Use of the Female Language Marker Feature by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* in Interview Program 《星月对话》 *Xīngyuè Duìhuà* Episode 10

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ABSTRACT

Female speakers have special social characters as markers of personal identity when interacting in speech acts, namely, the features of female language markers whose characteristics are already attached to the identity of female speakers. They are identical to the speaker's character, namely, having a smooth and soft impression, having politeness values, adherence to binding patterns, and being more expressive concerning the speaker's inner feelings. Therefore, those features are inferior and weak to the certainty value. One of them can be seen in the speech used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* in the interview program 《星月对话》 *Xīngyuè Duìhuà* episode 10. There were nine types of features of female language markers and five functions based on the context of the use of vocabulary; namely, elements in the form of lexical fences as markers of the start of speech acts, features in the form of interrogative speech as markers for obtaining response and approval, interrogative speech as a marker of uncertainty or doubt, elements in the form of formal speech as a sign of politeness, and segments in the form of expressive speech as a marker of expressing feelings.

Keywords: Gender language, Feature, Sign, Language rules, Lexical concept.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sex and gender are two different things but, they are related. According to Nathan [1, pp. 252], the term sex refers to the biological differences possessed by men and women, or what is commonly referred to as gender. While gender is no longer talking about differences in physical form but refers to the characteristics and roles in social society [2, pp. 90]; [3, pp. 294]. Furthermore, Holmes [4, pp. 150] states that gender is more appropriate to distinguish people based on their sociocultural behavior, including the language they use. By comparing the speech between men and women in everyday life, it can be seen that there are differences in the way they speak. In a language-speaking society, the emergence of a norm system demands on the speaking community may be due to differences in the form of expression [5, pp. 9]. In specific contexts, even though they have the same meaning, the states of speech used by male speakers may not be the same. One of these differences is caused by the form of language features that mark the gender of the speakers.

Characteristics of the language features of women's gender markers are, the form of speech is smooth, polite, obeys linguistic rules and or socio-cultural rules, and smooth delivery. For example, the speech used by 宁静 Níng Jìng as a guest in the interview program 《星月对话》 *Xīngyuè Duìhuà* episode 10 below. In this excerpt, 宁静 *Níng Jìng* prefers to avoid using swear words when addressing gossip news that corners and demeans his honor.

> Emmm…**我的天**又想哭。"
> *Emmm…**wǒ de Tiān** wǒ yòu xiǎng kū."*
> Emmm…Oh my God, I want to cry again.. (X.00.21.01).

The utterance **我的天** of ***'wǒ de Tian'*** ***"Oh my God"*** was spoken by Níng Jìng with teary eyes holding back tears and his palms were covering his face as a form of expressing his sadness and/or disappointment. Instead of using swearing speech forms such as 他妈的 *tā mā de*, damn, or 卧槽 *wò cáo*, bastard, which is often expressed by male speakers and has a more disrespectful impression. 宁静 *Níng Jìng* as a female speaker prefers a more neutral speech form.

Language can be a marker of the speaker's image. Subandi [5, pp. 9] states that the form of language used by speakers characterizes the speaker's identity. Reinforced by Andree [6, pp. 315], the language is spoken by somebody, and his or her identity as a speaker of this language is inseparable. Based on the quote above, it can be understood that the characteristics of the speaker's identity can be seen from the utterances used by the speaker because the speech characteristics are attached to the speaker's identity as one of the speakers' identities.

This study identifies female gender panda features and their functions spoken by 宁静 *Níng Jìng*, an artist and a public figure who is considered to have an extensive direction, especially towards the young female-speaking community in China. The interview program aims to reveal another side of 宁静 *Níng Jìng* that is not known to the public and share his life experiences and career journey in the Chinese entertainment industry. 宁静 *Níng Jìng*'s speech was analyzed using a sociopragmatic study approach, in particular, related to the phenomenon of the form and role of women's gender language. The utterances are identified, analyzed, and then described to see how each pattern of features of the female gender language variety markers forms a linguistic role in a speech event concerning Lakoff [14] and Pearson's [15] theory.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenon of gender language marker features attracted the interest of linguists and researchers. Jespersen [7, pp. 61] stated that women's languages are very different from the lexicon. There is a tendency to use more euphemistic features or language softening and use fewer features that have the meaning of swearing, swearing, and which seem rude so that the language of female speakers is more conservative [5, pp. 22]; [8]. On the other hand, Lakoff said that the language of women in question is the language used to describe women and female speakers often use. Furthermore, Lakoff [9, pp. 45] divides the features of female language markers into ten elements, namely, the use of lexical or tegun fencers (模糊限制语 *móhú xiànzhì yǔ*), the use of short question forms (反义疑问句 *fǎn yì yíwènjù*), the increase of intonation in declarative sentences (上升语调 *shàngshēng yǔdiāo*)，blank adjective (空洞的形容词 *kōngdòng de xíngróngcí*)，appropriate and varied use of color terms (精准颜色词 *jīngzhǔn yánsè cí*), affirmation (使用强势词 *shǐyong qiángshì cí*), consistent use of standard forms (过于正确的语法 *guòyú zhèngquè de yǔfǎ*), the use of polite tenses (过于礼貌的形式 *guòyú lǐmào de xíngshì*), the avoidance of swear words and/or swear words (弱化的咒骂语 *ruòhuà de zhòumaà yǔ*), and the use of empathic emphasis (情感化的形容词 *qínggǎn huà de xíngróngcí*).

In addition, female speakers have a more polite and subtle way of communicating or interacting with other people [10, pp. 19]; [11, pp. 131]; [12, pp. 301]. The form of speech used is also more formal and meets the standards of linguistic rules that reflect female speakers' character of obedience and politeness. Furthermore, [12, pp. 169]; [13, pp. 1] mentioned that many men still think that women are inferior, known as gentle figures, and tend to be more careful and maintain their attitude when speaking, which is reflected in the form of speech used. In contrast, Lakoff [14, pp. 36] and Pearson [15, pp. 187] said that female speakers more often use types of lexical fencing features and indirect speech forms as a strategy to avoid direct involvement in a speech act that is felt to be unacceptable based on her inner mood [16, pp. 47]; [17]. Briefly, in speech acts, female speakers have the characteristics of the form and type of speech under the speaker's features used as a strategy to express their ideas and feelings.

Furthermore, Pearson [15, pp. 187] classifies the features of female language markers based on their functions into five functions, namely; first to start a conversation which is characterized by the use of lexical fencing features such as; yes…, well…, in my opinion…, maybe…, and the like. The second is to refine speech characterized by the consistent use of standard language form marker features and the use of polite speech forms. Oktapiani et al. [18, pp. 210] and Wahyuni [19] mentioned that women prefer to use polite language than men. The third is to express uncertainty or doubt. The use of types of features such as questions to get certainty "Really?" and feature types that indicate doubt or uncertainty such as "I think..." are these types of function markers. Fourth, to get a response, namely to get the attention of the speech partner, the strategy is to use the form of provocation or provide a stimulus. Fifth, to express feelings such as the use of speech forms "Oh my gosh,..." to express admiration, "Oh, I am so sorry..." to express empathy, "Oh, that is amazing" to convey sympathy/appreciation and other similar feature forms.

2. METHODS

This research is a type of qualitative research using the descriptive method because the data in this study are in the form of words, phrases, and other expressions that characterize the features of female language markers used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* in the 星月对话》 *Xīngyuè Duìhuà* program in the 优酷 *yǒukù* application as a data source, with a qualitative descriptive approach. The total number of data is 34 data. Furthermore, the data were classified based on ten types of Lakoff feature classification and analyzed. The data are interpreted based on the context of the speech and described to provide a concrete description of the function of women's language marker features based on Pearson's classification of feature functions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Types of Female Language Marker Features

Based on the analysis and classification of data according to Lakoff's [14] feature types, the results are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Classification of data based on the type of Lakoff features

Female Language Marker Feature Type	Occurrence Frequency
Lexical or Tegun Fencing	5
Short Question	3
Rising Intonation in Declarative Sentences	2
Empty Adjectives	0
Appropriate and Diverse Use of Color Terms	2
Affirmer	11
Consistent Use of Standard Forms	3
Use of Polite Forms of Words	4
Swearing Retreat	2
Use of Empathic Emphasis	2
Amount of data	34

Based on table 1 above, the data included in the classification of empty adjective feature types were not found, and the affirmative feature type had the highest frequency of occurrence, namely 16 data. Furthermore, the types of features in table 1 above are classified and described based on the function of Pearson's female language marker features. The results of the classification are as in the following table 2.

Table 2. Classification of Data Based on Pearson Feature Functions

Female Language Function	Appear Frequency
To Start a Discussion	2
To Refine Speech / Politeness	5
To Reveal Uncertainty	13
To Get Response	8
To Express Feelings	6
Amount	34

3.2. Female Language Marker Feature Function

3.2.1. As an Opening Marker for Speech Acts

As stated by Pearson [15], there are forms of female language marker features used to initiate a speech act. Like the lexical fence type speech used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* in the following utterance excerpt.

> 你知道，我出专辑至少这个音乐是我自己挑的，然后我虽然也有挑错音乐的时候但是这个音乐至少我听了以后是顺耳的，我喜欢的。
> *Nǐ zhīdào, wǒ chū zhuānjí zhìshǎo zhège yīnyuè shì wǒ zìjǐ tiāo de, ránhòu wǒ suīrán yěyǒu tiāo cuò yīnyuè de shíhòu dànshì zhège yīnyuè zhìshǎo wǒ tīngle yǐhòu shì shùn'ěr de, wǒ xǐhuān de.*
> **You know**, when I make an album, at least I choose the music myself, although sometimes I choose the wrong music, after listening to it feels good to my ears, I like it (X.00.03.42).

The utterance 你知道... *Nǐ zhīdào...* **You know...** which is used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* in the data fragment above, although it has an interrogative structure, it is connected with the accompanying speech also it certainly does not have an interrogative function because the speech that accompanies the entire speech text is a declarative speech. In order to prioritize the process of producing further utterances about experiences and views as the ultimate goal, 宁静 *Níng Jìng* prefers to use lexical fencers 你知道... *Nǐ zhīdào...* **You know**... as a prelude. By choosing the speech 你知道... *Nǐ zhīdào...* **You know**... it is also used as a speaker's strategy to emphasize that partners focus their attention on the speech delivered and to convince the hearer. This assumption is proven by looking at the speech text as a whole; there are no interrogative markers/markers, the whole speech text is a statement about the experience and views of the speaker in response to the statement of the presenter who suspects that the speaker's album production process is seen as easy and smooth. So, the speech 你知道... *Nǐ zhīdào...* **You know**... is used more to trigger the interlocutor's attention when the speaker starts the speech activity.

3.2.2. As a Marker of Uncertainty

Female speakers often use uncertain speech forms to express thoughts and feelings. Doubts and worries that female speakers generally own are the fundamental reasons for choosing this form of speech. One of them is the type of lexical fencing feature 因为可能 *Yīnwèi kěnéng* **Maybe because** the one used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* as in the following data quote has a function as speech to express uncertainty. This utterance is used to respond to questions related to the complexity of the cooperation/contract agreement process with partners.

(1) **因为可能**做演员，你每次都要跟人家有一个合约在那，就是**你**签了这张纸虽然**你**可能还有一些小小的抱怨或者什么…

*Yīnwèi kěnéng zuò yǎnyuán, nǐ měi cì dōu yào gēn rénjiā yǒu yīgè héyuē zài nà, jiùshì **nǐ** qiānle zhè zhāng zhǐ suīrán **nǐ** kěnéng hái yǒu yīxiē xiǎo xiǎo de bàoyuàn huòzhě shénme…"*

Maybe because as a celebrity, every time **you** will do a deal or contract there, in other words, **you** sign this paper even though there are still minor problems or whatever... (X.00.06.33).

(2) **读书栏目?** 是，我小时的候特别特别喜欢。

Dúshū lánmù? Shì, wǒ xiǎoshí de hòu tèbié tèbié xǐhuān.

Reading column? Yes, I liked it, especially when I was little (X.00.46.05).

According to Lakoff [20, pp. 78], the marker feature of uncertainty and/or doubt usually appears when female speakers are unsure of what has been said. This statement is relevant to 宁静 *Níng Jìng*'s speech in the data quoted above. From the aspect of semantic structure, the **可能** *kěnéng* **maybe** feature in data 1) lexically already refer to the meaning of uncertainty. The use of the **可能** *kěnéng* **maybe** feature when the speaker conveys his real personal reasons or opinions; it is more intended to give the impression that the speaker is aware that what the speaker is saying is not sure that it is entirely acceptable to the hearer. Instead of simply conveying reasons or opinions, speakers also have a mission to convince the interlocutor. This is evidenced by the use of the personal pronoun **你** *nǐ* **you**, indicating an attempt by the speaker to bring the speech partner into the text as if he were directly involved in the context so that the reasons or opinions expressed by the speaker can be fully accepted/can convince the speech partner. However, speakers have realized that it is not easy to make the interlocutor immediately get the reasons presented; as a strategy not to give the impression of being the dominant party, speakers prefer to use the **可能** *kěnéng* **maybe** feature as possible. Using the **可能** *kěnéng* **maybe** feature may also give the impression that the speaker is not coercing and controlling the speech partner in the speech act. On the other hand, the speaker anticipates when the speech partner cannot accept the reasons given.

In addition, according to Lakoff [20, pp. 79], short questions usually also arise when female speakers are not sure what is being said. Speech 2) above is an example of the feature of female language markers in the form of short questions used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* to express his insecurities. **读书栏目? *Dúshū lánmù?* Reading column?** in speech 2) above is used to respond to the host as a speech partner when reading a specific column. While saying the speech **读书栏目? *Dúshū lánmù?* Reading column?** with a rising intonation as a form of questioning 宁静 *Níng Jìng* several times turned his gaze

to the other guest stars and back to the interlocutor, as a gesture indicating a state of confusion. Then, with a chuckle 宁静 Níng Jìng continued his utterance '是，我**小时的候**特别特别喜欢' '*Shì, wǒ **xiǎoshí de hòu** tèbié tèbié xǐhuān*' 'Yes, I really liked it especially when I was little'. 宁静 *Níng Jìng*'s body movements that psychologically signify uncertainty and are supported by the use of **小时的** *xiǎoshí de* **when I was little** speech as a child are two factors that strengthen the assumption that, interrogative speech forms **读书栏目? *Dúshū lánmù?* Reading column?** in the speech text above, it is not used to ask questions.

However, it functions more as a strategy to cover the uncertainty of the response given due to confusion and/or unpreparedness of the speaker. Although, then the speaker answered because the response is given was in the form of information about the speaker's childhood which was marked by the presence of **小时的** *xiǎoshí de* **when I was little** and not a piece of information when the speaker was interviewed so, what happens after the speaker was an adult-like when he/she was interviewed, does he/she like to read the column? There is still no certainty because the speaker's response has not answered the speech partner's question. Therefore, the interrogative speech form **读书栏目? *Dúshū lánmù?* Reading column?** in the speech text above, it completely does not have an interrogative function but only as a form of actualization of the uncertainty of the speaker's response. This is also evidenced by the absence of a response as an answer from the speech partner to the interrogative utterance used by the speaker.

3.2.3. As a Marker of Politeness/ Softening Speech

Pearson said female speakers tend to use the type of speech that is subtle and has the value of politeness because female speakers realize that the form of speech used will be associated with her self-image and social status background. Because the social background of the community has a strong enough role, female speakers tend to be more careful when performing speech acts. As in the following speech, speech forms that are classified as polite/soft speech forms as a feature of female language markers are also used by speaker of 宁静 *Níng Jìng*.

> 虽然这个节目的时候有的时候会对有一些姐姐我会觉得哇你是来交朋友的**吗请问**…
>
> *Suīrán zhège jiémù dì shíhòu yǒu de shíhòu huì duì yǒu yīxiē jiějiě wǒ huì juédé wa nǐ shì lái jiāo péngyǒu de ma **qǐngwèn**…*
>
> Even though some brothers and sisters in this program who will think, **excuse me** if you came to make friends... (X.00.27.42).

The speech form 请问 *qǐngwèn* **excuse me** above lexically has a politeness marker function. Because the speech is used to ask permission when the speaker will interfere, ask for help/assistance, ask the speech partner, and/or if the speech that will be delivered is not pleasing or offends the speech partner. Furthermore, in the speech above, the speaker asks the speech partner as a confirmation form marked by using the interrogative marker particle 吗 *ma* **what**. Thus, using the female language marker feature 请问 *qǐngwèn* **excuse me** in the speech above has a function to refine and increase the overall level of politeness of the speech.

3.2.4. As a Marker to Get Response

In carrying out speech activities, female speakers often use repeated short interrogative utterances and/or interrogative utterances for confirmation. The use of these speech forms is a sign that the speaker wants to get attention from the speech partner to get a response and/or approval from the speech partner. In connection with the use of interrogative speech, Lakoff [20, pp. 80] states, it is not even uncommon for female speakers to ask something obvious to get attention or a response from the speech partner. The following is an interrogative speech form used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* and used to respond from the speech partner.

(1) 但是你做艺人不一样的**对吧？** 你会讲相声吗，显然我不会**对吧？** 你会脱口秀吗，我没有太整过**对吧…**

*Dànshì nǐ zuò yìrén bù yīyàng de **duì ba?** Nǐ huì jiǎng xiàngsheng ma, xiǎnrán wǒ bù huì **duì ba?** Nǐ huì tuōkǒu xiù ma, wǒ méiyǒu tài zhěngguò **duì ba…***

But you as an artist are not the same, **don't you think?** Can you tell the lines? I cannot, **right?** Can you talk show, I'm not very good there, **right…?** (X.00.35.23).

It can be seen in the speech text above; interrogative speech forms are used successively in one 宁静 *Níng Jìng*'s speech text. These interrogative utterances are used between speakers to convey every opinion/every thought accompanied by the speaker's view towards each speech participant alternately and quickly. Through these short interrogative utterances, the speaker functions as a strategy to get a response in the form of approval from the speech partner to strengthen the speaker's opinion/thought. This assumption is reinforced by the context of the speech, namely, the response of the speech participant, which is only a nod. The speaker uses the interrogative utterance not to dig up information from the speech partner but rather to function as a marker feature to get a response and/or approval from the speech partner.

To get a response from the speech partner, in specific speech contexts, the use of interrogative speech forms does not always have to be repeated or successively. Like

the interrogative speech form used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng*, the following also functions as a marker feature to get a response from the speech partner.

(2) 她们没有说有一个人不行，**你明白这个道理吗？**

*Tāmen méiyǒu gěi wǒ liú kōngjiān, tāmen méiyǒu shuō yǒuyī gèrén bùxíng, **nǐ míngbái zhège dàolǐ ma?***

They are not saying that there is one person who cannot. **Do you understand this?** (X.00.08.04).

Interrogative speech 你明白这个道理吗？ *nǐ míngbái zhège dàolǐ ma?* **Do you understand this?** above has a function to get a response from the speech partner because, based on the speech's theme, it is inevitable that the speech partner does not know whom the speaker is asking. Furthermore, the speaker is also confident that he knows that the speech partner will not know who the person in question is because the speech partner is not involved and has no relationship with the context of the speech. So, based on this assumption, the speaker uses the interrogative utterance as a strategy for the speaker to invite the speech partner to be involved in the context of the speech. Because, by bringing the speech partner involved in the context of the speech, the speech partner is not only placed as an active listener but, as an active speech partner by being allowed to respond even though only response in the form of "yes" approval or "no" rejection. This strategy indirectly has built a two-way speech act structure.

3.2.5. Feeling Expression Marker

Female speakers have the ability and a more expressive way than male speakers in expressing feelings. In addition, women are also easier to give praise or appreciation to their speech partners and or to an event by using speech forms that represent their inner mood. Like the utterance used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* below, it is an example of a female language marker feature that functions to express feelings.

(1) 哎呀，**你真的懂我**，就是其实我是一个标新立异的人…

*Āiyā, **nǐ zhēn de dǒng wǒ**, jiùshì qíshí wǒ shì yīgè biāoxīnlìyì de rén…*

Ah, **you totally understand me**; I am a person who likes different things… (X.00.12.33).

(2) 我要么鄙视他要么我觉得他说的不是真话…

wǒ yàome bǐshì tā yàome wǒ juédé tā shuō de bùshì zhēn huà…

Either I'm going to hate him or I can think he's not telling the truth... (X.00.30.19).

Based on the data above, 宁静 *Níng Jìng* expresses his feelings through the use of appreciative speech as in speech (1) as a form of appreciation for the speech partner who is considered to have understood the character and personality of the speaker. While in speech (2), the

speaker uses a type of speech which is lexically a type of feeling speech. The form of speech describes the speaker's confusion and or inner atmosphere, which is filled with confusion and uncertainty in responding to unpleasant experiences.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the identification and classification of the data, if it is returned to the variety of 10 types of features of Lakoff's female language markers, the type of 宁静 *Níng Jìng*'s speech that is included in the classification category is found to be nine types of features of female language markers. Namely, types of features of lexical, types of short question features, types of features of rising intonation in declarative sentences, types of features of using appropriate and varied color terms, types of affirmative features, types of features using standard forms consistently, types of features using polite forms, types of swearing avoidance features and types of empathic emphasis use features. While the empty adjective feature type was not found, the affirmative feature type was the most common. The types of affirmative features that 宁静 *Níng Jìng* often uses are speech forms that have the basic meaning concept of "very" such as 很 *hěn* very, 特别 *tèbié* very much, 非常 *fēicháng* very, and 超级 *chāojí* super.

Nine types of female language marker features used by 宁静 *Níng Jìng* when viewed from a function based on Pearson's classification of functions have five functions, namely, the function of a marker to initiate speech acts, a function of the marker of uncertainty, a function of marker to get a response or recognition, a function of a marker of politeness/refining and a function marker of feelings. Based on the context and aspects of feature types, the same function can be expressed with more than one type of feature. The function of the uncertainty marker can not only be represented by the kind of the uncertainty marker feature itself, such as 可能做 *kěnéng* maybe, can also be expressed by the short interrogative feature type. On the other hand, based on a particular speech context, one feature can be used to express more than one function. For example, the type of feature in the form of interrogative speech and having a function to get a response or acknowledgment also serves to reveal the function of uncertainty and a function of marking the start of speech acts.

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