

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Problem

Writing is the top productive skill in language learning process; it comes after listening, speaking, and reading. It is believed as the most complicated activity. In this skill, the students must integrate their previous knowledge in order to create a good composition. Their background knowledge which is acquired through listening, speaking, and reading should support their writing ability. They must master the vocabulary and structure before composing. It is supported by Meyers (2005:2). He states that writing skill requires the skill of organizing ideas, putting the right vocabularies and using grammar as the structure of the composition.

As the researcher's teaching experience at SMP IT Daarul 'Ilmi, the students had difficulty in descriptive text writing, the sample below can describe students' difficulty in descriptive text writing. The sample was cited from one of SMP IT Daarul 'Ilmi students' work.

The faforite Cartoon

"You call him 'spongebob', he is main characteristic in the cartoon movie, he is always make me laugh.

He is 10 years old. He has yellow body. He has squere body. He has not really tall. He is so cute because him always make all person laugh. He work in the restaurant as ceff. It is the femose restaurant in the Bikini bottom city."

There are some problems that the researcher found based on the above sample, among them are listed as follow:

1. The student found difficulties on using the appropriate grammar when writing the text. She wrote the text in her native language structure (Indonesia), such as in the fifth sentence “. *He work in the restaurant as ceff.*” In this sentence, we can see that the student cannot use simple present tense which is the main tense in the descriptive text.
2. The student got difficulties on using the suitable generic structure of the text. She wrote the generic structure of the text in random, unarranged order, and it was not suitable with the rules of the text.
3. The student had lack of vocabularies. She did not have enough vocabularies in at hands; therefore, it took too much time in finding the words by dictionary. If there was no dictionary, she wrote the word based on her guessing which could lead to error, for example the word *chef* was written as *ceff* in the fifth sentence.
4. She made an error in the use of subject and pronoun, it could create confusion when the text was read; the use of *him* should be replaced by *he*.
The sentence “*He is so cute because him always make all person laugh.*”

Sari (2010: 58-59) informs some of students’ writing weaknesses, they are: organization and vocabulary. In the organization aspect, the students’ compositions were not fluent since their ideas in composition were confusing and disconnected one another. Frequent errors were found in their word choice and vocabulary. The student could not create write the correct form of chef. She used

ceff to show the man who is able to cook well. Student's problems happened when she wrote inappropriate words to express her ideas. This problem exists because some factors which are explained on the following paragraphs.

Three problems facing a student on making good writing are informed by Byrne (1991: 3-4) in Qomarudin (2010: 31) are:

1. Psychological problem: there is no benefit of feedback from others directly. The problem happens because the student rarely gets writing training. It possibly happens because the limited learning writing English period. Consequently, the teacher teaches writing only some minutes in the class which causes the student evaluates his writing. He does not know whether his writing is correct or not.
2. Linguistic problem: we need to choose sentences and structure in such a way that can be understood by the reader. The student must explain about what they intended to mean on their writing by using good words order and structure. It is going to be big obstacle when the student does not know a specifically needed word which reflects what she meant. The problem can be seen in the previous sample.
3. Cognitive problems: to be able to write is not an instant process, but someone can acquire this ability by 'process of instruction or strategy'; how to learn certain structures, organize ideas etc. In this way, the student uses their cognitive strategy as the process center in writing. The problem would be complicated if the student did not use cognitive strategy well.

The third problem above, cognitive problem, takes big role in the process of writing. It is the process that happens before the writing itself. The student tended to create errors when his cognitive (thought) was in doubt. Reid (1993:9) states that students' errors are caused by students' thought. The student's thought sometimes create intelligence of their mistakes. What he thought was transferred in the wrong linguistic form if he had wrong writing strategy. He would use wrong vocabulary when he could not evaluate the appropriate vocabulary on his writing.

The other researchers also support the important role of cognitive strategy in writing. Raimes (1983:3) states that writing involves systematic way of thinking. What the students write reflect what they think. Through writing the students can share what they have in their mind to other people. In addition, Bell and Burnady in Nunan (1991:36) point out that writing is a complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate simultaneously such as control of content which cover the way of integrating information, coherent, paragraph unity, using sentence structure and the right vocabulary.

The importance of cognitive strategy in writing leads many researches done. Chen and Hu (2005: 1) state that since the early 1980s, second language (L2) writing teachers need to understand the process of L2 writing and take them into account in writing instruction. Teachers of second language need to understand students' writing strategy to develop the students' writing as part of teaching second language writing.

One of the ways to analyze the student's writing strategy is Thinking Aloud Protocol (TAP). TAP is a method that allows researchers to understand, at least in part, the thought process of the subject as they use a product, device or manual as Ericsson and Simon state (1996). The researcher observed the user while attempting to complete a defined task.

