

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a means of communication in a society which basically consists of woman and men, and it plays a substantial role in human's life. There are some stigmas regarding the genders, one of which is that women have been stigmatized physically and intellectually inferior to men. For a long time women and men carry out different tasks, they were engaged with different work that require different skills. Women had to do things such as taking care of children and making food, while men were focused on the hunting and leadership. This implies women subordinate status in the society. This status is even reflected in how women use language to communicate. According to Lakoff (1975), girls and boys are taught to communicate differently. As they grow up, men are more likely to use rough aspect of speech such as slang and profanity. Meanwhile, women are forced to learn weak and trivial style of language as a reflection of their inferiority to men.

According to Holmes (2013), women are more conscious about their status than men. It means that they are more aware that the way they speak could signal their social status in the community. Therefore, they use more standard speech forms to assert high social status that is generally associated with such speech forms. Women are also associated with their role as keepers of values in the society while being the subordinate group of the community whose speech must be polite and careful to avoid offending the superordinate. Women's role as value-keeper who

raise the children makes the society expects them to be the models for children by speaking more correctly and standardly than men (Holmes, 2013).

The differences between men and women utterances can also be found in Lakoff's women's linguistic features. Lakoff (1975) proposed ten women's linguistic features, they are: lexical hedges or fillers, avoidance of strong swear words, tag questions, superpolite forms, emphatic stress, intensifiers, empty adjectives, hypercorrect grammar, rising intonations on declaratives, and precise color terms. Lakoff (1975) noted that women language is a powerless language and is used by those with relatively little power. Its features are notable for its uncertainty, weakness and excessive politeness. However, a recent theory by Coates (2013) present a view that the difference between women's and men's language is not about language which denigrates or is believed to denigrates women, but women and men develop differentiated communicative competence. This means, women's and men's behaviour in conversation suggests that they have a different understanding of the functions of language use. For instance, women and men have different purposes in using minimal response when they are in a conversation. Women use minimal response to support the current speaker, while men use delayed minimal response as a way to reinforce male dominance. Moreover, Coates categorized women's linguistic features into seven categories. Those are minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, and compliments (Coates, 2013).

There are many studies on linguistic features that have been conducted. Broadbridge (2003) analyzed a recorded conversation of four people consisting of

two women and two men who have the same professions as teachers to examine the differences between women and men languages. He divided the analysis into four sections which include conversational dominance, swearing and vulgar language, verbosity, and assertive and tentative speech styles. Through this study, he found that the existing concepts of sexual equality and women's right were involved in the results that illustrate the female participants' awareness and desire to be equal. Another study about gender differences in using language was done by Xia (2013). Her study was conducted by comparing the use of women's linguistic features between the language of women and men. Xia (2013) found that there are seven differences between the language used by women and men. The differences are in pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, syntax, the attitude toward language, manners and choosing topics. Further, she also explained that there are factors such as different psychology, different social status and different cultural background that may affect the use of language between women and men. The conversational difference between women and men was also studied by Chouchane (2016). He analyzed a recorded conversation of six people consisting of three women and three men using Deficit and Dominance Theory. From the study he found evidence of significant linguistic differences between female and male speech in using lexical hedges and fillers, intensifiers, the lexical choice, and intonation which show clear bias to women.

Another study that is more focused on women's linguistic features was conducted by Sholikha (2016) on Michelle Obama's speech as an African-American first lady. The study found that there were seven women's linguistic

features used by Michelle Obama with the most frequent feature used was intensifiers with the function of persuading her addressee to take her seriously and strengthen the meaning. Meanwhile, the other studies used movies as the subjects. One of them was conducted by Ramadhani (2017) in which she studied women linguistic features of two female characters of *Mona Lisa Smile* movie – a movie about women in 1950s. The dialogues of the characters were analyzed and through the study it was found that the features used by the female characters were also influenced by external factors such as the participants, the settings, the topics, and the functions. Another study was conducted by Kusumawardah (2017). She conducted a study about women linguistic features used by female employer and female employee in *The Devil Wears Prada* movie where the focus is in the power of distance between female characters. In this study she found nine women linguistic features that were used in the movie with only hypercorrect grammar and precise color term that were not used in the movie.

The previous studies focus on analyzing only women's linguistic features or the differences between women's and men's linguistic features using Lakoff's theory that is more biased on women's language weakness. However, nowadays, there are more women in institutions and some of them have high positions. It means the number and the role of women and men in workplaces are almost equal. Also, Coates (2013) suggests that women's language supposed to be considered powerless, but women and men have different understanding in using language. Therefore this study aims to identify the differences of women's and men's linguistic features used by female and male characters in the workplace in *Hidden*

Figures movie (2016), and discusses the linguistic features from different aspects using Coates' (2013) theory.

The study of women's and men's language can be done in several ways. In this study, a movie is used as the subject of the analysis. It is worth examining how the gendered behavior in a movie reflects language differences in the dialogues (Schofield & Mehr, 2016). The movie that is chosen is *Hidden Figures* movie, a movie which is based on a true event in the past. It means that the movie likely more or less reflects the reality at that moment. Moreover, this study would focus on examining the differences of women's and men's language used by the main and supporting characters who were black and white people in *Hidden Figures* movie, particularly when they have interactions in the workplace.

Hidden Figures is an American biographical film directed by Theodore Melfi which was released in 2016 and is based on the non-fiction book of the same title written by Margot Lee Shetterly about African-American female mathematicians who worked at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The movie tells the story about a group of female mathematicians known as 'human computers' who do the math that would launch rockets into the space. These mathematicians were African-American and were the brightest minds of their generation. The story then revolved around the three African-American women Katherine Goble, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson who struggled to deal with daily difficulties as they worked at a segregated society despite the fact that they were not intelligently inferior to men.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

In relation to the background of the study and as the writer has mentioned before, the writer conducted a study using Jennifer Coates' (2013) theory which focus on analyzing the utterances of four female characters in *Hidden Figures* movie that are: Dorothy Vaughan, Katherine Goble, Mary Jackson, and Vivian Mitchell, and two male characters that are: Al Harrison and Paul Stafford. Based on the following questions:

1. What are the linguistic features used by the female characters in *Hidden Figures* movie?
2. What are the linguistic features used by the male characters in *Hidden Figures* movie?
3. What are the main differences between women's and men's linguistic features used by the characters in *Hidden Figures* movie?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the statement of the problems above, this study tries to reach the following objectives:

1. To identify the linguistic features used by the female characters in *Hidden Figures* movie.
2. To identify the linguistic feature used by the male characters in *Hidden Figures* movie.
3. To identify the main differences between women's and men's linguistic features used by the characters in *Hidden Figures* movie?

1.4 Significance of the Study

In doing this study, the aim is to find out the differences of women's and men's linguistic features used in the utterances of the six characters in *Hidden Figures* movie. In addition, this study is expected to have theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, the findings of this study contributes as an additional information to the field of sociolinguistics particularly on the study of women's and men's linguistic features. Hopefully, it can also become one of the sources for linguistic students who want to conduct similar study or undergraduate thesis on language and gender. Practically, since this study applies Coates' theory about women and men's language which presents a view that women's language is not supposed to derogate women, it is expected that the readers might gain more knowledge about women's language today with more equality in gender role which is considered to be different from how it was in the past.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Gender	: A term used to distinguish people based on the socio-cultural behavior, including speech (Holmes 2013)
Women's and Men's Linguistic Features	: Features which include minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, and compliments (Coates 2013)

Hidden Figures

: An American biographical film directed by Theodore Melfi which was released in 2016 and is based on the non-fiction book of the same title written by Margot Lee Shetterly.