

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer presents the background of the problem in section 1.1, the statements of the problem in section 1.2, the objectives of the study in section 1.3, theoretical framework in section 1.4, the significance of the study in section 1.5, assumption in section 1.6, limitation of the study in section 1.7, definition of key terms in section 1.8, and organization of the study in section 1.9.

1.1. Background of the Problem

English is an international language. According to Power as quoted by Sasaki et al (2008), non-native English speakers now outnumber native ones 3 to 1. Facing the Asian Economic Community where people from Asian countries are able to stay in Indonesia for a living freely, Indonesians have to be able to communicate in different languages, especially English. Chin (2014) as written in Jakarta Post mentions that individuals can take steps to improve their English which is the language of ASEAN and their business communications and cultural understanding of other countries. It means that without the ability to communicate in English, Indonesia will not be ready to compete to other Asian countries whose people can communicate in English.

English has four language skills which are Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. Writing is one of the essential skills English Department students need in acquiring the English Proficiency. By writing, students can express all of their thoughts and ideas. In the globalization era, writing is surely important to maintain good correspondences to English speaking countries for business plan, agreement, and so on. However, writing needs not only solely writing skill but also grammatical skill. Heaton (1975: 127) mentions, “Writing is a task which involves the students in manipulating words in grammatical correct sentences, those sentences in form of writing which successfully communicates the writer’s thoughts and ideas on certain topic.” As a result, if the students are not able to produce grammatical sentences, they will not be able to express their idea completely.

There are various kinds of grammatical aspects which a language learner should have to be able to write a good essay, one of which is English tenses. Tenses enable the readers to understand the situation or event in its exact time. According to Peterson (1980), English tense system is quite complicated, but the most common problem is not how to form tenses but decide which tense to use in a given situation. Therefore, not understanding tenses will create confusion in the readers to understand the author or students’ idea, especially in an essay.

In relation to essay, English tenses play a crucial role in telling the ideas of the essay itself. The wrongly applied English tenses will cause

misinterpretation of the ideas of the writer. The writer might relate his present argument with an example from the historical event which needs clear tense distinctions, the past and the present. The wrong use of tenses will make readers wrongly notice the sequence of the time in the essay. Besides, misusing the tense might lead to the misunderstanding the context of the text. For instance, a senior high school student writes, “When I am in junior high school, I often fall down.” This kind of sentence uses the wrong tense and creates misunderstanding for the readers since they might interpret that the student is a junior high school student. The right sentence should be, “When I was in junior high school, I often fell down.”

Due to the importance of the English tenses, this research aimed to find out the errors in the English tenses encountered in the essays of the English department students. Since Simple Present tense is the English tense which is mainly used in the discussion essays, the writer limited the English tense into Simple Present tense. From this research it is hoped that the types of errors and the causes of the errors in the Simple Present tense would be discovered and significantly useful for the development of Writing IV course in the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

Based on the background above, the problems can be formulated as:

- a. What are the types of errors in the Simple Present tense which the Writing IV students made in the discussion essays?
- b. What are the possible causes of Simple Present tense' errors in the discussion essays made by Writing IV students?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

- a. To find the types of errors in the Simple Present tense which the Writing IV students often made in the discussion essays
- b. To find the possible causes of Simple Present tense's errors in the discussion essays made by Writing IV students

1.4. Theoretical Framework

- a. Contrastive Analysis
- b. Error Analysis
- c. Interlanguage
- d. Errors and Mistakes
- e. Types of Errors: Surface Strategy Taxonomy
- f. Sources of Errors: (1) Transfer/ Interlingual Error, and (2) Intralingual Error
- g. English Tenses: Simple Present Tense
- h. Discussion Text

1.5. The Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is divided into two:

1. Practical Significance

This study was conducted to improve the quality of Writing IV students of the English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education in Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. Writing IV students are hoped to consider errors as one of the ways to improve their grammatical skills especially in the Simple Present tense.

It is also hoped by knowing the common errors made in the Simple Present tense, the Writing IV lecturers will be able to adjust their method of teaching by giving feedbacks and applying training and peer-review approaches to make the students understand the Simple Present tense well and later they will be able to overcome these weaknesses and write discussion essays well.

2. Theoretical Significance

Generally, errors are not things which need to be avoided. Errors are the things need to be made in order to know the development of the target language proficiency. According to Corder (1967) quoted by Rod Ellis (1994:48) errors could be significant in three ways:

- a. they provide the teacher with information about how much the learner has learned
- b. they provide the researcher with evidence of how language is learned

- c. they serve as methods by which the learner discovers the rules of the target language

Moreover, according to Dulay et al. (1982: 138), the benefits of studying learners' errors are:

- a. they provide data from which inferences about the nature of the language learning process can be made,
- b. they indicate to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students have most difficulty in producing the target language correctly and which error types detract most from a learner's ability to communicate effectively

Therefore, lecturers, especially Writing IV lecturers should not discourage the students when they make errors and consider the errors as a developing process of acquiring and learning the Simple Present Tense.

1.6. Assumption

There are three Writing IV lecturers who are often assigned by the English Department to teach Writing IV. They have a master degree and are qualified in teaching writing. Since they are experienced, they have their ability to teach Writing IV well. With qualified lecturers, the tests constructed are valid and reliable.

Writing IV students have known Simple Present Tense since they finished their Structure I, Structure II, Structure III, and Structure IV classes.

However, the students were still in the middle of learning the target language, so errors were very possible to be made.

1.7. Limitation and Scope

The study was limited on the errors in the Simple Present tense made by Writing IV Students of the English Department of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education in Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. The study was limited to Simple Present tense since Simple Present tense is mainly used in the discussion essays.

The writer took Writing IV as the subject of the research because the students who took Writing IV class had taken Structure I to Structure IV courses in which they were taught about the English tenses.

The writer took the midterm test in order to get the best writing the Writing IV students made since they had done a lot of practices before the midterm test on making discussion essays. The writer did not take the students' final tests because the writing genre was different, not discussion genre. Besides, the problems of the midterm tests were believed to be valid since they had been made by the lecturers.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

- a. Errors: any deviation from the norms of the target language without considering the characteristics or the causes of the deviation (Dulay et al., 1982: 139)
- b. Mistakes: “a performance phenomena and regular feature of native-speaker speech, reflecting processing failures that arise as a result of competing plans, memory limitations, and lack of automaticity (Ellis, 1994: 51).”
- c. Discussion text: a text which is used to give information about and to deliver arguments for both sides of an issue which are pros and cons including the conclusion or recommendation based on the weight of evidence (Eltis, 1990: 22-23).
- d. Simple Present Tense: Simple present tense is a tense which expresses events or situations that exist always, usually and habitually, have existed in the past, or probably will exist in the future (Azar, 1999: 2).

1.9. Organization of the Study

This proposal consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, theoretical framework, significance of the study, assumptions, the scope and limitation of the study, and definition of the key term. Chapter II deals with review of related literature and previous study. Chapter III presents research method of this study.

Chapter IV presents the result and the discussion of the finding. Lastly, chapter V presents the conclusion and suggestions of the study.