CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the research, the formulation of research problem, objective of the research, significance of the research, scope and limitation of the research, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Research

Linguistic competence like grammatical and vocabulary knowledge cannot be viewed as the only goal of language learning since the process of communication goes beyond the mere knowledge of making well-structured sentences (Thornbury, 2006). Generally, learners when learning foreign language always focus on building linguistic competence such as grammar, vocabulary and so forth. However, language competence not only reflects to the knowledge of language forms or structures, but also refers to the way people use language for real communication. In other words, the goal of learning language is to be able to use the language in real social situation. Here the term of pragmatic competence can be referred. Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language appropriately in reference to social context and cultural norms (Yule, 1996:3). Someone who is considered as a fluent speaker due to their linguistic competence such as mastery of grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, may still lack of pragmatic competence if they are unable to use the language socially and culturally appropriate. Therefore, examine the learners' language competence only by

their grammatical and vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient and pragmatic competence should be taken into consideration.

Thomas (1983) emphasizes the importance of pragmatic competence in foreign language communication by comparing it with grammatical errors. He asserts that grammatical errors can indeed interfere with the communication process between non-native speakers and native speakers, but it is still seen as an unsubstantiated error because it is very possible that foreign speakers have not mastered grammar. Here the assessment of native speakers is only on the matter of fluency or not. It is different from pragmatic failures which, if done by foreign speakers, will give the impression of impoliteness or hostility. This pragmatic incompetence directly reflects the personality and behavior of speakers in society.

What makes pragmatic competence different from linguistic competence is that it always considers or involves the context. Pragmatics is greatly related with context or situation when something is being said, thus it is essential for the speakers to focus on the context also. Yule (1996:48) argues that pragmatics should also consider aspects of context such as when to speak, to whom, where and under what circumstances that will determine the way people say and what they want to say. In a communication, context plays an important role. Such as understanding the context of the relationship between speakers in communication is essential. For example, when someone talks to friends, it may be different once they talk to their teacher, the closeness between them also greatly affects how they will communicate to

each other. This context will then be the basis for the speaker in choosing the language in order to avoid social conflict. When someone ignore the personal relationships between them in communication, it may break the relationship between the two even though they are grammatically correct in speaking. The speaker can be said to be less polite, offensive, arrogant and this can create social conflict between the two of them and result in their relationship breaking apart. Therefore, both linguistic and pragmatic competence should be learned and mastered by language learners so as to make the communication run succesfully.

Learning language means also learning the culture of that language and the way that language is used within the target community. For EFL learners, English native speakers could be used as a role model for them to learn English just in case they could have the authentic materials to build pragmatic competence. In some studies, within the process of learning foreign language, learners often refer to their L1 social and cultural norms or their L1 pragmatic competence. It leads the possibility of differences in performing language in communication. Pastoroyaá (2020) stated that producing language behavior differently does not mean that it is considered either completely "right" or "wrong", it is rather considered more or less preferred or appropriate in a given context by native speakers in a certain community. Although in fact that there are various cultural norms that exist in every country which greatly influence the learners' language development, it must be noted that understanding the English language use in the target community remains

vital, just in case once they take part or join in that community or communicate with the English native speakers, they know how to communicate in English that will be appropriate for the given circumstance.

One of several ways to know the learners' pragmatic competence is through speech acts. The concept of speech acts was first introduced by Austin (1962), and he defined speech act as a set of utterances by which individuals perform a specific function like requesting, apologizing, refusing, complaining complimenting, or thanking and the fact that these kinds of utterances always happen in daily communication. Based on the category of speech acts, refusal is quite challenging among the other speech acts. It is occurred as negative responses to the other acts like requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions (Gass & Houck, 1999). Refusal as a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson, 1987:311) has been categorized as a "major cross-cultural stinking point for EFL learners" (Beebe, et al. 1990). In this context, Face refers to the individual's selfesteem and according to Brown and Levinson (1987:311), all individuals wish to maintain both positive face and negative face. The term of positive face refers to one's desire to be liked and accepted by a particular group to which one wishes to belong while negative face refers to one's desire to be autonomous and have freedom of action. Such refusals, acts which will damage the face need of the speaker, the addressee, or both, defined as face-threatening acts (FTA). Hence, some strategies are needed to mitigate face threats and save the face of participants doing an act of refusal. If a speaker does not employ the acceptable or appropriate refusal

strategy, the hearer's face will be hurt and their relationship could also be damaged, so that the communication fails and it is very important for the interlocutors to adopt the varied refusal strategies to reduce the negative influence of the refusal act. Many studies associated with refusal strategy had been carried out. In recent years, some researchers begun to combine the study of the refusal strategies in their own languages, cultures and English learning. Al Qunayeer (2019) addressed an analysis of the use of refusal strategies in L1 and L2 among undergraduate Saudi EFL learners. Tuncer and Turhan (2019) conducted a study on the refusal strategies utilized in social activities by preservice English teachers focuses on gender difference and the social status in Turkey. Al-Ghamdi and Alrefaee (2020) conducted a cross cultural study between Yemeni Arabic speakers and American English speakers in the realization of refusal speech act focuses on the role of social status. Alrefaee, et al. (2020) studied the refusal strategies of Yemeni EFL learners and compare them with refusal of Arabic native speakers and English native speakers. However, few studies that have investigated refusal strategy employed by Indonesian EFL learners and their comparison with English native speaker. Therefore, this study is trying to fill the gap by exploring the differences in performing the refusal strategy between Indonesian EFL learners and English native speakers. Besides, as refusal is one of the speech act that has a potential to break communication between people with different cultures, it is necessary to conduct an investigation on the way EFL learners make refusals in English.

B. Research Problem

In line with the background of the research, the researcher formulates the research problem as follows:

1. What are the refusal strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners?

2. What are the refusal strategies used by English native speakers?

3. How do Indonesian EFL learners' refusal strategies differ from those of English native speakers' strategies in performing refusal?

C. Objective of the Research

Based on the formulation of research problem, the objective of this research as follows:

1. To investigate the refusal strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners.

2. To investigate the refusal strategies used by English native speakers.

3. To investigate the differences of the refusal strategies between Indonesian EFL learners and English native speakers in performing refusal.

D. Significance of the Research

First of all, the findings of this study are hopped to be helpful in raising EFL learners' awareness of using refusal strategy, particularly when they are join in the target community. Second, it is expected to enrich the pedagogical field on pragmatic speech act particularly in refusal strategy. Last, for future researcher, this study can be used as the additional reference or source to get inspiring idea or develop the related study in another cases.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Research

This research is conducted for EFL learners from English major at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung only who have studied pragmatic subject and for English native speaker taken from social media namely Tandem Language Exchange application. The limitation of this research is refusal strategy focuses on two social variables, which are social status (higher, equal, and lower) variable and social distance variable in refusing request, invitation and offer. Besides, this research only used the DCT as the main instrument.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding term and content on this study, it is necessary to define the key terms as follows:

1. Speech act

Speech act defined as an action performed via utterances like requesting, apologizing, refusing, complaining complimenting, or thanking (Yule, 1996).

2. Refusal

Refusals are speech acts that occur as negative responses to other acts such as requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions (Gass & Houck, 1999). It indicates that speaker do not willing to do some acts such as request, invitation, and offer. However, Felix (2006) viewed that it not always fully rejection. Doing refusal there are some possibilities that may

happen. It may be fully rejection or may be rejected by postponing it or reject but set for future course of action.