

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Language and Gender

From the time we are small, we are surrounded by gender stereotypes. Males and females are different in many ways, both physiologically and psychologically. In addition, men and women may use different language style although they are from the same speech community. How men and women differ in their language use appeared to be research interests for decades (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 2003).

Physiologically, women have different vocal cord compared to men. Men tend to develop larger larynx than women, causing their heavy vocal cord to vibrate slower and produce lower pitch compare to women. Women and men produce different pitch due to this physiological difference. Men's brains are usually 11-12% bigger than women's brains but this has absolutely nothing to do with intelligence. This size difference only contrasts men from women in physiological way. Men commonly have larger a brain and need more neurons in order to control their greater muscle mass and larger body size. Women usually do extremely well in language-based subjects and in language-associated thinking than men since they have larger sections of brain responsible for language. Women can process language in both hemispheres while men generally can only do this in their dominant hemisphere. In case of a stroke, this distinction offers a bit more protection. Women may be capable to recover more completely from a

stroke affecting the language areas in the brain while may not have the same capability (Hensley, 2009).

Psychologically, women are generally better in expressing and being more in touch with their feelings so that they can stimulate bonding with people compared to men. More women perform as caregivers for children due to this skill. On the other hand, women tend to be more sensitive or depressed especially during times of hormonal shifts such as during pregnancy, after childbirth, or during menstrual cycle. Men are more task-oriented, less talkative, and less expressive whereas women tend to communicate effectively using non-verbal signals such as tone, emotion, and empathy. Understanding emotions that are not explicitly verbalized give men more difficult time while women can easily sense emotions and emotional signals. These dissimilarities explain why men and women sometimes have difficulty communicating and why men-to-men friendships look different from friendships among women.

Gender was first employed to emphasize the social and relational nature of differences between men and women in contrast to biological differences between the sexes. Gender has become part of the everyday language of social science, largely as a consequence of the feminist movement and the accompanying intellectual efforts to better understand the systematic and widespread subordination of women and their domination by men (Acker, 1992).

Lakoff (1973) suggests that women have a different way of speaking from men which reflects and produces a subordinate position in society. The way

women are speak and are expected to speak mirror the marginality and powerlessness. Women's language style reflects and contributes to the oppressed role of women in a patriarchal world. Women's language is supposed and expected to be more polite than men's. This situation is caused by the low status and social pressure in society for women to talk like a lady. Women generally lack of social status in society and are considered as the subordinate group, therefore they try to acquire their social status by using standard form. Women are also the guardian of society's values, so they use more standard form than men because society expects better behavior than men. People presumed women to speak carefully and politely to be a model for their children's speech (Lakoff, 1975; Cameron, 1987; Holmes, 2008).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) suggest that gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our action, our beliefs, and our desires. The question of identifying and interpreting possible differences in linguistic styles between males and females has emerged for decades. It has been argued that some consistent differences exist in speech between men and women. The force of gender categories in society makes it impossible for us to live without gender-oriented way and not to bring out gendered behavior in many aspects.

## **2.2. Women's Language Features**

There were many ideas proposed by many linguists about male and female language. Research indicates that men are the people who invent new terms while women are innately conservative (Jespersen, as cited in Eckert and McConnell-

Ginet, 2003). He also sees women as having dulling effect on language use. He reported that: „Men will certainly with great justice object that there is a danger of the language becoming languid and insipid if we are always to content ourselves with women’s expressions and that vigour and vividness count for something“ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

An American feminist and linguist Robin Lakoff criticizes Jespersen’s finding in a book called *Language and Woman’s Place* (1975). Lakoff says that women were being trained to sound inferior. Lakoff suggests that women tend to soften and weaken their expression of opinion through some features. Women tend to use super polite forms and hypercorrect grammar more often in their conversation as they lack of social status in society. Women try to acquire their social status with polite and indirect request so as the subordinate group they won’t offend men. Society expects them to use more polite form and correct grammar in order to show their femininity.

