

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

From childhood males and females are different in many ways, both physiologically and psychologically. They are not only different in their physical appearance, but also in the way they use their language. Each person has different style of communicating with other people. To say one intention, someone can say it in different ways. Holmes (1992:4) stated that language provides a variety of ways of saying the same thing. It depends on a lot of things: where people come from, educational background, age, and it also depends on gender.

Eckert and Ginet (2003:17) state that gender is a collaborative affair that one must learn to perform as a male or a female, and that these performances require support from one's surroundings. Indeed, people do not know how to interact with another human being (or often members of other species), or how to judge them and talk about them, unless people can attribute a gender to them. Most of people's interactions are colored by performance of people own gender, and by attribution of gender to others. The different of performance and communication leads the gender differences.

There are two main bodies of research on gender differences in communication styles; academic research and popular literature. Academic research points out major differences in conversation characteristics and traits across gender, while popular research focuses on major stylistic differences in

conversation styles between men and women. Popular research also points out common pitfalls and areas of conflict due to gender differences in communication style of men and women (Merchant, 2012).

Academic research on psychological gender differences has shown that while women use communication as a tool to enhance social connections and create relationships, men use language to exert dominance and achieve tangible outcomes (Leaper, 1991). Women are, overall, more expressive, tentative, and polite in conversation, while men are more assertive, and power-hungry (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003).

On the other hand, popular works by John Gray and Deborah Tannen show that while men view conversations as a way to establish and to maintain status and dominance in relationships, women see the purpose of conversation to create and foster an intimate bond with the other party by talking about topical problems and issues they are communally facing (Gray, 1992; Tannen, 1990).

The characteristics of women in communication are women give more priority to connections or a good relationship and intimacy, avoid superiority, more emotional, and reduce different opinions. In non-verbal communication, women are proved more to use eye contact (67.5 %), body language (75.5 %), and smile (83.7 %). While men communicate, they communicate to report facts and in short phases with little or almost negligible (Griffin, 1999). To say about getting food they serve different ways. Questions are more common in women's contributions (e.g., "Does anyone want to get some food?"), whereas directives

that tell the audience to do something (e.g., “Let’s go get some food”) are more likely to be found in men’s conversational contributions.

Tannen (1990) distinguishes men and women communication pattern. According to her, the men communication pattern is considered “report talk, while women communication pattern is considered by “rapport talk”. Rapport Talk and Report Talk term break down the differences between men and women communication so language users are able to understand those differences in our everyday lives and apply our communication adaptations. These terms differentiate the language characteristics between men and women. The characteristics include questions, apologies, compliments, longer talk, taking blame, giving advice, thanking and performing request.

In daily communication, people always ask others to do things. Speaker asks a person to give him something, or ask the person to do some actions. These are all requests. Request refers inclusively to an utterance that is intended to indicate the speaker’s desire to regulate the behavior of the listener that is, to get the listener to do something (Becker, 1982) as cited in Achiba (2003).

A request is made when a speaker asks a hearer to do something (Levent, 2013). In other words, the speaker is imposing on the hearer. The hearer has to pay the cost of carrying out the request and the speaker usually gains the profit out of it. The concept of request is important because it helps to understand the way in which a certain society is maintained through individual’s everyday conduct.

In social interaction, people sometimes perform request to do things they want. It happens not only in community surrounding but also at school. At school, people especially students perform request in some places; in the classroom, canteen, library or in laboratory. Performing request isn't a part of inseparable of communications. Men and women are different in performing the request. Tannen (1990) states men tend to use direct request when speaking to others. For example: "Close the door!", "Switch on the light!". Men speak most directly to the point while women tend to use indirect request. For example: "Won't you close the door?".

Based on the observation done in Dharmawangsa School at informal context, it was found that male students performed request in the direct ways. As the example when a male student knew that his friend wanted to go to canteen, he asked him to buy mineral water. He said "Buy me mineral water! Here is the money". This utterance shows that a male student perform request directly since his utterance is coded by imperative and right to the point. It means, the intention of the speaker is clear.

But, it was different in another male student. In this case, he performed request indirectly. In a case when he wanted to ask his friend, female student, to throw rubbish which was in front of them, he prefers to say "This area is not clean, the rubbish everywhere." His interlocutor didn't understand his intention so she just said "I don't know who throw the rubbish here", so that the he threw the rubbish in the recycle bin himself.

These two phenomena describe that men are not always in direct position. There are some factors that influence them to choose direct or indirect ways. They can be from interlocutors, situation, social status, or gender.

The main rule of a request is to bring the requestee or interlocutor to the awareness that some action is desired of him, but there are various ways in which this action can be achieved. According to the structure and pattern of sentences, request can be realized linguistically into syntactical realization (imperative, interrogative, declarative, modal auxiliary) and lexical realization (Sadock, 1974). The example “Buy me mineral water!” which said by male students is called imperative request while “This area is not clean, the rubbish everywhere” is called declarative request. These two kinds of request occur when they had interaction at informal context. Therefore, the study will find out the other requests that will be performed by male and female students in doing interaction at informal context. Informal context is chosen considering the observation done at that school when they had rest time.

In performing request, they do it in different ways that are through body language, had higher intonation and through the language used by them. The study will explore the way of male and female students perform request linguistically means that the researcher doesn’t focus with the other way like body language or higher intonation but focuses on the linguistic characteristics. Therefore, the study will elaborate the way request linguistically performed by male and female students with reference to Tannen theory direct and indirect request.

Therefore, the consistency of male and female language characteristic is still debated. It is because language characteristics of men and women are not regarded as an absolute condition caused by gender differences. Connel (2002: 51) asserts that category gender differences in language are not a fixed category. This is due to the specific and situational differences that sometimes arise in communication between men and women. These differences could have been influenced by other factors beside gender like the atmosphere communication and the level of speaker social status. Hence, the study of language and gender has to examine the relationship of several types of factors that affect the level of communication.

As already described above, it is interesting to study the language characteristics of men and women in performing request. This study will explore male and female students' language in performing request. It will be conducted in Dharmawangsa Senior High School in Medan.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

Based on the background in the previous part, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of request performed by male and female students in doing interaction at informal context?
2. How are the requests linguistically performed by male and female students in doing interaction at informal context?

3. Why are the requests performed by male and female students in doing interaction at informal context the way they are?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

This study is aimed to find out:

1. The kinds of request performed by male and female students in doing interaction at informal context.
2. The way request linguistically performed by male and female students in doing interaction at informal context.
3. The reasons of male and female students perform request in doing interaction at informal context the way they are.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

This study is talking about language and gender. The researcher will elaborate the different ways of male and female students in performing request at Dharmawangsa Senior High School. The gender language of them in performing request will be observed through their utterances in informal context; canteen, area in front of the class, and parking lot.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Various factors are very important to the significance of this study. Theoretically, the result of this study is useful for the enrichment of linguistics knowledge in the field of sociolinguistics especially language and gender.

Practically, the results are useful for both male and female students in performing requests. They have to consider who are their interlocutors and should use the appropriate request in order to create a good atmosphere of communication and interaction.



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