CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research

Drag is the art form of self-expression. Drag practice is defined as the phenomenon that 'naturalized' the border between male and female bodies (Moore, 2013). The term drag queen is used to refer to people that do drag or performers that perform in exaggerate female persona. Rupp et al. (2010) define *drag queen* as a performer that impersonates female appearance that usually has a biologically male body known as gender performer *(as cited in Moncrieff & Lienard, 2017)*. Instead of using casual clothes as most women do in their daily life drag queen only performed female persona exaggeratedly for their performance in the show or certain event without the intention of being biologically female. The objective is merely to perform the art, entertain and show their true self. Meanwhile, the performer who dresses and performs in the male persona is called Drag King.

In their performance in various events, drag queens express their creativeness in their appearances as the art-form with heavy make-up, glamorous stuff, and exaggerate female attire. Drag queens perform the irony of womanhood with comedic aspects. They also impersonate woman celebrities that they value by imitating the iconic look of the celebrity. In a show, drag queen also performs an entertaining performance like exciting dance and lip-syncing. In western culture, drag queens usually perform at gay bars usually three to five hours at night, night clubs or competitions (Berkowitz et al., 2007)

This art-form of drag has been widely known because of the media exposure toward the culture of a drag queen. The most influential and well-known drag performer is Andre Charles or popular as RuPaul. Recently he has produced and hosted a TV show named after him RuPaul Drag Race (RPDR) The show won *Emmy Awards,* an outstanding competition program, in 2019. The show is held in the USA, the drag queens gather in competition as one community. Drag queens are the competitor or the contestants who come from different cultural backgrounds in this show. In season 09, for example, the contestant is Caucasian, African-American, Russian, Vietnamese, Mexican-American, and British-American.

Different racial background may convey a unique identity of a drag queens or contestants in the shows. This may be reflected in the way every drag queen speaks in terms of accent, diction and other linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects. RPDR showcases the ways of speaking and the variation in the language of drag queens as the contestants in the show. Most contestants, coming from different races, converse daily language that is rich with specific expressions or slangs. The use of slangs colors the communication in this show. Thus, a drag queen shows can be considered as a speech community. Barret (1994, 1995a, b, 1997, 1998, as cited in Simmons, 2014) who did research on drag queen's language states that drag queens are a unique speech community. He claims that the verbal language that is used by drag queens is uniquely constructed and sometimes has unrelatable meaning with the word itself as defined in standard American English dictionary. The word "fish", for example, is defined as being feminine or womanlike among

drag queen community. This kind of unfamiliar word or expression for other communities outside drag queen is called 'slang' Drag queens influence the language that they use, as an example, several slangs have been found in RPDR season 09.

Slang is primarily used by those from lower social status to distinguish themselves outside the higher-status groups (Yule, 2006, p.211). Slang is an informal word in a language constructed by certain speech communities to distinguish their group from outsiders. The use of slang often considered fun, attractive, engaging, and slang is also seen as 'people's poetry' (Adams, 2009). Nowadays slang has been used as the aesthetic aspect of social life. The uses of slang are usually used to define group, distinguished one to another. Slang is a term used to define an informal expression within a particular group, which might not be understandable for other groups. It is not only an expression in language but beyond that slang could be the determination of social identity (e.g., age, gender, beliefs, social class, and race), familiarity, and a sense of belonging as a member of a particular community. Therefore, slang is not simply used as a spoken variety but as a term whose usage indicates the relationship between language expression is being used and its speaker (Agha, 2015).

Considering the use of slang in the RPDR, the racial background of the contestants, and explanation above it is interesting to study the use of slang used by the contestants and investigate the sociolinguistic aspects. It is particularly to determine the process of word-formation of slang, it is necessary because it gives an understanding toward structure and meaning of slang seen from the process of

forming a slang. Also, to determine the classification of slang sociological properties and to determine the possible influences of the contestant's racial background toward the classification of slang sociological properties.

1.2 Research Question

As described above, in this show, slangs colors the use of language of the contestants who have different racial background. Thus, this research is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What is the process of word-formation of slang used by the contestants in the RPDR competition show?
2. What is the classification of slang sociological properties and does the racial background of the contestants influence it?

1.3   Objective of the Research

Based on the research question above, the objectives of this research are:

1. To determine the process of word-formation of slang used by the contestant in RPDR competition show
2. To determine the classification of slang sociological properties and the influence of racial background toward it.

1.4   Scope of the Research

This research is limited to the study of slang. The data of this research are acquired from RuPaul Drag Race Season 9. The episode is limited to first three episodes of season 9. The speakers are chosen based on their racial background

which categorized into two, three white drag queen and three African-American drag queen. This research is aimed to analyze the process of word-formation refer to Yule (2006), meaning, the classification of slang sociological properties purposed by Mattiello (2008), and the possible relationship is described from a historical perspective, especially African-American during slavery in America and how it effects a language as medium of expression.

1.5   Method of the research

This research is studied slang in an American TV shows, entitled RuPaul's Drag Race (RPDR) which is limited to the season 09. The show was selected as it reflects a real-life society which is composed of people from a different social background. The contestants represent themselves as a community that shares and work toward the same goal and a sense of unity in the group. The slangs are used by three selected black and white American drag which are Shea Coulé, Peppermint, and Nina Bonina Brown that represent black American drag queen contestants. Eurika, Trinity Taylor, and Alexis Michelle that represent white American drag queen contestants. This research was conducted in three main steps: Data collection, data analysis, and the presentation of analysis.

1.5.1 Data Collection

The data are collected using non-participant observation method, in which the researcher is not involved in the process of data production (Williams, 2008). As mentioned above, the data for this research are a conversation which contain slang used by three selected black and white American Drag Queen. The data were collected by following some steps. Firstly, the videos of RPDR show are

downloaded from torrentz2.eu.. Secondly, the videos are repeatedly watched. Each episode contains more or less than 40-minute duration. The transcript of the conversation was obtained from www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk. The script in the form of conversation were rewritten and then numbered for the sake of simplicity in doing the data analysis. After that, all slang encountered in the conversations are counted and put into a list of slang.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

The data are analyzed by referring to the process of word-formation by Yule (2006) and refer to Mattiello's theory (2008). The meaning of the slang is determined by referring to the Cambridge Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang, Online Urban Dictionary and media sources that provide the interview with a drag queen that explains the meaning of their slang. The possible relationship between racial background of the contestant and the classification of slang sociological properties was determined using pragmatic identity method by referring to the history of American society during slavery, especially African-American vernacular English explained by Filmer (2003).

1.5.3 Presentations of Analysis

Data analysis are described descriptively. The finding were presented on the table, it is used to show the quantity of the process of word-formation and the classification of slang sociological properties found on the videos.