

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

English, as a foreign language, is the world's most widely used language. Due to the fact that the world has reached globalisation when the need to communicate with more and different people from different countries is unavoidable, we have to be able to communicate in English. For all those reasons, English has been the most important foreign language in Indonesia. Therefore, English has been made as a compulsory subject in the primary and university levels of education.

Every language has its own grammatical system which means that different languages usually have different grammatical system, like Indonesian and English. The difference of grammatical system between Indonesian and English makes people possible to do analysis toward those two languages. A common thing usually analyzed is the tense patterns. Tense is a part of English system that Indonesian does not have. According to Hornby (1975:78), tense stands for a verb form or series of verb forms used to express time relation. Every English sentence indicates information about event or situation that occurs in a particular time, whether in the present, past, or future. For example, *I went to Surabaya last week* indicates that the speaker did an activity "went to Surabaya" at a particular time in the past "last week." Indonesian uses adverbs of time to show the time when an event or activity happens. Indonesian only has adverbs of

time, such as, *kemarin (yesterday)*, *besok (tomorrow)*, not the tenses. English has both adverbs of time and tenses.

Generally, English has three major types of tense, namely present, past, and future tenses based on the time when a certain event or action takes place. The three types of tenses have different rules, especially concerning the verb forms used in each tense. The use of verb forms will be different in each tense that indicates whether an event happens in the present, past, or future time. The verb form changes and adjusts to the time of an event or situation in relation to the act of speaking or writing (before, simultaneous with, or after), and the aspect of the event being focused on (began, in the process, or completed). For example, if an event happened in the past, the verb changes into regular verb (e.g. *I listened to the radio last night*) or irregular verb (e.g. *We ate at that restaurant yesterday*).

Actually, there are twelve kinds of tenses, namely, Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future, Present Progressive, Past Progressive, Future Progressive, Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Future Perfect, Present Perfect Progressive, Past Perfect Progressive, and Future Perfect Progressive. However, there are five tenses that can be viewed as the core system, namely, Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future, Present Progressive, and Present Perfect. (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1983:62). Those five tenses are considered to be the core system, which means that they are the most important part of the tense system. Since they are often used in the daily communication, all of the EFL or ESL learners have to master the usage of those five tenses. Simple Present is used to express habitual actions or activities; Simple Past is often used to express an

activity began and ended in the past. Simple Future is used to express an action that takes place at some definite future time. Present Progressive is used to show expression or event in the moment of speaking, and Present Perfect is used to express the repetition of an activity before now.

Learning language also means learning its grammatical system. Grammar is considered to be the system, which all speakers of a language learn earlier (Cook, 1969). Grammar is ordinarily taken as the way how language works. Thus, English grammar may simply mean the way or the guideline to produce things correctly in English. Since the English grammar represents a system of the language; the English foreign language (EFL) learners should start the learning process by mastering the grammar. The English grammatical rules provide the learners with a set of principal system, which allows them to construct acceptable English sentence. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983:62) pointed out that:

English tense is often correlated to the grammatical system because tense deals considerably with the form and meaning of English sentences..... The meaning of tenses entails a language-specific way of dealing with time and the relationship of events and interlocutors to time.

For that reason, many English teachers firstly introduce the language to the EFL learners by making them acquainted to tenses. It is necessary for Indonesian students as EFL learners to learn the usage of tenses because tenses are concerned with meaning as well as form of English sentences. Without learning the usage of each tense, the Indonesian students will have difficulty in constructing the acceptable English sentences.

Most of the Indonesian students often have difficulty in producing the correct tense usage because tense systems are language-specific. It is not surprising that EFL learners (in this case Indonesian students) have a great deal of difficulty in mastering the English tense. Tense itself is basically defined as the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the action or state described (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1985:290). The verb form used in each tense is controlled, or affected by time markers or time expressions.

In the process of learning a foreign language, learners often make errors. Brown (1994:204) said that learning a foreign language is like any other human learning, in which making errors often occurs. It is a common thing that people who learn a foreign language face some language barriers such as making errors during the process of learning. Making errors naturally occurs during the process of second language acquisition, in this case concerning to the tense errors made by Indonesian students. Errors are systematic, likely to occur repeatedly and not recognized by the learners. According to Corder (cited in Richards, 1974:25), errors are signals that actual learning is taking place; they can indicate students' progress and success in language learning. Errors are often labeled as a competence problem; they occur because there is a problem with learner's competence. The learner has not acquired the knowledge of what the correct form is.

The writer is interested in analyzing the verb tense errors made by the second grade students of SMUN 4 Surabaya because there is a tense difference between Indonesian grammatical system and English grammatical system.

Indonesian does not have any tenses that explain an activity happens in the present, past, or future time. This situation might influence the process of learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, the writer focused her study on the tense errors. The writer chose second grade students of SMUN 4 Surabaya as her subject research because she considered that they have learned all types of tenses when they were in the junior high school and in the first grade. The writer chose SMUN 4 randomly among other high schools in Surabaya.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In which tense of the core system do the second grade students of SMUN 4 Surabaya mostly make errors?

1.3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To find out which tense of the core system that the second grade students of SMUN 4 Surabaya mostly make errors

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to provide description about the tense errors made by second grade students of SMUN 4 Surabaya. It is expected that the result of this study will be of some use for students of linguistics since this study has been purposed on the boundaries of these fields. It is also expected to increase students' knowledge about the usage of English tenses, so they can minimize their errors. This study might also be useful for some English teachers in teaching English

tenses to their students, so they can focus and emphasize on some tenses that need further attention.

