

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

##### 2.1.1 Types of Women Linguistic Features

Women's language has a distinctive feature that is different from man's language. Robin Lakoff in her book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) claimed the number of women linguistic features that are more often used by women than men and she claims that this feature are typical of women's language that they used in their speech. The women's linguistic features defined by Robin Lakoff will be explained in detail in the following part:

##### 1. Lexical Hedges or Fillers

Hedges are linguistic forms such as *I think, I'm sure you know, sort of* and *perhaps* (Coates, 2004). It is an aspect of women insecurity. Lakoff (1975) explicitly linked women's use of hedges with unassertiveness. She claimed that women speech contains more hedges and argued that this is because women m'are socialized to believe that asserting themselves strongly isn't nice or ladylike, or even feminine' (cited in Coates 2004). The use of hedges is also manifestation of women's lack of self confidence. Lakoff (1975) considered that "pause fillers" are also categorized as 'hedges', because of their function which is expressing lack of confidence or uncertainty.

According to Coates (1996) ‘hedge’ means roughly ‘to avoid taking decisive action’. When we hedge linguistically, we avoid saying something definite and so we keep our option opened to the others speaker give their opinion. Hedges are valuable resource for speakers. There is evidence that women use them more than men. Coates (1996) also divided the functions of hedges as the expression of doubt and confidence, sensitivity to others’ feelings, searching the right word, and avoiding playing the expert. Moreover, Fillers’ such as *um*, *uh*, and *ah* and ‘Hedges’ such as *well* and *you see* were described as ‘meaningless particles’ to expressing lack of confidence (Holmes, 1992).

## 2. Tag Question

Question can be used to look for some information, to introduce new topic, to encourage other speaker to participate in talk, to invite someone to tell a story, among other things (Coates, 1996). Lakoff (1975) nominated the tag question as one of the linguistic forms associated with tentativeness, but provided no empirical evidence to show that women use more tag question than men. She also stated that tag questions decrease the strength of assertions (cited in Coates, 2004). Dubois and Crouch (1975) listed all formal examples of formal tag questions (such as ‘probably industrial too, isn’t it?’) as well as ‘informal tags (such as ‘Right?’, ‘OK? As in ‘That’s not easy, right?’) (cited in Coates, 2004).

A tag question might be thought of as a declarative statement without the assumption that the statement is to be believed by the addressee as with a question. A tag gives the addressee leeway, not forcing him to go along with the views of the speaker (Lakoff cited in Cameron, 1990). A tag question is used

when the speaker is stating a claim, but the speaker is not totally sure about the truth of that claim. According to Holmes (1992), the function of tag question may express uncertainty, affective meaning, softening the negative comment and also be used as confrontational and coercive devices. It aims to cue a response from the listener or obtain his or her agreement to the original statement.

### 3. Rising Intonation on declarative

Lakoff found (in English language) that there is a peculiar sentence intonation pattern, only among women, which has the form of a declarative answer to a question, but has the rising inflection typical of a yes-no question, as well as being especially hesitant (cited in Cameron, 1990). Lakoff (1975) said that women show non-assertive behavior by using question intonation in conjunction with declarative sentences. That is, rather than making direct statements, they suggest or request agreement from their addressee(s). For example in the question “*when will you go home?*”; they usually give answer “*oh, about five p.m o'clock?*”. Women usually answer a question from someone by giving a question response intonation.

### 4. ‘Empty’ adjectives

‘Empty’ adjectives only convey an emotional reaction rather than specific information (Crawford, 1995). It shows the emotional feeling of someone who produced it. In this case, women usually differ from men in their extensive use of certain adjective such as *pretty* and *nice*. Lakoff (1975) specifically singles out “empty” adjectives like *divine, charming, cute.....*’as typical of what she calls

‘women’s language’ (cited in Coates, 2004). It means that the ‘empty’ adjectives can be classified as women’s language.

According to Lakoff (1975), certain words are used almost exclusively by women. They usually utilize some pattern of language in their daily life. As stated above, Lakoff (1975) claims that women use “empty” adjectives such as *divine*, and *cute*, these adjectives are said to be not only meaningless, but also lacked of any connotation of power, contrasted with “men’s adjective” such as *great* and *terrific*.

### **5. Precise colour terms**

Lakoff wrote that women make far more precise discriminations in naming color than do men. Words like *beige*, *ecru*, *aquamarine*, *lavender*, *maroon*, and so on are unremarkable in a woman’s active vocabulary, but absent from that of most men. Men find the discussions about precise color terms are amusing because they consider such a question trivial and irrelevant to the real world. When men saying something in precise color terms, people might well conclude he was imitating a woman sarcastically, or was a homosexual (cited in Cameron, 1990).

