

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the design of the study, instrument, data collection procedures and data analysis. Research design section elaborates the design used in the study. The research design chosen enables the researcher to achieve the purpose of the study to describe the interlanguage in regard to verb phrase acquisition that occurs in students' writings. The instrument used in the study is also presented in this chapter. Data collection procedures provide the procedures of collecting the data: its techniques and types. Data analysis describes the tools used to analyse errors and presents the steps of analysing the data.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study was cross sectional since the data were collected in a single point of time and covered different students' levels of proficiency. Connole, et al. (1993:61) confirm that "cross-sectional takes a 'snapshot' of a situation at a particular point in time". Whereas, Cohen et al. define a cross-sectional study as "one that produces a 'snapshot' of a population at a particular point in time" (Cohen et al., 2005 :175). A cross-sectional design, according Dulay et al. (1974), is a design in which the data are collected from a large sample of learners at one point in their language development and stimulates actual development over time by including many learners who are at different stages of L2 development. Hobson (1999) states that cross sectional approach is economical and efficient since a large number of subjects can be studied at one time and development of a particular form or function can be measured fairly and easily. He adds if the subjects have different levels of competence, inferences can be drawn about developmental sequences by taking samples of writing from learners of different levels and sequencing the different developmental patterns which are found. In this case, the nature of this analysis merely focuses on interlanguage, namely verb phrase acquisition. The participants were grouped into three levels according to students' proficiency or competence.

The reason for this arises due to the limitation of time in conducting the study and also due to some arguments that verbs are considered as the central part of the clause or the head of the sentence (Borjars & Burridge, 2001). Unfortunately, the use of verbs still becomes a big problem for the students. Practically, they produce big amount of errors in regard to the use of verbs. i.e. Mardijono (2003), Pardede (2006), and Kanshir (2008). Hence, the use of verbs still potentially appears to be problematic and important to be investigated.

### **3.2. Participants**

The population of this study was the second year of undergraduate students who are majoring English Education in a Private Higher Education Institution in Bandung. The participants for this study were 12 undergraduate students from the second year. They were chosen to be participants of the study since it was assumed that they have learnt English for years and they also have experienced some subjects related to writing subjects. Hence, they were familiar with several kinds of texts and had experiences to produce a written target language. In addition, as undergraduate students, it was assumed that they have good understanding of English as foreign language. However, when they produce target language, their outcome seemed not achieve the complete target language. They still often made errors and produced variations of utterances and sentences with inappropriate structures and forms.

The study employed purposive sampling. Ritchie and Lewis state the sample units were chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). For instance, they are learners of English as a foreign language, their language productions contain errors although they have learnt it for a long time. In dividing the students into three groups representing students' level of proficiency; lower, middle, and higher achievers, the study used their score from subjects related to writing skills; Writing for Academic Purposes, Writing for General Communication and Writing in Professional Context. This can be considered as

reliable because writing is a complex and consists of some knowledge. This is in line with Jacob et al. (1981, cited in Fatemi, 2008) who assign that writing is not an isolated performance from the rest of human experience. Rather, writing skills have been shown to be fundamentally integrated with other skills like reading, speaking, and listening.

Jacobs et al. (1981: 74, cited in Fatemi, 2008: 26), further, note that since composing involves many of the same factors as general language proficiency; “a test of composition should correlate substantially with measures of overall English proficiency even though a composition requires a writing performance specifically”. Cumming et al. (2005, in Fatemi, 2008) report important differences in the discourse characteristics of written text that are related to proficiency levels. They conclude that greater writing proficiency is associated with longer responses, greater lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, and grammatical accuracy.

### **3.3. Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was a test of Writing for Academic Purposes subject. The test was conducted as the final test which was held at the end of the previous semester. The test consisted of some parts including making a free writing based on topic given by the teacher, summarizing paragraph, writing paraphrase and determining topic sentence. Based on this explanation, they finished the test and simultaneously produced a written texts under test conditions. Luna (2010), who analysed real academic exams, argued that basic grammatical errors appeared where the students did not come up in a normal classroom exercise. She confirmed that during students' writing process, different cognitive strategies were taking place in their minds. Thus, these conditions were relevant because they stand for the examples of students' interlanguage that showed a certain degree of L1 transfer.

### 3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The data of the study were students' free writings regarding the experience in learning writing for academic purposes. In this study, 12 writings were chosen as the data of the study. They were chosen because they met the criteria of Corder's (1971, in Richards, 1974) idiosyncratic dialect and error analysis that language of L2 learner is a special sort of dialect, any spontaneous speech or written text intended by the learners is meaningful, in the sense that it is systematic, describable in set of rules. Further, the spontaneous speech or written production of the L2 learner is language and has a grammar. Corders (1971, in Richards, 1974:158) affirms that since a number of sentences of that language are is omorphous with some of the sentences of his target language and have same interpretation, then some, at least, of the rules needed to account for the learners' language.

In collecting the data, several steps were taken. Firstly, the undergraduate students of English Education were chosen as the participants of the study because they had learnt English grammar and several writing subjects. Secondly, the study chose students' final test at the end of semester. In the test, the students were given sheet of paper test, they were asked to complete the questions about paraphrasing, summarizing, determining topic sentence and also task to write an writing based on the given topic by the lecturer, namely 'experience in learning writing for academic purposes'. The students' paper sheets of the final test were collected, however, the data used for the study was only the students' freewriting.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

As mentioned previously, the data of the study are the writings written by students in final test. The collected data were reread carefully and critically. As the focus of the study was to investigate interlanguage that appears in students' writing, so that the students' grammatical forms became the focus of the analysis, both the correct and incorrect form were identified and categorized. According to the limitations, the study focused the analysis on verb phrases only. An Error Analysis was carried out on their writings to identify linguistic behaviour shared

by the students. The study analysed every students' writing comprehensively. It means that the study did not analyse only the errors but also the accurate or correct ones since the objective of the study is to investigate students' linguistic behavior shared by the students in terms of interlanguage. These writings constituted the primary data of this study.

The analysis of the students' errors in their writings was carried out by using the steps suggested by Corder (1982) and Ellis (2008). The steps were as follows; The first step was to identify errors; in this step, the study acquired data and tried to find out the grammatical errors by underlying the errors. The second step was to describe errors; in this step, the study described or classified the errors into grammatical categories. Categorization of errors based on their specific nature was based on Politzer and Ramirez's and Burt and Kiparsky's Linguistic Category Taxonomy (Dulay et. al, 1982). The last step was to explain errors; in this step, the study explained the problem of students' errors and evaluated them according to the grammatical rule. The study also compared the expressions or sentences that students produced to the accurate expressions in the target language.

After analysing the students' error and non-error productions, the study wanted to conclude whether the students have acquired the target language or not using the acquisition criteria. As stated in Chapter II, a structure is acquired when it is used correctly in 60 per cent (Vainikka and Young-Sholten 1994 in Palotti, 2007), 75 per cent (Ellis, 1988 in Palotti, 2007), 80 per cent (Andersen 1978 in Palotti, 2007), or 90 per cent (Dulay and Burt 1974; Bahns 1983 in Palotti, 2007) of cases. Based on these percentages, the study employed the 80 per cent, following Anderson (1978 in Palotti, 2007), and Barrot's (2010) study which based on Brown's (1973 in Barrot, 2010) definition that is used in L1 language acquisition research. Furthermore, in analysing the causes or processes that contribute to students' interlanguage, the study used the five central processes of interlanguage proposed by Selinker (1972, in Richards, 1974 & Ellis, 1996) and other causes of errors proposed by Richards (1971 & 1972, in Ellis, 1996).

