

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

English as an international language has a significant role in the various field of activities and wide influences in the world. Therefore the flow of its growth has forced the students in Indonesia to master English. It has been determined as the compulsory subject in National Curriculum.

In learning English the students as the language learners concerns with four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. They have to master the four language skills in order to be competent in learning English. Writing is one of the four language skills that should be mastered well. Writing is sometimes used as a production mode for learning, reinforcing or testing grammatical concept (Douglas:2001). Writing is a complex operation requiring knowledge of text structure, syntax, vocabulary, and topic, and sensitivity to audience needs; so it is not surprising that many students find writing challenging. It is one of the most important language skills. It is a critical skill for students in school, college, and lifelong (Warschauer, 2010). Writing is also important for the instruction of foreign and second language learners for three reasons. First, writing well is a vital skill for academic or occupational success (National Commission on Writing, 2003). Second, writing can be an effective tool for the development of academic language proficiency as learners more readily explore advanced lexical or syntactic expression in their written work (e.g., Warschauer, 2010). Third, writing across the curriculum can be invaluable

for mastering diverse subject matter, as written expression allows learners to raise their awareness of knowledge gaps, abstract problem-specific knowledge into schemas that can be applied to other relevant cases, and elaborate mental representations of knowledge that can be more easily retrieved, while simultaneously allowing teachers to better understand the students' state of knowledge and thinking process and thus adjust instruction as necessary (Yih and Nah, 2009).

The Curriculum of Educational Stratified Level ( Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan: KTSP) of Senior High School states that the students of senior high school are expected to be able to write various genres such as narrative, descriptive, and expository writing ( Depdiknas: 2006).

In reality, most of the students have less capability in learning English, especially when they are asked to write a text. Writing a text in English is a difficult task for them. They are always having some troubles in choosing the appropriate words and lack of vocabulary. They are also weak in arranging the elements of a good text. The difficulty of writing lies in generating and organizing the idea.

The skills involved in writing are highly complex. Students have to pay attention to the level skills of planning and organizing as well as the level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, grammar and usage.

This goes in line with Ackerman (2006) who reports that up to 40 percent of students in high schools are not doing well in writing classes. Ackerman adds that many students consider writing a chore that they do within the walls of the

classroom. Similarly, Witte (2007) states that students show little interest in classroom writing activities and assignments.

This may be due to students being generally passive learners who consider that their role is to absorb knowledge as it is presented to them in the traditional classroom. As a consequence, this general agreement on the importance of writing skill and the poor performance of students in writing has provided the challenge for educators and researchers to look for ways to teach and motivate students to write effectively. Educators should attempt to find ways that don't cause a writer's block, and feel a responsibility towards their learners to create and maintain environments that motivate learners to continue learning even after the class end.

Based on the researcher's observation during four semesters in the school year 2012/2013 and 2013/2014, the students of State Senior High School (*Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri: SMAN*) 1 Besitang have difficulties in learning English. The data obtained from SMA Negeri 1 Besitang show that the students' achievement in English, including their achievement in writing skill, does not achieve the Minimal Mastery Criterion (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal : KKM*). Students should achieve a score of 70 as a minimum score. But in fact, most of the students have low achievement in English, as shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Average of Students' English Score (Grade X) in SMAN 1 Besitang**

Academic Year	2012/2013		2013/2014	
	I	II	I	II
X1	68	68	66	67
X 2	66	67	65	66
X 3	63	65	65	65

Table 1.1 shows that the scores of those three different classes are divided by the total number of the students that result the average scores of each class. From table 1.1 it is concluded that the students' achievement does not achieve the minimal Mastery Criterion (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal: KKM*) determine which is 70.

Based on the observation in the classroom and interview with the teacher and students, the researcher finds that the students have difficulties in learning English especially when they are asked to write a descriptive text. They have difficulties in writing and fulfill the characteristics of the descriptive text including the social function, generic structure and language features.

