

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the general background of teaching writing in kindergarten in Indonesia, writer's workshop framework, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, clarification of terms and the organization of the thesis.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Teaching writing in kindergarten within an Indonesian context consists of copying words and sentences dictated by the class teacher. This similar process was adopted by K2 teachers in a pre-school in Cipete, Jakarta Selatan. Seeing the lack of enthusiasm by students during writing activity, the researcher and K2 teachers opted to implement the writer's workshop framework. Writer workshop is a part of the process writing approach made popular by James Britton in 1975 (Freisinger, 1980) in the United Kingdom and Howard Graves (1985) and Lucy Calkins (1986) in the United States. As a process writing, students are introduced to mini lessons or steps of process writing similarly followed by professional writers that include pre-writing, writing, editing, revising and publishing. Teachers are able to check on students' progress by conferencing with them throughout the process writing.

Writer's workshop main focus is not the process of developing students' reading and writing skills but the early introduction of literacy program that will enhance students' language ability as well as reading and writing skills. Furthermore, Writer's Workshop emphasizes the need for children to understand that writing is a method for meaningful communication (Karsbaek, 2011; Bissex, 1980 cited by Ely & Gleason, 2005) and to "create meaningful piece of writing for a reader takes place" (Routman, 2005 cited by Karsbaek, 2011). Different from professional writers, writer's workshop in kindergarten consists of drawings

as well as written texts. A child would instinctively draw as a form of writing to communicate her/his meanings prior to learning orthographically correct spelling (Newkirk & Kittel, 2013). Drawings play an important role in early literacy, because it is a form of communication in which children express themselves (Davido, 2012; Malchiodi, 1998; Kress and Pahl cited by Ring and Anning, 2013) prior to children's ability to acquire reading and writing skills (Wright, 2007) because "pictures help children to reflect about the meanings they want to convey" (Schickendanz & Casbergue, 2009 p.13).

Furthermore, drawings are communicated through inter-textualities such as swoosh line behind a car and lettering of names such as M for mommy (Wright, 2007); thus as a narrative expressing children's feelings (Malchiodi, 1998 cited by Ring & Anning, 2013). These drawings represent meanings to compensate for children's limited knowledge of vocabulary. Yet, through the practice of naming and labeling, children use their phonemic knowledge to invent words that express their drawings in order to communicate. According to Dunn and Graves (1987) vocabulary knowledge leads to reading comprehension and can improve the quality of writing (McCartney & Raphael, 1989). Thus, it is important for teachers to guide students in "interactions that emphasize how print and writing can carry meaning" (Shufelt, 2008) and understand the uses and functions of print in daily life" (Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004 cited by Shufelt, 2008).

As students become more confident in invented spelling and development of their spellings, children readily immerse themselves in writing sentences. These sentences become stories about themselves, persons and things that are close to them. Just as professional writers, children want to be heard and the "Author Chairs" provides the venue for children to celebrate their writings. (Graves, 1985; Brown, 2010).

To provide further in depth understanding of the study, several previous studies were scrutinized and provided as the literature review. These previous studies utilized the social constructivist in early childhood learning (Dyson 1999, 2006, 2010) and TEYL theories (Musthafa, 2010). These studies include: Early childhood literacy (Dyson, 1993; Genishi, 2009; Kennedy et al, 2012) Children's

early writing (Graves, 1985; Blecha, 2009; Bouas et al, 1997; Brown, 2010; Dyson, 2006; Dyson 2010; Kissel et al, 2011), Kindergarten writing workshop (Hertz & Heydenberk, 1997).

However these studies, with the exemption of Musthafa's, were done in the United States with the focus on teaching methods, children's writing achievements and improvements in children's reading abilities. These studies represent students achievements in writing where English is their first language. Furthermore, these studies did not represent the hurdles EYL students have to overcome to improve their writing abilities through the enhancement of vocabulary learning in a writer's workshop taught by local teachers. Thus, based on these grounds, the study aims to fill the gap by investigating teachers' implementation of writer's workshop to enhance students writing abilities and vocabulary learning.

## **1.2 The Research Question**

Referring to the background above, this research attempts to address the following question:

1. Can the implementation of writer's workshop as a process of writing enhances students' writing abilities and vocabulary learning?

## **1.3 The Aims of the Study**

Based on the focus mentioned above, the aims of this study are:

1. To investigate teachers' implementation of writer's workshop: what methods used in the various stages of process writing to enhance writing abilities and how teachers assist students to develop their vocabulary learning.

## **1.4 The Significance of the Study**

This study concerns how EYL kindergarten students perform in writer's workshop and how it contributes to the enhancement of students' writing abilities and vocabulary learning. Theoretically, this study aims to collect and document

data imperative to understanding the primary issue. Principally, the research is expected to investigate students' improvement in their writing abilities and vocabulary learning. Moreover, this research is expected to contribute to the implementation of writer's workshop into kindergarten curricula.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

Measures are taken to ensure the research is legitimate since limitations could impact the outcomes and substance of findings. Several limitations conceivably affect the results of data analysis. First, the study is limited to 11 students. As the researcher and teacher of the study, who are familiar with each student's strengths and weaknesses, bias may have influenced the outcome of the findings. Actions are taken to ensure professional judgements are adhered to throughout the study.

### **1.6 Clarification of Terms**

**Early Literacy Activity:** Early literacy activity is part of early childhood literacy program that engages students in developing their understanding, reading, writing and communicating skills to express their feelings and ideas through interaction with the environment and socialization.

**Vocabulary Learning:** The process by which children learn new words through exposure, elaboration and the attempt to correctly write the words through phonemic awareness and references; such as word list.

#### **Emergent Writing:**

Emergent writing is a theory of literacy development referring to the "dynamic and overlapping stages of early writing ability that all children pass through, leading up to conventional writing" (Piedra, 2007). The stages are drawing, scribbling, phonetic spelling, developmental spelling (mock letters, letters and letter strings and invented spelling) and conventional spelling.

**Phonemic Awareness:** the awareness that spoken language consists of a

sequence of phonemes (Yopp&Yopp, 2000 in Jentzen, 2010).

## **1.7 Organization of the Thesis**

The organization of this research paper is divided into six chapters.

### **Chapter I**

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the topic of the research paper. This section is divided into seven parts consisting of general background, the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the aims of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study and the clarifications of key terms and organization of the paper.

### **Chapter II**

This chapter is the literature review which incorporates the most relevant theory and previous research associated with Writer's Workshop. The theories and studies are discussed in depth to support the investigation process.

### **Chapter III**

This chapter explains the exploratory methodology used in the study. The strengths and weaknesses of the method are presented to validate the reasons the method is chosen for the research.

### **Chapter IV**

The Implementation of Writer's Workshop

### **Chapter V**

This chapter reports the result consistent of the data analysis and the researcher's interpretation of the outcome of the research.

### **Chapter VI**

This chapter discusses the conclusions, implications and suggestions according to the research results.