### **6. Intensifiers**

*So* is also claimed as having ‘something’ eternally feminine about it. Lakoff had a section on the intensifiers *so*. She asserts that ‘*so* is more frequent in women’s than men’s language, though certainly men can use it’ (cited in Coates, 2004). That is, the intensifiers *so* usually used by women in their daily

conversation. However, men ever use it, but the intensity is rare. The intensifiers *so* for absolute superlative (like very, really, utterly) seems to be a way of backing out of committing oneself strongly to an opinion, rather like tag questions (Lakoff in Cameron, 1990). It is the way for the speaker to highlight their idea in the conversation. Then, the intensifiers *so* is a favorite adverb used by women, in conjunction with an adjective. For example ‘It is *so* lovely!’; ‘He is *so* charming!’; ‘Thank you *so* much!’; ‘I’m *so* glad you have come!’ et cetera.

### **7. ‘Hypercorrect’ grammar**

‘Hypercorrect’ grammar is related to the use of standard and non standard language form. The ‘hypercorrect’ grammar involved avoidance of terms considered vulgar or coarse, such as ‘ain’t, and the use of precise pronunciation, such as sounding the final g in words such as ‘going’ instead of the more casual ‘goin’ (Lakoff in Crawford, 1995).

### **8. ‘Superpolite’ forms**

The belief that women’s language is more polite, more refined – in a word, more ladylike – is very widespread and has been current for many centuries (Lakoff in Coates, 2004). It has been known in our daily activity that women usually use more polite language than men. When a woman speaks to others they usually choose polite language. Lakoff summarizes her position later by saying ‘women don’t use off color or indelicate expressions; women are the expert at euphemism’ (cited in Coates, 2004).

### 9. Avoidance of strong swear words

Taboo language is prohibition forces the substitution of another word for one, while swearing is kinds of interjection that can express extreme intensify. It has been widely considered as an expression of very strong emotion (Eckert, 2003). In this case, taboo language or non-standard words can be classified as strong swear words. Women rarely used strong swear words. They will try to avoid them. As stated by Lakoff (1975), men use stronger expletives (*damn, shit*) than women (*oh dear, goodness*) (Cited in Coates, 2004). It means that men tend to use the swear word in conversation.

### 10. Emphatic stress

Women usually use words to emphasize and to strengthen the meaning of their utterance. For example *it was a BRILLIANT performance*. The word brilliant is using emphatic stress. This word is used to strengthen the meaning of the utterance.

Linguistic features provided by Lakoff may serve as hedging and boosting devices. The hedging device can be used to weaken the strength of an assertion while boosting devices can be used to strengthen it. The features which may serve as hedging devices are lexical hedges, tag question, question intonation, superpolite forms, and euphemisms. Meanwhile, the features which may serve as boosting devices are intensifiers and emphatic stress (Holmes, 1992).

### 2.1.2 Language and Gender

Although the talk about gender is widespread, but in reality, there is still misunderstanding about the differences by what is meant by gender and sex. Sex is to a very large extent biologically determined whereas gender is a social construct (but one heavily grounded in sex) involving the whole gamut of genetic, psychological, social, and cultural differences between males and females (Wardaugh, 2002). While gender is the term used to describe socially constructed categories based on sex. Most societies operate in terms of two genders, masculine and feminine (Coates, 2004). This is also known as 'genderlect'.

According to Stockwell (2002), today the term 'genderlect' is used to refer to the different lexical and grammatical choices which are characteristically made by males and females; e.g. women in their talks use frequent certain color term, frequent certain evaluative adjectives, not sure intonation, tag phrases and super-polite expressions, such as euphemism, less swearing and more indirect words. It is used to explain the selection characters of language that is lexically and grammatically made by man and woman in their life.

In term of grammatical differences, women are claimed more linguistically polite than men. The society expects women to speak more correctly and standard than men. People, who are subordinate, such as women, usually tend to be polite. As subordinate group, they must avoid offending men and they must speak carefully and politely. By using more standard speech forms, women are looking after their own need to be valued in society (Holmes, 1992). In other words, in our society, there is a necessity for women to use standard speech form

in order to get respect in their society. It is also associated with female value and feminist.

Trudgill said that when men use a form more often than women, it is usually a vernacular form, one which is not admired overtly by the society as a whole, and which is not cited as the correct form (cited in Holmes, 1992). Men prefer vernacular forms because they carry macho connotations of masculinity and toughness.

Lakoff (1975) also writes about the language discriminations toward women; the first one in how women are taught to speak the language and how the language treats women. Women have the complicated place in language, because they are required to speak like a lady, means gently and politely. Women's language shows their powerlessness and weakness, if they do not speak like a lady, they will be called unfeminine, but if they speak gently and politely, they will be as the group of who cannot speak about serious problem.

Lakoff (1975) also shows how girls and boys are taught to communicate. She finds girls and boys literally learn different languages as they grow up. Girls are taught to speak more passively, gently, and politely, while boys emerge from their 'rough talk' stage with more forceful active voice. Cool, calm, silent are the characters that are required of girls, but boys are proper to be angry and aggressive. The studies of gender differences have shown the power of stereotyping, and the correlations between gender-related linguistic differences and social differences between them. This is another way to see how closely language and social variation are related (Spolsky, 2001).



## **2.2 Review of Related Theories**

### **2.2.1 Film as Mass Communication**

Instead of television, radio, magazine, and newspaper, film is also a part of mass communication. In its development, film is no longer seen as works of art but rather as social practice (Turner, 1993). In its social practice film has its role as mass communication (Jowett and Linton, 1980). As a role of mass communication, film has an important role in our daily life to communicate with other people.

McQuail (2010) stated that we deal with four main elements that are of significance in the wider life of society. There are certain communicative purposes, needs, or uses; technologies for communicating publicly to many at a distance; forms of social organization that provide the skills and frameworks for organizing production and distribution; forms of regulation and control. Because of those elements, film becomes one of mass communications that can deliver message to the people. Film has an ability to attract the attention of the people, and partly based on the reasons that film has a unique ability to deliver the message.

Besides, McLuhan (1994) also revealed that film as the extension of man, where film is literary means that the film stands for the human hand. In other words, what human can do can be done by the film because human is the creature of the film and it can convey the message properly what is recorded in it to the audience. That is why the people use film as part of communication and it reflect human's daily life.

*Mean Girls* is one film that is reflecting about girl's life such as friendship and romance. It was published at 2004 and an American teen drama directed by Mark Waters. The screenplay was written by Tina Fey based on the non-fiction book *Queen Bees and Wannabes* by Rosalind Wiseman. The cast of the film is Lindsay Lohan, Rachel McAdams, Amanda Seyfried, Lacey Chabert, and Lizzy Caplan.

This film describes about the female's high school's social life. This story begins when Cady moves out of the Africa and she goes to high school in public school for the first time. Cady Heron is 16 years old. She lived with her parents, who are zoologists, for 15 years in the African jungle and she was home-schooled. In the high school, she instantly makes friends with two sweet teenagers, Damian and Janis. Then, she meets "the Plastics", the teen royalty in her school, consisting of Regina, Gretchen, and Karen. They immediately let Cady into their group. Janis and Damian agree if Cady joins with "the Plastic" because they want to know about the Plastic's dark secret through Cady. Then, Cady fallings love with Regina's ex-boyfriend, Aaron Samuel. Regina knows about this and she wants take Aaron back by making her jealous at Halloween party. Then, Cady hates Regina and she seeks revenge of Regina by spying on "The Plastic". She discovers all Regina's secrets and turns it into a plan to destroy Regina. Then, Cady, Janis, and Damian are together to bring Regina's status down. Finally, "The Plastic" is broke up at the start of the school year and they lives in peace each others.

### 2.3 Related Studies

The study about women's linguistic features had been done previously by Dian Rosita (2008) who studied in Airlangga University. Her thesis is entitled "An Analysis of Sex and the City's Dialogue Based on Ten Types of Women's Linguistic Features" She analyzes the dialogue of *Sex and the City* drama TV series. She only focused on episode *The Real Me*. Her study analyzed the types of women linguistic features found in the dialogue of *Sex and the City*. It is conducted to find what types and which types of women's linguistic features occur most frequently. The result of her study show that not all types of women's linguistic features occur in the dialogues. There are only nine types of women's linguistic features found in the dialogues, they are lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation on declaratives, 'empty' adjectives, specialized vocabularies, intensifiers, 'superpolite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress. One feature that was not found in the dialogues is 'hypercorrect' grammar.

In this study, the analysis is about women's linguistic features used by the female teenage actresses in the *Mean Girls* film. Although this study and Rosita's study use the same theory that is proposed by Robin Lakoff (1975), the difference is the object of this study. This study uses *Mean Girls* film as the object. This film is one of teenage film that most actresses are teenagers. While Rosita (2008) used *Sex and the City* films as her object that the actresses are adult women. From this, it can be seen that the conversation of both films are different. Then, this study uses the number and the percentage as the presentation of the

data, and the result is shown in the diagram of women's linguistic features. While in Rosita's study only show the numbers of women's linguistic features. In addition, this study explains the use of women's linguistic features more detail in each utterance, but in Rosita's study explains it in general in the conclusion. Finally, the result and the presentation of this study will be different with the previous study.