

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Many pragmatic researchers, such as Blum-Kulka (1985), Ervin-Tripp (1977), Trosborg (1985), Dore (1974), Greenfield-Smith (1976), Read-Cherry (1978), Halliday (1975), etc. were interested in investigating requestive speech act. It was interesting because realizing requests was very challenging. The speakers not only show their ability in using proper language but also show how they use language in particular context. The speakers should have socio-cultural and linguistic competence to avoid misunderstanding and to make the communication run as what expected.

Most of the previous studies investigated the realization of requesting speech act in second language learners or in cross-cultural communities. The example is Hassall (1997) who examined how Australian learners of Indonesian perform request in everyday situations compared to Indonesian native speakers. Another study was conducted by House-Kasper (1981) that analyzed requestive behavior in two groups between native speakers of English and native speakers of German. Both studies showed the differences on request strategies, especially in the directness of the request.

While requests by second language learners are often studied, the studies of requests in first language speakers are relatively small. "In first language

acquisition research, the acquisition of pragmatic functions has received a considerable amount of attention, often with directives as the primary object of investigation” (Trosborg 1995:287). A number of studies were available on children’s mastery of requests, mostly with English as the language of acquisition, such as Gorvey (1975), Ervin-Tripp (1977), James (1978), and Trosborg (1985a). Other studies investigating the acquisition of other languages are Hollos-Beeman (1974) in Norwegian and Hungarian and Bates (1976) in Italian.

An example of first language acquisition in Indonesian was conducted by Ismanto (2008). He investigated the realization of requesting speech acts in demanding fulfillment of promises in Indonesian. He pointed out that the educational background of the respondents: hard sciences and humanities, did not really contribute to the choice of request strategies. In other hand, the social variables like power, ranking of imposition, and social distance influence the realization of request strategies.

However, the present study examines the realization of requesting speech acts used by school-age children. This study investigates the first language speakers of Indonesian. These realizations are connected to the age of the speakers, where their language develops rapidly, and the influence of sociopragmatic factors. It is expected that this study will enrich the material of pragmatics, especially Indonesian pragmatics. For practical side, it can be used to evaluate the pragmatic competence of children whether they have good communication or not.

1.2 Formulations of the Problems

The present study is designed to answer these following questions:

- a. What are the strategies used by children in performing requesting speech acts?
- b. How do sociopragmatic factors such as power, social distance, and ranking of imposition affect the realization of request?

1.3 Aims of the Study

The aims of present study are as follows:

- a. To find out the request strategies used by children.
- b. To examine how sociopragmatic factors (power, social distance, and ranking of imposition) influence the realization of request.

1.4 Research Methodology

This study was a qualitative study, using purposive sampling that analyzed deeply about the informants. The informants of this study were children whose ages are from 10 to 12 year old. They were chosen since their vocabularies have increased rapidly so that they have a good comprehension and have an ability to construct adult-like definitions. The data were gained from oral Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and role play which covered different sociopragmatic factors. The data were analyzed based on the request strategies that proposed by Trosborg (1995). The influence of sociopragmatic factors toward such realizations was also analyzed. Detailed elaboration of research methodology is given in chapter 3.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- a. Speech act: In this study, speech act is defined as action performed via utterances (Yule 1996).
- b. Request: Illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker (Trosborg 1995).

1.6 Organization of the Paper

This introductory chapter provides information on the background of the study, formulation of the problems, aims of the study, research methodology, and organization of the paper. The clarification of key terms was also added to avoid misunderstanding. Chapter two contains the theoretical foundation which provides the theory to investigate the research problems. Chapter three discusses about the methodology of the research. This includes the informants of the study, stages of data collection, and data analysis. Chapter four contains analysis of the responses to the oral DCT and role play, discussions of the analysis includes realization of requests, the use of request strategies, and the influence of sociopragmatic factors. The paper is rounded off by Chapter five, in which conclusions of the present study and suggestions for further research are presented.