

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Research

Writing in a foreign language is one of the most challenging skills for almost all learners. Developing the writing skill is thought to be the most complex in comparison to listening, speaking and reading. What makes writing a very troublesome task for EFL learners is the fact that it requires some criteria of acceptability relative to different aspects of writing which include content, organization, vocabulary, language use, spelling, punctuation and accurate capitalization and paragraphing.

Learning a foreign language requires learning the four skills of this language. Language teachers usually follow a certain order; beginning with listening, speaking, reading and then writing. The reason behind leaving writing at the end is that it is viewed as the most important, most difficult and most sophisticated one compared with the other language skills. The reading and listening skills are known as receptive skills, whereas the speaking and writing are productive skills.

Writing is an important skill in which someone can express his/her ideas, thoughts, and experiences through written language. Manfred (2010) claims that writing is one form of communication. Writing is a process of putting ideas, thought, and feeling in words into a sequence of words combined into sentences in the forms of paragraph. Writing proficiency does not develop instantaneously; it is a continuous process that adapts and changes with one's experiences and education.

Harmer (2004 : 86) states that writing is a process and that we write is often heavily influenced by constraints of genres, then these elements have to be present in learning activities. It is a continuous process of thinking and organizing, rethinking, and reorganizing. Writing is a powerful tool to organize overwhelming events and make them manageable. Writing is really a form of thinking using the written word.

Writing, like speaking, is essentially communication. The message expressed should always be determined by the context of the whole communication situation. This is sometimes overlooked either dealing with the grammar side of writing or dealing with writing as the free expression side of thoughts and feelings.

But, in fact, many students are less competent in writing. They tend to avoid writing even before they try it. Writing skill in the context of EFL causes students to lack confidence to write in English. When they are asked to write, they face many problems in conveying what they want to say; selecting proper words, using correct grammar, generating ideas and developing them into a proper organizational pattern. More importantly, they have trouble using an acceptable writing format that conforms to a target language and they strive to manipulate proper language forms. It is very vital for the EFL students to grasp the whole knowledge of writing.

The failure of the students in writing has been empirically proved by some researchers. To mention some as Suprinata (2002) in his findings stated that many students of senior high school made errors in writing, especially in narrative and exposition. Similarly, Marta (2003) has also conducted a research on *The*

*Students' Ability in Creating a Writing Composition* and the result showed that among 40 students, there were 11 students (27.9%) that could get good score in writing while the other 29 students (72.5%) failed to get the minimum standard. And the writers assumed that the failure in writing were caused by unadequate knowledge of the students on grammar and vocabulary to transfer their ideas into writing symbols.

As the researcher's experience in analyzing the achievement of students of grade XI at SMA Negeri 2 Kisaran in writing shows that the achievement in writing skill of competence standard: expressing meaning in written short functional text and simple essay in the form of *narrative* in the context of daily life is still low. Based on the list of score found by the researcher at that school, it shows that the students' achievement in writing is the lowest compared to three other language skills. It is described in table 1.

Table 1. The English Score of the Students at SMA Negeri 2 Kisaran, 2011/2012

No	Language Skill	Mean Score of each Class						Mean
		XI IPA1	XI IPA2	XI IPA3	XI IPA4	XI IPA5	XI IPA6	
1	Listening	72	72.4	70.2	68.2	68.4	65.4	69.4
2	Speaking	68.8	68.2	66.6	66.2	64.2	65	66.5
3	Reading	75.2	74.8	74.6	72.2	70	70.2	72.8
4	Writing	62	65.4	58.2	60	55	53	58.9

Based on the score through the table above, it can be seen that the students' score on writing is the lowest.

There are many factors causing the low writing achievement. They can be from students' internal factors and external ones. The students' internal factors are motivation, intelligence, interest, attitudes, personality, habits, and also linguistic

competence. Meanwhile, the students' external factors are the teaching material, the total program of writing instruction, the environment outside their school, and also teaching methods.

