

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Twentieth century is the sign of globalization and modernization in all life aspects. Politically, chances for bilateral or multilateral relationships are widely opened. Economically, people are racing to earn wealth and prosperity. Socially, they are searching for a better social status and relationships. Therefore, the need of communication is increasing as well.

Communication takes place everywhere and even through boundaries of time and places. People are communicating to fulfill the need of socialization, to share thoughts and feelings, or even for business. Language, as it called as the means of communication, plays an important part to sustain the existence of the communication itself. Pei (1958:3) believed that language is the most important tool we use if life because “it serves the purpose of communication with our fellow men, without it no coordinated activity is possible.” People use language in every time of their life and language makes us human simply because language “... created the human world ...” (Trask, 1995:1).

However, there are many languages around the world including their dialects. How can people coordinate activity without knowing and comprehending the language of others? Pei (1958:5) argued that the effect would be the feeling of loss because the power of communication is elided and so is the activity. There is much to say but cannot be said. There are many things to do in which other persons’ participation is involved but cannot be done. Thus, a learning foreign language is encouraged, yet on an underlining point that foreign languages are many in number (Pei, 1958:5).

People of course do not have a lifetime to learn all of them so that they come up to a decision that they need to choose a language, the global one: English.

English is spoken in more than 80 countries in the world (Simatupang cited by Ngadiman, 2009:19). Though in some parts it does not have the official status but it is still the dominant language. Even nowadays, English has many forms and variations. As the direct result of it, there is a friction of paradigm that English is not only as a Second Language (ESL) but also as a Foreign Language (EFL), even as an International Language (EIL) as stated by Smith in Ngadiman (2009:19). From that fact, a point can be drawn that more people of every age will start learning English either formally or informally.

When English is referred to as a language, it can be characterized through its pronunciation, grammatical structure and vocabulary (Jackson and Stockwell, 2011:3). People who have comprehended those characteristics can be called as language users. Language users are engaged in a verbal exchange of communication with each other. Somehow, in the real conversation, language users also own an intention of maintaining social relationship rather than only conveying message.

Based on the background above, the most suitable field of analysis is based on linguistic field of study. Linguistics, as defined by Trager (1972: 23), is “the study and analysis of language a whole”, which includes phonology, morphology, semantics and pragmatics. Phonology deals with “... the way in which sounds combine ... into syllables and words, as well as features of intonation, stress and so on, which accompany speech,” semantics is concerned on meanings, and pragmatics focuses on “... the context and purposes of language” (Jackson and Stockwell, 2011:8-10).

Jackson and Stockwell point out that phonology “... considers the selection that a language makes from the inventory of human speech sound, and the contrast that the language invokes for the purpose of distinguishing words” (2011:8). When one violates that basic, he will not make himself understandable, as when he pronounces a minimal pair of ‘sheep’ and ‘ship’ exactly the same, for instance.

In the scope of formal English learning, English teachers are the ones who are directly involved with learners in their learning aiming to achieve that broad communication. Teachers are aware of merits and drawback learners experience in the classroom setting and one point of awareness is that learners may sometimes experience communication failure both with their teacher and colleagues. Differences in culture, sex, social status, and many more are initialized to be the cause of that failure. But how if the cause is the language itself in which they pursue to master?

Landing on that crucial point, the writer intended to conduct a study on how language can be the cause of communication failure. The writer chooses a serial movie as the object of the study as it may represent the real situation happening in the real life. Thus, may depict the process of communication.

The title of the serial movie is ‘Mind Your Language’ which was a British serial movie aired in 1977. It is a comedy television series produced by Stuart Allen and is set in an adult education college in London and focuses on the English as a Foreign Language. The main character of the movie is Jeremy Brown, a new EFL teacher, who replaces the former teacher who has resigned because of not being able to stand the tension of teaching that particular class consisting of ten adult students coming from different nationalities. The interactions are mostly based on classroom

interaction in which Brown, the teacher, is often made confused by the students' remarks. The students made a number of errors in using English and it causes misunderstanding both for the teacher or the fellow students.

The reason why the writer chooses the movie is because the writer believes that it depicts the real situation in international adult classes. Although it does not entirely portray the real problems faced by English teacher in the international classroom nowadays, especially when realizing that the movie is outdated, the problems of language experienced by the learners still exist nowadays, for example is the problem of mispronunciation as illustrated below:

Brown	: What is your job?
Max	: I walk with sheeps
Brown	: Walk with sheep? You're a shepherd? You work in a farm?
Max	: No,no, not farm
Brown	: But you said you work with sheep
Max	: No, no. Sheeps, big sheeps Tut. . tut (imitating the sound of SHIP)
Brown	: Ah, ship

In that case, the student, Max, mispronounces the word 'ship' and 'work' incorrectly and leads the teacher to misunderstanding.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

In line with the background of the study, the writer intended to answer a major problem: "What linguistic aspects can cause communication failure in an EFL class as depicted in 'Mind Your Language' movie?"

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

Based on the problem statement above, it is clear that the objective of this study is to find the linguistics aspects that cause communication failure taking place in the school interaction between foreign students of an EFL class and the educators (teacher and principal) in Mind Your Language TV series of episode 1 to 3.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

This study is aimed at giving students, especially those majoring in the English teaching and the graduates of the English teaching education, an illustration of linguistic problems they may face when teaching English in international classes consisting of students from different nationalities, languages, and cultures. Furthermore, it is expected that they may find solution to cope with the problems.

### **1.5. Scope and Limitation**

According to the background above, this study is limited to kinds of linguistic factors that influence communication failure happening in the EFL class as depicted in “Mind Your Language” serial movie season 1 episode 1 to 3.

The data are taken only from three episodes of the first season because during that time the students are making adjustment of the presence of a new teacher and errors in the use of the target language will likely to appear.

Problems of misunderstanding appearing in the interactions between the teacher and the students, or between the students are limited to those linguistic ones. The analysis will be limited to only be based on the

observation of the spoken language; the written form cannot be observed because the data are taken from a movie.

## **1.6. Definition of Key-Terms**

Here are the descriptions of keywords used in this research:

1. Communication (from Latin "*communis*", meaning *to share*) is "... the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written/visual modes, and production and comprehension process." (Canale, 1993:4)
2. Communication failure is a situation in which the message uttered by the speaker is unsuccessfully conveyed by the listener – that a misunderstanding or misinterpretation occurs in the process of exchanging the information between those two parties.
3. Immigrants are people who are immigrating to a new country to live permanently (usually because of job or marriage).
4. "Mind Your Language" is a British comedy series released in 1977 and directed by Stuart Allen also starred by Barry Evan as Jeremy Brown, a new English teacher who has to deal with a crew of foreign students in which the former teacher had resigned because of being not able to stand the tension. There are ten students coming from different countries: Italy, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, China, Japan, India and Pakistan.

## **1.7. Organization of the Thesis**

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of the research such as the background of the study, the statement of problem, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation, the definition of key-terms, and the organization of the study. The second chapter presents the review of related literature, while research methodology is presented in the third chapter. The data analysis, findings, and discussion are presented in chapter four. In the last chapter, the writer draws conclusion and gives the summary of the study and some suggestion for further studies.