

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

English is an international language which is used for communication among all countries in the world that has put English as an important language to be learned. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language which is taught from elementary school to higher education. Indonesian students often find that English is difficult to be learned. The difficulties come from the differences between English and Indonesian in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Grammar is very crucial portion because it is the basic knowledge for developing language skill. Harmer (2007: 4) defines grammar as the study and practice of the rules by which words change the forms and are combined into sentences. Therefore, it is very important for learning language especially English. Tenses are a part of grammar. There are 16 tenses, one of them is simple past tense.

Simple past tense is used to talk about activities that began and ended in the past. Azar (1999: 27) states that the simple past indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past. For Indonesian students it is a difficult item to be learned, because it requires awareness to use past verb form. There is also the problem of regular and irregular verb, and the making of negative and interrogative sentence. The change of simple past tense verb is difficult to be learned because students have to memorize that, especially the change of irregular

past verb. There are two patterns of simple past tense, namely pattern with full verb and pattern with be “was/were”.

The pattern of simple past tense with full verb is divided into five forms, namely positive form (S + V2), negative form (S + did not + V1), interrogative form (did + S + V1?), asking subject form (Who/What etc. + V2?), and asking other than subject form (QW + did + S + V1?). Whereas, the pattern of simple past tense with be “was,were” is divided into four forms, such as positive form (she/he/it + was, they/we/you + were), negative form (she/he/it + was + not, they/we/you + were + not), interrogative form (was + she/he/it?, were + they/we/you?), and WH questions form (QW + was/were + S?).

Many people experience events that happen in the past like telling past experience, telling autobiography or telling biography of someone. Simple past tense is important to be mastered by the first students of English Department, because it is often used in spoken and written English. Then, the writer wants to know whether the first semester students of English Department master simple past tense well or not. Therefore, the writer will conduct a research entitled “An Analysis of Simple Past Tense Errors of the First Semester Students of English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto in Academic Year 2013/2014”.

B. Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The reasons in choosing the topic are as follows:

1. The mastery of simple past tense is important for the students in learning English.
2. Knowing the error is important to design the teaching which can improve students' mastery of simple past tense.

C. The Problems of the Research

The problems of the research can be stated as follows.

1. What is the students' mastery in using simple past tense?
2. What kind of errors made by the students in using simple past tense?

D. The Aim of the Research

The aim of the research is as follows:

1. Knowing the students' mastery in using simple past tense.
2. Finding out the kind of errors made by the students in using simple past tense.

E. The Contributions of the Research

The result of the research is useful for the students, the lecturers, and the other researchers.

1. For the students

This result can hopefully make the students know their competence in using simple past tense, so they will be able to improve their skill in simple past tense.

2. For the lecturers

The lecturers can be use the result of this research as a feed back for the teaching activities.

3. For the other researchers

This result can be used for the other researchers as a reference to conduct the similar research more accurately.

F. Clarification of the Research

The title of this research is “ An analysis of simple past tense errors of the first semester students of English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto in academic year 2013/2014”.

To understand the topic more easily, the key terms of the research are classified as follows:

1. Error Analysis

“Error analysis is a procedure generally used by researcher and language teacher including collecting sample, identifying error in its sample, describing the errors, classifying the error based on the reason and giving evaluation about erroneous level” (Ellis in Tarigan, 1990:68).

2. Past Tense

The simple past tense indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past (Azar, 1999: 27).

