

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with: background of the problem, research question based on the background, objectives of the research, uses of the research, scope of the research, and definition of term.

1.1 Background

Communication is very important for people to understand each other. In written communication, people write their thought and feeling to communicate with other people. To communicate effectively, people must constantly adjust their writing to suit their purpose and audience. Writing is a form of communication to deliver thought or to express feeling through written form (Harmer, 2001). Although writing is one of the skills students need to master, writing is one of the difficult skills for the students. Writing is definitely “hard work” (Pearsall, 1988; Cunningham, 1988; Emmons, 2003). In addition, writing is difficult for the students to understand because it is more complex than speaking (Langan, 1987).

Based on the Indonesia School-Based Curriculum (2004), the English lesson for junior high school aims at developing the communication competence in both spoken and written forms through the four developing skills of English, i.e.,

speaking, listening, reading and writing. With reference to the curriculum 2006, the objective of junior high school in Indonesia is to enable the students to achieve the functional level and written forms to resolve daily problems (Effendi, 1998).

However, according to Suwarno (2003), students' achievement in writing, particularly in junior high school in Indonesia is regarded as not being satisfactory in the sense that students' score of writing is not good enough. It was shown from their low score in English test, especially in writing. He found that students' mean score of writing 4.10. In the reference to standard score of Junior High School (7.00), this indicates that the score remains low.

Some factors were found to have affected the students' low achievement in writing: low understanding about grammar, lack of vocabulary, and inappropriate materials in learning English (Widarso 1993; Manis 2010). In addition, based on the pre-observation carried out by the researcher, the students were mostly found to have problem with respect in writing class. They were not interested in the material of writing English. The students felt that writing English was a difficult subject for them to learn.

Furthermore, writing is almost neglected from teaching-learning process in junior high school. Students rarely had learning activities about writing English. The teachers usually focused on teaching reading and speaking English regardless the writing and listening skills (Effendi 1998). It resulted in lack of knowledge of writing.

The students were not interested in English especially writing because the material provided by the teacher is not interesting for the students. The material of teaching

writing English used by the teacher is regarded as not being suitable with students' levels. It made students feel bored when they learn English. The students didn't pay attention to lesson in the class. This might result in the students' low score in writing.

There are two forms of material that teachers can employ in teaching and learning writing; authentic and modified materials (Tomlinson 1998, Heitler 2005). Authentic materials are the real texts which aim to communicate with other people in English (Melvin and Stout, 1987). Authentic materials are any texts written by native English speakers for native English speakers (Heitler, 2005). Authentic material is usually an up to date information. Authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world, so they have an intrinsic educational value (Sanderson, 1999).

When people first think of authentic materials, they usually assume that we are talking about newspaper and magazine articles (Martinez 2002). Actually, authentic materials are not only about newspaper and magazine. Based on Martinez (2002), the term can also encompass such things as songs, web pages, radio and TV broadcasts, films, leaflets, flyers, posters, indeed anything written in the target language. Using authentic materials is a relatively easy and convenient way of improving not only students' general skills, but also their confidence in a real situation (Nunan 1999, Sanderson 1999). This is only a brief introduction to the ideas involved, but some of these ideas could easily be expanded to form part of a motivating and effective course (Peacock, 1997).

While, modified materials are the materials or texts which are written by the teacher for teaching and learning purposes (Schward, 2005). Teachers make a text especially for their own preparation before they teach in the class. For teachers and students, using modified materials are very easy because the diction and grammar which are used in modified materials are easy to understand (Bonneson, 2000).

Based on the explanation above, the research aims to compare teaching descriptive writing using authentic materials and modified materials. This study was conducted to investigate which of those two materials was more effective to increase students writing ability.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the problem above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. Is there any difference of student's writing achievement between the students who are taught using authentic material, and those who are taught using modified material?
2. Which aspects of writing do improve?

1.3 Objectives

In relation to the research questions, the objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To find out whether there is any difference of student's writing achievement between the students who are taught using authentic material and those who are taught using modified material.

2. To find out which aspects of writing do improve.

1.4 Uses

The findings of the research are beneficial theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretically, the results of the research are expected to support previous theories dealing with authentic and modified material.
2. Practically, the finding of this research may give information to English teachers about the strengths and the weakness of both types of materials, authentic and modified materials.

1.5 Scope

This research was conducted to increase students' writing ability of the second grade of junior high school students. The researcher focused on increasing students' writing ability achievement of descriptive text. This research compared between two types of materials. The materials employed in this research were authentic materials and modified materials. Authentic materials in form of descriptive texts with title "My sister", "Elephant", and "Borobudur Temple" were used in experimental class 1 and modified materials in form of descriptive texts with the same title of the authentic materials were used in experimental class 2. The students' scores were analyzed based on five aspects of writing. They are content, language use, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Based on the explanation above, the definition of terms are formulated as follows:

Writing is an activity of producing printed text through signs or symbol to complement spoken language.

Writing Ability is the competency or skill to write appropriately.

Materials are anything that can be used to help teaching and learning process.

Authentic materials are the materials which are made by native speaker to communicate with other people.

Modified materials are the materials which are made/modified by the teachers by considering the needs and the ability of the students which have purpose for education.

Writing achievement is the accomplishment of writing on individuals.