

## Gossiping Among the Characters in “*Confession of A Shopaholic*”

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian dengan judul Bergosip Antara Karakter di “Confession of a Shopaholic” bertujuan untuk mengetahui fitur linguistik pria dan wanita dan fungsi gosip selama sesi gosip di antara karakter dalam film Confession of a Shopaholic. Gosip sering muncul selama percakapan sehari-hari kita dengan orang lain dan itu akan, entah bagaimana, mempengaruhi cara pria dan wanita menggunakan bahasa, mempengaruhi orang dan dipengaruhi oleh orang lain. Data untuk penelitian ini adalah sebuah film berjudul Confession of a Shopaholic, dan dalam mengumpulkan data, metode dokumentasi digunakan. Setelah data dikumpulkan, data-data tersebut dianalisis secara kualitatif untuk menemukan fitur linguistik pria dan wanita nya dalam percakapan karakter berdasarkan jenis gosipnya dan juga untuk menemukan fungsi gosip.*

*Teori dari Lakoff (1975) tentang fitur linguistik perempuan, Holmes (2000) tentang fitur linguistik pria, Nevo et al. (dikutip dalam Watson, 2012) tentang jenis gosip, dan Stirling dan Foster (2004) tentang fungsi gosip digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dari sepuluh fitur linguistik perempuan, semua diantaranya ditemukan selama sesi gosip pada karakter. Penggunaan intensifier adalah yang paling sering muncul selama percakapan. Dalam film ini, karakter pria cenderung menggunakan tata bahasa yang benar dan juga penggunaan kata yang tegas, yang membuat tata bahasa yang benar dan penggunaan kata yang tegas tidak menjadi fitur linguistik laki-laki maupun perempuan. Di sisi lain, fitur linguistik pria yang muncul hanya penggunaan bahasa tabu dan kata sumpah yang kuat, yang dinyatakan oleh seorang pria dan seorang wanita di film ini. Fungsi gosip yang muncul dalam sesi gosip karakter adalah pertukaran informasi, memperkuat persahabatan, dan mempengaruhi pendapat orang lain. Antara tiga jenis gosip, fitur linguistik perempuan ditemukan mendominasi sesi gosip dibandingkan dengan fitur linguistik laki-laki.*

*Kata kunci: Pria, Wanita, Bahasa, Gosip*

### 1. Background of the Study

Language can be associated as a means for transmitting a message, information, or idea from speaker to hearer in a communication. In different social context an individual will speak in different ways, which is called stylistic variation (Coates, 1986:

4). In the way of using language as the medium to communicate, men and women share different styles of language. The linguistic features used by men and women in their speech would characterize their style of language. The differences of women's and men's languages are seen in the choice and frequency of lexical items, intonation and other patterns (Lakoff 1975: 49). Also, there is this issue where it is believed in our culture that gossip - an important part of our communicative and "social behavior that nearly everyone experiences, contributes to, and presumably intuitively understands" (Foster, cited in Al-Hindawi & Mirza 2015: 73) - cannot be separated from men and women's behavior. Therefore, this study tried to analyze the linguistic features or the characteristics of men's and women's language in their daily conversations, especially during their gossip session, and the functions of gossip that they used during the conversations among the characters in the chosen movie.

Since linguistic features are what characterize men's and women's language, some related theories such as one from Robin Lakoff (1975) which is about women's linguistic features and by Holmes (2000) about men's linguistic features were used to support the data. This topic was interesting because gossip is considered an activity that everyone contributes to and appears very often during people's daily conversation and we all know how such a language that we use during our conversation can be powerful and convincing. Other than that, a word may represent how someone feels and think about something and such a word may have a hidden meaning behind it. The gossip session would show what relationships the characters have with the other. The data source was a comedy-romance genre movie entitled "*Confessions of a Shopaholic*" released on February 9, 2009, with the main character named Rebecca Bloomwood, a fun-loving woman who is really good at shopping. She would love to work at the city's top fashion magazine but, so far, has not been able to get her foot in the door. From this movie, the focus was to analyze the conversations, which are considered to be gossip, produced by the main character and some of her friends she has gossip with and match them with the linguistic features of men's and women's language theories and the functions of gossip.

## **2. Problems of the Study**

Based on the explanation above about men's and women's language that comes from conversations that involved gossiping, two problems occurred in this study. The problems are:

- 1) What are the characteristics of men's and women's language used in gossiping among the characters in the movie "*Confession of a Shopaholic*"?
- 2) What functions of gossip appeared during the characters' gossip session in the movie "*Confession of a Shopaholic*"?

### 3. Aims of the Study

This article is made for two aims:

- 1) to find out the characteristics of men's and women's language used in gossiping among the characters in the movie "*Confession of A Shopaholic*"
- 2) to find out the functions of gossip that appeared during the characters' gossip session in the movie "*Confession of A Shopaholic*".

### 4. Research Method

The data was a comedy, romance movie entitled "*Confessions of A Shopaholic*" released in the U.S on February 9, 2009. This movie was directed by P.J. Hogan, and the movie script was written by Tracey Jackson, Tim Firth, and Kayla Alpert. The data were collected using the documentation method and it came in two forms; primary and secondary data. The primary data was the movie itself, and the transcription became the secondary data. The method used to analyze the data was the qualitative method. The analysis focused on the characters' utterances and would be analyzed using related theories, mostly proposed by Lakoff (1975), Holmes (2000), Nevo et al. (cited in Watson, 2012), and Foster (2004).

### 5. Findings and Discussion

#### 5.1 Social Information Gossip

- (1) Ryan, a worker at Successful Saving who is also a friend to Luke, was playing an indoor golf in his office. Ryan called Luke to go to his office to discuss about how he could have brought Rebecca, the new journalist, to a finance seminar because Ryan thought Rebecca could damage the company by how honest she was to everyone. The conversation between Luke and Ryan will be shown below

Ryan: Oh, yeah. Nice!  
I just got a call from Jeff Kanter at Comintex.  
They're having their stockholders' meeting.

Luke: Yes, I sent someone.

Ryan: Yeah, you did.

Luke: A real find, actually, the girl I sent.  
She's sparky, honest. Exactly the type that I was hoping to find (talking  
about Rebecca that he took to the seminar with). I assume that's why  
Edgar West got you to recruit me.

Ryan: ***Damn it!*** (curses because his golf ball misses)  
Luke: Ooh. Slice.  
Ryan: I hired you to fix the bottom line of this magazine, and we  
know the key to that is advertising revenue.  
Luke: Now, you hired me to create a product that sells, not to sell a product.  
Ryan: What if I'm with Edgar West. We're playing golf, and he  
just turns to me, ***sort of*** nonchalantly, and says, "Hey, I'd  
like to know why Luke Brandon decided to  
hire a journalist who could damage the commercial  
interests of Dantay- West." What do you  
think about that?  
Luke: I haven't, because she won't.  
Page 25, no. dialogue (75)

Ryan swore by using the word ***damn it*** with high intonation. The swear word ***damn it*** was not addressed to Luke, but because he missed the golf ball. The swear word ***damn it*** is one of men's linguistic features based on Holmes (2000) theory. Ryan probably felt that he was allowed to swear in front of Luke because the situation during the conversation was informal because it was between friends. Their relationship at work did not look like between a boss and an employee. The swear word was used to express his solidarity and maintain his social relationship with Luke. Other than that, Ryan also uttered the hedge ***sort of*** while talking to Luke to make Luke imagining of what would happen if their boss asked why they sent a journalist that could damage the company. The hedge ***sort of*** was identified as the women's linguistic feature by Lakoff (1975), but it appeared that Ryan has also used it. It was probably because the hedge ***sort of*** was the best option for him to express his uncertainty about what he was imagining and saying to Luke.

The conversation between Luke and Ryan was considered social information gossip which happened with no presence of the third party, Rebecca. The topic of their conversation was about how Rebecca could damage the company they worked at. Ryan felt anxious once he found out that Luke brought Rebecca to be a representative to a seminar and was being all innocent asking about stuff that were not supposed to be asked in front of the audience. Ryan feared that Rebecca's innocence in that seminar could damage the reputation of the company. The function of gossip from Luke and Ryan's conversation here is to strengthen their friendship in individual level. Individual level of friendship means gossip that can be a way of advertising one's own advantages, as a friend, an ally or even a mate (De Vos, Dunbar, and Foster cited in Al-Hindawi & Mirza, 2015).

(2) Luke and Rebecca have just attended a seminar together. In the seminar, Luke tried to make Rebecca to ask one of the speakers, who worked in a huge company, about their investment system. Luke made Rebecca ask a hard-hitting question on that

guy, which then he could not answer because it was considered to be a question that would reveal his company's secret. When the seminar ended, Luke talked with Rebecca about how it went, and the conversation is shown below.

Luke: OK. *You know why we did that?*

Rebecca: *Some kind of cruel initiation right?*

Luke: Listen to this. Security can mean different things to different people. For some, it's going to a party wearing the right shoes. This might leave you feeling secure for an evening, but have a crippling effect on you in later life.

Rebecca: I wrote that.

Luke: You wrote that.

Now, what firms like Comintex thrive on is an endemic lack of public understanding. They get away with murder because...

Maisie with a root beer and a \$200 investment portfolio, what does she know?

What does she actually know about what those guys are doing?

What she's told.

And if the magazines she looks to for answers aren't asking the right questions, it isn't good for Maisie.

I want you to tell the truth in a way that Maisie can understand. Now, go home, write me an initial outline and e-mail it to me by 3:00.

OK?

Page 24-25, no. dialogue (73)

The conversation between Rebecca and Luke as shown above showed that Luke used one of women's linguistic features (Lakoff, 1975), which was the rising intonation on declaratives. Luke used it in his statement "*OK. You know why we did that?*". Luke stated that statement in order to get a confirmation from Rebecca on whether Rebecca knew the reason why Luke made her ask that hard, yet rude question in front of the audience of that previous seminar or not. After that, Rebecca was also seen to use the rising intonation in her statement "*Some kind of cruel initiation right?*" in order to get a confirmation from Luke if she was getting an initiation in her new job or not.

This conversation is considered a social information gossip because Luke and Rebecca mentioned social information referring to their job and also they talked about someone who was not present during the conversation, Maisie. Then, from the conversation that both Luke and Rebecca had, they could get new information, especially Rebecca, about how to work as a journalist for a saving magazine. They could also strengthen their friendship as colleagues by sharing information that one lacks of. Luke has also now influenced the way Rebecca thought about how business worked for the field they work in. Luke influenced Rebecca instructively (Dunbar cited in Al-Hindawi & Mirza, 2015) by giving her some advice.

## 5.2 Achievement-Related Gossip

(1) When Rebecca got the job at Successful Savings magazine, she went to tell her best friend, Suze. But Suze was surprised when she heard it because all this past time Rebecca only told her how she only wanted to get to a fashion magazine named Alette magazine. The gossip session between Suze and Rebecca is shown below.

Suze: *You took a job at a savings magazine? You?*

Rebecca: I know it sounds bad, but it is, in fact, part of a *very* structured plan.

Suze: Yeah, that's great, but then in a lot of ways it's kinda not great. What do they call it when an animal rights person gets trampled to death by a cow? I don't think there is a word for that.

Page 19, no. dialogue (57)

The conversation above showed the use of rising intonation and intensifier. When Rebecca told Suze that she took the job at Successful Savings, a saving magazine, Suze seemed not to believe what she had heard. Suze rose her intonation when she said “*You took a job at a savings magazine? You?*” because she could not believe that her best friend would take a job at a saving magazine in which she had no experience and passion about. The rising intonation during Suze’s statement showed that Suze was seeking for a confirmation from Rebecca and also she underestimated Rebecca for getting a job which she had no experience about. There also occurred the use of intensifier in Rebecca’s statement. Rebecca used the intensifier *very* to show the strong assertion. It matched Lakoff’s statement (1975) that intensifiers such as *so* and *very* were usually used to strengthen an assertion and to hedge on one’s feelings also to show strong emotions. The intensifier showed her strong emotion during stating her words, which she hoped that would make everyone believe in what she was saying.

This conversation between Rebecca and Suze as shown above is categorized as achievement-related gossip which fulfilled the requirement to be called gossip because they talked about every day details of someone. Rebecca and Suze were talking about Rebecca’s newest job. But Suze questioned it that Rebecca could get a job at Successful Savings magazine, which she has no experience about. This gossip session has the function of influencing others. Rebecca wanted to influence Suze competitively as Schmidt (2004) said that the influence of gossip can be called competitive when people “attempt to gain control in situations, purposefully influencing the attitudes and actions of others in a specific direction”. In this case, Rebecca wanted to make Suze think that she could control of the situation she was in.

### 5.3 Physical Appearance Gossip

(1) The Successful Savings staff were now back from the conference in Miami. Rebecca was still feeling disappointed in Luke that he went out with Alicia last night. Rebecca did not like the fact that Luke and Alicia might have a special relationship. The next day, there would be a dinner meeting held by the Dantay-West management which invited some businessmen and businesswomen to it. Rebecca wanted to look good in that event, and also to impress Luke. Suze helped Rebecca choosing her best dress to wear.

Rebecca: *Oh my gosh*, I forgot I even had this dress.  
Suze: And Fluke would love you in that dress.  
Rebecca: Don't talk about Fluke.  
Suze: Why? What happened?  
Rebecca: Alicia *Bitch* Longlegs is what happened.  
Suze: I hate her. Who is she?  
Rebecca: She's the girl with the perfect everything.  
Suze: Well, well, Luke is a raging *moron*.  
He's gonna be so bummed when you show up at the  
ball looking like a total knockout in that dress.  
You're gonna be a total hottie.

Page 46, no. dialogue (142)

The conversation above showed two words considered as the avoidance of strong swear word and also the use of taboo language or swear words spoken by Suze and Rebecca. The first avoidance of strong swear word, which was considered as women's linguistic feature, was stated by Rebecca in her utterance "*Oh my gosh, I forgot I even had this dress*". The words *Oh my gosh* were considered as light swear words (Lakoff, 1975). They were considered to be equal as *oh dear, my goodness*. The second avoidance of strong swear word was uttered by Suze. Suze uttered the word *moron* which she referred to Luke, probably for paying more attention on Alicia, not Rebecca. Light swear words were believed to be used more often by women, to express their strong emotions towards something, than men. Men usually use stronger swear words like *damn, shit*, etc. After that, Rebecca was heard to use the strong swear word *bitch* to refer to Alicia, whom she hated. The use of swear words is considered one of men's linguistic feature, but Rebecca used it too to express her strong emotion on Alicia. Rebecca hated Alicia very much for trying hard in getting Luke's attention. Rebecca referred the word '*bitch*' to Alicia when she gossiped about her with Suze. Rebecca felt free to use swear word around Suze, her best friend, to express her solidarity with Suze.

The conversation above was considered gossip that refers to physical appearance (talking about clothes). The topic discussed about the possibility of personal affairs

between Luke and Alicia with absent third party and in intimate situation between two best friends. Suze and Rebecca were gossiping about someone named Alicia for always hitting onto Luke. From the gossip session they had, they could exchange information and strengthen their friendship. It is said to exchange information because Rebecca told Suze about how she felt about Luke at that moment, and in exchange, Suze told Rebecca that she hated Alicia from all the stories Rebecca had told her. From telling each other such information as mentioned before, they could strengthen their friendship individually level as best friends.

## 6. Conclusion

This study discussed about the gossip session among the characters in “*Confession of a Shopaholic*” movie to find out the men’s and women’s language, and also to find the function of gossip in their conversation. The results of the discussion showed that the gossip session between the characters in the chosen movie were mostly categorized as social information gossip, with 15 (fifteen) conversations. The achievement-related gossip was found with five conversations, and lastly the physical appearance gossip with four conversations.

Between the three types of gossip as mentioned earlier, women’s linguistic features were dominating all of them. The men’s linguistic features that occurred during the gossip session between the characters were the use of taboo language and strong swear words that occurred in social information gossip and in physical appearance gossip. Meanwhile, the women’s linguistic features that occurred were ten out of ten, and the use of intensifier was the most often to appear in women’s conversations. The women’s linguistic features were also found in men’s dialogues especially for the hypercorrect grammar and the use of emphatic stress. This made hypercorrect grammar and the use of emphatic stress, which were once considered women’s linguistic features (Lakoff, 1975), became neither men’s nor women’s linguistic features because both women and men use it quiet frequently in this movie. The analysis has come up with only the three functions of gossip; the exchange of information, friendship, and to influence others.

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