The Role of Women's Language in Transwoman's Identity in The Documentary *Disclosure* (2021)

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Abstract: This research explores the use of women's language by trans women in the documentary Disclosure. The research is based on Robin Lakoff and Judy Pearson's theory, which explains the various language features often used by women to express themselves in social contexts and also how the function of women's language. These features include women's language, which reflects the way women communicate. This study aims to identify the types of women's language features used by transwomen in the documentary and understand the function of the language in constructing, expressing, and representing their gender identity. The method used in this research is qualitative, with data collection techniques in the form of observation and analysis of dialog contained in the documentary. The dialogues spoken by Transwoman are classified based on Lakoff's women's Language and Pearson's Function of Women's Language theory, then analyzed to see how language choices play a role in representing their gender identity. The results of this study are expected to reveal the relationship between the language features used and the process of gender identity construction in the media. In addition, this research makes a significant contribution to the study of sociolinguistics by expanding the understanding of the relationship between language, gender, and also identity.

Keywords: women's language, transwoman, gender, sociolinguistics

INTRODUCTION

Language and society are closely related. As a system of symbols, languages provide a structure for describing the empirical world in abstract thought and sensory experience. It is important because language is a human communication tool to understand each other (Adventalia et al., 2022). In the first instance, linguistics is a discipline that attempts to understand the linguistic structure, the linguistic function, and the linguistic use of the language in different situations. According to Daulay & Aulia (2024), the scientific language approach can be used by others. Simply put, it is a branch of science, which studies language

scientifically and tells us how the language has evolved or adapted depending on the cultural, historical, or social landscape it is located.

Sociolinguistics, according to Trudgill (2000) is the study that concentrates on languages and society. Sumarsono (quoted in Gu) stated that sociolinguistics looks at languages because they relate to community life. All aspects of society act on languages and one of them is gender (Gu, 2013). Among the subjects of one of the studies in sociolinguistics is gender. Gender is what sociolinguistics and other social sciences refer to as a person's sexual identity in terms of culture and socioeconomic environment (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). It is at the level of words that the use of an expression can reflect and reinforce the social attitudes in turn about gender as they stand. Gender is defined to be an individual difference between males and females due to their psychological traits (Coates, 2015). The areas where people distinguish themselves from their opposites will also make a difference in how people speak and use grammar (Lakoff, 1975).

There are speech functions for men and women. In their words, women use language forms that are softer or occasionally inconsistent, whilst men characterize language forms that are more direct and assertive (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Lakoff (1975) argues that men and women speak differently. The languages used by men are more aggressive, mature, and direct, and more words are clear and precise. However, women's language is typically more indirect, less assertive, and more cautious in communication. Women usually use more courageous but milder phrases they might use gestures when they have to express something (Lakoff, 1975). In that sense, it is quite a phenomenon of 'women' 's language', because this is the idea that if it's life's major issues that are being ruled by men, and women are only on the fringes of the same, then this would represent that 'Women' s language. Women's identities are thus linguistically reduced, and the language blocks the recognition of women as serious people with their perceptions (Gooch, 1975). The ten Women's languages that Lakoff classifies are lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation on declarative, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). According to Pearson (1985), Women's language has five functions, expressing certainty, getting a response, softening utterances, starting a conversation, and expressing feeling.

Many societies have separated particular responsibilities by gender but are now moving into a new era where gender roles are not just birth-given. Present people are looking into and learning about the diversity of gender, sex, sexuality, body representation, and identity, which resulted in the conclusion that gender identity is a choice (Jobe, 2013). The manifestation of the genuine self manifests due to sex reassignment surgery intended for some people who claim to express their new gender identity. These individuals are commonly called transgender, and men who transition into women are transwomen (Beisembayeva & Issina, 2022).

Transwoman communicates how they express their identity not only in how they look at their body representation but also in the way they talk with how they speak (Wright, 2012). During the process of affirming themselves as women, transwomen tend to frequently adopt communication patterns that correspond to Robin Lakoff's theory of Women's language, which embraces a soft, polite, and conscious style. The way they follow

this pattern corresponds with how they want to behave and be seen and accepted as being, being a part of the gender identity they believe in (Kelien & Karjo, 2023). Due to this pattern of compelling communication, the topic is a linguistic strategy used by individuals to strengthen representation in a social environment that is not always ready to accept the presence of those individuals. This targeting is the characteristics of Women's language facilitate inclusive communication (Broadbridge, 2009). They can claim their gender identity by using a language style that corresponds to feminine values. Therefore, language is not just a way of communicating, it is also a way to find identity, especially for Transwoman (Wright, 2012).

