

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

According to Ameliani (2019), grammar is an important thing, especially in the use of language process. Richards and Schmidt (2010) state that grammar describes the structure of language and how linguistic units such as words and phrases form sentences. While Yule (2006) explains that grammar is the process of describing the structure of phrases and sentences concerning their order within the language. Wang (2010) adds that structure is always important in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language.

The importance of English grammar cannot be denied, but many students, including college students, often struggle to understand grammar. According to Al-Mekhlafi (2011), grammar can create an atmosphere of discomfort and even fear in students. Utomo and Ahsanah (2020) argue that students usually find learning grammar exhausting. Effendi (2017) even argues that many students who have studied grammar for several years at the university level still have trouble forming good and accurate sentences. So, grammar plays an important role in a language, but it takes a lot of effort to master it.

In English grammar, there are several grammatical elements that students need to use correctly when writing sentences such as prepositions, tenses, subject-verb agreement, etc. However, Master (1990) notes that

there is one part of English grammar that is considered difficult to learn for EFL/ESL learners, it is called the articles system.

Articles are small part of the language, but they are very important. Crystal (2008) points out that the articles are subclass of determinants that play a major role in distinguishing noun usages. That is, the article belongs to a broader class of qualifiers: words or phrases that come at the beginning of a noun or noun phrase to indicate whether the information is new or familiar, or to convey something about quantity. It is in line with Parrott (2000) who found that each time a noun is used, the student must decide whether an article needs to be used or not.

As stated by Yuliawati and Andayani (2020), in the process of learning a foreign language, students may find it difficult due to the difference in the grammatical structure. Therefore, errors can occur during learning. Brown (2000) notes that an error is the use of a linguistic item by someone regarded as faulty or incomplete. A few studies are concerned with grammatical errors made by students, especially when it comes to writing a text. It can be in any type of text, including descriptive text. Descriptive text is a text that describes people, animals, things, and places with clear explanations to provide the reader with information and understanding about the objects described.

When students tend to write a descriptive text, they require the ability in using the correct articles. As we know that one of the major language features contained in a descriptive text is the use of nouns. When students describe nouns, they should pay attention to the use of proper

articles because it helps them provide more detailed descriptions of the objects like identifying whether they are specific or unspecific, telling about quantities, etc.

Because the importance of the ability in using the articles in writing a descriptive text, several studies have been conducted to investigate the error in using the articles. Sholihatun (2017) reported that students made errors in using the articles in writing their descriptive text. Regarding the results of her research, there were some errors that students made when using the articles in English such as additions, omissions, and substitutions. Withakurnia (2017) also reported in her research that many students still struggled to use the articles and the source of error was because of the inter-language and intra-language transmission. Furthermore, Dawitri (2022) revealed in his research that students still faced difficulty in distinguishing the definite and indefinite articles when applying them in the writing process.

Based on the background above, the researcher decides to also analyze the errors in using the articles when writing descriptive text. In this case, the researcher will select the fourth-semester students of the English Education Department Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in the academic year 2022/2023 as the subject because they have studied the basic grammar and writing subject in the previous semesters and they have gotten the material about English articles and descriptive text. At first, the researcher assumed they have mastered them. However, after having interviews with several students of the English Education Department Universitas Ahmad Dahlan,

the researcher found that some of them still have difficulty when using articles. Since the use of articles cannot be separated when students want to produce their own written text, the researcher believed that it is important to know the types and the dominant type of errors in using articles.

B. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the researcher decides formulation of the problems as follows:

1. What are the types of errors made by the fourth-semester students of the English Education Department Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in using English articles in writing the descriptive text?
2. What is the dominant type of error made by the fourth-semester students of the English Education Department Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in using English articles in writing the descriptive text?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the problems above, the objectives of this research are:

1. To know the types of errors made by the fourth-semester students of the English Education Department Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in using English articles in writing descriptive text.
2. To know the dominant type of error made by the fourth-semester students of the English Education Department Universitas Ahmad Dahlan in using English articles in writing descriptive text.

D. Focus of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the use of articles used in written descriptive texts. These articles are the indefinite article 'a/an', the definite article 'the', and zero article. The researcher will conduct the study on the fourth-semester students of the English Education Department of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.

E. Significance of the Study

The results of this study are hoped to be beneficial for the following parties:

1. For students

This study will give benefit for students because they will know their weaknesses in using the article system, which can reflect and encourage them to learn better.

2. For English teachers

In the learning process, a teacher needs to know students' ability in understanding the material. This study gives teachers descriptions of how students apply the articles in their writing. The researcher hopes through this study, teachers can design improvement tasks and develop the best treatments to overcome students' difficulties in learning the article systems.

3. For Researchers

The goal of this study is to increase research in the field of second language learning, especially in Indonesia. Other researchers are

expected to conduct various studies to determine the English proficiency of Indonesian students.

F. Operational Definition

Based on Corder (1981), error analysis refers to the study and analysis of the errors made by second or foreign language learners. It is used to identify, categorize, and analyze the errors made by students in acquiring and learning materials for teaching and learning activities and formulating effective learning strategies for both learners and teachers.

According to Parrott (2000), articles belong to the wider class of determiners, words, or phrases that come at the beginning of a noun or noun phrase and give a signal whether the information is new or familiar, or tells us something about quantity. There are two types of articles called definite and indefinite articles. The definite article refers to the word 'the,' while the indefinite articles refer to the word 'a' and 'an'

Based on Anderson (1997), descriptive text is a type of text used to describe something in particular (people, places, things). It helps readers understand the real object more clearly. The descriptive text consists of identification and descriptions. Identification consists of general information. While the descriptions consist of more specific information about the topic that the writer talking about.