

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Like in many other languages, English has four basic skills, among others; speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Regarding those basic skills of English, writing has been one of the most difficult skills to master (Hogue, 2003). Many students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) seem to encounter many problems and difficulties in dealing with this writing skill. One of those problems and difficulties they have to deal with is to write in accordance with the use of accurate or even perfect grammar. The accuracy in writing covers the validity in several aspects considered, like good grammar, language formality, punctuation, diction, structured sentence and/or paragraph (Bailey, 2003).

It is believed that language is a system of meaning (Halliday, 2002). In that case, the notion of creating good writing along with either good grammar or good organization is to make a good-contextualized-comprehensive-structured-meaningful writing, so that the readers can trust and understand to what we are trying to say in our writing (Brooks, Pinson and Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, grammar in writing is essentially considered since many people tend to recognize and give more consideration toward English written grammar. Besides, convenient grammar in writing plays a very significant role, especially when people are going to apply job, internships or even scholarships because it often becomes one of the requirements tested to be passed (Brooks, Pinson and Wilson, 2013).

Meanwhile, some researchers, Weaver, McNally, Moerman (2001) believe that grammar in writing is not that necessary to be focused or even taught traditionally since it will come naturally later. Truscott (1996) also argues that grammatical error correction or focusing on improving grammar is not important in writing, but ineffective instead due to its tiny significance. They perceive that

the students can naturally know the correct and proper grammar through more examples and repetition of using the grammar itself in a context. Besides, Truscott (1996) and Weaver, McNally, Moerman (2001) suggest that it would be better if the focus is put more in the quality of the writing itself.

However, Halliday (2003) believes that Grammar is not merely annotating experience but construing experience in which we theorize it in the process of what we call as ‘understanding’. Besides, the importance of grammatical accuracy is not only intended to avoid some misunderstanding but also intended to send the writer’s original intended message (Brooks, Pinson and Wilson, 2013). In other words, it can be said that grammar is necessary to be taught and learned. Some people can learn it naturally, but many of them cannot, instead of learning it traditionally – using formulas and theories. Even Brooks, Pinson and Wilson (2013) believe that it is not only about the grammar, but the knowledge also that matters in differentiating those who are more professionals or educated and those are still amateurs in writing.

Despite the importance of a good writing skill involved with grammar accuracy, many EFL students, especially undergraduate students basically are prepared to have writing academic course in their class. The course indirectly teaches how to make good, meaningful, well-structured-grammatically-correct sentences and paragraphs. For later, those undergraduate students are going to be more prepared and specialized in their major to go for finding jobs or getting scholarships/continuing their study. The English writing skill along with grammar accuracy can be one of the basic skills that appears to be one of the requirements, like writing an essay or a paper. In other words, as Brown (2001) says that the higher someone’s educational background is, the better his/her grammar accuracy should be, for one is going to have a higher professional goal.

However, the problem of students’ lack understanding/knowledge towards Basic English Grammar appears to still happen rampantly in EFL students adopting English as their second language or L2. Many of them are still mixed up

with tenses, verb agreements, noun phrases, word choice, and some kinds of those things. A research done by Mardijono (2003) showed that from 17 research proposals written by the English Department students approaching their final stage of study, there were found 32,61% of noun phrase errors, 45% of verb phrase errors, 53,57% of passive transformations errors. These students' lack of grammar understanding problems indicated that even college students who have learnt English for like about more than eight years still make several errors in their English writing skill. Whereas, according to Brown (2001), among the four-skill proficiency of English, writing skill tends to require more perfection in grammatical form.

Thereby, based on the facts, problems, and theories stated above, this study will focus on the analysis of grammatical errors in writing an argumentative essay done by the undergraduate students of English Education Department in one of state universities in Bandung.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study is to address the following question:

- a. What kinds of grammatical errors made by the undergraduate students of the English Education Department in one of state universities in Bandung in writing an argumentative essay?

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to identify what kinds of grammatical errors made by the undergraduate students of the English Education Department in one of state universities in Bandung in writing an argumentative essay.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The limitation of the study is necessary to make it clearly specified. Meanwhile, this study focuses on the analysis of grammatical errors made by the

undergraduate students of the English Education Department in one of state universities in Bandung in writing an argumentative essay.

1.5 Significance of the Study

a. For the students

This study is expected to be a learning process, reflection, as well as a reference, especially for the undergraduate students of the English Education Department in one of state universities in Bandung regarding grammatical errors in their argumentative essay, so that the students can know how to overcome it while improving their written English grammar accuracy in the future.

b. For the lecturers/teachers

While this study gives information about students' written grammatical errors, then it is expected that the lecturers can give better solutions in ways of either improving or strengthening the students' grammar skill, accuracy, understanding and knowledge.

c. For the researcher

This study is expected to get and to give more information as well as knowledge about students' common written grammatical errors in their argumentative essay, for the researcher plans to be a better teacher/lecturer.

1.6 Research Method

1.6.1 Research Design

The research design of this study is conducted by using a descriptive qualitative design. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2012), descriptive qualitative research is a study to describe the conditions that exist properly with no analysis of the relationships among variables.

To begin with, the researcher identified what kinds of grammatical errors made by the students in their writing argumentative essay. Afterwards, the researcher classified and analyzed types of grammatical errors that the students

made in their essays. At last, the researcher went through the analysis of how deep and far the students' understanding/knowledge toward Basic English Grammar through the result of their essay, multiple-choice test, and interview.

1.6.2 Research Participants

The participants in this study are nine undergraduate students of the English Education Department in one of state universities in Bandung. All of the students come from semester eight, those who have taken English Foundation Grammar course.

The samples were chosen due to the limitation of time, energy, and fund considerations of the study.

1.6.3 Data Collection

This part discusses the ways or steps of searching and collecting some data needed in this study. The data collection used some instruments and steps. The instruments used were writing test, multiple-choice test and semi-structured interview, in which those were combined into one method called 'triangulation'.

1.6.4 Instrument

Since the study employed triangulation method, so there were three kinds of instruments here which consisted of writing, multiple-choice test and interview. These instruments were used in order to meticulously get the description and deeper analysis of students' grammatical errors in writing an argumentative essay. Here are brief descriptions for each instrument:

1. Writing Test

The students were given a topic: "Should National Exam/UN be banned?". Each student was supposed to make an argumentative essay based on the topic given, at least 600-700 words. Afterwards, it would be analyzed to identify what kinds of grammatical errors had been made.

2. Multiple-choice Test

Each student was given a set of multiple-choice test consists of ten questions concerning about grammar. The multiple-choice test's validity and reliability had already been tested to 30 students from one class of the English Education Department. These 30 students were taken due to their time availability and their passing the English Foundation Grammar course, as well as their same level in semester eight. Then, the results were finally checked and analyzed, like how many errors the students made from those ten multiple-choice questions.

3. Interview

The interview was done to each student and the results were put as additional information to the data. The interview technique employed here was semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview was done by asking a series of structured questions and investigating deeply into getting more additional information by using open-form questions (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2012). Thus, by this technique of interview, hopefully, the data and the information obtained could be more accurate and specific in elaborating the result. After analyzing while identifying the grammatical errors in the students' essay so long with the multiple-choice result as well, then each student was interviewed and/or asked some questions regarding their background, knowledge and understanding of Basic English Grammar.

1.6.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis was started when the researcher had done the data collection. It was begun by transcribing all the data first. The researcher defined and classified the students' grammatical errors in their argumentative essay and also in their result of doing multiple-choice exercise. Finally, the researcher did the interview to each student in order to ensure the students' knowledge as well as understanding toward English grammar, then transcribed and analyzed the data of the interview.

1.7 Clarification of Terms

In order to avoid some misunderstandings, several terms are clarified as below:

1. Error in this study is defined as students' failure in mastering the rule of target language as well as students' lack of knowledge about the target language.
2. Grammar is one of the important fundamental aspects in English writing proficiency which covers either syntax or morphology; the rules that make sentences more structured and meaningful, as well as understood (Thornbury, 1999).
3. Grammatical errors in this study are the deviations of English grammatical rules that happen in ESL writing learners, like the deviations in the use of subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, word choice, noun, article or determiner, and pronoun.
4. Argumentative essay is an essay that consists of thesis, arguments, and a stance of either pro or contra.

1.8 Organization of the Paper

The organization of the paper consists of five chapters as in the following:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter points out the background of the study, research question, aim of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter provides the theories related the topic of this study. It covers: grammar: definition of grammar; the importance of grammar; error analysis, sources of the errors, types of grammatical errors; writing: definition of writing; argumentative essay: linguistic features of argumentative essay.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. In this chapter, the details of research methodology will be elucidated.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion. This chapter presents the result of the study and the analysis of the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation. This chapter presents the conclusion based on the study conducted and points out some suggestions or recommendations.