

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents some general issues related to the present study. These cover background of the study, formulation of the problems, purposes of the study, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is part of four language skills necessary to be mastered by the students. This is more urgent than before because the ability to write well is becoming increasingly important in our global community (Weigle, 2002). Moreover, workplace needs people who master English well especially on transactional letters (Firth, 2009) because there is a very close relationship between professional success and the writing skill. For that reasons, writing is becoming the main part of the curriculum in schools, and all students in a formal education system have to learn to write (Weigle, 2002).

However, writing is not easy. Errors are commonly found in students' writing. Some authors (i.e. Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ghabool, 2012) state that there are some major categories of common errors in writing. These include, (a) content (related to ideas, evidence, and information); (b) noun endings (preposition, pronoun, singular/plural); (c) sentence structure (unnecessary words, missing words, and word order); (d) mechanics (punctuation, spelling, and capitalization); (e) organization (structure); (f) vocabulary (word choice and mixing up similar words); and (f) style (tone and expression).

The aforementioned category of errors in writing proposed by Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994), and Ghabool (2012) focuses on both content and form. However, the implementation of teaching writing in EFL class just focus more on the form (mechanics) than the content. It is supported by Alwasilah in his study (1999) which revealed that writing practices in EFL classroom in Indonesia has

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more emphasis on the mechanical aspect of writing such as spelling, word formation, vocabulary, grammar, and theories about writing (Alwasilah, 2001). It means the writing practice focuses more on the organization of ideas than on the ideas themselves. Consequently, some students have difficulties in developing the content of their writing. As Harmer (2007) states that “They do not have anything to say and cannot come up with ideas” (p. 329). Meanwhile, writing does not only require the knowledge of the linguistic, but also the writers’ creativity to transfer their ideas into written form. It means writing is not a simple process because there are many things to consider in composing a good writing.

Moreover, the failure of providing appropriate method in writing skills cause students’ productivity in writing low. The data presented by Djokronegoro in the *Kompas* daily of December, 17, 1997 edition as cited in Alwasilah (2001, p.11) shows that, in higher education level, around fifty percent of the faculty members never publish textbooks or articles in Indonesian, let alone in English (Alwasilah, 2001, p.11). Consequently, foreigners are more active than Indonesian in publishing their writing. It is because Indonesian students are not provided with appropriate writing skill. As intellectuals say that they do not know how to write because their school teachers failed to provide them with writing skill (Alwasilah, 2001). The failure of students’ writing is caused by inappropriate method in teaching writing. Therefore, Indonesian intellectuals are frequently criticized for their lack of ability to write (Alwasilah, 2009, p11).

Based on the facts that the failure of providing appropriate method in writing skills cause students’ productivity in writing low, it is necessary for teachers to choose an appropriate way to teach writing to tackle the failure in teaching and learning writing. One of the problems faced by the students in learning writing is difficulties to find out the ideas and the teacher should be able to inspire their students with various ideas to write (Harmer, 2007). He or she should find out approaches and strategies to develop their writing and organize their ideas (Mukundan, 2014). This is really important because the idea or the content of writing is one of the major problems for them.

One alternative way to support the students in eliciting ideas to write is using photographs. As visual media, photographs allow a complex idea to be easily conveyed (Kress, 2010). The idea is supported by some empirical researches which report that visual media such as photographs do not just convey meaning but represent external narratives of reality and figure out the way persons think and act (Kress, 2010).

There are some benefits of using photographs as part of the teaching instruction. They provide a new source to collect information and help low achiever students to spark their imagination more easily (Cortash, 2011). It also can help teachers to reimagine literacy instruction in class (Siegel & Panofsky, 2009; Wohlwend, 2011, 2013, in Kuby & Vaughan, 2015). In short, photographs have many benefits to promote the success of teaching and learning program. For that reasons, photographs are used in our a daily life as we can see in newspaper, television, video, computer game, and book and it becomes a feature of school curriculum (Macken & Horarik, 2004).

Regarding the school curriculum in Indonesia, the use of photographs can be combined with genre based approach (GBA). Genre based approach (GBA) has been implemented in 2013 curriculum which is developed on the basis of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory that sees language as a resource for making meaning, interacting with others, and communication (Agustien, 2013, p. 40). Formulation of competence in 2013 curriculum includes some basic text types adopted from GBA. The text types learned by junior high school students, based on 2013 curriculum, include descriptive, procedure, narrative, recount, and report text (Regulation of Ministry of Education and Culture Number 64, 2013 on Content Standard of Primary and Secondary Education). Furthermore, statement of competence in 2013 curriculum also uses communicative purpose, text structure and linguistic features which are developed based on characteristics of GBA (Agustien, 2013).

