

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

As a part of social behavior, gossip is an informal conversation that flourishes within a group of people. This form of conversation can be found in various media in our daily life. According to Dunbar (2004), about two-thirds of people's conversations indicate that most free-form conversations conveying social issues are labelled as gossip. Gossip has played an essential role in sharing information and knowledge which have not been publicly recognized or known in society (Baumeister, Zhang and Vohs 2004). Gossip contains various issues which can portray social and personal events that occur in our surrounding. Through this speech activity, people indirectly establish a sense of addiction to this exchange activity with friends, relatives, co-workers, and others. Furthermore, gossip has two sides that often appear in a conversation: negative and positive (Kniffin and Wilson 2005).

The negative side of gossip can be seen from how people label gossip as an idle talk with a negative connotation. Gossip, which is associated with sharing information about social topics, is used to report or talk about a third party, resulting in their negative image in front of a community (Beersma and Kleef 2011). In the process of communication, gossip, which contains negative evaluation toward others, is often formed to signal that people are not part of the group. Moreover, the negativity of gossip links to the personal problem and feelings towards other people

about their physics and misbehavior. The emergence of this phenomenon in society can be a threat to the target because it can make people lose their self-confidence and self-esteem (Baumeister , et al. 2005). Although this form of conversation is malicious to others, gossip also has a positive side. Gossip has a phatic function related to social support and interpersonal relationships (Duffy, Ganster and Pagon 2002). Thus, it can build intimacy and social control to maintain the social group's values (Tanen 1993). However, the form of gossip can also clarify the ambiguity of the updated information that develops within a group (DiFonzo and Bordia 2007). Through its functions, gossip is one of the essential media to communicate among members of the group.

The phenomenon of gossip is one of the social interactions regarded as a common activity in society. Gossip is defined as a form of communication that occurs in a relaxed in-group talk with informal contexts. In addition, gossip within a group of people involves an implicit exchange of opinions and evaluations about other people (Eggins and Slade 1997). This speech phenomenon occurs in both women's and men's daily conversation. However, gossip tends to refer to women rather than men. According to Cameron (1998), women are much more likely to gossip than men. In general, women tend to talk about personal matters with close friends, co-workers, and family, especially during gossiping. Gossip is an essential form of a talk that discusses a woman's common role among members of women group-talk (Jones 1980). Gossip has positive remarks reflected from the types of gossip: house-talk, scandal, bitching, and chatting. Along with the various forms of gossip, most women utilize gossip to fulfil their needs. Through uttered gossip, they could

convey feelings, reinforce important shared values, and strengthen relationships (Jones 1980). The intimate communication and closeness among participants support the development of the discussion in gossip.

Women have a certain preference in forming a communication, especially with the same sex. Gossip is an evaluative comment that often occurs in same-sex conversation. An interaction between same-sex can make differences in quality of social interaction (Leaper and Holliday 1995). Women tend to use features that are not offensive to interlocutors (Litosseliti 2006). The main pattern of same-sex communication between women tends to be cooperative than competitive, which portrays a collaborative style among women (Coates 2013). Moreover, Coates (2013) divided collaborative styles into five: topic development, minimal response, hedges, questions, and turn-taking. By using these features, women show the pattern of women talks that demonstrates the engagement of the conversation formed by each participant. Therefore, these features can promote intimacy and maintain women's conversation to express feelings and encourage or contribute to each other (Coates 2013). This phenomenon of women's gossip occurs in various media in women in-group talk, one of which is An American sitcom TV series *Grown-ish*.

The writer uses American sitcom TV series *Grown-ish* as the object of the study. ABC signature video released *Grown-ish* season two in January 2019. This sitcom has five female characters, Zoey, Nomi, Jazz, Sky, and Ana. The story focuses on Zoey Johnson as the main character, while the rests are supporting characters. *Grown-ish is an American TV sitcom that tells us about multi-ethnic*

friendship with the different personalities and backgrounds of sophomores of California University in their quarter life crisis. The struggle occurs because of their failure during their adaptation process in a new environment of a young adult.

The female characters in this sitcom have many conversations that can be categorized as gossip. This sitcom captures some of the problems experienced by these female characters such as relationship, friendship, and financial problems among college friends. Therefore, the characters form a discussion containing elements of gossip regarding the current problems or situations to share and find out the solution. The issues raised in gossip can build a bonding toward each character because the interaction between characters increases. This television situational comedy has received a positive response and is popular among teenagers. It also received a nomination from the Teen Choices Award (2019) and MTV Movie + TV Award (2019).

The writer chose *Grown-ish* because it indirectly reflects the phenomenon of gossip in general. In addition, most of the characters in this sitcom are women. The presence of several female characters in this sitcom makes women's stereotype of gossip in society proved that gossip always associated with women. Besides, the characters also portray how gossip occurs in women's group talks. The gossip phenomenon is shown through the interaction among the female characters when discussing their problems. The discussion shows the utterances performed by each character about their personal experiences, feelings, and relationships. Holmes (2013) stated gossip has a function to reveal individual's feelings and shared values.

Thus, conversations among female characters should be able to show a positive side of women's gossip rather than a negative.

There have been several studies on gossip occurring in a conversation in a group talk. All of these studies focused on analyzing gossip through sociolinguistic frameworks as conducted by Guendouzi (2001), Ahmed (2011), Sari (2015), Maharani (2018), and Nabilah (2019). Most of these studies examine gossip through conversations that occurred in a television program. In comparison, some of the studies observed face-to-face conversations in a group talk. In addition, these studies used different theories with various aims to analyze the phenomenon of gossip. Guendouzi (2001) investigated the types of gossip and identified the cooperative functions in the conversation of three-woman group. Meanwhile, Ahmed (2011) examined the cooperative styles and social functions of gossip during bedtime. Sari (2015) conducted the study to investigate the types of gossip, women's linguistic features, and gossip's social function in the sitcom. On the other hand, Maharani (2018) aimed to investigate the types of gossip and the collaborative style in the sitcom. Another study by Nabilah (2019) identified the type of women gossip and the function of gossip in a movie. Similar to Maharani (2018), the current study examined the phenomenon of gossip by identifying types of gossip and collaborative talk. However, the present study categorized women's conversations based on the components of contexts proposed by Holmes (2013). Additionally, the women's conversation was identified as a gossip based on Jones' (1980) definition of gossip and elements of gossip, especially topic and setting. Moreover, instead of direct conversation, this phenomenon was analyzed through

the conversations of the female college student characters with multi-ethnic friendships in American Tv series *Grown-ish*.

The current study shows how gossip occurs in conversation in a television situational comedy (sitcom). Readers are also provided with better understanding that women's conversation in a sitcom plays a vital role in representing gossip content relevant to discussions that often appear in daily life. This content conveys positive sides of gossip that are different from the stereotypes formed in society. In general, people consider gossip as an idle talk associated with negative speech activity, but this sitcom can portray a positive side which gives speakers a positive function. The topic discussion on gossip emerges several types of gossip as proposed by Jones (1980) This study also explains the different styles used during gossip to show how members can construct a discussion. The styles of conversation are also identified through a collaborative style by using Coates' (2013) theory to show their role in maintaining the conversation intimately.

This study aims to identify the types of gossip in the conversation among five characters in an American sitcom TV series *Grown-ish season two*. Jones' (1980) theory was used to determine the types of gossip so that readers can know what kinds of gossip appeared in their conversation. In addition, the present study also investigated the collaborative style on the characters' utterances through the theory proposed by Coates (2013). These features are expected to demonstrate that certain features can affect the establishment of topics in each type of gossip in *Grown-ish season two*.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the writer formulated the problems as follow:

1. What types of gossip are performed by the female characters in the American sitcom TV series *Grown-ish* season 2 based on Jones' theory?
2. What are the collaborative style found in the gossip performed by the female characters in the American Sitcom TV series *Grown-ish* season 2 based on Coates' theory?

1.2 Objectives of the Study

In accordance to the statements of the problems above, the writer determined the objectives of the study as follow:

1. To identify the types of gossip performed by the female characters in the American sitcom TV series *Grown-ish* season 2 based on Jones' theory.
2. To describe the collaborative style found on the gossip performed by the female characters on American sitcom TV series *Grown-ish* season 2 based on Coates' theory.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study about women gossip in the American sitcom TV series *Grown-ish* is expected to give a theoretical contribution to the field of sociolinguistics and practical contribution to society in general and women or readers more specifically. Theoretically, this study can provide new insights into the study of gossip, while many studies of gender in sociolinguistics focus more on women's linguistics features. Furthermore, the current study that also focuses on the analysis of the

collaborative style features in gossip can enhance the theory of element of gossip and the theory of women's linguistic features. Practically, this study can help the readers understand the phenomenon of gossip in society, which is not only restricted to negative stereotypes but also has positive sides that can be learned further. This study is expected to be a reference for further research of English Department's students interested in conducting a study about women's gossip. It can also show women several features that can be used as a strategy to maintain communication while gossiping.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The present study focuses on the analysis of gossip only in female characters' conversation in the American TV series entitled *Grown-ish* season two. The gossip was analyzed only in four episodes of *Grown-ish* season 2 through dialogues between five female characters, Zoey, Nomi, Jazz, Sky, and Ana with the help of the scripts. In the analysis, Jones' (1980) theory was utilized to identify the four types of gossip in each conversation of female characters. Since the features of collaborative styles can affect the establishment of gossip in female characters' conversations, the theory proposed by Coates (2013) was also used to analyze the collaborative style.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

The Collaborative Style : A conversational pattern in women group talk when doing same-sex conversation that determined cooperativity of participants in

	forming a communication in women same-sex group talk (Coates 2013).
Women's Gossip	: The way of communicating between women to share any information related to their role as women which discusses about a domestic and personal topic discussions intimately (Jones 1980).
<i>Grown-ish</i> Series	: An American television series with situational comedy genre which tells story about the five multi-ethnic female characters as sophomore year students with different personalities and backgrounds who facing the similar problem, namely the quarter life crisis of being adults which raises several problems such as relationships, friendships, and financial which show intimate friendship from every conversation that is carried out (Foltz 2020).
Type of Gossip	: A variation or classification of topic discussion of gossiping among women speakers (Jones 1980).