

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Acquisition is ‘a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language, not unlike the process used by a child to ‘pick up’ a language’ (Brown 2002: 278). Learning is a conscious process in which ‘learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own processes. Language is the uniquely human characteristic. Men, women and children have their own languages. Children learn language at a stage when they themselves are developing rapidly. They may also master a second language easily. Generally, they acquire one language then they will master another language that is influenced by their environment in different ways.

According to Danny (1982), the process of mastering the language is related to the process of acquiring the language. The process of acquiring a language in a child is naturally a process of development. This process is usually called language acquisition. In the process of the development, there are some important things that they get. It involves language comprehension, language production, and language perception of the child in acquiring the language as a child is not born with the knowledge of a particular language. Language acquisition very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interactions in the target language-natural communication-in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.

It has been hypothesized that there is a fairly stable order of acquisition of structures in language acquisition, that is, one can see clear similarities across acquirers as to which structures tend to be acquired early and which tend to be acquired late. Acquirers need not have a conscious awareness of the "rules" they possess, and may self correct only on the basis of a "feel" for grammaticality. De Boysson-bardies (1999:37) states that the adults influence the development of children's language. The children carefully follow the movements of mother's mouth and try to imitate them. They distinguish voice and showing a particular preference. They are sensitive to the rhythm and intonation of adults talk. Parents provide predictable repeated situations in which meaning of utterances is clear to the child. And they effectively teach their ideas over to the children. The children never make conversation with other people seriously, but they acquire the language and share the knowledge with other people.

Clark (2003:1) argues that babies are not born talking. They learn language immediately from birth. They hear sounds and words, meaning and constructions. They need to know what to use, where and when, how to integrate language with other modes of communication, how to make them understood and how to understand others. During the infants or very clearly childhood period, children learn to express things by using speech sounds. Whenever they feel hungry, thirsty or hurt, they produce speech sound such as crying, which is also a part of the process of communication, where the infants start to use their articulation to communicate with other people because they are still not able to say perfectly what they want like adults do.

In addition, Darjowidjojo (2000:49) explains that human beings are born to speak, with an innate gift for figuring out the rules of the language used in the environment. Environment influences the children in conversation. Infants need other people such as their caretakers, parents, friends and people who live around them to motivate them to communicate through crying, cooing, uttering sound or meaningful words which help them to be able to carry out conversations and to communicate their needs and wants with other people in the community. The adjustment in the caretakers speech register served two functions, namely to facilitate understanding and to get the child to be involved in the conversation.

Conversations may be learned in early interactions, such as taking turns and the way they express, as declared by Gleason's (2005). As a result, this life long process of development was dependent on social interaction and that social learning actually leads to cognitive development. Moreover, generally speaking, the children's social interaction is firstly occurred in the family. Thus at the beginning, children's language acquisition will take place with their parents. Parents will become children's first teachers.

Casual Conversation can be happen where the participants have equal power in the interaction both of polite and confirming. (Wagner, 2008). Polite is Interactions where little previous and/or future contact is likely and therefore affective feelings between the participants will not be well developed and confirming is Interactions where the participants are in close or continual contact and therefore have developed affective attitudes or feelings towards each other.

Several previous studies prove that children's acquisition of casual conversation in different ages have different Ability in communicating by casual

conversation. For example, as investigated by McTear (1985), he has examined the pragmatics of children's conversations. The main pragmatic structures he notes are: greetings, initiations, attention getting, attention directing, and conversation repair e.g. repeating an utterance or requesting or responding to a need for clarification, and use of discourse connectors for topic shift or to continue the conversation after repair and to signal turn taking. Turn taking exchanges can be to initiate, respond, follow-up or conduct a simultaneous response with initiation (e.g. "is it in the cupboard" in response to "where is it?") Even young children use verbal and non-verbal means to accomplish these activities as well as changes in prosody and variation in politeness depending on the partner.

