

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The background of this study is organised into multiple parts in this introductory chapter as an overview for the readers to learn about this research. These sections include the research background, which includes past studies that served as references for this research, the problem statement, the research purpose, the research significance, and the definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Research

Discussions on language and gender have long attracted the attention of the general public as well as scholars. In the discussion of language and gender, the use of language is conceptualized as having clear differences based on speakers, which are distinguished by gender. This difference is not only limited to the use of language features, but broaden into the divisions of society into genders and social status. As explained by Schilling in Mesthrie (2011, p. 220), in reality, this difference in language use is not as simple as the difference between the use of language between women and men. This language use differences also resulting to the division of society into two genders. In which he further explains that it is not bound to biological sex only, but also extends to socio-economic status and gender power itself.

When addressing language and gender, it is necessary to first distinguish gender and sex. Though many people use the terms gender and sex interchangeably, sociolinguistic distinguish between the two. Gender is understood to be a complex

sociocultural and sociopsychological construct that cannot be reduced to biological or physiological sex. This idea is supported by Cameron's claim (2006, p. 724) that sex refers to the biological attributes that distinguish humans and other animals as male or female, whereas gender refers to the cultural traits and behaviours that a society considers proper for men or women. While biological sex is commonly thought to be the foundation of gender, gender cannot be defined by biological sex only.

Gender also affects social and economic roles and relationships (including power dynamics), masculinity and femininity conceptualizations, and, in many situations, sexual orientation and sexual identity. According to the gendered language stereotype, each gender tends to retain specific qualities of the language features they employ. This viewpoint is supported by Chandra and Yulia's (2018, p. 186) claim that proposed the idea of men's tendencies to keep their masculinity in their language use while women tend to demonstrate their femininity. Thus, society's perception towards women is also different from their perception towards men.

In language use, there are several linguistic patterns that connected to the cultural discourses of men and women. To construct men's identity as masculine through their language use, men are expected to show dominancy over both women and other men. Pamikat (2020, p. 60) in her research explains that while men are expected to be stronger and have greater influence in society through their language use, women are expected to be seen as weak, helpless, and inferior to men. This can only mean that in using their language, women tend to use language features that

indicate their lower position in society. By being subordinate and inferior, Pamikat (2020) also claims that it can be understood that women are placed in lower status than men and that their power, ranks, importance, and impact is seen as no higher than men. Women are also considered to talk too much compared to men, which is then supported by Pillai's statement (2015) which argues that women are more likely to talk because women spend a lot of time talking about things such as other people's love relationships, tv shows, lifestyle, and other topics that interest them.

In her research, Lakoff (2004, p. 39) mentions that women were taught to sound inferior, thus they soften and weaken their expression of opinion through certain features. To appear more feminine, society expects women to adopt more polite form and correct grammar. Lakoff believes that because women lack social status, they employ super polite forms and hypercorrect grammar more frequently in their discourse in order to achieve social status through polite and subtle requests. When women use more linguistic form in many speech communities, it is often the standard form that women choose. When men use a form more frequently than women, it is usually a vernacular form, one that is not openly admired by society as a whole and is not acknowledged as the 'proper' form. This idea is also in line with what Holmes proposed in her research about women's linguistic pattern. According to Holmes (2017, p. 164), Women use more grammatical forms than men among all social classes in Western societies, so men use more vernacular forms than women.

To understand more about Holmes' theory of women's linguistic pattern, it is necessary to first understand what defined as social class. According to Britannica

(2022), social class defined as a social group consisting of individuals of the same socio - economic status. In addition to that, Guy in Meshtrie (2011, p. 159) explains that some of the most prominent sociolinguistic divisions in many societies are related with disparities in social prestige, wealth, and power. They communicate socioeconomic inequalities through phonology, syntax, and lexical choice, just as they do extralinguistically through clothing, automobiles, and so on.

While social class is segregated based on economic status, members of society's social status is divided based on both other social ascribed variables such as race, ethnicity, and gender; and achieved qualities such as education, occupation, marital status, and achievement. Supporting this idea, Guy in Meshtrie (2011, p. 159) claimed that in a society, status relates to whether people in their society respect and defer to them (or, conversely, are looked down on or ignored), and power refers to the social and material resources a person may command, as well as the ability (and social right) to make decisions and affect events. As an outcome of this social status disparities between men and women, how women are expected to behave in society shown through the employment of their language features. These linguistic qualities that are stricter to grammatical structure can then be explained in four ways. The linguistic attitude of women who are more fixated on grammatical structures and show their modesty through politeness, according to Holmes (2017, p. 167), is based on several factors that employed to show their lower status than men.

To show their inferiority, Lakoff (2004, p. 49) proposed the idea that women, in using their language, does not overtly (to use a metaphor), and is

cautious when confronted with something, fixated on conventional grammar forms, frequently using mild and polite words. She also categorizes these features into ten kinds of Women's Language Features, namely lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, empty adjectives, rising intonation, precise colour term, intensifier, super-polite form, avoidance of strong and swear words, emphatic stress, and hypercorrect grammar. A language can indirectly participate to be one of the factors that determines one's position in society. Be it good or bad, as the use of language is different from one another, the way society perceived the speaker itself can be different. This claim is supported by Hodge and Kress (1993) arguments that said as a social phenomenon, a language not only reflects a gender but also the social attitudes towards the gender.

In many cases of women's utterances analysis, the study of women's language use as proposed by Lakoff (2004) tends to be focusing more on the use of language features that denote women's subordination towards men in society. The idea of women being subservient towards men in society should be long abandoned since modern society in many countries (especially America in this case) has evolved into community that give almost the same opportunity to men and women in many academic and working spaces. This leads to the use of language features increasingly cannot be only seen to be influenced by gender, but also other social aspects that ultimately affect differences in access to learning media and language literacy of each individual.

Prior to this research, there are several studies conducted in which focuses on the study of Women's language features. Thus, several journals related to the

study were read in order to support this research, in which all of them are conducted using qualitative research method.

Throughout the study, notes from the pluses and minuses of the journals were read and taken. First journal being studied is from Annisa Aga Pebrianti (2013), whom conducted a study on women's language features used by Indonesian female bloggers, titled *Women's Language Features Used by Indonesian Female Bloggers*. The findings showed that the features of the 97 postings studied can be classified into eight categories, with intensifiers being the most frequently used feature with 257 occurrences (34.92%), followed by lexical hedges with 246 occurrences (33.42%), emphatic stress with 153 (20.79%), empty adjectives with 42 occurrences (5.71%), precise colour terms with 15 occurrences (2.04%), tag questions with 11 occurrences (1.50%), super-polite forms with 10 occurrences (1.36%) and avoidance of strong swear words (0.27%). When asked why they use the features, the majority of respondents stated that they use them because they tend to reflect uncertainty and women's lack of confidence in conversation.

The second one is the research on Women's language features in film, entitled *Women's Language Features Found in Female Character's Utterances in The Devil Wears Prada Movie* written by Tika Oktapiani, M. Natsir, and Ririn Setyowati (2017). The study employed Robin Lakoff's Women's language features theory and Jakobson's theory to study the language functions of female characters in *The Devil Wears Prada*. Nine aspects of women's language were discovered, with intensifiers being the most frequently used feature. Lexical hedges or fillers, super-polite forms, tag questions, avoidance of strong-swear words, emphatic stress,

empty adjectives, and precise colour terms were also found. Hypercorrect grammar did not emerge in the study due to the female characters employing informal language in their dialogue to overcome the gender gap.

The third study the writer had read is an analysis of women's language features in Nicki Minaj's comment, entitled *Nicki Minaj's Comments in American Idol Season 12: An Analysis of Women's Language Features* written by Diana Chandra and Made Frida Yulia (2018). Chandra and Yulia's research used Lakoff's theory of Women's language features to analyse a comment made by Nicki Minaj to the American Idol Season 12 contestants. The study found that the features of women's language that emerge in Minaj's comments are intensifier, emphatic stress, fillers, rising intonation, and lexical hedges. Minaj's speech lacks tag question, 'empty' adjective, precise colour term, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'super-polite' form, and avoidance of harsh swear words. There are four theories for the absence of these features: father's speech, ethnicity, community practice, and a variety of social psychology perspectives.

The fourth study is an unpublished thesis written by Monica Leoni Daraninggar Murti (2018) entitled *An Analysis of Women's Language Features Used by Mia in The Princess Diaries Movie*. In this study, Lakoff's Theory: Women's language features are used to analyse the speech of Mia's character in the film. By applying Lakoff's theory, the writer identified lexical hedges or fillers, intensifiers, 'super-polite' forms, 'hypercorrect' grammar, emphatic stress, tag question, rising intonations, and 'empty' adjectives in Mia's utterances in the film. Meanwhile precise colour terms and the avoidance of strong swear words were not

found. Mia's language use was also influenced by gender, which linked to how Mia dealt with her social life in addition to her status as a fifteen-year-old princess. The writer discovered five purposes of Mia's female language features. They were to express uncertainty, elicit a response, soften an utterance, initiate a conversation, and express feelings or opinions.

This study differs from the previous studies in various ways. Although this study employs Robin Lakoff's Women's language features theory, it is applied to three different speeches delivered by one speaker (Anne Hathaway) in professional or formal and semi-formal settings, and in prior studies on women's linguistic features, Anne Hathaway's speeches has never been found used as data. Additionally, unlike what has been studied in the previous studies, this research does not focus on the language features and its function, but rather describes the connection between Anne Hathaway's social status and class, and how it influences the use of women's linguistic features in her speeches.

To understand more about women's social status through their use of women's language features, extensive research on Anne Hathaway's language features and their relation to her social status is needed. Therefore, this study of Women's Language Features entitled *Women's Social Status Through Women's Language Features in Anne Hathaway's Speeches* is conducted to explain more about women's understanding of their social status influences on the language features they employ.

1.2 Statement of Problems

In her research, Lakoff (2004, p. 46) claims that WLF is a feature that shows how women in this society are considered as human beings whose social status is not higher than men. WLF is also an indicator that women are associated with things that have nothing to do with important world interests, shows lack of confidence, and uncertainty. Seeing the current developments in gender equality, where women's access to education is almost equal to that of men all over the world, it is necessary to investigate how women's language features can show women's social status in society.

So based on the research background, the problems in this study can be formulated as follows:

- a. What women's Language Features are appeared in Anne Hathaway's speeches?
- b. How does Anne Hathaway's language features show her social status in society?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research as a response to the statement of problems proposes to achieve some objectives, as follows:

1. To find the women's language features used by Anne Hathaway in her speeches
2. To describe how the use of women's language features shows Anne Hathaway's social status

1.4 Research Significances

The result of this study is expected to be useful and can bring some benefits to the study of language. Theoretically, this study ought to provide further information and understanding in the field of sociolinguistics, particularly in the area of social, language, and gender study. Practically, it is hoped that this research can be beneficial to readers in that it will provide understanding on the linguistic features of women and their relation to women's social status, and serve as a source of encouragement for future studies. Additionally, it is also hoped that this research will be able to contribute to new sociolinguistics teaching resources.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

This section provides a brief explanation for particular significant phrases that appear frequently in this research. This part directs and assists the reader and researcher in concentrating on the issue. Here's a quick rundown of some key terms:

1. Sociolinguistics

As a part of macro-linguistics, sociolinguistics investigates language in social situations and its purposes in society. It investigates the connection between language and its social elements such as colour age, sex, education, occupation, race, etc (Sabila, 2022). Sociolinguistics is the study of how language works in our everyday conversations and the media we are exposed to, as well as the presence of societal norms, policies, and laws that address language.

2. Language and Gender

Language is a form of communication, a code communicated between two or more people. Meanwhile, in the behavioural and social

sciences, gender refers to the complex social, cultural, and psychological processes linked with sex.

3. Women's Language

Men and women employ distinct language elements to maintain their identity; men tend to keep their masculinity, while women keep their femininity. Women's language refers to the way of speaking the reinforced women's subordinated place in society.

4. Women's Language Features

Women's Language Features are the features that widely used by women. Not that men do not use these features, but women use these features more frequently than men. Those features are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, precise colour terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super-polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress (1974, p. 49).

5. Social Status

The relative rank that an individual enjoys in a social hierarchy based on honour or prestige, with related rights, duties, and lifestyle, is referred to as social status. Status can be attributed (that is, given to people at birth regardless of their natural skills) or earned (attained via competition and individual effort). Attained status is decided by education, occupation, marital status, accomplishments, or other traits, whereas ascribed status is determined by sex, age, race, familial relationships, or birth.