

Lexical Hedges in *Mamma Mia!* Movie

Ni Ketut Ani Septiarini, I Made Suastra, I Komang Sumaryana Putra

Udayana University, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

Correspondence e-mail: septiariniani@gmail.com, madesuastra@yahoo.co.id,
komangsumaryana@gmail.com

Article Info

Submitted: October 7th, 2020
Revised: December 5th, 2020
Accepted: December 15th, 2020

Keywords: lexical hedges,
movie, women's language
features

Corresponding Author:

Ni Ketut Ani Septiarini

emial:
septiariniani@gmail.com

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.24843/JH.2021.v25.i01.p10>

Abstract

The study is aimed to generally identify the types of lexical hedges used in the movie script and to determine the function of lexical hedges used. The data of this study were taken by using documentation method and note-taking technique from the movie *Mamma Mia!*, which firstly released in 2008. The movie is originally conducted by Phyllida Lloyd and also written by Catherine Johnson based on the 1999 musical of the same name, which is based on the songs of famous pop group ABBA. The data were analyzed descriptively qualitatively using Lakoff's theory about women's language features (1973). This study revealed that there were four examples of lexical hedges found in *Mamma Mia!* movie.

INTRODUCTION

Language, as one of the branch in linguistic studies takes a very substantial part in terms of communication. It generally brings meaning which rises towards several symbols in the form of written, oral, and image. However, if we take a look in the context of social relationship, a meaning in language should be determined by involving many social factors. Human being, which also categorized as parts of social community, always needs the role of language in order to express their ideas or thoughts towards other people. As its own importance in communication, it also

makes language takes a very substantial part in social aspect of human life. The study of language in social aspect itself is clearly known as sociolinguistics, which generally deals with the relation between language and the society.

Sociolinguistics is genuinely interested in giving explanation on why people speak differently in different social context. Besides, it is also having concern to identify any social function of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning (Holmes, 1992:1). It also discussed about the different language that usually used by gender. Gender can be defined as the difference

of the roles between women and men in the form of language which they usually used in daily life. Study about Women's language in *Mamma Mia!* movie is an interesting topic to be discussed since it shows a lot on variation of women and men speak in one occasion, even when they have no close relationship.

Based on the foregoing introduction, this study aims to identify the types of lexical hedges applied and to determine the functions of lexical hedges used by the main character in *Mamma Mia!* movie. Some researches had been done related to the same topic with different data source. Yet, the researcher focuses on the use of woman daily speech to support the acquired dialogues on the movie.

METHOD AND THEORY

This study is focused on identifying the types and functions of lexical hedges which were used by the main character in *Mamma Mia!* movie. The main source data of the study were taken from *Mamma Mia!* movie which is directed in 2008. It is a jukebox musical romantic comedy movie which was originally directed by Phyllida Lloyd. The movie can be considered to be unique, as it only present one character onstage, and the other character remain silent and offstage.

There were several steps to collect the data. First, the data were collected by watching the movie repeatedly and reading the script. Second, the data found were noted and highlighted. Third, the data were being classified based on the kinds. The samples of the collected data then were taken to be analyzed.

The collected data analyzed descriptive qualitatively. Analyzing the data consists of several steps. First, the data were identified and classified

according to the types of lexical hedges used in the movie based on the theory of women's language features proposed by Lakoff (1973). Second, the functions of the lexical hedges were determined by using the theory of functions of women's language features by Lakoff (1975 with the help of context of situation theory by Halliday and Hasan. Lastly, the results were presented descriptively.

Review of Literatures

Analyzing women's language features is not a new topic of discussion. In the literature review, there are some studies which has similar topic with the current study. Those studies were reviewed to support the process of this study.

Pebrianti (2013) discussed that women are claimed to have less confidence to talk than men because women are powerless. It is found that male and female often rather to use different linguistic forms and address terms when they speak English even in the same speech community. It is also showed that men had a tendency to be more direct while women preferred to be more supportive and use different strategies in the language they use. In this sense, one can suspect that making requests might differ as well (Onem, 2014). Nurjanah (2017) discussed about communicative competence emphasizes that the knowledge of grammatical rules cannot be sufficient to communicate, therefore it needs more pragmatics knowledge. Without pragmatic understanding, there will be many failures in communication such as misunderstanding.

Hedging is also connected to women as opposed to men because women are believed to speak in a more indirect style hence they hedge their utterances to avoid being directly hesitate. Mitigation is defined as a softening device in language, that is, any linguistic (or

paralinguistic) feature, as stated by Paidamoyo (2016) which makes an utterance appear less threatening and hence more polite. Mulyani (2014) stated about women's language that is also considered to be inferior to men's language, and is appropriately fit enough for their gender domestic roles. Jespersen views language from an essentialist perspective; that is seeing men-women language difference at the result of sex and gender differences. Kasni and Budiarta (2017) in their study stated that the use of language for men and women is closely have relation with the culture and norm where the language is used. The language used for men and women termed as gender language in Bali is much influenced by its culture. Therefore this research was done to investigate what linguistics devices are used to show men and women and what are the functions of those devices.

A study proposed by Khoirut (2018) stated that in a certain situation, women speak differently from men in various speech communities. It is often aimed to protect their face and their addressee's face. Women's role as mothers makes the society expect them to be politer in their acting and speaking. Other studies proposed by Alhumaid (2017) discussed that a person is likely to be classified to a certain social group or class judging by their speaking habits, vocabulary choice, grammar use and stylistic peculiarities of the speech. The language here is one of the key factors, prevailing over the initial judgment based on appearance or clothing. Shalaby (2019) stated that most people are exposed to hundreds of advertisements that encourage them to purchase certain products on a daily basis which seen as "socializing agents" that construct people's ideologies and standards. Atmawati (2018) discussed that Language forms choice of someone can be different from language formation choice of others when speaking. Those

differences come from sex difference and local culture as well. In daily conversation, the Javanese women tend to choose more polite vocabularies than men'

Some previous studies (e.g. Juwita, 2016; Sunggingwati, 2016; Puspitasari, 2018; Rahayu, 2015) do not exactly discuss about women's language features. However, those studies only analyze language style used by women in general. Unlike those study, there is a study which mainly discuss about women's language features (Sanjaya, 2018) and Chandra (2018). Both of these studies discussed about the types and functions of women's language features in *The Nanny Diaries* movie. Nevertheless, this study mainly discussed all types of women's language features proposed by Lakoff, meanwhile the current study only take one type of women's language features to be analyzed.

Theory of Women's Language Features

This study uses the theory of women's language features proposed by Lakoff (1973). He defined the types of women's language features into nine types; lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, intensifiers, super-polite forms, color terms, emphatic stress and avoidance of strong swear words. Since this study focus only on lexical hedges, therefore the explanation can be seen as follow.

Lexical Hedges

Basically the use of hedging has the means to show a doubt or a confidence of what has been said. Some examples of hedging in women's language is like the words um, well, you see, sorta/sort of, like, you know, kinda/kind of, like, I guess, I think, and it seems like.

Functions of Lexical Hedges

According to Lakoff (1975), functions of lexical hedges in women's language features can be divided into three, which are explained below.

- a. To mitigate the possible unfriendliness or unkindness of a statement, where it is used for the sake of politeness.
- b. To show speaker's feeling of uncertainty about she is saying or cannot vouch the accuracy of the statement itself.
- c. As an apology for making any assertion because the speaker does not want to assert themselves strongly. In other words, hedges are used to weaken and strengthen any assertions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis related to the examples of lexical hedges used by the main characters in *Mamma Mia!* movie can be seen as follow.

[4-1]

(03:30-03:35)

Sophie: I'm getting married tomorrow. I'm so glad you're here, because I have a secret and I can't tell anybody else.

Ali: Sophie, you're knocked up?

Sophie: No! No! No! **Um.** I've invited my dad to my wedding.

The bold word above is classified as a lexical hedge. The hedge **um** is signaled that the sentence above fulfills the requirement as a lexical hedge. Related to the context, the data shows spoken dialogue between the female characters of the movie, which are Ali and Sophie. The dialogue took place in a harbor where Ali and Lisa are about to leave off the boat on Kalokairi. Sophie explains that she will get married soon and uttered *No! No! No! Um. I've invited*

my dad to my wedding to answer her friends. She tries to convince her friends that she really want to invite her father to her wedding day by saying that sentence. The hedge **um** in Sophie's utterance has the means to that she has uncertainty to invite her father to her wedding, because she hasn't know yet who her real father is. According to Lakoff (1975: 54), anyone may do this if there are lacks of self-confidences as everyone does in particular situation, but women usually do it more.

