

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This section describes several discussions: background of the research, problem of the research, objectives of the research, operational definition of the terms, significance of the research and scope of the research.

#### **1.1 Background of the Research**

Vocabulary is one of the components of English as a foreign language. It is very important to teach vocabulary to English language learners because it has a key position in the teaching and learning process. According to Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 255), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. Therefore, a wider vocabulary that learners have will influence their writing, listening, reading, and speaking skills. This is in line with Kweldju and Priyono (2010) who stated that the most significant element of English language teaching (ELT) is vocabulary. Moreover, Riankamol (2008) stated that vocabulary is the word used in language, indicating an important role of it in mastering language. Not only learning it matters, teaching it is also important, as Harmer (2007, p. 229) put it that teaching vocabulary is a major part of the teacher's art where she/he helps learners see words in context to see how they are used.

When someone wants to master English, they should master the vocabulary first. It will help them in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. All of these skills will be better accommodated if a large number of vocabulary is mastered. At the time of communication, it will not run properly because of vocabulary selection that is less precise when communicating. In fact,

people who lack vocabulary will find it difficult to arrange the language. For example, when a student is communicating in English with her peer but she is constrained in selecting vocabulary which is not quite right then in the communication, it will create ambiguity and is very confusing.

Learning vocabulary is not easy for learners. Learning vocabulary for L2 learners is a matter of effort. Therefore, students who have not yet received a second language to learn vocabulary are very difficult to understand and require more time and effort. Such a phenomenon is common in EFL classes in Indonesia.

These are four vocabulary learning aspects that the learners need to learn in learning vocabulary, they are word meaning, word use, word formation, word grammar (Harmer, 1991, p.156). Words that are too long will make it difficult for them to find the meanings. Therefore, most students are wrong in the placement of a word in the sentence. According to Cameron (2001), vocabulary is not simply about learning words, but it is actually much more than that. It is also about learning chunks and finding words inside them. By looking at the reason above, the researcher is interested to in studying students' difficulties in learning vocabulary.

There are some reasons why the researcher want to examine the difficulties of students learning or understanding vocabulary such, whether they have difficulty in understanding vocabulary, pronunciation, understanding the meaning of the text or environmental factors that do not support them in learning vocabulary. As suggested by Shah (2005, p.132), there are individual factors and social factors. He briefly mentions that individual factors are the factors that come from the learners. It consists of growth, aptitude, exercises, motivations, and

attitude. While, social factors are the factors which come from surrounding the learners such as family, teacher and teaching method, facilities, social motivation, environment and chance.

From this reasoning the previously discussed rationale, it can be concluded that it is very important for students to master the vocabulary. By mastering the vocabulary they can understand all kinds of English contexts. The difficulties that students face while learning vocabulary can be solved if there is a will to learn and try.

## **1.2 Research Problems**

The problem of the research is a discussion of a problem about the focus of the research above, therefore the researcher finds the following problem formulation:

1. What are the difficulties faced by the students while learning vocabulary?
2. How do the students' solve the difficulties while learning vocabulary?

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Research**

The objectives of this research are to find out the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary and how do students solve the difficulties while they are learning vocabulary at the eleventh grade of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Jember.

## **1.4 The Operational Definition**

An operational definition is used to facilitate the understanding of the researcher and readers in understanding what is being researched by the researcher. The following are definitions of the terms used by the researcher : 1) vocabulary mastery, 2) difficulties in learning vocabulary, 3) vocabulary learning strategies.

### **1.4.1 Vocabulary Mastery**

In this study, mastery means complete knowledge or great skill that makes someone a master in a certain subject. In order to understand the language, vocabulary is crucial to be mastered by the learner. Vocabulary mastery is a student's great skill in using words of a language, which is acquired based on their own interests, needs and motivation. 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.

### **1.4.2 Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary**

There are several factors that make English vocabulary difficult to be remembered and forgotten easily such as difficulties in pronunciation, spelling, idiomatic, and overlap in meaning. The other factor is the student's interest in learning vocabulary is low. Many students give less attention when teachers explain the materials. The student must understand the word and its meaning to gain comprehension of its use. The use of inappropriate learning methods will increase students' difficulties when learning vocabulary. Teachers tend to struggle to produce effective and relevant instructions of vocabulary (Olney and Sargent, 2004). According to Huyen and Nga (2002), they said that students usually feel bored in vocabulary lessons because they have not changed their learning habits, such as writing words on paper, trying to learn by heart, or learning passively through the teacher's explanations.

### **1.4.3 Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

An often-quoted definition of learning strategy is given by Oxford, learning strategies are behaviors or actions which students use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable. Asgari and Mustapha (2011) define vocabulary learning strategies as stages were taken by students when learning new words. Schmitt (2000) classifies strategies into several specific groups namely determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. Schmitt (2000) explains that VLS can empower learners and attract learners' attention in learning language in a way that will improve that learners' vocabulary development.

### **1.5 Significances of the Research**

This study was expected to contribute to both theory and practice. Theoretically, in this study it is expected to contribute to the body of theory in English language teaching, especially vocabulary learning and can be used as a reference for further research. Practically, this research was expected to give more help to both students and teachers to teach vocabulary more effectively.

### **1.6 Scope of the Research**

The scope of the study has been limited only to the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary at the eleventh grade of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Jember. Students' difficulties in learning vocabulary in this research meant what are the difficulties for students in learning vocabulary in understanding a written text or printed material at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Jember.