

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

English is the most popular language in the world. It is used as a way to get through the international communication in globalization era. English has been used by people all over the world as a tool to communicate in oral and written form. For that reasons, mastering English is very important because it is needed for education, economy, politics, social, culture, tourism and many other fields.

In the educational field, students are expected to be fluent in English, especially in four basic skills of English; these are listening, speaking, reading and writing. That is why English is essential to be taught from early age of children. One of the reasons of teaching English from early age is because it is the best time to learn language.

In Indonesian educational system, a number of elementary schools have begun to introduce English to their curriculum. English is introduced to the students through learning vocabulary because it is one of the important elements and the basic competence in order to get other competences like listening, speaking, reading and writing. This statement is supported by Coady and Huckin (1997:5), "Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner".

Vocabulary plays an important role in language learning because it is an aspect that a teacher must teach to the students in learning English as a foreign language. Students will not have skills in English without mastery of its vocabulary. It is because vocabulary mastery is a key for students to understand well what the teacher says during the learning process.

Every teacher wants to run the teaching and learning process effectively. However, it is not easy for a teacher to teach vocabulary to young learners in elementary school. They almost have no focus, do not pay attention to the lesson and they are difficult to control. They also usually talk and even joke with their friends during the class. Besides that, many students have difficulties to improve their vocabularies because almost of them just rewrite the vocabulary that is written by the teacher on the white board. This problem has to be solved to make the teaching and learning process runs effectively.

The teacher should pay attention not only on how the right implementation of the techniques used, but also on how these techniques are suited to the elementary students' characteristics. Harmer argued that "Young children, especially those up to the ages of nine or ten, learn differently from older children, adolescents, and adults" (Harmer, 2001:38). Teaching vocabulary to them is totally different from teaching adult learners, so the teacher should use appropriate techniques and strategies in teaching vocabulary to them. Finding out the best technique for teaching young learners need an intensive analysis. Teacher should create alternative of techniques to teach young learners in order to make them interested to what they are going to learn.

The use of media is aimed at giving an enjoyable atmosphere in the classroom and encouraging students' motivation and interest in the lesson. Picture is a part of visual aids that almost used as a technique in teaching vocabulary at elementary school. Picture can be used to explain the meaning of vocabulary items. This statement is supported by Wright (1989:17), "Picture can motivate students and make him or her want to pay attention and take apart". Picture can be sketch, flashcard, graph, comic, poster, picture in newspaper, magazine, photograph etc. Picture is very helpful media especially to avoid misunderstanding of the questions because they have an important role in the understanding of meaning.

Flashcard is one of the kinds of picture that used to help students to understand and comprehend something clearly and easily. It is useful to achieve the instructional goals of teaching and learning process, and it can also be easily found in our daily lives. Meanwhile, flashcards could improve students' motivation, attract their attention, help students to memorize vocabulary easily, and make the teaching and learning activity more interesting. In this research, the writer tries to use flashcards in teaching vocabulary to students at elementary school.

Based on the explanation above, the writer decides to conduct a Classroom Action Research (CAR) to know how far flashcards can improve students' vocabulary mastery. The title of the research is "IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY BY USING FLASHCARDS (A Classroom Action Research at the Fifth Graders of MI Miftahul Huda Batealit Jepara in the Academic Year 2016/2017)".

1.2. Statements of Problem

There are problems which become main discussion in this research:

1. How can flashcards be implemented in teaching vocabulary to young learners?
2. How can flashcard be used to improve students' vocabulary?

1.3. Objectives of the Research

Based on the background of the research above, the writer writes the objectives of this research as follows:

1. To describe the implementation of flashcards in teaching vocabulary to young learners.
2. To know whether flashcards can be used to improve students' vocabulary.

1.4. Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The reasons of why the writer chooses the topic are:

1. Vocabulary is an aspect that a teacher must teach to the students in learning English as a foreign language, and it is essential to teach them from early age.
2. Students should enrich their vocabulary because it is the basic competence in order to get other competences like listening, speaking, reading and writing. With a good vocabulary, students can understand well what the teacher says during the learning process. As the result, students can receive the material delivered better.
3. Teaching English vocabulary to young learners is different from teaching adult learners, so the teacher should use appropriate techniques and strategies in teaching them.
4. Flashcard could improve students' motivation, attract their attention, help them to memorize the vocabulary easily, and flashcard could make the teaching and learning activities more interesting.

1.5. Hypothesis of the Research

The hypothesis of the research entitled “IMPROVING STUDENTS’ VOCABULARY BY USING FLASHCARDS (A Classroom Action Research at the Fifth Graders of MI Miftahul Huda Batealit Jepara in the Academic Year 2016/2017)” are as follows:

1. Pictures could attract students’ attention. Using picture helps students to understand and comprehend something clearly and easily, so they can memorize and enrich their vocabularies or the meaning of the picture.
2. Flashcards are useful to focus the students’ attention on what the text says by helping students to imagine them. Flashcards can be a good technique in teaching vocabulary to the students in elementary school.

1.6. Significances of the Research

This research is expected to be beneficial for:

1. Theoretically

The findings of the research are expected to enrich the language teaching literatures dealing with teaching methods.

2. Practically

a. The teachers

The writer hopes that this research will be beneficial for the teachers to develop their teaching method, to improve their quality of teaching and to provide better technique in teaching vocabulary.

b. The students

The writer hopes that the students will be motivated to learn English and enrich their vocabularies by using flashcards, because this method surely attract and interest their attention to study English deeply. The writer also hopes that the students can improve their performance in learning and building their vocabularies.

c. The readers

This research hopefully will be beneficial for the readers to make them know that learning English is easy, fun and interesting, so it can raise their willingness to learn English. The writer also hopes that this research can be used as reference for who wants to conduct a research in teaching vocabulary by using flashcards to young learners.

3. Pedagogically

This research is expected to give more explanation about applying flashcard in teaching vocabulary to young learners.