

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Language and society are two things that cannot be separated. Language is part of society. As defined by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2000), society is a social community; or certain grouping of humanity. It means that society includes people in the world. On the other hand, language has often been defined as a system of arbitrary symbols used for human communication (Hatch, 1992: 1).

As social creatures, human beings need to socialize with other people. They use a language to communicate with others. However, a language is not solely as means of communication. It is also an expression of shared assumptions and transmits implicit values and behavioral models to those who use it (Mills, 1995: xi). Hence, by using a language, people can express their feelings, emotions, and ideas to someone else. It can also establish and maintain social relationship with others.

Everybody in the world, whatever his/her sex, age, education, and social class, speaks a language. Nevertheless, sometimes there is miscommunication in conversation between men and women, even though they speak the same language (for example, English). This condition may be caused by several factors, and a gender factor could become one of the influential factors.

Some experts believe that the ways men and women speak are different because of their biological, social-politic, and cultural differentiation which usually have tight relationship with power issue. Although they speak the same language, men and women have different features of language when they speak. Their language differences are not merely on their voice qualities (e.g. men have lower tone, while women have higher tone) but also on lexical (the use and the choice of word), grammatical (the use and the choice of sentence), and pragmatic problems (the way they state a meaning of a language). It is also claimed that women are more linguistically polite than men, and that women and men emphasize different speech functions (Holmes, 1992: 164). Those arguments explain that in a conversation, men and women might not understand each other.

Researches which show that men and women use different language have been carried out by some sociolinguists. In his research in 1922, Jespersen, in his book entitled *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (cited in Kuntjara, 2003: 2) showed that men and women in a certain tribe in Caribea used a different language. The language used by the men in that tribe was never used by the women (even though the women understand and know the language) and vice versa. The mothers in this tribe would teach their language only to their daughters, while their sons would follow their fathers' language. According to Jespersen, the differences were related to the socio-cultural problem in that tribe. For example, a wife of Zulu tribe was not allowed to say the name of her father in-law and her brother. For that reason, that woman had to find other words as the replacement. A woman who disobeys this rule could be accused as a witch and get a dead penalty.

Holmes (1992: 164-165) also noted the differences between men's and women's language in the Amazon Indian tribe. Husbands and wives in this tribe usually have a different language because men must marry women outside their own tribe that usually have a different language. Therefore, in this community, men and women speak different languages. There is another similar example that is noted by Holmes. In Montana, for instance, there are pronunciation differences between the sexes in the Gros Ventre American Indian tribe. The women say [kja tsa] for 'bread', while the men say [d a tsa]. In this community, if a person uses the wrong form for their sex, the older members of the community consider them bisexual.

Lakoff also supports the idea that men and women have different speech functions. In her 1975's book *Language and Woman's Place*, she identified a number of linguistic features which she claimed were used more often by women than by men, and which in her opinion expressed uncertainty and lack of confidence. She labeled those features as 'women's language'. Those linguistic features are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonations on declaratives, 'empty' adjectives, specialized vocabularies (precise color terms), intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'superpolite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words (the use of expletives), and emphatic stress. Lakoff herself admitted that her findings were based on her own observation and intuition, but her work has motivated other sociolinguists to do further researches on the relationship between language and gender.

Based on that fact, the writer is inspired to do a similar study which relates language and gender using Lakoff's theory. For that reason, in this study the writer uses the theory of Robin Lakoff to analyze women's linguistic features in the dialogues spoken by the characters of a well-known TV series, Gilmore Girls. The writer decided to pick the dialogues in Gilmore Girls TV series as the corpus of her study because the main characters of this series are women and the writer assumed that the female characters should frequently use the linguistic features defined by Lakoff. Besides, as far as the writer had observed when she was watching this series, the male characters also frequently use those types of linguistic features. Moreover, this American TV drama series has become one of the favorite TV series, both in The United States and Indonesia, since its first appearance on May 10, 2000. Beside the quite interesting mother-daughter story, this series is also supported by young actresses and actors such as Alexis Bledel and Jared Padalecki, who become the idols of most teenagers after they appeared in this series. Therefore, by choosing the dialogues from a familiar TV series which has been known well by a lot of people, the writer hope that this study would be interesting to be read and could attract the curiosity of the readers about women's language.

1.2. Statements of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the statements of the problems in this study are as follow:

1. What types of women's linguistic features occur in the dialogues of Gilmore Girls TV series?
2. Which type of women's linguistic feature occurs most frequently?
3. Who use those types of linguistic features more often, the male or the female characters?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the statements of the problems above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find out the types of women's linguistic features which occur in the dialogues of Gilmore Girls TV series.
2. To find out the type of women's linguistic feature which occurs most frequently.
3. To find out whether the male or the female characters of Gilmore Girls TV series use those types of linguistic features more often.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The writer did this study because of two reasons. First, this study is expected to give meaningful contribution to linguistic studies, especially sociolinguistics studies of women's language and women's linguistic features. It may become an input or side reading for linguists and provide useful information for the ordinary people who are interested in studying and analyzing the phenomena of language in society, or language and gender in particular. By

reading this paper, the writer hope that the readers would be more aware with the issue in language and gender, especially the existence of women's language in society.

