
Analysis on the Role of Language as A Communication Tool in Building Gender Equality: Sociolinguistics Study in The Mulan Movie

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Abstract

This research is entitled “Analysis the role of language as a communication tool in building gender equality in the Mulam Movie:Sociolinguistics Study”. The objective of this study is to identify whether there are differences in language use between male and female characters in the “Mulan” movie that illustrate gender equality. The formulation of the problem is whether there are differences in language use between male and female characters in the “Mulan” movie that illustrate gender power dynamics. This research uses descriptive - qualitative methods to analyze and collect data. The theory used in this research is the theory proposed by William Labov (1927). The results of the research found that in the Mulan movie there are differences in the use of language between male and female characters that illustrate the dynamics of gender power, such as in the dialog between Mulan's parents that reflect gender stereotypes and different views on gender roles.

Keywords: gender equality, sociolinguistics study, Mulan movie.

1. Introduction

Language is a systematic tool for conveying ideas or feelings by using agreed signs, sounds, gestures, or signs that contain understandable meanings (Zadeh, 1975; Tseng, 2018). According to this definition, language includes all things that are used as a means of communication, both in the form of verbal and non-verbal signs (Oviogun & Veerdee, 2020). A science that studies language is known as linguistics. Linguistics is the scientific study of language that includes the analysis of language structure, language use, and other aspects related to verbal and nonverbal communication. Language as a tool of human communication can be separated into certain units, i.e. sentences, words, morphemes, and phonemes (Rabiah et al., 2012). Language structure analysis includes phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatic, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. Sociolinguistics, according to Janet Holmes, is the study of the interaction between language and society (Holmes, 2013). According to Meyerhoff (2011: 1) “Sociolinguistics is a very broad field, and it can be used to describe many different ways of studying language”. In sociolinguistics, language is the means by which groups articulate themselves and delineate themselves from others. “Sociolinguistics is how speakers group themselves in socially meaningful ways”. It

explores the relationship between speech and social status, which is of course still one of the main aims of the field (Kandagasari et al., 2023). Sociolinguistics is the study of how language is used in social and cultural contexts, including language variation based on social factors such as age, gender, social status, and ethnicity. One of many factors which create language variation is gender. In sociolinguistics, language and gender have a very close relationship (Kandagasari et al., 2023). Speaking of gender, language is closely related to gender equality. In this context, many films describe interesting stories that tell about women's journey towards rights and the struggle for gender equality. In this context, many films outline compelling stories that tell of women's journey towards rights and the struggle for gender equality (Nurul Fadilla et al., 2022). The relevance of gender equality and language in the present can be found in the film *Mulan* (2020), which is a live-action adaptation of the classic Disney animated film that raises issues of gender equality.

According to William Labov, language is not only a means of communication but also a marker of social and cultural identity. William Labov (1927) was a leading figure in American linguistics from the early 1960s. He pioneered the study of the relationship between language and society and developed a field known as “variationist sociolinguistics”. The central tenet of the field is that variation is inherent in linguistic structure. The way language is spoken (and written) differs from person to person and from situation to situation. Labov argues that these differences are not only normal, but also necessary for language to function. This view challenges much of the thinking and practice that has traditionally dominated language theory, from Ferdinand de Saussure to Noam Chomsky. Mainstream theorists do not deny the existence of variation, but they tend to downplay its relevance and treat it as a superficial phenomenon that obscures the fundamental uniformity that characterizes language. Labov's research shows that language variation is ubiquitous and highly structured, with regular patterns of occurrence of linguistic forms such as the pronunciation of certain vowels and social categories such as socio-economic class (Gordon, 2014).

Language has a very important role in shaping community norms, attitudes and perceptions, including those related to gender equality. There is a saying that 'men are from Mars and women are from Venus'. There is also the term 'women's language' and 'men's language'. All of these clearly state that men and women are different (Eka Putri et al., 2017). The role of language as a communication tool in building gender equality includes challenging stereotypes and as representation. Language can reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. By consciously avoiding language that reinforces traditional gender roles or stereotypes, individuals can help overcome these barriers and promote a more egalitarian society. Language also influences how different genders are represented in various contexts, such as media, literature and education. By using language that accurately represents the diversity of experiences and views of different genders.

The “Mulan” movie has become a significant cultural touchpoint regarding gender equality. The narrative centers on a young woman who defies traditional gender roles to protect her family and country. Aspects of gender equality in the movie *Mulan* such as dismantling gender stereotypes, *Hua mulan* challenges traditional gender roles by disguising herself as a man to join the army. This action subverts societal expectations and shows that gender should not limit one's abilities or opportunities. Despite facing discrimination and skepticism because of her gender, *Mulan* proves that she is an equal, even more so than her male counterparts in battle. Through *Mulan*'s journey, the movie highlights the valuable contributions of women, both on the battlefield and beyond. It emphasizes that women are just as valuable and brave as men, debunking the idea that certain roles or tasks are exclusive to one gender. *Mulan*'s story is one of self-discovery and empowerment. By embracing her true self and recognizing her strengths, she became a symbol of resilience and resilience, inspiring others to challenge social norms and embrace their identity. In the end, *Mulan* gets support from her peers who eventually accept and respect her for who she is. Overall, *Mulan* becomes a powerful representation of gender equality, advocating for the recognition of women's abilities and breaking down gender-based barriers.

Research in the fields of language, sociolinguistics and gender in film has been conducted by various academics. For example, Pimpatchanok Manaworapong and Neil Evan Jon Anthony Bowen (2022) *Language, gender, and patriarchy in Mulan: a diachronic analysis of a Disney Princess movie*. Dian Eka Putri, Kartika Harda Putri, Elviza Yeni Putri (2017) *Language And Gender: A Conversation Analysis In The Difference Of Languae Related To Gender*. Nanan Kandagasari, Mutiara Indah Nirmala Dewi, Muhammad Lutfi Wiguna (2023) *Communication And Language Use Analysis By Gender Pattern Between Mr. And Mrs. Smith” Movie*. This study examines the relationship between language and gender, with the aim of identifying differences in language use between male and female characters in the context of the film *Mulan* which illustrates gender equality. This research provides a foundation to analyze the role of language as a communication tool in building gender equality in *Mulan* movie.

This study aims to identify whether there are differences in language use between male and female characters in the “*Mulan*” movie that illustrate gender equality. The use of language between male and female characters can reflect the gender power dynamics that exist in the story of *Mulan*. Some of these differences can be seen, among others, in language styles and actions, conversation patterns, roles and responsibilities, and responses to authority. By paying attention to the differences in language use between male and female characters in the “*Mulan*” movie, we can see how gender power dynamics are reflected in the way they interact and communicate with each other.

Through a qualitative approach, the research data was collected by watching the film *Mulan* (2020), analyzing the dialogues and narratives of the characters in the film

Mulan. Collection techniques include transcription of dialog from the film and identification of language elements relevant to gender equality.

2. Method

This research used a qualitative descriptive method to analyze and collect the data. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is descriptive analysis, it provides insight into the problem or helps develop ideas or hypotheses for the research being conducted. Qualitative research can also be descriptive because the data collected in the form of words is more explanatory than numbers. Content analysis of visual and textual materials, oral history, interviews, open-ended surveys, and immersion and observation are qualitative research methods.

Descriptive methods describe circumstances, events, or objects. Creswell (2018) states that qualitative research is when the data is collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Those who conduct qualitative research can be represented with words, images, or speech that can be analyzed. In addition, according to Creswell (2018), emerging goals are also related to qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to uncover the meanings underlying actions or outcomes that are usually measured by quantitative research. Therefore, qualitative research investigates meaning, interpretation, symbols, as well as processes and relationships between actions or outcomes that are usually measured by quantitative research.

The stages of this research are as follows. First, watching the whole “Mulan movie”. Second, transcribing the dialogue in the film. The transcript is taken from the transcript feature in the film itself. Then, the last one is to analyze each dialogue by looking at the language styles, actions, context of the conversation, and roles between male and female characters that show differences in language use that illustrate gender equality.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the research are derived from the text script of the Mulan movie which were chosen according to the expression related to the gender words, phrases, and sentences. The data analyses are described in the following discussion.

Datum 1 (04.00 – 04.20)

Mulan's mother: You forget, Mulan is a girl not a boy. Girls bring honor through marriage.

Mulan's father: Any man would be lucky to marry one of our daughters, including Mulan.

Mulan's mom: I ask you, what man would want to marry a girl who runs around on the rooftop? Chasing chickens?

Analysis: In this scene, the dialogue delivered by Hua Li (Mulan's mother) leads to the gender stereotype that women can only bring honor to their family through marriage. However, Hua Zhou (Mulan's father) disagrees with this opinion because for him, any man would be lucky to marry one of their daughters, including Mulan. Mulan's father indirectly conveys gender equality which is seen from the differences in roles and responsibilities between men and women.

Datum 2 (05.05 – 06.02)

Mulan's father: Do you know why the phoenix sits at the entrance to our temple? She is the messenger of our ancestors.

Mulan: But I ruined it.

Mulan's father: It's said that the phoenix was consumed by fire, and rose again. I think she can survive a broken wing. Your chi is strong, mulan. But chi is for warriors, not girls. You will soon be a young woman, and it is time for you to hide your gifts, to ignore her voice. I say this to protect you, that is my duty. Your duty is to bring honor to the family, can you?

Mulan: ...

Analysis: In this scene, Hua Zhou asks Mulan to hide her chi or ability because of the environmental demands that the ability is only for warriors (mostly men) not women. Here, Mulan's father supports gender equality between men and women in terms of behavior and actions, but gender stereotypes in Mulan's neighborhood are much stronger.

Datum 3 (13.54 – 14.56)

Mulan: I rode the black wind accompanied by two rabbits that ran side by side. I think one was a male, the other a female. But you can't tell when they'll run fast. When I ride tomorrow, I'll try to find them again.

Mrs. Mulan: Maybe they'll still be there. But we have good news, the matchmaker found a favorable match for you.

Mulan's father: Yes, Mulan. It's been decided. Come sit down, it's the best for our family.

Mulan: Yes...the best. I will bring honor to all of us.

Analysis: In this scene, gender stereotypes reappear when Mulan's mother says that Mulan will be married off and thinks that this is the way that will bring honor to her family. Mulan accepts the arranged marriage because of the environmental demands that require it.

Datum 4 (34.37 – 35.00)

Soldier: only the strongest will reach the top. It takes everything you've got. Straighten that arm, keep it up, shoulder height. Keep your mind firm, don't stop.

Mulan: ...

Analysis: In her disguise as a man, mulan is trying to prove that in this war training she as a woman also has the strength and ability equal to men. This can be seen from Mulan's persistent behavior in training and following the commander's directions regardless of being a woman.

Datum 5 (41.15 – 41.36)

Mulan: What a fool. Now that everyone sees it, you should hide your chi.

Mulan's partner: hua jun, who can guess? That's great!

Analysis: While Mulan is cursing herself for showing her chi abilities, on the other hand there are her colleagues who think it's amazing even though what they know is Hua Jun not Hua Mulan. Here it can be seen that a man who has the ability is more appreciated than a woman, but Hua Jun is Hua Mulan who is a woman. Although not directly, Mulan shows gender equality in terms of behavior and actions.

Datum 6 (46.21 – 47.21)

Commander Tung: Hua Jun, it looks like you're hiding something.

Mulan: Commander...

Commander Tung: I felt it the moment I met you. But now I'm sure I have a secret too. I knew your father, he was a great warrior. In you Hua Jun, I see the shadow of his sword. Perhaps this shadow is weighing on your shoulders. Do not let your father's legacy hold you back, you must develop your talents.

Mulan: Yes, sir.

Commander Tung: Your chi is strong, Hua Jun. Why are you hiding it?

Mulan: I don't know.

Analysis: The dialog spoken by Commander Tung, shows that he appreciates Mulan's ability but in her disguise as Hua Jun (male soldier). Here, gender stereotypes are reinforced but it encourages Mulan to deepen her chi skills.

Datum 7 (50.13 – 50.40)

Analysis: In this scene, Mulan managed to reach the top of the mountain in training where men were not able to but even though she was a woman, she succeeded and

Mulan again proved through her behavior the gender equality between men and women.

Datum 8 (56.08 – 57.04)

Mulan: My father once said, “there is no courage without fear”

Fellow soldier: so?

Mulan: So this is natural. Listen to me, all of you. We will live, I guarantee it because I will protect you. We will protect each other, we will fight for each other.

Analysis: In this scene, Mulan's courage as a female soldier when facing a battle can be said to represent gender equality. Even male soldiers feel nervous about fighting against the Rouran army but Mulan shows her courage.

Datum 9 (59.44 – 1.01.35)

Commander Tung: Those cowards are retreating, go after them!

Soldier Commander: Left wing, attack!

Mulan: Haaaa...

Analysis: Mulan, who is in the left wing position with her courage along with other soldiers, pursues the Rouran core troops or the shadowy elite troops where there is Bori Khan, the leader of the Rouran nation. Mulan's brave and unyielding attitude is a form of gender equality, where she only survives alone chasing Bori Khan's troops and fighting with xianniang.

Datum 10 (1.12.31 – 1.13.31)

Mulan: I'm Hua Mulan, I'm sorry.

Soldier: Is she a girl?

Commander Tung: You are a fraud, you have betrayed the regiment. You have brought dishonor to the Hua family.

Mulan: Commander.

Commander Tung: Your deception is my shame.

Analysis: After Mulan showed herself to be a woman, she was rejected, humiliated, and expelled by the war commander. The form of gender equality shown by Mulan was not acceptable in the imperial Chinese army regiment even though she contributed to the victory of the war.

Datum 11 (1.15.39 – 1.16.28)

Mulan: You're following a coward who ran away from battle.

Xianniang: Bori Khan did not run away from battle. That coward will take the royal city, and your emperor will die.

Mulan: That can't be happening.

Xianniang: Yet it is happening now. Come with me, we will take our place together.

Mulan: I know my place and it is my duty to fight for the kingdom and protect the emperor.

Analysis: Despite the rejection and expulsion, Hua Mulan is still determined to fight for the kingdom and protect the emperor. Mulan remains firm in her stance that women who have the ability, strength and courage will be equal to male warriors. Mulan's persistence is a form of representation of gender equality.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the role of language as a communication tool in building gender equality in the Mulan movie provides valuable insights into the ways in which language shapes societal norms and perceptions regarding gender dynamics. Mulan movie is an interesting example of how language can be used to subvert traditional gender roles, empower women, and emphasize the value of gender equality. By examining the linguistic elements present in the movie, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between language, communication and gender equality.

Language styles, conversational patterns, and roles in the movie reflect gender dynamics and equality. In the context of the “Mulan” movie, language analysis reveals nuances of gender representation and power dynamics through dialog and communication patterns. As example, the dialog between Mulan's parents reflects gender stereotypes and different views on gender roles. Mulan's mother emphasizes traditional gender roles associated with marriage for women. Meanwhile, Mulan's father opposes this view, indicating a belief in gender equality and challenging societal norms.

From all the data that has been analyzed, the researchers conclude that in the “Mulan” movie there are differences in language use between male and female characters that illustrate gender power dynamics that can be seen, in language styles and actions, conversation patterns, roles and responsibilities, and responses to authority.

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