

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In this study, movie is selected as its object, the movie title is *On the Basis of Sex*. It is a movie that is adapted from a true story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a white American lawyer's journey in achieving her dream in becoming a lawyer. The movie's setting is in 1960s to 1970s where it is not easy for women to get her dream job. This gender discrimination also experienced by Ruth, where she faced many obstacles in her path becoming a lawyer. In some scene, we may see where women are not supposed to be in certain school for instance where Ruth studied about law, Harvard Law School. It is showed when the women students are invited on a dinner with the Harvard Law School dean, Erwin Griswold. In that scene, he asked the women why did they go to Harvard Law School where it supposed to be occupied by men.

The phenomenon about gender discrimination that is described in the last paragraph was actually happening in the USA. This circumstance was fought by people, but the discrimination of racial, ethnic, and gender is still happening globally (Sidanius and Veniegas 2000). Although there are several kinds of discrimination, this movie only depicted gender discrimination. Sidanius and Veniegas (2000) addressed this kind of inequity as a *patriarchal-system*, one of a Social Dominance Theory type. This theory describes that the subordinate group,

women in this case, will achieve less or suffer from negative value. In the other side, men achieve more in terms of works, social, political, and also education in some cases. Another scholar mentioned that women also eliminated in getting a wider opportunity in her jobs (Abrams 1989).

The writer chose *On the Basis of Sex* (2018) movie because the writer interested in analyzing Ruth Bader Ginsburg's utterances because of her journey. She struggled in achieving her dream job as a lawyer because of the gender discrimination. In addition, this movie is released in 2018, but the setting of the movie is in the 1960s to 1970s. Hence, the writer wanted to prove that Lakoff's framework about women's language features still exist and relevant even though the movie is produced in recent year. It is because people's speaking style is changing over time, so did the movie maker put on the 1960s-1970s style of speaking on the movie script. Another reason why the writer chose this movie is because this movie is nominated as one of the best women film critics circle award and won Humanitas Prize (IMDB 2021).

Gender also affects the language used by an individual or speech community. A short explanation by Holmes (2013), where sex and gender are very distinct. He explained that sex has something to do with the differences of the biological features. In the other hand, Holmes prefer to use the term gender because it has an ability to separate people by their socio-cultural behaviour, for example, the language or speech used in the community they live in. Wardhaugh

(2006) also argued that we could not avoid gender, because gender is adjusted by the society around us.

Another explanation related to language and gender by Haas (1979) stated that topic, content, form, and the use of the language is sex-associated, so whether men and women have their own utterances style. Sex and gender concept usage is to differentiate between male and female, but sex is preferably used when it comes to biological appearance. In the other side, gender is related to social, cultural, psychological construct (Shapiro 1981). Cameron (in Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003:452) stated that the ideologies of language and gender are specific and vary across cultures and historical periods, in addition, it also could be modified by social characteristics such as class and ethnicity. In further explanation by Cameron, she also stated that women language is less superior compared to men. For instance, we can see that males are freer to speak as Jespersen (in Haas 1979:616-617) stated that men are more direct and eager to use new terms, slangs, and also say profanity and obscenity, unlike women that they evade using rude and direct words.

Women's linguistic features is one of the theories that is used quite widely in language and gender studies proposed by Lakoff (1975). These features also mentioned by Holmes (2013) which consists of ten linguistic features: *Lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonations, empty adjectives, specific color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite forms, avoid using swear words, and emphatic stress*. The features mentioned before that appear in the utterances

differ the language spoken by women and men. In addition, in a community or social group, what we speak is what we are, so everything that is spoken reflects our identity in the society or group. Furthermore, in our culture and society, women that do not speak like the way they are, they might be differentiated.

In the discussion of this topic, there are several researchers that conducted the studies using the women's linguistic features proposed by Lakoff (1975). They are Pebrianti (2013), Oktapiani, Natsir, and Setyowati (2017), Arsyi (2020), and Martín (2015). Some of these studies conducted have different specific objects which result in the different number of women's linguistic features used by the speaker.

Oktapiani, Natsir, and Setyowati (2017) and Arsyi (2020) shares a similarity in their studies. They conduct language and gender studies using a movie as the object. First studies conducted by Oktapiani, Natsir, and Setyowati (2017), they analyze the female character's utterance in 'The Devils Wear Prada' movie using women's linguistic feature proposed by Lakoff (1975). They also use another theory that is suggested by Jakobson (1960) about six types of language functions. These six functions, including: Expressive function, directive function, referential function, metalinguistic function, poetic function, and phatic function. In this study, the authors used the descriptive qualitative design, and as a result, there is the appearance of the woman linguistic features and the functions of language in the movie. The other study that used the movie as the object is written by Arsyi (2020) that discovered the women's linguistic features of three heroines in three

different movies by Marvel. She picked Natasha Romanoff from *Avengers: Endgame*, Hope Van Dyne from *Ant-Man and The Wasp*, and Gamora from *Guardian of The Galaxy 1*. The result of this study shows that every heroine that is analyzed did not use all of the features proposed by Lakoff. Instead of using the women's features, the three heroines also use the men's language like command, interruption, and insult. Men's language features are proposed because of the differentiation from the women's language features proposed by Lakoff (1975).

Unlike the two studies before that use movie as their source of the data of the research, these two studies written by Pebrianti (2013) and Martín (2015) use blogs as the source of their data. Pebrianti (2013) took three samples from Indonesian female bloggers to do her research. Again, Lakoff's theory about women's language features is used to analyze the data taken. Actually, she used a qualitative approach in writing the study, but she converts the total amounts of the blogger's utterance features into a percentage. As a result of this descriptive qualitative study, she found that almost all women's language features occurred appeared, except the hypercorrect grammar. Pebrianti (2013) argued the absence of this feature is because the language of the online media used is mostly an informal language. The rising intonation feature is also missing because the object of the study is an actual text with no transcription. Another study by Martín (2015) provides the definition of the language of blogs, male and female language features, and also a comparison between male and female in maintaining their position and interacting with others in the blog. In this study, she also used Lakoff

(1975) as the frameworks for the women's language features, while for men's linguistic features she used several studies like Goodwin (1980), Zimmerman and West (1975), Baalen (2001), etc.

In summary, this research used Lakoff's theory about women's language features just like the previous studies did. To fill the gap from the previous studies that the theory used by this study the writer also wanted to prove Lakoff's theory relevancy with the movie settings that took place in 1960s-1970s In addition to fill the gap from the previous studies this study used a true story based movie about a white American woman who dream in becoming lawyer and fight for gender equality in law.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

According to the background of the study, here are some research questions constructed by the author:

1. What women's linguistic features are performed by Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *On the Basis of Sex*?
2. Which women's linguistic feature that mostly appears in the utterances performed by Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *On the Basis of Sex*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

After writing the statements of the problem above, here are the objective of the study that will be conducted in the near future:

1. To identify the women's linguistic features performed by Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

2. To discover which women's linguistic features that mostly used by Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The importance of writing this study in the near future is that the writer expects that this study might contribute to giving more insights into the language and gender studies. The writer also hopes that this future study may provide the theoretical and practical significance. For the theoretical aspect, the writer also hopes that this research might enrich and boost the pieces of information gathered in the previous language and gender studies, specifically women's linguistic features proposed by Lakoff (1975). Moreover, the practical significance of this future study is to discover the women's linguistic features even in the movie level.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The focus of this study is in the field of sociolinguistics, language and gender. The writer used Lakoff (1975) that include ten features of women languages as the theoretical framework of the study. The writer also limit the object of this future research, in order to avoid a developing analysis of the utterances produced by main character. The limitation is set by only the main character in *On the Basis of Sex* (2018), Ruth Bader Ginsburg, is the only female character's utterances observed and analyzed by the writer using Lakoff's women's language features theory.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

- Women's Linguistic Features** : The features that lie within the utterances produced by women consisting of 10 features: *Lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonations, empty adjectives, specific colour terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite forms, avoid using swear words, and emphatic stress*. This theory is proposed by Robin Lakoff in 1975.
- Language and Gender** : One of the branches of sociolinguistics study which focus on how gender affects the usage of language. Gender itself is a term to differentiate people from its social and cultural background.
- Movie** : One of entertainment media that is produced to express one's creativity and feelings. Movies also contain messages that can be taken from the plot of the story. Some movies are based on true story.
- On the Basis of Sex** : A movie that is based on a true story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg in fighting inequalities of gender in the perspective of law.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg : The main character of *On the Basis of Sex* (2018) movie.