CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of The Study

The relationship between language and sex has attracted considerable attention in recent years, largely as a consequence of public concern over male and female equality. Language plays an important role in shaping the social scene and constructing social identities. This can be seen particularly in the area of gender—the socially constructed differences of behavior and belief considered appropriate to the two sexes. The following illustration might help our understanding in grasping the idea of sexist language before we come up later with further description about the current issues of language and sexism.

Have you ever been told about the riddle that goes like this: A man and his young son were in automobile accident. The father was killed and the son, who was critically injured, was rushed to a hospital. As attendants wheeled the unconscious boy into the emergency room, the doctor on duty looked down at him and said, "My God, It's my son!" What do you think the relationship of the doctor to the injured boy?

As a matter of fact, the answer of this riddle is so simple. However, this could make us think over it so complicated. The answer is obvious once you see it that the doctor was the boy's mother but why can't we answer this riddle

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immediately? To say that a woman in medicine is an exception is simply to confirm the puzzle. The assumption that all doctors are male deletes the female segment of the profession and reinforces the perception that only males are "proper" professionals. Even there are thousands of doctors who are women, but in order to be seen in the mind's eye, they must be called women doctors (Miller and Swift, 1972 cited in Goshgarian, 1992: 218).

It is a semantic mechanism that operates to keep women invisible. This invisibility is much more concrete such in the generic use of 'he' and 'man' to address all human species both male and female. If the generic 'man' is genuinely inclusive then such following examples should sound equally odd:

(a) Man's vital interests are food, shelter, and access to females

(b) Man is a mammal which breastfeeds his young and experiences difficulty in giving birth (Montgomery, 1992: 64)

Generic here means general rather than specific, so the generic 'he' and 'man' is therefore to include females as well as males. Even in practice, when operating generally, words such as 'he' and 'man' still carry their masculine connotations. The readers of sentences containing generic pronouns often do not read them as referring to both sexes, but in fact read them as referring strictly to males only.

Above are various examples of sexist language that exist in our language. These might cause the feeling of being insulted, offended and humiliated on the behalf of a certain party that in this case is female as the opposite sex of male.

We often do need to realize the existence of sexism within our language. As we know, sexism is the discrimination on the grounds of sex, based on the assumption that women are both different and inferior to men. Slightly from the definition, we can comprehend that there is a gap that separates women from men. The feeling of authority and superiority is always identical to male while the inferiority and weakness are always attached to female.

However, in constructing relationship with others, people need to build a good communication. Good communication respects individual worth, dignity, integrity and capacity. It treats people equally despite their sex, race, age, religion, disability, socio-economic background or creed (Miller and Swift, 1972 cited in Goshgarian, 1992: 218).

A bias of gender can be easily slipped through both speaking and writing. We are accustomed to the emotive force of words and to the ways in which language influences thought and behavior. We follow the truth wherever it leads even if it is heading to the reform of our ordinary concept and belief and, if necessary, of our everyday language. We will try hard that our readers or listeners will not receive a message that we never intend to send. The use of non-sexist language can also be a good devise in tightening a solid society. A writer of articles on newspapers and a host on a talk show should pay more attention on the choice of the language used because of the ethos that the writer or speaker should fulfill. Ethos is the reader's or the hearer's faith that the writer—as well as the speaker—is a good and trustworthy person. If a writer uses language that the reader finds either offensive or inaccurate, the reader will lose faith in the writer's

argument. Of course, the writer cannot persuade people when he or she offends them or makes inaccurate claims.

Based on the accounts above, the writer then tries to take the topic about sexism in language especially English. By collecting materials taken from various contexts of language use —such as articles in newspapers, magazines, Internet and sentences taken from English dictionaries —that are considered inclusive to that sexist language, the writer then examined further which linguistic items that should be corrected according to the guidelines of non-sexist language.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

In relation with the background of the study, the problems are stated as follows:

- What are linguistic items containing sexism in a variety of language uses that have been gathered by the writer?

- What are the non-sexist alternatives for those linguistic items that can be used to eliminate sexism in English?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out linguistic items containing sexism from various contexts of language use and to suggest non-sexist alternatives for those linguistic items according to the guidelines of non-sexist language.

1.4   Significance of the Study

This study attempts to provide non-sexist alternatives mostly found in English language so that the subtle violation of language in the sense of bias could be avoided as much as possible. Furthermore, this study might contribute some hints for preparing materials or discourses for professionals such as linguistic scholars, columnists, journalists and broadcasters. It is also expected to be the guidelines for English teachers at the beginning stage as an effort to introduce the value of non-sexist language and as a part of the early insight for young generation about sexist and non-sexist language. More particularly, this study might be useful for a certain group of people because the study may reveal the fact that the existence of sexist language might disturb the society's life especially people of opposite sexes. By knowing about sexist and non-sexist language, people will understand better about non-sexist language which treats people more equally. This effort could help them avoid offense on the behalf of a certain party that will finally lead people to become a solid society. It is hoped that there will be an awareness of the way in which language can reflect and help maintaining social attitudes towards men and women.

1.5   Scope and Limitation

This study concerns strictly only on some sexist expressions found in English language. Further analysis will only focus on the chosen linguistic items in forms of words, phrases and sentences that have been collected from various contexts of language use. They were taken from magazines, newspapers, English

dictionaries and articles on Internet (among others are Indonesian Daily News, Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary and some online bulletins).

1.6   Theoretical Framework

Guidelines of Non-sexist Language

Many educational institutions have published their own versions of guidelines for non-sexist language. The writer has gathered some guidelines issued by American Philosophical Association (APA), Linguistic Society of America (LSA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The writer gained those sources through Internet connection since those institutions only published the guidelines in the form of online bulletin because the printed copy of the bulletin is no longer available. In addition, the writer also found a book entitled *The McGraw –Hill College Workbook* written by John C. Bean that discusses briefly the sexist language and some short guidelines to avoid sexual biases in our language. The intention of making the guidelines of non-sexist language is not for censoring and limiting language but rather for expanding language so as to include all people on equal basis regardless of sex.

The writer then combined those guidelines so that one elaborate version of guidelines of non-sexist language can be formulated. The purpose of combining those guidelines is for picking out the best part of each. Since those four guidelines— which come from American Philosophical Association (APA), Linguistic Society of America (LSA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and *The McGraw –Hill College Workbook* written by John C.

Bean—have their own weakness and strength hence each version acts as a complement for another. Furthermore, the description of each version of guidelines will be dealt thoroughly in Literature Review.

Meanwhile, the combined guidelines of non-sexist language in the writer's version are divided into several categories

1. Generic use of 'man'

It is often claimed that 'man' is a generic term. As a matter of fact, the word 'man' is ambiguous as it can mean either human being or male human being. 'Man' once was a truly generic word referring to all humans, but has gradually narrowed in meaning to become a word that refers to adult male human beings. Somehow the generic 'man' is not interpreted gender neutrally. When we use the word 'man' generically, people do tend to think male persons only and this obscures the presence and contribution of female. Here are some hints to find out the alternatives for using 'man' as a generic term:

a. Using indefinite pronouns as alternatives for 'man'

b. Avoiding the use of 'man' as a noun, verb or adjective

c. Avoiding the generic use of words that contain 'man' and its masculine equivalents

2. Generic use of personal pronouns

The male authors of the earliest English grammars wrote for male readers in an age when few women were literate. The grammars of this period contain no indication that masculine pronouns were sex-inclusive when used in general references. The masculine pronouns did not reflect a belief that they could refer to

both sexes. Since English does not posses a singular sex-indefinite pronoun, the pronouns 'he', 'his' and 'him' are frequently used as generic pronouns. Male pronouns should be used only in relation to male. As the use of these pronouns is either having ambiguous meaning or excluding women, we try to find alternatives using these hints:

a. Changing active sentence into its passive form

b. Addressing the reader/audience directly

c. Recasting singular pronoun into plural

d. Rephrasing the sentence

e. Replacing personal pronouns with articles

f. Using double-pronoun construction

3. Sex-balanced occupation terms

Sex specific occupation terms reinforce the assumption that the job can be and only be done by persons of one sex. This can inhibit members of the other sex from applying these posts. The alternatives forms are sought in order to avoid the impression that certain positions are sex specific-exclusive.

a. Alternatives for male sex-specific occupation

b. Alternatives for female sex-specific occupation

4. Titles and other modes of address

Inappropriate use of names, titles, salutations and endearments creates the impression that women merit less respect or less serious consideration than men do. The titles 'Miss' and 'Mrs' not only identify the person addressed as a woman but reveal her marital status also, whereas the use of 'Mr' merely identifies that person as a man. The use of 'Ms' is recommended for all women when the parallel 'Mr' is applicable. 'Ms' should always be used when a woman's title of preference is unknown. A woman's preference of title should be respected when it is already recognized.

5. Sexist description

Sexist description certainly involves sex role stereotyping. Sex role stereotyping here means common utterances that usually alienate group of sexes and make some characteristics identical to certain sexes, whereas in fact, the condition might be the other way round.

a. Selective choice of adjective

b. Stereotyped notion alteration

1.7 Method of the Study

The method used in this study is qualitative since the whole materials of this study were taken from the documentary data. This study can also be called library research since the writer counted on secondary data merely.

Punch (1998: 190) writes on his book *Introduction to Social Research:*

Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches as follows:

> Documents, both historical and contemporary, are a rich source of data for social research... documentary sources of data might be used in various ways in social research. Some studies might depend entirely on documentary data, with such data the focus in their own right (Punch 1998:190)

1.7.1 Definition of Key Terms

- *Sexism:* any discrimination against women or men because of their sex made on irrelevant background.

- *Sexist language:* any language that expresses such stereotyped attitudes and expectations, or that assumes the inherent superiority of one sex over the other.

- *Non-sexist alternatives:* other optional forms of language that might be used to avoid the sexism within a language.

- *Guidelines:* directive points to compass and suggest something; a principle or criterion guiding or directing action.

- *Linguistic Items:* lexical items, which —in this case— are words, sentences and phrases.

- *Various contexts of language use:* different sorts of language in practice—in this case— can be taken among variety of written mass media such as magazines, newspapers, English dictionaries or online bulletins.

- *Generic:* characteristics that are general; not specific or special

1.7.2 Technique of Data Collection

Data collection is a process of gaining materials for this study. Therefore, the writer collected the data through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is done by picking out samples not based on the strata or area, but samples having certain characteristics since they are chosen for a certain purpose. Punch states that purposive sampling is a sort of sampling which is often used in qualitative research which means sampling in a deliberate way with some purpose or focus in mind (1998: 193).

The characteristics of the data are:

1. Linguistic items in the form of words, sentences and phrases were taken from the sources, in this case from magazines, newspapers, English dictionaries and articles on Internet regardless of the date of the issues.

2. The linguistic items were regarded as sexist language, in this case language that expresses stereotyped attitudes towards certain kind of sex.

3. These linguistic items belong to one of the categories in the available guidelines of non-sexist language.

1.7.3 Technique of Data Analysis

First of all, the collected data in the form of linguistic items were selected and divided into five main categories. Then they were identified by using guidelines of non-sexist language and later would be given their suggested forms as the substitutes for the previous ones, which no longer contain sexism within them. In short, the procedures of data analysis are as follows:

1. Grouping the data into some categories of the guidelines

2. Identifying the linguistic items inclusive to sexist language

3. Suggesting the non-sexist alternatives for those linguistic items

I.8   Organization of the Thesis

The writer organizes the thesis into four main chapters. Each chapter is specified as follows: the first chapter is *Introduction*. This chapter contains eight subchapters: background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, theoretical framework, scope and limitations, method of the study, and organization of the paper itself. The next— the second chapter— is *Literature Review* in which the writer presents arguments, opinions, findings (or related studies) and other supporting sources in the field of study. The third chapter is *Discussion*. This third chapter is concerned with the findings and explanations of the data analysis. The last— the fourth chapter— is *Conclusion and Suggestion* in which the writer tries to draw the result of the study and provides suggestions that may be beneficial for subsequent studies on similar field.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW