

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents about the background of the study, statement of the problems, scope and limitation of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and definition of key terms.

A. Research Background

Speech and writing are two different activities. The distinction between both of them can be seen transparently. When a speaker speaks, people can only rely on gestures, tone of voice, and body language to make people who are listening understood. The speech is rarely in complete sentences, and if the meaning is unclear, it can be immediately clarified. Writers, of course, do not have the same opportunity to change what they have written, unless they are publishing on the web. Once a piece of writing is printed, there is little opportunity for revision.

In writing activity, generally, there are a lot of things need to be paid attention. It is started from the grammatical issue, the unity and coherence within sentences, up to the punctuation marks. When a person is writing paragraphs, his mind needs to be in accordance with all of the items that support the establishment of the product of his writing.

Speaking of writing activity, it is connected with texts or paragraphs. Paragraphs itself are made up from one or more sentences which all relate to one

As David Waugh's opinion stated through his book¹, "Within two years of publication, Lynne Truss's (2003) book about punctuation, *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, had sold three million copies. Even though the book you are reading covers spelling and grammar too, we would not dare to dream of selling even 5 per cent of that figure! But why should a book about commas, colons, and apostrophes attract such interest? One reason was that the title held an appeal, being based upon a misunderstanding caused by a missing comma". It can be interpreted that it is like his wander on how could a book with straight topic sold by so many copies that he writes on his own book discussing the similar topic with once book he was curious with.

¹ David Waugh, Claire Warner, and Rosemary Waugh, *Transforming QTS: Teaching Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling in Primary Schools* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), 95.

occurs continuously, where writers or students do not come into a realization that comma is an important issue, for sure, the communication goal built between writer and readers in written will not be achieved.

The difficulties of the students in writing English text sometimes bring errors. Errors indicate that the learners construct their own rules on the basis of input data which is different from the target language. As Julian Edge stated in Jeremy Harmer's book⁵, errors cannot correct themselves, so they need explanation about the reasons they happen.

In language learning, the study of learner's errors is needed because the result of the study gives some contributions on attempts to deal with the students' difficulties. The teacher can infer the nature of the students' knowledge and find what they still have to learn by analyzing the students' errors. Moreover, the result of the study focusing on students' errors can be used as a means to measure whether the students have mastered the language taught by the teacher. It is also as a means to measure the teacher's success in teaching a language.

This study was conducted at SMPN 25 Surabaya. There were some underlying points of why researcher chose the school to do the research rather than the other schools. It was also based on some considerations. The main reason was that the school gets “A” accreditation which indicates that the school has predicate as a good quality school in society. The next reason was according to the result of preliminary research in the form of asking and giving question undertaken by the

⁵ Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Longman, 1998), 99.

The researcher gave concern on the comma error since it happened dominantly to all of students and quite destroyed the meaning of each sentence, so that the things that the students would like to convey through paragraphs cannot be understood by the readers because of the mistakes in the placement of the comma. For instance, one of comma theory that stated by *Language Portal of Canada*⁷, it is said that comma should be put after an introductory clause, phrase or adverb. One of

⁷ Government of Canada. “Comma” *Language Portal of Canada*, (<http://www.ourlanguages.gc.ca>, accessed on December 14th, 2014).

students' writing once wrote "*Tough the farmer has made a trap the clever animal doesn't trap in.*" There must be a comma after the word 'trap', but there was no comma put inside the sentence.

Moreover, the researcher tended to choose eight grade students rather than the seventh and ninth grade students. It was based on the consideration that eight grade students have more vocabularies and experiences in writing English texts if they are compared to the seventh grade students. Besides, ninth grade students were not allowed to be research subject since they were now prepared to do a National Examination.

According to the explanation that was elaborated by the researcher previously, then the researcher was interested in conducting a research dealing with the problem, under the following title: “The Comma Error in Students’ Writing: A Case Study of Eight Grade Students at SMPN 25 Surabaya.”

B. Research Questions

This study was aimed to answer these questions:

1. In what category comma error mostly occurs in students' writing?
2. What are factors driving students to put comma incorrectly?

C. Objective of The Study

Considering the statements of the things which were being asked throughout this study, the objectives of the study were then:

1. To find out the comma error mostly occurs in the written work of the eight grade students at SMPN 25 Surabaya.
2. To find out and describe the factors driving the eight grade students at SMPN 25 Surabaya to put comma incorrectly.

D. Significance of The Study

By the end of this study, it was expected to be able to give significant contribution for the sake of quality improvement of the language teaching and learning. Those benefits are mainly addressed to teachers and further researchers as follows:

- ## 1. Teachers

It will give teachers a detail description about the students' error in putting comma within students' written work. It is expected that teachers provide the information of using comma correctly when learning about writing English skill since it is the basic material usually ignored to be taught. Thus, teachers will not be stuck only in some particular teaching writing strategies, but also deals with the term punctuation marks in writing activity.

- ## 2. Further Researchers

This study is also addressed to the further researchers who are going to discuss similar topic. Researcher realizes that the study is imperfect without any other real action like the technique to overcome the students' problems in the case of giving punctuation. So that, it is expected for further researchers being able to apply a

