CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It has been widely recognized that English is one of the international languages which is used throughout the world; therefore, it is used as a means of communication by people in most countries in the globe. As the most dominant formal language, English is used in various fields such as in science and technology, commerce, politics and education. In academic setting, for example, English is learned from primary education to university. As stated in the standard of content by Kemendikbud (2013), that the teaching of foreign language, specifically English is aimed to develop students' ability to communicate with people. By having skills in English, it is expected that learners can develop themselves to become intellectuals and being skillful in using the language.

In Indonesia English is treated as a foreign language that is taught in schools based on the existing curriculum. Therefore, the students are expected to be able to improve their ability in using English. Though English is treated as a foreign language in many parts of the word, many countries also consider it as their second language which matches what Harmer says: "Although English is not the largest number of native or "first" language speakers, it is widely used by many people all over the world as their "second" language" (2001:1).

In spite of the difficulties in studying English, it is worthwhile to study the English language because it plays a very important role in almost all fields of life such as: communication, commerce, economy, politics, education, science,

technology and many electronic devices are set up in English. Therefore, from elementary school up to university Indonesian government has decided that English is learned as one of compulsory subjects to be taught to the students. (Depdikbud, 1994: 1) English is taught from the first grade until the sixth grade as it is stated in GBPP 1994. In many countries in the world, a foreign language such as English is learnt from primary school or kindergarten. Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (1992: 12) say that "In most countries, children are confronted with learning a foreign or second language at about the age of eleven, except where an earlier start is made in primary or preschool."

In learning English as a foreign language there are four fundamental skills that should be mastered by students; that is, listening, speaking, reading and writing. In order to support the mastery of the four skills, it is essential to learn vocabulary. Vocabulary is very important in studying English. If people have inadequate vocabulary, they may not understand what other people are saying, or they may not be able to write sentences to transfer their messages to other people. In other words, they can only understand English expressions if they have enough vocabulary. Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed (Thornburry, 2002:13).

Vocabulary becomes a central part in English learning. It is the most important element that becomes the basic competence in order to get other competences. If the students have adequate vocabulary required in their level, it will be easier for them to possess the desired skills. Frank (1972:6) states that "vocabulary is the one of the English components, which has to be mastered and

acquired by students in learning a new language". That's why vocabulary becomes an important component in the field of education and indispensable for the students because the success of their studies for some reasons depends on the vocabulary mastery.

Vocabulary deals with words and meaning. Mastery itself means the comprehensive knowledge. Vocabulary mastery is comprehensive knowledge to recognize, understand, and produce stock of words and their meaning. Without mastering vocabulary one will face difficulties in improving the ability of communication with others. The mastery of vocabulary is very important because it will carry and consider the learners in the teaching learning process. In brief, vocabulary mastery can be defined as a number of words in a language which contain information about their meanings, forms, and usage in context of communication. It is the basic knowledge that students should master first before mastering English. Chen and Li (2009) acknowledge, vocabulary learning is a principal issue for English learning because it comprises the basic building blocks of English sentences.

It should be understood that vocabulary mastery is not a spontaneous process which is easy to be done. The process of vocabulary mastery begins when someone is still an infant. Basically, the baby's first language comes from the mother tongue. They will master the vocabulary through the simple words by listening the words which are uttered by someone else. As stated by Richards and Renandya (2002), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis of how well learners speak, listen, and write.

Lack of vocabulary students are very likely to fail in their study or at least they will have difficulty in making progress in those skills. According to Deighton (1971: 461), vocabulary is the most important aspect to learn English. Vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language (Cameron, 2000). Harmon, Wood and Keser, (2009) as well as Linse (2005) state that learners' vocabulary development is an important aspect of their language development.

In reality, many people who learn English especially the beginners are often faced with the problem of vocabulary mastery. It could be seen from the preliminary observation conducted in November 2016 at SMP N 02 Sinaboi at Rokan Hilir regency. Based on the preliminary observation, it was found that the learners faced some obstacles in learning English, especially in mastering the vocabulary. They were not able to practice English. One of the factors was that they could not understand English. They were not able to pronounce the words correctly, they were not able to put the words in good order, they could not memorize the meaning of words, and most of them were lack of vocabulary. In the end, they got bad scores in English tests.

