

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, problems of the study, aims of the study, and significance of the study. This chapter also provides a brief description of the research method which is divided into data collection and data analysis. A brief explanation of the structure of the paper is also given in the end of this chapter.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Some research on children's language acquisition has been primarily dominated by researchers who aim to describe the linguistic competence of the children. They are particularly interested in describing children's linguistic developments in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. A number of linguists have conducted such studies e.g. Dardjowidjojo (2000), Fodor and Kam (2012), Fikkert (2014), Lapiak (2014), Pica (2005), and Wagner (2014). Today, however, there is an emerging trend among researchers to switch their attention from structural descriptions to pragmatic descriptions because it appears that children also develop their pragmatic competence. When children have mastered particular linguistic features, they must also have mastered how to use those features for pragmatic functions.

According to Ninio and Snow (1996, cited in Dardjowidjojo, 2000), nonverbal communications performed by a child, such as weeping and laughter, show that they have acquired pragmatic competence. Dardjowidjojo (2000) discovered that a five-week-old child has been able to perform these abilities. In addition, it is said that the ability to give something to the right person also reveals that a child has been able to perform pragmatic competence (Dardjowidjojo, 2000).

Moreover, one of the ways to identify children's pragmatic competence is to discover speech act patterns in their language use (Jung, 2014). Related to speech acts produced by children, Dardjowidjojo (2000) conducted a study which found that a

child is able to perform speech acts since he or she is at the age of one and a half years old. Dardjowidjojo (2000) found that an 18-month child was able to perform primitive speech acts, i.e. labeling, repeating, answering, requesting action, requesting answer, calling, greeting, protesting, and practicing (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). Supporting Dardjowidjojo (2000), Brumark (2010) states that a three-year-old child has been able to respond and produce indirect speech acts both grammatically and pragmatically. This is a reason why a three-year-old child was chosen as the subject of this study.

In general, research on speech acts' acquisition mostly focuses on describing how speakers understand and produce speech acts (Cohen and Ishihara, 2010). It is also related to the notion of pragmatic competence because it deals with language abilities (Taguchi, 2009). Therefore, various studies regarding different types of speech acts have been conducted and one of them is indirect speech act.

Indirect speech act is important to investigate because it is considered to be complex, especially for young children for the reason that, according to Mey (2001) and Scheyder (2004), indirect speech acts arise multiple meanings. For example, "*Did you forget to bring me a box of chocolate?*" does not only convey a question whether the hearer forgot to bring a box of chocolate, but also the speaker apparently scolds the hearer for the mistake. Since there are multiple meanings arisen from indirect speech act, the responses may contain more than one "move" (Pinker, Nowak, & Lee, 2008; Goffman, 1976).

Some research on responses to indirect speech acts usually involved adults as the subject. For example, Scheyder (2004) investigated responses to indirect speech act by college students in an English-speaking country. However, children's response to speech acts is still rarely investigated. For instance, Yuniarti (2010) found that in responding the directive speech acts (DSA), preschool children used two basic forms; acceptance and refusal. The results of the study showed that in both accepting and rejecting the DSA, the preschool children may produce utterance (give verbal responses) or did not produce utterance (nonverbal responses).

Nonetheless, the subject of Yuniarti (2010) was not specific and the topic was too broad. Besides, the research did not specifically mention how the directive speech act was given, directly or indirectly. Moreover, both Yuniarti (2010) and Scheyder (2004) did not reveal ranking of imposition (Rx) as a factor that influences the responses performed by the subject. Consequently, the present study makes it specific by involving a three-year-old boy, who is acquiring colloquial Bahasa Indonesia as his first language, and investigates his responses of indirect speech acts. Furthermore, this study examines the effect of ranking of imposition to the subject's responses.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The problems of this study were formulated as follows:

1. How does a three-year-old boy respond to indirect speech acts?
2. What kinds of responses appear mostly?
3. How does the ranking of imposition (Rx) influence the subject's responses?

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

Based on the problems above, this study aims to:

1. Examine how a three-year-old boy responds to indirect speech acts.
2. Investigate kinds of responses that appear mostly.
3. Discover how the ranking of imposition (Rx) influences the subject's responses.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

The results of this study are expected to contribute to pragmatic competence, especially in investigating children's ability to respond to indirect speech acts. In addition, this study is expected to enrich current insights in terms of kinds of responses to indirect speech acts produced by a three-year-old Indonesian boy. The more researchers conduct research about this topic, the clearer the development of children's responses can be observed.

**Hatfina Sakinah, 2015**

*A CASE STUDY OF A THREE-YEAR-OLD INDONESIAN BOY'S PERLOCUTIONARY ACTS TO INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS*

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## 1.5 Research Method

This study primarily used a descriptive qualitative method because it is satisfactory in elaborating the response to indirect speech acts performed by a three-year-old boy in an Indonesian family. In addition, a qualitative method can be shown from the form of words in elaborated data of findings and analysis in this study (Maxwell, 1992). According to Maxwell (1992), qualitative researchers depend on a diversity of understanding and corresponding types of validity in describing, interpreting, and explaining process of interests' phenomena. In particular, this study occupied a case study although Heigham and Croker (2009) suggested that it is not a research method. A case study "involves an intensive study of the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit: an individual, a group, an institution, or a community (Brown & Rodgers, 2002)."

### 1.5.1 Data collection

The data were collected from the recorded conversations with the subject. Elicitation method was applied to allow the subject to speak actively. This method was employed because, according to Schmidt and Richards (2002), it can be used to obtain data as natural as possible. Therefore, the data were taken in casual settings and indirect speech acts given to the subject were suited to the setting. The conversations, recorded by using cell-phone, were transcribed and they were conducted until the data are sufficient to be analyzed. Notes were also used to gather the data regarding different types of speech acts. Data collection was completed because the conversations have been conducted for a certain period of time until indirect speech acts, both in the form of interrogative and declarative, given by the interlocutor are responded, either verbally or nonverbally.

### 1.5.3 Data analysis

First, the collected data were classified based on the utterance given to the subject. Second, the data were analyzed in terms of rank of imposition (Rx), suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Aziz (2000), and context to discover

responses to indirect speech acts produced by a three-year-old boy. Finally, the results of responses to indirect speech acts by the subject were presented.

### **1.6 Organization of the Paper**

The final paper consists of five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Method, Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion. The first chapter is an introduction which consists of background of the research, problems of the research, aims of the research, and scope of the research. A brief description of the research method is also provided. It is divided into respondents of the study, data collection, and data analysis. The clarification of the key terms is also given in this chapter. The second chapter is a literature review presenting the reviews and summaries of the theoretical frameworks that are related to the case study of speech acts acquisition of a three-year-old Indonesian boy in an Indonesian family.

The third chapter is a research method explaining the procedures which include the data collection and data analysis to answer the problems of the study. The data collection section elaborates who were involved, where the data were obtained and how the data were collected. The data analysis describes how the data were analyzed by applying the theories that have been reviewed in the second chapter. In addition, a chapter of findings and discussion is provided to elaborate the analysis of the data using theory on indirect speech acts. Finally, conclusion and suggestions are also given as a summary of the study and as a reference for those who want to conduct a study on a similar topic.