

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

A language is a tool of communication that no human in this world can live without. Humans need to be able to speak at least one language to interact with others so that they can fulfil their needs in their lives properly. Human society depends on spoken (or written) interaction (Gilmartin et al., 2019, p. 51). The interaction that is created by every person can be various in terms of the conversational type such as a casual conversation between friends and a formal conversation between colleagues at the workplace.

In the writer's experience, young people gossip with their peers and closest friends. For instance, they tend to gossip when there is a juicy rumour about someone's personal life and when they dislike other groups of students. They can gossip by directly talking to each other or even using their group chat on social media. Gossip can bring an impact on a work relationship or friendship between one person to another. Gossip has been cited to be related to friendship as it can increase the bond between people and the sense of belonging to a group (Watson, 2012, p. 4). At the same time, gossip has been proposed to be a uniquely human form of "social grooming," analogous to physical grooming by other primates, a process by which individuals build trust and strong social bonds (Jolly & Chang, 2021, p. 3). This phenomenon of gossip has put itself as a part of human societies.

Both males and females have their own preferences of what topic of gossip they like to talk about. The type of gossipy topic that a male mostly likes to talk about is related to personal achievement issues. The topic of gossip that male likes to talk about varies from one to another “But they did score slightly higher when it came to "achievement related gossip," which refers to shooting the breeze about grades or salaries, and other status-oriented stuff” (Nierenberg, 2012, para. 8). Meanwhile, the type of gossipy topic that a female likes to talk about is mostly related to private issues. “When I interviewed college girls about gossip, most agreed that their favourite topics to gossip about are friends, sex, relationships, material/social status, and celebs.” (Mellardo, 2014, para. 5). In addition, women are more identical to those who gossip more. It is conventionally accepted that gossiping is something that women do (Coates, 2013, p. 103).

In his study, the writer aims to focus on exploring the motives and choices of gossipy talks among male students in the Faculty of Language and Arts and their choice of topics for gossiping. The main reason the writer decided to choose male students instead of female students is that people in general usually relate gossip to females. Consequently, girls and women are predicted to initiate and engage in gossip more frequently than boys and men (Davis et al., 2020, p. 1). Because women and gossip are considered closely related, therefore, many researchers have conducted on women gossip. Studies on the motives and choices of males are mostly underrepresented. The writer intends to conduct a research about this particular issue because the research will bring some insights of how and why male students gossip especially the male students

in the Faculty of Language and Arts. Furthermore, this research will contribute to the discussion of gossipy talks.

There have been some other previous studies on similar topics conducted by other researchers. The objective of Beersma and Van Kleef's research is to develop a measure of gossip motives to explore whether the motives to do gossip that they derived from their literature review can be empirically distinguished and are, indeed, related to the tendency to instigate gossip. Based on Beersma and Van Kleef's research, there are four motives that make people gossip. The first motive is people can influence others and manipulate their opinions, typically in a negative direction by gossiping. The second motive is one can acquire new information about the person about whom one gossips, or check whether or not others share one's by doing gossip. The third motive is one can simply have fun and distract oneself and others from routine activities by gossiping. Gossiping then is motivated by the desire to have a good time with others. The fourth motive is one can "warn" group members against others who violate group norms, and it is possible that this explicit motive is a reason to instigate gossip. The result of the research that is conducted by Beersma and Van Kleef proved that the four motives could be empirically distinguished.

Previous studies on gossipy talks have mostly emphasized the talks among women and people in general. This study focuses on the motives of gossipy talks among men; thus, this study has addressed the research gap in this field of inquiry. The second difference between this study and the previous studies lies in the fact that this

study discussed the most common topics in gossipy talks among men. Currently there has been no studies focusing on that particular area.

## **1.2 Field of the Study**

The field of this study is Discourse Analysis.

## **1.3 Scope of the Study**

In this research, the writer limits his research on the motives and topics of gossipy conversation among the male students of the Faculty of Language and Arts.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

In this research, there are two research questions that have been arranged as follows:

1. What are the motives of gossipy talks among male students?
2. What are the most discussed topics of male students' gossipy talk?

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are

1. To find out of the motives of gossipy talks among male students.
2. To find out the most discussed topics of male students' gossipy talk.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The result of the study is expected to contribute to the Discourse Analysis, especially in the motives and topics of gossipy conversation. Furthermore, the result of the study can be developed by other researchers who deal with a similar study.

## 1.7 Definition of Term

### 1. Gossip

Among a lot of definitions of gossip, the writer chose three sources that could define the definition of gossip comprehensively. First, gossip can be defined as an informal communication process that includes information about the social environment or other people” (Noon and Delbridge, 1993 (as cited in Eckhaus & Ben-Hador, 2018, p. 274)). Second, Jolly & Chang (2021) stated that gossip is a multi-faceted behavior that reflects multiple social functions. Third, anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist, Robin Dunbar, has theorized that gossip is an efficient tool for forming alliances, although usually at the expense of the gossip target” (Dunbar, 2008, as cited in Eckhaus & Ben-Hador, 2018, p. 273)).

### 2. Gossipy

Gossipy means full of gossip (Cambridge dictionaries online, 2021).