



THE ANALYSIS OF SPEECH FEATURES OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN GOSSIPING (A STUDY CASE IN THE FILM “BRIDESMAIDS”)

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Abstract

This research focuses on analyzing the speech features in gossiping produced by the female characters, of the Film “Bridesmaids” in which the settings are a house, apartment, and restaurant. The theories used are Jone’s theory about gossiping, and Lakoff and Holme’s theory of female speech features and social factors. The descriptive qualitative method is used in this study as the research method since the numbers are not the form of the data but in the forms of utterances. This study aims to answer the problem of what speech features are used in gossiping. This study found that the topic that is mostly revealed gossiping is house talk and the most speech features used is swearing and many produced in topics of gossiping ‘bitching’.

Keywords: *speech features; Lakoff and Holme’s theory; social factors*

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INTRODUCTION

Stereotypically gender is a practice that perceives men and women in a specific way such as in behavior, character, and responsibilities that is performed. The ability to perform is not seen based on their capability and knowledge but on their personality and cultural preference. (United Nations Human Rights, 2023) With this stereotyping, women are observed to talk more compared with men. A study by Kaplan (2016) stated that females speak differently than men and they are “X-er in such-and-such a situation” and, in some cases, females talk more politely and use more questions yet speak less in meetings and formal occasions. (Tannen, 2017) According to Poynton (1989:45), there are some stereotypic portraits, on the basis of which a few generalizations have been made in which females have the ability to deliver ‘better’ and ‘correctly’ in a way that they are clearly understood with a

comprehensive idea, and with more defined and ‘refined’ accent. On the other hand, males rarely swear and use slang more often than women do; females and males such as males often crack jokes while females can solve difficult social situations. Also, females use more standard forms than men. Women also avoid slang and coarse language and they also have a lack of humor sense.

The differences between males and females can be known clearly in language. It can be seen in the way of they talk and in their characteristic language. Dardjowidjojo (1996) said that “there are languages in this world which differentiate the language used by men and women. Even in a modern language like English. In their language, the way women talk and the characteristics of their language are different from men’s language”. The difference comes in many linguistic structures, forms, and discourses that may be influenced by sociocultural aspects.

Females pretend to talk about everything, which is often considered too much talk or gossip. Ludwig (1975) noted that “men in same-sex groups talk about business, sport, other men and technology, while women talk about men, clothing, and relationships. The interesting part is that when women talk about these topics on the jobs, it’s viewed as gossip.”

In daily communication, women like gossiping. Jones (1991) said, “gossip is one of the women’s cultures in using language speech community”. It is women’s way of having an intimate and comfortable exchange of their stories and news that builds harmony among them because of their commonality in their interests. It was also revealed that there are four topics of gossip, such as chatting, scandal, bitching, and house talk.

In gossiping, the women use some women's speech features of gossiping. In this research, the researcher used Lakof’s theories (2004). She said that these speech features have almost never been used by men. She suggested that linguistic features are characterized by female speech features. The linguistic features are as follows: lexical hedges or filters, Taq Eustion, Rising intonation on declarative, Empty Adjectives, Precise Color terms, Intensifier, Hypercorrecctgrammar, Super Polite Form, Avoidance of Strong Swear Words and Emphatic Stress.

Some researchers have studied the features of female speech from a different angle. Dewi Rosita (2001) analyzed a sociolinguistic study of the speech characteristics of female students while they gossip on campus. Linguistic variations are deepened by understanding the relationship between rumors or gossip and the characteristics of the discourse produced. She used the theory of Lakoff and Deborah Jones. The topics of gossip mainly involve "scandal" and "chatting." The speech features are mostly "meaningless or empty adjectives." Gossips have an influence on speech characteristics that occur in everyday situations. It is the talk of the people on information that may be truthful or irrelevant and they have been part of their everyday lives both in an organization and in a company. (McAndrew, 2019)

Cecilia Agustin (2004) studied the characteristics of female speech used by MTV Indonesia's VJs. Most often, the smallest feature that VJ Denise uses is the tag question; extremely polite form and avoids strong swearing. The least used element by Nirina was the empty adjective.

Mahardika, IGM Cari, conducted a study in 2015 on topics and speech features in women's gossip activities in the Level of Intermediate at the Santhi Budaia Art Foundation North Bali at an intermediate level. The participants were talking about gossip house talk, scandals, bitching, and chatting which are the classifications of gossip. The women's speech uses lexical hedges, intensifiers, tag-question, and swear words. Also, the participants occasionally switch the topics, from one speech feature to another. In the study of Requinala, Follosa, Almazan, and Paderan (2022) gender-biased language was identified in the news articles and has shown through the corpus-based analysis that stereotyping is still present and usually denotes a negative association for women, thus, the contemporary times should be more inclusive in the use of language that associates with gender.

Negari, Riskianti Kesuma (2011) investigates the rumors or gossip shared by female students of the Department of English at Airlangga University. She found that the most common frequency of gossiping is a scandal, while the most common communication characteristic used in gossiping is a question. This example shows that each participant helps in building harmony among themselves.

None of the objects of those researches is film. The researcher chose the Analysis of Speech Features of Female Characters in Gossiping in Film “Bridesmaids” as the object of research to know women’s speech features in gossiping used by women in their communication.

METHOD

A descriptive qualitative method was used because the researcher analyzed the data by describing it based on Deborah Jones's theory of voice types. Also, the theory of Robin Lakoff on the utilization of speech features was used in the study. Moreover, the research used a qualitative method that explains the observed phenomena and leads the study to findings and conclusions. In this study, the dialogues of the film The Bridesmaid were analyzed.

The speech data used the words that were used in the movie, phrases that were uttered, clauses, and sentences that were expressed by the main character of the film "Bridesmaid." These linguistic forms reflect the speech features of the gossip related to the story. The researcher chose as data the information spoken by the main character of the film Annie, Lillian, Rita, Becca, Helen, Megan, and Judy, because they can represent the different female language features or when they talk to each other or to other people. In other. Condition. In addition, the researcher understood the phenomena of how they used speech features in their gossip from the film “Bridesmaids.”

The research collected the data and analyzed them through repetitive viewing of the entire film from the first minute to its end. The study identified the possible data to be analyzed, collected them by random sampling, and found the topics of gossip produced by the female character and their speech features. The topics of gossiping were first analyzed and then continued to the speech features descriptively.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Datum 1

Conversation in time/scene: 00:95:39 – 00:05:46

The characters involved in the conversation: Annie, and Lillian

This conversation in this scene took place in a restaurant when they hang out together. The topic of gossiping is house-talk. They talk about daily activity of Lillian in Chicago

When Annie says: “I’m ‘so glad we got to do this, I feel like I haven’t seen you in forever” it means that Annie is happy that she can hang out together with Lillian because it has been a long time, ever since Lillian has been in Chicago, that they have not seen each other hang out. This line can be identified as ***emphatic stress***.

With the emphatic stress, the speaker emphasizes a message or Annie’s way of speaking because Annie is happy to spend time together. “So,” as a word used in the movie, is used as an adjective, combined with the word “glad,” which was used to describe what they feel. Nevertheless, intonation makes the conversation different from the intensifier due to its usage and placement in the sentence. Finally, when Annie used the word “so,” it allowed her to make her point.

The utterance “*It’s just closer to work*” said by Lillian means that the place of Lillian’s work is nearby her boyfriend’s house, Dougie. Lillian reacts and utters this sentence when Annie said that she is sleeping at Dougie’s house. In those lines, she expresses her opinion using intense justice. It expresses women’s character in the speech delivery in which women are considered more intense because it uses strong **intensifiers** like “very, so, really, and just.”

Just is a strong type of intensive that has become a very characteristic feature of women’s use. This intense word is used to convince the speaker to take the speech seriously and reinforce the meaning. Lillian said they were thrilled that the entire audience at the restaurant took what they said seriously.

Datum 2:

Conversation in time/scene: 00: 05: 48 – 00: 06: 02

The characters involved in the conversation: Annie and Lillian

The underlined words *I think* are the speaker's utterance that shows the focus of chatting in this gossip. The woman here discusses Lillian's boyfriend. The conversation in this scene deals with chatting because Annie and Lillian are best friends and this gossip is the most intimate form of gossip and only happens in a situation where the participants have an intimate relationship with her partner so that she can share all her private life (Cameron, 1998; 235).

Utterances can be classified as *lexical hedges*, which are one of the characteristics of the female's language that reflects the woman's insecurity and low confidence. It refers to the use of certain expressions like, *well, a lot/kind of, I think, I think, it seems, sort of, like, and you know*. The hedge in the line delivered by the characters with *I think* was used to avoid the obvious things about Lillian. This shows that she is not committed to what she told her friends. Annie uses fillers in her statement

Datum 3:

Conversation in time/scene: 00: 06: 02 – 00: 06: 40

The characters involved in the conversation: Lilian and Annie

This conversation this scene took place in a restaurant when they hang out together. It deals with the discussion on daily activity in the concept of house talk. In this conversation, they talk about what they did last night

The word *umm* is of kind speech feature categorized as meaningless particles. Meaningless particles are a kind of speech feature that includes un-meaningful words. These features are used as pause fillers or the speakers' expressions. But Lakoff considered pause filler as hedges. Here the word *umm* is used to short response to the speaker; the word *umm* is one of the characteristics of female speech that shows the difficulty in communication. It can be classified as a type of hedge. Based on the theory women also show a greater tendency to make use of positive minimal responses than men. In this case, Annie uses hedges *umm* which shows her lack of confidence to tell her statement. She won't tell what she did last night to Lilian.

Furthermore, the sentence “*And then we go through this and you feel like shit*”. Here Lillian used the harsh word *shit* when she has shown her opinion about Ted who didn’t want to have a relationship seriously. The word *shit* is a kind of harsh language and is more commonly used by males than females. According to Lakoff, very precise grammar or hypercorrect avoid using coarse language. Women usually talk politely and they also avoid coarse language than men. The word *shit* here is not for swearing something or someone and the intonation of Lillian when she speaks is flat. The swear word is used by someone when they get angry with someone else or when they hate someone else. It can be concluded that Lillian does not speak politely and does not avoid harsh language as well as hypercorrect grammar when she speaks with Annie.

Datum 4:

Conversation in time/scene: 00: 12: 40 – 00: 13: 16.

The characters involved in the conversation: Annie and Lillian

In chatting, women share their feeling of comfort by retelling their experiences, this gossip is called as chatting. The underlined words above are the speaker’s utterances that show the focus of chatting in this gossip. They the engagement of Lillian with her boyfriend when Lillian show her ring to Annie

The conversation in this scene occurs in the Lillian’s apartment. Lillian shows the engagement ring to Annie and she told Annie that she got engaged and would go married. Shocked to hear that Lillian was getting married, Annie then spontaneously utters an expletive four times, “*Oh my God, Lillian*”. This is the kind of swear word that women use more often than men. This is an intense emotion that is termed “swearing” which is widely used and can be classified as powerful for it relays positive and more personal results.

Annie's statement is something of an exclamation that portrays a situation that shows Annie as devastated when she learned that Lillian is engaged. Women usually use less intense swearing words as compared to the intense profanity of men. The expression depends on how the intensity of the emotion a person has over

something. The level of affection of a person is dependent on how the phrase was used. The character, Annie, used concrete and clear emotions through the delivery and the context of the lines.

"*Oh my God*," as mentioned by the women characters in the movie, is seen as a lighter language than a man's swearing. Lakoff stated that women swear lesser because of their role of nurturing the children in their words by teaching them to be more encouraging such as by becoming nice and polite. The stereotype that women can complain, but only men can get angry appeared in the movie where the characters were seen as loud because it expresses a strong angry emotion in delivering opinions, thus, they will be taken seriously. Men can express stronger means than women because men hold positions of authority in the real world.

