CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the reason for conducting the research. It deals with several points: an introduction that concerns a background of research, formulation of the problems, purpose of the research, rationale, hypothesis, and previous research.

A. Background of Research

This study aims to improve students' grammar ability through PBL (Problem-Based Learning), especially in writing descriptive text. It is an attempt to know whether the PBL (Problem-Based Learning) method can help the students to improve students' ability to understand the use of grammar in writing descriptive text.

English is an international language used for communication by people around the world. The use of the English language requires several components, one of them is Grammar. Grammar is one of the essential abilities that most English foreign learners have. Grammatical is needed to master all English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Related to this, Brown (2001) argues that grammar competence, as a significant component of communication, has an important position and tenses, considered the most challenging skill for Indonesian students. Thornbury (1999) as cited in Magfirah (2015), Grammar describes the rules for forming sentences, including an account of the meanings these forms convey. According to Harmer (2001), grammar describes how words can arrange. In line with this, Tomakin (2014) as cited in Zuhriyah (2017) states that without learning Grammar, somebody could not master a language because Grammar helps him or her to construct meaningful words or sentences. From the definitions, Grammar is the rule used in word and sentence arrangement so that the meaning conveyed can be understood.

It is a fact that learning grammar is more challenging than we think. It is supported by Ananda (2016) as cited in Afifuddin (2016), who states that when students are asked to write a text, some sentence errors is a grammar problem because learning writing is more challenging than learning to speak a foreign

language for most EFL. Students often have problems writing a text in various forms, including grammatical problems. In Grammar, students usually find problems, such as constructing words into correct sentences (Ahsyar, 2012) as cited in (Putri, 2013). Students' grammatical difficulties are usually caused by confusion in the teaching and learning process and incompatibility of the method used. Other than that, Grammar has many aspects that should be learned. In the first grade of junior high school, students need to learn about simple present tense in writing descriptive text.

Writing is one of the English skills. Writing has some texts, one of the texts is descriptive text. The descriptive text describes things, places, person, etc. The descriptive text has a function to give information to the readers. Furthermore, by reading descriptive text, the readers can know and imagine what the descriptive text means. Related to this, Knapp & Watkins (2005) define a descriptive text as a kind of text that describes a particular thing, person, animal, place, and or event to the readers or hearers used by the writer or speaker. The process of describing a text has some characteristics. Simple present tense becomes one of the characteristics of descriptive text.

The simple present tense is one of the kinds of tense. It is important because simple present tense is usually used in English skills: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. In writing, simple present tense is important, especially in descriptive text. In line with this, Simple present tense is tense denoting an action happening at this time (Krohn, 1971) as cited in (Laela, 2017). The simple present tense is one of the language features of descriptive text. Descriptive text is a type of text with a meaningful linguistics unit to describe persons, things, and places in detail (Sari Sragih & Subakti, 2014) as cited in (Sari, 2020).

Based on the limited observation in SMPN 1 Cikarang Timur shows that the students had difficulties in using Grammar, especially regarding the use of tenses when writing a text. *First,* the students need clarification about learning grammar. *Second,* the students need help in arranging the word into sentences and paragraphs. Moreover, the students felt bored because the teaching and learning method needed to be more appropriate for teaching grammar, especially simple present tense in

writing descriptive text. It makes the learning process monotonous, so the students do not get what the teacher has explained. The problems are based on the results of a short interview with an English teacher at SMPN 1 Cikarang Timur. Besides, the teacher also shows the students' score of students writing text which contains abot tenses. Based on the data, most of the students got low scores. There are the 67% of students who got low scores. It means that the students have difficulties in using tenses when writing a text. Furthermore, to make students motivated and active in learning as well as applying Grammar in real life, an effective method is needed.

To overcome the problems, this research uses the PBL (Problem-Based Learning) method to improve student grammar, especially in teaching the simple present tense. Problem-Based learning is one of the student-centered teaching methods in which the teacher becomes a facilitator. It is supported by Etherington (2011), who states that PBL (Problem-Based Learning) is a student-centered teaching method involving learning by solving obscure but real problems. Meanwhile, based on Doghonadze & Gorgiladze (2008), Problem-Based Learning is a curriculum development and education system that simultaneously develops. It also enhances problem-solving strategies, expertise bases, and skills by placing students in the active role of problem solvers faced with unstructured problems that reflect real-world problems. Problem-Based learning is a method that presents problems so that it stimulates students to learn and be active.

There are several kinds of research regarding the Problem-Based Learning teaching method. Those were Pohan (2019) used Problem-Based Learning to enhance students' grammar ability in passive voice, Zuhriyah (2017) used Problem-Based Learning to improve students' grammar competence in English Education Department students, Sidauruk et al., (2020) used Problem-Based Learning on writing recount text at senior high school, Haryudin & Syhrizal (2018) used Problem-Based Learning jo with Puzzle at English Education Department students, Amalia & Rusfandi (2020) focused on the use of Problem-Based Learning in improving Student' Descriptive Text at Vocational School. Until recently, there has not been research on using Problem-Based Learning to improve students' grammar

ability in writing descriptive text at junior high school. However, this research is different from previous research.

B. Research Questions

The problems in the background are formulated in the following questions:

1. What is students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text before using the Problem-Based Learning method?

2. What is students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text after using the Problem-Based Learning method?

3. How significant is the difference between students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text before and after using the Problem-Based Learning method?

C. Research Purposes

According to the research questions above, the purposes are the following:

1. To find out students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text before using the Problem-Based Learning method.

2. To find out students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text after using the Problem-Based Learning method.

3. To find out the significance of the difference between students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text before and after using the Problem-Based Learning method.

D. Research Significances

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the result is expected to become a source of information about improving students' grammar ability, especially in the simple present tense, when writing a descriptive text using the Problem-Based Learning method. Besides, this research is expected to give information or theory that using Problem-Based Learning can influence students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text. Practically, this research is significant for the following:

1. Students

The result of this research is expected to help students improve their understanding of simple present tense in writing descriptive text by using the PBL method.

2. Teachers

This research could contribute to all teachers solving students' grammar understanding of simple present tense and use it as the best strategy in the teaching and learning process to minimize and maximize their potential in learning English, especially in grammar subjects.

E. Rationale

Grammar is an important aspect of English when people read, write, listen, and speak. Grammar is the rule to combine words and sentences. Related to this, Tuan & Doan (2010) defines Grammar as the rules of arranging and forming words. Therefore, the use of Grammar can help people to communicate effectively. Without Grammar, we would not express and understand the meaning we convey.

In English Grammar, there is simple present tense as a kind of tense. The simple present tense is used to talk about things, actions, or situations that occur in the present time. Simple present tense also usually takes place in speaking and writing activity. In line with this, Calver (1946) states that the present tense is used to show continuity, not repetition. Since mastering simple present tense is pivotal, it is also one of the language features in descriptive text.

Descriptive text is a way to give information by describing an object. The objects that usually describe as a particular thing, animal, person, or other. According to Siregar & Dongoran (2020), descriptive text is a paragraph that is arranged of related sentences in thought and which serves one comment process often used to describe what a person acts, the place looks, and what an object looks like.

Problem-Based learning is one of the student-centered teaching methods. This method assigns students to solve problems related to their materials. This method aims to make students play an active role as problem solvers. On the other side, PBL develops critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills. It is supported by Etherington (2011) who states that Problem-Based Learning is a student-centered teaching method in which the students are responsible for solving the real problems about the materials.

5

Therefore, the teacher is a facilitator who gives a problem to be solved by students by discussing it in groups.

The Problem-Based Learning method is used in this research to overcome students' grammar abilities. It is a method that implicates and solves a particular problem in the teaching and learning process in small or large groups with students' cooperativeness (Brown, 2001). By using the Problem-Based Learning method which the students are faced with some grammar problems, the students will think critically to investigate and solve the problems.

F. Hypothesis

Based on Creswell (2012), hypotheses is prediction or guesses about the result of the relationship between variables in quantitative research made by the researcher. He also states that the hypothesis predicts what the researcher expects to find. According to Tavakoli (2012), the hypothesis is an educated and testable guess or hunch, generally based on prior research or theory, to be subjected to verification or disconfirmation. From those definitions, it can be concluded that hypotheses are temporary theory that needs to be tested.

In this research, the research has two variables. The first variable is *Problem-Based Learning* as variable "X". The second variable is *to improve students' grammar ability in writing descriptive text* as variable *"Y"*. There are two types of hypotheses: the null hypothesis (H_0) and the alternative hypothesis (H_a). From the discussion above, the hypothesis of this research is the following:

1. The null hypothesis (H_0) means there is no effect of using Problem-Based Learning in improving students' grammar ability.
2. The alternative hypothesis (H_a) means there is an effect of using Problem-Based Learning in improving students' grammar ability.

If Problem-Based Learning affects the students' grammar ability, then H_a is accepted, and H_0 is rejected. While, if Problem-Based Learning does not affect the students' grammar ability, then H_a is rejected, and H_0 is accepted.

G. Previous Research

There are five previous kinds of research that relate to this research. The first research was initially conducted by Pohan (2019). He used Problem-Based

Learning as an efficient strategy for enhancing students' grammar ability in passive voice. This research was quantitative and experimental research. Furthermore, this research used a large number of participants. They are the eleventh-grade of SMAN 3 Batam, which consist of class A and class B by choosing with simple random sampling. The data of this research was taken by using pre-test and post-test. The research result shows that Problem-Based Learning enhances students' grammar ability in passive voice. Besides, this research also provides that Problem-Based Learning Strategy can be suggested as one strategy to be implemented in teaching grammar.

The second research is conducted by Zuhriyah (2017). She used PBL to improve students' grammar competence. This research aimed to determine whether or not PBL could improve students' grammar competence. This research was collaborative action research. Meanwhile, Nine students in the fifth semester of the English Education Department of Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHASY) Tenuireng Jombang become the subjects of this research. The data of this research was taken from observation and grammar tests. This research used two cycles with two meetings of each cycle which consisted of four main steps: planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, and reflecting on the action. This research showed improved students' competence with PBL teaching and learning in cycles one and two.

The third research is conducted by Sidauruk et al., (2020). They used PBL on writing recount text. This research aimed to examine whether or not PBL could significantly affect the students' ability to write recount text. This research was quantitative and experimental research. The participants of this research took two classes in the tenth grade of SMK Negeri 2 Permatangsiantar. Meanwhile, this research had an experimental class and a control class. The data of this research is taken from the test, which consisting pre-test and post-test. This research showed that PBL is effective in teaching writing recounts, provided by the significant effect on students' ability to write recount text.

The fourth research was done by Haryudin & Syhrizal (2018), entitled "Teaching English Grammar Using Problem-Based Learning Jo. With Puzzle at

English Education Student of IKIP Siliwangi Bandung". This research was to determine whether the PBL jo with Puzzle media could improve students' grammar mastery. The objectives of this research were 45 students of the English Education Department. This research was action research. Meanwhile, the data got from an interview, grammar test, and questionnaire. This research showed that teaching English grammar using Problem-Based Learning jo with Puzzle to English Education Department students could improve students' grammar mastery. Also, PBL can be applied well in teaching grammar.

The last a research was conducted by Amalia & Rusfandi (2020). She used PBL in teaching descriptive text. This research was to investigate whether the use of PBL has a significant effect on the students' writing of the descriptive text. This research was quantitative and quasi-experimental research. The participants of this research were tenth-grade students at Vocational School in Malang. They consisted of 23 students in tenth-grade of Office Administration 1 as the experimental group and 23 students in the tenth-grade of Office Administration 3 as the control group. The data of this research got from pre-test and post-test. The data showed that PBL would be an effective method to improve students' writing of descriptive text, and also it was effective for teachers in teaching descriptive text.

Based on the previous researches above, they focus on the use PBL in teaching grammar and writing a text generally. Until recently, the research about the using of Problem-Based Learning to improve students' grammar ability especially about simple present tense in writing descriptive text is still rare. Beside, this research is conducted at seventh grade of junior high school. However, this research is different from previous research.