CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In Indonesian curriculum, writing becomes one skill which is taught in almost all level of education. In senior high school, especially, writing is taught from the tenth grade until twelveth grade. Based on the implementation of School-Based Curriculum, writing skill has a number of competency standards and basic competencies that should be mastered by the students at the end of semester. According to Sulfasyah (2013: 33) the School-Based Curriculum is designed to promote student-centered learning which is active, creative, and joyful. Therefore, nowadays the paradigm of teaching writing changes from writing as a set of skills to be mastered, to a view of writing as a meaning-making activity that emphasises composition.

Writing is a way that students can express his/her ideas or thought on a paper (Harsyaf, et. al., 2009: 4). Writing activity involves the procedures of thinking process and making decision to produce written texts used for communication in daily activities. According to Macdonald (1996: 1) writing process is a creative act of construction that seems to begin with nothing – a blank page- and ends with coherent structure that expresses feelings, emotions, attitudes, prejudices, values – the full range of human experiences. It is unique because it combines thought and activity carrying out the thought (Arapoff, 1975: 234).
Writing, of course, is not only about transcribing language into written symbols, but also what is written by the writer should be able to understand by the readers. Richards (2005: 303) says that there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skills for L2 learners to master. The students should be able to generate and organize the ideas and make it meaningful and readable for the readers. According to Weigle (2002: 1) writing has become an essential tool for students in today’s global community. It insists them to understand how to make a good process and product in writing.

Moreover, writing is also seen as a complex activity which requires the students to use the correct form of written language, such as spelling, punctuating, word choice, grammar, and sentence arrangements. Heaton (1975: 138) says that writing skill is complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental element. This statement supports the opinion that writing skill is difficult to teach by the teacher and to master by the students.

From the explanation of the previous paragraph, it can be said that writing seems as the difficult skill to learn by the students. They easily get bored because of the difficulties in writing. Therefore, the teacher has to consider the teaching strategy in teaching writing. During the preliminary research, the researcher found that the teacher used one of strategy in teaching writing named Scaffolded Writing Strategy. Scaffolded Writing Strategy is based on Vygotskian concept about the Zone of Proximal
Development (ZPD). ZPD is the Vygotskian concept that defines development as the space between the child’s level of independent performance and the child’s level of maximally assisted performance (Bedrova and Leong, 1998: 2). Based on this strategy, learning is developed when a novice learner is assisted by another learner who has special training and/or advanced skills (Schwieter, 2010: 32). Therefore, in this strategy, the students will be guided by the teacher during the teaching learning process.

However, the students were not enthusiastic during the implementation of Scaffolded Writing Strategy because it is teacher-centered classroom. In this strategy, all of the teaching steps are dominated by the teacher. It makes the students more passive during the teaching learning process. This rises a monotonous atmosphere in the classroom so that the students easily get bored during the teaching learning process.

In order to make an interesting and enjoyable atmosphere of the classroom, there is one of the strategies to teach writing which is recommended by the experts named Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS). Daraz (2001: 58) states that PALS is a strategy to support scheme of each student for both academic and personal development. In this strategy, the students with high proficiency will be paired up with the students with low proficiency. Then, the students work together in teaching learning activity and help each other. PALS is a version of peer learning where the teacher evaluate and identify students who need help in writing (Nianndari, 2012: 237).
PALS encourages the students to show up their ideas. It also increases students’ self confidence and critical thinking because they can discuss and evaluate their ideas with their peer. In addition, Setiowati (2013: 4) says that the teacher should make the students as the centre of learning by giving them more chance to write. This way is effective to encourage students’ interest in writing because the students will realize that they have important roles in this activity and get accustomed to writing English. As the centre of learning, the students will be participated actively during the teaching learning process. They realize that the result of learning process will depend on themselves, not the teacher.

Furthermore, writing needs the learners’ higher thinking in order to develop the concepts and ideas, and to use right grammatical pattern. Therefore, some experts considered writing as a thinking process. Brown (2001: 336) states that writing is a thinking process, a writer produces a final written product based on their thinking after the writer goes through the thinking process. It means that, writing skill need learners’ critical thinking to develop and organize the ideas into a good composition.

Since writing is a thinking process, the students have to think about the topic before they produce a draft and a final text. Besides that, the students have to think about the message which should be delivered to the readers. Therefore, in the process of thinking, the students need critical thinking to develop the ideas in order to make a good writing. Critical thinking is the mode of thinking about any subject, content, or problem in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skilfully
taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.

Scriven and Paul (2009: 1) say that critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. According to Chance (1986: 6) critical thinking refers to the ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, defend opinions, make comparisons, draw inferences, evaluate arguments, and solve problems. The learners who think critically can ask appropriate questions, gather relevant information, efficiently and creatively sort through information. They also make a logical reasons from this information, and come to reliable and trustworthy conclusions about the world that enable them to live and act successfully in it.

In addition, Fisher (2001: 10) says that critical thinking is skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observations, communications, information, and argumentation. The aim of critical thinking on writing is effectively gather question, organize, and evaluate the students’ and their peers’ comments, annotations, and errors. Ennis (1996: 45) emphasizes critical thinking as the decision-making about belief and action, the process of reflection and the rationality of the reason. Critical thinking helps people to decide what to believe and how to solve various problems.

Actually, there are some researches about PALS and Scaffolded Writing Strategy, but those are in the different research, different context,
and different variable. The result of most of the studies show that the two strategies are effective to teach writing. However, there is no study which examined the effectiveness of PALS and Scaffolded Writing Strategy from the perspective of students’ critical thinking.

Considering the explanation above, the researcher is interested to conduct an experimental study on the Effectiveness of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) on students’ writing skill from the perspective of students’ critical thinking.

B. Identification of the Problem

1. Why do the students have difficulty in writing?
2. What are the factors that cause the students’ difficulties in writing?
3. What kind of strategies that are used by teacher to teach writing skill?
4. Is the teaching strategy that is used by teacher effective to teach writing skill?
5. Is there any factor which influences students’ writing skill?
6. Does the student’s critical thinking influence writing skill?

C. Limitation of the Problem

The researcher realizes that it is impossible to investigate all the problems, therefore, the researcher only limits the problems of the research which are supposed to the effectiveness of teaching strategies namely Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) to the students’ writing skill from the perspective of students’ critical thinking.
D. Formulation of the Problem

1. Is Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) more effective than Scaffolded Writing Strategy to teach writing?
2. Do the students who have high critical thinking have better writing skill than those who have low critical thinking?
3. Is there an interaction between teaching strategies and students’ critical thinking to teach writing skill?

E. Objective of the Study

The research aims:

1. To identify whether Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS) more effective than Scaffolded Writing Strategy to teach writing skill.
2. To proof whether the students who have high critical thinking have better writing skill than those who have low critical thinking.
3. To investigate whether there is an interaction between teaching strategies and students’ critical thinking to teach writing skill.

F. Significance of the Study

1. For Student

   It can be one of the ways in creating the students’ activeness. Students are more active than before because they can communicate and share with their friends. Then, it is expected that by this research, students are able to comprehend and enjoy the writing class.
2. For Teacher

It can develop teachers’ creativity in choosing an appropriate technique especially for teaching writing skill. Teachers are careful in selecting the good technique to apply it in the teaching learning process.

3. For Other Researcher

It can be the references of other studies dealing with writing skill and technique in teaching writing. This research is expected to inspire the other researchers conduct the similar research and to be a reference for the next research.