabulary, the writer decides to make a study entitled "Correlation between the mastery of vocabularies

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The writer formulates the problem of the study as follows: "Is there a relationship between the students' mastery of vocabularies and their reading comprehension achievement?"

1.3 Objective of the Study

In line with the problem stated above this study is intended to find out whether there is a correlation between the students' mastery of vocabularies and their reading comprehension achievement.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The data and information obtained from this proposed study are expected to give somewhat clear picture about:

1. Making the English teachers aware that they prepare a planning of teaching vocabulary material in teaching English.

2. The result of the research in this field can be used as a reference for researches in other fields which are relevant with this field.

1.5 Hypothesis

There are two hypothesis for this study. One is the null hypothesis and the other is the alternative hypothesis.

In this study, the null hypothesis is "There is no relationship between the students' mastery of vocabularies and their reading comprehension achievement".

Since alternative hypothesis is the prediction that the writer made before the data is collected and it is opposite of the null hypothesis, the statement of the alternative hypothesis for this study is "There is a relationship between the students' mastery of vocabularies and their reading comprehension achievement."

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Being aware of how abroad the topic of this study will be and limited the time given to finish it, the writer finds it necessary to limit the scope of the study.

This study is limited only the students of senior high school who are having the English subject. The choice is second year students of 1996-1997 academic

year. The writer only analyzes the relationship between the mastery of vocabularies and reading comprehension achievement.

1.7 Assumptions

In order to answer the questions on the statement of the problem, the writer tries to draw the following assumptions :

1. The second year students of Senior High School in Stella Maris are expected to have more or less the same mastery of vocabularies since they have been taught with the same materials and the same teaching learning hours. Vocabulary, in the case, is taken into consideration since this study is about a correlation between the mastery of vocabularies and the reading comprehension achievement and the vocabulary is closely related with reading comprehension.

2. The objective of studying English for the students is to gain information from reading English text books.

3. The test instruments of vocabulary and reading are considered valid and reliable.

4. Reading is one the subject outline in SMU's curriculum.

1.8 Definition of the Key Terms

Before coming to the core of this study it is necessary for the writer to explain the key terms used in this study :

1.8.1 Correlation is a measure of relationship between two variables (Downie and Health 1974:82).

1.8.2 Mastery of vocabularies means the extent to which knowledge of vocabularies owned by the students are used to improve the students' comprehension in reading English textbook.

1.8.3 Reading comprehension achievement is the extent to which an individual has mastered the reading skills. The students' mastery of reading comprehension is shown by the result of reading comprehension tests.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of vocabulary and reading. Richards and Theodore (1986:32) said "Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning". Because words are tools to

express the learner thought or idea, he would not be able to think adequately in the language if he has not adequate vocabulary. Dale (1971:6) states that "Consolidation of vocabulary skill is an important part of reading." Baker (1974:47) supports Dale statement by saying that "Your ability to comprehend and critically evaluate what you read depend on your knowing the meaning of a large number of the words you see in print."

Nutall (1982:4,9-10) asserts that reading is an active interactive process of getting the writer´s message but of the text. To understand a text, a reader should have the background knowledge about the meaning of words, sentences and the content (Choon and Richardson, 1990:26). Manurung (1987:1-7) describes that the students should have a complete understanding of the text covering every meaning of words, phrases, and structural.

1.10 The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I, the introduction, is about the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objective and significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study hypothesis, assumptions, definition of the key terms, theoretical framework and the organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents review

of related literature. It is divided into three sub-topics: the importance of vocabulary, what is reading and the relationship between the vocabulary and reading comprehension. Chapter III presents the research methodology which comprises the research design, subject of the study, instrument, procedures of collecting data and procedures of the data analyses. The findings and their discussions are presented in chapter IV. Chapter V presents the conclusion and suggestions of the study.