# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study that explains the importance of writing, the essential aspects in writing a good composition, and the insignificant attention of lexical aspect in EFL class. Moreover, the explanation about the impacts of lexical errors and some previous studies that deal with lexical errors are also discussed. In addition, in this chapter, the statement of the problems, the objective of the study, significance of the study, and definitions of terms are also provided.

## 1.1. Background of the Study

Learning to write, particularly foreign language writing, forces students to make a great effort in order to master that skill adequately. Since, basically, writing skill requires a good comprehension in making the right choices of syntactic patterns, morphological inflections, vocabulary, and so on, moreover, the communicative meaning of written composition must be also well-conveyed (Llach, 2011, p. 42). However, writing is an essential skill for students, since writing is at the center of teaching and learning, especially in higher education, usually secondary education, and even tertiary education (Coffin et al., 2005).

However, the empirical practice reveals that most secondary graduates have generally low competence in producing foreign language written composition (Lie, 2007, p. 3). It could happen because students are not active users of English and they are not comfortable when practicing their English (Lie, 2007, p. 7). In this sense, it implies that students are afraid to commit language

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error. However, regarding the process of language learning, errors has earned special attention since the process of language learning will be disrupted if learners do not commit errors (Brown, 2000, p. 216). Thus, committing error is generally accepted because it is a part of language learning and it is made unavoidably (Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006). In contrast, James (1998, p. 1) states that a language error is an unsuccessful bit of language, thus, a language error implies a sign of failure in language performance.

Furthermore, a main issue that deserves special attention when dealing with the process of writing skill, especially in foreign language, is the accuracy of grammar and lexical choice. Accuracy means the learner's use of grammar and lexicon is free from errors (Parrott, 2002, p. 67). Grammatical aspect covers a wide range of phenomena, such as subject-verb agreement (for example, *she works*, rather than *she work*), consistent use of verb tenses, writing in complete sentences, and so on. In other words, grammar possesses the conformity of a sentence (or part of a sentence) to the rules of a language (Crystal, 2008, p. 219). On the other hand, lexical aspect refers to lexicon of a language, which deals with word choice that is used constantly to shape the internal cohesion of texts (Greenbaum & Quirk, 2003, p. 434). Accuracy becomes a crucial thing in writing skill, and so does grammatical and lexical knowledge. Consequently, errors committed in both aspects, grammatical and lexical, imply a 'bad' sign of writing process (Llach, 2011, p. 42).

Both lexical and grammatical aspects are essential in writing. However, the grammatical aspect has priority over lexical aspect in real teaching classroom

(Suetae, 2010). Consequently, both students and teachers often neglect and ignore the lexical aspect of writing. Nonetheless, Llach (2011) emphasizes that vocabulary is the primary element of language in terms of communication purpose. She concludes that lexical aspect that refers to vocabulary plays a major role for FL students to be academically successful in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. The better the quality of student's written production indicates the greater the linguistic competence of the student will be. Therefore, the insignificant attention and the importance of vocabulary learning will rise to some problems that make lexical errors become a crucial issue and worthwhile study toward English Foreign Language (EFL) students.

Furthermore, lexical errors that deal with lexical aspect in writing become an important issue today, since they have become the most numerous types of errors in learners' performance and they are the most frequently made by students. In addition, lexical errors play an important role as evidence of vocabulary acquisition (Llach, 2005, p. 93). Riyahi and Ridha (2011) also support that lexical error was considered more problematical than other error types by native speakers because it deals with lexical or word choice, which makes an effective communication obstructed.

This study, which focused on lexical errors, was conducted in SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya. It is the most favorite and preferable school in 'Sekolah Kawasan' that admitted the biggest number of student registrations (1384 students) in the first choice of International-Based School (PPDB Surabaya Website, 2013). 'Sekolah Kawasan' is a label granted to schools that are being one of educational

centrum in each region of (Kompas.com, 2013). It is the continuity of International-Based School program, or so-called 'Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional (SBI)', which aimed to enhance educational qualities, especially in Surabaya. Students intended to register in 'Sekolah Kawasan', particularly SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya, must have high passing grade and pass the proficiency test as the prerequisites to enter this school. Thus, the students who successfully pass the admission test of SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya are classified as the students who have high quality.

