

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

Language is one of the most important things in communication; it is used as a tool for communication among people in all over the world. The existence of language becomes essential, it helps people to express and share their idea and feeling.

The possession of language, more than any other attribute, distinguishes human being from animal. To understand our humanity one must understand the language that makes us as human. According to the philosophy that is expressed by the religions and many peoples; language is the source of human life and power.¹ The presence of language is one of the signs of Allah as a creator. As Allah stated in verse ar-Rum 22:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوَانِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know.²

English as an international language plays an essential role in many various aspects of life related to human being such as: politic, economic, education, culture, etc. In Indonesia, English is considered as the first foreign language; it is taught formally from elementary school up to the university level.

¹Victoria Fromklin, *An Introduction to Language*, (New York: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1983), p. 3.

²Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, *The Qur'an*, (London: Curzan Press Ltd., 1981), 3rd Ed., p. 397.

There are four major skills that must be paid attention in learning English as a foreign language. They are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The writing skill is the most important skill since it represents our thinking and feeling in a real form and influences other people's understanding toward our ideas. The development of writing is one of the great human inventions. It is difficult for many people to imagine how language nowadays without the presence of writing. When people speak without having any written form, oral literature will abound, much crucial knowledge will be memorized by limited people and environment, it cannot be delivered widely to others who are different in place and generations, finally, all of them will pass away. These are very serious problems, because human memory is short-lived. The presence of writing has overcome such problems and allowed communication across miles and through the years and centuries. Writing permits a society to permanently record its poetry, its history and its technology in order to be known and learned by others. As Allah states in verse al- A'raf 146:

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

And We had written (laws) for him (Musa) in the tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things....³

In the education field, especially teaching English, students need to be exercised and trained to produce a good written language forms. There are many important things that must be paid attention on teaching writing. One of them is about punctuation marks.

Punctuation is the use of standard marks and signs in writing to separate words into sentences, clauses, and phrases in order to clarify meaning.⁴ It also can be described as the act or art of pointing sentence with

³*Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴George A. Miller, "Wordnet: A Lexical Database for English Language", <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>, cited on July 14, 2009.

comma, semicolon and other marks.⁵ Punctuation marks are signals to the readers. When you speak, you can pause, stop, or change your tone of voice to make your meaning clear. You cannot do this when you write. When writing, you must use punctuation marks clearly such as comma, full stop, question mark, etc to make your meaning clear and easier to be understood by others.⁶

The uses of punctuation marks were often less considered by the eighth students of MTs Darul Ulum Semarang in the academic year of 2009/2010. Some of them regarded that the presence of marks in writing would not influence their writing of being understood by readers. They just wrote and punctuated their writing automatically without having enough attention toward the importance of punctuation marks.

There were many cases of misapplying punctuation marks in writing, for instance in punctuating dialogue text, it was found a lot of complicating problems such as: errors, confusions and unawareness of using appropriate punctuation marks when composing it. All of those problems may influence people's understanding toward what they wrote about. For instance, there was a student wrote "Where are you from!". Almost people will regard that the sentence is about exclamatory. Actually he wanted to write interrogative sentence but he put incorrect punctuation mark on it. As a result, a reader was confused on how to understand that sentence; it is about asking or expressing anger.

The problems occurred because of less attention of students and also English teachers on the importance of punctuation marks in writing. Some of teachers were also less attention on giving enough knowledge about punctuation marks to their students because their guide book didn't provide special chapter which discussed about punctuation marks and their uses. Finally, many students were unaware and less considered toward the importance of the presence of punctuation marks in their writing.

⁵C. Ralph Taylor, *Webster's World University Dictionary: Illustrated Encyclopedic Edition*, (USA: Publisher Company Inc., 1965), p. 793.

⁶Mangrum Strichart, "Using Punctuation Marks", <http://www.how-to-study.com/study-skills/en/language-arts/10/using-punctuation-marks/>, cited on August 15, 2009.

Based on those explanations, the study on analyzing students' awareness of using appropriate punctuation marks in dialogue text was conducted. Since punctuation is very important aspect in writing. Arlo Bate states that "no man can write really well who does not punctuate well; who cannot vitally mean every punctuation mark as clearly as in vigorously as he means any word".⁷ So, without having a good punctuation, our written language cannot be understood clearly by readers.

This research may give positive outcome to students' writing in order to make their written language understandable well. Besides that, it may also become a basic reference for language teachers on designing their course syllabus and also for readers in understanding what they are reading.

B. Reason for Choosing The Topic

These are the following reasons why the researcher chooses this research topic:

1. Writing is the most important skill in language because it represents our thinking, feeling and understanding. Especially in dialogue text, if we are unable to punctuate well, it will influence people understanding to what we are writing about.
2. Punctuations play significant role in writing because the presences of them enable us to clarify the meaning of the sentence.
3. The uses of punctuation marks were often less considered by the eighth students of MTs Darul Ulum Semarang in the academic year of 2009/2010. Some of them regarded that the presence of marks in writing would not influence their writing of being understood by readers. They just wrote and punctuated their writing automatically without having enough attention toward the importance of punctuation marks.
4. The researcher wants to know how students' awareness on punctuating unmarked dialogue text, are they able to punctuate well or not?

⁷ Samuel Smith, *Best Methods of Study*, (USA: Harper and Row Publisher Inc., 1970), p. 82.

5. The researcher wants to find out some dominant errors are encountered by the students when they are punctuating dialogue text together with the type of errors.
6. The researcher wants to know the factors which cause errors of using punctuation marks in dialogue text that is encountered by the students.

C. Research Questions

These are the following question related to the research:

1. What errors of using punctuation marks in dialogue text are encountered by eighth grade students of MTs Darul Ulum Semarang in the academic year of 2009/2010 when they were punctuating unmarked dialogue text?
2. What factors cause the errors of using punctuation marks in dialogue text?
3. How is students' awareness of using appropriate punctuation mark in dialogue text?

D. Objectives

The research is conducted to the following objectives as follow:

1. To find out errors of using punctuation marks in dialogue text which are encountered by eighth grade students of MTs Darul Ulum Semarang in the academic year of 2009/2010 when they were punctuating unmarked dialogue text.
2. To describe factors which cause the errors of using punctuation marks in dialogue text.
3. To know how students' awareness of using appropriate punctuation mark in dialogue text.

E. Limitation of The Study

The limitation of this study can be described as follow:

1. This is a descriptive study about students' awareness of using appropriate punctuation marks in dialogue text.
2. The object of this research is just the eighth grade students' of MTs Darul Ulum Semarang in the academic year of 2009/2010.
3. It's only seven of fourteen types of punctuation marks that are applied in this research.

F. Significance of The Study

The results of the study in the field of education may give some advantages to students, language teachers and readers. The advantages can be described as follow:

1. Theoretically the results of the research may give broader knowledge to the reader about punctuation marks together with their uses.
2. Pedagogically the results of this research may give some advantages, as follow:
 - a. Students: having a good awareness of using appropriate punctuation marks in dialogue text, students pay more attention on the importance of punctuation marks in writing. Good writing is impossible without good punctuation.
 - b. Teachers: the results of this study may give a brief explanation to the teacher on the importance of teaching punctuation marks to the students because sometimes punctuation is less considered by them.
 - c. Readers: they will pay more attention on the importance of using correct punctuation marks on their writing.