

Women Linguistic Features Used by Elle Evans in *The Kissing Booth 2* Movie

Ni Putu Sheila Damota¹, I Made Suastra², and Luh Putu Laksmi³

Udayana University, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

Correspondence e-mail: sheiladamota90@gmail.com, madesuastra@yahoo.co.id,
putu_laksmi@unud.ac.id

Abstract Language makes people understand each other and interact in daily life. Most importantly, language has become an important tool in communication. The way men and women speak is different. They have different features although they speak the same language. The title of this undergraduate thesis is "Women's Language Features Used by Elle Evans in The Kissing Booth 2 Movie". The main purpose of this research was to identify and describe the types of women's language styles and to find out functions and factors of the use of women's language. This research is a descriptive-qualitative study and the primary data were expressions in dialogues related to women's language in the movie. The method that was used to collect the data was the documentation method through the note-taking technique. The data analysis was conducted using the theory proposed by Robin Lakoff (1975). The result of this study showed that not all types of women's language features were used by Elle Evans in the movie *The Kissing Booth 2* Movie. The researcher found eight types of women's language features. They are: lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, empty adjectives, hypercorrect grammar, super polite form, intensifiers, the avoidance of strong swear words and emphatic stress. The precise color terms and rising intonation on declaratives were not found in Elle's utterances. However, the key problem of Lakoff's theory of women's linguistic features is that apparently, men also use women's speech in their dialogue. Lakoff's theory would have been more interesting if she had considered the use of women's speech used by men and the use of strong swear words used by women in her book.

Keywords: women's language, gender, women's speech

I. INTRODUCTION

Everyone has been introduced to a language or two languages since they were a child to communicate. Language makes people understand each other and interact in daily life. Widdowson (1996) mentioned, "language is so intricately and intimately bound up with human life, and is so familiar an experience, that its essential nature is not easy to discern." (Widdowson: 1996:17). Most importantly, language has become an important tool in communication. Lakoff (1975) describes that "language uses us as much as we use language" (Lakoff: 1975:3). Language is also a big influence since people can deliver everything in their minds. In delivering their speech, they have their special feature of speech.

Gender is one of the major topics in Sociolinguistics that discusses the connection between structures, vocabularies, and ways of using particular language and the social role of the men and women who speak these languages. Women's position is seen as inferior to men. Socially, they are also different based on social class, ethnicity, and race. It means

that women generally have lower status than men. Also, women need to use a certain language that uses the language standard to be accepted by society. Holmes (2013) states that masculine and feminine behaviors are explained as gender in terms of scales rather than absolute classifications. Women and men's speech features become linguistic resources for constructing ourselves as relatively feminine or relatively masculine (p.159).

The way men and women speak is different. They have different features although they speak the same language. Many sociolinguistics found that men and women have different ways of speaking. Women are taught to be polite and speak like a lady and if they refuse to do so, they will be considered rude. The same goes for men, if they do not speak gently and powerfully, they will be judged as feminine. According to Tannen (1990), women talk too much rather than men (Tannen:1990:35). Most women work as a secretary, bank teller, customer service; whereas men usually work as managers, head waiters, and bank supervisors since it does not require them to talk a lot. Until now, men and women have their features of speech. Lakoff (1975) states that women do not talk roughly and they tend to use language more politely. However, interestingly, Lakoff (1973) also stated in her book that men use stronger

expletives such as *shit* and *damn*, whereas women use weaker or softer profanity such as *oh dear*, *goodness*, or *fudge*. (Lakoff: 1973:50). In general, studies of forms confirm that men use more non-standard language than women do. As claimed by Lakoff (1975), women have different speech functions since women are forced to learn a weak, trivial, and different style as a reflection of their powerlessness. Therefore, women are more aware of the fact that the way they speak describes their social background. As mentioned by Lakoff (1975), women's speech was characterized by linguistic features such as lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation, 'empty' adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'super polite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words and emphatic stress.

