

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This part contains backgrounds of the problem, problem of the research, objective of the research, uses of the research, scope of the research and definition of key terms.

### **I.1 Backgrounds of the Problem**

We use language every day to communicate with others. Language, this tool of communication, plays a very important role in our life. It is in line with Richard and Rodgers in Setiyadi (2006:166) who say that language is as vehicle for communicating meanings and messages. Each language, precisely, has its own rule and structure which are different with other languages.

English, as an international language, has been learnt by the students in Indonesia since the elementary level. They learn it in order to be able to communicate in English. In learning this language, there are four skills and three components of this language that should be mastered. Those four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while the three components are vocabulary, structure and phonology. Writing is learnt after the other three skills because writing skill is considered as the most difficult and complicated skill to master.

It is different from the other productive skill, speaking, which does not concern much about the structure, as the main point is the listeners get the meaning we say. In speaking, we also can find out whom we talk to directly. It is different from writing. We cannot see who the readers are. We have to make sure that the readers get the meaning rightly like what we intend, without any misunderstanding or ambiguity. Of course, to do this, we have to choose the right dictions with the right structure to the right readers. That is why the writing skill becomes the most difficult and complicated skill. This statement is also supported by Heaton (1991:135) who states that writing skill is complex and sometimes difficult, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices, but also of conceptual and judgmental elements.

There are many considerations in mastering the writing skill. One of them is the right use of vocabulary. Sometimes we call it as 'diction' or words choice. Vocabulary is the key of communication, especially in writing, because it is impossible to speak or write something without using vocabulary. The writer here is likely more concern about the vocabulary use in writing, because the writer thinks that the vocabulary mastery holds an important role in developing the writing skill. To avoid the miscommunication or ambiguity, we have to choose the right diction or the right word choice.

Previous study concerning writing skill conducted by Sentosa (2007) shows that the junior high school students experienced difficulties in their writing task, especially in the terms of vocabulary. This study shows that there were many students who found difficulties in finding the appropriate vocabularies that represent the words on their minds. Another study conducted by Setiyani (2008)

shows that the quality of the students' narrative writing ability depends on their vocabulary mastery. She conducted her study to the first SMA students in SMAN 1 Bandar Lampung. Those reasons became the writer's rationales why she was interested to find out whether there is any correlation between the vocabulary mastery and writing ability.

Carstairs and McCarthy (2002: 4) say that word is as the basic unit of the language that have a unit of meaning. We use words or vocabularies to express our ideas or deliver our messages to others. We will find many difficulties in expressing our ideas both in writing or speaking if we only have limited vocabulary mastery. Based on the 2006 curriculum, the students of junior high school are expected to master approximately 600 to 1500 words and able to use them in their daily communication or their daily lives. But in fact, according to the writer's experience while teaching first class grade in Senior High School 10 Bandar Lampung during the PPL practice last January-April, the students only able to gain about 200 vocabularies after graduated from their junior high school.

The writer also found the same problem when she taught the first grade of SMA students in Al Qolam Pringsewu. This limitation of vocabulary mastery made the students felt difficult in expressing the ideas, especially in written form because they did not know what words that could represent what on their minds appropriately.

It will be impossible to learn a language without vocabulary, learning a language means learning its vocabulary (River 1970: 462). Vocabulary mastery here means not only knowing the meaning, like what the students do at their school,

memorizing the meaning only, but mastery also means knowing how to use it in sentences appropriately. If the students only know the meaning, they will arrange the words in sentences based on the rule exist in their first language, not English language rule. The writer often finds many students who write in English but using the rule of Indonesia language. This is because they only memorize the meaning, not master the vocabulary.

It is said that vocabulary mastery plays important rule in writing because it can support the students to choose the appropriate words, so it can support the effectiveness of using the language. These statements are in line with Harris (1969:68):

Vocabulary mastery / diction plays an important role in a language, especially in the writing activity. The choice of vocabulary could describe the writer's knowledge. The number of words that is mastered by a writer could indicate that he/she mastered a number of concepts; mastery of vocabulary can improve by reading and listening a lot.

Viewing vocabulary will concern especially about parts of speech, according to Crystal (1995: 196), there are 8 parts of speech existing in English language. They are verb (word of action or state), noun (word of thing or person), adjective (word for describing a noun), adverb (word for describing verb, adjective or the other adverb), pronoun (word for replacing a noun), preposition (word that links a noun to another word), and conjunction (word that joins clauses or sentences or words). While in terms of diction, the vocabulary means the appropriate word choice under a certain topic or condition given. In this research, the writer is more interested in analyzing the vocabulary used by the students in their writing tasks based on these eight parts of speech.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing the correlation between the vocabulary mastery and the students writing ability, especially in descriptive writing. Therefore, the researcher focuses on the vocabulary mastery with an indication that the vocabulary mastery has a contribution to the development of the writing ability. Thus, the researcher wants to know the significance of correlation between the students' vocabulary mastery and their descriptive writing ability.

### **I.2 Problem of the Research**

In relation to the phenomenon mentioned above, the problem in this research is formulated as follow:

Is there any significant correlation between the students' vocabulary mastery and their descriptive writing ability at the first year of SMAN 1 Ambarawa?

### **I.3 Objective of the Research**

It is expected that the objective of this research is:

To find out whether there is significant correlation between the students' vocabulary mastery and their descriptive writing ability at the first year of SMAN 1 Ambarawa.

### **I.4 Uses of the Research**

It is expected that the uses of the research can:

1. Give more emphasis and motivation to help the students to increase their vocabulary mastery in order to enhance their writing ability.

2. Be used as the information to both the English teacher and students about the importance of vocabulary mastery in writing.

### **1.5 Scope of the Research**

This research is quantitative co-relational study that deals with the investigation of the first year students' vocabulary mastery and their descriptive writing ability at SMAN 1 Ambarawa. It was chosen the first year students with an assumption that they already had enough vocabulary mastery for writing a simple descriptive paragraph. They also had learnt about making simple sentences and short paragraph. The topic of the writing was describing person and animal which was taken from the curriculum.

The test was conducted in the essay form. The students were asked to describe the topic they choose in at least 100 words. In scoring the writing, it was only focused on three components. They were vocabulary, grammar and organization. To keep the reliability of the score, the researcher asked another rater, Eka Lismaya Dewi, to score the students' writing. While for the vocabulary test, the writer chose the objective multiple choice tests. There are 40 items with four choices (a, b, c or d) for each items. This vocabulary test was designed to see the students' ability in choosing the diction and the ability in putting the right form of vocabulary in the sentences.

### **1.6 Definition and Key Terms**

In order to have similar perception, definitions of key terms are cited below:

1. **Vocabulary** is the basic unit of a language that contains information about meaning and use of a word in a language to be spoken or written to build up a language.
2. **Diction** is the choice of words employed by the writer, particularly the extent to which the words the writer uses are thought suitable and effective for different kinds of writing.
3. **Writing** is an act of putting words into piece of paper or other media as one way to communicate to the others using grammatical rules in English.
4. **Descriptive text** is a text where the writer draws something using words in order to make the readers see, feel, hear and sense what the writer sees, feels, hears and senses.
5. **Paragraph** is a group of related statements that a writer develops a subject using several supporting sentences and one concluding sentences.

