CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the effectiveness of clustering technique in teaching writing English descriptive text at an Islamic junior high school in MTs Raudlatul Ulum. This chapter discusses the background of study, the problem of study, the objective of study, the significances of study, and the definition of key terms.

A. The Background of the Study

As a productive skill, writing is an important language skill which is used for a medium of communication, especially indirect communication. Writing is a part of learning process that has to be mastered by all students in Indonesia. It is supported by Harmer who states that writing is one of compulsory skills that determined in part of syllabus in teaching of English.[1] Meanwhile, writing according to Chastain helps to acquire of vocabulary and structure of the lesson.[2] Hence, it still holds an important place in examinations in high school level in Indonesia.

Furthermore, writing is a way to develop students' thought into written form to ensure their success in their school life. Also, students are encouraged to focus writing on language use. As stated by Brown, writing is a process of filing down learners' thought in order to be able to express the ideas in their mind into

---

[1] Jeremy Harmer, *How to Teach Writing,* (England: Pearson Education Limited, 1988), 31
[2] Kenneth Chastain, *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory to Practice*, (USA: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1976), 364.

written form.[3] Hence, students should develop their writing ability in order to prepare them to face examination successfully. It implies that writing is an important skill that has to be learned beside the other language skills.

Despite being an important skill, writing is usually considered as the most frustrating to master for the students who are learning English. Leaver states that writing, in fact, is the most difficult skill to master.[4] Harmer states *"Writing process is complex."*[5]

The problem of writing was also experienced by an English teacher in Mts Raudlatul Ulum Besuki - Situbondo. From an interview with this English teacher, it was found out that from the process of teachers' teaching, the teacher found that the students have some problems in writing process. First, the students faced difficulties in starting and organizing the ideas (pre-writing stage). They did not know how to start, discover, and choose many ideas which come to their mind. Second, they got problem in producing unified paragraph. The problem made the paragraph difficult to be understood. The last problem was that the students were neither active nor motivated in writing activity.

In fact, a number of problems in writing are shown in some researches. A study conducted by Sumartini for second year students in writing paragraph showed that the students did not have ability to organize ideas and sentences into

---

[3] H. Douglas Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (2ⁿᵈ Ed.)*, (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2001), 15
[4] Betty Lou Leaver, et. al., *Achieving Success in Second Language Acquisition,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13.
[5] Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, (New York: Longman), 258.

coherent paragraphs.[6] A study by Marliasari for second year students of SMAN 7 Malang also found that the students made a lot of errors.[7] The problem was resulted from the lack of vocabulary. Moreover, the students did not have the ability in organizing ideas into a good text.

Based on an observation of students at MTs Raudlatul Ulum, the cause of the problem was recognized. The strategy used in teaching writing was monotonous. The teacher just asked the students to write some text without some strategies. Regarding this problems, there need this research proposed "clustering technique" to the teacher and the teacher agreed.

Related to the above matters, the writer is interested in studying the use of clustering technique in teaching writing. Clustering is a prewriting technique used by writers to produce ideas.[8] The process of clustering is very useful to help students to generate and organize ideas into a good composition of writing, so the product of writing can ease the reader in understanding the composition coherently. Also, clustering is adaptable for all ages of students.

MTs Raudlatul Ulum is a representative school in generalizing other schools which pioneered to help students from rural area. Most of students in this school use Madurist as their first language and Bahasa Indonesia as the second

---

[6] Tinitin Sumartini, Thesis "*Clustering as Pre-writing Technique in Teaching Descriptive Text*". (Surabaya: State University of Surabaya, 2008), 6.
[7] Devi Marliasari, Thesis "*Using Clustering Technique to Improve The Senior High School Students' Abilities in Generating Ideas of Writing Analytical Exposition*". (Malang: State University of Malang, 2006), 5.
[8] Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue, *Introduction to Academic Writing,* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 48

language of their communication. Hence, the students are unmotivated in learning English as their compulsory subject in this school especially in writing process. Therefore, the English teacher needs creative techniques especially in teaching writing.

In the teaching of English writing, the teacher uses the 2010 standard of content as the guidance. The 2010 standard of content for junior high school level states that writing competence includes the competence in writing short functional texts, monolog texts in the form of procedure, descriptive, narrative, and some other English texts. The standard competence for the second semester of the eight year student of junior high school in English writing skill is to enable students to express a meaningful idea in short functional written texts and simple texts in the form of descriptive and procedures.[9] This standard of competence is developed into several basic competencies and one of the basic competencies is that the students are able to make a descriptive text.

In short, this study focuses on the clustering technique which is used as an alternative prewriting technique. This study also focuses on writing descriptive text. This study might be a solution to the students' problem in generating and organizing the ideas to develop English text. Therefore, this study conducted under a titled *"The Effectiveness of Clustering Technique in Teaching Writing at The Eighth Grade of MTs Raudlatul Ulum"*

---

[9] Depdiknas, *National of Standard Competence*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2010), 16

B. The Problem of Study

Based on the background above, the research question of this research is whether clustering technique more effective than traditional technique in writing English descriptive text.

C. The Objectives of Study

Related to the research problem, the objective of this study is to find out whether the clustering technique is more effective than traditional technique in writing English descriptive text.

D. The Scope of Study

To make the research effective, this study was limited to examine the use of clustering technique in descriptive English text. In addition, the technique was applied only on writing an English descriptive text based on selected English textbook.

There were two classes that were involved as the sample of the study those VIII C and VIII D class of MTs Raudlatul Ulum in Situbondo. Each class consists of 30 students. The VIII C class was chosen as the experimental group by using clustering technique. Meanwhile the VIII D class as the control group that used traditional technique.

E. The Signficance of Study

The study is expected to give practical contributions to some parties. This study is expected to provide recent data concerning with the teaching of writing by implementing clustering technique so teachers especially can use clustering as the reference teaching English writing in Indonesian EFL.

D. The Definition of Key Terms

1. Teaching writing is a classroom activity that develop learners to express themselves in written form.[10] In this study, teaching writing is focusing the teaching of English descriptive text

2. Clustering technique is a visual representation with a central theme surrounded by branches.[11] In this study, clustering technique is as a new technique applied in MTs Raudatul Ulum on generating and organizing ideas in writing English descriptive text.

3. Traditional technique, in this study is a usual technique that the teacher used in teaching on writing English descriptive text

4. Descriptive text is words to build images (sight, sound, smell, tastes, or even feelings) for the reader.[12] In this study, the descriptive text is defined as an English text composed by the students that describes the students' favorite artists and the student self.

---

[10] David Cross, *A Practical Handbook of Language Teaching*, (UK: Prentice Hall International 1992), 268

[11] John Langan, *English Skills Seventh Edition,* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 22

[12] Alice Savage and Praticia Mayer, *Effective Academic Writing 2,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28.