

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Language is a means of communication. With language, people can express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. In order to do that, people should master the communicative competence. According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), communicative competence enables someone to use a language effectively.

Canale (1983) defines four components of communicative competence which are *grammatical competence*, *discourse competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, and *strategic competence*. Grammatical competence concerns with mastery of the language code. Discourse competence emphasizes on combination and interpretation of meanings and forms as well as the use of cohesion devices to relate forms and coherence rules to organize meanings. Sociolinguistic competence addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors. Strategic competence is composed of mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that enhance the effectiveness of communication.

One example of languages is English. English has become an international language that is used in many countries. In this globalization era, it is very important to master this language. English is not only used in daily conversation, but also in an important speech like state address.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language. According to Ramelan (1992), English has been taught in our country as the first foreign

language since the independence proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17th, 1945. Nowadays English is taught from the kindergarten until the university level.

Mastering English means mastering the four language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are called receptive skills while speaking and writing productive skills. Among the four skills, writing is the most difficult skill to master because it requires competence of some other components like vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. Grammar is one of the components of language which must be learned by students. By learning grammar, people will be helped to comprehend what other people say or write. However, students usually find difficulties in learning grammar. They find difficulty in arranging words or phrases into correct and meaningful sentences.

When learning a foreign language, people often face interference. People tend to apply their mother tongue or first language structure to the foreign language structure which is different from their native language. We know that English has different structures from Indonesian. This often causes difficulties for Indonesian students in learning it. The difficulties then cause the students to make grammatical errors. Brown (1980) states that an error is a noticeable grammar from the adult grammar of native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learners. In the process of learning a foreign language, the production of errors by learners is very natural.

There are many kinds of English grammatical item the students have to master. One of them is prepositions. According to Frank (1972) prepositions are words which are used to connect a noun or a pronoun to

another word, usually a noun, verb or adjective. The complexity of the use of prepositions often makes students confused, even the ones at the university level. Although prepositions have been taught since the junior high, or even in some schools it is taught at the elementary level, errors in prepositions are still often made. Students often write “He lives in Jl. Residen Sudirman 12.” instead of “He lives at Jl. Residen Sudirman 12.” It shows that Indonesian students do not really understand the rules of using prepositions. In Indonesian, we can just simply use *di* to point a place and *pada* to point time.

Descriptive, one of the genres in writing, has been taught in the senior high school. University students must have learned the basics of how to compose a good descriptive composition. One of the significant lexicogrammatical features of descriptive writings is the use of adverbials (prepositions), so it matches with the study. Therefore, the writer would like to find out the students’ learning problems of prepositions in descriptive writings, kinds of error that they make, and the sources of the errors.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study above, the research problems can be formulated as follows:

1. What types of preposition errors are made by the third semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya in their descriptive writings?
2. What are the types of preposition on which the third semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya often made errors?

3. What are the sources of the errors in the descriptive writings made by the third semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study is intended to find out:

1. The types of preposition errors made by the third semester English Department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya in their descriptive writings.
2. The types of preposition on which the third semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya often made errors.
3. The sources of the errors in the descriptive writings made by the third semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is error analysis which is described by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2008) as a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learner errors. This theory analyzes the nature of errors and their sources. According to Abbot's (1981) classification, there are four types of errors. They are errors of addition, errors of omission, errors of substitution, and errors of misordering. Frank (1972) classifies four types of prepositions; prepositions of time, prepositions of position, prepositions of direction, and prepositions of other semantic relationship. Richards (as cited in Ellis, 2008) classifies three

sources of competence errors namely: interference errors, intralingual errors, and developmental errors.

1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study

In this study, the writer limited the study on the students' errors in using prepositions in writing a descriptive text and their sources although there are some other errors found in their work. Despite the fact that the writer's study focused on the preposition errors, there might be a possibility that in his analysis, some mistakes were analyzed. The writer chose the third semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University and conducted a study on their knowledge of prepositions in descriptive writings.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The result of this study could be beneficial for teachers and students:

1. For Teachers

The teaching approach is expected to anticipate the making of the errors by emphasizing the differences between the native language and the target language and explaining the prepositions that are confusing and idiomatic expressions further.

2. For Students

By reading the result of this study, the students are expected to improve their ability in using prepositions in descriptive writings correctly by reading some references about prepositions and idioms and doing grammar exercises about prepositions. Students

are also expected to realize the errors that they usually make, so they later can avoid making them

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation, it is necessary to define the following key terms:

1. Errors
Errors refer to the learners' unusual utterances which are against the grammatical rules of the target language reflecting their inter language competence.
2. Mistake
Mistake is a performance error that is either random or a slip of the tongue or a failure to utilize a known system correctly.
3. Error Analysis
Error analysis is a systematic process of identifying, describing, and explaining the incidence, nature, sources and consequences of errors made by learners in their oral or written production on the target language.
4. Prepositions
Prepositions are words which are used to connect a noun or a pronoun to another word, usually a noun, verb or adjective.

5. Descriptive writing

Descriptive writing is one type of genres to describe a person, place or thing in such a way that a picture is formed in the reader's mind.

1.8. Organization of the Thesis

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I is the introduction which presents background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, theoretical framework, scope and limitation of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis. Chapter II is review of related literature which discusses errors and mistakes, descriptive writings, prepositions, and review of some related studies. Chapter III is the research methodology which deals with the research design, type of data and data source, data collection, instrument, and data analysis technique. Chapter IV presents the data analysis and interpretation of the findings. The last chapter, Chapter V, contains conclusion and suggestions.