

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The way people speak changes day by day, and it also depends on certain contexts. For instance, the different genders may influence the way people speak (Coates, 2016; Holmes, 2013). This phenomenon can be depicted in film. As film is generally made to portray human interaction, the utterances and behaviours of characters in film can reflect the culture, society, and ideology of a specific era (Chapman, 2003).

In sociolinguistics, the different ways people speak based on different genders can be analysed through gendered language theories. Sociolinguists prefer the term 'gender' rather than 'sex' because "sex has come to refer to categories distinguished by biological characteristics, while gender is more appropriate for distinguishing people on the basis of their socio-cultural behaviour" (Holmes, 2013, p. 159). In relation to this, gendered language is a classification associated with either masculinity or femininity, meaning it is not exclusively used by a specific sex. Although gendered language covers both masculine and feminine features, studies on masculine language features used by both sexes remain limited. Therefore, in this thesis, I use Coates's (2016) theory of masculine language features to analyse the utterances of Juli Baker and Bryce Loski as the main characters in the film entitled *Flipped* (2010).

*Flipped* (2010) is a romantic comedy film adapted from a novel released in the 2000s with the same title. Both the film and the novel are set in the 1950s. The film begins when Juli Baker meets Bryce Loski as her new neighbour in her second year of primary school. Juli Baker falls in love with Bryce Loski after she is fascinated by his eyes, which she perceives as ‘dazzling,’ while Bryce Loski often responds to her fascination with hesitation and avoidance. These contrasting behaviours are reflected in their utterances, which can be analysed through Coates's (2016) theory of masculine language features to examine how each character's speech differs. In addition, the use of masculine language features in the main characters' utterances can be further analysed through Holmes's (2013) theory of speech functions to see the communicative goals.

The 1950s setting of *Flipped* (2010) is important to the analysis in this thesis as the traditional gendered language expectations were still rigid in that era, as women were expected to meet certain norms when they were talking (Lakoff, 1975). However, nowadays, women's position in society is indeed no longer as limited as it once was, as evidenced by both women and men now adapting language features traditionally associated with the opposite gender (Holmes, 2013). In contrast, Juli Baker deviates from the norms of that era by using masculine language features, likely due to her male-dominated environment. Meanwhile, Bryce Loski serves as a comparison in this thesis to examine whether a male character raised in the same neighbourhood and era shows a similar pattern of masculine language feature use.

## 1.2. Research Problems

Based on the background of the study above, there are two problems regarding the thesis:

1. What kinds of masculine language features are used by Juli Baker and Bryce Loski in *Flipped* (2010)?
2. How do speech functions and character backgrounds reflect the differences in the use of masculine language features between Juli Baker and Bryce Loski in *Flipped* (2010)?

## 1.3. Objectives of the Study

Following the problems above, the objectives of this thesis are:

1. To identify the types of masculine language features used by Juli Baker and Bryce Loski in *Flipped* (2010) based on Coates's (2016) theory of masculine language features.
2. To explain how speech functions and character backgrounds reflect the differences in the use of masculine language features between Juli Baker and Bryce Loski in *Flipped* (2010) through Holmes's (2010) theory of speech functions and a quantitative comparison using the chi-square test.

## 1.4. Previous Studies

*Flipped* (2010) has been analysed from various fields of study. For instance, Chen and Zhang (2020) analysed conversational implicature through Grice's cooperative principle and Leech's politeness principle. They found that the

characters often violate conversational principles to achieve different communicative purposes. However, in their study, they did not find any opposite example where the politeness principles are violated. Similarly, Fadhillah and Sari (2022) also analysed this film in pragmatics, specifically using the politeness strategies theory. They found that bald-on record strategies were most dominant. In spite of that, they missed examining the reason why specific characters use specific strategies in their speech. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Nafi'ah et al. (2023) applied Dell Hymes's SPEAKING theory to analyse contextual factors that influence language use in the dialogues. Despite analysing the same object: dialogues in the same movie, the study identified the SPEAKING components without examining the relationship between them, which results in a limitation in analysing why the characters' language use keeps changing from the perspective of the social environment. Although *Flipped* (2010) has been examined from various perspectives, none has analysed the use of masculine language features by the main characters, nor examined how speech functions and character backgrounds reflect the differences in their language use.

Research on gendered language has shown that masculine and feminine language features are not exclusively used for one sex, as both female and male characters in films are found to use features traditionally associated with the opposite gender (Anggraeni, 2023; Juwita et al., 2018; Zansabil, 2023). Furthermore, some scholars have also analysed gendered language using the chi-square test and further confirmed that gender language features differ significantly between female and male characters in films (Busso & Vignozzi, 2017; Schofield

& Mehr, 2016). However, these studies relied only on identifying the features used by the characters in films without examining the communicative purposes behind their use. Furthermore, none applied Coates's (2016) theory of masculine language features or conducted a qualitative comparison of the distribution of masculine language features between the two main characters of different genders within a single film.

Studies on speech functions in films have also addressed communicative purposes through Holmes's (2013) theory. These studies found that the directive function is the most dominant across different film genres (Dwiningtyas et al., 2023; Wardhana & Maharani, 2023). Nonetheless, these studies only focused on analysing a single character and did not connect speech functions with any other supporting theories, for instance, gendered language theories, which left the communicative motivations behind those functions unexplored.

Taken together, I found gaps in the existing literature. No study has combined Coates's (2016) theory of masculine language features with Holmes's (2013) theory of speech functions and a chi-square test to examine and compare the language use of two characters with different genders and backgrounds in a single film. Therefore, this thesis addresses this gap by applying Coates's (2016) theory of masculine language features with Holmes's (2013) theory of speech functions and a chi-square test to analyse the utterances of Juli Baker and Bryce Loski in *Flipped* (2010).

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This thesis contributes to sociolinguistic research by analysing whether Juli Baker's and Bryce Loski's utterances in *Flipped* (2010) reflect or deviate from the traditional gendered language theories in the 1950s background. Furthermore, this thesis also fills a gap in existing research by combining Coates's (2016) theory of masculine language features with Holmes's (2013) theory of speech functions to explain not only what masculine language features are used by both characters, but also how speech functions and character backgrounds reflect the differences in their use. In addition, the use of a mixed-methods approach in this thesis strengthens the analysis by combining qualitative interpretation with quantitative comparison through the chi-square test.

### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

This thesis explores gendered language in *Flipped* (2010). The analysis is limited to the utterances containing masculine language features spoken by Juli Baker and Bryce Loski as the main characters. In addition, this thesis focuses on identifying the use of masculine language features by the main characters, analysing the speech functions within those utterances, and comparing the distribution of masculine language features between the two characters.