

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the research, including background of the study, research problem, objective of the study, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of the key terms.

#### A. Background of the Study

Second language acquisition is the knowledge that studies how people acquire and learn second language.<sup>1</sup> In acquiring a language, language learners also have to learn five primaries linguistic. They are phonology, syntax, morphology, syntax, and semantic. One of the primaries linguistic that is discussed in this study is syntax. Syntax is the knowledge that studies the rule that govern word order in a sentence, and it is also known as grammar.

In this research, the researcher used processability theory as the framework to analyze the students' ability in understanding grammar. Processability theory (PT) is one of paradigm that focuses on how language learners develop grammar in second language, and it was introduced by Manfred Pienemann.<sup>2</sup> PT has a hypothesis that language learner will acquire second language through many stages. The stages cannot be skipped because every stage is the following of the

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<sup>1</sup>Susan M. Gass and Larry Selinker, *Second Language Acquisition; An Introductory Course, Third Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Bronwen Dyson, "Understanding trajectories of academic literacy: How could this improve diagnostic assessment?", *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, 1 (2009), 54.

previous stage.<sup>3</sup> Thus, if the language learners skip the stage of second language acquisition, there will be a gap in the processing of acquiring second language.

There are five stages that demonstrate the language acquisition. They are lemma, category, phrasal, sentence, and subordinate clause.<sup>4</sup> The first stage called lemma or noun procedure. In this stage, language learners have to be able to produce a single word without formal variation, for example *yes, no, flower*.<sup>5</sup> This stage is the simplest stage of processability theory.

The following stage that is the development of lemma is category. In this second stage, language learners have to be able to produce a lexical form variation, such as the insertion of *-ed* on the verb for indicating past tense and *-s* on the noun for indicating plurals, for example *watched* and *books*.<sup>6</sup>

The third stage called phrasal. In this stage, language learners have to be able to produce phrasal agreement. There are two phrasal categories in this stage; the first is noun phrase procedure and the second is verb phrase procedure. In noun phrase procedure, language learners have to be able to understand the rule of matching plurality, thus they can produce it, for example *two books, many children*. On the other hand, language learners also have to be able to produce verb phrase procedure. In this phrasal category, language learners have to be able

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<sup>3</sup> Yumiko Yamaguchi, "The Acquisition of Complex Structures: The Case of Child ESL", *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 3 (September, 2013), 224.

<sup>4</sup> Yanyin Zhang and Ima Widyastuti, "Acquisition of L2 English Morphology; A Family Case Study", *Articles*, (2010), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Daniele Artoni and Marco Magnani, "LFG Contributions in Second Language Acquisition Research: the Development of Case in Russian L2", (2013), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Yamaguchi, "The Acquisition of Complex Structures", 2.

to understand the rule of moving an adverb out of the verb phrase to the front of a sentence, for example *I went yesterday* → *yesterday I went*.<sup>7</sup>

The next stage is called sentence. In this stage language learner should be able to produce a good sentence from lemma, category and phrasal. The language learners in this stage have to produce a sentence at least subject-verb agreement; for example, *Mary likes pizza*.<sup>8</sup> The last stage of processability theory is called subordinate clause procedure. In this last stage, language learners have to be able to understand the use of diacritic feature between main clause and subordinate clause; for example, *I know where you live*.<sup>9</sup>

All the stages above have to be acquired by the language learners, because as what have stated above that every stage is the development of the previous stage. Thus, EFL learners are suggested to know their level so that they will not skip the level and they can improve their English well. Therefore, it is important to know EFL learner level in order to improve their English and to make an appropriate method to increase their knowledge in the level that they do have not acquired yet.

Grammar is commonly related to writing skill, when we do writing we have to make a sentence. The sentence must be understood well and the understanding of sentence comes from its structure. Different structure will give different meaning, thus it will give different understanding to the reader. Therefore, it is important to study sentence and its structure.

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<sup>7</sup> Zhang, “Acquisition of L2 English Morphology”, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Yamaguchi, “The Acquisition of Complex Structures”, 2.

According to Patricia Murrow, EFL learners are good in understanding the theory of grammar, but they fail to practice the theory that they get in the form of written English.<sup>10</sup> Thus understanding the theory is not enough. From that statement, it can be concluded that writing English is difficult and one of the difficulties in writing English comes from the use of grammar.

Based on the problem stated previously, the researcher conducted the research entitled **“An Analysis of EFL Learners’ Acquisition of Written English through the Measurement of Processability Theory”**

## **B. Research Problem**

Based on the background of the study, the researcher wants to analyze EFL learners’ acquisition of written English through the measurement of processability theory. The analysis of this study is to know at what level the EFL learners’ acquisition of written English. Therefore, the general question of this study is **“What are the stages of written English that has been acquired by EFL learners?”**

## **C. Objective of the Study**

Based the previous discussion stated in the background of the study, the objective of this study is to know EFL learners’ current language acquisition of written English using Pienemann’s Processability Theory (PT).

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<sup>10</sup> Patricia Murrow, “Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Students’ Writing; Indicators for Curricula Enhancement”, 2004, 20.

#### **D. Significance of the Study**

The results of this study are expected to provide useful contribution to teachers, students, readers, and other researchers. The usefulness is below:

##### **1. Teachers**

The results of this study will be useful for English teachers to get more information about processability theory. It will be useful for the teachers to know the students' level of second language acquisition. Therefore, the teachers can make an appropriate method to improve the level that the students have not acquired yet.

##### **2. Students**

The results of this study will be useful for the students to give information about how to know their level of second language acquisition through the measurement of processability theory.

##### **3. Readers**

The results of this study will be useful for the reader to provide useful information about how to know the level of second language acquisition through the measurement of processability theory.

##### **4. Other Researchers**

The results of this study will be useful for other researchers who are interested in analyzing the level of second language acquisition

through the measurement of processability theory to get further information from this study and do further research.

#### **E. Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses on analyzing EFL learners' acquisition of written English. This study will be conducted on the tenth grade students of senior high school. This study will be conducted by asking the students to write a descriptive text because one kind of texts that the tenth grade students must master in second semester is descriptive text. The descriptive qualitative research will be used to analyze the EFL learners' acquisition of written English and to know at what level the students have mastered and what level the students have not mastered yet.

This research will be conducted at the first grade students. Every grade has different level of acquisition. Therefore, this study could not be decided as the result of EFL learners' acquisition level of written English at Senior High School.

#### **F. Definition of the Key Terms**

This study will focus on analyzing EFL learners' acquisition of written English. Thus, to avoid misunderstanding, the researcher states the definition of the key terms. The following are the key terms used in this study:

##### **1. EFL Learner**

EFL (English as foreign language) is a tradition term for the use or study of the English language by non-native speakers in countries

where English is generally not a local medium of communication.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, EFL learner is someone who learns English as their non-native language. EFL learner in this study refers to the tenth grade students of SMA Terpadu Abul Faidl Wonodadi – Blitar.

## 2. Acquisition

Acquisition is the act or process of achieving a language or a linguistic rule or element.<sup>12</sup> Thus, acquisition that is mentioned in this study refers to the acquisition of the tenth grade students of SMA Terpadu Abul Faidl Wonodadi – Blitar in written English and the acquisition in this study will be measured using Pienemann's Processability Theory (PT).

## 3. Writing

Writing is producing something in a written form so that people can read, perform, or use it.<sup>13</sup> Writing in this study refers to the tenth grade students writing. In this study, the students will be asked to write a descriptive text because it is one kind of texts that should be mastered for the tenth grade students in second semester.

<sup>11</sup> <http://grammar.about.com/od/e/g/English-As-A-Foreign-Language-Efk.htm>, accessed on March 16, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> "Acquisition | Define Acquisition at Dictionary.com", *Dictionary.com*, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/acquisition>, accessed on March 5, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary third edition, 2000:502.

#### 4. Processability theory

Processability theory (PT) is one of paradigm that focuses on how language learners develop grammar in second language.<sup>14</sup> There are five stages of processability theory; they are lemma, category, phrasal, sentence, and subordinate clause. All the stages have to be acquired by language learners, and all the stages cannot be skipped because each stage is beneficial to other stage.

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<sup>14</sup> Dyson, “Understanding trajectories of academic literacy”, 3.