Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter describes the research background. Research background consists of general reason for choosing the topic, the reason for choosing assertive act as the object of research, and the reason for choosing the novel *Dear John* as the source of research. Besides, this chapter also presents the research question, research objective, research significance, scope of study, and definition of terms.

Research Background

Language is a communication tool that is produced by a human to send a message. Through language, people can express their ideas or communicate with each other to share many things. Moreover, language is not only used as a communication tool but also it is an act itself. It means that when someone produces an utterance, he not only produces a combination of words but also performs an action to make other people do something. Therefore, language cannot be interpreted based on its literal meaning.

On the other hand, some people do not know what the speaker intends; therefore, they still interpret the utterance based on its literal meaning. For instance, when somebody is having trouble opening his bottle, then he says, "could you please open the bottle?" some people who do not understand the speaker's intention, they will only say "Yes, I could" or "No, I could not." Conversely, the speaker is not only asking the knowledge of the hearer to open his bottle. The utterance contains an act such as requesting. Besides, the meaning of that requesting is the hearer should come in front of him and help him to open the bottle. Based on this case, there are two types of meanings: speaker meaning and

sentence meaning. As a speaker's meaning, the utterance contains an act to make

the hearer do something. Whereas, as a sentence meaning, the utterance can be

responded by saying yes or no. In line with this statement, Hurford et al. (2007, p.

3) state that the word "meaning" can be defined in two different ways: speaker

meaning and sentence meaning. Speaker meaning is a meaning produced by a

speaker to convey his intention. In contrast, sentence meaning is focused on the

meaning of the sentence. However, this research is only focused on the speaker's

meaning to interpret the meaning based on the particular purpose of the speaker's

utterance.

Further, the utterance cannot be separated from the context or situation. If

somebody attempts to interpret the utterance correctly, as a hearer, he should

consider the context first. Consequently, the researcher uses a pragmatic approach

in order to complete this study. Pragmatic discuss the meaning and the speech

situation (Leech, 1983, p.6). Equally important, pragmatics also contributes to

explaining the speech act.

Speech act is the element of pragmatics related to what in speaker

utterance might contain an act. As stated by Austin (1962), an utterance is a part

of doing an action which is not generally described as saying something (p. 5). In

producing utterances, it might be intended as stating, requesting, ordering,

suggesting, complaining, and so forth. Speech act theory states that when an

utterance is produced, the action can be analyzed in the three different categories.

Those are locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is

performing the act of saying something, which again is roughly equivalent to

meaning in the traditional sense. Illocutionary act is performing an act in saying something, which has a specific force. In comparison, perlocutionary act is performing an act by saying something, such as persuading, surprising, convincing, and so forth (p. 108).

However, based on three categories of speech act, this research only focuses on the illocutionary act because there is a gap between what the speaker said and the meaning of the utterance; the theory of illocutionary act through the speaker's utterance and his intention. To perform an act, the hearer should consider the implied meaning of what the speaker meant. In illocutionary act, there are five types to distinguish an act. Searle (1979, p. 12-17) has divided illocutionary act into five categories: assertives, directives, commisives, expressives, and declarations. Nevertheless, the researcher only centralizes on assertive act because of several reasons. Firstly, the researcher chose assertive because the types in this class, which are explained by Searle alone, are still few, and the classification is not precise. Thus, this needs to be further investigated by looking at other experts such as Leech, or Searle and Vanderveken. Secondly, to reach a good quality of conversation, the hearer should believe what the speaker asserts. Therefore, people should consider the types of assertive act and each indicator to understand what the speaker meant. Thirdly, assertive act can be identified in spoken or written form and daily activities or informal situations.

Whereas assertive act becomes the object of the research, the novel becomes the subject of this research. The researcher chooses the novel as the subject of the research because it provides a more detailed description of an

object. In effect, the researcher can found context and various utterances through narration and dialog among characters. Also, identifying utterances in novels is more accessible than in a movie. The reader does not need to be pursued in time to examine the various utterances between the speaker and the hearer.

Subsequently, this research is used "Dear John" novel to explore the existence of assertive act. There are several reasons for taking *Dear John* as a source of research. Firstly, the language use of *Dear John* novel is modern English. Secondly, the language does not have the rules of grammar. Also, when the researcher reads the novel, there are some utterances produced by the characters related to assertive act. Likewise, this novel has been chosen because the dialog uses informal situation, which is related to daily life. Here is an example of assertive act in the novel *Dear John*:

John and Savannah were eating shrimps. When Savannah cracked the shrimp and peeled it, John reached in the pail and set a couple of shrimp on his plate. While enjoying the food, Savannah asked John what else John wanted to know about her.

Savannah	: "What else do you want to know?"
John	: "I don't know. Anything. What's the best thing about being in college?"
Savannah	: "*Good teachers. In college, you can sometimes pick your professors, as long as you're flexible with your schedule.* That's what I like..." ***(Stating)***

(Page 69-70)

Based on the conversation above, this situation happened when none of them are not talking to each other. Then, Savannah asked John what else he

wanted to know about her. When John asked her about the best thing in college, she replied, "*Good teachers. In college, you can sometimes pick your professors, as long as you're flexible with your schedule.* That's what I like..." The researcher determined Savannah's utterance as assertive act category 'stating'. It is because when she said, "Good teachers" meant that Savannah's utterance contained the benefit for the hearer, that is the information about the best thing being in college. Also, that utterance meant Savannah was picturing the actual campus atmosphere where John needed to know about it.

From the example above, it is proved that this novel contained assertive act. Furthermore, based on the explanation of this study's background, the researcher attempts to conduct this research entitled "An Analysis of Assertive Act in The Novel *Dear John* by Nicholas Sparks."

Research Question

The research question of this research is, "What are the types of assertive acts in the novel *Dear John* by Nicholas Sparks?"

Research Objective

This research objective is to find out the types of assertive acts in the novel *Dear John* by Nicholas Sparks.

Research Significances

There are two kinds of research significances; they are theoretical and practical significance.

As a theoretical significance, this research is expected to increase the knowledge of the English Department students in illocutionary aspects, especially in recognizing the types of assertive act in the novel.

As a practical significance, this research is expected to help the lecturers in describing illocutionary aspects, especially assertive act in the novel. Furthermore, it can be a reference for other researchers who are eager to write other aspects of illocutionary act, especially in recognizing the types of assertive act in the novel.

Scope of the Study

This research is limited to find out the types of assertive acts in the novel *Dear John* by using Searle and Vanderveken's theory of illocutionary act. The researcher uses their theory because they defined the types of assertive acts in detail. Based on Searle and Vanderveken's (1985) theory, there are 32 members of assertive acts. Those are asserting, claiming, affirming, stating, denying, disclaiming, assuring, arguing, rebutting, informing, notifying, reminding, objecting, predicting, reporting, retrodicting, suggesting, insisting, conjecturing, hypothesizing, guessing, swearing, testifying, admitting, confessing, accusing, blaming, criticizing, praising, complaining, boasting, and lamenting.