

An Analysis of Communication Approach in Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva's UNICEF Interview on Young Women's Rights

Sabbihisma Robbika¹, Nur Qolbiyatur Rikza² ✉, Endratno Pilih Swasono³
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya^{1,2,3}
✉ qolbiyarikza@gmail.com

Abstract:

The young generation in some parts of the world still struggle through numerous challenges to gain their rights and welfare. UNICEF, as an organization that works particularly in children's concerns, plays a critical role by conducting campaigns to promote their rights, notably on young women's rights. This study aims to reveal the language style used in a UNICEF interview featuring two UNICEF ambassadors, Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva, and how messages and meaning on young women's rights are communicated through Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model. The data from the interview were taken from the UNICEF Brasil YouTube channel and were transcribed and analyzed, and were presented using a qualitative descriptive method. The researchers examine the communicative elements using the ethnography of the communicative approach developed by Dell Hymes, including the setting or scene, the participants, the end purposes, the act sequence, the key style, the instrumentalities, the norms, and the genre. The result of this study shows that the language style used by Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva can frame the discussion to address the audience. In addition, the researchers find that Dell Hymes' theory of the SPEAKING model suits how the messages in the interview effectively highlight young women's struggle for their rights.

Keywords: young women's rights; UNICEF; SPEAKING model; ethnography of communication

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality remains a worldwide concern that is still being struggled with today. In many parts of the world, women and children are still limited in gaining their rights and welfare. Female teenagers tend to be more affected by gender inequality. One of the severe risks is pregnancy at a young age, which affects badly on their health and growth, both physically and mentally. According to UNICEF (2025), there are 1 in 23 deaths of teenagers due to complications of pregnancy and giving birth in the age range of 15-19 years. On the other hand, there will be approximately 12 million teenagers aged 15-19 years who give birth around the year 2025. In addition, child marriage of teenagers under 18 years old becomes another concern in this case. This matter leads to risks, particularly

for the female parties, such as early pregnancy, social isolation, and hindering education and career freedom. As many as 650 million teenage marriages are still a significant number, although there has been a decline in cases over time. In the last 10 years, early marriage has declined from 23 per cent to 19 per cent worldwide (UNICEF, 2022).

Globally, gender equality is also endeavoured by women's rights organizations, whether local or universal, like the United Nations. This is represented in one of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically number five, which is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. UNICEF is an organization focusing on children's rights and protection. They hold the critical responsibility in promoting and ensuring children's welfare, so the children are to be afforded an adequate education and health regardless of their gender. The focus of UNICEF's goal is on adolescent girls and young women because they essentially hold an important role in their society as well as the next generation (UNICEF, n.d.). This goal is implemented in programs conducted by UNICEF to champion empowerment and gender equality in the world.

In March 2025, UNICEF involving a Goodwill Ambassador, Millie Bobby Brown, paid a visit to Brazil. Millie is the youngest UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador since being appointed in November 2018 at the age of fourteen. Millie visited a school in Cidade Tiradentes district of São Paulo and engaged in a discussion with adolescent girls. The girls shared their experiences as young women facing difficulties regarding gender issues. They discussed how they encountered different treatment between female and male students, especially during their period. Besides, girls there underwent a crisis of menstrual dignity. They had limited access to obtain menstrual hygiene products and knowledge about their period. In addition, the poverty that afflicted them compounded the issues more severely.

The focus of this study is an interview between Millie Bobby Brown, a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, and Maisa Silva, a UNICEF Brazil Ambassador, as the host. This interview was conducted after UNICEF and Millie's campaign in Cidade Tiradentes to champion girls' rights. In the interview, Millie and Maisa not only discuss the gender inequality issues they faced, but also inspire them to pursue their self-development and growth. Although there have been prior sociolinguistic studies conducted regarding the ethnography of communication from various perspectives, the researchers found a lack of detail in Dell Hymes' model analysis, especially in recent communicative events. Arising

from that gap, the researchers examined through sociolinguistic elements that construct the participants' conversation in conveying messages to advocate young women's rights. This includes: What is the language style used by Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva in their UNICEF interview? Furthermore, this article studies from the field of the ethnography of communication approach: How is Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model applied in Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva's UNICEF interview?

This research aims to study the language style used by Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva in their interview session on young women's rights. Additionally, the researchers analyze the sociolinguistic elements using the ethnography of communication based on Dell Hymes' theory of the SPEAKING model. Specifically, this research identifies components of communication in the interview, including the setting and the scene, the participants, the end goals, the sequence of acts, the keys, the instrumentalities, the norms, and the genre. With this in-depth analysis, this research contributes to the sociolinguistic field by providing a perspective of the ethnographic communication approach to the messages advocating women's rights communicated in these two UNICEF ambassadors.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dell Hymes proposes that cultural and sociological factors help create meaning and construct linguistic forms. On the other hand, speech considerably cannot be separated from sociology and culture (Johnstone & Marcellino, 2010). Carbaugh & Boromisza-Habashi, (2012) mentions that the SPEAKING model developed by Hymes' is regarded as "a series of questions to be asked" to comprehend the diverse traits of cultural and social manifestation. Dell Hymes proposes the following aspect in his model such as:

S - Settings and Scenes: both refers to time and place that describes a situation and condition of the environment. They usually explain where and when communication occurs.

P - Participants: this shows who is involved in the communication, especially the speaker and the audience.

E - Ends: it is the purpose and goal with any outcome of the communication.

A - Act Sequence: it shows the order of the messages and how they are delivered.

K - Key: The general style or delivery of the speech how the speaker delivers with formal, informal, or even semi-formal.

I - Instrumentalities: This is the communication channel that is given like the form and the style. They are like oral, written, or gestures.

N - Norms: The rules that govern the interaction.

G - Genre: it is the type of discourse that is given such as story, speech, casual conversation, or prayer.

There has been research that studied using Hymes' model of ethnography of communication. Umezinwa (2017) analyzed a discourse in a bargaining activity based on the ethnography of communication. (Situmorang et al., 2024) applied the SPEAKING model in studying speech acts in a video "Main Hakim Sendiri" on YouTube. It reveals that the context of communication influences the speech act in an interaction. Furthermore, Bajwa et al. (2025) revealed the reliability of Hymes' SPEAKING model in a selected legal discourse of The Rylands v Fletcher 1868 case. Swasono et al. (2024) studied how language serves media to build personal branding in social media. The finding showed that in building identity, most users prioritize appearance, followed by manner and setting for the least. In addition, Swasono et al. (2025) revealed how politeness strategies facilitate effective communication in the context of divorce mediation using Bald-on-Record strategy, Positive Politeness strategy, Negative Politeness strategy, Off-Record strategy, and Sharing Story strategy.

METHOD

The researchers used a qualitative descriptive method to conduct this study. This method aims to describe in detail the analysis of language style and Hymes' communicative elements in the UNICEF interview featuring Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva on young women's empowerment. According to Njie & Asimiran (n.d.) the qualitative method observes data deeply to comprehend a complex thought and to reveal the rich detail within. The descriptive approach is meant to explain clearly how the methodology is applied to approach the study (Turale, 2020).

The data were taken from an interview video of Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva that was released on April 3, 2025, on Maisa Silva's YouTube channel, and also made

publicly available on the UNICEF Brasil YouTube channel by April 4, 2025. The video was downloaded and transcribed to facilitate the analysis of the content. The topic of the interview aligns with UNICEF's advocacy goal, which is about championing women's rights (UNICEF Brasil, 2025).

The researchers analyzed the data with a guide of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model in the ethnography of communication approach. The analysis involved the communicative components, including setting and scene, participants, end purpose, sequence of acts, key style and tone, instrumentalities, norms, and genre. The researchers identify the instances that are relevant to each of the SPEAKING models. Then the data was observed and described in detail to reveal the analysis of its contribution to all the communicative purposes of promoting young women's rights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language Style

Based on an analysis of language use in UNICEF interview featuring Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva, their language style is characterized by a blend of personal reflection, emotional resonance, and advocacy. Millie Bobby Brown emphasized her personal experiences and motivations for advocating for children and adolescents worldwide. She stated:

“My parents were always very transparent with me about the world I lived in and how privileged I was to have access to certain resources. When I realized that other children and teenagers lived in a world that didn't offer these opportunities, I understood that I had a platform to speak up about these crucial issues, and UNICEF gave that support.”

This statement reflects a language style that is introspective and grounded in personal experience, aiming to connect with the audience on an emotional level. It is as what Wu et al. (2017) stated in their paper that “We all know the power of words: how you say something is oftentimes more important than what you say.” In Millie's words, she showed that the use of personal, emotive, and inclusive language styles played an important role in conveying advocacy messages related to young women's rights. The use of informal language in this interview aimed to create a more intimate atmosphere and was easily understood by the audience, especially children and adolescents. Millie also used this UNICEF platform as a place where young people no longer feel pressured. As

she gave a speech at the global summit at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on November 20, 2019, she said:

“She’s scared. She’s vulnerable. She feels alone. My message to her is this: you are not alone. There are people who care about you. There are people who will listen if you reach out for help. You have rights (UNICEF, 2019)”.

Millie explained with her formal language but still understandable for children and teenagers, as a speaker that she had also felt that way, she knew how she felt from bullying. Moreover, Millie said that you are not alone, many people care and you have the right to speak up as resistance especially with the existence of this UNICEF organization. Millie's use of language style means that she will always embrace children and teenagers against bullying.

Likewise, Maisa, who also serves as UNICEF Brazil Ambassador focusing on empowering youth voices, was inviting young people to actively speak up for their rights and participate in social change. Not only that such as gender, hobby, or age same or well known interpersonal similarity which is interpersonal similarity plays an important role in the development of romantic relationships (Ireland et al., 2010). By using interpersonal similarities and relaxed and easy-to-understand language, they could reach a wider audience of young people and even inspire them to become agents of social change. Overall, the use of informal language in this interview reflects UNICEF's inclusive and empowering approach, which aims to ensure that children and adolescents' voices are heard and valued in the shared effort to create a better world for all.

SPEAKING Model by Dell Hymes

After analyzing the language style, we moved to analyzing the data applying SPEAKING model by Dell Hymes. As we know Ethnography of Communication is an approach to understand society, culture and its reconstruction of an ethnic group in particular and nation in general (Ray & Biswas, 2011). Indeed, before that, Dell Hymes and his friend, John Gumperz and their students, was just analyzing the language but then broadened to Ethnography of communication, it was based on Elizabeth Keating's written in 1960. Then, Dell Hymes proposed a concept combining ethnography, society, culture, and language. It means Ethnography of communication is not only focusing on a language but also on ethnography, society and culture. Everything that is obtained by humans as a society creature that regards languages, ethnography, morals, the description and structural-functional analysis of society and culture, arts, or even beliefs, they include

‘Ethnography of communication’. Analysis of this model began to be considered by society exclusively in the 21st century [...] as the model of analyzing the use of language and communicative process (Ray & Biswas, 2011). There are eight points that are indicated by Dell Hymes or shortly we call the “SPEAKING model”. The model focuses on how, when, where, and with whom communication occurs. It is related to the data and the description above, the researchers decided to use this model to analyze influencing both of this interview and the ambassador of UNICEF.

The researchers need to apply in the data as a case study: On April 3, 2025, Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva, both UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors, met in São Paulo to talk about their experiences in promoting the rights for young girls. The interview was hosted by Maisa and highlighted important issues such as cyberbullying, mental health, education, and the dignity of menstruation. They have the same goals:

- a. Millie Bobby Brown was appointed as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador at the age of 14. Millie shared her motivation to advocate for the rights of children and young people around the world. She stressed the importance of raising awareness of the inequalities experienced by many children and young people, and the role of a global platform to speak up these issues.
- b. Maisa Silva has been UNICEF Brazil Goodwill Ambassador since 2023. She highlighted the challenges faced by young girls in Brazil, including limited access to education and the issue of menstrual dignity. She expressed her commitment to using her platform to raise awareness and drive positive changes.

The Analysis

Setting: The interview between Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva, as UNICEF Ambassadors, was held in São Paulo, Brazil on April 3, 2025. This interview occurred at 16.00 PM and it took place in a cozy and modern living room. Two light-colored chairs were arranged facing each other, creating an intimate and relaxed atmosphere. Behind them, there was a wooden shelf with green plants and some minimalist decorations, giving a warm and professional impression. Additionally, there were two youths as speakers that sat side by side, exchanging views and experiences. This interview did not only highlight the struggles that were faced by young women, but also showed how individuals with global platforms can cooperate to bring positive changes in society.

Participants: There were some participants who had an important role in this interview.

Their name as follows:

- a. Millie Bobby Brown was the main speaker and a Goodwill Ambassador of UNICEF since 2018 who shared her experiences and motivations when she did her advocacy in promoting the rights of children and young women throughout the world.
- b. Maisa Silva was the host of this event and an Ambassador of UNICEF Brazil since 2023. She played role as an interview facilitator, discussion leader. She highlighted UNICEF initiatives in Brazil, including issues of menstrual dignity and education.
- c. Audiences such as young women and society who become target messages about children's and adolescents' rights.

Ends: The conversation began by giving warm greetings to each other. They did not expect to meet back again because before one of them was just seeing her in London but in Brazil they could collaborate together in an interview. Then, they continued to share their experiences themselves, even their past and why they wanted to join the UNICEF.

Act Sequence: The interview demonstrated how their conversation going naturally and structurally, it can be analyzed as follows:

Introduction: The interview begun with a warm introduction and greeting between Millie and Maisa, creating a friendly and comfortable atmosphere.

Purpose Statement: Maisa explained the purpose of the interview, which is to discuss challenges faced by young women, such as cyberbullying, mental health, and access to education.

Topic Discussion: Millie and Maisa talked about their personal experiences, UNICEF's role in supporting young women's rights, and initiatives such as Dignidade Menstrual and the "Busca Ativa Escolar" program in Brazil.

Giving Gift: Millie was given a gift by one of indigenous girls from Kambeba, her name is Tainara.

Closing: The interview ended with words of gratitude and hope for a better future for young women in Brazil and the world.

Key: Empathetic, motivational, and supportive. The speakers used a tone that resonated with the audience's experiences and aspirations. In this interview, the communication took place in a serious yet empathetic tone, demonstrating the commitment of both UNICEF Ambassadors to support young women' rights and inclusive education. They used easy-

to-understand and passionate language to convey their messages to young audiences and the wider community.

Instrumentalities: Millie and Maisa met face to face in Brazil. Millie was invited in the interview so that she could share her experiences and support young women's rights.

Mode: Spoken word, with the interview conducted in English.

Style: Informal yet respectful, allowing for open dialogue and sharing of personal experiences.

Norms: There are two important aspects that the researchers highlight as follow:

Interaction Norms: Social rules that govern how participants interact during an interview. In interview norms, during an interview, participants are expected to take turns speaking, listen attentively, and respect each other's opinions. For instance: when Millie Bobby Brown told about her personal experience, Maisa Silva listened attentively and responded in a way that demonstrated understanding and support.

Interpretive Norms: Social rules that govern how messages are understood and interpreted by participants. In interview norms, participants and audiences are expected to understand the cultural and social context behind the issues being discussed, such as the challenges faced by young women in Brazil. For example: When discussing mental health issues, participants were expected to understand that the topic is sensitive and requires an empathetic and non-judgmental approach.

Genre: In this interview context, the genre of communication used by Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva is a public interview with the aim of social advocacy.

Type of interview:

Public Interview: The interview was organized by the UNICEF and was attended by the public and media, with the aim of raising awareness on important issues affecting children and adolescents, such as mental health, education, and menstrual dignity.

Dialogic Format: The interview was conducted in a dialogue format between two UNICEF Ambassadors, Millie Bobby Brown and Maisa Silva, who shared their experiences and perspectives on their role in promoting children and adolescents' rights

Interview objective:

Social Advocacy: It is to raise awareness and advocate for concrete actions on social issues affecting children and youth, such as access to education, mental health, and menstrual dignity.

- Inspiration and Motivation: It is to inspire the audience, especially children and youth, to engage in social activities and fight for their rights.

Language Genre:

Language Style: The language used in this interview was informal yet empathetic, allowing the audience to feel connected and understand the message being conveyed.

CONCLUSION

This interview highlights that the importance of regarding youth is in promoting child the rights of children and teenagers. Through the empathic and passionate dialogue, both of the Goodwill of UNICEF successfully delivered a strong message regarding issues such as cyberbullying, mental health, menstrual dignity, and education access. They utilized this UNICEF platform to inspire young audiences so that they are more active in fighting for their rights and contributing on the positive social change. Using SPEAKING model, this analysis demonstrates how elements of communication (settings and scenes, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instruments, norms, and genres) interact to create effective communication experience in the context of social advocacy. This conversation is not only working as a place for delivering information, but also as a tool for empowering audiences, especially young women, to become agents of change in their society.

REFERENCES

- Bajwa, A., Riaz, S., Khalil, H. A., & Shahzadi, K. (2025). Critical discourse analysis of selected legal discourse using Dell Hymes' (1974) SPEAKING model. *Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies*, 3(1), 269–283. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71281/jals.v3i1.220>
- Carbaugh, D., & Boromisza-Habashi. (2012). Ethnography of communication. In *A cultural approach to interpersonal communication: Essential reading* (pp. 245–248).
- Ireland, M. E., Slatcher, R. B., Eastwick, P. W., Scissors, L. E., Finkel, E. J., & Penebaker, J. W. (2010). Language style matching predicts relationship initiation and stability. *Psychological Science*, 22(1), 39–44. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610392928>
- Johnstone, B., & Marcellino, W. M. (2010). Dell Hymes and the ethnography of communication. In *Sage handbook of sociolinguistics* (pp. 57–66).
- Njie, B., & Asimiran, S. (n.d.). *Case Study as a Choice in Qualitative Methodology*. 4(3), 35–40. Retrieved May 2, 2025, from www.iosrjournals.org
- Ray, M., & Biswas, C. (2011). A study on ethnography of communication: A discourse analysis with Hymes 'speaking model.' *Journal of Education and Practice*, 2(6), 33–41. www.iiste.org

- Situmorang, L., Sapta, D., Simanjuntak, R., Halawa, I. M., Repayona, T., Tarigan, B., Pasaribu, T. F., Eka, S., Pandiangan, R., & Simbolon, M. H. (2024). Speaking Dell Hymes terhadap tindak tutur dalam tayangan video akun Youtube “Main Hakim Sendiri.” *DEIKTIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 4(2), 164–178. <https://dmi-journals.org/deiktis/index>
- Turale, S. (2020). A brief introduction to qualitative description: A research design worth using. *Pacific Rim International Journal of Nursing Research*, 24(3), 289–291. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X\(200008\)23](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X(200008)23)
- Umezinwa, J. (2017). *Analysis of a selected bargain discourse using Dell Hymes’ S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model*.
- UNICEF. (n.d.). *Goal 5: Gender equality*. UNICEF.
- UNICEF. (2019). *Remarks by UNICEF goodwill ambassador Millie Bobby Brown at world children’s day 2019*. UNICEF.
- UNICEF. (2022, October). *Gender equality: Child marriage - UNICEF data*. UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/child-marriage/>
- UNICEF. (2025, April). *Gender equality: Sexual and reproductive health - UNICEF data*. UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/sexual-and-reproductive-health/>
- Wu, L., Han, S., Alei, F., & Mattila, A. S. (2017). The impact of language style on consumers’ reactions to online reviews. *Tourism Management*, 59, 590–596. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.09.006>