CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background of the study, problems of the study, purposes of the study, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Euphemism is an important part of every language since, "a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication" (Burchfield, 1985:29). In the globalized society, people tend to avoid naming things, objects or phenomena directly. They tend to search for alternative words to express their opinions whenever they feel their words might sound offensive so they will not hurt someone or a certain groups' feeling. "At first sight one might suppose that these expressions [euphemism] are too ordinary, but in fact they possess a strong persuasive character" (Arif, 2015:151). It means that euphemism which was once used to avoid hurting the listener's feelings, in modern life has developed a different purpose which is to sound more persuasive instead of simply sounding polite. Euphemism is not only used in spoken language, but it can also be applied in written language, including literature.

One of the literatures where euphemism can be applied is dystopian novels. The word 'dystopia' was coined by John Stuart Mill in 1868 and it is derived from the Greek 'dis topos', meaning 'a bad place' (Milner, 2009:827 as cited in Desmet, 2010:11). Dystopia mainly describes how individual expression is

suppressed in order to reach the collective goals of the State, and then the State will attack dystopian citizens in both body and mind and turn them into robots that are supposed to live and work for the state only (Gerhard 2012:14).

One of the examples for the dystopian novel is Lois Lowry's classic dystopian novel *The Giver* in 1993. The novel was aimed at readers around twelve years old, the beginning age that is considered young adult reading (Scherzer, 2015:21). This novel is by far Lowry's greatest success for it has received *Newbery Medal* and *William Allen White Award* as well as being sold more than 12 million copies and has been adapted into a play, a musical and an opera (Ulaby, 2014). This is one of young-adult novels that is easy to read and understand with hidden meaning of choice and individualism in a community of conformism. *The Giver* is a quartet novel with three other books set in the same dystopian theme, which are *Gathering Blue* (2000), *Messenger* (2004), and *Son* (2012). Even though there are sequels after this novel, the main characters in each book are different. *The Giver* is chosen as the corpus because apart from the huge success this book has received, this novel has become a standard text in middle schools and high schools across the English-speaking world (Barron, 2014). Also, among the other three sequels, *The Giver* emphasized the importance of the use of language in the community as to avoid telling a lie, but instead, some truths are concealed by the Committee of Elders in order to maintain the utopian community.

At first, the novel seems like a utopian novel because there is almost no disruption in their community. However, as the story developed, turns out the

utopian world is actually a dystopian one, which is known for the dominant control of the government in their community. In order to create an ideal world, a utopian world, the Elders in *The Giver* uses euphemism to try to distance their community from the reality (Schmidt as cited in Lowry, 183) as well as to maintain the utopian world so the people in the community does not know all the bad things hidden in the words they are saying. Lois Lowry choose to write *The Giver* as a dystopian novel because it was the most effective means to communicate her dissatisfaction with the lack of awareness that human beings have about their interdependence with each other, their environment and their world.

Previous related study regarding this research has been conducted by several researchers. Among others, Hanson (2009) studied *The Giver* novel with the title *The Utopian Function of Memory in Lois Lowry's The Giver*, Sar (2012) on her journal titled *Political Dystopia in Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games*, Ruiz (2015) on her journal titled *Euphemistic and dysphemistic language in Fifty Shades of Grey Trilogy* and Arif (2015) on her journal entitled *Social and Cognitive Implications of Using Euphemisms in English*. From English Department of State University of Jakarta, Fildzah (2013) has already studied euphemism entitled *Euphemism Used in Sherlock Holmes the Series* and Pratisi (2015) with her skripsi entitled *Euphemism Used in The Jakarta Post year 1991-1998*. However, this study will not focus on the dystopian or utopian elements like Hanson's and Sar's research. This research will also be different from Ruiz's and Arif's because this research will try to find out the use of euphemism

by analyzing the types of euphemism as well as the meaning of the euphemistic expression found on the novel *The Giver*. This study will use the same theory as Pratisi, and will be similar to Fildzah. However, this study will see euphemism as a tool to hide certain meaning or change people's thought instead of see it as a tool to make a taboo words become polite or inoffensive.

1.2. Problem of the Study

There are three questions this study would like to answer. Those questions are:

1. What is the dominant type of euphemism in *The Giver* novel by Lois Lowry?

2. What is the dominant type of meaning in *The Giver* novel by Lois Lowry?

3. What is the dominant use of euphemism in *The Giver* novel by Lois Lowry?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to find out the most used types of euphemism as well as its types of meaning, and the function of euphemism used in *The Giver* novel by Lois Lowry through dialogues and narrations in the novel.

1.4. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the types of euphemism and its meaning as well as the use of euphemism in *The Giver* novel by Lois Lowry.

1.5. Significance of the Study

By conducting this research, it is hoped that the reader will be able to shed light on how euphemism is used to manipulate one's thought without them even realizing it so in the future they will try to be more careful with the language of people around them. Another benefit of this study is to show that euphemism can be one of the techniques used by authors to write a more beautiful and interesting story with layered meanings.