

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter tells about the problem of this research. It consists of background of the problem, research problem, objectives of the research, uses of the research, scope of the research and definition of terms that are used in this research.

1.1 Background of the problem

In today's modern society, in general, there are two ways of making communication; they are direct communication and indirect communication. Speaking and listening are known as direct communication, while writing and reading are indirect communication. Writing, in particular, plays a vital role in this modern life, it is not only a process of linking words into sentences or paragraphs, but it is also a sequence or steps of expressing the ideas, organized thoughts and feeling in the form of words and combined into sentences then into paragraphs where in which every sentences are closely related one to another. Writing is also a process of transforming knowledge to create a new knowledge (Graham & Harris, 1989:6).

Broadly, among the four language skills taught in schools, writing is the most difficult skills to learn. This is true because it needs specialized skill that includes the ability to express the writer's opinions or thoughts clearly and

efficiently. This ability can be achieved only if a learner masters some techniques of writing such as how to obtain the ideas, how to express them in sequence of sentences, how to organize them chronologically and coherently, and how to review and then how to revise the composition until the writing well-built. In Indonesia, writing English is considered as the most important part to be learned by the students in school. As stated in Curriculum 2006, School Based Curriculum (KTSP), that students of senior high school are expected to be able to communicate in spoken or written form in simple function. For this reason the students should be able to write any kind of genre.

During the pre observation , it was found in the field, there were difficulties found in writing activities when assigned to students. As the beginners in learning English, they still had problem in constructing well-formed sentences. As a result, they generally produced less syntactically complex sentences that contained more grammatical errors (Myklebust, 1973:7).

The previous research of writing achievement conducted by Andayani (2010) in SMA Al Kautsar found that the students experienced difficulties in writing, especially in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and organization. Students often produced sentences that were shorter; had higher percentages of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling error; and were lower in overall quality. Anderson (1982:359) adds that less skilled writers had more missing subjects and verbs in their writing than regularly achieving students, and more often over use the connector *and*.

Therefore, this overcoming problem in sentence construction is an important problem to senior high school student as young writers for several reasons. First, problems with sentence production skills may interfere with other processes such as planning, content generation, and revising because attention devoted to lower level skills depletes available cognitive resources that can be applied to higher level processes (Graham, 1997:201). Second, lack of knowledge of effective writing formats at the sentence level hinders a writer's ability to translate his or her thoughts into text (Hayes & Flower, 1986:3). These problems, of course, directly affect the complexity and the coherence of the communication. The difficulties of constructing well-designed and grammatically correct sentences may make the students' writing become more difficult for others to read.

The observer also found this condition in reference to the writer's experience through Teaching Practice (PPL) in SMA N 1 Pesisir Selatan. It was objectively observed that almost half of students from each class still obtained score under 70 in any genres of writing. The students attained many difficulties in grammar, word choice and still weak in using punctuation and capitalization. They wrote with the short and choppy sentences also, and the sentences always began in the same manner. Another problem occurred was mainly related to writing paragraph which was not relevant to the topic given.

In relation to the problem above, a study conducted by Azizah (2012) showed that SMA students found crucial difficulties in their writing especially in terms of

organization, vocabulary, and grammar. To moderate such problems above, teacher as a facilitator should find out solution to help students in their effort to be able to write a constructive writing. Certainly changing the way of teaching done by teacher is the solution. But the teacher may be able to figure out how to solve the problem because, in fact, there are so many options available to be applied. Sentence combining practice is good to be chosen to solve such problems faced by the students.

This stands to reason for sentence combining can prompt students to use syntactical options in their writing by providing them practice in consciously controlling and manipulating syntax (Saddler, 2005:43). The application of this technique can be started by giving practices to the students to combine words into phrases, and phrases into kernel sentences. After the students are able to combine words into phrases and phrases became kernel sentences, teacher can accordingly move to the next level in which the students can practice to combine some kernel sentences. In this way, teacher can give them two sets of kernel sentence then asks them to combine it at least in two different ways. Once students understand the concept of kernel sentence, it is beneficial for them to write their own sets of kernel sentence. Teacher models how to make compound subjects, predicates, adjective modifiers, and conjunctions. Then teacher practices them to combine the compound sentences into a paragraph.

By doing so, the process of decombining and recombining sentences will provide activities of how complex sentence carries many ideas and makes the sentences

become more varied, interesting and sound better to read.

Evidently, many studies involving sentence combining research have been conducted and shown that this practice is effective to increase the quality of students' writing. A study by McAfee (1980) in Strong (1986) randomly assigned fifty five graders to experimental group and control groups. Over a six-week period, the experimental group received sentence combining treatment for forty five minutes, while control group followed their regular program. The sentence combining treatment consists not only sentence manipulating but also the writing paragraphs and stories. Results indicated that sentence combining practices made students achieve significant gains over their control group in written language scores and free writing. The next study by Stoddard (1982) in Strong (1986) tested the effects of sentence combining against regular programs. In a six-week study involving 180 students in four district schools. Results showed that the treatment groups' score significantly higher on syntactic fluency and overall writing quality than the control group students. A recent study by Saddler and Graham (2005) which assessed the effect of sentence combining procedure involving peer-assisted practice shown that the experimental students who received the teaching treatment by using sentence combining practice had positive improvement in writing. From the results shown above, it can be inferred that sentence combining technique is one of alternative and effective strategies to be applied to increase the students' writing achievement in SMA Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung.

In reference to the explanation above, this study chooses to conduct a research about the effect of sentence combining practice toward students' writing achievement.

1.2 Research Questions

Considering the background presented above, the researcher formulate following research problem:

1. In general, is there any significant effect of sentence combining practice on students' writing achievement at the first grade of SMA Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung?
2. Specifically, which aspects of writing skills improve after they are being taught using sentence combining practice?

1.3 Objectives of The Research

In line with the research questions, the objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To find out wether there is significant effect of sentence combining practice on students' writing achievement at the first grade of SMA Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung.
2. To find out the improvement of each aspects of writing

1.4 Uses of The Research

The uses of this research are:

1. Theoretically, the result of this research can be used as a contribution for educational research especially the one concerning teaching of writing.

2. Practically, the result of this research can be used as information sharing for English teachers in senior high School that sentence combining practice is applicable or not.

1.5 Scope

This research will be conducted at the first year of SMA Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung of academic year 2014/2015. In this case this study will use one class only that consists of \pm 35 students. In genre based text, writing consists of thirteen types of text such as narrative text, news item, procedure text, argumentative, expository, spoof and others. The research basically limits to students writing skill on students' achievement in writing particularly on descriptive genre text, specifically describing personality or person. There are three aspects of writing measured in this research that are grammar, vocabulary and organization. Students' improvement will find out by comparing the result of students' recorded answers of pre-test and post-test.

1.6 Definition of Terms

There are several terms needed to be clearly defined in order to have similar understanding. The terms can be described as follows:

Writing Skills

Writing skills are refer to the ability of using written language with certain elements to express ideas, issues, events, feeling or thinking to the others through written form.

Sentence Combining

Sentence combining is the practice of putting together strings of basic kernel sentences into more complex, syntactically mature and fluent sentences which refers to the effectiveness of the sentences.

Writing Practice

This is the act of rehearsing a behavior (writing) over and over, or engaging in an activity again and again, for the purpose of improving or mastering it, as in the phrase "practice makes perfect".