

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses certain points; introduction that deals with background of the problem, research problem, objective of the research, uses of the research, scope of the research, and definition of terms clarified like the following.

1.1 Background of the Problem

English teaching is intended to develop students' ability to use English as a means of communication. Students should practice intensively so that they will be able to use English communicatively both in oral and written form. Writing in a foreign language is a complex process involving the ability to communicate in foreign language and the ability to construct a text in order to express one's ideas effectively. It requires a combination of clear set of rules and communicative application that serves effective communication. Classroom writing instruction, therefore, should give students the opportunity to participate in writing as a holistic process of composition not just controlled exercises in sentence structure, grammar, or bits of paragraph development if the main goal of the instruction is to enable the students to write effective communication.

Based on School – based Curriculum (Depdiknas: 2006) the students are required to communicate oral and written text, mainly in the descriptive, narrative, recount, explanation, discussion, commentary, and review by stressing on the interpersonal

complex meaning and variety textual meaning. Raimes (1983: 76) said that writing is an ability in which we express the ideas, feelings, and thought arranged in words, sentences and paragraph using eyes, brain, and hand. But, this objective is very hard to achieve. The students often get the difficulties during the learning process, especially to express their ideas into words or sentences. Almost of the students are still confused about what will they write and how to write it.

Accordingly, most of students still experience difficulties in writing. Diharyono (1990: 1) said that students know or have the ideas what they were going to write but they did not know how to put them into words. The students often get difficulties to express their ideas into words or sentences. When their teacher asks them to make a composition, they get confused about expressing themselves in written form. This might be caused by the following facts: firstly, the students do not know the specific technique that can guide them in developing their ideas. Secondly, they almost never get writing exercise (Juwitasari, 2005: 2), and thirdly, many English teachers still teach writing in conventional way and technique in teaching text.

The students may have writing classes but they sometimes feel confused of what will be done after finding a topic. Based on the researcher's experiences when doing PPL in SMP Negeri 1 Adiluwih, Pringsewu, it was found out that although the students had been given a topic to write, they could not automatically start their writing assignment. This fact supports Marini's statement (1995: 7) who states that the students still need a long time to figure out how to organize the idea to build a good paragraph and to make their paragraph readable and effective.

They still have problems to relate all sentences in the paragraph to the main idea. Another problem faced by the students was that because they have no specific technique to guide them in developing their ideas and put them in written form.

Referring to the description above, it was assumed that word cluster was an appropriate technique to solve the problem and improve the students' writing ability. Theoretically, word cluster could facilitate the students to plan their ideas in systematical way (Oshima, 1997: 155). Word cluster provided students a frame of ideas that guide the students to write. Therefore, word cluster could help the students to focus on the idea that they intend to write in relation to the content and to link sentences into coherent ideas in the target language. In addition, making word cluster was an active process that also gave the students opportunities to monitor their writing in order to minimize grammar errors and inaccuracy of selection of words. Hence, it is assumed that word cluster can improve students' writing ability.

In relation to word cluster, it was necessary to choose related text which would be used as media to measure students' writing ability. Due to its similar structure with the essential paragraph, descriptive text was chosen. The use of descriptive text was reasonable since the recent curriculum stated that descriptive text was the one of the texts that should be learnt by the second year students of Senior High School. It pointed out that the students should be able to understand and create a descriptive text coherently and accurately based on the social function and the generic structure of the text. Besides that, the students feel confuse how to develop the topic to be put in their descriptive text writing. Although they have

started writing, they naturally found difficulties on how continue their writing. This will frustrate the students and as the effect, they tend to stop practicing their writing. In this case, word cluster is considered as an alternative technique that can be used to develop students' descriptive text writing.

Based on the facts above, the researcher tries to find a way on how to make students enjoy their writing classes and assignment. The researcher will try to apply word cluster to develop their descriptive text writing ability because it can help them generalize the ideas to be put in their paragraph writing. Hopefully, it can help the students become easier to write a descriptive text clearly and communicatively.

1.2 Research Problem

In relation to the background, this research focuses on the following problem, namely:

Is there any improvement of students' descriptive text writing ability after being taught through word cluster?

1.3 Objective of the Research

Concerning with the problem above, the objective of this research is:

To find out whether there is improvement of students' descriptive text writing ability after being taught through word cluster.

1.4 Uses of the Research

This research aims at having the following uses:

1. Theoretically, the results of this study are expected to give contribution to the theories in which word cluster could be applied to improve students' text writing.
2. Practically, to inform readers, English teacher, language researcher, and other practitioners the improvement of the students' writing ability by using word cluster in order to develop English teaching method further. Hopefully, this study can activate the students in learning process so that the ability in writing text will increase.

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 3 Metro. The sample of the research was XI IPA 2 students in academic year 2012/2013 in second semesters which consists of 34 students was chosen as the sample of the research. This sample was chosen because in accordance to the SMA curriculum, the students had already studied about structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension in the previous semesters.

This study was focused on teaching descriptive text through word cluster. In this research there were two topics of descriptive text, they were describing person and place. The students' achievement of descriptive text was evaluated in relation to content, grammar, organization, vocabulary, and mechanic. The test was given twice; pre-test and post-test. The materials was adopted from the School Based Curriculum / Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan Senior High School 2006.

1.6 Definition of Terms

In relation to the use of this study, there are some definitions clarified in order to have similar understanding. The terms can be described as follows:

Writing

Writing is one of language skill in which the students learn how to get ideas and expresses the ideas in written form by applying content, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and organization.

Text

Text is any meaningful stretch of language either oral or written in the form of word, cluse, and sentence.

Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is a composition that consists of sentences that develops the main idea that makes the readers see or paint a verbal picture. It also conveys the physical or abstract image of persons, events, ideas, and objects.

Word Cluster

Word cluster is a type of free associated listing. It begins with a core-word, a word that acts as a metal stimulus to make the writer come up with related terms that branch out from the center term. One term leads to another and another to create a complex network of diverse ideas, all related back in the same way to the core stimulus word.