

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Learning writing skill in English is very important for ones' life either for formal or informal reasons. Writing has always been used as a means of reinforcing language that has been learned as well. It is a productive skill which demands them to express their knowledge, ideas, messages, feeling, and imagination creatively, logically, critically, and accurately through the English language they have learned. Therefore; *SMP* learners are expected to have the skill of writing in English effectively. Harmer (2004:31) states “ Writing can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from being merely a “back up” for grammar teaching to a major syllabus strand in its own right, where mastering the ability to write effectively is seen as a key objective for learners.

One of the objectives of teaching English at *SMP* is to develop learners' communicative competence both in oral and written forms to achieve functional literacy level. It is stated in the competence standard and the basic competence of writing that learners should be able to express meaning and rhetorical steps in short simple written functional texts and short simple written essays accurately, fluently and acceptably to interact with their environment in daily life context (*Permendiknas RI* number 22, 2006).

Functional texts cover short messages, announcements, advertisements, invitations, notices, labels, letters, and brochures. Short simple written essays cover descriptive, recount, procedure, narrative and report texts. Descriptives describe a particular person, place or thing. Procedures tell how something is accomplished through a sequence of actions or steps. Recounts retell a sequence of past events or experience for the purpose of informing or entertaining. Narratives have the basic purpose to entertain, i.e. to gain and hold the reader's interest in a story, to teach or inform, to embody the writer's reflections on experience, and perhaps most importantly to nourish and extend the reader's imagination. Reports classify and describe the way things are with reference to a range of natural, man made and social phenomena of our world. They function to document, organize and store factual information on a topic (Derewianka, 1995).

As most writing activities are not time constrain learners often have more time to think than they do in oral activities. They can discuss in details with others what they know in their minds, consult dictionaries, grammar books or other reference material, and revise their writing. It, therefore, provides learners with more opportunities to focus on both content organization and linguistic accuracy of their writing. Ghaith (2002) states "Writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged, and changed."

The statement implies that writing encourages learners to plan and rethink the communication process focusing on accurate use of language, allows greater precision in communicating ideas, allows logic and other forms of complex thought, broadens their vocabulary, and provokes their language development because through this activity they are trained to think logically, critically, accurately and creatively as they resolve problems which the writing puts into their minds.

However, in spite of its benefits, writing is not an activity that all learners enjoy. It is often considered a burden for them. Some learners are reluctant to write because they find it difficult. They feel anxious and unconfident about their ability to construct sentences and paragraphs. They also often find difficulties related to the text content, mainly when the topics are not familiar enough for them. They often have nothing to write when they do not have enough prior knowledge related to the topics.

Learners' low writing skill and inappropriate teaching techniques are assumed to contribute to learners' writing difficulties. Learners also rarely write in English since they do not have sufficient opportunities and motivation. To overcome the problems, teachers need to develop learners' interest, skill and habit in writing through various writing tasks and effective teaching-learning techniques. Hyland states "Writing is seen as a skill that is essentially learned, not taught, and the teacher's role is to be non-directive,

facilitating writing through encouraging and cooperative environment with minimal interference” (2004:7).

Teachers should act as the motivators and facilitators to encourage their learners to be active. They should provide more creative writing tasks that involve their learners both intellectually and emotionally; amuse, intrigue them, or make them feel good. They should also provide learners with enough linguistics knowledge and information, and should invite them to do their writing tasks in groups. When the learners are motivated, there is a good chance that some of their doubts about writing will disappear and they are able to complete writing tasks successfully.

Facilitating learners’ writing activities can be done through various ways. For example, learners might be asked to write a story about their past experience as a good way of having the practice of simple past tense, or to write a description of someone they know because this is a good way of getting them to practice simple present tense and to use the character and physical description vocabulary they have been learning. They might also be asked to communicate with their friends or teachers through e-mail, face book or twitter. Such writing activities will not only develop their English writing skill but will also provoke their confidence in practicing their English in daily life.

In fact, writing skill is difficult to learn and develop, especially in EFL context, where exposure to English is very limited. Implementing

pedagogy process in a foreign writing classroom also has its own limits for learners with low English proficiency. Although learners commonly benefits from writing multiple drafts, most of the low English level learners do not benefit from the revisions. Richard and Renandya argue (2010:303):

There is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. Writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. The difficulty becomes even more pronounced if their language proficiency is weak.

Based on the preliminary research conducted on July 25th 2011, the researcher revealed that writing was proved to be difficult for the learners in class IX I at SMP Negeri 3 Ungaran. That was reflected on their low writing achievement in pretest. The data indicated that out of 28 learners, 26 learners (92.86%) had scores below the passing grade (67). The mean of their pretest scores was only 54.14. The mean of mechanics was 3.16 (63.22%), of content was 2.84 (56.78%), of organization was 2.81 (56.07%), of diction was 2.68 (53.57%) and of grammar was 2.06 (41.08%). The highest score was 70, and the lowest score was 32.

Most of their writing products were poor and some of them even were opaque. Much of the information in the content is irrelevant, the ideas were not clearly stated, the sentences and paragraphs were not well-organized, and there were many errors in dictions, grammar, mechanics.

