Characteristics of Women's Language in "*Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982*" by Cho Namjoo

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ABSTRACT

Sociolinguistics differentiates gender from sex which is a perception of how one's femininity or masculinity is perceived by social construct. This not only affects the mindset that one action is exclusively for one gender but linguistics has also shown that women's language is different from men's language. This research is conducted to acknowledge the women's language in Cho Namjoo's *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]*. This research applied a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. Women's language in the novel is analyzed with the theory coined by Lakoff (1973). The results revealed that *intensifier* is the most commonly used feature to emphasize a point not to be underestimated. However, *hypercorrect grammar* is absent in the novel since the female characters are mostly engaged in informal situations and the author uses correct grammar in general. In addition, the usage of some figures of speech, stated as a unique characteristic of women's language in literature, is found in the novel. Based on the results, women's language is used to express their opinions and existence to climb the social ladder and seek equal opportunities for men and women. This research is done with the ambition to spread awareness about women's language. It is not a negative trait only because it has feminine qualities but is also determined.

Keywords: *Feminism, gender, language, sociolinguistics, women.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Sociolinguistics considers that the language we use to communicate is influenced by factors such as social status, gender, age, level of education, occupation, religion, etc. Gender in sociolinguistics is perceived differently than sex in biology. It pertains to how one's femininity and masculinity are constructed socially, while sex refers to the biological distinction of being born male or female (Bucholtz, 2002). This not only impacts the perception that certain actions are exclusively for a particular gender but also linguistics has demonstrated that women's language differs from men's language.

The release of Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place* (1973) is considered the beginning of the study of language and gender in linguistics (Adnyani, 2014). In her theory, it is stated that women have faced two forms of language discrimination: how they are taught to speak a language and how a language perceives women. According to Lakoff, male dominance in society is the reason women are always subordinate to men and are expected to embrace feminine qualities, resulting in inequality. This sparked the feminist revolution in the late 1960s to early 1970s, addressing gender discrimination, which grants men more advantages and power solely based on their way of speaking (Rahmi, 2015).

As cited in Holmes (2013), Lakoff explained that if a woman speaks crudely and does not conform to societal expectations of femininity, she will face scolding and ridicule. On the contrary, if a woman speaks in accordance with societal norms, she may be perceived as 'too hardworking' or 'fake'. It is considered inappropriate for women to swear openly, and they are only expected to use strong language and expressions in private or when it is deemed appropriate. Furthermore, the difference in power between men and women can be observed through their word choices. Stronger words such as 'fuck' are more acceptable when used by men rather than women. People tend to listen to individuals who speak confidently rather than those who express doubt. If a woman adheres to these 'rules' of appropriate speech,

she may be looked down upon. Consequently, being 'appropriate' means she will never be taken seriously as an individual (Holmes, 2013).

In the study Language and Woman's Place, Holmes (2013), citing Lakoff, presented ten variations of women's language. These included the use of *empty adjectives, precise color terms, hedging, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, question tags, emphatic stress, and rising intonation on declaratives*. These variations are considered distinctive to women's way of speaking. In support of Lakoff's theory, Jeon (2004) provided the same findings about the language characteristics of women in the Korean language, including the usage of hedge, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, question tags, and rising intonation on declaratives. These characteristics are closely related to the use of honorific systems in the Korean language and their culture.

Women's language in literature is defined by the employment of figures of speech including hyperbole, figurative language, repetitions, and rhetorical questions, claims Cixous (Yuniarti, 2015). She added that writing is essential for women because it allows them to communicate their worth to society and stress their existence. According to Nareswari (2019), this book served as the catalyst for the feminist movement, which entails political, intellectual, and social efforts with the shared objective of defining, advancing, and achieving gender equality in politics, economics, personal life, and society. The movement promotes women's equality in terms of rights and opportunity.

This study aims to identify the characteristics of women's language in *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* by Cho Namjoo. Published in 2016, this novel is considered a pioneer of the feminist movement in South Korea and gained immense popularity. Cho, as cited in Hu (2020), stated that the novel portrays women's lives, their thought processes, and their struggles in the modern era. She also expressed her desire for women to have choices and to make those choices consciously, free from societal pressure. Therefore, this study is done with the ambition to raise awareness about women's language to avoid discrimination in the future. Language awareness, according to Bilgin, as cited in Audriyan and Putri (2021), is having explicit knowledge of the language and being conscious and sensitive to it in learning, teaching, and usage. By knowing about women's language, the discrimination towards these feminine qualities is hopefully reduced and women's voices will be heard as equal to men's voices. This is described as language attitude, which is a person's mental position towards their own language or another's language (Amin, 2020).

2. METHOD

This research is qualitative descriptive research. The purpose of this study was to investigate the variations of women's language in the novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* by Cho Namjoo. The data analyzed include words, phrases, and sentences that characterize women's language appearing in the novel, serving as the research data source. Words, phrases, and sentences are a way to see how women's language is used by the female characters in the novel. The technique employed in this study is observation and note-taking. Sudaryanto describes the observing technique as a method for observing language usage within the object of study (Hapsari, 2022). This technique is suitable for this research due to the identified variations in women's language present in the novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]*.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In Cho Namjoo's *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]*, 377 data were found, consisting of 52 data of empty adjectives, 2 data of precise color terms, 53 data of hedge, 116 data of intensifiers, 21 data of the super polite form, 14 data of avoiding strong swear words, 13 data of question tags, 43 data of emphatic stress, and 64 data of rising intonation on declaratives. Although intensifiers are the most common variation, the novel doesn't have any hypercorrect grammar. The identification of each variation of women's language in Cho Namjoo's *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* will be explained as follows.

3.1. Intensifier

According to Purnata (2021), women use expressions such as "very," "extremely," or "truly" to prevent the other party from underestimating the point they are discussing. The use of intensifiers in Cho Namjoo's *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* will be discussed as follows.

Data 1

그냥 내가 좋아서 푸는 거야. 요즘 수학은 우리 어렸을 때 배우던 거랑 다르더라고. **완전 어렵고, 완전 재밌어**. 이것 좀 봐. 이게 **진짜** 서울 간선버스 번호 시스템이거든? 이 표랑 지도랑 노선도를 보고 버스 번호를 맞히는 게 수학 문제야. **너무** 재밌지 않아?"

Geu-nyang nae-ga joh-a-seo pu-neun geo-ya. Yo-jeum su-hak-eun u-ri eo-ryeoss-eul ddae bae-u-deon geo-rang da-reu-deo-ra-go. **Wan-jeon eo-ryeop-go, wan-jeon jae-miss-eo**. *I-geot jom bwa. I-ge* **jin-jja** *Seo-ul gan-seon-beo-seu beon-ho si-seu-tem-i-geo-deun? I pyo-rang ji-do-rang no-seon-do-reul bo-go beo-seu beon-ho-reul maj-hi-neun ge su-hak mun-je-ya.* **Neo-mu** *jae-miss-ji anh-a?*

(Just for fun, math these days is different from what we learned in school. It's **really difficult** and **really** fun. Look at this. This is the **actual** Seoul City Public Bus numbering system. The goal is to guess the bus number by looking at the chart, map, and bus schedule. Isn't this interesting?). (Cho, 2020)

In Chapter 2016 as presented in Data 1, which is narrated from the viewpoint of Kim's therapist, his wife explains why she likes to do the math from their child's book. The wife emphasizes the significance of each of the three objects she is pointing out by using the intensifiers: 완전 [*wan-jeon*], 진짜 [*jin-jja*], and 너무 [*neo-mu*].

3.2. Rising Intonation on Declaratives

Sinurat et al. (2021) described rising intonation on declaratives as a method to capture the audience's attention and prompt them to listen to the forthcoming content. Jeon (2004) further contributed by explaining that this variation serves as a means to affirm the information one is attempting to acquire. This particular pattern of rising intonation is evident even when the sentence structure is not a question. The utilization of rising intonation on declaratives in Cho Namjoo's novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* will be examined as follows.

Data 2

저 선배한테 힘 돼 주려고 나오는 게 **아니거든요?** 기운 없으면 보약 한 재 해 드시든가. 내가 진짜 다 때려치우고 싶지만 악착같이 나와서 여자 회장 꼭 보고 말 거야."

