CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significances of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

English is very important to be mastered. By English, people can easily enter international world in every part of societies. It is supported by Trask (1999: 128) that English is beyond dispute the premier international language throughout the world. In everywhere, English is regarded as the first language such as dominant as business, science, technology, communication and popular culture.

Teachers play an important role in helping students master English. Teachers have the role to transfer their knowledge of English to the students and guide them to practice what they have got from the classroom. It is supported by Brindley (1994:3) that teaching English sets out to support teachers in the part of becoming a ‘good’ English teacher – ‘knowing the subject’ by bringing together some of the thinking on key areas in English, and relating that thinking to effective classroom practice.

There are four skills in English that students need to master: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Among the four skills, writing is considered as the most complex skill, because students need to follow several complex processes to
make a good writing. As stated by Byrne, writing is translating thought into language that requires some components like grammar, vocabulary, mechanic, and rhetoric. The combination of these components makes the skill of writing complex (1984). It can be said that writing is a difficult task because it requires special skills in the production. Some of the special skills are in the choice of words, the use of structure, the mechanic, and rhetoric.

Writing is an act or art of forming letters to record ideas which characters and words express or to communicate the ideas by visible signs. It is different from speaking because writing needs a process. Oshima and Hogue (1999:3) explain that:

It is important to note that writing is a process, not a “product”. This means that a piece of writing, whether it is a composition for your English class or a lab report for your chemistry class is never complete; that is, it is always possible to review and revise, and review and revise again.

According to Harmer (2004: 41), teaching writing is the way where a teacher has to give writing direction to the students, stimulate them to get ideas, help students when they lose their words, and always give support. Besides, a teacher has to give reaction to the content and construction, gives suggestion to improve students’ writing, and evaluates their writing by showing where they write well and where they make mistakes.

There are several problems that are faced by students at SMP Muhammadiyah 06 Dau Malang. They have lack of vocabularies and they often forget easily new vocabularies after they get the meaning from dictionary. Even though, they have already learned how to make a good paragraph, they still find difficulties in
constructing the sentences. They find difficulties in choosing and using the appropriate vocabularies.

It is supported by Zulfainah finding (2007) found that first year students faced several problems in writing, especially in writing narrative. The first problem was that the students’ writing was not comprehensible because the content of the composition was not relevant to the topic, the ideas were not clearly stated, the ideas and sentences were not well organized. The second problem was that the students had low motivation and were not interested in doing the tasks. The students were only asked to write sentences and paragraph without being given some clues, so that it was difficult for them to express their ideas into paper.

To solve the problems, some researchers have applied a particular technique to help improve students’ writing. Rizka (2005), for instance, used diaries to guide and encourage students to express their ideas, feelings, or experiences freely and spontaneously.

Another study done by Prilia (2007) introduced brainstorming technique to help improve the students’ ability in writing descriptive paragraph. It has found that students’ ability in writing a descriptive paragraph has improved by implementing brainstorming strategy in the classroom. The students can be active and enthusiastic in learning English.

Sulistiowati (2010) found that the use of picture series is very effective for students in guiding and encouraging students to express their ideas in their writing product. By implementing picture series in the classroom, the students can be active
and enthusiastic in learning English.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that all techniques used by previous researchers were good, but some problem occurred. On technique using diary, for example, the students could not create a good writing because the teachers did not check the students’ writing, such as the content, unity, and coherence. Besides, in Prilia’s (2007) study, using brainstorming made students not focus in creating their writing because the teachers gave too general topics, which led to the students’ lack of coherence and unity in writing. For the use of picture, teachers had to work harder to find appropriate picture series with the material. In addition, not all picture series can be used for expressing ideas in writing.

It is not easy to teach writing due to the problems that may appear. For example, teachers find their students often use incorrect grammar, have lack of vocabulary, and face difficulties to write a good paragraph. It is the task of teachers to solve these problems by selecting suitable techniques in teaching writing. However selecting a suitable technique is not easy because not all techniques are applicable and suitable for their class. One effective technique is by using picture, because pictures provide not only shared experience for students, but also help them to focus on the picture. Besides, pictures provide a lot of varieties of tasks. Therefore, the writer is interested in conducting research by the title “using pictures to improve students’ skill in writing at SMP Muhammadiyah 06 Dau, Malang”.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Based on the background of the study, the statement of problem is
“Can the use of pictures improve students’ skill in writing?”

1.3 Purposes of Study
The aim of conducting this research is to find out whether a technique of using pictures is able to improve students’ skill in writing.

1.4 Significance of Study
The study is expected to be useful for English teachers especially in teaching writing. By using pictures, the teachers can get new ideas about the technique and apply it in teaching writing, particularly in writing descriptive texts. Teachers can also use pictures as the media to teach other texts such as narrative, procedure, recount, and report. Moreover, it can encourage students to write and improve their skill in writing a descriptive text. Hopefully, the use of pictures will make the class more interesting and bring a new atmosphere.

1.5 Scope and Limitation
This research is focused on the study of improving students’ skill in writing using pictures. The limitation of this study is on the use of pictures to improve the skill of writing descriptive texts, because writing descriptive texts is one of the indicators that students in junior high school have to be reached in order to fulfill their basic competence in writing. The study will involve the second year students of
SMP Muhammadiyah 06 Dau, Malang, because the descriptive text forms are introduced in that period.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation, the writer presents some terms used in this study:

Writing : the way people communicate with others using words or symbols written on paper or other solid medium.

Technique : a specific method applied when teaching process is going on to help students understand the material given.

Pictures : photographic representation of people, places, or things that can translate abstract concepts into a more realistic or concrete items (Kasbolah 1999: 21).

Skill in writing : the ability to write ideas, knowledge, or experience in such away that it can be understood by the reader (Byrne, 1978).

Descriptive text : a kind of text to convey a writer’s dominant impression at a person, or place, to readers in order that is able to use their sense about something (Martin, 1980).