

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background of the study, the statement of the problems, the objective of the study, the theoretical framework, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, the assumption, and the definition of the key terms.

1.1. Background of the Study

English has become one of the demanding languages for learners across the globe. Whether it as ESL (English as second language) or EFL (English foreign language), English as a language is used as a tool or bridge for communication. In Indonesia, English is still a foreign language (EFL) so that there are less interaction done in English outside class.

English as a language consists of four major skills, there are speaking, reading, listening, and writing. The researcher took one of the main of the skills, writing as a field of study. The reason of choosing this field was because of writers findings from PPL (Teaching practice program) and from fellow college students' works. Both the findings was very subjective as the writers only checked the writing of the 11th grades high school students and sophomores in college in a normal basis. However, the thesis focused on finding the level of writing proficiency of college students in a more structured method. Moreover, the writer wanted to find out whether the average level was improved from high students to college students. As a result, the writer wanted to find out the level of writing skill of college students.

Writing and speaking are parallel of each other as the two skills function the same, as a communication tools. However, there are differences that should be explained. Coulmas (2003, p. 11) explained that speaking are: (1) bound to utterance time (2) continuous, (3) produced by voice, (4) edible, and (5) evanescent,

on the other hand writing are: (1) timeless, (2) discrete, (3) visible to the eyes, (4) produced by hand, and (5) permanent. Coulmas (2003, p. 11) also added that each one of those contrast characteristic listed above warrants careful investigation. It means that it is not obvious how an audible sound produced by the human voice, which can only be noticed or heard at the time of speaking. However, a discrete order of fixed visible marks or writing produced by the human hand can be perceived at any time. In simple words, speaking has a time limit only when the speaker start speaking till it stops. The speech/information will vanish if the speakers end his speech. Thus, making it bounds to the speech time and it is not permanent. However, writing is considered to be timeless as the written text is available to be read over and over without limitation. That is why one of the methods to conserve a history event from extinction in the past is writing.

Inside the language system, writing relies on many similar structures encountered in spoken language, such as vocabulary, grammar, and semantics. The product of writing is called text and the receiver of text is called a reader. The function itself is to channel ideas to the reader in a written form. The features concept of writing is a high degree of and sentence structures that created style, tone and information accuracy, complex grammar, and a careful choice of vocabulary appropriate for the readers of one's written text (2005, p. 7) as mentioned by Hedge.

Writing is a complex process of learning how to communicate in English using a text. According to Lepionka (2008, p. 118) a composition is considered to be good when it exhibits unity, coherence, and emphasis. A good written composition should have only one main topic (unity). In other words, the many paragraphs written should have one goal. Coherence also plays important role in writing. Coherence in a paragraph or text is defined as a link to other sentences. A good writing should have consistent logical relationship with other sentences in the same paragraph. A good writing should also have emphasis. The clearness of the sentence is very important. Unlike speaking, written text cannot be modified or directly explained to ease vague or ambiguities information. Thus, a written text should be as clear as possible i.e. by using full sentence rather than a phrase. A

special key words should be emphasized in writing to ease the readers. Emphasizing the important information in the end of the sentence/paragraph is one of the examples. Taking advantage of punctuation can also enhance a writing composition to ease the readers. As complex as it is, a composition or a writing is considered to be the most difficult English skills, even for native speaker.

Spoken and written texts share almost similar features and the fact that both have the same objective—to give certain information to the receiver. They are categorized as the productive skills of a language. The other feature found in writing that is different from spoken language is called orthography. Orthography is a set of conventions that contain rules and agreements obligatory used in writing a language. It includes rules of spelling, hyphenation, capitalization, word breaks, emphasis, and punctuation. According to Eckersley (1979) punctuation is simply a device or media to make it easy to read and understand a written text. A written text cannot be understood if the symbols or rules do not exist. Unlike written form, spoken language takes the full advantage of the sound, intonation, face expression or mimic, and gesture to deliver a good and understandable information to the receiver. According to Messenger & Taylor (1989, p. 162) that in writing, punctuation takes the place of the sound features (pitch, volume, speed) and physical gestures constantly used in speech. As a compensation for the lack of intonation, mimic, and gesture in writing, the punctuation become available.

