

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

For communication, people need tool which is called language. Language is used to express thoughts, feelings or perceptions. It directs how and what people will communicate in different circumstances. This point is stressed by Howards (1980:4) who says that:

“Language is the ultimate human technology which organizes man’s thoughts, feelings and perceptions. It makes it possible for him to communicate and it directs how and what he will communicate, to whom and in what circumstances.”

In some circumstances, language is considered to have some elements. If language can be divided into several Activities, language consists of language skills, namely Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing, and language components, namely, vocabulary, grammar, and so on. Those skills and components are related to each other when they are used in communication.

Among those language skills, writing is one of the skills which plays an important role in communication. This point is stressed by Harmer (1991:139) who says that writing, especially communicative writing can play a valuable Activity in the lesson. Thornton (1980:9) explains “language is a knowledge in our heads, writing is a realization of that knowledge in behaviour.” However, there is a difference that can be found between writing and other language skills in its function in communication. Heffernan and Lincoln (1990:3) state:

“In writing, you have to communicate without facial expressions, gestures or body language at any kind. You have to speak with words and punctuation alone.”

One example that shows the use of writing for communication is a letter. Letter is one of the simplest forms of writing that can be used to express feeling or to deliver information. Students can show affection, anger or love to someone far away just by writing sentences or phrases on a piece of paper. Barrass (1982:25) explains that writing a letter can test our ability in communicating effectively in appropriate language. On the other hand, writing is considered to be the most difficult skill to do, especially in language learning. Harmer (1991:139) stresses this point by saying “It is often easier to provide opportunities for spoken communication in the classroom than it is for the written medium.”

Writing is a thinking process. Lannon (1992:4) points out “Most writing is a conscious and deliberate process – not the result of divine intervention, magic, miracles or last minute inspiration.” It means that learning how to write takes time. Writing is a long learning. Flower (1989:65) also states “Writing, as a way of thinking things through, is often a process of re-representation – making your knowledge as verbal and as explicit as you can.” The process of writing consists of several stages. First, a person has to find ideas that will be developed in their writing. He or she finds the ideas from his or her own experience or from his or her knowledge. Then, he or she tries to formulate the ideas that have been gathered into a good form of outline or draft. A person begins to write when he or she feels ready with his or her composition. After a person finishes the work, he or

she revises and edits the writing. When he or she does not feel satisfied with the works, he or she will start over again.

Writing is complicated. Because of this reason, people, especially students often feel afraid to write. They feel hesitated to start writing a composition because they are not sure whether they can finish it or not. They start thinking about the difficulties and obstacles they may find during the process of writing. They are afraid that they will not be able to find appropriate words, phrases, sentences or even expressions. In some circumstances, they have ideas, but they cannot express them in words. This obstacle is called “the writer’s blocks”. One of the causes of the “blocks” as stated by Anson and Wilcox (1992:44) is:

“Many students run into trouble in their writing because they have little or no sense that their papers should do anything. They think of writing as vaguely ‘informative’, with ‘to inform’ meaning simply to ‘write stuff down’. Since they have no goal or aim in their work, they get stuff down all right, but their papers turn out formless, haphazard and dull.”

“The writer’s blocks” can be experienced by every person in every stage of writing. Beginners usually experience more “blocks” than advanced writers. However, a person’s writing ability does not guarantee that he or she will not find any “blocks” during the process of writing. The “blocks” can occur at the beginning stage of writing or at the pre-stage when a person tries to find and gather ideas before expressing everything onto the paper. In some circumstances, students can easily start writing, but he or she can also stop writing because he or she has no ideas. This means that the “blocks” can also appear in the writing stage when a person tries to arrange and write the ideas to be a good form of writing.

Finally, the “blocks” can also appear at the post-stage of writing when a person revises and edits the work.

To understand more about the condition that involved in the teaching of writing, the writer observed the teaching learning activities in the classroom. When the writer was conducting her teaching practice program at SMUK Santa Agnes, she found out that writing was not given much emphasis in the classroom. The skill that was focused more was Reading. It seemed that writing was neglected. However, there was an extra-curricular that was used to develop the language skills and components. One of the skills that were focused was writing. The writer observed that the students often faced difficulties to write. Based on her discussion and survey with the English language teacher and also with the Indonesian language teacher, she found out that writing was also rarely focused in Indonesian language lesson. If the students felt that writing by using their mother tongue was a complicated thing to do, they would feel worse when they were asked to write in their foreign language, English.

