

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading, as one of the basic language skills, is very important to access information and make meaning. It is the best way in gaining valuable activity for filling in time. In reading, a book can serve more than one useful purpose at the same time. Teixeira (2012:15) states that reading is a key language skill that has had an important place in teaching and learning foreign languages. In addition, by reading, the students will be smarter and creative. This skill allows students to express their ideas communicated by people in different countries, allowing them to broaden their horizons and increase their knowledge. Reading enables students to open up their minds to new ways of thinking, perceiving and doing things, while books can be the teachers, mentors and inspirations. Furthermore, there are so many benefits that the students get from reading in learning a language.

Based on Harmer (2007:99) argues that reading is useful for language acquisition. The students more or less understand what they read; the more they read, the better they will get it. The statement means it is really important for the readers to have good language acquisition in reading comprehension. By having good language acquisition, the readers can read many kinds of textbooks, magazines, newspapers or various reading materials. Frequent reading can increase the students' reading comprehension, and it helps them find information from the textbook that they have read. In reading, the students have to be focused on what they read because reading is not only reading, but it also involves their ability to recognize what they have read. Therefore, they could comprehend or understand the ideas stated in the reading texts systematically.

According to Pang et al. (2003:6), reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. In addition, comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. By reading, students can gain new knowledge and open new worlds, especially in getting new vocabulary. As a result, the students must master vocabulary and understand reading comprehension to make it easier to understand the reading text. Thus, those two variables of reading comprehension should be emphasized to make students understand what they have read.

Reading comprehension is the process of making meaning in the written word. In getting clear information and avoiding misunderstanding, it is important to comprehend the reading text well. Brassell and Rasinski (2008:18) state reading comprehension is the ability to take information from written text and do something with it in a way that demonstrates knowledge or understanding of that information. Students develop these reading or representations of the text meaning during the reading process. It means that readers must understand the meaning of a paragraph from reading because the reading ability is reading aloud and understanding what the reader reads. Most people can read well, but some of them may not be able to comprehend the text they read exactly. Therefore, reading comprehension is an important skill that students should master.

Vocabulary mastery helps the students understand the language. According to Wainwright (2006:33), vocabulary is an important factor in reading. The more a person memorizes vocabulary, the better her/his language will be. Mastering vocabulary helps the students' chance to speak, listen, read and write. When the students read something, it will sound good if they understand the

words or vocabulary in their reading. Because it will guide and help them in pronouncing, reading, and grasping the idea from their reading, they will understand. Cameron (2001:72) states that improving a useful vocabulary is a basic point to learning a foreign language at an early level. Students who have a lot of vocabulary of foreign language, they could learn language easily.

The research that was conducted by Antari (2021) entitled “The Correlation between Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension of the Tenth-grade Students of SMK Pariwisata Putra Bangsa Ubud” showed that vocabulary and reading comprehension were correlated. Having a lot of vocabulary can make students easily mastering reading comprehension. Vocabulary mastery could also help the students in comprehending the text with some complicated words. Based on these findings, this research has scientifically proven that vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the tenth-grade students of SMK Putra Bangsa Ubud had a significant correlation. This research finding strengthens the present research which dealt with the same area.

Based on the explanation above, vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension have a strong relationship. Students who do not have a large vocabulary or effective word-learning strategies often struggle to achieve comprehension. Furthermore, Brassell and Rasinski (2008:99) state that vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in students’ reading comprehension. Regarding this matter, this research attempts to find out whether vocabulary mastery influenced reading comprehension. Based on the research background, the researcher was interested in conducting a research entitled “The Correlation between Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension of the Eighth-grade Students of SMPN 2 Ubud in Academic Year 2021/2022.”

1.2 Research Problem

Before conducting the research, the research problem should be formulated and specified to make the research problem in the present study more specific. Based on the research background that has been stated, the crucial issue that attracts the researcher in conducting this study concerns the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Moreover, the researcher was interested in figuring out the significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension in junior high school. Concerning the aforementioned explanation, the researcher question of the present study can be briefly and concisely formulated as follows: is there any significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Research objectives are set to find a solution and answer the research that has been explained above. A clear research objective would be able to direct the researcher in doing the present research. A particular investigation is expected to provide a scientific solution to the research problem. The undertaking of any scientific investigation is always intended to solve the research problem that has been previously formulated. The research objective is to investigate the significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension as described above. In line with the research problem that has been stated, the objective of the present study was intended to figure out whether there is any significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study is important to make the discussion about the research problem more specific and avoid a broad discussion. In this study, the researcher focused on the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. The researcher limited this research only to vocabulary mastery in the content words, including nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives because those are four types that student learn at school. To test the students' vocabulary mastery, the researcher used descriptive texts in which they had to choose one of the words provided in the box, and they then completed the missing word, and the missing words dealt with the abovementioned content words. Moreover, reading comprehension was assessed based on identifying four aspects of reading: general information, specific information, textual reference, and textual meaning.

1.5 Significance of the Study

One of the practical reflections taken into account in undertaking the present investigation is the significance of the expected research findings. In the present study, the researcher focused on figuring out the significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022. The researcher hoped that the present study could benefit the study of English. The present research results are highly expected and recommended to provide significant research findings on the correlation between the students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Both theoretical and practical significance of the present research could be briefly and concisely elaborated as follows.

Theoretically, the result of this research is expected to help in doing or conducting something related to vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension as a source of information. Moreover, additional empirical evidence is expected to be used in future studies. It can be used to give more empirical evidence to the existing findings related to the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension in choosing the correct word classes (noun, verb, adverb, and adjective) provided in the box, and then complete the missing word with the correct word choice. Furthermore, the present research findings are expected to give more information about the importance of mastering vocabulary, which could help students have good reading comprehension.

Practically, the present study results are expected to be beneficial for English teachers, students, and other researchers. For the English teachers, the researcher hopes that the teachers could improve their quality of teaching foreign languages and help students master vocabulary and reading comprehension. For the students, it is expected that this study could positively influence the students and give motivation in learning English. These research findings in terms of the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension could be used to design a much better teaching and learning process. For the other researchers, this study can be useful information in conducting scientific research focused on the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension.

1.6 Definition of the Key Term

Key terms are several typical words used in research to avoid misunderstanding and confusion among the readers in comprehending this research. The researcher provides a clear operational definition in comprehending

this study and clarifies the terms used in the present study. It could lead to the definition that the researcher needed to focus on the research. These operational definitions can be used as a reference in confining the complexity of the present study related to the key terms. Accordingly, the definition of the key terms used by the researcher in this study is vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. Furthermore, the definition of key terms used in the present study could be briefly defined as follows.

1. Vocabulary Mastery

In this study, vocabulary mastery refers to the number of words in a language that is mastered by the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud, and it involves four content words: nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

2. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension in the present study is operationally defined as the ability of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022 in identifying general information, specific information, textual reference, and textual meaning of descriptive texts.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Theoretical review is a risky component in scientific research, and it brought a vital contribution to the research itself. The theoretical review discusses both knowledge and its concept of theories. The purpose is to provide information on knowledge towards variables. Scientific research should be conducted based on relevant theoretical constructs and hope to give practical significance and empirical evidence. The theoretical review contains a theoretical framework to strengthen the discussion from the present study as it summarises the literature. These theoretical reviews are very important to support the present research. They are elaborated as follows: vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. It is important to strengthen the theoretical foundations of the present research.

2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading is one of the important skills in the teaching and learning process, and by reading, students can improve their ability to acquire knowledge of the world. Reading can help to get the solution to the problems and also as a source of information. Reading is defined as reacting to a written text as a piece of communication. Reading positively affects students' vocabulary knowledge, spelling, and writing (Harmer, 2001:99). Reading is also someone's ability to understand the meaning of the symbols contained in the written texts. They read for enjoyment when they immerse themselves in novels, magazines, or even comic books. Through reading, the readers can learn to comprehend the reading texts to answer the questions, expand grammar knowledge, vocabulary, etc.

Blachowicz and Ogle (2008:15) state that reading is essential. It is the process by which people gain information and ideas from books, newspapers, manuals, letters, constructs, advertisements, and a host of other materials. There are certain aspects of reading, such as fluency, intonation and word recognition which can be learned in a few years. These basics must be mastered, but at the same time, reading comprehension should be emphasized in the process. Reading is not only done by the students but all people who need information in their life. They can search for information through books or other written texts. It is very important to support learning so the students could develop their language skills.

In relation with comprehension, Pang et al. (2003:14) describe that comprehension is the process of deriving meaning from connected text. It involves word knowledge as well as thinking and reasoning. Therefore, comprehension is not a passive process but an active one. The reader actively engages with the reading text to construct meaning, and good readers normally take active steps to overcome difficulties in comprehension. This active engagement includes making use of prior knowledge. It involves drawing inferences from the words and expressions that the writers use to communicate information, ideas and viewpoints through their writings.

Camille (2008:33) adds that comprehension is a process demanding strategic approaches. The readers actively construct meanings as they read. They also direct their own comprehension by using basic strategies and monitoring their own understanding. It means that an appropriate strategy is very important to motivate the students to achieve their reading comprehension. The strategy applies in reading activity has a very important role since it is a way for readers to understand the text, which can be directed by a series of reading steps involved in

strategy. A good strategy will lead readers to achieve a goal of reading comprehension. It will make readers easier in connecting their ideas by monitoring its accuracy based on the procedures of the strategy applied.

According to Pang et al. (2003:19), reading comprehension relates prior knowledge to new knowledge contained in written texts. Prior knowledge basically deepens on the students lived experience related to new knowledge that will be gained in reading content. Reading comprehension is explained as understanding new information of what is already known. Prior knowledge is expressed with words. When the meaning of the word is unknown, the reader does not have background knowledge nor has no experience in that area. Without background knowledge or without the vocabulary that comes with various experiences, the students will not comprehend the content of the text.

Klingner et al. (2007:8) describe that reading comprehension is a multi-component, highly complex process that involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text (previous knowledge, strategy use) as well as variables related to the text itself (interest in reading text, understanding of the content of the reading text). Reading comprehension is explained as understanding new information of what is already known. Prior knowledge is expressed with words. When the meaning of the word is unknown, it means the readers do not have background knowledge. Without background knowledge or the vocabulary that comes with various experiences in learning, the students will not comprehend the content of the reading material which is being read.

Snow (2002:11) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. The use of the word extracting and

constructing is to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension. It will involve identifying and recognizing printed or written symbols that serve as exciting for the recall of meaning built up through the readers' manipulation of relevant concepts already in their possession. It means their prior knowledge is critical to their understanding of what they have read based on the reading texts.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is the process of extracting and constructing the meaning of the text to get the goal is a communication of messages. Reading comprehension is important because it will influence the students' knowledge of the written paragraph book or the other written sources. Without reading comprehension, the students could not understand the information in the reading texts. The readers are expected to be able to extract information by using reading skills. Moreover, reading comprehension occurs when new information interacts with the old one that has been previously stored in students' memory.

2.1.2 Vocabulary Mastery

In learning English, vocabulary cannot be separated as a part of understanding the language. When someone learns a foreign language, vocabulary will be the first thing that they know. Many of the vocabulary in English books have to be learned. Learning vocabulary is necessary because it enables students to speak, write, and listen nicely. Without it, no one can speak or understand the language. Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency; one of their primary language learning goals is to know its meaning. Without mastering it, foreign language learners will get some difficulties in developing the

four language skills. Moreover, vocabulary is a must in every language and it becomes important parts in language learning.

Vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings. Actually, vocabulary is more complex. Vocabulary mastery is knowing the words and their meanings and knowing how the words sound and how the words are used in the context. The vocabulary of language always changes and grows. Blachowicz and Ogle (2008:178) state that vocabulary reflects our knowledge and experience and our social interactions. It means that vocabulary has an important role in understanding the language for the learner, especially the students who learn English at school. Mastering vocabulary will make students easier in learning language skills particularly reading, as their comprehension could increase.

Vocabulary is important to understand and convey the message. Pollard (2008:13) defines vocabulary as a basic building block of language learning. Students need to know words, their meanings, how they are spelt and how they are pronounced. It is a tool for communicating with each other in daily life. It is important and to express the feelings and to express the ideas what is on our minds. Building up a useful vocabulary is the basis of learning a foreign language at the primary level. Knowing a lot of vocabulary will make the students easy in learning a language. If the students have good vocabulary mastery, they can read or listen to English clearly and then write or speak the sentences in English.

Cameron (2001:72) states that improving a useful vocabulary is a basic point to learning a foreign language early. Learning vocabulary is important because it enriches students' knowledge of the word. Vocabulary and reading cannot be separated because both of them are related to each other. By having and mastering vocabulary, we will know the meaning of vocabulary in the context. It

can also help to avoid making mistakes in understanding. Vocabulary becomes something that must be mastered to communicate. Moreover, vocabulary can make students comprehend the words received while listening and reading during the teaching and learning process to improve their comprehension.

Hackman (2008:3) states that vocabulary is more than a list of words, and although the size of one's vocabulary matters, it can be understood how to use the one that matters most. In our everyday life provides most of the vocabulary needs. Words are around, but it takes time to take them in to become acquainted with their numerous uses and the contexts in which they are appropriate. Some words may appear to be simply stated. However, some words may also be difficult to state because their meaning may change depending on the word they are attached to. It is impossible for the students to read, write, and speak a foreign language without having enough vocabulary knowledge to use.

According to Kamil and Hiebert (2005:3), vocabulary is the knowledge of the meanings of words. This definition becomes complicated when words come in at least from two forms: oral and print. Oral vocabulary is the set of words for which the students know the meanings when speaking or reading orally. Print vocabulary consist of those words also comes in two forms. A productive vocabulary is used when writing or speaking, and receptive that can be understood or recognized. In mastering vocabulary, we can understand the meaning of a word in the context and transfer the information in written form. Building vocabulary can be started from teacher practice, students influenced by the conversation, short reading text and games. These activities could enrich their vocabulary.

Vocabulary mastery is the competence or complete knowledge of a list or a set of words that make up a language used by a particular person, class, or

profession. Vocabulary mastery is one component to master English as a foreign language in elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. In learning four language skills, vocabulary is one basic component to be mastered. It is reasonable, remembering that the four language skills need knowledge of words because they will get nothing without vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery plays an important role in the four language skills, and it has to be considered that vocabulary mastery is one of the needed components of language.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is very important in language learning. When the students master vocabulary, they can understand the information and express their ideas. Vocabulary mastery does not mean knowing the meaning of vocabulary. It also means that they can recognize, understand and produce the stock of words and their meaning. In this study, the researcher only investigated four types of vocabulary: nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives because those have been taught in the class. The researcher used descriptive texts, especially in describing animals. It is expected that their vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension could be well measured to figure out their correlation. For this reason, the researcher only limits four types of vocabulary mastery: nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

2.2 Empirical Review

An empirical review is a review of relevant research conducted in which it reviews the previous research relevant to the present research. The empirical review can be a reference for developing the study's concept. This would also be helpful to avoid unintentional replication of the previous study and clarify accurate information for the results. Empirical review deals with original research

such as scientific experiments, surveys, and research based on experience and observation. In the empirical review, the researcher inserted two relevant previous pieces of research. The two related research pieces that were used as empirical reviews could be described in chronological order as follows.

The first research was conducted by Erniwati (2019) entitled “The Correlation between Students’ Vocabulary Mastery and Their Reading Comprehension Ability in Learning English.” This research was conducted for the first grade of SMA Muhammadiyah 9 Makassar. The objective of this research was to find out the correlation between students’ vocabulary mastery and the students’ ability in reading comprehension. The researcher involved 31 samples of the tenth-grade students of SMA Muhammadiyah 9 Makasar. In addition, the research instruments were used to collect the required data on reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery. According to the research findings, it could be found that there was a strong correlation.

Additionally, the strength of this research was in data analysis. It was because the previous researcher provided a clear explanation about how to find out the correlation between two variables. Besides, the words that were used by the researcher were simple and easy to understand. However, there were unclear instructions in the research instrument regarding the division of time allotment given to each student when answering questions. Thus, it was less efficient in working on the questions. Therefore, in this study, the researcher provided clear instructions about time allotment to make it easier for students to answer easily and efficiently. The researcher would give 40 minutes to answer the matching cloze procedure test which had 40 gaps, and 40 minutes to answer 30 items of short answer task from 6 descriptive texts that have been provided.

The second research was conducted by Fatmawati (2017) entitled “The Correlation between Vocabulary Mastery and Reading Comprehension of the Tenth-grade Students of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sragen in Academic Year of 2016/2017.” The objective of the study was to figure out how the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. The researcher involved 81 samples of the tenth-grade students of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sragen. The research instruments were used to collect the required data in the present research that was focused on the correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. The results clearly figured out that there was a significant correlation between students’ vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension.

In addition, the strength of the previous study was in its research findings. The previous research findings showed that there was a significant positive correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension. However, the researcher did not explain how to score the students and did not specify the previous researcher’s scoring rubric. Thus, it made the students confused on how to write a good answer to the test. In the present study, the researcher would like to provide a clear aspect and indicator in a scoring rubric based on the statement stated by Brown (2004). Therefore, it made it easy for readers to identify each valued item and assess reading aspects to know the problem. It enables students to be actively involved as they know the criteria in their reading performance.

2.3 Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a precise, testable statement of what the researchers predict will be the study’s outcome. It is focused on the relationship between two different variables studied in this research. According to Singh (2006:54)

hypothesis is defined as a tentative solution to the problem. The hypothesis is needed to predict the existence or non-existence of a relationship. Based on the theoretical review and empirical review above, a hypothesis is proposed in this study. In the present research, the researcher uses a hypothesis to predict the relation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud. The hypothesis that was formulated by the researcher was constructed as the following statements.

Ha : There is a significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and the reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022.

H₀ : There is no significant correlation between vocabulary mastery and the reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 2 Ubud in academic year 2021/2022.