Jeo seon-bae-han-te him dwae ju-ryeo-go na-o-neun ge **a-ni-geo-deun-yo?** *Gi-un eobs-eu-myeon bo-yak han jae hae deu-si-deun-ga. Nae-ga jin-jja da ddae-ryeo chi-u-go sip-ji-man ak-chal-gat-i na-wa-seo yeo-ja hoe-jang kkok bo-go mal geo-ya.*

(**I'm not here to support you?** If the club needs brightening up, get a lamp. God, I'm sick and tired of this place, but I'm gonna keep fighting tooth and nail until the day a woman becomes president of the hiking club). (Cho, 2020)

In Cha Seungyeon's character in Data 2, she is confronted by a senior male member of the hiking club who underestimates her by assuming she wants to be treated the same as the other boys, without any special treatment. She raises her voice to explain that her reason for joining the club is not to be a supporter like he deemed true.

3.3. Hedge

Jeon (2004) stated that women use expressions like "글쎄요 [*geul-sse-yo*]" and "몰라요 [*mol-la-yo*]," both of which can be translated as "I don't know," to decrease their certainty about something. This is believed to help them avoid being held strictly accountable for the accuracy of their statements. The use of hedges in Cho Namjoo's novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* as seen in Data 3 and Data 4.

Data 3

급식 먹는 순서를 바꿔야 한다고 **생각합니다**.

Geup-sik meok-neun sun-seo-reul ba-kkweo-ya han-da-go **saeng-gak-hap-ni-da**.

(**I think** that we should change the order in which we eat lunch). (Cho, 2020)

The statement in Data 3 is made by Yuna, one of Kim's classmates. Yuna suggested to the teacher that they should change the lunch order because the girls are having difficulty eating within the short amount of time given to them, as the boys are prioritized to eat first. However, despite her argument that the change is necessary, Yuna opts to use the term "생각하다 [*saeng-gak-ha-da*]" (to think) since she doesn't want to make a scene.

Data 4

택시가 더 무서워요. 학생이 많이 **놀란 것 같은데** 잘 달래 주세요.

Taek-si-ga deo mu-seo-weo-yo. Hak-saeng-i manh-i **nol-lan geot gat-eun-de** *jal dal-lae ju-se-yo.*

(Taxis are even worse. She **must have been** extremely frightened. Comfort her). (Cho, 2020)

In Data 4, a woman assisted Kim Jiyoung when a boy assaulted her on her way home by bus. She uses 'ㄴ 것 같다 [*n geot gat-da*]' to convey her uncertainty about whether Kim is truly terrified or not, as she doesn't want to jump to conclusions.

3.4. Empty Adjectives

Lakoff stated that there is a category of feminine adjectives called "empty adjectives." (Hidayati, 2022). Some examples of these adjectives include "gorgeous," "fabulous," and "pretty." The usage of empty adjectives in Cho Namjoo's novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) [*Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng* Kim Ji-yeong] as seen in Data 5.

Data 5
순간 김지영 씨의 두 볼에 사르르 홍조가 돌더니 **표정이 부드러워지고 눈빛은 따뜻해졌다**.
*Sun-gan Kim Ji-yeong ssi-eui du bol-e sa-reu-reu hong-jo-ga dol-deo-**ni pyo-jeong-i bu-deu-reo-weo-ji-go nun-bit-eun dda-ddeut-hae-jyeoss-da***.
(Jiyoung's expression softened, **her cheeks turned a gentle pink, and a warm smile appeared in her eyes**). (Cho, 2020)

Writer Cho illustrates the rapid changes in Kim's character by employing feminine expressions such as "her cheeks flushed pink" and "a warm smile." According to Lakoff' (1973), men frequently refrain from using these expressions because they are considered too feminine and clash with their masculine image.

3.5. Emphatic Stress

As cited by Anhar (2019), Lakoff stated that women tend to emphasize their words with stressed intonation. This intonation could involve a rising intonation or the elongation of syllables, as seen in the word "참 [*cham*]," which would be pronounced as "차암 [*cha-am*]" The use of emphatic stress in Cho Namjoo's novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) [*Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng* Kim Ji-yeong] is as seen in Data 6.

Data 6
"**만약에, 만약에**, 지금 배 속에 있는 애가 또 딸이라면, 은영 아빠는 어쩔 거야?"
  "***Man-yak-e, man-yak-e***, ji-geum bae sok-e iss-neun ae-ga ddo ddal-i-ra-myeon, Eun-yeong a-ppa-neun eo-jjeol geo-ya?"
(**What if... What if** the baby is another girl? What would you do?") (Cho, 2020)

In order to underline that what she stated is only a hypothetical scenario, the mother's character used the phrase "what if" twice.

3.6. Super Polite Forms

This variation was used to be more respectful towards the addressee (Widyawati, 2018). Super polite forms include indirect requests, euphemisms, expressions of gratitude, and other ways of showing respect, such as the honorific system in the Korean language (Jeon, 2004). The super polite forms used in Cho Namjoo's novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* is as seen in Data 7 and Data 8.

Data 7
사돈어른, 외람되지만 제가 한 말씀 올릴게요. 그 집만 가족인가요? 저희도 가족이에요. 저희 집 삼 남매도 명절 아니면 다 같이 얼굴 볼 시간 없어요. 요즘 젊은 애들 사는 게 다 그렇죠. 그 댁 따님이 집에 오면, 저희 딸은 저희 집으로 **보내 주셔야죠**.
*Sa-don-eo-reun, oe-ram-doe-ji-man je-ga han mal-sseum ol-lil-ge-yo. Geu jip-man ga-jok-in-ga-yo? Jeo-hui-do ga-jok-i-e-yo. Jeo-hui jip sam nam-mae-do myeong-jeol a-ni-myeon da gat-i eol-gul bol si-gan eobs-eo-yo. Yo-jeum jeolm-eun ae-deul sa-neun ge da geu-reoh-jyo. Geu daek dda-nim-i jip-e o-myeon jeo-hui ddal-eun jeo-hui jip-eu-ro **bo-nae ju-syeo-ya-jyo***.
(Mr. Jung, with all due respect, I must speak my mind. As you know, the holidays are a time for families to come together. However, they are not just for your family; they are for my family as well. Nowadays, everyone is so busy, and it's difficult for my children to gather, especially outside of the holiday season. **You should at least** allow our daughter to come home when your daughter visits you.") (Cho, 2020)

The context of the statement in Data 7 is when Kim is acting as though her mother was defending herself in front of her father-in-law. As Mom, she asks indirectly that he should let Kim come home during the holidays instead of serving her in-laws like this.

Data 8
연세도 많으신 할머니를 언제까지 손녀들과 같은 방을 **쓰시게** 할 거냐며, 혼자 편하게 라디오도 듣고 불경도 들으면서 낮잠 **주무실** 수 있게 방을 따로 내드려야 한다고 했다.

*Yeon-se-do manh-eu-sin hal-meo-ni-reul eon-je-kka-ji son-nyeo-deul-gwa gat-eun bang-eul **sseu-si-ge** hal geo-nya-myeo, hon-ja pyeon-ha-ge ra-di-o-do deud-go bul-gyeong-do deul-eu-myeon-seo naj-jam **ju-mu-sil** su iss-ge bang-eul dda-ro nae-deu-dyeo-ya han-da-go haess-da.*

(She explained that Grandmother was **too elderly** to **share** a room with the daughters and needed her own space for listening to the radio and Buddhist sutra tapes, as well as for resting). (Cho, 2020)

In Data 8 the mother employs three distinct honorific word forms: 연세가 많으시다 [*yeon-se-ga manh-eu-si-da*] (literally translated as 'has many ages') instead of 늙다 [*neulk-da*] (old) to refer to the grandmother; 주무시다 [*ju-mu-si-da*] (to sleep) instead of the more common 자다 [*ja-da*]; and 쓰다 [*sseu-da*] with 시 [*si*] as an infix to enhance respect in addressing the subject.

3.7. Avoidance of Strong Swear Words

Women will transform profanity in Korean such as 씨발 [*ssi-bal*] into something similar but a milder version of it, for example, 씨방 [*ssi-bang*] or 아이씨 [*a-i-ssi*], to avoid being too vulgar and rude (Jeon, 2004). Avoidance of strong swear words used in Cho Namjoo's *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* is as seen in Data 9.

Data 9
학교 앞에는 유명한 **바바리맨**이 있었다. 수년째 일정 시간, 일정 장소에 출몰해 온 토박이 바바리맨이었다.

*Hak-gyo ap-e-neun yu-myeong-han **ba-ba-ri-maen**-i iss-eoss-da. Su-nyeon-jjae il-jeong si-gan, il-jeong jang-so-e chul-mul-hae on to-bak-i ba-ba-ri-maen-i-eoss-da.*

(An infamous **Burberry man** was seen lurking around the school gate. He was a local who had consistently appeared at the same time and location over the years.) (Cho, 2020)

A "Burberry man" in Data 9 is a milder term used to describe a person who behaves inappropriately by exposing his genitals in front of young girls. The term refers to his lengthy coat, which he wears to cover his nude body. If a boy were the victim of such an incident, he would simply be called a pervert.

3.8. Question Tag

Nuringtyas and Navila (2022) describe the purpose of a question tag as gaining confidence in what a woman is saying. Jeon (2004) stated that in the Korean language, question tags are used when expecting a positive response from the other party. The question tags used in Cho Namjoo's *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]* is as seen in Data 10.

Data 10
엄마는 우리 키울 때 어땠어? **힘들지 않았어? 후회하지 않았어?** 그때 엄마는 위대했어?

*Eom-ma-neun u-ri ki-ul ddae eo-ddaess-eo? **Him-deul-ji anh-ass-eo? Hu-hoe-ha-ji anh-ass-eo?** Geu-ddae eom-ma-neun wi-dae-haess-eo?*

(What was it like when you were raising us? **Wasn't it tough**? **Didn't you** regret having so many? Were you also almighty?) (Cho, 2020)

In Data 10, Kim asks her mother about her experience giving birth to her and her siblings after giving birth to her daughter. She wonders whether it was difficult and whether her mother ever regretted having so many kids, as she does at the moment. However, she is unsure and uses "~지 않다 [*~ji anh-da*]" as a question tag to confirm her curiosity.

3.9. Precise Color Terms

Yunita (2018) cited Lakoff, who stated that men don't tend to place as much importance on different shades of color as women do. Lakoff's argument suggests that men consider this matter trivial and irrelevant to real life. In the subsequent discussion, we will examine the utilization of precise color terms in Cho Namjoo's novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82 년생 김지영) *[Pal-sip-i nyeon-saeng Kim Ji-yeong]*.

Data 11

두 사람 사이에 여전히 냉랭한 기운이 남아 있던 어느 날, 외출 준비를 하던 아버지가 옷장을 살피며, 저기 그거 어딨지? 했다. 어머니가 서랍에서 **남색** 카디건을 꺼내 주었다.

*Du sa-ram sa-i-e yeo-jeon-hi naeng-raeng-han gi-un-i nam-a iss-deon eo-neu nal, oe-chul jun-bi-reul ha-deon a-beo-ji-ga ot-jang-eul sal-pi-myeo, jeo-gi geu-geo eo-diss-ji? haess-da. Eo-meo-ni-ga seo-rap-e-seo **nam-saek** ka-di-geon-eul kkeo-nae ju-eoss-da.*

(The tension between them was still palpable when, one day, the father was rummaging through the closet, getting ready to go out. He asked where "that thing" was, and the mother handed him an **indigo** cardigan from the drawer). (Cho, 2020)

Indigo which is used in Data 11 is a blue colour with a purplish undertone. Women can distinguish between purple and blue, as well as indigo in between, and consider it important to recognize the difference. On the other hand, men frequently fail to recognize the distinction and tend to categorize it as either purple or blue.

Patriarchal issues and gender equality influenced the use of women's language in this novel, similar to how social caste affected the use of women's language in Bali, as stated by Utami (2022). Lakoff (1973) stated that women use correct and polite language to demonstrate their social status. Moreover, Cixous (as cited in Yuniarti, 2015) supported this statement by asserting that writing also serves as a medium for women to convey their significance in society and express themselves. Other than that, this could raise language awareness in order to avoid language discrimination, which is to have an appropriate language attitude towards women's language.

4. CONCLUSION

Among the 10 differences that Lakoff listed as traits of women's language, intensifiers are the most prominent. Intensifiers are used to highlight a point and should not be underestimated. However, hypercorrect grammar is absent in the novel, as the majority of the characters engage in informal situations, and the author, in general, uses correct grammar. Both the female protagonists and the author utilize appropriate and polite language to express their ideas to the public because they are both educated women. However, they are oppressed as a result of gender inequity and patriarchal laws. In this book, Cho effectively captures the experiences of women. This accomplishment is made possible by the use of figures of speech such as intensifiers such as hyperbole, figurative language, repetitions, and rhetorical questions, which are unique characteristics of women's language in literature. The novel explores feminist themes, carrying forth Cixous's idea that women should use literature to highlight their existence and convey their significance in society.

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