SMPN 02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir made great efforts to encourage the students to have more vocabulary. For instance, the school encouraged the students to memorize and put in their heads 5 English words every day except on holiday which was applied for one year. This activity was done in each classrooms fifteen minutes before the compulsary subjects began. In addition, every student had borrowed a mini dictionary freely to support their study.

Furthermore, the teacher had made a rule for the students to use English as much as they could to communicate with the others during the English class. But the vocabulary mastery of students was still low. When they were asked about some vocabulary around them, they could only answer the very familiar ones such as a pen, and a book. They did not know the words like shirt, floor, cupboard, and so forth although the words had been provided in their mini dictionary. They were not able to remember the words they had memorized for along time.

These problems probably occured as the school or the teachers had not found or applied appropriate method especially in teaching vocabulary. Some teachers tended to ignore the acquisition of vocabulary in the classrooms and some others still applied conventional teaching strategies in teaching vocabulary such as drills, repeatition after the teacher or memorizing words to be tested in the next meeting. It seems, the phenomenon matches what Riahipour and Saba (2012) cite, traditional activities such as memorization of long vocabulary lists, derivations, repetition of words, translation, fill-in-the-blank exercises are boring for students.

Based on the above phenomenon, it is important to find effective ways in teaching vocabulary. The teachers shoud be smart in finding, creating, or chosing appropriate strategies in teaching vocabulary. The strategies should be able to encourage and motivate them to learn English. There are many techniques and methods of language teaching that can be selected for teaching vocabulary. One of the teaching strategies that were recommended by some researchers for

motivating the students to learn English is by using games (Azar, 2012; Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011; Huyen & Nga, 2003).

Hurwits (1969) states that games awake the students' eagerness to learn, to think, to imagine, to listen, to create, and to express their ideas. So, the lesson will be more absorbed by them and they are involved in the activities directly. There are various games that can be used in teaching vocabulary. Seeing the age and the characteristic of the learners, the crossword puzzles game and thematic dominoes game are considered appopriate to solve the problem. Therefore, in this study, crossword puzzles and thematic dominoes games were recommended to help the students to improve their vocabulary mastery.

The crossword puzzle is a word game in which words corresponding to numbered clues or defenitions are supplied and fitted into corrsespondingly numbered sets of squares, one letter per square, the words being arranged horizontlly or vertically so that most letters form part of two words. This game can make the teaching-learning process attractive. Not only does the crossword puzzle offer a challenge that motivates the students to try to solve the puzzle by making learning fun and relaxed (Bressan (1970). Besides, it also gives much opportunity for students to practise and repeat the sentence pattern and vocabulary (Widaningsih, (2009). Furthermore, a number of related studies show us the application of crossword puzzle game as an effective way in teaching vocabulary (Ngoroje, Ndung'u, Gathigia, 2013; Nining, Wiwik, Annur, 2013; Rosnelly, 2010; Dini, 2012; Rokuhuma, 2011; Yheni, 2014).

Another strategy is applying thematic dominoes game. A thematic domino game is a kind of game that will motivate the students in the learning vocabulary. Khasanah, Chamdani, & Susiani (2012) view that Dominoes game is very effective for increasing the students' vocabulary mastery. Thematic domino is a pedagogical model based on the selection of a theme or topic of study by using the domino card, for example, a theme about profession, so vocabulary in this game must connect with profession. Thematic domino can be played in the group like a domino game, but only the students search answers in vocabulary form based on the question that have been prepared. Thematic dominoes game requires students to compete which will determine the winner in this game. The media of thematic dominoes games that were used in the research were in the form of pictorial Dominoes cards. The Dominoes-card shows not only pictures but also some words or phrases which describe animals. This is in line with Lessard-Clouston idea (2013) stating that vocabulary can be defined as the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do.

Thus, based on the background above, it was necessary to carry out a research entitled "*A Comparison Between The Use of Crossword Puzzle Game and Thematic Dominoes Game on Students' Vocabulary Mastery at SMP N02 Sinaboi of Rokan Hilir Regency.*"

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main aim of this study was to investigate the comparison between the effects of using Crossword Puzzle and Thematic Dominoes game on students' vocabulary mastery. Based on the problems in the background, the students got difficulties in vocabulary mastery. The students were not able to understand the meaning of words and got difficulty in memorizing them. The students felt embarrassed to practice English, so they got difficulty in pronouncing words. The way of the students to improve vocabulary was by memorizing words separately not in context. The students had limited number of vocabulary and it was hard for them to find synonym and antonym.

