

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents (1) Background, (2) Problem of Study, (3) Objective of Study, and (4) Significance of Study.

1.1 Background

English is an international language which has been received by countries all over the world. In Indonesia, English is considered as the primary foreign language which is considered more important than other foreign languages. This point is well clarified by (Lauder, 2008, p. 9-20), he explains that the expanding or extending circle refers to nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language, but which were not colonized by the countries of inner circle, and which have not given English any special official status. In these countries, English is taught as a foreign language. Indonesia belongs to this group.

In the process of teaching and learning English, students are required to master four basic skills; they are speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Writing skill is one of essential elements in English language to be mastered thoroughly. Peter Watkins (2004) analysed that the importance of teaching writing and lists the essential reasons why learners may need to learn how to write are, first, writing is an important means of communication, and therefore an important skill to master. Second, writing can consolidate other language learning (vocabulary, grammar). Third, writing is a relatively straightforward way of practising and using language outside the classroom. Fourth, a writing phase in a lesson can provide a change of pace. Fifth, learning to write may fulfil professional needs.

Learners may have to write business letters, emails or reports in English. Sixth, many exams demand writing skills.

The latest EFL issue has dealt with learners' difficulty in mastering English, particularly in writing skills development which requires cognitive and physical activities to produce and combine letters as well as certain aspects of linguistics involving words, spellings, and sentence structures (Stoddard and Waters, 1998). In addition, EFL learners have to struggle with acquisition of grammar, syntactic structure, vocabulary, rhetorical structure and idioms of the second language (Nik et al., 2010). In contrast to grammar, vocabulary has long been neglected in teaching. It has always been taught through the other skills whereas grammar has been taught as a separate module, which has ranked vocabulary in an inferior position to grammar. Curricula are full of grammatical rules that are said to improve the learner's language as if teaching a language equals teaching its grammar. Although, the old approaches have tried to teach vocabulary, words have been introduced only in lists which proved to be useless. Michael Lewis (2000) has recently raised the importance of teaching vocabulary who questioned "the grammar-vocabulary dichotomy" and advocated a lexical approach which is mainly interested in teaching collocations or "common word combination"(p. 127). The latter is a broader term that does not include only collocations but also idioms, phrasal verbs, fixed phrases and semi-fixed ones.

According to Michael Lewis (2000), we believe that teaching collocations would raise students' proficiency in language learning. Furthermore, we focus on the direct influence of teaching collocations on the field of foreign language writing where the students have a problem of combining words together. Even though the native speaker can also have a problem in associating words, foreign

language students struggle more with making their writing sound natural. This may be due to their ignorance of collocations and the interference of the mother tongue or even the second language. Thus, we believe that by mastering on collocation, students can raise their proficiency in writing better since collocations constitute the most important part of vocabulary.

Even though writing is a difficult skill learners have to master, both native and non-native speakers may lack the competence necessary to make them good writers because learners could not express their ideas effectively without this competence. Frith, J (2009) argued that:

“It is through the mastery of writing that the individual comes to be fully effective in intellectual organization, not only in the management of everyday affairs, but also in the expression of ideas and arguments” (p. 1).

Thus, foreign language learners are struggling to write correctly since they face many obstacles toward a correct English composition. Writing necessitates, at least, a basic knowledge of grammar, lexis and vocabulary, and the ability to express ideas in an appropriate English language unaffected by the mother tongue.

What the learners ought to reach in writing is *proficiency*, which is used by some writers to replace “competency” or what to “do with the language”. According to Nunan (1988) “proficiency is “the ability to perform real world tasks with a pre-specified degree of skill (p. 34). On the other hand, Michael Lewis (2000) considered proficiency as a term that refers to three characteristics: *accuracy, fluency* and *complexity*” (p. 174).

Firstly, we have to consider *accuracy versus fluency*; under the communicative approach accuracy is not the main interest as far as it does not hinder the communication of meaning. What is aimed at is not the form but rather the meaning. The communicative approach does favour fluency, whereas the audio-lingual and grammar translation approaches favour accuracy. Hence, considering the 'accuracy/fluency' question from the view point of teaching approaches and methodologies is somewhat problematic. Thus, the teacher would better encourage the learner's fluency first, then accuracy would follow at the end of the writing process (Michael Lewis, 2000, p. 175)

Secondly, "*complexity*" is, the improvement of students' writing especially at advanced levels. It indicates "the writer's ability to construct noun phrases which are high in informational content". He gives the example of noun phrases joined by *of*, for instance *nature of time, a construction of our minds....etc.* He further comments that noun phrases are neglected in contrast to verb phrases that are the focus of traditional grammar (Michael Lewis, 2000, p. 176).

As a result, the accuracy / fluency dichotomy has to be replaced with an endeavour to direct our students towards complexity of the language. This may lead to both fluency and accuracy. Hence, proficiency in foreign language writing will increase to a degree that it could challenge natives' proficiency especially if students are taught the most common collocations that improve their writing style and make it more natural.

Besides that, according to Neville (1988) "students are expected to learn how to be good writers. If they can't write correctly and logically using

appropriate language and style, life will be difficult for them not only at school but in adult life, too”. Based on their arguments, it seems common that many learners particularly those of foreign language learners have some degrees of difficulties in writing. Therefore, some efforts need to be done in order to maintain or improve the students’ writing skill.

Nunan (2003, p. 88) said writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader. So, the students need to master writing skill because it can be used to express the students’ ideas as well as feelings and communications with others.

In addition, writing is a skill, which is not only helpful in writing to English, but also useful to improve other considerably. “In English learning classroom, the teacher aims at developing four skills of his/her the learner’ ability to understand to speak, to read and to write. The ability to write occupies the last place in this order, but it does not mean that it is least important. Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man”, said Bacon. “It is an important tool, which enables man to communicate with others people in many ways” (Rita Rani Mandal, 2009). For students, good at writing will bring many benefits for them. Firstly, writing is a good way to help develop their ability of using vocabulary and grammar, increasing the ability of using language. Secondly, writing is an essential tool to support other skills. If a student has good writing ability, they can speak and read the text more effectively. Thirdly, writing is a way to approach modern information technology as well as the human

knowledge. Otherwise, it is necessary to master writing skill because it can help people have a well prepared when finding a job or attend English courses. With those benefits, writing is really very important to every student.

Brown (2001) stated that learning writing is just like learning to swim. Learning to swim can only be practiced if there is a body of water available and usually only if someone teaches too. People learn writing if they are member of a literate society and usually only if someone teaches too. If someone wants to be able to swim, he cannot just master the theories to swim, but he had to get into the water to practice and apply the theories on ourselves. Same as writing, if someone wants to make a good writing, he cannot just focus on the theories, but instead he must plunge into the real writing world where he would practically involved in writing (p. 334).

In fact, writing skill of Indonesian people is good enough. It can be said because students of Indonesia have a good motivation in studying of writing. Dornyei (1994) stated some conceivable factors can ensure the students' success in their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in writing classrooms. One can be described to the students' motivation in learning their EFL writing since motivation plainly becomes one of primary determinants for students' learning achievement and it is regarded as a main factor that influences the success of students' foreign language learning (Ellis, 1994 & McDonough, 1983). Besides that Harmer and Reid (2007) stated that motivation is a primary factor for one's successful learning and "most language teachers believe that motivation is a key factor for success in language learning". With similar views, motivation is also

believed to be “a predictor of language-learning success” (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 349). Thus, in the context of EFL writing, any attempts to find out insight into what motivates students to write become an essential issue to consider by teachers (Tran, 2007).

English First-English Proficiency Index (EPI, 2015) reported average level of English language skill in some countries, and it is reported that English writing skill in Indonesia is in the rank of 32 from 70 participating countries. Based on EF EPI, Indonesia is in medium level (52,91) (Okezone, 2015). It means that the quality of English writing skill in Indonesia has to be improved. In addition, based on the *Surat Dirjen Dikti No. 152/E/T/2012*, to pass the education. In Indonesia, university students, including undergraduate EFL students, must publish their paper. Unfortunately, the position of publication of Indonesia in international level is still low, at rank 52. Compared to Malaysia and Singapore, Indonesia is left behind, where Malaysia is at rank 23 and Singapore is at 33. (Scimago, 2014)

In the scope of writing skill, there are numbers of components learned to produce good qualified writing. One of important things to be done is to combine the word into a good sentence therefore it is easy and natural to read. The study about combining the words is called collocation. According to McCarthy and O’Dell (2005) collocation is a pair or group of words that are often used together. Collocation will help to write English in a more accurate and natural (p. 6). We will probably understand the utterance “there was very hard rain this morning” (but we feel it sounds unnatural. Please check in this sentence “there was very heavy rain in this morning”. It is very different about “hard rain” and “heavy

rains” since “hard” is not collocated by “rain” and “heavy” is collocated by “rain” thus it is natural (McCarthy & O’Dell, 2008, p. 4).

Considering the influence of native culture of where English language is exist, collocation is regarded as a more complicated topic to be mastered. The reason is to predict to combine of words have collocation or not and it necessary a skill and to accustomed. McCarthy and O’dell (2008) stated that there are some types of collocation. there are adjective and nouns, noun and verbs, noun and noun, verb and expression with prepositions, verb and adverbs, adverb and adjectives (p. 10). All of them facilitate us to combine the word as a collocation.

Knowing the meaning of a word not only requires knowing its dictionary definition; one must also know the type of words with which it is often associated. Collocations, either fixed or more flexible, are the result of many years of habitual use by fluent speakers of the English" (Prodromou, 2003). It is believed that automation of collocations helps native speakers to express themselves fluently since it provides 'chunks' of English that are ready to use.

In relation to the mastery of English collocation, the students whose language are not English should prioritize to learn it as it is a main part of the type of vocabulary. The aim of understanding English collocation is to increase learners’ speaking and writing proficiencies well. Therefore, the EFL learners are expected to pay close attention to the mastery of the collocation along with the mastery of vocabulary. In addition, collocation is already fixed or very strong to present the meaning of the expression used by the speakers, for instance, *take a picture/photo* where no word other than *take* which collocates with *picture/photo*.

