

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the problem

Learning English for the first time is often hard for most Indonesian students. They realize that the sounds, the vocabulary, the structure, and the cultures of English are different from those of Indonesian. Consequently, they often have problems in learning English.

According to John R. Muna as quoted by Hendra (1989:2), to be able to communicate well in English, one should have, among others, wide range of vocabulary and master its grammar - a set of rules for coding one's thoughts, ideas and emotions for the purpose of conveying one's intention to someone else.

In learning English at the high schools, students are taught many grammatical items. Each of these items has different grammar system from those of Indonesian. Those differences usually cause difficulties, which are then followed by errors the students produce. Having observed this phenomenon, the writer would like to make a contrastive analysis between the English and Indonesian degrees of comparison with the purpose of

finding out whether the students find any difficulties in applying the degrees of comparison in sentences.

The writer has chosen this topic as she finds that many students are confused in applying the degrees of comparison for adjectives and adverbs. In English to denote degrees of superiority, adjectives are regularly compared by adding *-er* and *-est* as in *'Ani is cleverer than Ina'* and *'Ani is the cleverest student in the class'* or the use of adverbs *'more'* or *'most'* of positive of adjectives as in *'Ani is more beautiful than Ina'* and *'Ani is the most beautiful girl in the class'*. And to denote inferiority, the method of comparison is limited to the phrasal pattern *'less'* and *'least'*, for example: *Rina has less water than Rini, but Rita has the least of all*. If an adjective is not compared by one of these methods, it is said to be irregularly compared, as in *'Your mark is good, mine is better, but hers is the best'*. While in Indonesian, to denote both the superiority and inferiority the adjectives are compared by adding *'lebih'* and *'paling (ter-)'*, for example *'Ani lebih pandai daripada Ina'* or *'Ina adalah murid terpandai/ paling pandai di kelas'*.

Knowing how important the "degrees of comparison" is in English, while there is not a form with the same function in Indonesian, the writer assumes that many students find difficulty in applying the degrees of

comparison in sentences. This is stressed by Klein (1986:25) who says that contrasting structures present considerable difficulty and give rise to errors as a result of negative transfer or interference between the two contrasting languages..

Based on the fact that Indonesian grammar is quite different from the English grammar system, the writer would like to know whether or not the students find difficulty in applying "the degrees of comparison for adjective and adverb" in their test. The writer feels the significance of the contrastive analysis for teaching based on what Lado said - The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real learning problems are and can better provide for teaching them (Lado, 1957:2). A contrastive analysis of English and Indonesian degrees of comparison is, therefore, very useful.

1.2. Statement of the problems

With reference to the background of the study, the writer has formulated the major problems of this study as follows :

1. Do the different systems of 'degrees of comparison' between English and Indonesian cause difficulty for the students ?

2. Are there any causes underlying the above conditions ?

1.3. Objectives of the study

Derived directly from the formulated problems above, the objectives of the study are :

1. to see whether or not the different system of degrees of comparison between English and Indonesian cause difficulty for the students.
2. To determine specific causes underlying the above conditions.

1.4. Significance of the study

This study attempts to make the English teachers aware that they will be able to diagnose students' difficulties in learning English through contrastive analysis. She hopes that the result will be useful for both English teachers and students of the teacher training faculty.

1.5. Limitation of the study

This study is limited to the analysis of the structure of English and Indonesian comparison, in this case comparative and superlative, since most students

make mistakes in this part. The English comparison includes both the regular and irregular degrees of comparison for adjectives and adverbs. The Indonesian comparison is also discussed on how to express the degrees of comparison.

The subjects of this study are the second year students of a senior High School. The choice of the subjects is based on the assumption that the students have learned this topic, as the degrees of comparison for adjectives is introduced in the first semester and the degrees of comparison for adverbs is learned in the third semester.

1.6. Definition of key terms

To avoid misunderstanding, the writer will define some terms as follows :

1. Contrastive analysis

Brown (1987:148) states that Contrastive Analysis is the systematic comparison and contrasting of the native and target (or second) language system.

2. Adjective

According to Shurter (1957:20) adjectives modify nouns or pronouns and maybe used to describe, to

~~tell numbers,~~ and to show specific identity or quantity.

3. Adverb

Shurter (1957:21) adds that adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, and in general terms describe how, where, when, and to what extent.

4. Degrees of comparison

Comparison, defined by Shurter (1957:22), is the change in the forms of adjectives and adverbs to show a greater or smaller degree of the quality they indicate. There are three degrees of comparison--positive, comparative, and superlative.

5. Form

Form (Webster, 1986:892) refers to the shape and structure of something as distinguished from the material of which it is composed.

7. Organization of the study

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I is the introduction of the thesis which consists of background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, definition of key terms, and

organization of the thesis. Chapter II discusses the review of the related literature, while Chapter III deals with the Research Methodology. Chapter IV describes the interpretation of the findings, and the last, Chapter V presents the conclusions and some suggestions concerning the result of the study.