

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Study**

Vocabulary is one of the most important components of English. It is considered as the most important one for students in learning English as a foreign language. Because of their limited vocabulary, they cannot communicate their ideas transmitted to them (Kufaishi, 1988). Vocabulary mastery must be acquired by students in order to get other competencies like listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In other words, vocabulary mastery takes an important role in mastering the four basic skills of English.

In relation to the teaching-learning of the four skills of English, vocabulary is an inseparable part of any language learning, for example: in reading. It would be impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. It should be presented, explained, included in all kinds of language learning activities and must be learnt by students. Vocabulary mastery would be very helpful for the students in learning English, especially in reading skill.

Reading is one of the most important skills to master by students as foreign language learners. The students read

when they need some information or to entertain themselves. Most of current information has been found through electronic or printed media, such as: internet, books, journals, articles, newspapers and etc. It means the students should read from many kinds of sources to get more information in every field of study.

The process of reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery learning activities in the classroom depends much on the printed materials such as textbooks, magazines, newspaper, articles, and etc. It means that the students should have good ability in reading in order to comprehend what they read. To comprehend the content of the text or passage they should have good vocabulary mastery. That's why reading comprehension skill and vocabulary mastery is often connected one to another.

In addition, as stated in the School-Based Curriculum of junior high school of 2006, reading becomes one of the skills tested in the final exam. This shows that reading should be given more emphasis than the other skills and has to be taught well by teachers. Because of this, the students must be able to comprehend the text early on their education stage.

However, teaching-learning reading and vocabulary mastery at the school are still a problem for both students and teachers. One of the existing problems in the vocabulary

mastery is the number of new/unknown words appearing in textbooks or other supporting obstacles in reading comprehension. Those words still becomes one of the significant obstacles in reading comprehension skill and vocabulary mastery especially, probably due to the insufficient vocabulary knowledge of the students as foreign language learners of English. When the researcher had the students read and understand the content of a text, most of them said that the text was difficult to comprehend since there were many unknown words found in the passage. They could not understand the new words appearing in sentences or passage. They did not try to think of how to understand the meanings of the words and started to make noises by asking one another. They even did not want to answer questions related to the passage. Whenever the students were asked to understand the unknown words found in sentences or text, they always looked up the words in their dictionaries, got help from friends, and or asked teachers.

Through direct observation done by the researcher, it was found out that most of teachers there taught language components, especially vocabulary, using improper methods or techniques of teaching vocabulary. They just frequently follow up the instruction in the students sheets, such as; giving the

students explanations about the components they taught, then giving them some examples, after that, asking them to do the tasks in the worksheets. For example; some English teachers tended to apply translation method during the learning process. They asked the students to translate the reading passage from English into Indonesian. And then the teachers discussed the results of the students' translation with the whole class. These activities made the students feel bored and less challenged in learning English. Consequently, their vocabulary mastery was low. Such situation often made the students feel bored so that they were not interested in learning English.

As a matter of fact, most students, especially, the second graders students of SMPN 1 Labang found it difficult to guess the meanings of new words. The students felt difficult to understand the meanings of the unknown words appearing in sentences or text. When the teacher had the students guess the meanings of the underlined words of two sentences; there is a book on the table, and my father has booked a room in the hotel. They looked confused and did not know the appropriate meaning of those words. All of them said that the meaning of the word is *buku*. These all that caused the students' vocabulary achievement was very low. It was below the minimum passing grade of the school (70).

In relation to the teaching-learning reading skill and vocabulary mastery, teachers should motivate their students to study English texts by using appropriate strategy or technique in order to make them are able to comprehend what they read in the target language. The appropriate strategy or technique in teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery especially should be implemented by teachers in teaching-learning process because applying good strategies and technique in the classroom activities can improve their vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension skill at once.

There are many strategies or techniques that can be applied by both teachers and students in the teaching-learning vocabulary integrate with reading skill. One of them is Contextual Clues Technique (CCT). It is a good strategy or technique used by students to find the meanings of new words in sentences or passage by relating them to their contexts; the context here can be a word, a phrase, or the whole sentences of the contexts that come before or after the new word. This technique can improve the students' vocabulary mastery that is always used or integrated with reading passage, with the result that the readers know that the meanings of the words without depending on the teacher's translation. This technique is often applied in the form of the textbooks or reading skill because it

needs some clues to help the students or readers in guessing the new/unknown words by relating them to their contexts.

Understanding the context of the text can help the students to improve their reading skill as well their vocabulary mastery, whereas it can make them easier to find out contains, messages and details information. The context can be identified through some clues words such as: synonyms, antonyms, definitions, restatements, explanations, and etc. Based on the clue words, the students can identify the context directly. And then, when they understand the context, they can guess the meanings of the unknown words and hopefully can catch the ideas, news, message or information from the text.

The teaching of vocabulary integrated with reading skill is not a simple matter, it involves far more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in sentence. Instruction in vocabulary should be integrated with reading skill. Vocabulary should be acquired by students incidentally through indirect exposure to words and intentionally through explicit instruction in a specific words and word-learning strategies.

Based on the explanation above and also the strong desire to solve the problems faced by the second graders students of SMPN I Labang Bangkalan of the academic year

2013/2014, this present study is aimed at improving the students' achievement on vocabulary through Contextual Clues Technique (CCT) in three cycles of treatments. In this study, the researcher taught vocabulary integrated with reading comprehension skill where the new/unknown words found in the texts then added/equipped with clues in the modified texts by the hope the students are able to find and understand the meanings of the words by relating them to their contexts. The CCT is chosen and applied by the researcher because it has some advantages for the students in learning English as a foreign language. The technique can improve their intention in vocabulary acquisition, stimulate critical thinking of reader. The students also do not need longer time than opening dictionary, can be useful for them to define meanings of new/unknown words by relating them to their contexts as well as improve their reading comprehension skill by using the technique.

Since one of the factors that determine the success of students in learning vocabulary is the teaching technique, this study focuses on improving the students' vocabulary achievement through the CCT. It is selected to be used because of its advantages. Gains, R. and S. Redman (1986) state that

there are several advantages to use the CCT in learning vocabulary. They are:

1. It helps readers not only learn words but also know how to use them in context. Guessing the meaning of a word from its use in context requires an understanding of semantic properties, register, and collocation. It makes readers aware of one important feature of vocabulary, namely, that context determines the meaning of words,
2. Training students to infer meaning from context gives them a powerful aid to comprehension and will speed up their reading,
3. This approach allows the learners to make intelligent, meaningful guesses. This will make the learning activities much more active and challenging than direct explanation of words. It has a problem-solving characteristic that appeals to most people and challenges them to make use of their intelligence to an extent that is not always common in language classes,
4. It helps readers develop a holistic approach toward reading. Because the context of a new word may be drawn from a group of sentences, a paragraph, or even the entire text, they learn to direct their attention to language units larger than the sentence while they are looking for context clues.

The writer tries to apply the CCT to improve the students' vocabulary achievement above the minimum passing grade (70) and could reach of the school decision criteria (75).

### **Statement of the Problems**

In line with the title of this thesis and the background of the study, two research questions are formulated as follows:

1. To what extent can CCT improve the students' achievement on vocabulary?
2. How can the students' achievement on vocabulary be improved through CCT?

## **Purpose of the Study**

In line with the above research questions, this study aims at finding out: to what extent contextual clues technique can improve the students' achievement on vocabulary and how contextual clues technique can improve the students' achievement on vocabulary.

## **Scope of the Study**

As reflected in the title of the study, the scope of the study was to improve the students' vocabulary achievement using CCT. The participants were SMPN 1 Labang Bangkalan students of academic year 2013/2014. For the sake of data sufficiency and conformability, this study carries out three cycles of treatments.

## **Significance of the Study**

The results of the research are expected to be beneficial for the following group of people.

### **a. School**

The results of the research are expected to give some theoretical contributions to the school to develop the quality of education.

b. Teachers

The results of the research are useful for English teachers as information to know his/her students' reading ability and it can be used as a consideration to improve the teaching quality and the students' reading ability.

c. Students

The results of the research are useful for the students as information to know their vocabulary mastery, so they can improve it because of its importance to be mastered to support the improvement of their English reading comprehension skill.

d. Researchers

The result of this research are expected to become a reference for other researchers who want to conduct a further research on the similar problems, by using another design, such as an experimental research to develop the students' reading ability, especially vocabulary achievement.

## **Hypothesis**

Based on the problem above, the hypothesis is formulated as follows: CCT can improve the vocabulary achievement of the second graders of SMPN I Labang Bangkalan if it is properly implemented.

## **Theoretical Framework**

To support this study, some theories are needed. The first theory is concerned with some aspects of vocabulary teaching. Traditionally, the teaching of vocabulary above elementary levels was mostly incidental, limited to presenting new items as they appeared in reading or sometimes listening texts. This indirect teaching of vocabulary assumes that vocabulary expansion will happen through the practice of other language skills, which has been proved not enough to ensure vocabulary expansion.

Nowadays it is widely accepted that vocabulary teaching should be included based on the syllabus, and taught in a well-planned and regular basis. Some authors, led by Lewis (1997), argue that vocabulary should be at the center of language teaching, because language consists of grammatical lexis, not lexicalized grammar. There are several aspects of lexis that need to be taken into account when teaching vocabulary. The list below is based on the work of Gains and Redman (1986):

- *Boundaries between conceptual meanings*: to know not only what lexis refers to, but also where the boundaries are that separate it from words of related meaning (e.g. cup, mug, and bowl).

- *Polysemy*: to distinguish between the various meaning of a single word form with several and closely related meanings (head: of a person, of a pin, of an organization).
- *Homonymy*: to distinguish between the various meaning of a single word form which has several meanings which are not closely related (e.g. a file: used to put papers in or a tool).
- *Homophony*: to understand word that has the same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings (e.g. flour, flower).
- *Synonymy*: to distinguish between the different shades of meaning that synonymous words have (e.g. extends, increase, expand).
- *Affective meaning*: to distinguish between the attitudinal and emotional factors (denotation and connotation), which depend on the speakers attitude or the situation. Socio-cultural associations of lexical items are another important factor.
- *Style, register, dialect*: to distinguish between different levels of formality, the effect of different contexts and topics, as well as differences in geographical variation.

- *Translation*: awareness of certain differences and similarities between the native and the foreign language (e.g. false cognates).
- *Chunks of language*: multi-word verbs, idioms, strong and weak collocations, lexical phrases.
- *Grammar of vocabulary*: learning the rules that enable students to build up different forms of the word or even different words from that word (e.g. sleep, slept, sleeping; able, unable; disability).
- *Pronunciation*: ability to recognize and reproduce items in speech.

The implication of the aspects just mentioned in teaching is that the goals of vocabulary teaching must be more than simply covering a certain number of words on a word list. Teachers must use teaching techniques that can help realize this global concept of what it means to know a lexical item. And we must also go beyond that, giving learner opportunities to use the items learnt and also helping them to use effective written storage systems.

The second theory is concerned with the methods of teaching English as a foreign language, that is: Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL) which helps teachers relate subject matter content to real world situations; and motivates students

to make connections between knowledge and its applications to their lives as family members, citizens, and workers and engage in the hard work that learning requires. Thus, CTL helps students connect the content they are learning to the life contexts in which that content could be used. Students then find meaning in the learning process. As they strive to attain learning goals, they draw upon their previous experiences and build upon existing knowledge. By learning subjects in an integrated, multidisciplinary manner and in appropriate contexts, they are able to use the acquired knowledge and skills in applicable contexts (Bern's and Erickson, 2001).

## **Assumption**

This study is carried out under assumption that the students' vocabulary achievement can be improved through the use of particular teaching technique.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding of the key terms used in this study, the key terms are defined as follows:

1. Contextual Clues refers to clues or hints that appear in a sentence or a text that can help students find the meanings of new/unknown words by relating them to their contexts; the contexts can be before or after the word itself (Hartman and Blass, 2007).
2. Vocabulary achievement is the increasing score that indicates the progress made by the students on the achievement test (Hughes, 1941). In this study, the vocabulary achievement refers to the score obtained by the students on the vocabulary achievement test given by the teacher.
3. Contextual Clues Technique refers to strategies or technique to find the meanings of new/unknown words in sentences or passages by relating them to their contexts.