The Women’s Language Features in Crazy Rich Asians Movie

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Abstract--This study aims to identify the women’s language features in Crazy Rich Asians movie. The women’s language features are identified using the theory of language and woman’s place proposed by Lakoff (2004). This is a qualitative study that used documentation and observation checklist method in collecting the data. In analyzing the data, this study applied the content analysis method. The result of the analysis was presented descriptively using the informal method. The analysis comes to the conclusion that the Crazy Rich Asian movie contains all women’s language features. There are ten women’s language features, namely lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite forms, avoidance of swearwords, and emphatic stress.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Women’s Language, Women’s Language Features, Crazy Rich Asians.


1. Introduction

Gender is one of the major topics in Sociolinguistics that discuss the connection between features, structures, vocabularies, and ways of using language and the social role of men and women (Eckert, 2003: 9). Moreover, according to Wardhaugh (2006: 316), gender is the main component of identity. Different from sex which is biologically determined, gender refers to sexual identity in the relation to society or culture (Wardhaugh, 2006: 315). Different gender also means different word choices in using the language. Both men and women might also have a different paralinguistic system, move, and gesture. In fact, women tend to be more polite and use indirect expressions when they speak. On the other hand, we find that men are more direct in delivering intentions. In our society, we can see some kind of ideal that is created for both women and men. Women are seen as weak and less compared to men who are expected to be stronger and have more power. Thus, women have these special characteristics that distinguish them from men. Furthermore, this uniqueness also applied to how they use language. As the result, because of their subordinate position, women frequently show uncertainty and lack of confidence in their expression. They tend to soften their expression through the usage of polite forms and avoiding rude or swearwords. Women also tend to choose mere topics such as relationships, friendships, family, and so on as their conversation topics. This is the reason why women are way more expressive than men in conversation. This certain way of using language is known as women’s language. This language, of course, contains some features in it.

Women’s language features can be found in everyday life including in our daily conversations, novel, song, speech, TV shows, serials, and movies. Based on that phenomenon, this study aims to identify the women’s language features in Crazy Rich Asians movie using the theory of language and woman’s place proposed by Lakoff (2004). There are some studies to be reviewed in relation to the topic of this study. The study conducted by Aini (2016) aims to identify the women’s speech features and how women’s language is used by the main character in the movie. This qualitative study applied two theories, such as the theory of sociolinguistics by Lakoff (1975) and the theory of social factors by Holmes (1992). This study comes to the conclusion that the movie contains six women’s features. The undergraduate study by Retiningrum (2020) aims to investigate the type and function of women’s language. This qualitative study used the theory of sociolinguistics by Lakoff (1975). The finding shows that there are only nine women’s language features in the movie. The article by Priska (2020) focused on finding out the types of women’s language features in the movie. This mixed method study applied the theory of sociolinguistics by Lakoff (1975). The finding shows that there are only nine types out of ten used in the movie. The article by Anjani (2019) aims to find out the types of women’s language features in the movie. This quantitative study applied the theory of sociolinguistics by Holmes (2013). The findings show that Wonder Woman movie contains all types of women’s language features. The article by Sanjaya (2018) aims to identify the women’s language features and context of a situation using the theory of sociolinguistics by Lakoff (1975) and the theory of context of the situation by Halliday and Hasan (1989). This qualitative study comes to the conclusion that there are only seven types of women’s language features found in the data. The study conducted by Andriani & Soethama (2018) aims to find and describe the women’s language features in Summer McKeen’s vlogs using the theory of women’s language by Lakoff (1975). This qualitative study comes to the conclusion that there are all types of women’s language features in the vlogs. The last article to be reviewed is conducted by Mahardiani (2018) aims to identify and analyze the women’s language styles and their characteristics in Pitch Perfect Movie using the theory of women’s language style by Tannen.
This qualitative study comes to the conclusion that there are all types of women’s language styles such as support, understanding, feelings, proposal, and compromise. There are also some supporting characteristics, namely to show connotate triviality, to get response of something, to show uncertainty, to give a suggestion, and to express feelings. The contribution of these earlier studies is expected to give a deeper understanding of this current study. The dividing line is, that this study used a more updated data source and more updated theory about women’s language features.

The study of language features has carried out by many experts. Lakoff (2004) proposes the theory of language features which focuses on genders. According to Lakoff (2004), the way women and men deliver the contents of the conversation is different because it reflects their social status in society. Moreover, she also explains the four main reasons why women applied the women’s language features in their utterances, such as social class and its related status explanation, women’s role in the society, women’s status as a subordinate group, and the function of speech in expressing gender identity, and especially masculinity. Women believe that the way they speak is a reflection of their social class or social status in the community. Thus, women’s language features are applied by women in order to claim higher status. Women also use the standard forms because society expects them to be a good model and have good behavior. Additionally, women also seen as inferior compared to men. Thus, women use standard form of politeness to respect the superior.

2. Research Method

There are four points in this section, namely data source, method and technique of collecting data, method and technique of analyzing data, and method and technique of presenting data. Qualitative method was used in this study. According to Creswell (2014: 261), qualitative method relies on text and visual data, have distinct analysis procedures, and use a variety of design.
of language and woman’s place by Lakoff (2004). The content analysis method employed several steps of the technique of analyzing the data. The process began with classifying the data which indicates women’s language features. Then, reduced and organized the data that has been classified before. The final steps were analyzing and explaining the selected data based on the related theory.

The result of the analysis in the previous process will be presented descriptively using the informal method based on the theory of language and woman’s place proposed by Lakoff (2004).

3. Result and Discussion
3.1 Result
The findings showed that Crazy Rich Asians movie contains all types of women’s language features proposed by Lakoff (2004), such as lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite form, avoidance of swearwords, and emphatic stress. There are also four reasons why women used women’s language features, such as social class and its related status explanation, women’s role in the society, women’s status as a subordinate group, and the function of speech in expressing gender identity, and especially masculinity.

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3.2. Discussion
3.2.1 Lexical Hedges
Lexical hedges or fillers are items that aim to reduce the force of an utterance or to indicate doubt (Lakoff, 2004: 79).
Example: you know, sort of, well, you see (Holmes, 2013: 302).

The example of lexical hedges usage in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.

Nick: “I really like that place, thank you very much. And yes, my family has money, but I’ve always thought of it as theirs. Not mine.”

Rachel: “I get that. But I’m going all the way over there to meet them… Kind of just wanna know what I’m getting into. And, you know, they’re your family.”
The conversation occurred between Rachel and Nick when they finally ended up on a first-class flight. At first, Rachel thought that they would be directly going to the economy class flight just like what they have planned. But then a flight attendant directly led them to the first-class area. It makes her wonder and have an assumption that her boyfriend, Nick is actually hiding something from her. Rachel senses there is more to this. Nick tells her that his family has business with the airline, real estate, investment, and others. Rachel applied two lexical hedges in her utterance, such as kind of and you know. These two lexical hedges show that Rachel was unsure. Lexical hedges help her to pause and to support what she wanted to say. Her utterance which said kind of just wanna know what I’m getting into, represents her intention to know about Nick’s family in Singapore, to know the environment, and everything she has not known about. Moreover, her utterance which said, and, you know, they’re your family means that she was trying to remind Nick that she needs to know about his family and everything about him. The reason why Rachel used lexical hedge in her utterance is that she lack of certainty and expressed her status as a subordinate in society and showing her role in society.

3.2.2 Tag Questions
Tag questions fall between an absolute statement and yes or no questions. It is more certain yet less aggressive than the latter (Lakoff, 2004: 48).
Example: She’s very nice, isn’t she? (Holmes, 2013: 302).
The example of tag questions in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.
Rachel: “I know Nick told you the truth about my mom. But you didn’t like me the second I got here. Why is that?”
Eleanor: “There’s a Hokkien phrase. Ka gi lan. It means ‘our own kind of people.’ And you’re not our own kind.”
Rachel: “Cause I’m not rich? ‘Cause I didn’t go to British boarding school or I wasn’t born into a wealthy family?”
Eleanor: “You’re a foreigner. American. And all Americans think about is their own happiness.
Rachel: “Don’t you want Nick to be happy?”
The conversation occurred between Eleanor and Rachel while they were playing mah-jongg. Mah-jongg is a tile-based game developed in China in the 19th century and commonly played by four players. The entire movie showed us that Eleanor dislikes Rachel because she is a liberal, an American, and not ka gi lan which means Asian kind of people. Moreover, Eleanor could not accept the fact that her son, Nick is actually having a serious and lifetime relationship with a foreign girl. This scene tells us that they are having an honest conversation about Nick and Rachel’s relationship, the reason why Eleanor dislikes Rachel, and ended up with Rachel asking whether Eleanor wants her son to be happy in the future or not. Rachel’s utterance which contains a tag question was, don’t you want Nick to be happy? She used the tag don’t you since she was pretty certain that Eleanor, as Nick’s mother, would always wish the best for him and want him to be happy in the future. Additionally, Rachel was also confident enough that her statement would be true and accepted by Eleanor. The reason why Rachel applied tag question in her utterance was that she was aware of her status in social class and represent women’s status as subordinate group.

3.2.3 Rising Intonation
Rising intonation on declarative indicates that there is an unwillingness to be assertive in carrying an opinion (Lakoff 2004: 50). This feature shows a confirmation from the speaker since she is unsure if her idea or opinion is true.
Example: It’s really good. (Holmes, 2013: 302)
The rising intonation is used to show tentativeness. The example of rising intonation in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.
[Rachel flees, upsets, when she collides with someone. It’s Astrid, who’s just arrived. She clutches a bag while porters behind her carry her luggage]
Rachel: “Sorry.”
Astrid: “Rachel?”
[They head to the resort villa suite --]
Astrid: “I’m so sorry.”
Rachel: “It’s okay.”

The short conversation occurred between Rachel and Astrid (Nick’s cousin) whom she accidentally collided. The scene begins with Rachel feeling uncomfortable because Amanda, a new friend she met during Nick’s friends’ bachelorette party, disrespected her by roasting her relationship with Nick. Moreover, Amanda has a group of friends who also agreed that Rachel is nothing to Nick. Amanda and her friends made up a scene to mock and badmouth Rachel when she seems finally irritated and uncomfortable and finally decided to leave the spa resort. When Rachel left, she accidentally collided with Astrid who just arrived there. Astrid seemed a bit surprised and called Rachel to make sure that it is truly her. Rachel? expressed rising intonation and seek confirmation whether it is true or not. The reason why Astrid applied rising intonation in her utterance was to show her social class and status in society.

3.2.4 Empty Adjectives
Empty adjectives indicate the speaker’s admiration of something (Lakoff, 2004: 25). Through this feature, the speaker also wants to show an emotional connection to the listener. Example: Women mostly use neutral adjectives, such as adorable, charming, sweet, lovely, divine, etc. (Holmes, 2013: 302)

The example of empty adjectives in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.
Eleanor: “Self-made woman. She must be so proud of you.”
[...]
Rachel: “Well, she knows that I’m passionate about what I do, and she’s always wanted that for me.”
Eleanor: “Pursuing one’s passions. How American. Well, your mother is very open-minded, not like here, where parents are obsessed with shaping the life of their children.”

[It sounds like a compliment, but Rachel isn’t entirely sure. Eleanor turns away again to talk to a passing COOK before returning to Rachel]
[Eleanor shoots Nick a look. He shifts, uncomfortable, and is relieved to hear a MUSICAL GONG from upstairs]
Nick: “Hmm. Oh. That’s dinner.”
Eleanor: “Hmm. Go ahead. I’ll be out in a minute. Rachel, it was lovely meeting.”
Rachel: “Thank you. You, too.”
[Rachel smiles as she and Nick head off]

The conversation occurred between Eleanor, Rachel, and Nick in the kitchen. The scene begins with Nick introducing Rachel to Eleanor (his mother). Both Eleanor and Rachel tried to admire each other. But it seemed Eleanor was surprised about her appearance. She found out that Rachel is different from her kind of people. Eleanor’s utterance contains an empty adjective was hmm. Go ahead. I’ll be out in a minute. Rachel, it was lovely meeting. Even if Eleanor seemed uninterested in Rachel, she tried to respect their first meeting by saying it was lovely meeting. Eleanor applied empty adjective to emphasize her impression about her first meeting with Rachel. The reason why Eleanor applied empty adjectives in her utterance was to show her gender identity and give a form of appreciation.

3.2.5 Precise Color Terms
According to Lakoff (2004: 43), women have the ability to interpret colors differently from men. Vocabularies regarding colors are well identified by women. On the other hand, men generally do not care about the accuracy of color because it does not involve their emotions at all, in contrast to women who always question the accuracy of color.

Example: magenta, maroon, beige, ecru, lavender, aquamarine, turquoise, mustard, etc. (Holmes, 2013: 303)

