

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

People are more aware of how important the language is. Language means communication, which helps people to interact, express, and communicate their ideas. The use of language can not be separated from human life because it is a tool that is used by people in speaking or writing. Corder (1962:20) states that language is an object like a tool, which we can pick up, use for some purposes and put down again. By using language, we can ask other people to do something, exchange our ideas, and communicate each other about our plans in the future or experiences.

English is an international language and it has an important role for communication in the world. In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language and it is taught as a compulsory subject in Junior and Senior High Schools. Even in many Universities there is a English Study Program.

Since English is foreign language, it is realized that most Indonesian students generally get some difficulties in learning it. The difficulties occur when they lack of knowledge about vocabulary and grammar. In fact, they have to master the language skills, including listening, speaking, reading and writing because the goal of learning English is to use it in spoken and written communication.

On the other hand, writing is a challenging task that requires both effort and skill all at once. The writing skill is regarded as the most difficult and complex language skill because it requires extent of perception and involves thinking process extensively. It is quite possible for second/foreign language learner to find difficulties in getting and generating their ideas for writing or focusing their attention on particular topic when they are asked to write.

White & Arndt (1991:14) stated that a second and foreign language learner will need quite a long time to create an idea in writing something. Further, Bracewell as cited by White & Arndt (1991:12) agrees that writing is not easy. Bracewell also explains that writing is the most complex and demanding cognitive activity undertaken by human beings. Therefore, the second/foreign language learner is facing the most difficult skill (writing) to be developed. Indeed, second/foreign language learner has to master writing for their academic purpose. In addition, Harmer (2001:79) states that writing is a form of communication to deliver thought or to express feeling through written form. Meanwhile, Brown (2001) stated that writing is a thinking process, because writing is a process of putting ideas down a paper to transform thought into words and gave them structure and coherent organization.

On the other hand, Miles (1982: 4) stated that writing process is easier than speaking process because people who write something have time to think the idea and find out the right words then expressed it into writing. It means that the students should choose suitable words to be arranged into sentences and determine the right verb that is suitable to the tense. It also means that the students have time to prepare their writing such as the topic that they are going to write, to revise and rearrange into a good composition. Although it is easier than speaking but the students still say that writing is difficult because the English rules are very complicated and they differ from their native language. They often make incorrect structures or break the language rules. They still use Indonesian English in their sentences. In fact, a wrong sentence can disturb the meaning of the sentence. Braganza (1998: 14) says that by breaking the fundamental rules and grammar, our ideas become wrong, the sentences become erroneous and we stand self-condemned.

The difficulties in applying the rules of the language in writing cause the students to make errors. According to Fries & Lado, error is a failure to respond a particular stimulus automatically. It occurs when the features of the eight language is different from the learners'

native language. The students' errors can be classified into linguistic errors. Dulay (1982: 146) states that there are four taxonomies that are important to consider, namely the linguistic category taxonomy, the surface strategy taxonomy, the comparative analysis taxonomy and the communicative taxonomy. While Richard (1974) concludes that writing errors made by the students are caused by two factors, they are interlingua and intralingua. Interlingua factor occurs when they make deviant sentences from mother tongue. Intralingua occurs when they lack grammatical knowledge in the target language. He also points out that complex rule learning is typically characterized by overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesized.

In the education practice, writing plays important role for students who are in the process of learning a language. Based on the Senior High School Competency Based Curriculum, the students are expected to be able to communicate in English both in oral and written form. In senior high school in Indonesia, the skill of writing is taught by using genre based approach. Students are introduced to some genres and taught through the model of reading texts where they are explicitly taught about the social function, the generic structures and the language features of the genres. By introducing them to the reading model texts, they are expected to know and understand the difference between one genre to another in English, so that they are able to write the genres by themselves with the right order of generic structures and the correct use of the language features of genres.

There are twelve genres that are taught in senior high school. Those are descriptive, recount, narrative, procedure, explanation, discussion, exposition, news item, report, spoof and review. Writing descriptive text is one of the genres in writing texts. It is taught by teacher in order to make students know how to describe themselves and their surrounding although it is still in a simple way. Descriptive text is a text which a writer tries to portray what is being described. Description is used to describe a particular thing/object, place, or

person. On the other hand, Oshima & Hogue (2007:61) stated that descriptive writing appealed to the senses, so it told how something looked, felt, smelled, tasted, and/or sounds and a good description was a word picture so the reader could imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind. Meanwhile, Wyrick (1987:227) stated, “the writer of description creates a word-picture of persons, places, objects, and emotions using a careful selection of detail to make an impression of the reader”. It can be concluded that descriptive writing is a kind of writing that consists of description, characteristics, definition of something, object or person. As for tense that usually being used in the descriptive text is simple present tense.

However, based on researcher’s experience in doing research at one public university in Jambi in writing a descriptive text, students often find difficulties although they have been guided by their lecturer to write. The difficulties are involving in developing ideas, grammar, hesitation in choosing the appropriate dictions while composing descriptive text as the lack of vocabularies, mechanic aspects such as spelling, punctuation and capitalization difficulties can also affect the meaning of the sentences in paragraph.

One way that can be used to find out students’ knowledge about English is by analyzing the students’ text/writing. Analyzing students’ text is very important to do because it can help English teacher to find out the students’ ability and difficulties in writing (Lock, 1996). Further, Emilia (2005) states that research about analyzing students’ text is very important to do because by knowing the students’ difficulties, it can lead the teacher/lecturer to help solve the students’ problems.

From the explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing and focusing grammatical errors in writing the descriptive writing among the 2nd semester students (class of 2015) at one public university in Jambi because it is taught by introducing the students to the kind of texts with a hope that they will be able to write a well descriptive piece of writing in the future. In addition, the researcher chose descriptive because they have been taught in

senior high school and the target participants were the second semester students or the first year in college who have graduate from high school not long ago. The researcher hope that they still remember about the text, especially descriptive one because there is also writing course (paragraph writing) in the syllabus course and the researcher have asked advice and permission from lecturer who teach the course. As for the academic writing in college, the researcher is interested to acknowledge the difficulties that students may find in composing a piece of descriptive writing.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

College students still make errors in their writing, especially the students who have a lot of ideas but not have enough knowledge of language to express what they want to write. They find it difficult to make English writing that are gramatically correct and acceptable. The main cause is that foreign language writing is linguistically different in many ways from native language writing. Besides, writing skill also can not be acquired in a short time. It requires the students to understand the spelling and punctuation, a sentence structures, vocabulary and paragraph development. Because of that, they still make errors when they have to express or describe something in English, especially about the structure construction.

Errors play an important role in learning a foreign language. From the errors that students make, one can determine their level of mastery of language system and discover what they still have to learn. Foreign language teachers should realize errors made by the students.

In an error analysis, there should be at least two stages of activities that should be carried out. The first thing is identifying and describing errors based on the type of errors. There are four types of errors; they are addition, omission, misformation and disordering.

Table 1. shows the examples of type of errors

Erronous Sentences	Reconstructed Sentences	Type of Errors			
		addition	omission	misformation	misordering
My friend usually <u>call</u> me Rika	My friend usually <u>calls</u> me Rika		√		
I <u>am very love</u> him and he <u>love</u> us too	I <u>love</u> him <u>very much</u> and he <u>loves</u> us, too	√	√		√

The second is interpreting the causes or the sources of errors. There are at least two sources of errors. The first is the influence of the students' native language which is called interlingua errors. The second is interference within the target language that is called intralingua errors.

Table 2. shows the examples of the causes of errors

Erronous Sentences	Reconstructed Sentences	Causes of Errors
My friend usually <u>call</u> me Rika	My friend usually <u>calls</u> me Rika	Intralingua Error The verb "call" should be "calls" because the verb is singular and the sentence is present
I <u>am very love</u> him and he <u>love</u> us too	I <u>love</u> him <u>very much</u> and he <u>loves</u> us, too	Interlingual and intralingual error The verb should be "love" without "am". The order is like Indonesian rule. The verb "love" should be "loves" because the verb is singular and the sentence is present.

In classifying linguistic errors, there are four taxonomies namely: linguistic category taxonomy, surface strategy taxonomy, comparative taxonomy and communicative effect taxonomy (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982:146)

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are common grammatical errors made by the second semester students at one public university in Jambi?
2. What are the possible causes of grammatical errors in writing made by the second semester students?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is intended to describe the common errors made by the second semester students of one public university in Jambi and to describe the possible causes of grammatical errors in writing made by the second semester students.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

The students usually make errors in their writing, especially related to the structure construction; namely grammatical errors. In this study the researcher will focus on grammatical errors which found in the students' writing. The researcher will only take descriptive text writing since the second semester students (class of 2015) has paragraph writing course in the course syllabus. The analysis will focus on four types of errors, namely: addition, omission, misformation and misordering.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The results of the study are expected to give contribution for language learning in theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to give a real portrait about Indonesian students' ability in composing the descriptive piece of writing. Practically, this research is expected to give much information about students' difficulties, so in the future the

students will be more careful in writing and English teachers can help the students to solve the difficulties they face.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Descriptive text is a text about how something looks, sounds and tastes (Kane, 2000: 352).

Error analysis is listing and classification of the errors contained in a sample of learner's speech or writing (Dulay, 1982:277)

Writing is a form of communication to deliver thought or to express feeling through written form (Harmer, 2001: 79).