CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Study

It is a fact that English is an important international language that is used in various kinds of fields by many countries. Brumfit (1982:1) states that there are two reasons why English is the most widespread medium of international communication. The first is the number and geographical spread of its speakers and the second is the large number of non-native speakers who use it.

In Indonesia, teaching English to young learners has been realized as a need. Based on the Garis-Garis Besar Pedoman Pengajaran 1994, the teaching of English has a function to give a chance for the elementary school students to get knowledge and improve it. This is for anticipating the condition of the society which is influenced by the development of knowledge, technology and art.

Kasbolah (1992 : 11-12) states that research on language development between 1950's and 1960's showed that children possess unique capacities for language learning. The psycholinguists and linguists have an opinion that it is better for the learner especially children to begin learning a new language at the early age to get good result.

English second language (ESL) learners are considered successful if they are communicatively competent. Communicative competence here includes the knowledge of the speaker (or hearer) concerning what constitutes appropriate as well as

correct language behavior and also what constitutes effective language behavior in relation to particular communicative goals (Ellis 1994: 13). In short, communicative competence includes both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge.

Pragmatics tells people it is all right to use language in various, unconventional ways, as long as they know, as language users, what they are doing. Whenever people cannot explain a phenomenon in language using regular, accepted linguistic theories, then they must have recourse to something else, namely pragmatics. When people talk, they do this with the intention to communicate something to somebody. In fact, the users of language do not always actually communicate what they set out to, or what they think they do. As Leech says speakers often "mean more than they say" (Leech 1993: 9). This fact can be explained by appealing to a pragmatic principle or maxim. The maxims are in fact not arbitrary conventions, but rather describe rational means for conducting cooperative exchanges (Grice 1975). Politeness principles should be operated on the same level as, to collaborate with, the cooperative principle and its associated maxims.

Since politeness norms vary across cultures, learners from different culture may have difficulty concerning what is polite and what is not. As a result they tend to overuse exaggerated linguistic politeness form from time to time or on the other hand they display only limited range of politeness features.

There are two previous studies related to this study. The first was done by Margaret Ann Dufon. The title is *The Acquisition of Linguistic Politeness in Indonesian as a Second Language by Sojourners in Naturalistic Interaction*. This study was aimed at answering whether the second language learners learn about politeness, how the native speakers (Indonesian people) socialize learners into the target language and culture in

naturalistic setting, what changes are seen during the learners' stay in Indonesia, and of what the learners learn about politeness. The second study was done by Mujiyono Wiryotinoyo and was titled *Implikatur Percakapan Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar*. This study tried to investigate the form of lingual implicature which is shown by the elementary students, what the relationship between the implicature and cooperation principles are, and what the relationship is between the implicature and politeness principles.

The first study which is mentioned above took some foreigners as the participants who studied in Malang. The target language, Indonesian, was learned in naturalistic settings. The second study had Indonesian children as the subject and it was also done in naturalistic settings.

Both writers learned about linguistic politeness. They did the study in naturalistic settings. Besides to seek the acquisition of linguistic politeness which is shown by children, the writer in this study tries to relate the result of this study with the classroom settings. According to Allright (1984), classroom settings may share crucial characteristics with naturalistic settings. Second language classroom provides more accurate intake for acquisition. Besides that, ESL learners can exercise intensively under the guidance of a teacher.

1.2. The Statements of the Problem

This study is conducted in order to answer this general problem:

How do the Indonesian elementary school students acquire linguistic politeness in English?

These are the specific problems of this study:

a. Do the elementary school students produce polite utterances in an appropriate way based on the parameters such as: power (P), social distance (D), and ranking of imposition (R)?

b. What are the politeness markers that are often used by Indonesian elementary school students?

c. What are the main factors that influence the development of linguistic politeness of the Indonesian elementary school students?

1.3. The Objectives

The general objective of this study is:

To find out how Indonesian elementary school students acquire linguistic politeness in English.

The specific objectives of this study are:

a. To find out whether the elementary school students produce polite utterances in an appropriate way based on the parameters such as: power (P), social distance (D), and ranking of imposition (R).

b. To find out the politeness markers which are often used by Indonesian elementary school students.

c. To find out the main factors which influence the development of linguistic politeness of the Indonesian elementary school students.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of second language acquisition. Krashen states that 'second language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language, natural communication, in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.

Since the subjects of this study are the elementary school students, the writer concerns that they may produce ungrammatical utterances. Therefore; the writer focuses her study on the acquisition of linguistic politeness which is shown by the subjects.

Another theory is pragmatics. Dijk says that:

"... The pragmatics perspective does not determine truth, satisfaction or accessibility, but the appropriateness of discourses, and hence should be defined in terms of context, point of view, attitudes, etc of speech participants..." (Dijk 1977: 227)

It is clearly stated that in pragmatics a discourse does not need to be a grammatically correct form but it is used appropriately in certain context. Pragmatics is the science of language seen in relation to its users. It is the science of language as it is used by real, live people, for their own purposes and within their limitations and affordances. Pragmatics methods give greater understanding of how the human mind works, how humans communicate, how they manipulate one another, and in general, how they use language, in all the ways, and with all the means, and for all the ends they traditionally have done (Mey 1993: 7).

Deviation from the cooperative principles often occurs in the daily conversation. For example, people do not speak baldly if they want others to do something especially if

the request is hard to do; therefore, they break the maxim of relevance. Politeness is one consideration why people do irrationality or inefficiency in conversation. Politeness principles are principled reasons for deviation. Polite motivations for kinds of deviations perhaps have a special status in social interaction by virtue of their omni-relevance (Brown and Levinson 1987:5).

1.5.   Assumptions

The study is based on the following assumptions:

a. The elementary school students have mastered some simple requests.

b. The teachers have taught some simple requests in English.

c. The teachers have given examples of using appropriate requests in English.

1.6.   Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses only on the acquisition of ESL learners in making requests politely by making use of certain utterances in context. Because the subjects of this study were the students of the fourth grade, the writer did not concern on the grammatical mistakes that might be recorded on the observation data. The most consideration is that the meaning that an utterance conveys.

Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce a schema of possible strategies for doing FTA (Face Threatening Act). A speaker can choose to do the FTA or do not do the FTA. *Do not the FTA* means that the speaker performs in such a way that he or she does not make a hearer lose face. In analyzing the data the writer neglected the strategy of *don't-*

1.8.   The Parameters

The writer of this study uses three sociological factors that are crucial in determining the level of politeness which a speaker will use to an addressee. The factors are relative power (P) of an addressee over a speaker, the social distance (D) between speaker and addressee, the ranking of imposition (R) involved in doing the face-threatening act (FTA).

1.9. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction. It discusses the background of the study, the statements of the problem, the objectives, the theoretical framework, the assumptions, the scope and limitation of the study, the significance of the study, the organization of the thesis, and also the definition of key-terms.

The second chapter is the Review of Related Literature. In this chapter the writer discusses some theories related to the study, such as: theory of language acquisition process, children strategies of learning language, classroom language as input to second language acquisition, pragmatics, and politeness principles.

Chapter III is the Methodology. It discusses the nature of the study and its design, the subjects, the research instruments, the procedure of collecting the data, the procedure of analyzing the data, and the parameters.

Chapter IV is the Findings and Discussion of the Findings. It discusses about the data, the findings, and discussion of the findings.

Chapter V is the Conclusion and Suggestion. It summarizes the contain of this study.

1.10. Definition of Key-terms

To avoid misunderstanding of certain terms, the writer tries to explain shortly some important ones.

a. Acquisition. It is a subconscious process of "picking up" the language through exposure.

b. Communication. It is the process of sharing meaning through verbal and nonverbal behavior (Levine 1993).

c. Discourse. It is a systematically organized set of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution (Kress 1985: 6-7).

d. Pragmatics. It is the field of study where linguistic features are considered in relation to users of the language (Levinson 1983).

e. Second Language. It is any language other than the first language.

f. Utterance. It is the unit bounded by what a single speaker says.

g. Politeness. It is an abstract quality, residing in individual particular expressions, lexical items or morphemes, regarding for the particular circumstances that govern their use (Mey 1993: 68).