

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The Background of the Study**

Language is a tool for understanding and interpreting the world around us, as well as the thoughts and perspectives of others. It allows individuals to convey thoughts, ideas, and emotions to others through spoken or written words. . Verderber (1999) stated language is the body of words and the system for their use in communicating that are common to the people of the same community or nation, the same geographical area, or the same cultural tradition. Through language, we can convey our thoughts and feelings, share our experiences, and connect with others on a deeper level. It allows us to communicate not just information, but also cultural values, beliefs, and norms. By learning and using language, people can build relationships, form social connections, and collaborate with others to achieve common goals.

Levinson (1983:24) stated that pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate. The definition leads to the analysis that pragmatics cannot be separated from context and principles of language usage. Therefore, to understand pragmatics meaning of the speaker, people should consider the principles of language used by the speaker. In communication, there is a speaker and a listener. The speaker gives information to the listener. It has the function of connecting people both in spoken and written language. Language not only makes the listener do something but also does the activity as desired by the speaker. It means

language has a function to persuade the hearer to do something by the speaker's utterance.

Yule (1996) stated that pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by the speaker (writer) and interpreted by a listener (reader). How people use language to communicate is studied through pragmatics.

Pragmatics studies the social-cognitive basis of communication, which is crucial for understanding the non-literal meaning of an expression. Pragmatic comprehension requires cognitive functions such as attention, the ability to use and store information (memory), comprehension of the structures of utterances (grammatical rules), integration of information from different sources (beliefs about the speaker and situation), empathy, and the understanding of the mental states of others (theory of mind), all guided by context.

In order to understand the speaker's intention, the hearer has to utilize the information communicated directly and indirectly. When processing language, people utilize relevant contextual information when they are deriving the meaning of an utterance. People automatically pay attention to information that is relevant to them, and therefore they do not try to process all available information. Pragmatics allows understanding the intended meaning of another speaker, which has been measured in a variety of ways. The evaluation of pragmatic capacities is very broad, and it usually includes the assessment of underlying cognitive processes that are needed for understanding the intended meaning according to the context. Pragmatic comprehension is seen as an ability to utilize context in comprehension. (Sperber & Wilson 1995). Pragmatic comprehension involves the

inferential process of understanding what a speaker intends to accomplish by making utterances. Linguists consider context in comprehending the meaning of the sentence to refer to context as an important aspect to interpret meaning, the reader can know about the meaning and context of an utterance given. sentences in context, have effect would have been if the context ( who speaks, to whom, what purpose, how a speaker says, when, and where aspects) had been slightly different” (Fillmore 1977:119).

Here is a simple context from the conversation, to comprehend pragmatic meaning. Two friends, Sarah and Alex, are hanging out in Sarah's living room. They're watching a movie, but Sarah keeps fanning herself with a magazine,

Sarah: it's hot in this room

Alex: The AC is out of order. Will the fan do?

- What does the speaker A mean?
- Why the speaker B answer by saying, “The AC is out of order?”

Student's answer: Sarah & Alex feel hot at the time and Alex said this room is hot because the AC is out of order.

In this data, the researcher gives a conversation that contains pragmatic meaning. There are speaker and listener in that conversation, the context Sarah hereby requests that to turn on the AC, Alex respond to the speaker's intention and do an action to turn on the fan.

The data show that the student did not get the meaning from the conversation. The student's answer only rewrites the information about the

situation from the conversation, it means that the answer shows an utterance meaning. She understands the literal meaning of the sentence. The learners' failure in communicating their messages can be traced back to their inadequacy in comprehending pragmatic meaning. The cognitive process of comprehending pragmatic meaning can play an important role in developing the pragmatic competence of learners. This research is important to hone students ability to comprehend implied messages and improve the quality of communication. If students don't understand this cognitive process, they might become confused and disconnect in communication. to fill the gap by developing a comprehension conversation of native speakers that measures pragmatic comprehension for students.

The researcher wants to know how the cognitive process is occurring in students of Senior High School because High school students have reached a higher stage of cognitive development compared to junior high students. This includes improved theory of mind, understanding of social cues, and ability to process multiple perspectives. These skills are crucial for interpreting the nuanced meanings behind language, which makes comprehending pragmatics more relevant. High school curriculum often places a greater emphasis on critical thinking and analysis, which are essential skills for interpreting pragmatic meaning. Students are expected to go beyond the literal meaning of words and consider the speaker's intentions, context, and social cues. Preparation for higher education and careers, The skills required for comprehending pragmatic meaning are crucial for success in higher education and many careers. High school can be a prime time to begin refining these skills in preparation for future challenges. The

researcher is interested in doing the research about “The cognitive process of comprehension in pragmatic meaning in Senior High School Methodist 1 Medan, that is located on Jl. Hang Tuah Medan.

### **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

In relation to the background, the problems of the study are formulated as follows:

1. How does cognitive process take place in comprehending pragmatic meaning by Senior High School Methodist 1 Medan students?
2. Why does the cognitive process of comprehending pragmatic meaning occur in the way it does ?

### **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

In relation to the problems, the objectives of the study are:

1. To describe the cognitive process of comprehending pragmatic meaning.
2. To explain reasons for the cognitive process of comprehending pragmatic meaning.

### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the cognitive process of comprehending pragmatic meaning by the Twelfth grade of Methodist 1 Senior High School Hang Tuah Medan.

### **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study are expected to be useful theoretically and practically:

For theoretically, The findings of this study are anticipated to enhance our understanding of the cognitive process involved in comprehending pragmatic meaning.

For Practically, the findings are expected to benefit:

- a) Students by helping them to better compete in an increasingly advanced and independent educational environment, specifically in learning pragmatic meaning.
- b) Teachers by providing them with insights into more effective ways to engage students in learning pragmatic meaning, thereby facilitating students' comprehension of the subject.
- c) Other researchers by serving as a valuable source of knowledge to enhance the cognitive process of comprehending pragmatic meaning. This area of research is significant for understanding how students acquire and utilize pragmatic language skills, which is essential for effective communication and educational achievement."