

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter consists of seven sections: Background of the study, scope of the study, the research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms and outlines of the thesis.

### **Background of the study**

In the area of education with English as a foreign language, non-native students, especially undergraduate students are required to be able to communicate in both spoken and written language. Written language is one of language products as well as a means of communication. Accordingly, it can be used to measure the students' achievement in a process of learning the language (Harmer, 2004). The outcome of the students' written language can be produced in a certain level which requires specialized writing skills (Brown, 2001). Writing skills, is one of productive skills which involves communicating a message by making sign, forming letters and words and joining them together into a series of sentences that link together to communicate that message (Pulverness, Spratt and Williams, 2005). Hence, it can be assumed that students' writing skill which enables students to produce a piece of written composition by linking a series of sentences to communicate with others can reflect their achievements toward the teaching and learning process of English. As a result, writing skills become an important part, in students' English learning process, and in their daily life as a whole.

However, writing teachers and lecturer in Indonesia still hold the view that writing is merely a product of the students (Alwasilah, 2006). It tends to be unnecessary thing, particularly, to look at the process how the students work on their writings. It poses a problem and challenge whenever the teachers emphasize only to the final result rather than the steps how the students attempt to convey their message into a piece of writing.

In fact, the process of writing is one of recognition to see whether students are allowed to focus on content and message, and they become the centre of learning instead of the teacher (Brown, 2001). It brings the idea that what counts more on the students' writing skills of L2 is the process of how they can apply their skills appropriately. Another view examining the importance of process of writing instead of the product also comes from Nation (2009). He states that one way of focusing on different aspects of writing is to look at writing as a process.

Unfortunately, the evidence found by Alwasilah (2006) investigate that the writing process in most of Indonesian context is seen separately from the results of the students' written product. This written product is also often done individually both inside and outside classroom. Hence, should the teachers and lectures pay more attention to the product rather than a process of writing, they fail to provide the students opportunities to follow each step of writing process and to comprehend themselves when working collaboratively in groups.

This may also become one of the reasons why most Indonesian students find it difficult to write an academic writing (Widodo, 2006). In addition to their difficulties on academic writing, Syaifur (2003) also examined that there were still many issues faced by Indonesian students such as the use of grammar, the students' critical thinking, and feedback as role of a critical peer or partner. This finding portrays evidence that Indonesian students, particularly those who are undergraduate students, cannot generate their ideas into a good piece of writing. They further find difficulties in elaborating their skills which is perhaps integrated with their reading skills that results inability of giving feedback to others' work.

For this reason, there must be an appropriate technique to well develop the writing skills of the students. Collaborative writing has the potential to help both students and teachers to obtain the goal of students' improvement in writing skills (Dale, 1997). Some studies showed that collaborative writing enhances and stimulates students' motivation in improving the writing skills. A study by (Bremner, 2010; Dobao, 2012; Storch and Wigglesworth, 2009) which compared individual and pair performance on short composition, found that exercises completed in pairs were generally more accurate than when completed individually.

According to Dale (1997, p.12) Collaborative writing implies meaningful interaction and shared decision making and responsibility between group members in the writing of a shared document.

The concept presented by Dale is supported by Storch (2005) saying that collaborative writing affords students the opportunity to pool ideas and provide each other with feedback. In other words, it can be said that collaborative writing needs the students to work in groups which can promote a friendly competition among them. The students can even create a positive relationship when they work in groups and this may change their attitude toward learning (Storch, 2005). They will have multiple pairs of eyes to proofread the writing when doing the task. Creativity can be achieved when multiple writers brainstorm with each other. It increases the amount of combined knowledge of the writers on the group. Collaborative writing increases students' enthusiasm toward developing their writing skills. It means that this process can afford students the enjoyment of writing a creative task as a form of writing that relates to their personal experiences (Storch, 2005). The personal experiences are interpreted in a form of texts in which the students can explore and discover the language that sounds familiar to them. It eases them in starting to write the texts because the language and the topic used are based on their surroundings that are very common and easy to find.

Furthermore, collaborative writing becomes the process in which the students are offered the opportunity to give and receive immediate feedback on language used on their writings that may be missing when they work individually (Storch, 2005). The invention strategies, multiple drafts, and formative feedback both by the teacher and by peers also become important parts of writing instruction in many L2 classrooms (Matsuda, Cox, Jordan and Hooper, 2006). Peer review has on the whole been regarded as beneficial in L2 writing instruction, inasmuch as it provides student writers with added motivation for revision (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 1999). The feedback which is provided in the Collaborative writing can be beneficial for students' grammatical awareness as well. It is much different with L1 acquisition because L2 students may sometimes need explicit information about what is not grammatical in the L2 (Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

Those varieties of research studies have shown the result of the application of collaborative writing in the western context. The context particularly takes place in the area where L2 students are among foreign students using English as a second language. It is still less known, in the field of writing skills, especially collaborative writing which takes place in Indonesian context which English is used as a foreign language. Moreover, the integration of current approach on writing was still new, so that it could be a brand new notion to improve students' writing skills through the implementation of integrated approach on collaborative writing.

In conclusion, a research study showing students' writing skills development was needed to be conducted, especially the one that provided collaborative writing as a technique to improve students' writing skills. This research, hence, attempted to give a clear objective of how students could improve their writing skills through integrated approach of collaborative writing technique implemented in the classroom. It was conducted in one of the private universities in Indonesia and applied on L2 students at English Department of a teachers training and education faculty as the participants. It was different from many other research studies which mostly investigate the students from the context in western countries which may be different with Indonesian context. Further, this research could answer the problems in the field, especially in motivating and improving students' writing skills.

### **Scope of the study**

The participants of this study were the fourth semester of English Department students in a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The study highly focused on the development of the students' writing skills through collaborative writing technique in order to overcome their problems on L2 writing. The writing process on collaborative activities was seen through the steps in action research. This study was conducted by using the principles of action research because it attempted to find out the self reflective investigation in social contexts and in order to improve the rationality of educational practice through each cycle of the research. The cycle of action research included the following steps: planning, action, observation and reflection.

The instruments used were writing tasks, observation, and interview. These instruments were expected to give a clear description and information of students' writing skills development through integrated approach for collaborative writing on each cycle of action research.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To describe the implementation of collaborative writing in improving students' writing skills.
2. To improve the students' writing skills through collaborative writing.

### **Research questions**

Based on the background of the study, the research seeks answer to these questions:

1. What is the nature of integrated approach in L2 students' writing skills through collaborative writing?
2. To what extent does collaborative writing improve students' writing skills?

### **Significance of the study**

This research had some benefits in the English teaching learning process, especially in improving writing skills. There were three pedagogical significances in this research:

1. The result of the research would give a clear description on the implementation of integrated approach for collaborative writing in improving students' writing skills.
2. The result of improving students' writing skills through integrated approach for collaborative writing could be used as a reference for English teacher in general and for English lecturer in university level to improve students' writing skills.
3. The result of learning through integrated approach for collaborative writing could be useful for the students in improving their writing skills.

### **Definition of terms**

To express some of the technical concepts in this research, the following definition of terms are included.

1. Collaborative writing: a form of writing classroom activities that requires the students to work with their peers.
2. Integrated approach of writing: a teaching writing approach in which collaborates the three different approaches (genre, process, and product) into a single approach.
3. The nature of writing: the typical characteristics of writing in the classroom which include some different features such as the process and the participants involved, for example, teachers and students.
4. Pre-test: Students' writing task that was given once before the implementation of the research.
5. Post-test: Students' writing task that was given once after the overall implementation of the research.

### **The outline of the thesis**

This thesis was divided into five different chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the thesis. It presented the research question, the setting of the study, and the significance based on the background of the study.

Chapter two had a purpose to provide the theoretical background through the relevant review of the literature. Literature in collaborative writing and teaching strategies in improving writing skills were presented in this chapter.

Chapter three showed the outline of the research methodology conducted in this study. The choice of action research as the approach to conduct the study was also described. There was divided into two cycles which had four different steps on each cycle: plan, observation, action, reflection. The data of each step of the cycle was also described and analyzed.

Chapter four presented and described the overall findings of the research in terms of qualitative and quantitative data.

Finally, the last chapter asserts the conclusion of the research, the limitations, the discussions of the findings; implication found from the findings and recommendations for future research.