

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. MISTAKES VS. ERRORS**

First of all, since this study analyses learners' errors, it is appropriate to define what errors are. The writer started by explaining the terms of error and mistake. Occasionally, the terms "mistakes" and "errors" are often used interchangeably. Technically, they are two very different phenomena. However, there is a clear difference between the two. The following definitions of errors and mistakes are applicable to this study. Norrish made a clear distinction between errors and mistakes, and defined errors as "a systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong" (1983:25). He added that when a learner of English as a second or foreign language makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learnt the correct form. The learners are not aware of making the errors because they do not know the correct form. Norrish defined mistakes as "inconsistent deviation." When a learner has been taught a certain correct form, and he uses one form sometimes and another at other times quite inconsistently, the inconsistent deviation is called a mistake.

Corder also distinguishes between mistakes and errors from a pedagogical point of view (1967:167). The former, common to native speakers, are the failure to utilize a known system correctly; they are unsystematic, resulting from memory lapses, physical states, such as tiredness, and psychological conditions such as strong emotion. They are of no pedagogical relevance. The later are typically

made by apprentice language learners who do not yet have a full command of a language system; they tend to be systematic and reveal the learner's underlying knowledge of the language to date. In other words, it can be said that mistakes commonly occur to native speakers who are unable to perform what they know, while errors commonly occur to EFL or ESL learners who have lack of knowledge; errors occur because the learners do not know what is correct.

Human learning is fundamentally a process that involves the making of mistakes, misjudgments, miscalculations, and erroneous assumptions that form an important aspect of learning virtually any skill or acquiring information (Brown, 1994:164). Like any other human learning, learning a language has the same process in terms of the appearance of mistakes made by the learners. Making errors for most of language learners is something that cannot be avoided, especially in learning a foreign language. Whenever a language is learnt or acquired, one is faced with the problem of errors. Errors that are made by foreign or second language learners in the process of constructing a new system of language show the understanding of the process of foreign or second language acquisition (Brown, 1994:164).

Generally speaking, errors are an inevitable feature of learning, which provide evidence regarding with the grammar rules and categories used by the learners. It is alike as what Corder states that errors are signals that actual learning is taking place; they can indicate students' progress and success in learning language (1974:25). A learner's errors provide an evidence of his or her understanding of the system of language that he or she has learned. The term

*“errors”* in this study covers only those verb tense errors, which occur repeatedly in the written work of the students.

## **2.2. CLASSIFICATION OF ERRORS**

According to Ubol (1981:8), the production of error can happen in the oral and written expression. He classifies the production of errors into two ways, namely oral and written errors. For an oral expression, errors of the target language learners refer to those features of the learner’s utterances, which differ from those of any native speaker. For a written expression, on the other hand, errors of the target language learners in translation and in tests of free production (i.e. composition in second or foreign language) refer to those grammatical structures and lexicon which differ from those of the native speaker of the target language. The main problem one faces in the area of classification is that one error can be classified in a number of ways. The following error categories and sub categories were dealt with by Lim’s error classification (cited in Ubol, 1981:13). He classified three types of errors appearing in the written expressions, in which each type has been sub divided into smaller sub categories for pedagogical reason:

- Structural errors , which involve errors of tense
- Lexical errors, which involve errors of word choice (meaning and vocabulary)
- Errors of style, which involve discourse errors.

In conducting this study, the writer did not deal with the whole categories above since she would like to focus on the structural errors of tense only. The

focus of this study is on the written errors, in view of the fact that errors in the written work of the learners can be easily collected, analysed, and explained since the inevitable problems of misunderstanding is exacerbated (Penman, cited in Abi Samra, 2003). The written errors are noticeable; there is only one passage. The sentence is written and read. Because there is no possibility of negotiating meaning of written documents, the problems of misunderstanding are avoidable. We make sense of the dialogue in a complex back-and-forth process of negotiation of meaning between speakers in the oral production errors (ibid). It means that the production of errors in the written expression can be analysed more easily than in the oral expression because the problems of misunderstanding are avoidable. Because of that reason, the focus of this study is on the written errors committed by the learners, particularly in the structural errors of tense.

### **2.3. ERROR ANALYSIS**

At first sight, it may seem a little bit strange to focus on what learners perform wrong rather than on what they perform right. However, Ellis (1997:15) stated that there are some good reasons for focusing on learners' errors. First, they are conspicuous feature of learner language, raising the important question of why learners make errors. Second, it is useful for a teacher to know what errors learners make. Third, paradoxically, it is possible that making errors may actually help learners to learn when they self-correct the errors they make.

The identification and analysis of the area of learning difficulties in second or foreign language learning has traditionally been a central aspect of study in

many parts of the world. It may be true, as Corder states that central to the investigations was the analysis of errors made by the learners since they represented the most significant data on which a reconstruction of his knowledge of the target language could be made (cited in Ubol, 1981:4). The fact that learners do make errors and there are some benefits for focusing on the learners' errors, make researchers observe, classify, and analyze them. This leads to a way of study of learners' errors which is called error analysis. Through error analysis, language scholars believed that they could point out clearly the causes of errors in the oral and written production of the learner in the target language. Johansson (cited in Ubol, 1981:8) has pointed out that:

An analysis of the learner's errors gives us evidence of his competence in the foreign language. We also gain valuable information concerning learners' difficulties at different stages. Such information is important for the planning of courses and the construction of teaching materials.

Ubol has simply defined that error analysis as a systematic describing and explaining of errors made by learners or users in their oral and/or written production in the target language. He also stated that error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make (1981:8). It consists of comparison between the errors made in the target language and that target language itself. In other words, error analysis can be regarded as a process to examine and analyze both language learners' errors in the oral and written production.

## 2.4. PROCEDURES OF ERROR ANALYSIS

In order to facilitate a clearer analysis, the verb tense errors have been modified and analyzed by using Ellis's theory of error analysis. Ellis (1997:15) has designed procedures to analyze the learners' errors which include three stages:

### a. Identification of Errors

The first step in analyzing learners' errors is identification of errors. To identify the errors, we have to write out the sentence containing the error, and then underline the word/phrase which shows the error. Identification of errors is needed to compare the sentences learners' produce with what seems to be the normal or correct sentences in the target language, which correspond with them. For example, a learner produces: *George goes to the library last night.* It is clear that the sentence contains error, the correct sentence should be: *George went to the library last night.* By comparing the two sentences, we can see that the learner has used "goes" instead of "went." The verb tense error is due to error in the use of the Simple Past.

### b. Description of Errors

The second step in analyzing learners' errors is description of errors. Once all of the errors have been identified, they can be described into types. There are two ways of doing this. One way is describing errors into grammatical categories. All the verb tense errors are gathered and identified based on the different kinds of verb errors. For example, the errors concerning the Past Tense are grouped together. The second way

is by identifying general ways in which the learners' errors differ from the reconstructed target language sentences. These ways include "omission" (leaving out an item that is required for an utterance to be considered grammatical), "misinformation" (using one grammatical form in place of another grammatical form), and "misordering" (putting the words in a sentence in the wrong word order). In describing the learners' errors, the writer applied the first way, which is stating the type of errors into grammatical categories.

c. Explanation of Errors

The last step in analyzing learners' errors is to explain the different types of errors. There are three ways in explaining the learners' errors in terms of grammatical analysis. First, is stating the grammatical rule which has been violated. Second, is stating the correct form to show contrast with inappropriate form. Third, is giving examples which show the rule in action. The error explanation of this study was explained in grammatical terms.

Procedures of error analysis proposed by Ellis are also supported by Brown (1994:207-211) and Corder (cited in Richards, 1974:166-170).

## **2.5. ENGLISH TENSES**

Since this study focused on the English tenses, it is necessary to explain the definition of tense itself. Tense is a part of English system. According to Hornby (1975:78), tense stands for a verb form or series of verb forms used to express a time relation. Tense indicates whether an action, activity, or state happens in the present, past, or future. In other words it can be said that tense refers to the relationship between the form of the verb used and the time of an action. Time markers or time expressions affect the use of verb tense. Each of the tenses has its own set of rules. English learners must recognize the rules of each tense in order to select the appropriate verb forms for specific time frame.

