

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Studying grammar is important for every learner of a second or foreign language because communication, both spoken or written, will not be successful without the use of correct grammar. A learner of a second or foreign language learner, specifically a learner of English as a second or foreign language, cannot be said to be masterful if she or he is unable to demonstrate her or his good English grammar. Therefore, grammar cannot be neglected in the process of English learning.

When English is learned as a second or foreign language, the learners will normally make errors, which can be caused by the different systems of the learners' mother tongue (L1) and the English language (L2). In Indonesia, English is learned as a foreign language. Commonly, Indonesian learners of the English language will regard English grammar as a serious problem. The difficulty of learning the English grammar is generally caused by the different systems of English and Indonesian. One of the grammatical difficulties frequently faced by learners in learning English grammar is about tenses, which are not found in Indonesia.

Producing the right English tenses can be difficult for the learners because the Indonesian language has no tenses. According to Hornby, “the word tense stands for a verb form or series of verb forms used to express a time relation” (Hornby 78). In addition, Martin (142) says, “Verbs tell time. They tell whether something takes place in the past, the present, or the future. A verb changes its form to indicate time. Verbs have three basic tenses, past, present and future.” In the Indonesian language, to express an idea in a different time frame, we only need to attach an adverb of time, such as *kemarin*, *besok*, *tadi pagi*, etc. In the English language, there are various tenses, namely present and past tenses, future tenses and perfect tenses. In the Indonesian language, a verb does not show the time when the action happens; however, in the English language, a verb shows it. For example, we say *Saya pergi ke bioskop kemarin* and *Saya selalu pergi ke sekolah pukul tujuh* in the Indonesian language, whereas in English we say I went to the cinema yesterday and I always go to school at seven o'clock.

The different way of Indonesian and English in showing different time frames may cause English learners to make frequent errors in using English tenses. The fact that English learners often make errors in English tenses makes me interested in analyzing the tense errors in students' English in order to find out the types and causes of errors that they often make.

In this thesis, I will analyze the tense errors in an anthology entitled Pieces of Life, which consists of the sixth semester students' short stories in their Creative Writing class in the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Maranatha Christian University. The short stories were compiled in 2008. I choose Pieces of Life to be analyzed because it is unedited and the dominant errors that I find in this anthology are errors in tenses. Besides, this anthology is

the first experience for most students of Creative Writing Class in writing a short story.

In my analysis, I present my correction of the spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation found in the data. Hence, although the analyzed data in this study contain those errors, I only discuss the errors in the use of tenses in my analysis.

The reason of my taking the data from the sixth semester students is that they are considered to be intermediate students who are expected to write in English with proper grammar. However; in reality, they still apply incorrect grammar, especially tenses, in their writing.

According to Corder, errors are divided into two kinds, namely performance errors and competence errors. Performance errors are said to be caused by fatigue, inattention and a temporary lack of memory and they are often called mistakes. On the other hand, competence errors are caused by lack of knowledge of the rules of the language, and they are often called errors. However, to determine learners' mistakes and errors is difficult and it needs a long and sophisticated study or analysis (Richards 24-25). In this paper, I will not differentiate between errors and mistakes owing to the fact that they are difficult to be differentiated and there is limitation time in finishing this thesis.

In doing the research, I take two stories because I find that those two stories contain errors which are commonly made by the students. Moreover, the writers of these two stories are still available in the campus to be interviewed while some others have graduated. In analyzing the data, I use a non-contrastive approach. In this approach, there are two kinds of errors: intralingual and developmental errors, which are explained as follow: "Intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules

apply; on the other hand, developmental errors illustrate the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook” (Richards 173).

Finally, I hope this paper will give some contribution to the English learners in general and help them to understand their errors in English tenses so that they will be able to improve their use of tenses in their writing. I also hope this paper can be an additional reference for lecturers of grammar and writing classes.

912 words

1.2 Statement of the problem

In this paper, the problems that I would like to research are formulated as the following questions:

1. What types of tense error do the students make in their short stories?
2. What are the causes of the tense errors?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are

1. To find out the types of tense error that the students make in their short stories.
2. To find out the causes of the tense errors.

1.4 Method of Research

I read books and other references from the library and the Internet to obtain some error analysis theories. Afterwards, I took two short stories from Pieces of Life that are suitable for my analysis. I analyzed the errors in using tenses that the students have made in their short stories. I also interviewed the

writers to check the story line or the meaning of certain words in their short stories. After that, I classified the kinds of errors that the students made and finally I wrote this thesis.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

There are four parts in this thesis. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the Theoretical Framework. Chapter Three presents the Analysis of Tense Errors in the Collection of Short Stories Entitled Pieces of Life by Students of English Department, Maranatha Christian University. Finally, Chapter Four contains the Conclusion. At the end of the thesis, I put the Bibliography and the Appendix.