

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Barbie (2023) by Greta Gerwig is a live-action movie of Mattel's nostalgic iconic fashion doll "Barbie". Gerwig wrote this movie based on relatable social issues that are currently happening in society. Shown in fantasies and comedies, this movie captures Barbie's journey in many eventful scenes from the beginning until the end. The movie starts in a utopia, named Barbie Land, with many different versions of Barbies and Kens existing there. Conflicts arose when Barbie and Ken went back to Barbie Land where Ken tried to change the constitutional system in Barbie Land, resulting in a clash of point of view and idealism between Barbie and Ken. Barbie started her journey to the real world when she lost her 'stereotypical Barbie traits'. There, Barbie and Ken met Gloria, an employee for Mattel who is also a mother. By meeting Gloria and other people from the real world, they discover that the real world is nothing like Barbie Land, everything is almost reversed. Barbie discovered that unlike in Barbie Land, the real world is dominated by men. Being exposed to the real world, Barbie and Ken discovered new concepts and began to realize the reality that they were facing. Since gender representation is the main topic of this movie, it is interesting to analyze whether the representation is also embodied in the characters' utterances.

In the movie, there are four dominant figures that show gender representation through their utterances. This movie represents feminist critique through a utopian world from Barbie's and The Narrator's discourse (Houghton, Murray, &

O'Donoghue, 2024). Myisha (2023) stated that another character in this movie, Ken, represents the patriarchal point of view. Ho (2023) argues that from Gloria's monologue in the movie, women are attributed with underlying expectations from society's gaze. Another study also stated that women's rights are being expressed and promoted through The Narrator's narration (Ma, 2024). These studies have associated Barbie and its characters with gender representation. McRobbie (2004) stated that gender representation might be represented through popular culture and media. For example, Kayani (2023) analyzed the representation of Indian genders from Faruqi's *The Mirror of Beauty* through transitivity choices. However, there is little study that focuses on the exploration of gender representation through verbal communication. Therefore, future study is needed to analyze the gender representations through transitivity analysis.

Verbal communication or the way people communicate are constructed from language. Language and verbal communications have been used to convey meanings and are also influenced by social and cultural context (Eggins, 2004). From the linguistic approach, the gender representations that are conveyed in the speakers' utterances can be systemically explained through the transitivity system. According to Simpson (1993), transitivity can be used as a tool to configure 'ideational' aspects of someone's utterances, meaning that it gives systemic explanation on how the utterances are constructed in a lexico-grammatical level. Transitivity can also be used to determine the reader's or listener's way of perceiving certain meanings from a certain discourse (Simpson, 1993). In order for the transitivity system to carry this function, the expression of the process is needed

(Simpson, 1993). According to Halliday and Matthiessen, the transitivity system manages the various events of experience into a manageable set of process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These process types represent how each process conveys different expressions. The types are material, behavioral, mental, verbal, relational, and existential processes.

There have been multiple studies that have analyzed the gender representation behind this movie. However, no study has analyzed the gender representation that only focuses on the characters' utterances or The Narrator's, especially analyzing it by using a tool that is focused to analyze the language that is used from of the utterances. The use of Halliday's theory on the transitivity system is applicable since transitivity can be used to analyze the language that are used to express gender representation, and interpret meanings from how the expressions are formed systematically. To explain the social phenomenon, which is gender representation from the systematical analysis, the addition theory of feminism, post-feminism, patriarchy and masculinity is added.

1.2 Research Questions

According to the research problem and the purpose of this research, a further study regarding gender representation through utterances of the characters and the narrator is needed to challenge and support the previous studies. Therefore, to achieve the research purpose, four research questions below will be answered:

1. How does Barbie represent feminism through her utterances?
2. How does Ken represent the stance of patriarchy through his utterances?
3. How does The Narrator represent feminism through her utterances?

4. How does Gloria represent feminism in the human world?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To answer the research questions, there are four objectives for this research:

1. To determine how Barbie's utterances represent feminism
2. To determine how Ken's utterances represent patriarchy
3. To determine how the Narrator represents feminism
4. To determine how Gloria represents feminism in the human world

1.4 Previous Studies

Many studies have analyzed gender representation from the movie *Barbie* (2023) by Greta Gerwig. For example, there are studies that analyzed the movie's gender representation from the sociolinguistic, semiotic, sociology, law, and critical discourse analysis. However, there is no conducted study regarding gender representation analysis by using the transitivity theory. The researcher found a total of seven previous studies that have the *Barbie* (2023) movie as its object and three studies that analyzed gender representation by using the transitivity process.

The first previous study is from a thesis entitled "How Women in Barbie Movie (2023) are Represented Through the Gendered Language", written By Yasna Taha in 2024. Taha (2024) used a sociolinguistic approach by applying Butler's and Lakoff's theory of gendered language. The method that is used is qualitative content analysis where the characters' dialogue is analyzed to conclude Taha's analysis. Taha (2024) concluded that women are constantly objectified by the language that is used by and towards Barbie. This thesis only showed how women perceived from

how the characters around the main character Barbie treated her. There are many other characters that represented the women community in this movie. Therefore, to fill that gap, the researcher conducts this research with different approach and more figures that can be considered as the women representation from this movie.

The next three previous studies are studies that used semiotic as the approach. The first one is a proceeding article entitled “Semiotic Analysis of Barbie Movie Poster”, written by Anggraheni, Anandha, and Yogatama (2024). The second one is entitled “Semiotic Analysis of Patriarchal Relations in the Film Barbie” written by Esa and Yuliana (2024). The last one is an article written by Myisha, Maharani, Ramadhan, Sabila, Fathima, and Kamalia (2024) with a title of “Decoding the Perpetuation of Patriarchal Culture in the *Barbie* Movie”.

The poster that is analyzed in the first semiotic study is the main promotional poster where Barbie is being lifted on Ken’s shoulder with the domination of bright pink and blue. By using a qualitative method, underlying message from attractiveness and meaning was analyzed. It is concluded from the poster that Barbie’s high status can be seen from the position, and the color choice of the poster represents the genders which are men and women in the movie. The second semiotic study related Indonesia’s patriarchal culture and the patriarchal relations from the movie by using John Fiske’s theory. The analysis concluded that patriarchal culture is still heavily practiced in the real world or in Barbie Land. The last semiotic study used Barthe’s theory and concluded that patriarchy will still thrive in a matriarchal culture and give the men advantages while harming the women’s community.

A journal from sociology written by Yakali (2024) deconstructed hegemonic masculinity from the Kens' narratives. The focus of this study is the Kens which represented the hegemonic and toxic masculinity through their narratives. Yakali used post-feminist discourse as the method. The result showed that the movie is embedded with critiques of patriarchy and a movement towards post-feminist masculinity.

A law and cultural study written by Houghton, Murray, and O' Donoghue (2024) entitled "Kenstituent Power: An Exploration of Feminist Constitutional Change in Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*" analyzes the constitutional change of the Barbie Land throughout the movie. The study concludes that there is a shift of constitutional power between the Barbies and the Kens with an influence of feminism and patriarchy. However, although the researchers analyze the character's discourse, there is no linguistic theory applied in this study.

The last study that used *Barbie* (2023) as the object is an article entitled "Exploring masculinities in *Barbie* (2023) directed by Greta Gerwig" written by Lubis, Eryani, and Solin (2024). This study focuses on analyzing the male characters by using Raewyn Connell's types of masculinity. The results showed that each Kens in the movie represents different types of masculinity such as hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity, subordinate masculinity, and marginalized masculinity. However, Lubis, Eryani, and Solin (2024) only analyzed the utterances through Critical Discourse Analysis. Since CDA interprets language with a loose set of tools (Lubis, Eryani, & Solin, 2024), it gives room for the researcher to analyze this aspect from a more focused linguistic tool which is transitivity.

There are three studies of gender representation that are analyzed through transitivity. The first one is entitled “Transitivity Analysis: Gender Representation in Two English Textbooks for Tenth Grade Students” written by Salsabila, Maolida, and Nuraini (2023). The second one is “Representation of Indian Woman and Man: A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Transitivity Choices in Faruqi’s *The Mirror of Beauty*”, written by Kayani, Anwar, Shafi, and Ali (2023). The last one is an article entitled “Reversed Gender Roles and Linguistic Choices: A Transitivity Analysis of Gender Disparities in *Ali’s The Stone Woman*”, written by Anwar, Kayani, and Ramiz (2024). From the three studies, the representation of gender was represented by analyzing domination through the frequencies of the processes that were used. For example, the material process is the most dominant process for women, therefore, women dominate by being active participants in the data. What differs this research from the other three studies that used the same method is the object of the study. Other than that, the other three previous studies only highlighted the relation between two genders and conclude which gender that is more represented. This research focuses on how each figures expressed the gender representation and associates the result with feminism and patriarchy, which cannot be found in the previous three studies.

All of the seven previous studies related *Barbie* (2023) with a certain representation of feminism or patriarchy. However, none of the studies focused on identifying the gender representation from *Barbie* (2023) through transitivity analysis. Therefore, what differentiates this study from the other studies is the

linguistic tool that are used to identify the gender representation and the object of the study.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is only limited to discussing the utterances by Barbie, Ken, The Narrator, and Gloria. Barbie and Ken here are the main characters of the movie, not the side characters Barbies and Kens. The utterances that are taken in this study are retrieved from the very beginning of the movie until the end of the movie and only the ones that refer to women and men in general, indicated by the specific keywords that functions to limit the type of data that is included in this research. Other than that, the researcher uses the theory of Transitivity Analysis by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), specifically the transitivity of process. For the supporting theory of the social context of the analysis, theories of feminism and patriarchy are included in this research. For theory of feminism, the researcher uses the theory from Bell Hooks, Angela McRobbie, and Rosalind Gill. Lastly, as for the theory of patriarchy, the researcher uses the theory from Sylvia Walby.

1.6 Writing Organization

The organization of this study is divided into four chapters which include:

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the background of the study, research questions, previous studies, scope of the study, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II : THEORY AND METHOD

This part of the chapter is divided into discussing the theory used for the analysis, namely transitivity theory, and the research method, which includes the data source, the method of collecting the data, and the method of analyzing the data.

CHAPTER III : FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the results of the analysis that will have been done.

CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

This chapter will discuss the conclusion of the study, including the summary of the study.