

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

People require language as a means to communicate with others. It is used to express their ideas, thoughts, feelings, and emotions through spoken or written form. There are various languages people produce to communicate with others; English is one of them. Also, English is considered as a global lingua franca which means English as a first language, as a second language, and as a foreign language. English is officially admitted as the first international language. The use of English is global. Many people speak English in world conferences, world contests, international organizations, daily life, institutions, and even at schools. Even though, English is still admitted as a foreign language in Indonesia, government establishes that Indonesia's students must be able to communicate in English passively as well as actively. Therefore, English is taught in Indonesia beginning at Primary level to University level and some pre – schools and Kindergartens teach English as one of the important subjects. Some national plus schools, even, apply English as the primary language spoken at schools.

From a pedagogical side, English has four basic language skills to be taught, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this case, an English teacher must be able to master those basic language skills very well. They are required to comprehend (listening and reading) the language and produce (speaking and writing) the language. Among the four language skills taught in schools, writing is considered to be the most difficult skill to learn. It includes the

ability to express the students' opinions or thoughts clearly and effectively in a written form. Ratnasari (2004) as cited by Sa'diyah (2011:164) states that these abilities can be achieved only if a learner masters some techniques of writing such as how to obtain ideas about what s/he will write on, how to express them in a sequence of sentences, how to organize them chronologically and coherently, and how to review and then to revise the composition until the writing is well-built.

The study conducted by Msanjila (2005:15) reveals six glaring writing problems, namely: capitalization and punctuation problems, inexplicitness or fuzziness, poor organization or illogical sequence, spelling problems and grammatical errors. There are some factors the students might think that writing is difficult. First, they find difficulties in gathering their ideas and organizing their ideas in a paragraph unity. Second, students do not have much idea of what to write and how to start writing. As a matter of fact, they waste too much time thinking about what they are going to write instead of freewriting. Third, students are afraid of making errors. Most students only focus on not making errors – spelling, grammar, and punctuations - to their writing rather than strengthening their ideas to be vivid. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are also important parts in writing a paragraph, but the most important part is how the writers can give clear views through their writing. Finally, most teachers tend to use the traditional method. Here, the teacher takes the major role explaining everything, doing what the student is supposed to do while the student's role is only listening to what is uttered to him/her by his/her teacher.

Based on the researcher's teaching experience in an English course for several years, she also finds that her students face the same obstacles in writing proficiency as the factors mentioned above. When someone wants to write for a specific purpose, they have to think about who will be their audience and how they will provide the information the readers need to know in their writing. Here, applying various prewriting techniques, strategies, or writing methods students is very crucial. Those ways will lead the students to feel free to express their ideas and thoughts in written form. Nevertheless, students practically still have a hard time in applying suitable grammatical features, punctuations, word choice, spelling, and capitalization.

Based on the standard competency in the syllabus of the first grade of Junior High School (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama: SMP*) called Educational Unit Oriented Curriculum (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan: KTSP*), students are expected to be able to write simple paragraphs in descriptive, recount, procedure, report and narrative. In this case, teachers play a great role in thinking of a good strategy to be applied in their class in helping their students to write well.

Descriptive text is a type of text that functions to describe particular person, place, or thing. Wyrick (2011:323) states that the writer of description creates a word-picture of people, places, objects, and emotions, using a careful selection of details to make an impression on the reader. Students who are going to write this type of text should be able to express what they see, hear, feel vividly, so the reader can get the same views as what the writer means.

Because of the problems mentioned above, the writer chooses to conduct this study by using Four Square Graphic Organizer. Gould, Gould, & Burke (2010:iv) state that it is a method of teaching basic writing skills that is applicable across grade levels and curriculum areas and can be applied for writing narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive text. Four Square Graphic Organizer is an organizational tool to help students to write clear, organized paragraphs and essays, so they will be able to write systematically. Prewriting and organizational skills in Four Square are taught through the use of a graphic organizer. The graphic organizer helps students to conceptualize, understand, and structure a piece of written discourse successfully.

Luban, Lutke, Powell, & Wilson (2006) state that this method is relatively new; there is no research as to the effectiveness of this writing tool. The classroom action research conducted in 2006 by Luban, et al., showed that significant growth was observed in the students' writings. The strengths of this method seem to help the students to organize their thoughts in a logical way and improve the use of adding detail to their writings. However, the students still had difficulties in varied vivid word choice and the concluding sentence.

From the research findings from Luban, et al., the research will be conducted by using an experimental research to discover the effectiveness of applying Four Square writing strategy on student's achievement in writing a descriptive text in SMP Swasta Sultan Iskandar Muda Medan. It is expected that the problems Luban, et al., found during their research will be covered in this study. In the end of the study, the students will be able to organize their ideas

systematically, add detail to their writings, use various vivid word choice and write concluding sentence well by applying Four Square Graphic Organizer while writing a descriptive text.

B. The Problem of the Study

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

“Is there any significant effect of applying the Four Square Graphic Organizer on the students’ achievement in writing descriptive text?”

C. The Objective of the Study

Four square is a fun strategy to help the learner to learn basic writing skills. It helps the students in the prewriting process and with organizing their ideas. Based on the question formulated in the problem of this study, the objective of the study is to discover whether students’ achievement in writing descriptive text is affected when they are taught by using Four Square Graphic Organizer.

D. The Scope of the Study

There are several kinds of writing genre taught in Junior High School, i.e. descriptive, recount, procedure, report and narrative. There are several types of descriptive writing, i.e. describing person, place, or an object. This research is only focused on descriptive writing in describing place by applying the Four Square Graphic Organizer in the students’ descriptive writing. The scope of the

study is limited to investigating the effectiveness of applying the Four Square Graphic Organizer on the grade seven Junior High School students' achievement in writing a descriptive text of describing place.

E. The Significance of the Study

This research, which is focused on the application of Four Square Graphic Organizer on students' achievement in writing descriptive text, is expected to give some benefits theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to enhance the literature and provide more information on an alternative way of teaching descriptive writing by applying Four Square Graphic Organizer.

In addition, the study is practically expected to give contribution to the effectiveness of writing achievement, both for the students and the English teacher, especially in teaching descriptive text writing. Specifically, the study can be applied by students independently to help them to write a descriptive text. The teachers can also apply Four Square Graphic Organizer as one of alternative ways in solving students' writing problems and as an encouragement to the teacher to develop any other media in teaching writing. This research can also be used as reference for another similar research on students' writing achievement.