

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a universal thing, which means that everyone, men and women, uses it to communicate to each other in a society. The society constructs men and women differently in some aspects of life. The common phenomena that always comes up is usually men and women stereotyped based on their biological condition to distinguish their identity. However, the stereotype also exists in the perspective of language used by male and female. Trudgill (1974, p.80) noted that there are some differences between the language used by men and women.

The different usage of language between male and female can be identified in many aspects. Across all social groups women generally use more standard forms than men and so, correspondingly, men use more vernacular forms than women (Holmes, 1992, p.163). This has created gender stereotyping in the use of language across the societies between men and women.

We can also find gender stereotyping in literary works, not only in adult text but also in children text. The process children go through when learning about gender roles is an essential part of their knowledge construction (Nair & Talif, 2010, p.137). As they grow up, they will learn how to define and differentiate themselves as their actual gender. Taylor (2003, p.301) said that by the age of seven, and perhaps as early as age four, children begin to understand gender as a

basic component of self. Therefore, children literature has a role in children's language learning process development.

Some studies have been conducted focusing in gender stereotyping inside the children literature. Some studies observed gender stereotype through the title of books, the characters' roles, gender, and language limitations of children literature. Children books or fairy tales become the mainstream objects of the study while children literature can be found in any media such as movie, comics or children novels.

Amandara (2013), observed in her thesis which analyzed children text, Grimm's Fairy Tales, that there are differences in the language used to describe male and female characters inside the stories of Grimm's Fairy Tales depicted traditionally, the study shows a traditional stereotypical construction that females are characterized as powerless, compassionate by being with family and often described in domestic setting such as room and home, display tears also. On the other hand, the male characters are often connected to promise and words also doing lot of physical activities. Overall, she revealed that the gendered construction of female and male characters in the stories of Grimm's Fairy Tales could possibly discourage children to develop their skill in many aspects of life because their vision limited by stereotypes.

The research about gender stereotype conducted by Amandara (2013) encourages the writer to explore more on the gender stereotyping based on the use of the language. Numerous studies have focused in gender stereotypes in children books, only a few which could support their arguments based on empirical data.

This study tries to observe the gender stereotypes in female and male characters representation in movies for children. Movies are chosen because they are the media that has significant role in recent daily life, especially children.

Movies for children usually have subtitles. A movie subtitle is a written text that usually appears at the bottom of the screen in each movie that helps the audience to figure out the dialogue of the characters in movie also to avoid misunderstanding the message of the movie. The movie chosen in this study are *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) which are directed by Thor Freudental. The second movie is *Ramona and Beezus* (2010) which directed by Elizabeth Allen. Moreover, both movies has the same settings, school and home become the most captured setting in the movies.

The genre of both movies is family comedy with an American family background. These movies are chosen because they are quite recent which is produced in 2010 and they represent children characters of different gender in children ages, as UNICEF (1990) defines a child as a person below the age of 18. There are both male and female as the main characters in the movie, they are approximately at the same age.

*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) depicts the life of a junior high school boy in his ordinary dairy life. The main character in this movie is called Greg. He has teenage brother, Rodrick, that somehow has a significant impact in his life. Moreover, he also has a best friend called Rowley that has a quite important role in his life. On the other hand, *Ramona and Beezus* (2010) shows the life of a girl at nearly the same age as the character of Greg in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010),

the girl is called Ramona. She also has a teenage sister, Beezus, who helped her built her character in the movie. The writer only focus on the main male character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) that called Greg and Ramona in *Ramona and Beezus* (2010) because they are categorised as children by looking at their ages.

When watching the movies, the writer noticed some differences in the choice of words of the characters. These differences can show the preferences based on the gender. One example of the different diction is as follows:

Greg: “Right now I have to take abuse from these morons.”

*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010).

Beezus: “And you even stuck me with my stupid nickname.”

*Ramona and Beezus* (2010).

The words *morons* and *stupid* have a similar sense. However, the word *stupid* is less offensive than the word *moron*. According to OALD (2010, p.995) moron is “an offensive way of referring to somebody that you think is very stupid.” Whereas, stupid is defined as if you call somebody stupid, you are telling them, usually in a joking way, that you think they are not being very intelligent (OALD, 2010, p.1539).

The examples given above show that there is different word choice between male and female characters in the same age, in this case children. In addition, it shows that women are considered to use less offensive words. This is in line with the opinion of Lakoff (1975) who mentions that the form of women's language is reputed to be more polite than the form of men's. Lakoff (1975) noted that "women are supposed to be particularly careful to say 'please' and 'thank you'.

The writer compares the data on the use of the words *morons* and *stupid* with the database in the British National Corpus (BNC). The BNC consists of 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide-cross section of current British English, both spoken and written (BNC, 2010). In the BNC, we can identify the age and gender of the users. The data from the website showed that the word *moron* is not used by children while for the word *stupid* there are 2 hits by female children and no hits by male children. The data strengthen the fact that the word *moron* is more offensive from the word *stupid*.

The BNC can show the actual use of the English words because they are based on empirical data. In this thesis the writer uses corpus linguistics approach which also relies on empirical data. The data are taken from the text found in the movies. The text becomes the corpus of this study. According to Sinclair (1996) a corpus is a collection of pieces of language that are selected and ordered according to explicit linguistic and or extra-linguistic criteria in order to be used as a sample of the language. Moreover, (McEnery & Hardy, 2012, p.6) defines a corpus as a method and claims instead that the corpus itself should be the sole source of our hypotheses about language.

The corpus is expected to show gender representation based on the words used by the characters. The differences in the word choice of the male and female characters can also be noticed from the content words. In the English language, according to (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2003, p.73) content words denote concepts such as objects, actions, attributes, and ideas that we can think about like

*children, anarchism, soar, and purple*. Unlike the function words that do not have clear lexical meaning as the content words. This study tries to analyze the content words used by the male and female characters in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) and *Ramona and Beezus* (2010). Based on the corpus linguistic approach, this study is expected to show the gender representation based on the content words used by the male and female characters.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problems

In order to observe the phenomena of gender representation in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) and *Ramona and Beezus* (2010) movies, the writer formulates some research questions as follows:

1. What are the typical nouns used by the main male character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) and the main female character in *Ramona and Beezus* (2010)?
2. What are the typical verbs used by the main male character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) and the main female character in *Ramona and Beezus* (2010)?
3. What are the typical adjectives used by the main male character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) and the main female character in *Ramona and Beezus* (2010)?
4. What are the typical adverbs used by the main male character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) and the main female character in *Ramona and Beezus* (2010)?

### 1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems, the writer would like to fulfill the following objective of the study is as follows:

1. To know the typical content words used by the main male character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010)
2. To know the typical content words used by the main female character in *Ramona and Beezus* (2010)
3. To know the similarities and differences between the content words used by the main male character in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2010) and the main female character in *Ramona and Beezus* (2010)

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

The writer expect that that this study will give both theoretical and practical contributions. For the theoretical contribution, the writer expects that this study will give some inputs to sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics when analyzing language and gender. Moreover, the writer hopes that the analysis could enrich the readers knowledge and have better understanding about the diversity of language features between female and male especially among children. Moreover, this research will give such self awareness and could give wise explanation towards gender stereotypes of male and female characters in children literature. Also, the writer hopes this research could help the movie directors or children text writers in deciding choice of words of their characters.

## 1.5 Definition of key Terms

- Children : A person below the age of 18 (UNICEF, 1990)
- Content Words : The words that denotes concepts such as objects, actions, attributes, and ideas that we can think about. These words include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs (Fromkin et al., 2003, p.73).
- Gender : A social construc involving genetic, psychological, social and cultural differences between male and female (Wardough, 2002, p.123)
- Representation : The act of presenting something in a particular way; something that shows or describes something (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary).