

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background

Language plays an important role in social relationship. Every utterance that people speak contains messages. Moreover, utterances perform many kinds of actions, for example complaining, suggesting, inviting, persuading, etc. To avoid miscommunication, people have to use certain strategies (Montgomery, 1986). In persuading, for example, the purpose is to make the listener agree to the speaker's idea or to make the listener willing to do what the speaker's will. Therefore, the speaker has to say what he wants from the listener in such a way to reach his goal. Meanwhile, language is also involved in many human's aspects, for example in teaching activity, art, science, and economy.

Persuasion, as the main topic of my research, has a significant role in economic activities, especially to promote products. A producer and a customer interact with each other to establish beneficial relationship in trading goods and services. The process of sales is entirely a complicated form that involves interactive behavior followed by good ability to use linguistic competence that has various and significant functions. A product, certainly, has to be introduced to a customer, who must be appreciated and respected, informed about the product, and persuaded. There are a lot of investigations that study the desires and the needs of customers for customers' satisfaction and customers' enrichment (Coulmas, 1992). Therefore, having a good ability in communicating is a key to be successful in business community, especially for producers to attain a great achievement in their

companies. Furthermore, a good speech will represent the image of the company; as a matter of fact, it will help to raise product selling, the negotiation of profitable transactions, the motivation in good performance, and the advancement of the company (Hildebrant, and Murphy, 1991). This requirement makes foreign companies in Japan, for example, provide language training, especially in communicating for the employees since the availability of linguistic capability is not enough to meet the needs of the companies to interact economically with society and other business segments (Coulmas, 1992). Generally, producers use the marketing system that also requires the capability of linguistic performance to market their products. In fact, a certain product has an ordinary quality, but has “a special price”. In other words, the product is not only more expensive, but also more wanted in trading. On the other hand, the other similar product, even probably with higher quality, is not able to attract people’s attention better than the previous product (Bender, 1980). Noticing this fact, I was, as the writer, curious to study deeper how this can happen.

Basically, I noticed that product selling involves good marketing strategies. In this case, producers need individuals who have willingness, commitment, and linguistic competence to introduce the products to customers and be able to gain great beneficial transactions for the company (Frazer, 1999). This linguistic performance includes speech acts, gestures, and choice of words. Therefore, those individuals have to get a special training to meet the requirement. These individuals include salespeople. Thus, salespeople serve as a bridge for the producers to gain business transactions (Frazer, 1999).

As a matter of fact, producers and salespeople should be aware and improve their strategy to be more competitive in the business trade. The strategy is the main point that I investigated. It deals with a smooth communication with customers, which is like an art that does not only need creativity, but also a learning process.

The businessmen learned that there are a lot of obstacles occurring when they have negotiation with customers. Salespeople often experience this while persuading their prospective customers to buy their products. One problem is that the prospective customers may not pay attention to their offered products, or even they do not care to what are offered. This situation is getting worse since they may refuse to continue the dialogue. As a matter of fact, when a prospective customer decides to leave the salespeople, it means that the salespeople fail to make a transaction with him. This will cause a great loss for the company if it happens a lot of times.

Certainly, salespeople cannot let this situation happen over and over again. They can learn how to avoid it. Once, I noticed that salespeople have certain strategies to introduce and give information about the products, then, persuade their prospective customers to buy them. As a result, the prospective customer will be willing to give their time to listen to the information, and even be persuaded. One transaction may mean a lot for those who really want to sell products in large quantities. To give a clearer description, I provided a simple script of a dialogue between a saleswoman and a housewife below:

*Saleswoman: "Good morning, Ma'am. My name is Stella from ***.I
would like to introduce a new product of ***. This coffee is named
***"*

Mrs. X : " Oh, I'm not used to drinking coffee".

*Saleswoman: " Perhaps, you can buy it for your husband, Ma'am. This
is the sample, you can taste how it is very delicious and good for
your husband".*

Those bold italic words reflect her strategy to attract the lady's attention about the new product, and persuade her to buy the coffee. First, the saleswoman addresses the lady, then she tries to use the lady's husband as a reason for her to buy the coffee. In fact, the final goal is to make the lady buy the product. If it is not for herself, she can buy it for her husband as an alternative.

This fact made me more interested in studying what linguistic strategies they use to persuade their prospective customers. Of course, it must need creative skills to smoothen the salespeople's persuasive speech in front of their future customers. I noticed that some salespeople are successful in delivering their persuasive speech, while others are not. Based on an assumption that usually the ones who are not really successful are junior salespeople since they lack necessary experiences, I investigated deeply in how the senior salesmen, who succeed in their product selling, use some kinds of strategies to persuade their prospective customers. It would be beneficial to know which strategies are workable.

Next, I chose multilevel-marketing or MLM as the field of my data source for four reasons. First, Amway products are not mass products, and they do not advertise their products intensively. In order to market their products, Amway uses

direct-selling method. Here, salespeople directly approach the customers when offering products. In order to increase the number of selling, they have to use persuasive skills. For instance, when persuading, they use comparison, quality&guarantee, and discounting method. Those persuasive skills reflect Bender's ten strategies which I used to do my research. Therefore, I research persuading strategies that are used in Amway. Second, Amway has a clear marketing promotion system. Besides selling products, they also arrange and expand networks. There are a lot of people including executives who join this network. For example, COO Christian V. Ponto, CEO Reinner Latief, and Senior Gardjito are the top executives of a petroleum multinational company who join N21-Amway (Manopol, 2001). Third, there are clear scales to categorize the rank of the salespeople according to their achievements in selling products. Thus, those who sell products a lot will be put on a higher level (DeVos, 2001). This rank arrangement helped me to determine who can be regarded as successful salespeople and junior salespeople. Finally, I saw that becoming a member of multilevel marketing network did not need to have certain formal education. It is shown by the existence of housewives and students who want to join the network and sell the products. Therefore, the important thing is that they have the capability to persuade the prospective customers.

1.2. Research Questions

To conduct my research, I hereby used some questions which need to be answered.

1. What persuading strategies do the senior and junior salespeople in MLM Surabaya use to win their customers?

2. What are the differences between the persuading strategies used by senior and junior salespeople?
3. What persuading strategies are mostly used by both the senior and junior salespeople?

I.3. Purpose of the Study

In this research, I would like to find out the use of persuading strategies that are applied by junior salespeople and successful salespeople in MLM Surabaya. Next, I would like to study the difference between the persuading strategies that are used by junior salespeople and senior salespeople. After that, I would like to find out which strategies are mostly used, especially those that **may** support the salesmen to be successful in gaining great transactions in product selling.

1.4. Significance of the Study

From this research, I hope that it may bring a new issue related to the basic theory I use. I hope that the result or the findings will either support, justify, develop, or even reject the relevance of the theory to be applied. Moreover, the findings may hopefully provide new input to be discussed and used in the relationship between the field of linguistics and economy.

Practically, I hope that my findings will provide relevant, qualified, and good input in the world of business communication, especially in salesmanship.

Therefore, this study is not only useful for the advancement of linguistics, but also for the advancement of the economics field, especially in marketing strategies.

Hopefully, the findings will justify the necessity for providing knowledge and

training to junior salespeople so that they can apply those workable strategies and succeed to reach their goal.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

persuading strategy= technique or act to make statements or questions which
alter beliefs or influence other people to adopt the speaker's idea
(Bender, 1980)

salesman = a person who sells goods or services to the public (Oxford's
Dictionary of Business English. 1993).

customer = a person who buys something from a shop, pays for service or orders
something from a company; a consumer, a client (Longman's
Dictionary of Business English. 1993).

Multi-Level Marketing (MLM) = one of the methods to move products from
factories or producers to customers by direct selling method
(Clothier, 1990).

successful = having done what one tried to do, gain high position in life
(Longman's Dictionary of English Language and Culture. 1992).

1.6. Scope and Limitation

1.6.1. Scope

In this research paper, I worked in the scope of rhetorics because this study deals with rhetorical strategies which are applied in marketing. Rhetorics is concerned with the steps or the organization of persuasion speech. Specifically, I used persuading strategies that are applied in the way salespeople influence

prospective customer to buy their products. Besides that, I also worked in the field of pragmatics because this study deals with activity in the context of salesmanship. During the conversation with customers, salesman interprets what customers mean by saying X, so they can understand what responses they should say in order to persuade the customers.

1.6.2. Limitation

Next, I chose “Amway” Multilevel Marketing in Surabaya as my source of data for the reason that Amway has a very wide network, N21, and has been in operation for more than forty years (DeVos, 2001).

Moreover, I took twelve respondents from Amway MLM Surabaya to support my research paper. Specifically, I asked six junior salesmen and six senior salespeople according to their levels as my respondents.

Then, I only investigated the expressions they used when they persuade their prospective customers in which persuading strategies are reflected. Thus, I did not investigate about the quality of product knowledge known by the salespeople, the psychology aspects, or the customers’ motivation of buying that might influence the dialogues. I only limited the investigation on the linguistics data that was included in the dialogues.

1.7. Organization of the Study

In this research paper, I discuss why I was interested in choosing the topic, the variable of the research, and the source of the data in chapter one. Then, in chapter two, I discuss briefly the theories that I used to underlie my research so that my research would go smoothly based on qualified theories and would be

empirical. Besides that, I include the previous related study conducted by an expert to support my research. Then, in chapter three I explain how I conducted my research. Generally, I used the method of role-play that will be done by my respondents. I explain further the details how I collected the data in qualified and empirical way. Next, in the fourth chapter, I discuss how I analyzed the data accurately., while the analysis itself could be seen in appendix B. Then, I show briefly and clearly the discussions as a result of my observation and the interpretation. Finally, I draw a conclusion based on my findings in chapter five.