

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

As we know, English is considered as the primary foreign language. That is why it is important for us, Indonesians, to learn English as many books are written in that language.

However, it is also assumed that many Indonesian students still have many problems in mastering English ; as stated by Mrs.Sulaiman, that:

It has been an important part of the curriculum of Indonesian High Schools ever since it was adopted as the official foreign language of this nation over twenty years ago. There remain however, a number of serious problems connected with the teaching of English in Indonesian. 1)

One of the main problems faced by most Indonesian students is grammar. This is quite understandable since the structure of English is quite different from that of Indonesian. In English verbs change according to the tense while in Indonesian there is no change of verbs to

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Mrs.N.Sulaiman. English Teaching Forum, The teaching of English in Indonesia, October 1970, number 5, page 20.

indicate that an action has happened, is happening, or is going to happen. This, of course, makes the students get troubles in learning English while grammar is to be learned because "grammar permeates all language skills"²

When carrying out her teaching-practice in SMAKr Petra 3 Surabaya, the writer made some observations on the results of the students' English grammar tests. From her observation, she found out that the students really got problems in certain grammatical items. One of the grammatical problems that the students faced was the Simple Past Tense. Although the Simple Past Tense is simple in its formation, the students still made a lot of mistakes. In addition their teachers complained about their mistakes. Maybe the students were confused with the past formation, that is regular and irregular forms since Indonesian language does not have a Past Tense form. However, the writer was doubtful whether the students' mistakes were caused by their confusion of the past formation or the teacher's explanation is not clear or any other aspects.

² Paulston, Christina, "Grammar", Teaching English as a Second Language Techniques and Procedures, Winthdrop Publisher, page 1.

Realizing that Past Tense is frequently used both in oral and written language and knowing that SMA students still face a lot of difficulties in mastering it, the writer is interested in making an error analysis on it, so as to know the real cause of the difficulties and to find a good solution to the problem.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The problems of this study are :

a. What kinds of errors are made by the First year students of Petra 3 Senior High School dealing with the English Simple Past Tense ?

b. What are the possible causes of errors of the Simple Past Tense made by the First year students of Petra 3 Senior High School ?

1.3. The Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are mainly :

a. To identify the kinds of errors the first year students of Petra 3 Senior High School Surabaya made in using the Simple Past Tense.

b. To try to find the possible causes of the errors.

1.4. The Significance of the Study

The data and information obtained from this study are expected to give a clearer picture about what is still lacking in the first year students of Petra 3 Senior High School in learning the Simple Past Tense. The findings of this study are also expected to help the English teachers of Petra 3 Senior High School to anticipate the possible errors made by their future students so that they are motivated to search for better methods and techniques in teaching the Simple Past tense. This is in line with Hendrickson's statement (1981), "knowing about errors is important as errors provide feedback. They tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques, and show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention".³

Hopefully, by so doing, the teaching result and the students' learning outcome will be maximized.

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James Hendrickson, Error Analysis and Error Correction in Language Teaching, Singapore, Seameo Regional Language Centre, 1981, page 3.

1.5. Limitation of the Study.

The writer limits the study only on the SMAK Petra 3 jln. Kalianyar 43 Surabaya and the students that the writer observed are the first year students for the reason that they have just been taught the Simple Past Tense.

This study only concerns with the errors in the Simple Past Tense in the written test, in this case the form of the verbs in the affirmative sentences, negative sentences, and interrogative sentences,

Since this study uses Split-half method, the writer administered the try-out test only once and then the real test in order to get the data.

For the classification of the errors, she uses Brown's classification, namely : errors of addition, errors of omission, errors of substitution, and errors of ordering.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

This study is planned to be based on the theories of :

1. Error is "an indication of the difficulties that learners had with certain aspects of the language, which could be explained by the persistence of habits

of the mother tongue and their transfer to the new language".⁴

2. Error Analysis involves "collecting errors, studying them, classifying them in various ways and suggesting the possible cause".⁵
3. Simple Past Tense is "the tense normally used for the relation of past events".⁶

1.7. Assumptions

This study is carried out under the assumptions that the students have already been taught the Simple Past Tense. It is stated in the Garis-garis Besar Program Pengajaran that the Simple Past Tense is taught in the first semester students of senior high school.⁷ It is also assumed that the students have already learnt negative sentences, yes-no questions and informative questions.

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Valerie Kinsella ed., Language Teaching and Linguistics: surveys, Great Britain, Cambridge Univ Press, 1978, p.60.

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Gerry Abbot and Peter Wingard, The Teaching of English as an International Language, Great Britain, Williams Collins Son and Co.Ltd., 1981, p.212.

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A.J.Thompson and A.V.Martinet, A Practical English Grammar, Oxford Univ Press, 1979, p.148.

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Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, Kurikulum Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) 1987, Garis-garis Besar Program Pengajaran, Bidang Studi: Bahasa Inggris, Jakarta, 1987.

1.8. Definition of the Key-terms

To make the title clearer, the writer would define some of the terms used.

1. Error is " a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker. reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner." ⁸
2. Error Analysis is " a procedure which involves collecting sample of learner language, identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, classifying the errors according to their hypothesized causes, and evaluating the seriousness of errors." ⁹
3. Past Tense is " the tense that is used to express activities that existed or occurred in the past." ¹⁰

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H. Douglas Brown, . Principles of Language Learning and Teaching, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1980, p. 170

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Fod Ellis, Understanding Second Language Acquisition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 296

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Rebecca E. Hayden, Mastering American English. A Handbook, of Essentials, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956, p. 91

1.9. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I presents the background, the statement of the problem, the objective, the significance of the study, the limitation of the study, the theoretical framework, the assumptions, the definition of key-terms, and the organization of this study. Chapter II deals with the review of the related literature, the theory of English Simple Past Tense, and the review of the related studies. Chapter III presents the methodology of the study which consists of the research design, the population and sample for this study, the instruments for this study, the procedures of collecting the data, and the procedure for analyzing the data. Chapter IV discusses the data analysis, the frequency of the errors occurrence, and the interpretation of findings. Chapter V is the conclusion which presents the results of this study and some suggestions concerning the study.