IMPROVING STUDENT'S ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY USING CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH PROBLEM SOLVING: A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH IN THE FOURTH YEAR CLASS OF SD N 01 TEGALSURUH, SRAGI PEKALONGAN IN 2007/2008 ACADEMIC YEAR

RESEARCH PAPER

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Language as a means of communication is very useful and flexible. It can serve the human needs in their communication in any situation. Language is really rich and beautiful. We can express almost everything such as thoughts, actions, ideas, emotion, etc. language can also be used to transmit culture from generation to generation. By language we can know the culture from the primitive civilization to the modern one.

English is learned in Indonesia as the first foreign language. Since it plays an important role in an international communication, mastering English both written and spoken are absolutely needed, especially for Indonesians who live in a developing country. Besides, it is useful to follow the globalization era to become a modern nation. Thus, English is taught formally in high school as a compulsory subject, even now the elementary schools have begun to introduce English in their curriculum.

Mastering vocabulary is important for learners since vocabulary knowledge, as one of the basic components plays an important role among the four language skills. It gives contribution to learners to perform their skills better. It is impossible for the students to perform their English appropriately, if their vocabulary is very poor. In short, by having too limited vocabulary, the students find it difficult to master language skills, since a good store of words
is crucial for understanding and communicating. Therefore vocabulary mastery must be on the first priority in English language teaching.

Teaching English to students of elementary school is presenting vocabulary since they meet English for the first time. The students are introduced with simple things around them, which are familiar to them. Meanwhile, the curriculum of elementary education also contains a number of vocabularies to learn beside expressions and simple sentences about things around the children, family, school, geography, and their communication to the environment.

In Indonesia, there are some English teachers who still use traditional method to teach vocabulary. Traditional method is an approach which offers an insight of grammatical rules when the process of translating from the second to the native language is done. This method is popular because students could demonstrate that they understand the grammatical construction underlying a specific sentence by it. The typical of this approach emphasizes the rote memory learning of long lists of bilingual “vocabulary equations”, and on the learning of explicit rules of grammar, frequently in form of tables for the declension and conjugation of nouns and verb. Teacher just helps the students to translate the written text in mother tongue or gave the students long list of words with their equivalence in the students native language and asked them to memorize it. Students who are not able to translate the words correctly are blamed on being neither intelligent nor lazy or both. This approach is still implemented because many people believe that learning a
foreign language means learning to translate sentences from the mother tongue into the target language (Fauziati, 2004).

The problem faced by teacher of SD N 1 Tegalsuruh in teaching vocabulary to the fourth year students is the students boredom of the conventional or traditional method used by teacher to teach them in vocabulary subject. The teacher explains the material of vocabulary mastery by writting the words on the blackboard and the students write it in the book, then students must memorize the words at home. The conventional method usually makes student passive so this method is not interesting. Wichadee (2003: 3) states that teacher-centered approach taking place in traditional classrooms do not produce active recipients and result in fossilized language learning. It is not effective enough to promote language acquisition. Several problems that most of the students encounter are their inadequate vocabulary and their low motivation in joining teaching learning process.

There are some indications which show the weakness of students’ vocabulary. First, in reading activity, students may sometimes stop to read and pronounce the English sentences or words because they have difficulty to read them correctly. Second, in speaking activity, they find difficulty to express their ideas orally because they lack of vocabulary, even though it is a simple thing. Third, the student’s English achievements tests result are still low.

According to Scoot and Pefes (1994), teachers are pressed to extend their craft to prepare more diverse students for work and life beyond schools. Fellows (2000) stated that students learn best, and retain what they have
learned, when (1) they are interested in the subject matter, and (2) concepts are applied to the context of the students’ own lives. An excellent way to do this is involving the strategies of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) which constitute a suitable approach in foreign language teaching.

