CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, aims, scope and limitations of the study, significance of the study, and clarification of the related terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is one of the core skills in the English subjects taught in Indonesian schools, along with listening, speaking, and reading. Writing is the process of thinking to invent and express ideas into good writing, and arranging the ideas into statements and paragraphs. It can also develop the students' critical thinking and imagination to be able to write creatively and effectively (Nunan, 2003). The main purpose of writing itself is to express ideas in a written form to give information. Through writing English, learners can convey messages to readers across places and times (Brown, 2007). Writing is a written product consisting of several procedures or processes such as thinking, composing, and revising which require specialized skills (Brown, 2001). Richards and Renandya (2002) state that writing is a difficult skill for foreign-language learners to master because in writing, students are encouraged to find and generate ideas, and later put them all in writing as a finished product. Moreover, the difficulty of writing lies in generating and organizing ideas by using the appropriate choice of vocabulary, sentences, and paragraphs, then converting these ideas into readable text. Based on the Indonesian 2013 curriculum, narrative text is one of the texts taught to tenth-grade high school students. Narrative texts are often recommended for writing because it is easier to organize ideas compared to other types of writings (Hedge, 1988). However, English teachers need to find other media to help students enhance their writing skills, with one of them being comic strips.

One of the media used to enhance English learning is comic strips. Comic strips are generally short in length, ranging from less than one page to several pages or

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more (Chute, 2008). Therefore, it is very suitable as a learning medium due to its short length. Comic strips also help students to write a story. Kristi and Purwati (2013) state that comic strips enable students to identify the chronological sequence of the story through the visuals and dialogues presented in comic strips. Therefore, comic strips are suitable for encouraging students to enhance their writing skills because of the comics' similarity to narrative texts.

In the writing process, comic strips give advantages, especially in the planning stage. The planning stage is considered an important stage in the writing process because most students face difficulties in generating the ideas into a composition. Comic strips have very exciting potential to help the teachers in achieving the learning objectives (Rokhayani & Utari, 2014). When students are interested in the image and character of the comic, they want to know more deeply about the contents of the comic story. It means that students are entertained and motivated with comic strips as a learning medium because it has interesting and supporting images to help them understand the characters in the comics that convey in the conversation (Nurhalimah, 2018).

In a study conducted by Megawati and Anugerahwati (2012), it is found that comic strips could improve students' narrative writing skills. Several students from MAN Bangil were selected as its participants. According to the study, the students were able to understand narrative better by using comic strips which resulted in them being able to pass the minimum score of 70 which they previously failed to attain. In addition, comic strips were also proven to be able to increase the students' motivation to study and improve their positive attitude towards writing due to the uniqueness of the method. The researcher said that teachers should be more careful and selective towards the selection of the stories.

With that being said, comic strips were able to help students get over the obstacles that they usually face during writing, or at the very least, in narrative texts. According to a study conducted by Toba et al. (2019) on 52 EFL students of IAIN Samarinda, the participants tend to face two different types of problems in writing comparison and contrast essays with the first being the writing process itself and the

second their personal issues. In terms of writing aspects, the students find trouble in creating content, organizing structures, having limited vocabularies, understanding little to nothing about the target language grammar, and writing mechanics itself. This in turn enables personal issues to arise. Due to their challenges in the writing process, their sense of confidence in writing crumbles that put negative attitudes toward writing. To make matters worse, the inability to write also triggers anxiety among the participants.

However, the studies mentioned earlier were done prior to COVID-19 stay-at-home learning. Therefore, new methods of teaching, particularly writing, need to take into account various challenges caused by distance learning. Higher education students found online learning to be stressful due to several reasons including heavier homework load, unstable internet connection, depleting internet data and its lack of funding from their respective universities, and being cooped at home (Irawan et al., 2020). Boredom also plays its part in the students' dwindling moods or attitudes during online learning. This factor plays a bigger role in children since they are more prone to mood changes (Purwanto et al., 2020). In addition, the main concern stems from their inability to use gadgets for online learning. Unlike higher education students, elementary school children are not as tech-savvy.

Therefore, alternative media are needed to increase students' positive attitudes as well as to boost their writing skills. Comic strip as a learning medium is expected to help students' writing and make students pay more attention, when students pay more attention, they will be able to grasp more knowledge and information. Besides that, teachers can use comic strips to build strategies to deepen their students' understanding of content using visual literacy skills (McVicker & Claudia, 2007). Therefore, considering the positive contribution of comic strips to teaching English writing and its suitability for the characteristics of narrative text, the researchers conducted a study on the implementation of comic strips to enhance the students' skills in writing narrative texts.

1.2 Research Questions

The problems that discussed in this study based on the purpose of this research is to address the following questions:

1) To what extent does the use of comic strips improve students' narrative writing skills?

2) How do students respond to learning to write narrative text using comic strips?

1.3 Aims of the study

From the formulation of the problem, the study aims to investigate whether comic strips are able to help to enhance students' writing skills in online learning and to examine the students' responses regarding the use of comic strips in online learning.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research is implemented to tenth grade of Senior High School. This research focuses on the use of comic strips as a medium to enhance students' writing in online learning.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to provide useful information, especially for teaching English writing.

1) **Theoretically**

   a. The result of this study is expected to be able to widen the skill of teachers in using comic strips to enhance students' writing.

   b. The result of this study will enrich the literature on comic strips as a teaching medium if this media can be used successfully.

2) **For the researcher**

   The result of this study can develop her experience related to her knowledge especially in implementing the use of comic strips in teaching

writing. It is also expected that this study can realise a policy on the use of comic strips and the use of GBA.

3) For the English teachers

The result of this study can be a reference in teaching writing and to provide them the alternative media to erase the monotonous activities in the class to enhance students' writing.

4) For the Students

The result of this study can improve students' interest in learning writing so they can be more motivated to develop their abilities.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

The researcher defines the clarification of terms as follows:

1) Comic Strip

A Comic strip is a well-arranged picture or a cartoon combined with text that tells a story and less than one page to several pages or more. In this research, the comic strip is taken from many sources and modified by the researcher to attract the students' motivation and interest and adapted from local and foreign stories as suggested by the teacher based on the suitability between the content of the story and the characteristics of the narrative text. Then, from the comic strips, the students will change it into narrative text.

2) Writing

According to Harmer (2004), writing is an activity that expresses ideas in a written form to give information. Brown (2001:336) states that writing is a productive skill that needs some processes to create ideas into a well-written text to deliver by the readers. In this research, the term writing is interchangeably used with narrative writing.

3) Teaching Writing

According to Richard and Renandya (2002), there are some guidelines based on what we have known to be the key participles of course design, which include some consideration of the course goals, content, theories, syllabus, focus, material, activities, methodology, and course evaluation. In

this study, teaching writing is a term used to describe the process of using comic-strips as narrative writing learning media.

4) **Online Learning**

Urdan and Weggen (2000) state that online learning embraces a wide range of technological applications and learning processes including, computer-based learning, web-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. In this research, online learning carried out through three applications, namely WhatsApp, Google Classroom, and Google Meet. In this study, online learning is a term used to refer to teaching in school as it is now done online due to the pandemic.