CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to communicate effectively and involves linguistic knowledge beyond grammar. There is of course diversity of pragmatic norms (regional, ethnic, political, and class differences) as well as linguistic variation, and therefore it is not just a cross-cultural area (Thomas 1983: 91). Within pragmatics and the study of language, the concept of the speech act plays a crucial role, since it embraces both linguistic and social norms. To successfully operate in a second language, it is important to understand the rules of speaking of the target language. In other words, experience and knowledge of the culture of the target language are intended to learn. The competency of second language users to use speech acts in socially appropriate ways is part of a speakers knowledge of the target language,

The area of pragmatics includes a socio-cultural perspective taken on language use. Together with sociolinguistics it explores how the principles of social behaviour in language use are influenced by the social as well as the cultural context in which people interact. Pragmatics investigates the relationship between contexts and conversational conventions that speakers follow in order to cooperate and be socially acceptable to each other (Cutting 2002: 66). There is variability across cultures regarding linguistic and social behaviour. This is evident in the way a person uses speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, refusing, thanking and complimenting. This linguistic and social variability depends on linguistic, social, and cultural conventions.
To the extent that different speech communities share behavioural features, e.g. in the domain of giving and receiving compliments. Communications within these domains will seem appropriate. However, if the underlying linguistic and social norms differ, cross-cultural misunderstanding or miscommunication can be occurred. For example, native speakers of Australian English, they do not always accept or return a given compliment. Instead they might use wit and humour to downplay the compliment. There is a possibility that two interlocutors might misunderstand each other because of the differences of linguistic and social conventions of their respective native language. The area of compliment responses is consequently a very informative one in which to detect differences that might underlie misunderstandings.

Compliment responses are one of speech act types in pragmatic study that deals with the compliment given by the complimenter to the hearer in order to maintain good communication. (Holmes 1988: 485) stated that compliment is a speech act which is explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addresses, for some ‘good’ which is positively valued by the speaker and hearer. In the other way, compliment is aimed at showing respect to the hearer that minimizes the feeling of discomfort between speaker and hearer. Moreover, compliment is need to be paid so that it reduces the problems that probably occur in communication such as uneasy feeling or imposition to the complimenter.

Paying compliment is a symbol of positive politeness strategy that serves a social lubricant by diminishing elements such as distance and power and by strengthening solidarity between interlocutors (Fasold 1990: 99). It means that
giving compliments gives a sense that the speaker feels comfortable in talking to the hearer, especially for positive comments. However, people apply compliment responses different across culture. It depends on their norms and rules of their own culture.

In this respect, it is important to analyze the pragmatic competence in responding compliment particularly among English Department Students. The researcher assumed that the students in this department basically had pragmatic competence, because they already have English skilll, compared with students who are not from English Department, although for students who have never studied pragmatic course in specific ways, because by using other languages is a complex behaviour that requires both linguistic and pragmatic competence. Whether they speak in a first or second language, they must be influenced by sociocultural norms and constraints that affect the way they communicate.

Although in recent years there are many linguists have better identified the components of language by recognizing a number of areas of competence other than the grammatical and lexical that a successful language user should control, instruction of many of these components is still lacking in the use of language. One of the area of competence that continues to is pragmatic competence. Pragmatic elements of language, such as the social and cultural phrases and terminology involved in appropriate ways for language users to appreciate, make a request, or respond to a compliment in a certain way, have long been assumed to simply emerge with increased grammatical and lexical instruction.

The purpose of this study was to see and understand how the students respond to the compliment given by the interlocutors in Discourse Completion
Task (DCT), but not to compare such as what have done by some researcher, although there are some groupings done in this study, but it need to describe what strategies are used by students in responding to the compliment in English and to get the answers of the factors that affect in response to the compliment provided by the students.

In fact, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time etc. of an utterance. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence. Therefore, in this study the researcher analyzed what strategies are applied by the English Department students in responding compliments in English. This study is also aimed at finding out the evidence of pragmatic competence problem that the students encountered in responding to compliments in English.

1.2 Problems of study

The problems of the study are formulated as the following:

1. What strategies are applied by the students in responding to the compliment in English?
2. What are the factors that students encounter in responding to compliment in English?
3. Why do the problems occur in responding to compliment in English?

1.3 Objective of study

In accordance with the problems of the study, the objective of the study are:
1. To find out what strategies are applied by the students in responding to the compliments in English

2. To describe the problems that students encounter in responding to compliments in English.

3. To explain why the problems occur in responding to compliment in English.

1.4 Scope of study

The scope of the study focused on what strategies are applied by the students in responding to compliment in English. This study is also want to find out the problems that the students encountered by the English Department Students of University of Sumatera Utara in responding to compliment in English and also want to find out why the problems occur in responding to compliment.

1.5 Significances of study

The findings of the study are expected to be relevant and significant theoretically and practically. The findings give the contribution to all readers for those who are concerned this field.

Theoritically, the usefulness of the findings in this study improve the implication of pragmatic competence in pragmatic field. It also enrich the readers knowledge about pragmatic competence particularly in responding to compliment in English.

Practically, by knowing the problems in responding to compliment in English, it is expected for the linguist who is concern in pragmatic field, students or the readers and lectures or teachers should be aware about responding
compliment in English so that they do not find the problem in responding to compliment in English. This study is also encourage and motivate them to be have more understanding in how to respond to compliment in English particularly in responding to compliment in English, and then this study give more contribution to the pragmatic course, particularly in English Department Program.