

# **CHAPTER I**

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### 1.1 Background of the Study

People use language in order to communicate with others in their society. By using language, people can play their roles in the society, express their needs and ideas, give and get information, and learn about other people and their surroundings. It means that there is a relation between language and society. A study of the relationship between language and society is called Sociolinguistics (Holmes, 1992:1). One of the fields of study in sociolinguistics is politeness.

Being polite is very important in society because it creates and maintains social relationships (Cook, 1989). It also involves taking account of the feelings of others. A polite person makes other people feel comfortable and not violate one another's 'face.' Erving Goffman introduced the concept of 'face' in politeness, which means that every one in the social relationship needs to be appreciated and needs to be free and not interfered with others (as cited in Renkema, 1993). Goffman calls the need to be appreciated as 'positive face' and calls the need to be free and not interfered with others as 'negative face.' Refusing a request or an invitation is one of the actions, which can form a threat to the other's 'face.'

Furthermore, Gumperz (1987) states that because of their status as universal principals, politeness phenomena by their very nature are reflected in language. It means that politeness is not only reflected in behaviour but is also reflected in

language. That is why people might know whether one is being polite or not through the way he or she speaks. In Indonesian culture, the way an Indonesian speaks with older people is different with the way he or she speaks with younger people. When he or she speaks with older people, he or she usually uses 'Mas or Mbak' and 'Pak or Bu' as the address forms. On the contrary, when he or she speaks with younger people, he or she uses his or her interlocutor's nickname as the address forms. This is one of the examples of the use of the politeness strategies in language. If someone does not know how to use the politeness strategies in conversation appropriately, he or she might threaten the face of his or her interlocutor, and this eventually will disturb the relationship. Politeness strategies prevent and repair the damaged caused by 'face threatening acts' (FTAs).

Brown and Levinson (1987:91) have suggested four politeness strategies; they are bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record. Each strategy is used differently depending on different situations. Talking to a friend is different from talking to a stranger because the degree of relationship is different. Relationship among friends is intimate or close, while to a stranger, there is a gap or social distance in the relationship. Other factor that might influence the usage of politeness strategies is gender. In our society, it is acceptable for a man to be bold and direct his assertiveness to control the actions of others. However, society does not accept these speech patterns when women utilize it. From historical recurrence, it has appeared that women have had a secondary role in society while men have the primary role in society. Therefore, it

is expected from a woman to "act like a lady" and "respect those around you." It reflects the role of the inferior status being expected to respect the superior. In Frank and Anshen's "Language and the Sexes", they note that boys, "are permitted, even encouraged, to talk rough, and, if they violate the norms of correct usage or of polite speech, well "boys will be boys" (as cited in "Politeness and Gender," <http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/gender.html>). These roles are becoming more of a stereotype and less of a reality. This phenomenon has drawn the writer's curiosity to investigate the differences on the politeness strategies in refusing invitations — verbal invitations — employed by Indonesian men and women and the reasons of the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women. The writer is interested in the act of refusing invitations because this act can form a threat to the other's face (FTA). Therefore, people will more likely to use the politeness strategies in this act to reduce the FTA. In addition, the writer only chooses to analyse the answers that show refusal statements of invitations expressed by Indonesian men and women. The reason for analysing the answers that show refusal statements of invitations is that Indonesian people are more likely to do refusal to verbal invitations than to written invitations.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study, the writer raises two questions as follows:

1. Are there any differences on the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women?
2. What are the reasons of the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

To answer the above questions, the writer conducts a study, which aims to find out:

1. Whether there are some differences on the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women.
2. The reasons of the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The writer hopes that the findings of this study can enrich the varieties of Sociolinguistics studies. It is expected that this study can contribute a justification to the field of Sociolinguistics especially about the differences on the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women and the underlying reasons of the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women. Through this study, the writer also hopes that the readers will realize the importance of politeness strategies in their social life and can understand the idea of politeness better. Furthermore, the writer hopes that the readers will be able to use politeness strategies appropriately in daily

conversation, positing themselves in others' positions, so that they are able to create and maintain their social relationship with others. By doing this, they will make their interlocutors feel more comfortable and enjoy having good relationship with them.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of The Study**

The study focuses on the investigation of the differences on the politeness strategies in refusing invitations especially verbal invitations, which happen in informal situation, employed by Indonesian men and women and of the underlying reasons of the politeness strategies in refusing invitations employed by Indonesian men and women. The writer chooses this study because she realizes that politeness is very important in creating and maintaining social relationship. Being polite makes other people feel comfortable. Indonesian people consider that being polite is very important in their society. They reflect their politeness through language and they use politeness strategies differently depending on different situations. The way they speak with older people is different from the way they speak with their friends or younger people. In other words, the use of politeness strategies is influenced by the degree of relationship. Other factor that influenced the use of politeness strategies is gender. Women tend to be more polite than men and this become a stereotype in the society. That is why the writer chooses women's politeness strategy and men's politeness strategy to be analysed and to be compared.

