

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Expressing gratitude is one of the ways that people frequently use in human social interactions (Floyd, 2018) such as among family members, to friends or strangers, and so on (Özdemir 2010) as a response of thankfulness, appreciation, and joy due to certain stimuli that trigger it. Gratitude is defined by the Oxford English online dictionary as "the quality or condition of being thankful; the appreciation of an inclination to return kindness", and it is also considered as an emotion, a mood, a moral virtue, a habit, a motive, a personality trait, a coping response, and even a way of life (Emmons, 2007).

To express gratitude or to say *thank you* triggers by different situations in response to the different social interactions in which the stimulus changes. For example, in one occasion the stimulus could be asking for help, and another time could be receiving a tangible gift or an abstract gesture of kindness (Emmons, 2010), etc. However, for this study, the thanking expressions will be taken only from the stimulus of compliments, specifically in the social interaction among the family members of a nuclear family where its participants are: the father, the mother, and the children.

Studying who expresses gratitude to whom, and in what social context will improve the understanding of a community's culture, and social values, as well as the functions and meanings of these linguistic actions in that community (Lewis,

1993 in Al-Khawaldeh, 2014) which may vary depending on the culture (Coulmas, 1981) and/or social factors (Hymes, 1972: Wo-hyun, 1994) as education, social status, age and so on.

The *thank you* expression and its variations are part of every culture (Floyd, S. et al. 2018), and they are found in different languages such as in English *thank you, thank you very much, thank you so much, thanks a lot* (Aijmer, 1996; Apte, 1974), in Spanish, *muchas gracias (mil gracias and gracias)* in Japanese, *arigato, sumimasen* (Ikahesti, 2014), and in Indonesian, *terima kasih, terima kasih banyak, makasih, makasih banyak, dan makasih banget* (Dalila, 2012). The Indonesian language is considered the national language of the country, however, there are around 700 local languages in all over Indonesia which characterise a specific area and culture of the country. To say *thank you* also varies on the different local languages. In Sundanese language, for example, the *thank you* expression is *natur nuhun, nuhun*, while in Batak language is *mauliate* and in Minangkabau language is *terimo kasih*, and its variations *mokasi, mokasih banyak, etc.*

“Every society and every socio-cultural group seems to have its norms and values with regard to what kinds of deeds and omissions require apologies and thanks, and how these obligations can be met verbally”

(Coulmas, 1981,p.70)

Expressing gratitude, then, may vary from culture to culture (Aijmer, 1996) depending on the norms or value from a specific society and culture, which could be verbal and non-verbal, direct and indirect, formal and informal (Katesi, 1986), context, and the level of relationships among the speakers (Ikahesti, 2014).

Because of this, a person who lives in a host culture (which is completely different from his) should be aware of the way that the host culture expresses gratitude to have a better understanding of its worldview and to be able to use it appropriately as well.

In American or Western cultures in general, the expression of gratitude is more extensive or used than in South Asian communities (Apte, 1974; Cheng, 2005). In the Western world, it is common to verbalise the appreciation for all kind of gifts and compliments which is different from Asian cultures where the concept of thanking is related to reciprocity and indebtedness. For example, to express gratitude in Japan for a gift given, the benefactor will give a gift too, but not necessarily saying *thank you*. In China, the way of expressing gratitude is through gifts and if they are family or close friends they will not express gratitude verbally to each other (Cheng, 2005). In the case of the speakers from Laos to say *thank you* is so rare (Floyd and et al, 2018), and in other countries such as, Turkey and Iran, the speakers will not utter *thank you* but rather a small talk, leave-taking and joking (Özdemir, 2010).

