CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the problem

Language is one of the most essential human means of communication. It means that with language as a means of communication, people can express their ideas, thought, and feeling to others. However, the most important thing of the language is that the possession of the language of the human being distinguishes them from the animals (Fromkin et.al., 1990). By means of language, people can share their ideas, reports, papers, and research findings through the communication of language. Moreover, this sharing of ideas or thoughts can only be possible if the language users have similar views in their language system, otherwise the communication process will not be in the way that it is hoped. As Samsuri (1994: 35) states that *"Karena bahasa merupakan medium komunikasi, sudah jelas bahwa masyrakat-masyarakat yang secara social dan budaya terbelakang, dan secara ekonomis, poiltis dan industriil, serta ilmu pengetahuan tidak maju, buhasanya tetap bisa dipakai dalam kehidupan sosial dan budaya, tetapi masyarakat-masyarakat itu tetap mengalami kesulitan dalam bidang-idang yang lain* (as language is the medium of communication, it is clear that the societies that are socially and culturally left behind, and in terms of economic, politic, industrial, and science aspects, are still undeveloped, their language can be used in social and cultural life, but they will have difficulties for communication in the other aspects).

Today, English has become a compulsory subject in every school. English is now taught from elementary school to university. English is needed in the modern world. However, it is not that easy to acquire a new language. As students learn English, they will face some problems. They have to learn English grammar, and new vocabularies. They will have to make some adaptation to the new language system. Their unfamiliarity with the new language system will obstruct their learning development. It is normal for them to make some errors and mistakes in the learning process. They always or often make mistakes when they speak, read or write. It is very predictable that they are influenced by their native language. Thus, it becomes one of common problems for the students, and also for the teachers.

The development of teaching and learning a foreign language in Indonesia grows so rapidly. In fact, many colleges and universities choose English as a compulsory subject. However, there are many influencing factors in its teaching and learning process. This includes some psychological factors, the materials, the applied method, the current curriculum and the competencies of the English teacher.

English language teaching is somehow different from Indonesian language teaching because both of them have different structures. However, grammar provides an inside to its particular areas of language, and it can help student to describe and compare the language style and register in which grammar is the first step to be able to write and speak correctly.

It is very obvious that some language learners in Indonesia face some difficulties in learning English. And as grammatical knowledge is deemed to become an important element of English, some students find it to be the difficult subject in their mind. This condition is observed by the writer as he found that the first year students of *SMP N 1 Sindangwangi Majalengka* find some difficulties in learning their English lesson. They often find some problems in learning or using "to be". In this respect, they often make mistakes in the sentence as follows:

1. I *am** eat the food
2. He *is** come to school
3. I student
4. He angry

The uses of auxiliaries like *am* and *is,* are some clear examples that the students often make during the lesson. These level of difficulties show that the students have not understood yet the concept of verbal and nominal sentences as in a case that a verbal sentence is normally constructed in which the auxiliary verbs are not presented, they occur in a nominal sentence that takes no lexical verb as its predicates.

For examples:

1. I eat the food (verbal sentence)
2. He comes to school (verbal sentence)
3. I am a student (nominal sentence)
4. He is very angry (nominal sentence)

Indeed, the students' difficulties do not lie only in the verbal and nominal sentence, but it covers the other grammatical applications such as passive voices, progressive tense, and some special constructions.

For examples:

1. I writing ('I *am* writing')
2. I at home ('I *am* at home')
3. I here ('I *am* here')
4. The bananas eaten by the monkey ('the bananas *are* eaten by the monkey')

So far, it is clear that "to be" is one of the important grammatical elements that widely covers so many areas in grammatical construction. This comes up with some reasons below:

1. "To be" is an obligatory constituent of nominal sentence (e.g. *he is a student*)
2. "To be" constitutes both the function and content words (e.g. 'be' as copular verb in *he was a doctor* or 'be' as auxiliary verb in *he was taking a course*)
3. "To be" is the most important element of progressive tense (e.g. *she is singing a song*)
4. "To be" is a part of the passive construction (e.g. *the letter is written neatly*)
5. "To be" is occasionally used in specific constructpion (e.g. *he is to come to Jakarta next week*)

However, most importantly, the functions of "to be" exist in the structural formation of the basic sentence in nominal sentence. It becomes the obligatory constituent of it. As in the following examples:

1. I *am* the cleverest student in my class.

2. Suminah *is* the most beautiful girl in the town.

3. Sindangwangi *is* my home town.

In the sentences above, it is clear that the existence of "to be" cannot be omitted to realize the minimum structure of a sentence.

Based on the above description, it is very obvious that learning 'to be" is inevitably important for the learners as it covers in many functional structures of the English grammatical system. For this reason, the writer finds that it is very important to know further the map of the students' difficulties in learning "to be" and in the same respect, the common solutions that are taken by the learners, in their attempt to overcome such difficulties. Hence the writer takes a title "the first year students' difficulties in learning "to be" and their solution at the first year students of *SMPN 1 Sindangwangi Majalengka*.

B. The identification of the problems

To further identify the problems of the research, the writer arranges the following items as the description of the research problems. These include the formulation of the problems, the limitation of the problems, and the research questions.

1. The formulation of the problems

   In the sections that follow, the writer describes the research field, approach

   and the main problems of the research.

   a. The research field

      The research field is the English grammar. It involves the students'

      learning process in mastering English "to be'.

   b. The research approach

      In this research, the writer takes the quantitative approach. Hence, the

      techniques of the data collection and the data analysis are conducted

      empirically.

   c. The main problems of the research

      The main problems of the research are the unclear condition of the

      students' difficulties and its solution in learning 'to be'.

2. The limitation of the problems

   To limit the problems of the research, the writer sets up the following

   sections.

   a. The scope of the research

      The scope of the research is limited on the identification on the types of

      the students' difficulties in learning 'to be' and the solutions that

      commonly taken by the students in overcoming such problems.

3. The research question

   a. How are the students' abilities in using 'to be?

   b. What types of the students' difficulties in learning 'to be' commonly occur?

   c. What solutions do the students commonly take?

C. The aims of the research

1. To get the data of the students' abilities in using 'to be'.

2. To get the data of the types of the students' difficulties in learning to be.

3. To get the data of the solutions that commonly taken by the students.

D. The framework of thinking

In English teaching and learning, there are some basic aspects relating to the teaching and learning process, grammar system or structure system. The basic aspects they are very close relation between them. Grammar is the study of syntax and morphology and possibly also semantic. Structure is the total set of all the rules and word in a language, plus their interconnections or a sentence and the various patterns and words found in it.

Further discussing, Greenbaum and Quirk (1995: 1) clearly state that English is the world's most widely used language. Therefore, mastering English both in its spoken and written form is a necessary matter. However, to be able to use English fluently in speaking and accurately in writing, it must be based on the correct usage of its grammar and structure. In English language, a linguistic understanding is very important. In this case, the using of "to be" can be

changeable with the subject follows it. Muhammad Ali al Khuli (1976: 58) states that in teaching English, there are some points that must be known among others. It is the word type and selection. This also includes a further comprehension on the types of using *"to be"*. However, there are some difficulties faced by student in its learning. In this case, the they cannot correctly search and fail to improve their ability to comprehensively understand the using *"to be"*. That is why, it becomes the major problems in this thesis. Besides that, to overcome the student's difficulties, they often apply some solutions that are surely different one and another. For this reason, the writer would like to know what types of solution that commonly taken by the students. Therefore, the description of the students' difficulties in learning 'to be" and their applied solutions will clarify the most important facts supporting the significance of this research.

E. The steps of the research

The research is systemically conducted based on the steps as follows:

1. Data resources

    There are two important data that are used along this research, they are the qualitative and the quantitative data. The following sections comprise their descriptions

    a. The qualitative data

        The qualitative data are the data that are normatively related to the theme of the research. These are actually some supporting data needed to construct the theoretical frame of the research.

b. The quantitative data

The quantitative data comprises the students' information on their competency and efforts in learning "*to be*". These include the students' data showing their types of difficulties in learning 'to be', the students' abilities in learning 'to be', and the types of solutions commonly taken by them in overcoming the problems.

2. Population and sample

a. Population

The research is intended for the second year students of *SMPN 1 Sindangwangi Majalengka*. The amounts of the students are 200 students. This means that the population of the research is 200 students.

b. Sample

As the sample of the research, the writer randomly takes 20% of the total population. It means that there are 42 students that are taken as the sample of the research.

3. The techniques of the data collecting

To obtain the data for the research, the writer takes some of the following techniques:

a. Test

The test is mainly given to measure the students' ability in learning 'to be'. However, it is also used to analyze the types of the students' difficulties in learning 'to be'. The test consists of 20 problems. It

comprises the various types of the grammatical usage of the 'to be'. The description of the test is available in appendices.

b. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is given to the students to get the data of their solutions in overcoming their difficulties in learning "to be". The content of the questionnaire comprises 10 items related to the possible solutions that they frequently take. The description of the questionnaire is available in appendices.

c. Interview

The interview is held in relation to the alternative problems and solution that are possibly taken both by the teacher and the students. In this respect, the writer interviews the English teachers, students, and some of the school staff. The form of the interview is available in the appendices.

d. Observation

The observation is conducted to find out the objective condition of the instructional facilities, the supplementary equipment and the real teaching and learning atmosphere. The detail description of the results of the observation is available in Chapter III.

4. The techniques of the data analysis

The final step of the research is the data analysis. This section comprises the statistical calculation on the whole data that are managed to be collected. In

this respect the writer uses the statistical formula that are relevant with the frame of the research.

a. The mean score formula

The mean score formula is used to find pout the average point of the students ability in mastering 'to be'. The following is the description of the formula;

$$M = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

Where :

M = mean score

Σx = The total score

N = The total respondents

The scores are further classified in the following category:

0,800 – 1000 = Sangat *Tinggi* (Very High)

0.600 – 0,799 = *Tinggi* (High)

0,400 – 0,599 = *Cukup* (Sufficient)

0,200 – 0,399 = *Rendah* (Low)

0,00 – 0,199 = *Sangat rendah* (Very low)

(Sutrisno Hadi; 1980: 29)

b. The percentage formula

To find out the percentage of the students' mastering 'to be' and the students' difficulties in learning 'to be', the writer takes the formula below:

$$P = \frac{\Sigma x}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where :

P = the percentage score

Σx= The total score

N = The total respondents

(Sutrisno Hadi; 1980: 32)

The scores are further classified in the following category:

80%	– 100%	=	Sangat *Tinggi* (Very High)
60%	– 79%	=	*Tinggi* (High)
40%	– 59%	=	*Cukup* (Sufficient)
20%	– 39%	=	*Rendah* (Low)
0%	– 19%	=	*Sangat rendah* (Very low)

(Suharsimi Arikunto; 1996: 258)