

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) is a branch of second language inquiry “which studies how non-native speakers understand and carry out linguistic action in a target language, and how they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge” (Kasper, 1992 : 203). In other words, interlanguage pragmatics study intends to scrutinize the language learner’s performance and acquisition of pragmatics competence in the second language. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993 in Bou Franch, 1998 : 1) identify five research areas in interlanguage pragmatics including: (i) pragmatic comprehension; (ii) production of linguistic action; (iii) development of pragmatic competence; (iv) pragmatic transfer; and (v) communicative effect. Study in interlanguage pragmatics has shown that the ESL learners’ performance of speech acts is often different from that of native speakers because of “lack of knowledge in the target language sociocultural rules”. Consequently, communication failure may take place. This kind of failure in communication is called pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1984).

The notion of pragmatic failure, in the eyes of Thomas (1984 : 226), is “the mismatch which arises from cross-culturally different assessments within the social parameters affecting linguistic choice, size of imposition, social distance between speaker and hearer, relative rights and obligations, etc.” It means that pragmatic failure is regarded as more serious than linguistic failure.

When a person performs a linguistic error, he or she is just considered to be a less proficient language learner. However, if he or she makes a pragmatic mistake, he might sound rude, disrespectful or impolite (Wannaruk, 2005 : 1). These phenomenon shows that non-linguistic elements emerged in the interlanguage pragmatics study either in directive or in-directive. The non-linguistic elements, for examples, are social, psychological, or cultural bonds, in other words, the relationship between language and culture is inseparable.

A lot of the work in interlanguage pragmatics has been carried out within the framework of speech acts. Speech acts can be considered as ‘functions’ of language, such as complaining, thanking, apologizing, refusing, requesting, and inviting. Within this view, the minimal unit of communication is the performance of linguistic act. All languages have a means of performing speech acts and presumably speech acts themselves are universals, although the ‘form’ used in specific speech acts varies from culture to culture. Thus, the study of second language speech acts is concerned with the linguistic possibilities available in languages for speech act realization and the effect of cross-cultural differences on second language performance and on the interpretation by native speakers of second language speech acts (Wolfson, 1989 : 183).

Numerous studies in interlanguage pragmatics have recognized that the learners’ ability to use appropriate speech acts in a given speech act event and to use appropriate linguistic forms to realize this speech act is a main component of pragmatic competence. Fraser (1983 : 30 in Al Eryani: 2007) describes pragmatic

competence as “the knowledge of how an addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognizes intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle attitudes”. Rintell (1997 in Al Eryani : 2007) also pointed out that “pragmatics is the study of speech acts”, arguing that L2 learner pragmatic ability is reflected in how learners produce utterances in the target language to communicate specific intentions and conversely, how they interpret the intentions which their utterances convey. One of the consistent findings in the empirical studies of speech act behavior is that, although the typology of speech acts appears to be universal, their conceptualization and verbalization can vary to a great extent across cultures and languages. In other words, L2/FL learners may have access to the same range of speech acts and realization strategies as do native speakers (NSs), but they can differ from in the ways that they choose. Therefore, it is clear that L2/FL learners must be aware of L2/FL sociocultural constraints on speech acts in order to be pragmatically competent (Al Eryani : 2007).

One speech act in which communication failure can possible take place is the speech of refusal.. Refusal is an effect on the part of speakers to deny to change in an action proposed by interlocutor (Gass and Houck : 1999 in Wannaruk : 2005). It is not an act initiated by the speaker but a response to a speaker’s act such as an invitation, a suggestion, an offer or a request (Wannaruk : 2005). The speech act of refusal occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says *no* to a request or invitation (Tanck : 2002). Tanck also considered that refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/requester/inviter, because it contradicts his or

her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies. Therefore, it requires a high level of pragmatic competence (Chen : 1996 in Tanck : 2002).

Refusal is chosen as the focus of this current study because this language function often comes up in everyday communication. It is often difficult to express a rejection of invitation, requests, proposal, instruction, and such that. It is even harder to reject them in a foreign language without risking offending the interlocutor. This concern involves not only linguistics but also pragmatic knowledge. One can have a wide range of vocabulary grammar knowledge, but misunderstanding can still take place if the ones can not apply pragmatic competence properly.

This current study , firstly, highlights on how learners think and express refusals of invitations pragmatically; secondly, it interprets present forms of refusals of invitation in the frame of interlanguage pragmatics in context where refusals occur, thirdly, it assists to the understanding of pragmatics aspects in second language acquisition; and lastly, it provides learners become more aware of selected models of refusals to invitations in English. Referring to these highlights, the purpose of this study is to find out the types of refusal speech act and their common semantic formulas of invitations, and how the refusal types and the semantic formulas are performed by EFL learners _Javanese college learners of English_ based on the gender variable.

This study is the opening step of a further research in refusals of invitations in interlanguage pragmatics. The writer feels that one of ways to begin to address the issues above is to scrutinize the ways of the English learners in

expressing refusal of invitations. The expression of invitation refusal is a speech act commonly often happened in the daily communication. Javanese learners of English may have a certain uniqueness in using the refusal speech act of invitation, particularly when it is performed by male and female speakers. Therefore, the current study includes the gender factor as social variable. This is the writer's reason to conduct this research.

1.2 Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of speech act of refusal to invitations are used by Javanese college learners of English in Surakarta?
2. What the semantic formulas of the refusal to invitations are used by Javanese college learners of English in Surakarta?
3. How are the different types of refusal to invitations and their semantic formulas used by male and female Javanese college learners of English in Surakarta?

1.3 Objective of the Study

- a. To find out the types of refusal speech act to invitations used by Javanese college learners of English in Surakarta?
- b. To find out the semantic formulas of the speech act of refusal to invitations used by Javanese college learners of English in Surakarta.
- c. To find out the differences between male and female Javanese college learners of English in Surakarta in performing the semantic formulas for refusal to invitations.

1.4 Significance of the Study:

The study has two essential benefits, either the theoretical benefits or practical ones.

The theoretical benefit of the study is that the findings can build the attentiveness or awareness for the methodological and practical description of the foreign language learning or acquisition. Hence, this study is specifically able to provide the theoretical contributions in the following regards:

- (1) the language researchers, especially the researchers of SLA, can take benefit from theoretical basis such as interlanguage pragmatics, speech act theory, communicative competence, pragmatic transfer, and the other related theories : sociopragmatics
- (2) this study can enrich the discourse of applied linguistics theory

The practical benefit can be taken from this study are:

- (1). The issues written in this research can inspire other researchers to develop, explore, or improve the research.
- (2) The research can assist the English teachers or lecturers recognize more deeply the types refusals and their semantic formulas to invitations, and how the refusal types and the semantic formulas are usually performed by the learners of EFL.
- (3) The research is helpful for EFL learners and teachers to understand the issues of refusal speech acts of the target language.

1.5 Thesis Organisation

This thesis is organized into six chapters, they are:

Chapter One describes the background of study explaining the reasons of the writer to write the study of refusal speech act.

Chapter Two reviews the previous studies of speech act and pragmatic transfer and other related issues, the focus is on the speech act of refusals performed by the learners of EFL and native speakers..

The theoretical background or literature review of the interlanguage pragmatics is presented in Chapter Three. It also reveals the other related notions of interlanguage pragmatics such as speech act theory, communicative competence, pragmatics transfer, directive and indirective communication, and the language use by gender.

Chapter Four is about the research method used in the study. It presents the type of study, subject of study, research materials, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter Five illustrates the findings and discussion, for the sake of providing an answer to the problem statements.

Chapter Six, summarizes the findings, specifies how these answer the problem statements, points out the limitations of the study, pedagogical implication, and provides recommendation for further research.