This research discusses the language the Transwoman characters in the documentary Disclosure (2021) use and this research is based on that. The purpose of this research is to ask if a Transwoman continues to use Women's language once they have physically altered their bodies to look like a woman and were originally biologically men.

This research is similar to three previous research. Ramadina et al., (2022) titled, "Women's Language Used by Characters In "Brave" Movie" The film was chosen because Women's language is used in many of the character interactions. The purpose of the study is to analyze the women's language of various types and their use in the movie. The authors use a note-taking method to gather data from the transcript of the movie (Ramadina et al., 2022). Next, previous research conducted by Amalia entitled "Women's Language Features Used by Hillary Clinton in Formal and Informal Situations examines the different types of women's Language employed by Hillary Clinton in both formal and informal speeches" looks at the two types of women's Language that Hillary Clinton uses in her formal and informal speeches. Using data from videos of Hillary Clinton's most famous speeches on the same topic found on YouTube, the study analyzes them. From these videos, the author read the utterances of Clinton and transcribed them to text, then categorized them according to Lakoff's conceptualization of women's language. According to this theory, the data were analyzed. The researcher found similarities between the women's Language used by Clinton in formal and informal situations. However, she exhibits different ways of using the language, which Amalia (2019) attributed to differences in formal and informal settings.

Another research conducted by Juwita et al., (2018). They researched "The Differences between Men and Women's Language in The Devil Wears Prada Movie" (Juwita et al., 2018). For men's Language features Coates (2004), and for women's Language, as cited by Holmes (2003). So, to analyze, they took six dialogues from the movie and found four out of six of men's Language, excluding compliments and themes about current affairs, travel, and sports, used by male characters. Seven of ten features of women's language were displayed in five out of six female characters, i.e. all but rising intonation in declarative sentences, hypercorrect grammar, and emphatic stress. Juwita et al. (2018) also found that male and female characters always used Language features belonging to the respective gender, neither.

Last previous research by Sudewi et al. (2018) entitled "Women's Language Used by Female Characters in the Movie How to be Single.". This study then concentrated on which Language features were used by the main and supporting characters in the film. For their analysis of the data, the authors used Lakoff's (1975) framework. They also found that the

characters applied nine out of ten language features, except precious. In addition, they explained the functions and reasons for each Language feature and most of the features were designed to show politeness and not too strong expression (Putri Nila Sudewi et al., 2018).

Language identity has been studied for a long through women as subjects of study as their language mirrors their societal roles, statuses, and identities. Thus, although Transwomen's linguistic expressions become more and more visible in the media and society they remain little considered (Kelien & Karjo, 2023). The use of Women's language by Transwomen helps their feminity and shows that they are Transwomen. Most of the studies of Women's language have tended only to include women, omitting transwomen who use similar linguistic features to express themselves. This research offers an opportunity to bridge the gap by trying to bridge the gap of how transwomen use Women's language, as a vehicle to construct their identity in the object of this research, Disclosure Documentary. The purpose of this research is the filling of a gap in sociolinguistic studies while reinforcing a lack of linguistic research of Transwoman practices.

This research aims to determine the types of Women's language employed by a Transwoman in the documentary and to correlate the use of this language with the expression and construction of the Transwoman's gender identity. In an attempt to gain insights into how linguistic practices contribute to identity negotiation and representation for marginalized groups, such as Transwoman, this research focuses on.

METHOD

The research method uses qualitative methods in accordance with the views of Sugiyono (2014). This method aims to understand social phenomena in natural conditions, where the author acts as the main instrument in data collection. In qualitative research, data collection techniques are carried out through observations and documentation that allow authors to gain a deep understanding of the experiences and perspectives of research subjects (Sugiyono, 2014).