Scardamalia (1984) states that teacher can use the think aloud protocol as an expression of students' inner dialogue in which will reveal much information not available from the finished product alone. Through thinking aloud protocol, teacher can define what happen in their mind because the students verbalize their thinking. Students will say anything in their mind during their writing processes.

By using Think Aloud Protocol the researcher analyze the students' cognitive strategies in their writing. The researcher could reveal the dominant and less strategies used by the students in the writing process after transcribing and coding their verbalization. The strategies which were revealed in the research can be used to develop better writing instruction as the following information.

Wilhelm (2006) states that thinking aloud protocol helps teachers to develop strategic instructional techniques and how students take benefit of think aloud. Through thinking aloud, students are able to learn how to recognize problems when they occur, how to isolate problems and name the source of confusion, and how to use strategies to overcome their confusion. It means thinking aloud protocol not only gives benefit for the teacher but also gives advantages for the students.

After analyzing the students' strategies, the researcher got the information how the students utilized their strategies in the writing process. The researcher can identify the least and most frequent strategies. Then the researcher categorized the strategies which influenced the writing and tried to create good writing instruction.

Beaton (2002) suggests that the researcher should specify a definite task which must be accomplished by the subject to get better thinking aloud protocol. To enable this, researcher used the guided writing task; that is descriptive writing based on the picture given. The students were required to verbalize their thinking in the descriptive writing process. They were not taught about the descriptive writing since it had been studied in the previous meeting with the teacher. To make the verbalization in descriptive writing was familiar with them, the researcher created training.

In this research, picture was used as the writing object to stimulate the students to write. Picture is chosen because it can activate students' language skill (Joyce, 2009:131). It can make students try to focus on one object because it collects students' attention. Students always try to find the words which are suitable so that they can start writing.

The whole background above affected the researcher to conduct a research entitled: "An EFL Writing Strategies at the Second Year Students of SMP IT Daarul 'Ilmi Kemiling, Bandar Lampung."

1.2. Research Problem

Based on the background above researcher focused on a problem; that is “what are writing strategies engaged in writing process at the second year students of SMP IT Daarul ‘Ilmi?”

1.3. Objectives of the Research

The objective in doing this research was formulated from the research problem; the objective is to know the writing strategies at the second year students of SMP IT Daarul ‘Ilmi.

1.4. Uses of the Research

Practical Uses

1. This research will be a reference for English teacher to know students’ strategies in writing descriptive paragraph. So, the teacher can consider what treatment that can be given to the learners.
2. This research also gives an opportunity to create future investigation which relates to Thinking Aloud Protocol and writing; either qualitative or quantitative research.

Theoretical Uses

1. This study can give a contribution to EFL writing strategies research at students of Junir High School in Indonesia.

2. This study can be used to support previous theories related to Thinking Aloud Protocol (TAP) on writing and teaching writing.

1.5. Scope of the Research

The research was a qualitative one. The research dealt with students' writing process. The instrument for analyzing students' writing strategies was the researcher.

Roudatun Najihin Class consists of twenty one students. All of them were trained to practice Think Aloud Protocol (TAP) during their writing process. The subjects were asked to compose their descriptive writing which had been studied previously. From twenty one students, the researcher took six students as his subjects. The six students were taken from the lottery. Every student, from twenty one students, was asked to pick one paper out of twenty one papers. The twenty one papers were divided by two; six numbered pieces and fifteen blank pieces. The student, who got the numbered paper, automatically became the subject of the research.

While the subjects were doing the writing and thinking aloud, researcher recorded their verbalization. The research used one rater. The rater was the researcher himself, who concentrated on recording and transcribing. The data analysis was done to determine the subjects' strategies and identify the dominant and the minor one. Finally, the subjects were interviewed to find deeper observation about their L2 writing strategies.

1.6. Definition of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding in the context of research, the following key terms are defined as follows:

1. Writing is the skill of organizing words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs, which involves language capacity and thinking.
2. L2 writing strategy is a technique and procedures to conceptualize and fulfil second language task which consists of seven elements; they are *planning, monitoring, evaluating, resourcing, reduction, repetition, and use of L1 strategies*.
3. Descriptive Text is a text that can be used to describe someone or something which is characterized by the generic structure (identification and description) and some language features (using present tense, focusing on specific object, using attributive and identifying process).
4. Descriptive Writing Process is a complete activity of the subject to compose a descriptive text which refers to subjects' thinking, knowledge, English proficiency, and difficulty.
5. Thinking aloud protocol is a method to gather data in which the users (subjects) are asked to say whatever they are seeing at, thinking, feeling, and doing. In this research, TAP is used as the data elicitation.
6. Verbalization is an activity of the subjects to tell everything they have on their mind. They speak their thinking as if they talk to themselves.