In order to avoid some gaps, these questions were needed to be addressed: What factors made the students' vocabulary mastery still low? Had the teachers implemented the proper strategies in teaching vocabulary? What efforts to be made to improve students' vocabulary mastery? What strategy was suitable to improve students' vocabulary mastery? Could direct method with crossword puzzle game improve students' vocabulary mastery? Can direct method with thematic dominoes game improve d the students' vocabulary mastery? At last, which strategies gave more significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery whether using direct method with crossword puzzle game or direct method with thematic dominoes game at SMP N02 Sinaboi at Rokan Hilir Regency?

To solve the problem, teachers should create an appropriate strategy in which learners can acquire their vocabulary as much as possible through funny, attractive and interactive activities. Looking at the learning principles of using

crossword puzzle and thematic dominoes games, they were considered as appropriate strategies in teaching vocabulary.

Richard (2002: 255) says that vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basic for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. Hubbard (1983) states that vocabulary can be defined as a powerful carrier of meaning. Additionally, Diamond & Gutlohn (2006) suggest that vocabulary is the knowledge of words and their meanings. This means that without establishing a strong vocabulary base first, comprehension and use of a language will not be achieved. In addition, the student should be able to recognize words, and know their meanings as well. Thus, when a student is effectively able to recognize and use a word in different contexts, speak, write, pronounce the word well, she/he has the knowledge and meaning of that word. Nevertheles, the students of SMP N02 Sinaboi at Rokan Hilir Regency still have problem in vocabulary mastery as mentioned in the background above.

Crossword puzzle game is a useful way in teaching vocabularies for students. And from the statements above, by using crossword puzzle game in teaching-learning vocabulary process will become a variation of teaching that helps students understand and memorize English words easily. According to Wahyuningsih (2009), crossword puzzle is a game in which words guessed from their definitions and are fitted into a diagram of white and black squares. The crossword has words written horizontally (across clues) and words written vertically (down clues). The pattern of black squares usually serves to separate each word from adjacent words, as cited in (Martin C. Njoroge, 2013). Crossword

puzzle is indirect learning. When students are playing the game, but they do not realize that they are learning. (Ratnawati, 2013) states "This showed that Crossword Puzzle could be used to sustain students' interest and make the students feel relax."

The thematic dominoes game is a kind of game that will make the teaching learning process more attractive. The thematic dominoes are interesting medium that should be given to the students, they will be motivated to study and by thematic dominoes it can enriching their vocabulary. And also make thematic dominoes interesting by students and make it critical thinking, remembering, predicting, and guess the meaning of words. The thematic dominoes is a one of media of learning which provide stimulus to the students in fun and active learning (Malik, 2008).

1.3 LIMITATION OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigated the comparison between the effects of using crossword puzzle and thematic dominoes games on the students' vocabulay mastery. The vocabuary mastery was focused on things around us (things in the kitchen, things in a bag, things in a bathroom, parts of the human body, cardinal number, family members and animals around us).

1.4 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to find out which strategy was more appropriate to be used in teaching students to enrich their vocabulary mastery by comparing the crossword puzzle game and the thematic dominoes game at

SMP N02 Sinaboi Rokan Hilir Regency. The study was carried out to meet the following objectives::

a. To find out a significant difference of students' vocabulary mastery before being given a treatment by using Crossword Puzzle and Thematic Dominoes Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency.

b. To find out a significant difference of students' vocabulary mastery before and after being given a treatment by using Crossword Puzzle Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency.

c. To find out a significant difference of students' vocabulary mastery before and after being given a treatment by using Thematic Dominoes Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency.

d. To find out a significant difference of the students' vocabulary mastery after being given a treatment by using Crossword Puzzle and Thematic Dominoes Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency.

e. To find out a significant difference of the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery by using Crossword Puzzle Game and Thematic Dominoes Game.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the limitation above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

a. Is there any significant difference of the students' vocabulary mastery before being given a treatment by using Crossword Puzzle and Thematic Dominoes Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency?

b. Is there any significant difference of the students' vocabulary mastery before and after being given the treatment by using Crossword Puzzle Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency?

c. Is there any significant difference of the students' vocabulary mastery before and after being given a treatment by using Thematic Dominoes Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency?

d. Is there any significant difference of the students' vocabulary mastery after being given treatments by using Crossword Puzzle and Thematic Dominoes Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency?

e. Is there any significant difference of the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery by using Crossword Puzzle Game and Thematic Dominoes Game at SMP N02 Sinaboi, Rokan Hilir Regency?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research attempted to explore the comparison between the use of Crossword Puzzle and Thematic Dominoes games on students' vocabulary mastery. This research was conducted because there were many demands or necessities on English proficiency such as increasing of students' scores for

English lesson in the school, the need for enriching students' vocabulary to improve their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, the need to improve teachers' knowledge and ability in using appropriate strategies in teaching and learning process in order to make the learning process become easier, enjoyable and attractive.

To make a successful teaching and learning process in the classroom, teachers should apply some strategies. Some of the strategies are by using Crossword Puzzle and Thematic Dominoes Game. Furthermore, some related studies have proved that these strategies are effective to enrich students' vocabulary. Besides, the Crossword Puzzle Game and the Thematic Dominoes Game are good ways to discover new words and their spellings, thus improving student vocabulary. And also, they gave more opportunity to the students to practice and repeat the sentence patterns and vocabulary. The students may have fun, are relaxed and challenged, and they may also memorize the vocabulary in different ways. So, by using Crossword Puzzle Game and Thematic Dominoes Game, hopefully it could improve and increase the students' vocabulary mastery.

This research is expected to help the students to solve their problems in understanding the meaning of words in sentences and mastering the vocabulary by using both strategies because through these strategies the students are expected to increase and memorize the vocabulary. The research are also expected to encourage the students to be more active and feel relaxed and full of fun in the learning activities by using Crossword Puzzle Game and Thematic Dominoes Game.

1.7   RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

It is undeniable that vocabulary is one of the important language components in language learning and basic element of language. So, if the students do not have enough vocabulary it is impossible for them to speak fluently and write accurately. Rahmadi (1990:1) states that students still have problems with the four language skills due to lack of vocabulary achievement. It indicates that vocabulary is very influential to English students in their efforts to learn the language because without sufficient vocabulary, the students cannot speak fluently; sometimes they do not know what the speaker says. In short, it is necessary for students to have adequate vocabulary in order to communicate well.

Through this research the teachers can identify which strategy can give significant effects to increase and improve the students' vocabulary mastery. Hurwitz (1969:13) states that games awaken the students' eagerness to learn, to think, to imagine, to listen, to create and express their ideas. So, the lesson will be more absorbed by the students and they are involved in the activities directly because games give a pleasant variation in learning. Hopefully, this study is one of the efforts to improve the quality of the school by improving the students' achievement.

This research is not only for the students and the teachers' need, but may also be useful for further research. Ben Sola (2012) views that researchers search for suitable vocabulary that can result a best learning. The findings of this study could provide some forms of empirical data for future research in this area. It could

perhaps also help to apply Crossword Puzzles and Thematic Dominoes Games more effectively, especially in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Through this research others educators can be provided with insight, information and motivation for them to teach and improve their students' skills by using variety media to make learning more fun and attractive, especially in English. Case (1994:5) states that puzzles are useful for language learners because the enjoyment, satisfaction, reflection and play can focus learners' attention on the language in a concentrated but non-stressful way.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

To get general understanding about the aim of this research, the key terms need to be defined.

1. Crossword Puzzle

Crossword puzzle is a puzzle in which words have to be written (from numbered clues) vertically or horizontally in spaces on a chequered square (Hornby ,1974:206).

2. Thematic Dominoes

Thematic is a theme or something related to the theme. And Domino is a game in a set of dominoes which is taken and placed on the table. So, thematic dominoes is a game of dominoes that have a theme (Brown, 2009 : 80). Dominoes game in technical vocabulary does not contain numbers like dominoes game a general, but contain questions and answers related to specific themes.

3. Vocabulary Mastery

Webster (1993:1116) defines vocabulary as list of words, and phrases, usually arranged, explained, or defined. The word "mastery" refers to great skill or knowledge (oxford, 256). Thus, vocabulary mastery is defined as a number of vocabulary (words) in a language which contains information about its meaning, form, and usage in context of communication. In this study the focus is placed on English words learned especially by junior high school students of the first year of SMP 02 Sinaboi Rokan Hilir regency.