

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the problem, formulation of the problem, objective of the research, uses of the research, scope of the research, and definition of terms clarified like the following.

A. Background of the Problem

Most schools in Indonesia apply School - Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan / KTSP*) as the guidance of teaching learning activities to achieve the main goals of national education. Based on the goals of learning English stated in the curriculum, students are expected to be able to master and use the language skills for any relevant needs and situations they would encounter in real life. Those language skills that have to be taught by teachers and mastered by senior high school students are listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Basically, people will agree that all the four skills are difficult. However, writing is learnt after the other three skills because writing skill is considered as the most complicated skill to master. This statement is also supported by Heaton (1991: 135) who states that writing skill is difficult, requiring mastery not only of grammatical devices (dealing with devices used to create writing based on the correct grammar; the set of structural rules that govern the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in language) and rhetorical or cohesive devices (relating to the devices used to manipulate the language to effectively transmit the author's message to a reader; such the using of analogy that compare two pairs which have

the same relationship), but also of conceptual and judgmental elements. He mentions that there are five general components or main areas of writing; they are: (1) *language use*: the ability to write correct and appropriate sentences; (2) *mechanical skill*: the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language – e.g. punctuation, spelling; (3) *treatment of content*: the ability to think creatively and develops thoughts, excluding all irrelevant information; (4) *stylistic skill*: the ability to manipulate sentences and paragraphs, and use language effectively; (5) *judgment skills*: the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information.

Here, there are several reasons why writing is considered as a difficult and complex skill. First, a writer does not have a direct contact with his or her reader so he or she cannot show what he or she means. Furthermore, there is a little opportunity for the readers to ask the writer directly if they do not understand the writing. This is in line with Beaugrande's statement (1985: 2) that a writer does not have a contact with the readers. In other words, the writer has to be careful in deciding what to write, otherwise, the reader will have difficulty in following the writer's ideas in his or her writing. Second, writing is a skill that requires us to take account of some elements such as content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanic Jacobs (1981: 90). The next reason is that for creating a well-organized writing, someone must be able to use his rational thinking.

Rational thinking or commonly called as logic has predominant role in attempting to write well Levin (1982: 1). Logic guides a writer how to be consistent in his/her thinking and writing. It can also teach him or her how to see the implications in statements and how to test the relevance of arguments and evidence to a central

idea. In other words, logic enables the writer to be consistent and help him/her to identify the relevance in his/her writing. As we know, relevance and consistency are the significant characteristic for all good writing.

Meanwhile, viewing the language teaching based on School – Based Curriculum Syllabus of senior high school, especially for first grade students, writing is one of the language skills presented in the teaching learning process of English. One of the writing forms that should be mastered by them is descriptive text. It is a text aims to describe a particular person/thing. Its text organization/generic structure is identification and description (Sudarwati and Grace, 2007:135). Therefore, the students are expected to be able to understand and create a descriptive text coherently based on the social function, language use, and generic structure of the text.

In fact, there are many students who still could not express their idea in written form since they found writing is difficult to learn. Even though they have been given the topic to write, it did not automatically help students to start writing. In addition, Harsyaf, Nurmaini, and Izmi (2009: 1) mention that most L2 learners might agree when we say that writing is the most difficult skill for them to master.

Furthermore, study conducted by previous researcher, Ervina (2010: 2) also found that although the students have learnt descriptive text, they still have difficulties in writing descriptive text; those because of their limited vocabulary, their difficulties in writing the content, and their poor organization of the text. Besides, the teachers often teach them writing descriptive text without using appropriate technique.

It is supported by the writer's experience during PPL at SMA 9 Bandar Lambung that has been done from 31st January to 5th April 2011; it was also found out that most of X-class students still have problem in creating a descriptive text according to the generic structure. They did not consider its generic structure; they made a descriptive text only in one paragraph while as we know that its generic structure is identification (1st paragraph) and description (2nd, 3rd paragraph and so on). The writer also really saw that they had problem in composing a good descriptive text with correct grammar and vocabulary. It was also added by the situation happened during the teaching and learning process; the students were so passive. They hardly raised their hands and gave questions, comments, opinions, or answered questions about materials being taught.

On the other hand, after having discussion, the English teacher of SMA Xaverius Pringsewu, said that there were many students of the first year who could not create a descriptive text in good order; they could not compose descriptive text based on the generic structure. He also saw that they made many problems in the vocabulary and the structure used in their descriptive writing test.

Perhaps, that phenomenon happened because the teachers did not master suitable techniques for teaching writing. Therefore, it is English teachers' tasks to look for appropriate techniques to be applied in teaching writing so that the students are interested in writing. The most important thing is that teacher should make the students active and should create fun and interesting activities in the teaching writing process.

