

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The phenomenon of women's linguistic features can be found in many mass media. One of the mass media is film. By over the time, film has been adapted by individual, companies, or independent group for the purposes of entertaining, giving information, and educating the audience in a unique form.

There were only three genres of film at first: documentary, fiction, and *avant-garde* (Butler 2005). *Avant-garde* or experimental film is a film made outside the film industry on an artistic basis, without regard to the structures and demands of traditional narrative film. However, over the time, movies have developed into several kinds of genres such as Science-fiction, Romance, Comedy, Action, Horror, Drama musical, Fantasy, Animation, and many more. Movie variations may be the representation of daily activities or fictional stories; it depends on the creators who choose the genres. In addition, the creators may make a fiction story to express their imagination and expand the movie.

Movies convey some linguistics features in the use of the language spoken by the characters. This can be noticed from their conversation. Linguistic features vary according to the sex/ gender of the speakers and that of whom they encounter. Linguistic features portrayed in the language used by men who speak to people with different gender/sex might be different from that when they speak to those with the same gender/sex, and vice versa. Women advise that conversation is the most common and usual activity that they involved in with

other women (Johnson and Aries 1983). Women saw conversation as a friendly behavior (Duck 1994). Furthermore, women observe their relationship with the other women based on perceptions of the quality of their conversation, and also their attitude behaviors, thoughts, ideas, and feelings can change as a result of conversations with friends (Duck, Rutt, et al. 1991). Gramely and Patzold (1995) stated that women are thought to be more friendly, gentle, enthusiastic, smooth, and calm. It means that women more concentrate about emotion, and how to behave between women. As Lakoff (1975) stated women have complicated language that is commonly known as 'women's language'. Also, women are concerned about social class; familiarity and education that make them feel more pressed to communicate with other people (Holmes and Wilson 2013). On the other hand, women and men have different roles in society since long time ago. Men must have a job outside their home, but women not obligatory have a job outside their home. Women are determined to be an ideal housewife in society role. Even women have a job outside their home, they usually have lower status than men. In brief, women held subordinate status in society because women and men have different role in social class.

In 1960 twice as many women were at work as in 1940 and 40 percent of all women over sixteen held a job. Female employment was increasing at a rate four times faster than that of men. The median age of women workers had raised to forty-one, and the proportion of wives at work had doubled from 15 percent in 1940 to 30 percent in 1960" (Chafe 2007). The 1960s became the nation revolution which women start to revolt. Consequently, from that women on,

women could obtain more power and set their position in society. One of the ways to gain more power and set a superior position in the society, women use their language. They may adjust the way they speak according to their addressee or even speak “another language” to be accepted in society. These linguistic phenomena are interesting to be investigated.

As mentioned before, movies might be the portrayal of daily activities. Thus, the language used both by the characters or the narrators is the reflection of the language used in reality. For that reason, linguistic features can be represented in the movie and can be analyzed. In this research, the writer used a movie entitled *The Help*. *The Help* is one of Drama movies directed and written by women, namely Tate Taylor, and one of box-office movies in 2011. It is an adaptation from Kathryn Stockett’s 2009 novel under the same name. This movie won some awards in the female character category. Those awards are Academy Awards 2012 as the best performance by an actress in a supporting role; AFI Award in 2012 as the best movie of the year. On top of that, the main actresses, Viola Davis and Octavia Spencer, won awards in African American Film Critics Association (AAFCA) 2011, Viola Davis, as Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress

The movie tells about some black women who worked in white families as nannies. They have been working for the white families since they were teenagers. One of them, who is one of the main characters, is named Aibileen Clark. The plot shows that Aibileen Clark met a girl from white family, Skeeter, who decided to write a book about black maids in her region – Jackson, Mississippi. She wanted to know how white people treat black people as maids and also wanted to help the

black maids who were treated inequitably by their bosses through her book. Furthermore, Aibileen Clark invited other maids who suffered the same misfortune as her. However, it did not go as well as expected. The other maids were in doubt whether their decision to accept Aibileen's invitation was right, or whether it would be dangerous for them. The movie's setting was in 1960 when white people had a higher social status than black people. It was the era when the community was strictly separated based on race, social, political, and economic status. At that time, black people had been oppressed by white people through any forms of intimidation (Carson 2004). This might be one of the reasons why the maids doubted their decision in attending Aibileen's invitation.

This research explores linguistic features expressed by women. Therefore from this movie, the writer chose two characters, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson. Both of them had power and had important roles in this movie. They convinced the other maids to participate in Aibileen and Minny's project. Moreover, those two characters portrayed hard-working black nannies. They succeed in turning their future life to be a better one. The linguistic features expressed by the chosen characters were analyzed using Lakoff's theory (1975).