The statements mentioned previously support Lakoff findings that women start the conversation differently. Moreover, "I guess he's been planning it for like two months and he's not a good liar" prove that the speaker has speech problems when saying his statement. Lillian uses fillers in this sentence to show that she has difficulty speaking her statement or that she has difficulty speaking. It indicates that she is not committed to what she has to say. A hedge is used to express doubt as it is divided into **lexical hedges**.

Datum 5:

Conversation in time/ scene: 00: 15: 52

The characters involved in the conversation: Annie and Judi

The conversation in this scene is gossip about two women who talk about other, women. In this conversation that Judy talks about Barb who has seized her husband. Thus, this gossip is a *scandal*. It is completely the talk of other's life Lakoff stated also that women have difficulty starting a conversation. "*Well, I guess I'm going to Lill's party all by myself.*" This reflects the characteristics of female speech features and indicates that the speaker has difficulty delivering the speech. Annie uses filler twice in this sentence. This shows that she has trouble expressing his opinion or that he has trouble holding a conversation. The speaker has a hard

time telling Judy that she is going to Lil's party alone. From this description, it is clear that the fillers hedge the sentences and can therefore be classified as **lexical hedges**. In addition, Annie said " I guess" to hedge its information. The phrase "*Well, I guess I'm going to Lily's party all myself*" suggests that Annie is unsure about telling her story. Annie isn't sure she knows she'll be going to Lily's party alone.

Datum 6:

Conversation in time/ scene: 00: 26: 51 – 00: 27: 18

The characters involved in the conversation: Annie and Lillian.

The conversation in this scene is gossip about two women who talk about other women, this conversation is started by Annie who is talking about Helen's appearance. Thus, according to the theories, this gossip is a scandal.

The female speech is anchored on the theory of Lakoff which can be attributed to a **tag question**. It reflects the speaker's uncertainty about something unknown, which encourages her to ask. In Annie's speech, use "*He's at your wedding and you've only known him for eight months, right?*" because he's not sure what he believes in. Her question on her suspicion to gain some insight. In another talk, Annie also uses the tag question "*It is just weird right?*" because even he is not sure what he believes in. She asks Lillian's opinion about the gown that Helen wears at that party, she thinks that her style is weird. In this tag question, she only wants a positive response from Lillian

Datum 7

Conversation in time/ scene: 00: 41: 53 – 00: 45: 08

The characters involved in the conversation: Whitney, Annie, Megan, Rita, and Helen

In a conversation in this scene, we can see that the women talk about the dress in all of this conversation and also talk about their role as women occupation.

As we know that talk about dress patterns and women's role as occupation can be categorized as house talk.

The conversation above occurs in a bridal shop. When Annie enters to the shop, she is amazed to see the beautiful dress there. She then spontaneously utters an expletive, such as "*Oh my God*" which is classified as **soft swearing** which females use more often than males.

Annie's statement is a response to a situation where she is amazed when she sees beautiful dresses in a bridal store. Females, as stated by Lakoff, use softer language in swearing than males. This depends on the personality as to how a person relates to something. This means that the strength of a person's emotions just like Annie's expletive expression as it reflects the strength of their emotions.

Also, in the sentence "*Jesus Christ, Megan,*" it's clear that Rita uses a milder insult. Rita gets annoyed when she hears Megan burst into tears. The phrase "*Jesus Christ*" is believed to represent the light intensity of Rita's feelings. "*Jesus Christ*" is a **soft swearing** which is often uttered by females. The expression Rita uses shows how she complains to Megan. In this situation, Rita needs a softer expletive so that the responder doesn't get mad.

