CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Background of the Study

As human beings, we need to communicate with each other, to express our ideas and feelings to our friends, family, and other people around us. The means to show our feelings and opinions is language.

Since human beings are unique creature and each has different social background, they express things in different ways. Also for women and men, the linguistic forms used by women and men contrast - to different degrees- in all speech communities (Holmes, 1992).

Sex differences in language are often just one aspect of more pervasive linguistic differences in the society reflecting social status or power differences (Holmes, 1992). Moreover, she says that if a community is very hierarchical, for instance, and within each level of the hierarchy men are more powerful than women, then linguistic differences between the speech of women and men may be just one dimension of more extensive differences reflecting the social hierarchy as a whole.

The situation where men are more powerful than women also occurs in our surroundings, in Indonesia. There is an opinion that men are 'better' speakers in the public sphere of industry, politics, education, etc. On the other hand, women mostly talk by using words that express their uncertainty and lack of confidence.

Lakoff (1992) says that women mostly use powerless speech in her everyday talking, which shows their uncertainty and lack of confidence.

Concerning the use of powerless speech, it is true that there are many factors, which influence people in using Women's Language features. The factors can be linguistic behavior, attitudes, characters, personalities, cultural background, social class, or social status.

Due to the fact above, the writer decided to do a research on the use of powerless speech by women and men witnesses. This research is conducted based on the previous researches done by Robin Lakoff and William O'Barr as the guides.

I.2 Statement of the Problem

This study is planned to answer the questions below:

1. Is it true that female witnesses at court use more powerless language devices in the way they speak than witnesses?

2. What are other factors besides the speakers' gender that correlate with the using of powerless language devices?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study has objectives to answer the questions above. The objectives are:

1. To find out whether it is true or not that female witnesses use language that is more powerless in the way they speak than male witnesses.

2. To find out the other factors that may correlate with the using of powerless language besides the speakers' gender.

I.4 Significance of the Study

The findings obtained from this study are expected to be able to give a little contribution concerning the Sociolinguistic studies especially about the use of powerless language by women and men that tend to show the speaker lack of confidence. In addition to that, the writer hopes that this study will be useful for other researchers who intend to conduct similar researches.

I.5. The Scope and Limitation

Concerning with the limitation time, energy, and funds available and the width of the subjects to be observed the writer decided to limit the scope of the study. This study is limited in several ways:

1. The subjects are two male and two female witnesses who give testimony in a law court.

2. The testimonies are not limited for a certain case but varied. Therefore, each witness will testify for different case.

3. The subjects come from different social backgrounds.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theories of sociolinguistics that cover the social factors and social dimensions, gender and conversational style, and women's language.

Hudson (1980:4) defines sociolinguistics as the study of language in relation to society. Holmes (1992:1) moreover states that sociolinguistics explains why we speak differently in different social contexts, and it is concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning.

According to Coates (1993:3), sociolinguistics is the study of language in its social context. The study of language in its social context means crucially the study of linguistic variation. In different social contexts an individual will speak in different ways - this is called stylistic variation. Moreover, speakers who differ from each other in terms of age, gender, social class, ethnic group, for example, will also differ from each other in their speech, even in the same context. This is called social variation.

1.7 Definition of the Key Terms

There are some key terms that are significant to be explained in order to enable the readers to understand them. The key terms are:

1. Powerless Language

According to Lakoff (1992), powerless language or women's language is language devices that are mostly used by women and signaling uncertainty. The language

4

features that can be categorized into women's language are the use of hedges, boosters, tag questions, and many more that will be discussed further in the next parts.

2. Witness

Witness, based on Hornby's dictionary, is a person who was actually present at an event and should, for this reason, be able to describe it or a person who gives evidence under oath in a law court.

3. Lack of Confidence

According to Hornby, lack of confidence is a condition when someone does not have or has less than enough belief that one is right or that one is able to do something.

I.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. It consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, The Objective of the Study, the Scope and Limitation, Theoretical Framework, Definition of the Key Terms and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter is about review of the related literature, which presents the basic theories of the study and related study. Chapter three discusses the research methodology, which covers research design, the research instruments, the procedures of collecting the data, and the techniques of data analyses. The fourth chapter deals with the data analyses and the findings. The last chapter presents the conclusion and the suggestions concerning the topic under study.