

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

It is common that men and women have their own ways of talking. Holmes (2013) states that men tend to use vernacular forms of speech while women tend to use standard forms of speech, especially in social context. Furthermore, Holmes (2013) explains four reasons why women use more standard forms than men. The first one deals with social class and status, the second refers to women's role in society, the third concerns with women's as subordinate group, and the last deals with the function of speech in expressing gender identity. The reasons indicate that society expects women to behave politely and properly in using their language. This phenomenon exists in all domains, including in work places and the media.

For a long time, women have been seen as peripheral or even invisible, while men have been seen as at the core of society (Coates 2013, 5). These days, women tend to have an equal status as men in society. Moreover, the loss of heavy industries in Britain and the growth of the service sector have meant the end of traditional working patterns for many working-class communities – and the development of new opportunities which favor skills associated with women (Coates 2013, 209). Women have the same opportunities as men to play an important role in every aspect of life such as in economic sectors, education sectors, and entertainment sectors that include music industry, game industry, dance industry and film industry.

Previously, women were hard to obtain the lead role of a film in the film industry. In the late 19th century, women roles were seen as second-class citizens

and stereotypically portrayed as unintelligent, weak, and needing to be rescued (Knight 2010). At that time, women took their predicted role as loving mothers or girls who need to be loved, rescued and cared (Knight 2010). However as the time goes by, Gauntlett (2002) states that men and women are usually equals in today's TV shows and films. Recently, there are many films with various genres that place women as their main characters. Lauzen (2019) states that female characters have appeared in comedy, drama, horror, action, and science-fiction genres.

According to Johnston (2011) science-fiction genre is a story based around advanced technology, robotics, space exploration or time travel, including supernatural power. The supernatural power is most likely related to superhero or superheroine. Superhero is a term used for male heroic character who possesses superpowers (Coogan 2013), while superheroine is a term used for female fictional hero having not only extraordinary or superhuman powers, but also having romantic and mentorship characteristics (Stuller 2013).

The existence of female superheroes usually serves as the supporting characters (love interests and helpers for the male lead characters) in the superhero films (Gauntlett, 2002). Moreover, Beerman (2012, 2013) states that female superheroes are characters like a male character, but who merely happen to be women, serving more as a supporting character or sidekick to the lead, male, superhero. In 20th century, due to second-wave feminism, producers attempted to launch television series that aired the progressive, independent female action hero — even if she was stereotypically beautiful and feminine and failed to display quite the same effectual ability, command, and confidence as classic male heroes (Knight 2010, xix).

However, in the late 1990s onward with the third-wave feminism, many female superheroines underwent a drastic change (Knight 2010). Superheroines tend to work more independently and integrate their femininity into the identity of the character and the story arcs (Beerman 2012, 2013). Their portrayals were no longer limited to mothers, love interests, sisters and wives only, but they could be space adventures, martial arts, spies, assassins, and so on (Knight 2010). There are some films that came up with superheroines as their main characters such as *Super Girl* (1984), *Wonder Woman* (1974, 2009, and 2017), *Catwoman* (2004), and the latest one *Captain Marvel* (2019). Apart from *Captain Marvel* film which was under Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), all other female superhero films were based on DC Comic characters. The presence of those films indicates that the equality of women and men has developed and they tend to have similar talents and abilities in films today (Gauntlett 2002).

Even though both women and men tend to have similar skills and abilities in film industry, they still have their own characteristic of talking. Coates (2013) states that men and women have dissimilar linguistic usage and have their particular ways to use the language. Furthermore, Coates (2013, 5) argues a general rule that she called The Androcentric Rule: “men will be seen to behave linguistically in a way that fits the writer’s view of what is desirable or admirable; women on the other hand will be blamed for any linguistic state or development which is regarded by the writer as negative or reprehensible.” Lakoff (2004) in her book entitled *Language and Woman’s Place: Text and Commentaries* stressed the lack of power in which women’s language came up as the subordinate than the male one. As stated in her book, women have been discriminated in society because of their language,

in which they should talk politely and behave like a lady by using proper linguistic level. Lakoff (2004) characterized women's language by ten linguistic features, which are fillers or lexical hedges, 'superpolite' forms, tag questions, precise color terms, avoidance of strong swear words, rising intonation on declaratives, 'empty' adjectives, intensifiers, emphatic stress, and 'hypercorrect' grammar.

Much evidence has shown by researchers who examine women's linguistic features in films. Kusumawardah (2017) found nine features used by one of the main characters, while the other used eight women's language features in *Devil Wears Prada* film. Nisa' (2017) found seven women's language features used by both female main casts in *Frozen* film. Nisa' (2017) discovered that Elsa uses less linguistic features because she is more powerful than Ana. Both Kusumawardah (2017) and Nisa' (2017) used language and power concept while analyzing their data. Ramadhani (2017) found seven and six women's linguistic features used by two main characters (Katherine Watson and Betty Warren) in *Mona Lisa Smile* film, in which both characters were having different social background. Sudewi and Sedeng (2018) discovered nine kinds of women's linguistic features in *How To Be Single* film and those features had different functions and reasons. Roesman (2018) revealed both female characters (Maria and Valentine) in *Clouds of Sils Maria* film used eight women's linguistic features even though they have different perspectives.

Most of the studies used Lakoff's theory and focused on the utterances of female characters in films that portray ordinary women in society. However, no or less research on women's linguistic features that has used a female character as a superheroine, not just an ordinary woman. Therefore, this study attempted to

analyze women's linguistic features used by a superheroine in a film. The writer chose *Captain Marvel* film as the source of the data. There are several reasons for choosing the film. First, *Captain Marvel* becomes the pioneer of female superhero film produced by Marvel Studios. The studio states that it is a brand-new adventure in the history of the Marvel Cinematic Universe that presents the MCU's first stand-alone, female-franchise title character — Carol Danvers aka Captain Marvel (Marvel Studios 2019). Second, this film has won numerous awards. According to IMDb, the film itself has won six awards and twenty nominations, one of which is MTV Movie + TV Awards for best fight (Captain Marvel vs Minn-Erva). Third, according to Box Office Mojo by IMDbPro, this film earned over \$ 1.1 billion worldwide which made it the first female-led film to pass the billion-dollar mark and ranked as the fifth-highest-grossing film of 2019.

Captain Marvel (2019) is a film based on Marvel comic book series. The film sets in the 1990s in which Carol Danvers, the lead role of this film already possesses her superhero powers. She joins Starforce, an intergalactic elite Kree team military and becomes a valued member of the team. One day, Carol and the other Starforce members have a mission to rescue one of the team member that has been captured on Planet Torfa, named Soh-Larr. While rescuing Soh-Larr, Carol is abducted by Talos, the Skrull General. Talos unlocks Carol's past memories to obtain information about Light Speed Engine. Carol escapes from Talos and finds herself landing on Earth (Planet C-53). Her journey on Earth begins and she discovers the fact about her past memories on Earth. She meets Fury, SHIELD agent and they work together against the Skrulls (Marvel Studios 2019). However,

when Carol knows the truth about her life, she helps the Skrulls to find their new home and fights back against the Kree.

This present study aims to explore the uses of women's linguistic features by the superheroine in *Captain Marvel* film. Specifically, it identifies types of women's linguistic features used by the superheroine and discovers the most frequent women's linguistic features used. Furthermore, this study also aims to discover the function of women's linguistic features in Carol Danvers utterances.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Statements of the problem are formulated into two questions below:

1. What are the women's linguistic features found in Carol Danvers' utterances in *Captain Marvel* film?
2. What is the most frequent women's linguistic features found in Carol Danvers' utterances in *Captain Marvel* film?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

According to the statements of the problem, the objectives of the study can be described as follow:

1. To identify the women's linguistic features found in Carol Danvers' utterances in *Captain Marvel* film.
2. To explain the most frequent women's linguistic features found in Carol Danvers' utterances in *Captain Marvel* film.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The outcomes of the study are expected to provide advantages to the readers and give some contributions to the linguistic field. Theoretically, the writer expects the analysis of women's utterances in *Captain Marvel* film may give new insights

in sociolinguistics under the topic of women's speech. Practically, the results of the study may help and inspire other researchers of sociolinguistics to conduct similar research related to the women's linguistic features. Finally, this study can become a reference for further research.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- 1. Captain Marvel** : The first female-led franchise title film in Marvel Cinematic Universe (Marvel Studios 2019).
- 2. Carol Danvers** : The female character in Marvel Cinematic Universe that possesses superhero powers and becomes one of the most powerful heroes in MCU (Marvel Studios 2019).
- 3. Gender** : The term used to describe socially constructed categories based on sex that is constructed locally and interacts with class, race, age, and sexuality (Coates 2013).
- 4. Superheroine** : The term for female superhero who possesses supernatural powers and integrates her femaleness into the character and story arcs (Beerman 2012).
- 5. Women's Linguistic Features** : Ten characteristics of women's language (fillers or lexical hedges, 'superpolite' forms, tag questions, precise color terms, avoidance of strong swear words, rising intonation on

declaratives, 'empty' adjectives, intensifiers, empathic stress, 'hypercorrect' grammar) proposed by Lakoff (2004).