

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In daily life, people frequently become annoyed, dissatisfied or unhappy about other people or circumstances. In fact, uncomfortable situations often trigger expressions of complaints. The ways people show their reactions to the annoying events, express their feelings of dissatisfaction toward others, make certain word choices and behave depending on particular factors. Social status, gender, relationship between the interlocutors, and the complexity of situations are the social variables that influence the speech strategies of speakers. This study focuses on gender as the main analyzer to investigate the differences of the complaining speech acts' realizations between Indonesian EFL male and female learners. The researcher intends to reveal how gender can influence people's speech.

This study focuses on the realizations of complaining speech act and tries to reveal the style differences between Indonesian EFL male and female learners. In this investigation, the researcher managed to reveal how gender can influence people's speech.

The speech act of complaining is identified by Searle (1969) as a category of expressive. According to Trosborg (1995), a complaint is, "an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his or her disapproval or other

negative feelings towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he or she holds the hearer (the complaine) responsible, either directly indirectly” (pp. 311-312).

This research intentionally focuses on the speech act of complaining because of the unique characteristics of this kind of speech that according to Brown and Levinson (1978; as cited in Brown, 1987) involve the Face-Threatening Act and considered as conflictive acts (Leech, 1983) that should be avoided because they show the negative feelings of the speaker (S) and tend to threaten the hearer (H). Conflictive means that by complaining, people create a conflict between the S and H while Face-Threatening Act means it tends to threaten the hearer (H). However, speech act of complaining has a vital function in constructing someone’s improved behavior.

Language cannot be alienated with a society because language use is influenced by social structure. Wardhaugh (1992) asserts that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and or behavior. Speaking is a social act: what people say and how they express it is people’s choice. It reflects who people are: gender, age, ethnic group, and social class.

Discussing language and society, which is part of sociolinguistics, falls into the area of ‘language and gender’ (Wardhaugh, 1992) as one of the characteristics, that influences people’s communication. Gender is a term used to describe socially constructed categories based on sex. It asserts that gender has an effect to the speaker to choose what kind of style in language they will use. Language and gender focuses on the language characteristics used by men and

women: how gender stereotyping works in their choice of language styles. In the present study, the researcher attempts to reveal the differences of language styles used by men and women when they are in annoying situations.

Sociolinguists have various evidences that men and women tend to develop different patterns of interaction. In terms of linguistic differences between women and men, there do seem to be linguistic features that are stereotypically associated with men and women over time (Edelsky, 1977 as cited in Michael [et al], 2010) and this research aims to uncover these patterns in the realizations of complaining act as the object of this research.

Numerous studies indicate that men and women typically employ different linguistic styles. They have described women's speech as being different from that of men. Women have been found to use certain patterns associated with surprise and politeness more often than men (Brend, 1975 as cited in Michael [et al], 2010). Lakoff (1975) also declares in his study that women may answer a question with a statement that employs the rising intonation pattern associated with making a firm statement. It is because they are less sure about themselves and their opinions than men are. Lakoff is among the first to claim that women used more questions than men did. Keith and Suttleworth, as cited in Boxer 1993 suggest that women's characteristics are more polite, indecisive or hesitant, complaining and nagging whereas men tend to swear, dominate conversation, and give more commands.

In this study, the researcher attempts to establish evidences and verification about women's linguistic behavior in which women are theoretically

more polite than men are and to discover more information about the characteristics of men and women by investigating the linguistic features between men and women's speech act.

Moreover, there has been much research about the speech act of complaining; studies show that realization of complaints varies across speakers from one culture to another. Some examples are the studies which were conducted by Olshtain and Weinbach (1987), De Capua (1989 as cited in Trench, 2000), Trosborg (1994), Trenchs (1995), Moon (2001), Tanck (2003) and the later are Farnia, Buchheit and Banu (2010). Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) investigated the speech act of complaining in Hebrew; De Capua (1989) observed the speech act of complaining between EFL learners in Germany and Native speakers; Trosborg (1994) compared aspects of discourse competence and sociolinguistic competence in Danish learners of English to native speakers of English; Trenchs (1995) studied speech act of complaining in Catalan; Moon (2001) observed the differences of complaint strategies between Native and Non-Native Speakers in Korea; and the later Tanck (2003) investigated the differences between native and non-native English speakers' production of refusal and complaint, whereas Farnia, Buchheit and Banu (2010) investigated the preferred strategies of the speech act of complaining by Malaysian ESL learners.

Previous studies tend to observe the comparison between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) in one specific language area. Gender as one of social variables, which has more and less an effect on people's activity, appears to be involved as part of the assessment variables in the previous investigations.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher intends to reveal the different styles of the realization of complaining between men and women by focusing on a gender perspective as the analyzer. This research aims to uncover a phenomenon in English Foreign Language Learners by revealing the relationship between language and gender in terms of the realizations of complaining. This research is expected to enrich the existing references for studies on the subject and to contribute to the development of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, cross cultural understanding and English linguistics in general.

The present study examines Indonesians learning English as Foreign language (EFL Learners) by focusing on men and women in complaining act. The decision to choose EFL learners was based on the assumption that their comprehension of English and the closeness with the English Speech Act of Complaining were still developing.

1.2 Research Questions

This research was guided by the following specific questions:

1. What are the realizations of complaining between Indonesian EFL male and female learners?
2. What aspects of gender difference affect the differences of complaining act between Indonesian EFL male and female learners?

1.3 Aims of The Study

The research aims to collect data about the realizations of the speech act of complaining by EFL students. Data are used to explore the comparison between

EFL male and female learners regarding with the production of the components of complaining strategies. The present study aims to reveal answers to the research questions mentioned earlier as follows:

1. To discover the realizations of complaining act between Indonesian EFL male and female learners;
2. To explore the aspects of gender difference that affect the differences of complaining act between Indonesian EFL male and female learners.

1.4. Scope of The Study

This study investigates only the style differences of the complaining speech act between Indonesian EFL male and female learners. This study describes the realizations of speech act of complaining between the EFL male and female students and examines the aspects of gender difference that affect the differences of complaining act between Indonesian EFL male and female learners.

1.5 Reasons for Choosing The Topic

This research is conducted to spawn insights on the speech act of complaining, by focusing on complaining act between men and women. Many previous studies took complaining act as the focus of study through comparative investigations about the realizations between Native Speakers (NS) and Non-Native Speakers (NNS) by using a cross-cultural approach. This research, however, focuses on how people linguistically respond to complaints between different genders. Many studies have shown that there are differences of language

styles between men and women even in one similar occasion. It has been revealed that women are judged to be more polite. This research seeks to clarify this finding.

1.6 Significance of The Study

1. This study offers an answer to the question about the differences of complaining styles between men and women.
- 2 This study provides insights for language learners to learn the relationship between people's complaining styles and gender factors.
- 3 This study strengthens the results of previous studies on the subject and contributes to the development of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, cross cultural understanding and English linguistics in general.

1.7 Research Design

a. Respondents

The research was conducted at the English Department of the Indonesian University of Education, involving 40 advanced students. They were chosen based on purposive sampling in order to have the subjects who are assumed to have sufficient linguistic and communicative competence. They were selected by their speaking skill and the period they have studied English.

b. Instrument

The research employed questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Each questionnaire is in the form of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). It consisted of three scripted situations that had different gender contexts. In every situation, there was a description about the social variable involved. Afterward, there was a blank space for respondents to fill in. Respondents were asked to write the oral response if they were in the situation. They were encouraged to respond quickly so that they would not carefully analyze what they thought their responses should be. They were asked to write their responses as closely as possible to what they might actually say. The following is an example of the DCT (Tanck, 2003):

A student in the library is making too much noise and disturbing other students. A librarian decides to ask the student to quiet down. What will the librarian say?
Librarian: _____

The second instrument, the interview, was employed to clarify the respondents' answers. The interview was conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia* in order to make them feel comfortable in expressing their answers.

b. Procedure

Subjects were asked to participate in the study in person by the researcher. The subjects were provided with a survey packet comprised of an Informed Consent Form (Appendix A), a Demographic Survey (Appendix B) and a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) (Appendix C). The Informed Consent form provided information about the research and researcher. In the written Demographic Survey, subjects were asked to provide basic information such

as gender, age, course of the study, first language, as well as more specific information considering the subjects were non-native speakers. Specific information elicited including English learning environments, length of the formal English study, frequency and context of English use, self-determination of English fluency and total time spent in English-speaking country (if any). Lastly, subjects completed the DCT.

1.8 Organization of The Paper

This introductory chapter provides information on the background of the study, Research Questions, Aims of The Study, Scope of The Study, Reasons for Choosing the Topic, Significance of The Study and Research Design. Chapter 2 presents theoretical framework of the study. It provides the speech act theory, politeness theory, gender theory, language of men and women and previous studies on speech act of complaining. Chapter 3 contains the outline methodology of the research, such as respondents of the study, instruments and stage of data collection and steps of data analysis. Chapter 4 presents analysis of the responses to the DCT and some detailed discussion of the analysis including the realizations of the complaining act, describes the difference of realization between EFL male and female students, the influence of social variables, and focuses on gender. This research is improved by chapter 5, in which conclusions of the research and suggestions for further research are presented.

1.9 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed by the researcher for describing the realization of speech act of complaining between men and women and was used to reveal the difference between the two gender-based groups. The responses were analyzed based on Complaining Strategies by Trosborg (1995) and were improved by Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) taxonomy of the speech act of complaint to examine the main components of complaint, the level of directness and the degree of mitigation.

