

## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the introduction of this study consisting of several sections covering background, research questions, purposes of the study, significances of the study, scope of the study, clarification of the key terms, and outline of the dissertation. This chapter is closed with concluding remarks.

### **1.1 Background**

The current trend in teaching English to meet the needs of students in learning English is closely related to the achievement of communicative competence as the main goal of learning English as a foreign language or as a second language. This means that communicative competence, exquisitely, is echoed in the scope of English language learning, especially oral English learning, which includes the English language instructional curriculum and syllabus, training of English teachers, as well as approaches, methods, techniques, or models of English language instruction (Ahmed, S.T.H. & Pawar, S.V, 2018). Hence, communicative competence is transformed into a competency that cannot be negotiated in learning English, especially in oral communication classes. The world of teaching and learning English is increasingly demanding the availability of good quality in terms of management of English instruction as well as materials and resources for teaching and learning English, so that students can have communication skills in English. That is the concept of why communicative competence in spoken language becomes the needs that must be present in English teaching and learning, especially in oral communication classrooms (Richard, 2006).

Therefore, teaching language is an effort to develop students' communicative competence. To achieve adequate communicative competence, students need to be taught sociocultural competence, discourse competence,

linguistic competence, formulaic competence, interactional competence, and strategic competence (Celce-Murcia in Soler & Jorda, 2008) or in other words, they must be taught not only organizational competence but also pragmatic competence (Bachman, 1990). Researches show, especially in the Indonesian context, that organizational competence learning is easy to be found, contradictory teaching pragmatic competence is very difficult to be found. That is why it is difficult to find people who have good communicative competence.

Failure to communicate in English in accordance with the social norms of the native English speaking community is often experienced by high school graduates. This still happens especially in Indonesia, even though English has been taught and used as a foreign language for years. The same thing is experienced by graduates of high school or equivalent level in several other countries where English as a foreign language is taught in classrooms (Lie, 2007). The failure to communicate in English that is experienced by these learners requires more serious handling, especially by English teachers. In similar vein, the unpreparedness of English learners in Indonesia to practice English as a means of verbal interaction in their social life is really very concerning. This is quite different when compared to the English language skills of English learners who are in English classrooms in several nearby countries (Sulistiyo, 2016). This is clearly a serious problem that all components of this nation must immediately find a solution to, especially those related to English education or training in Indonesian schools.

The grammar and vocabulary of the target language generally become the scope of EFL learning. EFL teachers teach how language functions in different forms as well as directs their EFL students to memorize vocabulary in the target language. Nevertheless, the correct use of linguistic forms in language learning is as urgent as knowledge of these linguistic forms. It is necessary to have pragmatic

competence, the ability to understand and to use foreign language conventions, to be able to communicate in the target language properly, in addition to, of course, recognizing the form and vocabulary of the target language (Viljamaa, 2012).

In reality, pragmatic competence, the capacity to communicate our intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of our interlocutor as it was intended, has become greater and extra necessary in foreign language learning (Fraser, 2010). For example, the university's syllabus of speaking for general communication subject states that upon the completion of the course, the EFL learners are expected to be in a position to speak English fluently and as it should be following the present context. Language mastering has shifted from a grammatical point of view to a communicative viewpoint that emphasizes the grasp and appropriate use of language in communicative contexts (Liu, 2007). Since acquiring pragmatic competence is recognized as a central part of foreign language learning, in the present study, the pragmatic competence in EFL learning was examined.

Yet, for many years the training of foreign language was equated with linguistic or grammatical accuracy (Rueda, 2006). For a long period, the focus of the EFL class has been on grammatical knowledge and vocabulary. There has been great neglect about the teaching of using the foreign language pragmatically appropriate (Yin, 2009). This occurrence takes place in EFL classroom of which English teachers tend to, frequently, focus on grammatical knowledge and vocabulary in the teaching of EFL, not on pragmatic competence. To date, teachers have tended not to focus largely on how students acquire pragmatic competence (Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Du, 2004; Hou, 2007; Ruan, 2007; Schauer in Yuan, 2012); Indonesian society for years has not been able to be satisfied with the benefits of learning English as a foreign language in formal schools. This

situation can be recognized by the limited number of high school graduates who can speak English appropriately (Lie, 2007).

English teachers tend to be unconscious and reluctant to develop students' pragmatic competencies, resulting in the inability of high school graduates to communicate intelligently in English. Pragmatic competence is often seen as an aspect of language that is difficult to teach, the EFL teachers more emphasize the grammatical aspects of the language, not emphasizes the use of language appropriately. The implementation of Pragmatic instruction carried out by teachers in the classroom is as complex as the process of obtaining students' pragmatic competence. Although at this time there are no longer very detailed steps for teaching pragmatics in class, there is one conclusion that is mutually agreed upon in language learning, namely that successful conversations in language learning must emphasize the socio-cultural norms of the second language community in addition to linguistic forms (Vitale, 2009).

The demand for EFL written examinations, in addition to the teachers' difficulty of teaching pragmatic competence, also causes teachers' ignorance of developing students' pragmatic competence. So far, many EFL students spend their time thinking about which grammatical features will decorate the test questions made by their teachers. Usually, these exam questions are in the form of memorizing vocabulary and grammar paradigm. Usually, teachers also face a similar challenge where they are required to expose grammar and semantic aspects to their students. So as a consequence, the pragmatic aspect of the language is often overlooked (Vitale, 2009). As this language teaching emphasizes the learners' mastery of the grammatical features of the language, the pragmatic aspects of the language are frequently overlooked. The success of EFL students in the written test does not guarantee them to be able to communicate orally efficiently with other students, even in simple conversations. Learning

English for so long as if it was of no use to them. The students cannot communicate either orally or in writing, because they have been exposed to lexical and grammatical knowledge rather than the use of these linguistic forms, so they have not been able to apply it to verbal communication in everyday life due to their limited understanding and competence of pragmatic (Vaneva & Ivanovska, 2018).

As in the case of English students in Thailand, teachers usually direct students to linguistic signs to pass the test so that a negative impact occurs in which students become poor in sociolinguistic competence, one of the pragmatic competence aspects, like native speakers. For example, it is common for students to get high test scores, but not be able to express themselves effectively in English in social situations. Although they can produce grammatically correct utterances, they do not necessarily fit the context. In this case, the social norms of the target language tend to be violated due to a lack of pragmatic competence. This lack of pragmatic competence awareness is recognized when students talk to native English speakers. From this, it can be observed that the development of linguistic proficiency of students is mostly oriented to language skills with little socio-cultural knowledge (Ambele, Boonsuk & Buddharat, 2018).

EFL learners are, to a great extent, not engaged in pragmatic competence instead they mostly get involved in specific lexical and grammatical items, far from being competence pragmatically. Regarding the high engagement of the students in such a grammatical perspective of language instruction, learner's use and perception of pragmatic competence is a relevant issue in the process of teaching (Guzman & Alcon, 2009). It implies that EFL teachers are expected to be more concern about students' pragmatic competence. This is in line with the current alteration of EFL learning from grammatical view to communicative view, in which there is an increasing body of literature on awareness-raising of the

importance of pragmatic knowledge and strategies for classroom interaction, e.g. (Abbasi & Azzawi, 2008; Alcon, 2005; Shively & Cohen, 2008; Castillo & Eduardo, 2009; Moron, 2009; Muir & Xu, 2011; Jiang, 2010; Rasekh & Rasekh, 2008; Rasekh & Mardani, 2010; Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012). Pragmatic competence does not develop on its own. In effect, it is widely acknowledged that especially exposure to the target language is central in acquiring pragmatic competence (Viljamaa, 2012).

The lack of exposure to the target language in the EFL classroom implies that teaching of pragmatics is frequently considered unimportant. Pragmatic competence is rarely addressed in the process of EFL instruction at schools. This competence has been neglected for ages by the teachers. The lack of teaching and learning programs related to this issue indicates the ignorance of the prominence of bringing this topic to the fore. In this case, teaching pragmatic is often not covered in teacher education programs even though this is an excellent area for continuing professional development (Vellenga, 2011).

As a result of not enclosing teaching pragmatics in the schooling program, EFL learners lack pragmatic competence. There are many college students lack pragmatic information on how to interpret discourse with the aid of referring to their meanings, understanding the intention of language users, and how language is used in precise setting ( Bachman & Palmer in Yuan, 2012). Furthermore, EFL learners seem to encounter difficulties, especially when having a conversation with English native speakers (Amaya, 2008). Even superior learners, with good sized knowledge of language structures, may additionally fail to participate properly in a given communicative scenario if they have not gained a good level of pragmatic competence. Frustrations may additionally occur when they then discover they are unable to use the language creatively as they progress to extra advanced level (Vitale, 2009).

