

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the scope of the study, and the significance of the study.

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

In teaching and learning process, especially language, lexis is one of the basic aspects that is vital to the students' knowledge. Richard and Rodgers (2001) assert that word and word combinations are the building blocks of language learning and communication. In addition, Lewis (1997) suggests that language is made of lexical elements besides grammar. It means that grammar is not the main point for students to learn a language, but lexis.

Lexeme is a unit which may consist of one or more (orthographic) word forms; *simple* containing single word and *complex* being multi-word expressions. For instance the word 'visit', 'visits', 'visiting' and 'visited' are forms of the lexeme 'visit'. According to Cruse (1986) a lexeme refers to a family of lexical unit which is also called as lexical items. Lexical item is a single word or part of a word or a chain of words that forms the basic elements of a language lexicon (vocabulary).

Vocabulary is concerned with meaning. It is needed to be learned by the students as Nation (2011) stated that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. It means that

vocabulary is a very important part to learn a new language and the richer vocabulary a person has, the more capable a person is to communicate with others as Wilkins (1978, p.111) claims that vocabulary is the material to put in the patterns while without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. In addition, Harmer (2002, p.153) cited in Haixia and Zhaohui (2015, p.394) asserts that if language structure makes up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh. He also adds that an ability to manipulate grammatical structure does not have any potential meaning unless words are used.

Vocabulary is one of the basic elements to learn language as stated by Richard and Renandya (2002) that vocabulary is the main component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis or how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. Through vocabulary, language learners can apply listening, speaking, reading and writing skill. In addition, McCarthy (1984) asserts the purpose of vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use them automatically in a wide range of language contexts when the need arises. If someone lack of vocabulary, then it will affect to all the four language skills. Therefore, vocabulary is very vital to be mastered in learning a second or foreign language.

Ujian Nasional (UN) is a national examination that is held annually by the government to measure students' ability in academic. UN is given

to every terminal grade in every level; starting from elementary up to senior high level. The purposes of UN are to map the quality of education service across regions and to set a criterion for graduation as Zakaria (2009), a member of Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BSNP), stated that increasing the quality of education is very important because it is related to human resource quality.

The government puts two skills in English UN. Those are listening and reading comprehension (senior high level). In junior high level, there is only one skill that will be tested, it is reading comprehension. Wu and Hu (2007) show that vocabulary knowledge was found to have a significant and positive correlation with reading achievement and have a role in reading comprehension. Therefore, it can be concluded that the relationship between UN reading comprehension text, lexical items and vocabulary cannot be separated. Students must learn a number of words to prop up their reading ability.

However, comprehending the reading text has become one of the problems for students as stated by Nuttal (1983, p.78) that there are five problems students usually face while they are reading not in their first language, especially when they try to comprehend the text. Those problems are the code or alphabet symbols, vocabulary and sentence structures, cohesive devices and discourse markers, the problem beyond plain sense, and the concepts. Since the students do not know the meaning of words in English reading text or it can be said they are lack of

vocabulary, reading texts become the obstacle in English UN. Their lack of vocabulary makes them difficult to comprehend the reading text. Moreover, Richards (1980) and Krashen (1989) cited in Maximo (2000) also stated that there are many reasons for devoting attention to vocabulary. "First, a large vocabulary is of course essential for mastery of a language. Second language acquirers know this; they carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary is a major problem".

A study entitled *The Vocabulary Profile of UN (Ujian Nasional) 2015 Reading Texts of Senior High School* which carried by Atmadja (2016) revealed that there were 14 reading texts altogether containing part of speech, in which content words are more dominant than functional words and covering 1067 words in the vocabulary list. As this study was conducted in senior high level, the writer is interested in conducting a research for junior high level since in 2013 curriculum junior high school students have their first English subject in junior high level, not from elementary level. It is because the government has made a policy that English in elementary school has been changed its status from compulsory local content (*Muatan Lokal Wajib*) to be extracurricular. This made the writer interested to take a research in junior high school level since students have just known a number of vocabularies in junior high level, which in the third year they will be tested in National Examination.

To consider this condition, the writer is interested in conducting a research related to the vocabulary profile of UN (Ujian Nasional). In order to know what kind of vocabulary mostly encountered in the UN reading text and to assist the students in comprehending the reading texts and doing the UN test much better. In this study, the writer investigates the vocabulary of English UN (Ujian Nasional) 2018 Reading Texts for Junior High School in Jakarta. The writer also adopts the theory proposed by Lewis (1997).

## **1.2. Research Questions**

1. What are the types of lexical items encountered in UN 2018 reading text?
2. How do the vocabularies of UN reading texts for Junior High Schools cover the 1000 – 2800 level new general service list and new academic words list by Browne and Coxhead?

## **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

This study was aimed at investigating types of lexical items encountered in UN 2018 reading text and how the vocabularies of UN reading texts for Junior High Schools covered 1000-2800 new general service list and new academic words list by Browne and Coxhead (2013).

## **1.4. Scope of the Study**

Based on the issue presented, this study focuses on investigating types of lexical items proposed by Lewis (1997) encountered in UN 2018

English reading texts for Junior High School in Jakarta and vocabularies covered in the UN 2018 reading texts.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The result of the study is beneficial for enriching the students' vocabulary mastery and guiding the teacher to broaden students' vocabulary bank.