

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

The title of my thesis is *Errors of Collocation Made by the First Semester Undergraduate Students of English in Their Writing Class*. This title is derived from a general topic, collocation, which is broadened into a specific topic: errors of collocation made by the 2005 undergraduate students of the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University, in their first semester writing class.

I choose this topic on the grounds that problems of collocation are usually ignored, even though they are important problems faced by the learners of the English language. When they learn English, the basic thing that they usually focus on is how to be understood by others; however, collocation tends to be ignored. Without learning collocation, English learners will not have maximum mastery of the English language, owing to the fact that collocation is also an aspect of English language.

Collocation is the correct combination of words in a language. (Hornby, 2005: 293) The English learners will not be able to use English correctly if they

do not learn collocation, even though they can still be understood by others. As an example, if someone says or writes: “I will *make* my homework”, of course people can understand what he or she means, but it is incorrect and unnatural, because there should be a collocational relationship between the words that are used. The verb that is collocationally right for that sentence is *do*.

According to Luke Prodomou, collocation is important because it makes English words appear naturally. <[www.macmillandictionary.com/med-magazine/May2004/19-Language-Study-Collocation-UK.htm](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/med-magazine/May2004/19-Language-Study-Collocation-UK.htm)> Besides, Pawley and Syder say that studying collocation is useful to know which sentences are ‘nativelike’. (Setiawan, 2004: 106) I think collocation is important because as the English learners we should not only study English for the purpose of being understood by others, but we should also become increasingly better in using English, becoming closer to the native speakers’ competence.

In my opinion, my topic is significant not only for the lecturers, the department, and the students of the English Department at Maranatha Christian University but also for other English learners and teachers in general. For the English lecturers and department at Maranatha Christian University, and for English teachers in general, this can encourage them to pay more attention to their students’ use of collocation and to teach collocation more intensively, especially the areas in which most of their students make errors. In my opinion, in the English Department at Maranatha Christian University, collocation seems to be considered trivial, considering that little attention is given to it in some of the linguistic subjects. For the students of the English Department at Maranatha Christian University as well as English learners in general, my topic is also

significant, for the reason that it will make them more aware of using collocation when they are using English.

In this thesis I choose to analyze the collocation used in writing, and not in speaking. Language learners are more likely to make errors in speaking rather than in writing because they do not have much time to think about the language rules when they are speaking, for the reason that they spontaneously use English. In writing, they will think more about the language rules since they have more time to think about it. So, if my subjects make a lot of collocational errors in writing, it is ascertained that they would make many more in speaking. This means that their understanding of collocation is low and they need further study about it. By analyzing their writing, I hope to be able to find out their difficulties in using collocation.

The subjects of my research are the English Department first-semester students of the 2005/2006 academic year. When I started doing this research, they were the youngest generation of Maranatha Christian University students. The subject called Paragraph and Narrative Writing is their first writing class of the five semesters of writing subjects in the department. In this research, I analyze the errors of collocation in fifty percent of their Paragraph and Narrative Writing assignments.

It is important to analyze the English language of the first semester students, owing to the fact that it is better to overcome collocational problems as early as possible. If most of them make errors in their use of collocation, it means that the English knowledge which they obtained in Senior High School, and maybe also from English courses, does not give them sufficient understanding of

collocation. This can support me to strongly suggest that the English Department includes the Vocabulary subject again in its curriculum, as they have done previously, in which collocation is one of its focuses, so that the students' use of English can improve.

All my subjects have the same first language, that is, Indonesian language; Indonesian language is their mother tongue. I limit my research to what kinds of collocational errors they make in their English writing and how their first language influences their making those collocational errors; however, I do not carry out research on the non-linguistic reasons why they make the errors.

As I investigate the errors in using collocation related to the language process in mind, the linguistic area of my topic is Psycholinguistics, which studies the relationship between language and the mind. (McArthur, 1992: 820) The part of Psycholinguistics to which my topic belongs is Second Language Learning, on the grounds that my subjects are Indonesian undergraduate students who are learning English, a language that is not their mother tongue. Reid says that Second Language Learning is a conscious process in studying second language knowledge and rules; furthermore, being able to use them. <<http://languageimpact.com/index.htm>>

Since collocation has characteristics of semantic and syntactic units, in this thesis I use Semantics and Syntax as the approaches. Semantics studies meaning in language (McArthur, 1992: 914), whereas Syntax studies patterned relations that govern the way the words combine into phrases, clauses, and sentences. (McArthur, 1992: 1016) Besides Semantics and Syntax, I also focus on Interlanguage theory because I carry out research on how my subjects' first

language influences their making collocational errors. According to Cheryl Sisak, Interlanguage studies the transfer of habits of the first language into the target language which is being learned. <<http://www.coas.uncc.edu/linguistics/courses/4263/4263intl.htm>>

For the references, I get the theories from journals, books in the library, and on-line information in the internet.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In this thesis, I would like to do research on:

1. What kinds of collocational errors do the 2005 undergraduate students of the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University, make in their first semester writing class, in relation to Semantics and Syntax?
2. How does their first language influence their making those collocational errors?

### **Purpose of the Study**

By doing this research, I intend:

1. To know what kinds of collocational errors that the 2005 undergraduate students of English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University, make in their first semester writing class, in relation to Semantics and Syntax.
2. To find out how their first language influences their making those collocational errors.

## **Methods of Research**

First, I gather the data by collecting fifty percent of the writing assignments, that is, the assignments after mid-semester exam, made by the 2005 undergraduate students of the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University, in their first semester writing class. Second, I analyze them by focusing on the errors of the students' use of collocation. Third, I classify their collocational errors based on the collocational divisions and subdivisions, in relation to Semantics and Syntax. Fourth, I analyze how their first language influences their making those collocational errors. Finally, I write a research report.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

My thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Methods of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Theoretical Framework. It deals with the explanation of the linguistic area, the approaches and the theory used in writing my thesis. Chapter Three is the discussion of the errors of collocation made by the first semester undergraduate students of English in their writing class. And the last chapter, Chapter Four, is the Conclusion, in which I write my personal comments and opinions based on the findings. After Chapter Four, there is Bibliography, which contains the sources of information of the authors and their books, the journals, and the on-line cites from where I get the theories and to which I base on my research. The

last part is Appendix, which contains my research data, namely, my subjects' errors in using collocation.