Secondly, this study is expected to provide useful information for English Department students, so that by reading this paper, the students would understand more about women's language, especially the types of women's linguistic features defined by Lakoff which are shown in the dialogues of Gilmore Girls TV series.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

To be more focused and able to provide an in-depth analysis, the writer limits this study into the following steps. First, the writer picked Gilmore Girls TV series as the corpus of her study. Next, she chose one episode of the Gilmore Girls TV series in season four to be analyzed. The chosen episode is episode one, Ballroom and Biscotti. The duration of this episode is approximately one hour.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

In this study, the writer uses the theory of Robin Lakoff about women's linguistic features. Lakoff proposed this theory in her book entitled *Language and Woman's Place* (1975). As cited in Holmes (1992: 313), Lakoff stated that women were using language which reinforced their subordinate status; they were 'colluding in their own subordination' by the way they spoke. She shifted the focus of research on gender differences to syntax, semantics, and style. She

suggested that women's subordinate status in American society is reflected by the language used by women, as well as the language used about women. She also identified a number of linguistic features which she claimed were use more often by women than by men, and which in her opinion expressed uncertainty and lack of confidence.

Lakoff (cited in Holmes, 1992: 314) suggested that women's speech was characterized by linguistic features such as the following:

1. Lexical hedges or fillers, e.g. *you know, sort of, well, and you see.*
2. Tag questions, e.g. *"She's very nice, isn't she?"*
3. Rising intonation on declaratives, e.g. *"It's really good."*
4. 'Empty' adjectives, e.g. *divine, charming, cute.*
5. Precise color terms, e.g. *magenta, aquamarine.*
6. Intensifiers such as *just* and *so*, e.g. *"I like him so much."*
7. 'Hypercorrect' grammar, e.g. consistent use of standard verb forms.
8. 'Superpolite' forms, e.g. indirect requests, euphemisms.
9. Avoidance of strong swear words, e.g. *fudge, my goodness.*
10. Emphatic stress, e.g. *"It was a BRILLIANT performance."*

Even though Lakoff's claims were based on her own intuitions and observations, her work has inspired a lot of linguists to do similar research, because her claims appeared to be so specific and easy to investigate.

1.7. Method of the Study

The method that is applied in this study is quantitative descriptive. The writer uses the quantitative descriptive method to provide detailed description on the use of women's linguistic features which are uttered by the characters of Gilmore Girls TV series based on Lakoff's theory and to calculate the percentage of each type of the women's linguistic features and the percentage of male and female characters in using the women's linguistic features.

1.7.1. Corpus

The corpus of this study comprises the dialogues of Gilmore Girls TV series in season four. In doing the analysis, the writer picked one episode, which is episode one, entitled *Ballroom and Biscotti*. This episode was played in the United States on September 23, 2003 by Warner Brothers Television.

1.7.2. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, the writer defines the following key terms:

1. *Women's language*: A language that avoids direct and forceful statements, and relies on conforms that convey hesitation and uncertainty.
2. *Women's linguistic features*: Linguistic features which are used more often by women than by men (e.g. lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, 'empty' adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'superpolite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words, emphatic stress).

3. *Lexical hedges / filler words*: Words or phrases that are not necessary for the meaning of the sentence which serve to make a statement less than an assertion.
4. *Tag questions*: Syntactic devices which may express uncertainty. It is used to request agreement of their addressee.
5. *Emphatic stress*: Modifiers which are used to emphasize the utterances or strengthen the meaning of an utterance.
6. *'Hypercorrect' grammar*: The use of more formal syntax and pronunciation by women which are closer to the prestige norms.
7. *'Superpolite' forms*: A kind of request and other sort of utterances with excessively polite forms.
8. *'Empty' adjectives*: Adjectives which do not have strong meaning or adjectives which are meaningless and lack of power.

1.7.3. Technique of Data Collection

Data have an important role in this study. The data were used when the writer analyzes the types of women's linguistic features uttered by the characters of Gilmore Girls TV series. The writer used several ways in collecting the data. By using this technique, the obtained data are expected to be as accurate as possible. The procedures are as below:

1. Finding the Transcript on the Internet

First of all, the writer planned to record the conversation from the chosen episode of Gilmore Girls TV series and then transcribed the recorded data. But

unfortunately, Gilmore Girls TV series was not played in Indonesia anymore. As an alternative way, the writer found the transcript of Gilmore Girls TV series season four episode one (Ballroom and Biscotti) from the Internet. The transcript is taken from the official site of Gilmore Girls TV series, i.e. <http://www.gilmore-girls.net>

2. Copying the Transcript Found in the Internet

The writer copied the transcript of the chosen episode of Gilmore Girls TV series found in the Internet. By using this technique, the writer was able to read the transcript for several times.

3. Selecting the Dialogues

The writer selected the dialogues which contain women's linguistic features only. Then she omitted the rest of the dialogues which do not have any relationship with women's linguistic features. This technique makes the writer able to analyze the use of women's linguistic features in the dialogues easily.

1.7.4. Technique of Data Analysis

From the collected data, the writer then analyzes the selected data using the following steps:

1. Identifying Features Found in the Data

From the selected dialogues, the writer was able to identify the types of women's linguistic features that occur in the conversation. For example: which dialogue contains the feature of lexical hedges / fillers, which one contains tag questions, which one contains 'empty' adjectives, etc.

2. Classifying the Data

After the data was identified, then the data was classified according to each type of women's linguistic features proposed by Lakoff. The data which contains lexical hedges / fillers is classified into the feature of lexical hedges / fillers. The same technique had been done to the rest of the features.

3. Making a Table

The features found in the data were put in a table according to the types of women's linguistic features. Each scene was analyzed in one table. In the end of the data analysis, there is also a summary of the whole analysis in form of a table.

4. Making a Calculation

After the data in each scene was analyzed in a table, the writer then made a percentage calculation to find out the type of women's linguistic feature which occurs most frequently and to find out whether the male or the female characters of Gilmore Girls TV series who use those linguistic features more often.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW