

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Law no. 20/2003 of the National Education System (Republik Indonesia) has made it possible for Indonesian nationals to study in international schools, something that was not permitted in Soeharto era (Coleman, 2009, p. 17 in Hadisantosa, 2010, p. 27). Today, ten years since, there are perhaps close to 100 international schools nation-wide and even more numerous National Plus schools, which are private schools that use English as the medium of instruction for some subjects and have international curriculum alongside the national one (Hadisantosa, 2010, p. 30). To keep up with and meet the demands of the growing numbers of children entering those international or bilingual formal schools, Indonesians also witness the mushrooming of the so-called international pre-schools. Naturally, many parents would want their children to be exposed to as much foreign languages as possible from their tender ages in preparation for such international and National Plus schools. Despite the ongoing debate on the topic among academics, most parents still cling to the ‘earlier means better’ idea when it comes to second language acquisition in children (Cameron, 2003, p. 106).

One such international pre-school is the one where the researcher is presently employed, namely *Town for Kids International Pre-school* (“Town for Kids”) Surabaya. It is a franchised school of the same name in Singapore, from whom the school obtains the license for the name, curriculum, multimedia software, and other teaching materials. English is the medium of instruction in all the lessons, except Mandarin and Bahasa Indonesia, and is to be used by the teachers in their dealing with the students within the school compound. Other such international preschools available in Surabaya are like *Kinderland*, *Apple Tree*, and *Tutor Time*, to name a few.

While Town for Kids’ graduates are generally known to be quite commendable academically, the same cannot unfortunately be said of the grammatical accuracy of their spoken English. The primary school teachers and parents of Town for Kids alumni generally comment that Town for Kids students are quite fluent in speaking English, but with ‘chaotic’ grammar. Indeed, the students were not given Grammar lessons explicitly up to this academic year. Grammatical aspects were only touched upon in relation to other subjects such as Reading. Whenever some grammar points were discussed, they were only introduced to the children with the sole purpose of acquainting them with some of the rules. The resulting grammatical inaccuracy was perhaps reminiscent of several studies done in the past (Ioup, 1983; Trahey and White, 1993; Stathis and Gostch, 2011) that showed how children from immersion program without explicit grammar

instruction maintained erroneous grammatical forms up to college years despite being immersed in the L2 environment.

In order to have a more systematic picture of the situation, the researcher conducted a mini research observing the grammatical and lexical accuracy of the students in her own Kindergarten-2 (5-6 years-old students) class for a period of one term (10 weeks). Upon analyzing the 111 transcribed errors, she found that the students exhibit a variety of learning strategy and, consequentially, error characteristic. For example, some students are more prone to the influence of L1, Bahasa Indonesia, in their lexical choice and word ordering. This is evident in errors such as “I **finish know** this one [saya sudah tahu itu]” and “I already see, **because** [saya sudah lihat soalnya].” Some other errors displayed the characteristic of intralingual errors, namely those arising from difficulties experienced by the learners due to the language itself. The more prominent ones are related to the use of the auxiliary *do/does* (“I **doesn’t** know”, “he **don’t** want”), personal pronouns (failure to use *she/her* for females), and missing copula *am/is/are* (“So-and-so playing”)

A quick glance at the result of the error analysis also provides some clues to the cause of the errors. Intuitively, the causes could be enumerated as the language itself, L1 interference, the learners’ characteristics, teachers’ input, teaching techniques and materials, and family or social environment. The result showed that only 23% of the errors were judged to be interlingual in nature, and therefore L1 influence was not as strong as expected. Intralingual errors made up the majority at 72%, the remaining percentage being ‘learning context’ – teachers’ or peers’ influence. Teaching techniques and materials given to the students were free from errors displayed by the students. The interlingual errors were made by a few, specific students, and thus indicating that perhaps these few students do not have much English exposure outside of school. In sum, the main causes of errors seem to be the language itself (as shown by the large percentage of the intralingual errors), exposure to English outside of school, and, presumably, the learners’ still-emerging cognitive development.