II. METHOD AND THEORY

A descriptive qualitative was applied in this research. After collecting the data, the first step the writer did was reading the data that had been read to get the relevant data. The second step was classifying and choosing types of women's linguistic features proposed by Lakoff (1975) which are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation, 'empty' adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress and her theory were also supported by Holmes (2013). And the last step was analyzing the data by looking for hidden meaning content of the utterances conveyed that contained the function following the theory and explaining the situation in the movie then describing the women's language features. The situation needed to be described because the problem should be analyzed. Therefore, to analyze the women's language features and their functions, the description of the situation in the movie needed to be put by the writer. Then, the writer paid attention to every type of women's speech used by Elle and the function of each of them. The context of the data must be understood to help the writer in analyzing the data of the meaning and the function of women's linguistic features.

only. To collect the data, several steps have been done by the writer. Collecting the data needed was done by downloading the movie script, collecting and classifying the women's speech features that are uttered by Elle, and taking notes on the paper to jot down the speech features found both in the dialogue and the movie script. The movie script needs to be read more than three times to understand the data. And then, the next step is collecting the data that is related to the problems of the study. When collecting the data, the writer focused on the use of words and the meaning contained which are connected to women's linguistic features. Focusing on Elle's mimic and gestures that can influence the meaning conveyed to the audiences are also needed.

To get more correct data, Concordance with AntConc

tool is also used to help the writer in collecting and generating the data by inserting the movie script and finding the utterance that is related to women's language uttered by Elle. The script of the movie is considered as a corpus of 12,021 words. The next step is by classifying the data. The data in features of women's language were classified to make it easy for the writer in doing the analysis. The last step is taking notes. Microsoft Notes was also used to write down women's speech that is found in the utterance. Then, the important data were to avoid the loss of important and significant data.

Lakoff's Theory on Women's Language

One of the best-known theories to describe gender and language was made by Robin Lakoff (1975) in her book entitled "Language and Woman Place". She is known as the linguist who worked on linguistic research about men and women language for the first time. She mentioned in her theory that some linguistic features differentiate women from men. She believed women have insecurity when they are talking and women lack confidence and the desire to avoid giving offense and they need to seek approval from other people. frequent use of emotionally intensive adverbs such as *so*, *terribly*, *awfully*, and *quite*. According to Lakoff, there are several linguistic features in which characterized women speech; lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation in declaratives, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifier such as *so* and just hypercorrect' grammar, super polite form, avoidance of strong swears words and, emphatic stress.

Lexical hedges such as *you know*, *well*, *kind of*, *sort of* are used to keep women's femininity. The reason why women use them is to add tentativeness to statements and to show there is uncertainty. For example, **I guess** he is a nice man.

Tag question is used to soften directives and criticism. As an example, a woman wants a confirmation of her claim using a tag question in her utterance. For example, Bella is majoring in English Literature, **isn't she?**

Rising Intonation is used to give a confirmation which women doubt if their opinion will be agreed by the addressee. Therefore, rising intonation on declaratives is used to show that the decision can be in the addressee. For example, Speaker A: What time are you going to pick me up later tonight? Speaker B: Around six **o'clock?**

Empty adjectives such as *adorable*, *charming*, *sweet*, *lovely*, and *divine* are strongly marked as feminine. They are used to show the relationship of her emotional expressions to the addressee. For example, what a **lovely** person!

Precise color terms are terms that are mostly used by women. In Lakoff's theory, women can state or mention precisely, such as *beige*, *ecru*, *aquamarine*, *lavender*, or *mauve*.

Intensifiers such as *so*, *really*, *just*, *very*, *such*, or *quite* are used to strengthen the intended meaning. Women are

afraid of being ignored and women always try to get the addressee's attention therefore they tend to use intensifiers in their dialogue. For example, His father is **really** wise so that he can solve the problem

Women are supposed to behave politely and they should not talk roughly. Hypercorrect grammar is mostly used by women to show that they are role models in society.

Women are expected to behave carefully and politely. Women's speech differs from men's in that women are politer, which is precisely as it should be since women are the preservers of morality and civility, (Lakoff, 2004:77). For example, women would say the phrase "**passed away**" instead of the word "**died**" or "**killed**" in their utterance.

Women usually avoid swearing words in communication to show how polite they are. Women usually use soft softer forms such as "*fudge*", "*what the heck*" "*freaking*" while men tend to use "*fuck*", "*what the fuck*", and "*fucking*". For example, "**fudge**, I forgot to call her!"

Emphatic stress is used to express uncertainty with women's self-expression. Emphatic stress is also known as boosting devices. For example, the movie was GREAT.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Types of Women's Linguistic Features in The Kissing Booth 2 Movie

Lexical Hedges or Fillers

Lakoff (1975) has demonstrated that women tend to use hedges such as "*well*", "*you know*", "*sort of*", "*kind of*" to show that they are uncertain about their statement. Additionally, Lakoff (1975) also observed that it is believed that women use this feature for their protection in case they overstep their rights by making a certain statement. One of the examples is presented below:

[Dialogue 1]

Flynn: "Well, the thoughts we are having...."

Elle: "Right. Right. That's a great point. Good point.

well, you know,

we have decided to keep this year's list a secret."

Dialogue 1 exhibits that Elle was not sure about the details of the list of people who will be at The Kissing Booth. Elle claimed that she had found the best host for the event this year meanwhile she and Lee had not found someone to be a host for the booth. Elle was communicating to her teachers and friends which means they are just schoolmates. Elle used *well* and *you know* in her utterance while she was discussing her plan about The Kissing Booth for the school with her best friend, Lee Flynn. The hedge *well* and *you know* showed the characteristics of a hedge. Moreover, the hedges showed that Therefore, Elle used these hedges for protection because she was uncertain of her statement.

Tag Questions

Tag questions have many functions. Lakoff (1975) showed that "tag question is used to express uncertainty" (p. 16). Besides, women tend to get more confirmation from the addressee by using tag questions. The examples of tag questions are "*isn't it*", "*right?*", "*aren't we?*". In The Kissing Booth 2 movie, two tag questions are found by the writer in Elle's utterance.

[Dialogue 1]

Elle: "Busted. Walking pretty well, **aren't we?**"

Flynn: "I'm sorry, okay? You had a better shot with Marco."

Dialogue 1 illustrates Elle was walking towards the hallway because she saw Flynn in his car. Surprisingly, Lynn was able to walk normally while he broke his ankle when he and Elle were playing Dancing Mania. Therefore, Elle approached Flynn in the hallway to make sure if he could walk normally or not. Elle and Flynn are best friends and they are very close. Elle used *aren't we* to check the truth of what she saw. Elle was uncertain before she asked Flynn that he can walk without the tools again and apparently, Flynn does not need them again as his ankles are getting better.

Empty Adjectives

Lakoff (1975) proposed that both men and women can use adjectives words however women tend to use more adjectives such as "*adorable*", "*divine*", "*charming*", "*cute*", "*sweet*", and "*lovely*" (p. 12). Similarly, Talbot (2010) also found that women use empty adjectives to indicate admiration and femininity. One of the examples is presented below:

[Dialogue 1]

Noah: "You know, it kind of looked to me like you'd already rearranged your life."

Chloe: "I think that maybe we should just..."

Elle: "You know what? This has been **lovely**, Chloe. Always a pleasure."

The use of empty adjectives is shown in dialogue 1. Elle was having dinner with her family, Lynn's family, Rachel, and Noah, who was her current boyfriend, on Thanksgiving day to celebrate. Unfortunately, both Noah and Lynn were pissed off at Elle because she betrayed their trust. During dinner time, each of them had to tell their wishes until Elle had her turn. At the end of her sentence, she sarcastically mentioned that it was a pleasure to meet Chloe, Noah's new friend by saying this has been a lovely day. The word "lovely" indicates her femininity.

[Dialogue 2]

Elle: "I already sent out applications to Boston University, Tufts, Boston College..."

Noah: "And Harvard?"

Elle: "Yes, and Harvard."

Noah: "**Brilliant!**"

As shown above, Noah used one of the empty adjectives that are theoretically used by women to indicate femininity. The result was contradicted by the experiments of Lakoff who considered women tend to use more empty adjectives. In dialogue 5, Elle and Noah were calling on FaceTime to discuss Elle's plan on going to universities. Noah was delighted to hear that Elle also applied to Harvard which is Noah's current university he went to at that moment and he said "**brilliant**" to indicate his admiration for Elle's plan to meet him.

Intensifiers

Lakoff (1975) raised several concerns about intensifiers. She illustrated that women have a tendency to use intensifiers more frequently than men (p. 54) and women are also afraid of being ignored. The writer provided examples with the discussions below.

[Dialogue 1]

Noah: "Don't tell me you've only applied to one school, Elle."

Elle: "I know, but it's the only school we've ever talked about going to."

Elle was calling Noah on Skype and they were discussing the best universities for her. However, Elle and her friend, Flynn, only applied to one school which is Berkeley because they have never considered going to the other universities. It appears from Dialogue 1 that Elle used intensifiers *literally* to emphasize her meaning. Elle used literally to express her feelings and emphasized the word school that she was talking about. Therefore, the intensifier *literally* in picture 1 is used to strengthen the meaning.

Hypercorrect Grammar

Women are supposed to behave and talk politely and avoid the use of rough talk. Society expects women to play a role for their children by using languages with correct grammar. One of the examples that are mentioned by Lakoff (2004:80) is the use of 'g' in the word *singin'*.

[Dialogue 1]

Marco: "You two do go everywhere together."

Elle: "Uh, yeah. Yeah, we do. We wanted to, uh, ask you something. We do this kissing booth at the Homecoming fundraiser and **we were wondering if you'd be one of our kissers this year.**"

Marco: "No."

Hypercorrect grammar is depicted in dialogue 1. Elle and Flynn were at the gaming zone when all of a sudden they met Marco. Flynn had an idea to invite Marco as a headline for The Kissing Booth and Elle agreed to it. Elle was trying to ask Marco if he wanted to be one of the kissers by asking him politely. Instead of using "hey, do you want to be a kisser for our booth?", Elle used a standard form of English which is "we were wondering if you'd be one of our kissers

this year." Elle's background as a student outside the class affected her to use hypercorrect grammar. Moreover, Elle also tried to show the aloofness of the relationship between Elle and Marco.

'Super-polite' form

The study by Lakoff (1975) examined that "women are believed to be experts of euphemism and know the right things to say to other people" (p.56). For example, women use "*passed away*" instead of "*die*". In this research, Elle used super polite forms in her utterance.

[Dialogue 1]

Elle: "**I'm sorry.** But I just can't deal with this right now."

Marco: "So, you're just gonna ignore what's happening between us?"

Elle: "**I'm really sorry.** Can we just please talk about this later? **Please.**"

The super-polite form plotted in picture 1 showed Elle used super-polite form. Elle and Noah competed but they did not realize Noah was watching them. They were carried away by the situation that they kissed. Noah saw them and left the place. Elle was chasing him but she was stopped by Marco and Elle politely said that they would discuss what happened. Elle used "*I'm sorry*" and "*please*" to indicate politeness instead of saying "*let's talk about it later*". Elle used super-polite forms to respect Marco as a friend during a tense atmosphere they both had.

Avoidance of Strong Swear Words

To show women's identity as role models in society, they need to avoid using strong swear words in utterances. Lakoff (1975) illustrated in her book that "in Middle America, the majority might condone the use of strong swear words by men, but not for women. It is because women are encouraged to act like a lady since they were young. They are allowed to complain and fuss, but not to flinch like men when they get upset."

[Dialogue 1]

Elle: "**What the hell** is that? Top score is MVP? "Most Valuable Player"

Well, somebody thinks highly of themselves."

Flynn: "I kind of always just figured we'd be number one forever."

Avoidance of strong swear words is given in dialogue 1. Elle said "*what the hell is that?*" instead of "*what the fuck is that?*" to show her surprising feeling toward or strengthen the expression of what she saw in the gaming zone. She was surprised and a little bit annoyed because Elle and Flynn were on the second rank in dancing mania while they were always in the first position. Elle did not fuss toward the rank she and Flynn got.

[Dialogue 2]

Elle: "No. Oh, **son of a bitch.**"

Flynn: "Come on. Come on, baby. Ooh, that might do it! Yes, we still got it!"

Elle: "Whew!"

However, on the contrary, Lakoff's theory about avoidance of strong swear words does not always apply to Elle's utterance. Elle and Flynn were at the dancing mania again and suddenly; she saw MVP win the game again. Elle could not accept the fact that Elle and Flynn were on the second rank. Therefore, she did not avoid using strong swear words once in her utterance. In her dialogue, she expressed her anger by saying *son of a bitch* instead of saying something politer.

Emphatic Stress

Women use emphatic stress to indicate and emphasize the important word in their utterance. The features of emphatic stress are used by Elle Evan in her dialogues. The writer found "super-duper", "literally", and "complete" in the utterance.

[Dialogue 1]

Noah: "I am grateful for my family, uh... my new friend, and... my motorcycle."

Mrs. Evans: "Uhm, okay. Elle?"

Elle: "Wow, what a tough act to follow. Let's see. I am thankful for my family. For that I just, you know, won some money for school. And, oh, yeah, oh my God, I am **super-duper** thankful that, uhm, that I found Chloe's earring.

Elle was having dinner and also was having a conversation with her family along with Noah and Rachel. Elle, her family, Noah, Chloe, Rachel, and Flynn are gathering to celebrate Thanksgiving Day at Flynn's house. Unfortunately, the dinner did not go well because there was a lot of misunderstanding happening between Elle, Flynn, and Noah. One of them is that Elle found Chloe's earring in Noah's bedroom that caused Elle to be disappointed in Noah. Elle used emphatic stress SUPER DUPER. Elle emphasized SUPER DUPER so that the addressee will get her intention. Elle used emphatic stress so everybody took her word thankful seriously. Therefore, emphatic stress was used to strengthen her meaning. Therefore, the addressee will seriously catch the meaning of Elle's word because Elle said it clearly with the stress.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study indicates that there are eight features of women's linguistic features found in The Kissing Booth 2 movie and they are: lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, empty adjectives, hypercorrect grammar, super polite form, intensifiers, the avoidance of strong swear words and emphatic stress. The precise color terms and rising intonation on declaratives were not found in Elle's utterances.

However, the key problem of Lakoff's theory of women's linguistic features is that apparently, men also use women's speech in their dialogue. It seems that Lakoff's

understanding of the theory of women's speech is questionable since women nowadays still use strong swear words in every context and men use women's linguistic features in their dialogue. Lakoff's theory would have been more interesting if she had considered the use of women's speech used by men and the use of strong swear words used by women in her book.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aini, Lisda. 2016. *Women Language Used by The Main Characters of "Mockingjay" Movie*. Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang: Malang.
- [2] Adnyani, E.K. (2014). *Bahasa sebagai Objek Kajian Gender*. Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha: Singaraja.p.11-14.
- [3] Apridaningrum, M.C.G. (2018). *Women's Language Featured Used by Sarah Sechan in Her Talk Show*, Yogyakarta: Sanata Dharma University.
- [4] Bloch, B, and Trager, G. 1942. *Outline of Linguistic Analysis*. Baltimore: Linguistic Society of America.
- [5] Cameron, D. (2003). *Gender and English Language*. London: Macmillan Press.
- [6] Cameron, D. (2003). *Gender and Language Ideologies*. In J. Holmes, & M. Meyerhoff, *The Handbook of Language and Gender*. Maiden: Blackwell Publishing Lt.p.447-467.
- [7] Creswell, John W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- [8] "Context of Situation." WordPress.com. EFL Func, 22 Nov. 2011. Web. 16 Apr 2021.
- [9] Eckert, P., & McGonnell-Ginet, S. (2003). *Language and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [10] Holmes, J (1992). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. New York: Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd.
- [11] Holmes, J. (2013). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Longman: London.
- [12] Jespersen, Otto. (1922). *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin*. George Allen & Unwin, London.
- [13] Lakoff, R. (1973). *Language and Woman's Place. Language in Society*. p. 45-80.

[14] Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper Colophon.

[15] Lakkof, R. (2004). *Language and Women's Place*. In Bucholtz, Mary. *Language and Women's Place: Text and Commentaries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 21-80.

[16] Murti, Monica. 2018. *An Analysis of Women's Language Featured Used by Mia in The Princess Diary Movie*. Yogyakarta: Sanata Dharma University.

[17] Talbot, M. (2003). *Gender Stereotypes: Reproduction and Challenge*. In: Holmes,

[18] J. and Meyerhoff, M. (ed.) *The Handbook of Language and Gender*. Blakewell Publishing: Cornwall.

[19] Svendsen, A. D. (2019). Lakoff and Women's Language: A Critical Overview of the Empirical Evidence for Lakoff's Thesis. *Leviathan: Interdisciplinary Journal in English*, (4), 1–11.

[20] Tannen, D. (1990). *You just don't understand women and men in conversation*. USA: Ballantine Books.

[21] Wahyuni, Delva. 2015. "Fitur-Fitur Tutaran Perempuan yang Digunakan oleh Margaret Thatcher dalam Wawancara". Yogyakarta: Linguistik UGM. Online, <http://etd.repository.ugm.ac.id/downloadfile/77646/potongan/S2-2015-338340-chapter1.pdf>, accessed on May 20 2021 at 14:28)

[22] Wardaugh, R. (2006). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics fifth edition*. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

[23] White, Andrew (2003). *Women's usage of specific linguistic functions IN THE CONTEXT OF CASUAL CONVERSATION: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION*. England: University of Birmingham.

[24] Widdowson, H.G. (1996). *Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[25] Xia, Xiaufang. 2013. *Gender Differences in Using Language*. Qingdao University of Science and Technology, China: ACADEMY PUBLISHER Manufactured. p. 1485-1489