

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

English language is vitally important because it is spoken in so many parts of the world. Businesses, educational domains, academic domains, and even realms that deal with security all use English as a language of communication. In a practical sense, one could survive without English, but with the globalized nature of the world and commerce, knowledge of English is quite essential. In terms of the appreciation of language and literature, knowledge of English is extremely important in understanding some of the best writings offered. This is not to say that other languages do not possess the same amount of introspection and talent. Far from it, yet, the knowledge of English could help to open many professional and literary doors.

In Indonesia English is regarded as an important subject nowadays. This condition has been caused by the fact that English has become the most used-language in the world. Graddol's study (as cited in Jarvis: 2005) suggests that in the year 2000 there were about a billion of English learners - but a decade later, the numbers will have doubled in 2010.

A common goal of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) in most schools today is the students' ability to use English for communication in either written language or spoken language. Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world, and English is the most commonly used language in the sciences with Science Citation Index reporting as early as 1997 that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though

only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries, (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language). It is also the language of computers that help to communicate with the people around the world through Internet technology and e-mail. People who know English can deal with the internet, which regards information and communications revolution. English operates as the lingua franca of today, the language that businesspeople around the world use to communicate when they don't speak the same native languages. Understanding English is necessary to succeed in international business. According to Global Envision in www.ehow.com/facts, English is the official language for more than 70 countries, and English is taught in schools around the world. Knowing English opens new business doors. One has the chance to land jobs in which English fluency either in written or spoken language is required, he or she can communicate clearly with contacts and potential clients.

Based on those reasons, consequently, students are required to have competence in using the target language for communication. This competence is known as communicative competence (Hymes, 1972 in Richard and Rodgers, 2001; 159). Communicative competence involves several components. First, based on the work of Canale and Swain (1983 in Brown 2007), it includes four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. Meanwhile, according to Celce-Murcia, et al (1995 in Fulcher and Davidson, 2007), it includes five instead of four: discourse competence, linguistic competence, socio-cultural competence, actional competence, and strategic competence.

Among other components within both frameworks of communicative competence, grammatical (or linguistic) competence seems to be popular in language

pedagogy. Grammatical competence is an aspect of communicative competence that encompasses “knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology”. It is competence that we associate with mastering the linguistic code of a language, the “linguistic” competence (Brown: 2007). Grammar is very important within the English language, since it is, in effect, the glue that holds the language together. With the use of incorrect grammar, sentences can become meaningless and the message is unclear. This means that without correct grammar, one is not able to communicate effectively and the person who is reading the work may well be quite confused about the meaning.

For a non-fiction writer, proper grammar is always important. With non-fiction, the writer telling readers facts and information they need to know. The writer is most likely doing this in some of article format. If the writer’s grammar is poor, then the reader is left with thoughts of whether or not the writer really knows what he or she is talking about. If the writer cannot write properly, how he or she can really convey the subject matter he or she is writing about authoritatively. Hence, good grammar usage is important.

Although having grammatical competence is important and “grammar is too important to be ignored”, how grammar should best be taught is still questioned. In effect, grammar is the way in which sentences are structured and the language is formatted, so whilst it may be considered a bit boring to study correct grammar, it really is worth the time and effort. If one does not know the rules of grammar, then he or she will never be able to communicate clearly and effectively in the English language.

How to deal with grammar in communicative EFL/ESL classes is an issue, which

has been investigated under the study of focus on form (Hinkel and Fotos, 2002). The term focus on form is defined as any attempt of grammar teaching which is employed incidentally in communicative activities or when the focus of the lesson is not on studying grammar (Ellis, 2001). According to Long and Robinson (1998) focus-on-form refers to "how focal attentional resources are allocated" to linguistic forms. For example, during a meaning-based classroom lesson the teacher or another student may momentarily shift attention from the content of a lesson or communicative activity to specific linguistic features (e.g., words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns) in response to problems with comprehension or production.

According to Ellis et al., 2001 there are two types of focus on form, namely *reactive focus on form* and *pre-emptive focus on form*. Reactive focus on form refers to the provision of corrective feedbacks towards grammatical errors during communicative activities, while pre-emptive focus on form refers to initiating grammar discussion when there is a need to do so; especially, it happens when a student asks question about grammar or because the teacher feels it is important to highlight a particular point of grammar.

An important issue involved in the studies of reactive focus on form and pre-emptive focus on form is learner uptake. Learner uptake is defined as student's response after the information or explanation of grammar has been given to students by teacher. In reactive focus on form, learner uptake is identified after corrective feedbacks, while in pre-emptive focus on form learner uptake is identified after teacher introduces grammar to students. Learner uptake is theoretically believed as to facilitate second language acquisition (Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Ellis et al., 2001). Ellis also added that the factors

like the way teacher introduces grammar and the time provided for producing uptake are considered also affect the quality of uptake.

Considering the above discussion (i.e. grammatical competence, grammar teaching, and the study of focus on form), this study will focus on investigating the nature of pre-emptive focus on form which is initiated by teacher and learner uptake in an EFL communicative class where the primary focus of the lesson is on the use of English for communication within all classroom activities.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

In line with the background of the study above, this study was concentrated on finding the answers to the following questions.

1. In what context of communicative class did the teacher initiate Pre-emptive Focus on Form (PFF)?
2. How did the teacher teach grammar in PFF sessions?
3. How was the learner's uptake in teacher-initiated PFF sessions?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

In line with the research problems, the objectives of the study were to describe:

1. in what context of communicative class the teacher initiated PFF.
2. how the teacher taught grammar in PFF sessions.
3. how the learner's uptake in teacher-initiated PFF sessions was.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

Dealing with the teaching of grammar in communicative class, the term focus on form has been investigated as the best way how to teach or insert grammar in communicative classes. There are two kinds of focus on form; they are pre-emptive focus on form and reactive focus on form. Reactive focus on form refers to the provision of corrective feedbacks towards grammatical errors during communicative activities, while pre-emptive focus on form refers to initiating grammar discussion when there is a need to do so; especially, it happens when a student asks question about grammar or because the teacher feels it is important to highlight a particular point of grammar.

This study was concentrated on the pre-emptive focus on form. Pre-emptive focus on form itself can be initiated by teacher and student. This study was focused on the focus on form which was pre-emptively initiated by teacher which happens incidentally during communicative class and learner uptake as the response to the teacher's grammar explanation.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Findings of the study were expected to be useful for both theoretical and practical purposes. For theoretical purpose, it was expected that the findings of the study would contribute to the theory of learning English as a foreign language, especially in the theory of focus on form and learner uptake. For the practical purpose, this study was expected to provide readers especially English teachers the insights of how grammar could be inserted in an EFL communicative classroom. The findings were also hopefully beneficial for the following researchers to conduct further research about focus on form.

1.6 The Clarification of Terms

To avoid possible confusion arising from the use of terminology, a brief review of the definitions of terms is presented as follows:

a. Teacher-initiated pre-emptive focus-on-form.

Teacher-initiated pre-emptive focus on form (PFF) is a phenomenon of grammar teaching in communicative classes by which a teacher initiates to introduce or explain particular points of grammar to students in the middle of learning activities (see Ellis, 2001; Ellis et al., 2001). The term 'pre-emptive' is used to show that the act of giving information of grammar is conducted before an error occurs since there is another phenomenon of Focus on Form which contradicts PFF: *Reactive Focus on Form* (RFF). Unlike PFF, RFF refers to any attempt of giving information of grammar by which teacher provides corrective feedback towards students' errors in using the target language.

b. Learner uptake.

The term *learner uptake* in this paper refers to student's utterances in the target language which serve as a response to the given information of grammar and aims at incorporating that information into his/her own language production (Ellis et al., 2001). Based on the work of Ellis et al. (2001), learner uptake in teacher-initiated PFF might take two forms. First, the student makes a sentence based on the information given. Second, he/she paraphrases the teacher's explanation or making a conclusion based on the teacher's information of grammar. In short, learner uptake shows the student's understanding about grammar based on the information given; either through giving examples or through making a conclusion.

c. Communicative English class

The term “communicative English classes” in this paper is intended to refer to an English class in which both teacher and students uses English in classroom interaction and the primary focus of the lesson is on communicative language use through many kinds of learning tasks like role plays, interview, and games (Ellis et al., 2001).