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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION)

I.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

English has been considered as an essential language to be learned in order to meet the communication needs in this globalization era. Realizing the importance of English, Indonesian government treats English as the first foreign language and sets it as a compulsory subject at elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school as stated in standard of content by Kemendikbud 2013. The teaching of foreign language, specifically English, is aimed to develop students' ability to communicate with world society. Further, it is suggested that English is an international language which has to be taught for the sake of development of science, technology, arts and culture as well as the development of relationship among nations (Depdikbud, 1994:1). In addition, Harmer (2001:1) asserts that 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. In brief, English is a language that is necessary to learn.

Frank (1972:6) states that vocabulary is one of the English components, which has to be mastered and acquired by students in learning a new language. Further, the Frank's statement is supported by Coady and Huckin (1997) who suggest that vocabulary is the first step to be taught before teaching other aspects of language. According to Nation (2001), the words level for Junior High School is 1000 words. It is in line with the curriculum in Indonesia, in which, the



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government requires students at Junior High School should master 900-1200 words nowadays (<http://edukasi.kompasiana.com>). Therefore, it is very impossible to learn a particular language with a limited number of vocabulary. Furthermore, the importance of vocabulary is strengthened by Linse, 2006 who asserts that language ability of learners can be improved overall by vocabulary improvement (Linse, 2006). In addition, vocabulary is an element that links the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing as cited by Richards and Renandya, 2002. It is stated that vocabulary is one of the core components of language proficiency and it determines how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. Another essential thing of vocabulary mastery is it can make learners efficiently communicate and fundamentally comprehend English articles and academic essays (Dickinson, 1987). The two aspects are really newsworthy. Lots of people are well known all over the world because of their abundant knowledge which is supported by their capability in communicating in English well. Besides, lots of newsworthy knowledge and references can be taken from English articles and academic essays. As the matter of fact, the main problem in learning a language is lack of vocabulary (Gunning, 2002).

Furthermore, according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2000), vocabulary knowledge is essential to comprehending text. When students do not understand at least 90% of the words in a text, they do not adequately understand what they read (Hirsch, 2003; Sedita, 2005). The research suggests that students acquire 2,000 to 3,500 new words a year and know the meaning of approximately 50,000 words by the time they

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graduate from high school (Graves, 2006; Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert, 2004; PREL, 2008).

In brief, vocabulary is arguably the foundation of learning a language and its role has been claimed by Hammer, 1991, If language structure makes up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and flesh.

Referring to some journals, it is found that many students still have problems in vocabulary mastery. For instance, Azar (2012) stated that EFL students, particularly Iranian students, usually got bored in vocabulary lessons because they did not change their learning habits, such as writing words on paper, trying to learn by heart or learning passively through the teacher's explanations (international journal of basic and applied science, Vol. 01, No. 02). Besides, Munawaroh also stated most of the students of MTs Pesantren Sabillil Muttaqien Tanjunganom NGANJUK found difficulties in using English as the target language. One of the main causes was lack of vocabulary. After memorizing a certain number of words and their meanings, sooner they forgot them. They were bored and they just had less attention and low motivation to learn (International Journal of Current Research Vol. 5, Issue, 02, pp.313-321, February, 2013). Further, Elham suggests one of the difficult parts of learning the target language for English language learners is the acquisition of vocabulary. It is a hard work, so an attempt is required to understand, produce and manipulate the target words (Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, Volume 2, Issue 3, 2015, pp. 39-47)

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Based on preliminary study carried out at SMP IT Bangkinang, it was also found some problems related to the vocabulary teaching and learning process. The traditional method was usually used by looking up difficult words and finding the meaning in the dictionary and students supposed to memorize the words. Consequently, the students were lazy to memorize the unfamiliar words that they heard or read in the text. They had difficulties in understanding or comprehending the meanings of unfamiliar words and memorizing new words.

According to the principal's explanation, the school also implemented a system, memorizing - depositing 5 English words every day except on holiday which was done for one year. It was done in each of the students' classrooms fifteen minutes before the compulsory subjects began. Besides, every student was given a mini dictionary book freely to support their vocabulary building. Unfortunately, the students' vocabulary mastery was still low. When they were asked about some vocabulary around them, they could only answer very familiar ones such as pen, table and book. They did not know the words like a shirt, floor, cupboard, and so forth, although the words were provided in their mini dictionary book. They were not able to remember the words they had memorized in long-term period. These problems probably occurred since the school or the teachers have not found or implemented appropriate method especially in vocabulary instruction. Some teachers tended to ignore the acquisition of vocabulary and used conventional way in case of teaching vocabulary such as drill, the students repeat after the teacher or the students memorize it by themselves, the present week the

students memorize ten words and will be tested in the next meeting. It seems, the phenomenon agrees with what Riahipour and Saba (2012) kite, traditional activities such as the memorization of long vocabulary lists, derivations, repetition of words, translation, fill-in-the-blank exercises are boring for students.

Based on the phenomenon, it is important to find effective ways in vocabulary instruction. The teachers should be smart in finding, creating, or choosing appropriate strategies in teaching vocabularies. The strategies should be able to encourage and motivate them to learn. One of the activities of teaching vocabulary which is believed to be effective is through games. 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 several games that can be used in teaching vocabulary. Seeing the age and the characteristic of the learners, crossword puzzles and word search puzzle games are assumed appropriate to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Therefore, in this study, crossword puzzles and word search puzzle games are proposed to be evaluated in vocabulary instruction.

The crossword puzzle refers a word game in which words corresponding to numbered clues or definitions are supplied and fitted into correspondingly numbered sets of squares, one letter per square, the words being arranged horizontally 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 will motivate the students to try to solve the puzzle

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by making learning fun and relaxed (Bressan (1970). Besides, it also gives much opportunity for students to practice and repeat the sentence pattern and vocabulary (Widaningsih, (2009). Furthermore, it is found lots of related studies showing us the application of crossword puzzle game is an effective way in teaching vocabulary (Ngoroje, Ndung'u, Gathigia, 2013; Nining, Wiwik, Annur, 2013; Rosnelly, 2010; Dini, 2012; Rokuhuma, 2011; Yheni, 2014).

Word-search puzzle game is another instructional game that reinforces the word level onto a grid and persuades the class to make suggestions for the puzzle clues. The object, word search puzzle is to find the listed hidden words. The words may be hidden in any direction: horizontally, vertically, diagonally, and forwards and backwards. It gives much opportunity for the students to practice and repeat the sentence pattern and vocabulary. The students will feel fun, relaxed and challenged, and they will memorize the vocabulary in different way. Lisa (2016) mentions some benefits of word-search puzzle: it helps develop word recognition, it assists learning in context clues, it helps develop pattern recognition, it introduces and reviews vocabulary, and it is fun. It is in line with A Harvard Business Review article by Gilkey and Klits (2007) who assert that word-search puzzle emphasize pattern recognition, a key cognitive tool. Pattern recognition is the brain's ability to find order and create meaning from data around us. Furthermore, they also suggest that word-search puzzles have dopamine connection which is naturally produced in our brains. When we finish finding words in a word-search puzzle, our brains reward us with a surge of dopamine. Finally, some of related studies also show us that word search game is

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able to improve students' vocabulary mastery (Munawaroh, 2013; Vossoughi, 2009; Sholikhah, 2011; Damayanti, 2014; Astutik, 2015).

Thus, based on the background above, it seems interesting to carry out a research entitled “A Comparison of Students' Vocabulary Mastery being Taught Using Crossword Puzzle and Word Search Puzzle Game at SMP IT Bangkinang.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Based on the background of the study, it has been recognized that students of SMP IT Bangkinang still faced some problems in vocabulary mastery, although the school has made some efforts such as implementing a system, memorizing - depositing 5 English words every day and giving every student a mini dictionary book freely. Unfortunately, the students' vocabulary mastery was still poor. They were not familiar with the vocabulary that exists around them. At the same time, they could not write the vocabulary in the correct form and use it in context.

Referring some problems mentioned above, the following questions need to be addressed: What factors make the students' vocabulary mastery still low? Have the teachers implemented the proper strategies in teaching vocabulary? What efforts should be made to improve students' vocabulary mastery? What strategy is suitable to improve students' vocabulary mastery? Can crossword puzzle game improve students' vocabulary mastery? Can word search game puzzle improve the students 'vocabulary mastery? At last, which strategies give more significant effect to students' vocabulary mastery whether using crossword puzzle game or word search puzzle game at SMP IT Bangkinang?

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To solve the problem, teachers should create an appropriate situation in which learners can acquire vocabulary as much as possible through funny, attractive and interactive activities. Seeing the learning principles of using crossword puzzle and word search puzzle games, they are considered as the appropriate ones in teaching vocabulary.

Kerry (2007:14), writer of educational games asserts crossword solving involves several useful skills, including vocabulary, reasoning, spelling, and word attack skills. To solve any crossword puzzle, a person must be able to identify and understand the terms used. This often involves acquiring new vocabulary or terminology. It can also involve making differentiations between similar words or phrases. Correctly deciphering a crossword also requires exact spelling, which for students may mean practicing dictionary skills. Other important skills required for completing these puzzles include making inferences, evaluating choices, and drawing conclusions. Another benefit of using crossword puzzles in the classroom is that they are associated with recreation, and can be less intimidating for students as review tools. Puzzle solving is a much more active type of learning, and engages students with the material more than passive types of review techniques do. Crossword puzzles also have the advantage of appealing to different learning styles. Visual learners often have strong puzzle-solving skills, and feel great satisfaction when they complete one. Auditory learners enjoy systematic reasoning, so they also benefit from the sequential steps of completing a crossword. Even kinesthetic learners enjoy the multi-task strategies required to

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solve a crossword. Finally, crossword puzzles have the benefit of being customizable to study the content.

Word-search puzzle game is another instructional game that reinforces the word level onto a grid and persuades the class to make suggestions for the puzzle clues. The object, word search puzzle is to find the listed hidden words. The words may be hidden in any direction: horizontally, vertically, diagonally, and forwards and backwards. This game has some benefits to students. It helps develop word recognition, assists in learning context clues, helps pattern recognition, and introduces and reviews vocabulary (Astutik, 2015). Gilkey and Klits (2007) assert that word-search puzzle emphasize pattern recognition, a key cognitive tool. Pattern recognition is the brain's ability to find order and create meaning from data around us. Furthermore, they also suggest that word-search puzzles have dopamine connection which is naturally produced in our brains. When we finish to find words in a word-search puzzle, our brains reward us with a surge of dopamine. As the result, through this game, the students have strong retention toward new vocabulary they know.

I.3. LIMITATION OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigated the comparison of students' vocabulary mastery being taught using crossword puzzle and word search puzzle game. Since there are some types of crossword puzzle, British style grid was used in this study because it is the most familiar one. Besides, there are some tools available to

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create it. The vocabulary test was focused on things in the classroom, things in the bag, things in the living room, things in the bedroom, things in the bathroom, things in the kitchen, and animals around us. This study was carried out at SMP IT Bangkinang. The Sample of this study was taken from the first year students. Class VII.A was chosen as an experimental group 1 and VII.B as an experimental group 2.

1.4. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to find out a comparison of students' vocabulary mastery between those who were taught using crossword puzzle and those who were taught using word search puzzle game at SMP IT Bangkinang. Specifically, this study was carried out to uncover the objectives of the study as stated as follows:

- a. To determine whether using crossword puzzle game has a significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery at SMP IT Bangkinang.
- b. To determine whether using word search puzzle game has a significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery at SMP IT Bangkinang.
- c. To determine a difference of students' vocabulary mastery between those who are taught using crossword puzzle and those who are taught using word search puzzle game at SMP IT Bangkinang.

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1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the objectives of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- a. Does using crossword puzzle game have any significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery at SMP IT Bangkinang?
- b. Does using word search puzzle game have any significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery at SMP IT Bangkinang?
- c. Is there any significant difference of students' vocabulary mastery between those who are taught using crossword puzzle and those who are taught using word search puzzle game at SMP IT Bangkinang?

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research tries to see the comparison of students' vocabulary mastery being taught using crossword puzzle and word search puzzle game. Hopefully, this study may provide a useful launching pad for further research in this area of interest. Besides, the findings of this study hopefully can provide some forms of empirical data for future research in this area. It could perhaps also help in the more effective implementation of Crossword Puzzle and Word Search Puzzle Game, especially in improving students' vocabulary mastery. This study also tries to provide some feedbacks concerning the comparison of using Crossword Puzzle and Word Search Puzzle Game in some factors that involve in the implementation. It is also expected that this study gives meaningful learning



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experience to the students because both of the strategies give any benefits in improving their vocabulary mastery.

The last but not the least, It is hoped this study is able to reveal the significant differences between using Crossword Puzzle and Word Search Puzzle Game on the students' vocabulary mastery. Thus, it is suggested certain solutions to the problems being faced and there is a valuable experience after the research conducted.

1.7. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The choice of vocabulary instruction and acquisition as a topic of this study is based on a number of reasons. First of all, vocabulary is an important factor in the comprehension of language and the number of words acquired by a learner is related to competent language use (Nation, 1990). Students who have a limited vocabulary are at risk of not becoming proficient in reading (Beck and McKeown, 2005; Blachowicz and Fisher, 2000. In addition, vocabulary is a major factor of poor reading comprehension, and students' word knowledge is strongly linked to success in academics (NRP, 2000 and Nagy, 1998). Stahl and Nagy (2006) add that the more words we have, the more complex ways we can think about the world.

Widaningsih (2009) views that a good solution to poor performance in English as a Second Language is by teaching vocabulary using crossword puzzles. Furthermore, some related studies have proved that this strategy is effective to improve students' vocabulary mastery. These games are able to create

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fun learning and make the students relaxed (Bressan (1970). Besides, they also give much opportunity for students to practice and repeat the sentence pattern and vocabulary (Rokhuma: 2011).

Besides, Word search puzzle games have also been proved to be an effective way to improve students' vocabulary mastery. It is a good way to discover new words and their spelling, thus improving vocabulary. Besides, It gives much opportunity for the students to practice and repeat the sentence pattern and vocabulary. The students may be fun, relaxed and challenged, and they may memorize the vocabulary in different way. Lots of related study also shows us that word search game is able to improve students' vocabulary mastery (Munawaroh, 2013; Vossoughi, 2009; Sholikhah, 2011; Damayanti, 2014; Astutik, 2015).

I.8. DEFINITION OF TERMS

To get a general understanding about the aim of this research, it needs to clarify the following terms:

1. Crossword Puzzle

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

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2. Word Search Puzzle

Word search puzzle is a word game that is letter of a word in a grid that usually has a rectangular or square shape. The objective of this puzzle is to find and mark all the words hidden inside the box. The word may be horizontally, vertically, or diagonally (Yulianto, 2011: 36).

3. Vocabulary Mastery

Webster (1993:1116) defines vocabulary as a list of words, and phrases, usually arranged, explained, or defined. The word “mastery” refers to great skill or knowledge (Oxford, 2016). 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.