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. Based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman theory, the writer would like to focus only on those five tenses. The rule and the time expressions or time markers that are commonly used in each



tense are explained below. Here are the explanation of each tense based on Azar (1989, 1992), Hornby (1975), and Hayden (1992):

### 2.5.1. Simple Present Tense

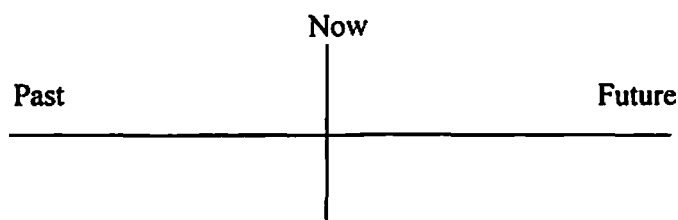
Simple Present Tense is formed with the pattern **Subject (He, She, It) + Verb (adding s/es)**, or **Subject (I, We, You, They) + Verb (without adding s/es)**. The verb is added with “s” if follows first person subject or third person singular. It is used to express habitual or everyday activity, general statements of fact.

For example:

<i>I take a nap</i>	<i>She takes a nap</i>
<i>We take a nap</i>	<i>He takes a nap</i>
<i>You take a nap</i>	<i>It takes a nap</i>
<i>They take a nap</i>	

In the Simple Present Tense the verb “be” has three forms, namely *is*, *am*, and *are*, for example:

<i>I am student</i>	<i>She is student</i>	<i>You are student</i>
	<i>He is student</i>	<i>We are student</i>
		<i>They are student</i>



There are some time markers or time expressions which are commonly used to show habitual actions or repeated action, e.g.: *frequently, usually, sometimes, seldom, always, rarely, often, never, regularly, every week/day/time/year*.

- *I usually go to school at 7.00 am in the morning.*

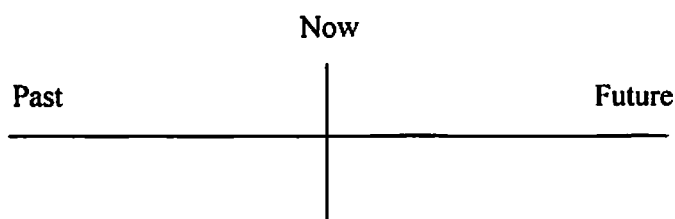
- *The baby often cries.*

### 2.5.2. Simple Past Tense

Simple Past Tense can be formed with two patterns. The first pattern is **Subject + Regular Verb** (adding **-ed** in the end of the verb). The second one is **Subject + Irregular Verb** (without adding **-ed** in the end of the verb, but we have to be familiar with some irregular verbs). Simple Past Tense expresses an event or activity that began and ended at a particular time in the past.

For example: *He walked to school yesterday* (regular verb, with **-ed**)

*I went to the bookstore last night* (irregular verb, without **-ed**)



*(He walked to school began and ended yesterday)*

The verb “be” has two forms in simple past, *was and were*.

e.g. : *I was here last night*                      *You were here last night*

*She was here last night*                      *They were here last night*

*He was here last night*                      *We were here last night*

*It was here last night*

There are some time markers or time expressions to show an event or activity started and finished at a particular time in the past, such as, *yesterday, the day before yesterday, last week/month/year, a few minutes/two hours/five years ago*.

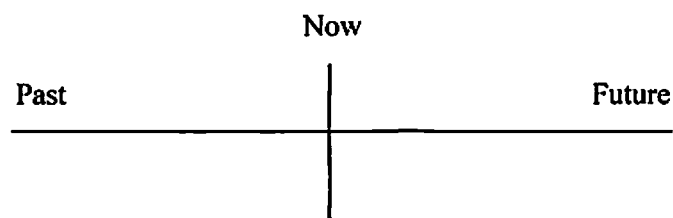
- *The baby slept for six hours last night*
- *I watched movie yesterday night*

### 2.5.3. Simple Future Tense

The form of Simple Future Tense is by using “*will*” after the subject and before the verb (Subject + will + Verb). It expresses an action or event that takes place at one particular time in the future. The “*will*” form also indicates promise, volunteered action and expressing willingness.

