

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Communication is a process in which information is sent or received. In doing a verbal communication, the utterances that are produced by a speaker are usually different from another speaker. There are some factors that influence the production of utterances, for instance the topic of the speech, to whom we talk to, the setting, and etc.

The participant of a conversation is considered as one factor which influences the production of speech. The participants of a speech are varied. They can have differences based on social status, age, and sex or gender. When the participants are different in gender, it is believed that the utterances produced by a woman are different from those produced by a man. Holmes (2008) suggested that women use more standard speech forms than men because they are more status-conscious than men. Men prefer vernacular forms because they carry macho connotation or masculinity and toughness. It implies that women and men have different linguistic competence and it maybe because they have different goal in doing conversation. It is not only about the structure or the linguistic form, but it also deals with topic difference. Soskin and John (1963) conducted a research about conversation between husband and wife and the result shows that men and women tend to discuss different topic, for instance men mainly talk about sports and car while women tend to talk about personal relationship and style.

According to Renzetti & Curran (1989), sex is a biological given which concerns with maleness or femaleness and which is used as the basis for constructing social category, while gender is a term which concerns with masculinity and femininity. In delivering utterances it is believed that women have their own styles which are distinguishable from men's. The difference of the speech can be influenced by various factors. Some scholars such as Gilligan (1982) and Boe (1987) see the differences between men's and women's as reflections of psychological differences. What makes men and women different is not only from the physical appearance, but also from the psychological condition. Women who tend to be subordinate in society will automatically be polite to men. Besides, women also play role as a guardian for children, so the behavior and the utterances being delivered should be more polite. This is done in order to make women have a good image in society.

According to Holmes (2008), the linguistic forms used by women and men contrast. It is claimed that women are more linguistically polite than men. To distinguish women speech and men speech more clearly, Lakoff in *Language and Women's Place* (1975) described about the characteristics of women language. Those features including 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. The use of women language feature is also affected by another participant of the talk beside the speakers themselves. It implies that not only does the speaker cause a different speech style but also the listener of the talk or the one we

talk to results in varieties of speech style. As an example, our talk is different when we talk to a same sex person (same sex communication) or cross-sex person (cross-sex communication).

The characteristics of women speech may emerge in a regular conversation in natural setting. One of the examples of natural setting conversation is talk show. Although it has a script, but the host is not fully dependent to the script. The host will improve and use her/his own personal speaking style without changing the topic.

Regarding to the characteristics of women language, to analyze a talk show that is carried out by a woman seems appropriate. Munson (1993) pointed out that the purpose of a talk show is to give useful information on topics dealing with interpersonal and psychological matters, mainly to women. This study aims at examining what linguistic features characterized woman speech when she talks to another woman in talk show and comparing those features to the linguistic features which characterized woman speech when she talks to a man in talk show. Oprah Winfrey show is chosen as the source of data in this study because it is considered to portray or depict women linguistic features through the communication within it. The linguistic features can be recognized from the utterances of the host when she is interviewing the guest or when she is making a conversation with the interviewee. In this talk show, she usually interviews guest stars who can be an actress, actor, politician, writer, or other inspirational people. Besides, it also comes with various topics in each episode. The host and the guest in this talk show interacts using simple daily language. During the show, the host

sometimes uses women linguistic features no matter who the participants are. What makes it interesting is to know whether the use of women linguistic feature is different when the host is talking to a female guest or when she talks to a male guest. As the writer found in her preobservation, Oprah used different linguistic features when she spoke to a female guest and when she spoke to a male guest.

When Oprah talks to a woman:

Come on out here, Nick! Great to see you. Oh, you're so great in that movie!

When Oprah talks to a man:

It is one fantastic (xx), please welcome Jonathan Franzen. Jonathaan!! Hi. Hallo. Hallo.

From the brief example of utterances above, we can see the difference between Oprah's utterances when she was talking to a woman and when she was talking to a man. It seems that Oprah uses more formal language when she greeted a man with the use of polite request *please* and she also mentioned the man's full name. On the other hand, she only greeted the women with her nickname.

The other reasons choosing Oprah Winfrey Show to be analyzed in this study is because Oprah Winfrey Show is one of the creative television shows that always bring popular and up to date topics with famous guests. It is also a very well-known television show that is seen by many people all over the world. Oprah Winfrey Show is also the highest-rated program of its kind in history. Oprah, as the host of the show is an incredible woman who is called as "arguably the world's most powerful woman" by [CNN](#) and Time.com. She is a successful host who can carry the show very well and finally it leads her to receive many awards and achievements. Therefore, it is interesting to conduct a research about linguistic feature of women with Oprah Winfrey as the subject of the research.

Sometimes, it is not realized that there are some differences in delivering utterances and it can form a certain characteristic or feature of a particular sex. Therefore, this study focuses more on how women construct their linguistic form and how it is used.

