

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background**

Secondary-level students in Indonesia have difficulty assembling words, phrases, and sentences in learning to write. While this is an important component in starting to write. Hyland, K (1999) said that the components of writing are the arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences that are arranged sequentially according to a system of rules. This can be interpreted that good writing requires components as above. In this component some students have problems in writing words or sentences in English. As stated by Hossain (2015) words or sentences addressed to other people must use supporting words. In the sense that the word or sentence is appropriate and with what will be conveyed. Words should be arranged regularly in phrases and sentences so that people can understand what they are trying to say. Furthermore, these sentences are combined into a discourse that produces a complete meaning.

Furthermore, the things that make it difficult for students to write are the lack of understanding of grammar and the little vocabulary they know. According to Abas (2016), most students of English as a foreign language (EFL) find writing in English difficult because they have to use correct English grammar and vocabulary, apply the writing skills they have learned, and combine their knowledge. This is with their previous experience on a given topic while writing. Harima & Ilmiah (2019) support that writing is not an easy skill for language learners to master. In addition to the above factors, student difficulties are also related to the use of punctuation, spelling, and handwriting. This shows that the difficulties of EFL students in writing classes exist.

Writing is essential for language learners, especially for middle-level students in Indonesia. However, writing in English is not an easy thing. Setyowati et al. (2017) suggested that writing is widely recognized, as the most challenging and least preferred of the four English skills because writing is a complex activity, even though it plays an essential role in language

development. Talking about writing difficulties, the following are some examples of difficulties experienced by secondary students in writing activities. In writing recount text, students often find difficulties. Zaenudin (2015) states that the thing causing students to experience difficulties is the lack of fluency in issuing ideas using English. Then they are not accustomed to using English in daily communication. The student's understanding of language's generic structure and features is not enough, and their ability to think abstractly is little. Other researchers also stated students' difficulties in writing, namely writing descriptive texts. Novita (2017), said that students had some difficulties in writing descriptive texts. Difficulties experienced include generic structure, grammar, and spelling. To write descriptive texts, students can organize their ideas by identifying topics and describing the topic. Writing narrative text is also an example of the difficulties experienced by middle-level students. Tambunan et al. (2020) found the difficulties experienced by students in writing narrative texts. The first cause is a transfer between languages. The next cause is intralingual transfer. In addition, students also lack grammatical knowledge, which makes them make many mistakes in their writing. The last cause of difficulty in writing narrative texts is the lack of vocabulary.

Several researchers have stated that there are difficulties for students during writing class. Like Alisha, Safitri, & Santoso (2019) who found students' difficulties in writing to EFL students, the findings showed (that 77.84%) of respondents had difficulties in writing due to a lack of vocabulary. Then some respondents (78.38%) often made some mistakes in writing words in English. And the last respondent (64.86%) also felt that their spelling was not good enough. In writing, they have problems with spelling. That's because they often go hesitant in writing English words and think their spelling isn't good enough.

Phuket and Othman (2015) have explored the main sources of errors occurring in EFL students' writing. They also investigated the types of errors that came from two sources (interlingual and intralingual errors). The results show that the errors that most often occur are words translated from word

choice, verb tense, preposition, and comma. It is recognized that the most common source of errors is interlanguage or mother tongue disorders. In addition, Liamnimitr and Pochakom (2017) conducted a study to examine the language errors in major English students' writing in Thailand and explore the sources of errors. The results showed that the most frequent errors were punctuation, article, subject-verb agreement, spelling capitalization, and fragment, respectively. However, this study was conducted in Thailand and only explored the sources of students' errors in writing. Previous research did not find that students could not string words together, and compose sentences in English. And the researchers found the phenomenon of students having difficulty assembling sentences and phrases at the middle-level students. Therefore, the researcher wants to complete the shortcomings of previous researchers by exploring more about what difficulties are faced by middle-level students in Indonesia in writing class.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the background above, the researcher addressed the following question, “What difficulties do the students have in writing English?”

## **1.3 Operational Definitions**

To avoid misinterpretation of this research, here are the operational definitions of each keyword:

- 1.3.1 Students’ difficulties in writing** : Students' obstacles to composing their ideas, thoughts, opinions, and experiences in written expressions using adequate vocabulary, appropriate grammar and punctuation, and understandable content.
- 1.3.2 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Classroom** : Learning environment where English is taught to students whose first language is not English and who reside in a country where English is not the primary language.

#### **1.4 Aim of the Study**

This study describes students' voices regarding the difficulties they experience in-class writing.

#### **1.5 Significances of the Study**

##### **1.5.1 Theoretical Use**

This research will be useful for readers to find out the difficulties experienced by students in writing class.

##### **1.5.2 Practical Use**

This research is a reference for teachers to overcome the difficulties experienced by students after knowing the cause.

##### **1.5.3 Empirical Use**

This research will provide information for researchers about what students in writing class experience difficulties.