

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

As an International language, English plays an important role as an instrument for people who speak in different languages to communicate each other. In this context, English has been considered as a lingua franca, which means a language used to facilitate people whose first language is different (Holmes 2013). According to Crystal (2012), there are 1.5 billion people who have been already considered as fluent and competent English speakers. The condition of English usage globally makes the non-English speaker countries adapt English as a compulsory subject which impacts on the early age of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in formal schools in Indonesia besides as one way contributes in building the well-qualified generations.

In Indonesia, English teaching starts earlier from elementary school as the first stage of formal education for children in which the students are categorized as young learners. Although English is considered a foreign language in Indonesia, it is taught as a compulsory subject in secondary schools and some universities (Nababan 1991) with a possibility that an early English teaching is allowed such as in primary schools (Lauder 2008). As a foreign language, it is taught extensively in almost all levels of education institution but does not take an essential role in national or social life (Broughton, Brumfit, et al. 2003). Compared to English as Second Language (ESL) users, according to Thompson as

quoted by Huda (2016), EFL learners require approximately seven years to reach the same level of English proficiency as those learners who speak in ESL. It becomes a strong reason why teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) should be provided for young learners and certain teaching strategies are needed to enrich English vocabulary that may impact on the advancement of English competence.

Some researchers have a similar argument in defining the term “young learner”. Garton, Copland, and Burns cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Snow (2014) referred young learners as seven to twelve years old students. Based on their grade, they are divided into students of grade 1 to 3 called lower class and students of grade 4 to 6 called upper class (Sepyanda 2017). Lelawati, Dhiya and Mailani (2018) specified young learners for 5 or 6 years old (the first year of formal school students) to 11 or 12 years old.

Starting to teach English in the elementary school stage is an appropriate decision since there is a notion from neuro-physical clinical investigation which states that the first to ninth year of life is the optimum age for learning language since the brain’s speech learning center is in its maximum capacity. Johnson and Newport also revealed the notion about Critical Period Hypothesis in which compared to adults, children gain an advantage in the process of language acquisition (Johnson and Newport 1989). It is also mentioned that the mother tongue interferes less at the age under 10 years old (Broughton, Brumfit, et al. 2003).

Regarding the age of the young learners, English language teaching should be begun from vocabulary since it is the sub-skill of English language (Ketabi 2010) that must be acquired in the first stage of language acquisition before reaching the next stage for instance, learning tenses. Aside from being an appropriate learning material for the young learners who recently start to learn English, vocabulary also becomes part of English language that merits to be learnt on account of some significant reasons pointed by experts. Folse (2004) and Wilkins (1972), for instance, stated that instead of grammar, vocabulary is something very essential in communication. The lack of grammar competence will be an obstacle in communication that makes people convey less utterance, but still the poor vocabulary knowledge can be the worst thing and can end up a conversation since without it, we cannot convey anything. In addition, mastering vocabulary is the gate to master the English language. As revealed by Nation (1994), the presence of rich vocabulary can make EFL learners perform better in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Thus, we can say that if we want to build a strong foundation of English language competence in those four English language skills, it is necessary to place vocabulary as the fundamental aspect in learning English.

However, not all vocabulary can be taught to young learners. The most dominant words used by lower class students are usually nouns and verbs (Mulyati 2017). It is supported by Gentner (1982) and Bloom in Mulyati (2017) who revealed that students acquire nouns before verbs. In addition, Tardif (1996) pointed out that since verb is frequently used in conversation, it becomes type of

vocabulary that children master. Those notions appear since children master objects that surround them (here) and at that time (now) (Mulyati 2017). The type of vocabulary that is taught also contributes upon the learner's vocabulary enrichment. Thus, it is necessary to pay attention on the appropriateness of vocabulary type that is taught by informal school teacher so they are capable to enrich young learner's vocabulary.

Considering the age of young learners and their characteristics, it may be ensured that utilizing particular strategy to reach the goal in the process of teaching-learning activity is a necessary. Cameron (2001) stated that as the teachers who teach EFL learners pay attention to the notion "how they can facilitate" the learners in learning process as an influential aspect should be considered. The expression "how they can facilitate" is often called strategy. Richards (1986) explained that a strategy is a plan, method, steps of a conscious action taken in facilitating the learning process to make the learning activity become easier, more effective and enjoyable to achieve a particular goal. In addition, Wandberg quoted in Sanchez (2016) teaching strategies are related to the particular structure, system, methods, techniques, procedures and processes used by the teacher when giving instruction in teaching process. Thence, Cameron (2001) also explained that employing various strategies in teaching is one way to drive the young learners' attention in the teaching learning process since young learners get bored and lose focus toward something easily. Thus, observing and examining the teaching strategies applied by teachers in an informal school,

whose students show better competence in English, becomes significant to be conducted.

The way teachers teach or help the students in learning is an influential factor for the success in learning process. It happens since teacher takes an important role as the facilitator who provides learning material and the center of learning process in which the teachers also serve as the determiner of teaching strategies applied. The correlation between student better accomplishment and teaching strategy applied is revealed in a study by Tulbure (2012). In applying teaching strategies in the process of teaching learning, teachers require a particular media since it is the main instrument to support the strategies applied by attracting the young learners' attention (S. S. Lelawati 2018). Therefore, it becomes the reason to consider the teaching media applied during the teachers applied vocabulary teaching strategies.

