CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Human communicates through language that is delivered in interaction in a society. By communicating through a language, people can deliver their thought, emotion, ideas, and feeling. Language is an individual and a social possession since humans are individuals as well as beings in the society (Wardhaugh, 1992:117). Language also reflects social and cultural phenomena that occur in the society. Language can involve many issues that are usually popular at some situations. It is undeniable that different languages are used in different occasions too.

In relation to multicultural society, there are many people who use intercultural communication in their way to interact to each other. It is because they have different cultures which influence their language. There are many problems that appear in intercultural communication which sometimes lead to a conflict. One of the problem is the differences between races. These differences will lead to racial segregation which usually arises in terms of skin color, power, and wealth. Therefore, racial issue becomes a crucial issue in some countries, including the United States of America.

The way a person utilizes language is affected by many factors, such as social factors and social dimensions. Those factors will also influence the conversation whether the speakers discuss one or more topics, like in

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discussing racism issue. This phenomenon is a reason why communication becomes an interesting object to investigate. Language can also be varied according to the people using it. People from a different social status or educational background use their language differently; those who are from a higher social status or educational background do not speak the same way as those who are from a lower social status or educational background. This phenomenon also appears for those who have different treatment which usually happens in some speech communities. Some factors that influence someone's language may also reflect something that occurs in the society, such as racism issue.

There are many parameters or factors applied to analyze the complexity of how a person uses language, regarding his/her role as a social being. Some of these many factors which influence how someone chooses a language in communication are social factors and social dimensions. Both social factors and social dimensions are complementary and they support each other in order to enhance a good concept about how to examine social perspectives which affect the way people use language. Variety of speech may change depending on the circumstances in which the people are speaking. A variety of speech is not simply uttered but is always controlled by some social aspects. Supporting this point, there are social factors and social dimensions that are relevant in analyzing the particular variety used. They are the participants of the interaction, the setting or social context of the interaction, the topic of the interaction and the function of the interaction.

Besides, social dimensions are also important in analyzing the interaction among people. They are social distance scale focusing on the relationship between the participants, status scale which is concerned with the participants' social rank in the society, formality scale related to the type of the interaction, and two functional scales: referential and affective scales which describe the purpose of interaction (Holmes, 2001:9). These social dimensions are needed to clarify and measure the cause of a particular interaction. Communication is a socially complex-matter. A combination of social factors and social dimensions will influence the concept about the causes of a particular interaction to be conducted. The social dimensions are the supporting factors to the social factors in studying the variety of speech. The combination of these categorization is essential to be applied in order to establish a better concept about how to make use of language properly in the community since it is vital to maintain the speaker's role as a social being. People may use different languages due to the social factors or social dimensions in which they are speaking. There are many different ways to communicate a topic. They are based on the speakers' background, such as education, gender, relationship, and race. These kinds of language can be found in the *Freedom Writers* movie which involves racism issue in the United States of America. This is shown by the following example:

> Erin Gruwell   : "Ben Samuels?"
> Marcus   : "That ***white boy*** is hoping he's in the wrong room."
> Ben Samuels   : "I gotta get out of here."
>
>   (SF/02)

The dialogue above is taken from the movie script of the film *Freedom Writers*. There is an utterance that represents racism phenomenon. The conversation happens when Erin Gruwell as a new white teacher calls Ben Samuel's name in the classroom. Erin Gruwell uses formal language to call him by using his full name, Ben Samuel. At the same time, Marcus as a black student interrupts her by saying "***white boy***" which refers to Ben. He thinks that Ben should have a different room and Ben feels that he must move to another room, because he is the only white student in that classroom.

The above conversation is an example of racism phenomena shown by Marcus (black student) toward Ben Samuels (a white student) which appears in the school in Long Beach, California. This phenomenon may reflect the same issue that is also found in all parts of the United States of America. This dialogue was taken from the script of *Freedom Writers*. It is a 2002 American movie, written, produced and directed by Richard La Gravenese. The movie is directed by Richard La Gravenese and it was given Humanitas Prize Award for Best Feature Film Category in 2007 and was also nominated in Image Award for Outstanding Writing in a motion picture (theatrical/TV) in 2008.

This movie is based on the Freedom Writers diary by the teacher Erin Gruwell who wrote the story based on Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach, LA, California in 1994. The class consists of students from different cultural background such as white people, African-American, Cambodians, Mexicans, Jews, etc. The movie portrays how Erin Gruwell played by the twice Academy Award winner Hillary Schwank as a new,

excited school teacher who must struggle hard to cope with her class that consists of people from different races and cultural background due to a new integration program. The students are described as dealing with much violence in their neighborhoods and do not care about education. They also fail to interact well with each other due to racial parameters.

B. **Research Focus**

Many countries live in multicultural societies, such as Indonesia, USA, and United Kingdom. In those nations, phenomena of language varieties exist. These also show racism. These phenomena are well-portrayed in the movie *Freedom Writers*. It tells more about people living in many speech communities where their problems can be identified. The first problem is that people who live in a multicultural society have both benefits and problems in their daily life. Sometimes the problems are bigger than the benefits. Most problems in many speech communities are complex. Usually the problems are related to the difference phenomena, which include difference of belief, culture, value, norm, religion, language and many aspects that influence the communication among people there. The cultural difference can make gap between the dominating and dominated group that later on may lead to stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination even a cultural hatred such as racism. It can also lead to conflicts from disagreements that appear in the society.

The second problem is the effect of different social roles that will make group conflict and difference in power as one of society factors. The group

being stereotyped is usually inconvenient of a negative attitude shown by other groups. In this case, one of the reasons of the emergence of conflict in *Freedom Writers* is because of different speech communities that cannot be denied by racist phenomenon. In this film, one of the conflicts shown is the conflict between a Latino student with the Chinese one. The conflict began with the murder of a Chinese by a Latino student that makes a complicated case in the school.

The third problem is linguistic choice in language use that is frequently reflecting racism. The manifestation of racist phenomenon is in the form of speech because perception in human mind will influence their linguistic choices. The linguistic choices are in the form of verbs, adjectives, and nouns. In *Freedom Writers*, there are many linguistic choices that highly imply the influence of social factors and social dimensions of racism.

The explanation above implies that the social life in the United States of America is reflected clearly on *Freedom Writers*. The influence of the social life (the social condition, marriage and family, economic conditions, and arts) towards the characters' language is examined by investigating the social factors (the participants of the interaction (related to the users of language; who is speaking and to whom they are speaking to), the setting or social context of the interaction (related to its users, where they are speaking), the topic of the interaction (concerns with why they are speaking) and social dimensions (social distance scale focusing on the relationship between the participants, status scale which is concerned with the participants' social rank

in society, formality scale related to the type of interaction, and two functional scales: referential and affective) as the indicators. These parameters are used to categorize as well as to measure the social features motivating the interactions.

In this study, the researcher only focuses on analyzing the social factors and social dimensions in the characters' language in *Freedom Writers* that focused on racism issue in the United States of America. Then, the process of classifying the dialogues into each of the social factors and social dimensions is based on the context observed from *Freedom Writers*. These parameters are used since it is impossible to analyze all sentences existing in the dialogues. Finally, all of the problems relate to one phenomenon that also occurs at the same time, which is Racism.

C. Formulation of the Problem

The social life in the United States of America at that time influences the language of the characters in *Freedom Writers*. In line with this attention, the problems formulated in this study are presented below:

1. What are the social factors in the characters' language that reflects racism in *Freedom Writers*?

2. What are the social dimensions in the characters' language that reflects racism in *Freedom Writers*?

D. Research Objectives

In reference to the research focus above, the objectives of this research are:

1. to describe the social factors in the characters' language that reflects racism in *Freedom Writers*, and

2. to describe the social dimensions in the characters' language that reflects racism in *Freedom Writers*.

E. Research Significance

The study offers practical and theoretical benefits. Theoretically, the findings are expected to enrich and give an additional reference to other researchers in the scope of sociolinguistics. This study may also add to current studies that are connected with the impact of social life of a particular society towards the use of language. Practically, the results of the study provide parties with the following significance:

1. To the researcher

    The study can give wider knowledge about social factors and social dimensions as the parameters in analyzing interactions. Furthermore, this study can give new information about how to use language correctly and appropriately in the community.

2. To the academic society

    The research is expected to give contribution as a valuable source of reference to related studies for it discusses the influence of social factors and social dimensions in the society and its relationship with Racism in the United States of America. This study can give a

contribution to the development of language research, especially in investigating various social aspects which influence interactions.

3. To other researchers and students interested in Sociolinguistics

The study can give contribution to the developmental sociolinguistics study especially in investigating the relationship among language, culture, and society.

4. To all readers

This study can increase the awareness of readers in general to not only view a film from its internal elements but also from its external elements. In this case, the readers could learn the cultural background of film, including the use of language as a part of culture captured on the film.