

# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Problem

Vocabulary is one of the language components in English. It is important for learners in learning a language especially English as foreign language that should be mastered. It has a very important role in communication. Rivers (1970:462) states that it is impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. It means that the ability to speak English needs the mastery of adequate vocabulary. Hornby (1984:11) states that adequate is satisfactory, sufficient or satisfying a requirement. It means that vocabulary is required to increase our ability to communicate in English and it is very important to support our development, especially concerning science and technology. Harmer (1991: 161) says that, language structures are to make up the skeleton of language, and then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh. However, Effendi (cited in Restina, 1997: 1) says that one of students' weaknesses in using English is they lack of vocabulary.

Vocabulary is one of language components that are presented in the classroom during the process of language teaching, Wallace (1986: 1) states that 'vocabulary is the vital element of the language'. Vocabulary has been considered important for those who learn a language, since it was a term that should be acquired by the students in order to communicate effectively. Since students were lack of in understanding the meaning of words, but it did not mean that, the teacher should give the students a list of the words to be learned and memorized. It in accordance with Wallace (1983:13) that learning vocabulary is something more than memorizing list of words. Then the students get bored easily because of their learning condition. In fact, the students look frustrated.

Based on the guideline of KTSP 2006 curriculum of English local content for elementary school, the target of English vocabulary that should be reached by the fifth grade of elementary school students is 250 – 400 words, and one of the objectives of teaching English at elementary school is that the students should master a number of vocabularies in order to be able to understand and make simple sentences in English. Besides, the students are expected to be able to communicate at least in very simple conversation.

From the explanation above, the researcher assumes that mastering an adequate vocabulary might enable students to communicate well. It means that vocabulary is important to learn. Language cannot be separated from vocabulary, because the language itself consists of vocabulary.

When the researcher observed at SD N 2 Metro Selatan, there were a gap between the target curriculum and the reality, the result in the field did not reflect to the target, In fact, the students who learn English as a foreign language find it difficult to learn the vocabulary of English. They do not understand some of the English words that they listen, read, speak, and write. They cannot pronounce some words and find difficulty to define the meaning of a word or some words.

To overcome the problem, in teaching English for children the teacher should be able to select the material, and choose proper techniques of teaching and that are relevant to the students' condition, needs, and age. They make the students more interested in the subject and it would be easier for the students to understand the materials taught by the teacher. Through appropriate teaching technique and material the students of elementary school are expected to be able to communicate not only in spoken but also in written form in very simple English.

In this case, the researcher found a media or visual aid that seems suitable for students of elementary school that was flashcard. Flashcard may become a good choice as a medium to teach vocabulary and an alternative aid for helping students' vocabulary achievement. The researcher saw that flash cards contain vocabulary or word that made the students become easy to learn the vocabulary. As a linguistic, Lado (1964:153) in Lismayanti (2000:2) defines that flashcard is set of card with a word or phrase on one side and its meaning usually on the other. The card also included picture, the native language word and its meaning. And we could buy them easily in bookstore if we want to have them. Further, Lado (1964:198), states that flashcard can be very helpful in teaching and studying language. By using flashcard, the teacher helped the students to transfer their knowledge in practicing their vocabulary.

Based on explanations above, the researcher was interested in applying this aid for teaching vocabulary at elementary school. So, the researcher conducted the activities of teaching learning process through flashcard at the fifth grade of SD Negeri 2 Metro Selatan.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the background of the problem, the writer formulates the problem as follow:

1. Is there any significant difference of students' vocabulary mastery before and after they are taught by using Flashcard?
2. Which one is aspect of vocabulary to gain better after being taught by using Flashcard?

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Research**

Concerning the research problems, the objectives of this research are:

1. “To find out whether there is any significant difference of students’ vocabulary mastery before and after they are taught by using flashcard”.
2. “To know what the aspect of vocabulary gain better after being taught by using flashcard”.

#### **1.4 The Uses of the Research**

This research is useful both practically and theoretically.

1. Theoretically, this research can be used as a contribution to support the idea that teaching vocabulary through flashcard can increase the students’ vocabulary mastery.
2. Practically, to see whether flashcard is applicable for teaching vocabulary.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Research**

The research conducted at fifth grade of SD Negeri 2 Metro Selatan Kota Metro in the first semester of academic year of 2010/2011. The writer focused the research on teaching on teaching vocabulary by using the flashcard as a technique of vocabulary teaching. There were three times of treatments. The class got the material and evaluation based on curriculum competency.

#### **1.6 Definition of Terms**

- Vocabulary is a set of lexeme include a simple word, compound word, and idiom. Lamb (1963: 19) defines a simple word as a single word that may or may not have a prefix and/ or suffix, compound word is, a word joined from two or more other words, idiom is a group of words with a meaning, which is different from the individual words and often difficult to understand the individual words.

- Flashcards are set of cards with a word or phrase on one side and its meaning rarely in translation on the other.
- Vocabulary mastery is a number of words that have already been mastered by students as their basic knowledge, and those that will be mastered by them.