

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

As a social creature, every human being has the need to interact with others. Language is one of the instruments used in human interaction. By using language, we are able to communicate with others. In other words, language has become one of human basic needs. That is why language is very enjoyable to observe and analyze; it is really close to everybody's life.

However, using language is not as simple and easy as we may think. On the contrary, it is a complex matter because it deals with at least two individuals. Misunderstanding or misinterpretation often occurs for the reason that these two individuals do not share the same message implied in their communication. It is believed that gender plays a role in the use of language. Realizing it or not, male and female do speak differently and it sometimes frustrates both sides in many ways. This difference is also influenced by culture. According to Goodenough (1957, p.167): '...a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves.' Departing from the previous statement, we can draw a conclusion that language is created by society. In

addition, whether they realize it or not, male and female use language differently. They speak as the society wants them to and permit them to. Moreover, they speak as they are expected to. Generally speaking, female is expected to speak more politely than male. To make it clearer, let us take a look at a conversation between a couple, male and female, who is having a trip by car. The female wants to stop for a while in a coffee shop to buy a cup of coffee.

SHE: Would you like to stop by and have a cup of coffee?

HE : No, thank you.

SHE: Why do you have to be so annoying?

HE : Give me a break. What do you mean? Am I doing something wrong? What have I done? I've done nothing...I'm just trying to be polite by saying no, thank you.

SHE: You don't have to yell at me just because I want a cup of coffee.

HE :Now, I got it. You want a cup of coffee. Why don't you just say it out loud?

We can see clearly from the conversation above that instead of giving an order, the female speaker gives a suggestion to deliver her message. As a consequence, the male participant thinks she only offers to stop by and buy a cup of coffee. He does not want to stop by; therefore, he rejects the offer in a polite way. It is obvious that he does not understand what she really wants. The female becomes upset for the reason that she feels he is being insensitive. Furthermore, she feels hurt because he does not seem to understand her. It is possible that both of these people are frustrated because they cannot understand each other. She thinks her male partner is insensitive. Nonetheless, he feels the female does not state what she really wants directly.

The example above shows that misunderstanding even between close partners often occurs because male and female have different ways of speaking and different purposes implied in their communication. At present, there have

been many researches focusing on language usage. Moreover, people wonder if gender does make a difference in the usage of language. There are some linguists who are deeply interested in this issue, such as, Dell Hymes, Henri Tajfel, Janet Holmes, Jennifer Coates, Peter Trudgill, Robin Lakoff and so on. Deborah Tannen is one of the linguists who have done a research about gender role in the use of language. She has been well-known all over the world through her works which eventually become best-sellers. One of her books, You Just Don't Understand, becomes a best-seller book in New York, USA. In this book, Tannen states that there are six contrasts in cross-gender communication.

The first contrast deals with status and support. In doing communication, male always seeks to achieve the upper status; on the other hand, female always seeks to gain confirmation and support for their ideas. Second, male communication focuses more on being independent, while female tends to preserve intimacy. The third contrast occurs when dealing with problems. Male tends to give solution for the problem; on the other hand, female tends to give sympathy. The fourth contrast, male concerns more on what information that they can give or get, whereas female tends to concern more on what they feel. The fifth contrast, male tends to use and prefer to hear direct imperatives, whereas female tends to do indirect imperatives. The last contrast deals with how male and female show their disagreement. Male tends to show their disagreement outspokenly while female tends to compromise with it.

However, there is no such perfection in this world. There is always flaw or anomaly in everything, including in a theory. There are some cases where male speaks like female and vice versa. Concerning this, I would like to find out the

anomalies of Tannen's theory dealing with cross-gender communication. In addition, I would like to find out the reasons behind these anomalies. As a result, I choose to discuss "The Violations of Deborah Tannen's Theory of Six Contrasts in Cross-Gender Communication Seen in The Peacemaker and A Few Good Men" as my thesis topic.

Owing to the fact that English is a foreign language in Indonesia, I would prefer to use films as my data source to get a clear picture of conversation between male and female in a real situation. Besides, I find that films are more reliable than other data sources. By using films, I am able to get clearer important information about the participants, the setting (time and place), the verbal and non-verbal behavior.

The films that will be my data source are The Peacemaker and A Few Good Men. The reason for choosing these two films is that the female major characters in these two films do not act or speak like what Tannen has stated in her theory.

## **1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In analyzing The Peacemaker and A Few Good Men through Deborah Tannen's theory of six contrasts in cross-gender communication, I would like to state the problems as follows:

1. What are the violations of Tannen's theory that can be found in The Peacemaker and A Few Good Men?
2. Why do these violations occur?

### **1.3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

1. To show violations of Tannen's theory found in The Peacemaker and A Few Good Men.
2. To show the reasons behind the violations.

### **1.4. METHODS OF RESEARCH**

In writing my thesis, I will begin by watching The Peacemaker and A Few Good Men, which are my data sources. While watching these films, I take notes of the female major characters' utterances. Then, I analyze the utterances containing the violation of Tannen's theory. After getting the valid data, I classify the data into Tannen's six contrasts. The next step is to apply Tannen's six contrasts into the classified data and write the research report.

### **1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

The thesis is presented in four chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Theoretical Framework, which contains the explanation about sociolinguistics and Tannen's theory. The next chapter discusses the violations of Deborah Tannen's theory of six contrasts in cross-gender communication. The last chapter is the Conclusion, consisting of the research result and the findings I get. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and Appendices.