This research analyzed the documentary Disclosure (2021), directed by Sam Feder and Produced by Laverne Cox, focusing on the women's language used by Transwoman featured in the film. The data obtained from the film and its script were collected by observing and marking the dialogue of Transwoman, such as Laverne Cox, Jamie Clayton, and Bianca shared their experiences as Transwoman in the entertainment industry. The author followed several steps: watching the documentary, reviewing the script, identifying relevant dialogues (for example, equating relevance with research focus or use of Women's language features), and cross-checking by comparing in detail between transcripts and audio-visual content. This analysis uses two continuous theories, those of Robin Lakoff and Pearson. Lakoff argues that features in Women's language, for example, Lexical Hedges, Tag Questions, Intensifiers, Empty Adjectives, Super Polite Forms, Emphatic Stress, and Hypercorrect Grammar. Reflect women using language to show uncertainty or to create interpersonal relationships. In this research, Lakoff's theory is applied by identifying these features in the dialogue, then analyzing how these features are used to express the identity of Transwoman, and how the application of Lakoff's theory helped the author categorize and interpret

linguistics features, showing their ultimate role in expressing identity. While Pearson's theory is used to understand the function Women's language is used for, Pearson's theory is used to analyze how the identified language features reflect the identity of transwomen in the context of the entertainment industry. The analysis employed Robin Lakoff & Pearson's theory to categorize Women's language and find out the function of Women's language used by transwomen for demonstrating their role in expressing identity. A final summary concluded the findings based on the analyzed data.

RESULTS

This chapter contains data on Women's language used by Transwoman in the Disclosure documentary based on findings obtained by the author through analysis. The author identifies twenty three data from Laverne, Jamie and Bianca's utterances in the documentary that reflect the use of Women's language.

Table 1. Women's language Features

Women's language Features	Total
Lexical hedges	4
Tag Question	1
Intensifiers	2
Empty Adjectives	1
Super Polite forms	1
Emphatic Stress	7
Hypercorrect Grammar	7
Total of Woman's Language Features	23

In the Disclosure documentary, the author found 23 data classified into Women's language elements. The data consists of 4 Lexical Hedges utterances, 1 Tag Question, 2 Intensifiers, 1 Empty Adjectives, 1 super Polite Forms, 7 Emphatic Stress, and 7 Hypercorrect Grammar. All these data will be analyzed in the Discussion chapter. In addition, the author will not only classify the data into Women's language elements, but will also analyze and classify their functions based on the theory proposed by Pearson (1975) for a more complete explanation, see the table and description below.

Table 2. Function of Women's language

Function of Women's language	Total
Expressing Uncertainly	7
Getting a Response	4
Softening Utterances	2
Starting a Conversation	3

Expressing Feeling	7
Total Function	23

The functions of Women's language can be classified into five main categories, where the author categorizes 23 data based on these functions. From the analysis, the Expressing Uncertainty category ranks first with the highest number of data, which is 7 data. Next, the Expressing Feeling category also has 7 data but is in second place based on the context of use. Getting a Response category follows with 4 data, followed by Starting a Conversation category with 3 data. Finally, the Softening Utterances category has the least amount of data, which is 2 data.

DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the results of data analysis from the Disclosure (2021) documentary. The data here are sentences spoken by all transwomen in this documentary to answer the problems in this research. In this chapter, two sub-chapters follow the problem formulation. The first sub-chapter contains the analysis of Women's language used by Transgender in the documentary Disclosure (2021). The second sub-chapter is to find out what the function of women's language used by transwomen. This research has 23 data from conversations issued by Transwoman in this documentary.

Women's language Features

In this subchapter, Robin Lakoff's theory of categories and concepts of women's language is explored, specifically prominent linguistic features that are often commonly linked to women's speech. Lakoff explains that features, such as lexical hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, empty adjectives, super polite forms, emphatic stress, and hypercorrect grammar are considered some of these features. Each of these features points to the peculiarities and subtleties of how women communicate how they share themselves, revealing and distilling what are mostly the expectations and gender roles of the world they inhabit. In order to study the manifestation of the seven key features of women's language in the speech of Transwomen in the documentary Disclosure, the research is limited to focusing on these seven key features.

