

TRANSGENDER CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES IN *TRANSAMERICA* MOVIE

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Abstrak

Tokoh utama dalam film *Transamerica* yakni Bree Osbourne, mendukung perubahannya sebagai wanita transeksual dengan menggunakan strategi bahasa di dalam percakapannya. Berdasarkan film ini, peran Bree Osbourne melalui strategi bahasa menggambarkan karakter dirinya secara utuh. Memiliki dua identitas sebagai lelaki dan perempuan membuat dirinya terjebak dalam kebingungan. Hal ini sangat alami terjadi, karakter asli dirinya tidak dapat bertukar meskipun dia berperawak perempuan. Film ini tentunya menemukan keberadaan fitur kebahasaan lelaki yang ada pada dirinya sebagai karakter transgender. ke aslian manusia dan tata cara penggunaan bahasa akan berhubungan secara tidak langsung.

Kata kunci: *strategi bahasa, fitur bahasa lelaki dan film transamerica*

Abstract

In *Transamerica* movie, the main character Bree Osbourne used linguistic strategy in her conversation to support her change as transsexual woman. Throughout the movie, the action of Bree with her strategies embraced herself after all. Being ambivalence within two identities – of man and woman's character – made Bree sticks in confusion. It was natural that her origin as a man could not be switched even if she had her real body as a female. This movie then exactly figured out the existence of man's language features did exists in her – the character of a transgender. Human natural origin and the way the language being used were related unconsciously.

Keywords: *Linguistic strategies, man's language features and Transamerca movie.*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the issue of transgender is being abroad and popular since there are many people who decide to be a trans-people. Society's view about trans-people still narrow and make them feel uncomfortable to live in society. The existence of trans-people usually ignore by society because of their crisis identity. Sex and gender are complex issue. A huge variety of factors are at work in making each individual the person that they are and there is no one reason that causes people to be transgender. (national center for transgender equality, 2009) transgender cannot be separated from society. Societal will indicate that transgender through the appearances, language which is used and behavior. Trans-people also should change their ability of using language as a men or women.

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity (sense of them as male or female) or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex. The term transgender was popularized in the 1970s (but implied in the 1960s) describing people who wanted to live cross gender without sex reassignment surgery.

Linguistic strategy means that Interactional view which the delivered words can have different meaning behind the actual meaning as it design a conversation in certain way to achieve a purpose. Men and women speak different varieties of the same language. In other words, men and women do not use completely different form of language. They use different quantities or frequencies in the same form. This

fact is more or less affected by social role they have in society.

Kulick(2003) draws intention to the issue of transgender as a particular groups or individual who wanted to live diverge from the normative gender role and they could accommodate the claims of people who identified them as bisexual or transgendered. Lesbian feminists argued about whether women who defined their lesbian identities in terms of butch-femme roles could legitimately lay claim to a radical sexual politics. Women's groups grappled with the issue of male-to-female transsexuals who claimed access to women-only space on the grounds that they identified as women. Being ambivalence within two identities of men and women makes a person sticks in confusion.

This study focused on transgender as a main topic to be revealed the discussion about transgender and have been taken from the character of Bree Ousbourn trans-people in *Transamerica* movie. This study is concerned with only one movie *Transamerica* movie. This study only focuses on the main character (*Felicity Huffman*) in this movie. This study discussed the linguistic strategy used by the character in this movie as a trans-people. *Transamerica* is American comedy drama film directed by Duncan Tucker, and co-written by William H. Macy. This film was released on February 14, 2005. It tells the story of Bree Ousbourn, a trans-people played in the movie by Felicity Huffman, whose birth name was Stanley Schupak. Who goes on road trip with her long lost son Toby (Kevin Zegers). Despite that this movie is marked by the academy award nominated and golden globe winning a performance by huff man who is also known for her performance in *Desperate housewife*. Because Bree has to change his way of using language, attitude and also his physical appearance truly act as women. He has to learn how to take clothes, the way to touch up as perfect truly as women, the way to walk and to speak and he must tries to against his men's feeling. Increase her elegance attitude as women.

Based on the explanation above, this study concerned with the language used by the main character Bree Ousbourn in movie entitled (*Transamerica*). a study of the linguistic strategy in *Transmaerica* movie intends to be conducted. This study found out and described the linguistic strategy used by transgender character in this movie. The theory about linguistic strategy by Tannen (1992) and kulick (2003) were used. Furthermore, the theory about the cooperative principle by Grice (1981) was also used.

METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative method. The researcher intends to analyze linguistic strategies which is used and shown in *Transamerica* movie, whether to identify and describe which are uttered by the speakers; and to describe the role of linguistic strategies in creating gender identity cause of her crisis gender identity.

In this study, the instrument is the researcher herself. The researcher evaluated some books, journals and article which related this topic to find the answer of the statement of the problem. Also, Laptop, movie, paper, and pen as the instruments were necessary needed, this study does not use any questioners to help answering the research question. The video of *Transamerica* movie, GOM player, and earphone were also needed in this research.

In order to collect the data for this study, there were several steps. The first step was watching *Transamerica* movie. The second step was browsing to the internet to get the movie script and to search the information about the movie. The third step was checking the script that had been taken from the internet with the movie. The last step was listing the linguistic strategy used by the transgender character in *Transamerica* movie. Then, those strategies were categorized based on the strategy that mostly used by the character transgender in this movie.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Strategies of Transgender

The linguistic strategies that already found in the movie *Transamerica* are advertiveness, interruption, topic raising, silence and indirectness. This movie of *Transamerica* exactly figures out the existence of transgender, Even her-transgender character appearance cover herself into a women but it couldn't make her to change perfectly. This movie then exactly figures out the existence of man's features does exists in her – the character of a transgender. Human natural origin and the way the language being used are related unconsciously. It is natural that her origin as a man cannot be switched even if she has her real body as a female.

Although the data above belong to the same type of strategy, the purpose or function can be different one of them depends on the context and interlocutor of the conversation. Bree Osbourne-transgender character used all of the categories of linguistic strategy.

First is advertiveness or verbal conflict is more likely to engage in conflict, it can express to everyone, whether men or women. Men use advertiveness by arguing, issuing commands, and taking opposing stands) in contrary, females to be cooperative and more likely to avoid conflict (for example, by agreeing, supporting, and making

suggestions rather than commands). For example when Bree- Transgender character used the function of agreeing, it happened when she caught Toby brought codeine and wanted to whiff it but Bree directly forbade him and said *"Is that drugs? Oh, no. Absolutely not. Goddamn it! No! That is not all right. You can't do that here."* In this case, rejection and conflict occur toward Toby, he straightly against her and said *"Are you gonna let me do my thing, or do I have to get out of this fucking car right now?"*. Here she couldn't resist Toby. She showed her powerless as a women because she had to act truly as women by saying *"Huh? Go ahead Kill yourself"*. She only agreed what Toby's wants to whiffing his codeine in her car. Otherwise it indicated that Bree couldn't do anything except agree. Therefore, the motive of agreeing is caused by she was impacted.

Second is Interruption is a kind of linguistic phenomenon in conversation which has received a great deal of attention in recent years which is primarily due to the fact that interruption deals with the operationall of dominance in conversation, among other things. Interruption is often described as evil intention to cut the flow of the current speaker's speech and to grab the floor to make one's own points. For example when she-transgender character used the function as a way of getting the floor. By using this strategy she started to familiarize societal with her new look and new identity as a women. The obvious interruption does stop the flow of cop's speech and take the floor for Bree. It happened when the police called Bree and said *"Mr. Schupak. Mr---"* Bree was directly replied and said *"Ms. Schupak. i mean, Ms. Osbourne. i changed it."* Here, Bree didn't fully cooperative with her character as woman, because she still use her old character of men by interrupting to grab the floor and to control the direction of conversations. By using this strategy she started to familiarize societal with her new look and new identity as a women.

Third is topic raising The speaker who thinks the other has no more to say on a given topic may try to contribute to the conversation by raising another topic. The speaker who has a conversation with another has to raise a topic in order to make the conversation still ongoing both women and men have their own purpose in raising the topic or switching the topics. The purpose of raising a topic is to control the conversation floor and dominate it. For example when Bree tried to switch the topic when she had a conversation with her doctor. At that time she was asked by the doctor about her feeling, whether she was a happy person or not. But she didn't give certain answer. And it made the doctor said *"How can I help you if you won't be honest with me?"* And she directly switched her topic by saying *"You can sign that consent form."* Bree was investigated by the doctor before she had re assignment surgery

consent form. In this case the purpose of using this strategy was to get the floor of interaction.

Fourth is silence Society believes that silence is a sign of powerless person. The dominating person robbing the ability of the weak to speak. This is the assumption that most individuals of the society tend to believe in. while silence is traditionally being at beginning and ending of a conversation. When Toby said that he wanted to change his name to Stanley Schupak, *"I'll change my street name. Something like Stanley. Stan. Stan the man. That's my dad's name. There's his picture. He's with my mom. (pointing to the old picture)"* at that time Bree remains to be silent and did not respond anything to Toby. Bree-transgender character used the function of unwillingness to interact or avoidance of communication. Through her silent, she was being shocked and couldn't imagine if Toby know that Bree was his biological father.

The last is Indirectness The ability to get one's request met without expressing anything directly can be a sign of power rather than the lack of it. For example when Bree-transgender character said *"I have to go to the ladies room. Do you think there are snakes around here?"* Here means that she made indirectly request for Toby to accompany her because of his scare toward a snake. In this case the utterances used as request speech act. When she asked something to Toby, it might gain the possible rejection or conflict occurs from Toby. This provides greater freedom for the hearer to refuse. this utterances used the function of self protection.

CONCLUSION

In *Transamerica* movie, the transgender character Bree Osbourne use linguistic strategies in her conversation to support her change as transsexual woman. There are five types of linguistic strategy which are uttered by the main character, they are interruption, topic raising, silence, advertiveness or verbal conflict and indirectness. The result shows that the main character in *Transamerica* movie used those strategies in order to show her identity as woman. It is not an easy way for Bree to change her habit from being men to women and each of the strategy has function. First, advertiveness or verbal conflict strategy is used to express suggestion, agreement, command, taking opposing stand, arguing and agreeing. Second is interruption strategy used to get the floor of interaction, interactive condition, avoid embarrassment and build a good communication. Third is silence strategy used to express unwillingness to interact, sense of embarrassment, powerless, anxiety and sense of dominance. The last is indirectness strategy that used to express politeness, self protection, rejection and denial. The character of Bree draws a reality of language and naturality included in a

relation of cause-effect. Throughout the movie, the action of Bree –transgender character with her strategies embraces herself after all. Since interruption, topic raising, silence, advertiveness or verbal conflict and indirectness represented by the character of Bree, this movie then fits the requirement for the study about transgender. There is nothing to deal with even if a man turns out into a woman, the body can reflect the personality but then it is the matter of the language that shows the original character of a man or a woman should be naturally.

SUGGESTION

The result of the analysis was expected to enlarge the point of view of the readers about linguistic strategy. For suggestion, the next researchers can analyze another gender phenomenon such as pedophilia. Moreover, the next researchers can focus on linguistic strategy which was used by a man who experiences pedophilia in other movies. The theories of Men are from Mars women are from Venus by John Gray and Language and Sexuality by Cameron and Kulick (2003) can be used to conduct the next researches.

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