

## LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES USED BY LESBIAN CHARACTERS IN THE MOVIE "REACHING FOR THE MOON"

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### Abstract

In conversations the language of lesbians can be seen through the study of language and gender. Examining the language of lesbians and gay men is critical to the study of language and gender, the relationship between language and gender mixed-sex conversations have continued to be discussed based on data from heterosexual or presumed heterosexual speakers. This study focuses on how the linguistic strategies run within the lesbian characters in the movie correlating to the purpose of showing both dominance and solidarity in conversation. The purpose of this study is to analyze the utterances of lesbian characters containing linguistic strategy. The description consists of (1) what linguistic strategies do lesbian use with their partner in the movie *Reaching for the Moon*; (2) how are the reasons using of those linguistic strategies used by lesbian in the movie *Reaching for the Moon*; (3) how are the effects of using linguistics strategies by lesbian in the movie *Reaching for the Moon* to the interlocutors. The researcher used descriptive qualitative method using the main theory of Johnson and Christensen (2012) linguistics strategy theory by Tannen (1994). The data analysis requires the process of (1) ordering the data based on each sub sections linguistic strategy and (2) discussing the function of using those kind linguistic strategy and the effect to interlocutors. The result shows that this study has found some linguistic strategies used by lesbians in the movie. They are interruption, indirectness, topic rising, silence and adversativeness. However, the linguistic strategy minimal response does not appear in this movie. Each of the strategies has their own function and effect to interlocutor depending on the context in conversations. Some strategies are used to create domination to the interlocutor while the other are used as a defensive strategy to create solidarity and closeness to the interlocutor. The one that create domination is Lota who dominates Elizabeth. In conclusion, linguistic strategy uttered by lesbian characters in the movie "Reaching for the Moon" leads a purpose to both creating domination by gaining the conversation floor and showing solidarity as a sign of powerless person.

**Key words:** linguistic strategy, lesbian, conversation, power, domination, powerless

### INTRODUCTION

In conversations the language of lesbians can be seen through the study of language and gender. Examining the language of lesbians and gay men is critical to the study of language and gender, the relationship between language and gender mixed-sex conversations have continued to be discussed based on data from heterosexual or presumed heterosexual speakers. The use of language as well as language as the important tool for human being to deliver their thought is believed to have different purpose other than conveying message clearly. Language, according to

this view can also be a tool to establish and maintain a social relationship by using certain linguistic strategies. Each of the linguistic strategies is in purpose to show both dominance and solidarity. The dominance and solidarity can also be seen as power and closeness.

- **Language and Gender**

Tannen (1994) states that no one could deny that men as a class dominate women in our society, and that many individual men seek to dominate women in their lives. It clearly describes that how dominance existed in conversation especially between men and women.

Analyzing linguistic strategy and conversational style are able to give understand of what actually created this dominance in conversation.

Tannen (1990) claims that sometimes a conversation between men and women can be considered as a cross-cultural communications. They are not different in dialect but Tannen used the term genderlect to describe their differences in mindset. When a conversation between men and women happened, the conversation changed into a clash of conversational style, and linguistic strategies appear in the conversation floor to make up the difference in their genderlect or to maintain their dominance.

Furthermore, according to Brown and Gillman (1960), one person may be said to have power over another to the degree that he is able to control the behavior of other. Power in a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non-reciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior. So, basically if someone wants to gain power or dominance in a conversation floor, they need to create unbalanced conversation floor where they are positioned in the upper of their interlocutor.

- **Language and Sexuality Theory**

According to Deborah Cameron and DonmKulick (2003) to make a distinction whether someone is homosexual or heterosexual is not about the reproductive organs. Nevertheless, sexual orientation is also important to recognize kind of sexuality. The sexual orientation usage of sexuality could be said to reaffirm the connection between the 'men and women' sense of sex on one hand, and the 'erotic desire and practice' sense on the other hand, because it defines as an individual's sexuality exclusively in terms of which sex their preferred sexual partners are.

- **Masculinity and Femininity**

In the book entitled "Gender: psychological perspectives" by Linda Brannon state that the male gender role and the female gender role is like a script that men and women follow to fulfill their appropriate part in acting masculine or feminine (1995).

Gender is no longer seen as static which add on the characteristic of speaker, but as something that is performed by the speaker. Speakers are seen as performing masculinity and femininity. Women's and men's interest are different, where they both have different areas of influence. The influence of women is home and children, whereas men's sphere includes work and outside world. Women are supposed to be

weak, dependent, and timid, whereas men are supposed to be strong, wise, and forceful.

- **Linguistic Strategy**

Tannen (1994) describes that meaning or purpose of the linguistic strategy can be vary depending at least on context, conversational style of participants, and the interaction of participant's style and strategies. Furthermore, in her book are mentioned some linguistic strategies in turn taking process, such as interruption, indirectness, adversativeness, silence, topic rising and minimal response.

- 1) **Interruption**

A person who uses interruption can have purpose to gain power and control the conversation, or simply wants to show solidarity and closeness. It can be used to show agreement toward what the opposition said too.

- 2) **Indirectness**

Lakoff (1975) identifies two benefits of indirectness: defensiveness and rapport. Defensiveness refers to a speaker's preference not to go on record with an idea in order to be able to disclaim or modify it if it does not meet with a positive response. The rapport benefit of indirectness results from the pleasant experience of getting one's way not because one demanded power but because the other person wanted the same thing (solidarity).

- 3) **Silence**

Spender (1980) claimed that in gender language men dominate women by silencing them. There are obviously circumstances in which this is accurate. Sattel (1983) stated that men use silence to exercise power over women.

- 4) **Topic Rising**

Shuy (1982) is typical in assuming that the speaker who raises the most topics is dominating in conversations. Both women and men have their own purpose in raising the topic or switching the topics.

- 5) **Adversativeness**

Many researches on gender and language show that male speaker to be more likely engaged in conflict due to their character of being competitive. They do it by arguing, issuing command, and taking the opposing stands. While in contrast, female tend to

avoid conflict because they commonly have trait of being cooperative gender.

6) Minimal Response

Minimal responses are forms such as mmhm, yeah, uh-huh, and right which are uttered by a listener during a speech event to signal a certain level of engagement with the speaker.

This study uses 3 research questions. They are in what linguistic strategies do lesbian use with their partner in the movie *Reaching for the Moon*, how are the reasons of using those kind of linguistic strategies used by lesbian and how are the effect to interlocutors of using those kind of linguistic strategies used by lesbian.. The purpose of this study is to categorize the kinds of linguistic strategies used by lesbian, the reason of using those linguistic strategies and the effect to interlocutors resulted from the use of those kinds of linguistic strategies used by lesbian. All of the research questions are about in *Reaching for the Moon* movie.

## METHOD

The research type used in this study is descriptive qualitative. In this case, a qualitative research only deals with the words in written and spoken data. The study is more focus in observing the use of linguistic strategy uttered by lesbian, the function of using those linguistic strategies and the effect to interlocutors in *Reaching for the Moon* movie.

The data of this study is the lesbian characters in *Reaching for the Moon* movie. They are also as the subject of the study. Furthermore, the source of data is lesbian characters in *Reaching for the Moon* movie. This movie is used as the primary data. It is an adaptation movie which is based on the lesbian characters's real life.

The key instrument of this study is the researcher. There are also some tools which are needed to support this research. They are soft file video of *Reaching for the Moon* movie and earphone.

In the process of collecting the data, the observation is the technique to collect the data. According to Wray (1998:186), the observation is not enough to be done once, but ongoing. The collected data are based on the *Reaching for the Moon* movie. The observation is to note the use of linguistic strategy uttered by lesbian, the function of using those linguistic strategies and the effect to interlocutors. In this case, the observation sheet is used to note and transcribe it.

After collecting the data, it comes to the process to analyze the data in this study. The theory which is

used for the data analysis technique is from Miles and Huberman (1992). They said that in analyzing the data, it needs three steps. They are data reduction, data display, and the last is conclusion drawing and verification.

