

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Background of the Study

Writing is one of four skills that should be mastered in learning English. English learning curriculum in Indonesia expects students to be able to communicate their thoughts in written texts that are included to interpersonal texts (various types of expressions in communicating), functional texts (such as posters and advertisements) and monologue texts (such as narrative, recount, exposition, and other genres). The texts written grammatically right is one criteria demanded by curriculum. This indicates that grammar, that is a set of rules of how linguistic units structured, is important for the success of writing. Once writers learn the parts of sentences and how they work together to determine the meaning and effect of a sentence, they can begin to understand what good writing is all about (Chakravarty, 2004: 1).

In fact, many students fail in composing the good writing because of errors in grammar. One common error in English writing texts is subject-verb agreement errors, and it may occur due to various forms of subject (Scott, 2014). Subject and verb of a sentence must be agree in number and person. The key of this concept is to identify the subject of the sentences, determine whether it is singular or plural, and then choose a correct verb (Devine, 2002: 19). Errors in identifying the subject lead to the verb errors. So, one needs to understand the singularity and plurality of subject ,as well as how the subject arranged in words, and what must be done to the verb in relation to the subject to make a right sentence.

It could be said, errors in subject-verb agreement can lead to misunderstanding. For example, someone who does not aware of present tense concept in which singular subject must be paired with an base form of a verb plus addition of *-s* to form plural subject, he writes *Simon, my neighbour, go sailing*. Readers might interpret that the subject of the sentence is made up of two people, that are *Simon* and *my neighbour*. Apparently, the subject of which is referred to by the author actually just *Simon*; the '*my neighbour*' is only an additional information that refers to *Simon*.

Based on the preliminary observation took place in SMA YAPIM Marelan, the writer found that the eleventh grade students had problems with subject-verb agreement matters in their writing. The writer examined some writings of them randomly and found that most of the students did not bother to add the affix *-s* in the end of verbs they used and to use plural 'be' when they put a plural noun as subject of a sentence in composing present tense. For example, a student wrote *The student make the teacher very angry* instead of *The student makes the teacher very angry* and *Parents is worry when kids _ with bad friends* instead of *Parents are worry when kids are with bad friends* .When the writer showed the incorrect forms to some of them, they could not find what was wrong with the forms. Their cluelessness of the deviations means that they misunderstood the subject-verb agreement in simple present tense.

Many researches related to subject-verb agreement errors in writing several monologue texts have been conducted. A research on errors in recount text made by the Tenth Grade Students of SMAN 1 Siantan concluded that the

students' errors in subject-verb agreement were caused by students' incompetence in identifying the subject whether it is singular or plural (Ramli, 2013).

There was also a research done by Wahyudi (2014) at Maulana Malik State Islamic University Malang. The research was to found out how well university students in comprehending English subject-verb agreement by analyzing errors in the concept. He found out that the highest frequency of subject-verb agreement error made was error of omission. Factors that might be inferred are: firstly, there seems to be phonological transfer from the first language to Indonesia; secondly, the learners might not unequivocally comprehend the use of 'to be'; and thirdly, the learners were not able to differentiate between active sentence and passive sentence.

Another research was conducted by Nayan (2009). The subjects of the research were the third semester students of Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia who were from several ethnic groups including Malays, Javanese, Bugis, Minang and other indigenous ones. They were asked to write a term paper about issues they were interested on. The result was that the students had more tendency to make errors in the general rule of subject-verb agreement due to the interlanguage factor in which they do not have this kind of rule in their native language. The students did not aware of their errors and make any effort to find the 'correct' rules applied in English. It means that students need feedbacks and encouragement from anyone who knows the right concept.

Responding to the issues described in researches and observation, it seems very reasonable if the Indonesian students makes errors in subject-verb agreement. In contrast with English, Indonesian language, as like Malaysian's, itself does not has the subject-verb agreement concept. In learning the foreign kind of rule, Indonesian students might be puzzled by questions as 'what subject is singular or plural?' and 'what to do on the verb if the subject is singular or plural?'

Errors are caused by lacked knowledge about a target language (Hubart, 1983). An error is not a lack of performance that can be awared and corrected by an English learner as soon as he recall the incorrect utterance, but a lack of competence in which feedbacks from anyone who understands which ones the correct terms are in a target language are needed to correct the incorrect. In order to overcome errors, analysis on the errors production should be done. Error analysis provides data about in which parts of target language learners have tendency to produce incorrect forms and shows teachers what difficulties faced by students are (Brown, 1987). By analyzing errors, teachers will know the students' misunderstanding so that they can effectively correct it by giving feedbacks so that the students can profit by mistakes, and designing some effective ways in teaching to avoid misunderstanding in particular concepts of target language.

Therefore, since students' lacked knowledge in subject-verb agreement concept is a problem in their attempt to make a good writing, it deserves to be analyzed. It has been many studies done in this field, but the farther, more recent data is necessary to add information and provide a comparison. The writer was

interested in conducting research to provide the information by collecting data from Indonesian students—in this study are the eleventh grade students from private schools in a district of Medan, who had just learned to write analytical exposition text.

B. The Problems of the Study

The problems of this study are formulated as:

1. What kinds of subject-verb agreement errors are made by the students in writing the analytical exposition text?
2. What error is dominantly made by the students in the relationship between subject and verb in writing the analytical exposition text?
3. What are the causes of the students' subject-verb agreement errors in writing the analytical exposition text?

C. The Objectives of the Study

The study is aimed at finding:

1. the students' subject-verb agreement errors in writing the analytical exposition text;
2. the type of error dominantly made by the students in the relationship between subject and verb in writing the analytical exposition text;
3. the causes of the students' subject-verb agreement errors in writing the analytical exposition text.

D. The Scope of the Study

The study is limited to:

- The writing test was only given to the 11th grade natural science program students of private high schools in Medan Marelan District.
- There are some genres of writing taught to Indonesian students but this study is focused on a genre taught to the 11th grade students, that is analytical exposition text. It means that analysis is done on sentences that use present tense for the tense is a grammatical feature of the genre.

E. The Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the expected significance of the study is to provide some useful information for anyone who intends to increase the understanding of subject-verb agreement errors, or for those who find the study as an appropriate reference for the further research.

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to be useful for:

1. Teachers, to know the students' errors in comprehending the agreement between subject and verb so that they will make efforts in giving feedbacks and considering the students' lack of competence in applying any strategy or technique of teaching English.
2. Students, to be helped in realizing their errors in the subject-verb agreement and profiting by mistakes to overcome the said errors and reduce the errors made in the next semester.

3. The readers, to encourage them to learn and study more about the subject-verb agreement, errors and their analysis, analytical exposition text, and the other related concepts.



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