e.g.: *I will be there for you (promise)*

*I will pick you up (volunteered action)*



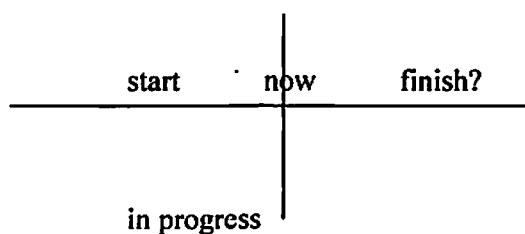
There are some adverbial times expressing future actions or events, such as , *soon, tonight, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, next week/month/year, in 2005, for the next two years/days/months, later.*

- *I will call you later*
- *He will walk to school tomorrow*

### 2.5.4. Present Progressive Tense

The form of Present Progressive is Subject + the present auxiliary “be” (is, am, and are) + Present Participle (Verb + ing). It expresses

an action or event in the progress when the speech is uttered. It shows that an action is not finished at the moment of speaking or writing.



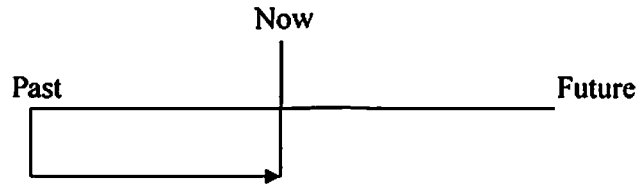
There are some time markers or time expressions used in the Present Progressive which indicate the events at the moment of speaking or writing, such as, *now*, *right now*, *at this moment*, *at this time*, *at present*, *today*, *these days*, *nowadays*, *currently*, and *presently*.

- *She is attending a meeting right now*
- *I am studying Geology at this time*

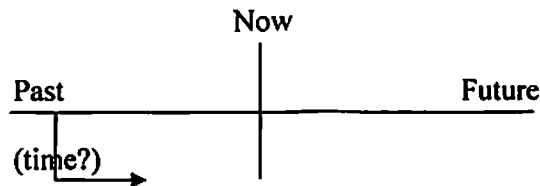
#### 2.5.5. Present Perfect Tense

The pattern of Present Perfect Tense is **Subject (He, She, It) + has + Past Participle**, or **Subject (I, We, You, They) + have + Past Participle**. It is often used to express how the speaker views himself or herself related to the events she or he is talking about:

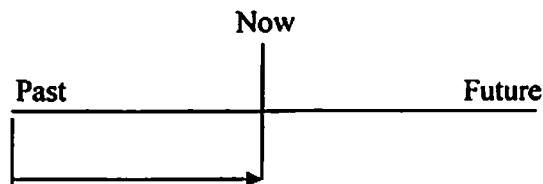
- A situation that began in the past and that continues into the present  
e.g. *I have been a teacher since 1972; I have lived in America for two years.*



- An activity that happened before now, at an unspecified time in the past, e.g. *I have already seen that movie*



- An activity that was repeated several or many times in the past, e.g. *She has flown on an airplane many times.*



There are some time markers or time expressions that usually used in present perfect tense, such as, *just, already, since, for, so far, several/four/many times, until now, in the last ... .. years, etc.*

- *The value of Bradford's house has doubled in the last four years.*

- *I have already finished my exam.*

## 2.6. RELATED STUDIES

The study about error analysis has been done before by Charas Ubol , a Thai English teacher. The title of that paper is *An Error Analysis Study of English Compositions by Thai Students*. This study wants to find out the common difficulties and errors in the written English of Thai students. This study is analyzed based on Ellis Jenner's classification theories of error analysis. Some definition of errors and error analysis by Corder, Richards, and Norrish are also used in this study. In classifying the error, Ubol used Lim's theory of error classification.

A student of Petra Christian University has done another study that analysed tenses error before. The title of the thesis is *Error Analysis on the Usage of the English Tenses of the Second Semester of the English Department of Petra Christian University*, and it is written by Silvia Arista Haryono. The thesis writer wants to find out kinds of errors made by the students in using tenses and tense that seems to be easier for the students to acquire rather than the other ones. This study is analyzed by using Ellis and Corder's theories of error analysis. This study also used some definition of errors and error analysis by Brown, Corder, and Richards. Some definition of tenses by Comrie and Hornby are also used in this study.

# CHAPTER III

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA