

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief description of the whole contents of the research including the background of the research, statement of the problems, aims of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, clarification of terms, hypothesis, and organization of paper.

1.1 Background of the Research

Out of the four fundamental language skills in English, writing is considered to be the most complex and difficult language skill to master. This is due its process of composing which is profoundly different compared with the spoken language. Thus, it can be stated that to learn and to teach writing needs an effective strategy to master it. This is supported by Brown (2001, p. 335) that “the process of writing requires an entirely different set of competencies and is fundamentally different from speaking” This language skill however plays an important role in certain academic field. For instance, a job applicant is obligated to write a paper about something instructed by particular institution. His or her writing product is then used as one of the considerations to be accepted in the institution proposed. In this case, writing ability becomes so important. Besides, in educational field, writing is one of the language skills that must be acquired by the students since the curriculum obliges the students to have capability to write some text genres. Furthermore, Fatemi (2008, p. 2) also said that in academia, the skill of writing is visible in conference presentations, journals and book publication through which the transmission of new ideas and concepts are affected. Thereby, the necessity of being skillful in writing is necessary to such an extent for the students.

In this regard, as it is an important productive skill through which thoughts and ideas are disseminated, it is incumbent for language instructors of writing in different educational environments to exploit many different methods, approaches, and techniques that can serve to produce better writers. Thereby some experts have studied some approaches to gain students' writing ability. Besides, some have also devoted their times to find out some variables that account for the writing development.

There are several variables that have strong relationship with the writing development such as vocabulary, reading ability, meta-cognitive knowledge, grammatical knowledge, speed of processing etc. According to Tribble (1996, p. 43 in Fatemi 2008, p. 9), in order to write effectively, a writer requires a range of knowledge which can be summarized as:” a) content knowledge, b) context knowledge, c) language system knowledge, and d) writing process knowledge”. Among the above-mentioned variables, grammatical knowledge is one of the variables that can influence writing ability. The role of grammar as an important variable, which can affect writing, has been espoused by several researchers.

Schoonen et al. (2010, p. 8) stated that different with L1 writers which grammatical knowledge may not discriminate well between various levels among writers, the difficulty in fluent grammatical structures for L2 writers will burden the working memory and thus hinder the writing process. Fatemi (2008, p. 2) further in his study said that “a number of studies affirm that a lack of grammatical accuracy in writing may impede progress” Therefore, it is imperative that learners are sensitized to such errors and are trained to apply the appropriate approaches to rectify them. The grammatical accuracy highly affects the quality of writing product since grammatical

errors as stated by Min (2013, p. 3) frequently inhibit unity, coherence, and clarity of the entire content for an ESL/EFL learner's writing.

Regarding the importance of grammar in the writing process, various findings have been investigated including whether the grammatical knowledge has an impact on students' writing ability or not. First, a study from Macaro and Masterman (2006) concluded that grammatical knowledge leads to gain in some aspects of grammar tests but not to gain in accuracy in either translation or free composition. Second, a study from Mirzaei et al. (2011) told that there was a fairly strong relationship between the explicit grammatical knowledge of L2 learners and their general language proficiency. This study also claimed that the explicit grammatical knowledge accounts for TOEFL. Thus, those L2 learners who had performed better on the explicit grammatical knowledge test had also performed well on the listening comprehension, structure, and reading comprehension sub-tests. Third, Huang (2011) also conducted a study for some Taiwanese learners of English to examine the correlation between grammatical knowledge and writing ability and found that the correlation between the two variables was at moderate level. Last, Tajzadeh et al. (2013) in an experimental study found that grammatical knowledge has put a positive effect on writing ability of learners.

In Indonesia where English becomes a foreign language, however, the controversy whether to grammar or not to grammar still exists amongst some English practitioners. Thus, under the discussion of various findings and the reality that burden some language teacher's minds regarding whether or not grammatical knowledge has an impact on students' writing ability, different from the previous study in which the participants were taken from native or ESL learners, this study will eventually make sure whether grammatical knowledge accounts for writing

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**THE CORRELATION BETWEEN EXPLICIT GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE AND WRITING ABILITY
OF EFL STUDENTS**

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ability in EFL context. Therefore this study attempts to find out the degree of correlation between grammatical knowledge and writing ability of EFL students. The subject of this research is the twelve grade students of a senior high school in Bandung. The results of this study are expected to be a consideration for language practitioners to develop language teaching method or at least to enrich the literature on research regarding to the relationship of students' grammatical knowledge and their writing ability. Moreover, this study result is expected to fill the gap of the previous findings where the research on the EFL learners still needs many references.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

The problems to be discussed in this research will be summarized in the following research questions:

1. What is the EFL students' ability of grammatical knowledge?
2. What is the EFL students' ability in writing?
3. What is the correlation between grammatical knowledge and writing ability of EFL students?

1.3 Aims of the research

In accordance with the research question, the aim of the present research is:

1. Finding out the EFL students' ability in grammatical knowledge.
2. Finding out the EFL students' ability in writing.
3. Finding out the correlation between grammatical knowledge and writing ability of EFL students.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on finding out the correlation between grammatical knowledge and writing ability of EFL students in the 12th grade of a senior high school in Bandung.

1.5 Significance of the Research

From this current study result, it is expected that this research will make one major contribution to the areas of English writing in EFL context. This study is an attempt to investigate whether grammatical knowledge has the correlation with writing ability of EFL students or not. Furthermore, it is also expected that the result of the study can provide reference in the teaching writing. Instead of struggling with some debates on whether to grammar or not to grammar in the previous years of some researchers' studies, based on the result of this study, the teachers hopefully can put their mind on professional skill to immerse the first impression to EFL students on learning English in order for them to be a professional teacher who contributes to the development of this beloved country.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding related to this study, the terms used in the present research are clarified as follows:

A correlation is a statistical test to determine the tendency or pattern for two (or more) variables or two sets of data to vary consistently (Cresswell, 2012, p. 338).

Explicit means clear and exact (Cambridge Dictionary).

Grammatical Knowledge is a linguistic ability to determine the uses to which language can be put (Ellis, 2004 in Widodo, 2006, p. 125).

Writing Ability is the ability of generating ideas, organizing them coherently by using discourse markers and rhetorical conventions to put them cohesively into a written text, revising the text for the clearer meaning, editing the text for appropriate grammar and producing the final product (Brown, 2001, p. 335).

EFL students is the students who do not widely use the language in his/her immediate social context which might be used for future travel or other cross-cultural communication situations, or studied as a curricular requirement or elective in school but with no immediate or necessary practical application (Troike, 2006, p. 4).

1.7 Hypothesis

When there is a correlation between explicit grammar knowledge and writing ability of EFL students, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected.

It is described as follows:

- ❖ H_a : there is correlation between the two variables.
- ❖ H_0 : there is no correlation between the two variables.

1.8 Organization of the Paper

The paper will be presented into five chapters. The chapter will be subdivided into subtopics that will elaborate the issue given.

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the research, statement of the problems, aims of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, clarification of terms, hypothesis, and organization of paper.

Chapter II Theoretical Foundation

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This chapter elaborates the foundation of relevant theories as a for discussing the research problem.

Chapter III Research Methodology

This chapter provides the explanation of procedures in collecting and analyzing data in the research including research method, research participants, data collecting techniques, and data analysis.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussions

This chapter presents the finding of this study and its discussion through relevant stories.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestion

This chapter describes the conclusions and suggestions relevant to the finding of this study.