

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

Language as a means of communication or the means of interacting among human creature can be both learned and acquired. In the process of learning a language, we not only learn the structure, but we also learn the vocabulary, the spelling and the pronunciation. According to Finocchiaro (1969: 97), vocabulary, structure, etc. are not taught as an end in themselves, but they are integrated in actual use in the four basic communication skills: understanding, speaking, reading and writing.

Vocabulary is considered as an important factor in learning a foreign language. Krakowian (1984) says that the most pressing concern for the learners is the need to master an adequate vocabulary; the learning of syntax or pronunciation is, on the whole, comparatively less important in developing the ability to successfully interact in the target language. In line with Krakowian, Martin (1977: 87) says that vocabulary is particularly important in communication because people primarily communicate by using words, so they come into contact with words. According to Troike (1976: 87), words are tools to express the ideas. To clarify this statement she continues to explain that people might have no success in communication in the target language if they do not master the vocabulary of the target language. Since words are the tools to express ideas, they would not be able to think sufficiently in the target language if they do not have

enough vocabularies. The more words they have, the more easily they understand and are understood by others. Kufaishi (1988) adds that the possession of a large number of vocabulary items is necessary to succeed in social, professional and intellectual life, that vocabulary is the vehicle for thinking, self-expression, interpretation and communication. To summarize all those opinions, the writer concludes that one's vocabulary reflects his experience of the language. If he has no contact with English except through his schoolbooks, he will know only the words in his books. If he has the chance to meet English-speaking people (English native speakers); or reading English magazines, novels or newspapers; or seeing English motion pictures without subtitles, he will be able to extend his vocabulary into areas that are beyond his books.

Since this study deals with vocabulary and spelling, the writer would like to discuss spelling. Spelling has relation with vocabulary. Usually, the preferred spelling will indicate the preferred vocabulary. However, learning spelling must be started from the words used in accordance to each individual needs. Smedley (1983: 16) states that spelling has to be learned and effective spelling must be geared from the needs of each individual. Finocchiaro(1958) supports this statement by stating that practice in the early stage should be limited to the sound in the structural patterns or vocabulary, which are used for active production.

We can not deny that in the world, there are more than 100 languages. English as one of those languages has become a world-language (the international language) for years and has been used by many people from all over the world.

Even in non-English speaking community, English has become an important subject to be learned. Consequently, there will be many types of English, many pronunciations and vocabulary-groups within the English language. Therefore, differences in style may occur. These differences are known as dialects.

Dialects – all the differences between varieties of languages, those in pronunciation, word usage and syntax – occur because of the influence of the first language. This phenomenon occurs mostly in non-English speaking community. How do dialects occur? Let's take the Indonesian language as the example. In the Indonesian language, there are no /ŋ/ or /æ/ like what we find in English. Consequently, the Indonesian people tend to change or at least make them similar to their mother tongue. That is just one example that occurs in pronunciation. After all, other aspects, like spelling also take part in influencing the second language learning.

From many dialects of English that exist, there are only two major dialects, American English and British English. The American people as well as the Canadians commonly use the American English but mostly the European people use British English. In the development, these two dialects influence the learners of non-English speaking. The influence – in the form of vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation – may cause difficulties for the learners. They may have difficulties in distinguishing between American English and British English. As the result, they will have inconsistency in using each of them.

In the vocabulary field, we often find that the students are unaware of using either American English vocabulary or British English vocabulary. For

example, the word *eraser* in American English, which means a tool used to remove marks made by pencils. In British English, we find the word *rubber* to indicate the same meaning. On the other hand, there are some words that have different meaning either in American English or in British English. Let's take the verb *to bathe* as the example. In American English, it means to give a bath to somebody. Meanwhile in British English it means to go swimming in the sea, a lake or a river for enjoyment. All the differences might enable the students to produce either American English or British English inconsistently. Thus, it is possible that they will mix up the usage of American English vocabulary and British English vocabulary.

When it comes to spelling, we can hardly discuss it without discussing about pronunciation. The differences in spelling commonly occur in the form of suffix. For example, the suffix *-er* in the word *center* can be found in American English, but the British English will use the suffix *-re* like in *centre*. All the differences in spelling can create inconsistency for the students, especially in writing. Likewise, some words either in American English or in British English have individual spelling. For example the word *skillful* can be found in American English while in theory it should be found in British English. On the contrary, the word *skilful* can not be found in British English, where it should belong to, but we can look it in American English. Thus when we talk about pronunciation, other problems might appear. The variation in pronunciation either in American English or in British English will cause confusion for the non-English speaking learners. For example the sound /r/ in American English will be pronounced, while in

British English it may not be pronounced at all. Let's look at the word *learn*. In American English, it will be pronounced as /lɜrn/, while in British English it will be pronounced as /lɜ:n/.

All those differences make the students encounter difficulties when they are told to choose either American English or British English consistently. As a result, they tend to use either American English or British English inconsistently. Therefore this paper is intended to observe how this inconsistency is manifested and which dialect - American English or British English - is dominantly applied by the freshmen - the second semester students - of Teacher Training Faculty of Widya Mandala University. Moreover this paper is written to help the teachers to understand why the students have inconsistency in using either American English or British English both in the written or oral communication.

1.2 *Statement of the Problems*

The differences between American English and British English, which occur in four major facets of language learning – spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar – too often confuse the non-English speaking learners. From that point of view, the writer wants to analyze the familiarity of the freshmen in American English or British English in the field of vocabulary and spelling. Therefore, the writer formulates a major question as follows:

➡ Which dialect is dominantly applied by the learners, American English or British English?

This major question, is broken down into two minor questions as follows:

1. Which vocabulary is more familiar to the freshmen, American English vocabulary or British English vocabulary?
2. Which spelling is more familiar to the freshmen, American English spelling or British English spelling?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

This study intends at giving an explanation which dialect, American English or British English is dominantly applied by the freshmen of English Department, especially in the field of vocabulary and spelling.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to give more input for the English lecturers so that they can understand the inconsistency which arise either in the students' oral or written communication because of the freshmen familiarity toward either American English or British English. Besides that it is hoped to inform the lecturers which dialect is more familiar to the students, either American English or British English.

1.5 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

Since English is spoken in almost all countries in the world, the varieties in the usage will obviously occur. Those varieties are what we know as dialect.

There are many English dialects such as American English, Australian English, British English, Canadian English, Singaporean English (known as Singlish), etc. Among those dialects, there are two major dialects: American English and British English.

In this discussion, the writer wants to limit on the differences between American English and British English only, because both of them are the most common dialects to be used especially by the non-English speaking learners.

Definitely, the differences between the American English usage and the British English usage will create difficulties for non-English speaking learners. As a result, they will have inconsistency – that will appear clearer in four major facets of language learning: vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and grammar – in using either the American English or the British English because they lack the knowledge of the differences between the American English and the British English.

Besides that the discussion will be limited on vocabulary and spelling in the American English and the British English as manifested by the freshmen of the English Department of the Teacher Training Faculty of Widya Mandala Catholic University.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Spelling : 1. The action or process of forming words correctly from individual letters or the way a word is spelt (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995)

2. The forming of words from letters according to accepted usage or a sequence of letters composing a word (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1994)

Among those definitions of spelling, the first definition, that is the process of forming words correctly from individual letters will be the most suitable one to be used for this study.

- Vocabulary :
1. The total numbers of words (with rules for combining them) which make up a language (Oxford advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995)
 2. A list or collection of words or of words and phrases usually alphabetically arranged and explained or defined (Merriam Webster's Collegiate dictionary, 1995)

From all the definitions of vocabulary, this most suitable definition for this study is the second definition, that is a list or collection of words or of words and phrases usually alphabetically arranged and explained or defined.

American English : A dialect in English that is used in the United States of America (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995)

British English : An English dialect used in the Britain and Ireland with the islands near their coasts (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995)