CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of the study. It contains background, research questions, research objectives, significances of the research, rationale, hypothesis, and previous studies.

A. Background

Grammar is an essential component of language. Harmer (2001) defined grammar as the set of rules that describe the structure of a language and control the way that sentences are formed. To be an effective language user, learners should study grammar because grammar skills will help learners to organize words and messages, and make them meaningful. Knowing more about grammar will enable learners to build better sentences, especially in writing. A good knowledge of grammar helps learners to make sentences clear enough to understand. Even, Emery (1978) analogized learning language without grammar like drivers who do not know what to make a car run. It means grammar holds an important place in foreign language learning.

English grammar consists of many terms. One of them is tenses. When English learners hear the word grammar, they directly relate it to the study of tenses. The reason is because tenses are the basic of grammatical study in English (Aminah, 2017). Tenses are important to explain the actions in the story happened. According to Grain (2006), tenses are the tools that English speaker use to express time in their language, so they learn to think likes a native speaker. One

of the English tenses that taught especially in junior high school is past tense. According to Azar in Mega (2017), past tense describes the actions or situations that happen in the past.

In fact, understanding past tense is not easy, especially for Indonesian EFL learners. The learners often make errors in writing composition because they are still influenced by Indonesian sentence structure in making and composing the structure of English sentence in writing paragraph (Nur, Kamaludin, Yoke, & Rajendran, 2015). The learners are usually confused of rules and the used of verb form in past tense. The learners sometimes get bored with teaching-learning process that is employed by the teacher in teaching English tenses. As the result, some of learners have low score on English writing caused by the failure in understanding the rules of past tense.

The previous problems were faced by the EFL learners in one of junior high schools in Cileunyi, Bandung. From the researcher's observation to EFL teacher and learners in the third grade classes, the learners faced difficulty in understanding past tense, especially in writing paragraph. The learners were still confused to make sentences using appropriate verb to indicate past actions and to distinguish between verbs which are included in regular and irregular verbs. The standard of minimal score in English classes at that school for all sections is 75. However, they only had the average score 70 for writing section.

In foreign language acquisition, accurate understanding of the language structures is the key part, so teaching grammar is an essential aspect of foreign

language instructions (Halliday, 1985). According to Mart (2013), one of the effective ways in teaching grammar is through context. Teaching grammar through context positively affects learners' competence to use grammatical structures accurately in language skill. It is always useful for learners to see how language works in sentences or paragraph. Therefore, teaching grammar in context will give learners opportunities to see how grammatical structures function in a sentences. Teaching grammar in context will help learners to acquire nature of the language which will facilitate their understanding of the language.

There are many researchers who have sought to employ different strategies to help learners to apply grammar, especially the rule of English tenses. Surgue and Bruce (2005) studied the impact of teaching grammar through writing context by the students on their performance, and the results were positive. Likewise, Weaver (1996) confirmed the effectiveness of teaching grammar in written context more than when it was taught through traditional methods. By teaching grammar in context teachers have opportunities to extend concepts and include learners in the lesson. Learners become active participants in their learning. It becomes second nature and their grammar and writing will have improved. The results of the study carried out by Mart (2013), Pingle (2013), and Magfirah (2015) showed that teaching grammar in context will help learners to acquire new grammar structures and forms.

In this research, the researcher is interested to implement teaching grammar in writing context to improve learners understanding of past tense using story

completion technique. According to Widiantoro (2013), story completion can improve learners writing skill, especially in constructing grammar into sentences. Saputra (2015) stated that in story completion technique, the learners are demand to make appropriate sentences based on grammatical structure in writing to make a good paragraph. It supported by Retno (2017) that story completion is a simple activity that helps the learners to write with basic grammar, such as practicing past tense.

Furthermore, it is important to investigate more about the effect of story completion technique as the strategy of teaching grammar in writing context toward EFL learners' understanding of past tense particularly in narrative writing. Thus, the researcher wants to conduct a research with the title "**Teaching Grammar in Context: The Effect of Story Completion to Improve EFL Learners Understanding of Past Tense**".

B. Research Questions

From the observation above, the researcher formulates the problems of this research as follows:

1. How is the EFL learners' understanding of past tense after the use of story completion technique?

2. How is the EFL learners' understanding of past tense after the use of explanation technique?

3. How significant the difference between EFL learners' understanding of past tense after the use of story completion and explanation technique?

C. Research Objectives

From the research questions above, this study is aimed at obtaining the following objectives:

1. To find out the EFL learners' understanding of past tense after the use of story completion technique.

2. To find out the EFL learners' understanding of past tense after the use of explanation technique.

3. To find out significant the difference between EFL learners' understanding of past tense after the use of story completion and explanation technique.

D. Significances of the Research

The study is significant at least in two areas includes:

1. Theoretically

The result of this study can increase the wide knowledge of strategy in teaching grammar in context through writing activities by implementing story completion technique for the reader, particularly, the teachers.

2. Practically

This research can provide an alternative strategy in teaching English grammar, especially past tense. The use of story completion can become an

interesting and motivating activity that assists learners in improving their understanding of past tense.

E. Rationale

Grammar teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical forms (Sik, 2015). Teaching grammar in context is an approach which does not only focus on linguistic forms but it insists on the importance of teaching grammar structure as a means to perform communicative functions and how to utilize these forms appropriately (Maulidiyah, 2015). In communication beyond the classroom, grammar and context are often so closely related that appropriate grammatical choices can only be made with reference to the context and purpose of the communication (Mart, 2013). If learners are not given opportunities to explore grammar in context, it will be difficult for them to see how and why alternative forms exist to express different communicative meanings.

Grammar becomes one of the important components in writing. Pearce (2000) stated that writing requires a greater amount of vocabulary and the use of grammatical structure of written language. According to Mulroy (2003), proper grammar helps writers to convey the message in their writing effectively. It means that when learners want to write something, they should know about grammar because it shows the meaning and relation with every single word that become a

sentence. Steward and Vailette (2002: 8) stated that knowing grammar means understanding what the text means.

Tenses are one of grammar terms that learned by all level of learners. Tenses are the linguistic concept; it denotes the form taken by the verb to locate the situation referred to in time to express the temporal relation between the times of the situation (Declerck, 2006: 22). Tenses are important because it can be used as basic foundation to construct a word into a good sequence of sentence. According to Leech (2006: 111), there are two kinds of tenses, namely past tense and present tense. Past tense is used to express events or action in the past and finished in the present time.

Ratnaningsih (2016) stated that one of the best methods of teaching grammar in writing classroom is to use passages or texts that illustrate grammatical functions within their context. According to Permendikbud No. 21 in the Curriculum of 2013, Senior High School learners are expected to be able to write various genre of the text; one of the texts is narrative text. Narrative text is an imaginary story to entertain the readers (Derewiyanka, 2004). In narrative writing, the use of past tense should be concerned by the learners. Teaching the learners about grammar in context shows them how to apply various grammatical concepts. This is commonly believed to improve the learners' ability through written language.

The teacher should find the strategy using appropriate technique to teach learners how to use past tense effectively in order to make EFL learners better in

writing. One of the techniques that can be used is Story Completion. Story Completion activity is an interesting technique that was introduced firstly by Hayriye Kayi (2006). In this technique, the learners in a group are asked to continue the story which is told or write by the previous speaker based on their own creativity and imagination. Before that, the teacher begins the story that must be continued (Clarke, Heyfield, Moller & Tichner, 2017). In this activity, the EFL learners practiced and applied the use of past tense in narrative writing.

From the explanation above, the researcher tried to present teaching strategy expected to give an effect on understanding of past tense in narrative writing to the EFL learners by implementing story completion. The sample of the research used two kinds of variable. The first is story completion as the "X" variable and the second is EFL learners' understanding of past tense as the "Y" variable.

F. Hypothesis

According to Hatch and Farhady (1982), the hypothesis is a tentative statement about the outcome of the result. The hypothesis must experiment and logical-based or explained. The relationship between variables should be stated in a clear term. Furthermore, the hypothesis can make clear questions that will be researched. This research about teaching grammar in context has two variables: the first is story completion, as the "X" variable, and the second is EFL learners' understanding of past tense as "Y" variable. The relation of the research hypothesis is proposed as follow: "TEACHING GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT:

THE EFFECT OF STORY COMPLETION TO IMPROVE EFL LEARNERS'
UNDERSTANDING OF PAST TENSE"

The hypothesis in this study is an alternative hypothesis (Ha) and the null
hypothesis (Ho). The formulated hypothesis is described as follows:

Ha is accepted if there is significant difference in EFL learners'
understanding of past tense after using story completion and explanation
activity.

Ho is rejected if there is no significant difference in EFL learners'
understanding of past tense using story completion and explanation activity.

G. The Previous Studies

There had been a number of researchers conducted some researches related
to the effectiveness of teaching grammar in context and also the use of story
completion in improving understanding of past tense in writing.

First, Pingle (2013) conducted a research entitled "*Teaching Grammar in
Context*". The research was conducted to middle school students when she
became an English 1000 Instructor. The problem of the study was many English
learners had difficulty in acquiring grammar to make paragraphs. The researcher
used grammar teaching in context. The result showed that learners can acquire
grammar and the learners more enthusiast in learning grammar.

Second, Albalawi (2014) conducted a research entitled "*Using Media to
Teach Grammar in Context and UNESCO Values: A Case Study of Two English*

Teachers and Students from Saudi Arabia". The research was conducted to high school and college level in Saudi Arabia. The problem of the study was that many teachers in Saudi Arabia used traditional method in teaching grammar. It made learners not clearly understand the use of grammar. To solve the problem, Albalawi used various media both in classroom and for homework in teaching grammar in context. The result showed that these methods help students to understand the grammar points more effectively. They prefer to be active in the class and these methods create more activity than the traditional methods.

Third, Maulidiyah (2015) conducted a research entitled *"Teaching Grammar in Context: Why and how?"* The research was conducted to English Department students in Antasari State Institute, Banjarmasin. Based on researcher's experience in teaching grammar using the traditional way, many students still had difficulty in acquiring the grammar points. The grammar meetings were not effective and the students did not thoroughly understand the grammar exercises. The students seemed bored and did not enjoy the grammar lessons. The result of the study teaching grammar in context can help students develop their understanding of grammar.

Forth, Magfirah, 2015 conducted the research entitled *"The Teaching Grammar In Context Through Writing Activities"*. The research was conducted to students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri Model Makassar. The problem of the research was the English learners' knowledge of grammar was still low. They were still difficult to find the differences of verb, noun, adjective, and adverb in a

sentence. To solve the problem, the researcher tried to teach grammar in context through writing activities. The research employed descriptive qualitative research method. The result showed that the implementation of teaching grammar in context through writing activities at MTsN Model Makassar were learners do not need to memorize the formula and they were more motivated in learning English because the example given based on learners' daily experience.

Fifth, Widiantoro (2013) conducted a research entitled "*Improving Students' Narrative Writing through Story Completion Activity for the Eighth Grade Students of SMPN 1 Ngemplak"*. The research was conducted because the students faced difficulty in writing, especially the lack of ideas and do some errors in making good sentence. The researcher found the improvement of students' ability in writing narrative text by using Story Completion activity. Story Completion activity could improve 70% students of total students in writing narrative text at grade VIII A of SMPN 1 Ngemplak.

Sixth, other research conducted by Munnisa (2015) entitled "*The Use of Story Completion to Improve Students' Writing Skill in Descriptive Text"*. The research was a classroom action research at the 8th Grade Students of SMPN 39 Semarang in the Academic year of 2015/2016. The problem of writing activity that students faced was in generating ideas and arranging sentences. They were also weak in vocabulary and the use of *to be*. They got low score because there were so many mistakes in their writing. The result of the data showed an improvement of the students' writing by using Story Completion activity. The

students' writing improved in all writing aspects including grammar, content, vocabulary and spelling.

Seventh, Putra (2013) conducted a research "*Using Story Completion to Improve the Ability of The First Year Students of MA Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru In Writing Recount Text*". The research was conducted because many students in MA Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru still faced difficulties in writing especially in writing recount text. Students' difficulties were in terms of finding the ideas both motivating and encouraging. The result of this study was students' writing recount text improved. Moreover, the students' activeness during the Story Completion treatment also improves from one meeting to others. Regarding the effectiveness of the Story Completion on the students' attitudes, the observation sheets and field notes results showed that the students had positive attitudes toward the Story Completion technique.

The last but not least, the research was conducted by Wahyuni (2016) title "*Using Story Completion to Improve Students' Ability in Writing Recount Text*". The research was conducted to X IPS-2 Grades of MA Nurul Ulum Munjungan-Trenggalek Academic Year 2015/2016. The problem to be solved is the students' difficulties in writing recount text and the students' writing score was low. Those problems were found in the preliminary study. The result of this study indicates that the used of Story Completion Strategy can improve students' ability in writing recount text. The improvement was indicated by achievement of student's writing score.

The previous researches showed that teaching grammar in context will help learners to acquire new grammar structures and forms. The learners will use grammar in spoken and written communication effectively if the learners learn grammar in context. However, this research focuses on teaching grammar with context in writing class to EFL learners in junior high school using story completion activity to make the students more interested and motivated during the writing class.