CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A.   Background of the Study

The main aspect in developing the ability to use language correctly and properly is vocabulary. The vocabulary mastery should be developed since the early age. In many countries, English becomes an important subject that is taught to the children since they are in elementary school. Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (1992: 23) say that as far as secondary schooling is concerned, most countries consider that learning a first foreign language should start straight away at the beginning of the first year when the pupils are, generally eleven or twelve years old. In short, younger is better.

Here, in Indonesia, English is formally taught from Junior High School to University, but recently it is introduced in Elementary School as local content. For more than ten years, there has been a policy about the possibility to include English in the curriculum as local content subject.

It is stated in the curriculum of elementary school 2004:

"Sebagai upaya meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan khususnya pengajaran Muatan Lokal Bahasa Inggris Sekolah Dasar, pada tahun anggaran 2005 Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Provinsi Jawa Tengah telah menyusun Kurikulum Muatan Lokal Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Sekolah Dasar untuk kelas I s.d kelas VI" (Kurikulum Tahun 2004 Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Untuk SD/MI Previnsi Jawa Tengah 2004:iii)

Teaching English to young learners of elementary school is very important because it will serve as the main foundation for students to learn English at the

higher level. Singleton in Brumfit (1997: vi) says that there are a number of the reasons for teaching English at primary level, they are:

1. The need to expose children from an early age to understanding of foreign cultures so that they grow up tolerant and sympathetic to others.
2. The need to link communication to understanding of view concepts.
3. The need for maximum learning time for important languages-the earlier you start the more time you get.
4. The advantage of starting with early second language instruction so that later the language can be used as a medium of teaching.

Further, Halliwell states that young children do not come to language classroom empty-handed. They bring with them an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics which will help them to learn another language (1998: 3). So, it is the teacher task to motivate and to encourage students in developing their basic ability.

There are four skills in English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To enhance those skills, one, especially beginner, needs to master vocabulary. Zimmerman in Coady and Huckin (1998:5) states that for young learners vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to language learning. Vocabulary cannot be separated from the other language elements in the teaching and learning process because it influences the students' ability in learning English. The statement explicitly states that vocabulary mastery takes a very significant role to support other language skills. The more vocabulary the students master, the better chance for them to master the language.

While realizing that vocabulary is very important, in many cases, teachers encounters problems in improving their students' vocabulary. This is so because

the method and media in language learning process is not appropriate with the condition of the class. Similarly, in SD Negeri 02 Kebak, Kebakkramat there were three problems found as follows: first, the students were less interested in the teaching learning process because the teacher did not provide attractive teaching aid. As a result, many students did not concentrate on the lesson. Second, it was difficult for students to pronounce a new word, for example they pronounce /jau/ instead of /ju:/ for the word 'you'. Third, they got difficulties to remember the meaning of the words.

Due to those facts, in this research, the writer would like to implement a method which is expected to able to help the teacher in developing the students' vocabulary mastery. The writer would use computer assisted games to improve the students' vocabulary mastery.

As we shall see, teaching is a complex process. Audio-visual aids, such as computer is a great help in stimulating the learning of foreign language particularly in vocabulary teaching. The students will use their ears as well as their eyes. Scott and Yterberg (1998) state that children's own understanding comes trough hands and eyes and ears. The physical world is dominant at all times. Holt in Hunt (2007) states that child is curious. He wants to make sense out of things, find out how things work, gain competence and control over himself and his environment, and do what he can see other people doing. He is open, perceptive, and experimental. He does not merely observe the world around him. He does not shut himself off from the strange, complicated world around him, but

tastes it, touches it, hefts it, bends it, breaks it. To find out how reality works, he works on it.

Computer becomes the attractive, factual, and innovative educational materials provider in English class. Kang and Dennis in Ybarra and Green (2003) write that students need to learn vocabulary in context and with visual clues to help them understand. Computers can provide this rich, contextual environment. The computer also allows students to become active learners in a one-on-one environment. Computers can incorporate various learning strategies as well as accommodate a variety of learning styles. The writer wants to make the elementary school students interested in improving their vocabulary mastery by using computer games. It is hoped it will be easy for the students to pronounce words correctly and remember the meaning of words in computer assisted game based class.

But what is meant by computer? Based on *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.htm* computer is a machine that manipulates data according to a list of instructions. While *hhtp://www.news .miuegypt.edu.eg/index.php* states that a computer is general-purpose machine that processes data. The data is processed according to a set of instructions known as programs. The computer and all equipments attached to it are called hardware. The computer is a form of hardware and the programs are known as software.

Computer assisted games is a kind of software. The technologies used in computer assisted games instruction generally fall into two categories, software and internet-based games. Here the writer will use the first based games for two

reasons: first, internet-based game is an expensive technology for many Indonesian people; second, software-based game is the most familiar item. Recently, 'traditional' linguistic games like 'hangman' and 'scrabble' that are incorporated with computer are easily found in English class. They have become fun and exciting media for learners, especially the young learners.

Language games are not activities mainly aimed at breaking the ice between students or to kill time. Byrne in Deesri (2002) give the definition to game as a form of play governed by rules. They are not just a diversion, a break from routine activities, but a way of getting the learner to use the language in the course of the game. The main focus of using game in class is to help students learn and have fun.

Children love games, Khan in Brumfit (1984: 142) states that children play and want to play. Children learn through playing. When playing, children interact and in their interaction they develop language skills. Game provides context to play, reason for playing and routines for playing. Scott and Yterberg (1992:3) also state that young learner love to play, and learnt best when they are enjoying themselves.

Computer assisted game has some attractive features that cannot be found in other games. It is a good pronounciation model. It can act as the picture provider, and moreover as the assistant of the students while they evaluate their own pronunciation. It becomes the most complex, complete, fun, and attractive aids that teacher can bring into the class.

Based on the problem and the potentials of computer games in improving students' vocabulary mastery, the writer would conduct an action research entitled, **IMPROVING STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY THROUGH COMPUTER ASSISTED GAMES** (A Classroom Action Research on the Fourth Grade Students in SD Negeri 02 Kebak, 2008/2009).

B.　The Identification of the Problem

The writer identifies the problems as follows:

1. The students are less interested in teaching learning process because the teaher did not provide attracting teaching aid.

2. The students get difficulties in pronouncing new vocabulary correctly.

3. The students get difficulties to remember the meaning of the words.

C.　The Statement of the Problem

The problems of the study that will be analyzed are:

1. To what extend computer assisted games can improve students' vocabulary mastery?

2. What are the responses of the students when the computer assisted games technique is applied in class?

D. The Benefits of the Study

The significances of this research are:

1. Improving the teacher's technique of teaching vocabulary particularly for elementary school students.

2. Improving the students' motivation in learning vocabulary.

3. Improving the students' vocabulary mastery.