

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Communication as an equipment to convey human ideas cannot always be fluently understood. It can be understood when the communicators are able to convey and understand the meaning to each other. We cannot argue that when a speaker can transfer his/ her illocution (intended meaning) to meaningful locution (literal speech) means that the speaker understands the communication. We also need to consider the ability of the listener in understanding the intended meaning of the speaker and respond the meaning into the correct perlocution (action). In the other word, in understanding communication, the speaker and the listener obligate to convey and comprehend their intended meaning. If one of the aspects or both of them are not accomplished, there will be misunderstanding in communication. There are some consequences of misunderstanding in communication such as insulting the communicators' feeling, threatening face, raising the offense, emerging awkwardness in communication, etc. Derived from those consequences, comprehension in communication becomes a significant thing, which cannot be neglected. Therefore, the communicators have to comprehend the intended meaning in communication.

One of factors that emerges misunderstanding in communication is cross-cultural communication. This factor requires communicators' pragmatic competence mainly to comprehend the cultural norms on different cultures. The communicators have to consider how to use language in the appropriate contexts or situations. Derived from Blum-Kulka and Olstein in Song (2012), there are three types of variability that influence the comprehension of the speech act in communication. The first one is *intra-cultural variability*, which needs the understanding of cultural norms in various situations even within the same culture. The second one is *cross-cultural variability*, which illustrates the understanding of cultural norms in various cultures. The last one is *individual variability*, which represents the understanding of the unique communication behavior of each individual. The first two types of variability (*intra – cultural variability* and *cross – cultural variability*) demand the

understanding of culture. Additionally, Hymes in Song (2012) states that the communicators must have the communicative competence in a language includes knowledge of cultural rules for speaking as well as the technical linguistic features of language. It means that good communication can be achieved when both the speaker and the listener are on the similar side with respect to the rules and conventions of the language in use and the culture behind it.

Nowadays, cross-cultural communication that involves native speakers and non- native speakers require both of them to achieve pragmatic competence in communication. However, the limitation of the non-native speaker to comprehend cross-cultural norms as well as the linguistic features of the target language leads the non-native speakers make misunderstanding in communication. When the non- native speakers try to communicate with the native speakers, their limited pragmatic competence may destroy the communication process and lead to misunderstanding or even offense because the non- native speakers only understand the literal meaning without knowing the sociolinguistic rules for interpreting the words.

Based on the phenomena above, interlanguage pragmatic study emerges to learn how the non-native speakers or foreign language learner acquire the pragmatic competence including sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence. According to Kasper & Kulka (1993: 9), "Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) has consequently been defined as the study on non-active speaker's use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in L2". The center point of interlanguage pragmatics study is how the language learners comprehend and produce target language action. It refers to how the language learners increase their ability to understand and perform target language action. Interlanguage pragmatics then is classified into three aspects, namely interlanguage pragmatics production, comprehension, and development. Interlanguage pragmatic production investigates the way of language learners use their pragmatic proficiency to transfer the intended meaning of their source language into the target language in appropriate context. Interlanguage pragmatics development examines the development of language learners' acquisition mainly on their pragmatic transfer in the target language.

Meanwhile, interlanguage pragmatics comprehension explored the language learners' comprehension toward their target language knowledge, including the use of language in appropriate context as well as the language features of the target language. In the other word, interlanguage pragmatics exposes the language learners' acquisition in mastering their target language with the contextual knowledge and organizational knowledge as the center point.

In the interlanguage pragmatics, we need to consider the language learners' pragmatic competence. There are many factors which influence the progress of language learners' pragmatic competence, such as the explicit instruction of pragmatic teaching, learners' pragmatic exposure in the target language, and the primary one namely the influence of pragmatics knowledge of the L1' learners itself. Commonly, the L1 of language learners has influenced the way they transfer the target language. The pragmatic knowledge of the native speakers can be different from the non-native speakers. For instance, the cultural norms of the language learners may different from their cultural norms in the target language. Having limited comprehension in cultural knowledge of the target language leads the non-native speakers do potential offense to the native speakers such as speaking impolitely even when the non-native speakers do not aware it.

There are many phenomena in interlanguage pragmatics in which the language learners do impolite speech act as the impact of limited pragmatic knowledge, mainly on cultural knowledge. EFL learners in UMS have studied English as their target language in the long time. They have a lot of explicit teaching and English exposure. However, their source language still has influenced their product of target language, namely English. Additionally, their pragmatic knowledge includes cultural knowledge and discourse knowledge need to be developed in order to achieve cross-cultural communication. One of the EFL learners' difficulties is their speech act production, mainly on doing complaint in English. The weakness of pragmatic knowledge leads them to produce impolite complaint that is able to increase an offense to their partner. The EFL learners in UMS make some impolite complaints. Wijayanto, et al.,(2013) in their previous study examined language learners' politeness in complaint production. They have

found the EFL learners produce impolite complaint such as “*Shit! You drive with slowly. I will late to campus.*”; “*Are you blind? You broke my motorcycle.*”; “*Oh shit! What are you doing? You know what?! I’m gonna kill you!*” Most of them use explicit complaint. They accuse and blame the complainers directly and perform disapproval expression. They also use taboo words to strength their complaint.

Derived from these phenomena, the language learners (non – native speakers) need to think about politeness strategies in uttering speech act. Complaint is a speech act that potentially appearing impoliteness in communication. Speech act of complaint generally performs displeasure or unhappiness as the result of particular offense. Complaint can be called as an abusive act. It belongs to an illocutionary act includes the speaker’s (the complainer) expression of his/ her disapproval, negative feelings etc. This expression stated by the complainer when the event in the proposition (the complainable) demands the listener’s (the complaine) responsible, either directly or indirectly (Trosborg, 1995). As the consequence of negative expression that is commonly performed in the complaint, so complaint includes non-polite or impoliteness expression. Knowing that speech act of complaint able to cause an offense, then some strategies are required to prevent a personal conflict in communication between the complainer and the complaine. Although a complaint is categorized as non-polite act, a complainer can choose to smooth the complaint in order to reduce the impact of his/ her complaint to the complaine (Trosborg, 1995).

The previous researchers have conducted research on politeness study such as politeness strategies made by the EFL learners and comparative study of politeness theories (e.g. Pierre & Rosier, 2013; Wijayanto et al, 2013; Cajnko, 2016; and Dickey, 2016). The others have investigated speech acts variation of interlanguage pragmatics production, mainly on complaint (e.g. Yarahmadi & Fathi, 2015; Seykh & Esmali, 2015; and Kakolaki & Shahroki, 2016). Some others have examined EFL learners’ development and comprehension in their interlanguage pragmatics but not as many as interlanguage production researches (e.g. Cheng, 2005; Matsumara, 2007; Taguchi, 2011; Zangoei and Derakhshan, 2014). These researchers have

found that there are many politeness variations and strategies made by EFL learners in their interlanguage pragmatics. The similar case also happens on their interlanguage pragmatic development and comprehension. In the interlanguage development and comprehension, some researchers found the students' development and comprehension of politeness have been influenced by their pragmatic proficiency, such as their pragmatic teaching and pragmatic exposure. However, the study, which examines EFL learners' comprehension on politeness and impoliteness in ILP mainly concerning with pragmalinguistics forms, social contexts, and complainers-complainees relationship is still rarely discussed. Based on the gap, the researcher is interested to examine the students' comprehension on politeness and impoliteness in the interlanguage pragmatics of complaint. The researcher chooses complaint expression because this expression is potentially raise impoliteness. In fact, every communicator wants to make good relationship to each other.

The writer is fascinated to explore this research because interlanguage pragmatics is the product of English learning process that cannot be avoided. Complaint is one of expression that exists in daily communication. However, by expressing complaint without paying attention on personal positive and negative face may raise face-threatening act, which damage or break down communication. By exploring students' comprehension on politeness/impoliteness in the interlanguage pragmatics of complaint, expectantly face-threatening act able to be minimize. Based on the phenomena and the statement above, the writer is encouraged to carry out a research entitle *The Students' Comprehension on Politeness/ Impoliteness in Interlanguage Pragmatics of Complaint by EFL Learners in UMS*.

B. Limitation of the Study

The writer limits the research on the interlanguage pragmatics comprehension, mainly on the students' comprehension of politeness and impoliteness in interlanguage pragmatics of complaint by EFL learners in UMS. The writer specifies the participants to be the post-graduate students in UMS 2016/ 2017 Academic Year. The writer assumes the advanced EFL learners have a lot of pragmatic exposure and explicit pragmatic teaching

which potentially having good comprehension on politeness and impoliteness in the interlanguage pragmatics.

C. Research Questions

The research problem is “Do EFL learners in UMS comprehend politeness/impoliteness used in complaint?” Derived from the problem, the writer formulates some research questions below:

1. How do EFL learners relate the pragmalinguistics form of complaints to politeness/impoliteness?
2. How do EFL learners associate the context situations of interlanguage complaints to politeness/impoliteness?
3. How do the EFL learners correlate the complainers – complainees relationship to politeness/ impoliteness?

D. Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of the study are:

1. to investigate the EFL learners’ understanding on politeness/ impoliteness in complaints based on pragmalinguistics forms’ perspective.
2. to investigate the EFL learners’ understanding on politeness/ impoliteness in complaints based on context situations’ perspective.
3. to investigate the EFL learners’ understanding on politeness/ impoliteness in complaints based on the perspective of complainers – complainees’ relationship

E. Significance of the Study

There are significances that can be reached from this study. The significances are stated as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

The result of the research can be used as the reference for those who conduct a research in the interlanguage pragmatics, especially to comprehend the EFL learners’ understanding about politeness/ impoliteness on complaint.

2. Practical Significance

- a. The lecturer can get description and information about the student’s comprehension on politeness/ impoliteness in the interlanguage

pragmatic of complaints during the language learners learn English as foreign language.

- b. The lecturer can know the students' weakness in understanding politeness/impoliteness mainly on pragmatic of complaints.
- c. The lecturer can define good strategy to teach interlanguage pragmatic of complaints.
- d. The students can construct strategy of complaint politely to avoid face-threatening act in doing communication.
- e. The next researcher can use this research as the guideline to develop future research about interlanguage pragmatics study.

F. Research Paper Organization

Chapter I is introduction that involves background of the study, limitation of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significant of the study, and research paper organization.

Chapter II is review of related literature, which consists of previous study, interlanguage pragmatics, speech act, speech act of complaint, politeness, and impoliteness.

Chapter III is research method, which presents types of the study, subject and object of the study, data and data source, technique of collecting data, technique of analyzing data and credibility of the data.

Chapter IV performs data analysis, research findings, and discussion, which elaborate the students' understanding about politeness/ impoliteness in interlanguage pragmatic of complaints, based on some perspectives namely pragmalinguistics forms, context situations, and complainers-complainees' relationship.

Chapter V is conclusion, pedagogical implication and suggestion that investigate general overview of the study. It reviews the research findings and gives general overview of this research. Moreover, this chapter gives suggestion for the next writers, students, and lecturers.