Moreover, from overall research about lexical errors on second language writing, most of the studies have only concentrated on university or college students. Only few studies deal with the production of lexical errors in high school students. In Llach's (2005) study, she looked at the relationship between the percentages of lexical error types and the quality of written composition of students of Business English at Universidad de La Rioja. She found that quality was marked as the score of composition. In this study, she was using lexical error category as writing quality predictors. Hemchua and Schmitt (2006) examined lexical errors in the English argumentative compositions of Thai English majors in their third year of study at a university in Bangkok.

Then, Akande, Adedeji, and Okanlawon (2006) also investigated lexical errors in English of final year students of some Technical College in Osun State. They administered multiple-choice test and essay writing exercise as the data sources. Furthermore, Ander and Yildirim (2010) also conducted a similar study in lexical error area. They identified and categorized lexical errors that appeared

in a group of elementary level Turkish EFL learners' composition of EFL students at Anadolu University, School of Foreign Languages. In addition, Suetae (2010) analyzed lexical errors produced by the fourth-year students at Prince of Songkla University majoring English language in written compositions. Carrio Pastor (2004) investigated lexical error in thirty technical scientific writing articles produced by intermediate English students in the Universidad Politecnica de Valencia.

From those previous studies, obviously they have chosen students at the same level that is tertiary education or at college/university level. Therefore, the present study chooses students at senior high school level as the subject of the study with the aim to investigate lexical errors found in expository essays.

This study is important because through the identification and analysis of lexical errors the process of lexical acquisition and the strategies used by secondary school students can be learned. Besides, as explained before, due to lexical errors, the communicative meaning of written composition and language learning process become less intelligible and distorted. Therefore, this study is conducted to help English learners, especially English teachers, to have well understanding about lexical aspect in English writing. Furthermore, the quality of writing is upgraded and the students' enthusiasm for learning English increases. By improving the quality in English skills, the government may enhance the education quality. Moreover, lexical error study also earns little attention that makes it being less studied in Universitas Airlangga. Hence, the existence of the study of lexical errors in Universitas Airlangga is also being rated as important.

Finally, this study is intended to figure out and classify the types of lexical errors produced by the students of SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya. The classification is based on lexical errors taxonomy proposed by James (1998). Then, this study goes to specify the most frequent lexical errors that occur in their English expository essays.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problems

1. What types of lexical errors are produced by the students of SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya in their expository essays?

2. What is the most frequent lexical error type made by the students of SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya in their expository essays?

## 1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the types of lexical errors produced by the students of SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya in their expository essays.

2. To find out the most frequent lexical error type made by the students of SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya in their expository essays.

## 1.4. Significance of the Study

The main importance of this study is that the teachers understand what kinds of lexical errors produced by the students. In addition, the teachers are provided with clues on the most frequent destructive lexical error type. Therefore, the teachers know what to focus and emphasize on their teaching practice. The findings can also be important for the students because they will understand the essence of writing process that writing does not only emphasize on grammatical aspect, but also lexical aspect. Then, they can explore and gain more knowledge

about lexical items in order to enrich their vocabularies. Besides, the findings can be utilized to develop and optimize the English curriculum on SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya. In addition, the findings could contribute to the applied linguistic studies in terms of lexical development, also to the next researchers who are interested in conducting similar study. Finally, the result of this study can be used as a reference for future studies.

## 1.5.  Definition of Key Terms

In order to avoid misinterpretation in understanding this study, the researcher provides the following key terms:

**Error Analysis** : a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics (Crystal, 2008).

**Expository essay** : a text type, particularly in the humanities and social sciences discipline, which has basic essay outline–introduction, body, and conclusion, that is initiated by stating a perspective and then put forward a

point of view or argument (Coffin et al., 2005).

**Formal Error** : formal error mostly plays a major role in the form of deviations including orthographic and phonological deviation. Therefore, it also results in misinformation (James, 1998).

**Lexical error** : lexical error is a deviation in the form and/or meaning of a target-language lexical word (Llach, 2011).

**Semantic Error** : semantic error contributes deviation in meaning. It appears when there is an incorrect choice of lexical items, or also when some semantic feature is not considered by the learner (James, 1998).