To solve the writing problems, the writer conducted cooperative learning in her research. Cooperative learning refers to the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. It is

supported by (Blanton, 1992; Savona and Donato, 1991) in Reid (1993: 156) who states that collaboration and small group can be especially successful in ESL writing classes. Writing is usually easier, better and more successful when talking, drafting, revising, reading, and editing. While according to Lie (2004: 28) the philosophy that underlies cooperative learning model in education world is *homo homini socius* philosophy. It means that a human being is a social creature who cannot live alone; he needs to work together with others.

Meanwhile, in order to activate the students during the teaching writing process, the writer conducted roundtable technique. Roundtable technique itself is one of the models of cooperative learning in which students sit in teams of three or more, each student starts a piece of paper, writes one answer and passes it to their friends in groups to continue writing on the paper; as quoted by Valenti, Latourelle, and Maitland (2011:1).

In line with roundtable technique, Lee (2009:127) who has applied this technique reports that 75% of the students were interested in this technique and they still want to use this technique when they learn writing. Besides, for the students, this technique also can make the lesson easy to be understood. Furthermore, during the teaching learning process they were very active and it has made fun and active writing class. Furthermore, Nurhasanah (2009: i) in her research has stated that studying through roundtable technique results students' increase in writing speech text score. It can be seen at the last cycle that shows that 83% of the students are successful in improving their score. It means that this technique has successfully activated students to write and it could increase their writing ability.

And, Hasanah (2011: xvi) also states that this technique can increase student' descriptive writing. This increase can be seen from the learning process and product. In the learning process, they seemed more focus, more confident, more excited, more enthusiastic, and more active. Meanwhile, in the learning product, the increase can be identified from the students' result of descriptive writing: the average score increased from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2.

Roundtable technique is suitable if it is applied for writing class since it allows all students in each group to write on a paper then pass the paper to their friends and continue writing on the paper. In this technique, the teachers' role is as a facilitator who helps the students' problems and also as the time keeper who set the process of teaching and learning in exact time. Therefore, the researcher applied this technique in order to increase the students' ability in descriptive text writing. The researcher conducted her research in the first year of SMA Xaverius Pringsewu because the first year students who had studied English using descriptive text when they were in junior high school still find difficulties in writing a descriptive text. Besides she wants to overcome the problems met by the students and English teacher in this school as she has stated at the background above.

B. Formulation of Problem

In reference to the background of the problem above, the writer formulates the problem in the following question:

Can roundtable technique increase the students' ability in descriptive text writing according to five components of writing at the first year of SMA Xaverius Pringsewu?

C. Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to see whether roundtable technique can increase the students' ability in descriptive text writing according to five components of writing at the first year of SMA Xaverius Pringsewu?

D. Uses of the Research

It is expected that the research can have the following uses:

1. Theoretically, the result of this research is expected to support the previous study and to use as a reference for further research.
2. Practically, the result of the research can be used for English teacher as information to choose appropriate technique in teaching writing.

E. Scope of the Research

This quantitative research was conducted at SMA Xaverius Pringsewu. The population of this research was the first year of this school and the sample was class X.3. She chose the first year students with assumption that they have learnt and have enough knowledge about descriptive text at the junior high school. The variables of this research were roundtable technique as the independent variable and descriptive text writing as the dependent variable. In her research, she would find out whether roundtable technique can increase students' writing ability in descriptive text. So, she focused on the using of roundtable technique in teaching and learning process. She conducted this technique in three times.

Meanwhile, the writing tests were the instruments to measure students' writing ability. These tests were writing pretest and writing posttest. In all tests, the researcher asked the students to write a descriptive text based on the instructions and directions stated on the writing test sheets. Then, their writing on the pretest

and posttest was scored by considering on content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

F. Definition of Terms

In order to make readers easy in understanding the content of this writing, the writer defines the terms that are used in her writing. Those terms are explained as follows:

1. *Teaching* is showing or helping someone learn how to do something providing with knowledge, causing to know or to understand (Harmer, 2004: 7).
2. *Writing* is an ability to communicate in a way which gives the readers full satisfaction. So, in order to create a good writing, it has to display a completely logical organizational structure, relevant arguments, and no errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar (Hughes, 1989: 87).
3. *Descriptive text* is a text aims to describe something in order to explain it to someone or describing something in order to persuade an audience to see and believe as you do (Corder, 1979: 158).
4. *Cooperative learning* has been defined as “small groups of learners working together as a team to solve a problem, complete a task, or accomplish a common goal” ((Artz and Newman.1990.p.448) in Peterson and Miller).
5. *Roundtable* is two-step cooperative learning structures. In step one, the teacher asks a question with many possible answers and in step two the students respond in turn to make a list of possible answers for the questions (Jacob and Stone, 2011: 1).