

Analysis of Women's Language Features Used by Main Female Character in *Flipped* (2010) Movie

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to examine how the main female character, Juli, in *Flipped* (2010) movie used women's language features. Using Lakoff's (1975) theory of women's language, this study investigates how these characteristics are represented and how they influence Juli's interactions with her male interlocutors. The study uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the movie transcript and categorize Juli's language features. The findings show that Juli uses several female language features, including lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, intensifiers, super polite forms, emphatic stress, and empty adjectives. Certain characteristics, such as precise color terms, hypercorrect grammar, and avoidance of strong swear words, were not found. The most common feature is lexical hedges or fillers, which reflect uncertainty or allow Juli to gather her thoughts. The study sheds light on how women's language is portrayed in the media and how it influences gender dynamics in interpersonal communication.

Keywords: language and gender; women's language features; movie; *flipped*

Abstrak:

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk meneliti bagaimana tokoh utama perempuan, Juli, dalam film *Flipped* (2010) menggunakan fitur bahasa perempuan. Dengan menggunakan teori bahasa perempuan dari Lakoff (1975), penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana karakteristik ini direpresentasikan dan bagaimana karakteristik ini memengaruhi interaksi Juli dengan lawan bicara laki-lakinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis transkrip film dan mengkategorikan fitur-fitur bahasa Juli. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Juli menggunakan beberapa ciri bahasa perempuan, termasuk lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, intensifiers, super polite forms, emphatic stress, dan empty adjectives. Karakteristik tertentu, seperti istilah precise color terms, hypercorrect grammar, dan avoidance of strong swear words, tidak ditemukan. Fitur yang paling umum adalah lexical hedges or fillers, yang mencerminkan ketidakpastian atau memungkinkan Juli untuk mengumpulkan pikirannya. Penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana bahasa perempuan digambarkan di media dan bagaimana hal itu memengaruhi dinamika gender dalam komunikasi interpersonal.

Kata kunci: bahasa dan gender; fitur bahasa perempuan; film; *flipped*



INTRODUCTION

Language is an important aspect in human interaction that not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a reflection of social dynamics, including gender roles and identities. Since Robin Lakoff introduced the concept of women's language in his work *Language and Woman's Place*, published in 1975, the study of women's language use in interpersonal relationships has become an essential topic in the field of sociolinguistics. Lakoff (1975) argues that women tend to use several language features, such as hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, and empty adjectives, which reflect uncertainty, politeness, and caution when speaking. This phenomenon is considered a reflection of women's more subordinate social position compared to men. In the context of media, movies play an important role in representing gender in how women's language is used in various social places.

Numerous studies have examined the characteristics of women's language such as Putri et al. (2023), Ainurisanti (2023), Wulandari & Sari (2024), Sanjaya (2018), and Pamikat (2020). These studies focus on analyzing the characteristics of women's language towards characters in movies. The first, Putri et al. (2023) identified the women's language features used by Jules Ostin in *The Intern* film, as well as the functions these features serve, based on Lakoff's and Jakobson's theories, respectively. The second, Ainurisanti (2023) explored the features of women's language in Jo March's dialogue from the movie *Little Women* with a sociolinguistic approach, using the theory of women's language features proposed by Robin Lakoff. In addition, this study also found various social factors that influence Jo's language use, including participants, settings, topics, and functions. Third, Wulandari & Sari (2024) identified the features of women's language utilized in the movie *Enola Holmes 2* based on Robin Lakoff's theory and analyzed their functions according to Judy C. Pearson's framework. Fourth, Sanjaya (2018) analyzed the features of women's language in the movie *Moana* using sociolinguistic theory from Lakoff (1975) and the situational context approach adopted from Halliday and Hasan (1989). Fifth, Pamikat (2020) analyzed the features of women's language utilized by Eilis Lacey in the movie *Brooklyn*, focusing on two primary research questions such as the types of women's language features present and their uses within the movies' script.

Based on previous studies, many studies have discussed the characteristics of women characters in movies. This study focuses on the analysis of the use of female language



features by the main female character in the movie *Flipped* (2010), and discusses the influence of the dynamics of interaction between the main female character and her male interlocutor. On the other hand, this movie tells the story of the lives of two teenagers, Juli Baker and Bryce Loski, who have different views on love and each other. The main female character named Juli has strong characteristics and tends to be active in interacting with her male interlocutor. However, although Juli's character is depicted as a confident figure, the use of language displayed in this movie still reflects gender stereotypes that are relevant to the concept of female language features explained by Lakoff. Therefore, it is important to examine how this movie represents female language, especially in the interaction between the main female character and her male interlocutor. Thus, this study aims to determine the types of female language features used by the main female character in the movie *Flipped* (2010) and the influence of the use of female language features on the interaction of the main female character with the male interlocutor in the movie.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language and Gender

Early studies of language and gender suggested that women tend to engage in language features that resemble uncertainty, politeness and subordination. Lakoff (1975) identified a number of linguistic features that she called women's language features. These features include the use of lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, super polite form, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, emphatic stress and avoidance of strong swear words. Women use these languages as a form of social adaptation, reflecting their subordinate position in a patriarchal society (Lakoff, 1975). However, criticism of Lakoff's theory has emerged, especially from feminists and linguists. Tannen (1990) introduced a different approach to understanding the relationship between language and gender through the concept of genderlect. According to Tannen, men and women do not simply use language in ways that indicate dominance and subordination, but they have different communication styles. Men tend to focus on report talk, which is the use of language to convey information, while women use more rapport talk, which is the use of language to build emotional relationships. Tannen does not see this difference as a hierarchy, but rather as two forms of communication that are equally valid.

The study of language and gender is not only in everyday interactions but also broadly includes media. Media, including movie and television, plays a role in representing men and women talking, which always reinforces or challenges gender stereotypes. Coates & Cameron (1989) argued that media usually represents women as more emotional, full of doubt, and tidy in conversation when compared to men who are dominant and direct. This media style is a reflection of the real gender gap, while referring to social expectations about how men and women must communicate. As one of the usual media formations, movie is also not free from creating this gender stereotype. Research related to language in movie shows that female characters use more women's language features that are type-identified by Lakoff. This confirms the existence of a social construction of women's language that is reinforced by the media.

Women's Language Features

The study of women's language features is rooted in sociolinguistic studies first popularized by Robin Lakoff in his book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975). Lakoff (1975) argued that women use certain language features that reflect uncertainty, politeness, and social compliance. These features, later known as women's language features, reflect how women are perceived and expected to communicate in a patriarchal society. First, lexical hedges or fillers which refer to language forms used to indicate uncertainty or reduce the strength of a statement. Second, tag questions are short questions added to the end of a declarative sentence, such as "It's beautiful, isn't it?" or "You're leaving, aren't you?". The use of tag questions indicates uncertainty and the need for approval from others, reflecting social norms that expect women not to be too dominant in conversation. Third, rising intonation on declaratives which refers to the use of declarative sentences so that they sound like questions. Fourth, there are empty adjectives which are adjectives that are considered not to add significant semantic value but function to express emotions or aesthetic judgments. For example, the words cute, lovely, and beautiful. Fifth, the use of intensifiers such as "very", "so", "really", or "absolutely" is also considered a characteristic of female language. Women use intensifiers more often than men to give additional emphasis to their statements (Lakoff, 1975). Sixth, precise color terms, namely color terms that are more specific and varied than those usually used by men. Seventh, the use of super polite forms, such as very polite requests, more refined request sentences, or excessive polite expressions. Eighth, emphatic stress which refers to strong emphasis on certain

words or phrases is also considered a characteristic of female language. Emphatic stress is used to emphasize the emotion or intensity of the statement. Ninth, hypercorrect grammar, which includes the use of very formal and perfect grammar. And the last, avoidance of strong swear words is also a characteristic of female language according. She observed that women tend to use more polite forms of language and avoid using harsh or insulting words in everyday speech, such as “shit” or “damn,” and more often use more polite substitutes such as “oh dear,” or “gosh.” Thus, studies analyzing women’s language have provided important insights into how language reflects and actualizes gender roles in social settings. Not only are these linguistic characteristics but also the social restructuring associated with women’s social position. Although, Lakoff’s research has been discussed, developed, and criticized, Lakoff’s initial findings remain a major foundation for understanding language and gender.

RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers used a qualitative descriptive method as the research design. This method was chosen to analyze women’s language features in depth the utterances of the main female characters in *Flipped* (2010) movie. The data source in this study was the movie transcript downloaded from https://www.scripts.com/script/flipped_8331. As a research instrument, the researchers acted as a data collector by watching the movie and reading the transcript carefully, then identifying the relevant utterances of the main female characters. The data collection technique began with searching for the movie title on the Netflix application, where the researchers watched the movie and downloaded the transcript for further application. In data analysis, the researchers watched the movie on Netflix and underlined each utterance spoken by the main female character, then categorized the utterances into women’s language features based on established theories. This approach allows researchers to systematically identify and analyze the language patterns used by the main female characters in the movie.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researchers found that the main female character named Juli showed the use of various women’s language features including lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation on declarative, emphatic adjectives, intensifiers, super polite form, and emphatic stress. However, for characteristics such as precise color terms,

hypercorrect grammar and avoidance of strong swear words were not found in this study. The following table explains the number of female language features used by the main female character.

Table 1. Women's Language Features used by Main Female Character

| Number | Women's Language Features | Number of Occurrences |
|--------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Lexical Hedges or Fillers | 7 |
| 2. | Tag Question | 1 |
| 3. | Rising Intonation on Declarative | 4 |
| 4. | Precise Colour Terms | 0 |
| 5. | Empty Adjectives | 5 |
| 6. | Intensifiers | 6 |
| 7. | Super Polite Form | 3 |
| 8. | Emphatic Stress | 4 |
| 9. | Hypercorrect Grammar | 0 |
| 10. | Avoidance of Strong Swear Words | 0 |
| Total | | 30 |

The table above shows that the main female character used women's language features with a total of 30 utterances, where the most widely used feature is lexical hedges with 7 utterances. Then, there are intensifiers with 6 utterances, empty adjectives with 5 utterances, rising intonation on declarative with 4 utterances, emphatic stress with 4 utterances, super polite form with 3 utterances. And the last is tag questions with the least number uttered by the main female character, which is 1 utterance.

Lexical Hedges or Fillers

According to Lakoff (1975), lexical hedges or fillers are used by woman to mark uncertainty or to give speakers time to come up with ideas. These features often appear in everyday conversation, especially when speakers suppose to sound more polite or avoid claims that are explicit. In this study, there are 7 utterances spoken by the main female character that include the category of lexical hedgers or fillers. The following data is one example of the utterance that indicates hedges or fillers.

Datum 1

Richard : "Just that you.... talk about him all the time."
 Juli : "I do? I don't know. I **guess** it's something about his eyes."

In the conversation above, Richard (Juli's father) is asking about his daughter's closeness to a boy named Bryce. Then Juli gives her opinion about Bryce. The use of the word 'guess' shows that Juli is making assumption or speculation about her reason for

liking Bryce without giving a firm statement. The use of hedge like this is often associated with women's language features that tend to be more communicative and empathic.

In addition, the word 'guess' had significant effects on Richard as her male interlocutor. By expressing uncertainty, Juli made the atmosphere more relaxed. Therefore, Richard felt more comfortable answering or expressing his point of view without feeling pressured to be right or wrong in his response. Then, by using a more communicative and empathic speaking style, Juli creates an emotional closeness between them and allowing them to share feelings and ideas more openly.

Tag Question

Lakoff (1975) stated that tag questions are language features that women usually use to seek agreement or confirmation from the listener after making a statement. This structure usually consists of a statement followed by an additional question in the form of confirmation, such as "isn't it?" or "right?". The use of tag questions not only reflects uncertainty, but also shows a desire to create a social connection with the interlocutor. Researchers have found 1 tag question from the main female character's utterances.

Datum 2

Juli : "I think the tree looks particularly beautiful in this light. **Don't you?**"

Bryce : "If by "beautiful" you mean "unbelievably ugly," then, yes, I would agree."

In the conversation above, Juli asks Bryce about his opinion on the beauty of the tree and expects Bryce to have the same opinion as her about the tree. However, Bryce's response is not the same as Juli's so he says that the tree is ugly in his opinion. The use of tag questions such as "Don't you?" has an influence on Bryce to give his response. This creates a two-way interaction and encourages Bryce to engage in the conversation, even though his response may be sarcastic.

Rising Intonation on Declarative

Rising intonation in declarative statements is one of the language characteristics often associated with women, where the statement ends with rising intonation and stress on the part so that it turns into a question. Although this rising intonation can give the impression of doubt or notification, it can also encourage the listener to express agreement or confirmation. In this study, the researchers found 4 rising intonations in declaratives in the utterances of the main female character. The following data in one example of rising intonation that used by main female character.

Datum 3

Juli : "I heard you like making airplane **models?**"

Eddie : "Yeah. My father and I just finished the Russian MiG-19. It was made in 1955."

In the conversation, Juli talks to Eddie about Eddie's interest in making airplane models. Juli's statement sounds like a question with rising intonation at the end of the utterance to make sure what she said is true. Then Eddie responds to this by confirming Juli's statement that he and his father have just finished the Russian MiG-19 airplane model. The use of Rising intonation on declaratives has an effect on giving Eddie space to explain further about the airplane model he built. This can open up opportunities for more in-depth and interactive discussions, facilitating a better exchange of ideas between them.

Empty Adjectives

Empty adjectives are adjectives that are used to express opinions or emotions without providing significant information. Terms such as "cute", "sweet", and "beautiful" are some examples of these adjectives. Although empty adjectives are often considered a sign of weakness or frailty, they can also indicate a more communicative and emotional female speech style, which helps create better relationships between individuals. In the utterance of the main female character, there are 5 empty adjectives found by researchers. These following data is one example of the utterance that contain empty adjective.

