CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language is a medium for literary expressions. To appreciate literary works, we have to understand its language. However, the language that is used, occasionally, is not familiar. That is why linguistics can be useful for people to understand the literary works. Curtis W. Hayes says in *Linguistics and Literature: Prose and Poetry*, "I take as one premise that literature is language, and is thus amenable to linguistic analysis. I also believe that incorporating some of the techniques of linguistic analysis into description of literary utterances will enhance the description of those texts" (200). Therefore, no matter how arbitrary language is, people who have ability in linguistic analysis will not be bothered by what is proper in language when they are trying to enjoy the literary works.

When we are trying to enjoy literary works such as drama, poetry, or novel, sometimes, we have some difficulties to understand them. One of the difficulties deals with grammar that is used by an author in the language used by the characters in the story. For example, a poet usually changes some grammatical rules to produce artistic sentences. Linguistic analysis is needed to explain the system of rules that is used in literary works so that readers can understand the forms and meanings of the sentences. According to Jonathan Culler in *Interrelations of Literature*, "Linguists do not try to discover the meaning of sentences, much less to develop new meanings or interpretations. They attempt to

describe the system of rules that enables sentences to have form and meaning they do" (3). Therefore, it is important to understand the language of the literary works especially when we want to make a literary analysis.

The writer also encountered the difficulty of reading a literary work. When she was reading Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*, she felt confused with its language. The language structure of Walker's novel is different from Standard English. She uses the multiple negation and absence of copula, for example "You ain't never done nothing for him?" and "He trying to git as big as you", that would typically occur in Black English vernacular.

In Black English Vernacular (BEV), there are different rules that can make the reader confused. These rules are different from those of the Standard American English (SAE). That is why some people consider the rules as non-standard English. As one of varieties of English, BEV has its own vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. If the readers do not have such linguistic knowledge, they cannot interpret or comprehend the work. Inspired by these unique features, the writer is interested in making study on this phenomenon.

Black English firstly appeared because of slavery. The discrimination against Black Americans created social isolation that made dialect differences emerge. Negro slaves learned English as their second language from their white masters. Fromkin and Rodman explain in *An Introduction to Language*,

> The dialect differences persisted and grew because Blacks in America were isolated by social and racial barriers. The proponents of this theory point to the fact that the grammars of Black English and Standard American English are basically identical except for a few syntactic and phonological rules, which produce surface differences (268).

That is why there are systematic differences between BEV and SAE. Therefore, the writer will show the grammar construction in this study so that the reader will know the BEV grammatical features.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In relation to the phenomenon above, the problems of this study are as follows:

1. What are the grammatical features found in Celie and Shug Avery's dialogues?
2. What are the most dominant grammatical features in Celie and Shug Avery's dialogues?

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Based on the statement of the problem, this study is intended:

1. To find out the grammatical features that are found in Celie and Shug Avery's dialogues.

2. To find out the most dominant grammatical features in Celie's and Shug Avery's dialogues.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The data can be useful to linguistics students who try to make a syntactical analysis of Black English grammatical features. At least, it will provide references for other studies concerning syntax. The writer hopes this study will give some input for linguistics students and others who want to learn about another variety of English especially Black English so that they will not be confused if they deal

with Black English speakers or texts. This study can also help literature students to understand the literary works that use Black English. It will be easier for them to understand the works if they can understand its language.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

Since this study relates to the syntactical analysis, it is closely related to linguistics study, especially syntax. This study just analyses the grammatical features that are depicted in the dialogues of the characters in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. There are several characters in this novel. However, the writer only takes two characters, Celie and Shug Avery. Celie is the main character and Shug Avery is one of the supporting characters. Therefore, the writer only analyses the grammatical features of those two characters' utterances.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.6.1 Syntax

William O'Grady explains that the system of rules and categories that underlies sentence formation in human language is called syntax (181). Thus, C.L. Baker reveals that when we investigate English syntax, we will be trying to determine the rules that dictate how English speakers combine words to make sentences (3).

1.6.2 Standard English

Peter Strevens defines Standard English as a particular dialect of English, being the only non-localized dialect, of global currency without significant variation, universally accepted as the appropriate educational target in teaching English; which may be spoken with an unrestricted choice of accent (88).

1.6.3 The Grammatical Features of Standard English

According to Guth, verbs change to show changes in time. Such "time changes" are called changes in tense (359). He mentions that verbs also change to show changes in number. The change from "one" to "several" is the change from singular to plural (359).

He also explains that sometimes the verb even changes when the subject changes. *I* and *we* are 'first person'. *You* is 'second person'. *He, she, it,* and *they* are 'third person' (369). Moreover, he says that many verbs have one form for the simple past. The verbs have another different form for use after the auxiliaries *have* and *be* (360).

Meanwhile, to reverse the meaning of a positive sentence, we can use the negative pattern. W. Nelson Francis states that in English there are two ways to do it: (1) by including somewhere in the total sentence a negative word such as *no, nobody, nowhere, never, none*; (2) by expressly negating the verb phrase by means of the function word *not* or its reduced from *n't* (54). Francis also reveals that one of the standard ways of asking a question in English is to invert, or reverse the position of, the subject and the first auxiliary of a statement. Francis

mentions that the dummy *do* as an empty auxiliary can be used to invert with the subject (55).

In addition, Quirk *et al.* declare that nouns and most pronouns in English have only two case forms: Common case (*children, someone*) and Genitive case (*children's, someone's*). However, the five personal pronouns *I, we, he, she, they,* and the *wh*-pronoun *who* have a further distinction between Subjective and Objective cases (336). Quirk *et al.* add that the genitive forms of the personal pronouns are, in accordance with grammatical tradition, called Possessive pronouns (336).

1.6.4 Black English

According to Peter Strevens, Black English is a dialect of English which is identifiably different in grammar and vocabulary from any other form of English, and which also has its own linked accents (38). Traugott and Pratt state that Black English (BEV) originally derived from other languages in contact with English (325).

1.6.5 The Grammatical Features of Black English

1.6.5.1 Black English Syntax

According to Traugott and Pratt, there are five major characteristics of syntax in Black English (331-334).

1.6.5.1.1 Verbal Auxiliaries

Traugott and Pratt state that in SAE only adverbs, not tense-marker, distinguish something that has happened a long time ago from something that has

happened very recently. In BEV, however, the distinction can be made by auxiliary verbs which are, *bin* and *done* (331).

Traugott and Pratt also say that to express states of affairs that recur at intervals, BEV speakers use "invariant be". This "invariant be" shows that the 'be' forms are uninflected according to person or number (332).

1.6.5.1.2 Absence of Copula

According to Traugott and Pratt, in BEV the inflected *be*-verb (frequently called a "copula") is not often present in surface structure if it signals present tense. This is presumably because the present can be inferred from the speech situation, whereas the past cannot be inferred (332-333).

1.6.5.1.3 Multiple Negation

According to Traugott and Pratt, multiple negation is particularly common in BEV. For such speakers it is optional. However, for some speakers of BEV it is obligatory. Multiple negation is so fundamental to BEV syntax that it can affect not only the main clause but even spread to subordinate ones (333).

1.6.5.1.4 Question Transformation

Traugott and Pratt reveal that the question transformation in BEV is for many speakers considerably simpler than in SAE. In yes-no questions there is frequently no auxiliary verb shift. Content questions, too, tend to remain in the underlying Subject-Auxiliary-Verb order, with only the question word in initial position (334).

1.6.5.2 Other Grammatical Features of Black English

1.6.5.2.1 'Ain't'

According to Chaika, BEV also uses 'ain't' as an auxiliary in the sense of *didn't*, as in "I ain't do nothing". Non-standard white varieties also use 'ain't' but in the sense of *isn't* (301).

1.6.5.2.2 Pronoun

According to Guth, non-standard uses two kinds of pronouns. The first is the "pointing" kind (demonstrative pronouns) and the second is the "pointing back" kind (reflexive pronouns) (366-367).

1.7 METHOD OF THE STUDY

The method of this study is qualitative descriptive since it attempts to gain description of Black English grammatical features. The description will be established from data corpus.

1.7.1 Definition of Key Terms

In this study, these are some essential terms that need to be known and understood for any reader to follow the discussion thoroughly. Some of those terms are as follows:

1. Grammar: the mental system that allows human beings to form and interpret the words and sentences of their language.

2. Syntax: the part of the grammar that concerns the structure of phrases and sentences.

3. Black English: the dialect that is spoken by a large section of non-middle-class black people in Southern America.

4. SAE (Standard American English): a dialect of English that many Americans speak.

5. Copula: the forms of the verb 'be'.

1.7.2 Source of Data

The source of data of this study is the utterances used by two characters in Walker's novel *The Color Purple*, which are Celie and Shug Avery. In other words, the data are taken from the dialogues of the two characters.

1.7.3 Technique of Data Collection

In collecting the data, the first step is choosing dialogues of those two characters that contain Black English grammatical features. The second step is making a list of all Black English grammatical features produced by each character separately. The next step is analyzing and classifying the utterances. The last step is rewriting the utterances of each character. In short, the procedures in collecting the data are:

1. Choosing the dialogues of the two characters that contain Black English grammatical characteristics.

2. Making a list of the utterances produced by each character.

3. Analyzing and classifying the utterances.

4. Rewriting the utterances of the two characters.

1.7.4 Technique of Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the writer classified the data based on Traugott and Pratt's theory of Black English grammatical features. After that, the writer tabulated the Black English grammatical features used by each character. Finally, the writer made a conclusion. In short, the techniques of data analysis are as follows:

1. Classifying the data based on Traugott and Pratt's theory of Black English grammatical features.

2. Tabulating the Black English grammatical features used by each character.

3. Drawing a conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

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