A number of previous studies related to the implementation of visual media have been conducted by many researchers (Chairena, 2007; Fitriani, 2009;

Noviani, 2012; Putri, 2012; Fitriana, 2013; Ramadhani, 2014; Sari, 2014; Setiawan, 2014; Suherdi, 2015; Sari, 2016). Previous studies related to the implementation of visual media in writing skill have also been conducted by Chairena (2007), Fitriani (2009), Putri (2012), Fitriana (2013), Ramadhani (2014), Sari (2014), Setiawan (2014), and Sari (2016). Those studies have come with positive results. They prove that using visual media is very beneficial to improve students' writing ability. Therefore, visual media are suggested to be applied in the teaching-learning program.

Furthermore, previous studies related to the implementation of visual media in reading skill have been conducted by Noviani (2012). Her findings prove good results as well. Visual media can improve the students' skill in reading. Furthermore, Suherdi (2015) analyzed a series of teaching learning processes applying multimodal pedagogy to a genre-based teaching of English in a senior high school in Indonesia. The results show that the use of multimodality, including images, is very beneficial in any classroom setting. Therefore, multimodality is suggested to be applied in the teaching learning program.

Many previous studies have been conducted to test the use of visual media, especially photographs, in writing skill. However, no study has identified its use of photograph in writing a descriptive text. In fact, descriptive text is important to master. The present study is an attempt to fill the gap by investigating the use of photographs in writing descriptive text for junior high school students in the framework of genre based approach.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problems**

Based on the background stated above, the problems of this study are formulated as follows:

1. How photographs improve students' ability in writing descriptive text?
2. To what extent does photographs improve students' ability in writing the descriptive text?

3. How are the students' responses towards the use of photographs in teaching writing descriptive text to improve their writing ability?

### **1.3 Purposes of the Study**

With reference to the problem above, this study is aimed at:

1. To see how photographs improve students' ability in writing descriptive text.
2. Discovering the extent of the students' improvement in their descriptive writing by the use of photographs.
3. To explore the students' responses towards the use of photographs in teaching writing descriptive text to improve their writing ability.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the implementation of teaching writing by using visual media, especially photographs. The analysis focuses on genre, register, discourse, grammar, and graphic feature of the text. The analysis tries to identify the effectiveness of photographs in writing and students' responses about the use of photographs in teaching writing descriptive text. The data are collected from the tests (pretest and posttest), questionnaires (open-ended and close-ended questionnaires), and interview from junior high school students in Lampung, Indonesia.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

There are some contributions that the study may offer to the English language pedagogy either theoretically or practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to enhance empirical supports to the existing theories, literature, and scientific research findings of photographs in teaching writing especially to improve students' writing ability. Moreover, the research findings can provide information for future researchers who intend to carry on research in the same field with certain interests. Practically, by looking at the result of the study, it is expected that it can explain the benefits of the use of photographs in teaching writing to improve students' writing ability. Then, it is expected to give a portrayal of

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method in teaching and learning writing through photographs. Furthermore, it can be a basis of policy making for education in Indonesia to consider the use of photographs in teaching and learning writing.

### **1.6 Clarification of Terms**

In order to avoid misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and ambiguity, several terms need to be clarified in reporting this study. The definitions of the terms in this study are as follows:

#### **a. Writing**

Writing is defined as a process of transferring ideas into written texts as a result of thinking, drafting, and revising process that require specified skills (Feez & Joyce, 1998; Brown, 2001; Utami, 2014). In this case, teaching and learning writing refers to the activities involving teacher and students in order to improve students' writing skill.

#### **b. Descriptive Text**

Descriptive text is a text which focuses on describing particular objects, pieces, places, or persons and it identifies some of their characteristics (Emilia, 2013). In this study, the descriptive text written by the students focuses on describing a particular place, especially home.

#### **c. Photographs**

Photograph means drawing with light or getting the picture through a camera as a medium with light helping (Sulaeman, 1982, p.94). It means, all pictures which are made by using a camera are called photographs.

#### **d. Genre Based Approach (GBA)**

Genre based approach is an approach that focuses on the agreements of a particular text type and follow several stages such as Building Knowledge of the

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Field (BKOF), Modeling of the Text (MOT), Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of the Text (ICOT) (Hammonds, 1992).

### **1.7 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one gives a general description of the introduction to the research topic. Chapter two reviews the theory related to the study. Chapter three provides the research methodology. Chapter four discusses the findings of the effectiveness of photographs toward writing ability and the students' responses towards the use of photographs in teaching writing program. Chapter five presents conclusions and recommendations for further study.

