

Women's Language Features Used by the Main Character Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* Movie

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Abstrak

Makalah penelitian ini berjudul "Fitur Bahasa Wanita yang Digunakan oleh Tokoh Utama Elle Woods dalam Film *Legally Blonde*". Makalah penelitian ini menganalisis ciri-ciri bahasa perempuan berdasarkan teori Coates yang digunakan oleh tokoh utama perempuan, Elle Woods dalam film *Legally Blonde*. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji setiap ciri linguistik perempuan yang terdapat dalam film untuk menjelaskan kepada pembaca apa yang tersirat dan bagaimana cara kerjanya. Metode deskriptif kualitatif yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini memberikan penjelasan lengkap mengenai objek yang diteliti. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, dari 7 ciri bahasa perempuan menurut Coates (2013), peneliti menemukan 6 ciri yang diucapkan oleh tokoh utama perempuan dalam film *Legally Blonde*. Yaitu pertanyaan (10), pujian (5), makian dan bahasa tabu (7), minimal respon (6), lindung nilai (1), dan tag question (3).

Kata kunci: *Berambut pirang secara hukum, Tokoh Utama, Film, Sociolinguistik, Fitur Bahasa Wanita*

Abstract

This research paper is entitled "Women's Language Features Used by the Main Character Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* Movie". This research paper analyses the women's language features based on Coates' theory that are used by the female main character, Elle Woods in the *Legally Blonde* movie. The purpose of this research is to examine each of the women's linguistic features that can be found in the film to explain to the reader what they imply and how they operate. The descriptive qualitative method used in this study provides a full explanation of the object under study. The result shows that, from the 7 women's language features according to Coates (2013), the researcher found 6 features uttered by the female main character in the *Legally Blonde* movie. They are questions (10), compliments (5), swearing and taboo languages (7), minimal responses (6), hedges (1), and tag questions (3).

Keywords: *Legally Blonde, Main Character, Movie, Sociolinguistics, Women's Language Features*

INTRODUCTION

As a human being, communication takes a huge part in our lives. It can be said to be one of the most crucial elements required for human evolution. People convey their thoughts and feelings through communication, which also enables us to comprehend the sentiments and thoughts of others. To communicate with people, we need to know the language they are using, so that the message between the two people that they want to convey can be well delivered. An individual can express oneself as a member of a social group and a contributor

to its culture using a language, which is a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols. Language is used for communication, identity expression, play, creative expression, and emotional release, among other things. We must comprehend both the language and the culture of the other person to fully comprehend what they are saying, particularly today when it is so easy for people to communicate with others who speak different languages.

Geography, age, social standing, gender, and other factors can affect how people communicate or utilize languages. Gender is a factor that can lead to language differences. There are several potential connections between language and society. It depends on their regional aspect, social, ethnic social, and gender (Wardhaugh, 1992). One of the factors that can lead to language variance is gender. Language characteristics refer to the variances in language brought on by social factors like gender. Language aspects include sentence structure, punctuation, nouns, vocabulary, phrases, and other elements that give communication its meaning (Yule, 2005). When a person uses a certain linguistic feature to communicate with another person, they are referring to that feature of that language. (Coates, 2013). Language features are elements or properties of language, that include sentence structure, vocabulary, diction, grammar, intonation, punctuation, phrase, pronunciation, and how men and women utilize a certain language in a communication.

In communicating, men and women are different in using language. It can be seen from the word choice that men and women use in communicating. In this research paper, the researcher analyses the women's language features used by the main character Elle Woods in the movie entitled *Legally Blonde*. *Legally Blonde* is a 2000s rom-com movie directed by *Robert Luketic* and produced by Marc Platt and Ric Kidney. This movie tells a story that follows Elle Woods (Witherspoon), a sorority girl who tries to get her ex-boyfriend back Warner Huntington III (Davis) by getting a Juris Doctor degree at Harvard Law School, she succeeded as a successful lawyer while overcoming prejudice against blondes. The researcher chose this movie to be analyzed, and the main character Elle Woods as the object of this analysis, is because the researcher feels that the main character of this movie has such a strong feminine side, which includes a lot of women's language usage in the movie. The principal character Elle Woods uses several female language traits, which the researcher also wished to examine, based on the types of women's language features according to Coates (2013). According to her, there are 7 women's language features. They are questions, commands and directives, compliments, swearing and taboo languages, minimal responses, hedges, and tag questions.

In real life, women's and men's language use are truly different. As we can see in society, women's language is usually more polite, and more expressive, using more gestures and words signifying feelings, and emotional and psychological state. Meanwhile, men tend to be more direct. They usually used more simple words. Labotka (2009) stated that specific language traits are taught to women regularly, and these traits are connected to powerlessness. Rather than expressing their gender identity, women's language reveals their social status as men and women. From Labotka's statement, the researcher feels it is relevant to be discussed, because the researcher found several types of women's language features in the *Legally Blonde* movie, and wanted to prove that these language features are associated with a lack of power or not.

METHOD

The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data in this study. The author in this instance gathered, examined, and analyzed the data before describing it. This method is intended to describe everything related to the topic of the research. In this analysis, the data source is taken from the dialogue spoken by the main character Elle Woods in the *Legally Blonde* movie, and taken from the movie script. To gather the data, the researcher followed various procedures. First, the researcher downloaded the movie and the transcription of the *Legally Blonde* movie. Second, the

researcher watched the movie while reading the English subtitle conscientiously, and read from the transcription of the movie. The researcher then makes a note of the female linguistic characteristics discovered in the *Legally Blonde* movie, to be analyzed later. In presenting the data, the researcher puts the data found sequentially in a dialog form, then arranges them based on each type of the women's language feature.

Before choosing and considering what topic they wanted to analyze, the researcher reviewed 5 studies. The first one is a thesis by Lisda (2016) which is entitled *Women Language Used by The Main Characters of Mockingjay Movie*. The aim is to investigate how women's language is used by the main characters of *Mockingjay* movie related to the types of women's language, and how the characteristics of women's language in the movie. The descriptive qualitative method is used by her in this thesis because the data is analyzed descriptively based on Robin Lakoff theory. As a result, the analysis of the data revealed that not all women's speech traits were present, according to the researcher. The *Mockingjay* movie's key protagonists made use of seven characteristics of women's speech. The first character is Katniss Everdeen (F) who used six types of women's speech features: lexical hedge, intensifiers, rising intonation, precise color terms, super polite form, and tag question. However, Katniss' utterances do not contain any of the three sorts of women's speech characteristics, they are hypercorrect grammar, avoiding using strong expletives and empty adjectives. The other character, Peeta Melark (M) only used six types, they are emphatic stress, lexical hedge, intensifiers, rising intonation, super polite form, and tag question. Kinds that are not available are precise color discrimination, hypercorrect grammar, empty adjectives, and avoiding strong expletives. The similarity between both of our studies is that we are discussing the women's language used by the movie's lead character's selection. Both are mostly debating how to understand women's language and analyzing the many forms of women's language used in the film. However, we are both using a different subject.

The second thesis is by Rif'atul (2019) is entitled *The Use of Language Features Between Men and Women on YouTube Vlogs*, whose aims are to investigate kinds of language features and to explain the motivations behind why men and women use different terminology in their *YouTube* vlogs. The descriptive approach was employed by the researcher. The outcome demonstrates the disparity in the usage of each linguistic characteristic between men and women on *YouTube* vlogs. In Men's *YouTube* Vlog, the total of language features used is 219 times. There were 144 hedges, 45 compliments, 6 questions, 14 commands and directives, 2 swear words, and no minimal response or tag questions used during that period. The total number of linguistic elements employed on women's *YouTube* vlogs is 211. That amounts to 154 hedges, 35 praises, 19 commands and directives, 10 inquiries, 1 swear word, and no usage of the minimal response or tag inquiry. The similarity between our studies is that we are both discussing language and gender. However, his study focuses more on the language uttered by both men and women, meanwhile, my study is focusing more on the women's language.

The third one is entitled *Women's Language Features Used by the Female Characters in Wonder Woman Movie* by Liya (2019). Her paper aims to know the impact on the interlocutors in the movie that uses female characters and interlocutors "Wonder Woman." A qualitative approach is used by Anjani in this journal article. As a result, Eight of the ten types of women's language elements proposed by Lakoff (1975) and Janet Holmes (2013) are used by female characters. Initial lexical hedges, tag questions, increasing intonation, bare adjectives, priceless words and colors, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, extremely polite form, avoidance of powerful swear words, and emphatic stress are among them. Each of them contains words, phrases, or fillers that serve as type indicators. The similarity between our studies is that we are discussing how women understand language and analyzing the many forms of female language used in the film. However, we are using different movies for the subject of the study.

The next one is entitled *The Use of Language Features of Male and Female Authors in Two Short Stories "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "A Rose for Emily"* by Hapsari (2014). The

purpose of her study is to find out the type of language features used by the male and female authors in the short stories, as well as to find out the differences between male and female authors in language features in the short stories. In her study, she used the descriptive qualitative method to help her analyze the data. In the results, the researcher found two language features from four men language features used by male authors in *A Rose Emily's* short story, namely Interruptions and Commands. From ten women's language features used by female authors in *The Yellow Wallpaper* short story, the researcher found three language features, namely; lexical hedges, intensifiers, and empty adjectives. The similarity between our studies is that we are both examining gender and language features. Meanwhile, the difference is that her study focuses on both male and female language features, and my study focuses more on the women's language features.

The last study is entitled *Women's and Men's Language Features Showed by Natalie and Blake's Utterances in the Movie "Isn't It Romantic" (2019): A Sociolinguistic Study* by Anggraeni (2023). Her study aims to classify and describe women's and men's language features used by the two characters, as well as to describe the purposes of using those features. Her study used identity referential and articulatory phonetics methods to analyze the data. In results, showed nine out of ten women's language features, namely; lexical hedges, intensifier, tag questions, empty adjectives, hypercorrect grammar, super-polite form, rising intonation, avoidance of strong swearing words, and emphatic stress. As for the men's language features, the researcher found five features, namely; minimal responses, questions, compliments, swearing and taboo language, and commands and directives. The main purpose of using those features is to express the speaker's emotions. The similarity between our studies is that we are both examining the types of language features found in a movie chosen. However, her study focuses on both men's and women's language features and their purposes. Meanwhile, my study is focusing more on the women's language features.

This study uses Coates (2013) theory to analyze the data found. She is a Professor of English Language and Linguistics at Roehampton University. She is the person behind the "Coates Theory." In this study, Coates states that several phenomena show how language handles women. One of them is that women are instilled with a positive linguistic attitude to speak like women in general from an early age, such as speaking in a soft tone or refraining from using aggressive words. Besides the idea of the theory, Coates also mentions several features of women's language.

Women's Language Features

She claims in her study, women, men, and language, that society uses women's linguistic views to influence how general language is taught and how women are treated. She claims that gender and conversational strategies examine how men and women typically use various methods during conversational contact. Seven characteristics are stated in this study and utilized to assess the linguistic characteristics of women., such as minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, and compliments.

1) Minimal Response

Coates states minimal response sometimes refers to backchannel such as *yeah*, *ummh*, and *yeah*. These words are used to express support for the speaker who is now speaking. According to a variety of studies on minimal responses, women are more prone than males to employ minimal responses. The brief, encouraging remarks made by listeners during the conversation interaction are referred to as minimal responses (also known as back-channel communication, positive feedback, and assent words).

2) Hedges

Women's speech is frequently described as "tentative," which supports the claim that they speak with more hedges than men do. Hedges are words and phrases that serve to lessen the impact of the speaker's remarks, such as sort of, maybe, I mean, and many others. Coates (2013: 40) suggests that utilizing hedges may serve a purpose for

women. Negotiating delicate subjects, self-disclosure, the collaborative floor, and the necessity of open dialogue are those things.

3) Tag Questions

Women are more likely than males to employ tag questions, albeit there are no significant disparities. There *aren't it* and *isn't it* are two examples of tag questions. A tag question is a question that is appended to a declarative phrase, typically at the conclusion, to engage the audience, ensure that something has been comprehended, or check that an action has taken place, according to N. Ricard (2019).

4) Questions

Numerous studies have found that women question things more than males do. Another study on the linguistic habits of those who purchased tickets at Amsterdam's central station was carried out by Brouwer et al. (1979: 47). Their research demonstrates that most women question things more than males do.

5) Commands and Directives

Her research indicates that the term "directive" relates to a speech act in which people attempt to request something from others.

6) Swearing and Taboo Language

Many studies have indicated that men use taboo words and phrases more frequently than women. Lakoff (1973: 50) says that men are more likely to use stronger expletives (*sh*t*) than women (*Goodness, oh my God*).

7) Compliments

Coates (2013: 98) According to studies conducted in the United States, Great Britain, and New Zealand, women are more likely than males to receive and give compliments. Holmes (1995: 127) found that men and women used compliments about equally often. Women frequently utilize patterns like "*such wonderful earrings!*" while men typically use a simple pattern like "*Great shoes!*"

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part shows the data collected. The data was analyzed and collected from the transcript and the movie *Legally Blonde* movie. Elle Woods, the protagonist, uses the female linguistic characteristics that were discovered. The theory chosen to analyze the 7 women's language features is proposed by Coates (2013). After the process of data collection, the researcher found 6 women's language features that were used by Elle Woods in the movie. They are questions (10), compliments (5), swearing and taboo languages (7), minimal responses (6), hedges (1), and tag questions (3).

a. Question

Data 1

Elle : **"Is this a low-viscosity rayon?"**
Saleswoman : "Uh, yes -- of course."
Elle : **"With half-loop top-stitching on the hem?"**
Saleswoman : "Absolutely. It's one of a kind."

The conversation in data (1), the bold lines were uttered by Elle Woods, when she was in a boutique with her friends. She wanted to buy a dress for a date, and she asked a couple of questions to the saleswoman. The lines that were uttered by Elle are considered as *Questions* in a women's language feature because she asks several questions in one conversation to the interlocutors.

Data 2

Elle : "Do they just -- **put you on the spot like that? Like, all the time?**"
Emmett : "The professors? Yeah, they tend- to do that. *Socratic* method."
Elle : "And if you don't know the answer, **they just kick you out?**"
Emmett : "You have Strom well."
Elle : **"Did she do that to you, too?"**
Emmett : "No, but she made me cry once."

The conversation in data (2), the bold lines were uttered by Elle Woods, when she was at the Campus. She is complaining about her lecturer who just kicked her out of the class. Then her new friend, Emmet gives his experiences with the lecturers to Elle. The lines that were uttered by Elle are considered as *Questions* in a women's language feature because she asks several questions in one conversation to the interlocutors.

Data 3

Elle : **"How can it be the right thing if we're not together?"**

Warner : "I have to think about my future. And what people expect from me."

Elle : **"So you're breaking up with me because you're afraid your family won't like me? Everybody likes me!"**

Warner : "East Coast people are different."

Elle : "Just because I'm not a Vanderbilt, **all of a sudden I'm white trash?** I grew up in Bel Air, Warner! Across the street from Aaron Spelling!"

The conversation in data (3), the bold lines were uttered by Elle Woods, when she was fighting with her boyfriend. Elle's boyfriend wanted them to break up because his family wanted him to focus on his studies. The lines that were uttered by Elle are considered as *Questions* in a women's language feature because she asks several questions in one conversation to the interlocutors.

b. Compliment

Data 4

Elle : **"You look very nice** today, Vivian."

Vivian : "Thank you."

Elle : "You're welcome."

The conversation in data (4), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she compliments her friend's look, Vivian. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered a *Compliment* in a women's language feature because she compliments expressively to the interlocutors. She is using the word *very nice*, to compliment the interlocutors.

Data 5

Elle : **"She could make you drop three pounds in one class. She's completely gifted!"**

Professor Callahan : "Well, in all likelihood, she's completely guilty as well. She was seen standing over her husband's dead body."

The conversation in data (5), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she compliments her old friend, Brooke. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered a *Compliment* in a women's language feature. She is using the compliment word *completely gifted* to express it.

Data 6

Elle : "Are you okay? You look so sad...and so orange."

Brooke : "I'm glad it's you and not Callahan."

Elle : "He means well. He's **really brilliant** and all."

The conversation in data (6), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she compliments her professor to her friend, Brooke, when she underestimates him. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered a *Compliment* in a women's language feature. She is using the compliment word *really brilliant* to express it.

c. Swearing and Taboo Languages

Data 7

Warner : "What're you talking about? You're not here to see me?"

Elle : "No, **silly**. I go here."

Warner : "You go where?"

Elle : "Harvard. Law school."

The conversation in data (7), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she was on her first day at Harvard University, and "accidentally" met her boyfriend there. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered as *Swearing and Taboo Language* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *silly*, to express a mockery. The word *silly* here can be explicated as *stupid*, *fool*, or *dumb*.

Data 8

Elle : "You're kind of being a **butt-head** right now."

Emmett : "I can't believe you called me a butt-head. No one's called me a butt-head since ninth grade."

Elle : "Maybe not to your face..."

The conversation in data (8), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she was having a small debate about her friend's stubbornness. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered as *Swearing and Taboo Language* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *butt-head*, to express her annoyance toward Emmet. The word *butt-head* here means to engage in conflict or be in strong disagreement. It can be explicated as *arguing*, *quarreling*, or *wrangling*.

Data 9

Chutney : "I didn't mean to shoot him –
(Pointing to Brooke)

I thought it was you walking to the door!"

Elle : "**Oh, my God!**"

The conversation in data (9), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when Chutney Windham turned out to be the murderer of her father. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered as *Swearing and Taboo Language* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *Oh, my God!* to express her shock. The word *oh, my God!* here can be explicated as *wow*, *bloody hell*, or *goodness*.

d. Minimal Responses

Data 10

Warner : "My family expects a lot from me"

Elle : "**Right**"

The conversation in data (10), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she was discussing her boyfriend's future. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered as *Minimal Responses* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *right*, to express her reaction toward her boyfriend's statement. This expression can be defined as a supportive comment.

Data 11

Margot : "Honey, stop! You have to leave this room-- it's been a week."

Elle : "**So?**"

The conversation in data (11), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she was depressed since she broke up with her boyfriend, and she did not want to leave her room for a week. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered as *Minimal Responses* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *so?* to express her cold response to her friend since she is in a horrible mood.

Data 12

Brooke : "You took my class in LA."

Elle : "**Uh-huh**"

Brooke : "You had the best high kick I've ever seen. Are you one of my lawyers?"

Elle : "Sort of"

The conversation in data (12), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she was doing her internship program as a lawyer and met her old friend, Brooke. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered as *Minimal Responses* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *uh-huh*, to express her short agreement toward Brooke's question.

e. Hedges

Data 13

Enid : "Maybe there's a sorority you could join instead."

Elle : "**You know**, if you'd come to a Rush party. I would've at least been nice to you."

The conversation in data (13), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she refused her friend's offer to do a group study. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered a *Hedge* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *you know*, to mitigate word or sound used to lessen the impact of an utterance, so that her words do not seem that rude. The word *you know* here can be explicated as *well* or *you see*.

f. Tag Questions

Data 14

Warner : "I just don't want to see you get your hopes up. You know how you get."

Elle : "I'll never be good enough for you, **am I?**"

The conversation in data (14), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she realized that her boyfriend will not like her even though she is trying her best. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered a *Tag Question* in a women's language feature. She is using the word, *am I?* to express uncertainty. She is also using that expression in other matters to soften the critical comment.

Data 15

Professor Callahan : "You should. Do you have a resume?"

Elle : "I do."

Professor Callahan : "It's pink."

Elle : "And it's scented. Gives it that extra little something, **doesn't it?**"

The conversation in data (15), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when her professor asked her for a resume and Elle gave him a pink and scented resume. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered a *Tag Question* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *doesn't it*, to expect her professor to agree with her statement.

Data 16

Elle : "You, however, had time to hide the gun, **didn't you**, Chutney? After you shot your father?"

Chutney : "I didn't mean to shoot him -- I thought it was you walking to the door!"

The conversation in data (16), the bold line was uttered by Elle Woods, when she is interrogating the suspect of a murder case. The line that was uttered by Elle is considered a *Tag Question* in a women's language feature. She is using the word *didn't you*, to ask for the suspect's confirmation.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the understanding of women's language features, including its definition, function, and usage that is uttered by the female main character, Elle Woods in the *Legally Blonde* movie. The two issues that are examined in this study are the kinds of women's language features utilized by Elle Woods, the major character in the film *Legally Blonde*, and how those elements are used in the narrative. This study examines the language characteristics of women using Coates' theory (2013) as a foundation. She claims that there are seven linguistic traits unique to women, which are questions, compliments, commands and directives, swearing and taboo languages, minimal responses, hedges, and tag questions. In total, the researcher found 32 women's language features uttered by the main character Elle Woods in the *Legally Blonde* movie, which are, questions (10), compliments (5), swearing and taboo languages (7), minimal responses (6), hedges (1), and tag questions (3). From the 7 features mentioned by Coates (2013), there is one women's language feature that the researcher did not find in the movie, which is the command and

directives. Meanwhile, the most uttered women's language found used by Elle Woods is questions (10), swearing and taboo languages (7), and minimal responses (6).

Regarding how this movie uses profanity directed at women, the feature questions used by Elle when she is asking multiple questions to her interlocutors in one conversation. Compliment is mostly used by her to express admiration. Swearing and taboo language is used in the movie by Elle, to express her annoyance to her friends. Minimal responses were used to give a short response to her interlocutors. Hedges are used to mitigate words or sounds used to lessen the impact of an utterance. The last one is tag questions, used to give an expression, in other matters. It also softens the critical comment and indication of an agreement.

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