CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human beings are born with the ability to communicate with others through language. People can use language to share information and also build relation with other people. In maintaining the relationship, people should build a communication. The existing variation of communication among people comes from their different languages such as between their first language and other languages. In many cases, language learners can understand fluently their first language, but they will face many problems in using other languages. In other words, foreign languages cannot be understood easily by these language learners. There must be obstacles and difficulties for learners in learning other languages.

English as a second language has been the most popular and important foreign language for many people around the world. In Indonesia, English as the first foreign language has been taught in many schools, starting from Elementary school to University level. Airlangga University, as one of Indonesian state universities also has English Department under Faculty of Humanities in which English is used entirely during the teaching and learning process.

The students of the English Department have about four semesters to learn about English skills including writing skill. However, many students often get difficulties in producing well sentence structures not only from the early semester but also up to the fourth semester students. From the researcher's pre-observation, he assumes that the students often get problem in applying the rules of agreement and plural form, some types of inflectional morphemes in English, such as omitting the suffix '-s' in the sentence 'The writer *choose* some *category* to explain the problem of learning habit'. Based on this fact, the researcher is interested to explore more about this problem by analyzing the English Department students' errors in their writing assignment from one of their subjects taken in the fifth semester.

Academic Writing and Presentation is one of the subjects in English Department, Faculty of Humanity, Airlangga University which is offered for the fifth semester students. It uses English language both written and spoken in the class. This subject presents the techniques how to be a good writer and how to write well especially in academic writing both linguistics and literature field. The students who are taking this subject also taught how to present their academic writing in the class.

Every language has its own rules. Learners need to know how to use language well by studying the rules of that language. The rules are applied, both in spoken and written language. The researcher is more interested in analyzing written errors because in writing, students can have a full control on their grammar, and they have more time to rethink and revise their sentences to

produce well sentence structures. In spite of the length of time to rethink and revise the sentences, students keep producing error sentences. This condition is supported by Nunan's statement that writing is more difficult than the other skills in English such as Listening, Speaking, and Reading (Nunan, 1989). Writing skill requires demonstrating the control of a number of variables simultaneously; they are control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation spelling, etc. In addition, Nunan (1989, p. 35) states, "It has been argued that that learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is first, second, or foreign language." Therefore, the possibility of making errors is wide enough among students who learn English as a foreign language.

In a foreign language learning process, making errors are usual things that occur and considered as a necessary phenomenon. Hendrickson (1979, p. 44) stated when the learners use a foreign language creatively, they produce many errors. Many kinds of errors occur when the learners write because they do not master the language structure well. In addition, errors are the inability of the students in using rules of the components and elements of the foreign language.

The errors made by the learners during the process of learning can also be related to the complexity of a language, such as the rules of grammar. Grammar is essential in learning languages including English since each language has its own set of rules or grammar (Batstone, 1995). Grammar is organizing words into sentences, using the correct grammatical word structure. Learners of English should also mind their grammar in using English in communication, not only in

speaking, but also in writing. They often make errors, especially when they try to arrange sentences in their writings. As a result, they will write sentences ungrammatically.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is particularly interested in investigating grammatical errors of inflectional morphemes. According to Katamba, English has seven inflectional morphemes, namely, Plural morpheme which indicates the plural number in most nouns, Genitive morpheme which indicates the genitive case in most nouns, Agreement morpheme which indicates the third-person singular present tense of verbs, Present-participle morpheme that is used to show the present-participle forms of verbs, Past-tense morpheme that is used to show past many verbs, and then the Comparative and Superlative morphemes respectively indicate degree of adjectives. (Katamba, 1993).

The Academic Writing and Presentation class students of the English Department of Airlangga University have already taken completely Structure class from Structure I to Structure IV and also Writing I to Writing III class before they take Academic Writing and Presentation class. Therefore, the researcher assumes that they have already mastered English grammar well and got enough practice in writing. However, error sentences, particularly errors in inflectional morphemes, occur as the problems for these students who are already in the fifth semester of their studies. This problem shows that a study is crucial needed to find out what are actually the students' errors in their writings. Without any studies on this problem, this condition is predicted to be worse since these students are going to

write their thesis. The worst, these errors can make the readers of their papers get confused and misinterpret their messages.

Considering the problems above, the more intensive discussion of the foreign language learners in making errors especially inflectional morpheme errors is really needed. By analyzing these errors, the researchers are able to reveal the type of errors produced by them. This result is useful for English teachers in general and for English writing teacher particularly to know what errors that the learners make. By knowing the students' errors, teachers are able to help learners to learn to correct the errors that they make by themselves (Ellis, 1997).

1.2   Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher would like to seek out answers to these following questions:

1. What are the types of inflectional morphemes errors produced by the Academic Writing and Presentation class students of the English Department Students of Airlangga University in their writings?
2. Which inflectional morpheme errors have the highest occurrence?

1.3   Objectives of the Studies

This study aims to investigate the inflectional morphemes errors produced by the Academic Witting and Presentation class students of the English

Department in their writing. There are two objectives which the researcher eager to achieve in this study:

1. To find out what types of inflectional morphemes errors produced the Academic Witting and Presentation class students of the English Department Students of Airlangga University in their writings.

2. To find out the highest occurrence of inflectional morpheme errors.

1.4 Significance of the Study

1. The researcher expects that the findings of this study will give contribution in Linguistics field especially in Morphology and Second Language Teaching. In addition, the findings of this study can enrich errors analysis studies particularly in inflectional morphemes.

2. The researcher hopes that the findings will be considered as input for students especially English Department students who are taking Academic Writing and Presentation class to make improvement on their writing skills and their English competence. By knowing the kind of inflectional morpheme errors that the students frequently make, the researcher hopes that the students can be more concerned with their language production in minimizing their errors particularly in their writing.

3. The researcher hopes that this study will give input for the English teachers especially those who are teaching AWP class, writing class, and English structure class, so that they know in which part(s) students have most difficulties on regarding English as the foreign language.

1.5   Definition of Key Terms

AWP	: Academic Writing and Presentation. One of the English Department programs of Airlangga University (Faculty of Humanities).
Error	: Errors reflect gaps in a leamer's knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct (Ellis, 1997, p. l7)
Error Analysis	: Three procedures to analyze second language learners' errors, that is, the identification, the description, and the explanation of the errors (Ellis, 1997)
Grammar	: Grammar is an essential part in the use of spoken and written languages. It would be impossible to learn language effectively without understanding the grammar (Batstone, 1995)
Inflectional morpheme	: Bound morphemes that are used to produce new words in the English language, but rather to indicate aspect of the grammatical function of word. (Yule, 1985, p. 62)

Morpheme : Minimal linguistic unit which has a meaning or grammatical function. (Godby, 1982)