

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology of the present study, which covers the research questions, research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis. Each of them will be explained below.

3.1 Research Questions

The present study is conducted to answer the following questions:

- (1) What negative structures are evident in the interlanguage produced by EFL learners at one secondary school in Bandung?
- (2) How is negation acquired across periods?

3.2 Research Design

This study aims to investigate the developmental sequences in acquiring English negation in the learners of EFL; therefore, this study employs qualitative approach. According to Cresswell (1994:1), "qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting."

The study used students' utterances on observation, pictures description test and writing as the main data. The observation was conducted once a month. The pictures description test, which consists of twenty different items in each test,

was conducted three times. Similarly, the writing composition, of which the themes were related with students' textbooks, was also conducted three times in one semester academic year. The nature of the analysis merely focused on negation. The participants of this study were 34 students from seventh grade of one private secondary school in Bandung. Both acceptable and unacceptable versions related to the use negation were analysed and presented.

This study is also longitudinal in nature because developmental sequence concerns with the the chronology of language acquisition. Documenting the course of acquisition for some individual appears to be the optimal methodological choice (Meisel, 2011).

Longitudinal studies, according to Rajulton et al. (2000), are meant to uncover the dynamism of language acquisition by examining both stability and change, and not one or the other. Furthermore, Rajulton et al. (2000) states that the general motivation in longitudinal studies is that they can show the nature of growth, trace patterns of change in an individual, and possibly give a true picture of cause and effect relationships over time. An advantage of longitudinal research according to Loewen & Reinders (2011) is that it can track the development of a learner's interlanguage system, yet a process takes time. According to Iwasaki (2004), to accurately document acquisition orders and developmental sequences, it is important to capture this dynamic process of language acquisition. However, even a longitudinal approach requires certain conditions in order for the dynamic process of acquisition to be precisely captured. The data collection needs to be of a sufficient duration of time for the details of the acquisition process to be

accurately documented. In response to these difficulties with accuracy Pienemann (1987:89 in Iwasaki 2004) states:

In principle, every productive usage of a structure is treated as an instantiation of an interlanguage rule. Thus the development of L2 structures is described as a dynamic process, taking the early ‘deviant’ interlanguage structures as the starting point rather than defined as some arbitrary criterion for ‘acquired’ or ‘mastered’.

This study is not purely longitudinal study due to the duration of data collection. Butterworth & Hatch (1978 in Iwasaki 2004) state that three months was the shortest duration for a study of this type and the longest was three years (Huter, 1998). Generally it seems that the duration most commonly used is approximately one year (Iwasaki, 2004). Therefore, this study can’t track the whole process.

This study also has the characteristics of a case study due to the limited number of participants that are involved in it. A case study approach allows this study to be conducted in a small scale, and one single case in a case study causes it to be defined as “a study of a single case or bounded system” (Stake 1985; Connole 1993 in Emilia 2008).

3.3 Participants

The participants of this study are 34 students of beginner level in the secondary school, but as this study investigates the negation, only 24 students that constantly produce negation are included in this study. They are in 7th grade. Most of them are between 11-13 years old. All subjects had studied English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in primary school for at least 6 years before they entered

secondary school. Their first language is Indonesian. However, these students have a different mother tongue e.g., Sundanese, Javanese and Bataknese. They learn English six credit hours a week during second semester in the academic year 2012-2013.

3.4 Data Collection

It is generally believed that the data for a longitudinal case study should be spontaneously produced oral language, and that this should be taken from one subject or a small number of subjects over a long period of time (Iwasaki, 2004). In the majority of case studies on child bilingualism, the researchers were linguists using their own children as a subject of investigation (Dopke, 1998). In such cases, spontaneous speech is almost always accessible by these parent linguists, particularly when the subject is too young to go to kindergarten or school. This meant that researchers who are not the parent of a subject are disadvantaged with regard to the on-going access to a subject's natural oral production. On the other hand, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:26) point out that spontaneous speech itself can be, in reality, tricky "natural" data. They list three reasons for this claim:

- (1) It often contains too sparse a number of linguistic aspects which researchers are interested in finding, simply because subjects have no opportunity to produce all of those aspects of language in given contexts during data collection.
- (2) Subjects often use an avoidance strategy, where they tend to stay in a range of easier linguistic aspects which they believe they can handle with confidence. That is, they will rarely show all of their language performance to researchers.
- (3) Solely relying on spontaneous data makes it difficult to compare the results of these various case studies.

Therefore, to overcome these problems, particularly when a longitudinal approach is used, it is beneficial if researchers use instruments that elicit particular linguistic features (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991:13). As they state:

There is no reason, for example, why the natural linguistic performance data obtained through a longitudinal study could not be supplemented by data elicited by some controlled, ‘obtrusive’ verbal task. Indeed, specific hypotheses generated by an analysis of the natural data are sometimes concurrently tested by means of data collected through elicitation procedures. Moreover, quantifying the data obtained by either means is standard practice in SLA.

A variety of tasks have been used in FLA and SLA studies, including reading tasks such as “read aloud” (e.g., Beebe, 1980; Flege, 1980 in Iwasaki 2004), writing tasks such as “free composition” (e.g., Andersen, 1976 in Iwasaki 2004) and oral production tasks such as “oral interview” and “role play” and so on (for a full explanation of these twelve different types of tasks, see Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991, pp. 27-30). The present study employs observation, negation test and writing composition documentation to collect the data. The observation, negation test and writing composition documentation are used to gain data about the negation produced by the research subjects.

3.4.1 Observation

Observational research, but not necessarily research conducted in the classroom, according to Allwright (1993), has provided language teacher training with some new input. It has also pursued fundamental issues in the field, still stimulated mostly, if not exclusively, by work in second language acquisition

(now frequently referred to as interlanguage studies, see Davies, Criper and Howatt, 1984 in Allwright, 1993)

The observation aims to observe the occurrences of the negation. The observation was conducted once a month from January 2013-May 2013. The observation was done five times altogether. Each observation was recorded then transcribed. Taking notes was also conducted during the observation. The observation looked into the ways the participants communicated among themselves and with their teacher to see how they produced negation.

3.4.2 The Picture Description Test

Brown (1973:255 in Chen 2004) introduces the concept of obligatory context to provide the framework that can be used to show the child's acquisition of grammatical structures:

....so one can set an acquisition criterion not simply in terms of output but in terms of output-where-required. Each obligatory context can be regarded as a kind of test item which the child passes by supplying the required morpheme or fails by supplying none or one that is not correct. This performance measure, the percentage of morphemes supplied in obligatory contexts, should not be dependent on the topic of conversation or the character of the interaction.

Furthermore, Dulay and Burt (1974:39 in Chen 2004) develop an instrument called the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) which consists of "seven color cartoon-type pictures and a set of 33 questions". It meant to elicit certain grammatical structures. As an instrument, it requires that the administrator asks rather specific questions in order to elicit the grammatical structures.

The present study applies picture description tests. According to Rispen et al. (2001), the tests help to investigate the production of negative sentences in more details. Furthermore, Baker (2012) states that the picture description task is a language intervention provided through individual sessions with the purpose of eliciting growth in language production.

Each test consists of twenty different pictures. The short oral explanation and question of each picture before the test was hoped to help participants in constructing utterances containing negation. The examples of oral question are as follows. 1) What do you see in the picture? 2) Why is she/he do it? 3) How do they do it? 4) Where do this event take place? 5) When do they do it? After the students answer the questions, then they were asked to make a sentence based on their answers. The test has been tried out to the similar level of participants to examine the occurrences of negation. The test was given 3 times in one semester to investigate the development of negation in the participants. The first test was conducted on 14 February 2013, the second test on 15 April 2013 and the third test on 13 May 2013.

3.4.3 Writing Composition Documentation

The writing composition assignments from the teacher, as part of teaching and learning process in school, were also used to investigate the occurrences of negation and the developmental sequences of negation in the EFL learners. The students were asked to write three essay in one semester of academic year 2012/2013. The first theme is “*Me and my house*”, the second theme is “*My*

favorite cloth” and the third theme is “*My hobby*”. For the specific purpose of the study, it is hoped that those writing instruments could be more accurate in producing many well-defined, structured negatives than any of the possible spontaneous oral prompts that may just elicit unclear responses for analysis. In order to achieve that purpose, the clues are given before the students write the essay. The clues for the first theme are as follows, 1) I have one brother, 2) My father is a teacher, 3) My house is big, etc. The clues for the second theme are as follows, 1) I have a lot of clothes, 2) Most of my clothes are shirt and jeans, 3) I wear it every time, etc. The clues for the third theme are as follows, 1) what is hobby? 2) My hobby is music, 3) I do my hobby every day, etc. The first writing assignment was conducted on 11 March 2013, the second assignment on 16 April 2013 and the third assignment on 14 May 2013.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data in this study include the utterances from the recorded observations, the picture description test and writing composition document. The essential step in qualitative analysis is reading the observational notes and documents that were analyzed (Dey, 1993; Smith, 1979; Tesch, 1990 in Maxwell, 1996).

In analyzing the data, this study takes several steps. The first is to identify the occurrences of negation. The recorded observation is transcribed. The data from the pictures description test and writing composition are identified into

negative and positive structure construction. Then, only the utterances containing negation are chosen as the data.

The second is to classify and categorize all the data containing negation obtained from all sources by using the stages of the developmental sequence of negation for L2 proposed by Ellis 1996; Meisel 2011; and Lightbown & Spada 2011. The sequence includes four stages, stage 1 {external negation-*NEG + Adj/V(P)/ N(P)*}, stage 2 {internal negation 1- *X+no/not/don't+V(P)*}, stage 3 {internal negation 2- *X+copula/aux+no+Y*}, and stage 4 {target-like negation-*Restructuring of unanalyzed forms, do auxiliary*}.

The third is to interpret and explain the data through the interpretation of the order of developmental language acquisition. According to Ellis (1996:111), what constitutes evidence for a developmental pattern?

- 1) Developmental patterns can be established by looking at either the order in which different target structures are acquired, or the sequence of stages through which a learner passes en route to mastery of a single TL structure.
- 2) In the case of transitional structures, a 'stage' consists of a period during which learners use a particular form or structure in a systematic manner, although not necessarily to the exclusion of other forms and structures.
- 3) The forms and structures that a learner produces at different points during the process of L2 acquisition can be ordered such that one form or structure always precedes another.
- 4) Learners progress step-by-step along an order or a sequence, mastering one particular structure-target language or transitional-before another.
- 5) Strong evidence for developmental patterns occurs when it can be shown that an order or a sequence is universal (i.e. applies to different L2s and to all learners). Weaker evidence is found if it is shown that an order or a sequence applies only to specific L2s and/or to specific groups or learners.

3.6 Conclusions

This study aims to investigate the developmental sequence in acquiring English negation in the learners of EFL. For this purpose, the study employs qualitative approach. As this study attempts to uncover the dynamism, both stability and change, of acquiring negation in an individual, it is a longitudinal one.

The study used students' utterances on observation, pictures description test and writing as the main data. The observation was conducted once a month. The pictures description test, which consists of twenty different items in each test, was conducted three times. Similarly, the writing composition, of which the themes were related to students' textbooks, was also conducted three times in one semester academic year. The nature of the analysis merely focused on negation. The participants of this study were 34 students from seventh grade of one private secondary school in Bandung, but as this study investigates the negation, only 24 students that constantly produce negation are included in this study. Both acceptable and unacceptable versions related to the use of negation were analysed and presented.

In the case of developmental sequence of negation analysis, students' utterances containing negation that obtained from all sources were analysed through identification, description or categorization, and explanation using developmental sequence of negation in L2 learner (Ellis 1996, Meisel 2011 and Lightbown & Spada 2011).

Next chapter will present the findings and the discussion of the study. It displays the data obtained from all sources. The data displayed cover the types of

negative forms and illustrate the different levels of progress of these participants.

