CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

If someone truly wants to understand people in certain situation, he has to understand not only their non-linguistic behavior, but also their linguistic behavior. To know their linguistic behavior means to learn their language. Therefore, understanding someone's language becomes an important part to completely understand him.

When people do something, they, of course, have their own reasons. Knowing what truly drives them to do it is one way to understand them. It is not fair when judging people without knowing their reasons. For example, people who see a drug addict generally do not understand why or how other people become addicted to drugs. They mistakenly view drug abuse and addiction as strictly a social problem and may characterize those who take drugs as morally weak. One very common belief is that drug abusers should be able to stop taking drugs if they are only willing to change their behavior. Therefore, when people can understand why someone uses drugs, at least, they have a good understanding than before about him.

In reality, drug addiction is a complex disease and quitting from it takes more than good intentions. In fact, because drugs change the brain in ways that foster compulsive drug abuse, quitting is difficult, even for those who are ready to do so. That is the fact about drug addicts that many people often underestimate. Thus, they give a drug addict a dirty look. Hence, this condition is not a

supporting matter to help a drug addict quit from the drug. What he needs is attention and support beside a medical treatment.

Today, drugs have become a serious problem in the entire world. Although people know that they are dangerous for their health, in fact, the number of drug users in the world always increases. According to World Drug Report 2010 launched by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), there are approximately 208 million people internationally consume illegal drugs and 2,4 million people aged 12 or older are from the United States (UNODC, 2010). In Indonesia, based on the report of National Agency of Narcotics or *BNN (Badan Narkotika Nasional)*, the drug users reach about 3,6 million by the end of 2010 (Bhawono, 2010).

Knowing the fact why many people finally become drug addicts, others should not underestimate them, at least, and further, should help them quit from the drugs. One way to understand them is through their language. As a human, a drug addict communicates with each other to express what he thinks, wants, or feels. However, a drug addiction will influence not only his behavior, but also his utterances. Drugs contain chemicals that causes changes in one's brain that interfere with his/her ability to think clearly, exercise good judgment, control his/her behavior that cause bizarre, erratic, sometimes violent behavior, disorientation, apathy, confused exhaustion, irritability, mood disturbances, etc. In addition, the context also influences the way he speaks.

Hence, analyzing language through pragmatics will be comprehensive in this case. This discipline studies the meaning of words in context, analyzing the

parts of meaning that can be explained by knowledge of the physical and social world, and the socio-psychological factors influencing communication, as well as the knowledge of the time and place in which the words are uttered or written. Therefore, pragmatic analysis does not only involve the analysis of linguistic form, but also the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said.

People will use a different language in a different situation. There are some factors influencing how people use language. They cover with whom, where, when, and under what circumstances they are talking. Then, the context cannot be separated in understanding the meaning of an utterance. According to Yule (1996: 21), context means the situation surrounding or accompanying the production of an utterance. It encompasses what is physically present around the speakers/hearers at the time of communication: what objects are visible, where the communication is taking place, what is going on, etc.

Further, an action can be performed via utterances. It is called speech act. People can perform an act by using an utterance. For example, a teacher in a school says "*Submit your works now, please*". This utterance has driven her/his students to come to her/him and do what s/he wants.

This situation can be seen in a movie. A movie or film is a story recorded as a set of moving pictures to be shown on television or at cinema (Hornby, 1995: 434). Even though it is the result of human creation, it is the reflection of the perception of the society. One of the movies portraying the current society is Ryan

Fleck's *Half Nelson*. The main character of this movie, Dan Dunne, is a drug addict who has two different lives, as a teacher and a common person.

As people know that drug habit will not only influence the behavior, but also the language. Thus, someone who has a drug addiction has to be able to control his/her language to speak to people in different situation. Since Dan is a teacher, he has the utterances that are used outside the school that is different from other places. In other words, the condition and the context of situation influence the use of language.

Below is one of Dan's utterances employing speech act in the form of expressive that takes place in front of Frank's house.

> Frank : Look, man, Drey is my family. She's my friend, man. All these cats, these are my friends and would you like to be my friend, man?
> Dan : **What the fuck is this, fucking romper room?**
>
> (28/ LXXVII)

Through this utterance, the illocutionary force can be revealed. Dan expresses his anger towards Frank. Dan asks him to stay away from Drey, his student and does not include her in the drug sale. Frank refuses it. Franks does not even respond him seriously. This conversation happens outside the school and it will be different if he is in the school.

As a teacher, Dan must know how to place himself in the school situation. He cannot use the same language as in other places. A school is a formal place. The context around the situation in the school will influence his use of language.

The following dialogue is the example of Dan's utterances in the school. These utterances employ speech act in the forms of directive.

Dan	: **What is history?**
Student	: Opposites
Dan	: You can read the board (Laughter). I'm so happy to hear that. Now, **what is it? What does it mean?**

<div align="right">(1/ V)</div>

By using these utterances, Dan as a teacher wants his students to answer his question, not only read his writing on the board. However, he wants to hear his students' opinions on what history is.

Through these examples, it can be seen that the utterances used by Dan are influenced by the situation. There are two kinds of situation in this movie. First is outside the school situation, where he is as a young man who has an addiction for cocaine and a distant relationship with his family. Second is inside the school situation, where the main character is as a dynamic, smart, high school history teacher and a coach of the girls basketball team at the Brooklyn high school which primarily populated by Hispanic and black students.

Related to the language and context, there are still many language phenomena concerning speech acts, particularly speech acts of someone who has two different lives. This triggered the researcher to conduct a research on speech acts of the main character in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson*.

The choice of this film is also based on some consideration. First, this film won many awards, such as, Gotham Awards and San Francisco International Film Festival for Best Film (2006), Sundance Film Festival for Best Dramatic Film (2006), and Screenwriting Award in Nantucket Film Festival (2006). The main actor, Ryan Gosling, was also nominated as the best performance by an actor in a

leading role in Academy Awards (2007) and as outstanding performance by a male actor in a leading role in Screen Actors Guild Awards (2007).

Second, this film shows how serious the drug problem is. Drug abuse is a dangerous worldwide human disaster of which users encompass all ages, occupations, and economic levels, even schoolchildren. Here, *Half Nelson* reveals a surprising fact that drugs do not only attack uneducated people, but also educated people, especially a teacher. Teachers who are supposed to be the one shaving a vital and unique role to play in a community's efforts at curbing the impact of drug abuse, in this film, the teacher, namely Dan, is the one who has a drug addiction. It can be imagined how hard he handles his life. He has to be able to differentiate how to behave outside and inside the school.

B. Research Focus

1. The Significance of the Title

Yule (1996: 3) states that pragmatics is the study of speaker's meaning. It has, consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. The utterances produced by a speaker imply certain meaning. Not all of the utterances delivered in communication have the same meaning; sometimes they have another meaning that is different from literary meaning. Further, Bowen (2001:6) states that pragmatics is the area of language function that embraces the use of language in social contexts (knowing what to say, how to say it, and when to say it and how to 'be' with other people).

Then, the meaning delivered by the speakers can be seen in their speech acts. Since speakers communicate with others, they produce speech act. According to Yule (1996: 47), a speech act is an action performed via utterances. By using the utterances during the conversation, the speaker performs speech act such as making statement, giving command, suggestion, asking question, etc.

Movie is the reflection of the perception of the society. Like in the society, a movie has characters that represent people who have a story and activity. The important character in a movie is the main character. As the central of the story plot, the main character has a special experience in his life. In Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson*, the main character is a teacher, but he has a different way of life outside of the walls of the high school. He has a distant but cordial relationship with his family. He is also addicted to cocaine. This condition does not only influence his attitude, but also his language use. In addition, the context also influences the way he speaks.

2. The Approach to Use

By reading Dan's utterances in *Half Nelson* movie script, the discussion will go further to identify and analyze the types of speech acts in terms of the locutionary acts, the illocutionary acts and the perlocutionary acts delivered by the main character in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* and also the way he copes with the life outside and inside the school.

In studying language, one can use many approaches. The researcher uses pragmatic approach as a problem solving to know more or to know the relationship between the form and the meaning of language produced by Dan

Dunne. Yule (1998: 3) states that pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener. Thus, the researcher uses pragmatic approach to solve the problem in this research.

3. Limitation of the Topic Being Discussed

It has been stated in the background of the study that the main character in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* is a man who is a drug addict and lives in two different situations. First is outside the school situation, where he lives with his own free life and second is inside the school situation, where he acts as a history teacher who tries to reject the standard curriculum of teaching history by which he approaches his teaching based on dialectics and as a basketball coach for the school's girl team. These different situations influence the main character's utterances.

Movie audiences sometimes face difficulties in understanding the meaning of the utterances delivered by the characters. Misunderstanding may occur while interpreting the implied meaning of the utterances. The situation may be influenced by the following problems.

The first problem is the use of uncommon vocabularies/terms by the characters which depend on the contents of films. For instance, science film usually uses many unfamiliar terms, such as biological, physical, or chemical names and also any kinds of science terms. Since Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* tells about a history teacher and also a basketball coach who has an addiction to cocaine (drug) and an activity in the school scope, sometimes history and basketball-related terms are used in this movie, including drug-related terms. The

audiences who have little knowledge about these terms face difficulty to interpret the meaning of the utterances. To understand the uncommon terms, the audience has to relate them to the situation where the conversation takes place.

The next problem is context. Widdowson (1996: 63) states that context is a schematic construct in the mind. In a movie, it involves the social and cultural background that leads some events to happen in a movie. Audience, who have limited knowledge about that background of the movie find it difficult to interpret the meaning of the utterances delivered by the characters. They need to know the context when interpreting the intended meaning expressed by the characters.

The fourth problem is speech acts. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 24) state that speech acts refer to the social action performed via utterances. As a part of language, speech act concerns what people say through the language. It is not only about the meaning of the utterances that people produce but also some acts behind those utterances. When someone speaks, s/he performs speech acts, such as making statement, giving command, asking questions, and making promises.

Austin (1962: 107) says that the action performed when the utterance is produced can be analyzed in three different levels. First is the act of saying something meaningful and can be understood, which is called locutionary act. Second is illocutionary act or what the speakers are doing with their words; the specific purpose that the speakers have in mind. The last level is perlocutionary, which is the act that a speaker expects from his utterance. It is also generally known as perlocutionary effect.

Meanwhile, Searle (1969: 23-24) classifies the illocutionary acts into five general functions, namely declarative, representative, expressive, directive, and commissive. Another categorization of illocutionary acts is delivered by Leech (1996: 104). He categorizes speech acts based on how they relate to the social goal of establishing and maintaining community. They are competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive.

Due to the limitation of the time and knowledge of the researcher, this research focuses on one of the problems stated above, that is, speech acts. Since the classification of speech acts provided by theorists vary in detail, the classification of speech acts suggested by Austin and Searle are chosen. Austin's theory of speech acts is employed to analyze the locutionary, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary acts and Searle's theory is applied to figure out the illocutionary act's functions, i.e. assertive/representative, declaration, expressive, directive, and commissive.

As other movies, Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* shows some characters that have different positions to support the plot of the story. However, in this film, the main character has a unique life. This research, therefore, is focused on the main character's utterances to be analyzed.

C. Research Objectives

In line with the research focus, the objectives of the research are:

1. to identify and describe the types of speech acts in terms of the locutionary acts, the illocutionary acts, and the perlocutionary acts delivered by the main character in Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* outside and inside the school, and

2. to describe the way the main character copes with the life outside and inside the school.

D. Research Significance

This research is expected to give some benefits both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the findings of this research could enrich the study in linguistics, especially pragmatics field. This research also becomes a bibliographical resource to the next relevant type of research.

Practically, the findings may be useful for the following parties.

1. The students majoring in linguistics

The research findings can be used as an example of how to interpret the meaning of utterances through context.

2. The other researchers

The research can be a reference to conduct other researches in pragmatics, especially those concerning speech acts.