CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Background of the Study

It is interesting to talk about swear words, since these words are universal. We can find swear words in all languages in the world, including English. We can easily find them in the media such as music, books, televisions, etc. Unfortunately, there is no clear explanation on these swear words, about how to use them appropriately, the meaning, the function, and also the psychological effect that the person will have if we say swear words to him/her. This is due to the fact that English teachers tend to avoid or ignore swear words in teaching English to the students. Meanwhile, the opportunities for the English learners to know swear words through the media around them are opened widely. This can be dangerous, especially for the young learners, if they adopt the words blindly. This is what happened to the writer when she often used some English swear words without knowing their meanings, the appropriate uses, or the effects on the person she spoke to, during her study in junior high school. She felt proud everytime she said those words to other people even though she did not know anything about them, since those words are often stated by the English people anytime they

want. She knew the words from the movies, from the televisions, or from music, especially rock music, she heard. The fact about today's entertainment is brought by Charles P. Alexander in Goshgarian's "Exploring Language". According to him, today's entertainment, including heavy-metal music, carries messages that are damaging to young psyches and dangerous to society, which among them are: 1) women are sexual objects to be used and abused by men; 2) violence is an effective means of resolving conflicts; 3) it is O.K. to hate another class of people (1992:452). Based on the reasons above and also the writer's own experience, she decided to make a study on the use of swear words in English rock lyrics as the media. The thesis supports the opinion that music is one of the media to introduce swear words to the English learners.

Everybody swears. It does not matter whether they realize it or not. Swear words, which are used to swear, are mostly related with the use of some taboo words. Taboo words commonly involve the deity, death, madness, sex, excretion and strangers (Hughes,1991). Therefore, words such as; bloody, drat, goddams, fuck, shit, piss may be called swear words, since these words violated some words considered taboo within the society. We have to realize that not all taboo words are swear words (Crystal,1989).

According to Ross in Crystal's "*Encyclopedia of Language*", there are two functions of swearing; emotional and social. Swear words function emotively when they are used to release emotional energy, for example when people get angry. Swear words which are used to socialize for some groups of young people ,for example, function socially. Swear words, in narrow sense, refer to the strongly emotive use of taboo words or phrases. Further, Ross states in Crystal's, ' Swearing is an outburst, an explosion, which gives relief to surges of emotional energy. It is a substitute for an aggressive bodily response, and can be aimed either at people or at objects' (1989:173). Since swear words are functioned only as relieves to surges of emotional energy, it is not impossible to find meaningless swear words such as; *fucking hell, mother-fucker*, and other phrases that are literally, nonsense.

People swear all the time. They swear in front of the public or when they are alone. They also swear to show their anger or just to be friendly with their groups. Based on those reasons above, we can find some swear words in music, too. Rock is one of some music genres that is identical with the use of swear words in its lyrics. Rock music is known from its characteristics, the tendency of its fast beat, and the predominance of certain musical instruments: the guitar and the drum. These characteristics related to certain emotional feeling are sent by the singers to the listeners. The fast beat or the

speed in rock music indicates the wishes of freedom. As mentioned by Reynold in *The Sex Revolts*, the beats of the music affect the nerve to break down psychic defences and open the soul to be united with the world (1995:120). Rock music shows up as a resistance against a matriarchy situation. It rebels against this situation, thus rock is a misogyny rebellion, because rockers can show their masculinity. Subordination and ego tantrums are bound within the terms of capitalism and patriarchy (Reynolds, 1995).

The background of this music leads to the use of many swear words in rock songs. The rockers tend to express their feelings freely through the songs they sing. They do not want to hide anything they feel. Whether it is happiness, sadness, even madness or anger. For the rock societies, swearing is a common thing. They swear almost all the time. It is not only done to show anger or to "explode" emotion but is also functioned as social markers (Crystal, 1989). The use of swear words indicate the emotive functions brought in rock music, which is to show freedom, violence, and rebellion. *Goddamn, motherfucker, shit* are some of the words that are often heard in rock songs. *Guns N'Roses*, as one of the biggest rock bands, uses a number of swear words in their songs. Example of pieces of their lyric in their song *Coma* are "In a world that's *full of shit*. Zap the *son of a bitch* again "or

in their other song, *Perfect Crime*, "*Goddamn* if it's a perfect crime. *Motherfucker* it's a perfect crime." Both songs are taken from their 'Illusions' albums.

Language attitude deals with general attitude toward the language, and also explores the stereotyped impressions toward the language , their speakers and their users (Saville-Troike, 1982). This study also focuses on language attitude. Hudson states that people may expect some characteristics of other people to have from the way they speak, or in other words, their language style. Based on those theories , this study focuses more on exploring the stereotyped impressions toward the language used by *Guns N'Roses,* a famous rock group. One of the stereotypes which the writer is trying to investigate is that the rockers are rude since they use inappropriate language in making their songs. This study is also supported by Saville-Troike's notion that stererotypic expectations may well become self-fulfilling prophesies (1982).

There are at least two related studies concerning the use of taboo words and swear words within the Indonesian community. The first one is a thesis by Try Sulistyowati Wahyuni, '*A Study on the Use of Taboo Words by the Male Students of English Department of Airlangga University* ', and the second one is by Yulenty Sampesule ' *The Language of Anger'*. Both studies

concern more on the use or the function of taboo words and swear words which show anger. According to them, Indonesian people still reject an act of swearing if it is only done to be 'friendly' with others. They are still bound to some norms. Swearing, therefore, will only make other people think that you are a person with bad manners. Wahyuni concluded that there are some factors that may influence the frequency of using taboo words as well as swear words. The factors are:

1. The speaker's personal feeling and habit.

2. The intercolutor's social status, age, and sex.

3. The setting of the conversation.

(Wahyuni,1997)

Based on Sampesule's study, she concluded that men use more swear words in stronger expletive than the women, since swear words are still considered as men's territory (Sampesule, 1996). The writer uses the data above to support her thesis. However, she concerns more about the kinds of swear words and also the prejudices against the use of swear words in some English rock lyrics. Therefore, the focus of this study is different from those of the two above. The writer uses the conclusions drawn from both studies as the supportive evidences in order to figure out the language attitude of the Indonesians towards swear words in general.

For the study of the stereotypes of *Guns N'Roses,* the writer, thus uses the lyrics as some clues to non-linguistic information about them, such as their social background and even personality traits like toughness or intelligence.

This group is chosen for the reason that they have existed for quite a long time, and already released seven albums. *Guns N'Roses* has a big name among the rock listeners around the world, included Indonesia. The third and the fourth albums; *Use Your Illusion I & II* are taken from their other five.

I.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the problems of the thesis are:

1. What kinds of swear words are used in the lyrics of *Guns N'Roses* ?

2. What are the prejudices against the use of swear words by *Guns N' Roses* in *Use Your Illusion I* and *II* ?

I.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of the thesis are :

1. To find out the kinds of swear words used in the lyrics of *Guns N'Roses*.

2. To find out the prejudices against the use of swear words by *Guns N' Roses* in *Use Your Illusion I* and *II*.

I.4 Significance of the Study

The writer hopes this research will be useful for all of the English Department students of Airlangga University , especially for those who take linguistics program, to have more awareness of the use of English swear words in rock songs as the media. This research is also expected to be useful to linguists who want to investigate the language attitude of the Indonesian people toward the use of English swear words.

The writer also hopes that this study could encourage people who read it to have broader knowledge on swearing especially swear words, so that they will have better perspective on treating and using them in the right way. This research is expected to make people aware of the presence of swear words in a language and that swear words are part of language.

I.5 Theoretical Framework

I.5.1. Theory of Language Attitude

Several sociolinguistics theories are applied in this study. They are theories from Trudgill, Fasold, Troike-Saville, Hudson, William, Agheyisi, Fishman, and Cooper.

In the book *Sociolinguistics; An Introduction,* Trudgill states two aspects of language behavior which are very important from a social point of view, first, the function of language in establishing social relationship, and , second, the role played by language in conveying information about the speaker. It is clear that both these aspects of linguistics behavior are reflections of the fact that there is a close interrelationship between language and society (Trudgill, 1974: 34).

Attitudes of Indonesians toward the use of swear words in *Guns N'Roses'* lyrics play an important role in this study. Therefore, some language attitude theories are applied here. One of them is Saville-Troike's theory which states that language attitude studies may be characterized as: (1) those which explore general attitude toward language and language skills (2) those which explore stereotyped impressions toward language, their speakers and their functions: and (3) those who focus on applied concerns

(e.g. language choice and usage, and language learning) (1982: 168)

Another theory is presented by Fasold in, *The Sociolinguistics of Society*, which states that language attitude studies concern with attitude toward language itself, the speakers of a particular language or dialect, and even language maintenance and planning efforts. The theory is based on mentalists's view of attitude which is considered as an internal state aroused by stimulation of some type and which may mediate the organism's subsequent response. (William, Agheyisi, Fishman and Cooper in Fasold, 1984).