The usage of precise color terms in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.
Rachel: “Hey, Mom, this one’s kind of cute.”
Rachel looks at her reflection in a mirror as she holds a blue and white dress to her body. Her mother, Kerry (50s, real estate agent, Chico chic), shakes her head. Kerry has a slight Chinese immigrant accent]
Rachel: “What do you think?”
Kerry: “No! No! No! No! You can’t wear that to meet Nick’s Ah Ma. Blue and white is for Chinese funerals. Now this, this symbolizes good fortune and fertility.”
[Kerry holds up a conservative Red dress]
Rachel: “Great! I was really going for that ‘lucky baby-maker’ vibe.”
Kerry: “Hey! You are the one who asked for my help picking out a dress to meet Nick’s family.”
The conversation occurs between Kerry (Rachel’s mother) and Rachel and took place in a clothing boutique. Rachel asked Kerry to help her pick out a dress to meet Nick’s family. At first, Rachel picked out a blue and white. But Kerry refused that by saying that blue and white colors are for Chinese funerals. After that, Kerry picked out red dress which symbolizes good fortune and fertility. But according to Rachel, it makes her look like a lucky baby-maker vibe. There are three color terms here, which are blue, white, and red. According to Chinese belief and culture, blue and white are used for death or funerals. On the other hand, red symbolizes joy, luck, and happiness. Moreover, it also represents celebration, vitality, and fertility. This scene tells us that women really pay attention to colors and their meanings. While men, have little to almost no attention to color and its relation to certain meaning or value. From the scene, Kerry paid attention enough to the color of the dress chosen by Rachel. The reason why Kerry and Rachel applied precise color terms was to show their gender identity and as women they pay attention enough to color terms and their meaning.

### 3.2.6 Intensifiers

According to Lakoff (2004: 48), intensifiers aim to intensify sentences, whether to increase or decrease them.

Example: **just** and **so**, e.g. I like him **so** much. (Holmes, 2013: 303)

The example of intensifiers in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.
Rachel: “You okay?”
Astrid: “Yeah…”
[beat; close to tears]
Astrid: “Actually… no…”
Rachel: “You could talk to me.”
[Tough to say]
Astrid: “Michael is… having an affair.”
Rachel: “**I’m really sorry**, Astrid.”

The conversation occurred between Astrid and Rachel at night at the beach where the drunken bachelorettes dance and have parties throughout the night. Astrid and Rachel decided to find a more peaceful space to have a vulnerable moment and talk about their life. But before having a conversation, Rachel dumps the previous dead fish she accidentally found in her resort room from Amanda and her friends as a form of terror and mocks into the hole and buried it. Astrid started the conversation about her life and her husband but it seemed that she was unhappy recently with what she had and Rachel recognized that something is wrong with her. Rachel asked whether she is okay or not and Astrid finally opened up that her husband, Michael has been cheating on her. Rachel directly expressed that she sympathized with her by saying **I’m really sorry, Astrid.** The intensifier **really** aimed to intensify and increase Rachel’s emotional message that she also felt sorry for her. This also expressed that Rachel cares about Astrid’s problem and is on her side. The reason why Rachel applied intensifiers in her utterance was to show the function of speech in expressing gender identity, social class and its related status explanation, and women’s status as a subordinate group.

### 3.2.7 Hypercorrect Grammar

Hypercorrect grammar is related to politeness in utterance. According to Lakoff (2004: 80), the use of g ‘in the word singin’ is more dropped by men than women do. Women tend to use standard and more grammatical than men
The usage of hypercorrect grammar in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.

Nick: “I screwed up.”
Rachel: “Why?”
Nick: “I really messed up, okay?”
Rachel: “Why? What – were you trying to test me? Why would you do that?”

The conversation occurred between Rachel and Nick the moment they got back to their hotel. Rachel was disappointed and mad because of what she had experienced during the bachelorette party. Rachel expected that she came along from New York to Singapore to meet Nick’s family and have a good time with them. But it ended up with her having a horrible experience with those girls. Nick did not know what Rachel had and felt at that time. He asked her to tell him everything and when at the same time he also opened up that he was also messed up. Rachel was surprised and guessed whether Nick tested her or not. From the conversation above, it can be seen that Rachel used more grammatical structure than Nick. It is proven from her utterance which said why? What – were you trying to test me? Why would you do that?

The reasons why Rachel applied hypercorrect grammar in her utterance was to show the function of speech in expressing gender identity, and women’s status as a subordinate group.

3.2.8 Superpolite Form

According to Lakoff (2004: 77), women’s speech differs from men’s because women are more polite since women are the preservers of morality and civility. For example, women should behave and communicate politely and very carefully, avoid assertive words, make requests indirectly, euphemisms, and grammar hypercorrect (Holmes, 2013: 303). The usage of superpolite form in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.

Araminta: “Listen, Rachel, I know we’ve only just met, but it’s my bachelorette party this weekend and I would love for you to come.”

[Rachel is surprised, happy to be embraced by Nick’s pals.] Rachel: “That would be amazing. Thank you so much!”

Araminta: “Good! Good!”

This scene occurred when Rachel and Nick were already in Singapore and having a really good dinner at the Singapore food court with Nick’s friend, Colin, and his soon-to-be bride, Araminta. Araminta invited Rachel to come to her bachelorette party on weekend. Rachel was surprised and happy at the same time because she was embraced by Nick’s friend. As a form of appreciation, respect, and acceptance, Rachel said That would be amazing. Thank you so much! which contains superpolite expression which is thank you so much. The reason why Rachel applied superpolite form was to show women’s role in society.

3.2.9 Avoidance of Swearwords

Women tend to avoid swear words. They usually use softer forms. According to Lakoff (2004: 44), a woman is encouraged to become a little girl who does not scream loudly and represents softer emotion than a man.

Example: fudge, oh dear, oh my gosh, oh my god, my goodness. (Holmes, 2013: 303)

The avoidance of swearwords in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.

[Neena and Peik Lin show Rachel into the cavernous living room, everything is covered with gold or mirrors. Rachel takes it in, amazed.]

Neenah: “Rachel, welcome, welcome.”
Rachel: “Wow! Oh, my gosh! Your house is amazing, Mrs. Goh.”
Neenah: “Li gaou kong wei ah. (You’re such a sweet talker). Call me Auntie. Auntie Neenah.”
Rachel: “Sorry. Auntie Neenah.”

The scene occurred between Rachel, Peik Lin (Rachel’s best friend), and Neenah (Peik Lin’s mother) when Rachel visited their house. Rachel showed admiration when she saw their house by
saying "Wow! Oh, my gosh! Your house is amazing, Mrs. Goh." She avoided the use of swearwords, instead, she replaced them by saying **wow** and **oh my gosh** to show a more polite expression of her admiration, amazement, and surprise. Compared to men, women tend to use **oh my god, oh my gosh, oh dear, oh love, oh god** which indicates their direct reaction when seeing something magnificent or terrifying. The reason why Rachel applied the avoidance of strong swearwords was to show social class and its status explanation, women’s role in society.

### 3.2.10 Emphatic Stress

According to Lakoff (2004: 81), emphatic stress is a form of referral to tell someone how to react because what was said by the speaker is less convincing then it is better to use more power to ensure the hearer can understand what is being said before. Example: fabulous, very, very, very, great, magnificent, wonderful, enough, brilliant, e.g. it was a **brilliant** performance. (Holmes, 2013: 303)

The usage of emphatic stress in Crazy Rich Asians movie is presented below.

Nick: “Mum, this is Rachel Chu.”
Rachel: “Oh, my gosh! **I, I’m so happy to meet you, Mrs. Young.**”

[Gives her a big hug.]
Rachel: “Or, uh, Auntie. Right?”

[Giggles]
Rachel: “I’m learning the lingo.”

[Eleanor smiles, subtly scans Rachel, evaluating her.]  
Eleanor: “I’m very glad to finally meet you, too. And I’m sorry Nick’s father couldn’t be here. He was called to business in Shanghai.”

The conversation occurred between Rachel, Nick, and Eleanor. It was Rachel and Eleanor’s first meeting during a party in Eleanor’s house. Aside from avoiding swearwords, Rachel emphasized that she was excited to meet Nick’s mother by saying **I, I’m so happy to meet you, Mrs. Young.** Additionally, as a form of respect and response, Eleanor replied with **I’m very glad to finally meet you too.** Both Rachel and Eleanor shared the same emphatic stress to show that they are pleased to meet each other. The reason why Rachel applied emphatic stress in her utterance was to show the function of speech in expressing gender identity.

### 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that Crazy Rich Asians movie contains all types of women’s language features. There are 10 types of women’s language features according to Lakoff (2004), such as lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite form, avoidance of swearwords, and emphatic stress. Lexical hedges, tag questions, and intensifiers aim to show hesitancy, invite someone to tell something, encourage other women to join the conversation, confirm something, show emotional state, and express emotion, praise, and admiration to someone. On the other hand, the usage of rising intonation, emphatic stress, empty adjectives, avoidance of swearwords, hypercorrect grammar, and superpolite form is to express appreciation to someone, seek confirmation, polite requests, leave an open decision, and reduce the force of utterance. It can be also concluded that women and men applied different patterns of language use. Because of their subordinate position in society compared to men, women tend to soften their expressions and choose mere topics in their conversations. In most cases, women lack of certainty and confidence. While men are expected to look stronger and have more power than women. This study gives the example of women’s language features and contributes to the improvement in understanding of women’s language features in Crazy Rich Asians movie. It is expected that this study becomes one of many references for language study students to learn more about women’s language features.
5. References


