

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

English is regarded as a Foreign Language (FL) in Indonesia. Foreign Language is the language which is officially used in a foreign country in addition to the language used in that country. Although English is as a foreign language in Indonesia, it is considered to be the most important one among other foreign languages such as German, French, etc. It is simply because of its status as an International language. So English is used for wider communication or for other reasons all over the world.

This fact may lead Indonesian people to learn more about English. And our government supports this effort by placing English as one of the subjects that should be taught to Indonesian students beginning from the Junior High School. Even some schools have given their students the English lesson when they study in the fifth year of the elementary school.

According to the 1984 curriculum, English is taught in the Senior High School with the stress on the reading ability. It means that Senior High School

students are expected to be able to read English books after they have passed their Senior High School. In order to be able to comprehend English books well, students have to understand the English word orders they read. That is why, first of all they have to know the basic grammar of the language. The basic grammar of the language (English) is taught to Junior High School as well as Senior High School students. Even it is also taught in universities of all faculties.

However, most students find English difficult to learn. As a result, most students get troubles in their English lesson. To avoid the difficulties faced by the students in their English lesson, a teacher should be able to create teaching activities to facilitate and reinforce learning. In this case, the teacher, of course, has to use several strategies suitable for his or her teaching activities. Homework seems to be one of the teaching strategies that can help students to facilitate and reinforce learning.

Should students do homework? In his book, Teaching Study Skills, Thomas G. Devine states :

"Homework is an important dimension of an effective

study skills program."¹ It means that homework can improve study skills. The study skills consist of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In this case, since grammar is considered to be an important base to form a language, grammar is necessary to be taught at schools. To teach the English grammar effectively so that students are used to getting a set of habits in constructing correct English words is by giving homework to be done at home by students. Hence, a good mastery of the English grammar may lead to a good mastery of listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Based on Thomas G. Devine's opinion above, the writer feels interested in making an experimental study to know whether there is the effect of homework on students' mastery of English grammar.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As what we have known, with a certain teaching strategy, the optimal students' progress is expected. It also happens to this homework. By a good planning and preparation of homework, it is expected

¹ Thomas G. Devine, Teaching Study Skills, Allyn and Bacon Inc., 470 Atlantic Avenue, Boston Massachusetts 02210, 1981, p.161.

to be able to increase students' mastery of English grammar. Since language teaching occurs through habit formation, Stephen D. Krashen, in his book Language Methodology Series Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition says: "Error correction is thought to be useful for conscious learning about the grammar of the language."² To get the habit formation of the grammar of the language, some error corrections must be done after students have done the assignment given by the teacher so that students know the correct rules in English.

However, from the writer's experience while carrying out the three-month teaching practice at a certain school, the writer has got confused of the different teaching strategies that the teachers in that school apply. Some teachers always give homework at the end of the English lesson while the other teachers seldom give homework to their students.

From the previous statements, the problem that calls for immediate answer is as follows: "Is there any effect of homework on students' mastery of

² Stephen D. Krashen, Language Methodology Series Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition, Pegamon Press, 1982, p.10.

English grammar ? "

1.3 Hypothesis

To answer the problem that has been mentioned, the following hypothesis are set up :

- The alternative hypothesis :

There is the effect of homework on students' mastery of English grammar.

- The null hypothesis :

There is no effect of homework on students' mastery of English grammar.

1.4 The Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to detect whether homework aids students master the English grammar. If the findings of this research shows there is the effect of homework on students' mastery of English grammar, it can be said that homework is one of good strategies that can be applied in English language teaching to reinforce learning.

1.5 Limitations of the study

To look for the depth of the analysis, the study is necessary to be limited. Homework can be

applied to all subjects taught at schools. In this study, the writer just wants to discuss homework dealing with the English lesson in the Junior High School. Since the grammar or structure of the language is considered to be an important base to form a language, this study is limited to know whether homework is necessary to be applied to increase students' mastery of English grammar.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, certain technical terms used in this thesis should be clarified :

- Homework

Homework is considered to be tasks related to the previous lessons which are given by teachers to their students to be done at home as a reinforcement. In this case, Thomas G. Devine defines: "Homework is the study students do when they are not under the direct supervision of their teachers."³

- Students' Mastery of English Grammar

Students' mastery of English grammar is the students' knowledge of English grammar. Students must be able to use English rules correctly. This can be

³ Devine, op.cit., p.162.

judged from the difference between the average score of the pretest and posttest students get.