Out of the three causes of errors identified above, only the language and the learners’ factors are within the scope of possible corrective measures. Firstly, from the language perspective, a potential solution would be to provide an explicit Grammar instruction to the students. Coincidentally, starting from October 2012, the school has incorporated a new subject called Grammar to be taught to the Kindergarten 2 (K2) students, including those of the researcher. In this subject, simple grammatical items were introduced to the children, such as punctuation, *do/does*, *am/is/are*, adjectives, verbs, and so on. The teacher imparted the lessons using explicit instruction, games, and written exercises. However, a casual interview with the Grammar teacher and the error analysis above revealed that, while some students seemed to have mastered the forms taught during Grammar classroom exercises, the same students still showed occasional slips of those forms in

spontaneous speech. This occurrence might indicate what de Bot (1996 in Lyster 2004, p. 406) said about declarative knowledge that has not developed into procedural knowledge. Therefore, explicit Grammar instruction alone, in the way that has been given since October 2012, might not suffice for improving the accuracy of the children's spontaneous talks. Perhaps, this maiden Grammar instruction can benefit more from research-based pedagogy.

In this matter, recent research on Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) for Grammar teaching is of interest. FFI is essentially done by inserting some form-noticing activities within a communicative structure. It is defined by Ellis (2001, pp. 1-2) as "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic forms." FFI then employs activities intended for the learners to notice and become aware of salient grammatical points while being engaged in meaningful, contextual, communicative activities. Some examples of FFI tasks as delineated by Shak and Gardner (2008, p. 389) are Consciousness-Raising (C-R), dictogloss, Grammar Interpretation (GI) and Gramming. FFI approach was found to be more effective than merely isolated grammar instruction or communicative tasks without drawing the attention on grammar. Not only was it helpful in terms of improving accuracy and retention of the correct form, elementary school students also perceived FFI tasks rather positively (Shak & Gardner, 2008, p. 402). As will be described later on in the review of previous literature, FFI has been applied to young learners with mainly positive results by other language scholars. Therefore, in this study, it is proposed to provide some additional, FFI-inspired teaching techniques and materials to the Grammar teacher in the form of activities that simultaneously raise the students' awareness of the forms, for those aspects that the students make more errors. It was found during the mini research, for example, that many students were still using the auxiliary *do/does* and personal pronouns incorrectly, and so FFI might be of support here. Batstone's (1995) suggested sequence of grammar learning activities within the FFI framework, namely noticing, structuring, and proceduralizing (Cameron, 2001, p.108), will form the backbone of the FFI lesson plan.

Secondly, considering the learners' factor, it might be possible to facilitate the mastery of more accurate spoken English by giving a tailored, personalized instruction to the learners. The compilation and analyses of the students' errors in their spontaneous, natural speech that was done previously has shed light on the current state of their linguistic proficiency and needs. The outcome of that analysis can then be used to assist the students both in group and individually, to see which grammatical aspects need more time and practice, and which grammar area can be suitably taught to them. Thus, the choice of the aspect and the emphasis of grammar to be taught with the above-mentioned FFI techniques can be enlightened by the result of the error analysis. In this respect, the various propositions on the order of acquisition in children, such as that reported by Roger Brown (1973) and Pienemann (1998), could also guide the selection of grammar topics to focus on, to see

which ones are within the capability of the students. Individually, personalized instruction can be implemented by applying different types of error feedback according to the grammatical aspect in question and the learners' style and strategy. Indeed, feedback treatment is in reality part of FFI and is the *spontaneous* feature of FFI instruction (in contrast to the *planned* lessons) (Brown, 2007, p. 277). These two approaches, FFI and corrective feedback, have found support in renowned researchers of young learners such as Lightbown and Spada (1993) who postulated that the two, integrated in activities with communicative focus, have the potential to support the acquisition of second language in both the short and long term (p. 205 in Hussein, 2004).

However, when it comes to theories on Corrective Feedback (CF), the debate is still rather inconclusive over the necessity and usefulness of error treatment for second language acquisition (Long (1977) and Krashen (1982), among others). Nevertheless, the researcher leans towards the view of Edmonson (1985) who asserted that error treatment helps the language learners, principally by drawing the learners' attention on the gap between their production and the standard of the target language, thus moving them forward in their interlanguage stage. In the case of young learners, some proposed that 'recast' was effective (Mackey and Oliver, 2002), while others argued that it is too subtle for children and recommended the 'prompt' type of feedback (clarification, metalinguistic, elicitation, and repetition) instead (Lyster, 2001, 2004). However, Lyster (2002, p. 250) himself also found that recast is more beneficial for correcting unknown linguistic form while prompts, or *form-focused negotiation* as he termed it in that paper, is helpful for the students to elicit forms that they have learned before (Lyster, 2004, p. 406). Thus, in broad terms, the type of corrective feedback that will be used in this study are recast, for grammatical items that are not yet taught to the students, and prompts, for those that the students have learned before.

It can be argued that excessive correction might inhibit the students' zeal for communicating in English, and that fluency should be given more emphasis at the beginning stage of acquisition (Ebsworth, 1998 in Nakagawa, nd). It is also granted that during the era of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1980s, fluency figured more in the English instruction, whose focus had been teaching students to convey their message across. Some would also say that local errors, which do not hamper communication, need not be corrected (Kwok, 1987, p. 12). It can still be further debated whether it is more important to pay attention to the students' pronunciation instead of their grammatical errors, since it directly impacts intelligibility in normal communication (Derwing and Munro, 2005 in Nation and Newton, 2009, p. 75). However, some recent studies have demonstrated the importance of paying attention to the grammatical accuracy of children's spoken English in order to prevent the erroneous form from being fossilized (Lightbown, 1991; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long, 1991; Schachter, 1991; Van Baalen, 1983 in Herman & Flanigan, 1995, 1). Besides, both fluency and accuracy are essential components of successful communication

(Ebsworth, 1998 in Nakagawa, nd), such that language-focused learning (learning the forms and structures) and fluency development have to come in tandem in any speaking and listening course (Nation and Newton, 2009). It is also worth noting that correction like recast still allows for topic continuation and therefore, does not break communication flow. Moreover, error treatment is somehow expected by the learners in classroom discourse anyway (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, pp. 56-58). The relevance of correcting even local errors is also evident considering that erroneous utterances that go uncorrected might create the impression that they are correct, and might also cause the others to adjust their interlanguage hypothesis regarding the rule of that particular linguistic aspect (Allwright and Bailey, 1991 in Dlangamandla, 1996, p. 17). Lastly, acknowledging that pronunciation does play a pivotal role in communication, it is decided to place it outside the scope of this research for the moment. This is done considering the EFL (English as Foreign Language) setting in this research, in which the local pronunciation of English is conventionally acceptable and comprehensible among the foreign language speakers (Nation and Newton, 2009, p. 77).

While teaching grammar to kindergarten students might come across as rather unthinkable and debatable, the practice is not new in some parts of the world. Although an official source or academic articles on the topic are not popularly available, an internet search will yield several resources of grammar worksheets for kindergarten, or discussion forum on teaching grammar to that level. The state of Arizona, for example, apparently requires kindergarten students to be taught grammar for 60 minutes per week, following the Common Core State Standard of education to be applied in all states of the United States (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/K>). Some private English courses in Surabaya (EnglishFirst, Kelt, etc.) are also known to have classes for very young learners equivalent to kindergarten levels. Secondly, it is commonly regarded that children are good at pronunciation in contrast to adults who are better at grammar. Granted that this is generally true, an early exposure to grammar is never too detrimental for the children (McLaughlin, 1992, p. 192), as this will be the foundation for potential future communicative proficiency. Having said that, the intention of this research is not to join in the debate bandwagon on the suitability of teaching grammar to very young learners, but rather to improve, if possible, the spoken grammar of the kindergartners by supplementing the existing Grammar lessons. That is also the reason for choosing Classroom Action Research, which will be discussed further on, as the research methodology since the main aim is of this study is to effect an improvement rather than to prove or disprove certain theories.

The underlying theories and hypotheses for this research are, firstly, related to Language Acquisition and Grammar Learning/Teaching for children. For the former, Piaget's stages of development and the role of interaction for children's language acquisition according to Vygotsky

are briefly reviewed. In the latter, the classic study by Roger Brown (1973) on the morpheme acquisition order in children is of special relevance. Similarly, the Processability Theory by Pienemann (1998, 2005) provides a classification of linguistic structure into 6 stages (in Kersten, 2008, p. 5), which serves as a model for syntactic acquisition order in children. Those frameworks of various developmental stages in children's language were valuable for the practical conclusions drawn from the result of the error analysis. For instance, judging from which stage the children are presently in, it was concluded that teaching them pluralization and irregular past form will be opportune and optimal since they are at the right moment of acquiring them.

Next, the FFI approaches find support in various theories and hypotheses on Second Language Acquisition (SLA). FFI was inspired by noticing and consciousness-raising theories by Schmidt (1990, 1993) and Swain's (1985) output hypothesis (Uysal, 2010, p. 4). Further on, cognitive theories like McLaughlin's (1987) information processing model also endorses FFI, as it upholds that FFI helps preventing interlanguage (incorrect) forms to turn into automatized procedures in the long-term memory (Lyster, 2004, pp. 323-324). For Corrective Feedback, its detractors are those that subscribe to the Behaviorist Psychology (for example, Skinner, 1957) and the Generativist Linguists with their concept of Universal Grammar (UG). The former accord more role for positive feedback rather than the negative, while the latter hold that first language acquisition is conditioned by the UG in the absence of any feedback (Chomsky, 1981). The proponents of CF come from the field of, among others, Connectionist Model, Skill Acquisition Theory, and Interaction Hypothesis. Within the Connectionist Model, MacWhiney (1987) put forth the competition model in which he claimed that part of the driving force of language acquisition is the detection of errors (Leeman, 2007, p. 116). The Skill Acquisition Theory (Anderson, 1980 in Leeman, 2007, p. 117) posited that corrective feedback plays a substantial role in the three cognitive stages of learning; acquisition of declarative knowledge, proceduralization, and automatization. It lends support to recast as the type of feedback. The 'prompt' type of feedback receives its theoretical foundation in the Interaction Hypothesis (Pica 1994; Long 1996; Gass 1997), which purports that language acquisition occurs as learners negotiate meaning when faced with incomprehensibility.

The review of past researches on FFI and Corrective Feedback also constitutes a valuable guide for this research. Ellis (2002, pp. 223-236) did a study to determine if FFI resulted in the acquisition of implicit knowledge by reviewing 11 researches on the effect of FFI on learners' free production. With regard to young learners, he surmised that FFI was successful in all four studies involving children in both oral and written production (Harley, 1989; Lyster, 1994; Doughty and Varela, 1998) and written only (Day and Shapson, 1991). The target structures of those 4 studies were syntactic, morphological, and formulaic in nature. However, answering his own research

question, Ellis warned against jumping into the conclusion that FFI contributes to the acquisition of implicit knowledge in young learners. He cautiously posited that other factors besides the age might have come into play, specifically the target structure and the extent of instruction. FFI seemed to work best for simple morphological and formulaic structure with extended treatment, or complex syntactic features with opportunities for exposure outside the FFI lessons (Ellis, 2002, pp. 229-234). Shak and Gardner (2008, pp. 387-408) considered the young learners' perspectives on four FFI tasks. The result of their analyses prompted them to conclude that FFI integrated within communicative activities enhance the enjoyment and motivation in the children. However, the children expressed their reserve in activities which required production output such as writing, which they perceived as difficult. This led Shak and Gardner to conclude that, for more challenging production tasks, teachers must provide ample support by providing context (e.g., amusing stories) and language scaffolding (pair/group work) (Shak and Gardner, 2008, pp. 402-403).

In the domain of Corrective Feedback, previous studies suggested that the younger the learners, the more they will benefit from CF (Lyster and Saito, 2010). On the different types of feedback, there is a general tendency for teachers to use more recast than prompt (for example, in Lyster and Ranta, 1997), even though recast could also predominate depending on the teachers' perception of the students' proficiency (Hampl, 2011). While it augurs well for teachers to employ more variety of feedback type, and especially those that withhold the correct forms to the students for self-repair to occur like in prompts, recast can still be useful as an unobtrusive, implicit type of feedback to move the topic along and as positive evidence to the students for learning new linguistic items. Concerning other variables affecting the application of CF, Lyster (1998) suggested that prompt might be preferable for grammatical and lexical error as compared to recast. Several studies concurred on the advantages of using prompt rather than recast for the less proficient language learners. However, the effect of instructional settings (SL and FL) on CF and also the durability effect (whether the impact of CF is sustained over time) in oral production seemed to necessitate further investigations (Lyster, 2004; Lyster and Saito, 2010).