These kind of differences are very interesting for me as a Westerner living in an Asian country, because what I have observed during my time here is that people express gratitude depending on their relationship or context which is different from Latin American culture, specifically from Chile, where I come from. In Chile, we use to say *thank you* or *gracias* (*in Spanish*) all the time after a favour, compliment, etc., no matter who is the addresser, but from childhood we are taught to say it, as a polite and right response, making it part of our identity

and culture. However, here in Padang I have experienced that after saying a couple of times *thank you* to my close friends for different reasons (e.g. after receiving help or compliment) they have told me “*you don’t need to say thank you to me all the time*”, due to our close friendship. This made me realise that the way I perceive and express gratitude is a little bit different from this culture, which motivated me to study the speech act of thanking in the Minangkabau speech community. Minangkabau is one of the Indonesian’s ethnic groups mainly located in West Sumatra (Oktavianus & Revita, 2013; Marnita, 2013). The Minangkabau (Blackwood, 2000) are known because they are one of the “few strongly matrilineal and Islamic group in the region” (p.1) and one of the few that exists in the world. The Minangkabau has its traditions and language (Minangkabau language) that characterise and make them unique. Related to expressing gratitude in this culture, no written information has found yet.

Considering the facts that, (a) so far there is no written information about the speech act of thanking of the Minangkabau, (b) that the speech act of thanking is very wide, and (c) my limitation, as the researcher, to speak the Minangkabau language, the purpose of this qualitative research is to study the thanking expressions that the Minangkabau families in Pauh use in order to express gratitude after receiving a compliment (as a stimulus) by another family member considering the following relationships: husband and wife, father and children, wife and husband, mother to children, children and father, children and mother and between children (siblings). This study will respond to the following research questions: (1) what are the verbal and non-verbal thanking expressions that the

Minangkabau family members use after a compliment?, (2) what are the different thanking expressions that the Minangkabau uses among the family members?, and (3) what are the factors that determine the choice of the form of thanking expression?.

Considering that the Minangkabau are a matrilineal society the families studied for this research are families whose mothers have a low level of education. Therefore, in order to slightly understand the speech act of thanking in this culture, the present study is a sociolinguistic study of thanking among the Minangkabau family members in Pauh.

This study contains seven chapters. Chapter I describes the background of the research, the identification of the problem, the objective of the research, its significance and limitations as well as some key terms in order to understand important concepts. Chapter II focuses on the literature review and theoretical framework. The literature review is included to demonstrate the gap that exists related to this topic, however, there are other studies related to thanking. Chapter III describes the methodology of this research, which contains the description of the subjects and location, how the data will be collected and finally how the data will be analysed. Chapter IV presents the verbal and non-verbal thanking expressions obtained among the family members. Chapter V the thanking expressions are categorised and explained using Hebert's taxonomy (1986). Chapter VI contains the factors that influence the choices and chapter VII includes conclusions and suggestions for future studies.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

This research investigates the thanking expressions that the Minangkabau from Pauh use to express gratitude among the family members (nuclear family), especially after positively receiving a compliment by another member of the family. Therefore, the questions related to this study are:

1. What are the verbal and non-verbal thanking expressions that the Minangkabau family members use after a compliment?
2. What are the different thanking expressions that the Minangkabau uses among the family members?
3. What are the factors that determine the choice of the form of thanking expression?

1.3 Objective of the Research

The objective of this research is to provide relevant information related to the speech act of thanking in the Minangkabau specifically among the family members from Pauh in a particular context, with the purpose of learning and understanding thanking within Minangkabau nuclear families. Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to provide information for those who are not familiar with the Minangkabau culture from Indonesia. The objectives of the of this research are divided into three parts:

First, to *identify* the thanking expressions that the Minangkabau families from Pauh use after a compliment.

Second, to *describe* the different thanking expressions according to the

relationship among the members of the family after a compliment.

Third, to *explain* the thanking expressions that the Minangkabau from Pauh uses to express gratitude among the family members after a compliment.

1.4 The Significance of the Research

This research is expected to provide contributions to the field of applied linguistics, especially to sociolinguistics as well as to pragmatics specifically related to the speech act of thanking in a particular social context. The significances of this research are the following:

1. This study will be a source of future data.
2. This study will be the first of further studies related to the speech act of thanking in the Minangkabau families.
3. To provide positive input for language users, especially foreigners, which is relevant and applicable for international students who come to study Indonesian language and culture in West Sumatra, who will benefit in understanding more about the culture and the appropriate ways of expressing gratitude while they are studying in this province. And for the readers that are not quite familiar with the Minangkabau, so they could learn and have the slightest idea related to expressing gratitude in a particular Asian culture.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Research

Expressing gratitude is a speech act that we observe and use in everyday life and in every culture as well. This research is limited to the sociolinguistic study of thanking among the Minangkabau family members in Pauh, based on responses from positive compliments. For the purpose of this study, thanking is considered as a positive acceptance from the compliment stimulus with the social effect of acknowledgment (Norrick, 1978). The compliments for this research are limited in two, one for the parents and the other for the children. The compliment for the parents is related to appearance to attend a special event and for the children is related to an achievement that they have gained. Finally, for this research, only nuclear Minangkabau families from Pauh will be considered (father, mother and 2 children) as well as limited to families with mothers that have a low level of education (primary, junior high school and high school).

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

For a greater understanding of this study, some terminologies used in this research will be explained, considering that some of the readers may not be familiar with this field or may belong to another academic field.

Culture : It is defined by Kramsch (2001) “it is the membership in a social group that shares a common social space and history, including the system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting” (p.127).

Compliment : An admiration or approval of other's appearance, work or abilities (Ishihara, 2010), in which the different members of the family will receive a compliment or praise because of personal appearance (nice clothes or hair) and result of skill or effort (Hebert, 1986). Therefore, the compliments will be used with the function of thanking.

Family : The basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 1828). According to the Encyclopaedia (1998) there are two types of family nuclear family and extended family.

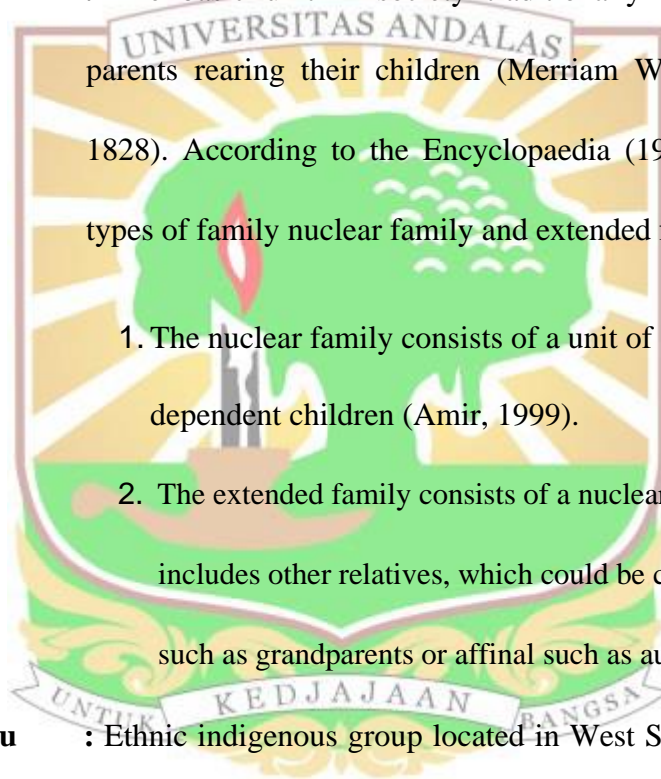
1. The nuclear family consists of a unit of spouses and their dependent children (Amir, 1999).

2. The extended family consists of a nuclear family that includes other relatives, which could be consanguineous such as grandparents or affinal such as aunts and uncles.

Minangkabau : Ethnic indigenous group located in West Sumatra, Indonesia.

The minangkabau has matrilineal system which language is Minangkabau (Oktavianus & Revita, 2013, Blackwood, 2000).

The etymology of *Minangkabau* comes from *minang* (victorious) and *kabau* (buffalo) because of a legend in where they won the buffalo race (New World Encyclopedia, 2018).



Sociolinguistics : According to Kridalaksana, (2008) The linguistic branch that studies the relationships and the influence between language and social behaviour (p.225).

Thanking : To express gratitude, appreciation, or acknowledgment to (Online Dictionary, 2019) Thanking could be express with words, gestures or actions.