Data from the Disclosure (2021) documentary is analyzed to calculate the frequency of these linguistic features in the Transwomen documentary. Table 1 reveals that there are four lexical hedges, one tag question, two intensifiers, one empty adjective, one super polite form, seven instances of emphatic stress, and seven hypercorrect grammar. This distribution shows off a variety of uses of language, and certain things show up more often than others. Interestingly, one of the most productive types of features in the Disclosure documentary are emphatic stress (seven times) and hypercorrect grammar (seven times). From this, it seems that the language used by the Transwomen in the documentary is primarily instrumental in defending their speech and their identity.

a. Lexical Hedges

Datum 1: "I think, for a very long time, the ways in which trans people have been represented on-screen...." said Laverne on 00:02:25-00:02:34, in datum 1 the words are said by Laverne, she is surprised by how the media, tends to portray Trans people in a demeaning way. The phrase "I think" is commonly used to express an opinion that is not confrontational or is still unsure of one's own argument. The use of these lexical hedges can be interpreted as a way of softening statements in communication, it can make utterances sound more polite. Therefore, the use of the phrase "I think" not only indicates uncertainty, but also functions as a communication strategy to create a more inclusive dialog atmosphere.

b. Tag Question

Datum 5: "Trans jokes? Really? This isn't funny, is it?" 00:06:33-00:06:35 The datum is still Laverne speaking, in this case Laverne feels offended and confirms again whether there really is a joke about Trans. The phrase "is it?" belongs to the Tag Question category, because in the sentence structure there is a main statement that has an initial negative tone, followed by a positive tag. This pattern shows that the speaker is asking for confirmation or approval from the interlocutor regarding the statement that has been previously conveyed.

c. Intensifiers

Datum 6: "At this point, we're talking, really, about unprecedented trans visibility." 00:01:16-00:01:20. This statement occurs in a section that shows the trans community's achievement in gaining public recognition through positive representation in the media. The word "really" functions as intensifiers that make a strong assertion on the discussion they are having. The use of these intensifiers emphasizes how important the topic they are talking about is. Intensifiers play an important role in conversation by creating a more expressive tone. The use of the word 'really' indicates that the speaker wants the interlocutor to understand the relevance and urgency of the conversation.

d. Empty Adjective

Datum 8: "As a trans person, you have the most sensitive radar". 00:06:05-00:06::11. This sentence was spoken by Jamie, a Transwoman, this can be categorized as an Empty Adjective. The word "sensitive" is an adjective that is often used to describe certain subjective traits or qualities. In the context of this conversation, "sensitive" does not have clear parameters, but is always used and depends on the speaker's interpretation. In Robin Lakoff's theory, empty adjectives refer to adjectives that provide no concrete information, rather than objective or functional descriptions.

e. Super Polite Forms

Datum 9: "......I would be very interested" 00:04:19-00:04:20. The phrase "I would be" includes a modal form that shows politeness by expressing interest indirectly, the use of the modal "would" show caution and provides space for the listener to respond without feeling pressured. In this sentence, you can see that the speaker chooses very

polite words when speaking to the other person. Politeness shown through Super Polite Forms not only reflects the speaker's respectful attitude, but also serves to keep interpersonal relationships harmonious.

f. Emphatic Stress
Datum 10: "Now, look how far we've come." 00:00:54-00:00:56 This line is spoken by Laverne, who is discussing a moment of significant achievement by Trans people, in that it is very characteristic of women's language, in that it gives strong emotional weight, and shows the great achievements of the Trans community. The emphasis on the phrase "look how far" serves to highlight the sense of awe and pride in the great achievement that has been achieved. Emphatic Stress not only emphasizes the meaning of the sentence, but carries a deep emotional charge. This is a characteristic of Women's language that focuses on how to communicate more empathetically, and is oriented towards taking care of the other person's feelings.

g. Hypercorrect Grammar
Datum 18: "I remember I would watch it with my mom and my brother." 00:03:53-00:03:56. This datum reflects the Hypercorrect grammar element in Robin Lakoff's women's language theory through its formal and detailed structure. The use of the reflective phrase "I remember" followed by the clause "I would watch it" shows caution in conveying a sense of formality. This sentence structure creates a reflective impression that invites the audience to understand the feelings of the trans community.

Function of Women's language Features

In this sub-chapter, the author uses Judy Pearson's (1981) theory to categorize the twenty-three data points in the Disclosure documentary into a particular function of Women's language. Pearson says that language functions in various communicative ways and that knowledge and understanding of how women use language underlie these functions for communication. The five main functions of Women's language identified in this research are Certainty, Getting a Response, Softening Utterances, Starting a Conversation, and Feeling. Revealing the underlying purposes of using particular linguistic features as well as how these shape communication, these functions are crucial.