There have been some researches about language and gender. One of the researches was done by Savitri (2012). In her thesis, entitled *An Analysis of Women Linguistic Features in Legally Blonde I*, she made a research about women linguistic features proposed by Lakoff in a movie entitled *Legally Blonde I*. In this movie, she found that most women characters used women linguistic features. There are nine women linguistic features found in the movie except precise color terms. The finding of the research supports Lakoff's theory of women linguistic feature. Besides, Labotka (2009) also had a research about women linguistic research used by gay male who acts as hostess in a show. In her study entitled *Language and Woman's Place in Drag: Power, Femininity, and Gay Speech*, she analyzed front and backstage uses of women linguistic features proposed by Lakoff and related it to the idea of power and femininity. Meanwhile, Lambertz (2011) did a research about representations of women's language in German and Australian soap operas through the dialogue using Lakoff's theory about women linguistic features. Both researches of Labotka and Lambertz result the disclaimer about Lakoff's theory. In addition, Lambertz (2011) claimed that women's language is facilitative and confident.

None of the researches above takes a talk show to be analyzed in the study. Besides, there is no previous study about women linguistic feature which

discusses the contrast of the use of women linguistic features in a cross-sex and same-sex communication. Therefore, the writer conducted a research with transcription of host's utterance in the talk as the source of data in the study and Lakoff's theory is used to describe that women have their own style in producing their utterances. Furthermore, the writer counted the frequency of each feature to know the feature which has highest frequency of emergence because it is useful to recognize the dominant characteristic of women language.

## 1.2 Statement of The Problems

Based on the phenomenon above, the statement of the problems are as follow:

1. What are women's linguistic features used by Oprah Winfrey in same-sex communication?
2. What are women's linguistic features used by Oprah Winfrey in cross-sex communication?
3. What are the most frequently used women linguistic features in Oprah Winfrey Show in same-sex communication compared to in cross-sex communication?

## 1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems above, the aims of this study are to:

1. Describe women linguistic features used by Oprah Winfrey in same-sex communication.

2. Describe women linguistic features used by Oprah Winfrey in cross-sex communication.
3. Find out the most frequently used women linguistic features in Oprah Winfrey Show in same-sex communication compared to in cross-sex communication.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The aim of this study is to find out what women linguistic features are found in Oprah Winfrey Show and the frequency of the use of women linguistic features in same-sex communication compared to cross-sex communication. Along with this study, theories and related studies are given together with the analysis. By conducting this study, hopefully the reader can get more information about women linguistic features. This study also can be a reference for students who are studying about linguistics so they can get a wider knowledge about sociolinguistic, especially about women linguistic features. Not only for students, this study may also be important for any talk show scriptwriter to find out appropriate utterances that will be used by a female host. Besides, the finding of this study can contribute theoretically in language and gender field of study, because it shows the relation between the use of women linguistic features and the influence of the participants. It also defines Lakoff's theory about women linguistic features which help the readers understand deeper about it.

## 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

1. **Language and gender:** the relation between gender and language use which involves a clear discussion of gender and of the resource that the linguistic system offers for the construction of social meaning. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003)
2. **Women linguistic feature:** linguistic features which become women language characteristic and are more often used by women than by men.
  - a. **Lexical hedge or filler:** linguistic forms which express the speaker's certainty or uncertainty about a proposition. (Lakoff, 1975)
  - b. **Tag Question:** linguistic forms associated with tentativeness and it can decrease the strength of assertion. It is usually used in the end of a sentence to ask confirmation from addressee. (Coates, 1996)
  - c. **Rising Intonation on declarative:** the raise of the pitch in the end of sentence which results question-like intonation pattern. (Cameron, 1990)
  - d. **Empty Adjective:** adjective which only convey emotional feeling rather than specific information. (Lakoff, 1975)
  - e. **Precise colour term:** the way a speaker mentions colour in specified or specialised terms. (Lakoff, 1975)
  - f. **Intensifier:** linguistic form which is used to intensify or to strengthen the meaning of an utterance. (Lakoff, 1975)



- g. **Emphatic Stress:** the use of stress in particular word to emphasize or to strengthen the meaning of an utterance.
  - h. **Hypercorrect Grammar:** the use of grammar which goes beyond the norm, it involves extending a form beyond the standard. (Holmes, 2008)
  - i. **Superpolite Form:** a kind of request and other sort of utterance with excessively polite forms. (Lakoff, 1975)
  - j. **Avoidance of strong swear word:** the use of particular word to soften strong swear words.
3. **Talk Show:** a show that can be regarded as a sort of entertainment program, designed to be funny and easy-going. (Ilie, 2001)
  4. **Same-sex communication:** a communication or conversation which involves same-sex participants (between woman to woman or between man to man).
  5. **Cross-sex communication:** a communication or conversation which involved cross-sex participats (between woman to man).