

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the research background, problem identification, research questions, research objectives, research significance, research scope, assumption and limitation. Research background explains reason for choosing question speech acts produced by the Junior High School students in *Sawan*. Research questions specify the four research objects studied systematically. Problem identification argues theoretically and empirically the students' lacking confidence, skills, and competence in asking question speech acts. Research objectives put forwards the general and specific research purposes or outputs. Whilst, research significance brings about the theoretical and practical research outcomes for EFL students, teachers, and other researchers. Research scope delimits the present research in terms of school, subject, time, and object. Assumption and limitation are meant to provide methodological constraints that might limit the generalizability or external validity of the research processes and outputs.

1.1 Research Background

Question speech act has an important function in English as a Foreign Language Learning (*henceforth*: EFL) (Husein & Saffinas, 2019). It is a communicative act that shows the intended language function, including

questions, requests, apologies, suggestions, commands, and offers (Austin, 1962). Despite the students' active learning approach applied in the 2013 Curriculum, students are reluctant in asking questions during EFL, particularly the students in *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 3 Sawan*.

Similar phenomena were reported in the literature. According to Ngadikem (2016), EFL students were lacking confidence and skill in asking questions. He added that some students were afraid of asking questions due to limited vocabulary and grammar. Some of them simply kept silent during learning though they did not really understand the lesson. Some others were not very actively involved in learning.

According to Asemota (2015), students' reluctance in asking questions might be related to culture or sub-culture within a speech community. In a direct culture, asking questions are indicative of absence of knowledge or information (Olmen, 2017). Through questions, speakers' thoughts, feelings and behaviours could be bridged to create and enforce personal, interpersonal, and transactional relationships. In maintaining communication or avoiding communication gap, question speech act is an essential verbal act (Rohmatillah, 2017). Question speech acts are therefore primary language unit used for effective communication (Nurani, 2015; Green, 2016; Rahayuningsih et al., 2020).

Sadighi (2018) claimed that the EFL students did not have a formal learning background in using questions during learning. According to Tarvin (2015), the EFL students' reluctance in asking questions was due to absence of communicative competence. Tarvin (2015) explained that communicative competence is the knowledge of cultural rules for the appropriate use of language

in social interaction, for example, during EFL. Nordquist (2019) added that communicative competence is to understand communication ethics and develop cultural awareness.

Other previous studies were concerned with question speech acts. For example, Ngadi (2018) studied questions-and-answers in an EFL classroom of St. Joseph Junior High School. The objectives were to know the types of questions used in EFL. It used a qualitative research design. The result showed that students' questions and answers in EFL were imperfect by purpose and grammar. Putri and Ermanto (2018) studied speech act in answering question in classroom discussion. The aim was to describe the form and strategy in answering questions. The result showed that the form of questions answered according to 5W+1H using directive functions speech act in the context of a quiet speech situation and sensitive topic.

The 2013 Curriculum has been implemented since 2013. The objective of Curriculum 2013 is creating productive, creative, innovative, through strengthening affective attitudes, skills, an integrated knowledge for Indonesian. One way for creating productivity and creativity in EFL is through improvement of confidence and skill in asking question during EFL (Khasanah,2015; Ekawati, 2016; Purnomo,2018).

Prior observation of the students' active participation in EFL during the pandemic showed that students were not very interested in asking questions. Theoretically, asking questions is an awareness of absence of knowledge or information (Nordquist,2019). However, students seemed to ignore the importance of understanding the lesson just by asking relevant questions during EFL. Empirically, only very few students asked questions during EFL in *SMPN 3*

Sawan. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, off-learning model was unable to be observed holistically, and therefore, the present research was conducted to explore the students' ability in producing question speech act in *SMPN 3 Sawan*. This research was focused solely on the students' production of question speech acts, especially types, social functions, linguistic structures, functions, and language elements. The four aspects of question speech acts were studied because they are emphasized in Curriculum 2013 in order to develop communicative competence in personal, interpersonal, and transactional interactions. These research foci were different from previous research conducted thus far.

1.2 Problem Identifications

The students in *SMPN 3 Sawan* were not confident and skillful in asking questions could be speculated as follows. Sadighi (2018) claimed that the EFL students did not have a formal learning background in using questions politely appropriately in social interaction contexts. Also, they did not receive proper training in functioning questions in speech act strategy in social interactions. Moreover, factors such as personality and age might hinder successful expressions of questions in the speech act.

According to Sari (2019), the students might not have good knowledge on the forms of questions types such as compliance questions, rhetorical questions prompting questions, probing questions, recall, and ledge questions, application questions, analysis questions, synthesis questions, evaluations questions, narrow questions, and broad questions. Knowledge of the questions types requires the students to identify the function of questions, the type of questions, the structure

of questions, and the language element of questions used in terms of questions speech act used by the Junior High School students.

Nordquist (2019) explained that the students' inability and reluctance in asking questions might be due to various types, contextual social functions, complex linguistic structures, and different language elements posed by the question speech acts themselves. He added that EFL teachers do not equip and expose EFL learners with examples used by English speakers.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are question-speech act types produced by students in *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 3 Sawan*?
2. What are question-speech act social functions produced by students in *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 3 Sawan*?
3. What are question-speech act linguistic structures produced by students in *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 3 Sawan*?
4. What are question-speech act language elements produced by students in *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 3 Sawan*?

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective.

General objective of the present research will value the question-speech act types, social functions, linguistic structures, and language elements produced by the students in *SMPN 3 Sawan*.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The present research specific research objectives are to identify and describe specific:

- 1) Question-speech act types produced by students in *SMPN 3 Sawan*;
- 2) Question-speech act social functions produced by students in *SMPN 3 Sawan*;
- 3) Question-speech act linguistic structures produced by students in *SMPN 3 Sawan*;
- 4) Question speech act language elements produced by students in *SMPN 3 Sawan*.

1.5 Research Significance

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance or outcome of the present research could be used for improving the EFL learners' communicative competence, especially in asking correct and appropriate question speech acts. Correctness refers to correct application of grammatical rules, especially the linguistic structures and language elements. Whilst, appropriateness refers to appropriate use of types and social functions of question-speech acts.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

- 1) EFL learners would be benefitted from the present research since they could improve their linguistic and communicative competence, especially

in interacting personally, interpersonally, and transactionally using question- speech acts in *SMPN 3 Sawan*.

- 2) EFL teachers could train EFL learners in developing and using correct and appropriate question-speech acts in personal, interpersonal, and transactional communication with others in a variety of linguistic and social contexts.
- 3) Future researchers could also make use of the research findings in designing and implementing question-speech acts for effective and efficient means of EFL classes in the Junior High School.

1.6 Research Scope

Due to the pandemic, the present research was delimited in terms of school, research subjects, time, and research objects. The school was limited to *SMPN 3 Sawan*. The school is a state Junior High School at Sub-District of Sawan, District of Buleleng. The research subjects were focused on the seventh grade students who began EFL in the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021. The research objects were focused on question-speech acts asked by EFL learners on descriptive, narrative, and recount text genres. The questions made by the students were limited to reading comprehension indicators, they are, title, main idea, specific ideas, textual reference, and word meaning. The forms or structures of question-speech acts were delimited to the following.

- a. **The Yes/No Question.**

Examples, “Do you have a mobile phone?”

“Could you help her?”

b. The **W-H Question**.

For examples, “When did it happen?”

“How did you come here?”

c. The **Tag-Question**.

For examples, “You are hurt, aren’t you?”

“You can’t make it, can you?”

d. The **Rhetorical Question**.

For examples, “Is rain wet?”

“Can fish swim?”

1.7 Assumption and Limitation.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the students’ question-speech acts on descriptive, narrative, and recount text genres related to text’s title, main idea, specific ideas, textual reference, and word meaning were assumed to represent the students’ real linguistic and communicative competence. In data collection, the students were asked to write questions related to the three text genres with their respective indicators. Through the elicitation technique used, the data found were non authentic. This method of data collection was assumed to be reliable and valid.