The writer also found out a case when she did her Teaching Practice Program. When she observed a group of students in English lesson, she found out that some students were not able to make a composition based on a topic given even though it was a simple one. They often experienced “blocks” whether in the beginning, in the middle or in the end of their writing. The temporary results of the writer’s observation were varied. In some circumstances, the students did not start writing because they have no idea. In another time, when the students wrote, they suddenly stopped and thought for a while to continue their writing.

The writer also relates that observation with her own experience. Based on the writer's experience when she was studying at the secondary school and at the tertiary school, she observed that the activities in the writing class were like a test. The students were asked to write and the teacher evaluated the results. Whenever the students entered the class, they had to make compositions based on the topic given with less guidance given by the writing teacher. It seemed that the writing class was intended to give the students knowledge about the theory of writing, for instance narrative, expositive, and so on. Students were given less opportunities to practice writing in order to improve their abilities. Finally, at the end of the lesson, the students were asked to submit their work whether it had been finished or not. In this case, the teacher has the tendency to see the end product of the students, even though it was actually terminal. He or she never realized that writing was a thinking process. Writing a composition cannot be done directly at one time. The process of writing can be considered complete when the writer has already felt satisfied with what he or she has written. In addition, the process of writing can also be considered complete when the reader can grab the message or the content of the result of writing.

As she observed, every student had different strategy in solving the problems that they faced before or when they were writing a composition. In some circumstances, the students tried to understand the theme first before starting to write. They spent a long period of time to think about what they would state. On the other hand, others tried to ask their friends to provide the appropriate words or

sentences. They also asked the teacher to help them when they felt that their friends' explanations were not clear enough. Some students worked independently by translating the words from their mother tongue into their second language. They searched the difficult words in the dictionary. Sometimes, the uses of the words were not appropriate. The key of the whole condition is that the students need time in writing because they often find "blocks" that make them stop while they are writing. They have to pass several stages before they finally feel that their works are complete.

Besides giving more time to the students to finish the process of writing, an English teacher should make the writing lesson more attractive and interesting. He or she has to find new creative way to motivate the students to write. Usually, the students are only given a theme as the basic of what they are going to write. To help the students in writing, the teacher can use media. Using song as the media in teaching writing can add a new variation in the teaching of writing. The song can be used as a means of stimulating the students' ideas to write. Many experts say that music can motivate people to do something. Dubin and Olshtain (1977:198) point that "Music is a pleasurable outlet which is shared by almost all people and singing is a good way for students to relax and feel more at ease in using the new language." In this case, listening to the songs and reading the lyrics of the songs are two ways that can be applied in teaching writing.

From the explanation above, it is obvious that eventhough writing is a process, the process is rarely considered. Besides, in the process of writing, there are so many "blocks" that should be faced by the students which they try to solve by

using different strategies. Therefore, the writer wants to know the stages of writing when students write a narrative composition. In addition, she also intends to know about the strategies used when the students experience “the writer’s block” in writing a narrative composition which is considered to be the easiest and the simplest type of writing. In this case, the writer uses a song as a means of stimulating the students’ ideas. The study will be done as an extra-curricular activity. Therefore, the students are considered to be interested in writing as one of the skills taught in this activity.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

In order to write a good composition, there is a process that should be carried out. This process consists of several stages, and it is not controlled because it occurs unconsciously. The stages involved in the process of writing can be divided into the pre-stage, the writing stage, and the post-stage. In the pre-stage, students can try to do the brainstorming (stimulating ideas based on the theme), the drawing, the branching (making a scheme of the ideas) or the outline (writing the main points of the ideas that will be developed). After finishing the pre-stage, a person comes into the writing stage. Students can start writing and he or she can do it several times. In writing the first draft, he or she can write everything in the mind without being aside from the theme. However, this composition cannot be considered appropriate to be read by other people. Finally, a person reaches the final stage or the post-stage where he or she can revise and also edit the result of the writing.