A descriptive text is a text which describes particular person, things and places. The basic competence that should be reached by the students of Senior High School is to make them are able to arrange a descriptive text based on the linguistic features and the generic structures of the text. There are two generic structures of this text, they are identification and description. Meanwhile, the linguistic features of a descriptive text are the use of specific relevant, simple present tense, adjective clause and relating verbs.

Besides that, there are problems that came from the teacher. The teacher has low professional development, used inappropriate teaching strategies and media. In teaching writing, the teacher mostly emphasizes his teaching on the product of writing. The teacher starts the learning activities by explaining the topic. A model is only provided very occasionally. The students then are asked to write a text in a certain time allotted. The teacher waits for the students writing product without giving any guidance. Finally the students submit their writing to

the teacher to be graded. Consequently, students feel bored and do not interested with the materials in writing. Therefore their writing achievement is unsatisfying.

Suitable teaching strategies are needed to achieve the goal of teaching writing, because the achievement of the goal depends on the strategies that the teacher applies. There are many strategies which can be applied in teaching writing. Two of them are Think-Talk-Write (TTW) and PLEASE strategies.

Think-Talk-Write is a strategy that facilitating the exercise of language both oral and written fluently. This strategy based on the interpretation that learning is a social action. Think-Talk-Write Strategy encourages the students to think, talk, and write based on the particular topic. Think-Talk-Write Strategy is used to develop the writing fluently and exercise the language before write them. Think-Talk-Write Strategy was introduced by Huinker and Laughlin. According to Huinker and Laughlin in Zulkarnaini (2011), “The think-talk-write strategy builds in time for thought and reflection and for the organization of ideas and the testing of those ideas before students are expected to write. The flow of communication progresses from student engaging in thought or reflective dialogue with themselves, to talking and sharing ideas with one another to writing”.

The second strategy is PLEASE strategy. “PLEASE” strategy is one of the strategies suggested to be taught through SRSD model. The “PLEASE” strategy was developed to address specific difficulties in paragraph writing which are mostly related to prewriting planning, composition, and paragraph revision (Welch, 1992). The “PLEASE” strategy is a mnemonic that provides learners with a road map for writing a paragraph. It reminds learners to carry out several steps for writing paragraphs (Graham and Harris, 2007). The first step of the “PLEASE”

strategy, “P”, stands for the action “PICK”. At this step students learn to Pick their topic, Pick their audience and, Pick the type of the paragraph. The second letter, “L”, refers to “LIST”. Students are taught various techniques for idea generation about the topic before starting to write. The third step of the strategy, “E”, represents “EVALUATE” for ongoing evaluation of the process. At this stage, students are taught to check if their list is complete and how they can organize their notes. The fourth step, “A”, reminds students “ACTIVATE” their paragraph with a topic sentence. Students are taught how to write a precise and effective introductory sentence. The fifth step, “S”, cues students to SUPPLY supporting ideas for their paragraphs based on the list that they have generated for the second step. The final letter, “E”, reminds students to END with a concluding sentence and EVALUATE their work (Welch, 1992).

Yet the success of students’ writing achievement does not only depend on the teaching strategies but also depend on the students’ attitude toward learning English itself. Attitudes could be viewed as a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain thing, idea, person, situation etc. Gardner (1985) defined attitudes as “an evaluative reaction to some referent, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent” As for education, Brown (2000) noted that teachers should recognize that all students possess positive and negative attitudes in varying degrees, adding that the negative attitudes can be changed by thoughtful instructional methods, such as using materials and activities that help students achieve an understanding and appreciation of the foreign culture, a fact that might be reflected on the process of learning the foreign language.

Thus, attitudes could highly influence how individuals approach many situations in life, including foreign language learning. It is believed that individuals with positive attitudes usually progress more rapidly in foreign language learning. Attitudes are closely related to our beliefs and are based upon experiences, thus, the researcher believes that effective language teaching strategies can encourage students to be more positive towards the learning process in general and learning EFL in particular.