The importance of the mechanics of writing including those of punctuation and spelling proved to be wide, especially in today's studies in writing. According to Thewissen (2015, p. 201) punctuation constitutes a much under-researched area in SLA (Second Language Acquisition and CEA (Computer-Aided Error Analysis). Thus, it is why the researcher was eager to conduct research in the area of mechanic of written language—in this case punctuation. The writer wanted to find out the proficiency of punctuation of college students who took Writing A, which was the first level of writing in English Department of Widya Mandala. As a conclusion, the flaws that have been discovered by the previous researchers will very useful to

improve the level of punctuation in the future, and that is why the punctuation should be more explored.

1.2. Statements of the Problems

Thewissen (2015, p. 201), stated that punctuation is considered to be under-researched in Second Language Acquisition. In addition, the researcher needed to find out what kind of punctuation and the errors found in Writing A students' compositions. Based on these statement the writer formulated the problems in the following:

1. What kinds of punctuation errors are found in Writing A students' composition?
2. What are the most and the least punctuation errors made by Writing A students' composition?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the research objective is determined as follows:

1. To find out the kinds of punctuation errors in Writing A students' composition.
2. To find out the most and the least punctuation errors made by Writing A students' composition.

1.4. Theoretical framework

This research is built around the theory of error analysis by Gass, Selinker (2008, p. 102-103) and Brown (1987, p. 17). Brown defined error analysis as a

process through which researchers observe, analyze, and classify learner errors in order to elicit some information within the learner, in this particular case the Writing A student's composition. According to Gass and Selinker, error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis method which is used to check the errors that appear on the learners' language. It means errors that occur because of learners.

In error analysis, there are two definitions to be comprehended, mistakes and errors (Brown, 2000). According to Brown (2000, p. 217) mistakes can be described as performance flaw like slip of a tongue. Both native and second language learner make mistakes. Brown also added that native speakers can normally recognize their mistake: thus, when the native speaker has made the mistake they can immediately correct it. Meaning the mistake was caused by their slip of tongue, hesitation when delivering speech, and random grammar flaw. The mistake are not related to the lack of knowledge or competence but rather the temporary downgrade of one's performance. According to James (1998, p. 83) differentiating error from mistake is not always work. James added that error cannot be corrected by the doer: but, mistake can be self-corrected. However, the person has to have the capabilities to be able to self-correct. Error occur as the learners lack the knowledge of the language system they use. Thus, they make the error and it will take a long time if there is no guidance from expert. Based on that explanation, the writer wanted to find error by using a fixed text of mid-term test. The error analysis tackles the students' competence of target language punctuation rules and function.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

1. The final findings of this research will yield valuable information to help university level teachers to know the exact proficiency of punctuation of college students. Thus, they can come up with new teaching method or material to increase the awareness about punctuation.

2. The results will help universities' writing teachers to improve their teaching in the future by adding a lesson or to enrich college students about the function of punctuation.

1.6. The Scope of the Study

Based on the theoretical framework stated above, the researcher focuses on the errors made by the students of Widya Mandala Catholic University. Using the combination of the two methods suggested by Gass, Selinker (2008, p. 103) and Brown (1987, p. 17). The method are collecting data, classifying data, and analyzing data. The researcher will first collect the Writing A students' composition from their final exam (a copied format), read and classify each punctuation found, and the last analyze them. Gass and Selinker's last step remediation in the method of error analyzing is omitted. The last step is not used by the researcher in the thesis since it is designed as a non-experimental. Moreover, the researcher does not have any authority to conduct remediation. Thus, limiting the researcher to remediate the students.

1.7. Assumption

1. The findings from the writer's PPL (Teaching Practice) of teaching senior high students who have little knowledge about punctuation (below average scores) has led the writer to construct the thesis. The writer wanted to find out the errors made by college students. Moreover, Indonesian' students have learned punctuation in their schools before setting on a bigger journey in college. Thus, the researcher needed to find out their level of proficiency in punctuation.

1.8. Definition of Key terms

1. Punctuation: punctuation is “the use of symbols not belonging to the alphabet of a writing system to indicate aspects of intonation and meaning not otherwise conveyed in the written language.” (Hanks, McLeod, & Urdang. *Collins English Dictionary*. 1986.)
2. Composition: “a short piece of writing about a particular subject, done by a student.” (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 3rd edition 2008)
3. Error: Learners’ lack of competence (Corder 1985, p. 25)