Some of the learners even failed to complete their writing task. During the writing activity some learners also looked sleepy, some were busy talking or playing with their friends and a learner just kept silent.

Based on the results of preliminary questionnaire, the researcher revealed the learners' writing difficulties, the sources of the difficulties, and the cause of their low motivation. The learners who found difficulties in making outline and in content: 26 learners (92.86%); in transferring ideas: 25 learners (89.29%); in writing good sentences and paragraphs, in generic structure, limited background knowledge related to the topic, insufficient time allocation, and low motivation due to the writing difficulties: 27 learners (96.43%); in grammar, in diction and no outline as a guideline for writing: 28 learners (100%); in punctuation: 9 learners (32.14%); in spelling: 24 learners (85.71%); in capitalization: 18 learners or 64.29%; in changing lines and paragraphs: 23 learners (82.14%). The sources of the difficulties included limited acquisition of grammar, vocabulary and mechanics; no outline or guidance in writing, limited prior knowledge related to the topic, and difficulties in generating ideas. Simultaneously, the writing difficulties cause their low motivation; moreover, there was no guidance from the teacher to overcome the difficulties.

Based on the preliminary research, the researcher concluded that the learners at class IX I had not been able to write effectively and were not motivated in writing. They needed treatment to improve both their writing

skill and motivation. Therefore, the researcher as the English teacher at this class decided to use dictogloss to solve the identified problems. Dictogloss was introduced by Wajnryb in 1990 as an alternative for teaching grammar. In dictogloss, learners listen to a passage, jot down key words as they listen, and are asked to capture as much as possible of the information content of the text read by the teacher as accurate and acceptable a linguistic form as possible although they may not be able to recall the exact forms in which that meaning is conveyed. Then, in small groups they pool their resources and work together to create a reconstructed version of the whole original text, rather than doing so line by line. In the final stage, the various versions that the learners produce are subjected to close analysis and comparison.

Dictogloss is designed to draw the learners' attention to language forms, that is structures, and patterns which are treated from the perspective of their particular contextual meaning in the task. It gives learners a more precise understanding of English grammar, which consequently leads to higher accuracy in language use. Wajnryb (1990:6) states:

Dictogloss is a task-based procedure designed to help language learning students towards a better understanding of how grammar works on a text basis. It is designed to expose where their language-learners shortcomings (and needs) are, so that teaching can be directed more precisely towards these areas. In this sense it is eminently learner-needs based.

Dictogloss which is mainly to develop grammatical competence also has several other aims as Wajnryb (1990:6) points out:

It aims to provide an opportunity for learners to use their productive grammar in the task to text creation, to encourage learners to find out what they do and do not know about English, and to upgrade and refine the learners' use of the language through a comprehensive analysis of language options in the correction of the learners' approximate texts.

Harmer states "One purpose of this activity is to focus on learners' attention on specific items of language by getting them analyze the difference between their written recreation and the original version which they have heard" (2004:74). Considering the benefits of dictogloss as stated above, the researcher assumes that dictogloss will be effective for improving the learners' writing skill and their motivation in line with the solution their writing difficulties as well as will be effective for promoting effective learning in the writing classroom. It is appropriate to teaching writing contextually. It actively engages learners in the teaching-learning process, improves their participation and cooperation in the writing classroom through cooperative learning as well as promotes creative thinking skill through reconstruction and correction activities.

B. Problems of the Study

The researcher focuses on certain problems related to the effort of solving the learners' writing difficulties. The problems are formulated as follows:

1. Can dictogloss improve the writing skill of the learners in class IX I at SMP Negeri 3 Ungaran?
2. How effective is the learners' learning when dictogloss is implemented in the teaching of writing?

C. Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at:

1. Improving the learners' writing skill in grade IX I at SMPN 3 Ungaran.
2. Describing the effectiveness of the learners' learning when dictogloss is implemented in the teaching of writing.

D. Benefits

The results of this classroom action research are highly expected to give benefits theoretically and practically to the previous theories, teachers, learners, future researchers and text book writers as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

Theoretically, the results of this research can be used as a model of the teaching of writing, a reference to empower the previous theories, and as a research foundation for the future researches.

2. Practical Benefits

- a. For English teachers, dictogloss offers an alternative technique appropriate for teaching writing contextually in order to help them overcome their learners' writing difficulties and increase their learners' potency. It helps them do their jobs professionally and innovatively in teaching writing, and encourages them to develop skill and creativity in conducting the teaching learning process in the classroom. As a teaching model, dictogloss can also be applied to teach other language skills (listening and speaking) as well as other subject matters.
- b. For future researchers, it is a challenge that this research may produce research results which are different from other researches due to different subjects and settings although they use the same technique, that is, dictogloss. In details, the improvement of learners' writing skill, the effectiveness of learners' learning in writing classrooms, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of dictogloss implementation in the teaching of writing can be evaluated by future researchers.
- c. For the textbook's writers, they can include dictogloss as an alternative technique for teaching writing in their textbooks.
- d. For school, this research is an effort to improve both the learners' competence and motivation in writing. It is hoped that in line with the improvement of their competence and motivation, the school will produce more skillful graduates, especially in writing.