Furthermore, collocation provides a similar meaning to another word such as, *keep to* is similar with *stick to*. The ability to pair a group of words into the right position makes someone's language different from the native speakers'.

It can be said, producing collocations in writing poses particular difficulties. To enhance EFL learners' writing competence. English teachers have been making significant efforts, spending a great deal of time devoting themselves to correcting students' writing and attempting to identify the difficult areas in students' English compositions. Despite this effort, the same errors continue to occur. In fact, as Bahn and Eldaw (1993) stated, it is usually the case that the majority of EFL learners have different problems in their oral and written production. According to Hill (2000), "Students with good ideas often lose marks because they don't know the four or five most important collocations of a key word that is central to what they are writing about". As a result, longer, wordier ways of defining or discussing the issue increase the chance of further errors. These problems are due to inadequate knowledge about the "companies that words keep." Lexical and grammatical phrases are both numerous and functionally important in written texts. Despite this, L2 learners often find their use problematic, typically overusing a limited number of well-known phrases, while at the same time lacking a diverse enough phrasal repertoire to employ lexical phrases in a native-like manner. Hill (2001) commented that "within the mental lexicon, collocation is the most powerful force in the creation and comprehension of all naturally occurring text" (p. 49). Moreover, collocation knowledge helps learners to create more native-like sentences (Nation, 2001). In

other words, to develop their writing ability, students need to use collocation in their writing.

Based on informal interview, with 50 students of PBI at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang who have taken vocabulary class and all the writing courses, some of them were forgotten about collocation and types in collocation.

However, some students were satisfied with their writing score even though they still had difficulty to write and construct some words become the sentences or paragraphs.

Further, this study is supported by Wakhidatu Sofi (2013) conducted study to find out where there is relationship between students' mastery on collocation and students' writing achievement. The participants were 99 students of the 8th semester students of English department of education faculty of STAIN Salatiga in the academic year of 2012/2013. In her study, the researcher used the random access sampling to get the sample because the class has same homogeneity and quality. In the collocation tests the researcher gives 10 questions and divided by 2 types. That are choosing type consist of 5 questions and matching type with 5 questions. Then the writing achievement test, the writer gives 10 questions too. The type of the test is multiple choices. In this research, the researcher uses the correlation product moment to get the correlation between students' mastery on collocation and their writing achievement. The result of calculating showed that the correlation between students' mastery on collocation and their writing achievement is 0,280, it means that the correlation is positive with level of significance 5%. . This case can be interpreted that the interpretation of r value,

0,280 is existing between 0, 20 – 0, 40. It indicates that there is correlation between students' mastery on collocation and the students' writing achievement, but the correlation is low.

Another research comes from Jeng-yih (Tim) Hsu (2005). He investigated study to find out the use of English lexical collocations and their relation to the online writing of Taiwanese college English majors and non-English majors. Data for the study were collected from 41 English majors and 21 non-English majors at a national university of science and technology in southern Taiwan. Each student was asked to take a 45-minute online English writing test, administered by the web-based writing program, Criterion Version 7.1 (Educational Testing Services) to examine the subjects' use of lexical collocations (i.e., frequency and variety). The test was also used to measure writing fluency of the two student groups. The study findings indicated that: (1) there seemed to be a positive correlation between Taiwanese college EFL learners' frequency of lexical collocations and their online writing scores; and (2) there seemed to be a significantly positive correlation between the subjects' variety of lexical collocations and their online writing scores.

Based on the fact, I am interested to find the correlation between students' collocational knowledge and their writing achievement of the undergraduated students of English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang,

1.2 Problem of Study

The problems to be discussed in this paper were summarized in the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant correlation between mastery of collocation and their writing comprehension achievement of the undergraduate students of English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang?
2. Does students' mastery of collocation influence their writing achievement of the undergraduate student of English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang?

1.3 Objective of Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. to find out if there is any significant correlation between the students' mastery of collocation and their writing achievement of the undergraduate students of English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang.
2. to know if students' mastery of collocation significant influences to their writing achievement of the undergraduate students of English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang.

1.4 Significance of Study

I hope this research can contribute to the theories of collocational knowledge, the theories of writing and the relation to the language learning because the collocation is included as a part of vocabulary subject of the syllabus in language learning, especially in English for foreign language students. This

research also presents the description between the collocational knowledge and writing achievement of undergraduate EFL students of English education study program in UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Moreover, by learning collocation and writing, it may help learners to be aware of the role and significance of collocation to improve their writing.

This research hopefully can be beneficial for lecturers, especially those who teach vocabulary and writing courses. The result of the study can provide the problem and solution on teaching writing and vocabulary activities so that the objectives of the English teaching program especially writing and vocabulary goals can be achieved. The study will direct teachers' attention to focus on collocations, and it will present useful ways for teachers to implicate a better understanding of the nature of English collocations and their effect on writing skill. This research in the future will accord with rising research interests and alternative approaches to investigation. Furthermore, the finding of the study can be used by many others researcher who take another research design. So that they are able to explore and find new method of teaching and learning approach area in educational process.