

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

Learning a foreign language means learning all skills of the language which are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, when it comes to writing, it seems that both teachers and students feel reluctant. Aboderin (1984:37) points out that writing is rarely given a serious attention like other skills as it deserves. For English teachers, teaching writing is a tiring job, mainly because they have to correct a lot of papers full of language errors with the limited time provided as Marquardt (1968:2) states that teachers of English as a second language who teach composition complain constantly of being the horns of a dilemma : how to control the writing of their students so they do not practice making errors, and how at the same time to train them to communicate effectively in English. For the students, on the other hand, writing is viewed as an unpleasant thing for they have nothing to say and they have to avoid making as many mistakes as possible. Protherough (1983:9) once overheard his students saying, 'I can't think of anything to write about', or 'When I write, I make a lot of mistakes which have to be laboriously corrected, I get bad marks and I feel a failure'.

Does it mean that writing is difficult to learn or to teach like what Raimes (1983:5) points out that learning to write is not just a 'natural' extension of learning to speak a language? Speech is a universal as people acquire their first language in the few years of life. Byrne (1991:4), in harmony with Raimes, states that writing is essentially a solitary activity and the fact that we are required to write on our own, without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult. Actually, writing is not so difficult as Graham (1976:ix) states that writing is not a mysterious process. It is like a craft which can be mastered by those who follow directions.

By using the right technique, writing teachers will be able to teach writing more successfully. Raimes (1983:5) explains that there is no single answer to the question of how to teach writing in ESL classes. There are as many answers as there are teachers and teaching styles, or learners and learning styles. However, when the writer attended her first writing class, the writer felt frustrated. It was due to the fact that during a teaching learning process, a writing teacher gave some notes on writing and then explained them. After the explanation, the students were assigned to write a simple composition. Most of the students complained, though not during the teacher's presence, about

their lack of writing experience and felt frustrated because when they were in high school, they were not taught this particular skill. Outside the classroom, the students exchanged ideas on what to write and they also listened to suggestions and criticisms from one another. And as a result, they did not feel as frustrated as they had been.

Crabbe (1982:41) states that when the students are asked to write in the language classrooms, two kinds of difficulties often arise. First, they do not know what to write about and for whom. Second, they are forced to take responsibility for a piece of work that is traditionally an object of judgment in terms of linguistic proficiency. Furthermore, Crabbe adds that to avoid or to overcome such obstacles is by using group work since the group provides an immediate audience and makes writing for the individual a more realistic task as well as providing him with immediate feedback on what he writes. Sprenger (1973:15), cited by Read (1982:1) agrees with Crabbe. He states that group work can be beneficial for the students who have hardly any contact with native speakers of language they are studying. It provides them a setting in which it becomes almost natural to use the new language ... to practice the new language creatively. In addition, McGreal (1989:17) points out that grouping enables students participate more freely in discussions without fear of ridicule from the class or chas-

tisement from the teacher. Besides, Crabbe states that the task of knowing what to write about is tackled by several individuals, each providing support and stimulus for each other. Another benefit of group writing, as Ghani (1986:36) points out, is that it promotes creativity through discussion and peer learning. At the same time group writing provides a change that both students and teacher need in order to maintain interest and incentive.

Realizing how beneficial group work in the writing class is, the writer suggest a way to help writing teachers teach writing more successfully, that is, by using group work.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Realizing the fact that writing is considered a difficult task while it is a very important tool for people in many areas of living, the writer is eager to conduct this study. For this purpose, she has formulated the statement as follows :

How can group work help writing teachers teach writing more successfully?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Derived directly from the problem and question above, the objective of the study is to suggest of how group work can help writing teachers teach writing more successfully.

1.4 Significance of the Study

First of all, this study is expected to give some contributions to the success of teaching writing at the university, especially at the English Department of Widya Mandala University, in giving ideas and insights to writing teachers. Second, it is expected that the students will get better achievement in writing by using group work.

1.5 Limitation and Scope

The writer limits this study in terms of :

a. Subject of the research

This technique can be applied to students who are in Writing I (second semester). It is due to the fact that second semester students do not have sufficiently enough experiences to write as in high schools English teachers usually do not teach them how to write. Moreover, inexperienced writers are less fearful when a few of their peers read and comment on what they write.

b. Material

The materials taught are in accordance with the materials of the level of the writing class.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding, the writer would like to provide some definitions of the key terms used before going further. They are as follows :

- a. Group work : a number of people who interact with one another, who are psychologically aware of one another, and who perceive themselves to be a group (Brumfit, 1987:72).
- b. Group work : ... units composed of two or more persons who come into contact for a purpose and who consider the contact meaningful (Read, 1982:1). She divides group work into two kinds. They are :
 - Casual groups : flexible task groups which can be adapted to create temporary groupings of various sizes to work on specific exercises.
 - Fixed groups : groups where the members remain in the same group for a period of time.

1.7 Methodology

The great majority of the research for writing this thesis is carried out in the library. The writer collects facts and experts' opinions mostly from books, articles, and also gathers facts and proofs from the reality within her environment. After she gathers relevant facts and opinions from those sources, she relates, summarizes, and expresses them in her own words. Then, she tries to suggest her own opinion concerning group work as a means of teaching writing.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This paper consists of five chapters. Chapter One deals with the introduction of the paper containing background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, limitation and scope, definition of key terms, methodology, and organization of the paper. Chapter Two discusses the theories of writing, the importance of writing, and kinds of writing. Chapter Three concerns with the theory of group work. Chapter Four contains the steps of teaching writing through group work. Chapter Five is the conclusion and suggestions of the study.