CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background of study, statement of problems, aims of study, research hypothesis, significance of the study, research methodology including research design, population and sample, data collection, data analysis, and clarification of key terms.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language is a medium of communication, which helps the members of a community in the society, to communicate and interact with one another. It involves both verbal and non-verbal communication. Language focuses on listening and reading which can be named as passive or receptive skills, while speaking and writing can be named as, active or productive skills.

One of the important skills in learning a language is writing. Through writing the writer can express ideas, feelings, hopes, and dreams as well as fears, angers, and frustrations. For students, writing is a primary medium through which they demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of concepts and theories studies for many weeks or months (Hughey, 1983).

Unfortunately, many students in Indonesia face difficulties when they have to write in English. For many reasons, writing is the most difficult skill to learn (Alwasilah, 2001). Common problems which were found by students during writing activities usually dealt with the problems in generating ideas and developing the ideas into a good piece of writing; problem with vocabulary, diction, grammar, and punctuation (Maula, 2008). For example when someone writes in English, the writer doesn’t only have to use vocabulary in English but also the grammar so that the writings can be meaningful and understood.
Meanwhile, the curriculum in Indonesia requires students to write different types of text, such as narrative text, descriptive text, and recount text. The study focuses on recount text. Recount text is a text which explores the informative fact for the past experience to inform or entertain the reader or the audiences (Gerot & Wignel, 1994, p. 194). Learning recount text is important since it is very useful in the process of further education, such as School Final Exams (Martin, 1984, cited in Emilia, 2011).

A recount text has three elements: orientation or setting, events, and reorientation or concluding statement of the story. The orientation provides the setting and introduces participants, the events tell the sequence of the events, and the reorientation consists of summaries of the events. Therefore, to help students in writing, teachers have to be very organized in their instructions (Brown, 2007), because this can be concluded that to write a recount text correctly, one should know well about the procedure or the steps of activities that should be followed.

One way to help students write recount text more coherently or cohesively is writing essay. In recent times, writing an essay has become a major part of a formal education. Secondary students are taught structured essay formats to improve their writing skills, and essays are often used by universities in selecting applicants. In some cases, essays are used to judge the mastery and comprehension of material. Students are asked to explain, comment on, or assess a topic of study in the form of an essay.

One of many examples of essay is a reflective essay. A reflective essay is an individual activity in which the writer commits ideas, thoughts, reflections and feelings to paper in various learning contexts (Gilmore, 1996). Writing reflective essay offers some benefits for both teacher and students. For the teachers, reflective essay can act as a useful tool for corrective feedback, and as a mirror to reflect on their teaching in the classroom so that it will be effective. Effective teaching has found to be related to “inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional growth” (Harris, 1998, cited in Ferrarro, 1999, p. 4).
students, a reflective essay can help to recall on what they did, what new vocabulary they learned, and what was difficult for them in the lesson.

Thus, the researcher is interested to conduct a study which aimed at investigating whether or not the reflective essay can be one of many effective techniques to improve students’ ability in writing recount text. In this study, the teaching and learning process is based on the Indonesian curriculum and uses the genre-based approach to teach writing recount text since it is the most effective methodology in implementing text-based curriculum (Freeze & Joyce, 2002, cited in Helena, 2008).

1.2 STATEMENTS OF PROBLEM

There are two problems which will be investigated in the study. The problems are formulated in the following questions:

1. Is the use of reflective essay effective in improving students’ scores in writing recount text?
2. What are the students’ responses toward the use of reflective essay in writing recount text?

1.3 AIMS OF STUDY

Based on the background and statement of problems of the study above, the aims of the study can be formulated as follows:

1. To analyze whether or not the use of reflective essay is effective in improving students’ scores in writing recount text.
2. To find out students’ responses toward the use of reflective essay in writing recount text.

1.4 SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of the study is limited to two concerns. First, the study focuses on analyzing the effectiveness of the use of reflective essay in improving students’
scores in writing recount text. Second, the study investigates the students’ responses toward the implementation of reflective essay technique.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

In conducting the study, the researcher expects to give some contributions for educational field, especially teaching strategy used in language teaching and learning, particularly in writing subject. If the result indicates that the use of reflective essay in improving students’ scores in writing recount text is effective, the technique can be used by students as one way to improve their skill in writing recount text. Furthermore, the study is expected to be reference for English teachers in developing innovative teaching technique used in the classroom.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

The following are the key terms used in the study to assist in understanding several terms or concepts of this study:

A reflective essay is a piece of writing that basically demands the writer to write about their activities and feelings about a particular subject. A reflective essay is an individual activity in which the writer commits ideas, thoughts, reflections, and feelings to paper in various learning contexts (Gilmore, 1996).

Writing is the ability to express ideas through symbols. According to many experts, writing is an activity to produce coherent written works. Thus, representations on the paper will have meaning and content that could be communicated to other people by the writer (Klein, 1985).

Recount text is one of story genre. The text is aimed at reconstructing past experienced by retelling events and incidents of the order in which they have occurred. A recount text has three elements: orientation or setting, events, and reorientation or concluding statement of the story. The orientation provides the setting and introduces participants, the events tell the sequence of the events, and the reorientation consists of summaries of the events (Emilia, 2011).
1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I consists of background of study, statements of problem, aims of study, scope of study, significance of study, and the clarification of related terms. Chapter II presents some theoretical foundations of the study such as general writing, the genre-based-approach, the definition of recount text, the generic structures and language features of recount text, the definition of reflection and reflective essay, the advantages of using reflective essay, stages in implementing reflective essay, relation between recount and reflective essay, and related studies. Chapter III informs methodology of this study, including the research design, variables, hypothesis of the study, site and participants, research instruments, data collection, research procedures, scoring rubric, and data analysis. Chapter IV presents the findings and discussions of the study. The last is chapter V which consists of conclusions and suggestions.