CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

English as one of International language has an important role in daily lives. It is acknowledge not only as means of communication, but also as scientific language. The use of English can be easily found. For instance, many books, articles and job vacancies use English. Accordingly, without mastering English, people can not communicate with other people and we may be left behind in education and also job vacancy.

Based on the researcher experience during her pre-service teaching in VII D Class of SMP Negeri 7 Muaro Jambi, students have some difficulties in learning English vocabulary. There are lots of ranges in English vocabulary items that will make some difficulties for the students to master. The other reason is that there is a lack of attention from teacher of English in teaching vocabulary. Most of teachers of English only pay attention on teaching grammar rather than on teaching vocabulary. On the other hand, the most significant problem that their students face in mastering English is due to their lack of vocabulary knowledge.

The lack of knowledge of the words that the students find is considered to be the biggest problem in learning vocabulary. They do not know the meaning of the words. Besides, another factor to be considered is the students’ laziness to consult to dictionary. In this case, the researcher assumes that vocabulary mastery is important in studying English.
In Indonesia, the government has chosen English as the first foreign language that is taught at Junior High School. Furthermore, English has become the compulsory subject that must be learned by students of Junior High School to college students. There are four basic skills that have to be mastered by English learners, among others are: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Besides all those skills, Basic Course Outline (GBPP), which is relevant to 2013 Curriculum, has also an emphasis on some language components, among others are: grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. However, the researcher would like to discuss one of the components, that is vocabulary.

In learning foreign language, vocabulary plays an important role. It is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing all together. In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately.

Tarigan (1987:7) also provides an explanation regarding to vocabulary mastery that the quality of one’s language skill depends on the quality and the quantity of the vocabulary itself. In brief, the researcher could point out that the more students master the vocabulary; the better students use they language skill.

English is a tool to communicate both orally and written. The department of national education, in the standards curriculum of competency, 2004, determined that the ability to be owned by Indonesian students are understanding and expressing information, thoughts, feelings, and developing science, technology, and culture in the English language. Thus, the function of English language as a
tool to communicate in order to access the information besides as a tool for interpersonal relationships, exchanging information as well as enjoying the aesthetic language in British culture.

One component of learning language is an understanding the English vocabulary itself. Understanding the vocabulary is generally regarded as an important part of learning a language or development of one’s ability in a language that has been mastered. Mastery of vocabulary is the most basic things that must be controlled by a person in learning English is a foreign language for all students and people of Indonesia. How one can express a language if he does not understand the vocabulary of the language. Especially if it is studied a foreign language, so that mastery of the vocabulary a language is something that is absolutely owned by language learners (Alam, 2011:11).

Vocabulary is major concern for junior high school student because vocabulary is an essential means in conducting communication. Students who want to improve their English should master the vocabulary. The mastery of vocabulary would be very helpful when one was learning foreign language having a great mastery on it.

Wilkins in Thornbury (2002:13) states that without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. In other words, the first thing that has to be mastered by language learners in learning language is vocabulary. In listening, students’ vocabulary influences their understanding toward teacher’s speech, class discussion, and other speeches. The word that they choose in speaking affect how well they deliver a message. In reading, students’
vocabulary affect their ability to understand and comprehend a text. In addition, dealing with writing, students’ vocabulary also influences how clear they convey their thought to the reader. In conclusion, vocabulary takes an important role in equipping students to be able to communicate English.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher wants to conduct a research entitled “The Students’ Mastery in English Vocabulary at SMP Negeri 7 Muaro Jambi”

1.2. Research Problem

The researcher formulates the research question as follow: What level is the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Muaro Jambi in academic year 2018/2019 master their vocabulary?

1.3. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the students’ mastery in English vocabulary.

1.4. Limitation of the Research

The research have several limitations. First, this research will be conducted at SMP Negeri 7 Muaro Jambi. The participants are students from VII D grade (around 20-30 students). The kind of vocabulary is basic vocabulary based on the curriculum 2013.

1.5. Significance of the Research

The significance of this research are:
1. For students, when the students perceive that their vocabulary is still fair, students should practice more and more to support their English skills.

2. For English teachers, the teachers can find out whether or not the students’ mastery of vocabulary have matched with their level as junior high school students.