#### **CHAPTER I**

# **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the basic idea related to the study, including: background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, hypothesis, significance of the study, scope and limit, and the definition of key terms.

#### A. Background of the Study

Spoken word recognition is a process involved in listening skill. Knowing the spoken form of a word includes being able to recognize the word when it is heard, and being able to produce that spoken form to express a meaning.<sup>1</sup> In order to decode the message of a speaker, listeners have to recognize individual words in the speaker's utterance. According to Weber and Broersma, recognizing spoken words is usually effortless in someone's native language, but the same task can be more demanding when listening to a foreign language.<sup>2</sup> When EFL learners listen to the native speaker's speech, what comes to their minds is to understand all the speech which is heard to get a good listening comprehension. Yet, the problem is EFL learners, especially the freshmen of English Teacher Education Department in Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, can be easily

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in another Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Andrea Weber - Mirjam Broersma, "Spoken Word Recognition in Second Language Acquisition". *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Vol. 10 No. 2, 2012, 1

confused by listening to a speech containing unfamiliar vocabulary and phrase. For example: first, in the sentence "..... but I was thinking if I could be able to find an \_\_\_\_\_, the correct answer to complete this sentence is "internship", but students tended to answer it with the word "intensive" or "entrance". Second, in the sentence "I think it's best to \_\_\_\_\_ and just, you know maybe study a little bit more till the economy gets better.....", the correct answer to this sentence is "lav low", but most of the students fail to answer it. They mistook the correct answer with "lawyer", "leave on", "little low", "lay on" and even "reload". Lay low itself means to take time off and think about the future plans. Third, when students listen to the phrase "speaking of which", students likely mistook the word "speaking" with "picking", "thinking", "breaking", and even "backing". Students often hear the words "speaking", but they just know a little about the phrase "speaking of which" so they confuse it with the other words. Speaking of which itself is used when someone else begins talking about a topic that reminds us of something similar. Moreover, the fact that English words similar another wine/one. are to one (e.g. comment/common/command, night/nice, cash/cast/catch, stuff/staff) complicates the task for the listener.

Scholfield as cited in Schmitt shows that there are a number of things a student must be able to do to find the correct entry and meaning sense for a word, they are: (1) the word's spelling must be guessed, even if it has only been heard, (2) alphabetical order must be known to define the word, and (3) in the plenty of

polysemous words, multiple meaning senses must be examined before deciding the appropriate one.<sup>3</sup> Then, according to Nation, one of the critical factors in successful guessing the words from a context is the students' vocabulary size, because this will affect the frequency of unknown words in a text.<sup>4</sup> The term "vocabulary size" or also known as vocabulary breadth refers to the quantity or number of words that the students know at particular levels of language proficiency.<sup>5</sup>

There have been some studies which examined the role of vocabulary size in language proficiency and skills. First, a study by Azadeh Nemati entitled "Proficiency and Size of Receptive Vocabulary: Comparing EFL and ESL Environments". This previous study focuses on the relationship between language proficiency and vocabulary size. The subjects are 80 freshmen students majoring in English Language and Literature in Iran and India as representative of ESL/EFL contexts. This study finds that there are positive correlations between vocabulary size and English proficiency for both Iranian and Indian students, producing a moderate correlation of 0.514 for Iranian students and 0.484 for Indian students.

Second, a study by Gholum-Ali Tahmasebi et.al entitled "The Relationship between Language Proficiency and Iranian EFL Learners'

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Norbert Schmitt – Jack C. Richards (Eds.), *Vocabulary in Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 156.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in another Language* ...370

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in another Language* ...573

Knowledge of Vocabulary Depth versus Vocabulary Breadth". This previous study examines the relationship between language proficiency, vocabulary depth, and vocabulary breadth of 80 Iranian EFL learners at upper and lower intermediate levels. The result of this study also finds that there is positive correlation between vocabulary size and language proficiency. Higher correlation is existed in upper-intermediate group, producing a correlation of 0.874. Meanwhile, the correlation for lower-intermediate group is 0.812. Besides, this study finds that 59% of the variation in language proficiency is affected by the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge.

Third, a study by Lars Stenius Stæhr entitled "Vocabulary Size and the Skills of Listening, Reading and Writing". This previous study examines the relationship between vocabulary size and the skills of listening, reading and writing. The subjects are 88 EFL learners from lower secondary education. The result of this study finds that reading is highly correlated with vocabulary size, producing a correlation of 0.83. Then, writing produces a correlation of 0.73 with vocabulary size. In contrast, listening shows the weakest association with vocabulary size, producing a correlation of 0.69.

Those previous studies show that vocabulary size plays an important role on ESL and EFL students' English proficiency and skills. One of the measures widely used to assess the students' vocabulary size is called by Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT).<sup>6</sup> This type of test is also used in the above-mentioned previous studies and it will also be used in this study. The Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) derives its name from the fact that there are some different word levels which measure the students' knowledge of a word. The word levels consist of different word-frequency ranging from high frequency (2000-word level) to low-frequency words (10,000-word level) and an academic vocabulary level. This Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) is a receptive vocabulary test, so it does not provide direct information about the ability to use the target language words productively. The term "receptive vocabulary" refers to the language inputs which are received from others through listening or reading.<sup>7</sup>

According to Nation, vocabulary size measurement is important for planning, diagnosis and research, because it can help the teacher to plan a sensible vocabulary development program based on the stage of the students' vocabulary growth.<sup>8</sup> Yet, this test has not been familiarly used in English Teacher Education Department of Sunan Ampel State Islamic University. As the result, recently, there is limited study concerning to how many words which are known by the students' of English Teacher Education Department in this university, and whether the students' vocabulary size is correlated to their language skills or not. Although there are many studies about the role of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Mohammad Taghi Farvardin – Mansoor Koosha, "The Role of Vocabulary Knowledge in Iranian EFL Students' Reading Comprehension Performance: Breadth or Depth?". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. Vol. 1 No. 11, November 2011, 1575

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> I. S. P. Nation, *Learning Vocabulary in another Language* ....37

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> I. S. P. Nation "Measuring Vocabulary Size in an Uncommonly Taught Language". *Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*, 1990, 1

vocabulary size in English language skills overseas, no one has studied about it in this department. Furthermore, words are likely to have varying degree of difficulty for students from different first languages even if they take the same Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT).9

This study is only focused on listening skill because the listening researches in English Teacher Education Department of this university mostly focus on the teaching techniques and strategies to improve the students' listening ability. Besides, according to Stæhr, most research on the relationship between receptive vocabulary size and language proficiency in second language has been conducted within the field of reading. Less research has focused on the role of vocabulary in listening.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the findings of this study will give an insight whether the students' vocabulary size is an important factor which affects the students' listening skill or not. The subject of this study is the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students in academic year 2014-2015 who get enrolled in Literal Listening classes. The students' ability in listening to the detailed information is needed to measure the spoken word recognition skill, therefore, Literal Listening is chosen because this course designed to develop students' skills on understanding the details.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Norbert Schmitt, et.al, "Developing and Exploring the Behavior...60
<sup>10</sup> L. S. Stæhr, "Vocabulary Size and the Skills of Listening, Reading and Writing". *Language* Learning Journal. Vol. 36 No. 2, December 2008, 139

#### **B.** Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, this study answers these following questions:

- What is the correlation between the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students' vocabulary size and their spoken word recognition in Literal Listening?
- 2. To what extent is their vocabulary size associated with the spoken word recognition in Literal Listening?

# C. Objectives of the Study

According to the statements of the problem above, the purposes of this study are:

- To examine the correlation between the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students' vocabulary size and their spoken word recognition in Literal Listening.
- To explore the extent of the association between 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students' vocabulary size and their spoken word recognition in Literal Listening.

# **D.** Hypothesis

A hypothesis testing examines two opposing hypotheses: the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis. Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) states that there is no relationship between the variables, meanwhile, alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$  or  $H_a$ ) states that there is a relationship between variables. The alternative hypothesis is accepted if the null hypothesis is rejected.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the hypotheses of this study are:

- a. Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): there is no correlation between the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students' vocabulary size and their spoken word recognition in Literal Listening, and the degree of listening comprehension does not depend on vocabulary size (equivalent to r = 0).
- b. Alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ): there is a correlation between the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students' vocabulary size and their spoken word recognition in Literal Listening, and the degree of listening comprehension depends on vocabulary size (equivalent to  $r \neq 0$ ).

## E. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study can be significantly beneficial in these following aspects:

## 1. For the lecturers of English Teacher Education Department

The findings of this study can help lecturers diagnosing the stage of the students' vocabulary development. Therefore, it will help them to plan a sensible vocabulary development program based on the stage of the students' vocabulary growth. Furthermore, it will allow lecturers to identify and remedy deficiencies in the students' vocabularies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Yogesh Kumar Singh, *Fundamental of Research Methodology and Statistics* (New Delhi: New Age International Publishers, 2006), 61

#### 2. For the students of English Teacher Education Department

The findings of this study will help the students of English Teacher Education Department improving their English listening skill by understanding the role of vocabulary size in listening comprehension. Besides, students will have more motivations to learn English vocabularies if they know their vocabulary size.

# F. Scope and Limit of the Study

This study focused and limited in these following aspects:

# 1. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on two aspects; firstly, the correlation between vocabulary size and spoken word recognition in Literal Listening, and secondly the extent of association between vocabulary size and spoken word recognition in Literal Listening. The data is collected from the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students in academic year 2014-2015 of English Teacher Education Department in Sunan Ampel State Islamic University who get enrolled in Literal Listening classes.

#### 2. Limit of the study

There are some limits of this study, they are:

a. Firstly, this study only examines the relationship between vocabulary size and the students' ability to recognize the spoken word in Literal Listening. For further analysis in other dimensions such as depth of

vocabulary knowledge and its correlation with spoken word recognition in listening will need to be measured.

b. Secondly, the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) used in this study is a receptive test, so it does not provide direct information about the ability to use the target language words productively.

## G. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation, the key terms used in this study are defined below.

## 1. Correlation

Correlation study is used when researcher relates two or more variables to see if they influence each other.<sup>12</sup> In this study the correlation between two variables is examined, they are: 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students' vocabulary size and their spoken word recognition in Literal Listening.

#### 2. Vocabulary Size

Vocabulary size, also known as vocabulary breadth, refers to the quantity or number of words that the students know at particular levels of language proficiency. <sup>13</sup> In this study, vocabulary size refers to the number of words which are known by the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students who get enrolled in Literal Listening classes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* (USA: Pearson, 2012), 338

## 3. Spoken Word Recognition

Spoken word recognition is a process whereby a listener matches the speech signal to phonological representation of words stored in memory.<sup>14</sup> In this study, it refers to the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students' ability to understand the speaker's speech in listening test.

# 4. Literal Listening

Literal listening is one of the listening courses in English Teacher Education Department. This course is designed to develop students' skills in listening detailed information and understanding the main ideas.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Ronald Peereman, et.al., "Orthographic Influences in Spoken Word Recognition: The Consistency Effect in Semantic and Gender Categorization Tasks". *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, Vol. 2 No. 16, 2009. 363