1.5. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study was conducted in a small number of students, and also on a very limited number of questions. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman said that there are five kinds of English tenses which can be viewed as the core system, namely Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future, Present Progressive, and Present Perfect. Because of time limitation, competence, and fund, the writer limited this study to the structural tense errors, especially on the verb forms since they can indicate what particular tense is used. Each of the questions uses time markers or time expression, which are related to the forms of the verb system. Then, she analyzed the tense errors based on Ellis's theory of error analysis.

1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study basically uses the theory proposed by some linguists and researchers of English tenses and error analysis. Actually, there are five major theories that support this study. First, the theory proposed by Hornby (1975:78), that stated tense as a verb form or series of verb forms used to express a time relation. It means that tense refers to the use of verb forms which follow the division of time. Second, the theory proposed by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983:62), stating that, there are five kinds of English tenses that can be viewed as the core system, namely Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Future,

Present Progressive, and Present Perfect. It is necessary for most EFL learners to master the use of those tenses because they are mostly used in daily communication. Third, the theory proposed by Lim (cited in Ubol, 1981:13) and Penman (cited in Abi Samsara, 1998), which explained that errors in the written production can be easily collected, analyzed, and explained since the inevitable problems of misunderstanding are avoidable. Thus, the written errors are noticeable, because they can be read. Fourth, the theory proposed by Ellis (1997:17), that stated there are three procedures to analyze learners' errors namely collecting sample of language learners and identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, and explaining the errors. The more explanation and definition of error, error analysis, and tenses will be outlined in Chapter II, Literature Review, which is also supported by some other theories.

1.7. METHOD OF THE STUDY

The method used in this study is a qualitative method. According to Dabbs (cited in Berg, 1982), qualitative refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphor, symbols, and description of things. Here, the writer applied this method to find out in which tense of the core system that the second grade students of SMUN 4 Surabaya mostly make errors. According to Becker (cited in LeCompte and Preissle, 1993:116), in qualitative data analysis, percentage can be used to count the number of times something is mentioned in field note as very rough estimate of frequency. It means that often enumeration is used to provide evidence for categories created or to determine if observations are

contaminated. She also does not take any statistical calculation. The writer only identified, described, classified, and explained the learners' errors.

1.7.1. RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

The respondents of the study are forty students in the second grade of SMUN 4 Surabaya. The writer chose this high school randomly among other high schools in Surabaya, where the students take English as their compulsory subject. In doing this study, class II-4 was selected out of six classes of the second grade students. The selection of class II-4 was recommended by the headmaster. The respondents are at the age of 16-18 years old.

1.7.2. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

To avoid misunderstanding, the writer defines the following key terms:

- Error** : a systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong. (Norrish, 1983:25)
- Tenses** : a verb form or series of verb forms used to express a time relation. (Hornby, 1975:78)
- Error analysis** : a systematic describing and explaining of errors made by learners or users in their oral and/or written production in the target language. (Ubol, 1981:8)
- Core system** : the five most important tenses used in daily communication, namely, simple present, simple past, simple future, present

progressive, and present perfect. (Celece-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1983:62).

1.7.3. TECHNIQUE OF DATA COLLECTION

There were three steps taken by the writer in collecting the data. The first step was choosing the respondents of the study. Then, the second step was asking permission to the headmaster of SMUN 4 Surabaya. The third step was giving the students written tense questions, in which the written tense questions were listed in a random order. It means that the writer selected the tense of each question randomly (see the appendix). The writer took the data by giving written tense questions, which were carried out by the second grade students of SMUN 4 Surabaya. The number of tense questions is thirty items. The written tense questions were taken from Azar (*Fundamental of English Grammar, Understanding and Using English Grammar*), Hayden (*Usage of Tenses*), Hartman (*Tense Situation: Tense in Contrast and Context*), and Murphy (*English Grammar in Use*). These books are often used by the teacher in teaching English to their students. The questions consisted of second parts; the first part was completing the sentences with the correct form of the words in parentheses. This part consisted of twenty items. The second part was choosing the correct answer for each question. This part provides the two alternative choices of each item. It consisted of ten items. There were six items for each tense. The test was conducted on 14th October 2004. The students had to do the test in forty-five

minutes. The questions were given in the class as a quiz to make the students do well and honestly.

Briefly, the procedures in collecting the data are:

- Choosing the respondents
- Asking the headmaster's permission
- Giving a written test to the students

1.7.5. TECHNIQUE OF DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting all the students' answers in each item, the writer began to analyze the data. In this analysis, she analyzed the data in four steps. The first step was presenting the errors made by the students in each of the five tense of the core system. The second step was identifying, describing, and explaining errors. The third step was counting all of the tense errors that occurred in each of question. Finally, the last step was counting how many times each of tense error occurred in percentage. The percentage of errors can be done by using the formula proposed by Arikunto (1992:195-196), as follows:

$$\frac{F}{N} \times 100\% = n\%$$

where: F = the number of errors in each type

N = the total number of errors

To sum up, the procedures of the data analysis are:

- Presenting the errors in each of the five tenses of the core system (focus on the verb form)
- Identifying, describing, and explaining the errors
- Counting the tense errors that occurred in each number of question
- Counting the percentage of errors in each of the five tenses

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW