

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

From the beginning of 2020 until now, the Internet has influenced the educational field in Indonesia significantly more than the last few years because of the Covid-19 pandemic (Indrawan, 2020). The effects of the viral outbreak in Indonesia brought teachers and students to adapt from face-to-face to online learning systems. From this situation, it is found that social media such as *YouTube*, *Facebook* and *Instagram* are used the most for students to learn English (Arif, 2019). Therefore, it could not be denied that besides using the Internet for educational purposes, students also use social media to keep themselves entertained (Bal & Bicen, 2017). This shows that social media has a significant effect on students' English learning ability.

Based on the current curriculum used in the English Language Education study program at Universitas Tanjungpura, students must take an Essay Writing course to fulfill their academic credits in the fourth semester. As mentioned by Sokolik (2003), writing is a complex mental process of delivering ideas where it is expressed in a written form. In academic scope, writing is an important yet difficult skill to master, because it requires accuracy in terms of grammar, punctuation and ideas (Aryuntini et al., 2018). Therefore, it is essential for both learners and teachers to use a good medium in learning writing to create a good outcome.

One of the texts that are used in writing is descriptive text. A descriptive text is a text that describes the image and meaning or context of a person, animals, objects, events, and places in a written form. According to Sari et al. (2020), a good descriptive text should explain something as clear as possible that can make the readers visualise the thing that is being described by using their five senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Therefore, it is essential for students to master this type of writing, so that they can describe objects clearly.

In addition, one of the challenges that are often found in students' learning ability is their attitudes. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, attitude is defined as "a bodily state of readiness to respond in a characteristic way to a stimulus (such as an object, concept, or situation)" ("Attitude," n.d). In other terms, attitude is someone's response and perception toward a particular event, person, thing, or idea that is experienced mentally.

In academic context, Fulmer et al. (2019) viewed that attitude is students' personal temperament and behaviour on knowledge that they are given. This means that when students learn some materials, they will behave in either positive or negative ways after processing it. The example of positive or high attitude is when the students feel encouraged and motivated in learning the materials whereas in negative or low attitude, students will feel declined and not connected to the materials given. Students will respond to the materials when their cognitive and emotional attitudes are working. As

stated by Zahroh et al. (2020), learners' cognitive and emotional attitudes are interrelated. Cognitive attitude can be defined as the students' inner judgments after achieving the knowledge and information given while learning, whereas emotional attitude is the behaviour that they express after given the knowledge and information. Other researchers believe that positive and negative attitudes have a significant impact on students' learning outcomes (Rahimi & Hassani, 2012).

One of the learning materials that can be found on the Internet is a meme. Here, the researcher found the most relevant definition of a meme as stated by a cognitive scientist, Daniel Dennet (cited in Brodie, 2009, p.8), "A meme is an idea, a kind of complex idea that forms itself into a distinct memorable unit. It is spread by vehicles that are physical manifestations of the meme". It means that a meme is some information, sometimes, unique information that can be easily spread like a virus, via a physical medium. There are many varieties of meme media; some examples are fashion, pictures, videos and songs.

Nowadays, the Internet memes are broadly recognized as some kind of entertaining and humorous pictures, texts and video clips, usually including trendy information and news, which are often spread through social media platforms (Purnama, 2017). As memes gain its popularity, many researchers and teachers apply them as learning media. For example, a study conducted by Purnama (2017) reveals that by using memes and *Instagram* as media in

teaching, students became more creative and eager to follow the lesson in the classroom. Based on the observation and questionnaire given from the study, the participants gave positive feedback on utilising memes and *Instagram* while learning English. A study from Underwood and Kararo (2020) on implementing memes to review materials of chemistry course before final exam also reveals that students have a variety ways in analysing the idea of the memes, describing events that related to the memes, and fixing information related to the materials. Lastly, an experimental study conducted by Kariko (2012), shows a relation between memes and students' creativity in interpreting meanings of a picture. The author found that when students are exposed to pictures that contain relatable behaviour and humorous messages, they could portray various meanings and information with their creativity and imagination. The author also explained how images and its interpretation work by using "*an image + word(s) = meanings*" formula (Kariko, 2012, p. 197). Therefore, those studies prove that Internet memes have a considerable effect on students' writing ability.

In most cases, many students get low scores in their writing outcomes because of some difficulties they face while doing the activity. Thus, this can make them perceive badly about writing, especially in descriptive text that may lead them to have a negative attitude. Other than that, there are many factors that can influence their attitudes, such as the teaching methods and writing media. Therefore, the researcher assumed that it is important to find

and discuss students' attitudes towards the Internet memes as media in writing descriptive text and its causes as it may have affected their writing outcomes.

Previous study by Purnama (2017) mentioned before, discussed making original memes where the students put some description in the memes using text or caption. Thus, the researcher concluded that there is a correlation between descriptive text and memes. Therefore, this research used descriptive text where the students use Internet memes as the object to be described. The researcher also investigated students' attitudes towards Internet memes in writing descriptive text to the fourth semester students of English Language Education study program at Universitas Tanjungpura in Pontianak.

Lastly, this study used qualitative descriptive design where the students were exposed with Internet memes in the form of pictures as one of their descriptive writing tasks.

## **1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research aims to answer these questions below:

- a. What are the students' attitudes towards the Internet memes in writing descriptive text?
- b. Why do they show that particular attitude towards Internet memes in writing descriptive text?

## **1.3. RESEARCH PURPOSES**

Based on the research questions above, the purposes of this research are to investigate and to describe:

- a. The students' attitudes towards the Internet memes in writing descriptive text
- b. The causes that influence students' attitude towards Internet memes in writing descriptive text

#### **1.4. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCES**

The researcher hopes that this study will bring contribution to some extent as follows:

- a. The students

The researcher hopes this study will help students to understand the effect of Internet memes on their writing ability in descriptive text and to inspire them to find new helpful learning media of writing.

- b. The writing teacher

The researcher hopes this study will help the writing teacher to understand the effect of a learning medium on their students' attitudes in writing ability, especially in descriptive text and to encourage them to discover and try new useful writing media.

- c. The other researchers

The researcher hopes that this study will be used by other researchers as a reference in conducting similar studies in the future.

#### **1.5. TERMINOLOGY**

To avoid misunderstanding other terms, the researcher provides some clarity in the terminology.

a. Students' Attitudes

In this research, attitude is a way of students expressing their opinions and perceptions towards Internet memes as a medium in writing descriptive text. There are positive and negative attitudes, which were analysed in this research later.

b. Internet memes

The Internet memes are the humorous images that often relate to everyday life events that were incorporated while learning descriptive text in this research.

c. Descriptive text

In this study, descriptive text is a written form of information that describes the Internet memes as a medium in writing descriptive text.