The two strategies was applied to different students' learning attitude it is affected to their achievement in writing. Besides those strategies, the researcher carry the descriptive writing. It is based on Senior High School syllabus for tenth grade. That is why the researcher considers conducting the research using that genre of text.

Based on the gap between the expectation and the reality and also the explanation of some theories above, there is an interest to conduct a research on the effect of teaching writing strategies and the students' learning attitude on the students achievement in writing descriptive text.

## **1.2 The Identification of the Problem**

According to the explanation presented in the background of the study, the identification of the problems is stated as follows: (1) Does Think-Talk-Write strategy significantly affect students' achievement in writing descriptive text? (2) Does PLEASEstrategy significantly affect students achievement in writing descriptive text? (3) Does students' learning attitude significantly affect students' achievement in writing descriptive text? (4) How is the students' achievement



taught by using Think-Talk-Write strategy? (5) How is the students' achievement taught by using PLEASE strategy? (6) Is the students' achievement in writing descriptivetext taught by using Think-Talk-Write strategy higher than the students taught by PLEASE strategy? (7) Is the achievement of the students with positive learning attitude inwriting descriptive writing higher than that of the students with negative learning attitude? (8) How is the achievement in writing descriptivetext of the students with positive learning attitude taught by Think-Talk-Write strategy? (9) How is the students' achievement in writing descriptivetext of the students with positive learning attitude taught by using PLEASEstrategy? (10) Do teaching writing strategies and students' learning attitude significantly affect the students' achievement in writing descriptive text? (11) What are the factors which influence students' achievement in writing descriptive text? (12) Is there any interaction between Think-Talk-Write and PLEASE strategies and students' learning attitude to students' achievement in writing descriptive text?



### **1.3 The Problems of the Study**

This study explores the effect of Think-Talk-Write (TTW) and PLEASE strategy and students' English learning attitude on students' achievement in writing descriptive text. Thus this study attempts to find the answers to the following questions:

1. Is students' achievement in writing descriptive text taught by using Think-Talk-Write (TTW) strategy higher than that of PLEASE strategy?
2. Is the achievement in writing descriptive text of students with positive English learning attitude higher than that of negative English learning attitude?
3. Is there any interaction between teaching strategies and English learning attitude to students' achievement in writing descriptive text?

### **1.4 The Objectives of the Study**

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

- 1) Students' achievement in writing descriptive text taught by using Think-Talk-Write (TTW) strategy is higher than that of PLEASE strategy.
- 2) Students' achievement in writing descriptive text of the students with positive English learning attitude is higher than that of negative English learning attitude
- 3) There is interaction between teaching strategies and English learning attitude to the students' achievement in writing descriptive text

### **1.5 The Scope of the Study**

There are many teaching writing strategies that can be applied in teaching writing. In this study the teaching strategies are limited to Think-Talk-Write (TTW) and PLEASE strategy. This study is limited to the writing process stage prewriting. This study is also limited to the effect of students' English learning attitude on their descriptive writing achievement. Therefore, this study is limited on the effect of TTW and PLEASE teaching strategies and students' English learning attitude on students' achievement in writing descriptive text.

### **1.6 The Significances of the Study**

Through this research, it is expected that the effect of Think-Talk-Write (TTW) and PLEASE strategies and students' English learning attitude are clearly revealed out. It is hoped that it can provide valuable informations, which may have theoretical as well as practical value for English language teachers and learners.

Theoretically, the result of this research support the theory of Think-Talk-Write (TTW) and PLEASE strategies in improving the students' ability in writing. Meanwhile, practically the result of the research guides the English language teachers in their attempt to decide the appropriate strategies that should be applied in enhancing the students' descriptive writing achievement. The English teachers can get informations of the application of Think-Talk-Write (TTW) and PLEASE Strategy as alternative teaching strategies in teaching writing. It is also expected to give contribution for those who are interested in performing further study in other field of research.