

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Men and women are completely different creatures. The construction of gender causes some differences between men and women in many aspects of life. It also leads to create differences in communication especially in conversational styles. The way they speak, express themselves, share their ideas, state the opinions, and the way they talk to each other is totally different. Those differences in language contribute a unique value to them as human being created in God's image in which they have to share to each other. Tannen (1990:50) specifies number of different general principles that differentiate males and females speech style to communicate, those differences can be seen physically.

On the other hand, the concept of gender is used to transform males and females human beings into social participants as men and women, assigning them roles and cultural values. This process of transformation involves expectation and evaluation of behaviour, societal attitudes, roles and their participations in family and community life. According to Bonvillain (1998:249), gender can be distinguished from sex. People usually use the word "sex" if they want to emphasize the physical differences between males and females.

In the linguistics field, gender differences in conversational styles have been documented for many years. Males and females are claimed to respond differently when their friends share their personal problems. There are two language functions that are usually used to respond to such a situation, sympathy and advice. The use of sympathy and advice is different between males and females.

In the society, there is an opinion that women will respond to their friends in trouble by expressing their sympathy. On the contrary, men prefer to give advice.

Women are claimed to discuss their problems more than men do and, while men tend to use advice more than women do, women purportedly express sympathy more than men do. That is, women prefer to respond to someone's troubles by giving comfort, describing similar personal situations and offering matching troubles (Tannen, 1990:51).

Thus, it can be concluded that women like to use sympathy and men like to use advice in responding troubles. If women offer solutions to problems, men complain about women's refusal to take action to solve problems they complain about. There is a tendency that females will express their sympathy as the best response and males prefer to give some advice to help their friends out of problems. On the contrary, the society thinks that males have a tendency to give advice rather than sympathy. Males are described as more concerned with establishing and maintaining social status or power. When their friends share personal problems, males will consider that those friends need some help to solve the problems. They will speak straight forward and directly discuss the point of the conversation and they will convey their advice automatically to their friends.

Actually, each person either males or females has his or her own way in expressing sympathy and advice. As Jane Sunderland (1994:1) wrote in her book, gender is a matter of tendency and degree. The stereotype of males and females that has been explained above causes misperception in the society that females in this world will respond by expressing sympathy when their friends share their personal problems and males will prefer to give advice in this situation.

In this research the writer tried to find out the different ways of females and males in responding to personal problems by giving sympathy or advice. The writer analyzed the students in the Faculty of Letters because based on the writer's experiences, they often share their personal problems with others and have unstable emotions, and have more complex problems with others. Hopefully, by analyzing it, the writer hopes that the writer can find the answer which one tends to use sympathy or advice between males and females and can give significant information for the language learners about the differences in conversational style especially in responding personal problems using sympathy and advice.

1.2. Field of the Study

The field of this study is discourse analysis.

1.3. Scope of the Study

The focused on analyze language in the conversational style. The writer only limits gender differences in conversational style especially in responding to personal problems by giving sympathy and advice.

1.4. Problem Formulation

The reasons of doing this research lead the writer to the following questions:

1. Do the male students of the Faculty of Letters show sympathy or give advice in responding to personal problems?
2. Do the female students of the Faculty of Letters show sympathy or give advice in responding to personal problems?

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The research questions above, then, lead the writer to some objectives of doing this research. The objectives are:

1. To investigate the responses given by the male students when responding to personal problems whether they give sympathy or advice.
2. To investigate the responses given by the female students when responding to personal problems whether they give sympathy or advice.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study investigated how men and women subjects differentiate between sympathy and advice as ways of responding to someone with a personal problem. By doing this research, the writer expects to find the comparison in using response based on gender occur in the Faculty of Letters students. It is expected that the result of this study can provide information about sympathy and advice responses problems which

are influenced by gender. The writer is expected to be able give significant information to the language learners about the differences in conversational style especially in responding to a personal problem using sympathy and advice.

1.7. Definition of the Terms

Sympathy : Sympathy is an emotional attachment to a subject and is commonly associated with an irrational response. Sympathy is a harmony of or agreement in feeling, as between persons or on the part of one person with respect to another¹.

Advice : A form of relating personal opinions, belief systems, personal values and recommendations about certain situations relayed in some context to another person, group or party often offered as a guide to action or conduct (Jong, 2000)².

¹ Brown, Marshall. Learn What You Need, Share What You Know. (http://www.amazon.ca/s?ie=UTF8&rh=i%3Astripbooks%2Cp_27%3AMarshall%20Brown&field-author=Marshall%20Brown&page=1). Downloaded on 24 October 2009.

² Ernst, Michael. Advice for Researcher and Students. (<http://www.cs.washington.edu/homes/mernst/advice>) downloaded on 25 June 2009.