

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN’S LANGUAGE FEATURES USED BY MAIN CHARACTER IN MAVKA: THE FOREST SONG MOVIE (2023)

Izchy Prisilia

Universitas Bangka Belitung

Email: terangizchy123@gmail.com

Dr. Diana Anggraeni, M.Hum.

Universitas Bangka Belitung

Email: diana-anggraeni@ubb.ac.id

Andri Fernanda, M.A.

Universitas Bangka Belitung

Email: andrifermanda92@gmail.com

Abstract

Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan bahasa perempuan dalam dialog dan monolog tokoh utama, Mavka, dalam film Mavka: The Forest Song (2023) dengan menggunakan teori bahasa perempuan Lakoff dan konsep peran gender Eagly. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, mengkaji 31 data yang mencakup delapan fitur bahasa perempuan: lexical hedges (7), tag question (2), rising intonation (2), hypercorrect grammar (5), superpolite forms (1), intensifiers (9), empty adjective (2), dan emphatic stress (3). Sementara fitur-fitur tertentu, seperti avoidance of strong swear words dan precise color term tidak ditemukan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Mavka lebih sering menggunakan bahasa sopan dan menghindari kata-kata kasar. Selain itu, enam fitur termasuk lexical hedges, tag question, rising intonation, hypercorrect grammar, empty adjective, superpolite form menunjukkan posisi inferior, sering kali menunjukkan ketidakpastian, keragu-raguan, atau penghindaran konfrontasi oleh karakter utama. Sebaliknya, empat fitur termasuk intensifiers, emphatic stress, dan lexical hedges menunjukkan posisi superior pada karakter utama, mencerminkan kepercayaan diri dan ketegasan. Secara keseluruhan, bahasa Mavka mencerminkan dualitas peran gender, menggambarkan kompleksitas dinamika kekuasaan dan kesantunan dalam konteks sosial budaya.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Perempuan, Gender, Peran Gender, Inferior, superior

This study analyzes the use of female language in the dialogues and monologues of the main character, Mavka, in the film Mavka: The Forest Song (2023), utilizing Lakoff's theory of women's language and Eagly's concept of gender roles. The method employed is descriptive qualitative, examining 31 data points that encompass eight features of women's language: lexical hedges (7), tag questions (2), rising intonation (2), hypercorrect grammar (5), superpolite forms (1), intensifiers (9), empty adjectives (2), and emphatic stress (3). Certain features, such as avoidance of strong swear words and precise color terms, were not found. The analysis results indicate that Mavka more frequently uses polite

language and avoids coarse words. Additionally, six features, including lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, hypercorrect grammar, empty adjectives, and superpolite forms, reflect an inferior position, often indicating uncertainty, hesitation, or avoidance of confrontation by the main character. In contrast, four features, including intensifiers, emphatic stress, and lexical hedges, signify a superior position, reflecting confidence and assertiveness. Overall, Mavka's language reflects the duality of gender roles, illustrating the complexity of power dynamics and politeness within a socio-cultural context.

Keywords: Women's Language, Gender, Gender Roles, Inferior, Superior

INTRODUCTION

Women tend to use language that is less assertive, more polite and also use words that are rarely used by men (Lakoff, 1975, p.,58). This reflects the social position of women, which is often considered lower in society. Women are often placed at a disadvantage in language context because language is not only a means of communication, but also a reflection of the existing social structure. Women also have a tendency to prioritize the welfare of others, while men focus more on individual achievement, which often leads to competition and the formation of social hierarchy (Eagly & Wood, 2016, p., 81). In addition, men are often placed in superior positions and women as inferior, creating an unequal power structure and causes unfair treatment of women, who are often seen and treated as lower or subordinate parties in social relations.

This difference in status opens up space for dominant and discriminatory behavior, where women often become victims of injustice and oppression. The existence of differences in women's and men's speech is often seen in various conversations when using linguistic features. One of the media that is often discussed both directly implicitly is movie and movie can be categorized as a form of mass communication, which is a form of conveying messages through modern mass media with a very wide reach and aimed at the general (Hidayati, 2016, p., 9). On the other hand, *Mavka: The Forest Song* movie will be the object of this research which will analyze it from gender perspective.

1. Women's Language Features

Lakoff (1975, p., 56) portrayed women's speech as reflecting weakness, uncertainty, and lack of interest. In her journal, she clearly assumed that women's language was inferior to men's language which she described as more direct, clear, and concise. Lakoff (1975, p., 51) states that men and women have different language styles. Men's language tends to be more assertive and mature, with men often speaking openly and using precise vocabulary. On the other hand, she proposed that women's speech is characterized by certain linguistic features. The features are as follows:

a. Lexical Hedges

Lakoff (as cited in Holmes, 2013, p., 304) states that the use of lexical hedges or filler words indicates a lack of confidence in women. Hedging indicates that speakers are not completely sure about what they are saying or want to reduce the strength of their statements. It is stated that women tend to use words such as *perhaps, well, maybe, um, uh, could, would, or phrases such as I think, I'm sure, you know* more often when speaking.

b. Tag Question

According to Lakoff (1975, p., 66), tag question is used when the speaker makes a claim or statement, but is not completely sure of the truth of that statement. Tag question also be used when someone wants to ask for confirmation or denial from another person.

c. Rising Intonation

This feature is generally used when women feel hesitant when giving information or statements. As a result, they tend to give answers with a high tone. Lakoff (1975, p., 14) also states related to the use of syntactic rules, there are significant differences seen in women's intonation pattern sentences that was only found among English-speaking women, where declarative answers to a question were delivered with a high inflection that is typical of *yes* or *no* questions, and sounded very hesitant

d. Empty Adjective

'Empty' adjectives refer solely to emotional reactions towards specific information. They are adjectives that indicate the speaker's approval or admiration for something (Lakoff, 1975, p., 12). Examples of these adjectives include *lovely, cute, fantastic, charming, divine, amazing and so on*. For example, "What a *divine* idea!"

e. Precise color term

Women have special terms to name colors that are different from men. Terms like aquamarine, mauve, persimmon, peach, lavender, beige, and ecru may not be well known to men. Women may have a wider color vocabulary because colors have an important meaning in their live, especially regarding home decoration and fashion.

f. Intensifiers

Intensifiers are used by someone mostly used by women when they want emphasize or strengthen the meaning of the words that follow. For examples, the use of the word ‘*very*,’ ‘*really*,’ and ‘*so*.’

g. Hypercorrect Grammar

Lakoff states this ‘hypercorrect’ involves trying to avoid terms that are considered vulgar or rude, such as the use of the word *ain’t*. Moreover, women also tend to use more precise pronunciation, for example by pronouncing the letter ‘g’ at the end of words such as *going*, rather than choosing a more casual form such as *goin’*.

h. Superpolite Forms

According to Lakoff (2004, p., 80), women tend to speak more politely, showing awareness of what they are expressing. They often use very ‘polite’ language forms to show concern for others.

i. Avoidance of strong swear words

Women tend to use softer expressions when expressing emotions such as anger or disappointment rather than using harsh words. For example, instead of saying *shit*, *damn* they might say *oh dear*, *goodness*.

j. Emphatic Stress

Lakoff states that emphatic stress is the emphasis on certain parts of a sentence carried out by the meaning and highlight the most important parts of their statement. Some examples of expressions that shows this stress are “it was a *BRILLIANT* day,” “it is a *GREAT* performance” and also “I had a *BEST* partner ever!”

2. Gender Roles

Gender roles are something that continues to develop and plays an important role in shaping social dynamics in various societies. In this case, society tends to set certain expectations for individuals based on their gender, both in the context family, work and other social lives. There are significant differences in the social roles of men and women in society. Men and women are often given different positions in the social structure. Women’s traditional roles require them to focus on domestic tasks, such as caring for children and running the household with their activities outside the home often limited. According to Eagly (1987, p.,15), the emergence of gender stereotypes is the result of separate gender roles in society, which indirectly shape certain expectations and characteristics associated with each gender. As a result, although women may have equal potential to men, social roles

formed base on views of superiority and inferiority often limit women's opportunities and freedom to develop fully in society.

a. Inferior

The inferior position of women is often associated with communal characteristics including those who speak tentatively, not only paying attention to oneself, accepting direction from others, supports and calms others, and provides solutions to problems relational and interpersonal (Eagly and Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001, p., 783).

b. Superior

Women who succeed in high positions develop a hybrid communication style, which is combining feminine characteristics (persuasive, inclusive) with masculine characteristics (assertive, direct), which corresponds to transformative leadership which Eagly calls a more effective strategy in the modern era (Eagly, 2013, p.,43).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs descriptive qualitative methods to analyze the object of the research. Qualitative research is a research approach that aims to understand social and cultural phenomena from the perspective of the participants or subject involved. According to Moleong (2017, p., 6), qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, including their behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions, in a comprehensive manner through verbal descriptions and within natural contexts using various natural techniques

The first step in data collection was to download the Prime Video app via the App Store. After that, the film is watched in its entirety paying attention to key elements such as dialogue, monologues, important moments, and existing audio elements. During the viewing process, the female language used by the main characters is identified and classified. Scenes that are relevant to women's use of language are then searched for and screenshots taken as evidence. All these findings are noted based on Lakoff's theory of women's language and Eagly's gender role theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. . Inferior

a. Lexical Hedges

Datum 21



Image 1 Mavka was chosen to be a guardian

Mavka's use of the word "possibly" in her speech highlights her self-doubt and lack of confidence, especially as she is entrusted with becoming the new guardian. Despite being chosen by the supreme spirits, Mavka is uncertain about her ability to protect the forest, particularly because Lesh, a former guardian, was more experienced. The lexical hedge "possibly" reflects her doubt and is linked to traditional gender roles, where leadership is often associated with men. Mavka's expression of inadequacy also mirrors social expectations that women are less suited for authoritative roles, such as being a guardian. This aligns with Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt's (as cited in Duncan, 2007, p., 8) view that women face greater challenges in leadership positions. Mavka's choice of words illustrates her internalized acceptance of societal gender norms that place women in more subordinate roles.

b. Tag Question

Datum 16



Image 2 Mavka thinks that she should help Lucas

Mavka's use of the tag question "right?" in her speech reflects her desire for confirmation and approval, making her statement sound more polite and less authoritative. The tag question also fosters a collaborative atmosphere, encouraging a response from Lucas and Hush. By seeking validation, Mavka subtly reinforces her authority as the guardian while also expressing vulnerability, as she seeks others' acceptance of her beliefs. According to Eagly (1987, p., 114), social norms expect women to speak in a gentler, more approval-seeking manner, which is reflected in Mavka's speech. This use of a tag question

signals her perceived inferiority, as she appears unsure and seeks validation from others. In a patriarchal society, women are often seen as more cooperative and less assertive, which can impact their leadership roles despite their abilities.

c. Hypercorrect Grammar

Datum 12



Image 3 Mavka is not a demon

Lucas: “Wow, you are the most amazingly beautiful demon I have ever seen.”

Mavka: “**I am not** a demon. **I am** Mavka the soul of the forest.”

Lucas: “Well, I’m Lucas. The soul of...myself?”

In the scene where Mavka speaks to Lucas, her use of hypercorrect grammar, such as “*i am not*” and “*i am*,” emphasizes her desire for formality, clarity, and precision in communication. By avoiding casual contractions like “*i’m*” and “*i’m not*,” Mavka underscores her rejection of being a demon and firmly asserts her identity as the soul of the forest. This use of more formal language not only strengthens her message but also reflects her awareness of social norms, especially in the context of speaking to a man. According to Eagly & Carli (2007, p., 30), women are often expected to exhibit empathy, gentleness, and concern in their speech, which are qualities associated with femininity. In Mavka’s case, her formal language demonstrates both her self-control and her efforts to ensure she is taken seriously. The use of hypercorrect grammar helps assert her authority, maintain credibility, and ensure her role as the “soul of the forest” is respected in this formal interaction.

d. Superpolite Form

Datum 29

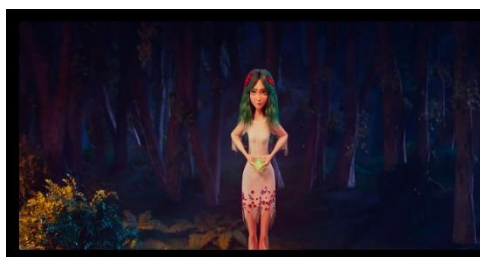


Image 4 humans are trying to destroy the forest

Mavka: Please, stop!

In this scene, Mavka uses the word "please" while trying to stop Kyllina and other humans from destroying the forest, reflecting a feature of women's language that emphasizes politeness. Despite the tension and conflict, Mavka chooses to speak gently, which helps maintain a peaceful atmosphere and prevents escalating the situation. Her use of "please" signals a request, showing her dependence on a more dominant party, illustrating her inferior social position. This aligns with women often exhibit behavior focused on empathy and interpersonal relationships. Mavka's polite and humble speech reflects traditional expectations for women to maintain social harmony, especially in unequal relationships.

e. Rising Intonation

Datum 26



Image 5 Mavka comes to Lucas' house

Lucas: "Mavka, are you here? Your hair! How are you here?"

Mavka: "Aren't you happy to see me?"

Lucas: No! I mean yes! Heart-burstingly happy, which is a thing I probably shouldn't say out loud."

Mavka uses rising intonation in her speech when asking Lucas, "Aren't you happy to see me?" to seek confirmation and emphasize her question. This rising intonation signals her doubt and emotional vulnerability, as she feels unsure about Lucas' reaction despite knowing he would be happy to see her. It also reflects her desire for validation and attention, highlighting her inferior social position in the relationship. By using rising intonation, Mavka emphasizes her need for a positive response, conveying her insecurity and seeking certainty about her place in the social dynamic.

f. Empty Adjective

Datum 18



Image 6 Music makes Mavka amazed by the human world

Lucas: "You know, humans are not actually terrible as you've been taught. We have a lot of nice things."
Mavka: "Like music. It's so **lovely**."

Mavka's use of the word "lovely" in her speech is an example of an empty adjective, which emphasizes her emotional response without providing specific details. This word reflects her admiration for the music in a general, non-detailed way. According to Eagly and Johannessen-Schmidt (2001, p., 783)., women are often socialized to use more emotional and tentative language, which is evident in Mavka's phrase "like music, it's so lovely." The use of "like" shows a flexible, subjective expression, avoiding firm claims, and reflects the expectation for women to express feelings and maintain harmony in communication. This language style highlights Mavka's inferior position, as she uses emotional and tentative speech to soften her expression and avoid confrontation, reinforcing her more submissive role in the interaction.

2. Superior

a. Lexical Hedges

Datum 28



Image 7 Mavka defended Lucas that Lucas would never Do anything bad to her

Lesh: "I love how no matter where you look, you see goodness, Mavka. But you have made the same mistake I made once in trusting a human."
Mavka: "Lucas would never do that. **I'm sure** he can explain everything."

Mavka's use the phrase "I'm sure" in her speech reflects both uncertainty and confidence. While it appears to express certainty, it also serves as a lexical hedge, which softens her statement and allows room for other interpretations. This aligns with the tendency

of women's speech to use hedges for politeness and to avoid confrontation. According to Eagly (2013, p., 43), women's communication often blends feminine and masculine elements. The phrase *"I'm sure"* combines both: it shows feminine qualities of interpersonal connection and cooperation by leaving space for other perspectives, while also asserting confidence, which is more characteristic of masculine communication. Mavka's use of this expression reflects her hybrid leadership style, balancing self-assurance with sensitivity, and maintaining social harmony while subtly asserting her perspective, which showcases her superior position in a non-aggressive manner.

b. Intensifiers

Datum 14



Image 8 Mavka was amazed by Lucas' personality

Lucas: "Had a feeling you like that."

*Mavka: "You're **very** different from the evil humans in all the forest legend."*

In this scene, Mavka uses the intensifier "very" to emphasize Lucas' uniqueness and separate him from the negative image of humans in myth and legend. The use of "very" strengthens her statement, conveying confidence and authority while making her words more convincing. This rhetorical strategy helps challenge existing perceptions of Lucas and reduces doubt or prejudice. Mavka's use of the intensifier also reflects her superior position in the conversation, demonstrating that women can hold authoritative roles despite traditional gender stereotypes. Her speech emphasizes both the difference between Lucas and "evil humans" and her own authority, breaking societal expectations about gender and leadership.

c. Emphatic Stress

Datum 3



Image 18 Mavka felt that day was the best day of the year

*Mavka: "Swampy! It's the **best** part of the **best** day of the year. Time to wake up the forest."*

In this scene, Mavka emphasizes the word "best" twice to highlight the significance and excitement of the day, expressing her happiness and the specialness of the moment. This repetition conveys her deep emotional connection to the event, aligning with Lakoff's idea that women's language is often more expressive and emotional. Mavka's use of "best" and the phrase "time to wake up the forest" shows her authority and leadership in a motivating, non-aggressive way. She doesn't need to explain why the day is special, her recognized position allows her words to inspire and direct others. This reflects her superior role, where she leads by inspiration rather than force, demonstrating effective leadership through enthusiasm and confidence.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This research analyzes the features of the women's language and used by the main character and also her position in a *Mavka: The Forest Song* movie and highlighting gender roles that are reflected in the dialogue of the main characters. The findings obtained from the research described in the previous chapter are summarized in this chapter. Data analysis from the movie using Lakoff's theory and Eagly's concept regarding to the women's language features and the position that appear in the main character's speech, namely Mavka. From 31 data in total, eight women's language features were found, which is *lexical hedges* (7), *tag question* (2), *rising intonation* (2), *hypercorrect grammar* (5), *super polite forms* (1), *intensifier* (9), *empty adjective* (2), and *emphatic stress* (3). Among these features, two features that do not appear in the analysis are *avoidance of strong swear words* and *precise color terms*. It shows that the main characters in this film tend to use more polite language and avoid rude expressions and are not too detailed in terms of color.

The results show that there are six features of women's language that describe an inferior position, including *lexical hedges*, *tag questions*, *hypercorrect grammar*, *rising intonation*, *super polite forms*, and *empty adjectives*. These features depict an inferior position because these features are often used to indicate uncertainty, indecisiveness, or avoidance of confrontation. On the other hand, there are four features that reflect the superior position of the main character, which are *intensifier*, *emphatic stress*, and *lexical hedges*. The use of these features gives the impression that the main character not only speaks politely, but also in a way that gives weight to her opinions, reflecting a superior position.

Overall, the results of this research indicate that the language used by the main characters in the film *Mavka* reflects the duality of gender roles, where one feature, namely lexical hedges, can reflect both inferior and superior positions depending on the context and communication goals. This illustrates the complexity in women's use of language which reflects the dynamics of power and politeness in a broader social and cultural context.

The most dominant features are the intensifiers, which appear in a total 9 datums. The dominant use of intensifiers symbolizes the superior position of the main character. *Mavka* uses strengthening sentences as a way to express her confidence and it is a strategy to emphasize the intensity of the feelings, actions, or circumstances conveyed. This not only emphasizes the message conveyed, but also shapes her image as a figure, which is guardian, who has strong control over the existing situation. On the other hand, the finding of the use of lexical hedges reflects the inferior position of the main character, which indicates a tendency to soften or reduce the assertiveness in the utterance. Based on eight features of women's language found in *Mavka's* speech, six of them indicate an inferior position, while four features describe a superior position in the main character. In fact, although the use of intensifiers is the most dominant feature that is often associated with a superior position, the overall analysis shows that *Mavka's* inferior position is more dominant in verbal interactions.

Suggestion

This study analyzes women's language in *Mavka: The Forest Song* (2023) but suggests areas for further exploration. Future research should include analysis of other characters, not just the main character, to capture a broader range of women's language use and avoid a narrow depiction. Additionally, the study recommends examining the impact of formal and informal contexts on women's language, as these settings influence language structure, expression, and power dynamics. Finally, expanding research to include different genres

(e.g., drama, comedy, fantasy) and investigating the relationship between women's language and gender roles in various contexts would provide valuable insights into how language reflects or challenges traditional gender norms in m

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Izchy Prisilia is an English Literature student at the University of Bangka Belitung. She was born in Bangka Belitung on March 15th, 2003. Her friends usually call her Izchy or Ichy. She spend most of her time to singing, travelling, and cooking.

REFERENCES

- Duncan, Phyllis Ann. (2007). Women in Positions of Leadership and Gender-Specific Emotional Intelligence Attributes. UMI Microform 3252973. ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
- Eagly, A. H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. (2001). The leadership styles of women and men. *Journal of social issues*, 57(4), 781-797.
- Eagly, A. H. (1987). Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Eagly, A. H. (2013). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Psychology Press.
- Eagly, A. H. (2007). Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders.
- Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2016). Social role theory of sex differences. *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies*, 1-3.
- Hidayati, N. N. (2016). Bahasa dan Gender: Kajian Karakteristik Kebahasaan Laki-Laki dan Perempuan dalam Film Anak. *Al Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 6(1), 9-32.
- Holmes, J. (2013). An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (4th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315833057>
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. Harper & Row.
- Lakoff, R.T. and Bucholtz, M. (2004a) *Language and woman's place*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moleong, Lexy J. (2017). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya