

# **CHAPTER I**

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### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Equipped with a capacity to think, human beings are enabled to creatively construct means for enhancing their quality of life; not only as individuals, but also as social creatures. As social human beings, their pursue of fulfilling their need to relate with other human beings has encouraged them to make use of their ability to think symbolically and to interpret and produce sounds to establish a system called language (Verhoven in Coulmas (ed.), 1997:389). Regarding language itself, it can be defined as “an arbitrary system of articulated sounds made use by a group of human as a means of carrying on the affairs of their society” (Francis, 1958:13). With the existence of this communication means, human beings can manifest their thoughts; yet, the utilization of language as a means of communication would be meaningless in the absence of thinking. As asserted by Boas (in Blount, 1975), he referred language as the representation of a classification of experience, which varies from language to language and lies outside the scope of conscious awareness. Furthermore, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, who asserted that language is not only a symbolic inventory of our environment. It is considered to have despotic powers so that our view of the world can be influenced by the structure of our language (Ember & Ember, 1985:221). In short, there is a strong undeniable interrelationship between language and thought, in which one influences the other and cannot exist without

the presence of the others as well. This study is conducted on the basis of this strong bond between language and thought

Furthermore, by means of language, people construct patterns for structuring their time, defining their roles, communicating with others, formulating beliefs and values, and performing actions which is referred by Putnis & Petelin (1999:65) as culture. This means that language cannot be separated from its setting, which refers to the society to which it belongs and the cultural values of the society (Sapir, 1949:207). In this research, the relationship between language and culture is viewed as bi-directional in nature. Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember have mentioned this interrelationship between language and culture in their book entitled *Anthropology* (1985). On one hand, it is stated that a culture may affect the structure the content of its language. As a result, linguistic diversity can be viewed as a partial derivation of cultural diversity On the other hand, the linguistic elements by themselves may have impacts upon other cultural aspects (Ember & Ember, 1985:219). This view is also adopted by Abdul Wahab in his article entitled *Peranan Bahasa dalam Pengembangan Budaya Bangsa*. This research is based on the interrelationship between language, thought, and culture.

There are many researchers who have explored the association between language, thought and culture. One of them is Agustinus Ngadiman (1997) in his dissertation entitled: *Javanese Cultural Thought Patterns As Manifested in Expository Discourse*. This study emphasizes the influence of cultural thought pattern upon the discourse of expository writing. It was conducted based on

Kaplan's theory on the influence of culture upon the rhetorical pattern of its society with a specification on the relationship between Javanese culture and its rhetorical pattern. This study has not touched the area of the influence of culture and its dynamic nature upon a society's view on a certain issue. Furthermore, it has not explored about how language is used to influence the thought and cultural concept of the society; therefore, this study was conducted on the areas that have not been explored by the previous researcher.

As it is believed that there is a strong correlation between language, thought and culture, the existence of the differences among the language users cannot be ignored. It means that since those language users belong to a certain cultural group, there are variations in terms of their age, gender, social class, ethnic group, and many other roles related differences, which cannot be ignored in the study of a particular language. These differences are commonly referred in sociolinguistic study as social variation (Coates, 1993:4). Gender, as one of the aspects of social variation has been a major topic in sociolinguistics continuously explored by linguists. Not only that it is appealing in nature, but also it still leaves some unexplored dimensions that become the interest of this study.

One of the observable differences between men and women is how they are brought up differently and fill different roles in the society, therefore, there are some differences in their speech (Wardhaugh, 1998:322). In other words, since men and women have distinct experiences of the world, they also employ different kinds of language (Wardhaugh, 1998:321), which include their choice of vocabulary such as in terms of color or certain adjectives as claimed by Lakoff

(1973). On the other hand, there are also distinctions in the vocabulary employed to describe men and women), which are the result of the different gender concept employed in a society (Wardhaugh, 1998:312). This study was conducted based on the relationship between language and gender and those previous researchers' findings on the gender linguistic differences. It is aimed to discover the influences of gender upon the characteristics of the symbols, metaphors, and similes used by American male and female poets of mid-twentieth century to represent gender issue.

One of the previous studies on the issue of language and gender has been conducted by Ria Dharma (1999) entitled *A Comparative Study on the Politeness Strategies in Giving Advice Employed by Male and Female Consultants in "Dari Hati Ke Hati" Column of Femina Magazine*. From the study, it can be concluded that there are only slight differences between men and women in giving advice as the use of politeness strategies cannot be separated from cultural factors and also from cognitive and affective factors. The findings show that there is a tendency for men to act more logically (cognitive factor), associatively, and directly compared to women who tend to use their feeling more (affective factor), emphatically, and indirectly in giving advice. It is obvious that the previous study has not focused on the gender linguistic differences in the use of symbols, metaphors, and similes in representing gender issue in a certain cultural and time setting, which becomes the area of this study.

Furthermore, regarding the term gender, it is applied to describe the culturally constructed characteristics of men and women (Kottak, 1991:184). It

refers not only to male and female 's role, but also it is a core aspect of their identity, which is important in determining how they perceive themselves and how they act in the world (Rakow, 1986; Zimmerman & West, 1975). Thus, the content of gender covers the personality differences between the sexes, the roles that a culture assigns to the sexes, and the different positions of the sexes in a social hierarchy (Light, Keller, and Callhoun, 1989). To deal with the above aspects of gender, this study focuses on two main aspects of gender—the psychological and social characteristics of men and women. The psychological characteristics—intended to cope with the personality aspect of both sexes—refer to the behavioral characteristics of men and women as an individual or a group (Merriam-Webster, 2000:940). Then, the social characteristics—intended to cope with the role and status of both sexes—refer to men and women's role and status as an individual or a group in an interdependent relationship with others (Kottak, 1991:185). Since culture varies from one society to another and dynamic in nature, the expected psychological and social characteristics of men and women are neither universal nor stable. It is the interest of this study to analyze the cultural concept of a certain society toward femininity and masculinity reflected by means of language.

Figures of speech can be defined as one form of multidimensional language used to represent human experiences, which are difficult to be defined in the ordinary way (Perrine, 1956: 11,65). They do not only cope with the intellectual dimension of human experience as found in informative language, but also the sensuous dimension, emotional dimension, and imaginative dimension. Since this

research focuses on revealing American male and female poets' views on gender issue, it is considered necessary to deal with their expression of thought in a complete unison of intelligence, senses, emotions, and imaginations. Thus, figures of speech applied by American male and female poets of mid-twentieth century American literature to represent their perception upon gender are chosen in this study rather than the informative language.

As to make this study more focused, the analysis on the figures of speech under study are limited only to symbols, metaphors, and similes. A symbol is something that means more than what it is. It is chosen to be investigated, since it can be regarded as a special kind of image due to the richness of its connotations compared to the other usual image (Kennedy, 1966:236). A symbol can stand on its own feet in delivering the message of the poet, but it also can be put in the form of a comparison either explicitly or implicitly (Knickerbocker, 1960:368). When the comparison is stated or explicit in nature by the use of some words such as *like*, *as*, *than*, *similar to*, or *resembles*, the symbol is found in the form of a simile (Perrine, 1956:65). Whereas, when the comparison is implied, the symbol is in the form of a metaphor (Perrine, 1956:65). Due to the different forms of symbols, the researcher also includes metaphor and simile besides symbol itself in this study. At last metaphor and simile are included besides symbol in this study, since in expressing their insights for which the literal language is insufficient, poets are said to rely on figurative language especially metaphor and simile (Reaske & Knott, (eds.), 1988:326).

Next, with a consideration on the purpose of this study, that is to reveal the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender, the object of this study is limited only to symbols, metaphors, and similes, which represent men and women's psychological and social characteristics in American society. It is expected that by interpreting those forms of figurative language used as the portraiture of the mid twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender, the cultural concept, which lies behind the applications, can be revealed.

Moreover, the decision to take symbols, metaphors, and similes to be studied leads into the selection of the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets as the subjects of this study. The poems written by those subjects become the source of this research data; they are the symbols, metaphors, and similes. Regarding poetry, it is one of the modes of literature in which literature itself can be seen as a reflection of the dynamic phenomena of human life throughout time that constantly attract people to not only explore its beauty, but also its eternal essence as claimed by Beardsley (1956:xxi). By exploring its verbal beauty, people can be molded to be more sensitive, flexible, and logical in their interaction with the real world. Related to teaching profession, it is necessary that teachers place themselves in other's shoes (Kennedy, 1990:vi) as to possess greater understanding toward their colleagues and pupils. Next, despite the condensed and concentrated form of poetry compared to other modes of literature, it has the capacity to depict a message deeply and completely through its effective and aesthetic utilization of language (Perrine, 1956:65). Finally,



poetry is about sincerity and truth; thus, a qualified poet should present the truth no matter how painful it is (Sanders, 1935:4). In this study, it is expected that through analyzing the symbols, metaphors, and similes utilized by mid-twentieth century American male and female poets, the factual mirror image of American gender concept in that period of time can be obtained.

There have been many studies conducted on figures of speech as the representation of the complete human being dimensions. One of the studies is conducted by Yustaf Uddin (1994) in his thesis entitled: *A Study on Emily Dickinson's Attitude Towards Death as Reflected in Her Poems*. The study is focused on the possible attitude of Emily Dickinson on death as reflected in her poems through the use of imagery, diction, and theme. As a result, it is proved that Emily Dickinson's poems reflect not only the philosophy of life, but also human's hatred, fear, and admiration on death. The richness in her view toward death is represented through the utilization of imagery and effective use of diction and theme. Then, there is also a study conducted by Audry Susanto (1998) entitled: *An Analysis of the Figures of Speech in Emily Dickinson's Poems on Death*, which focuses on the representation of Emily Dickinson's view towards death by the use of figures of speech. By conducting the study, Susanto revealed the richness of figures of speech specifically symbols, metonymies, similes, and personification in her poems on death. Those figures represent the ambiguous nature of death, which is frightening for those who are not ready for it, but it can also be the beginning of a new life and the end of the sorrows of life for those who believe in God. In general, these two studies only deal with the use

of figures of speech as the representation of the individual's attitude or view toward certain issue. They have not explored the involvement of cultural and gender background of the poets in the nature of the figures of speech used to represent gender issue. Therefore, the researcher is intrigued to observe the influence of culture and gender upon the representation of the poets' ideas through symbols, metaphors, and similes.

In realizing the feasibility of this study, the source of data in this study are confined to American poems written by male poets and female poets during the mid- twentieth century American Literature period. American poems are chosen as the focus of this study for two main reasons. First, the researcher has learned American English along with its cultural values including its gender concept; thus, it will be more relevant and feasible to study on this familiar topic. Secondly, America itself has been known to have an immense influence upon other nation's cultural values including its gender concept, therefore, the researcher chooses the language product of this country, in this case poems to add the contribution of this study to the reader.

Then, the male and female poets who belong to the mid-twentieth century period of American Literature ranges from 1945 until 1978 are the focus of this study, as during this thirty-year period, there were some shifts in the social characteristics of men and women in American society. It is due to the end of the World War II in 1945 and the reborn of 1960s feminism struggle triggered by Betty Friedan. It is the interest of this study to search whether there are any

changes in the representation of gender by mid-twentieth century American male and female poets as reflected in the use of symbols, metaphors, and similes.

Finally, the analysis of this study focuses on the interpretation of the semantic and pragmatic meaning of the symbols, metaphors, and similes used by mid-twentieth century American male and female poets. The semantic meaning interpreted in this study concern with what the poets means when they use the figures (speaker meaning) (Folley, 1997:3). Next, the pragmatic meaning refers to the meaning that is conveyed in a contextualized communicative act, in this case regarding the meaning of the symbols, metaphors, and similes as a means for the poets to communicate their view toward gender. All in all, with the findings of this study, it is expected that the bond between the concepts of language, thought, culture, and gender is explored and strengthened.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

Triggered by several scientific gaps, the researcher conducts this study in search of the answers to the following major inquiry. It is:

How do the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets view gender as reflected in the use of symbols, metaphors, and similes representing men and women in their poems?

As a general depiction of the above question obtained, a further exploration is conducted on account of providing complementary explanations. This study is focused on these two minor research problems, they are as follows:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender as reflected in the use of symbols, metaphors, and similes?
2. What factors influence the similarities and differences between the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender?

In all, both the major and minor research problems are established for the purpose of making this study feasible and informative.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

In accordance with the previously stated major and minor research problems, this study is aimed to achieve a major objective and two others minor purposes. The major objective of this study is to provide a description of mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender by locating and interpreting the symbols, metaphors, and similes used to represent men and women in their poems.

Along with the above major objective, the researcher's efforts were directed to the fulfillment of these two minor objectives, they are:

1. Providing a description of the existing similarities and differences between American male and female poets' views on gender by

comparing the characteristics of the symbols, metaphors, and similes used to represent men and women in their poems.

2. Providing a description of the factors which influence the similarities and differences of the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender by analyzing the characteristics of the symbols, metaphors, and similes used to represent men and women in their poems.

#### **1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses its analysis on one of the modes of literature that is poems in a particular language, English as the source of the data. As there are many poems written in English, they are limited to the poems written by American poets both male and female. Its aim is to describe the American male and female poets' views on gender.

Furthermore, as there are several periods in American literature, the American poems are limited to those written during the mid-twentieth century American Literature period (1945-1978). The period of mid-twentieth century becomes the focus of this study as it is found that there were some changes in American society during that age due to the end of the World War II and the 1960s rebirth of feminism (Norton, *et al*, 1986:958).

There are several aspects in poetry such as its language, form, etc. This study only focuses on the language of poetry with the emphasis on its figurative form instead of imagery or rhythm and rime. Moreover, there are several kinds of

figures of speech, yet this study is only intended to analyze the symbols, metaphors, and similes found in the poems to represent mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender.

By interpreting the pragmatic and semantic meaning of the symbols, metaphors, and similes used by the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets to represent men and women, the American poets' views on gender is expected to be revealed.

Finally, as there are several aspects on the term gender, this study limits its analysis on the poets' views on the psychological and social characteristics of men and women. Nonetheless due to the time limitation, the researcher does not deal with the psychological and cultural perspectives on gender thoroughly in the analysis of the symbols, metaphors, and similes. The researcher only uses psychological and cultural theories in establishing the parameters used to identify the characteristics of men and women. For American cultural influences, they are only discussed in reference to how the figures are viewed by American society as defined in *2000 Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* or in the J.E. Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols* (1971).

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions for linguists especially English Department Students of Widya Mandala, society in general, and also EFL teachers.

This study is expected to theoretically contribute for students of the English Department who are taking Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis. The students may acquire input regarding the relationship between language, thought, culture, and gender. Furthermore, they may also gain knowledge on the use of the written forms in serving the function of language as a means of expressing the writer's view and even influencing the society's concept. Moreover, this study is intended to provide theoretical contribution to English Department students, who study Literary Appreciation especially in the use of symbols, metaphors, and similes as a means of reflecting the view of the poets on a certain issue. They may also learn how the figures used reflect the cultural concept of the poets and the dynamic nature of the cultural values. In appreciating those figures, literary students are also informed on the necessities of considering the poets' cultural background and gender, as to get a maximal interpretation on them. Finally, EFL students may improve their theoretical knowledge on cross-cultural understanding especially regarding American gender concept and its dynamic changes during the mid-twentieth century.

Society in general can also put the findings of this research into a practical use for the sake of the improvement of humanity values. Through the uncovering of the existing differences between gender in terms of their language as intended in this search, people especially parents may be informed of the importance of educating their children to tolerate and appreciate the gender differences.

For EFL teachers, this study is expected to contribute some suggested techniques and theoretical input for teaching CCU, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, writing, and literary appreciation.

