CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In learning English, learners need to possess communicative competence in order to communicate effectively (Kurdghelashvili, 2015). Celce-Murcia (2007) stated that communicative competence includes not only linguistic competence (grammar, syntax and semantic), but also socio-cultural (speaking and actions depend on the culture), interactional (how language is used to build the relationship), formulaic (the fluency when the English learners speak) and strategic competence (the ability to improve when there is a failure in communication such the listener fail to get the message). Communicative competence involves both language competence and pragmatic competence (Leung, 2005).

Pragmatic competence is defined as “the ability to use language appropriately in a social context” (Taguchi, 2009). Pragmatic competence is important in learning English because learners have to concern not only with the grammatical, syntax and semantic but also with the context in which the language is used. For example, when a student asks his/her principal, he/she might say “Would you like to give me the book, sir/mam?” to the principal because it is more polite and formal. This indicates that the speaker has pragmatic competence. If the speaker lacks pragmatic competence, he/she might say “Give me the book.” At a glance, the expression of “Give me the book.” is grammatically correct. However, the
principal may think that the student is rude because he/she talks with a person who has a higher social status. Pragmatic competence is important because it is a part of language proficiency (Canale, 1983). Thus, pragmatic competence is essential in English language mastery and also signify someone’s speaking proficiency levels.

There are studies about request strategies based on longitudinal (Achiba, 2003), cross sectional studies (Jalilifar, Hashemian, & Tabatabaee, 2011), cross cultural (Tabar, 2012) or gender (Ebadi & Seidi, 2015). Some studies found that gender affects choices of requests. Gborsong (2016) found that males used imperatives more often than the females. Another study by Clarke & Cass (1999) showed that girls used indirect request than boys. Ebadi & Seidi’s study (2015) also confirmed these findings. In his study of request strategies across proficiency level and gender, he found that female learners chose indirect request because it was more polite. In addition, the findings indicated that students’ pragmatic competence increased.

The researcher did this research because the researcher wanted to know whether the choice of request strategies differ between male and female students. The differences of this study were that this study was conducted in Indonesia while a previous study was done in Iran, Australia, and Ghana. Also, the writer used Discourse Completion Test (DCT) to collect the data.
1.2. FIELD OF THE STUDY

The field of this research is applied Pragmatics especially request strategies.

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the choices of request strategies between male and female students. Total participants were 83 students of the Faculty of Language and Arts. It consisted of 32 male and 51 female students.

1.4. PROBLEM FORMULATION

This study attempts to find the answer to the following question:

What is the most frequently used request strategy among Soegijapranata Catholic University students based on their gender?

1.5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is as follows:

To examine the most frequently used request strategy among Soegijapranata Catholic University students based on their gender.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research analyzes the difference of the choice of request strategies based on their gender. By conducting this research, the writer expects that the study will help students in Faculty of Language and Arts Soegijapranata Catholic University improve their English communicative skills especially when they make
requests. The writer hopes that this study can be a reference for people who make a thesis related to this topic. The findings also help readers to understand better about the choices of request in English.

1.7. DEFINITION OF TERMS

a. Request Strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) request means the speakers enforces the hearers to accomplish the speaker’s goal over communication.

b. Gender

Butler (1999) defined gender is not attached with materiality body. It is related with the way human perform their actions. It is also a social construction.