

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

English as a foreign language has an important role in many aspects of life, such as: politics, economics, social, culture, technology and especially in education. In Indonesia, English is taught formally from the junior high school to the university level. However, nowadays, English is taught in some primary schools, even the kindergarten. It means children will get English earlier. English at the level of primary school can be started at grade four. Therefore, English in primary school is not a compulsory subject but it is taught as a local content.

At primary school, English is introduced through learning its vocabulary. Because vocabulary is the most important element. Vocabulary can not be separated from others elements of English in teaching learning process because vocabulary influences the ability of students in studying English language. Allen (1983) says that "Much of the vocabulary English textbooks must be learned. Without it, no one can speak or understand the language"

However, most students in the level of elementary schools still have difficulties in learning English, especially in mastering English vocabulary. Mastering vocabulary in learning language is basic, so is English. Gower and Walters (1995) state that "vocabulary is important to student- it is more important than grammar for communication purpose, particularly in the early stages when

students are motivated to learn the basic words they need to get by in the language”.

Teaching English vocabulary especially to the children is not easy. Teacher have to make their students learn English easier. The teacher should pay attention on how the techniques used are suited to the students’ characteristics. However, with the limitation of students’ vocabulary, teacher have to simplify their teaching and create the teaching learning process become interesting to the students. As far as the English teaching in many schools is concerned, teacher have to arouse the students’ interest so that they may learn better. Teacher should not only use the oral language and written language to deliver the information, but also use of the gesture.

Campbell (1995) says that teachers need to reinforce their instructions by using gestures, especially when giving instructions in English to beginners and elementary students. Similar with Campbell, Cole (1994) states, “Gesture can be used to reinforce much of what teachers say in class. Effective teacher use gesture and body movement to enhance communicative. Ineffective teachers are less competent in using gestures”.

Todd (1999) states that perhaps the most important aspect of non-verbal language to the teacher is gesture. Many teachers have their own set of gestures which they use routinely for both classroom management and more learning-oriented activities. These gesture are quickly learned by students and can save time.

However, it may be important for teachers to be aware of the meanings of gesture in their students' culture".

Gesture can be used in teaching English to the children. Elliot (1996) states that "children are beginning to communicate more effectively by the use of gesture, such as reaching, grasping and pointing". In addition, she proposes that "The child drew attention to an object by gesture and then commented on a particular property of the object in his speech". Foster (1999) also states that in the early stage, children use words (in combination with gestures and other pre-linguistic communications) mostly for things in their immediate environment (drink, bottle, hat). They also describe actions or states (down, Allgane) and they produce words that facilitate social interaction (hi, bye).

The result of the pre observation done by the writer on vocabulary mastery, especially for the third year students of SD Muhammadiyah Bekonang, Mojolaban is that the students face difficulties or problems. The problems are the students get difficulties in understanding and using the words.

The difficulties of the students in understanding and using the words are caused by the teacher just explains the material and then ask the students to do the exercise given and the time of English lesson is limited, it makes the teacher cannot apply the other technique, for example teaching using gesture.

Teaching English with the help of gesture can improve the students' interest in learning English. It is clearly stated in www.lunwenjia.com that "The

use of gesture or body movement can not only attract the students' attention, but also deepen their impression and imagination”.

Based on the description above, the writer is interested in carrying out a study on “Improving Students’ Vocabulary Mastery Through Gesture (A Classroom Action Research at the third grade of SD Muhammadiyah Bekonang, Mojolaban in the Academic Year 2008/2009).”

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, there are some problems may arise. The writer identifies the problems as follow:

1. Students in the level of elementary school still get difficulties in learning, especially in mastering English vocabulary.
2. Teacher need effective techniques in teaching English vocabulary.
3. Whether or not using gesture can improve the students’ vocabulary mastery.

C. Limitation of the Problem

From the identification of the problems above, the writer wants to focuses on how to improve students’ vocabulary mastery especially the vocabulary given to the third year students of SD Muhammadiyah Bekonang, Mojolaban.

D. Problem Formulation

The problem that will be analyzed in the research are:

1. Can gesture improve the students' vocabulary mastery?
2. What happens when gesture are used in teaching and learning process?

E. The Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem statement, the objective of the study is to know whether gesture is able to improve the students' vocabulary mastery. By implenting gesture, it is hoped that the students will participate actively.

F. The Benefits of the Study

The study result is expected to be able to give some benefits for the teacher, the student, and the school. For the students, they can improve their vocabulary mastery and with the students high vocabulary, they can use it in communication either listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

For the teacher, the result using action research can help the teacher choose the most effective technique of teaching vocabulary. There are many ways of teaching vocabulary, but not all of them are very helpful to the students. Gesture is one of the way in which this teachnique can improve students' vocabulary mastery.

For the school, it is hoped that this study will provide the better choice of teaching method in improving students' vocabulary in the elementary school.

