

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Study

Writing is a critical component of humanity's story. Today, approximately 85% of the world's population writes (Swedlow, 1999). Once used primarily for record-keeping, writing is now critical to communication and learning, as well as self-expression (Graham, 2006). Harris et al (2009) state that students who struggle significantly with writing, and adults who cannot or will not engage in writing, are at a terrible disadvantage in today's world. By the upper elementary grades, writing becomes a critical tool both for learning and for showing what one knows.

Writing is critical to gathering, refining, extending, preserving, and transmitting information and understandings; making ideas readily available for consideration, evaluation, and future discourse; fostering the examination of unexamined assumptions and creating cognitive disequilibrium that spurs learning; and promoting personal development (Graham, 2006). Students who do not write well cannot draw on its power to support and extend learning and development, and adults with inadequate writing skills can face significant barriers in further education and employment. It means difficulties with writing can result students' failure to realize their educational, occupational, or personal potential.

Therefore, the university students should have a good skill in writing. However, in reality, their skill in writing is still low. This can be proven by the fact that the result of the final semester score is about 66.05 in average. In detail, the data of mean score of the students' examination result in Muslim Nusantara University Medan 2009/ 2010 can be seen as the following table 1:

Table 1 Final Semester Data of Students' Examination Result in Muslim Nusantara University Medan 2009/ 2010

No	Language skill	Mean score of each class				Mean
		II-A	II-B	II-C	II-D	
1.	Listening	69.77	70.25	67.83	64.81	68.15
2.	Speaking	80.33	68.37	72.29	74.48	73.86
3.	Reading	72.13	77.24	76.77	73.80	73.74
4.	Writing	66.78	65.67	69.23	62.54	66.05

(Source: the final semester data of students' examination result in Muslim Nusantara University Medan 2009/2010).

Based on those data, it is clear that writing score is not satisfying in which it shows that students find writing difficult.

Langan (2005: 13) says, "For almost everyone, competent writing comes from plain hard work –from determination, sweat, and head-on battle." Most of the research literature recognizes this difficulty is caused by the complexity of writing (Urquhart and Melver, 2005: 6). The complexity of writing encountered by students involves the level skills of planning and organizing as well as the level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, grammar, and usage. Scardamalia & Bereiter (1986) have identified five areas of competence as particularly difficult in learning to write: (a) generation of content, (b) creating an organizing structure for

compositions, (c) formulation of goals and higher-level plans, (d) quickly and efficiently executing the mechanical aspects of writing, and (e) revising text and reformulating goals. In addition, students in universities frequently demonstrate a deteriorating attitude toward writing, even though most students begin university with a positive attitude toward composing. It is no doubt that those difficulties and problems make students fail to write.

Students' failure in writing is contrary to curriculum expectations issued by Muslim Nusantara University. The curriculum expects that students are able to write various genres such as narrative, argumentative, descriptive, expository writing, etc. Therefore, there must be several attempts in teaching and learning writing to solve the gap between students' failure and curriculum expectation in order to succeed students' learning achievement in writing.

There are many factors that can cause the low achievement in writing, namely internal and external factors. The internal factors are intelligence, motivation, including personality. The external factors are material, environment, parents, including teaching techniques. Teaching technique is essential to improve the students' achievement in writing because teaching technique offers practical suggestions to make learners more active participants in their language learning, and to make lecturers more sensitive to learner diversity and learning difficulties (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 37).

Based on the previous explanation, the improvement of students' learning achievement in writing can be affected by the use of teaching techniques. According to Anthony (1963), a technique is defined as "a particular trick,

stragem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective". In addition, Brown (2000: 16) states that technique is any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives. It means teaching techniques can realize the learning objective of writing based on the curriculum. Some research have found that writing teaching technique is effective to make students' writing better, for instance, as what Safriyantinar (2008) has found that the application of small group work technique in teaching writing is effective to make students' writing achievement better.

There are many teaching techniques used to improve students' learning achievement in writing. And this study concerns on two techniques called group critiques and exemplary examples techniques. Urquhart and McIver (2005: 128) explain that group critiques are small group works that help to develop small work-group skills, organize and direct the activity of the group, and build students' ability to provide helpful comments while analyzing and critiquing others' papers. Group critiques can help students' draft to be better through critique done by group and the critique can be the guidance for them to revise and edit their drafts and produce a final product of writing. In other words, the students' writing achievement improves through critiques done by the group.

The other technique, exemplary examples are devices for helping show students writers what their final products should or should not (Urquhart and McIver, 2005: 149). Writing devices in this case are previously published writing piece that can be used as an example. In this technique lecturer and students can analyze published examples and discuss the different elements that make the final

products enjoyable and easy to read or objectionable and difficult to read. When the analysis is complete, students should have been ready to complete their writing assignments through the analysis of exemplary examples.

Those techniques can be applied in any content area of writing genre, but this study applies those techniques in argumentative writing genre. Knapp and Watkins (2005: 187) define argumentative writing as a writing that involves reasoning, evaluation, and persuasion. The genre of arguing is an important and influential language process, essential for dealing with many aspects of university knowledge and effective social participation. That is why argumentative writing is chosen as the skill studied here. Besides, argumentative writing is one of the importantly used genres across all of the learning areas and one of the competences that should be achieved in curriculum of Muslim Nusantara University.

Besides teaching techniques, students' writing achievement can be also affected by internal factors namely, motivation, style (cognitive style and personal style or personality), and anxiety (Kellogg, 1994: 98). Based on the nature of argumentative writing that expresses opinion and gives reasons for a particular point of view personally, this study concerns with personal style or personality particularly introvert and extrovert on students' writing achievement because personality mediates thinking and writing skill.

Eysenck (1971) describes introvert-extrovert as the degree to which a person is outgoing and interactive with other people. These behavioral differences are presumed to be the result of underlying differences in brain physiology.

Introvert tends to avoid social situations in an effort to keep such arousal to a minimum, whereas extrovert seeks excitement and social activity in an effort to heighten their arousal level. The introvert focuses on the subjective inner world, whereas the extrovert looks to the objective external world. Therefore, it is said that introvert is better in writing than that of extrovert. It is because introvert is a subjective, sensing, thinking, and judging type of person who is the valuable characteristics of good writer.

Based on the previous explanation, there is an interest to conduct a research on the effect of group critiques technique and exemplary examples technique and students' personality on students' achievement in argumentative writing.

1.2. The Problems of the Study

In line with the background of the study, the problems of the study can be formulated as the following:

1. Do group critiques and exemplary examples techniques significantly affect students' achievement in argumentative writing?
2. Does personality significantly affect students' achievement in argumentative writing?
3. Is there any interaction between teaching techniques and students' personality to the students' achievement in argumentative writing?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

This study aims at investigating whether group critiques and exemplary examples techniques significantly affect students' achievement in argumentative writing; investigating whether personality significantly affects students' achievement in argumentative writing; investigating whether there is any interaction between teaching techniques and personality to the students' achievement in argumentative writing.

1.4. The Scope of the Study

There are many techniques to make writing achievement successful; however, this study is limited to group critiques technique and exemplary examples technique on the students' writing achievement. This study is also limited to the students' personality, particularly introvert and extrovert on students' writing achievement. The writing genre observed in this study focuses on argumentative writing which is one of the importantly used genres across all of the learning areas and one of the competences that should be achieved in curriculum of Muslim Nusantara University. The limitation also occurs in the interaction between the group critiques technique and exemplary examples technique and students' personality to the students' achievement in argumentative writing.

1.5. The Significances of the Study

This study is expected to provide useful information, which may have practical as well as theoretical values for both lecturers and students. Theoretically, this study adds what has been found in the area of teaching writing in foreign language. It also gives a lot of positive contribution to the improvement of lecturers' professionalism and the educational institution.

And practically, the result of this study informs English language lecturers in their attempts to decide the best technique to improve students' writing achievement. Students can also take benefit from being taught by the techniques which can improve their writing achievement.