The researcher deemed that Classroom Action Research ("CAR") is the most suitable design for the purpose of this study. Rather than testing a particular methodology or establishing the existence of some relationship, this research is aimed principally at making improvement in the current classroom situation, the solution of which can naturally be very specific to that particular set of students at that particular time. This fits well with the description of Action Research according to Annie Burns which essentially "involves putting deliberate practical changes or 'interventions' in place to improve, modify, or develop the situation" (Burns, 2009, p. 114). It is also inherent in a CAR to contain several cycles, each of which consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection, which then lead to the next cycle if necessary. In this study, each cycle comprises one or

two grammatical aspects to focus on, and the results will be monitored to see whether this aspect needs to be repeated in the next cycle, together with noting down other improvements to be made. The instrument of this research is the researcher herself, who will observe the speech production of the students using principally field notes, apart from video/audio recording and journaling. She also works closely with the Grammar teacher in planning the Grammar lessons and implementing the error treatment to the students. The participants are 11 Kindergarten-2 students of the Lavender Class, of which the researcher is the form teacher.

In sum, this CAR is designed to document and reflect on the process of improving the spoken English of 11 Indonesian international kindergarten students. In the pre-research part of the study, the researcher records, compiles, and analyzes the errors made by the students. The result of the analysis indicates the particular needs of some students and various discreet grammatical aspects that need to be worked on. This leads to the execution of the research, where the focus is on grammar instruction of the aspects that need special attention using the form-focused instruction approach, and also error treatment to individual student through various types of feedback.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Arising from feedback from parents of Town for Kids International Pre-school alumni that their children graduated from Town for Kids with poor spoken grammar mastery, the school principal has introduced a new Grammar subject for students at the highest level (Kindergarten-2 – the five to six year olds). Nevertheless, input from the Grammar teacher and a mini research done to compile and analyze samples of erroneous, spontaneous spoken English of those students indicated that Grammar instruction alone might not be sufficient. Students continued to make grammatical and lexical errors that are both inter- and intralingual in nature.

To that effect, this research is aimed at studying the process of improving the grammatical spoken English of 11 K2 students of Town for Kids, of whom the researcher is the form teacher. In this research, two forms of interventions will be applied, namely additional teaching technique and material for the whole class which are based on Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) approach, and more personalized pedagogical treatment to individual student in the form of Corrective Feedback. The result of the error analysis in the mini research mentioned above, together with the available language acquisition theories, were used to guide the choice on the grammatical aspects and topics that should be emphasized and highlighted.

In sum, this research attempts to answer the following major question:

- How could FFI strategy contribute to the improvement of the grammatical accuracy of the 11 Kindergarten-2 students' spoken English in Town for Kids?

- How could CF contribute to the improvement of the grammatical accuracy of the 11 Kindergarten-2 students' spoken English in Town for Kids?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The objective of this research is to document the journey of the process in improving the grammatical accuracy of the spoken English of 11 Kindergarten-2 students of Town for Kids through FFI technique, its activities and materials, coupled with Corrective Feedback on the students, to complement the existing Grammar lessons. In other words, it is aimed at investigating the process of employing:

- a. FFI strategy to improve the grammatical accuracy of eleven K2 students' spoken English in Town for Kids.
- b. CF to improve the grammatical accuracy of eleven K2 students' spoken English in Town for Kids.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The underlying theories used to inform this research pertain to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in children, which include the role of input in language acquisition and the existence of an order or sequence in the said acquisition. Besides, language acquisition principles as outlined by Piaget and Vygotsky are indispensable for studies concerning children. The theoretical basis supporting Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) approach and the theories on Corrective Feedback (CF) are also particularly relevant.

1.4.1 Language acquisition in children according to Piaget and Vygotsky

Piaget (1923) characterized children development in their acquisition of formal logic, and found that children undergo several stages of development when this logical ability is concerned. Hence, development is largely determined by biological growth, especially that of the brain. In this Piagetian stage of development, children are divided into belonging to the sensori-motor stage, pre-operational stage, concrete operational stage and the formal operational one (Pinter, 2006, p. 7). Some of Piaget's assertions were challenged by Margaret Donaldson (1978) who observed that the language and the context used by Piaget in his experiment might have been confusing and misleading for the children, thus giving the impression that they lack the logical thinking to answer the questions or carry out the tasks (Pinter, 2006, p.9).

While Piaget focused on the influence of the children's cognitive growth in their learning and development, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that social environment plays no insignificant role in

that respect. Hence the term ‘social constructivism’, which refers to the significance of the interaction between the child learner with his/her parents, caregivers, teachers and peers in the process of knowledge construction (Pinter, 2006, p.10). In fact, children develop their thinking through talking, interacting with the others (Brewster, 2007, p. 30).

Although Vygotsky himself did not venture into Language Acquisition, his works lay the foundation for subsequent studies on the topic (Mahn, 2013, p. 6). First language acquisition study also emphasizes the influential role of input in the child’s language acquisition, notably that coming from the parents and/or caregivers (Brown, 2007, pp. 46-47). This is consistent with the social interaction theory of language acquisition, which upholds the “reciprocal model” of language development; the child’s language develops in the process of socializing, teaching and nurturing by the competent, adult language user (Holzman, 1984). Although earlier studies claimed that adult speech contained ungrammatical model to the children (McNeill, 1966), other researches on the topic reported the contrary (Bellugi and Brown, 1964; Drach, 1969; Landes, 1975, among others); Parental input were found to be grammatical, careful, selective, and free of the usual hesitations and false starts typical of adult-to-adult speech.

1.4.2 Order of acquisition

Brown (2007, pp. 72-75) provides an excellent review on the case of bilingualism in children within the SLA field. He noted that, even though earlier studies placed much emphasis on the interfering influence of the first language on non-simultaneous second language acquisition, a number of research done in the 70s (Hansen-Bede (1975), Milon (1974), Ervin-Tripp (1974), Dulay and Burt (1974a), among others) went to show that children learn a particular L2 using similar strategies as those learning that language as L1, with not much interference from their native languages. This hypothesis was supported by several studies that tested the acquisition order of English morphemes by children of varying background, such as Spanish and Chinese in the case of Dulay and Burt’s study (1973, 1974 in Barrot, 2010, p. 48). In both, they found that those children possess similar order of morpheme acquisition, namely:

1. Plural ‘-s’
2. Progressive ‘-ing’
3. Copula forms of ‘be’
4. Auxiliary form of ‘be’
5. Definite and indefinite articles ‘the’ and ‘a’
6. Irregular past tense
7. Third person ‘-s’
8. Possessive ‘-s’

Pienemann (1998 in Kersten, 2008, p. 5) explained the acquisition order of English morphosyntax (see Table 1.1 below) using his Processability Theory. Simply put, it implies that in order to master a language, a learner needs to first acquire the procedural skill needed to process that language. This theory is the corollary of the previously formulated Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann, 1985), in which he purported that instruction will only benefit the learners if it coincides with the natural acquisition order of the learner's interlanguage. In other words, teaching grammar for example will only be effective when the learners are ready for it.

Table 1.1
PT (Processability Theory) Structures

stage	syntactic structures	morphological structures
6	cancel inversion	
5		3rd person singular –s
4	(wh-)copula inversion yes-no inversion particle-verb	
3	do-front topical wh-front adv-front	aux+ing aux+en possessive pronoun/determiner object pronoun
2	SVO neg+V	past regular past irregular Interlanguage -ing plural –s
1	single words	

1.4.3 FFI approach

Cognitive theories like McLaughlin's (1987) and Skehan's (1998) information processing model endorse FFI, as it upholds that FFI helps preventing interlanguage (incorrect) forms to turn into automatized procedures in the long-term memory (Lyster, 2004, pp. 323-324). McLaughlin, for example, stated that L2 learning involve the working of two processes, automatization and restructuring. In the former, the response to linguistic stimuli is quick and effortless, thanks to repeated practice that gradually turn a more controlled process into an automated one. Restructuring refers to an instantaneous moment when the learner understands the linguistic input in a novel way,

thus triggering a change that can be total, discontinuous, or qualitative of an existing knowledge. These two processes, automatization and restructuring, are essential in language acquisition. In this respect, FFI promotes the restructuring process, in which the learners' interlanguage grammar is restructured as their attention is drawn to the form in the input. Thus, conscious attention to forms is necessary (Schmidt, 1990; Nassaji, 1999; Gass, 2003).

Skehan (1998) also identified an essential component of interlanguage development to be the conscious awareness of rule-based representation. This information processing model asserts that, in the process of turning input into intake in the input processing step, noticing plays a substantial role. This noticing is in turn influenced by the quality of input such as its frequency and salience. Subsequently, intake reaches the central processing system where it is stored into either the 'analytic rule-based system' or 'memory-driven exemplar-based system'. In a communicative act, the exemplar-based system is preferred due to the need for quick retrieval and easy access. However, an effective change in the inter-language is only achieved in the rule-based system, which is greatly facilitated by FFI type of instruction (Chuang, 2010, pp. 4-5).

1.4.4 Corrective Feedback

For Corrective Feedback (hence abbreviated as CF), its detractors are those that subscribe to the Behaviorist Psychology (for example, Skinner, 1957) and the Generativist Linguists with their concept of Universal Grammar (UG). According to the Behaviorist's perspective, language acquisition is a conditioning process in which the correct form (positive feedback) is reinforced in the learners through training and reinforcement. Thus, negative feedback merely plays only a minimal role such as, for example, being silent when an utterance is expected (Skinner, 1957 in Leeman, 2007, pp. 113-114). The proponents of the generative model hold that first language acquisition is conditioned by the UG in the absence of any feedback (Chomsky, 1981). Extending this notion to SLA, they further asserted that feedback is irrelevant in L2 syntactic acquisition e.g., Beck, Eubank, & Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz & Gubala-Ryzak, 1992).

The proponents of CF come from the field of, among others, Connectionist Model, Skill Acquisition Theory, and Interaction Hypothesis. Within the Connectionist Model, MacWhiney (1987) put forth the competition model in which he claimed that part of the driving force of language acquisition is the detection of errors (Leeman, 2007, p. 116). The Skill Acquisition Theory (Anderson, 1980 in Leeman, 2007, p. 117) posited that corrective feedback plays a substantial role in the three cognitive stages of learning; acquisition of declarative knowledge, proceduralization, and automatization. It lends support to recast as the type of feedback. The 'prompt' type of feedback receives its theoretical foundation in the Interaction Hypothesis (Pica 1994; Long 1996;

Gass 1997), which purports that language acquisition occurs as learners negotiate meaning when faced with incomprehensibility.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study wishes to contribute somewhat to the body of research done pertaining grammatical instruction to young learners, in that it observes how grammar teaching works to improve the accuracy of the children's free, natural, spoken English. Since many past empirical studies in this topic measure the students' oral production in test environment or classroom-based tasks, the outcome of this case study might offer a different perspective. Yet another potential contribution of this study is the fact that it is done on Kindergarten students, which hardly features in the literatures of the recent researches reviewed thus far.

Besides, with the ever increasing demand for bilingual education in Indonesia starting even from pre-school age, there is a need for research to be conducted along the line of Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia (TEYLIN). With regards to grammar instruction to very young learners in this country, there is a scarcity of information available for the educational practitioners. It is hoped that this study will be of some benefit for the teachers of young learners as to the methodology, strategy, and approach for teaching grammar to young learners. Teachers will also have a somewhat clearer expectation of the spoken grammatical competence of their students, and the possible ways to address the shortfall of this competence in and outside of lesson time.

The result of this study will also benefit other stakeholders of the education process in the Indonesian context, such as parents and school headmasters. Parents who wish to place their children on the path of bilingual education will have a more research-based expectation of their children's spoken English – what can be tolerated and what can be corrected through instruction and/or correction. They will also be able to better appraise the grammar subject, if any, taught in the kindergarten of their children. Headmasters will have some research basis when considering the implementation of grammar lessons in the kindergarten, including the syllabus and the teaching methodology of the same.