Parental involvement is one factor that cannot be separated from the activity of learning English. Parents take an important role in motivating their children to learn another language, in this context English. There are some reasons that encourage parents to take their children to learn English in early age. Wati (2016) in her research mentions that parents have positive attitudes towards English language teaching for young learners, which is shown by parents' views. First, parents recognize that their children have big enthusiasm upon English, which makes them enjoy the learning process and learn more effectively. Other parents state that the government policy in deciding English to be taught in early age or in primary school is used to facilitate the children in facing the higher level

of education since English is always tested when the students reach the higher level of education. They also believe that if their children master English, they will be able to find a better job, or they can work overseas which is considered prestigious.

Being aware with this situation, parents take their children to an English course or an informal school since they believe that giving children additional lesson in an informal school will facilitate them to learn better. This notion is also discovered in research by Latchem (2014) that informal school potentially helps children reach better achievement in their learning process. Parents' awareness of taking their children to an informal English school is also caused by the condition of English teaching in public schools. Technically, as the primary place provided by government is expected to have good quality in order to generate young learners to be competent in English. Unfortunately, studying English in the formal school seems not enough for facilitating students to master English vocabulary well. It is shown by the student's incompetence in mastering English vocabulary such as the problem of lack in vocabulary.

There have been a number of studies that investigated teaching strategies applied in teaching vocabulary. Heningsih (2016) found that the dominant strategies applied at the grade 2 students at An-Nahl elementary school were game and small group discussion. Next, research by Febriani (2016) elaborated the teaching strategies applied in teaching students in TK Negeri I Pembina. The strategies applied were different in each stage of teaching process but it was revealed that sing a song is the dominant strategy applied in all five meetings

when she conducted this research. Liyaningsih (2017), studying the third grade of MI students, found that four vocabulary teaching strategies applied were Translation, Memorization, Playing Games, and Sing a song.

Heningsih (2016) and Liyaningsih (2017) focused on the elementary school students at grade 2 and 3. Meanwhile, Febriani (2016) observed the younger learners which are second year of kindergarten students. Rahmadhani (2015) also investigated the same topic which was conducted in LIA English course. It can be said that there were a great number of studies that investigated the vocabulary teaching strategies applied in formal schools, and only a small number of studies were conducted in informal schools. This phenomenon has provoked the writer to conduct a study that investigates the vocabulary teaching strategies applied in an informal English language school and how the strategies attract young learners.

This present study focuses on the vocabulary teaching strategies applied by the teacher of English First Course, which is based on Harmer's theory, in teaching English vocabulary at Highflyers class. Thence, this research examines the vocabulary teaching strategies as well as the teaching media applied in the school and observes how the vocabulary teaching strategies applied engage the young learners into the lesson. This research was conducted at Highflyers class, which is a class that is set to teach 7 to 9 years old students, at English First Course course, one of the informal English schools which presents some native speakers of English as the teachers. It is expected that the results can be applied in formal schools in order to facilitate students in enriching English vocabulary.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

This research was aimed to investigate the vocabulary teaching activities at Highflyers class of English First Course. Therefore, the questions bellow are represented the focus of this research which are:

1. What are vocabulary teaching strategies applied by teachers in teaching vocabulary at Highflyers class of the English First Course?
2. How was students' engagement during the application of the vocabulary teaching strategies at Highflyers class at the English First Course?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This research attempts to investigate how the teachers of Highflyers class of English First Course teach the students which can be recognized through these objectives:

1. To identify the teaching strategies applied in teaching vocabulary at Highflyers class of English First Course
2. To investigate the students' engagement during the application of the vocabulary teaching strategies at Highflyers class at the English First Course

1.4. Significance of the Study

It is expected that the results may provide new insights, especially in TEFL practices for the young learners and also may be applied in formal schools by adapting the vocabulary teaching strategies that have been investigated in order to facilitate students in enriching English vocabulary, thus Indonesian Elementary student will be able to master English as early as possible. Revealing the

vocabulary teaching strategies applied in that private institution may be useful in helping and improving the teaching-learning activities in formal schools so that students may have better competence in mastering English vocabulary. Practically, the results of this research can give a number of contributions. It can provide beneficial information to English department students who plan to organize research in the same field. It can also provide recommendation of vocabulary teaching strategies and the media that supports the teaching strategies for teachers and English department students who intend to be teachers. In addition, it is expected to provide ideas for researchers who will conduct research on the same area.

1.5. Definitions of Key Terms

- Highflyers class: a classroom set for teaching young learners at the 7 to 9 years old at EF English course.
- Non-formal school: an educational institution in which the learning process is done outside school. The students participate voluntarily and it is done non-sequentially to support learning process in a formal school (Eshach 2007).
- Teaching strategy: a plan, method, steps of a conscious action taken in facilitating the learning process to make the learning activity become easier, more effective and enjoyable to achieve a particular goal (Richards 1986).
- Vocabulary teaching strategy: the instruction used for developing the students' ability in using vocabulary (Ambarita 2015).

- Young learners: the term used to describe 7 to 12 years old students (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Snow 2014).
- Behavioral engagement: the observable act of the students involved in the learning activity (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris 2004; Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel & Martin 2009).