

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

People live in a dynamic, numerous, and varied society to which then they merge into several social groups which have more private and intimate interaction within the members and function to identify with one another. Giddens (2000) states that a society is a group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority, and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups around them. Thus, a society is a group of people who live within the same area and/or people with common interests, traditions, and cultures, and social groups include lesser people with even more common interests and features.

In many ways, language and society have influenced each other significantly. Certain social groups may have different ways of using language to other social groups, so each social group may have different language features which characterize and differentiate themselves from others. For instance, differences in language usage can be seen between genders. The discussion of language and gender has been popular and usually is under the sociolinguistics area. The term of gender is not determined by biological attributes, but it is defined as the social construct of behaviors, identities, and roles. While, sex is male and female, men and women, or boys and girls are usually used to describe gender. The phenomena of language differences between genders has raised certain stereotypes or beliefs among people. However, this stereotype may change with the evolution of the world.

One example of discussion in language and gender is language features of women. Lakoff (1975), argues that, within the cultural stereotype, women are considered as a subordinate group to men which then greatly influences their language usage. In other words, women tend to use language with consideration of cooperating with their own subordination since they recognize themselves as a subordinate group in society, especially to men. One example of women's linguistic features is tag question. Tag question is an interrogative fragment which is added

to a declarative or an imperative clause, such as the interrogative fragment in the sentence of “You don’t like me, do you?”. According to Lakoff (1975), tag questions are the best example of showing insecurity and doubt. In other words, women who use tag questions either intentionally or unintentionally are considered as indicating their tentativeness and unassertiveness when stating their statement.

In the past years, many researchers attempted to find out whether language varies between genders. Sociolinguists such as Lakoff (1975), Holmes (1986), and Coates (1988) write books which discuss language differences in genders which gained popularity upon their critical discussions and categorizations of the topic. Therefore, for the following years, the study of language use between genders has been an interesting and intriguing topic in sociolinguistics, such as in Mahmud’s (2010) study, Xia (2013)’s study, and Gu’s (2013) study. These researchers attempted to determine the similarities and differences of language between genders and found out that their use of language is similar but also different in certain ways.

The phenomenon of language and gender, and in particular women’s linguistic features can be found in many areas. For example, women’s linguistic features can be found in the language used by women at workplaces, houses, markets, and formal conferences and debates. Many older studies also examined the discussion of language and gender in media, such as magazines and news. Furthermore, in the modern era, the phenomenon of women’s linguistic features can be found in the rapidly growing industry of technology products, such as movies or films.

In recent years, there has been a lot of research in the field of women’s linguistic features in movies, such as in Oktapiani’s (2017) study, Murti’s (2018) study, Rengganis’ (2020) study. Most of these studies use female characters whose personality is dominant in maternity or mother-likeness in which they appear as a weaker persona than men. However, there are few studies on women’s linguistic features in a female superhero movie in which the characters are often represented stronger and having more masculinity than females with maternity personality (Sudarto, 2020).

One recent study on women's linguistic features on a superhero-based movie is conducted by Sudarto (2020). This particular study analyzed the utterances of a female superhero character in a movie to find out the types of women's linguistic features. Another recent study is conducted by Al Arsyi (2020). This study compares several female superheroes from different movies based on their utterances. Both studies used uncommon subjects since both studies used female superhero characters in a movie as the subjects of the study. Having a female superhero character as the subject of the study might bring different results in the field of women's linguistic features, especially Sociolinguistics research in the movie area.

A more recent movie which main character is a female superhero produced by Marvel Studios is *Black Widow* (2021). Its first release was on June 29, 2021 in theaters, and within the development of technology *Black Widow* (2021) was also released on Disney+ (a subscription video streaming service owned and operated by Walt Disney Company). *Black Widow* (2021) won several pandemic box office records and grossed over \$379 million worldwide. The movie also received positive reviews from critics, with praise for the performances, particularly those of Scarlett Johansson as Natasha Romanoff, and the action sequences. The movie also won several awards, such as Outstanding Feature Film on 23rd Women's Image Awards (2021), Best Fantasy Adventure on 21st Golden Trailer Award, and The Movie of 2021 on 47th People's Choice Awards (2021). One intriguing concept of this movie is that the main female character which is called 'widow' has undergone special surgery in which she is being 'sterilized' to be an assassin without affections. Therefore, the 'widows' are infertile and cannot have any children.