Last but not least, even when the generalization of this study is perhaps not largely applicable, the result of this study will hopefully benefit Town for Kids International Pre-school for further improving the existing grammar syllabus and the teaching methodology taught at K2 level.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study will be conducted to 11 Kindergarten-2 (K2) level students (about 5-6 years old) of Town for Kids International pre-school in Surabaya. In the mini research preceding this study, an error analysis of their spoken English was conducted and the result was used to determine the

grammatical aspects to be focused on. Based on this, the corresponding grammar teaching materials and technique were given to the Grammar teacher, and the students will also be given the suitable type of corrective feedback whenever errors arise.

Therefore, the scope of this study is an intact class of 11 K2 students in the academic year 2012-2013, who will be taught using additional grammar materials with a FFI approach, and will also be given specific types of feedback treatment whenever their spontaneous speech contains grammatical errors. Errors in writing or pronunciation are excluded from the scope of this study. The said intervention (grammar instruction and feedback) is done to improve the grammatical accuracy of their spoken English, so as to instill good spoken English habit right from the beginning and to prevent possible fossilization in the future. By 'improvement', it means that this research attempts to effect a betterment, no matter how small, in the current state of the children's English. Although at times it might seem that it is used interchangeably with the word 'acquisition', those words are used in their commonplace connotation and not the linguistic one. Considering the developmental level of the children and also time constraint, only four grammatical structures (pluralization, subject pronoun, auxiliary verb do/does, and irregular past tense verbs) are covered. The choice of those structures are also based on the result of the preceding mini-research on the grammatical errors recorded from the students and the theory concerning the order of acquisition. The entire duration of this study, including the mini research, pre-research preparation, data collection and analysis, is approximately 9 months, running from October 2012 to June 2013.

One of the limitations of this study is that which is inherent in any qualitative study, in that the result might not be largely generalizable to other institutions even of similar contexts. This is due to other variables that have to be taken into account, such as the children's personality, learning style, cognitive maturity, socio-economic and cultural background, teachers' personality and teaching style, and many others. There were also some limitations in the form of the students' personality those who are more reticent and hardly speak might not have their grammatical errors (or accuracy, for that matter) detected. Thus, in order to ascertain the present spoken linguistic competence of those students, the data collection will also include elicitation technique, hence their spoken English might not be very spontaneous. Lastly, since these students will graduate from Town for Kids in June 2013, hardly any luxury of time can be accorded to conduct an in-depth research on them. Nevertheless, it is deemed that any effort made to help them in their English acquisition feat is worthwhile and well-spent.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Improvement is defined as a betterment in the current condition to a larger or lesser extent. In this paper, it is at times used interchangeably with ‘acquisition’ in their ordinary sense, except when dealing with SLA theory where ‘acquisition’ takes the meaning as is defined by Krashen (1981).

Spoken English, in this study, is referred to as the free, spontaneous speech of the subjects, both self-generated and elicited by others (peers and teachers).

Grammatical Accuracy is defined here as the standard English use of the morpho-syntax of the subjects’ spoken English in the area of regular plural form, subject pronouns, auxiliary verb do/does, and irregular past tense verbs, excluding other grammatical and linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, intonation, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic accuracy.

Form-focused instruction (FFI) is a pedagogy for teaching grammar that draws students’ attention to linguistic form either in a separate, exclusive session or integrated within other activities that have different aim such as communicative activities, games, songs, etc.

Corrective Feedback (CF), used interchangeably with Error Treatment or Error Correction, refers to what has been defined by Chaudron (1977) as “any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to or demands improvement of the learner's utterance” (Dlangamandla, 1996, p. 10).

Recast is a less explicit form of correction, in which the teacher repeats what the student has said, replacing the error with the correct form. Unlike explicit correction, no indicative phrases are given prior to the feedback.

Prompt is the name used for a group of several feedback types in which the correct form is not supplied by the teacher, but is elicited from the learners. It includes, among others, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification request, and repetition.

Uptake refers to the students’ response immediately following the teachers’ feedback (Lyster and Ranta (1997). It can be further classified as ‘repair’, which means that the students provide the correct form, and ‘needs repair’ in which the students’ responses are still off-target.