CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Before the 1960s, foreign language writing skills often did not attract much attention. However, in recent decades, it has become more prominent and was regarded as an important communication skill and fundamental content in the language learning process (Anh, 2019). Writing has become an important skill since English was regarded as a mandatory subject in the curriculum (Anh, 2019). Writing is a productive skill that involves the process of thinking, building and revising the text. However, for many students, writing is one of the most difficult skills to learn. This perception can significantly influence their motivation and engagement in learning the writing process. The middle school writing teaching process also faces challenges such as inefficiency in the classroom writing learning process, lack of practice and lack of writing practice time. By doing writing activities students can express thoughts, ideas through writing. However, writing activities cannot be mastered only through theory, but must do exercises and also practice so that they can produce good writing (Meyers, 2005 in Tarigan et al. 2021). Writing skills are also integrated with other language skills such as speaking, reading, grammar and vocabulary. Due to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, writing is considered the most difficult skill for learners due to many objective and subjective

reasons. Therefore, students often make mistakes when writing various English documents. If students were not fully aware of the importance of improving their writing skills, it will take a lot of time to try to overcome these difficulties. As a result, students often lose motivation or become discouraged in writing classes, which to some extent affects their learning outcomes (Anh, 2019).

Some students faced challenges in composing, processing and practicing some grammar, punctuations and capitalization in order to wrote their writing in textual form. This caused by various factors, including limited exposure to English which hinders vocabulary mastery and also the large use of local languages in communication which can have an impact on their writing abilities.

Students sometimes have difficulty conveying ideas through good and correct language. Tarigan et al. (2021) argues that writing is an activity that expresses ideas through language media and writing is one of the most recent language skills mastered after listening, reading, and speaking. The goal of writing was to proved that students have learned specific grammar rules, not that they have a thorough comprehension of the subject. Furthermore, proper spelling, grammar, and overall structure are the most crucial indicators of second language proficiency. A student's ability to appropriately compose and write tenses is regarded evidence of their writing ability as well as their overall competency in the English language.

According to Nunan et al. (2003) explain the teaching strategies used play an important role in encouraging the development of students' writing skills. Strategies such as emphasizing the importance of creative writing, providing regular feedback, utilizing drafts, and facilitating meaningful learning experiences are

essential in improving writing skills. Lack of practice and lack of creativity in writing English texts have been identified as significant contributors to low writing skill scores, as well as the overall learning environment. The teaching environment, which includes support for teachers, a culture of learning among students, and English language proficiency for students and parents, can have a major influence on the progress of writing skills.

The researcher chose the research object were students of Silo, Middle School located at Jl. Ranggi No. 3, Krajan, Sumberjati, Kec. Silo, Jember Regency, East Java 68184, due to the phenomenon. Some students faced challenges in composing, processing and practicing their writing test. Coincidentally, the location of this school was in a rural area, which allows researchers to obtained information about this matter, and this research used as a reference by readers or other teaching staff to help their students develop writing skills. Regarding the four language skills, writing is concerned as the most difficult skill either in one's first language or in a second/foreign language (Chen, 2022). Writing involves a complicated process in which learners have to actively generate ideas, organize and construct information in different genres, as well as revise and edit the text (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2011 in Chen, 2022).

Tarigan et al. (2021) Improving Students' Writing Skills by Using Pictures and Picture Method at Junior High School. Found, researchers conducted research by improving functional text by using qualitative and descriptive techniques. Researchers made observations at SMP 21 MEDAN. The researchers found some problems students had related to the success of student writing skills. Based on the

observation at SMP 21 Simalingkar B in Medan, the researcher found several problems there are problems related to self-student, self-teacher and teaching process. Based on the observation at SMP 21 Simalingkar B in Medan, there were many students who have problems in writing because they don't have any idea how to express themselves, there was no motivation, and most of the students rely on quantitative measurement tools. This research carried out in stages, using natural tests and interviewed with students to explored their challenges in learning writing skills within a functional text framework. The goal was to provide valuable insight for readers and educators in developing writing learning materials that address the specific difficulties students face. Ultimately, the goal was to cultivated students who are excellent in the ability to write in functional text contexts. However, it can be accepted that many of them face various difficulties in creating functional documents accurately and precisely. From a lack of understanding of text structure to limited vocabulary, these challenges can impact students' ability to convey messages effectively. Therefore, this qualitative research aimed to dig deeper into the difficulties students faced when writing functional texts and provided effective solutions for better understanding and improving their writing skills. In summary, writing skills were very important for students to learn English, and effective teaching strategies were needed to improved writing skills.

1.2   Research Problem

Based on the research background, the problem of this research is:

'What are students' difficulties in writing functional text?'.

1.3   Research Focus

The main focus of this study is to identify and understand the difficulties of junior high school students when composing written assignments. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to identify and investigate the particular difficulties that students faced while creating writing functional text. These obstacles included issues with writing structure organization, proficiency with proper language usage and style, and difficulties in creating topic ideas for practical writing assignments.

This research employed qualitative observational methods to investigate how students navigate challenges in writing functional texts. By gathering detailed data, the researchers aimed to enhance their understanding of the contextual factors influencing student difficulties. The study utilized qualitative naturalistic observation techniques, which aim to comprehend behaviors, interactions, and phenomena in their authentic contexts without external interference. The research progressed through stages, involving naturalistic assessments and student interviews to delve into their struggles with developing writing skills specific to functional texts.

1.4   Research Objective

The research aimed to identify the difficulties that students experience when writing functional texts.

1.5 Significance of the Research

a. The theoretical significance

The qualitative research was that it allows students to thoroughly comprehend the complexity and nuances of the writing process. Qualitative research allowed academics to investigate students' experiences, attitudes, and behaviors in their natural environment, which might provide insights into the causes and contexts of their challenges in creating functional text. This research focused can assist in identifying the underlying causes of students' challenges, such as their grasp of writing norms, a lack of motivation, or insufficient teacher feedback. Researchers can get students' opinions directly through interviewed or observations in qualitative research.

b. The practical significance

The qualitative research in this context is that it can help establish focused interventions and techniques for improving students' writing skills. Understanding students' various challenges while producing functional text allows educators to build more effective instructional approaches and resources to deal with these issues. Thus, it allowed researchers to listen to students' voices, understand their experiences, and see their world from their perspective. By using this method, researchers gained a deeper understanding of the difficulties students experience in writing functional texts. Of course, this will help design more effective teaching methods and appropriate solutions to improve students' writing skills.

1.6   Research Assumptions

      Middle school students were assumed to face various difficulties when writing functional texts, including but not limited to understanding the purpose of the text, text structure, selecting appropriate vocabulary and applying grammatical rules. Students struggle to describe things, places and people accurately due to a lack of ideas. Students weren't interested in learning to write. Some students are uninterested in writing, even if it's a simple descriptive paragraph (Ismayanti & Kholiq., 2020).

      Appropriate teaching strategies can increase students' attention and motivation in functional text-writing activities and make sharing ideas easier. Also, it assumed that functional text-writing skills have a significant impact on students' daily lives. Therefore, it was important to understand and overcome the difficulties they face in this area.

1.7   The Scope of Research

      The scope of the research entitled "The Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Functional Text" includes an in-depth study of the challenges students face when writing functional texts. This highlights the importance of addressing these challenges to improve student's writing skills, particularly in the context of functional texts in the secondary school environment. This research also explores the theoretical framework of writing, writing teaching, and aspects of writing skills, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence students' writing competence. Additionally, this research seeks to explore effective teaching strategies and learning experiences that can contribute to improving students' writing skills,

especially in the context of short functional texts. It is hoped that the findings of this research will provide valuable insights and recommendations for educators and practitioners to improve students' writing skills, overcome identified difficulties and increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

1.8 Definition of Terms

This approach focused on students' difficulties, writing text and functional text. Students face difficulties at all stages of the writing process, including the preparation phase, in which they struggle to generate ideas, determine titles, choose establishing words, organize thoughts, and remember important details from memory. Student difficulties are various obstacles or difficulties faced by students in the writing process. Such difficulties may be due to a need for more necessary basic writing skills. This is especially true for those learning English as a foreign language. Writing is an important part of language learning, where students are taught to write texts that have a purpose and function, skills that involve the ability to compose clear, cohesive, and coherent texts in order to convey messages, information, or ideas effectively. This ability involves several interrelated aspects, including language understanding, grammar, vocabulary, text structure, and critical thinking experienced when writing. Functional text is essential in everyday life because they convey specific information and help individuals in completing various tasks. It serves a specific purpose, such as informing, instructing, or directing others. The functional text also has language features, generic structure, and social function. Language features in functional text use short and clear sentences so they are easy to

understand. It often uses the present tense to describe generally applicable facts or

instructions. Generic Structure includes the sender, opening greetings, the body of the

letter, which consists of several sentences, closing greetings, and a signature.