CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents about the background of the study, statement of the problems, scope and limitation of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and definition of key terms.

A. Research Background

Speech and writing are two different activities. The distinction between both of them can be seen transparently. When a speaker speaks, people can only rely on gestures, tone of voice, and body language to make people who are listening understood. The speech is rarely in complete sentences, and if the meaning is unclear, it can be immediately clarified. Writers, of course, do not have the same opportunity to change what they have written, unless they are publishing on the web. Once a piece of writing is printed, there is little opportunity for revision.

In writing activity, generally, there are a lot of things need to be paid attention. It is started from the grammatical issue, the unity and coherence within sentences, up to the punctuation marks. When a person is writing paragraphs, his mind needs to be in accordance with all of the items that support the establishment of the product of his writing.

Speaking of writing activity, it is connected with texts or paragraphs.

Paragraphs itself are made up from one or more sentences which all relate to one

topic or theme. People may not produce a paragraph by only arranging sentence by sentence into a good order. Punctuation marks, however, do contribute a lot in writing activity. Punctuation marks take an important role in connecting sentence to sentence when somebody is creating a paragraph. When one sentence has been written, to be continued to another new sentence that correlates each other, it needs a full stop between them, for instance. The other example of the use of punctuation mark that the writer is not aware of may damage the paragraphs he writes. Thus, the existence of punctuation mark in writing activity cannot just be skipped.

As David Waugh's opinion stated through his book¹, "Within two years of publication, Lynne Truss's (2003) book about punctuation, *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, had sold three million copies. Even though the book you are reading covers spelling and grammar too, we would not dare to dream of selling even 5 per cent of that figure! But why should a book about commas, colons, and apostrophes attract such interest? One reason was that the title held an appeal, being based upon a misunderstanding caused by a missing comma". It can be interpreted that it is like his wander on how could a book with straight topic sold by so many copies that he writes on his own book discussing the similar topic with once book he was curious with.

That punctuation should be such a topic for discussion and debate is interesting, particularly it is seen that people managed well without it for several

¹ David Waugh, Claire Warner, and Rosemary Waugh, *Transforming QTS: Teaching Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling in Primary Schools* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), 95.

times. The word *punctuation* derives from the Latin word *pungere*, that is 'to prick' (think of 'puncture'); this gives *punctus* – 'pierced' – as the participle².

Choosing punctuation well is about communicating the meaning properly. The careful of punctuation is one of many skills that writers need if they are about to communicate clearly in writing. The use of punctuation is more than memorising and applying a set of rules within writing activity. Punctuation allows certain words, phrases and clauses to be emphasized and can make major changes towards meaning. Thus, the same words may show up different meanings through giving the various punctuation marks. Furthermore, punctuation can be a very powerful tool when the writer writes, enabling the writer to express ideas in different ways.

There are number features of punctuation mark, and one of them is comma. Commas are probably the most punctuation marks used, and comma errors come up frequently in students' writing. Citing Brien (2012) through his book³, he writes, "This is one of the most difficult pieces of punctuation to teach, because writers need to make judgment about when it is helpful". Truss in her book⁴ suggests that the comma, more than any other mark, requires the writer to use intelligent discretion. When writers, in the case are students, fail putting the comma into the appropriate placement, the content of the sentences cannot be well-conveyed to the readers. Then, the effect like misunderstanding may appear between the writer and the readers. If it

² David Waugh, Claire Warner, and Rosemary Waugh, *Transforming OTS* ... 96.

³ J. Brien, *Teaching Primary English* (London: SAGE, 2012), 78.

⁴ L. Truss, Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation (London: Profile Books, 2003), 96.

occurs continuously, where writers or students do not come into a realization that comma is an important issue, for sure, the communication goal built between writer and readers in written will not be achieved.

The difficulties of the students in writing English text sometimes bring errors. Errors indicate that the learners construct their own rules on the basis of input data which is different from the target language. As Julian Edge stated in Jeremy Harmer's book⁵, errors cannot correct themselves, so they need explanation about the reasons they happen.

In language learning, the study of learner's errors is needed because the result of the study gives some contributions on attempts to deal with the students' difficulties. The teacher can infer the nature of the students' knowledge and find what they still have to learn by analyzing the students' errors. Moreover, the result of the study focusing on students' errors can be used as a means to measure whether the students have mastered the language taught by the teacher. It is also as a means to measure the teacher's success in teaching a language.