As a hypothesis always has pros and cons, Lakoff’s hypotheses of women’s language features have been supported and argued by some researchers. In Lakoff’s theory of women’s language features, men’s language is assertive, adult, and direct, while women’s language is immature, hyper-formal or hyper-polite and non-assertive. But such statements have their own pros. Michaelson and Poll (2001) (as cited in Nemati and Bayer, 2007), for example, emphasized on the dynamic nature of speech of men and women by stating that „rule of politeness“ governing face-to-face conversations seems to be less binding when there is no physical presence. They also state that it is this bodily presence of

conversational dyads that lead to a weakening of gender roles. While analyzing the electronic mails of a number of men and women, Bunz and Campbell (2002) stated that social categories such as age, gender, etc. do not influence politeness accommodation in e-mail. Canary and Hause (1993) as cited in Mulac (1998) have argued that meaningful differences in the communication strategies of men and women have not been found with any degree of consistency (Nemati and Bayer, 2007).

Despite such and many other similar observations, Lakoff believes that the use of tag questions by women is the sign of uncertainty. Dubois and Crouch (1975) (as cited in Nemati and Bayer, 2007), launched a critique on Lakoff's claims, especially on tag questions. They examined the use of tag questions within the context of a professional meeting and concluded that at least in that context males used tag questions more than females did. Their conclusion was that Lakoff's hypothesis might be biased in favor of highly stereotyping beliefs or folk linguistics.

Dubois and Crouch (1975) questioned Lakoff's findings as Lakoff had used introspective methods in her study. They argued that her conclusions were made on uncontrolled and unverifiable observation of others and were based on a highly skewed and non-random sample of people (as cited in Nemati and Bayer, 2007).



### 2.3 Lakoff's Women Language Features

Robin Lakoff (1975) provided list of ten women language features in her book entitled *Language and Women's Place*. Her work has been influenced and cited by many scholars who study language usage between men and women. Women language features are several language features that specifically indicate the characteristics of women language and show difference of language usage between men and women. Eight out of ten women language features proposed by Lakoff (1975) explained in the following part.

#### 1. Lexical hedges or fillers

Lexical hedges or fillers are linguistic forms which express the speaker's certainty or uncertainty about a proposition. Fillers are also used to signal the pause and to give women time to think what is being said next in their utterances. Filler are usually in the form of meaningless utterances such as *ummm...*, *ah...*, and *oh...*, while commonly used hedges are like *you know*, *sort of*, *well*, *kinda*, *probably*, *I mean*, *etc.* Hedging is the way to express lack of confidence while fillers is to signal pause even when someone hasn't finished speaking. Hedging expresses a lack of confidence and reflexes women insecurity. When people hedge linguistically, they avoid saying something definite and keep their option opened. In other words, when women hedge an utterance, it means that she lack of confidence which is expressed in a utterance. According to Lakoff (1975), women use 'you know' more often than men. 'You know' scattered randomly

throughout women's speech because its usage is supposed to reflect the general insecurity of the speaker (Savitri, 2012).

## **2. Tag question**

Tag question is commonly found in women's speech. When women lack of confident, they use tag question to confirm their opinion and avoid developing conflict with the addressee or offending them. Tag question used to state a claim but the speaker is less confidence in the truth of the claim. According to Lakoff (1975) asking question is a prime example of women's insecurity and hesitancy. She suggested the tag question as one of linguistic forms associated with tentativeness. Women used tag question in order to get confirmation from the addressee about their statement.

## **3. Intensifier**

Intensifier is usually used to strengthen an assertion. Intensifier such as *so*, *very*, *just*, and *quite* are the examples which commonly found in women's talk. The using of intensifier carried emotions of women who want to be considered seriously as a real individual in her own right. It also showed that women are more expressive in indicating their view about something compared to men.