## DISCUSSION

Table 1 Data Analysis Result

No	Strategy Used	Fragment	Context	Function	Effect to Interlocutors
1.	Interruption	Fragment 8	Lota interrupts Elizabeth when Elizabeth refused the gift	Gain the conversation floor	Interlocutor is silent (showing happiness) and accepts the gift
2.	Interruption	Fragment 9	Lota interrupts Elizabeth worrying Lota and Mary's relationship	Gain the conversation floor	Elizabeth is silent (calm down) and not going back to New York
3.	Interruption	Fragment 11	Elizabeth interrupts Lota knowing that Lota make an allusion by saying Elizabeth's poem	Gain the conversation floor	Lota defends herself by stating a statement
4.	Interruption	Fragment 12	Lota interrupts Elizabeth when Elizabeth deciding the place of the table	Creating domination by insisting Elizabeth to agree of the table's place	Elizabeth is silent (defenseless) and allows Lota to place the table
5.	Interruption	Fragment 14	Elizabeth interrupts Lota when Lota breaks Elizabeth's concentration in writing	Gain the conversation floor	Lota is silent (understand Elizabeth) and does not offense Elizabeth
6.	Interruption	Fragment 16	Elizabeth interrupts Mary when Mary does not answer Elizabeth's question	Gain the conversation floor by	Mary is silent (defenseless)
7.	Interruption	Fragment 19	Lota interrupts Elizabeth when	Creating domination	Elizabeth is silent (showing frightened)



			Elizabeth is trying to advise her for vacation		
8.	Interruption	Fragment 22	Lota interrupts Elizabeth when Elizabeth tries to explain about teaching at NYU	Gain the conversation floor	Elizabeth answers the question
9.	Interruption	Fragment 24	Lota interrupts Elizabeth when Elizabeth was answering Lota's question	Creating domination	Elizabeth is silent (showing frightened)
10.	Indirectness	Fragment 2	Mary speaks indirectly towards Lota to answer Lota's question	Avoid conflict	Lota does not get the idea and ask for explanation
11.	Indirectness	Fragment 6	Elizabeth speaks indirectly towards Lota saying her plan to leave Samambaia	Avoid conflict	Lota response Elizabeth but does not permit Elizabeth to leave the place.
12.	Silence	Fragment 13	Elizabeth is silent when Lota interrupted her in placing a table	Avoid conflict	Lota continuous to place the table
13.	Silence	Fragment 15	Elizabeth is silent when Lota was speaking on going toward her	Avoid conflict	Lota continuous to speak
14.	Silence	Fragment 17	Mary is silent after she had interrupted by Elizabeth discussing about Clara	Avoid conflict	Elizabeth tries to continue her sentence but Lota calmed them down
15.	Silence	Fragment 21	Elizabeth is silent and cannot response Lota's statement	Avoid conflict	Lota knows that Elizabeth already knew the message, so

			asking her to go back to Samambaia		Lota does not continue her sentence
16.	Topic Raising	Fragment 1	Lota rises a topic about her building	Defend speaker's pride	Elizabeth responds Lota's sentence
17.	Topic Raising	Fragment 10	Lota rises a topic about her experience with a boat pond	Gain the conversation floor	Elizabeth is silent (showing solidarity) and listening to Lota
18.	Topic Raising	Fragment 20	Lota rises a topic about indulgence toward Elizabeth	Gain the conversation floor	Elizabeth is silent (defenseless) and follows the topic given
19.	Adversativeness	Fragment 3	Lota speaks harsh sentence toward Mary discussing Elizabeth personality	Showing power	Mary responds Lota but she does not agree with Lota's statement
20.	Adversativeness	Fragment 4	Lota says rude sentence toward Elizabeth commanding her not to have cheer	Issuing command	Elizabeth is silent (defenseless) and abandon to have a cheer
21.	Adversativeness	Fragment 5	Lota says harsh sentence toward Elizabeth arguing about Elizabeth personality	Showing power to create domination	Elizabeth is silent (showing frightened) and says sorry
22.	Adversativeness	Fragment 7	Lota says harsh sentence toward Elizabeth commanding her to keep staying at Samambaia	Issuing command	Elizabeth is silent (defenseless) and do the speaker's command
23.	Adversativeness	Fragment 18	Lota says rude sentence toward Elizabeth when Elizabeth was trying to give Lota advice	Showing power to create domination	Elizabeth is silent (showing frightened) and trembled

			to vacation		
24	Adversativeness	Fragment 23	Lota says harsh sentence toward Elizabeth knowing that Elizabeth will teach at NYU	Showing power to create domination	Elizabeth tries to defend by saying some offensive sentence
25	Adversativeness	Fragment 25	Lota says harsh sentence toward Elizabeth knowing that Elizabeth to say 'I love you' when Lota was asleep	Showing power to create domination	Elizabeth is leaving the speaker (Lota)

- **The Type of Linguistic Strategies Used by Lesbian**

Based on the data analysis, it can be seen that this study has found some linguistic strategies used by lesbians in the movie. They are interruption, indirectness, topic rising, silence and adversativeness. The results are as following the explanation of Tannen (1994) about linguistic strategy. Tannen mentioned that some linguistic strategies in turn taking system are interruption, indirectness, adversativeness, silence, topic rising, and minimal response. However, the linguistic strategy minimal response does not appear in this movie.

They have different function in every conversation related to the context in the conversation whether it is shown as the solidarity or the domination toward interlocutors. It is following the theory of relativity in linguistic strategy proposed by Tannen (1994) that the meaning of purpose of the linguistic strategy can be vary depending at least on context, conversational style of participants, and the interaction of participant's style and strategies.

- **The Function of Linguistic Strategies Used by Lesbian**

Certain linguistic strategy can have each different function related to the context of the conversation and the effect to interlocutor can also be different even the strategy used is the same. This is relevant to the theory of relativity in linguistic strategy by Tannen (1994) that linguistic strategies can vary its function according to the context. In the movie it can be seen that Lota, who has male traits, frequently uses

her power to gain the conversation floor by using certain strategies in linguistic. Those strategies are interruption and topic rising. This is prior to Tannen (1994) stated that men as a class dominate women in our society, and that many individual men seek to dominate women in their lives. In so many ways she interrupts Elizabeth by stopping Elizabeth's sentence before she could finish her sentences (fragment 8, 9, 11, 14, 16, 22). Tannen (1994) argues that if one speaker repeatedly overlaps and another repeatedly gives way, the resulting communication is unbalanced which then creates the domination effect.

In addition, the function to gain the conversation floor can also be seen through linguistic strategy topic rising. Shuy (1982), stated that topic rising, similar to interruption, is used mostly for dominating the floor of conversation. Topic rising also violates the turn taking system by setting a topic in the beginning of the conversation making the interlocutor to choose to follow the topic given. Topic raising is used as the starter of making a conversation and ensures a conversation to be happened (fragment 10 and 20).

The function of showing power to create domination is seen through the linguistic strategy adversativeness or engaging in verbal conflict. As it has been stated by Tannen (1994) that male speaker tends to engage in verbal conflict by arguing, issuing command, and taking the opposing stands. Adversativeness also can be used as a sign of anger, like in the fragment 18 and 25 where Lota continuously saying harsh sentence toward Elizabeth. Her sentence like 'how dare you, you are aloof, you are imperious' can be seen as a rude language spoken toward women.

The function as a defensive strategy can be seen through the strategies indirectness and silence. Linguistic strategy indirectness allows the speaker to convey a sensitive message without hurting the feeling of interlocutors. For example in the table in fragment 2 shows that Mary answers Lota's question implicitly. She utters circuitous sentence making Lota to ask Mary for the second time in order to make Mary answers her question clearly. The way Mary answer Lota's question in circuitous way is in willing to not to hurt Lota's feeling.

In addition, the function of defensive strategy is also seen through linguistic strategy silence since the purpose of silence is used to avoid conflict. Furthermore, the silence in turn taking system is mainly to show the powerless people. In this movie, Elizabeth several times remains silent and cannot response the speaker (Lota) for Elizabeth has no power

to response the statements. Several times Elizabeth kept silent realizing that she cannot response Lota's statement or it is likely that she is in purpose to avoid conflict and prefer to be silent (fragment 13, 15, 17, 21). She lets Lota to dominate her. This is contrary to the statement from Tannen (1994) and Spender (1980) that men tend to dominate women by silencing them. In other words, men use her power to create domination by silencing them. In this movie, the use of silence is used in the purpose to avoid conflict. The silence of Elizabeth is a sign of powerless person. Knowing that Lota has power in every conversation make Elizabeth has no effort to offense every statement spoken by Lota that contains power and domination.

Another function of the using of linguistic strategy is defend the speaker's pride that can be seen from the use of linguistic strategy topic rising. In this movie, by rising a topic Lota can control the conversation floor and make her having a chance to defend her pride. In fragment 1 Lota raised a topic about her work in building a new house for her and Mary. She raised the topic to impress Elizabeth making Elizabeth remain silent and following to the topic given. By impressing Elizabeth it is seen that Lota is controlling the flow of conversation floor.

Issuing command as the function of adversativeness strategy is also seen in this movie. This is following to Tannen (1994) that men tend to engage in conflict by arguing, issuing command, and taking the opposing stands. In fragment 4 and 7 Lota said harsh language in the purpose to issuing command toward Elizabeth. In fragment 4 Lota commanded Elizabeth not to have a cheer with her and the other guest in Lota's house. While in fragment 7 Lota issued Elizabeth to keep staying at Samambaia by saying harsh sentence toward Elizabeth. By issuing command I harsh sentence Lota creates the domination toward Elizabeth making Elizabeth become the oppressed character in this movie.

- **The Effect to Interlocutors of Using Linguistic Strategies Used by Lesbian**

By using certain strategy in linguistic one can uses power to result unbalanced communication which then creates the domination effect to interlocutors. However, the unbalanced communication also results of showing subordinate effect. The lack of power indicates the position of one who has no power to defend her or himself to the speaker's statement. In other words, they are being subordinated by the domination of powerful characters. The effect to

interlocutor itself is classified according to the type of strategies. The strategies that creates domination effect to the speaker are the strategies interruption, topic rising and adversativeness. While the strategies that result to show subordinate effect are silence and indirectness.

The domination effect to interlocutor is firstly seen through the strategy interruption. The strategy interruption has effect to interlocutor used by the speaker to exercise the power and create domination fulfilling the request whether it is implicitly spoken or directly spoken. This is prior to Brown and Gillman (1960) that one person may be said to have power over another to the degree that he is able to control the behavior of other. Several fragments (8, 9, 14, 16, 19, 24) show that interruptions occur within directly spoken by the speaker resulting interlocutor to stop and several times and could not continue to speak. In other words, the speaker forces the interlocutors to stop her or his sentence and control his or her behavior by interrupting him or her.

In addition, the domination effect can also be seen through adversativeness strategy. Adversativeness strategy can only be ended in two ways. First, either the interlocutor agreed to engage on the verbal conflict or not to engage in the conflict. This is similar to topic raising that make interlocutor to follow the topic or not to follow the topic. In adversativeness classification the interlocutor tend to follow the conflict.

Several times Elizabeth remains silent and follows the command. In other words, Elizabeth tends to follow the conflict made by Lota. Tannen (1994) argues that arguing, issuing command, and taking the opposing stands can be stated in the category of adversativeness. It can be seen in fragment 7, Elizabeth has no chance to refuse Lota's command to keep staying at Samambaia. However, at the end of the movie Elizabeth is struggling her power to gain the conversation floor by response each Lota's harsh language even she is leave Lota before Lota could finish her sentence. This is contrary to Tannen (1994) about Gender and Language that women had no power than men that man as a class dominate women in our society.

In other words, the theory of Tannen (1994) does not always support the character of lesbian language especially to those who has female traits since in certain context Elizabeth uses her power to attack Lota's statement although it is just happened in one scene. In that scene, in fragment 23 and 25



Elizabeth's power to offense and even leave Lota creates bad effect to the life of Lota. Elizabeth's leaving destroys Lota's life making an effect to the life of mental hospital due to the stress of to be left by Elizabeth which then allows her to suicide herself at Elizabeth's apartment after she had known that Elizabeth had had another girlfriend.

Furthermore, the effect of showing subordinate effect can be seen through linguistic strategy indirectness and silence. By using indirectness, one can deliver an idea implicitly to the interlocutor safely. The purpose of indirectness is that to make the interlocutor realize and understand the ideas that are indirectly spoken by avoiding conflict and using circuitous sentence to not to harm interlocutor's feeling. As an oppressed woman who has no power Elizabeth uses indirectness strategy to avoid conflict when she is answering Lota's question or elaborating her sentence. She does not want to harm interlocutor's feeling by stating directly to interlocutor even the interlocutor cannot catch the message. This is following Lakoff (1975) stating that there are two benefits of indirectness: defensiveness and rapport. In this movie, Elizabeth tends to use indirectness strategy in order not to make demands. However, in the table above (fragment 2) indicates that the interlocutor (Lota) cannot catch the idea and ask for second time to get the clear answer. Nevertheless, in fragment 6 interlocutor (Lota) can catch the idea and directly response the indirectness.

In addition, the subordinate effect also goes through the strategy of silence. In this movie, in fragment 13, 15, and 21 Elizabeth was silent as a sign of powerless person. She could not response each of Lota's statements. As an oppressed person Elizabeth kept silent in order to avoid conflict if she responses Lota's each statements within other strategies rather than within silence. As a class of subordinate people she does not want in willing to harm Lota's heart, so she was silent as her sign to agree the statement spoken by Lota. This is contrary to the theory proposed by Sattel (1983) that men use silence to exercise power over women, for in this movie the silence of Elizabeth is a sign of powerlessness of Elizabeth.

## CONCLUSION

This research found that the linguistic strategies are used by the lesbian in the movie "Reaching for the Moon" taken from the conversation spoken by them. The reasons of using linguistic strategy itself vary according to the context and the interlocutor they are

talking to even the strategy used is the same. By using certain strategies in conversation the effect to interlocutors can be seen through the use of linguistic strategies and the function of using those linguistic strategies.

This study shows that the linguistic strategies used by lesbian in the movie "Reaching for the Moon" are interruption, indirectness, silence, topic rising, and adversativeness. However, the linguistic strategy minimal response does not appear in the movie. Each of the strategies has their own function and effect to interlocutor depending on the context in conversations. Some functions of using linguistic strategies are to gain conversation floor (interruption and topic rising), to show power toward interlocutor (interruption and adversativeness), to avoid conflict (indirectness and silence), to defend speaker's pride (topic rising), and to issuing command (adversativeness).

Each of the strategies has the effect to interlocutor. By using certain strategy in linguistic one can uses power to result unbalanced communication which then creates the domination effect to interlocutors. The strategies that used to create domination effect to the interlocutor are as interruption, topic rising, and adversativeness. In this movie, the one that results domination effect is Lota dominating Elizabeth. Lota become the dominant lesbian since she frequently dominates Elizabeth in every conversations. Lota has a power to use powerful sentence creating a power to dominate Elizabeth.

While on the other hand, the lack of using linguistic strategies make Elizabeth become oppressed person for she had no power to offense the strategies given by Lota. It is as the indication of the subordinate effect resulting from the use of domination strategy spoken by Lota toward Elizabeth. In other words, the character that has no power has a tendency to use defensive strategy such as indirectness and silence in a purpose to avoid conflict to any other character in the movie. However, at the end of the movie Elizabeth tries to use her power to offense Lota's oppression by leaving her to New York.

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