These functions are distributed in the speech of Transwomen of the Disclosure documentary, according to data presented in Table 2. Of the twenty-three instances of Women's language, six are in Expressing Certainly, three under Getting a Response, two under Softening Utterances, two under Starting a Conversation, and seven under Expressing Feeling. To be specific, emotional expression and the perceived assertion of certainty are discussed as communicative strategies used by transwomen, and this breakdown highlights the diversity of communicative strategies employed by of the use of Transwomen.

The most frequent function in the data, "Expressing Feeling" occurs seven times. The documentary in which Transwomen express their emotional depth and personal experiences is reflected in this function. The documentation often uses language to communicate emotions such as personal struggles, identity, or experiences of marginalization. "Expressing Certainly" is the next closest on eight, coming up just once behind it. It is reasonable to think

that this functions as a power play to assert that whether someone believes it or not the speaker is confident, makes definitive statements, and the like in their speech.

a. Expressing Certainly

Datum 1: "I think that best encapsulates the writers and producers of The L Word's approach to Max" 00:23:28-00:23:28, in this data as in Women's language Features the phrase "I think" reflects the function of Expressing Uncertainly. This phrase opens up space for contributions from others, indicating that the opinions expressed are uncertain or unfinished. This approach is in line with the characteristics of Women's language which focuses more on interpersonal relationships, and avoids potential conflicts.

b. Getting a Response

Datum 7: ".... they laughed at The Tree stooges. The Three Stooges, really?" Bianca 00:15:26-00:15:30. This sentence belongs to the Getting a Response category because it uses a rhetorical question to provoke a response from the interlocutor. By questioning something that is considered to invite reflection. The use of this question reflects the communication style of women, who often use this strategy to encourage direct participation. By using this strategy, the speaker not only shows concern but also pays attention to the other person's point of view, ensuring that the conversation is two-way and not just self-talk.

c. Softening Utterances

Datum 12: "There is a one-word solution to almost all the problems in trans media" 00:24:12-00:24:17. The use of the phrase "a one-word solution" makes the statement sound simple and direct, without appearing patronizing. Softening statements is a strategy often used by women to maintain harmony and engagement in conversations. This softening approach shows sensitivity to interpersonal relationships, one of the main characteristics of women's language.

d. Starting a Conversation

Datum 14: "What I knew was, when I spent time with my brother and my father...." 00:15:21-00:15:24. The above statement serves as an introduction to connect the personal experience to the larger topic. It prepares the audience to hear a more detailed story, and creates curiosity and engagement. The strategy of starting conversations with personal experiences reflects an orientation towards interpersonal relationships. Women tend to start conversations with personal stories or statements in order to create an intimate atmosphere with their interlocutors.

e. Expressing Feeling

Datum 15: "I connected to that because I was a girl" 00:27:23-00:27:25. The above statement serves as an introduction to connect the personal experience to the larger topic. It prepares the audience to hear a more detailed story, and creates curiosity and engagement. The strategy of starting conversations with personal experiences reflects an orientation towards interpersonal relationships. Women tend to start conversations

with personal stories or statements in order to create an intimate atmosphere with their interlocutors.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the Women's language features and their functions used by Transwoman in the documentary Disclosure, the researcher concludes that there are 23 utterances included in the Women's language features. The Transwoman used four Lexical hedges, one Tag Question, two Intensifiers, one Empty Adjective, one Super polite Form, seven Emphatic Stress, and seven Hypercorrect Grammar. These features create an inclusive dialog while emphasizing their gender identity. The researcher also found 23 utterances that belong to the Function of Women's language based on Pearson's theory. From the data, two utterances fall into Softening Utterances, three into Starting a Conversation, four into Getting a Response, and seven each into Expressing uncertainty and Expressing Feeling. This study aims to identify the types of Women's language features used by transgender women in the documentary and understand the function of this language in constructing, expressing, and representing their gender identity. In addition, this research makes a significant contribution to the study of sociolinguistics by expanding the understanding of the relationship between language, gender, and identity, especially in the context of transwomen and the media. As such, this research opens up new perspectives on the complexity of language as a means of expressing social and cultural identity.

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