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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Nowadays, English is a very crucial in the major aspects of life in this global era. Because the spread of the English language as a lingua Franca throughout the world, lingua Franca can be defined as a language adopted for communication between two speakers who have a different first language or between two speakers who use English as their second language (Harmer, p. 1, 2001). English has brought great advantages as a key priority for progress in different areas such as science, technology, finance and business in order to facilitate international communication.

As an International language, English has become very popular in many schools. In Indonesia, English is taught from primary school level to university level. At the elementary school level, English is taught as a local content. Old Deputy Education, Minister Musliar Kasim announced that English would be scrapped for lower elementary pupils as part of a curriculum change. English is not made compulsory in the new curriculum for elementary schools (Jakarta Globe, December 04th, 2012).

However, at junior and senior high school levels, English is offered as a compulsory subject with a time allocation of four classes-hours a week, whereas at the university or college, it is accorded for two to six credit-hours and the curriculum focus on English for specific purposes (Setiadi, 2006). The main goal

of teaching English is to master four language skills and language components like vocabulary and grammar.

There are four language skills that have to be mastered by the students in learning English. The four language skills are reading, listening, speaking and writing. Furthermore, those skills are related to each other and cannot be independent; therefore, students need to master all of the four skills. This is supported by Uma and Ponnambala (2001) who state that mastering language skills will determine the students' communicative competence in the target language.

Chastain (1988: 217) states that reading is a receptive skill in that reader is receiving a message from a writer. The reading goal is to read for meaning or to recreate the writer's meaning. Reading to improve pronunciation, practice grammatical forms, and study vocabulary does not constitute reading at all because reading involves comprehension. When readers do not comprehend, they are not reading. The importance of reading is that reading should be given the greatest attention is any level of education, similarly, Moats (2005) and Westwood (2008) said that reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends. It means that students who do not learn the basic reading, they will not easily master other skills and knowledge. It is the most important skill to master in order to ensure success in learning. Also, it is a process that requires effort on the readers' parts if they want to understand what they are reading.

The main aim of teaching reading at the junior high school and senior high school level in Indonesia is conducted based on the reading objectives in the

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English curriculum. It is stated in reading competence that the students are expected to understand the meaning of interpersonal and transactional written texts in the form of the recount, narrative, procedure and descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion and review in the context of daily life. In short, the students are really expected to understand and comprehend reading texts that are in accordance with daily life. (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan, 2006:31).

Based on the preliminary study conducted at SMAN 1 Benai dated on 15th August 2017, many students of SMAN 1 Benai had difficulties in comprehending the reading passage and some students of the eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Benai who could be categorized as poor readers. The students still faced more problems in reading comprehension. It was proven when the researcher interviewed and shared ideas with the English teachers there. It was informed that many students still had more problems in reading comprehension. Many students had difficulties to determine main idea questions, detail questions, recognize the organization of ideas, find unstated details and pronoun referents, answer implied detail and transition questions, find definitions from structural clues, determine meanings from word parts, meanings of difficult words, meanings of simple words and determine specific information, identify the main topic of the passage, the main idea of the passage, the factual information, the supporting ideas, and references and inferences, synonyms, antonyms and part of speech of the words. Therefore, they got difficulty in answering the questions from the passage.



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In many cases, students had difficulties in reading comprehension because the students did not understand some of words meaning in the text; the students could not identify inference; the students was could categorized as poor readers; the students had a limited vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge. In this case, reading comprehension is an interactive mental process between a reader's linguistic knowledge, knowledge of the word, and knowledge about a given topic. While reading, the reader constructs various representations of the text that is important for comprehension.

In addition, vocabulary knowledge can help the learner to comprehend written texts and reading can contribute to vocabulary growth (Nation, 2001; Stahl, 1990). Furthermore, Cooper (1984) also described vocabulary as being the key ingredient to successful reading while other researchers argue that “no text comprehension is possible, either in one's native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text's vocabulary” (Laufer 1997, p. 20).

Moreover, background knowledge of the learners is one aspect of language processing which enhances the comprehension in learning a language. Background knowledge is organized in the schemata, generalized mental representations of our experience that are available to help us understand new experience (Brown, 2006).

Based on the phenomena, students had difficulties in reading comprehension, especially in the difficult words and new materials. The students need vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge to guide them so that they are able to understand about the passage. Vocabulary knowledge and

background knowledge is expected to be able to overcome the problems. So, it was necessary to conduct a research entitled “*THE INFLUENCE OF USING VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE AND BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ON STUDENTS’ READING COMPREHENSION AT SMAN 1 BENAI*”.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The importance of reading is that reading should be given the greatest attention is any level of education, especially at university level, similarly, Moats (2005) and Westwood (2008) said that reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends. It means that students who do not learn the basic reading, they will not easily master other skills and knowledge.

Based on the background of the problem above, many students at SMAN 1 Benai had several problems in reading comprehension. First, they had difficulties to comprehend the text, identify main ideas, factual information, supporting details, meaning of words, references and inferences. Second, they also had difficulties to identify the unfamiliar words, synonyms, antonyms, and part of speech of the words. Third, they also had difficulties to make inferences or conclusions from the text. Lack of understanding of vocabulary knowledge caused students have difficulties in reading because to comprehend the sentences they have to know the components of vocabulary knowledge itself. Such as, word meaning, part of speech, synonym, antonym, and collocation. In fact, they are still low about it.

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Based on the background of the problem above, many students at SMAN 1 Benai were not able to comprehend the text well, especially in comprehending explanation text. Some of students had difficulties to answer main idea questions and detail questions, recognize the organization of ideas, find unstated details and pronoun referents, answer implied detail and transition questions, find definitions from structural clues, determine meanings from word parts, meanings of difficult words, meanings of simple words and determine specific information identify the main topic of the passage, identify the main idea, identify the factual information, identify the supporting ideas, and make inferences and confirm predictions based on background knowledge.

Therefore, they got difficulty in answering the question from the passage. Lack of understanding of vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge cause students have difficulties in reading, because to comprehend the passage they have to know the vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge itself. In fact, they were still low about it.

Because those phenomena employed by the students at SMAN 1 Benai, some questions are needed to be addressed? What are the students' difficulties in reading? Why do the students get difficulties in reading? Why are the students not able to master vocabulary knowledge? Why are the students not able to master background knowledge? Are vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge able to solve students' problem in reading? Is there any significant influence between vocabulary knowledge and students' reading comprehension? Is there any significant influence between background knowledge towards students'

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knowledge. Background knowledge is one the factors support learners' comprehension in reading. Brown (2006) stated that background knowledge is organized in schemata, generalized mental representations of our experience that are available to help us understand new experience.

1.3. Limitation of the Problem

This research focused on investigating the influence of using vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai. The subject of this research was limited at the eleventh grade students majoring in a natural science program at SMAN 1 Benai. Explanation text was used in this study as one of the kind English passages. This research focused on the ability of the students to link the text to make the questions according to the indicators of vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge and reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai.

1.4 Goal and Objectives of the Study

This research aimed to identify the influence of using vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on students' reading comprehension in explanation text at SMAN 1 Benai, and the objectives of the research are:

1. To determine the level of using vocabulary knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai.

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2. To determine the level using background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai.
3. To determine the level of using vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai.
4. To determine the influence of using vocabulary knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh students at SMAN 1 Benai.
5. To determine the influence of using background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh students at SMAN 1 Benai.
6. To determine the influence of using vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh students at SMAN 1 Benai.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions of this research are formulated as in the following questions:

1. What is the level of vocabulary knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai?
2. What is the level of background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai?
3. What is the level of vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai?

These studies have made it clear that understanding the role of schema in the reading process provides deep insights into why students may fail or succeed in comprehending the written text.

This study is apparently one of the first few attempts to investigate the influence of using vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai. Particularly by conducting this study, it is able to give positive contribution, whether vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge have correlation with students' reading comprehension.

This study is expected to be useful, especially in teaching reading practically and theoretically. Theoretically, the result of this research is expected to verify the theories which indicated that there is a significant influence of using vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on students' reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students at SMAN 1 Benai.

Practically, for the students of the eleventh grade students of SMAN 1 Benai by conducting this study is able to give positive contribution, whether vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge have correlation with students' reading comprehension. Thus, they can improve their capabilities in vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge to comprehend the text well. In addition, this study is able to find the outcomes of the problems that students face in reading. Furthermore, the result of this study can be used as a reference for the future researchers whether they want to conduct the similar study like this research.

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1.7 Rationale of the Study

This study is conducted to find out the influence of using vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on students' reading comprehension at the eleventh grade of SMAN 1 Benai. Vocabulary knowledge is the crucial aspect almost in every aspect of language knowledge (Daller, Milton & Treffers-Daller, 2007). According to Qian (2002), vocabulary knowledge is fundamental in reading comprehension because it functions as identical as background knowledge in reading comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge facilitates decoding, which is a significant part of reading. Joshi and Aaron (2000) found that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading ability when factoring reading speed with decoding and comprehension.

Furthermore, background knowledge and reading comprehension are closely related. (Johnston, 1999) stated that a person with more background knowledge is able to comprehend better than a person with less. Background knowledge is one the factors support learners' comprehension in reading. In addition, Brown (2006) stated that background knowledge is organized in schemata, generalized mental representations of our experience that are available to help us understand new experience.

Rationally, based on the explanation above, vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge have a relationship with reading comprehension. Because vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge are important things for the students in order to get success in reading. Furthermore, the students will be tested based on students' vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge which they

studied on the eleventh grade of SMAN 1 Benai and it is correlated with their reading comprehension.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

In order to avoid the reader misunderstanding in reading this research, the definitions of the terms will be defined in the following:

1. **Influence** is the effect that somebody or something has on the way a person thinks or behaves or in the way that something works or develops (Hornby, 2000). In this research, influence is a correlational research that attempts to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more variables (Gay and Airasian, 2000). In other words, influence is a measure of the relationship between two set data in this research.
2. **Vocabulary Knowledge** is the knowledge of words and word meanings (Milton 2009; Nation, 1990, 2001). Vocabulary knowledge is considered an important part almost in every aspect of language knowledge (Daller, Milton & Treffers-Daller, 2007). It is a benchmark of proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking.
3. **Background Knowledge** is all knowledge learners have when entering a learning environment that is potentially relevant to acquiring new knowledge (Biemans and Simons, 1996). It is the raw material that conditions learning. It acts as mental hooks for the lodging of new information and is the basic building block of content and skill knowledge.

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4. **Reading Comprehension** is the ability of the student to interpret and comprehend what the writer expresses in reading text. Longman (1987:30) said that reading comprehension is the result of understanding the reading.

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