In making social interaction with other people, someone needs information about another person's personality because it affects one's own behavior to the person whom one speaks. The information is conveyed in the language used by other person. As Hudson states in his book *Sociolinguistics* that the way in which we speak (or write) conveys a lot of socially important information because speakers use their linguistics choices in order to locate themselves socially in a multi-dimensional space, as an 'act of identity'. Therefore, we may expect characteristics of the people from the way they speak, and that the link between speech and these characteristics lies on the type of person, we think, speaks that way. This is what is called *language*

prejudice (1996:206-208). This study concerns with prejudice about *Guns N'Roses.* The illustration of *language-based prejudice* is given below.
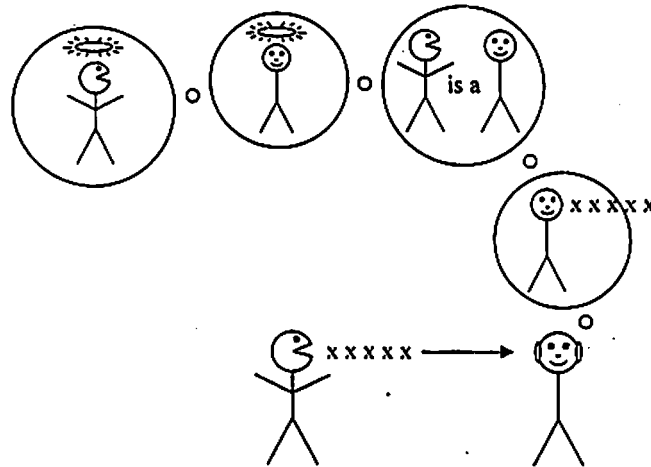

Figure cf Language prejudice

The figure illustrates the links from 'objective' social type to a 'subjective' and evaluative one. The hearer's chain of thought is as follows (with S as the speaker). S has just said 'xxxxxx', and people who talk that way are type T people; type T people are nice (have halos); therefore S is nice (1996: 208-209). Hudson states a method of *Subjective Reaction Test* which was first developed by social psychologists (Lambert, 1967, Giles & Powerland, 1975, Giles and Bradac, 1994 in Hudson, 1996). These are some related studies concerning the method, the first is *Labov's* study which investigated linguistic variability. He prepared a tape-recording of a series of people talking, then the respondents whose stereotypes were being

investigated were asked to listen to the voices in the tape recorder, one at a time, and answered a questionnaire about each. The second one is *Trudgill's* and *Tzavaras'* research which investigated the declining status of *Arvanitika* (the Albanian dialect) as a language of group identity. They used *a closed-question questionnaire* method which means the researcher makes some questions to be answered with some choices which are already given. The formats of this method involve *semantic differential, yes-no answers, multiple choice,* or *ranking schemes* (Trudgill & Tzavaras 1977 in Fasold). The last one is a study using *matched-guise technique* , *Lambert* is the one that develop this method. The aims of this method are at total control of all variables except language, therefore, a number of bilingual speakers fluent in the languages under investigation are recruited (Fasold,1984).

I.5.2. Theory of Swearing

Besides using several Sociolinguistics theories, the writer is also using some theories of swearing which are developed by Geoffrey Hughes in his book *Swearing* (1990), H.E. Ross (1960) in *David Crystal's "The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language"*, Dr. Joyce Brothers in *Goshgarian's "Exploring Language"*, and some theories taken from some articles *"The Gospel Reminder....."* in *Arkansas Bay* newspaper by Marvin Rickett, dated 22 February 1998 and 1 March 1998.

I.5.2.1 Geoffrey Hughes' Theory

1. The world-field of swearing is, as *Swift* and many others have observed, in constant flux, as older terms of weight and force are trivialized, to be replaced by modish newcomers (p.236).

2. There are at least three kinds of swearing mode; swearing *at* or various forms of personal abuse, which is the dominant one, swearing *by* (that something is *so*) and swearing *to* (do something), or asseveration and invocation of higher powers, which have correspondingly diminished. The mode of swearing *by,* is reserved for formal legal proceedings such as taking an oath or issuing an affidavit (p.237).

3. Swear words need periodic reinforcements since they become weakened through repetition (p.253).

4. In Western society, the major shifts in the focus of swearing have happened, from religious matters (more especially the breeching of the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain) to sexual and bodily functions and to national and racial insults (p.237).

5. Swearing is the most emotive form of language and the most easily misinterpreted. There is always the possibility of a form of words (such as *bastard, bugger* and *mother-fucker*) being taken literally when it may be intended in a mild, familiar or even jocular fashion (p.252).

6. Attitudes towards swearing are not constant, like they seem to oscillate in cycles between acceptance and repression (p.256).

I.5.2.2. H.E. Ross' Theory

1. Swearing is an outburst, an explosion, which gives relief to surges of emotional energy (p.173).

2. Swearing has at least two functions: emotional and social. Emotional is when swearing is used as a substitute for an aggressive bodily response which is aimed either at people or at objects. Social is when swearing marks *social distance*, as when a group of youths display their contempt for sosial conventions by swearing loudly in public or writing obscene graffiti on walls, and also *social solidarity*, as when a group develops identical swearing habits.

I.5.2.3. Dr. Joyce Brothers' Theory

1. Dirty words are connected with emotions and experiences that both frighten and fascinate.

2. The following are her opinions on obscenity and profanity:

A. Obscenity:

   1) Obscenity is meant to insult

Obscene words are mostly used to insult the person who received sexual attention. The dirty words are ugly not because they refer to sex but because they imply a narrow, mechanical master-victim concept of sexuality. The words will lose their power only when we are able to see sex as neither exploitation nor salvation but a human activity bringing a man and woman together in a loving way.

2) Words that don't always mean what they say

The real emotional meaning of a dirty word can't be understood apart from the situation in which it occurs. Obscene words that are stated by a child don't always have the same meaning as when they are stated by a frustated woman.

3) Obscenity vents fears

Obscene language serves as a tense-releaser for men, as well as women. They are likely to employ an unusual amount of obscenity, partly to vent the fears about homosexual impulses aroused by such highly charged, intimate situations.

B. Profanity:

She gives her opinion only on profanity of racial epithets. According to her, they are obscene words in that they are dehumanizing and distorting. Derogatory ephitets applied to persons of different race, religion or culture

are as hostile as sexual slurs. An insecure individual easily feels threatened by differences in appearance and behavior, his instinctive defense, often, is foul language.

I.5.2.4. Marvin Rickett 's Theory

1. Swearing is the taking of an oath which invokes the Divine, to make a solemn declaration with an appeal made to God that it is true (Webster). Swearing and cursing go together. One swears that what he says is true, and if it be not true, he invites a curse from God to come down upon him.

2. Swearing came to be abused by some people. Instead of reserving it to be used under the most solemn of circumstances, such as a court of law, they use it in their everyday language to reinforce their everyday language. The abuses of swearing cover the use of *scatological language.*

3. *Scatological language* refers to vulgar language or obscene language. It employs the vulgar terms for the bodily functions in elimination of wastes and sex, and the body parts used for these, are known as language reinforcers.

I.6 Method of the Study

The study concerns with the use of swear words in some English rock lyrics and the prejudices against them, which includes some subjective

connections between speech characteristics and social ones. In order to study them objectively, the writer uses *subjective reaction test.* The writer copies the lyrics with some already underlined swear words, then, *closed-question questionnaires* are distributed. The method to analyse the data is *quantitative descriptive.*

I.6.1 Definitions of Key Terms

1. Swear words : Words used emotively or socially, related to some terms such as religion, sexual and bodily function, to national and racial insult. Therefore, they can also be said as the emotive and social use of some taboo words.

2. Taboo words : Words referred to certain acts, objects, or relationships which society wishes to avoid - and thus to the language used to talk about them. They relate with immorality, social ostracism, illness or death, culture-specific beliefs and practises in religion or magic, decorum, and social control.

3. Rock lyrics : Words of rock songs.

4. Prejudice : A characteristic of a social stereotype which is only weakly predictable from the other characteristics (or even not predictable at all).

5. Stereotype :Social concept, associated with characteristics, as a way of recording that these characteristics tend to be associated with each other, so one of them allows us to predict the remainder which is shared by many people in society.

1.6.2 Scope and Limitation

There are a number of topics that deals with swearing. The writer, therefore, would like to focus on the use of swear words in rock music and the prejudices against them. *Guns N'Roses* , one of the best rock groups, is chosen as the object of the research.

1.6.3 Location & Population of the Research

The study requires respondents. Having English capability is one of the criteria that must be fulfilled by the respondents. Consequently, the location and population of the respondents is the English Department,

Faculty of Letters, Airlangga University. The population of the research is the English Department students of Airlangga University.

I.6.4 Sampling

Purposive random sampling is used to get the data. This is a method in which questionnaires would be given to certain respondents that have fulfilled the criteria.

The criteria of the respondents are:

1. having studied in the English Department of Airlangga University for at least one year.

2. being able to identify some English swear words.

Considering the criteria, the writer divides the respondents into three groups. However, different English proficiencies of each of the groups is not a problem in this study.

First group consists of students from year 1998. The students in this group have been studying in the English Department for a year. Second group consists of students from year 1997 who have been studying in the English Department for two years. Third group consists of students from year 1996. They have been studying in the English Department for 3 years.

In general, the division of the group is as follows:

1. the 1998 group

2. the 1997 group

3. the 1996 group

Each of the groups consists of 10 respondents, so the total is 30 respondents.

I.6.5 Technique of Data Collection

To find out the language attitude of *Guns N'Roses*, the writer uses closed-question questionnaire which is also used by Trudgill and Tzavaras in their study. (Fasold, 1984:159).

Briefly, these are the steps used in collecting the data:

1. doing observation

2. choosing the respondents.

3. underlining the swear words in the lyrics of *Guns N'Roses.*

4. making the questionnaires.

5. distributing the questionnaires.

6. calculating the scores of the questionnaires.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL DESCRION OF THE OBJECT OF THE STUDY