

Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the introduction. The introduction includes the background of the study, statement and limitation of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, and the significance of the research. Then, it is followed by the organization of the chapters.

Background of the Study

English is an international language. It is used for communication in the field of education, business, technology and other interactions. English is not only a subject learned in classrooms but also a medium for social and practical use (Foley, 2005). In Thailand, English has an increasingly important role in communication with people from other countries (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011). According to Akkakoson (2012), Thailand uses English as a foreign language. For Thai students, English has become an essential subject. They start learning English at a very young age. It is a compulsory subject for all students starting from the primary schools onwards.

There are a lot of Thai students who study abroad including Indonesia. They are senior high school to Ph. D. degree students. They take certain field of study that they prefer. Some of them choose to learn English at English Language Education Department (ELED) at a private university in Yogyakarta. Based on the researcher's observation, Thai students generally always use Thai language to communicate with each other. When they communicate with Indonesians, they use Indonesian language. It is common for them to use two languages either Thai or Indonesian language. For

Thai students who choose English major, they are required to master English. Therefore, they should be proficient in English in order to be successful in their study.

There are several components to learn when students learn English. Eileen (2002) mentioned that they need to learn a number of things including phonology which is a study of sounds, and then morphology which is a study of word formation. Vocabulary component is also a study of word needed to understand and produce words (Schmitt, 2000). Another component of language which should be learned is pragmatic which has to do with language use focusing on how language can be affected by context. The success of learners' communication in a new language depends on learning of each component in order to produce language at the social level as well as academically (Eileen, 2002).

As one of the components in learning a language, Yang and Dai (2012) defined that vocabulary is the most important component of a language. Further, the more learners know the meaning of vocabulary the easier to learn that language (Yang & Dai, 2012). One subcategory of language learning is vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary learning strategy is defined as what the learner do to reach the meaning of the new words, hold these words in long term memory, recall them when comprehension is used in producing language (Ruutemets, 2005). Vocabulary is like keyword to learn a language to be successful and learners can improve their language competence by developing their ability to use Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs).

For second language learners, generally they encounter problems or difficulties in learning English language, except those who join the international class where English is used as the language of instruction (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011). To deal with vocabulary learning problems especially, there are strategies to learn English vocabulary to enhance language learners' effectiveness. According to Dóczy (2011), in language learning, vocabulary learning strategies are important because the acquisition of vocabulary is never ending process and it also helps the learners overcome difficulties. Additionally, Saengpakdeejit (2014) mentioned that learners can increase the effectiveness of their English language learning through the use of vocabulary learning strategy. It is essential for students to be conscious of the basic vocabulary learning strategies which help them in learning vocabulary and apply the strategies effectively.

With regards to the Thai students studying English at ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta, based on the researcher's observation and informal interview, they still find difficulties in learning English especially in vocabulary although English is the medium of instruction in their classes. They generally see unknown words as the main problem to overcome. In reading, they find difficulties to understand the meaning of new or unfamiliar words. They do not have strong vocabulary knowledge because they do not use English in their daily conversation. This makes them struggle to understand the meaning of the words while reading a textbook. In writing and speaking, they do not know a lot of vocabulary, so they find difficulties in writing and presenting in English.

Based on the background above, the researcher is interested in investigating the problems faced by Thai students in learning English vocabulary. As vocabulary learning strategies help the learners increase their vocabulary mastery, it is also important to know the strategies used by Thai students in learning vocabulary. Therefore, the researcher wants to conduct a research on the problems faced and the strategies applied in learning vocabulary by Thai students at ELED of private university in Yogyakarta.

Statement and Limitation of the Problem

In learning English, there are many important components to learn. One of them is learning English vocabulary. When learners lack of vocabulary, it is not easy for them to master English because vocabulary is a foundation to master English skills. Vocabulary becomes a problem in learning English for many students including Thai students. Some of Thai students at English Language Education Department in their study still have difficulties in learning it. They cannot remember some vocabulary that they have just got. They easily forget the meaning of words that they have already known. Very often, they do not know the meaning of new words. Therefore, vocabulary becomes a big problem for them in mastering English. In fact, there are a lot of vocabulary learning strategies that can be used when students learn English. However, there is a possibility that the Thai students do not use the strategies in learning vocabulary maximally. Therefore, it is important to identify the Thai students' problems and strategies in learning vocabulary. Since there is no previous research conducted at English Language Education Department in this private

university addressing this case, the researcher wanted to conduct a research on the problems and strategies of Thai students in learning vocabulary.

The researcher firstly focused on the general strategies used by Thai students in learning English vocabulary at English Language Education Department in a private university in Yogyakarta. Then, the researcher also focused on the problems faced by Thai students in learning vocabulary as well as their strategies specifically used to solve their problems.

Research Questions

1. What are Thai students' strategies in learning English vocabulary?
2. What are Thai students' problems in learning English vocabulary?
3. What are Thai students' strategies used to solve those problems in learning English vocabulary?

Objective of the Researches

The objectives of this research are:

1. To identify Thai students' strategies used in learning English vocabulary.
2. To identify Thai students' problems faced in learning English vocabulary.
3. To identify Thai students' strategies used to solve the problems in learning English vocabulary.

The Significance of the Research

This research will bring some benefits for those who want to know the problems and the strategies in learning vocabulary of Thai students. It is expected that this study will be useful for English teachers, students, and other researchers.

For teachers. The researcher expects from this research that the teachers know and understand the students' difficulties in learning vocabulary. Thus, the teachers can choose appropriate materials in teaching English vocabulary for them. Besides, the teacher can encourage the students to apply more strategies in learning English vocabulary if the students use only certain strategy.

For students. This research reveals the strategies used to solve various problems in learning vocabulary. Therefore, the researcher expects this research can help students know the kinds of strategies that they might lack and want to try other possible strategies beneficial for them in learning English vocabulary.

For other researchers. This research can be used as a reference for the next researchers who wants to conduct similar research. This study provides the information related to general strategies used and the problems faced by Thai students in learning vocabulary. It also reveals the strategies used by Thai students to solve those specific problems in learning vocabulary.

The Organization of the Chapters

This research is presented in five chapters. The first chapter is introduction. It includes the background of the study, statement of the problems, research question, the objective of the research, and the significance of the research. The second chapter explains literature review related to problems in learning vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies. The third chapter explains the research method which includes research design, research setting, and data collection methods. The fourth chapter

reveals the research findings and discussion. The fifth chapter deals with the conclusion that answers the research questions followed by recommendation.