

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Learning a second language is never simple. There are many efforts to be made in order to be able to communicate well in the language. As Donn Byrne (1969) says in his book “English Teaching Extract”, language is not knowledge but a set of skills. He means that learning a language is a matter of learning to listen, read, speak, and also to write. Another thing to put into account is the grammar existence in language acquisition. Grammar is one of the language components which is very important in language learning. It has a very important role in a learner’s language proficiency in a presentation of those set of language skills. Without a proper and sufficient mastery of grammar, it is impossible for somebody to be able to communicate in the language fluently. Though many may say that grammar mastery is optional to cover in language acquisition, but without it the language presentation will not be ideal.

As a matter of fact, mastering grammar is a matter of practicing continually bit by bit and can not be instantly attained in a day. In the English Education Study Program (henceforth EESP) of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya (henceforth WMCUS), English grammar is given in a series of Structure classes (from 1 to 4). These classes are expected to train the students with enough grammatical elements and enable them to be qualified English teachers in primary and secondary schools later on.

Grammar is often seen as one of the most difficult items to master in language learning. Nonetheless, it is found that the results of the students' tests are often not satisfying in this particular subject. Some students even have to retake these classes. The findings of the study on translation conducted by Widiati and Ngadiman (2002), indeed supports the fact.

Knowing the causes of the error made by the students in their way of mastering English grammar will later on be useful in giving the appropriate remedy for them. It is important to understand the process which happens in the mind when errors are committed. To put into concern that it is impossible to observe and analyze directly human mind at work. One way to observe it is by using indirect approach. An appropriate approach is Interview Protocol which asks the student to explain and reflect his/ her mental process when he/ she was doing the English grammar exercises or tasks. Interviews are a powerful means of collecting data about learner or instructor reactions to a task given. However, interviews need to be carefully planned in order to get the kind and quality of information needed. In this study, individuals were provided with exercises or tasks and then a verbal record was produced while they were asked to reflect the process of thought.

So far, there has not been any study conducted which is focusing on the processes of what is happening in the mind of the individuals who made the errors in English tenses (in this case Simple Present tense and Present Continuous tense). Common errors made by the students are often analyzed and remedy is then given on which English tenses are often incorrectly used. By knowing the mental

process going on in the mind of the student, it is believed that a specific remedy will be a good *cure* for the difficulties the students are confronted with. Conducting a research which investigates the students' mind using Interview Protocol, the researcher tries to reveal the causes of the problems the students deal with. The goal of the study is to get a better teaching-learning program to develop and in this case the student will get useful understanding on ways to learn English tenses properly and the teacher will be able to use proper method in teaching English tenses in the classroom.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

In line with the background of the study, the purpose of the study is to analyze the mental processes of the students who have made the errors in Simple Present Tense and Present Continuous Tense. The problems of the study are formulated as follows:

- What are the causes of subjects' errors in the Simple Present Tense as expressed by their Interview protocols?
- What are the causes of subjects' errors in the Present Continuous Tense as expressed by their Interview protocols?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out:

- The causes of subjects' errors in the Simple Present Tense as expressed by their Interview protocols.
- The causes of subjects' errors in the Present Continuous Tense as expressed by their Interview protocols.

1.4 Significance of the Study

So far, only the kinds of common errors in grammar have been identified and the interpretations of why these errors have been made from the point of view of the researchers. This study will be a breakthrough as it will go deeper in its analysis on the part of the learners who have made the errors in English Tenses. It will try to reveal what is happening in their mind when they are committing the errors. Thus, it will give a useful insight for the English Department teachers to help their students to remedy their problems in English Tenses and to master them. To make it more precise, this study concerns not only with the product but also with the process of learning English Tenses. Therefore, the writer expects that once the mind of the students is revealed the writer will give clearer ideas of why an error is made. For the teachers, the result of this study is expected to give useful insight of how better teaching-learning programs can be prepared. For the students, the result of the study is expected to give suggestions on better ways to

learn English Tenses, so that they do not have to repeat making the same errors in the future.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is part of a bigger study under the title of The Problems in Applying English Tenses faced by the EESP Students WMCUS as Manifested by Their Interview Protocols supported by I-M HERE Research Grant. While the title mentioned above is concerned about the problems in applying English tenses in general, this study is narrowed down into the problems in applying the Simple Present Tense and the Present Continuous Tense. The students to be observed are those of EESP who have already taken Structure 2 class, where they have got all tenses here including the Simple Present and Present Continuous Tense.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on some theories. They are the method of conducting Interview protocols in investigating the process in making errors, the role of grammar in language proficiency, and the theory of teaching grammar.

Interviewing is another commonly employed qualitative technique (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). In contrast to survey research or other forms of “forced choice” questioning, qualitative interviewing is more “open ended,” allowing the interviewer and the interviewee to participate in the development of responses. Such interviews encourage participants to explore the complexity of the lives and experiences under consideration. Frequently, researchers combine interviewing

with observation in what might be called “ethnographic interviewing.” Interviewing may elicit many forms of data. Ethnographic interviews typically supply native accounts and understandings of what is going on in a particular setting. In-depth interviews strive for detailed, richly textured accounts and descriptions of the experiences of individuals.

Interview protocols help individuals to be able to know what mental processes happen in one’s mind because the user verbalizes his thought. Furthermore, the observer can get insight view on the mental process that happens which is helpful in knowing one’s difficulty or errors faced in the test. In this study, the problems of Simple Present Tense and Present Continuous Tense that happen in the users’ mind could be analyzed and the causes of the errors can be clearly prescribed by using the Interview Protocols.

Grammar is one language competence which is important to acquire in second language learning. In one of his unpublished papers, Greenbaum (1982) states, among other definitions, that "grammar refers to the properties and processes that underlie the use of the language — that underlie the ability of speakers to speak and understand the language". To be able to use it in oral or written performances, one must have a good mastery of grammar otherwise the communication happen would not be meaningful. The never ending debate occurs whether teaching language should focus on meaning or focus on forms. It is thought that when a teacher teaches grammar, the student will think that the focus of the language is learning the rules. Another to put into account is about how teachers should actually teach grammar, whether to use deductive approach or inductive approach.

However, this study does not discuss on those approaches, but it concerns on how grammatical feature, in this case, tense, how the students can be wrong in its application.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding, the writer provides the definitions of the following key terms:

1. Simple Present Tense: is the tense used to express daily habit or usual activities and general statements of fact

Form: S + V (s/es)

For example: Ann takes a shower everyday

The earth revolves around the sun

2. Present Continuous Tense: is the tense used to express an activity which is in progress right now. The event began in the past, is in progress now, and will probably continue into the future.

Form: to be (am/ is/ are) + V-ing

For example: It is noon. I am eating lunch at the cafeteria right now

3. Interview Protocol: Interviewing is a frequently used method in social research which the aim is often interpretation and understanding of how and why, not 'fact-finding' or getting answers to questions of how much or how many ([Warren,](#)

[1988](#)). In qualitative interviews the interviewees are given space to expand their answers and accounts of their experiences and feelings.

In this study, Interview Protocols is the approach used to know the mental process happens in one's mind as the subject verbalizes the thought while doing the test. The Interview Protocols is used to obtain data which are the errors made or what problems faced by the subjects in the test. This data will be helpful in providing the appropriate remedy for the subjects.

1.8 Organization of the Study

In order to help the writer to stay in focus on stepping her research report later, she writes down the organization of the study as follow: Chapter I contains the introduction of the thesis, Chapter II deals with some review of related theory, Chapter III concerns the research methods, Chapter IV talks about the data analysis and findings including their discussion, and Chapter V discusses the conclusion of the research.