Based on the situation, the researcher thinks of adding variety of teaching methods in the school. In teaching writing, it is better to measure how the students are able to write in their own words and elaborate their creativity and deliver their idea communicatively in writing. In order to make an active teaching learning process, Task-Based Learning is suggested to be compared to Direct Instruction method in the school.

In Task-Based Learning, learners made more rapid progress and were able to use their new foreign language in real-world circumstances with a reasonable level of efficiency after quite short courses. They were able to operate an effective meaning system, i.e. to express what they wanted to write, even though their grammar and lexis were often far from perfect.

Direct Instruction is different from task-based learning. In Direct Instruction, teacher gives set of explanation, demonstration, and gives examples then students are asked to make other examples based on the teacher's instruction and guides.

Besides teaching methods, students' achievement in writing is also affected by linguistic competence. They made a number of errors in terms of content, organization, language use, and also they were lack of vocabulary in expressing their ideas in writing. Linguistic competence is extremely important for all language skills including writing. In spoken or written language, the main tool used to construct words is vocabulary and grammar. It is believed that

linguistic competence affects the students' achievement in writing as to create self-esteem in them.

Thus it is badly needed to do some research about the difficulties of students in writing and to see the adequate effect of linguistic competence on writing achievement. Based on the underlying facts and concept of explanation, this research is intended to discover the effect of teaching methods and students' linguistic competence on students' achievement in writing. It means that the effect of applying the two teaching methods (Task-Based Learning and Direct Instruction) and students' linguistic competence (high and low) in teaching writing will be proven whether they are effective towards the students' writing achievement.

## **1.2 The Problems of the Research**

Based on the background of the research previously stated, the problems of the research are formulated as follows:

- 1) Is the students' achievement in writing narrative text taught by Task-based Learning (TBL) higher than those taught by Direct Instructionn (DI)?
- 2) Is the students' achievement in writing narrative text with high linguistic competence higher than those with low linguistic competence?
- 3) Is there interaction between teaching methods and linguistic competence on the students' achievement in writing narrative text?



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

In line with the problems of the research, the objectives of the research are to find out:

- 1) whether the students achievement in writing taught by TBL higher than those taught by DI.
- 2) whether the students' achievement in writing narrative with high linguistic competence is significantly higher than those with low linguistic competence.
- 3) whether there is interaction between teaching methods and linguistic performance on students' achievement in writing narrative text.

### **1.4 The Scope of the Research**

There are many teaching methods can be applied in teaching writing but this research is limited on the application of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Direct Instruction (DI) in teaching writing at SMAN 2 Kisaran of grade XI students 2012/2013 academic year. This school is chosen due to its feasibility to the researcher and it is the place where the researcher has observed their writing products and collected other prior data. To give focus to the research, the students' linguistic competence is selected as the moderator variable. The linguistic competence will be categorized into two levels: high and low to the students' achievement in writing. By controlling the students' linguistic competence in writing narrative, the study is expected to give clearer description on the effect of TBL on teaching writing narrative text to the students with certain linguistic competence level. The narrative text is chosen as it is one of the genres in writing at Senior High School Competence Standard on Educational Unit

Oriented Curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan/ KTSP), 2004 and revised in 2008.

### **1.5 The Significance of the Research**

This study is expected to provide information, which may have practical as well as theoretical values for English language teachers.

#### **Theoretically:**

- 1) The result of this research will enrich the theory of teaching how to write narrative text using Task-Based Learning and Direct Instruction.
- 2) The teachers will get the input which can make the students' writing improved.
- 3) The result of this research can be used as the references for those who want to conduct a research in improving the writing.

#### **Practically:**

- 1) The result of this research will give a lot of positive contribution for English teachers and other researchers to improve their professionalism.
- 2) The result of the research will help English teachers facilitate the students' writing achievement.
- 3) It can help English teachers and the students in solving one of many problems in writing.