

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The use of addressing terms to address interlocutors, especially for elders, is still prioritized in Indonesia. People use the addressing terms depending on sex, age, kinship, and social status (Arini, 2016). Indonesians use the addressing terms before the first name to show respect. In other words, the use of addressing terms may be similar to how people use euphemism to show themselves being respectful and polite (Semiun, 2019). Although the use of addressing terms can show politeness, the choice of addressing terms also needs to be considered depending on who the interlocutors are.

Indonesia is known as a country that has many cultures. Many communities practice their own distinctive norms and values. These socio-cultural differences can be seen, among others, from the way people choose their addressing terms (Hao et al., 2008). In Indonesia, many ethnic groups live and get along in communities, such as Javanese and Chinese Indonesians. Although these two ethnicities live in the same place, Javanese and Chinese Indonesians use different addressing terms when addressing the elders. Javanese use the terms *Mbak* for older sister or formally for elder woman and *Mas* for older brother and formally for elder man. On the other hand, with

the same application, Chinese Indonesians usually use *Ci* for older sister or elder woman and *Ko* for older brother and elder man.

During the New Order regime from 1966 to 1998, Chinese communities in Indonesia became targets of oppression because their existence was a security threat associated with communism (Harjatanaya & Hoon, 2020). Although not all Chinese people in Indonesia have physical appearance like Chinese people in general, they were still afraid of getting discrimination and oppression once *pribumi*, or native Indonesians, realized that they have Chinese ancestry. For example, it can be seen by how they use their Chinese addressing terms. It was when Suharto's assimilation put Chinese Indonesians in a situation where they were required to choose whether they wanted to be completely Indonesian by giving up their cultural identity; or keeping their identity, but they might have to deal with dire consequences, which were marginalization and discrimination (Hoon, 2006).

The researcher is motivated to conduct this study after she had a discussion with her Chinese Indonesian friend. When her friend was in public high school, most of her friends called her *Mbak* instead of *Ci*. This was because her friends rarely knew about using Chinese addressing terms. After she became a university student, she met a lot of fellow Chinese Indonesians in her college. She was not even surprised when she got addressed by non-Chinese Indonesians with *Ci* because she was in a multicultural place. However, when she prayed in a church near her dorm for the first time, she was shocked that everyone in the church tended to address each other with Chinese addressing terms. She realized that people who got addressed with Chinese addressing

terms did not have any Chinese physical appearance. Her experiences can be found in Ra's study (2014) which suggested that the behaviour of using addressing terms can be caused by social group culture and family culture.

From the researcher's experience who is Javanese, when she got addressed by her interlocutors with *Ci* for the first time, she was shocked because it was her first time getting addressed with a different addressing term aside from *Mbak*. She thought that her physical appearance did not show any Chinese ethnicities, so she preferred to be addressed with *Mbak* instead because the addressing term *Ci* was not her culture. What the researcher experienced is also explained by Urban (2013) who said, "Nowadays, both "native" Indonesians and Chinese continue to separate themselves through the labeling of names, spatial boundaries, and stereotypes formulated from the past" (p. 5).

The situations above encourage the researcher to investigate this study further in order to know how young people whose ethnicities are Javanese and Chinese Indonesians prefer to be addressed by their interlocutors between *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko*. They will also perceive the use of addressing terms of *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko* for their perceptions may become their reasons in choosing what addressing terms they prefer. This study is worth investigating because it will provide valuable knowledge for the readers in the use of many kinds of addressing terms that Indonesia has, especially for Javanese and Chinese Indonesian addressing terms. English linguistic students can also use this study as a reference in conducting a study that has the same field and scope, that is sociolinguistics and particularly the use of addressing terms.

Previous studies on addressing terms in Javanese and Chinese found that addressing terms can be used either in a positive or negative manner. If the addressing terms are used to respect seniors, they are used in a positive manner (Ra, 2014). In addition, the use of those addressing terms to respect the eldest depends on the situation (Susanto, 2014). The situations can be resulted from the interlocutors' aspects, ethnicity, setting, transactional status and function, physical appearance, prior knowledge, and personal preference by the addressers (Mutiara & Kuntjara, 2014). On the contrary, the addressing terms can be used in a negative manner which means they are used to imply the existence of race discrimination. Usually, they are used by people who have a strong self-identity (Ra, 2014). For example, a comedian named Ernest Prakarsa used to get addressed with *Akew* in a mocking way. The term *Akew* refers to Chinese people (Mahadian, 2015).

Another study comparing the addressing terms in mixed families found that most of the participants who are from families of Javanese fathers and Chinese mothers use neutral addressing terms, while most participants who are from families of Chinese fathers and Javanese mothers use Chinese addressing terms. The children in both mixed families preferred to be called with neutral terms (Kahari, 2015). Unlike the above studies that only focus on the addressers' preferences in choosing the addressing term, in this research, the researcher is interested in studying young people's preferences as addressees, whose ethnicities are Javanese and Chinese Indonesians.

1.2 Field of the Study

The field of this study is linguistics, while the sub-field of the study is sociolinguistics.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on analyzing young people's preferences to the use of addressing terms between *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko* and their perceptions towards the addressing terms *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko*.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. What addressing terms do the participants prefer between *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko* when they are addressed by their interlocutors?
2. Why do they choose the addressing terms?
3. How do the participants perceive the use of addressing terms *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko*?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the addressing terms preferred by the participants between *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko* when they are addressed by their interlocutors
2. To find out the reasons behind the participants' preference in choosing the addressing terms.
3. To find out the participants' perceptions towards the use of addressing terms *Mbak-Mas* and *Ci-Ko*.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study is expected to enhance and improve the readers' knowledge in the use of addressing terms in Indonesia because of various culture and norms in Indonesia in general, particularly in Java. Moreover, this study can be a reference for English linguistics students who are interested in investigating similar topics. For practical purposes, this study is expected to give knowledge on the use of Javanese and Chinese addressing terms so that the readers can choose the addressing terms when they interact with each other.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1. Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a study of the relationship between language and society that identifies the use of language in certain situations because of social factors (Holmes, 2013).

2. Preference

Preference is the act of preferring/choosing into something/someone or the state of being preferred/chosen by someone or something (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

3. Addressing Terms

Addressing terms are certain words or phrases for the interlocutors, either in oral or written interaction (Yule, 2010)

4. Kinship Terms

Kinship terms are defined as certain words that are used to categorize people based on genealogy (descent) which means to refer to blood relatives (family) (Holmes, 2013).

There are a lot of kinds of terms out there, yet those terms rely on the same factors.

They are: gender, age, generation, blood, and marriage (Wardhaugh, 2010).