Lakoff's early research on gender differences were elucidated in *Language and Woman Place*. She identified a number of linguistic features which she declared were used more often by women than by men. She listed ten linguistic features which characterize woman speech. The ten language features in those books are lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, 'empty' adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'super polite' forms,

avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress. Furthermore, women use minimal responses in a conversation. Women use minimal responses more often than men do because women indicate that they want to support the speaker and they want to listen to the speaker very well. It is different from women; men use minimal responses to signal their lack of understanding (Coates 2004). Therefore, this study only used Lakoff's (1975) theory as the main theory and used qualitative method since the data from movie and using audio visual form.

Women's linguistic features conducted by Lakoff (1975) begin from the phenomenon she found in her peripheral such as the people nearby as well as the phenomenon she found in commercials and televisions programs. Besides, Subyantari (2018) and Tya (2018) did study of women's language in animation film. Meanwhile, Savitri (2012), Ramadhani (2017) and Kusumawardah (2017) studied women's language in audiovisual scripted conversation which are films that are similar with the present study.

The studies of Savitri (2012), Subyantari (2018) and Tya (2018) showed similar results in which only nine features of women's linguistic features appear in their film used by the actresses. Savitri (2012) studied the women's linguistic features in a film entitled *Legally Blonde I*. There is one linguistic feature that did not appear in the conversation analyzed in her study, namely precise color terms feature. The same as Tya (2018) who studied the women's linguistic features used in the movie *Cinderella* and Subyantari (2018) who also studied a fantasy film entitled *Brave*, found that precise color terms feature have zero appearances in the main character's utterances, but they found the most frequently appear in their

film that is lexical hedges or fillers. Meanwhile, Kusumawardah (2017) who studied *Women Linguistic Features Used by Female Employer and Female Employee in The Devil Wears Prada Movie* found two features absent that is 'hypercorrect' grammar feature and precise color terms. Then, Ramadhani (2017) who has done research in a film *Mona Lisa Smile* did not find one similar feature in her study which was rising intonation. From the studies mentioned above concerning the women's linguistic features in films, there is always one or two features that is not found by each researcher. Furthermore, it might be generally stated that in real life, women use women's linguistic features in their conversations to differentiate their language from men's language.

From the studies concerning the women's linguistic features in films mentioned before, there is always one or two features that are not found by each researcher. Moreover, those studies seem to indicate that women use women's linguistic features in the conversation to differentiate their language from men's language.

Those previous studies described before are similar to this present study regarding the main topic. All of the studies, including the present study, discuss women's linguistic features using Lakoff's theory (1975) on women's linguistic features. Nevertheless, the previous researches aimed to show the difference of conversation performed by men and women which can be seen by the utterances of the main actresses and actors. Meanwhile, the present study analyzes women's linguistic features expressed in *The Help* movie by its two characters, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, in order to discover the most frequent women's

linguistic features used by both characters and their function. In addition, the setting in the movie analyzed in the present study is different from those analyzed in the previous studies. This will affect the result of the present study as women's language may change through time. Moreover, this movie explores and represents women's life, so that it is believed that many women's linguistic features would appear in the conversations. The simple language used in this movie makes it understandable so that the analysis can be learned easily by readers.

1.2 Statement of the problem

1. What are the women's linguistic features used by Aibileen Clark in *The Help* movie?
2. What are the women's linguistic features used by Minny Jackson in *The Help* movie?
3. What types of women's linguistic features that mostly used by the main characters in *The Help* movie?

1.3 Objective of the study

Based on the statement of the problem, in this section the writer will try to reflect the following objectives:

1. To find out the woman's linguistic features used by Aibileen Clark in *The Help* movie.
2. To find out the woman's linguistic features used by Minny Jackson in *The Help* movie.
3. To find out the types of women's linguistic features that mostly used in *The Help* movie

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is to find out the women's linguistic features in the main characters, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson in *The Help* movie. This study is expected to give significances both theoretically and practically. For theoretical use, this study is expected to give more information and add more knowledge for readers about language and gender field, particularly women's linguistic features. Furthermore, this study is expected to help readers learn about women's linguistic features used in women's speech through movie. In addition, this study perhaps be useful to inspire other researchers to conduct similar studies through any interesting objects. Meanwhile, practically, through this study, readers are not only known about women's linguistics features but also properly know the language used in women conversation. For women, they can apply the linguistic features to fulfill the right intention in conversation.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on analyzing women's linguistic features in *The Help* movie. The writer analyzed the utterances produced by the two supporting characters, *Aibileen Clark* and *Minny Jackson*. The writer will download the script of *The Help* movie and analyze that. Moreover, the writer will identify what function of women's linguistic features that will be used in the *The Help* movie and also what types of women's linguistic features that mostly used in this movie proposed by Lakoff (1975).

1.6 Definition of Key term

- *Movie* : Movie is a story, etc. recorded as a set of moving pictures to be shown on television or the cinema(Hornby 2010)
- *Women's Language* : The language that is restricted in use to women and language descriptive of women alone (R. Lakoff 1975).
- *Women's Linguistic Features* : Several features that indicate the characteristics of women's language include lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, empty adjective, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, emphatic stress, avoidance of strong swear words (Holmes 2001)