CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Dulay et al (1982:10), second language acquisition is the process of learning another language after the basics of the first have been acquired. It includes learning a new language in a foreign language context. It refers to the learning of all aspects of the language that a learner needs to master (Ellis, 1986:5). This includes the efforts to master the language components: grammar and vocabulary, and the language skills mainly listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The mastery of these language elements and skills enables learners to use the language for communication in real life situation in second language settings. Therefore, teachers have to realize the importance of measuring the students' mastery of the language after they have learnt so that they could improve what to be improved and maintain what to be maintained.

The tool usually used by the teachers to measure student's language mastery is a test. There are four benefits of testing. It can be a measure of the success of student learning; it can give information on student morale anxiety levels; it can be an opportunity for intensive learning; and it can give diagnostic tips to the teacher (Bowen, 1985:377).

The language test type that can be used by the

teachers to measure student's language mastery is the proficiency test. Clark (1972:5) states:

> Acquisition of real-life competencies may be referred to as proficiency tests in that they do not attempt to provide information about the students' achievements in a given course of instruction but rather to measure his ability to use language for real-life purposes without regard to the manner in which that competence was acquired.

Proficiency tests normally measure a broad range of language skills and competence,. including structure, phonology, vocabulary, integrated communication skills, and cultural insights.

There are several ways to test general English language proficiency in the classroom. One way is to administer a battery of different language tests, such as one testing reading, another writing, another speaking. Some have suggested that a good listening test become as close as any specific skills test to measure general competence in English. But one of the most widely accepted general proficiency tests is dictation (Bowen, 1985:376). To this point, Kaga (1991:112) says:

> Dictation would be an effective measure of language proficiency even if a target language has a very close relationship between its pronunciation and orthography.

In the dictation test, the students are tested for their ability to (a) discriminate phonological units, (b) make decissions concerning word boundaries in order to discover sequences of word phrases that make sense, i.e., that are grammatical and meaningful, and (c) translate this analysis into a graphemic representation (Oller, 1971:259).

All these reasons attracted the writer to use dictation to measure the language mastery of the students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Chatolic University. The errors that appear in the students' dictation papers will desribe the language elements that most of the students have not mastered yet. The information about the students' language mastery that the teachers got from the their dictation papers will be useful to plan their future teaching.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

With reference to the background of the study, the following questions are formulated:

(a) Which types of errors do the second semester students of English Department of Widya Mandala University most globally and locally make in their dictation papers?

(b) What are the possible causes of these errors?

The answer to the first main problem depends largely on the answers to the following sub-problems:

1. Do the global and local errors that appear in the students' dictation papers mostly consist of grammatical errors?

2. Do the global and local errors that appear in the students' dictation papers mostly consist of meaning errors?

3. Do the global and local errors that appear in the students' dictation papers mostly consist of spelling errors?

4

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

This study intended to (a) describe the types of errors that the second semester students of English Department of Widya Mandala University most globally and locally make in their dictation papers and (b) describe the possible causes of these errors.

In order to achieve the first main objective, the following sub-objectives were formulated as follows. This study intended to:

1. determine whether the global and local errors that appear in the students' dictation papers mostly consist of grammatical errors.

2. determine whether the global and local errors that appear in the students' dictation papers mostly consist of meaning errors.

3. determine whether the global and local errors that appear in the students' dictation papers mostly consist of spelling errors.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give some contributions to the English teachers of the English Department of Widya Mandala Chatolic University Surabaya to use dictation as a measurement of the student's English language mastery.

1.5 The Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theories of error

analysis, interlanguage and dictation.

1.5.1 Error Analysis

Error Analysis is a study of learner's errors by observing, analyzing, and classifying them to reveal the learner's operating system to acquire the target language (Brown, 1980:171). It serves two major purposes. Firstly, it provides data from which interferences about the nature of the language learning process can be made. Secondly, it indicates to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students have most difficulty producing correctly and which error types detract mostly from a learner's ability to communicate effectively.

In this study, the theory of Error Analysis is used as a guidance to analyze the errors that students made in their dictation papers.

1.5.2 Interlanguage

Interlanguage refers to the separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that has structurally intermediate status between the native and target languages (Brown, 1980:163).

According to Selinker (1974:37), there are five processes which are central to language learning, namely: language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of target language rules. Each process forces fossilizable or error material

upon surface interlanguage utterance.

This study uses this theory to interpret the students errors encountered in their dictation papers.

1.5.3 Dictation

Dictation is an active process of interpretation of the sound sequences and their analysis into meaningful units (Prodromou, 1983:37). Oller states that dictation is an extremely valuable tool for measuring language proficiency (in Allen and Campbell, 1972:353). According to Bott (1986:43), dictation tests no single skill, but neither does communication consist of less than a combination of the language elements.

The writer used dictation as a means of getting the needed data to be used in this study under report.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and the ambiguity of the terms used in this study, the writer would like to give the definitions of some key terms used in this study.

1.6.1 Dictation

It is the act of speaking or reading aloud for someone else to write down (Meriam-Webster, 1981).

1.6.2 Error

Error refers to the systematic deviation due to the learner's still developing knowledge of the L2 rule

system (Corder in Dulay, 1982:39).

1.6.3 Error Analysis

Error Analysis is a procedure which deals with collecting samples of learner language, identifying the errors according to their hypothesized causes and evaluating seriousness of the errors (Ellis, 1986:51).

1.6.4 Global Errors

Global errors are errors that affect overall sentence significantly and hinder communication (Dulay, 1982:191).

1.6.5 Local Errors

Local errors are errors that affect single elements (constituents) in a sentence and not hinder communication (Dulay, 1982:191).

1.6.6 Interlanguage

Interlanguage is the theoretical construct which underlay the attempts of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) researchers to identify the stages of development through which L2 learners pass on their way to L2 (or near — L2) proficiency (Ellis, 1986:42).

1.6.7 Grammar

Grammar is the study of rules for forming words and combining them into sentences (Meriam-Webster, 1981).

1.6.8 Semantics

Semantics is the study of the structure of meaning. Linguistic semantics is concerned with the ways in which meaning is organized and presented in language (Finocchiaro and Sako, 1983:308).

1.6.9 Phonology

Phonology is the study of the system of sounds in a particular language (Meriam-Webster, 1981).

1.6.10 Spelling

Spelling is the action or process of forming words correctly from letters (Meriam-Webster, 1981).

1.7 Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to the second-semester students of the English Department of Widya Mandala University. The tenses that are used in the dictation test are simple present, past, and simple perfect tense. The error analysis does not deal with any error of punctuation and capitalization.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This study consists of six chapters. The first chapter presents the background of the problem, the statements of the problem, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework, the

definition of key terms, the limitation, and the organization of this thesis. The second chapter deals with the review of related literature. The third chapter presents the research design and methodology of the study. The fourth chapter discusses the data analysis and findings. The fifth chapter presents the interpretation of the findings. Finally, the last chapter gives the conclusion of this study and some suggestions concerning the study.