

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Language is so basic to our existence that life without words is difficult to envision. Because speaking, listening, reading and writing are such fundamental aspects of our daily lives, they seem to be ordinary skills. Executed easily and effortlessly, language use guides us through our day. It facilitates our relationships with others and help us understand world events, arts, culture and sciences.

This thesis deals with a research on the socio-cultural knowledge of the Toba-Batak people on the sequence of occurrence of *umpasa* and its interpretation used in the wedding ceremony. *Umpasa(s)* is a poetic utterance of Toba-Batak language. Among the Toba-Batak people, conducting a wedding ceremony has a very important value in the future life of a newly married couple. By wedding ceremony the Toba-Batak people traditionally celebrate, announce, and legalize, and bless the marriage of a newly married couple (Sihombing, 1989; Hutagalung, 1991).

This importance is signaled by the activities of the Toba-Batak people who participate in the wedding ceremony. A Toba-Batak wedding ceremony has a socio-cultural function in the life of the Toba-Batak.

The presentation of *umpasas* in the Toba-Batak people wedding ceremony cannot be avoided. The participants of the wedding ceremony use them to communicate a

certain function which is related to the philosophical life of the Toba-Batak people to have harmony, unity, off-spring, prosperity, and dignity (Simanjuntak, 2005: 142-154). The most dominant verbal behavior of the Toba-Batak people in the wedding ceremony is saying *umpasas*. Today, the Toba-Batak people maintain saying *umpasas* in every cultural events.

In this context, the Toba-Batak people say *umpasas* just after when they have finished delivering sentences or wise words and as for their closing statement, they will present some *umpasas* as the prayer for that the newly couple will have it in the future.

The misinterpretation of sequence of occurrence of *umpasas* in the wedding ceremony particularly will mislead the speakers and listeners of the Toba-Batak people in the ceremony. Consequently, it creates a problem in the communicative interaction among the Toba-Batak people. A survey on the use of *umpasas* in the wedding ceremony in some locations in Doloksanggul was conducted for the sake of the research proposal of this thesis, the findings of the survey indicated that some of the young generation of Toba-Batak people did not understand the sequence of *umpasa*, its occurrence and even the interpretation of these *umpasas*, and some other younger could not mention what types of *umpasas* are generally used in the wedding ceremony and in what occurrence it will take place, while they were participating saying *umpasas* in the wedding ceremony of Toba-Batak people.

The majority of the older said that the younger in general today misunderstood the use of *umpasas* in the wedding ceremony. They said this happened

because the younger thought that there is no an appropriate sequence of occurrence of *umpasa* and when it takes place.

The problem of disorderness of *umpasas*, its occurrences, and its interpretation used in the wedding ceremony is predicted to be more serious by the socio-cultural trends among the Toba-Batak people. It can be predicted that in several years ahead the generation of the Toba-Batak people will scarcely speak these *umpasas* in an appropriate order, and they will consequently not understand the occurrence of these *umpasas* even the interpretation.

Philosophically, if the Toba-Batak people continue doing the disorderness of occurrence of *umpasas* and its interpretation and if there is not attention given to the solution of the problems at this early time, sooner or later the next generation of Toba-Batak people will totally mislead the cultural knowledge about the sequence of occurrence of *umpasas* used in the wedding ceremony.

A wise academic solution offered to this problem is to conduct a formal research to study the correct cultural knowledge about the sequence of occurrence of *umpasas* in the Toba-Batak wedding ceremony. The reason for this is that a such relevant research in the field of pragmatics are not yet communicated in journals.

This issue can be related to the rare application of the pragmatic theory to the analysis of Toba-Batak people in formal research. The research conducted in this thesis deals with the language functions in the actual communicative interaction of a homogeneous ethnic group. Accordingly, the topic of the research in this thesis deals



with the macro language functions of the sequence of occurrence of *umpasa* in the Toba-Batak wedding ceremony.

Theoretically, a study on the sequence of occurrence of *umpasas* in the Toba-Batak wedding ceremony is categorized as a topic in the field of pragmatics.

In the viewpoint of ethnography, a study of the language use is related to the context of a cultural life of an ethnic group. According to Hymes (1974), the use of an utterance in the correct of a cultural situation is to transfer the intentions of the speaker to the listener. This philosopher says that the member of a society can understand message communicated to them because they share the same knowledge on the language and communication rules in the context of their cultural life situation.

### 1.2 The Research Focus

The general focus of this research deals with the cultural knowledge of Toba-Batak wedding ceremony on the sequence and interpretation of the *umpasa(s)* presented. This focus can be specifically broken down into some divisions. The purpose of the division is to conceptualize the variables of the research. The first division is dealing with sequencing the themes of *umpasa*; first, middle and final. The second division, the sequenced *umpasa(s)* are going to be analyzed and classified what genre can be found in it. The third division is to interpret the meaning of *umpasa(s)* presented in the Toba-Batak wedding ceremony. The chiefs of custom (*Raja Adat*) will be politely investigated as long as the ceremony goes on.

### 1.3 The Research Problems

In congruent with the focus of the research mentioned in the previous page, the problem statements of this research can be formulated in the form of a question as follows

1. What are the interpretation of the first, middle, and final of *umpasa* in the wedding ceremony of Toba-Batak?
2. What types of genre can be derived from the sequenced *umpasa(s)*?
3. How do the Toba-Bataks interpret these *umpasa(s)*?
4. What lexicogrammatical aspects are textually used to form a certain genre in the presentation of *umpasa*?

### 1.4 The Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of the four research problems above, so the research objectives can be stated as follows

1. to describe out the sequences of *umpasa* in the Toba-Batak wedding ceremony,
2. to derive the potential types of genre in the sequenced *umpasa(s)*,
3. to interpret the meanings of *umpasa(s)* communicated and
4. to investigate the linguistic aspects of *umpasa(s)* presentation in order to for a specific genre.

### 1.5 The Research Significance

The findings of this research may have two general significances i.e. theoretical and practical significance. The findings of this research may have some theoretical findings. The finding may provide a new contribution to the development of the conceptual knowledge on the production and interpretation of the language use in the society. Beside, they may inform how people conduct a communicative interaction in the context of the society's activities. In addition to that, they may account the aspects of the situation which are related to a speech act occurs in a cultural situation. Moreover, they may provide the empirical rules on how people use and interpret a speech in a cultural situation.

The findings of the research may also have some practical significances. The findings may be used to improve the quality of conscious knowledge (Tampubolon, 2001) of the Toba-Batak on how to use and interpret *umpasa(s)* in the wedding ceremony. Beside, they may be used to help the Toba-Batak people how to participate saying *umpasa(s)* in the wedding ceremony. In addition to that, they may help the Toba-Batak to differentiate the meaning of *umpasa(s)* in a daily conversation from its situations in the Toba-Batak wedding ceremony and other cultural events. Moreover, they may help a person to become a fluent speaker in Toba-Batak wedding ceremony.