Upon the writer's interests in sociolinguistics and the phenomena of women's linguistic features performed in a superhero movie, the writer was intrigued to furthermore study the *Black Widow* (2021) movie. Since the main genre of *Black Widow* (2021) movie is live-action starring a superheroine, the main character of the movie is a female superhero. Therefore, the character is chosen because her position is the main character – representing the whole female superhero theme of the movie. It is interesting to study different features of

women's language, especially movies. Moreover, *Black widow* (2021) is a recent movie about superheroes in which the characters are not ordinary females with maternity personalities but rather more masculine personalities. Therefore, it is intriguing how a recent superhero movie captures different types of women's linguistic features.

To differentiate this study from previous studies about women's linguistic features such as Oktapiani's (2017) study, Haq's (2020) study, Sudarto's (2020) study, and Al arsyi's (2020) study, the seven features of Coates (2013) is used as the main theory in this study. Since those previous studies using ten features of women's language proposed by Lakoff (1975), the theory of women's linguistic features of Coates (2013) used in this study is aimed to present different results and discussion in the area of women's language. Moreover, since the features of women's language languages by Coates (2013) show that women can be aggressive, it is used to analyze the data rather than Lakoff's (1975) women's linguistic features since Lakoff's (1975) women's linguistic features show that women speak in a more lady-like style which may not really suitable to Natasha Romanoff's character in the movie. Furthermore, to differentiate this study from previous studies using Coates (2013) theory such as Lestari's (2020) study, Atmojo's (2020) study, and Rengganis' (2020) study, since the writer is also interested in the phenomenon of speech functions proposed by Holmes (2017), this study also explores the functions of speech found in the use of women's linguistic features performed by the main character of the movie. The functions of speech explain the possible aims of an utterance. Therefore, with additional explanation of speech functions, this study can show a broader discussion of women's linguistic features, especially such sociolinguistics research in movies.

Hereinafter, this study examines the utterances of the main characters of *Black Widow* (2021), namely Natasha Romanoff, based on the theory of seven features of women's language proposed by Coates (2013) and six features of speech proposed by Holmes (2017). The six features of women's language are *Minimal Response*, *Hedges*, *Tag Questions*, *Questions*, *Commands and Directives*, *Swearing and Taboo Language*, and *Compliments*, and the seven features of speech are

expressive function, directive function, referential function, metalinguistic function, poetic function, and phatic function. This study only focuses on the utterances of the character in the adult stage in which the main character already becomes ‘widows’ (superhero) and the English utterances of the character as she sometimes also speaks Russian in the movie.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

This study concerns women's linguistic features and speech functions. Thus, according to the background of the study, the writer formulated the following research questions:

1. What are the types of women's linguistic features performed by Natasha Romanoff in *Black Widow* (2021)?
2. What are speech functions found in the use of women's linguistic features performed by Natasha Romanoff in *Black Widow* (2021)?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems mentioned above, the objectives of the questions are as following:

1. To find out what types of women's linguistic features are performed by Natasha Romanoff in *Black Widow* (2021).
2. To identify the speech functions in the use of women's linguistic features performed by Natasha Romanoff in *Black Widow* (2021).

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to enrich the information contributing to the knowledge for both theoretical and practical aspects in sociolinguistics and particularly in women's linguistic features and speech functions. For the theoretical aspect, this research is expected to provide benefits in understanding the theory that is used to answer the problems of this research. Thus, this study might help the readers in understanding the theory of women's linguistic features and speech functions better, even more, especially on their appearance in movies. Whereas, for

the practical aspect, this research is expected to help the readers to notice the phenomena of women's linguistic features and speech functions, especially those that appeared in movies.

1.5 Definition Key Terms

- Sociolinguistics : Sociolinguistics concerns the relationship between language and the context in which it is used (Holmes, 2017).
- Women's Linguistic Features : It is a set of linguistic features which usage is linked to women. Coates (2013) proposes seven features which are *Minimal Response*, *Hedges*, *Tag Questions*, *Questions*, *Commands and Directives*, *Swearing and Taboo Language*, and *Compliments*.
- Language Functions : It explains the function(s) of an utterance. There are six functions of speech according to Holmes (2017) which are *expressive function*, *directive function*, *referential function*, *metalinguistic function*, *poetic function*, and *phatic function*.
- Movie or Film : According to Hornby (2006, 950), a movie is a series of moving picture recorded with sound that tells a story, shown at cinema/movie.