CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is the most difficult skill to be master for most students because there are many complex components involved, such as: grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, style, etc. According to Heaton (1975:138), writing skills requires not only grammatical and rhetorical devices but also conceptual and judgmental process. This certainly requires some efforts to be seriously done to solve the problem. In general, the main objective of the teaching writing skill is the students are able to write a composition.

Apparently, it can be said that writing basically requires the students to transfer their background knowledge and they should also structure their vocabulary to create logical sentence construction. In other words, they need to pay serious attention to one aspect of grammar, in this case syntax because syntax is used as the basic knowledge of sentence structure.

Furthermore, there are some types of composition in English, such as : narrative, descriptive, argumentative, etc. Each type has different characteristics. There are generic structure, social function and lexicogrammatical features. Usually the student can differentiate each type and they mix all kinds of types. This will be a challenge for the teacher to find out how the students can distinguish from one to another.

In writing a paragraph, students should also pay serious attention to the unity and coherence aspects of the paragraph. According to Wheeler and Limb (1982 : 32), unity is that quality in writing which keeps to a single line of thought. It is really the attribute that makes a paragraph a paragraph. While, coherence is the quality of binding together, the holding power, the attraction that one sentence holds for another so that the entire paragraph becomes a tightly knit unit.

Bram (1995: 25) asserted that there are four common problems faced by most beginning writers at the sentence level that should be overcome, they are: (1) sentence fragment, that related to incomplete sentence, usually lacks either a subject or a verb, or both, or contains only a dependent clause, (2) comma splice, which is concerning to the sentences that has incorrect punctuation, (3) run-on or fused sentence, denotes to sentence that has two or more independent clauses written one after another with no punctuation (4) dangling modifier, deals with a reduced clause which does not have the same subject as the main clause does.

During pre-observation stage, it was found that the students at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik have difficulties in their writing. It can be seen from their English score, which is mostly stated lower than the standard criteria. Study conducted by Irfani (1997) shows that junior high school students were poor at writing. There are many errors in their composition, such as punctuation errors, dangling sentences, fused sentences, etc. Therefore, studying errors in sentence structure is considered helpful to language teachers because the students' errors will show the problems faced by the students in learning English. Furthermore, the students' errors are also useful for the researchers in providing evidence of how language is learned or acquired.

Obviously, it is very important to conduct this study, because there are so many errors in writing paragraph that made by beginner writers such as at junior high school. So that the student will be aware of their own errors and the student's error will be decreased.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In reference to the background that has been discussed above, the problems can be formulates as follows:

a. Do the third grade students of MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik make sentence structure errors in writing descriptive paragraph?
b. What types of errors are made by students in writing descriptive paragraph?
c. How is the proportion (frequency and percentage) of the errors?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Intentionally, this study is aimed at:

1. Finding out whether there are sentence structure errors in students' descriptive paragraph at third grade of MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik.
2. Identifying the sentence structure errors that are often made by third grade students of MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik in writing descriptive paragraph.
3. Finding out the number of proportion (frequency and percentage) of the errors in order to know the problems faced by third grade students of MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik in their writing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Hopefully this study is able to give contributions to the English teachers, especially at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik because the students' errors, especially the sentences structure errors in writing descriptive paragraph can be used as a reference of the evaluation or a feedback for further treatment in order to improve the process of teaching and learning as well. This result is also intended to make the students aware of their own errors, especially in sentence structure problems. Furthermore, they know their weakness in their process of learning and it will encourage them to improve their competence in writing descriptive paragraph. Also, this study is expected for those who want to conduct similar research.

1.5 Scope of the Research

There are several types of paragraph that are taught in high school, such as: recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, reports, spoof, hortatory exposition, etc. This study does not investigate all of the types; it just focuses on descriptive paragraph. Besides, the writer only limits to the students' sentences problem, such as : *sentence fragments, comma splice, run-on or fused sentence, and dangling modifier*. The types of errors above are related to surface strategy and communicative effect taxonomies. The research was conducted at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik. The subject of this research is 26 students of the third grade in 2011/2012 academic years.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The aim of giving definition of key terms is to avoid misunderstanding that may

exist in understanding the logic of this study. The terms, which are needed to be defined, are as follows:

Sentence structure

Sentence structure is the order of the elements in a sentence, a group of words that expresses a complete thought consisting of correct and efficient sentence structure.

Error

Error is the flawed side of learners' speech or writing. Errors are systematic, consistent deviation characteristics of the learners' linguistics system at a given stage of learning.

Writing

The writing display an ability to communicate in way which gives the reader full satisfaction. It displays a completely logical organizational structure which enables the message to be followed effortlessly. Relevant arguments are presented in an interesting way, with ideas prominent and clearly stated, with completely effective supporting material; arguments are effectively related to the writer's experience or views. There are no errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar and the writing shows an ability to manipulate the linguistic systems with complete apropriacy.

Descriptive text

Descriptive text is a text that describes the features of someone, something, or a certain place. A descriptive text focuses on a specific thing and its specific features.

Paragraph

Paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. Usually, one sentence, called the topic sentence, states the main idea of the paragraph. All the other sentences are related to this topic sentence. They further explain or support the main idea.