

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Lakoff (1975) explores language and gender differences in speech, highlights differences in lexical preference, word arrangement, and conveys meaning between males and females. It is supported by Coates (2013) who states that the way men and women talk is different. Language and gender are interesting topics, as shown in the studies of Setyani (2019), Paramita (2019), Nisa (2022), Haibah (2022), and Anggraeni (2023), which focus on language features proposed by Lakoff (1975) in literary works. These studies reveal not only the use of language features by female characters but also by male characters.

Language features are proposed by Lakoff (1975) to illustrate how women speak based on societal expectations. Lakoff (1975) argues that there are differences in the speech styles of women and men. According to her, language features associated with women are characterized by powerlessness, uncertainty, and triviality. This view is supported by Labotka (2009), who states that women are expected to use specific language features that reflect a lack of power.

However, previous studies by Paramita (2019), Nisa (2022), and Anggraeni (2023) also find that such tendencies appear in men's speech as well. This raises the question of whether these features are exclusively tied to women's speech or not. Furthermore, the data in this study will be analyzed to determine

whether the use of language features proposed by Lakoff (1975) truly reflects weakness and subordination, or whether other social factors influence their use.

This study is relevant to the movie “*On the Basis of Sex*” (2018), which is set in the 1970s, a period when gender stereotypes were strongly evolved in society. The film highlights how women were often considered and treated as inferior to men, leading to various forms of social discrimination. However, there remains a lack of comprehensive research specifically addressing gendered language features and the factors shaping their use in “*On the Basis of Sex*” (2018).

Therefore, this research aims to examine whether Lakoff’s theories of language features are still applicable in the movie and to identify the factors that influence the use of gendered language features. Understanding how context and situational factors influence language use can provide deeper insights into the connection between gender, language, and social interactions in movie narratives.

1.2. Research Questions

Regarding the topic of this study, the author intends to examine the movie by applying several questions.

- 1) What are the types of language features used by Ruth and Martin in Mimi Leder’s “*On the Basis of Sex*” (2018)?
- 2) What factors influence the choice of language features used by Ruth and Martin in Mimi Leder’s “*On the Basis of Sex*” (2018)?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This research topic is language features used in a movie. This study aims to analyze the language features used by the male and female main characters in Leder's movie "*On the Basis of Sex*" (2018) and identify the aspects affecting the use of language features. By studying the data, the author intends to show a deeper understanding of gendered language features and discover the social context influencing language use. Furthermore, the author aims to reveal whether language features proposed by Lakoff (1975) are limited to women's speech or can also be used by men, and to examine whether these features are associated with weakness and subordination.

1.4. Previous Studies

The author discovers that several studies on "*On the Basis of Sex*" and gender language elements have been achieved. These previous studies are grouped into two groups of research concerning gender language features and studies about "*On the Basis of Sex*".

Setyani (2019) analyzed "*The Fault in Our Stars*" using Lakoff, Coates, and Tannen's theories, focusing on the reasons behind male and female characters' use of gendered language. Paramita (2019) examined "*Candy Jar*" with Lakoff's theory and found that the male character frequently used the language features based on Lakoff's (1975) theory. Similarly, Nisa (2022) studied "*Legally Blonde*" using Lakoff and Coates' theories and identified nine of Lakoff's language features and five of Coates' language features. However, the

previous studies by Setyani (2019), Paramita (2019), and Nisa (2022) did not identify the social factors influencing the language features used by the characters.

Haibah (2022) examined the linguistic characteristics of language features in the film "*Paradise Hills*" using Lakoff (1975) and Pearson's (1985) theories. The research found that lexical hedges were the most commonly used element in female characters, used to express doubt, initiate discussions, and convey perspectives. These characteristics were influenced by psychological reasons and social factors, particularly the patriarchal system. However, the study did not compare findings with different genders or gendered language variances.

Anggraeni (2023) discussed the film "*Isn't It Romantic*" using Lakoff and Coates' theories, and Holmes' theory of speech function. The study provided fascinating findings since the author examined both genders using two gendered language traits, indicating that language was not necessarily driven by gender. Furthermore, the author investigated language's functions by evaluating the utterance's meaning. However, the author did not explain how social context and factors can influence the language used by the characters.

The next five studies focus on research that examined the movie "*On the Basis of Sex*" (2018). Ferrara (2020) analyzed "*On the Basis of Sex*" using a literary approach, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the film, utilizing Judith Lorber's idea of inequality and John S. Mill's liberal feminist theory. She argued that the gender gap led to discrimination against women, which in turn stimulated the feminist movement. The main character, Ruth, personified liberal feminism, advocating for equal liberty, women's rights, and gender justice. The

study aimed to improve understanding of how gender stereotypes were challenged in the pursuit of gender rights and equality, despite prejudices.

Azizah (2021) used John Stuart Mill's liberal feminist theory to analyze "*On the Basis of Sex*" and explore its various forms of gender inequality. The author distinguished between gender discrimination and women's limited participation in society. The study revealed that gender inequality was rooted in gender-based social and legal systems, impacting both men and women. This research broadened our understanding of gender inequality which affected both genders, and reflected past and present behaviors in society. The study contributed to the understanding of gender inequality for both genders.

Salsabila (2021) examined the film "*On the Basis of Sex*" through Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis, also referred to as feminist stylistics. The author used language theory to highlight societal injustices against women, highlighting sexism in terms of words, phrases, and discourse. This study revealed a sexist culture in the legal profession, contributing to unfair treatment and preserving America's patriarchal structure. The study highlighted how language exposed societal systems and biases, providing new insights. However, it focused on how language revealed the existence of a sexist society, rather than how the environment shaped its use.

Karo-Karo (2021) explored the film "*On the Basis of Sex*" using Brown and Levinson's politeness principle and found the film's use of positive politeness was influenced by its setting, which included law school, the courtroom, and the

national government. Ruth's positive politeness included asking questions, requesting, disproving, suggesting, rejecting, and criticizing.

Indriyanti (2022) analyzed "*On the Basis of Sex*" using characterization theories and liberal feminist theory. She examined Ruth as a representation of liberal feminism. Ruth was described as clever, critical, determined, hardworking, confident, attentive, and independent. Despite her gender, she gained opportunities in various fields, becoming the leader of gender rights lawyers. This study highlighted Ruth's freedom to pursue her desires without societal control and her rights in the male-dominated field of law.

There is a gap in those previous research since they do not address how social situations and environments impact an individual's linguistic characteristics. Only several works on "*On the Basis of Sex*" (2018) use a linguistic method, especially positive politeness and feminist stylistics. Based on the literature review explained, the movie "*On the Basis of Sex*" (2018) has not been examined through gendered language characteristics to identify the use of language features by the characters, and to explore the components that influence this.

1.5. Scope of the Study

To avoid research that lacks focus and becomes excessively broad, the researcher applies Lakoff's (1975) language features theory, and Holmes' (2013) social factors. These ideas are applied through an analysis and observation of Mimi Leder's "*On the Basis of Sex*" (2018), particularly by distinguishing the utterances of the main female character, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and her husband,

Martin Ginsburg. This study is conducted to investigate the use of gendered language and the underlying causes for its use.

1.6. Writing Organization

This research was divided into four chapters as the structure shown below.

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the study's background, research questions, objectives, previous research, scope, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores language features theory by Lakoff (1975), and social factors by Holmes (2012). Chapter II further describes the type of this study, the data, and the research methodologies.

CHAPTER III : FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides the study's results and examines the data from both linguistic features for men and women, as well as how social circumstances affect Ruth and Martin Ginsburg's usage of them.

CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the study by presenting the significant results found in the study.