

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In films and other media, social class differences are often represented through the way characters are evaluated and positioned in relation to one another. These representations frequently rely on stereotypes that associate lower-class individuals with negative characteristics, while upper-class individuals are portrayed as more competent, respectable, or socially desirable (Hall, 1997; Durante & Fiske, 2017). Such representations contribute to the construction of social meanings about class and influence how audiences perceive social groups. One film that illustrates this phenomenon is *Pretty Woman* (1990). Through the character of Vivian Ward, a sex worker who suddenly enters a high-class environment after masquerading as the partner of a wealthy businessman.

When viewed from another perspective, this romantic film illustrates how someone from a lower-class background who enters an upper-class environment faces discrimination. This representation serves as a clear example of how cinematic narratives can mirror and critique the rigid social hierarchies found in the real world. In this context, Vivian Ward's representation as a lower-class woman and sex worker is frequently associated with social evaluations and stereotypes within upper-class environments. The way a character is evaluated within a story contributes to how social stereotypes and class-based assumptions are constructed, whether positively, negatively, or in a more complex manner.

Therefore, examining how Vivian is represented through lower-class stereotypes in language is essential to understanding how the film reinforces social class representation and hierarchy. To understand how these evaluations contribute to the construction of social class stereotypes and hierarchy, this study also draws on Stuart Hall's theory of representation and stereotyping as a supporting concept. Hall argues that stereotypes work by reducing individuals into limited and simplified characteristics that are treated as natural and fixed. He also explains that the representation of difference and stereotyping can be applied not only to racial and ethnic issues, but also to other dimensions of difference such as gender, sexuality, class and disability (Hall, 1997).

Therefore, Hall's concept supports the analysis of how evaluative language and judgement contribute to the construction of stereotypes and the reinforcement of social hierarchy toward Vivian Ward's character. To analyze how this representation is realized linguistically, this study employs Appraisal Theory developed, which is situated within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL views language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts, particularly in constructing interpersonal relationships (Martin & White, 2005). This framework is particularly useful for this research because it provides a systematic way to track how evaluative language builds a character's social standing.

Within Appraisal Theory, this research focuses on the Attitude system, specifically the category of Judgement, which concerns the evaluation of people's character and behavior according to social norms. By analyzing Judgement

resources in Vivian's utterances as well as in other characters' evaluations of her, this study seeks to examine how Vivian is represented through lower-class stereotypes and whether these evaluations position her positively or negatively in the film. Although issues of social class, representation, and stereotypes have been widely discussed, studies that specifically examine how lower-class stereotypes are represented through evaluative language in film dialogue remain limited. Previous research has mostly focused on general representation and social issues without closely analyzing how judgement in language contributes to the construction of stereotypes and social hierarchy.

Therefore, this study examines how judgement is used to represent Vivian Ward through lower-class stereotypes in *Pretty Woman* and how these evaluations reflect and reinforce social class hierarchies

1.2 Research Question

In line with the focus of this study, the following research questions are proposed:

1. How is Vivian Ward's lower-class identity constructed through Judgement resources in the film *Pretty Woman* (1990)?
2. How do other characters' Judgements of Vivian Ward reveal stereotypes and reinforce social class hierarchies in the film?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to answer the research questions above. Each objectives helps guide the analysis to keep the discussion of the study on track and easier to understand.

1. To identify how Vivian Ward's lower-class identity is constructed and evaluated through Judgement resources in the film *Pretty Woman* (1990).
2. To examine how other characters' Judgements of Vivian contribute to the definition of stereotypes and the reinforcement of social class hierarchies within the narrative

1.4 Previous Studies

The relationship between stereotypes, representation, and social hierarchy has been widely examined in film studies. One relevant study is conducted by Sihombing and Sinaga (2021), which analyzes the representation of social class in the film *Parasite*. It found that social class distinctions are shaped by the characters' lifestyles, living environments and patterns of interaction. Most importantly, upper-class and lower-class characters are represented differently through their communicative behavior; upper-class characters are associated with refined manners and controlled interactions, while lower-class characters are presented through direct and informal speech that is often considered socially inappropriate. These findings suggest that language and interaction serve as key markers in shaping stereotypes and social perceptions of specific characters.

Likewise, Manisa and Mutmainnah (2024) analyse the relationship between language and social hierarchy in the film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. The analysis shows that language reflects social identity, power, and hierarchical relationships, with differences in language use highlighting how certain characters are positioned within dominant and subordinate social groups respectively. On the other hand, Benny (2025) demonstrates that the representation of lower-class

individuals in literary texts serves not only as a reflection of economic conditions, but also as an ideological construction that shapes stereotypes and social judgements. Yet, this is a study of Victorian literature and does not examine how such stereotypes are linguistically constructed through evaluative meaning in film.

In general, although all of these studies confirm that language plays a role in the formation of stereotypes and social hierarchies, it is still not widely explored how evaluation functions as a linguistic resource in shaping stereotypes and placing characters within class hierarchies.

The topic of stereotypes has also been examined through Stuart Hall's framework of representation in several studies. In one example, Kobandaha et al. (2025) examined cultural stereotypes in the Disney film *Aladdin* (1992) and found that Middle Eastern characters were portrayed through simplified images and stereotypes that reinforced dominant Western values. In another study, Mardhika and Agustin (2025) investigated gender stereotypes in the film *Barbie* (2023) and concluded that films can both reproduce dominant stereotypes and challenge them through counter-hegemonic representations. These studies demonstrate that stereotypes in films are closely linked to the construction of meaning, identity, and dominant social values. Nonetheless, the majority of these studies focus on cultural and gender stereotypes while research on stereotypes concerning the identity of lower-class women and social hierarchies within romantic comedies remains somewhat limited.

To gain a better understanding of how these issues are illustrated in the context of a specific film, several previous studies have examined *Pretty Woman*

from linguistic, sociological and ideological perspectives. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Sri Ningsih (2011) discusses the humanistic portrayal of prostitution in the film, highlighting how Vivian Ward's social background influences the way she is viewed and treated by society. In the field of linguistic studies, Daramasajeng (2018) analysed the degree of directness in the requests made by the main characters and found that Edward's frequent use of direct strategies reflects his dominant social and economic position. Ideologically, Guatama (2013) investigates the ideology of capitalism through the character of Edward Lewis in *Pretty Woman*, arguing that material success and economic power shape the hierarchy and the characters' positions within the narrative. Although these studies provide valuable insights into the pragmatics, sociology and ideology in *Pretty Woman*, they do not specifically address how stereotypes and social hierarchies are constructed through evaluative language and judgements directed at Vivian Ward.

In order to understand how evaluative meaning is realized. Appraisal Theory has been widely applied to reveal how characters evaluate themselves and others through language within film discourse. In their study of *Aladdin* (2019), Nafisah, Suyatman, and Sugaryamah (2020) demonstrated that appraisal resources are crucial in shaping the protagonist's interpersonal attitudes, with appreciation and affection dominating evaluative expressions, whereas judgement emerges when assessing characters' behaviour and morality. These findings suggest that evaluation, although less frequent, plays a significant role in constructing interpersonal meaning and the characters' positions. Following this evaluation-oriented research into cinematic discourse, Khotimah and Widhiyanto (2025)

conducted a comprehensive analysis of evaluative resources in the main characters' dialogue in *The Professor and the Madman*. Employing the Appraisal Theory formulated by Systemic Functional Linguistics, this study reveals that judgement primarily serves to construct the authoritative and evaluative persona of James Murray, meanwhile, affect is more dominant in W.C. Minor's expressions, highlighting his emotional vulnerability. It confirms that evaluative language plays a significant role in shaping character identity and interpersonal relationships within film narratives. Another appraisal-based study was conducted by Wahyudi (2023), who analyzed evaluative language in *Troy Movie*. The study found that appraisal resources, particularly affect, were predominantly used to express interpersonal attitudes between characters, while judgement was employed to evaluate behavior and morality. The findings further demonstrate the usefulness of Appraisal Theory in examining how language contributes to character portrayal and interpersonal positioning in film discourse. However, the study focused on interpersonal evaluation and did not investigate the relationship between judgement and stereotype construction.

Regardless, none of the studies examining evaluative language have explicitly linked such evaluations to the formation of stereotypes and the identity of working-class women in romantic comedies such as *Pretty Woman*. To address this gap, this study goes beyond previous research by integrating Appraisal Theory, specifically the judgement system, with Stuart Hall's framework on stereotypes to examine how judgement represents Vivian Ward through lower-class stereotypes,

and how this kind of evaluation reflects and reinforces social class hierarchies within the film's narrative.

1.5 Scope of the Study

On the whole, the author seeks to analyze the use of evaluation within the Appraisal framework, focusing on selected dialogues spoken by and addressed to the character Vivian Ward in the film *Pretty Woman*. This analysis is limited to the Judgement subsystem of Attitudes framework, specifically social esteem and social sanctions, to identify whether these evaluations are expressed positively or negatively and through which social dimensions. This study does not aim to determine Vivian Ward's actual social class as a sociological reality. Instead, social class is treated as a representational context within the film. It is used as an interpretative lens to understand how the system of Judgement contributes to the representation and reinforcement of lower-class stereotypes and social hierarchies.