This study was conducted at SMPN 25 Surabaya. There were some underlying points of why researcher chose the school to do the research rather than the other schools. It was also based on some considerations. The main reason was that the school gets "A" accreditation which indicates that the school has predicate as a good quality school in society. The next reason was according to the result of preliminary research in the form of asking and giving question undertaken by the

⁵ Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Longman, 1998), 99.

researcher to one of English teachers at SMPN 25 Surabaya, it was known that the teacher asked students to write paragraphs regularly andsoon to be marked⁶. Besides, it was also because of the ease of the access; both the access to get to the school and the access to get the data. Firstly, the school is located close to the main street. It only needs to get into an aisle and the school can be seen. In addition, it is now standing a caution which is written "SMPN 25 Surabaya" that everyone is able to see easily at the bank of the main street. Secondly, researcher had already experienced teaching there when having internship about two months. And during the months, it was such enough time for researcher to know about the school; the teachers, the students, the lessons taught at the school, and so on. The researcher did find a number of mistakes when teaching a certain class dealing with students' written work, moreover in the case of punctuation marks. Thus, based on the reasons above, the researcher conducted the research at SMPN 25 Surabaya.

The researcher gave concern on the comma error since it happened dominantly to all of students and quite destroyed the meaning of each sentence, so that the things that the students would like to convey through paragraphs cannot be understood by the readers because of the mistakes in the placement of the comma. For instance, one of comma theory that stated by *Language Portal of Canada*⁷, it is said that comma should be put after an introductory clause, phrase or adverb. One of

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⁶ A result of Short Interview which was conducted on Thursday, 3th of December 2015 at 10.30 am.

⁷ Government of Canada. "Comma" *Language Portal of* Canada, (http://www.ourlanguages.gc.ca, accessed on December 14th, 2014).

students' writing once wrote "Tough the farmer has made a trap the clever animal doesn't trap in." There must be a comma after the word 'trap', but there was no comma put inside the sentence.

Moreover, the researcher tended to choose eight grade students rather than the seventh and ninth grade students. It was based on the consideration that eight grade students have more vocabularies and experiences in writing English texts if they are compared to the seventh grade students. Besides, ninth grade students were not allowed to be research subject since they were now prepared to do a National Examination.

According to the explanation that was elaborated by the researcher previously, then the researcher was interested in conducting a research dealing with the problem, under the following title: "The Comma Error in Students' Writing: A Case Study of Eight Grade Students at SMPN 25 Surabaya."

B. Research Ouestions

This study was aimed to answer these questions:

- 1. In what category comma error mostly occurs in students' writing?
- 2. What are factors driving students to put comma incorrectly?

C. Objective of The Study

Considering the statements of the things which were being asked throughout this study, the objectives of the study were then:

- To find out the comma error mostly occurs in the written work of the eight grade students at SMPN 25 Surabaya.
- To find out and describe the factors driving the eight grade students at SMPN 25 Surabaya to put comma incorrectly.

D. Significance of The Study

By the end of this study, it was expected to be able to give significant contribution for the sake of quality improvement of the language teaching and learning. Those benefits are mainly addressed to teachers and further researchers as follows:

1. Teachers

It will give teachers a detail description about the students' error in putting comma within students' written work. It is expected that teachers provide the information of using comma correctly when learning about writing English skill since it is the basic material usually ignored to be taught. Thus, teachers will not be stuck only in some particular teaching writing strategies, but also deals with the term punctuation marks in writing activity.

2. Further Researchers

This study is also addressed to the further researchers who are going to discuss similar topic. Researcher realizes that the study is imperfect without any other real action like the technique to overcome the students' problems in the case of giving punctuation. So that, it is expected for further researchers being able to apply a

number of significant techniques to cope with that problem to get better research result completing the one that researcher worked on.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The researcher limited this study by the following limitation:

- 1. The scope of this study was analyzing technique through document study and tests. Of the data obtained, researcher analyzed the errors by identifying and classifying them based on the theory used. Besides, this study was the process tracing root of factors on what makes students put comma incorrectly within texts.
- 2. This study was limited on the eighth grade students at SMPN 25 Surabaya, more specifically the students of Class VIII-G. It was undertaken in the first semester students of SMPN 25 Surabaya. The result of this study would be elaborated in descriptive way.

F. The Definition of Key Term

In order to clarify what the meaning of key terms involved in this study, some definitions are put as presented below:

1. Comma : the use of spacing to the understanding and correct

reading, in this case are handwriting and typed texts.

2. Error : misuse/incorrect use of comma placement.

3. Students : class VIII-G at SMPN 25 Surabaya.

4. Writing : the result of students' work in certain text, in this case is invitation card, narrative and descriptive text.

Each of key term listed above may have some other definitions if it is looked for the meaning in the dictionary. By showing the definition of each key term, it is expected to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation between the researcher and the readers. Thus, both of them will have the same understanding and interpretation of what the researcher tries to discuss on this study through, firstly, the key terms used.