

**Judul : An analysis of the functions of tag questions in  
female and male speech in the tv series “*gilmore  
girls*” (A sociolinguistics study)**

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**CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION**

**A. Research Background**

People who live in a society certainly need to interact with others to fulfill their daily needs. In making interactions, they need to communicate with others using a language. People can express their ideas, wants, thought, knowledge, and feelings through a language. A major function of language is the expression of personal identity (Crystal, 1995). In short, when we use or learn a language, unconsciously we adopt the attitude and behavior in the society. It signals who we are and where we belong. When people use language, automatically, they tell the listeners about their religion, social background, personality, occupation, age, sex, and level of education.

One significant phenomenon is gender differences between women and men, which differentiates their social roles and functions in society. This is clearly reflected in linguistic behavior of women and men. Lakoff (in Holmes 1999:313) suggests that women's subordinate social status in society is reflected in the language women use. Lakoff identifies a number of linguistic features which she claimed were used more often by women than by men, such as tag questions.

According to Lakoff (in Coates, J. and D. Cameron, 1994:75), tag questions were associated with a desire for confirmation or approval which signals a lack of self-confidence in the speaker. Thus, the speaker who uses tag questions will be perceived as being weak, unassertive, and lacking authority, as the examples below:

1. Jane came home, didn't she?
2. It's cold in here, isn't it?

Based on Lakoff, women use tag questions, such the examples above, because they are reluctant to make direct assertions. It can also be perceived as indicating uncertainty and a lack of definite opinions.

On the other hand, Holmes (1999:320) states that tag questions do not always indicate that a speaker is weak or lacking authority. For example, a conversation between a teacher to a pupil (Sam) who is looking at a picture of a butterfly in a cocoon in a book is as follows:

Teacher : "What's this called Sam?"  
Sam : *(No answer)*  
Teacher : "It's a cocoon, isn't it?"

A tag question, such the example above, is not used to undermine the speaker but is used to engage the hearer in the conversation. It means that the speaker cares about the hearer's opinion and offers the addressee an opportunity to contribute. In this case, the teacher gives a chance to Sam to express his opinion about the picture.

Holmes (in Weatherall, 2002:61) distinguishes the functions of tag questions in conversation into two types of tag questions. One type was 'modal tags', which request a confirmation of information indicating the speakers' uncertainty. Another type was defined as 'affective tags', which did not signal uncertainty but indicated

concern for the addressee. Affective function has a politeness function. There are two kinds of affective functions namely facilitative and softeners. Moreover, Holmes (1999:319) adds that tags may also be used as confrontational and coercive devices.

According to Holmes (in Gumperz, 1985), women and men have different perceptions of appropriate linguistic behavior in different contexts. In this case, it is related to social dimensions, such as solidarity, relative power, and formality. Women give priority to solidarity meanwhile men give priority to power. In other words, in the interactions, women are more concern in making connections or maintaining relationships whereas men are more concerned with autonomy or hierarchical relationships.

Moreover, women and men speak for different contents and different purposes (Holmes, in Mills, 2003:214). They use distinctive speech styles and strategies in conversational interactions to identify and to express themselves. Women's utterances show evidence of concern for the feelings of the people they are talking to. Women are more likely to be co-operative and to avoid conflict, for example agreeing, supporting and making suggestion rather than making command. On the other hand, men talk as a means to reach an end/decision, some information gained, and a problem resolved, such as men view questions as request for information. Men are also more likely to be competitive and to engage conflict, such as arguing, issuing, and commanding.

It can be seen in the use of tag questions. Both women and men use tag questions in their speech. Based on Holmes (1999:320), the tag questions are used

differently by women and men. Women more often use tag questions for addressee-oriented goals, particularly as strategies to engage addressees in talk and to invite discussion, whereas men more often use tag questions for speaker-oriented goals, to obtain or to confirm information for themselves.

In the TV series *Gilmore Girls*' dialogues, the researcher found many functions of tag questions used in female and male speech that are applied in various situations as illustrated below:

*[The town square is being set up for a festival. Lorelai walks toward Taylor, who is in an electric wheelchair giving orders to people.]*

LORELAI : Hey, um, what's all this for?

TAYLOR : This, young lady, is for the first annual Stars Hollow End of Summer Madness Festival.

LORELAI : **You finally found a way to fill September, didn't you?**

TAYLOR : This is gonna be a very exciting day. I'm really gonna go all out for this. I even think you'll be impressed.

LORELAI : Really, even me?

TAYLOR : Yes-sir-ee, mini-me, I did not put the word madness in the title for nothing. This place is gonna be crazy, wild – food, games, we've even got a band coming all the way from New York!

(Datum 01 / GG1 / FAC)

If we look at the situation, Taylor explained to Lorelai that he was preparing the first annual Stars Hollow End of Summer Madness Festival. Lorelai said contently "***You finally found a way to fill September, didn't you?***" This tag question is classified as a facilitative function, on the ground that it indicates a positive interest in or solidarity with the addressee. Lorelai assumed that Taylor found an activity in summer. He would be busy during September to prepare the festival. Taylor enthusiastically replied "*This is gonna be very exciting day. I'm really gonna go all out of this. I even think you'll be impressed*". It showed that he reacted to

Lorelai's words. He seriously would work hard to hold a great summer festival so everyone would be impressed by it. He added that Stars Hollow would become a crazy town. Then, the conversation between them flows automatically. In this case, Lorelai was successful in building a conversation with Taylor.

*[Luke get involved into a conversation with Jess in his apartment]*

LUKE : Oh my God, you work at Wal-Mart.

JESS : Let's drop this now.

LUKE : Yeah, sure, fine. **You're not the guy that greets people at the door, are you?**

JESS : We were dropping this.

LUKE : Come on.

JESS : I work in the back. I move stock around on a forklift.

(Datum 23 / GG6 / EPI)

Based on the dialogue above, Luke employed a tag question "***You're not the guy that greets people at the door, are you?***" with a rising intonation which indicated that he was uncertain about what he said. Here, he requested a confirmation of information whether his nephew Jess was the guy that greeted people at the door. As Jess' uncle, Luke delivered the tag question to request information rather than a direct question. It means that he used this strategy to emphasize closeness between them as the purpose of the conversation was to reveal Jess' work in Wal-Mart. In responding the question, Jess gave an indirect response, "*We were dropping this*" as an indication that he refused to give his confirmation about his job because he did not want his uncle to know his activities. But after Luke pushed him, Jess confirmed that he worked in the back of Wal-Mart. He moved stock around on a forklift.

From the examples above, it can be seen that the tag question used by a female speaker has a facilitative function. It is used to invite the listener to take a

conversational turn to comment on the speaker's assertion. On the other hand, the tag question used by a male speaker functions as an epistemic modal. It shows the speaker's need for a confirmation of information from the listeners. Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher is encouraged to do a research about the functions of tag questions in the TV series entitled *Gilmore Girls*. Therefore, the title of this research is **“An Analysis of the Functions of Tag Questions in Female and Male Speech in the TV Series *Gilmore Girls*” (A Sociolinguistics Study).**

### **B. Research Limitation**

There are some aspects that can be explored from tag questions, such as forms/structures, functions, types, etc. However due to time limits, the researcher only focuses on the analysis of the functions of tag questions in female and male speech in the TV series *Gilmore Girls*. The analysis will be limited on formal tag questions. It is based on Holmes' classification of the functions of tag questions.

### **C. Problem Statements**

Based on the research background, the problem statements are arranged as follows:

1. What are the functions of tag questions in female and male speech in the TV series *Gilmore Girls*?
2. What are the contexts of situation of the dialogues containing tag questions in the TV series *Gilmore Girls*?

#### **D. Research Objectives**

Relevant to the problem statements, the research objectives are as follows:

1. To find out the functions of tag questions in female and male speech in the TV series *Gilmore Girls*.
2. To describe the contexts of situation of the dialogues containing tag questions in the TV series *Gilmore Girls*.

#### **E. Research Benefits**

This research will hopefully bring benefits for the reader to obtain more comprehending insights in Sociolinguistics related to language and gender, particularly tag questions study. It can also be used as a reference to study about linguistic features of women and men's speech in connection to tag questions from different aspects. This research can stimulate other researchers in conducting further research having the similar topics.

#### **F. Research Methodology**

This research is a descriptive qualitative method. Dialogues of the TV series entitled *Gilmore Girls* containing tag questions, particularly formal tag questions, are taken and used as data. The sampling technique applied in this research is purposive sampling technique. The samples of the research are all formal tag questions uttered

by female and male speakers age 30's and 40's. Further details of the research methodology are explained on Chapter III.

### **G. Thesis Organization**

This thesis is organized by some chapters and items, which are arranged as follows:

- CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION, consisting of Research Background, Problem Statements, Research Limitation, Research Objectives, Research Benefits, Research Methodology, and Thesis Organization.
- CHAPTER II : LITERATURE REVIEW, consisting of Sociolinguistics, Ethnography of Communication, Context, Dominance and Difference Approach, Women and Men's Speech, Tag Questions, Synopsis of the TV Series, and Review of the Related Studies.
- CHAPTER III : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, consisting of Type of Research, Data and Source of the Data, Sample and Sampling Technique, Instruments of the Research, Research Procedures, Data Coding and Technique of Analyzing Data.
- CHAPTER IV : ANALYSIS, consisting of data analysis and discussion.
- CHAPTER V : CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION