

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Watching film is one of the most popular entertainment for the people who live in modern and globalization era which full of problems. Although the audiences know that what they watch from a film is only a delusion or fantasy, they still enjoy it. Some even make it as an exciting hobby. Oftentimes, they are even amazed and inspired by the story or values we might draw of a movie.

Film is a tool that is frequently used as the object of study of various scientific-viewpoints. If we look at the initial history, film was a reflection of culture in the United States, as described by Sklar (1994) in his book *Movie-Made America* the first half of the twentieth century movies were the most popular and influential medium of culture in the United State. On other hand, today, film-industry has been developing rapidly not only in the United States, but also all over the world. until now, it becomes the industry that interests many people.

As a medium to channel the creativity and imagination of man, films are created in many types or genre. The theme and objective of a film are adjusted to the genre which is determined by its author. According to Chandler explanation in his journal entitled *An Introduction to Genre Theory* (1997), the word 'genre' comes from the French (and originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class'. There are a lot of movie genres broadcasted in cinema or television are so many. The film

genres which are most interesting for scholars are those with a long historical lineage, such as “comedy”, “drama”, “thriller” and “horror”, alongside others which had clear formal coherence, such as the “western” “war film” and “crime film” (Brown, 2013). However, in the last few decades a movie genre that specifically for women began to emerge and attracted the attention of feminists or researchers in the field.

Feminist film theory started to be seen in the twentieth century. As Hollinger (2012) states in her book entitled *Feminist Film Studies*, several famous 1960s-feminist-works influenced the woman’s movement and, finally, the history of feminist film theory begun in the 1970s. The distinctive feature of feminist film is when the female acts or actresses portrayed as someone who always take care of children and other household affair more then the male actors. The theory being popular because at that time, movies which were dominated by actresses, told about woman, and to be consumed by women-audiences were greatly made. That phenomenon gradually shifted the existence of previous pathriarchal films which always were favored and dominated by men. William (1998) points out, woman’s films as inherently more melodramatic, meaning more fraught with heightened emotion than other film genres, and ignores its connections with what have been considered traditionally male action-oriented generic forms.

In fact, woman film is not only booming in 70s. It still continues to time with many varieties of title. One example of feminist film in this twenty-first century is *The Help*. *The Help* is a film which is adapted from the sensational

best seller novel written by Kathryn Stockett. Its novel was written in 2009, yet the film version was made and directed by Tate Taylor in 2011, produced by Mohd Shahreel Abu Bakar and released by DreamWorks production house. It has won many international-awards. As France (2011) reported through CNN news- website, *The Help* film is the tale of a group of black maids in 1960s Mississippi who agree to share their lives via a book written by a young, aspiring, white female journalist which had filmed in 2011. Agree with her, Duke (2012) also added through CNN-online website, *The Help*, a movie about the treatment of maids in a Mississippi town during the civil rights era, took top honors at the Screen Actors Guild Awards Sunday night, making it the movie to watch as the Oscar awards approach next month.

The author chooses *The Help* film to be the object of this research because from the first scene to the end, almost all the characters are roled by women, only a few male-role in. It highly represents women in the real life, such as, full of emotion and touching. The main actresses of the movie are from different ethnicities i.e. White American and Black-American. There are plenty of scenes reflecting the race which may affect the language variation of its speaker, along with the conversations among the actresses. This movie closely illustrates how life at that time, both from the point of view of white-skin employers and black-skin maids. There appears also friendship, conflict, romance, and tragedy. Finally, the most important thing why she chooses *The Help* is that many prestigious awards are won by its actresses and the film. *The Help* won, for example, Academy Awards in 2012, Screen Actors Guide (SAG) Awards in

2012, Oscar Awards in 2012, Critics Choice Award in 2012, and being a nominee in British Academy Film Awards in 2012.

The two characters in *The Help* film who are frequently shown are African-American women named Aibileen and Minnie Jackson. Both of them work as housemaids in white American Families. Minny Jackson works in a racist white-family, especially the housewife named Mrs. Hoolbrook. As African-American labor, Aibileen and Minny often use non-standard English in every utterance, for example *I done seen it happen plenty a time, i ain't afraid a no philosophy, We o living in hell!*, and *Hilly Holbrook been sent from the devil to ruin all over live*. That unique characteristic distinguishes them from other actresses. The African American Vernacular English they spoke has different linguistic features from the standard.

According to Holmes (2008) AAVE is a distinct variety or dialect that was developed by African Americans as a symbolic way of differentiating themselves from the majority group. Similar to her but a little deeper, Fought (2006) asserts AAVE is a variety spoken by many African-Americans in the USA which shares a set of grammatical and other linguistic features that distinguish it from various other American English. It means that AAVE is not exactly the same as the Standard despite of the same language. However, it is probably not much less pronounced if the listeners have lack understanding of linguistics. AAVE has certain phonological, morphological, and syntactic characteristics (Wardhaugh, 1999). Those three characteristics make AAVE engrossed to be discussed.

The writer conducts this research by using Rickford and Rickford's theory (2000) in order to discover AAVE Grammar which is morphological and syntactic features of African American female labors' dialogues in *The Help* film. Rickford proves some of AAVE linguistic features i.e. existential *it*, zero copula (is and are), completive *done*, and preterite *had*. Afterwards, the writer also uses Bailey and Thomas's theory (1998) to find out the phonological aspects of AAVE. According to Bailey and Thomas, there are four linguistic features groups in terms of phonology and which are shared with other dialects, namely: features characteristic of AAVE and Southern European-American dialects, features that seem to be unique to AAVE (most frequent in AAVE), features shared by other non-standard dialects, and the last, features shared by many other English dialects.

There was only one similar study that had already been done by the previous student from English Department, Universitas Airlangga and three studies written by Petra Christian University students. Firstly, Pramana with his undergraduate-thesis *The African American Vernacular English Used in Richard Wright's Big Boy Leaves Home* (2011). Pramana analyzed both grammatical and phonological factors of AAVE produced by a character in a book. Secondly, a Petra Christian University, Ardharini, with her study *The African American Vernacular English in Missy Elliot's Supa Dupa Fly* (2005). In her research, Ardharini analyzed only the gramatical factors of AAVE linguistic features of a song belongs to Missy Elliot. Then, an Undergraduate-thesis entitled *African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard English (SE) Used in the*

*Future Father in-Law and Son in-Law Relationship in “Guess Who“* (2007) also had been done by a Petra Christian University, Marliahad.

Although both thesis examined about AAVE linguistic features, yet there is no one of English Department students of Universitas Airlangga had investigated them through a film, especially from both the grammatical and phonological aspects. In this study, the author attempts to figure out the AAVE linguistic features which are morphological, syntactic, and phonological aspect of a black American character through a film. She decides to choose a film script because there was no one in English Department, Universitas Airlangga has examined AAVE through film.

## **1.2. STATEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM**

Depending on the background of the study which has already been mentioned above, the writer formulates the following statement of the problem:

1. What are linguistic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) produced by two African American actresses in *The Help* film?
2. What linguistic feature is mostly produced by two African American actresses in *The Help* film?

## **1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROBLEMS**

Departs from the statement of the problems above, this research intends to figure out these objectives of the problems:

1. To find out the linguistic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) produced by two African-American actresses in *The Help* movie.
2. To find out the linguistic feature which is mostly produced by two African American actresses in *The Help* film.

#### **1.4. SCOPE AND LIMITATION**

In *The Help* film, there are a number of women castings. Yet, this study focuses only on two African-American main maid-characters, Minnie Jackson and Aibileen, to discover the linguistic features of AAVE. Thus, this research might not generally pictured the language phenomenon from all over the world, even similar.

#### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Theoretically, by doing this research, the author expects that its results can be useful to enrich the knowledge and understanding of its readers about kinds of language variation, especially AAVE, affected by the speaker's race. People should know that English has many variations. Practically, the outcome of this study, hopefully, can help undergraduate linguistic students who are interested to learn and find out about language and ethnicity through films. The writer sincerely hopes that its result can be a reference for the next researchers who have a willingness to peel the identical topic in order to develop better knowledge and analysis.

## 1.6. DEFINITION OF KEYTERM

1. African American Vernacular English : A variety spoken by many African-American in the USA which shares a set of grammatical and other linguistic features that distinguish it from various other American dialects (Fought, 2006).
2. Linguistic Features : a linguistic item which has identifiable features (Wardough, 2002).

