

C H A P T E R I I

T H E O R E T I C A L F R A M E W O R K

Theories are essentially needed in making analysis in every field of study. This is also necessary in the study of Indonesian women's language done by the writer. The study is not only based on her observation through analysis and experience but also based on theories. The function of theories here is to show a position of a present study. By presenting theories, the writer can confirm or disconfirm or may strengthen the study.

On the question of language and sex, Trudgill (1974:91) claims that differences in language used by men and women in general are most influenced by the differences in social roles, and language as a social phenomenon is closely related to social attitudes. Therefore, there is no surprise, generally speaking, that more 'correct' social behaviour is expected of women. As we see in reality, women are demanded to be a good model, especially in a family, so they must

speak in a standard and correct form. According to Trudgill (1974:101) the same speaker usually uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes. It is because language, in other words varies not only according to the social characteristics of the speakers (such as social class, ethnic group, age and sex) but also according to the social context in which she or he finds herself or himself.

There are some reviews that are related to the study of language and sex. Among other is the study conducted by Janet Holmes (1992). Holmes finds that in many speech communities, when women use more of linguistic form than men, it is generally the standard form, the overtly prestigious form that women favour. When men use a form more often than women, it is usually a vernacular form, one which is not admired overtly by society as a whole, and which is not cited as the "correct" form. This pattern has been found in Western speech communities all over the world and has been described by Peter Trudgill, the sociolinguist who collected the Norwich data as one of the

sociolinguistic studies over the past twenty years (Holmes, 1992:203).

Referring to the problem of women's use of standard form, Holmes tries to give explanation of what we call women's linguistic behaviour. We come to the question "Why do women use more standard forms than men?" At least, there are three different explanations. The first refers to the social status explanation. Some linguists have suggested that women use more standard speech forms than men because they are more status conscious than men. The claim is that women are more aware of the fact that the way they speak signals their social class background or social status in the community. Standard speech forms are generally associated with high social status, high education or so. According to this explanation, women's use of more standard speech forms are a way of claiming such status.

The second refers to women's role as guardian of society's values. The fact that women use more standard forms than men points to the way society tends to expect 'better' behaviour from women than

from men. Women are designated the role of modelling correct behaviour in the community. Predictably then, following this argument, society expects women to speak more correctly and standardly than men especially when they are serving as models for children's speech.

The third refers to women's status as a subordinate group. Women are demanded to be polite. So, as the subordinate group, women must avoid offending men. They have to speak carefully and politely, which can be seen through their use of standard speech form when they are speaking to others, especially men. According to Holmes (1992:203), women's greater use of standard speech forms may then simply be a reflection of their sensitivity to contextual factors. Standard speech forms, for instance, are used in more formal contexts, where people operate primarily in terms of social status and role, and certainly, they reflect social distance. It means when people do not know each other well, they tend to speak in ways that reflect their social roles (e.g. customer- shopkeeper, teacher-pupil,

interviewer-interviewee) rather than relating as individuals.

Lakoff (Holmes, 1992:314) gives her opinion about the features of women's language. She suggested that women's speech was characterized by particular linguistic features (see chapter I). Lakoff's fundamental point is to give evidence that the inferior status of women in society contributed to forming the features and these features reflect women's uncertainty. There are some features provided by Lakoff (Holmes, 1992:313) which explain uncertainty of women. Lakoff (Holmes, 1992:316) divides two features : hedging devices and boosting devices. Lexical hedges, tag question, intonation, superpolite forms and euphemism, are part of hedging devices. While intensifiers and emphatic stress are part of boosting devices. The hedging devices can be used to weaken the strength of an assertion while the boosting devices can be used to strengthen it. For example, 'It's a good film' can be strengthened by adding the intensifier 'really' , so it becomes 'It's really a good film' or weakened by adding the lexical

hedge 'sort of', so it becomes 'It's sort of a good film'. The first sentence means 'Ini adalah film yang sangat bagus' or 'sungguh-sungguh bagus'. In Indonesian the words 'sangat' or 'sungguh-sungguh' function as intensifiers which strengthen the meaning of the whole sentence. The second means 'Ini nampaknya adalah film yang bagus'. The words 'nampaknya' sometimes is changed to the word 'agakny' or 'dapat dikata', which weakens the meaning of the whole sentence. It seems that the person is not sure whether the film is good or not.

However, Lakoff found in her research that it is possible if sometimes, the result of a research which uses the same method is not always the same, even is the contrary. Sometimes an analysis shows that what we call 'powerless form' is not always women's, and that what we call hedging and boosting devices do not always express uncertainty. In Indonesian, we will find that women also use words such as 'sangat' or 'amat'. Even they try to combine the words together, so it becomes 'amat sangat'; they also use words such as 'nampaknya', 'agakny', 'mungkin', 'sekali',

'sepertinya' which become a certain feature of women's language in general then. However, it does not mean that the features are the same with Lakoff's.

Poynton (1995:49) said that there are some features produced by women such as tag question, hedges and modal adverbs such as 'probably' and 'certainly'. Women also have a tendency to produce interpersonal metaphors such as 'I think', 'I suppose' and superpolite forms which sometimes show the indication of the use of modality, for example: "I was wondering if you could possibly just do me a small favour , if you wouldn't mind". She finds that women tend to produce features like those described by Lakoff. Then, she also gives other features such as 'sentence length' about which she says that women have a tendency to produce longer sentences than men.

Another common feature of women speech is 'sentence completeness'. According to Jespersen (1922:102), women leave sentences incomplete more often than men. While Hoas (1979: 618) suggests that this may be because women get interrupted more often. Futhermore, Hirschman and Fishman find other features

of women's language. Hirschman (Holmes, 1992:210) says that women show a greater tendency to make use of positive minimal responses, especially, 'mmm...hmm'. While Fishman (Holmes, 1992:210) says that women display a greater tendency to ask questions.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS