

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

For foreign language students, writing is considered a challenging skill. The complexity of the process of writing production becomes the root of the problems faced by these students. To produce a piece of writing, the students need to have the ability in organizing their idea into a written form (Abdollahzadeh & Behroozizad, 2015). This ability requires them to arrange their opinions, views, and facts, which they have acquired in learning, and turn them into a cohesive and coherent text (Rahayu & Cahyono, 2015). Besides organizing the idea, they also need to concern with the selection of words which should be appropriate with the context and the topic of their writing (Khoshsima, Saed, & Mortazavi, 2016). Moreover, they also need to consider the sequence of writing production which can take a long time, including the process of drafting, constructing writing, proofreading, editing, and revising (Kao & Reynolds, 2016; Yaghoubi-Notas, 2015). However, aside from all problems mentioned above, it is noted that the actual common problem faced by most foreign language students in writing is the existence of errors. Therefore, the present study focused on analyzing the foreign language students' writing errors.

In line with the focus of the study, this study aimed to analyze the foreign language students' writing errors in undergraduate level. In analyzing the errors, this study explored two aspects of errors which are the types and the possible causes. The types of errors were identified to find the common errors made by the students in writing. Meanwhile, the possible causes of errors were examined to identify the factors influencing the errors production. The selection of types and possible causes of errors as the topic of the present study was rooted from both practical and theoretical issues on dealing with error in English as a foreign language (henceforth, EFL) learning environment. Thus, this section discusses the issues on dealing with errors from the practical and literature aspects, including the solution offered to address the issue.

Practically, in learning a foreign language, it has become a common issue that the students will make any deviancies in their target language use. As what Rahimi and Tafazoli (2014) and Sawalmeh (2013) have pointed that the natural process of language learning happens where the language learner has made a new attempt at applying the target language and results in creating a deviancy. Nevertheless, the students' repeated target language structure deviancies also need to be identified carefully since it may have turned to be an error or, even, have been fossilized in the students' brains (Khansir, 2012). In this point, analyzing the errors made by the foreign language students in writing is necessary to prevent the students in creating the same errors in the future and fossilizing the errors.

Given the needs of analyzing the errors, many scholars in foreign language learning environment have conducted several error investigations. Their studies mostly focused on finding the common errors made by the students in writing and the studies have been conducted in China (Liu & Xu, 2013), Turkey (Seitova, 2016), Jordania (Al-Khasawneh, 2014), Iran (Pouladian, Bagheri, & Sadighi, 2017), Sudan (Elmahdi, 2015), Pakistan (Sajid & Siddiqui, 2015), Thailand (Bosuwon, 2013), and Indonesia (Silalahi, 2014). However, as the process of evaluating students' writing is still conducted manually, the process of analyzing the writing errors still becomes a challenge to be conducted in actual daily teaching, especially at the university level.

In the majority of universities, the challenge in analyzing the writing errors is commonly faced for the lecturer who teaches big size classrooms. Commonly, a lecturer has to teach more than 3 classes each semester and the total number of students in each class is relatively high (Wang, 2013; Wang & Wang, 2012). Consequently, when a lecturer assigns a writing task to the students, the lecture has to spend more time and effort to evaluate the students' writings (Wang, 2013; Wilson & Czik, 2016). Therefore, as a solution to address this problem, the utilization of Automated Writing Evaluation program as a tool in evaluating students' writing seems promising to help the lecturer in analyzing the errors in students' writing.

An Automated Writing Evaluation (henceforth, AWE) program is a computer program which can evaluate and rate writing automatically using online

checking system. As one of the technology products, this computer program uses the natural language processing, latent semantic analysis, and machine learning technique developed by computational linguistics to rate and to score the writing submitted to the program (Ferster, et al., 2012; Wilson, 2016; Wilson & Andrada, 2016). With those complex analytical processes, the AWE program is designed to focus on evaluating the writing and providing the feedback for the errors detected in the writing (Chou, Moslehpour, & Yang, 2016).

Moreover, the existing studies have also confirmed the positive contribution given by AWE programs to students' writing. One AWE program, namely Intelligent Academic Discourse Evaluator (IADE) program, has been identified to be able to raise students' awareness on errors (Cotos, 2011). Moreover, another AWE program, namely Criterion, is identified to give an improvement for students' writing quality (Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010). These positive outputs given by the AWE program indicate the benefits of having the AWE program in evaluating writing. However, it is noted that these studies were conducted to evaluate the writing in general criteria which are not focused on analyzing errors and seeking the detail of errors identified by the program. Thus, it indicates that the previous studies gave a little attention on the utilization of the AWE program as an error analyzer.

Reflecting from the gap found in previous AWE program studies, the present study utilized the AWE program for analyzing and identifying the errors to reveal its new potential as an error analyzer. In analyzing and identifying the errors, this study utilized Grammarly program which has been supported by complex analytical features. These complex analytical features built in this program could support the process of error detection in writing including the checking process on spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors, and also give feedback and corrections for each error detected in the writing. Thus, the utilization of this program could be a solution to address the problem in analyzing the writing errors.

Even though the study of error analysis may not be a new trend in this era, the utilization of computerized program to detect and analyze error may result in an innovation for error analysis trend (Cotos, 2011). As the program uses an

automatic checking system, the error analysis may result differently from the manual process. Moreover, the literature on AWE program utilization as an error analyzer program is still limited and this study could also give insights on the utilization of AWE program as an error analyzer.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Reflecting on the research background described above, there are five research questions proposed in this study. They are:

1. What are the types of errors made by the students in their writings detected by Grammarly program?
2. What are the types of errors made by the students in their writings undetected by Grammarly program?
3. How is the students' propensity of producing errors in writing?
4. What are the possible causes of these writing errors?
5. What are the Grammarly program's strengths and weaknesses as an error analyzer?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

In line with the research questions proposed, there are five research objectives to be achieved in this study. They are:

1. to describe the types of errors made by the students in their writings detected by Grammarly program.
2. to describe the types of errors made by the students in their writings undetected by Grammarly program.
3. to describe the students' propensity of producing errors in writing
4. to describe the possible causes of these writing errors found in Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' writings.
5. to describe the Grammarly program's strengths and weaknesses as an error analyzer.

#### **1.4 Research Significance**

From the description of the research background above, it can be noticed that the focus of this study is to utilize an AWE program in analyzing students' writing errors. Specifically, the AWE program utilized in this study was Grammarly program and the students participating in this study were Indonesian EFL undergraduate students. Thus, with the main focus on analyzing the errors through an AWE program, there are several expected significance contributions which come from two perspectives, i.e. theoretical perspective and practical perspective.

From the theoretical perspective, the contribution of this study is focused on two aspects. The first aspect is the enrichment of the literature and theoretical insights on writing errors. As the result of errors identification revealed, it is expected to bring new insights on the types and the possible causes of writing errors made by Indonesian EFL undergraduate students. The second aspect is the development of knowledge and theoretical insights about the use of AWE program. The result of AWE program utilization is expected to contribute on discovering new insights into the AWE program's potential as an error analyzer.

Meanwhile, from the practical perspective, this study is expected to give contributions to four practical aspects; students, lecturer, program developer, and other researchers. Firstly, for the students, the result of this study is expected to give a positive impact on their writing since they can raise their awareness of their writing errors and have a clearer vision in revising their writing by learning from the explanation provided by Grammarly program. Secondly, for the lecturer, the outcomes of this study can become a consideration for the lecturer in using AWE program in addressing the problem of having limited time in evaluating a huge number of students' writings. Thirdly, for automated writing evaluation program developer, the result of this study can become a product evaluation feedback for further program improvement and development in adding additional features in analyzing writing errors. Lastly, for other researchers, the result of this study can give fruitful information as an additional source for further similar studies, especially as one empirical review on the use of AWE program, especially Grammarly program, in analyzing writing errors.

## 1.5 Organization of the Thesis

In reporting the present study, this thesis is organized into five chapters. Each chapter represents the compulsory elements constructing this thesis into sequenced information which can give clearer insights into the study. Therefore, this section gives an overview of each chapter presented in the thesis.

The first chapter of this thesis is introduction. This chapter discusses the reason of the present study was conducted, the objectives investigated in the present study, and the expected significance of the present study. This chapter is divided into five sections, including research background, research questions, research objectives, research significance, and organization of the thesis

The second chapter of this thesis is literature review. This chapter discusses some related theories and previous studies to the present study's focuses. This chapter is arranged into eleven sections, including six sections which discuss the errors, four sections which discuss the automated writing evaluation program, and one section which concludes the reviewed literatures.

The third chapter of this thesis is methodology. This chapter discusses the research design applied, the participants participated in the study, the techniques of data collection and data analysis conducted, and the ethical issues addressed. This chapter is divided into five sections, including research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and research ethics.

The fourth chapter of this thesis is results and discussion. This chapter discusses the results of the present study and the discussion of the study result to the related theories and previous studies. This chapter is arranged based on the research questions proposed in the study and thus, this chapter is divided into five sections, including the types of detected errors, the types of undetected errors, the students' propensity of producing errors, the possible causes of errors, and the program's strengths and weaknesses as an error analyzer.

The fifth chapter of this thesis is conclusions and recommendations. This chapter concludes the results of the study into a brief summary, describes the limitations faced during the study, and presents some recommendations for some aspects related to the study. This chapter is divided into two sections, namely conclusions and recommendations.