

CHAPTER I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

1.1 The Background of the Study

Ideally, the main objective of language learning is to enable the students to achieve the four language skills, namely listening with understanding, reading, speaking and writing. By achieving the four language skills, the students can be considered to really acquire the language in the real sense. They can use the language both passively and actively, either in the oral or written forms.

In the teaching-learning of English, each of these four skills has its own objectives which can be found in the respective syllabus. In our SMAs, these objectives are stated in the GBPP of the English teaching issued in 1984. Among these skills, the writing skill and its objectives are the focus of this thesis.

To most of our Indonesian SMA students, writing is considered to be the most difficult and the most boring skill offered to them. On the otherhand, writing is, in fact, a good means to practice language in use. Writing forces students to have enough vocabulary to communicate concisely and properly; it forces them to master sentence

structures to state their thoughts clearly and logically: it also forces them to learn how to arrange their ideas coherently, logically and convincingly into paragraphs.¹ The close relationship between writing and thinking makes writing a valuable part of any language course.²

Writing is needed by people not only at school but also in daily activities, such as corresponding with family members and friends, writing reports, taking notes, writing down feelings and so on. Therefore, to Taylor,³ the sooner teachers teach writing, the sooner students will be writing well.

Concerning with this. G.G. Pfister claims that:

"The students should soon be assigned to use writing; otherwise, they will get serious difficulty in using the language for production purposes. The difficulty will arise from lack of adequate practice, that is exercise in expressing meaning or idea one has in mind."⁴

In fact, the writing skill requires training and practices. As such, in the teaching of writing students

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Ronald V. White, "Approaches to Writing", *Guidelines*, No. 6, December 1981, p.10.

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Anna Raimes, *Technique in Teaching Writing*, Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, 1983, p.3.

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Barry P. Taylor, "Teaching Composition to Low Level ESL Students", *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 3, September 1976, p.311.

4

G. G. Pfister, "Writing Assignments - Valid Reinforcers of Speaking and Understanding", *Foreign Language Annals*, Vol. VII, No. 4, May 1974, p.424.

have to be given practices and be trained by teachers gradually and patiently, because learning to write takes long practice.⁵

Actually, at SMA level, in the real sense, the writing skill is not how to write a composition, but rather, how to use of the language that has been learnt or acquired to write grammatically meaningful sentences which are then developed into various simple forms of paragraphs or compositions. This is stated in the GBPP of 1984 as follows:

"Mengajarkan kemampuan ala kadarnya membuat kalimat-kalimat yang baik dan benar, dan merakitnya menjadi paragraf dan berbagai wacana yang sederhana."⁶

In a reality, however, this goal has not been fully achieved. Most of the teachers tend to teach reading as the main goal, besides structure and vocabulary. Writing is the most neglected skill, for to some teachers the teaching of composition is a harder work than the teaching of other skills in the target language; the teaching of composition is troublesome especially in terms of both

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Mary S. Lawrence, *Writing as a Thinking Process*, The University of Michigan, 1972, p.3.

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Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, *Kurikulum Sekolah Menengah Umum Tingkat Atas (SMA). Garis-garis Besar Program Pengajaran (GBPP)*, Bidang Studi Bahasa Inggris, Jakarta, 1987, p.iv.

giving guidance to the students and scoring their compositions.

Even if the teacher teach writing, most of the time, they just ask the students to fill the blanks with the words given, to change the words in brackets, or to copy a paragraph by changing the names of the characters, etc. Only a few ask their students to end or to begin a given paragraph in their own words, to write a short passage with the given title, to summarize or to rewrite a paragraph by using their own words.⁷ And almost all SMA students' reference books, for instance Bahasa Inggris untuk SMA 'e',⁸ Active English for SMA,⁹ Kompetensi Komunikatif Bahasa Inggris,¹⁰ present such types of exercises that they most likely make students frustrated because with all these practices, many SMA students have difficulties in putting their sentences down on paper whenever they begin to write. Therefore, the teachers have to know how to overcome the writing problems faced by the

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Ann Raimes, *op.cit.*, p.32.

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Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Bahasa Inggris Untuk SMA 'e'*, Balai Pustaka, Jakarta, 1988.

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Dady Mulyo, et.al., *Active English for SMA*, Bina Pustaka Tama, Surabaya, 1987.

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Titik Isdiarti, et.al., *Kompetensi Komunikatif Bahasa Inggris*, PT. Intan Pariwara, Klaten, 1990.

students and how to present writing so that the skill can be enjoyable.

Writing is indeed, a skill in which the students put ideas and things they have learnt, such as grammatical and lexical items on paper in such a way as to communicate themselves to their readers effectively.¹¹ Thus, by understanding and acquiring the skills of making grammatically meaningful English sentences, the students will be able to write simple paragraphs or compositions. In brief, a composition must be expressed in grammatically meaningful sentences; otherwise, there will be no composition et al.

Considering all these, the writer intends to present ideas about how to teach grammatically meaningful English sentence as a starting point in teaching composition to SMA students so that they will be able to write meaningful English compositions later on.

1.2 The Statement of the Problems

In line with the background, the main problem dealt with in this thesis is that SMA students are not trained to write grammatically meaningful English sentences as a starting point to writing simple compositions. To solve

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Leonard A. Podis and Joanne M. Podis, *Writing Invention Form And Style*, Scott, Foreman and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1984, p.196.

this problem, the research questions to be answered in this thesis were formulated as follows:

1. What is the position of compositions in SMA, actually?
2. What is the nature of a grammatically meaningful English sentence in terms of composition?
3. Why must we teach SMA students to write grammatically meaningful English sentences?
4. How to teach SMA students to build grammatically meaningful English sentences?

1.3 The Objectives of the Thesis

Based on the importance of teaching composition at the SMA level and in line with the research questions presented in the previous section, this thesis was written with the following formulated objectives:

1. to describe the position of composition in the English syllabus of SMA.
2. to describe the nature of a grammatically meaningful English sentence and to exemplify it in English paragraphs or compositions.
3. to describe some advantages for teaching SMA students to write grammatically meaningful English sentences.
4. to present some ideas and procedures of teaching SMA students to write grammatically meaningful English sentences.

1.4 The Significance of the Thesis

It is expected that the ideas presented in this thesis will be of some help for English teachers, especially the SMA English teachers in their efforts to help their students write grammatically meaningful English sentences.

1.5 The Scope and the Limitation

There are many factors that most SMA students can not write grammatically meaningful English sentences in their compositions. These factors are among others: the students' lack of practice in English sentence making, especially the basic or simple sentences; they lack practice in English sentence arrangement into simple paragraphs or compositions. However, in this paper, the writer will only discuss the procedures used in helping SMA students write grammatically meaningful English sentences. Consequently, the examples of sentences chosen and used will also be the ones which are suitable to the ability of SMA students.

There are two major steps used in teaching the students to write grammatically meaningful English sentences:

1. the first step is learning how to make simple English sentences because most sentences, however complex, are

reducible to basic or simple sentences, and students can never hope to produce satisfactory texts without first mastering the basic sentences.

2. the second step is learning how to arrange them into a paragraph or composition because sentence arrangement is a part of organizational structure of a paragraph or composition.¹²

It is expected that all the ideas presented here can be of some help to the teachers of English, especially SMA English teachers to help their students write grammatically meaningful English sentences.

1.6 The Definition of the Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary to give the definitions of the following key terms used in this thesis.

Sentence, as it is used in this thesis, is a group of related words that express a complete and meaningful thought, either a statement, a question, a command, or an exclamation.¹³ To Podis,¹⁴ a sentence is grammatically

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Larry Walters, "A Theoretical Model for Teaching Students to Write", *English Teaching Forum*, Vol. XXI, No.3, July 1983, p.18.

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Joan G. Roloff and Virginia Brosseit, *Sentences*, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1979.

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Leonard A. Podis and Joanne M. Podis, *op.cit.*, p.448.

complete statement containing at least one independent clause called the main clause of the sentence. Each main clause is a group of related words containing a subject (S) and a predicate (P). Thus, a sentence bears a special relationship to the predicate and cannot be identified except in relation to the predicate. For instance, if the verb is an action verb, the subject performs the action. If the verb is in the passive voice, the subject receives the action.

Sentence building is sentence making practices used to help students gain both the background knowledge of English language and the practical manipulative experience that will lead them to the writing of effective sentences or of free written expression.¹⁵ Sentence building, used in this thesis, is an activity done to train the students arrange words into correct English sentences; it must undergo repeated practice until it becomes an automatic habit.

Paragraph is a miniature of essay which consists of a series of sentences all pertaining closely to one central idea.¹⁶

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Roloff and Brosseit, *op.cit.*, p.xi.

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Hulon Willis, *Structure Style Usage*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., New York, 1964, p.50.

Composition is the due arrangement of words into sentences and paragraphs in large units so that thought may be communicated to others.¹⁷ According to Laurer and his friends,¹⁸ composition is a satisfyingly permanent record of thought and feeling; the outcome is visible language. Composition, in this thesis, is how the students can make use of the language being learnt to write grammatically meaningful English sentences, simple paragraphs or compositions with assistance from the teachers.

1.7 The Organization of the Thesis

The writer arranges the discussion in six chapters:

Chapter I

This chapter is concerned with the introduction. It discusses the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the thesis, the significance of the thesis, the scope and the limitation, and the definition of the key terms.

Chapter II

This chapter deals with the theories of composition

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Clarence A. Brown and Robert Zoellner, *The Strategy of Composition: A Rhetoric with Readings*. The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1968, p.iii.

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Janice M. Laurer, et.al., *Four Worlds of Writing*. Harper and Row, New York, 1981, p.1.

in the English curriculum of SMA which are divided into two sections, namely English teaching in SMAs and English writing teaching in SMAs.

Chapter III

This chapter contains the theories of grammatically meaningful English sentences in composition which are divided into two sections, namely the nature of English composition in general and grammatically meaningful English sentences.

Chapter IV

This chapter contains some advantages for teaching SMA students to write grammatically meaningful English sentences.

Chapter V

This chapter contains the procedures in teaching grammatically meaningful English sentences and evaluation.

Chapter VI

This chapter consists of the conclusion of what has been presented in the previous chapters and some suggestions related to the topic.