From the discussion above, the writer is interested in carrying out a research dealing with mastery of vocabulary. The student’s mastery of vocabulary will encourage them to have good language skills. Therefore, in this research, the writer as the teacher brings forward the way of teaching English vocabulary using Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). The material is related to the students level and it involves them to learn actively. The strategies in CTL consist of 6 items, namely 1) emphasizing the importance of problem solving, 2) considering the use of teaching learning activity in various contexts, such as at home, society, and place of work, 3) teaching students by monitoring and guiding their learning in order to be independent learners, 4) emphasizing learning of the learner lives in different contexts, 5) encouraging students to learn from and with others 6) using the authentic assessment (Blanchard in Suyatno, 2002). Here, the writer focused her auctioning teaching vocabulary to the fourth year students of SDN I Tegalsuruh, Sragi, Pekalongan by using problem solving as the strategy.

Problem solving is a strategy in which a teacher gives an opportunity for students to work in pairs or small groups, to share information and opinions on topics, which are meaningful to them. The basic principle lying
behind such activities is that the teacher sets up a situation where there is "an information gap" among the participants, and this gap has to be bridged either orally or in written form. The primary objective in such activities may change significantly as students' oral proficiency develops (Fauziati, 2004). Hence, the writer takes courage to conduct a study entitled “Improving students’ vocabulary mastery in learning English using contextual teaching and learning through problem solving: A Classroom action research of the fourth year students of SD N I Tegalsuruh, Sragi, Pekalongan in 2007/2008 academic year”.

B. Previous Study

There has been other researcher who has studied teaching vocabulary. In her study entitled "improving students" vocabulary mastery in learning English using contextual teaching and learning (CTL): a classroom action research of the fourth year students of SD Djam'a'tul Ichwan (DJI) Surakarta in 2005/2006 academic year", Sugiarti maintained that CTL made the students vocabulary mastery higher than before.

This research is different from the previous research. In this research the researcher focuses her action in teaching the student by using problem solving. Problem solving is one of strategies in CTL.
C. Problem Statement

Based on the background of the study, the research problem is formulated as the follows.

1. How is the implementation of CTL through problem solving in vocabulary mastery?
2. Does problem solving improve the students’ vocabulary mastery?

D. Limitation of the Study

Based on the problem of the study above, the writer limits the study on the procedure of CTL through problem solving in teaching vocabulary mastery. The subject of this research is the fourth year students of SD I Tegalsuruh Srapi Pekalongan in 2007/2008 academic year.

E. Object of the Study

In line with the problem formulation mentioned above, the objectives of this study are:

1. to describe the implementation of CTL through problem solving in vocabulary mastery.
2. to improve the students’ vocabulary mastery.

F. Benefit of the Study

In this study the writer expects that the research paper has some benefits both in theory and practice
1. Theoretical Benefit

a) The finding of this research will enrich the theory of students’ vocabulary mastery.

b) The result of the research paper can be a useful input in English teaching learning process especially for teaching vocabulary using CTL.

c) The finding of the research can be used as the reference for those who want to conduct a research in English teaching-learning process.

2. Practical Benefit:

a) The research will improve the writer herself in mastering English.

b) The teachers and students of SD Negeri 01 Tegalsuruh will got a large knowledge about teaching vocabulary using CTL.

c) The finding of this research will be useful to the readers who are interested in analyzing vocabulary mastery of elementary school.

G. Research Paper Organization

This research deals with action research which focuses on the implementation of CTL through problem solving in teaching vocabulary to improve students achievement on vocabulary mastery to the fourth year of the students of SDN I Tegal Suruh Sragi Pekalongan. This research is organized into five chapters as follows.
Chapter I is the introduction which covers background of study, previous study, problem statement limitation of the study, objective of the study, benefit of the study, and research paper organization.

Chapter II presents the related theories of concept of underlying theories which covers the nature of vocabulary the teaching of vocabulary, kind of vocabulary, vocabulary limitation, general concept of CTL, strategies CTL, the notion problem solving, classroom procedure CTL through problem solving, theoretical framework, working of hypothesis.

Chapter III is the research method. This chapter deals with the research method covering the types of research, object of the study, data and data source, method of data collection, the credibility of data, research procedure, technique for analyzing data.

Chapter IV discusses the research implementation and the result of the study.

Chapter V it consists of conclusion and suggestions.