

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Increasing in numbers, students who are pursuing their studies in universities are required to be able to write any types of writing. They need to write in English not only in their study but also in their future careers. For this reason, they are expected to write in English as well as possible to succeed in their study and to be professional in their future careers as well, especially in this globalization era. However, based on the writer's experience as an EFL teacher, there are some obstacles encountered by the students in the process of writing such as generating ideas, developing ideas, having lack of vocabulary, having inadequate grammar mastery, and organizing ideas. This study focused on two problems which are commonly undergone by the students in the process of writing. The first challenge is generating ideas. Many EFL students still get trouble in generating their ideas. They do not know what to say or how to develop the topics given to them. The second one is organizing their ideas for writing. There are still a large number of EFL students who are not able to organize their ideas coherently and efficiently even though many of them have brilliant ideas to present. These difficulties are commonly undergone by both who are good at grammar and who are not really good at grammar. Therefore, some effective techniques are still needed to overcome these problems. One of the most effective techniques that has been believed to solve these problems is using creative and innovative graphic organizers. The writer is interested in utilizing this technique since it is unique and has been proven to be effective learning tools by many teachers worldwide.

According to Hall and Strangman (2003), a graphic organizer is a visual and graphic display that depicts the relationships between facts, terms, and/or ideas within a learning task.

Hall and Strangman (2003) also noted that Graphic organizers are also sometimes referred to as knowledge maps, concept maps, story maps, cognitive organizers, advance organizers, or concept diagrams. Graphic Organizers have their roots in David Ausebel's theory and research on advance organizers. According to Ausebelin Baxendell (2003), a learner's existing knowledge that is known as cognitive structure, greatly influences the student learning. When the cognitive structure expands by incorporating new information, learning occurs. To facilitate this process, graphic organizers provide students with the framework for relating existing knowledge to the new information learned. According to Novak (1980), advance organizers would include analogy, metaphor, model or capsule of knowledge as well as concept maps.

Graphic Organizers have been utilized by both teachers and students to assist the teaching and learning processes. There have been various studies on students with and without learning disabilities from all grade levels and a variety of subjects concerning the use of graphic organizers. Graphic Organizers can effectively facilitate learning for most students in writing, reading comprehension, and content-area subjects across a wide range of ages, grades, and learning abilities. (Ellis and Howard, 2007).

Baxendell (2003) noted that graphic organizers had been proven to be effective tools, especially for students with special needs. Based on his experience of teaching inclusive classes by using graphic organizers, he concluded that these tools had served as effective devices that helped his students to comprehend difficult academic standards and to organize information for all subjects. He also suggested that graphic organizers had to be used coherently, consistently, and creatively. To maintain coherence and consistency, he focused on four of the most graphic organizers (cause and effect diagrams, sequence charts, main idea – and - detail charts, and compare-contrast diagrams) in his classes.

This study is aimed at improving the Management Students' expository writing performance on the traits of content and organization by using graphic organizers for graphic organizers have been believed to be effective to assist the students in the process of writing. Furthermore, many of them still struggle to generate and organize their ideas in writing even though they have learnt writing since they were in high schools. Schumaker and Deshler (2003) suggested that Graphic Organizers may assist the students who have difficulty with the cognitive processes of planning and organizing the topic for writing. Graphic Organizers can be effective cognitive tools to help the students generate and organize their ideas in the process of writing. Also, there have been some investigations on the effects of graphic organizers on students' writing conducted by some different researchers. Lee (2007) studied that there are theoretical underpinnings to show that graphic organizers could be useful revising tools in the pre-writing stage and guidelines on the effective use of graphic organizers as revision tools. Sharrock (2008) investigated the effects of graphic organizers on the third grade students' writing in her own class. She investigated whether there would be any significant difference in scores between students' writing with the use of graphic organizers and students' writing without the use of graphic organizers. Thomas (2008) found that the use of graphic organizers in the pre-writing stage could improve the 8th graders' writing, especially the organization of the essays. Delrose (2011) explored the efficacy of graphic organizers as a strategy to facilitate higher complexity of syntactic and discourse structures in sentence and story formation. Price and Harkins (2011) examined two strategies for improving student writing: the use of a book response analysis information handout compared to the use of a two-page graphic organizer. The results showed that significant improvement within student book-response writing due to the use of a teacher-adapted graphic organizer.

The above mentioned studies were conducted in the countries where English is spoken as native language while this study was carried out in Indonesia where English is spoken as foreign language. The previous studies also indicated that students whose native language is English still get a lot of difficulties in writing. Moreover, in the environment where English is taught as a foreign language, the students commonly face more obstacles in writing. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to enhance the Management students' expository writing performance, especially on the traits of content and organization in the EFL environment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In their cognitive processes of writing, there are two major problems encountered by the Business Faculty students of Widya Mandala Catholic University in Business English course. The first issue is generating ideas. Many of them still struggle in developing their ideas. Even, there are still a number of students who are tempted to commit plagiarism by using their gadgets like smartphones and laptops to browse the internet in the classrooms. It may happen since they do not know how to generate ideas and what to write. The second problem is organizing ideas. Those who are good at grammar and who are not really good at grammar may face this problem. They still get difficulty to organize their ideas coherently although many of them have marvelous ideas to share. Due to those reasons, this study is aimed at enhancing their writing performance on the traits of content as well as organization. Thus, it was designed to address the following research question:

How could graphic organizers improve the students' expository writing?

1. Did the use of graphic organizers improve the students' expository writing performance on the trait of content?

2. Did the use of graphic organizers improve the students' expository writing performance on the trait of organization?

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

Derived directly from the problems mentioned, this study mainly aimed at improving the students' expository writing performance on the traits of content and organization in Business Faculty of Widya Mandala Catholic University. This study, particularly also investigated whether the use of graphic organizers would be effective to help the students to generate and organize their ideas as well.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on cognitive theories which support the use of graphic organizers in helping students process and retain information. Schema theory and dual coding theory provide the basis for explaining the characteristics of graphic organizers that support the learning process.

Based on schema theory, memory is composed of many schemas (schemata). There are three major types of schemata, namely, linguistic schemata, formal schemata and content schemata (Xiou-Hui & Wu Jun, 2007). Formal schemata and content schemata are closely related to the use of graphic organizer for writing. Formal schemata are the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts(Xiou-Hui & Wu Jun, 2007). Related to formal schemata, Graphic Organizers are also known as schemata tools that help organize information.Xiou-Hui and Wu Jun (2007) also noted thatContent schemata refer to the background knowledge of the content area of a text, or the topic a text talks about. Thus, based on schema theory, graphic organizers may also help to generate ideas by activating prior knowledge in writing. According to Parrish (2006), schema theory suggests that prior knowledge

shapes our expectation and understanding about what we hear; the closer our schema to the content of what we hear and read, the easier it will be for us to understand. Graphic organizer has its root on David Ausubel's advance organizer. A learner's existing knowledge that is known as cognitive structure greatly influences the student's learning and advance organizers can be effective tools to activate students' schemata so that more conscious clustering of new information with existing ideas could take place. (Ausubel, Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001). The advance organizer serves to provide additional scaffolding for the stable incorporation and retention of the more detailed and differentiated material (Ausubel, Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001). According to Novak in Oloyede (2011), an advance organizer is a kind of cognitive bridge which teachers use to help learners make a link between what they know and what is to be learnt. Graphic organizers make it easier to link new information to existing knowledge and help students build the schema they need to understand new concepts (Guastello, Beasley, & Sinatra, 2000). If prior knowledge is activated, the schema will be able to provide a framework to which new information can be attached and learning and comprehension will be improved (Wills, 2005).

Paivio in Ellis (2005) published a dual coding that assumes that memory consists of two separate but interrelated systems for processing information. One system is specialized in processing non-verbal imagery and the other is specialized in dealing with language. While each system can be activated independently, there are connections between the systems that allow for the dual coding of information. The visual system specializes in processing and storing images. The processed and stored images are termed imagens. The use of graphic organizers also helps students generate linguistic representations. As visual tools, graphic organizers help students process and remember content by facilitating the development of imagens, while as a linguistic

tool, text based graphic organizers also facilitate the development of logogens thereby dual coding the information, (Ellis, 2005).

1.5The Significance of the Study

Practically, this study is expected to give a somewhat clear picture about the use of graphic organizers to enhance the EFL Freshmen's writing performance on the traits of content and organization.

Theoretically, the findings are expected to yield some contribution to ELT studies and offer some ideas for both EFL teachers and students for effective writing.

1.6 The Assumptions

The study was conducted based on the following assumption:

- a. The students already learnt some aspects of grammar and sentence structure to the point of being able to write a sentence in English. The aspects of grammar are: basic sentence pattern, basic parts of speech, simple present tense and simple past tense.
- b. The students possessed a certain level of vocabulary storage, such as the list of words for basic appearances (adjectives), basic activities (verbs), basic time signal and name of places (adverbs), and basic nouns (e.g. house, bridge, school, building, etc.).
- c. Graphic organizers can be learnt by the students and each type of composition has its own organization.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study took place in the state where students were accomplishing the tasks given (process). The participants are the students taking Business English class at Widya Mandala Catholic University in Surabaya. They were still in the basic level of writing for many of them still have low English proficiency. There are many kinds of essays. However, this study only focused on one type of essay. The type of the students' essay that was used and analyzed is expository essay. There are several traits of writing like content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic. However, this study also only focused on the traits of content and organization. Since writing can cover different levels of skill, this study was delimited to writing for basic level based on the syllabus for the Business Faculty students of Widya Mandala Catholic University.

The study itself is delimited to investigating the effectiveness of graphic organizers to enhance the students' writing performance in terms of generating and organizing idea.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

- a. **Graphic** refers to a vivid description that evokes lifelike images within the mind and can be expressed to various drawings.
- b. **Organizer** refers to putting together into an orderly, functional, structured whole as well as arranging in a coherent form; systematize in a desired pattern or structure.
- c. **Graphic Organizers** refer to schemata tools and visual displays that help arrange information and show the relationship between ideas or concepts. As written and spatial arrangements of information, the graphic organizers prove to be communication tools among learners. Information may be viewed as a meaningful whole and interrelationships among ideas.

- d. **Expository Writing** refers to a piece of writing that gives information, explains something, clarifies a process or defines a concept.
- e. **Writing Content** reflects the purpose, the theme, the primary content, the main point, or the main story line of the piece, together with the documented support, elaboration, anecdotes, images, or carefully selected details that builds understanding or holds a reader's attention.
- f. **Writing Organization** is how ideas are presented in written form. Typically, organization refers to the larger parts of a piece of writing, although it also refers to how paragraphs and sentences are written. The flow of a piece of writing affects how readers interpret ideas.
- g. **Writing Performance** refers to how the students present their ideas in written presentation based on the criteria or traits such us content, organization, grammar, and mechanic.
- h. **EFL Learners** refer to learners who learn English in non-English speaking countries where English is taught as a foreign language.
- i. **Management Students** refer to students who major in management in Business faculty.