# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, research question, purposes of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study and previous related studies.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Every human beings in the world belongs to certain social groups which require them to communicate in order to build interactions toward each other. Language is the main tool used to communicate; as it is defined in linguistic term as the system of sounds, symbols, and meanings which approved to be used by the member of society to identify, cooperate, and communicate (Kridalaksana, 2005:3). In the communicating process, through language, somebody can express his ideas, feelings, beliefs, desires, and experiences (Samsuri in Sneedon, 2010:2).

Communication occurs between the speaker and one or more hearer(s); the speaker makes utterances to transfer his intention and message to the hearer(s). In addition, the speaker also attempts to accomplish intended actions through the utterance extended from its literal meaning; and the hearer needs to infer the intended meaning correctly for avoiding communication break-down. For example, A says "I'm hungry" to B; it does not only mean that A tells B that she

is hungry, but she also asks B to go to find food for eating. It can be concluded that communication needs well understanding and right interpretation of the utterances' meaning from both parties involved. A study to explain the meaning and action performed within utterances is called *speech acts*. Speech act is "the linguistic expressions that are being used in specific purpose and under certain extra-linguistic circumstances" (Marmaridou, 2000:167).

People do some speech act in the daily communication. They do pragmatic speech acts, such as invitation, refusal, apology, and suggestion (Pishghadam, 2011). One of the speech acts that people occasionally done in daily life is giving or receiving **suggestion**. According to Searle in Martinez-Flor and Juan (2010: 8), suggestions belong to the group of directive speech acts which are those in which the speaker's purpose is to get the hearer to commit him/herself to some future course of action. Making a suggestion means proposing an idea regarding what someone should do or how someone should behave. Sometimes, the term suggestion is confused to the term advice. The studies show that traditionally the terms suggestions and advice acts have been employed interchangeably to refer to the same speech act; both suggestion and advice are sharing the same linguistic structures and strategies (Searle 1969; and 10 others).

Suggestion is a very important speech act in people's daily life; since it is sometimes viewed as a panel from where people can improve their performance or to solve problems. In performing a suggestion, the speaker expects some kind of response from the hearer; and hearer's response will be depended on the speaker's ability to express the intended suggestion. This ability is classified in

pragmatic speech act which is the significant component of communicative competence (Bachman in Peterwagner, 2005). Suggestion has certain linguistic structures as proposed by Jiang (2006); there are nine categories based on the grammatical features: Let's, Modals and Semi-modals, Wh-questions, Conditionals, Perfomatives, Pseudo cleft, Extraposed To-clause, Yes/No question, and Imperatives. Martinez-Flor (2005) points out that suggestion performed by certain strategies, which classified into three types: Direct, Conventionalized forms, and Indirect. In addition to the linguistic structures and realization strategies employed, also intertwined to the communicative competence, it is important to pay attention to the modification devices in order to soften the suggestion. Since suggestion is an FTA (Face Threatening Act) which invade hearer's personal space, it should be mitigated in order to minimize the chances of the hearer's being offended or threaten. There are three mitigation devices of suggestion as proposed by Martinez-Flor and Juan (2010): Downtoner, (minus) Committer, and Forewarn.

Speech acts of suggestion occur in verbal communication; one of the concrete models is in talkshow, since it featured verbal interaction between speaker and hearer. Talk show is one of the TV programs which invites guests as informant, discusses some issues guided by the host. One of the famous talk shows which also presents unusual format is *Dr. Phil Show*. Debuted in 2002, the daily *Dr. Phil Show* offers advices and suggestions on a full range of topics involving psychological affair to his troubled guests. The host, Dr. Phil McGraw is a renowned life-strategist, best-selling author, and a former clinical

psychologist (http://www.drphil.com/aboutdrphil); his advices and suggestions are based on his life experience as a clinical psychologist. It is also stated in http://www.drphil.com/aboutdrphil, "Dr. Phil McGraw continues to offer his unique tell-it-like-it-is brand of advices and suggestions on a full range of topics". Since Dr. Phil McGraw as the host always gives advices and suggestions to his troubled guests in every episodes of *Dr Phil* talk show, it is interesting to analyze the way Dr Phil McGraw conveys his suggestions to the guests during the show, especially in terms of the linguistic structures, strategies, and mitigation devices of speech acts of suggestion. Suggestions in some way are considered as a panel to solve problems; so it is also interesting to seek whether speech acts of suggestion in *Dr Phil Show* are capable to solve the guests' problems or not.

The study on speech acts of suggestion has been developed over years. The pioneering study conducted by Rintell (1979) which investigated requests and suggestions performed by some Spanish students. Banarjee and Carell (1988) followed by conducting the comparative study specifically on suggestion between English native and non native speakers. Afterwards, Hinkel (1994, 1997), Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, 1993, 1996), Koike (1994, 1996), and Matsumura (2001, 2003) conducted similar studies on speech acts of suggestion in terms of the appropriateness related to status congruence, grammatical and pragmatic development. Based on those studies, Martinez-Flor (2005) and Jiang (2006) elaborated the intact taxonomy and classification of suggestion strategies and linguistic structures, which are utilized by some recent studies on speech acts of suggestion in analyzing the data. Martinez-Flor and Juan (2010) also developed

the study on speech acts of suggestion in terms of its downgrader or mitigating devices by reclassifying House and Kasper (1981) downgrader devices on speech acts, into the particular devices commonly used in suggestions. Then, Abolfathiasl and Abdullah (2013) proposed an upgrade taxonomy of suggestion by merging Martinez-Flor (2005) strategies and Juan (2006) linguistic structures.

The contexts of the previous studies on speech acts of suggestion are in pedagogical level; since they mostly conducted a comparative study between Native and non-native (learners) English in performing English suggestions. The results are still strongly attributed to cultural differences and certain learning materials like textbooks; because they still concern on objects' mother tongue discrepancy. The subjects in those studies were also taken in general, for this instance are Persian or Chinese learners. The subjects weren't specifically focused on certain individual that is also a native speaker, for example a public figure or a profession, such as doctor or the host of talk show. The data are also taken from questionnaire designated with certain suggestion situations; it obviously lacks of actual interaction between the speaker and the hearer(s) as would happen in verbal communication. Hence, this study will fill the gap of those previous studies.

Based on the background above, this study aims to investigate the speech acts of suggestion in *Dr. Phil Show*, especially by the host, Dr. Phil McGraw in terms of its linguistic structures, strategies, and mitigation devices. Further, the result of the study will reveal certain patterns on speech acts of suggestion used in the show and find out whether the speech acts of suggestion used in *Dr Phil Show* are appropriate and adequate.

## 1.2    Research Question

Based on the background of the study, this study was conducted to answer this following question:

How are the speech acts of suggestion used in *Dr. Phil Show* in terms of linguistic structures, strategies, and the use of mitigation devices?

## 1.3    Purposes of the Study

Related to the research question above, this study is aimed to investigate speech acts of suggestion used in *Dr. Phil Show* in terms of linguistic structures, strategies, and the use of mitigation devices.

## 1.4    Scope of the Study

This study investigated the linguistic structures and strategies of speech acts of suggestion and also the use of mitigation devices in *Dr. Phil Show*, especially in the host, Dr. Phil McGraw's utterances. The utterances were taken from selected eight episodes of *Dr. Phil Show*. The writer used the improved taxonomy of speech acts of suggestion by Abolfathiasl and Abdullah (2013), which is the merging of Jiang's (2006) linguistic structures' classification and Martinez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy of strategies; plus mitigation devices from Martinez-Flor and Juan's (2010) theory to analyze the data.

**1.5     Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to be a valuable reference for profound comprehension on linguistic field, particularly regarding speech act. This study is also expected can be a useful reference for further research regarding speech acts of suggestion, especially for readers who are interested in doing similar study. The writer hopes that the result of the study can enrich and contribute knowledge, in order to increase the awareness of language use especially for the writer herself and English Department students.

**1.6     Related Studies**

There are several studies on speech acts of suggestion that had been conducted by researchers all over the world in four consecutive years. Most of the studies took a comparative study, investigated similarities and discrepancies of suggestion speech act production between native and non-native speakers.

Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011) conducted a descriptive comparative analysis of suggestion speech act strategies used by English natives and Iranian EFL learners. The findings showed that Iranian EFL learners used more modals, imperative, and to-clause in making a suggestion; while English Natives used more Let's, modal and imperative. Their findings also displayed the role of language proficiency and gender in affecting suggestion speech act production.

Liu and Wang (2012) conducted a case study to investigate the development of making suggestions by Chinese doctoral student in a chemistry lab at an American university over a semester. The findings showed that the linguistic devices: imperatives, modals, and mitigation devices: minus committers that the Chinese doctoral student used to perform suggestions did not change in devices, but changed in the percentage. It also becomes the clear evidence of pragmatic developments in suggestion speech act production.

Mahmodi Gahrouei (2013) conducted a descriptive study of Persian EFL learners' strategies in performing the speech acts of suggestion. The result showed that Persian EFL learners used more formulaic pragmatic structure by using Let's and Yes/No question. It also presented that the values assigned to the two context-external variables of social distance and social dominance have significant effect on the frequency of the suggestions' intensifier in different situations.

Gu (2014) conducted a descriptive comparative analysis of the linguistic features and strategies of suggestion speech act used by Chinese EFL learners and English Natives. The result showed that Chinese EFL learners used more modal, performative, and conditional structures; while English natives used more Wh-Questions and Let's. In terms of suggestion strategies, Chinese EFL used more conventionalized indirect while English natives used more direct suggestion.