However, the problems occur when students faces “the writer’s blocks”. The “blocks” can occur in every stage of writing. To crack these “blocks”, there are certain strategies used by the students. Each student has different obstacles and tries to solve them by using different strategies.

Based on the above explanation, there are several questions needed to be answered:

1. What are the stages in the writing process that are passed when students write a narrative composition as stated in the theories?
2. What are the strategies used when students experience “the writer’s block” in writing a narrative composition?

1.3 Objective of the Study

By conducting this study, the writer wants to know:

1. The stages in the writing process that are passed when students write a narrative composition.
2. The strategies used when students experience “the writer’s block” in writing a narrative composition.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This result of this study is orientated to give some contributions to the teaching of writing, especially at Senior High School as a reminder that writing is a process. It is expected to give input to the English teacher and add a variation in the teaching of writing.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The writer studies the stages of writing and also the strategies used to crack “the writer’s block” when the students are writing compositions.

Furthermore, the writer would like to limit the points that will be discussed. They include:

- a. This study is focused on narrative writing. The writer chooses narrative writing because it is considered as the simplest and the easiest type of writing that the students have learned.
- b. This study uses a narrative song as the media to find ideas in writing.
- c. The Subjects of this study are 10 students from the second grade of SMUK Santa Agnes at Jl. Mendut no 7 Surabaya.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Writing is not simply transforming everything inside the head onto the paper. It involves a complex process. Lannon (1992:12) states:

“Writing is a process of transforming the material you discover – by inspiration, research, accident, trial and error, or whatever – into a message with a definite meaning. In short, writing is a process of deliberate decisions.”

In the process of writing, there are stages that are unconsciously there. Before starting to write, a person has to find and collect ideas to be developed later in the composition. If he or she has arranged everything well, he or she starts writing. Next, he or she tries to check the work again by doing the revising and the editing process. Then, the writing can be considered finished when the writer feels satisfied with his or her work. Neeld (1990:2) explains that controlling the process

of writing means finding ways of complex ideas and learning how to bring concepts in appealing way. In the process of writing, students usually faces “blocks” that can trouble them in finding words, expressions, sentences or ideas, and in formulating ideas. In this case, he or she has strategies in cracking the “blocks”. The “blocks” can occur in every stage of writing and any kinds of writing, even in the simplest kind of it, narrative writing.

Narration is considered as the most common kind of writing, especially in secondary school. Usually, it is also called with chronological writing. Heffernan and Lincoln (1990:15) explain that narrative writing uses chronological order. It is quite obvious that the reason of calling narrative writing as chronological writing is the use of chronological order. However, there is an exception of the use of chronological pattern. Berry (1974:116) states:

“Narration most commonly presents incidents in chronological order, but when it is used to convey a motive, purpose, or explanation, the writer often subordinates the natural time pattern to other considerations.”

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation, the writer thinks that it is important to have clear definitions of the terms used before she goes on to the next chapter. They are:

a. Song

Song is a tool for teaching language skills which can reinforce the students in studying the language and modern life. [Fraida Dubin and Elite Olshtain, 1977:199]

b. Narrative Writing

“Narration is a kind of discourse which answer the question ‘what happened?’” [Warriner et al., 1980:526]

c. Writing Process

The writing process is the process behind the significant and potentially difficult writing that a writer does when he or she is trying to explain, understand or argue and wanting the reader to see things the way a writer does. [Linda Flower, 1989:30]

d. Writing strategy

“... a strategy – in the composing process, just as in painting, or music or golf, and that the most effective approach to the study of composition is one which is positive rather than merely corrective.” [Clarence A. Brown and Robert Zoellner, 1968:iii]

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters, each of which has different kind of explanation. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of background of the study, statements of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical framework, definition of key terms, and organization of the study. The second chapter is about the theories that become the basic foundation of this study. The third chapter consists of methodology, subjects, data, research instrument, procedure of collecting data, and data analysis

strategies. The fourth chapter is about findings and discussion. The last chapter is about the conclusion and suggestion.