# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

## A. The Background of the Study

Writing is frequently presumed as the hardest to master among the universally recognized four language skills. It is a common occurrence that students are usually less enthusiastic about an upcoming test when the teacher informs them that it will be a written one (essay test) instead of the more preferable multiple choice test. Writing is an integration of the listening, reading, and speaking skills, and thus most students find writing a difficult task to carry out.

William Zinnser, in his well-known referenced piece "Simplicity" mentions that if you find writing is hard, it's because it *is* hard (Zinnser, 2001). In writing, the writer not only reflects his own values, experiences, prior knowledge, culture, dream, goal, and expectation but must also consider an additional category: the audience. According to Richard-Amato (2003), like reading, writing is an interactive process involving three basic components: the audience, other writers, and other texts whether written or oral. "Learning to write is a complex series of process that require a range of explicit teaching methodologies throughout all the stages of learning" (Knapp and Watkins, 2005). The complexity of the writing process becomes the main reason why students find writing to be the hardest language skill.

"Educationally, the learning of language is not complete unless its graphic skill is acquired to a satisfactory level" (Sharma 2008). Thus it is

obligatory that students maintain at least a decent level of graphic skill, which is another way to address writing skill. The unfortunate fact is that students' writing skill in Indonesia is still below satisfactory. Mahpudi, Community Organizer Paramedia Komunikatama, in response to the Creative Writing Training held for junior high school and high school students in Bandar Lampung on July 27 and 28, 2010 mentions that the writing ability among students has been decreasing due to the development in informational and communicational technology (Ulung Lampung: Social and Culture Reference, 2010, ulunglampung.blogspot.com).

There are different types of writing. One way to categorize writing is by genre. Based on the genre, texts can be divided into description, explanation, instruction/procedure, argumentation, and narration/narrative. More specified objective is required in order to have a greater chance in dealing with the problems in students' writing. Thus, in this particular research the researcher focuses in one genre in specific that is the genre of narrative.

"Narrative is one of the most commonly read, though least understood in all genres" (Knapp, 2005). Even though the most usually known purpose of narrative is to entertain the readers, we cannot say that it is the sore purpose of narrative. Narrative is also a significant media for students' reflective and critical skills. "Educators should teach narrative not as an ever-shifting set of lovely stories to be lauded, but as a foundation for analysis, reflection, and criticism, which can, in turn to be used as a resource for children's original writing" (Wolf, 1994).

The standard competence in Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan

(KTSP) English teaching syllabus for senior high school grade eleven (XI) states that the students are supposed to be able to express meaning in short functional text in the form of narrative in context of daily lives. In line with the unsatisfactory level of student's writing skill, however, most students from high school level are still lacking in narrative writing subdivision. The researcher's own experience in the four month Integrated Field Teaching Program (PPLT) in 2011 showed students are still struggling in writing narrative.

Below is the table of the means of students' English scores in SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar in two semesters, taken from the researcher's records while working as a teaching assistant in the school.

| Class<br>Term | XI IA – 1 | XI IA – 2 | XI IA – 3 | XI IA - 4 |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| I | 70 | 68 | 66 | 66 |
| II | 72 | 70 | 66 | 68 |

Table 1.1 Means of Students' English Score in SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar

The table shows that the students' English achievement at the school is still in need of improving. The minimum standard for passing English test for students in grade XI is 75, while from the table we can see that only one class in which all the students got a score higher than 75.

A number of researches have been conducted in related to teaching and learning. Among the theories studied in purpose of improving students' achievement is the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). "Experiential Learning

describes how experience is transformed into learning through a cycle of learning involving experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting" (Kolb, 1984). Kolb states that Experiential Learning is a process that seeks to transform experience into newly formed knowledge. To simplify Experiential Learning, it is possible to say that it means learning from experience. However, one of the founding scholars of this theory, John Dewey (1944) emphasized that learning involved the reconstruction or reorganization of experience that adds to the meaning of that experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience. Thus Experiential Learning means learning from experience, in which learning here refers to the act of experiencing, making connections, and carrying out action.

Learning through direct experience (or doing) is integral to successful learning across all stages of life. Experiential Learning supports knowledge equality in language learning, helps develop relationships quickly, and provides a common language, experience and story, which can be related to the work environment. In conventional teaching, the needs of the organization (which might be the college of school, etc.) are the primary driver of the learning content, design, and assessment. In experiential learning the starting point is quite different. It is the person. And the primary driver is to help the individual learn and develop in their own direction and in their own way. Learning narrative writing through Experiential Learning will help students, especially those who are in the beginner stage of narrative writing, in tackling one of the main problems in

student's inability to write narratives, that is figuring out what to write and how they want to write it by taking their experience as a learning device.

Based on the explanation on the existing problems and other related aspects, the researcher would like to carry out a research dealing with the implementation of Experiential Learning to see if it can improve students' achievement in narrative writing.

## B. The Problem of the Study

Based on the things discussed in the background of the study, the problem of this research can be formulated as: does the students' achievement in writing narrative improve if they are taught by using experiential learning?

## C. The Objective of the Study

As stated in the title and the formulated problem of the study, this research is conducted to find out whether Experiential Learning can be applied to improve students' achievement in writing narrative text.

## D. The Scope of the Study

Writing has many forms. One kind of categorizing writing is based on its genre. The kind of writing this research is dealing with is narrative. In accordance with the background and the objective of the study, the researcher will figure out how students' narrative writing achievement is improved by the chosen method, that is experiential learning.

**E.  The Significance of the Study**

There are several aspects of the significance of this research that the researcher hereby wishes to establish, namely:

1. Theoretically, the findings of this research will be useful for English teachers who need another strategy in developing students' progress in narrative writing, and for future researchers who aspire to further refine the application of Experiential Learning in teaching narrative writing, or writing in general.

2. Practically, the implementation of the Experiential Learning strategy will help students in improving their skills in narrative writing.