CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The article system is an interesting area to examine because of its three members (*the, a/an, and zero article*) appears frequently. Even so, it's not an easy task for second language learners to determine accurately which article should be used in a context. Second language learners tend to see the article as an unimportant part to be included in a sentence in writing because it has no clear lexical meaning or obvious concepts associated with them (Fromkin.et.al, 2003: 73) and typically unstressed which makes them sometimes hardly noticeable in spoken discourse (Master as cited in Adway, 2013: 1).

Article is always related to the concept of definiteness and indefiniteness. At glance, it looks quite simple to distinguish between definite and indefinite article. On the other hand, in actual practice determining whether or not we should use definite or indefinite article can be confusing especially for those whose first language do not use article at all, like in bahasa Indonesia. Furthermore, when the article deals with definiteness, it can be difficult to determine because definiteness crosses with category of specificity, specific indicating a particular thing in the world and non specific indicating non particular thing (Brinton, 2000: 110). For example, specificity matches with definiteness *A car = a particular car, known to the hearer* and nonspecific matches with indefiniteness *A car = no particular car, not known to the hearer*. Besides problematic in definiteness, article usage in English is intricate and in many cases arbitrary. There are some different uses for

each article, articles are often neglected, and there are dialectal dissimilarities in the use of articles (Brinton, 2000: 110). Therefore, article usage in grammar area is very challenging for non-native speakers to master.

Past studies had proven that errors in using English article still frequently occur. Nopjirapong (2011) and Alhaysony (2012) who studied errors made by students of English department stated that the influence from mother tongue is the factor of the difficulties in using article in Thailand and United Arab Emirates because they do not recognize article in their first language The similar problem happens in Indonesia because it does not have article too. Furthermore, another factor is due to the lack of learner's competence like the study done by Bataineh (2005), the study showed that simplification and overgeneralization were found to account for the majority of learners' errors in Jordanian first-, second-, third- and fourth-year university EFL students.

Until now, the use of articles is still problematic even for English department students. Even though they are learning English deeper than other departments, it is still found many errors in using English articles. As known, college students who take English department are expected to be able to produce writing for assessment purposes. So, for the future academic success students have to have written accuracy. A lack of written accuracy may meddle with the clarity of their message (or ideas) and indicate them as poor users of the language (Ferris, 2011: 14).

Since there are a lot of cases concerning article errors made by second language learner, the writer interests in finding out the errors in articles in

students' writing and causes that emerge those errors. Moreover, from previous past studies, most of them found the difficulties in using article because they have to learn hard learning a language that has very different letters of the alphabet (such as in Thailand, United Emirates Arab, Taiwan, etc). Based on that thought the writer is curious to find out if that case is in Indonesia that basically has similar letters of the alphabet with English.

1.2   Research Question

This study attempts to answer the following questions "How is the profile of undergraduate students' error in using articles in their writings?"

Below are three sub questions which are proposed by the writer to help to answer that main question.

1. What are the types of errors made by undergraduate students of English in using articles in their writings?

2. What are the frequencies of errors made by undergraduate students of English in using articles in their writings?

3. What are the causes of errors made by undergraduate students of English in using articles in their writings?

1.3   Purpose of The Study

The purpose of the study is to find out the profile of undergraduate students' error in using articles in their essay.

1. To find out the types of article errors made by English department students of state university of Jakarta in writing.

2. To find out the frequency of errors made by English department students of state university of Jakarta in writing.

3. To find out causes of English article errors made by English department students of state university of Jakarta in writing.

1.4 Scope of The Study

In this study, the writer focuses on founding out the types of errors, the frequency of errors, and the causes of article errors made by English department students of state university of Jakarta in writing.

1.5 Significance of The Study

The result of the study is aimed to build on the knowledge of error in the use of English articles so, it can give the information about how much the student had learnt to the lecturers. By finding out the types and the causes of errors in the use of English articles the lecturers can develop teaching strategies regarding to English articles which is in Indonesian language doesn't recognize article especially article *the*. Furthermore, the study can be used by English Department students of state university of Jakarta, especially who want to continue researching about errors in the use English articles on different educational institutions. The deep analysis of the study can show the way to understanding toward the difficulties in using English articles.