

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

THE ERRORS MADE BY THE SIXTH SEMESTER STUDENTS  
OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
OF WIDYA MANDALA SURABAYA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY  
IN CONSTRUCTING COMPOUND AND COMPLEX SENTENCES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Being an international language, English plays an important role in this globalization era. An ability to use English adequately can affect one's personal, social, academic, and professional lives; furthermore, a competence in English will aid one in gaining control of his or her environment, such as in academic setting, the world of work, and society in general. Thus, it is not surprising if more and more people try to learn English in order to aid them to cope with their every day activities, such as to get jobs, to read technical literatures, and even integrate themselves with its culture.

The ability to communicate in English as a foreign language, especially the ability to write well, is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. In fact, language skills must be practiced and learned through experiences. However, during the process of practicing and learning the language skills, a foreign language learner is bound to make mistakes or errors. This is due to the fact that errors in a foreign language learning are the cases which are difficult to avoid. Besides, many aspects that can cause the learner of a foreign language to make mistakes or errors.

Thus, when teaching English as a foreign language, it is important to have in mind the model of the kinds of errors to which the students are prone at any point in their course. Moreover, a teacher of English as a foreign language needs to know

about the kinds of errors which are commonly made by the students. Without this knowledge, it is hard to decide how quickly to proceed from one topic to another, or which types of interaction to concentrate on in the classroom. In other words, errors analysis is needed to show the students in what aspect in grammar which difficult for them; also, for the language teachers, it is required to evaluate themselves whether they are successful or not in teaching.

Especially with English as the target language, the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University are supposed to master the aspects of English since they are English teachers to be. However, during the process of learning and teaching English as the target language, they may encounter various problems of difficulties resulting from underlying differences between English and Indonesian rules. If they make errors in different components of language, such as in phonology, semantics, lexicon and discourse, their errors should be accepted as a natural phenomenon integral to the process of teaching and learning the target language. As Dulay et al. (1981: 138) state:

Errors are the flawed side of learners' speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance. Teachers and mothers who have waged long and patient battles against their students' and children's language errors have come to realize that making errors is an inevitable part of learning. People cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors.

The statement above has encouraged some methodologists and linguists to conduct studies on errors made by learners, and a number of studies concerning specific aspects of grammar have been conducted, such as tenses, articles, prepositions and parallelism. In this study, the writer intends to conduct a study with the limitation on syntax, namely: the errors in constructing compound and complex sentences.

The skill of constructing compound and complex sentences is important as a part of the study of grammar; in addition, compound and complex sentences are used to express ideas which are impossible to express in one word or phrase to other person. Furthermore, the compound and complex sentences can also be used to introduce the effectiveness and clarity in communication; Oshima et al. (1999:163)

state that a composition with only short, simple sentences is boring and ineffective. Writing with complex sentences is generally considered more mature, interesting, and effective in style.

It is clear that in English, the use of compound and complex sentences is a more desirable writing style. Thus, compound and complex sentences are used as the tools for producing better writing. The more years the students learn the target language, the ability to use compound and complex sentences is one of the surest marks of a good style, for it shows that the writer has carefully weighed his ideas for their relative importance, has studied them to see what their relationship is, and has put them in a form that makes clear to the readers both the relationship and the relative importance.

However, the usages of compound and complex sentences are not easy for the students who learn English as the target language because they still have problems with the complexity of clauses. To make sure whether the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University who have been taught all types of compound and complex sentences are able to construct them in the written form of sentences, we need empirical data. Therefore, this leads the writer to conduct the study to find out whether they make errors in constructing compound and complex sentences. The writer has not found any research, which only intended to analyze the errors made by students in constructing compound and complex sentences in written form.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem.

The problem of the research which is brought forwards to be discussed in this study deals with the language acquisition difficulty which is analyzed through errors made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences. Then, it is formulated to sub problems based on the main problem, which are stated in the question forms as follows:

- 1.2.1 What kinds of errors are made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences?
- 1.2.2 What is the frequency of occurrence of each type of error made by the sixth semester students of the English Department at Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences?
- 1.2.3 What are the areas of difficulty encountered by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences?
- 1.2.4 What are the causes of each type of error made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences?

### 1.3 Purpose of the study

It has been mentioned that research is a systematic and scientific activity, which is structured and purposeful. According to Richards et al. (1999:315), research is the study of an event, a problem or a phenomenon using systematic and objective methods, in order to understand it better and to develop principles and theories about it.

The main purpose of this study is to provide the answers of the problems as previously stated. It is meant to assess the language acquisition difficulty through the errors made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences in written form from the given test.

For the specific purposes, this study will:

- 1.3.1 Find out the types of errors made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences.
- 1.3.2 Find out the frequency of occurrence of each type of error made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences.
- 1.3.3 Describe the areas of difficulty encountered by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences.
- 1.3.4 Describe the causes of errors made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences.

#### 1.4 Significance of the study

Error analysis can help language teachers to view students' errors in a more positive way, as the errors can be a necessary part in a teaching and learning process.

Dulay et al. (1981:138) state:

Studying learners' errors serves two major purposes: (1) It provides data from which inferences about the nature of language learning process can be made; and (2) It indicates to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students have most difficulty producing correctly and which error types detract most from a learner's ability to communicate effectively.

In this study, it is expected that the teachers will make use of the finding in their teaching by giving more special emphases to the areas of difficulty reported in this study which deal with the language acquisition difficulty analyzed through errors

of English compound and complex sentences so that they can encourage and prepare materials for remedial teaching and select the most appropriate method to overcome such errors. For the students, hopefully they will learn to vary the kind of sentences that they write by using compound and complex sentences. In the long run, the students can avoid the errors of English compound and complex sentences that they often made. For further research, the finding of the study can be used to generate new objectives or hypothesis for conducting a research to find more information about the students' problems in constructing compound and complex sentences and to investigate better techniques or methods in teaching English compound and complex sentences.

### 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the study

According to Pauline (1986:32), limitation is necessary to avoid confusion and superficiality and promote clarification. It is also necessary to keep the research within manageable limit; that is, with the ability of the mind to grasp the implication and to explain them. Furthermore, Bruce (2004:20) states that it is important to establish a focus for your research questions or series of research aims.

Therefore, it is necessary to delimit the range of problem in such a way without neglecting its usefulness either practically or theoretically. For that purpose, the following aspects are limited.

This study is aimed to analyze the language acquisition difficulty through errors made by the sixth semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences according to the usage of coordinators and subordinators. However, because of the limitation of time, not all the coordinators and subordinators of compound and complex sentences are tested. To make the study feasible, the writer only tested three types of compound sentences and three types of complex sentences with the limitation on 25 coordinators and 35 subordinators which were given to the students based on the previous materials that they had received before the present study was conducted.

Therefore, the findings can only show an area of difficulty in constructing compound and complex sentences and they can only be used to infer the mastery level of the students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in constructing compound and complex sentences and cannot be generalized to other population.

## 1.6 Assumptions.

In conducting the study, the following assumptions are made:

- 1.6.1 The selected subjects of this study, the sixth semester students of the English Department who were taking the translation course at Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University, have been taught all types of compound and complex sentences. Thus, they should have mastered the use of coordinators and subordinators to construct compound and complex sentences. In terms of the knowledge, they are of the same level.
- 1.6.2 The results of the conclusion taken from the given tests show and reflect the students' level of mastery of the subject since the study was done after they had been taught compound and complex sentences in their English grammar courses.

## 1.7 Theoretical Framework

Although errors are undesirable things in learning English as a foreign language, error analysis is advantageous for both learners and teachers. For learners, error analysis is needed to show them what aspects of grammar are difficult for them; whereas for teachers, it is required to evaluate themselves whether they are successful or not in teaching English.



The theoretical framework used in this study was Error Analysis. Corder (1976) published a seminal article “The Significance of Learners Errors”, in which he proposed that learners constructed their own version of the grammar of the target language. The growth of his ideas is labeled error analysis. Errors, then, are no longer viewed as mere deviations but rather as a source for studying the process used by the learners at a certain stage in the course. Therefore, if we want to study the learners’ language system, we should find clues to the systems by analyzing the errors they commit.

There are several in-depth studies which have given invaluable contributions to the theories of Error Analysis. The studies reveal that there are three basic stages in Error Analysis: recognition, description, and explanation of errors.

The first stage in an error analysis is recognition of errors. Among the many language scholars whose works the writer has read, Corder (1978: 1981) is the only one who has elaborated the procedure to detect errors. He suggests that errors can be detected by comparing what the learner actually said with what he ought to have said to express what he intended to express. Thus, errors can be identified by comparing original utterances with reconstructed utterances, that is, correct sentences having the meaning intended by the learner.

