

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

In language use, there are many interesting issues to be analyzed; one of them is about language and gender. Some linguists have shown that men and women have different ways to communicate with others. Tannen (1992) proposed that men assume a conversation as a competition in which there are higher and lower position. When they have conversation with others, they want to show their dominance, try to protect themselves, and struggle in order to preserve independence and avoid failure. On the other hand, when women have conversation with others, they assume that they are in a community, in which they look for closeness, seek and give information and support, and struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation. Coates (2004) said that men tend to communicate with a language of “status and independence” while women tend to communicate with a language of “connection and intimacy.”

It is believed that men and women have different linguistic competence. It is because they are raised in different subcultures. Lakoff stated that little boys and little girls, from the very start, learn two different ways of speaking (cited in Cameron, 1990). Boys and girls firstly learn the same way of speech which tends to be women’s language because under the age of 5, mothers are the dominance influences in their lives. Several years later, when they go to school, they naturally split up into same-sex peer groups. In this stage, the two languages are present. The boys unlearn their

original way of speech and adopt new form of speech, while the girls retain their old way of speech. Trudgill suggested that men tend to use vernacular form which is not cited as the correct form, while women tend to use standard form which is the prestigious form (cited in Holmes, 2008, p. 163). The use of vernacular form by men expresses macho connotations of masculinity and toughness. On the other hand, women use standard form to communicate with others because they generally lack status in society so that they use this linguistic form to claim such status (Holmes, 2008, p. 164). In addition, people tend to expect that women have better behavior than men as they have role to be models for children's speech. As a consequence, society expects women to communicate more correctly and politely than men (Holmes, 2008, pp. 165-166).

There are several features that more clearly distinguish between men's speech and women's speech. Those features are uttered by women and can be used to indicate the characteristic of women's language. Lakoff (1975) declared that there are ten types of women linguistic features. Those ten types are 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, and emphatic stress. This study analyzes women linguistic features used in a television show since television show nowadays has a big influence on language. Trudgill admitted that television can be "a source for new lexis and idioms or as a model for speakers of a dialect to acquire the core phonology and syntax of a standard

variety of a language” which can be imitated by the viewers (cited in Stuart-Smith, 2006).

This study examines women linguistic features used in a television show which provides natural setting as it contains daily conversation. One of reality television shows which provides natural setting is *Project Runway* since it is a competition show which has been ruled but unscripted. This show focuses on fashion design competition and is hosted by Heidi Klum on Lifetime. The contestants compete with each other to create the best clothes and are restricted in time, materials, and theme. Most of the judges and the contestants of this competition show are women. Hence, the linguistic features that will be analyzed can be recognized from the utterances of the female judges and female contestants. These are the examples of the utterances of female judges and female contestants in *Project Runway*:

Alexandria : I think we have too many phone books in the world  
and I think that we need to stop printing them

Heidi : Alexandria I really like your collection (.) it  
looks very young (.) it looks very hip (.) it looks very now

The examples above show that female judges and female contestants have different style of speech. The female judge who has superior position is more powerful to express her opinion. She boosted her statement by using ‘*very*’ frequently which represents her sureness. While the female contestant, as subordinate, seems hesitant and doubtful in delivering their opinion. It can be seen from the occurrence

of '*I think*' twice. The way of female contestant's speaking can be considered as powerless language. Therefore, this reality show seems to be appropriate to be analyzed due to the fact that in every speech event, there is a phenomenon that can be observed.

Furthermore, there are some studies which relate to this study. The first study was conducted by Hedenmalm (2012) from Lulea University of Technology, the second research was done by Savitri (2012) from Universitas Airlangga, and the last study was written by Pebrianti (2013) from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Hedenmalm (2012) conducted a study of male and female language in *Walt Disney* movies. This study paid attention to interruptions, commands, insults, oppositions, politeness, compliments, insecurity, empty adjectives, intensifiers, and female exclamations. Savitri (2012) did research about women linguistic features proposed by Lakoff in *Legally Blonde I* movie. The result of this study showed that nine women linguistic features were found in the movie except precise color term. Pebrianti (2013) wrote a study of women's language features used by Indonesian female bloggers in *Blogspot*. The findings of this study were the absence of rising intonation on declarative and the most frequent feature used was intensifiers.

The previous researchers conducted research in movies and social media. However, none of them took a reality show as the object of the study, especially competition show. In addition, none of previous researchers conducts a study of women linguistic features used by female in different role, in this case is between judges and contestants, which show power and solidarity. The aims of this study are

to find out what linguistic features of women are used by female judges and female contestants in a competition show and to determine which role is more powerful and show more solidarity. Therefore, the writer conducted a study of a competition reality show since it is a television show which has been ruled but unscripted so that the talents can improve their utterances as long as it is not out of the context or the rules and still appropriate to be aired. The utterances of female judges and female contestants are expected to be different since the judges have more power to give challenges to the contestants and to determine which contestant that will be the winner.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study above, the writer formulates the problems of the study as follows:

1. What are women linguistic features used in the utterances of female judges in *Project Runway*?
2. What are women linguistic features used in the utterances of female contestants in *Project Runway*?
3. How are women linguistic features used in the utterances of female judges compared to those used by female contestants in *Project Runway*?

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

In relation with the statement of the problems, the following are the objectives of the study:

1. To identify women linguistic features used in the utterances of female judges in *Project Runway*.
2. To identify women linguistic features used in the utterances of female contestants in *Project Runway*.
3. To compare women linguistic features used by female judges and those used by female contestants in *Project Runway*.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

By doing this research, the writer hopes that this study can have a contribution to the field of Language and Gender, especially related to women linguistic features. The result of this study is expected to provide more knowledge about women language as well as its use in a television show. In addition, this study is expected to be useful to inspire and help the next researchers who want to conduct similar studies about women linguistic features. Besides, the result of this study is expected to be useful for the scriptwriter of reality shows or television series to determine the appropriate utterances so that the viewers will not imitate the inappropriate utterances, for example the use of swear words. It is not only for the scriptwriter, but also for the viewers to determine whether they want to follow the judges' or the contestants' utterances.

### 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- Gender : Categories used to distinguish people on the basis of the socio-cultural behavior, including speech (Holmes, 2008).
- Linguistic features : The linguistic elements that are functional for making the kinds of meanings (Schleppegrell, 2001).
- Reality show : Television program that is based on real people filmed in their living or working environment without a script and presented as entertainment (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003).
- Utterance : The act of expressing something in words; something that you say (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005).
- Women linguistic features : 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, and emphatic stress (Lakoff, 1975).