

**WOMEN'S LANGUAGE FEATURES USED BY MAIN FEMALE CHARACTER IN  
SUFFRAGETTE MOVIE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to describe the women's language features and the function of each features that used by Maud Watts who was the main female characters in *Suffragette* movie. The data for this research was gathered from the *Suffragette* movie and its movie script. The data of this research are the utterances from Maud Watts who was the main female characters in *Suffragette* movie. the data were collected through the observation and documentation method. Qualitative method was applied for this research to analysed the data. The data were analysed based on the theory of women's language features proposed by Lakoff (1973) and the theory of five women's language function by Pearson (1985). The findings of this research showed that, there are eight women's language features that Maud used in *Suffragette* movie. they are lexical hedges or fillers (10.84%), tag questions (2.41%), rising intonation on declarative (15.66%), empty adjective (3.61%), intensifiers (7.23%), hypercorrect grammar (38.55%), super 'polite' forms (7.23%) and emphatic stress (14.46%). According to the theory and the findings, the researcher found five women's language function. They are to express uncertainty, to get response, to soften an utterance, to start a discussion, and to express feeling.

Keywords: gender, women's language, women's language features, women's language function

**ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan fitur bahasa wanita dan fungsi dari setiap fitur tersebut yang digunakan oleh Maud yang merupakan pemeran utama pada film Suffragette. Data pada penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui film Suffragette dan naskah film tersebut. Data pada penelitian ini berupa ucapan dari Maud Watts yang merupakan tokoh utama wanita dalam film Suffragette. Data penelitian ini diperoleh melalui metode observasi dan dokumentasi. Metode kualitatif diterapkan pada penelitian ini untuk menganalisis data. Data dianalisis berdasarkan teori yang dikemukakan oleh Lakoff (1973) tentang fitur bahasa wanita dan teori yang dikemukakan oleh Pearson (1985) tentang lima fungsi bahasa wanita. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada delapan fitur bahasa wanita yang digunakan oleh Maud pada film Suffragette. Fitur-fitur tersebut yaitu lexical hedges atau fillers (10.84%), tag questions (2.41%), rising intonation on declarative (15.66%), empty adjective (3.61%), intensifiers (7.23%), hypercorrect grammar (38.55%), super polite form (7.23%) and emphatic stress (14.46%). Berdasarkan teori dan temuan, peneliti menemukan lima fungsi bahasa wanita. Antara lain, untuk mengekspresikan ketidakpastian, untuk mendapatkan respon, untuk melembutkan ucapan, untuk memulai diskusi, dan untuk mengekspresikan perasaan.*

*Kata Kunci: gender, bahasa wanita, fitur bahasa wanita, fungsi bahasa wanita*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creature who always interact and communicate with each other. One of the tools that human used to communicate with each other is language. Francis in Ramelan (1984) stated that a language is an arbitrary system of articulated sounds made use of by a group of humans as a means of carrying on the affairs of their society. Men and women had several differences in uttering a language. Furfey (1944) stated that the differences of women's language and men's language usually involving in phonetics, grammar and vocabulary. Men will tend to speak directly about a topic while talking with other. Meanwhile, women more expressive and polite in using a language when talking with other. Lakoff (2004) stated that women will tend to speak with reference to the rules of politeness, conversational implicature and interpersonal exploration. However, men will tend to speak with reference to the rules of conversation and straight factual communication. In this research, the researcher will focus this study to analyse about women's language.

Women's Language is one of the main topic discussions in sociolinguistics. Study about Women's Language focused on how women produce an utterance which has several differences with how men produce an utterance. Women as describes in Oxford English Dictionary is an adult female human being. According to an article in [siencemag.com](http://siencemag.com), woman is more talkative and like gossiping than men. They can spoke about more than 16.000 words per day. In the other hand, women claimed as less confidence when talking than men. Lakoff (1973) stated that women are generally lacking status in society because they are more subordinate than men. Women uphold the politeness in their daily life. This also

can be seen in how they speak with others. This make them become lack of status in society and become subordinate than men. Lakoff distinguish some linguistics features in women's language which are lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation on declarative, empty adjectives, precious colour term, intensifiers, super polite form, hypercorrect grammar, avoidance of strong swear words and emphatic stress. Women's language not only appeared on the past where women still has a powerless status than men. But, until today women still used women language and the purpose is not again to show their weakness but this became women characteristics and identity. This time, women's language not only appeared in our daily life but, it also can be found on literary works, social media and even in a movie. In this research the researcher focuses on women's language that appeared in movie.

The researcher uses Suffragette movie which is a British historical-drama movie. Suffragette movie tell about the growing suffragette movement forever changes the life of working women class in early 20 century of Britain. This movie showing the viewers about how women condition in that times struggling to achieve their right. Inspired by true events, Suffragette movingly explores the passion and heartbreak of those who risked all they had for women's right to vote their jobs, their homes, their children, and even their lives. The choice of this film is corroborated with its plot which portray the women condition in the 20-century era where women still had a status powerless than man.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The data source in this research is a movie entitled "*Suffragette*" and its movie script. The data of this research

were the utterances that can be in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that contain women's language features. The data were collected from Maud's utterances who was the main characters in the *Suffragette* movie. The data were analysed according to the theory of women's language features which is proposed by Lakoff (1973) and the theory of women's language function by Pearson (1985)

In this research, the researcher applied qualitative method as a method to analysing the data. In analysing the data, the researcher used Creswell (2009) theory of analysing data procedure. There are several steps of analysing the data in this research. First, the researcher preparing the data for analysis and submit the data into a checklist table. the format of the checklist table was according to the Lakoff theory about ten women's language features. Second, while watching the movie, the researcher tried to analyse and find women's language features in the character's utterances. The researcher then put the checklist mark into the suitable features for every Maud's utterances that contain women's language features. For the last steps the researcher rechecked and validate the data to make sure that the utterances were in the correct features. In presenting the data, the researcher used informal method. The informal method was used in this research because the data need to be present descriptively in the form of words to give more explanation and understanding.

### III. DISCUSSION

There are two problems that discussed in this research. First, the types of women's language features that used by Maud in *Suffragette* movie and

second, the function of each women's language features that used by Maud.

### 3.1 Analysis of women's language features and its function used by Maud Watts

#### 3.1.1 Lexical Hedges

##### DATA 1

Setting: on Maud's room where she was writing a letter for Mr. Steed

V/O Maud: **you see**, I find I am a suffragette after all.

As cited in Holmes (2013) Lakoff (1973) stated that hedges indicating women's lack of confidence. The situation in the movie shows Maud who tried to loosed her wedding rings with a bar of soap. After trying hard to rub and sunk her fingers, she finally loosens her ring and pulls it off. Then, she prepared a paper and a pen to write a letter. She wrote a letter to Mr. Steed to give a response about his offers. In the utterance above, Maud used hedges *you see* indicates her uncertainty and lack of confidence. The words *you see* used by Maud had a purpose to **start a discussion**. She wanted to know about Mr. Steed's opinion when she finally found herself was a suffragette after all through the letter she wrote. According to Pearson (1985) cited in Rubbyanti (2017), When women are about to start a discussion, they frequently use lexical hedges such as: you know, sort of, well, you see, maybe, perhaps, in my opinion, I think, etc.

#### 3.1.2 Tag Questions

##### DATA 2

Setting: Ellyn Pharmacy's back room

Maud: You a suffragette, **Mrs Ellyn?**

Ellyn: Yes. But I consider myself more of a soldier, Mrs Watts.

The word *Mrs. Ellyn* followed with tag question sign that Maud asking Mrs. Ellyn to seek a response if Mrs. Ellyn was a suffragette or not. Lakoff cited in (Murdi 2018) stated that *Tag Question* also known as yes-no question is used when the speaker declares a statement in a form of question in order to gain certainty of it from the interlocutor. Maud actually already know if Mrs. Ellyn was a suffragette because the appearance of Mrs. Pankhurst photograph in Mrs. Ellyn place that she saw before. She asked Mrs. Ellyn to gain certainty. According to Eckert and McConnell-Gin cited in Rubbyanti (2017) women's speech has often been interpreted as indicating uncertainty or unwillingness to take a stand.

### 3.1.3 Rising Intonation on Declaratives

DATA 3

Setting: internal office of police station

V/O Maud: I'm worth no more, **no less than you.**

According to Lakoff as cited in (Murdi, 2018) women rising their intonation when they are hesitant in giving an information and a statement. The voice of Maud that listened on the movie shown she rise her intonation because she was hesitant when giving Mr. Steed a statement that actually she tried to compare their worthiness. Her statements had an explicit meaning that actually Maud wanted to be respected same as he respected Mr. Steed. She used satire to seek a response from Mr. Steed. According to Pearson as cited in (Pebrianti, 2013) Different from men who often state directly what they want, women tend to ask indirectly what they want and hope the listeners are able to understand them. Therefore, the purpose of Maud using rising intonation in her utterances above was to get response from Mr. Steed.

### 3.1.4 Empty Adjectives

Data 4

Setting: Front room of Maud's house

Sonny: Let me have a look.

Maud: It's nothing... I got caught in a scuffle. There were a **load** of those women shouting...

On the conversation above, Maud using the word *Load* as an adjective to express her feeling when looking lot of women doing a demonstration on the way she back home. Lakoff (1973) stated that women tend to use the word *divine*, *cute*, *charming*, etc. than the standard adjective to give more amusing sound. Men usually use standard form of adjective as for example men will tend to use the word **lot** and according to the Maud utterance above, women will tend to use the word *load* to express feeling. Generally, women express what they feel easily to others. To create rapport and connection, women will talk more about their feelings, relationship, and people (Pearson et al., 1985). According to Pearson, Maud using *empty adjective* in order to express her feeling when looking lots of women doing anarchistic demonstration. While in her minds she thinks that women must act as a lady.

### 3.1.5 Intensifiers

Data 5

Setting: at Laundry with her husband

Sonny: Maud. What you doing?

Maud: I'm **just** going to listen.

According to the Maud utterances, she used *intensifiers* in "I'm *just* going to listen". She used the word *just* to response her husband question in order to tells that she was serious about she wanted to see her friend. She trying to convince her husband that she telling the truth. In this case, her husband actually worried if Maud join the suffragette movement and it will destroy their household. Maud also response her husband with high intonation in order to

convince her husband. Maud used *intensifier* to reassure her husband that is okay if she only attended Violet's court. Lakoff as cited in (Holmes, 2013) stated that women used intensifying device to persuade their addressee to take them seriously. According to Pearson (1985) the purpose of Maud using *intensifier* is to express her feeling to her husband. In expressing their feeling, women sometimes use boosting device in order to emphasize their utterances.

### 3.1.6 Hypercorrect Grammar

Data 6

Setting: on the Maud's bedroom

Sonny: I thought you was just gonna listen.

Maud: Violet couldn't so they asked me. I was just going to say what she would have said but then he asked me if I worked in the laundry as well and I just started talking to Mr Lloyd George.

According to the utterances above, Maud was talking to her husband, Sonny. As can be seen on the conversation above, Maud even used *hypercorrect grammar* when talking with her husband. According to Lakoff (1973) women will stick to use the original form *going* and men will use the simple form *goin* based on the situation. According to the conversation above, even when Maud with her husband in her bedroom, which is it was not on the public, Maud still used *hypercorrect grammar* to her husband. Maud used this because she needed to soften her utterances to her husband in order to respect her husband. According to Pearson (1985) women use superpolite forms that may soften their language. Moreover, they also use hypercorrect grammar and softer voice tone in order to turn their utterances become more respectful as decent ladies when they talk. Maud soften her utterances when talking with her husband showing how women are more polite than men.

### 3.1.7 'Superpolite' forms

Data 7

Setting: Hall of the house of commons

Alice: All you'd have to do is read it.

Maud: **Please** ask someone else. I'm... There'll be someone else who can do it better than I can. **Please**

According to the conversation above, Maud used *superpolite forms* with the word *please* twice in one utterance. the scene shows that Maud who ordered to giving Violet's testimony. Maud attend violet invitation in purpose only for listening her speech. But Alice wanted Maud to deliver Violet's testimony to the audience. This makes Maud nervous and unconfident. To soften her utterances, she used the word *please* as a politeness device. The repetition of this word in her utterances showing her lack of confidence when talking in the front of many people. According to Pearson (Pearson et al., 1985) Because women are inferior in society and they may also be drowned out by the men, they tend to be more polite or often too polite by softening their utterances when they speak. They use *superpolite forms* that may soften their language. The purpose Maud used *superpolite forms* was to soften her utterances.

### 3.1.8 Emphatic Stress

Data 8

Setting: at Maud's house with her husband

Maud: Wish us **luck**.

Sonny: Luck'd be you'd stop this now, go to work.

According to the conversation above, Maud used emphatic stress in her utterances. She used emphatic stress in word *Luck*. On the scene of the movie showed that Maud and Violet meet in front of Maud's house. Violet picked up Maud to join a protest that will be held by the suffragette movements. before Maud go with violet, she wanted her



husband to pray for her. unfortunately, there lots of male laundry workers who looked at Violet and Maud with obviously disapproval. Sonny actually has the same feeling with this male worker. Because of this, Sonny was disappointed because of Maud want to join the suffragette movements. Sonny actually only want Maud to do work as usual. Maud used emphatic stress in her utterances because she still thinks that she loved Sonny as her husband. This also proved when Maud try to kiss Sonny after she said her utterance. according to Rubbyanti (2017) women apply stress in their utterances in order to get attention from others of what they say. The words that they give stress are usually the words in which they want others to understand. According to this reason the function of Maud using emphatic stress was to express her feelings toward Sonny. According to Pearson (1985) women will talk more about her emotion, they will employ more emotional elements in their conversation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research, refers to the women's language features that used by Maud in *Suffragette* movie and the function of each features. After the analysis that has been done by the researcher, the researcher found that Maud only used eight out of ten features of women's language features in the movie. they were lexical hedges, tag

questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjective, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite form and emphatic stress. Two features that did not found in this research are 'precious color terms' and "avoidance of strong swear words". Maud background who only as a laundry woman has a small knowledge about colour. Even on her era when she lived, the terms of colour did not used as frequent as today. The used of avoidance of strong swear words in this movie replaced with Maud emotion. She used another sentence in order to express her emotion.

According to five women's language function that proposed by Pearson (1985) The function of women's language that Maud used in this movie that was found varied with each features. In lexical hedges/fillers features, the function of women's language that Maud used in order to start a discussion and express her feeling. The second features, tag question was used by Maud in order to get a response and expressing her uncertainty. Third features were rising intonation which has a purpose to express Maud's uncertainty and sometimes she used it to get a response. Empty adjective and intensifiers were used in order to express Maud's feeling and opinion. The other features, hypercorrect grammar and superpolite forms were used in purpose to soften Maud's utterances.

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