

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

One of the means by which individuals locate themselves in a community is through language. It can be through written language or spoken language. In fact, regardless what the forms are, people realize that language is important for them to be involved in a communication. When people are involved in face-to-face interactions, several kinds of speech acts such as complimenting, requesting, disagreeing, and expressing gratitude will occur. It happens because these speech acts are characteristics of spoken language (Aijmer 1996: 5). One of the speech acts that has some unique aspects to be investigated is expressing gratitude. It is considered unique because people look at it as a politeness behaviour; as the

crucial part to build and establish social relationships; and the writer assumes that the act of expressing gratitude may vary because of two important linguistic features such as different cultural backgrounds and gender of the speakers.

According to Brown (1987: 55), the forms of language usage that a person chooses are the crucial parts in building social relationships. It is said that expressing gratitude has some important social values in any society; and hence it can be said that expressing gratitude is a crucial point to build and to establish a good relationship with others. Therefore, the large amount of time and efforts have been done by adults in teaching small children how and when they thank others. Here, since a person was a child, his or her parents have always taught him or her to thank others (Coates 1986: 130).

At the other unique aspect, which is still in relation with building and establishing a good relationship, expressing gratitude is considered to be related to politeness behaviour. According to Leech (1983: 104; as cited in Conversational Routines, 1996: 35), thanking as one of the speech acts coincides with a convivial function. It means that thanking or expressing gratitude has an essentially courteous or polite function. Consequently, as it is considered politeness behaviour, failure in expressing gratitude can lead to negative conception toward the person that can endanger his or her relationship (Eisenstein and Bodman 1986:167).

In talking about uniqueness of expressing gratitude—as a crucial point in building and establishing social relationship and as politeness behaviour—it also leads to the concept that the act of expressing gratitude may vary because of

different cultural backgrounds (ethnicity) of the speakers. It means that the many ways people express gratitude can be influenced by those two factors above. According to Holmes (1992: 285), linguistic politeness is culturally bound. In this case, people who have different cultural backgrounds have different ideas about what is polite. Thus, the rules for polite behaviour differ from one speech community to another. In addition, in one speech community, there are many people with different ethnic backgrounds and also different ways of speaking to one another. They have different choices of language that are available for communication. These choices make them differ from one another. In this case, they try to signal their ethnicity by the form of language they choose to use. From the above statement, it is assumed that the ethnicity of the speakers may also effect the way people express gratitude.

Furthermore, gender of the speaker may also make the act of expressing gratitude vary. It is said that sex differences may influence the frequency with which the thanks are given. This idea is supported by Grief and Glieson's study (1980) that mothers were more likely to say *thank you* to the assistant when their child was given a gift than the fathers were (Coates 1996: 130). It can be said that women use the *thanks* as politeness markers more than men do. The finding of Grief and Gleason's study (1980) about gender differences in thanking, which is considered as the study of expressing gratitude in relation to sex differences in Western community, serves as the basic study about expressing gratitude in our community as a part of Eastern community.

From the two aspects (that expressing gratitude as a crucial point in building and establishing good relationship, and as politeness behaviour) and other two unique linguistic features of expressing gratitude (different cultural background and gender of the speakers), the writer is interested in doing an investigation on how the students of Faculty of Economy of Petra Christian University (PCU) express gratitude in their informal interactions among themselves.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In this study, the writer investigates the gratitude expressions produced by Javanese and Chinese-Indonesian Economic students of PCU. The problem that comes up is: Are there any differences and similarities in using strategies of expressing gratitude between male and female Economic students of PCU of different ethnic backgrounds? (For the elaboration of the problem, the research questions, which are used in conducting the investigation, see part 3.2).

1.3. Purpose of the Study

By doing this study, the writer intends to reveal the strategies that are used when male and female Javanese and Chinese-Indonesian students of Faculty of Economy of PCU express gratitude in their interactions with their friends of the same ethnic group. The writer tries to reveal their expressions and also wants to compare those expressions. Then, by comparing the gratitude expressions

produced, the writer is able to describe the differences between the strategies used.

1.4. Importance of the Study

This study gives a valuable contribution to the study of gratitude expression in general, especially which concerns about ethnicity and gender differences in using strategies of thanking in Indonesian, as a part of Eastern community. For it is known that many studies related to gratitude expressions are mostly done in Western community. Also, it gives contribution to the readers and students about the way male and female Economic students of different ethnic groups express their gratitude. Consequently, they can understand how male and female produce gratitude expression, and pay more attention to the importance of expressing gratitude appropriately in the relationships among the students of different ethnic and the same ethnic groups. In this case, they will minimize miscommunication that usually occur between men and women due to their linguistic behaviour.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is sociolinguistics, in particular speech acts; since gratitude expression is one of the speech acts that linked to the language use in society. The writer limits the study into the expressions that show gratitude, which can be in Indonesian, standard or nonstandard, local languages and foreign languages. The gratitude expressions are produced by male and female Chinese-

Indonesian and Javanese students of Petra Christian University, who come from different cultural backgrounds. In investigating the strategies used when they express gratitude, the writer uses strategies of thanking proposed by Haverkate (1984). The writer also limits the study on the gratitude expressions which their illocutionary force of the acts are; firstly, expressing gratitude; and secondly, express the idea of gratitude in Indonesian, standard or nonstandard, local languages, or foreign languages. Words whose illocutionary force do not express gratitude are excluded. In addition, facial expressions and prosodic features are also excluded in this study.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

Gratitude expressions: are words or phrases which show the appreciation for kindness or benefits received. (Garmonsway, 1969). They may be in Indonesian and other languages, and may contain words like *terima kasih* or *trim*, or other words involving the idea of thanking like stated in Haverkate's strategies of thanking.

Strategies of thanking: are the open-ended set or speech-act formulas as suggested by Haverkate that a speaker uses to express his or her gratitude. (Aijmer, 1996).

1.7. Organization of the Study

The discussion of this study is divided into five chapters. It begins with the Introduction, Chapter I, which covers the following parts: Background of the study, Statement of the problem, The purpose of the study, Significance of the study, Scope and Limitation, Definition of key terms, and Organization of the study. In Chapter II, the writer discusses about the Literature Review, which helps the writer to analyze the data. The Research Methodology of the study, which explains the methods use in this study, can be found in Chapter III. Then, the writer presents the findings and the analysis of the data in Chapter IV. Finally, the writer concludes all the results of the study in Chapter V.