

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Nowadays, people who have high educational background realise that English is a language which has an important contribution in global communication because English is an international language. Based on this realisation, English starts to be learnt at the earliest stage of school (kindergarden). In Indonesia, English is not a second language but a foreign language. According to Richards (1974: 87), ‘English in Japan, France, Indonesia, Russia, and so on, is a purely cultural object as a study and is not involved in societal functions.’

The Indonesian language has its own forms and patterns. Indonesian-speaking students’ utterances are gradually “shaped” by the patterns. The English language also has its own forms/patterns. Different patterns from those two languages make Indonesian students who learn English often face difficulties. The difficulties lead them to performance-error making. This condition is also faced by the seventh- semester students of the English Department, Faculty of Letters,

Christian University. The primary source of my data are the students whose mother tongue is Indonesian. The academic year of 2005/2006 is supposed to be the last for 2002 students at English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University. However, even having studied at the department for seven semesters, they still make errors in their speech by mispronouncing English sound(s) as well as by using wrong constructions of English sentences. I become interested in finding out what difficulties that are faced and what errors are often made by the students. This curiosity arouses me to choose this as the topic of my thesis. I decide to observe the seventh-semester students at the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University, in terms of their language performance for a particular purpose. I hope my thesis will help teachers to get more understanding about the students' difficulties, so that they can improve their teaching strategies to help their students to avoid making the errors. It would be beneficial for the development of teaching in the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University. It is also my hope that by reading my thesis, the students will be more aware of the errors they make or are likely to make.

Learning a certain target language with the interference from the first language is discussed in Psychology in Learning Foreign Language (Norrish, 1983: 10), one of the objects of psycholinguistics. Phonology and Syntax are the theories which I use to support the discussion of the topic. The reason I choose these two micro linguistic areas to support the big area, Psycholinguistics, is that they are two of the three major parts of any kind of language. This is in accordance with Raja T. Nasr's statements: 'Language has three major parts:

phonology (that is, sound or pronunciation), vocabularies (that is, words), and grammar' (1978: 52). '... it may be claimed that syntax is the most important part of grammar.' (1978: 74). Moreover, the errors are easily found in phonology and syntax.

In phonology, segmental sounds are used to analyse different consonant and vowel sounds of English and Indonesian. It contributes to the cause of Indonesian students' pronunciation errors. In syntax, the objects I intend to focus on are the aspect of quantity, subject-verb agreement and lack of grammatical elements. The aspect of quantity is the approach that I use to examine different forms of English singular/plural noun(s) with the Indonesian. On the other hand, subject-verb agreement is used to examine the use of verbs with the agreement of the subjects.

My hope is that the students will be more confident when they communicate in English. Good pronunciation and the ability to produce right English sentences are the intended results.

I am focusing my thesis on the students' difficulties and how the errors are made. I can predict the difficulties by making a contrast between the mother tongue's linguistic systems and those of the target language. The analysis I make is contrastive analysis. According to Norrish (1983: 28), contrastive analysis is 'an activity which contrasts the two linguistic systems, that of the mother tongue, and that of the target language.' The errors made by students in their speech are the data I gather from my observation. Observing the students' English speech in a classroom; furthermore, recording it to get the evidence are the appropriate ways

to collect the data. Not only can I get the reliable data but also compare the theory and the practice.

Statement of the Problem

In this thesis I would like to discuss the formulated problems as follows:

1. What errors in phonology and syntax do the students of the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University make in their speech?
2. How does the first language interfere in causing the errors?

Purpose of the Study

In this thesis I would like to show:

1. The errors in phonology and syntax which the students of the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University make in their speech.
2. The first language interference in causing the errors.

Method of Research

First, I attend the following classes: Formal Conversation, History of Modern Thought, Classical Poetry, Classical Drama, Novel: Thematic Analysis, Poetry: Thematic Analysis, where the students of seventh semester make presentations in English. I find it practical to observe their English performance. I record each student's speech while giving their presentation. Secondly, I listen to the recording I have in order to find the errors they make. The errors found in each

student's speech are collected, selected, and classified into phonological, and syntactic errors. Next, I analyse the data by contrasting the English and Indonesian theories connected with phonology, and syntax to find out the type of the difficulties which lead the learners to the error making. Finally, I draw a conclusion based on my discussion.

Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Three displays the data analysis, and the discussion. Moreover, Chapter Four states the Conclusion, in which what has been analysed and discussed in the previous chapter is concluded. At the end of the thesis, the whole data and their sources are displayed in the References and the Appendices.