In the conversation in this scene, the women used more than one of the female's speech features. We can see in the utterance "*well you all look fantastic. Sadly, you need to agree on one*" which is spoken by Whitney means that all the women who wear the dress that they like are beautiful to wear in Lillian's wedding as bridesmaids but they must choose one of the dresses that will be uniform of bridesmaids in Lillian's wedding. The classification of the word *well* is a speaker's hedge which Lakoff pertains to as a feminine language like *sort of/sort of, like, you know, well, sort of, I guess, etc.*

This scene is another example of female speech features, which we see in the statement: "*I think this dress will look good on everyone.*" The lexical hedges used show the characteristics of females in the use of the language such as insecurity and low confidence. By hedge, I mean using certain phrases like *sorta/sort of, like, you know, well, a sort of/sort of, I guess, and it seems like.*

In addition, the example of women's speech features utterance like "Holy shit, you look amazing" When Rita sees Lillian wearing the beautiful wedding dress, she is amazed to see Lillian look so beautiful wearing the wedding dress. Then she says something spontaneous like "*Holly shit*". This is a milder form of swearing that females use more often than males because it's more subtle. Swearing is considered a manifestation an intensified emotion, a powerful language that causes impressive effects for both women and children.

Females have shown a repetitive less likely to have profanity as compared with males. The expression of a person functions differently and it depends on the intensity of how they feel about a situation. Rita's swearing reflects the emotion through their words expressed.

"Holy shit" is an example of how females are less expletive in words. Lakoff shared that females used softer swear words because, as children, females are naturally gentle, polite, and not showy. Females can complain and fuss, but males can get angry.

Datum 8:

Conversation in time/ scene: 01:29:57 - 01:32:57

The characters involved in the conversation: Annie, Judy, Lillian, Becca. Rita, and Megan

The topic of gossiping in the conversation in this scene is bitching. Because in this conversation Annie gets angry when she knows that Helen gives Lillian a packet of honeymoon to Paris When women get angry, they will be understood and expected by other women. Annie expresses her anger to Lillian.

The utterance in this scene shows that Annie uses strong words for complaining about something. Annie feels disappointed when all her plans do not work working well. The choice of expressions "fuck you", "idiot", "shit" and "bastard" depends on how much a person allows Annie to feel something. This means that the words "fuck", "asshole", "shit", and "rascal" represent the strength

of Annie's feelings. This conversation also Lillian uses strong swear words such as "asshole" and "fuck" to represent the strength of Lillian's emotion.

Annie produced these sentences in Helen's home to Lillian when she knew that Lillian got a ticket for Honeymoon to Paris from Helen. She produced strong swear words such as in the above to express her anger. In this case, Annie's anger is often reframed as frustration or emotional sadness because she is disappointed when Lillian gets a ticket to Paris. She feels that all her do for Lillian's wedding is nothing since all her plan is bothered by Helen and Lillian is not mind that. But here also when Lillian responds the anger of Annie, she also cannot be patient anymore and she also gets angry with Annie and they fight argument at the time.

Related to the intonation and body language of the speaker, Annie storms out. She pushes the cake away and hits it, certainty there is a relationship in which the exercise of conversational power as striking. But in the conversation in this scene, Lillian shows her emotion with high intonation when she is also angry with Annie but her body language does not show her emotion like what Annie has done. The result is that both Annie and Lillian use swear words to express their anger in an impolite way.

The utterance "*Oh God, it's so hot*" show that Annie uses a softer expletive. She uses the word *oh God* when Annie touches the chocolate, she is startled that the chocolate is hot. Your choice of "oh god" particle is a function of how strongly you feel about something. Furthermore, the strength of the emotion used by the word Annie matches the strength of the particle. It is believed that the words "Oh God" represent the strength of Annie's vulnerable emotions. The word *oh god* is kind of a soft swear word that women tend to use more than men because it is generally softer. Thus, the speaker avoids using strong vulgar language to express his feelings.

The strong word used is determined by the character of the female. Younger females are encouraged not to show their anger or utter stronger curses than females. Females can complain, but only males can get angry. Referring to the phrase "*oh my god, how hot,*" the phrase Annie uses shows how surprised she is that when she touches it, the chocolate is still warm. In this situation, Annie needs to

use a milder curse so as not to offend the recipient. Hence the word "*oh my god*" is a language used for swearing something which does not show any level of emotion from the speaker.

In the conversation in this scene, the writer found more than one of the speech features. The utterance of the conversation shows the example of a tag question. In this sentence, the word "aren't we" is used as a tag. It is the use of 'auxiliary + no + pronoun' in English which forms a tag question. Here the speaker states claim that Annie asks her friends about her opinion of females who treats another female on a trip to Paris as a lesbian and when Annie asks her friends, they have stated the same idea. From the context of the conversation, it is known that purpose of the speaker in using tag questions is that she wants to make sure that all her friends that they have the same opinion about her statement. But Becca answers Annie with a negative answer but Megan answers positively as she also agrees with Annie's statement. Thus, from the phenomena which have been discussed above, the last sentence in the utterance above is a tag question.

Those are examples of tag questions in the context of Lakoff's theory. It shows the uncertainty of something the speaker does not know, prompting him to ask a question. In Annie's speech, "*What woman would take another woman on a trip to Paris? Am I right? lesbian! We all think so, don't we?*" and "*Yes, we all think so. Right?*" She uses the question tag because she is not sure what she believes. She believes that the woman who is taking the trip to Paris is a lesbian. She asks her friends twice. So, a question is suggested in relation to her suspicions in which she is unsure about her statement.

Sometimes females find it difficult to start a speech due to their lack of confidence and insecurities. In this case, *well* is used in Annie's words. She points out that Annie is having trouble starting her speech. He tells Lillian why he gets nervous when he learns that Helen is giving Lillian a honeymoon package to Paris. Annie uses *fine* to avoid long pauses when saying a sentence. In her speech, she avoided saying anything definitely related to what he said, which made her nervous. Well, it slows down as Annie thinks of what to say.

CONCLUSION

Through careful evaluation, the researcher may draw a general conclusion about the findings. After the collection, classification, and analysis of the data, it is revealed that the topics of gossip produced by the women characters in bridesmaids movie were mainly 'house-talk' (refers to daily activities) three times that they produced and 'chatting' (refers to private problems) was two times that they produced, which are the positive gossip, and also for the negative gossip, 'scandal', they produced two times in their gossip, but for the another one of negative gossip, 'bitching' was only once that they used in their gossip. Furthermore, in the use of house talk, chatting and scandal which are dominant in the gossip, generally most of the speech of the women characters of Bridesmaids movie are only asking about their daily activities, dress pattern, each experience, sharing their feelings, and talking about trivial things.

Second, the writer found that female characters in Bridesmaids movie tend to use speech features just like what Lakoff has proposed, but still, there were four kinds of speech features that were never used in all conversations, they are precise color terms, super polite forms, rising intonation. Most speech features that appear are sworn words but here the women use softer swear words. But the writer founds also that the unique phenomenon here is the character of women in the film "Bridesmaids" produced many strong swear words in their gossip. Based on Lakoff's theory that women usually avoid strong swear words in their conversation, women have to be polite when they speak and not show their temper. Another phenomenon that the writer found also is that the women do not speak in hypercorrect grammar when they speak, in here that women use harsh language in their conversation. But based on Lakoff's theory that females usually avoid coarse language and should not be tough in words or less polite. They usually talk politely when they speak.

Apart from the result above, the writer sometimes finds speech features that are not included in the theory in this case Lakoff's. The writer found that females tend to use strong swear words and not used hypercorrect grammar in their gossip. However, it means that Lakoff's theory does not admit strong swearing and hypercorrect. In addition, the female also uses strong swear words to express their

emotion when she angers based on the context. Since Lakoff’s theories do not cover all kinds of data, the writer may conclude that Lakoff’s theory is not as comprehensive as she thought.

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