

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter presents introduction of the study. In the introduction, points such as background of the study, identification and limitation of the problems are discussed. Formulation of the problem, purposes of the study and significances of the study are also elaborated in this chapter.

Background of the study

English has four basic skills that are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Those skills are categorized into two types that are receptive skill and productive skill. Listening and reading are receptive skills. Meanwhile, speaking and writing are productive skills (Brown, 2000).

From those four basic skills, writing as a productive skill is the highest level of language skill because it demands students to think and express their idea into a sentence. It is supported by Tangpermpoon (2008) who stated that when compared with other skills, writing is the most difficult skill because it requires writers to have a great deal of lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as principles of organization in L2 to produce a good writing. Lei, Man, & Ting (2014) highlighted the importance and complexity of writing on a hierarchy of language skill by saying that writing is a major class of discourses and evidences that can give students insights into deeper learning and high-order skills such as critical thinking, argumentation and mastery of complex ideas.

In university level, students are required to have a good skill in writing. It is because they have many writing assignments such as essay, research paper,

report, thesis, and other writing work. According to Faisal & Suwandita (2013), the students do not have many concepts to write something. It means that, when doing some writing exercises, students need a long time to think of an idea to write.

A difficulty of thinking about an idea to write also happened when students write descriptive texts. Descriptive text is a text that describes something in order the readers or listeners are able to understand and get the same sense as what the writer experienced (Husna, Zainil, & Rozimela, 2013). It means that when students write a text such as essay or thesis, they have to describe the points of their writing clearly to make their readers understand. A descriptive text is important since it can make the readers imagine a thing without see it. For example, when the readers read a description about a house, they can have understood how that house looks like, the shape, colors and size. Clouse (2004, p. 143) stated the importance of descriptive texts as follows:

As social beings, we want to share our experience, so we write to others to describe things such as vacations, childhood homes, and people we encounter. We even use description to persuade others to think or act in particular ways: advertisers describe products to persuade us to buy them; travel agents describe locales to entice us to visit them; and real estate agents describe properties to stimulate a desire to see them (p.143).

At English Education Department of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, students have learned different kinds of text types including descriptive texts. Based on the researcher's experience as the student of English

Education Department UMY, descriptive text is a challenging text. The researcher faced difficulties when he did not know how to develop the topic in good sentences, including descriptive texts. Grammar and lack of vocabulary are also the factors why the researcher got stuck in writing a descriptive text. Some students may face similar difficulties when they wrote a descriptive text. They got confused dealing with how to build their idea into their writing or what they should write although they knew the topic.

Teachers may give some examples of strategies and show the way how to use those strategies to help students improve their writing, especially writing a descriptive text. However, students have to find the most suitable and comfortable strategies for themselves to increase their skill in writing a descriptive text. That becomes an important reason why a study about students' strategies to overcome their difficulty in writing descriptive texts at English Education Department of UMY needs to be conducted.

Identification and Limitation of the Problem

Based on the researcher's experience in the writing class at the first semester, students of English Education Department of UMY learned about descriptive text in Academic Reading and Writing subject. The researcher learned dealing with the definition, function, and how to write it. To write descriptive texts, the teacher gave a material related to the generic structure and language features.

In fact, the students faced difficulties in writing descriptive texts such as lack of vocabulary, developing ideas, difficulty in arranging the sentences

correctly, and grammar. This study was limited on students of English Education Department of UMY batch 2015 that had learned descriptive text in writing class. The researcher was interested in investigating difficulties faced by students in writing descriptive text and finding out the strategies used by students to improve their skill in writing descriptive text at English Education Department of UMY.

Formulation of the Problem

The research questions being investigated in this study are:

1. What are the difficulties faced by students at English Education Department of UMY in writing descriptive texts?
2. What are the strategies used by students at English Education Department of UMY to overcome their difficulties in writing descriptive texts?

Purpose of the Study

This research is intended to find out:

1. The difficulties faced by students at English Education Department of UMY in writing descriptive texts.
2. The strategies used by students at English Education Department of UMY to overcome their difficulties in writing descriptive texts.

Significance of the Study

This research aims to give benefits specifically to the researcher, English teachers and students.

The researcher. This research gives benefits to the researcher in understanding difficulties of writing descriptive texts and gives a reference of strategies in writing descriptive texts for teachers and students at English

Education Department UMY. The researcher as a future teacher will understand related to the difficulties in writing descriptive texts and the strategies that can be used to overcome the difficulties in writing descriptive texts.

English teachers. The strategies are applicable for teachers as a solution to overcome their students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts. The students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts are revealed through this study. The teachers also can motivate students to face the difficulties in writing descriptive texts.

Students. The strategies in writing descriptive texts can be valuable references for students as a device to improve their skill in writing descriptive texts at English Education Department UMY.