

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

English is considered as the first international language because it is used in almost every country in the world. In United Kingdom, Australia, and America people use English as their first language to communicate. While in Indonesia, people use English as a foreign language, so they do not use it in daily communication.

Based on the writer's experience in teaching English at school and private course, she has found out that some high school students tend to make grammatical errors, especially subject-verb agreement errors in their writing. The writings can be in all kinds of text. Mostly they tend to make subject-verb agreement errors in texts that use Simple Present Tense like descriptive text, report text, and discussion text.

Once, the writer has tried to analyze descriptive text her student made. Her student was a high school student grade 10. She analyzed it and she found out that most of the errors made were verb forms. The student said that she often forgot to change the verb that should be added with an s/ es for third person singular. The writer has concluded that the main cause of this problem was the difference of language structure and features in the students' first language, Bahasa Indonesia and the target language, English.

Every language has its own rules which are called grammar. Just like Bahasa Indonesia and English, each language has different rules. (Hall, 1993: 3) says that

grammar is a description of certain aspects of a particular language. It usually includes phonological (sound), morphological (word composition), and syntactic (sentence composition). In writing a descriptive text, the student should translate the sentences she had in her mind from Bahasa Indonesia to English. There might be a syntactic problem found in the process of writing an English descriptive writing. That is why he or she often makes error in her writing, especially in the subject-verb agreement.

From the writer's experience, she has been curious to know the sources of subject-verb agreement errors of the students' writings. She thought that the students might have some difficulties because they have lacked of understanding the English material given from school. Since English has been declared as a compulsory subject at schools in Indonesia in junior high school and senior high school level by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, Muhammad Nuh, in the 2013 curriculum, there are 9 compulsory subjects which consist of 24 hours of learning hours in a week. English is one of the compulsory subjects. English is taught in Indonesian senior high school for 2 hours a week.(Qurahman, 2014) Unfortunately, there are still many students have difficulties in writing English composition.

Therefore the writer wanted to know the types and the sources of the subject-verb agreement errors made by the students. The writer has decided that she would have an error analysis in the high school students' writings. The study only focuses on the subject-verb agreement errors as the limit of her error analysis. The writer thought that it was important to analyze students' writing to find out the errors the

students make on subject-verb agreement in their writing and the reasons behind them and she hoped that the study may help teachers and the students to improve the students' ability in writing and to find the way to improve teacher's teaching technique if needed.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

- What are the types of subject-verb agreement errors made by high school students in writing descriptive texts?
- What are the sources of subject-verb agreement errors made by high school students in writing descriptive texts?

1.3. The Objective of the Study

The study aimed at exploring:

- The types of subject-verb agreement errors made by high school students in writing descriptive texts.
- The sources of subject-verb agreement errors made by high school students in writing descriptive texts.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to arouse teachers' awareness of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text, especially in the use of subject-verb agreement rules. By knowing the subject-verb agreement errors that are commonly

made by the students and the sources of the errors ,the teachers can take the results of this study as an input in his/her teaching techniques to improve students' ability in writing composition, especially in descriptive text, so the students will not make the same errors in their writing.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

In the study, the subject of the study is limited to high school students grade 10 who had learned and done the writing test of descriptive text about a person. This study deals with the subject-verb agreement errors found in the descriptive text writing of the students. This study emphasizes on the descriptive writing and the subject-verb agreement errors made by the students. The subject-verb agreement errors include only the errors in the form of subject and verb. The sources of the subject-verb agreement errors in the students' writings are found by analyzing the students' writing test.

1.6. Definitions of the Key Terms

- **Error analysis:**

“Error analysis is a branch of applied linguistics. It is concerned with the compilation, study and analysis of errors made by second language learners and aims at investigating aspects of second language acquisition.” (“Error Analysis,” 2009)

- **Error:**

“Errors are the flawed side of learner speech or writing.” (Dulay, 1982 in Dalal 2013)

- **Subject-verb agreement:**

Nordquist(2006) says that the definition of subject verb agreement is “the correspondence of a verb with its subject in person (first, second, or third) and number (singular or plural). The principle of subject-verb agreement applies to finite verbs in the present tense and, in a limited way, to the past forms of the verb *to be* (*was* and *were*).”

- **Descriptive Text:**

“Descriptive text is a text that is used to describe a particular person, place or a thing.” (Library of Congress, 2008 in “Descriptive Text”, 2010)

- **Writing:**

Daniels, Peter T., &Bright, William (1996) say that “writing is a system of more or less permanent marks used to represent an utterance in such a way that it can be recovered more or less exactly without the intervention of the utterer.”

1.7. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in the study is error analysis which is described by Corder (1967). He explains two rationales for conducting error analysis: theoretical reason and practical reason. Theoretically, he claims error analysis could help in the investigation of the language learning process. Practically, it can guide the remedial actions teachers need to make in order to correct the errors for learners.

The steps of the error analysis that Corder uses are collection of samples of learner's language, identification of errors, classification of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation of errors.

There are two error sources classified by Corder (1971) in Dalal (2013). The first error source is interlingual/transfer errors, which refer to the native language. These errors occur when the learner's first language (L1) prevents him from acquiring the rules of second language (L2). The second error source is intralingual/developmental errors, which refer to the TL that is being learned.

The types of errors by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) are *omission* (i.e., excluding a linguistic item that is obligatory in a grammatically correct utterance), *addition* (including a linguistic item that is not required in a grammatically accurate sentence), *misformation* (mixing up the use of linguistic items), and *misordering* (placing linguistic items in an inappropriate order).

There are some rules in subject-verb agreement, one of them is according to Turkenik (1998) in Mbau, Marhum, & Muhsin (2014), there are three basic rules of subject-verb agreement: In Simple Present or Past Tense, the main verbs are *be* and *have*; The verbs in the third person singular must be added -s, -es, or -ies in Simple Present Tense; Compound tenses use *be* or *have* as the first auxiliary.

The sources of subject-verb agreement errors made by high school students in writing descriptive texts by Corder (1971) in Dalal (2013) classifies error sources into two types. The first source of error is interlingual/transfer errors and the second is intralingual/developmental errors.

The theory of descriptive text tells about the definition of descriptive text, “a text that is used to describe a particular person, place or a thing.” (Library of Congress,2008 in “Descriptive Text,” 2010).Good descriptive writing includes many vivid sensory details that paint a picture and appeals to all of the reader's senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste when appropriate. Descriptive writing may also paint pictures of the feelings the person, place or thing invokes in the writer. Good descriptive writing often makes use of figurative language such as analogies, similes and metaphors to help paint the picture in the reader's mind. Good descriptive writing uses precise language. General adjectives, nouns, and passive verbs do not have a place in good descriptive writing. Use specific adjectives and nouns and strong action verbs to give life to the picture you are painting in the reader's mind. Good descriptive writing is organized. Some ways to organize descriptive writing include: chronological (time), spatial (location), and order of importance. There are four objects that can be described in descriptive writing. They are: a person, a place, a thing and an animal. The language feature is Simple Present Tense.

1.8. Assumptions of the Study

The study is based on the following assumptions:

- The person who analyzes the descriptive writing testof NSA high school students grade 10 is qualified in checking the errors.

- The subjects of the study have been taught about descriptive text before they do the assessment.
- The sources of subject-verb agreement errors made by high school students can be found by analyzing the students' descriptive writing tests.

1.9. Organization of the Proposal

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter is introduction, it consists of background of study, statement of problem, the objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, definition of key term, theoretical framework, assumptions of the study, and organization of the study. The second chapter is review of related literature, it consists of theory of writing, descriptive text writing, theory of error analysis, theory of grammar, and previous studies. The third chapter is the research method, it consists of research design, subject of the study, research instrument, research data, procedure of data collection, procedure of data analysis. The fourth chapter is the finding and discussion of the findings. The last chapter is the summary, conclusion and suggestion.