The function of hedging devices used in this conversation is to give the speakers sequence time to think what they will say next because she has a quite hesitance towards her words previously or it cannot prove the accuracy of the statement itself. She used the word "um.." which shows her attitude of being confused towards her own statement. This can be concluded that her statement is not a certain thing that would be happen.

[4-2]

(10:28-10:34)

Sky : You make me sound so unromantic! I just thought we should save our money for travelling.

Sophie : **Well,** we're not going anywhere yet. Anyway, please leave. We're very, very busy.

The type of women's language features above is classified as lexical hedge. It can be seen by the use of a hedging device **well** in the utterance. Related to the context, the data shows the spoken dialogue between Sophie and Sky, her husband-to-be in Sophie's room at Donna's villa located in Kalokairi, In the dialogue, it seems that Sophie upset and felt confused at the same time, she did not know what to response towards Sky, and then she finally answered with sentence "**Well,** we're not going anywhere yet. Anyway, please leave.

We're very, very busy." The sentence here using the word **well** as it means that Sophie tried to convince her husband to be by saying *we're not going anywhere yet* because it is true that they haven't got any plan to go on holiday, even their wedding day also didn't held yet, so she said that they are not going anywhere yet as they are still on the preparation for their wedding day.

The word **well** in Sophie's utterance is being one of the types of lexical hedges that has the function as an apology for making a defense or assertion because the speaker does not want to assert themselves strongly. In other words, this hedge is used to weaken and strengthen any assertions.

[4-3]

(00:54:56-00:54:57)

Bill: This is fantastic! How on earth did Donna get money to buy this place?

Sophie: She was left some money by the old lady she looked after when I was little. Sofia that I'm named after.

Bill: My great-aunt Sofia?

Sophie: **I guess.**

Bill: I always heard her money was left to family.

The utterance above shows spoken dialogue between Bill and Sophie. The dialogue takes place in a Donna's run-down hotel where Sky and Sophie will hold their special wedding day. The existence of using the lexical hedges is shown in the utterance above which is said by Sophie. The use of lexical hedges **I guess** appears in the middle of the conversation as a means that she is uncertain about what she is saying before.

According to Lakoff (1975: 54), anyone may do this if there are lacks of self-confidences as everyone does in particular situation, but women usually

do it more. The function of hedge **I guess** in Sophie's utterance cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement. This can be concluded that her statement about it is not a certain or exact thing that actually happened in the past, because she did not know exactly and just guessing by herself.

[4-4]

(1:13:00-1:13:17)

Sophie: I read Mom's diary, and I have three possible fathers.

Sky: But how are they here now?

Sophie: I invited them. **I thought** that I would know my dad right away, but I didn't. I just... I have no idea. And know, my mom is gonna kill me, and they're gonna hate me and you...

The conversation above happens between Sophie and Sky. The dialogue takes place in a Donna's run-down hotel where Sky and Sophie will hold their special wedding day.

By the situation showing Sophie and Sky's confusion at the same time, she uttered the sentence "I invited them. I thought I would know my dad right away, but I didn't...". In this case, Sophie tries to use lexical hedges "I thought" in her utterance as a means of her hesitation towards her own action that she did before. According to Lakoff (1975: 54), anyone may do this if there are lacks of self-confidences as everyone does in particular situation.

The hedging device that is used by Sophie in the dialogue is in the words 'I thought'. It has the same function with other examples of lexical hedges, which is to show that what she utters in the sentence cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement itself. Mainly, from the sentence Sophie tries to convince Bill that she is really confuse towards her own decision.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis in the discussion, the following points can be drawn as conclusions.

Related to the first problem, the finding shows that along the movie, Sophie uses one of the women's language features when she is speaking. The feature is defined as 'lexical hedges'.

She uses the features to speak to all role classification that is constructed in the movie. She uses the features to speak with the people who have the same age, gender, and close relationship. Also, to the people who have different age, gender, and have no close relationship with her. There are four examples of lexical hedges found in *Mamma Mia!* Movie Script. Those examples are included 'um', 'well', 'I guess' and 'I thought'. The main character tries to use the features as the means of her uncertainty towards her action or words that she uttered previously. According to Lakoff (2004:79), basically, the use of hedging also has the means to show a doubt or not having much confidence of what has been said.

Answering the second problem about the function, Sophie, as the main character in the movie, uses the lexical hedges, firstly to ease the possible unfriendliness or unkindness of a statement, where it is probably functioned for the sake of politeness. Secondly, to show speaker's hesitance about she said previously or it also cannot prove the accuracy of the statement itself. And lastly, as an act of apology for saying an assertion because the speaker does not want to assert themselves too much. In other words, hedges are used to weaken and strengthen any assertions.

REFERENCES

Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Seven Edition.

United States of America: Heinle & Heinle.

Alhumaid, Anfal. (2017). Language and Gender: a Socio-Cultural Feature Dominating Perception. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Vol. 7, No. 2; February 2017

Atmawati, Dwi. (2018). Gender Bias in Javanese Society: A Study in Language Forms Choice to Men and Women. *International Journal of Humanities Binus University*. Vol. 9, No.3

Budiarta, I Wayan. (2017). Balinese Women and Men and Their Language. *International Journal of Linguistics*. Vol 9, No 5.

Chandra, Diana. (2018). Nicki Minaj's Comments in American Idol Season 12: An Analysis of Women's Language Features. *International Journal of Humanity Studies*. Vol.1, No.2, March 2018, pp. 185-193

Juwita, Tri Puspa. (2016). The Differences between Men and Women's Language in the Devil Wears Prada Movie. *International Journal of Cultural Sciences*. Vol. 2, No.1

Kasni, Ni Wayan. (2017). Balinese Women and Men and Their Language. *International Journal of Linguistics*. Vol 9, No 5.

Khoirot, Aifi Umdatun. (2018). Women's Linguistic Features in Two Dramas. *Nobel: Journal of Literature, Language, and Language Teaching*.

Lakoff, Robin Tolmach. 1975. *Language and Women's Place*. London: Harper & Row Publishers.

Mulyani, Sri. (2014). Language and Gender: toward a Critical Feminist Linguistics. *International Journal of Language and Literature*. Vol. 14 No. 2.

- Nurjanah, Oktanika Wahyu. (2017). Male and Female Student's Linguistic Politeness in Speaking Classroom. *International Journal of Pedagogy and Teacher Education*. Vol. 1 No. 2.
- Onem, Engin Evrim. (2018). A study on gender differences in the length of requests in Turkish. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*. Vol. 12, No. 2, 13-21; 2016
- Pebrianti, A. A. 2013. Women's Language Features Used by Indonesian Female Bloggers. *Humanis Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 2 No (1), 109-118.
- Paidamoyo, M. Gilda. (2016). Contesting the Existence of Male Speech Stereotypes within the Communicative Context of Nursing: A Case of Bonda Mission Hospital, Zimbabwe. Vol. 12, No.3.
- Puspitasari, Desi. (2018). Women's Linguistic Features in Two Dramas. *Nobel: Journal of Literature, Language, and Language Teaching*.
- Sanjaya, I.B. Gede Dharma. (2018). Women's Language in "The Nanny Diaries" Movie. *Humanis Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 22, No. 3, July 2015, pp. 804-809.
- Shalaby, Menatella. (2019). A Cross-Cultural Study of the Representation of Women in Instagram Cosmetic Advertisements. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies* December 2019, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 58-67
- Vandergiff, Jim. 2012. Is There a Women's Language?. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* "Vol.2 No.2 published by School of Arts and Sciences, New Mexico Highlands University United States of America 2012.
- Hornby, Albert Sydney. (1989). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Express.
- Holmes, Janet. 1992. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistic*. London: Longman
- Holmes, Janet. 1997. *Woman, Language and Identity*. Journal. Victoria: University of Wellington.
- Knickerbocker, K. L and William Reninger. (1963). *Interpreting Literature*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Hua, C. 2013. Critical Discourse Analysis of Women Language at the Lexical Level in Sense and Sensibility. *Academic Research International*. Vol. 4 No.2
- Coates, J. 1986. *Women, Men and Language*. London: Longman.
- Coates, J. & D. Cameron (eds.). 1989. *Women in Their Speech Communities*. Longman.
- Eckert, P. 2004. *Language and Gender*. 3rd Edition, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- M. A. K, Halliday. (2004). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Third Edition. New York: Hodder
- Miftahul, Lisda. 2016. *Women's Language Used by the Main Character of Mockingjay Movie*. Undergraduate Thesis. Malang: Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University.
- Perrine, Laurence and Thomas R. Arp. (1992). *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*. Moeller: English Department.
- Coates, J (ed.). 1998. *Language and Gender: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell