



WOMEN'S LANGUAGE ANALYSIS IN THE WISH MOVIE

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Abstract

The representation of gender in animated films significantly affects people's perceptions of the construction of linguistic identity. This study examines the features of women's language in the *Wish* movie (2023) through a sociolinguistic analysis framework based on Lakoff's theory of women's language and Creswell's qualitative methodology. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature research design, analyzing the dialogue of Asha's female protagonist through objective sampling and thematic content analysis. These findings identified seven linguistic features that manifested in the protagonist's speech: lexical hedges appeared 32 times, intensifiers 12 times, tagged questions 6 times, superpolite forms 4 times, empty adjectives and hypercorrected grammar 2 times each. The analysis reveals the multidimensional function of these features, which simultaneously reflect the persistence of traditional gender norms and support the empowerment of protagonists through strategic contextual implementation. Lexical hedging serves as a politeness strategy rather than simply a marker of uncertainty, while tag questions serve a rhetorical purpose that challenges patriarchal authority. Intensifiers reinforce the emotional urgency for community advocacy and a very polite form of negotiating social hierarchies while maintaining agency. This research shows that contemporary Disney animation presents an ambivalence between the reproduction of patriarchal ideology and progressive attempts to construct complex and empowered female characters, which contribute new insights to gender-language relations in popular media representation.

Keywords: female language features, gender representation, sociolinguistic analysis

INTRODUCTION

The representation of women's language in animated films is an important study in the realm of contemporary sociolinguistics because of its ability to shape people's perceptions of gender roles. Animated films from major studios like Walt Disney Animation Studios have a significant influence on the construction of gender identity through the linguistic practices that their characters use. Recent research reveals that gender bias in movies is still very common, where male characters tend to be portrayed more dominantly, while female characters are more often portrayed in fun roles (Haris et al., 2023). This phenomenon reflects gender stereotypes that continue to be reinforced through popular culture products. The study of language and gender has undergone substantial theoretical development since Robin Lakoff introduced the concept of "women's language" that reflects women's subordinate positions in patriarchal social structures. Contemporary research integrates linguistic corpus approaches and critical discourse analysis to uncover linguistic patterns that reflect gender inequality. Recent studies have shown that gender stereotypes have a consistent impact on cognitive processes in language understanding and production, resulting in biased interpretations and perpetuating gender norms in a variety of contexts (Beroiza-Valenzuela & Salas-Guzmán, 2025).

Movie *Wish* (2023), as a production celebrating the centenary of Walt Disney Animation Studios, presents an interesting context for sociolinguistic analysis. The film features Asha, a female protagonist who faces the ruler of the kingdom to save her community. Previous research on female language in Disney films has shown that female characters are still often framed as obedient wives or mothers, demonstrating the persistence of patriarchal ideology (Manaworapong & Bowen, 2022). Although the representation of women in film is increasing in 2024 with 54 of the 100 highest-grossing films featuring women in lead roles, the gap remains (Smith et al., 2023). Research gaps are identified in the lack of sociolinguistic analysis of recent Disney films, such as *Wish*. The

uniqueness of this research lies in the analysis of women's language features using a sociolinguistic approach that integrates qualitative analysis of tags, hedging, intensifiers, and super polite forms in character dialogue. This study aims to identify female language features in the *Wish* movie, investigating how the feature reflects or challenges gender stereotypes, as well as evaluating the sociolinguistic implications of women's language representation in contemporary animated film narratives. Research benefits include theoretical contributions to the study of language and gender in popular media, as well as providing practical insights for the film industry on more linguistically inclusive character construction.

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the theory of "women's language" introduced by Lakoff in 1975, which states that women's languages are characterized by linguistic features such as hedging, tag questions, intensifiers, empty adjectives, and super-polite forms that indicate women's subordinate positions in patriarchal social structures. Lakoff argues that women use hedging tools to express uncertainty and use push tools to convince the interlocutor to take them seriously, so hedging and boosters reflect women's lack of confidence in communication (Lakoff, 2004). Although early criticism targeted this model's reliance on introspective methods, contemporary research on gender-mixed conversations has repeatedly confirmed that women's speech encompasses tentative devices at a higher rate than men's (Alotaibi et al., 2025). Recent research exploring gender differences in language use on the Talks at Google platform found that female speakers use intensifiers, question tags, and humor more often than male speakers, while male speakers use empty adjectives, hedging, hypercorrect grammar, and super-polite forms (Alhammedi et al., 2024).

The methodological approach of this study adopts Creswell's qualitative research design framework that emphasizes an in-depth exploration of social phenomena through textual and contextual analysis. Creswell and Creswell in *Research Design: A Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach* affirm that the qualitative approach is very appropriate for exploring and understanding the meanings associated by individuals or groups with social or humanitarian issues, where data analysis involves the organization and preparation of data, the reading of the dataset thoroughly, the coding of the data, the development of descriptive narratives, the identification of relationships between themes, and interpretation of meaning. The integration of Lakoff's theory with Creswell's methodology in this study allows a systematic analysis of the features of women's language in animated film dialogues by considering the sociolinguistic context and gender ideology behind it. In the context of the analysis of gender behavior featured in Disney animated films, quantitative research examining the protagonists of films released between 1937 and 2021 shows that stereotypical gender message representations are still very prevalent.

A content analysis study of 39 Disney protagonists revealed that female characters were consistently portrayed as more attractive than male characters, even though aspects such as intelligence, abilities, and activity levels did not differ significantly by gender (Clarke et al., 2024). Further research on gender representation in eight decades of Disney animated films, involving the analysis of 61 films with a total of 323 characters, showed that there was a significant difference in the number of male and female characters, with a ratio of about 60% male and 40% female. Interestingly, male characters are more often represented as parents or children in films written by women, and female characters are more often represented as antagonists in films written by men. The innovation of this research lies in the application of a sociolinguistic analysis framework that integrates Lakoff's theory and Creswell's qualitative methodology to analyze the *Wish* movie (2023), which has never been researched before. In contrast to previous studies that tended to focus on quantitative content analysis, this study specifically identified and classified female language features in contemporary Disney protagonist character construction, thus making a new contribution to the literature regarding gender and language representation in popular media.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a library research design to analyze the characteristics of women's language in the *Wish* movie (2023). The qualitative approach was chosen because it is appropriate to explore and understand the meanings associated with social phenomena through in-depth textual analysis, where the data analysis process involves data organization, thorough reading of the dataset, systematic coding, descriptive narrative development, identification of relationships between themes, and interpretation of meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The library research method was applied to collect secondary data in the form of dialogue scripts and film transcripts *Wish* obtained from official sources. The subject of this study is the entire dialogue spoken by the main and supporting female characters in the film, with a special focus on the character of the protagonist, Asha. The purposive sampling technique was used to select dialogues containing female language features based

on Lakoff's theoretical categories, including hedging, question tags, intensifiers, empty adjectives, super-polite forms, and avoiding strong swear words (Alotaibi et al., 2025).

The data collection procedure begins with a complete transcription of all the dialogues of female characters in the film, followed by the identification and classification of female language features using a coding sheet developed based on Lakoff's theoretical framework. Data analysis was carried out through content analysis with a thematic approach, where each speech was categorized based on the type of linguistic feature that appeared, then analyzed the frequency of its occurrence and the context of its use in the film narrative were analyzed. The theoretical triangulation technique was applied by comparing the research findings with previous research on women's language in Disney films (Clarke et al., 2024; Shawcroft et al., 2022). Data interpretation is focused on understanding how identified female language features reflect or challenge conventional gender stereotypes, as well as their implications for the construction of gender identity in contemporary animated film narratives. The validity of the research is maintained through member checks and peer briefings to ensure the accuracy of interpretation and reliability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identifies various female language features that appear in the dialogue of Asha's character as the main protagonist of the *Wish* movie (2023). Based on Lakoff's theoretical framework of women's language, the analysis revealed seven categories of linguistic features manifested in female character construction, including lexical hedging, increased intonation on declaratives, tag questions, assertive stress, intensifiers, super-polite forms, empty adjectives, and hypercorrect grammar. These comprehensive findings demonstrate the complexity of women's linguistic representations in contemporary animated film narratives that reflect the dynamics between traditional gender conventions and women's character empowerment efforts.

Lexical Hedging in the Construction of Linguistic Uncertainty

The lexical hedge feature is the most dominant female language characteristic in Asha dialogue with the highest frequency of occurrence reaching 32 utterances. Lakoff conceptualizes hedging as a linguistic device that expresses uncertainty and doubt, reflecting the subordinate position of women in patriarchal communication structures (Alotaibi et al., 2025). In the context of a *Wish* movie, the use of hedging such as "um", "uh", "good", "I mean", "I think", and "such" is consistently manifested in the various communicative situations that Asha faces. As a concrete illustration, at 03:09, Asha revealed "**I mean... I can't**" when rejecting Saba's invitation to eat cake, showing a reluctance to express rejection directly. Research (Alhammedi et al., 2024) confirms that women use hedging devices with higher frequencies to reduce speech power and maintain social harmony in communicative interactions.



Figure 1. Dialogue: "Oh. I hope so (CHUCKLES)"

The manifestations of the fence in Asha's dialogue show the psychological complexity of characters facing intimidating situations, especially in interactions with authority figures such as King Magnifico and Queen Amaya. At 10:27, when asked about her readiness to meet the king, Asha answered hesitantly, "Oh, I hope so" with a hesitant intonation, as visualized in Figure 1. The use of "I hope so" hedging devices instead of affirmative responses directly reflects the internalization of feminine norms that emphasize prudence and humility in communication (Wibawani & Rohman, 2023). A similar linguistic pattern was observed at 11:46 when Asha stated "I mean, yes" after being asked about her condition by the king, indicating the need to modify and soften the initial statement. These findings confirm the persistence of gender stereotypes that associate women's language with uncertainty and lack of assertiveness (Beroiza-Valenzuela & Salas-Guzmán, 2025).

The context of the use of hedging in film narratives reveals more complex nuances than simple stereotypical interpretations. At 43:36, Asha uses a hedge "**I think**" in a statement, "No, but I think it wants to help me pursue

mine," when explaining Star's role to her friends. In this situation, the use of hedging reflects not only a lack of confidence, but rather a communicative strategy to invite collaboration and avoid coercion on the interlocutor (Prastio et al., 2025). Contextual analysis shows that hedging in Asha's speech served as a politeness strategy that facilitated social negotiation within the hierarchical structure of the Rosas kingdom. Research (Gurning et al., 2024) asserts that variations in language use reflect social stratification and power relations in society, where women use hedging devices to navigate the complexities of social interactions.

Mark Questions as Confirmation Mechanisms and Dialogical Engagement

The tag questions feature is implemented in Asha's six utterances, serving as a mechanism to ask for confirmation, express doubts, or invite interlocutor involvement. Lakoff argues that tag questions are a typical characteristic of women's language that indicates uncertainty and the need to gain validation from the interlocutor (Rahma Salbiah & Sumardi, 2021). At 07:08, Asha responded to Dahlia's statement about her weakness with "I do? Wait. Is it a weakness?" as visualized in Figure 2, indicating the need to confirm his own interpretation of its characteristics. The use of question tags in this context reflects the internalization of doubts associated with the construction of feminine gender in patriarchal discourse (Hakim et al., 2025).



Figure 2. Dialogue: "They don't belong to him, do they?"

Question tag at 37:03 "They don't belong to him, **do they?**" reveals a more subversive dimension in the use of female language features. In this context, Asha uses question tags not to express personal doubts, but as a rhetorical strategy to invite the interlocutor to question the legitimacy of the Magnifico's power over the will of the people. This analysis confirms the findings (Mulyani et al., 2023) that although features of women's language are conventionally associated with subordination, their use in certain contexts can serve as a mechanism of resistance to patriarchal structures. The tag questions in the *Wish* narrative point to the inherent ambiguity of gender linguistic characteristics, where the same feature can serve as a manifestation of subordination or an instrument of empowerment depending on its pragmatic context (Oktapiyani & Hamdani, 2024).



Figure 3. Dialogue: "(YELPS) Ugh I sound ridiculous, don't I?"

The most significant manifestation of the tag question was observed at 30:09, when Asha reflected on her experience of witnessing an incredible phenomenon, revealing "Ugh, I sound ridiculous, **don't I?**" as visualized in Figure 3. The use of question tags in the context of self-deprecating statements reveals the internalization of gender norms that position women as subjects who need external validation for their experiences and perceptions (Andriani, 2024). Research (Aisyah, 2022) identifies that the linguistic representation of women in Indonesian films presents a paradox between empowerment efforts and the persistence of patriarchal norms that limit women's expression of subjectivity. In the context of *Wish*, although Asha plays a protagonist who challenges authority, her linguistic features still reflect doubt and the need to gain affirmation from her social environment.

Intensifier and Construction of Women's Linguistic Emotivity

The use of intensifiers is manifested in Asha's 12 speeches, which reflect women's tendency to reinforce the expressive power of speech through lexical modifications. Intensifiers such as "so", "very", and "really" serve to reinforce the meaning of an adjective or verb, building the emotive associated with feminine communication (Alhammadi et al., 2024). At 06:37, Asha revealed, "and I'm **so nervous** I think I'm going to explode", showing the emotional amplification of stereotypes associated with female expression. Research (Harini et al., 2024) Identifying that the representation of feminism in contemporary films still presents an ambivalence between the empowerment of female characters and the persistence of excessive emotional stereotypes.



Figure 4. Dialogue: "But it's so, so beautiful"

The intensifier manifestations in Asha's dialogue reveal the complexity of the construction of gender identity in the film's narrative. At 24:22, Asha used a double intensifier, "But it's **so, so** beautiful," when describing Saba's desires, reinforcing the emotional and aesthetic value of the object in question. The use of intensifier repetition reflects the linguistic patterns associated with feminine hyperbole in conventional discourse (Wibawani & Rohman, 2023). However, in the context of the narrative *Wish*, intensifiers serve not only as an exaggerated emotional manifestation, but rather as a persuasive strategy to communicate the urgency and significance of unfulfilled desires. At 9:32 a.m., Asha stated "Thank you **so much**" to Dahlia as visualized in Figure 5, where the intensifier reinforces gratitude and shows a deep appreciation for the opportunity given.



Figure 5. Dialogue: "(CHUCKLES) Good. Thanks. Thank you very much"

Intensifier contextual analysis shows that these linguistic features contribute to Asha's character construction as a passionate individual and deeply concerned about her community. At 24:42, the statement "There are **so** many wondrous, powerful wishes that will never be granted, just floating there...helpless" used the intensifier to emphasize the magnitude of the injustice experienced by the Rosas people. In this context, the intensifier serves as a rhetorical device to establish the moral urgency that motivates the protagonist's actions (Yuyun et al., 2022). These findings confirm that although intensifier is a stereotypical characteristic of female language, its use in film narratives can be recontextualized to support agency and empowerment of female characters (Clarke et al., 2024).

Super Polite Forms and Social Hierarchy Negotiation

The super-polite form feature is applied in Asha's four speeches, which reflect women's orientation towards the maintenance of social harmony through linguistic politeness strategies. Lakoff identified that women tend to use more complicated forms of politeness than men to avoid coercion and maintain the interlocutor's face (Yuyun et al., 2022). At 18:43, Asha uses the very tentative interrogative modal construction "**Would you maybe consider granting his wish tonight?**" when asking King Magnifico to grant Saba's wish. The use of double capital hedges

of "would" and "maybe", along with interrogative constructions, creates an extreme level of politeness, reflecting an awareness of the power distance in interactions with authority figures (Gurning et al., 2024).

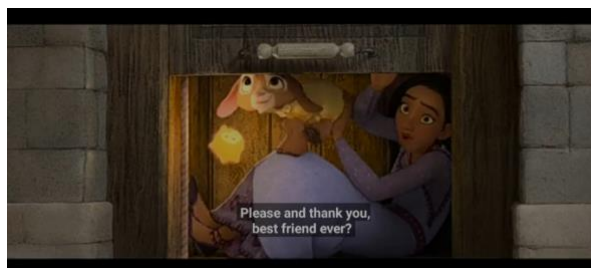


Figure 6. Dialogue: "Please and thank you, best friend ever?"

Very polite form at 45:16 minutes "Please and thank you, best friend ever?" as visualized in Figure 6 reveals a more informal politeness strategy while maintaining an orientation toward politeness. A combination of "please," "thank you," and "best friend ever" affectionate calls builds a demand that maximizes positive politeness strategies to facilitate compliance (Prastio et al., 2025). Research (Rahma Salbiah & Sumardi, 2021) Identifies that the use of super-polite forms in women's interactions reflects a gender socialization that emphasizes cooperation and the avoidance of confrontation. In the context of *Wish*, the super-polite form serves as a negotiation mechanism that allows Asha to ask for help and support while maintaining harmonious social relationships with peers and authority figures.

Super polite form usage at 48:52 "Please, find my saba's and mother's wishes as fast as you can!" combines the manners of the Marker with the urgent necessity, creating a tension between the need to act quickly and maintain the norms of politeness. This analysis reveals that although the super-polite form is associated with the subordination of women in patriarchal structures, this linguistic feature can be strategically used to achieve communicative goals without violating gender expectations (Hakim et al., 2025). These findings confirm the complexity of the relationship between language, gender, and power in contemporary animated film representations (Shawcroft et al., 2022).

Empty Adjectives and Hypercorrect Grammar in Linguistic Construction

The characteristics of empty adjectives and hypercorrect grammar are characteristics of female language that are less dominant in Asha's dialogue, but are still significant in the construction of the character's gender identity. At 06:34, Asha uses the empty adjective "**honorary**" in the phrase "Best friend and honorary doctor of all things rational" as visualized in Figure 7, where this adjective serves as a qualification that does not add substantive information but builds intimacy and playfulness in a friendly relationship. Lakoff identifies empty adjectives as characteristics of female language that reflect the triviality and lack of substance in feminine communication (Wibawani & Rohman, 2023). However, in the context of *Wish*, the use of empty adjectives is more appropriately interpreted as a strategy to build warm and supportive interpersonal relationships.



Figure 7. Dialogue: "Best friend and honorary doctor of all things rational"

Hypercorrect grammar manifestations are observed in two utterances that show careful attention to formal grammatical structures. At 6:52 p.m., Asha expresses "I have forgotten how to talk" using the grammatically correct present perfect tense, and at 24:35 "If you had seen them, if you had felt them like I did, you would understand" as visualized in Figure 8, using past perfect conditions that show the command of complex grammatical structures. Research (Alhammedi et al., 2024) Identify that female speakers tend to use hypercorrect grammar with a higher frequency than male speakers, reflecting socialization that emphasizes linguistic propriety

and adherence to standard language norms. In the context of *Wish*, hypercorrect grammar constructs Asha as an educated and linguistically competent character, challenging the stereotype of women as less than articulate communicators.

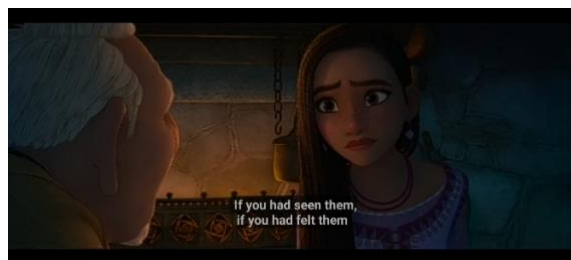


Figure 8. Dialogue: "If you had seen them, if you had felt them"

A comprehensive analysis of female language features in the *Wish* movie reveals the complexity of gender linguistic representation in contemporary animated narratives. The findings of the study suggest that although Asha's dialogue incorporates the various characteristics of the female language that Lakoff identifies, its manifestations cannot be interpreted simply as perpetuating stereotypes of female subordination. Instead, these linguistic features function multidimensionally: some reflect the persistence of traditional gender norms, others are recontextualized to support agency and protagonist empowerment (Andriani, 2024). This study confirms that the representation of women's language in contemporary Disney films presents an ambivalence between the reproduction of patriarchal ideology and progressive efforts to construct more complex and empowered female characters (Alhammadi et al., 2024). These findings contribute to the literature on the relationship between language, gender, and popular media, suggesting that sociolinguistic analysis of film representation requires a contextual approach sensitive to pragmatic nuances and the strategic function of linguistic features in narrative construction (Harini et al., 2024; Oktapiyani & Hamdani, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study shows significant advantages in understanding gender representation through sociolinguistic analysis of contemporary animated films. The study successfully identified seven linguistic features of female languages in *Wish* (2023), including lexical hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, superpolite forms, empty adjectives, and hypercorrect grammar, which provides empirical evidence of how Disney constructs female protagonists linguistically. The integration of Lakoff's theoretical framework with Creswell's qualitative methodology offers a robust analytical approach to examining gender ideology in popular media. However, there are limitations in the scope of the analysis, as the study focused exclusively on a single film and primarily on the protagonist Asha, potentially ignoring the broader pattern across recent Disney productions. In addition, the reliance on textual analysis without audience acceptance studies limits the understanding of how audiences interpret these linguistic representations. Future applications include the development of guidelines for more linguistically inclusive character construction in the animation industry, the expansion of comparative analysis in a variety of contemporary Disney films, and the investigation of audience perception through a mixed-methods approach. This research makes a theoretical contribution to the study of gender and language in the media while offering practical insights for creating progressive female characters that challenge patriarchal stereotypes through strategic linguistic constructions.

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