Pragmatic failures might even cause speakers to be seen as rude or impolite (Tavares, 2014). Pragmatic failure is a challenging problem because it tends to yield misunderstanding and even hatred between native speakers and foreign language learners (Ming & Yan, 2010). The resulting lack of pragmatic competence yields a phenomenon that hardly ever does high school graduates speak as it should be and efficiently in English. The difficulties to have interaction with the native speakers

imply that the students lack pragmatic competence. The resulting lack of pragmatic competence may lead to pragmatic failure, and more importantly to a complete verbal exchange breakdown. Pragmatic failure, which is caused mainly by a lack of or inadequate pragmatic competence, was first defined by Thomas (1983) as the inability to use an appropriate language form to express a particular meaning in a particular context and to understand speaker's intention when that person makes an utterance. Such failure is divided into two segments: pragma-linguistic failure and socio-pragmatic failure. The former mainly deals with the linguistic problem that occurs when inappropriate language forms are used to perform actions. The latter, on the other hand, is caused by misunderstandings which arise from the different perceptions that affect linguistic choices during cross-cultural exchanges. Pragmatic failure is more serious than linguistic failure (Thomas, 1983). A person might sound rude or disrespectful when he/she commits a pragmatic error, which could lead to breakdowns in communication (Pinyo, 2010). This sense of failure in the teaching of English as a foreign language forces teachers to have more awareness of stressing pragmatics in the process of teaching and learning.

As such, the teaching of pragmatic competence is prominent to administer. This dissertation is a report on the learning of pragmatic competence in learning speaking for a general communication course.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

In line with the background previously explained, this research endeavors to address the following questions.

- a. How is pragmatic competence taught in the speaking for general communication course?
- b. How is the development of the students' pragmatic competence?



- c. What is the students' level of pragmatic competence after being exposed to the teacher's teaching strategies?

### **1.3 Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of the study were

- a. to analyze how pragmatic competence is taught in speaking for a general communication course.
- b. to assess how the development of the students' pragmatic competence is.
- c. to discover the students' level of pragmatic competence after being exposed to the teacher's teaching strategies.

### **1.4 Significances of the Study**

The present research hopefully contributes and produces result having benefits in three points. First, it identified the current practice of teaching pragmatic competence in speaking for a general communication course, specifically teaching strategies or activities facilitating learners to enhance their pragmatic competence. Surveying the existing teaching practice may help internalize the syllabus and material conditions where EFL learning practices were administered. Second, the study assessed the students' development in pragmatic competence as one of the measurements to see the effect of EFL teaching practices. In turn, this second point led to frame the best practice of highlighting pragmatic competence in the teaching of speaking. Meanwhile, the third point found the level of students' pragmatic competence.

Thence, theoretically, the result of this study can be used to enrich the previous theory dealing with pragmatic competence in speaking classroom. This study is also expected to contribute knowledge on how to develop teaching syllabus and materials which concern with teachers' awareness in developing students' pragmatic competence in the teaching of speaking.

At a practical level, the results of the study help to clarify more precisely on how the use of appropriate teaching strategies or activities helps learners to improve their pragmatic competence. The findings of the research may inspire other researchers to administer further research related to the topic.

Meanwhile pedagogically, the present study is expected to provide the teachers and head of an educational institution as well as other school's authorities with empirical evidence on the emergence of pragmatic competence in the teaching of speaking and its benefits. Further, the result of the research is expected to give a valuable contribution in re-conceptualizing the teaching of speaking. It is also expected to be a foundation for making policies for the school's authorities to keep improving the quality of their professions.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study investigated the pragmatic competence in EFL instruction at an English Education Study Program of a private university in Bandung. The participating classes were the ones studying speaking for general communication of which there were two classes in the 2016 Academic year. This study restricted the student participants to the first-grade students who were studying speaking for general communication and two teachers teaching that subject. The teachers' teaching strategies were assessed by using pragmatics framework. This analysis was conducted to identify teachers' classroom activities in teaching pragmatic competence in

speaking a foreign language and to assess the development of students' pragmatic competence. To observe the classroom activities, observation sheet and videotape were used as the tools of observation. The observation sheets were mainly handwritten note on how the activities in the field run. To capture the process as comprehensive as possible, all participants' activities in the classroom were videotaped as well.

Meanwhile, the pragmatic competence of the EFL learners was stressed on two types of speech acts namely requests and opinions. The situations under each type were divided into two scenario types: low- and high-imposition. Low-imposition situations had been informal conditions in which the speaker addressed a person with an identical power status. Such sorts of pragmatic competence were assessed using Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT). The DCT was given individually two times over one academic year: Students read directions in English. They were told to read each situational scenario and respond as if they were in a real situation and performing the given role. The results of the test were used to determine teaching strategies or approaches where effective pedagogical practices were assumed to better enhance students' pragmatic competence.

### **1.6 Clarification of the Key Terms**

The study was developed around three key terms: pragmatic competence, DCT, and pragmatic failure clarified below.

- Oral communication classroom in this study refers to the teaching of speaking for general communication in the research site of which one of the goals of teaching speaking is to achieve pragmatic competence of which upon the

completion of the course, the students are expected to be able to speak English appropriately under the existing context.

- Pragmatic Competence refers to the capacity to use an appropriate language form to express a specific meaning for a given context and to internalize a speaker's intention when he/she produces an utterance. The pragmatic competence in this study is in two types of speech acts situation scenarios covering the speech act of requests and opinions. These kinds had been each divided into two situations types: Low- and high-imposition situations. Low-imposition situations are informal situations in which the speaker addressed a man or woman with an identical power status. High-imposition situations are formal situations in which the speaker addressed a person with a higher power status. The speech acts had been evaluated on their common appropriateness, which was once defined as the potential to produce speech acts at the acceptable level of politeness, directness, and formality in the given situations.
- Strategy in this study refers to kinds of teaching-learning activities administered by the teachers in teaching pragmatic competence in an oral communication classroom.

### **1.7 Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters.

- Chapter one serves as an overview of the overall content of this dissertation. It gives a general description of the introduction to the topic of the research. This introduces the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the significances of the study, the scope of the study, the clarification of the key terms, and the outline of the dissertation.

- Chapter two describes the theories which support the study covering the ones relevant to the purposes of the study. It elaborates the selective literature review covering the place of pragmatic competence in communicative competence, the nature of pragmatic competence, the oral communication, the roles of a communicative classroom, pragmatic competence in EFL classroom, the teaching of speaking to raise pragmatic competence, the roles of learners, teachers, and materials in EFL classroom, the awareness of helping students develop pragmatic competence, the teaching strategies, the teaching approaches in EFL classroom, the classroom activities in raising students' pragmatic competence, the DCT as a tool for measuring pragmatic competence, and the relationship between culture, language teaching and pragmatic competence.
- Chapter three deals with the research methodology and the rationale why particular types of research design. This chapter discusses the methodology that was determined by the purposes of the study. As elaborated in Chapter I, the aims of this study are 1) to analyze how pragmatic competence is taught in the speaking for general communication course; 2) to assess how the development of the students' pragmatic competence; and 3) to discover the students' level of pragmatic competence after being exposed to the teacher's teaching strategies. Hence, this chapter begins with the discussion of research design, followed by the elaboration of the research site and participants, data collection, and data analysis. The research design discusses the method that was employed in this study, the principles and characteristics. The site and participants describe the place where the study was conducted and the participants involved in this study. The data collection presents the

instruments and the procedures of data collection. The data analysis elaborates the procedure in analyzing the data.

- Chapter four presents and discusses data and its analysis to answer the three research questions. It presents, interprets and discusses the findings data from the research presented in the form of narrative and statistic.
- Chapter five concludes the whole research results and also proposes recommendations. The whole findings in this study bring some implications particularly for the implementation of a pragmatic category-based strategy to improve students' pragmatic competence especially at this research site and at Indonesia's oral communication classrooms in general. Thence, some recommendations are addressed to the teachers, administrator, government, and other researchers.

### **1.8 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has presented the introduction covering the background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, significances of the study, scope of the study, clarification of the key terms, and the outline of the dissertation. The next chapter discussed the literature review.