

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This chapter is about the background of the problem that explains why the researcher chooses to do a study on this topic. This chapter includes the background of the problem, statement of the problem, objective of the study, the significance of the study, theoretical framework, scope and limitation, the definition of key-terms, and the organization of the proposal.

1.1 Background of the Problem

In Indonesia, English is considered as a foreign language. One of the things that is important in English language is grammar, whether it is for the native speakers or for the non-native speaker such as the students of English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University of Surabaya. If the grammar in a sentence is not correct, the meaning that is conveyed in the sentence can be misunderstood. There are a lot of aspects in grammar. One of them which are very important is subject-verb agreement. Subject verb agreement is a condition in grammar where subjects and verbs must agree with one another in number (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural.

One of the salient aspects showing development of inter-language system of L2 learner is error (Lightbown and Spada, 2006 as cited in Wahyudi (2012). Errors are often found in grammars too, including subject-verb agreement. The subject-verb agreement, for the non-native speakers, is quite confusing, especially

for Indonesian people. In Indonesian language, there is no such thing as subject-verb agreement because they use the same verb for every subject and in every tense. For example: “*Indra pergi ke kota.*(Indra goes to town)” :*Dessy pergi ke sekolah.*(*Dessy goes to school*)” “*Mereka pergi bersama.*(They go together)” “*Kemarin Indra pergi ke kota.*(Yesterday Indra went to town)” “*Dessy pergi ke sekolah dua hari yang lalu.*(*Dessy went to school two days ago*)”. From those examples, we can see that no matter what different subjects or tenses are used, the verb in Indonesian still remains the same, meanwhile in English, the verb depends on the subject and also the tense. L1 interference is the factor that makes Indonesian learner of English does mistakes, one of which is subject-verb agreement. Therefore, the writer is interested in doing a research on subject-verb agreement errors.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study is aimed to answer these following questions:

1. What kinds of errors on subject-verb agreement are found in the Hortatory Exposition Texts written by Writing 3 students of the English Department?
2. What are the causes of those errors?
3. In what level of academic ability can errors in subject-verb agreement be found?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

- to find out the errors on subject-verb agreement found in Hortatory Exposition Texts made by English Department student.
- to find out the cause of errors on subject-verb agreement as found in the Hortatory Exposition Texts written by Writing 3 students of English Department.
- to find out in what level of academic ability errors in subject-verb agreement can be found.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

- *Teacher*

The teacher can focus on the subject-verb agreement error. By that, the teacher can minimize the errors on subject-verb agreement. The teacher can also design a follow-up task that can help students overcome the problem and master more on subject-verb agreement.

- *Students*

The students can focus on their error on subject-verb agreement and study how to overcome their errors.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The term *grammar* is often used by non-linguists with a very broad meaning. As Jeremy Butterfield says it, "Grammar is often a generic way of referring to any aspects of English that people object to, Butterfield (2008). There are some theories on grammar. One of them is functional theory. Functional theories of grammar are those approaches to the study of language that see the functions of language and its elements to be the key to understanding linguistic processes and structures. Functional theories of language propose that since language is fundamentally a tool, it is reasonable to assume that its structures are best analyzed and understood with reference to the functions they carry out, *Nichols (1984)*

TR Haskell, (2003) states that traditional theories of agreement production assume that verb agreement is an essentially syntactic process. Subject-verb agreement is a basic principle of the English language grammar, it simply denotes that a singular subject needs a singular verb and a plural subject needs a plural verb. According to Corder (as cited in Hourani, 2008), when students commit such errors it is thought that either the students have major misunderstandings of the concept or they had been taught by the method of rote memorization rather than practicing.

Error analysis in SLA is established in the 1960s by Stephen Pit Corder and colleagues. Error analysis (EA) is an alternative to contrastive analysis, an approach influenced by behaviorism through which applied linguists sought to use

the formal distinctions between the learners' first and second languages to predict errors. Error analysis shows that contrastive analysis is unable to predict a great majority of errors although its more valuable aspects have been incorporated into the study of language transfer. A key finding of error analysis has been that many learner's errors are produced by learners making faulty inferences about the rules of the new language, *Corder (1967)*. Cf. Bussmann (1996) states that errors are classified according to modality, linguistic levels, form, type, cause, and norm vs. system.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

1. This study is focused on subject-verb agreement errors. The researcher chooses the subject-verb agreement because it is one of the problems faced by non-native speaker of English especially Indonesian people. In Bahasa Indonesia, there's no such thing as subject-verb agreement because they use the same verb for every subject and in every tense.
2. The subject of this study is the Hortatory Exposition Texts made by Writing 3 students of English Department. The writer chooses the Hortatory Exposition text because it is taught in the 4th semester and subject-verb agreement has been taught in the 1st semester, which is included in Structure I course. By this, the writer wants to know whether the subject-verb agreement rules are properly applied in the Hortatory Exposition texts written by Writing 3 students.
3. This study is grammar in context. It means that this study focuses on the form of grammar and also the usage of it.

1.7 Definitions of Key-Terms

1. Errors

An error is a deviation from accepted rules of a language made by a learner of a second language. Such errors result from the learner's lack of knowledge of correct rules of the target language, Ellis (1994).

2. Subject-verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is a condition in grammar where subjects and verbs must agree with one another in number (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural. In present tenses, nouns and verbs form plurals in opposite ways. (<http://www.towson.edu/ows/sub-verb.html> retrieved on October 30th 2015)

3. Hortatory Exposition Text

A hortatory exposition is a type of spoken or written text that is intended to explain the listeners or readers that something should or should not happen or be done, Agustine (2012). In this research, the hortatory exposition texts are written by Writing 3 students of English Department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University.

4. Error analysis

Error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics. It is concerned with the compilation, study and analysis of errors made by second language learners and objects at investigating aspects of second language acquisition, Cherrington (2004)

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter is about the background of the problem that explains why the researcher chooses to do a study on this topic, which includes the background of the problem, statement of the problem, objective of the study, the significance of the study, theoretical framework, scope and limitation, and the definition of key-terms. The second chapter contains the related theories that underlie the researcher's study on the topic, which includes review of the related theories and the previous study. On the third chapter, the researcher explains the research methodology of this study, which includes research methodology, subject, instrument, material, treatment, and technique of data analysis. The fourth chapter consists the finding and the discussion of the study. Last, in chapter five, the conclusion and suggestions are prescribed.