

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter presents the background of this research, which is divided into five parts. Those five parts are the background of research, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, and research significance.

1.1. Background of Research

A language is when two or more individuals interact with each other through speech; the system of communication that they use is referred to as a code. According to Hudson (1996), language is a set of linguistic items such as sounds, words, grammatical structures, and so on (as cited in Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 10). Language and society are long related to each other. Socially relevant characteristics such as class, occupation, age, or gender influenced or led language use. Wardhaugh stated in his book *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (2006) that language and society could have several correlations: social structure affects or defines linguistic structure or behavior; language structure or behavior can impact or be determined by social structure; there is a bi-directional relationship where language and society may affect one another; and that there is a possibility that there is no link between linguistic structure and social structure and that they are entirely independent of one another (2006, p. 10). Based on the four possibilities mentioned above, it would be clear that correlational studies have an essential role in sociolinguistic research.

Li stated that sociolinguistics is a branch of macro-linguistics (2014, p. 52). It is concerned more about the language being moved by factors out of language. The researcher then concluded that sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society. Structure, vocabulary, the use of a particular language, and the social roles between men and women are related from a sociolinguistics point of view. According to Wardhaugh, the relationship between the structures, vocabularies, and ways of using specific languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages is a crucial topic in sociolinguistics (2006, p. 315). Gumperz (1971) described sociolinguistics as an approach to identifying relationships between social and linguistic structure and analyzing any changes that occur. Meanwhile, Chambers (2002) described sociolinguistics as the study of the social uses of language (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 11). The languages that speakers use reflect factors such as their regional, social, or ethnic origin, as well as their gender. The relationship between structures, vocabularies, ways of using specific languages, and the social positions of men and women who speak said languages is a significant topic in linguistics. Cameron (1998) stated his view regarding language and gender:

Men and women . . . are members of cultures in which a large amount of discourse about gender is constantly circulating. They do not only learn, and then mechanically reproduce, ways of speaking 'appropriate' to their own sex; they learn a much broader set of gendered meanings that attach in rather complex ways to different ways of speaking, and they produce their own behavior in the light of these meanings... (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 316).

According to Wardhaugh, there are several claims regarding the stereotyping in men's and women's language; one is that men and women being social beings

have learned to act in certain ways (2006, p. 327). Based on the definitions and claims above, it is clear that there is a possibility that language and society may affect each other. Robin Lakoff also stated in her article *Language and Women's Place*, which appeared in *Language in Society* (1973), that “*language uses us as much as we use language*” (1973, p. 45).

As much as our choice of means of communication is guided by the concepts we wish to communicate, the way we feel about things in the actual world determines how we express ourselves about these things. It means that although two individuals may be considered talking about the same thing, the real meaning they are trying to convey may be unrelated. These differences could result in sexism and other discriminatory behavior. It is not uncommon that women have almost always been mistreated. Women are not always used as informants in linguistic studies for various reasons. Women have a 'hypercorrect' attitude, which is thought to obscure the actual situation desired by researchers, so they are frequently regarded as 'second class' citizens (Wibowo, 2012, p. 16). Women experience two types of discrimination: ‘the way they are taught to use language’ and the way general language use treats them’, both of which reduce women to a submissive position in society (Lakoff, 1973, p. 46). Until now, there have been many efforts made by women to get gender equality in society, including speaking. One of them is to use a variety of languages as well as possible. Women speakers use more polite intonation, structure, and expression than men speakers (Rahmawati, 2019, p. 2).

There has been much discrimination recently happening towards women and Muslims worldwide. Women are seen as ‘second class’ citizens, and Muslims as

'barbaric' and 'oppressive', thus making people often not take women seriously, especially Muslim women. It is a fact that women have a special place in Islam. However, thousands of years' worth of cultures and norms have taken women away from their rights. Women are expected to act a certain way, including how they talk. In recent times, many movements have empowered women and allowed them to let their voices be heard. This research focuses on women's language features used by Alaa Murabit in her speeches titled *What Islam Really Says About Women*, *Doctor Alaa Murabit A Woman's Place Faith Based Changemakers*, *Q BERLIN QUESTIONS 2017 | Alaa Murabit*, and *Dr. Alaa Murabit, in Conversation* which were uploaded on TED, Mountain Lake PBS, Berlin Questions, and University of Saskatchewan Youtube channel, all respectively.

Alaa Murabit is a multi-award-winning doctor, global security strategist, women's rights advocate, and UN High-Level Commissioner for Health, Employment, and Economic Growth. For the 2020-2021 academic year, she is a Fellow at Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Fellow at Harvard University. Lakoff's theory of women's language features in Alaa Murabit's speeches was chosen because Alaa Murabit is widely known as a women's rights advocate and has been vocally conveying her views on women and women in Islam. As an academic, Alaa Murabit always emphasizes the importance of education. Regarding these issues, as an academic, Murabit always emphasizes the importance of education, and women often use it to earn their place in society. However, as a woman herself, and looking at the long history of discrimination towards women, it must have become a habit to show uncertainty and use gentler words in her utterances. Lakoff's theory

is used because it is easy to understand and suitable to analyze Alaa Murabit's way of speaking as a woman.

As stated above, women are often seen as the "weak subordinate group." This view mainly arises because of the way women talk. However, if a young girl speaks harshly like a boy, she will most likely be shunned, punished, or mocked. Society, in the form of parents and friends, keeps her in her place in this way (Lakoff, 1973, p. 47). This resulted in sexism in language. In order to understand why women talk the way they do, it must first be known and understood the distinguishing features and why such features exist. Language features are part of social study in linguistics, which means that those ten features mentioned above can be found in conversations daily and, in this case, are used by Alaa Murabit. For example, she often uses hedges in her utterances, such as "*I was like, thank you for making the footsteps so huge to fill,*" to soften her statement, or when she uses emphatic stress to emphasize what she is trying to say, such as "*God never makes a mistake, and God determined that the first convert to Islam would be a woman....*" Therefore, the researcher will try to analyze the use of women's language features by Alaa Murabit in some of her speeches to see if there are more language features that she uses frequently and to see whether the dominant feature used will show emphasis or uncertainty in her utterances, as well as the functions of each of those features.

1.2. Statement of Problem

Based on the description above, the problem is sexism in language if there is no understanding of why women talk the way they do. Therefore, women's language features and women's language functions are discussed in this research. The

researcher then formulates the problems into two questions that will be the main focus of this research. Those questions are as follows:

- 1) What types of women's language features are found in Alaa Murabit's speeches?
- 2) How do women's language functions conform to women's language features found in Alaa Murabit's speeches?

1.3. Research Objectives

Based on the research problems above, the objectives of this research are as follows:

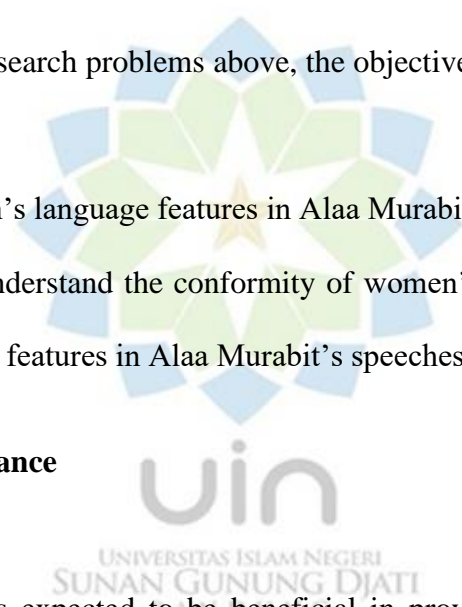
- 1) To identify women's language features in Alaa Murabit's speeches.
- 2) To find out and understand the conformity of women's language functions to women's language features in Alaa Murabit's speeches.

1.4. Research Significance

1. Theoretically

This research is expected to be beneficial in providing knowledge about women's language, especially women's language features along with each of its functions, and to provide further information from the previous researches that discussed women's language features and language functions. The researcher conducted this study to raise awareness of how language impacts our perceptions of the social environment, interpersonal interactions, and social identities, particularly among women.

2. Practically



Hopefully, the findings of this study will help students, future researchers, and readers who want to broaden their knowledge by spreading more information about the study of language and gender in Sociolinguistics, especially women's language features. This study is expected to be used as a source of reference by future researchers to conduct new, more advanced research.