Datum 4

Juli : "Bryce, you should come up here. It's so **beautiful.**"

Bryce : "I can't. I sprained my, um...I have a rash."

In this context, Juli invites Bryce to climb a tree to enjoy the natural scenery from the top of the tree which looks very beautiful to Juli. However, Bryce is reluctant to fulfill Bryce's request on the grounds that his leg is sprained. By using the word "beautiful", Juli reflects a more communicative and expressive speech style, in accordance with the characteristics of female language in Lakoff's theory. Juli's use of the word "beautiful" can influence Bryce to respond with the same feeling. This creates an opportunity for Bryce to become emotionally involved, even though he cannot see or feel the beauty that Juli describes.

Intensifiers

Intensifier is a word or phrase used to increase the meaning of an adjective or adverb, often to convey a deeper emotion. Words like "really," "very," "so," and "completely" are common examples of intensifiers. In conversation, the use of intensifiers adds nuance and

helps the speaker convey feelings more strongly and clearly. There are 6 Intensifiers found by researchers in the utterances of the main female character. The following data is one example of the intensifiers.

Datum 5

Juli : “I often heard my father talk about how difficult life was for Daniel.
But I never **really** understood it until now.”

In the context, Juli spends her time with her father and uncle, Daniel. Juli conveys that she often hears her father tell stories about her uncle's life who is mentally disabled. By using the intensifier "really", Juli expresses her deeper feelings about Daniel's situation. This shows that her change in understanding is not just an ordinary change, but something very meaningful and emotional.

Super Polite Form

Super polite form refers to the use of language that is very polite and formal, often to show respect or sensitivity to the interlocutor. Characteristics of this feature include the use of more complex request phrases, avoidance of direct statements, and the use of soft or gentle words. For example, the use of the words "please" and "thank you". In the utterances of the main female character, there are 3 utterances that contain super polite form. These following data is one of the examples that indicated super polite form.

Datum 6

Richard : “Sweetie, it's time to come down.”
Juli : “Daddy, **please** don't let them do this.”

In this context, Richard ordered Juli to come down from the tree because the tree was going to be cut down. However, Juli was reluctant to obey her father's words and asked her father to stop cutting down the tree. By using the word "please," Juli built a more empathetic atmosphere. This can have an effect on making her male interlocutor (Richard) more open to listening to Juli's reasons and considering her feelings, rather than feeling pressured or defensive.

Emphatic Stress

Empathic stress refers to the use of certain words or phrases in order to highlight the meaning or feeling that is to be conveyed. The characteristic of this feature is the emphasis given to stronger expressions of emotion, such as joy, anger, or surprise. In this study, there are 4 utterances that contain emphatic stress on the words of the main female character. The following data is one of the examples of main female character's utterance.

Datum 7

- Juli : “Hey, what's he doing?”
Richard : “Juli, calm down. I gave him permission. Permission?”
Juli : “Permission for what? He's **digging** a hole.”

In this context, Juli is interested in the presence of Bryce who is seen digging a hole in her yard. She looks confused about what exactly Bryce is doing in her yard. Then her father answers that what Bryce is doing in the yard has been given his permission. However, Juli does not yet realize that Bryce is digging a hole in his yard to plant a tree for her. The emphasis on the word "digging" strengthens Juli's emotional reaction. She highlights the concrete action that Bryce is doing, which adds emotional intensity to her statement. This shows that she feels that the action should not have happened without a clear understanding. Juli's emotional statement can influence her interlocutor, (Richard) to provide further explanation of the situation. Her father may feel the need to explain why he gave Bryce permission, thus creating an opportunity for a more constructive dialogue.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Juli, the main female character in *Flipped* (2010), demonstrates several of the women's language features outlined in Robin Lakoff's (1975) theory. The most commonly used feature is lexical hedges or fillers, which Juli uses to express uncertainty or hesitation, allowing her to pause and reflect before responding. The study also identifies other language features used by women, such as tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, intensifiers, super polite forms, emphatic stress, and empty adjectives. Meanwhile, Juli's utterances lack language features such as hypercorrect grammar, precise color terms, and avoidance of strong swear words.

The study also discovers that Juli's use of these language features influences the dynamics of her interactions with male interlocutors, particularly Bryce. Her use of women's language features like hedges and super polite forms helps to reduce confrontation and strengthen emotional bonds. This demonstrates how language is used to navigate interpersonal relationships, as Juli's speech, while emotionally expressive and at times uncertain, provides a more fluid, more cooperative form of communication.

Thus, this study emphasizes to the understanding of gendered language in media by demonstrating how women's language features function within fictional narratives to

reflect and shape societal perceptions of gender roles. By examining the use of these features in the context of *Flipped* movie, the study provides a critical lens into how language both conforms to and challenges existing stereotypes, arguing for more diverse representations of female speech in contemporary media.

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