CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This first chapter introduces the details of the research at the beginning of this paper. The discussion of this chapter includes the background of the research, the research problems, the purposes of the research, the research questions, the hypothesis, the scope of the research, the significant of the research, and the clarification of the key terms.

1.1. The Background of the Research

Not everyone is naturally able to write, especially in English. Writing is one of the English skills that can be practiced and mastered. Writing in a different language involves more than mastering its vocabulary and grammar. English learners need to focus more on the process of writing than its product (Harmer, 2001: 257). In fact, writing process is more complex than we think. White and Arndt (1991: 5 as cited in Harmer, 2001: 258) stress that writing is re-writing; that revision – seeing with new eyes – has a central role in the act of creating text. In their model, the processes of writing in an interrelated set of recursive stages include:

- Drafting
- Structuring (ordering information, experimenting with arrangement, etc.)
- Reviewing (checking context, connection, assessing impact, editing)
- Focusing (that is making sure you are getting the message across you want to get across)

- Generating ideas and evaluation (assessing the draft and/or subsequent draft)

Unfortunately, they add, one of the disadvantages of getting the students to concentrate on the process of writing is that it takes time: time to brainstorm ideas or collect them in some other way; time to draft a piece of writing and then, with the teacher's help, review it and edit it in various ways. This cannot be done in short time. However, the various stages may well involve discussion or a considerable amount of interaction between teacher and students, and between the students themselves. So, when the process of writing is handled appropriately it stretches across the whole curriculum.

Considering the difficulties above, English teachers need to choose the effective method to facilitate students' need in improving writing skill. By this time, the development of teaching and learning English as foreign language has gone on rapidly. Many methods and strategies have been used to facilitate the English teaching and learning process. In line with the development of the teaching methodology and strategies, many experts also have invented good technology of media and tools to enhance the quality of teaching and learning English.

The use of technology in education has been applied widely in teaching and learning process. The current technology, especially the use of computer, has made teaching methodology develop along with various computer programs. This condition indirectly demands English teachers to improve their model of teaching by integrating technology into teaching and learning process.

Computer is needed to make the process of teaching and learning easier and faster. One of the computer programs, Microsoft Word, is a tool that can be applied in the classroom to facilitate teaching and learning process. Microsoft Word can be considered as the most famous use of the computer for the language learning today, especially for the students' writing skills.

Harmer (2001: 261) adds that there are many good reasons for using Microsoft Word for writing, as the following list shows:

- A word-processing package removes the problem of poor handwriting that some students suffer from.
- A word-processing package allows the competent user to edit his or her material at great speed and with great facility.
- Spellcheckers can ease the task of achieving correct spelling.
- If students are working in group, a computer screen can sometimes be far more visible to the whole group than a piece of a paper might be.

However, in the process, teachers should be able to maximize the use of the Microsoft Word into teaching method in order to achieve the learning objectives effectively and comprehensively. Inherently, this research is conducted to know the effectiveness of Microsoft Word in improving students' writing skills.

Therefore, by integrating Microsoft Word, which allows students to process, maintaining and manipulating documents, into the English teaching materials (writing), students are assumed to be able to produce better writing products.

Considering the significance of Microsoft Word in teaching and learning process, the writer intends to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing this computer program in improving students' writing skills.

1.2. The Research Problems

A few decades ago, writing teachers were mostly concerned with the final product of writing: the essay, the report, the story, and what the product should look like. Brown (1994: 320) states that the products of writing's composition were supposed to: (a) meet certain standards of prescribed English rhetorical style, (b) reflect the accurate grammar, (c) organize the conformity with what the audience would consider to be conventional.

Considering Brown's statement above, the writer assumes that writing text is rather difficult than it looks like. Students need to sharpen their awareness on the text's criteria such as overall organization, vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation. As Brown (1994: 320) states on his work that a good deal of attention was placed on 'model' compositions that students would emulate and how well students' final product measures up against a list of criteria, organization, vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation.

He adds, that, the use of technology: the word processing program in teaching and learning process has brought the possibility of using creative ways for teachers in making teaching materials and help students to learn English

incisively especially in writing. The program offers the students to maintain and organize the documents (the texts) including vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation.

So, considering the various applications which are offered by the Microsoft Word and Brown's criteria on writing product, it would be an interesting issue to be investigated to know how the Microsoft Word can influence students' writing skills.

1.3. The Purposes of the Research

This research has the following purposes:

1. To find out whether there is a significant improvement on students' writing skills by utilizing Microsoft Word.

2. To find out students' response on the use of Microsoft Word in improving their writing skills.

3. To calculate how significant the improvement is.

1.4. The Research Questions

Based on the background above, some questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the effect of Microsoft Word in improving students' writing skills?

2. What are the students' responses toward the teaching method in improving their writing skills?

1.5. The Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a tentative answer of the research problems, until it is proved through the collected data (Arikunto, 2006: 71). Moreover, Hatch and Farhady (1982: 3) defines a hypothesis as a tentative statement about the outcome of the research. Since it is not possible to test a hypothesis directly, the hypothesis must first be turned into a null hypothesis (H_o). Thus, the null hypothesis (H_o) proposed in this research is stated in the following sentence.

H_o : There is no significant difference on the students' writing skills between those who are using Microsoft Word and those who are not.

1.6. The Scope of the Research

This research is largely descriptive statistics meaning that it involves measuring data using graphs, tables, and basic descriptions of numbers such as averages or means. The subject of the research consists of the second grade students of a Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Garut of academic year 2008/2009.

There are 60 students who are divided into two groups; the control group and the experimental one. This study is limited to investigate the effectiveness of Microsoft Word in improving students' writing skills in which all the students will learn how to write or to produce texts. Each group gets different treatment to investigate the use of Microsoft Word in writing texts, there are: the experiment group getting the method by emphasizing the use of Microsoft Word and the control group getting the method by using their own handwriting in writing texts.

1.7. The Significance of the Research

The research will be significant for the teachers who are applying the technology, especially the Word Processor at Madrasah Tsanawiyah or Junior High School. This research was conducted in order to assign the new method of language learning by using technology to:

a. Achieve better students' understanding in producing texts effectively and creatively.

b. Be a resource of evaluation, discussion, prediction and decision making in our language education system.

c. Give information to compare the ideal condition of teaching related to the theory and its application in different settings and contexts.

1.8. The Clarification of the Key Terms

a. *Teaching Writing* refers to the teaching and learning process that emphasizing student' writing skills in producing/composing written texts in English.

b. *Microsoft Word*, a computer program for writing, editing, revising, formatting, and printing text. It will be referred to the use of Microsoft Word 2000 and up in utilizing students in writing texts.

c. *Students' writing skills* refers to the ability to recognize and produce the distinctive structures of a language and to use them effectively in writing texts. The emphasized writing components are: *Overall organization, Content, Vocabulary, Sentence grammar (language use), Spelling and punctuation (mechanics)* (Brown, 1994:320 and Jacob, et al. 1981 cited in Weigle, 2007: 116).