

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Background of the Study

Language is the expression to human personality in words, whether written or spoken. It is the universal medium for conveying the common facts and feelings of every day life. According to Wrenn (1977:1), language as a means of communication or the means of interacting among human creature can be acquired and learned.

People cannot deny that although there are more than 3,000 languages being spoken today in the world, English has been chosen as one of those languages, which has become a world language or international language. English language is spoken or read by the largest number of people in the world, for historical, political, and economic reasons. However, as stated in English Teaching forum (1986), English has two classes of status in the country, where English is a secondary language for most or all of the users, as a foreign language or a second language. Even in non-speaking community, English has become a compulsory subject to be learned. Consequently, there will be many word usages of English, many pronunciation, and vocabulary-groups within the English language. This may cause different styles of English, and these different styles are known as dialects.

According to Chambers and Trudgill (1980:3), dialects--all the differences between the varieties of languages, those in pronunciation, word usage, and syntax—may occur because of the influence of the first language. This phenomenon occurs mostly in non-English speaking community. From many dialects of English that exist, there are only two major dialects, American English and British English. The influence of both dialect--in the form of spelling, vocabulary, and pronunciation--may cause difficulties for the learners. Other reasons that may cause both dialects are used inconsistently are the background of the native English teachers who may come from different countries in which English is spoken and the lack of knowledge of English from certain dialects. Because the English learners are taught by those kinds of teachers, they may mix the spellings and vocabularies from any of the dialects. It is not surprising when we find a second language learner of English combines the use of American and British English. We have to realize that not all of the English learners are aware of this problem. Besides, it is not surprising when we find a second language learner of English finds difficulties in differentiating American English from British English.

Wolfram & Christian (1989:4) declare that the most obvious difference of dialects is in the terms chosen. The differences between American English and British English in terms occur in certain well-defined and predictable situations, namely when they reflect differences in physical objects or feature characteristics of the two countries. American English, for example, retain the term *druggist*, which has been replaced by *chemist* in British English. However, the second

language learners may not be aware of this kind of thing, and may mix both of the dialects.

The differences of the two dialects can also be found in spelling and pronunciation. The differences in spelling commonly occur in the form of suffix. Suffix *-or* in the word *flavor* can be found in American English, but the British English uses the suffix *-our* like in *flavour*. The variation in pronunciation both in American English and British English will cause confusion for the non-English speaking learners, for example, the sound *r* in American English is pronounced, while in British English it may not be pronounced at all. The word *burn* is pronounced as *'bɜ:n'* in American English, while in British English it is pronounced as *'bɜ:n'*.

Those kinds of differences may cause the usage of English language become inconsistent. Therefore, this study is intended to observe the consistency within the use of American English and British English by English language learners, especially in the English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

In line with the title of this thesis, *The Consistency in the Use of Spelling and Vocabulary of American and British English in Written Communication*, and the above background, this study focuses on the consistency of the use of American and British English by the students of the English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University. The two major questions raised to be answered in this study are formulated as follows:

1. Do the English Department students know the differences of the spelling and vocabulary used in American English and British English?
2. Do the English Department students consistently use the spelling and the vocabulary of either American English or British English?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Related to the research questions stated in section 1.2, this study is intended to find out:

1. whether the English Department students know the differences of the spelling and vocabulary used in American English and British English.
2. whether the English Department students use either American English or British English consistently.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The results of this study is expected to be a meaningful input to the students of English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University who learn to use English in real communication in English. Hopefully, having read through this thesis, any readers, who are concerned with the consistency in the use of English, are motivated to reinforce the consistency in the of American English And British English.

### 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Knowing how broad the discussion on dialect is, the study is limited on several aspects. First, the subjects chosen for the study were the students of the best descriptive writing class of English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University. The best descriptive writing class here is considered on the basis of the students' average mark in the previous mid-term test in the academic year of 2002/2003. The students were considered the best class not only because of their mid-term test scores, but also their first placement test score done in the beginning of their first semester.

The reason why this study needs the best class is that the best class tends to contain more creative, critical, and cleverer students with better knowledge of English. The area of analysis itself is focused on:

1. American English and British English as these two dialects are most frequently used in Indonesia.
2. Vocabulary and spelling of written English, both American and British.

The writer did not focus the study on the spoken English since the use of the language will be influenced by the students' first language, in this case Indonesian, especially in terms of intonation and pronunciation.

3. The best descriptive writing class of the English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University in the academic year of 2002/2003.

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted on the theoretical basis of sociolinguistics, which covers the perspective of dialect and standard varieties of English. These theories are apparently essential as they reveal general information that gives a kind of help in understanding the study. Next, the very important ones are the theory of spelling differences and the theory of vocabulary differences. These theories are provided as the main focus of the study as the study is intended to find out whether the students of the English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University consistently use the spelling and the vocabulary of either American English or British English.

Although the writer used descriptive compositions written by the students as one of the instruments, the writer did not include the theory of descriptive writing in her study as the study focuses on the consistency in the use of American English or British English in the field of spelling and vocabulary, not on the aspects which are considered important in descriptive writing.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1. Dialect : a. Any given variety of a language shared by a group of speakers. (Wolfram, Walt & Donna Christian;1989)  
b. Simply linguistic varieties, which are distinguishable in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. (Holmes, Janet;1992)

From all the definitions of dialect, the most suitable definition for this paper is the second definition, that is simply linguistic varieties, which are distinguishable in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

2. Spelling : The forming of words from letters according to accepted usage or a sequence of letters composing a word. (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary; 1994)
3. Vocabulary : A list or collection of words and phrases which usually alphabetically arranged and explained or defined. (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary; 1994)
4. American English : Standard English as it is written and spoken by educated speakers in the United States of America and Canada. (Trudgill, Peter & Jean Hannah; 1985)
5. British English : Standard English as it is normally written and spoken by educated speakers in England and, with minor differences, in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. (Trudgill, Peter & Jean Hannah; 1985)
6. Consistency : the quality of being consistent. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary; 1995)

The word consistency is derived from the word consistent, which meaning is always following the same pattern or style, not changing. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary; 1995).

## **1.8 Research Method**

This study is an analytical study on sociolinguistics. What was analyzed was the students' consistency in the use of American English or British English. Since this study was not meant to generalize the phenomenon under analysis, qualitative method was applied in the analysis.

## **1.9 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. It discusses the background of the study, the problem statement, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation, the theoretical framework, the definition of key terms, the research method, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter II reviews some literature and studies related to the study under report. It consists of the related studies conducted by the previous researcher and the theory supported the study that is dialect and language, the two main standard varieties, spelling differences, and vocabulary differences. Chapter III presents the research methodology. It discusses the research design, the data of the study, the subject of the study, the research instrument, the procedure of collecting data, the procedure of analyzing the data, and the judgment. Chapter contains the data analysis and the findings & the interpretation of the findings. The last chapter, Chapter V, presents the conclusion and some suggestion concerning the topic under study.