

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Humans utilized language as a tool to communicate. Language is beyond a doubt essential in our life, as we use it to convey our needs, to represent ourselves, to express emotions, and most importantly to be able to interact with others socially. Knowing a language means also knowing that specific sound sequences represent particular meanings (Fromkin et al., 2003). Hence, it is very important for us to understand a language to avoid misunderstandings in communication. Perhaps the possession of language is what distinguishes humans from other living beings.

The study of the relationship between language and society is known as sociolinguistics. According to Hudson (as cited in Wardhaugh, 2006), sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society. The relationship between language and society is deeply rooted. Society heavily shapes language; therefore, it cannot be isolated from the social sphere. Language is vital in every civilization, regardless of time and period. The use of language represents essential aspects of how humans behave and engage in social interaction. The purpose of the study of language and its relationship with society is to have a better understanding of the structure of language and speakers' awareness of language (Wardhaugh, 2006).

The use of language in society is inevitably related to gender. Among the macro branches of linguistics, sociolinguistics covered gender as rather a vital variable concerned with the use of language in society. Gender can be defined as the condition and traits of maleness or femaleness that are socially constructed by society and assigned to boys, girls, men, and women. Eckert (2003) mentioned that sex is a biological categorization based primarily only on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Children learn societal stereotypes regarding appropriate behaviours for their gender. They are expected to conform to specific societal roles and to behave accordingly based on the norms in society. Gender is something that is deeply embedded in every aspect of society. It exists in various settings in society, from formal to casual places (Eckert, 2003).

The way men and women produce and use language can be different, particularly when it is linked to some linguistic features that they employ. Xia (2013) points out that the disparities between men and women in linguistic varieties may occur due to their different roles in society. Women appear to be more submissive than men in society. Furthermore, Cameron (1985) also states that the existence of different characteristics associated with gender roles may or may not stress the position of female subcultures in the power hierarchy. As a result, women's speech tends to be not as self-confident as men whereas men's speech is much more confident, direct, and filled with aggression, mainly due to their roles in society which almost dominate everything.

Lakoff (2004) mentioned characteristics that differ between women's and men's languages. Men tend to speak assertively, maturely, and more directly. On the contrary, women are indecisive and use figurative words. They tend to be more mannered and use polite words. Yule (2020) also points out that when using language, men tend to use more assertive forms and 'strong' language. Women, on the other hand, often add tag questions such as *don't* and *isn't* to the end of the statement when expressing their opinions.

Conversations and studies regarding the relation between language and gender are growing ceaselessly. Gender issues emerged due to the notion that women and men in society do not exactly speak the same way in communities. A few studies on male and female language features have been conducted by academics, such as Simon (2021), Ginarti et al. (2022), and Dinata et al. (2023).

The language used and its speakers play an essential part in a conversation. As already mentioned in the literature review above, the language used by certain people differs as they do not apply the same conversational features. In this context, conversational features refer to the features that distinguish the way a speaker communicates with others. The features are shown through the employment of different linguistic features in their speeches. When two different sexes engage in a mixed-sex conversation, the variety of conversational features employed by the speakers is more extensive compared to conversations done by individuals of the same gender.

Pearson (1985) asserts that there are fourteen features that differentiate men's and women's linguistics, namely (1) colour language, (2) sexual

language, (3) profanity, (4) hedges, (5) verbal fillers, (6) hypercorrection, (7) compound requests, (8) tag question, (9) questioning, (10) talk time, (11) controlling the topic, (12) interruptions, (13) overlaps, and (14) silence. The differences that occur between linguistic features used by men and women are motivated by several factors. Dell Hymes in Wardhaugh (2006) proposed a mnemonic device referred to as “SPEAKING” to analyze and understand the communicative ability of a speaker within cultural contexts. The “SPEAKING” model represents the key components involved in effective communication, namely (1) Setting and scene, (2) Participants, (3) Ends, (4) Act sequence, (5) Key, (6) Instrumentalities, (7) Norms, and (8) Genre.

Previous studies regarding conversational analysis have been conducted by scholars. Many scholars have researched the occurrence of conversational analysis in various data. Pascarina (2014), in her thesis, examines topics discussed among men and women in cross-gender conversations in *One for the Money* (2012). Atun (2017) tried to investigate the conversational features performed by male and female in cross-gender conversation and investigate the factors that motivated them to use the features in *Rules Don't Apply* (2016). Each of those studies examines conversational analysis in different data compared to this research, which uses a mini-series that is more recently released as its source of data. Furthermore, Khumairoh & Anugerahwati (2021) and Li (2014) also conducted studies regarding the conversational style used by men and women in TV series. Each of those studies used a different theoretical framework compared to this research, which uses the Gender & Communication

theory proposed by Pearson (1985) and Hymes' (1974) SPEAKING framework.

In reference to the related studies mentioned, I am interested in conducting research regarding conversational features used by male and female characters in the HBO mini-series *Scenes from a Marriage* (2021). It is an American adaptation of Ingar Bergmann's 1973 Swedish TV mini-series about a marriage falling apart, directed by Hagai Levi. This research intends to analyze the conversational features employed by the leading male and female characters and to find out the factors that influence the disparities in men's and women's communication patterns in mixed-sex conversations. There is currently no research on conversational features depicted in this mini-series. The findings of this study are likely to benefit the readers and future researchers by expanding their knowledge and understanding regarding the conversational features employed by men and women, particularly in media representations we consume daily.

1.2 Limitation of the Problem

In this study, I am interested in analyzing the conversational features of the main male and female characters in the first episode of the HBO mini-series *Scenes from a Marriage*. I will only analyze the conversational features performed by the main male and female characters and the factors that influence the main male and female characters' employment of conversational features in mixed-sex conversations in the first episode of the series.

1.3 Research Questions

In relation to the background, the problems are formulated as the follows:

1. What are the conversational features used by the main male and female characters in *Scenes from a Marriage*?
2. What are the factors that influence the main male and female characters' employment of conversational features in mixed-sex conversations in *Scenes from a Marriage*?

1.4 Objectives of the Research

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

1. To identify the conversational features used by the main male and female characters in *Scenes from a Marriage*.
2. To find out the factors that influence the main male and female characters' employment of conversational features in mixed-sex conversations in *Scenes from a Marriage*.