

**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

English is one of the primary subjects which is taught as a foreign language in Secondary School. Even now, according to the 1994 Curriculum, the government puts English as one of the subjects that must be taught to the students of elementary school. The objective of teaching English is to have communicative competence. Although the teaching of English is emphasized on reading skill, the other skills like speaking, listening, and writing must be taught to the students.

Learning a foreign language cannot be separated from learning grammar of the language because to have mastery of a language, we ought to master the grammar first. According to John R. Muma (1978:17), to be able to communicate well in English, one should have among others a wide range of vocabulary and master its grammar: a set of rules for coding one's thought, ideas, and emotions for the purpose of conveying an intensity to someone else. Among these sets of rules is the Degrees of Comparison which is the focus of this study. It is also in line with what Penny Ur (1988:4) says as follows: "Grammatical rules are essential for the mastery of a language; you cannot use words unless you know how they should be put together". Therefore, mastering

grammar is important to support the mastery of language skills.

When the writer conducted her teaching practice in a Junior High School, she found that grammar was the most difficult thing that the students had in learning English. The difficulties were shown by the errors that they produced. One of the grammatical topics that the writer had to teach was the Degrees of Comparison. It can be troublesome to the students. For example, most of the students added "-er" or "-est" to any adjective and adverb ending in "y" without considering whether they consist of two or three syllables.

The fact that the system of the English grammar is different from the system of the Indonesian grammar may cause the students to have difficulty in learning English. To denote the degrees of comparison of adjectives and adverbs in English, there are some formula that should be learnt by the students. While in Indonesian to denote the Degrees of Comparison of adjective and adverb, we add "lebih" for comparative and "paling (ter-)" for superlative.

Concerning learner's errors, Brown (1987:170) states:

Second language learning is a process that is clearly not unlike first language learning in its trial-and-error nature. Inevitably learners will make mistakes in the process of acquisition, and indeed will even impede that process if they do not commit errors and then benefit in turn from various forms of feedback on these errors.

Students who make error in the target language need time and process for an improvement.

Errors which are produced by the students play an important role in language learning. By using errors, a teacher can get feedback to make a strategy for a successful teaching learning activity. This is in line with Hendrickson's statement (1981:3):

Knowing about errors is important as errors provide feedback. They can tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques, and show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

Knowing this fact, the writer sees the significance of errors analysis. She is encouraged to make a careful study to find out the students' errors in mastering English grammar, especially the Degrees of Comparison, in an attempt to account for their difficulties.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problems

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of errors in using Degrees of Comparison are made by the third year students of SLTP Kristen Bethel Surabaya?
2. What are the possible causes of the errors in using Degrees of Comparison made by the third year students of SLTP Kristen Bethel Surabaya?

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the kinds of errors in using Degrees of Comparison made by the third year students of SLTP Kristen Bethel Surabaya.
2. To find out the possible causes of the errors that the third year students of SLTP Kristen Bethel Surabaya made in using Degrees of Comparison.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

It is expected that the findings of this thesis will be of some help for the English teachers, especially those of SLTP Kristen Bethel Surabaya to improve their techniques in teaching English Degrees of Comparison. By knowing the causes of the identified errors, hopefully, the errors which the students may make in learning Degrees of Comparison can be prevented or minimized.

### 1.5 Assumption

This study is carried out under the assumption that the students have already got knowledge about the form of adjectives and adverbs well.

### 1.6 Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to the errors in using Degrees of Comparison, in this case the comparative and superlative

forms (-er, more, -est, most, and also the irregular ones).

The subject of this study are the third year students of SLTP Kristen Bethel Surabaya. The reason for choosing the third year students is that the students have learnt Degrees of Comparison of adjectives and adverbs when they are in the first year and then, in the third year (CAWU I and CAWU III) they get the material again.

### 1.7 Theoretical Framework

This part will give an overview of the theories that are used in this study. The study is based on the theories of Contrastive Analysis, Errors Analysis, Interlanguage.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) claims that the principal barrier to second language acquisition is the interference of the first language system with the second language system, and that a scientific structural analysis of the two languages in question would yield a taxonomy of linguistic contrasts between them which in turn would enable the linguist to predict the difficulties a learner encounter (Brown, 1987:153-154). The CAH states that interference of the native language (L1) to the target language (L2) is due to the learner's unfamiliarity with the L2, that is to the learner's not having learned target grammatical patterns well (Dulay, 1982:99). Thus, according to CA proponents, the structures of the native language tend to be transferred to the foreign language the learners

are studying. The CAH also states that where the structure in the L1 differ from those in the L2, errors that reflect the structure of the L1 will be produced. On the other hand, when the structures of both languages are the same, the automatic use of the L1 structure in L2 performance will result in correct utterances. In this study, the theory of Contrastive Analysis is used to discuss whether the elements of the Degrees of Comparison pattern erroneously made by the students have anything to do with the interference of the students' first language or not.

Rod Ellis (1986:97) defines error analysis as a procedure which deals with collecting samples of learner's language, identifying the errors according to their hypothesized cause, and evaluating the seriousness of the errors. According to Brown (1987:171), 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. The theory of Error Analysis is used in this study to analyze the students' errors of the Degrees of Comparison and to predict the sources of those errors.

According to Douglas H. Brown (1987:169), in the process of learning language, the learner, by a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, slowly and tediously succeeds in establishing closer approximation to the system used by native speakers of the language. A

number of terms have been coined to describe the perspective which stresses the legitimacy of learner's second language system. The best known of these terms is interlanguage, referring to the separateness of a structurally intermediate status between the native and target languages. Thus, the learner's deviation from the target language norms should not be regarded as undesirable errors, but they are an inevitable and necessary part of the learning process. The theory of interlanguage is used to predict the causes of the errors in using Degrees of Comparison encountered in this study.

#### 1.8 Definition of Key Terms

In order to understand the meaning of the terms that are presented in this study, the writer defines the following terms:

##### 1.8.1 Errors

Errors refer to any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or causes of the deviation might be (Dulay, 1982:139).

##### 1.8.2 Degrees of Comparison

Degrees of Comparison are used to show the grade of adjectives and adverbs. There are two grades in degrees of comparison. The grade of comparing two people or two things is called comparative and the grade of comparing three or more people or things is called superlative.

### 1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I is devoted to the Introduction which contains the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, assumption, limitation of the study, theoretical framework, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents the Review of Related Literature. Chapter III talks about the Research Methodology which covers the nature of the study, population and samples, instruments, procedure of collecting data, and procedure of data analysis. Chapter IV discusses the data analysis and interpretation of the findings. Then, Chapter V is the conclusion which deals with summary of the result of this study and some suggestions concerning this study.