## **4. Hypercorrect grammar**

Hypercorrect grammar is the consistent use of standard word form. According to the Oxford Dictionaries, hypercorrection is the use of an erroneous word form or pronunciation based on a false analogy with a

correct or prestigious form, such as the use of I instead of me as a grammatical object (as in he invited my husband and I to lunch). Macmillan dictionary defines hypercorrection is the use of incorrect grammar or pronunciation by someone who is trying to show that they know how to use correct grammar or pronunciation. As Holmes (2008) stated, compared to men, women are more linguistically polite. Hypercorrect grammar is one of women linguistic features proposed by Lakoff that is more often used by women than men. They will use more standard forms while men use vernacular more frequently. Lakoff (1975) suggested that „hypercorrect“ grammar is the consistent use of standard verb forms which involves an avoidance of terms considered vulgar or coarse such as „ain“t“, and the use of precise pronunciation such as sounding the final g in „going“ instead of „goin“ . (Kartika, 2015)

##### **5. Empty adjectives**

Adjectives such as *divine*, *charming*, *cute*, and *fabulous* often emerged in women’s talk but not in men’s. They are adjectives that convey only an emotional reaction rather than specific information. There are adjectives set that seems to be used by women (women restricted words) such as *adorable*, *charming*, *sweet*, *lovely*, *divine*, and *cute*. According to Holmes (cited in Savitri, 2012), women are said to use evaluative or empty adjective more than men. In Lakoff’s opinion, if a men use the women’s adjective, he will damage his reputation (Cited in Cameron, 1990). Lakoff



(1975) said that basically the women restricted words are not feminine, but they indicate uninvolved or out of power (as cited in Savitri, 2012).

## **6. Superpolite form**

Women are linguistically more polite than men so they will use more „superpolite“ forms. According to Lakoff (1975), the belief that women language is more polite and more refined- in a word, more ladylike-is become widespread and has been current for many centuries (cited in Coates, 2004). Lakoff argues that in the same sense a request may be a polite command. It does not need obedience overtly, but suggests something to be done as a favor to the speaker (as cited in Savitri, 2012). Indirect request is one of the examples of this feature.

## **7. Avoidance of strong swear words**

Women avoid using strong swear words which can offend their addressee. The use of weaker swear words matter for women. The difference between using stronger swear words such as '*shit*' or '*damn*' as opposed to '*oh dear*', or '*goodness*', or '*oh fudge*' lies in how forcefully women says about what they feels. This choices show how strongly a woman allows someone to feel about something, so that the strength of an emotion conveyed in a sentence corresponds to the strength of the expression. Although they are in the condition that it is acceptable to use swear word, they will prefer to substitute it with the more non-vulgar words. It is said that they do avoidance of strong swear words. Eckert and McConnlee-

Ginet (2003) claimed that swearing is kind of interjection that can express extreme statements and swearing as an expression of very strong emotion. Avoidance of swear words prove that women are linguistically more polite than men, so they will avoid strong swear words as much as they can and will substitute it with the soft one. (Kartika, 2015)

### 8. Precise color terms

Precise color terms, e.g. *violet, magenta, aquamarine, ivory, beige, fuschia, etc.* used to mention color specifically. Women make far more precise discriminations in naming colors than men such as *beige, ivory, magenta, fuchsia, ecru, aquamarine, lavender,* and so on. These precise color terms are often emerging in women's speech but not in men's. Since women are not expected to make decisions on important matters, they replaced the non-crucial decisions as a concern. Deciding whether to name a color '*lavender*' or '*mauve*' is one such concern.

### 2.4 A Streetcar Named Desire

The story in *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee William is opened with 1940s New Orleans setting. There is a ground-floor flat named Elysian Fields where a young couple, Stanley and Stella Kowalski, live. Another couple, Eunice and Steve, live upstairs. A single older sister of Stella named Blanche DuBois comes to Elysian Fields in order to tell her that their family plantation „Belle Reve“ was bankrupt. She tells Stella that she wants to take some time off from routine as an English teacher at school. She worries that her sister is living in

slum place while she comes from elite family background. Stanley doesn't believe her because Blanche's appearance looks far from „elite“. He thinks that Blanche manipulated her story about Belle Reve. Stanley doesn't like Blanche personality as well as Blanche doesn't like his personality. She hates him for his bad attitude towards her sister. He doesn't give her regular allowance but she still loves him no matter what he has already done. Stanley objects the idea that Blanche is living with them.

Besides that, Blanche flirts with Mitch who is younger than her. As time goes by, Mitch realizes that Blanche is not as good as her physical appearance and refuses to marry her. She was in self-delusion because at first she was having a high self-confidence that a women like her will never be refused of men she loved. After that Stanley rapes her. It makes herself become more and more in very low-mental condition. In the end of play, Stella doesn't believe Blanche when she told her that Stanley raped her. Stella thinks her sister gone crazy and plans to send her to mental asylum. In this play, the author portrays the experiences of his characters in complexity and contradictory. Desire, unlike a streetcar which follows a predictable track, tends to go all over, randomly, regardless, arbitrary, running into dead ends, then branching out into several ways or possibilities at once.

In this play, the author portrays the experiences of his characters in complexity and contradictory. As the title suggest, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Desire here unlike a streetcar which follows a predictable track. Desire tends to go all over, randomly, regardless, arbitrary, running into dead ends, then branching

out into several ways or possibilities at once. This kind of character is successfully manifested into Blanche DuBois. She has her own „desire“, a brutal kind of desire. She is complicated, weak, confused, and tricky. She has plenty of her own fantasies that she lives on. She covers up her weakness with her own imagination of what she and her life should be. Audience may be sorry or sympathetic toward her but we know that she is a kind of social climber whom her ideals are hopeless in the real world. Blanche still doesn't understand that what she has done is contrast to her self-image.

## 2.5 Related Studies

There were several studies covering the issue of women's language carried out by some scholars. Most of these scholars' studies support Lakoff's theory. Earlier, Mulyaningtyas (2004) in *A Study of Women Linguistic Features Found in The Dialogue of Gilmore Girls TV Series* revealed that there are nine out of ten features exist. Rosita (2008) did a study about women language features used by the main characters in *Sex and The City* movie. The study entitled *Women Language Features used in Sex and The City* found that there are nine out of ten women language features that occur in the dialogue. Hypercorrect grammar did not occur in the dialogue of the movie. This study shows that Lakoff's theory that women use women language features more often than male. Besides, Lambertz (2011) studied about representations of women's language in German and Australian soap operas. The study entitled *Women's Language in Soap Opera: Comparing Features of Female Speech in Australia and Germany* concerned about tentativeness in women's language and the influence of media role models

on reproducing gender stereotypes. The result of the study shows that women language features can be identified in both cultural contexts. In her thesis entitled *An Analysis of Women Language Features in Legally Blonde I*, Savitri (2012) found nine out of ten features that occurred in the dialogue. Nine women language features occurred except precise color terms. Most women characters in that movie used women language features. The finding of her study supports Lakoff's theory of women language features. Meanwhile, in her thesis entitled *Women Language Features Used by Indonesian Female Bloggers*, Pebrianti (2013) investigated women language features, the frequency of the features, and the possible reasons of using the features by Indonesian Female Bloggers. The study adopted only nine women language features and did not apply rising intonation on declaratives. The findings reveal that there were eight out of nine women language features used by the female bloggers. Moreover, regarding the reasons by using the features, most respondents claimed that they use those features because they tend to reflect uncertainty and lack of confidence in conversation. Besides, few of respondents stated that they use those features because women have higher level of vocabularies than men. The study also supports the theory of women language features proposed by Lakoff. Kartika (2015) in her study *Women Linguistic Features Used by Oprah Winfrey in Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Communication* also support Lakoff's theory. The finding shows that there are six women linguistic features which exist in the same-sex communication while in cross-sex communication, there are six women linguistic features which emerged.



Although the studies above discussed about Lakoff's women language features, the source of data they use are different. Mulyaningtyas (2004) used the dialogue in the TV series while Rosita (2008) and Savitri (2012) used the dialogue in the movie. Meanwhile, Lambertz (2011) used soap opera, Pebrianti (2013) used female blogger's posts, and Kartika (2015) used talk show dialogue as the object of the study. The previous studies were commonly discussing women language features in context of movie, soap opera or talk show. There were no discussions about women language features in literary works such as a play before.