The second stage deals with classification of errors. Corder simply comments that errors can be classified through a comparison process between the data being the original erroneous utterances and the constructed ones, that is the process similar to that of contrastive analysis. He seems to have focused exclusively on one alternative for classifying errors, i.e. error types in terms of linguistic categories. Dulay et al. (1982:146), however, have presented a more complex work on error classification, comparing with Corder. They proposed several alternatives for error classification. They classify errors in terms of 1) linguistic categories; 2) surface strategy taxonomy; 3) comparative taxonomy; and 4) communicative effect taxonomy.

The final stage is explanation of errors. First, Jain in Richards (1977: 190) highlights on L1(first language) independent errors. There are several factors causing L1 independent errors, such as learning strategies, teaching techniques, folklore about L2 (second language), and the age of bilingualism. The later means the period over which the L2 has been used by the speech community which the learner belongs to.

In his works Selinker in Richards (1977, 1988) has presented a comprehensive discussion on this matter. He correlates the issues of the source of errors with the second language learning process. He even proposes the term ‘interlanguage’ to refer to the language system of the second language learner, a system distinct from both the native as well as the target language. Nemser in Richards (1977) called it ‘Approximative System’ and Dulay et al. (1982) called it ‘Transitional Competence’.

According to Richards (1974:143), intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn condition under which rules apply. While LoCoco in Dulay et al., (1982: 143), states that intralingual errors occur when L1 does not have a rule which L2 has, the learner applies an L2 rule, providing an error. Obviously, those quite different definitions also lead researchers to report different findings for the same data with respect to types and frequencies of intralingual errors.

At least, the different sources of errors, intralingual and developmental categories turn out to be subset to each other and Error Analysis continues to use them as separate error type within a single taxonomy. Intralingual errors reflect the general character of rule learning such as faulty overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply (Richards, 1974). On the other hand, developmental errors are those which illustrate the learner attempting to build up hypothesis about the target language. An examination of learners’ developing speech, however, reveals that most of the developmental errors are intralingual. No investigation has been made to classify the boundaries of these categories (Dulay et al., 1982:145).

## 1.8 Definition of the key terms.

There is some agreement that, as far as possible, the terms of discourse related to research should be defined through the use of what are called operational definition (Robert, 1969:59). So, it is important to clarify the conceptual definitions into the operational ones. In order to avoid misunderstanding of the concept use in this study, the following conceptual definitions used in the study are defined and clarified into operational ones.

### 1.8.1 Error.

Dulay et al.(1982) use the term error referring to any deviations from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or sources might be. They also explain that the norm used to identify the errors may be one of the dialects or other varieties of the language the speaker uses. They (1982:139) state,

One might, for example, look at errors with respect to a non-standard language variety such as Maori English. Using that norm, the sentence, “ Who is your name?” is a correct utterance. However, if the norm selected is British or American English, the use of Who for What would be considered as an error.

In addition to this definition, according to Richards et al. (1985: 95), a distinction is sometimes made between an error, which results from incomplete knowledge, and a mistake made by a learner when writing or speaking and which caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance.

In this study, the writer does not intend to differentiate or distinguish between errors and mistakes. Thus, he only uses the definition of error which is any deviations from the English rule system, that is the students’ attempt to omit the necessary items, add the unnecessary ones, misform items, or misorder them in constructing compound and complex sentences.

### 1.8.2 Omission Errors.

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al., 1982: 154).

### 1.8.3 Misformation Errors.

Misformation errors refer to the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. (Dulay et al., 1982: 158).

#### 1.8.4 Errors of Misorder.

Errors of misorder are characterized by the incorrect placement of morpheme of group of morphemes in an utterance. (Dulay et al., 1982: 162).

#### 1.8.2 Compound Sentence.

A sentence which contains two or more independent clauses which are joined by co-ordination is called a compound sentence. Richards et al. (1999: 69).

Sentences that are related to each other in meaning may be combined by using connectors that indicate the relationship between the two sentences. The result is a compound sentence. There are four kinds of connectors: coordinate conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, and transition expressions. (Wilson et al., 1980: 135).

In this study, a compound sentence refers to a sentence which contains two or more independent clauses which are joined by co-ordinations.

#### 1.8.3 Complex sentence.

A complex sentence contains one independent clause and one (or more) dependent clause(s). In a complex sentence, one idea is generally more important than the other one. The more important idea is placed in the independent clause, and the less important idea is placed in the dependent clause. (Oshima et al. 1999: 163).