1.5 Previous Studies

Several relevant previous studies discuss women's language features, which help the researcher to conduct this research. The researcher will briefly explain the differences and similarities between the previous study and the research conducted. Furthermore, the explanation of the differences and similarities will show that this research is not a duplication or plagiarism. The previous studies are taken from studies written by Maria Octaviani (2018) with the title *Women's Language Features of Mary Haines in The Women Movie Script*, Reka Indah Rahmawati (2019) with the title *Type and Function of Women Language Found in Furlough Movie: A Sociolinguistics Perspective*, Tika Oktapiani, M. Natsir, Ririn Setyowati (2017) with the title *Women's Language Features Found in Female Character's Utterances in The Devil Wears Prada Movie*, Maria Catharina Gustia Apridaningrum (2018) with the title *Women's Language Features Used by Sarah Sechan in Her Talk Show*, Shita Juliana Dwi Amalia (2019) with the title *Women's Language Features Used by Hillary Clinton in Formal and Informal Situations*, and Gilang Tira Asfika (2021) with the title *Women's Language Features used by Casey in Split (2017)*.

Octaviani (2018) investigated the language features found in Mary Haines in *The Women* movie. Two topics are covered in this research; features of women's

language used by Mary Haines in *The Women* movie and the functions of each language feature used by Mary Haines in the movie. Octaviani used Lakoff's theory (1975) and Pearson's theory (1985). The research findings showed eight features out of ten women's language features. Those features are lexical hedges (18.90%), tag questions (8.53%), rising intonation on declaratives (39.02%), precise color terms (1.21%), intensifiers (7.92%), super-polite forms (14.02%), avoidance of strong swear words (6.1%), and emphatic stress (4.26%). There are also five functions of women's language features found; to get a response, to express uncertainty, to soften utterances, to express feelings, and to start a discussion. The differences between Octaviani's research and the research conducted lie in the research's object and the data analysis technique.

Rahmawati (2019) analyzed the use of women's language features in *Furlough* movie. This study discusses language features used by female characters in the movie using women's language features theory by Robin Lakoff (1973) and women's language functions theory by Judy Pearson (1985). There are nine of ten women's language features found in this research, Lexical Hedges (66), Tag Question (15), Rising Intonation on Declaratives (9), Empty Adjectives (5), Intensifier (67), Hypercorrect Grammar (23), Super Polite Forms (37), Avoidance of Strong Swear Words (24) and Emphatic Stress (19). The researchers also found several functions of women's language, to express uncertainty (37), to get a response (14), to soften an utterance (44), to start a discussion (30), to express feelings or opinions (89) and to fill the absence of the next utterances (50). The differences between the previous research and the research being conducted lie in the object

analyzed. Rahmawati chose Furlough movie as the object, while the researcher chose several of Alaa Murabit's speeches as the object. Furthermore, there is a different technique between both researches in collecting the data. Rahmawati uses documentation to collect the data, whereas the research being conducted will use observation. However, although there are differences, there are also similarities between the two studies. Both use a qualitative descriptive method in conducting the research.

Oktapiani et al. (2017) conducted research that focuses on women's language features used by female characters in *The Devil Wears Prada* movie to identify women's language features based on Lakoff's theory and identify language functions based on Jakobsen's theory. There are seven female characters that they analyzed, namely Andreas Sach, Miranda Priestly, Emily Charlton, Lily, Jacqueline Follet, Serena, and Jocelyn. The research only found nine features used by the characters. They are lexical hedges or fillers (7), tag question (3), rising intonations on declaratives (2), empty adjectives (3), precise color terms (1), intensifiers (10), super polite forms (4), Hypercorrect Grammar (0), avoidance of strong swear words (3) and emphatic stress (3). The difference between this previous study and the research conducted lies in the object of the study. Oktapiani et al. chose *The Devil Wears Prada* movie as the object, whereas the researcher chose several of Alaa Murabit's speeches. Furthermore, there is a difference in data collection technique, where Oktapiani et al. used documentation. The similarity between the previous research and the research being conducted is that both use descriptive qualitative methods.

Apridaningrum (2018) investigated the use of women's language features by Sarah Sechan in the five episodes of Sarah Sechan Talk Show, based on women's language features by Robin Lakoff. Based on this research, there are nine out of ten women's language features used by Sarah Sechan, namely lexical hedges (35), rising intonation on declaratives (15), hyper-correct grammar (16), avoidance of strong swear words (9), tag question (18), empty adjectives (44), intensifier (44), super-polite forms (11), and emphatic stress (9). There are several differences between the research by Apridaningrum and the study conducted. First is the difference in the object being analyzed. Apridaningrum chose Sarah Sechan Talkshow as the object. There is also a difference in the data collection method, in which Apridaningrum used content analysis.

Amalia (2019) conducted research that analyzed women's language features used by Hillary Clinton in formal and informal situations. This analysis was based on Robin Lakoff's theory. Based on the result of this study, there are six features of women's language used by Hillary Clinton in formal situation: empty adjectives, super-polite forms, lexical hedges or filler, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, and emphatic stress. Meanwhile, there are seven features of women's language used in informal situation: empty adjectives, avoidance of strong swear words, rising intonations, lexical hedges or filler, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, and emphatic stress. The difference between this research and the research being conducted is the object of the research. Amalia discussed three topics in her research: language features used in formal situations, women's language features used in informal situations, and the similarities and differences between the use of women's

language features in both situations. Meanwhile, the research will discuss women's language features used by Alaa Murabit in several of her speeches and how language functions conform to the features used.

Asfika (2021) analyzed the use of women's language features in Split (2017) movie. There are two primary focuses of this study. First, this study discussed women's language features theory by Robin Lakoff used by Casey; second, it discussed verbal stimuli and refusal response in terms of pragmatics to reveal the meaning of women's language features used by Casey in the movie. Casey uses five out of ten features: lexical hedges or fillers, rising intonation on declaratives, intensifiers, super-polite forms, and emphatic stress. There are several differences between this previous study and the research being conducted. First, Asfika used qualitative content analysis and documentation techniques in collecting the data in her research. Meanwhile, the researcher uses qualitative descriptive method and observation technique.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics studies language in social contexts and its functions in society as a branch of macro-linguistics. It studies the relationship between language and society.

2. Language and Gender

Language is a mean of communication, a code that is exchanged when two or more people communicate. Meanwhile, gender is used frequently in the

behavioral and social sciences to describe the complex social, cultural, and psychological phenomena associated with sex (McConnell-Ginet, 1989, p. 76).

3. Women's Language

Men and women use different language features to keep their identity; men tend to maintain their masculinity, and women to maintain their femininity. According to Robin Lakoff, women were "colluding in their own subordination" by speaking in a way that affirmed their subordinate status in society (as cited in Holmes, 2013, p. 301).

4. Women's Language Features

Several language features are used more frequently by women rather than men. Those features are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super-polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress.

5. Women's Language Functions

According to Monica Leoni Daraninggar Mukti (2018), Judy Pearson (1985) proposed five women's language functions: to express uncertainty, to get a response, to soften an utterance, to start a discussion, and to express feelings or emotions.

6. Alaa Murabit's Speeches

a) *"What Islam Says About Women"*

This speech was delivered on TED, where it gained millions of views, and was selected as “one of four moving TED Talks you should watch right now” by The New York Times. Alaa Murabit talks about the story of her experience when she first moved to Canada as a Muslim woman, the discovery of examples of female Muslim leaders throughout history, told with passionate humor with a rebellious spirit, that led her to the launching of women’s right campaign using verses from The Holy Qur’an.

b) *“Doctor Alaa Murabit A Woman’s Place Faith Base Changemakers”*

This panel discussion showcases Alaa Murabit as one of five extraordinary Canadian women who utilize their faith to influence positive societal change in their communities and worldwide and aspire to improve the world.

c) *“Q BERLIN QUESTIONS 2017 | Alaa Murabit”*

Alaa Murabit discusses how women and girls are the solution to all global challenges and are essential to reimagining the new social contract.

d) *“Dr. Alaa Murabit, in Conversation”*

Alaa Murabit, who was named one of Forbes Magazine's 2017 Forbes 30 Under 30, explains what has to be done to assure access to education for girls and what stands in the way of global peace presented by the University of Saskatchewan.