Since there are many Indonesian men and women to be investigated, the writer chooses her Indonesian schoolmates from different universities as the investigated subjects. They are chosen to be the investigated subjects because they are often received verbal invitations. This background helps the writer to do the investigation easier.

Furthermore, the writer focuses her study on the usage of politeness strategies in refusing a verbal invitation because this act may cause a Face Threatening Act. In Indonesia, people are more likely to do refusal to verbal invitations than to written invitation. Since the focus of the study is the usage of politeness strategies in refusing verbal invitations, the writer will only analyse the answers that show refusal statements of invitations. Therefore, any usage of politeness strategies in refusing written invitations will be ignored.

Because verbal invitations often happen in informal situation, the writer assumes that positive politeness strategy and negative politeness strategy are often used in this situation. In her study entitled "Adapting Brown and Levinson's 'Politeness' Theory to the Analysis of Casual Conversation", Kitamura (2000) found out that the strategies used in casual or informal conversation were positive politeness strategy and negative politeness strategy. Therefore, the writer will only analyse the usage of positive politeness strategy and negative politeness strategy. Besides that, analysing all politeness strategies will be an excessive work to do.

In addition, Holmes (1992:296) states that being polite is not just a matter of saying *please* and *thank you* in the right place but being polite includes the choice of words, grammar, stress, intonation, the meaning of sentence, etc in using

language. Since the focus of the writer's study is on the refusal of verbal invitations, which often happen in informal situation, and the data are taken from the questionnaire, the writer assumes that the subjects will not use complete grammar in refusing invitations and there will not be any stress or intonation found in the data. Therefore, the writer only focuses her analysis on the choice of words and the sentence to determine the politeness strategies used by the subjects.

## **1.6 Definition of key terms**

As a means of clarification, the following constructs and concepts are explained:

### **1. Language**

Language is a structured system of signs, sounds, gestures, and marks used and understood to express ideas and feelings among people within a community, nation, geographic area, or cultural tradition (Brent, 2002).

Through language, people are also able to give and to get information, to learn about other people and their surroundings, and to play their roles in the society.

### **2. Politeness**

It means having or showing the control of good manners and consideration for other people. Brown and Levinson (1987) states that being polite means knowing how to treat people decently, maintaining their feelings and also knowing how to speak appropriately in the light of their

relationship to the hearer, such as using an address form, saying 'please,' saying 'thanks,' etc.

### 3. Gender

It is used as the term to describe socially constructed categories based on sex (Coates, 1993). Most societies operate in term of two genders, masculine and feminine.

### 4. Politeness strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are strategies used to avoid or minimize the Face Threatening Act (FTA) that a speaker makes. Face Threatening Act is an act that can form a threat to the hearer's face.

### 5. Positive Politeness Strategies

Positive politeness strategies are those, which show the closeness, intimacy, and relationship between speaker and hearer (Richards and Platts, 1992).

### 6. Negative Politeness Strategies

Negative politeness strategies are those, which indicate the social distance between speaker and hearer (Richards and Platts, 1992).

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

The study is based on the theory of language and gender, which includes politeness and gender, and the theory of politeness strategies.

People use language to communicate to each other. In their communication, they express their ideas and needs and try to create a good relationship with others. To maintain their relationships, they tend to be polite (Cook, 1989). The politeness is reflected in their language.

Because politeness is reflected in language, people might know whether one is being polite or not through the way he/she speaks. Therefore, in order to be polite and able to create and maintain good social relationship, he/she needs to know and then use politeness strategies in the conversation appropriately. If someone does not know how to use the politeness strategies well, he/she might threaten the face of his/her interlocutor, and this eventually will disturb the relationship.

People use politeness in various ways as well as they use language. One of the factors that vary the way people use politeness is gender. Women tend to use polite speeches in order to save the hearer's 'face.' Lakoff states that women often use one of the linguistic features, tag questions, as facilitative or positive politeness devices while men use it to express uncertainty (as cited in Holmes, 1992:320).

In addition, the theories of politeness that are used involve the terms needed in the study of men, women, and politeness. Those theories become guidance to analyse the data.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. It is divided into eight sub topics, namely the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation, the definition of key terms, the theoretical framework, and the organization of the study. Chapter two is about review on the related literature, which presents the review of related literature and previous related studies. Chapter three discusses the research methodology, which covers the research design, the respondents, the research data, the research instruments, the procedure of data collection, and the procedure of data analysis. Chapter four describes the findings and discussion of the findings. At last, chapter five consists of conclusion and suggestion.