

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Language is quintessentially human. Spoken language is used every day, face to face, as a means of communication and written language allows one to record and hold on to history across generations. Language calls for an intricate web of skills which is usually taken for granted. It is integral part of everybody life that one relies on to convey wants, needs, thoughts, concerns, and plan. But babies are not born talking. They learn language, starting immediately from birth. Language is not all cut from identical pattern, and this makes a difference in acquisition. Children's language acquisition grows with the environment or social interaction or mother's speech. Social interaction has essential roles in children language acquisition. Child's language acquisition process has been explored and studied by some scientists, philosophers, and psychologists, such as: the acquisition of syntax in from 5 to 10 (Chomsky, 1969), the connection between biological foundation and the stages of child language acquisition (Lenneberg, 1967), and cognitive development and the acquisition of language (Herbert H. Clark, 1973).

The study of language acquisition by children is very interesting. It will make better understanding about the development of the children's language and knowing uniqueness of children in producing a language. As a matter of fact each child has a unique process or way to acquire or even to learn a language.

For many years, many people assumed that the acquisition of children's language was something usual; nothing special, especially in Indonesia. So they thought the study of children's language acquisition was not important to conduct. In fact, that the assumption is not definitely true. The study of children's language acquisition is quite important. One of

which, it is beneficial for the language teaching technique, especially preschool or kindergarten children. With such a study, the question of how to deal with and face the children who have come with various language backgrounds can be attained. Obviously, this study was expected to answer the problems of children's language development in the kindergarten in which the researcher conducted the research. The problems were in terms of various languages produced by children when interacting with teachers and with one another. Different complexity of their languages often confused teachers and caused difficulties dealing with and associating with them. Consequently, it was likely put up continuous gaps of children's language and cause very distinctive educational attainment if this was not fully noticed.

With relation to children's language development, variation in complexity of children's language can be viewed from aspects of syntax that is individual differences among children in acquiring and producing multi-clauses sentences or clause complexes. In recent decades there has been extensive work on syntactical development. While it is widely recognized that the acquisition of syntax depends on innately available structures in the child and it is also acknowledged that child must receive input in the language he or she is acquiring (Huttenlocher, 2001). To expand this, Hoff (2003) also states that individual differences in language acquisition could be the result of several factors including (a) biologically based differences in children's abilities, caused by genes or health; (b) global effects of differences in family functioning and home environment; and (c) specific effects of differences in language learning experiences.

Huttenlocher (2001), in his study, found substantial individual differences in children mastery of multi-clauses sentences and a significant relation between those differences and the proportion of multi-clause sentences in parent speech. A parent in this case was mother. With respect to the input from parents in relation to children's language, genetic similarity

within a family may be critical (Plomin, 1997). It may be difficult to determine which factors are critical in particular cases because of the co-variations that occur in natural environments. For example, better input in a family may be provided by higher ability parents.

In children's language development, parents are children's first teachers and family becomes the first teaching place (Huang, 2004). As Olson (1986) claims that mothers will give children the most input. From mothers' speech, children can acquire the language gradually. This shows the importance of mothers' speech to their children's language. In children's language development, mothers play the essential role. From their points the researcher can realize the importance of mothers in children's language acquisition. Different social class mothers will affect children's language development (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991), for example; (Kagan and Tulkin, 1972) state that middle class mothers engage in meaningful verbal interactions.

Low-income mothers always talk less to their children (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991). As what it was found by Rowe (2005) that mothers with fewer years of education read to their children less frequently and demonstrate less sophisticated language and literacy skills themselves, which affects the quantity and quality of their verbal interactions with their children.

The acquisition of complex sentences or clause complexes revealed significant differences across SES groups. Not only did these children begin to produce complex sentences earlier but they also had a significantly higher frequency and diversity of such sentences through the period of the study. Furthermore, the shape of the growth trajectories suggests that children from different SES groups may be moving further apart in frequency and diversity of complex sentences as they grow older ((Vasilyeva et al., 2008)

Complex sentences or clause complexes are structures that are built up of simpler sentences through the recursive operations of *co-ordination* and embedding. In the early period of syntactic development, children are working on the structure of simple sentences and do not yet have knowledge of these operations (Brown *et al.*, 1969). The onset of ability with clause complexes greatly increases the child's generative capacity and thus is an important step forward in language acquisition. The first complex sentences appear after simple sentences about four words long become common.

Children who hear more diverse language and more complex language develop language more quickly. For example, Huttenlocher (2002) showed that four-child-old children whose parents produced a lot of complex utterances containing more than one clause tended to be good at producing and understanding complex sentences. In line with this, Carpenter and colleagues have found that the type of interaction that parents engage in with their children has an effect at the younger ages (Carpenter *et al.*, 1998). More specifically, they found greater language gains for young children whose parents engaged in a lot of joint engagement activities with their children. Many studies report that children of high socio-economic status (SES) or upper class tend to learn language earlier and faster than those of low socio-economic status (SES) (Hart & Risley, 1995)

SES or social class is usually defined in terms of the amount of education that parents have had, but sometimes in terms of occupational prestige or income. The most likely explanation is that more educated and advantaged parents talk more to their children and use more complex, varied language (Huttenlocher *et al.*, 2008). In fact, Hart and Risley (1995) estimate that children from high SES families might hear as many as 1100 utterances per day whereas children from low SES families might only hear only about 700 utterances per day. In other words, children of high SES or upper class parents are more likely to experience a language-rich environment than children of low SES or lower class parents, which then affects

their language development.

As previously Olson (1986) claims that mothers transfer the most input to children. In relation with social class or social economic status (SES), different amount of education or occupational prestige or income mothers have results in different complex sentences or clauses they utter to their children. In this case, it is very likely that children utter clause complexes in different complexity as the input they acquire is different.

Generally, normal children progress through a predictable sequence of stages and master the basic syntactic relations of simple sentences at a relatively early age. Despite the commonalities, however, there is evidence of individual differences in syntactic growth among children. Most of this work concerns the early stages of syntactic development where variations have been found in the rate and course of acquisition (Fenson et al., 1994). There are some data to suggest that, at later ages, children show individual differences for more complex aspects of syntax.

It is possible that a stronger relation of input or interaction to complex sentences or clauses children produce. It could be found when children are old enough. Most studies indicate that the major types of complex sentences emerge between the age of about 2 and 4 (Bowerman, 1979). Still, the question of whether syntactical development (in this case complex sentences or clause complexes) is related to mothers' social class has not been systematically studied. Possibly, this is because research on syntactic development has focused on the acquisition of the basic grammatical forms that appear early. And what's more is complex syntax which appears later is a central aspect of language development.

Clause complexes generally emerge in a child's speech when he or she has attained a mean length of utterance (MLU) of 3.0 (Lahey, 1988). The first clause complexes structures that emerge in children are (a) coordination of clauses with the word *and* (e.g., I like Barbies and he likes Batman/ *saya suka Barbi dan dia suka Batman*), (b) noun phrase complements

(also known as full propositional complements) (e.g., I wish I was bigger / *seandainya saya lebih besar*), and (c) infinitives with the same subject (e.g., I want to eat a banana / *saya ingin makan pisang*) (Bloom, 1991). These generally develop when a child has an MLU of between 3 and 4 (Paul, 2001). As children continue to develop, they add more embedded sentences to their language by using (a) infinitives with different subjects (I want you to go to sleep / *saya ingin kamu pergi tidur*) and (b) relative clauses (He is the man that I saw / *dia laki-laki yang saya lihat*) (Bloom, 1991). Paul reported that these skills develop when a child's MLU is between 4 and 5. Other clause complexes generally developed during this time are gerunds (I liked seeing it / *saya suka menontonnya*), *wh*- infinitives (I know how to do it / *saya tahu cara melakukannya*), and unmarked infinitives (Watch me swing / *perhatikan saya berayun*). By the time the child has an MLU of 5.0, it is expected that 20% of his or her utterances will be complex. This is generally achieved by the age of 4 or 5 (Paul, 2001). In other word, children utterances are beginning to be more complex before or after they have entered kindergarten. As in Indonesia; normally, children at this age have been enrolled to kindergarten. As in GBPKB (1994) it is stated that kindergarten is an educational program for children between the ages of four to five.

As children get into kindergarten, it is likely that their clause complexes vary because variations in input they acquire from their parents; especially mothers. Nathan et al (1999) says that Individual differences in language development might be due to biological factors, to variations in input, or both. The effects of the frequency of word use were not mediated by biological similarity between mother and child. And language input was found to have a significant impact on language growth. While it is clear those differences in language input within the normal range lead to particular patterns of language growth in the early years of life. While, Olson (1986) claims that mothers will give children the most input. The language input children receive can vary with their home environments. Several studies of lower class

mothers show that they talk less to their children and spend less time engaged in mutual activities where language is used than do middle-SES mothers. Lower class mothers more often use speech to direct children's behavior than to engage them in conversation; their speech is less frequently contingent on the child's speech, including fewer instances where they improve on children's expressions (Nathan et al, 1999).

With referring that above theory, the researcher assumed that kindergarten children of different class mothers show differences in acquiring and producing clause complexes. Most importantly, there was a striking correlation between the proportion of complex utterances in parent and child. Children who hear complex sentences more frequently are more skilled in understanding and producing them (Nathan et al, 1999).

This phenomenon had led the writer to conduct a small observation to children at the age of 4-5 years old who had entered kindergarten. This study described clause complexes the children utter related to mothers' social class or socio-economic status (SES). It was hoped, this research would be a contribution to the field of psychology and language and to enrich readers' knowledge about Indonesian language acquisition, particularly complex sentences or clauses development among children.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

With respect to the background that had been previously pointed out, the problems were formulated as follows:

1. What kinds of clause complexes are produced by kindergarten children of lower and middle social class mother?
2. Which ones of these kindergarten children of lower and middle social class mother produce more clauses?
3. What is the context of situation features in kindergarten children of lower and middle

social class mothers' clause complexes?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study as conveyed in the problems were:

1. to describe what kinds of complex clauses are produced by kindergarten children of lower and middle social class mother.
2. to describe which ones of these kindergarten children of lower and middle social class mother produce more clauses.
3. to describe the context of situation features in kindergarten children of lower and middle social class mothers' clause complexes.

1.4 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study of children language acquisition is a broad area to be studied because there are so many aspects to be discovered. In this study, the writer only dealt with the acquisition of Indonesian clause complexes. The children who were observed were kindergarten children at the age 4-5 years old at Taman Kanak-kanak Islam Terpadu (TKIT) Muhaddis Kutacane Aceh Tenggara. They had been observed for two months.

1.5 The Significances of the Study

Findings of the study were expected to be significantly relevant to theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, the researcher's findings were hoped to enrich knowledge and notice toward children's language development.

Practically, since this research focused on clauses' acquisition, especially; clause complexes, hopefully, it was useful for the other researchers who are interested in gaining some knowledge about clause complexes' acquisition by kindergarten students or children.