

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

The network marketing system is quite different from conventional marketing systems. As we know, in a conventional marketing system for instance in a company such as Unilever which sells daily needs and cosmetics, products are distributed from factories to large distributors and retails, then to consumers. The advertisement of the products is done by advertising the products through electronic and printed media, which requires a relatively high cost.

On the other hand, in network marketing (or also known as multilevel marketing or MLM), the distribution of the products is direct (hence it is also called as direct selling), directly to the personal distributors themselves and customers who contact the distributors. So the advertisement of the products is mostly done by words of mouth by the distributors. In short, it is a member-get-member system where distributors recruit other distributors, then sell the products to the customers who need the products, including the distributors themselves. The cost that is supposed to be spent on media advertisements is then used to give bonuses to the distributors. Therefore, there will be benefits for both sides. The company will acquire massive selling of the products, and the distributors who managed to achieve certain goals will get relatively high amount of bonuses.

Distributors of network marketing companies are also internationally known as ‘networkers’ since they build network of distributors in their work. Henceforth, we will address them as ‘networkers’ for short.

In business communication, verbal strategies play a very important role. Verbal choices in communication can play a critical role in establishing rapport (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000) and certainly play a crucial role in a sales representative’s ability to overcome a customer’s objection to buying (Campbell and Davis, 2006).

Based on a review of research on rapport across multiple disciplines, Gremler and Gwinner (2000) established that rapport has two important facets: enjoyable interactions and personal connection. For a sales representative, creating enjoyable interactions and personal connections with customers is vitally important to his or her success. Rapport indicates customers’ feelings about the relationship they have with sales representatives, particularly their level of trust and their commitment to continuing the relationship (DeWitt and Brady, 2003; LaBahn, 1996). In addition, increasing levels of rapport builds a deeper sense of loyalty in customers and inspires a greater amount of information disclosure from customers (Dell, 1991).

Furthermore, when a quality relationship develops between a customer and a sales representative, there are multiple benefits for both parties. The sales representative and his or her company benefits from continued customer loyalty and positive words of mouth (Zeithmal, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996). The customer benefits from the relationship by increased purchase confidence, social

benefits, and special treatment benefits (Bitner, 1990). On the contrary, when sales representatives attempt to sell without first establishing rapport, customers will avoid purchasing the product or service (Brooks, 1989).

In network marketing, the principal also works the same. Networkers will try to establish the rapport first before they offer the business cooperation. The networkers will also try to maintain the rapport during the conversation, when performing face-threatening acts, or when overcoming objections. Therefore, the networkers will use politeness strategies in managing the rapport. Campbell and Davis support it, as they stated linguistic politeness is used to manage rapport during interaction when face-threatening acts are performed (Campbell and Davis, 2006).

The writer here chooses the network marketing as the population as it becomes a phenomenon in the world including Indonesia. According to the World Federation of Direct Selling Associations, in 1990 over 1000 network marketing companies worldwide employed more than nine million salespersons who have reported sales of US\$ 44,000 million to 320 million consumers and these numbers are still increasing (Clothier, 1992).

Tiens International or also known as Tianshi is one of the network marketing companies. The writer chooses Tiens International as the sample due to efficiency, because Tiens networkers are easy to find in Surabaya. Tiens Group Co. Ltd (hereby shortened as Tiens Group), founded in 1995 by Mr. Li Jinyuan in Tianjin China, began its march into the international market in 1997. Its businesses cover fields like biotechnology, health management, hotel and tourism

industry, educational training, e-commerce, finance investment and real estate, etc. With food supplements as its main products, its business reached over 190 countries. (Company Overview- Tiens Group, 2002).

Networkers of Tiens International tend to have a one-on-one presentation with the prospects or small group presentation where one networker explains about the business in a presentation in front of a small group of people. They influence and invite the prospects to join the company, and then ask the prospects to sign a contract. If this goal is not achieved, they ask the prospects to attend a weekly seminar or a bigger monthly seminar so that the prospects will be interested in joining the company.

A networker has to build his / her network of people by recruiting new distributors in order to distribute products that the company sells. The more people in his / her network, the more products will be sold, thus the more bonuses that he / she will get.

In offering the business cooperation to prospects, networkers will threaten the face of the prospects as Brown and Levinson (1987) states that offers is one of the face threatening acts (FTA), because offers will put some pressure on the hearer to accept or reject them, and possibly to incur a debt. According to Yule (1996), Face threatening act is the utterance or action which threatens a person's public self-image. It is an act that primarily threatens either positive or negative face of the hearer in a communication.

Therefore, networkers will tend to apply politeness in order to redress the FTAs, so that the face threatening effects will be minimized. Yule (1996) states

that politeness can be defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face in an interaction.

Moreover, networkers will also encounter many challenges from the people they meet. They will meet refusals and debates in most of their journey. Unquestionably, they ought not to directly counter-debate their prospects or otherwise they will do what Brown and Levinson (1978) call threatening the face of the interlocutors, either the positive or the negative face, and thus the prospects will likely refuse the cooperation proposal.

Consequently, networkers will need to maintain the relationship or trust, handle the debates carefully, not to counter-attack the debate, and develop their interlocutors' positive faces while trying to avoid posing threats to their negative faces, and apply the politeness strategies.

In addition, Mey (1993) states "In cooperative acting, people try to build up their interlocutors' 'positive faces' while trying to avoid posing threats to their 'negative' ones. This is especially important in linguistic interaction, since every engagement in conversation opens up the possibility of 'losing face'." In the case of networkers, the possibilities of 'losing face' often happen in the process of building a trust, or when a distributor overcome every debate, every objection from their prospects, when they try to convince the prospects about the company, and when they try to influence and ask the prospects to join them when the prospects are already convinced and interested, or when asking the prospects to read a book or listen to a CD about the business.

Regarding the descriptions above, the writer would like to analyze the politeness strategies that network marketing distributors often use, what types or categories politeness strategies that they use, what politeness strategies are mostly occurred in their practices, and what factors influenced the use of the strategies. The writer will focus the research on distributors of Tiens International, one of the biggest network marketing companies in the world today.

A Similar research is conducted by Nurul Hidayati (2007) in her thesis “Politeness in Mixed Sex Conversation by the Members of SKI and UKMKI Airlangga University as the Practice of Ideology”. The research is conducted to discover what kinds of politeness strategies are applied by members of SKI and UKMKI Airlangga University and how they use the strategies in their meetings. The data are then analyzed and associated with the ideology of Islam in speaking with the opposite gender.

In the present research, the writer will focus on the analysis of the politeness strategies, which are used by networkers in their one-on-one presentations. The research will hopefully present a more in depth analysis, since the one-on-one presentations involve more personal conversations than of a presentation in a seminar that is done by one person for numerous people.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problems**

Based on the background of the study, the problems can be formulated as follows:

1. How are politeness strategies used by the networkers of Tiens International to influence the prospects to join the business?
2. What factors influence the use of politeness strategies by the networkers of Tiens International to influence the prospects to join the business?

## **1.3. Objective of the Study**

Based on the statement of problem above, this study is intended:

1. To find out how politeness strategies are applied by networkers in influencing their prospects.
2. To find out what what factors influence the use of politeness strategies by the networkers of Tiens International to influence the prospects to join the business.

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

The aim of this study is that the result of the study will be useful for general readers who are interested in the study of linguistics, especially Pragmatics.

This study is also expected to give more information and contribution to the studies of politeness strategies in Pragmatics and business communication, especially in relation with the use of language especially in the world of network

marketing. The writer hopes that through this study people acquire more information in how distributors of network marketing use politeness strategies in conducting an effective persuasive speaking. Furthermore, it is also hoped that this study will make people find out other aspects or features that are important in persuasive speaking, especially in network marketing communications.

### **1.5. Definition of Key Terms**

**Politeness strategies** : Brown and Levinson (1987) state that politeness strategies are strategies that are developed in order to save the hearer's face. Face refers to the self-image that everyone wants to claim themselves. Face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in an interaction (Brown and Levinson, 1987:61)

**Networkers** : Networkers are distributors of network marketing companies. People who already joined a network marketing company as a member. Their job is to recruit other distributors and sell products among distributors and customers.

**Prospects** : Prospects in this context are prospective members, prospective distributors. Targeted people who need to be influenced in order to join the business.