### **1.6 The Working Hypotheses**

The researcher is guided by these following working hypotheses in conducting this study, they are as follows:

1. The symbols, metaphors, and similes selected are used by the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets to represent men and women.
2. The symbols, metaphors, and similes selected reflect the mid-twentieth century American male and poets' views on gender, the psychological and social characteristics of men and women.
3. The mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender seem to have similarities and differences.
4. The similarities and differences of the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender seem to be influenced by the cultural concept of their society toward gender and its dynamic nature.
5. The similarities and differences of the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender seem to reflect the attempts of the poets to influence their society's cultural concept.



6. The similarities and differences of the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender seem to reflect the gender linguistic differences.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

In realizing the objectives, this research is based on the interrelationship between language, thought, and culture; and the relationship between language and gender. Those relationships are manifested not only in the form of informative language, but also figurative forms of language such as symbols, metaphors, and similes that are found in modes of literature such as poems.

First among various views on the relationship between language, thought and culture, the researcher bases her search on the bi-directional relationship between those aspects. On one hand as asserted by Sapir (1949), language is a medium of expression of its society to which it belongs including their thought (p.207). On the other hand as proposed by Benjamin Lee Whorf (Wardhaugh, 1999:217), the structure of a language determines the way its speakers' view the world. This means that not only that thought can be expressed through language, but language can also influence our thought.

Furthermore as language cannot be apart from its setting referring to the society to which it belongs and their culture (Sapir, 1949:207), there is also a relationship between language and culture. Carol R. Ember & Melvin Ember have mentioned the bi-directional issue on language and culture here in their book entitled *Anthropology* (1985). It is mentioned that on one hand, a culture

book entitled *Anthropology* (1985). It is mentioned that on one hand, a culture may affect the structure and content of its language. As a result, linguistic diversity can be viewed as a partial derivation of cultural diversity. Since culture is dynamic in nature as asserted by Triandis (1994:16), the linguistic behavior of society members to which it belongs is constantly changing as well. On the other hand, the linguistic structures themselves may have influential effects upon the cultural aspects of the language users (1985: 219). Thus by means of their linguistic representation, people can also influence or even change the cultural concept of their society. In short as asserted by Boas (in Blount 1975), language is a representation of experience—including thought, which varies from language to language. It is because each society has its own cultural values, which are reflected through their language. Nonetheless, since language may also affect the society perception of the world, it means that the thought expressed through the language also influences the cultural values of a society.

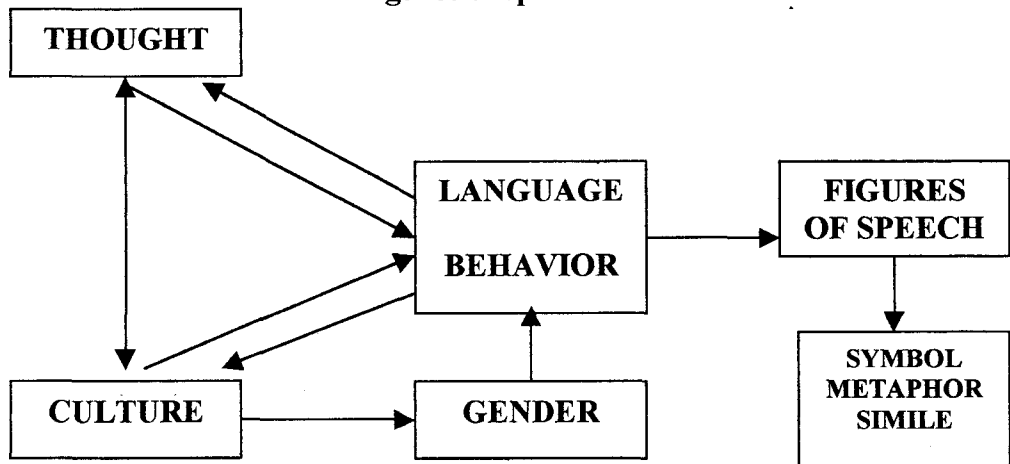
Furthermore besides social contextual factors, such as age, social class, or ethnic group; gender is one of the influential differentiate factor among language users, which results in the social variation of the language application (Coates, 1993:4). In this study, the “two cultures” model, which proposes the idea that women and men belong to different subcultures as asserted by Chodorow (Folley, 1997:296) is applied. Based on this perspective, the linguistic differences between men and women are considered as reflecting and maintaining gender-specific subcultures (Coates, 1993:13). Moreover, different ways between men and women in expressing themselves can be regarded as a result of distinct

experiences that males and females have of the world (Coates, 1986:72) and the way they are being brought up (Wardhaugh, 1998:322).

Next, in communicating their ideas, people do not only use informative language, but also figurative one as used in poetry, which is. Compared to the informative language, figurative language is not only able to describe the intellectual dimension of human experience, but also the sensuous, emotional, and imaginative dimensions. It contains figures of speech, which can be defined as “any way of saying something other than the ordinary way” (Perrine 1956:650). There are several kinds of figures of speech, yet this research only focuses on analyzing symbols, metaphors, and similes. Furthermore, a symbol is something that means more than what is (Perrine, 1985:83). Then, a metaphor implies the comparison of which the figurative term is substituted for the literal term (Perrine, 1956:65). Finally, a simile is also a form of comparison, yet the only difference compared to metaphor is the uses of words or phrases such as: *like, as, than, similar to, or resembles* for the comparison (Perrine, 1956:65).

In all, the relationship between thought, culture, gender, and figures of speech can be illustrated in the following figure.

**Figure 1: Diagram of the relationship between culture, thought, gender, and figures of speech**



### **1.8 Definition of the Key Terms**

There are some terms used frequently in this study as they are related to the purpose of this research; therefore, it is necessary to give the restrictive definition of those terms. They are as follows:

- *Culture*: a society's concept used in structuring time, defining roles in the society, communicating with others, formulating beliefs and values, and performing actions as a result of human capacity to think.
- *Symbol*: a poetical figure that means more than what it is.
- *Metaphor*: a poetical figure that contains an implied comparison between things essentially unlike.
- *Simile*: a poetical figure that contains an explicit comparison between thing essentially unlike by the use of some words such as : *like, as, than, similar to, or resemble*.
- *Gender*: a term used to refer to the sex differential categories constructed based on each category psychological and social characteristics.

- *Psychology*: the behavioral characteristics of an individual or a group
- *Social*: the role and status of an individual or a group in an interdependent relationship with others.
- *Characteristic*: a distinguishing feature, manner, and quality
- *Poetry*: a sincere reflection of the dynamic phenomena of human life along with its various aspects either beautiful or ugly.
- *View*: a concept in human mind that is formed by the environmental input

## 1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is arranged into five chapters. The first chapter gives the background of the study, along with the research problems, objectives, significance, parameters, assumptions, and theoretical basis of this study. There are also the definition of key terms and the limitation of the study.

Then in the second chapter, the researcher reviews the theoretical basis of this study in detail. The reviewed theories are on the relationship between language and culture, language and gender, also on poetry and figures of speech. The characteristics of the mid-twentieth century American poems and the mid-twentieth century American gender concept are also included in this chapter.

Next, the methodology applied in this research is presented in the third chapter. In this section, the nature of this study along with its design, data, corpus, research instrument, and parameters are presented. There are also the description of the techniques and procedures of data collection and analysis along with the triangulation.

Then, the findings and discussion of on the pragmatic and semantic meaning of the symbols, metaphors, and similes used by mid-twentieth century American male and female poets to represent their view toward the psychological and social characteristics of men and women are presented can be found in the fourth chapter. Furthermore, the influencing factors behind the mid-twentieth century American male and female poets' views on gender are also discussed in this chapter along with the underlying theories and previous studies.

Finally, a conclusion on the result of the analysis is given in the fifth chapter that contains the summary and conclusions of the findings and provides the theoretical and practical implications of the findings.