CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

Language is an instrument for communication among human beings in a society. Human beings can learn not only one language to communicate with other people but they can also learn as many languages as they want. When they learn a new foreign language usually named as the 'Target Language', they can learn it through four main language skills. One of the language skills is writing. While one is writing a composition, (s)he needs to concentrate in processing and assembling the ideas. (S)he has to choose the words and to present the ideas in a logical order that will be more easily understood by the readers. (S)he writes his or her composition because (s)he wants to share information or to express his or her ideas, feelings, and opinions.

Besides writing, (s)he can speak to share his or her ideas, feelings, opinions, or information. Meyers (1992:2) states that speaking and writing have something in common. First, both of them have the subject to be discussed. Second, they have the same general purposes. Warriner (1986:368) also states that both of them have the same purposes such as to tell or to describe something, to give or to ask for information, or to persuade someone. Third, they also have the audience. The writing audience are usually named as the reader and the speaking audience are usually named as the interlocutor.

However, they have differences especially when the differences are compared on the audience side. First, when (s)he speaks in a conversation, (s)he can rely on the tone of voice, facial expression and eye contact, gestures and posture (Brown et al,1984:661). The tone of voice can be used to express enthusiasm or tediousness while talking about the topic. Facial expression and eye contact can be used to signal that (s)he is surprised, interested, excited, bored, nervous, understanding, or attracted. By using gestures, (s)he emphasizes something in his or her utterances. Second, (s)he can answer his or her interlocutor's questions directly. Third, (s)he can explain his or her ideas again when his or her interlocutor asks him or her. Fourth, (s)he can change the topic of a conversation when (s)he knows that his or her interlocutor gets bored (Farmer,1985:15).

On the other hand, when (s)he writes a composition, (s)he cannot get such speaking advantages because the reader cannot listen to what (s)he utters. (S)he cannot also see whether the reader gets bored or confused about his or her composition. (S)he cannot answer the reader's questions directly when the reader wants to ask him or her. Therefore, (s)he should choose the words carefully and organize them into complete sentences to anticipate how the reader will respond to what (s)he has written.

While (s)he is writing a composition, (s)he has to notice, especially, his or her grammar and punctuation besides considering the audience. Grammar is important to determine whether the sentences can be categorized as grammatical or ungrammatical sentences based on each language rule and punctuation that is used

to regulate the sentences and to clarify their meanings in a composition by separating or linking the words, phrases, or clauses. In his or her composition, (s)he has to be able to express his or her ideas in complete sentences by giving attention to, especially, his or her grammar because some of the second or foreign language learners, while they are learning the target language, usually write incomplete sentences in their compositions. The foreign language learners forget to put the subject or predicate in the sentences, or they write their "complete" sentences in phrases or sub-clauses. This kind of the incomplete sentences is usually called as a fragment.

According to Heffernan (1986:159), a sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence which is written as if it were a complete sentence. Fragments are not appropriate for formal writing especially when (s)he is writing for a college composition, formal reports or business letters because the sentence fragments can disturb the readers and also destroy the meanings of the sentences. Mackie et al (1990:309) say that the fragment cannot be accepted in written work like this following example, *I live in my grandparents' house. Near the York river for about five years. I like living there. Near the York river for about five years* is not a complete sentence; it is just a phrase, a prepositional phrase. Since it is only a phrase that is considered as a single sentence, it cannot be treated as a sentence that stands alone (Ramsay,1990:43). Thus, it is not a sentence but it is only a fragment. According to Page (1990:50), a complete sentence has to have three characteristics: a subject, a complete predicate, and it must express a complete thought. From the above example about the fragment *Near the York river for*

about five years, it does not have a subject nor a complete verb and it cannot express a complete thought either. However, it can be corrected in two ways by joining the prepositional phrase to the sentence before the fragment *I live in my grandparents' house near the York river for about five years. I like living there*, or by adding the possible subject or verb *I live in my grandparents' house. It is near the York river. I like living there*.

Meyer (1992:42) states that fragments are not truly incorrect if the fragments are used in the spoken language. In other words, fragments can be regarded as errors in the written language. Byrd et al (1994:254) also state that fragments can be used in a conversation. They explain that the interlocutor may understand a fragment which is produced by the speaker because the speaker and the interlocutor, at least, have the same background knowledge of a topic. Besides that, the speaker and the interlocutor can use the speaking advantages (the tone of voice, facial expression and eye contact, gestures and posture) to replace some words or to emphasize his or her utterances. Both of the speaker and the interlocutor can see or look at each other and they can respond to each other directly. For instance, there is a conversation between Maria and Paul at school:

        Maria : Where do you live, Paul?
        Paul   : Near the York river.
        Maria : How long have you been living there?
        Paul   : About five years.

Near the York river and *about five years* are fragments; but in a conversation they are allowed to be used. Paul can answer Maria's questions in complete sentences such *as I live in a house near the York river* and *I have been living there for about*

five years. However, Paul uses the speaking advantages to emphasize his answer and to create the informal situation of a conversation.

Another example of fragment is such as in the conversation below between Kenny and Nonny:

> Nonny : How are you, Ken?
> Kenny : Not very well.

In this conversation, Kenny's utterances *"Not very well"* can be categorized as a fragment because it lacks the subject *I*, the *Do* support, and the possible verb *feel* or *be*. Kenny can express his feeling in a complete sentence like this one *I do not (don't) feel very well* or *I'm not (am not) very well*. However, Kenny utters his feeling state of being like that not because he does not know about the correct English grammar but he can use the speaking advantages to emphasize his utterance and he wants to create an informal situation between him and Nonny in their conversation.

Related to this study about the fragment errors, the sixth-semester students of English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University thought that the fragments might have been considered as meaningful units and complete linguistic units. The result of the students' thinking processes above is that some units when joined together will look like a complete sentence especially when the first unit/word starts with a capital letter and the last unit/word ends with a period, an exclamation mark, or a question mark particularly when they are located among the complete thoughts/sentences. These units which are written as a complete thought is called a fragment.

When the writer of this study still had many English subjects to take at the University, especially before her eighth-semester, she found out that many sixth-semester English Department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University still made the fragment errors in their compositions. In fact, they were taking the writing V and they had just been doing the final writing test. Besides writing, they also mastered the structure subject (structure I up to structure IV). Based on the English Department syllabus (1996:23-24), the English Department students learn about the adjective clauses, phrases, and also the noun clauses in structure IV. In writing V, the students learn the models of the argumentative texts, argumentative composition outlines, characteristics of a good argumentative writing (English Department syllabus,1996:130-131). Having had learned the writing and structure subject, the students of English Department should not have had any difficulties in making the complete sentences to express complete ideas in their composition. In fact, some of the English Department students of Widya Mandala Catholic University still made fragment errors in their writing V examination which was held on July 25, 1997.

Having browsed around the library of Widya Mandala Catholic University, the writer could not find any theses which discuss fragment errors. Therefore, the writer was interested in carrying out a research on analyzing the students' fragment errors in order to know the types of the fragment errors made by the students, to find out the causes of the errors, as well as to give the pedagogic suggestions to minimize the fragment errors.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Since the writer is concerned with the fragment errors, this study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. "What classifications and frequencies of fragments, based on their functions and the formal structures, do the sixth-semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala University make in their compositions?"

2. "What are the causes of the fragment errors which the students of the English Department of Widya Mandala University do in their compositions?"

3. "What pedagogic suggestions should be taken into consideration to minimize the errors as stated in point 1 above?"

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the background and the research questions above, the study reported here was meant to:

1. find out the classifications and frequencies of sentence fragments based on the functions of the units and the formal structures which were made by the sixth-semester students English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University.

2. find out the causes of sentences fragment errors made by the sixth-semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University.

3. present the pedagogic suggestions in order to help the students to minimize the fragment errors in making a composition.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give a contribution to the English Department teachers, especially for the writing teachers, in order to improve their teaching ways and help the students to minimize the fragment errors when the students are making a composition.

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

In this study the students are assumed to have taken all the structure subjects (structure I up to structure IV) and the writing subjects (writing I up to writing V).

Based on the English Department syllabus (1996:17-24), the students who have taken all the structure subjects are assumed to have mastered the subject, predicate, object complements, types of sentences, and tenses.

Based on the English Department syllabus (1996:122-131), the students who have taken all the writing subjects are assumed to have mastered the composition development and correction techniques, the models of narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and argumentative texts, personal letter writing, and the business letters.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the theories of Writing vs. Speaking, Writing Processes, Fragments Constructions, Error Analysis (EA), and Interlanguage (IL)

Writing vs. speaking theories are used to get the facts about the influences of writing or speaking devices as probable causes of fragment errors.

Writing processes theory is used to get the facts about how the L2 learner's doing the writing processes.

The fragments constructions are used to categorize the sixth-semester students' fragment errors in their writing compositions based on the functions of the units and the formal structures of the units. Based on the functions of the units, they are subject, predicator, modifier, qualifier, and head. Based on the formal structures, they are the verbal-phrase fragments, the prepositional-phrase fragments, the noun-phrase fragments, the adjective clause fragments, the adverbial clause fragments, and co-ordinated head clause fragments.

Error Analysis (EA) theory is used to identify the types and the forms of the sixth-semester students' fragment errors and to analyze these types and forms of fragments.

Interlanguage (IL) theory is used to get the facts about the probable causes of the students' errors.

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation, some key terms used in this thesis are defined as follows:

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a. Fragment

A fragment is an incomplete sentence which is written as if it were a complete sentence (Heffernan,1986;159).

b. Error and Mistake

In this study, the writer will not distinguish the terms between errors and mistakes.

All of the students' failure in their competence and performance in expressing their ideas in complete sentences in their compositions are assumed as errors, or mistakes.

c. Second Language Learner (L2 learner) and Student

All the terms second language learner (L2 learner) and student in this study are regarded having the same meaning.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

The writer limits this study only to analyzing the fragment errors in the sixth-semester students' composition. The compositions were taken from the sixth-semester students' final writing examination which was held on July 25, 1997. The population is limited only to the sixth-semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala University.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I is Introduction, Chapter II Review of Related Literature, Chapter III Research Method, Chapter IV Analysis and Interpretation of Findings, and Chapter V Conclusion.

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