The other one is a study by Sutopo (2013) which focuses on language acquisition of kindergarten child, he has an assumption that the types of casual conversation acquired by childrens still in very limited concepts and just got in the purpose to express what the child wants. In this case the commodity exchanged could be either information or goods and services. The roles associated with the exchange relations are either giving or demanding. One of the requirements in the process of studying a child's language acquisition is to understand the child's family background. It is an important fact to be studied so that the development can be well understood and will give a great deal of contribution to the process of a child's mental development.

Child's language is a unique phenomenon because they acquire the language from the environment and sometimes what they say is not what they mean. The child's language is understandable when the child has developed.

Every child has different cognitive development. It means even at the same ages they do not have the same abilities in communicating by casual conversation. The example of pragmatics acquisition in casual conversation used by children can be seen on the conversation between 2 boy of five-years-old Indonesian child in, the writer's own son and his friend. One day, suddenly the writer's own son approached his friend and asked.

(A): "Punya permen?"

(B): "Punya, nah." (issued candy and gave it to A.)

Gramatically the question asked by A to B was just a curiosity whether B have candy or not. But pragmatically it means that A wish B gave him candy. Understanding contained in the speech in the pragmatics study called 'purpose', or the meaning. So, pragmatically the question from A to B is not contained the meaning, but the purpose. In the example above, B had known the purpose of A so that beside answering the question, he also give the candy.

Based on researcher observation in daily activity while interact and communicate with children, she found that most children use pragmatics utterance based on the context. Children understand one each other since they are in the same perception, same area and same context.

The process of acquiring a language is regarded as a very complex and interesting to be studied. The writer is very much interested in conducting a research on a Batak Toba child. The writer is very curious to observe the child's acquisition of language specifically the pragmatics acquisition of casual conversation.

In accordance with the explanation above, in this research the writer is interested in studying about pragmatics acquisition of casual conversation by children of five-year-old as a case study on the writer's village, Humbang Hasundutan, Sumatera Utara. Three children are decided in this research since this study is language acquisition and conducted as a case study, so it must be investigated personally and can be done on an individual. The writer feels interested in studying this problem by taking Mc Tears theory which main pragmatic structures he notes are: greetings, initiations, attention getting, attention directing, and conversation repair. Further, the age of five chosen in this study because as we know that a-five year old children in this period are considered being active speakers with good speaking to communicate his mind. That's why the writer is interested in observing the children in this age.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of the study above, the problems are formulated in questions as the following:

1. What types of pragmatics structures acquired by five years old Indonesian children in casual conversation?
2. How do the five years-old Indonesian children acquire the pragmatics in casual conversation?
3. Why do the five years-old Indonesian children acquire the pragmatics in this way?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

In accordance with the problems, the objectives of this research are:

1. to describe the types of pragmatics structures acquired by five years old Indonesian children in casual conversation
2. to find out the way of how do the five years old Indonesian children acquired the pragmatics in casual conversation.
3. to find out the reasons of why do the five years old Indonesian children acquired the pragmatics in this way.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The writer conducts this study in the scope of first language acquisition, particularly the casual conversation acquisition as one of the acquisition field in pragmatics. The data is limited to the Indonesian words produced by a five-year-old child in his daily activities. Thus, casual conversation is driven by interpersonal, rather than ideational or textual meanings. To support this claim, it is pointed to: the absence of any pragmatic motivations or outcomes to casual talk, the observation that anything can be a topic of talk in casual conversation (no topics are a priori barred) which suggests that casual conversation is not focused on ideational meanings, the apparent triviality of much of the ideational content of casual talk, which suggests that the important work of casual conversation is not in the exploration of ideational meanings. Rather, any ideational domain (or field) serves as the environment for the exploration of social similarities and differences.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Findings of the study are expected theoretically and practically to give much contribution in the world of children language acquisition research.

1. Theoretically, this study becomes the basic of the further research which is also interested in investigating the same area with different focus and object.
2. Practically, findings of this study become some sort of guidelines for the teachers, adults, and particularly parents who directly touch this area, in order to be able to guide their children in having good language development specifically in casual conversation.

