Investigating the Construction of Gender Stereotypes in the Animated   Movie Mulan: A Feminist Stylistics Approach

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ABSTRACT

While global initiatives towards gender equality, as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, have gained momentum, the mainstream film industry continues to perpetuate traditional gender narratives and male privilege on a global and cultural scale. This study engages with the problem of gender codification in the motion picture industry. It particularly tackles the question of gender stereotyping in the Disney movie Mulan (1998), and how language codifies power relations and male privilege in patriarchal discourse. Adopting a feminist stylistics approach, the study examines the Disney Production Mulan (1998) to investigate the patriarchal discourse assignment of fixed constructs of male/female identities and social roles embedded in gender representation. It utilizes Conversation Analysis tools to showcase how the conversation exchanges between Mulan and other characters represent and construct the development of Disney's viewpoint towards the question of gender. It argues for the significance of merging the feminist stylistics model of analysis with the Conversation Analysis tools on the theoretical level in highlighting the power relation embedded in Mulan movie (1998) and Disney's vision towards the gender. The study concluded that despite Disney's movement towards feminist representation of female characters of the Third Wave of Feminism, the question of gender stereotyping and maintenance of male privilege still persists in gender representation: The male share in articulating patriarchal mindset and order exceeds the female share.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis, Disney, feminist stylistics, gender codification, gender representation, gender stereotyping, Patriarchal Discourse, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

1.   INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, represent a comprehensive global framework aiming at fostering a more equitable and sustainable future. Among the seventeen goals, **Goal Five**— Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls—is of paramount importance. This goal seeks to eradicate all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, while also promoting the full participation of women in public life and economic opportunities. Furthermore, **Goal Five** aims to ensure equal rights for women in terms of access to resources, ownership, and control over land, property, and financial services. By addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality, **Goal Five** aims to create a world in which all women and girls can fully exercise their rights (UN Women 2023).

Language, a powerful tool for shaping and reflecting societal values, is intrinsically linked to these broader development goals. As a multifaceted social construct, language can both perpetuate and challenge power dynamics, including those related to gender (Litosseliti 2006). It serves as a tool for communication,

representation, and social interaction (Simpson 1993). Moreover, language plays a crucial role in reinforcing or challenging power dynamics, including sexism and discrimination (Pratto, Korchmaros, and Hegarty 2007).

To understand these complex language functions, Discourse Analysis (DA) is a crucial tool. As a core component of applied linguistics, DA examines language in context, exploring its relationship to society, culture, power, and ideology (Baker and Sibonile Ellece 2013; Angermuller, Maingueneau, and Wodak 2014).

Given the centrality of DA to understanding language in use within various social contexts, as outlined above, it is particularly relevant to examine its application to the study of sexism. Sexism, a societal inequality rooted in gender power imbalances, manifests in various forms, including language (Wodak 1997). Sexist language often reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes, shaped by broader cultural and ideological factors (Weatherall 2002).

One particularly revealing site for examining these dynamics is the realm of animated movies. Animated movies, a popular medium for children, often perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek 2011). Research consistently demonstrates the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of female characters in contrast to the overrepresentation and powerful portrayal of male characters (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995; Anderson and Cavallaro 2002).

A prominent example of this is the work of the Disney Corporation. According to Towbin et al. (2004), Disney has exerted a significant influence on children's media. However, the company has faced criticism for perpetuating gender stereotypes in its animated movies. Female characters are often portrayed as physically attractive but passive and dependent, while male characters are typically depicted as strong, independent, and heroic (Signorielli 2001). These portrayals can shape children's perceptions of gender roles and contribute to gender inequality.

This study aims to investigate gender representation of the female protagonist Mulan and the construction of gender stereotypes through the language used in the conversation exchanges between the movie characters in a selected scene of the animated movie. This is achieved through employing Sara Mills' feminist stylistics model of analysis (2005) as a theoretical framework and employing Conversation Analysis (CA) (Liddicoat 2007) as analytical tools.

The study particularly focuses on the codification of gender stereotyping in language and how this linguistic construction concurs with or deviates from Western feminist discourse in its third-wave orientation and feminist stylistics in its focus on conversation style. The aim of the paper is related to goal number five of the sustainable development goals of the UN which targets ending discrimination against women and girls.

Unlike other studies that employed Mills' (2005) feminist stylistics model of analysis, this study works on three levels (rather than two), which are word, phrase/sentence, and discourse levels. It combines feminist stylistics analysis with CA, as this would serve to investigate the gender representation of Mulan in the animated movie. It also serves to examin gender stereotypes, patriarchy, the glass ceiling and female masculinity in the chosen movie. It highlights the evolution of gender representation in Disney's portrayal as part of the entertainment industry that shapes youth/children consciousness. Also, the significance of the study lies in the new instrumentalization of the theoretical model, which has been previously used in literary works (novels, poems), but not in animated movies as a widespread genre for reception by children and adults equally.

Consequently, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do the conversation exchanges between Mulan and other characters reflect gender stereotypes and patriarchy in the animated movie *Mulan* (1998)?

2. How can feminist stylistics showcase gender stereotypes and patriarchy in the animated movie *Mulan* (1998)?

In an attempt to answer these questions and address the aim of the study, it is important to elaborate on the theoretical approaches in the context of language, gender, Discourse Studies (DS), gender stereotypes, sexism, patriarchy, feminist stylistics, female masculinity, CA, and Disney and motion pictures.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

This review covers the theoretical background related to language, gender, Discourse Studies (DS), gender stereotypes, sexism, patriarchy, feminist stylistics, CA, and provides historical background on Disney and motion pictures. It also provides previous studies on feminist stylistics and CA.

2.1 Language, Stylistics, and Discourse Studies (DS)

Language transcends mere communication, serving as a complex social tool that constructs and reflects reality (Simpson 1993). It enables individuals to shape identities, express thoughts, and engage in social interactions across diverse contexts (Cameron 2020). To fully comprehend this intricate relationship between language and society, DA emerges as a critical lens.

DA is a multidisciplinary field that explores how language is used to create meaning, power, and social relations (Angermuller, Maingueneau, and Wodak 2014). By examining language in its social context, DA reveals the underlying structures and ideologies that shape human interaction (Baker and Ellece 2011; Paltridge 2012; Gee and Handford 2013; van Dijk 2009). This interdisciplinary approach highlights the dynamic and complex nature of language as a social practice.

Building on the insights of DA, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) delves deeper into the power dynamics embedded within language. Emerging in the late 1970s, CDA examines how language is used to reinforce or challenge social inequalities (van Dijk 1993). By scrutinizing texts and speech, CDA uncovers hidden ideologies and power structures that shape social relations (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). To systematically analyze the linguistic features that underpin these power dynamics, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) provides a robust framework.

2.1.1 Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

SFG, developed by Halliday in the mid-20th century, views language as a system for creating meaning. Register is a central concept in SFG, referring to the specific language variety used in a particular context. It is shaped by three key factors: *field*, the subject matter or topic; *tenor*, the social relationships between participants; and *mode*, the channel of communication. To understand how language functions within these registers, Halliday et al. (2014) introduced three *metafunctions*: *ideational*, concerned with representing experiences and knowledge; *interpersonal*, focusing on social interactions and relationships; and *textual*, relating to the organization and structure of language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). SFG posits a strong interconnection between register and metafunction. The field is closely tied to the ideational metafunction, tenor to the interpersonal, and mode to the textual. This interdependence highlights the inseparable link between language and its social context. (Bloor and Bloor 2004; Fontaine 2012; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Thompson 2013). This understanding of language

as a socially situated practice provides a foundation for examining how power dynamics, including gender, are embedded within language structures.

2.2 Feminist Linguistics (FL)

Feminist Linguistics (FL) builds upon this foundation by investigating how language both reflects and reinforces gender inequalities. By scrutinizing how language constructs and reinforces patriarchal power dynamics, FL seeks to illuminate the ways in how discriminatory representations of women are perpetuated through language practices. Drawing on a diverse array of theoretical frameworks, FL offers a critical lens for understanding how language both reflects and shapes societal structures, particularly in terms of gender (Mills and Mullany 2011).

Building upon the foundation of FL, feminist stylistics delves deeper into the linguistic minutiae of texts to expose gender biases. As a subfield of stylistics, it analyzes how language choices, at the level of word, phrase, and discourse, contribute to the representation and reinforcement of gender inequalities (Mills 2005). By investigating the stylistic features of various texts, feminist stylistics aims to uncover the subtle mechanisms through which gendered power relations are embedded within language (Ufot 2012).

In essence, both feminist linguistics and feminist stylistics share a common goal which is understanding and challenging the role of language in perpetuating gender inequalities. While feminist linguistics offers a broader framework for analyzing language and gender, feminist stylistics provides a specific method for examining how linguistic choices shape gender representations.

2.3 Language and Gender

Even though the two terms sex and gender have different meanings and imply distinct connotations, they are wrongly and interchangeably used as synonyms. However, it is possible to distinguish between both terms; sex refers to biological differences (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Holmes 2001; Litosseliti 2006; Talbot 2003), while gender is product of a socially created identity (Litosseliti 2006). Holmes (2001) discussed that gender describes the societal norms, expectations, and regulations related to femininity and masculinity. Also, Meyerhoff (2006) has differentiated between both terms by explaining that one's sex is based on their natural chromosomes and can be identified by non-negotiable scientific criteria. On the other hand, gender is seen as a social construct made up

of activities that are socially and culturally coded to specific norms and condemnations (Meyerhoff 2006).

This distinction between sex and gender is crucial for understanding the concept of sexism. The term sexism was first made up in the 1960s. It was correspondent to the term racism to elucidate discrimination within a social construct based on sexuality (Litosseliti 2006). Indeed, sexism takes place in relationships where one sex is seen as superior to another and where the other sex is labelled as inferior and marginalized with respect to a number of social behaviours and roles. In other words, women are always portrayed as manipulated and objectified through language because of their sex, whereas men are portrayed as dominant and manipulative. Thus, Litosseliti (2006) stressed upon the fact that language is a mighty powerful tool used by speakers to reflect and construct the world around them, similarly, she stressed upon investigating sexist language and its implications critically.

2.3.1 Sexist Language

Building upon this foundation of understanding the distinction between sex and gender, and their role in the manifestation of sexism, it is essential to examine how language itself perpetuates gender inequality. Nneka (2012) explained that sexist language is the language that tends supposedly to include all individuals, however, it unintentionally or purposely excludes a gender, whether it is male or female. Cameron (1992) defined sexist language as the language that depicts men and women an unequal basis where one sex is seen as inferior and has fewer rights than the other sex. Sandra (2013) defined sexist language as the language that favours one sex over the other and treats the other sex in a discriminative way. The bias is always in favour of men against women. She further explained that gender bias which is considered an unequal phenomenon in society is reflected on the lexis of the language. Spender (1985) argued that there is a lexical gap in the language, as there are no words to describe things women encounter that are common in their lives. Thus, it is frequently argued that the use of language is sexist.

Some scholars such as Spender (1985) and Mills (2005) discussed that language is not neutral but deeply ideological (Litosseliti 2006). They argued that men are seen as the norm, while women are seen as inferior groups. Men are seen as if they represent all human beings including males and females. Accordingly, such social practice marginalizes women in language and reflects how the society is male-dominated. Mills (2008) distinguished between two forms of sexism which are overt and indirect sexism.

Overt sexism is obvious and unambiguous, but indirect sexism can only be recognized contextually in respect of the interpretation of the surrounding utterances because it is common, and hence it needs ways to challenge and analyze its usage in language. Overt or direct sexism is a kind of language usage that can be easily detected by using linguistic markers or analyzing presuppositions. This kind of language usage has been historically related to the expression of opinions that view women in a discriminative way that conveys to the readers that women are marginalized (Mills 2008). Mills (2008) explained that overt sexism is exemplified in generic nouns, derivational, non-parallel terms, sexism in proverbs and sexism in swear words, whereas indirect sexism is exemplified in metaphors and irony.

2.4 Gender Stereotypes, Sexism, and Patriarchy

Sexist language, as discussed above, contributes to the construction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotype is defined by Shaw (cited in Gooden and Gooden 2001) as a presupposition made about each gender's qualities, such as physical appearance, physical ability, attitudes, hobbies, or career. Also, Cook and Cusack (2010) defined stereotyping as superficial generalizations about gender attributes, differences, and roles of individuals or groups. Litosseliti (2006) found that male characters tend to have more powerful and diverse occupations, such as bank manager, school principal, or physician, than female ones, who tend to have more traditional positions such as nurse, housewife, or secretary. Consequently, this stereotypical portrayal of women would have a negative effect on the way they perform in their daily lives, and any given situation, they might also doubt themselves and their competence.

Such stereotypes are deeply ingrained in societal structures that privilege men. The term patriarchy is associated with the ideology of men's dominance over women (Irigaray 2004). Sultana (2012) emphasized that patriarchy deprives women of having access to decision-making and other sources of power. This means that women in patriarchal societies are always submissive to men. Sultana (2012) exemplified how Bangladeshi society oppresses women and keeps them subservient to men. These examples are not just limited to the Bangladeshi society; they can also be seen in other parts of the world, as explained by Sultana (2012). First, society prefers to have newly born boys over girls and manipulates women and girls. Second, the burdensome household and domestic responsibilities, including cooking, cleaning, and childrearing, as well

as belittling the efforts females take to fulfil these responsibilities. Third, the an unambiguous discrepancy in receiving formal education. Fourth, being a victim of domestic violence and being hit over frequently. Fifth, A woman could lose her job if she opposes or exposes any sexual harassment incidents. Lastly, women hardly play any part in the family planning techniques.

2.5   Conversation Analysis (CA)

Conversation Analysis (CA) provides a framework for understanding how these power dynamics are enacted and reinforced through language and social interaction. Conversation is a means of communication that people utilize to socialize, establish, and maintain relationships with one another (Liddicoat 2007). A conversation comprises two or more people taking turns speaking, with only one person speaking at any time. In some ways, conversations are the perfect form of communication because they enable individuals with opposing viewpoints on a subject to learn from one another. A speech, on the other hand, is a single person's spoken presentation to a group. A good conversation involves mutually engaging connections or topics that the speakers are aware of. When people are involved in any conversation, they take part in a form of a linguistic mode. The conversation could be done not only through a linguistic mode, but through some other aspects of conversation such as silence, register, eye gaze, and body posture that are carried out by things other than spoken words (Liddicoat 2007).

CA emerged from the work of Sacks, Jefferson, and Schegloff in the early 1960s (Hutchby and Wooffi 2008). It is the study of patterns in conversation and how speakers utilize language to generate ordered social interactions. It is the study of conversation in interaction. CA, whether institutional or informal, tries to explain the orderliness, structure, and sequential patterns of interaction. It is the study of naturally occurring, recorded talk-in-interaction. Its primary goal is to uncover how participants comprehend and react to one another throughout their turns at talking, with a particular emphasis on how action sequences are formed (Liddicoat 2007).

CA mainly focuses on minute details of real situations that occur without the researcher's intervention. It focuses   on daily spoken interactions such as interviews, interactions in courtrooms, and interactions between teachers and students in the classroom. According to Hutcby and Woffitt (2008), CA is concerned with the issue of social order and how language is produced by social context. It is an examination of certain elements of a conversation as

the speaker follows along in a specific situation. These analytical principles can be extended to the realm of media, such as animated movies, to understand how cultural messages, including gender roles, are communicated and reinforced. For example, Disney, a leading entertainment corporation, is one of the media forms through which children learn about gender.

2.6   Disney and Motion Pictures

Disney animated movies target a huge number of audiences, especially children, who are in a growing stage, and slowly realize gender roles. Most of the target audience get their first understanding from these different movies of how men and women are supposed to behave. Indeed, "media consumption has a measurable influence on people's perceptions of the real world, and regardless of the accuracy of these perceptions, they are used to help guide subsequent attitudes, judgments, and actions" (Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008, 131). This means that the way women are portrayed on television and in movies has a huge effect on social norms, on how society perceives women, and even on how women perceive themselves. Such movies may affect the audience's perception and conceptions of gender and gender roles forming in their identities and personalities.

Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008) argued that analyzing gender roles in Disney animated movies helps in forming an understanding of gender stereotypical portrayals that would have a negative impact on the audience. It is important to be aware and alert if entertainment companies and major media are developing the stereotypical image of gender roles in their productions, as this would negatively affect the way audience organize their thoughts and perceive the world around them. They would consequently build their thoughts on what they have perceived from watching such gender stereotypical portrayals. In addition, children acquire their gender roles and choose their gender preferences at a very young age, this is actually strengthened by gender stereotypes and gender roles presented to them via television and movies (Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008). They get to know gender details and awareness about themselves and how they should look and act through mass media companies such as Disney.

2.7   Previous Studies on Feminist Stylistics and CA

Siregar, Setia, and Marulafau (2020) conducted a study to examine feminist stylistics that describes how women and men are portrayed in texts using Mills' feminist stylistics model (2005). This study examines

not just stylistics, which analyzes language structure and how it influences society, but also the role of women as actors and the position of ideas or events conveyed in the text. The data of the study consisted of a collection of poems by Rupi Kaur called *In the Sun and Her Flowers* (2017). The researchers found out that male and female characters are marked through a number of words on the word level. For example, father (for males), doctor (for males), pretty (for females), breasts (for females) and naive (for females). They also found out that gender-specific terminologies are mostly used to refer to females. Several phrases showed that the poems in the book have a specific gender. For example, there are certain phrases that refer to men such as "the men looked at my newborn hips with salivating lips", and other phrases refer to women such as "I felt beautiful until the age of twelve." They also concluded that there is a significant difference between men and women on the discourse level, women are frequently depicted in terms of their body parts and as the ones who should be blamed, manipulated, and controlled. For example, "If I just learn to act like a lady" (for female), "slut shaming" (for female), and "virgin praising" (for female). However, men are depicted as those who could exercise power over women and those who are in charge of women. For example, "the men will get angry and fight" (for males).

van Braak et al. (2021) conducted a study examining how general practitioners in training participate in Zoom-based collaborative reflection sessions. The researchers noted that participating in conversations is critical in creating educational value in an online register. For this, they recorded three Zoom sessions between practitioners and teachers to investigate the different ways practitioners use to participate on Zoom utilizing Have's (2007) and Sindell's (2013) CA tools. They examined how the online setting's capabilities influence and constrain participants' behavior. The researchers found out that participants specifically focus on the interactional achievement of participating in frameworks that vary throughout the course of a case discussion. In the online context, participants develop new methods to cope with both familiar and occasionally new participation issues. The researchers concluded that the context is not a container that predetermines how the interaction will be shaped. Instead, the action alters the context, emphasizing certain characteristics while minimizing others. The institutional objectives of collaborative reflection are the same in both settings, but the actions are vastly different. Both settings draw attention to different aspects of the educational process. Participants in the online environment clearly get oriented to a local relevant array of semiotic fields found in the

online environment, which creates a new contextual configuration. Using various semiosis layers (such as facial expression, chat and speech), users may engage in new forms of interaction. The study of these new behaviors may offer different insights into the nature of online interaction; a form of communication that is becoming more widespread and increasingly important nowadays. The results of this study showed that these reflection sessions may be used for medical and non-medical curricula training in online education.

In conclusion, there are no studies conducted on *Mulan* (1998) animated movie combining both the feminist stylistics model of analysis and CA tools. Thus, this is the gap the researcher is filling in in this study.

3.   DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an eclectic approach combining Sara Mills' feminist stylistics model of analysis (2005) and CA tools suggested by Liddicoat (2007) to analyze the language used in the conversation exchanges between characters to show the stereotypical portrayal of female characters in the movie. Utilizing Mills' feminist stylistics model of analysis (2005) and Liddicoat's analytical tools creates a theoretical connection between FL and DA whose central focus is the examination of social change and empowerment in relation to the complexities of gender, language, power, and ideology.

3.1   DATA

The 1998 Disney movie *Mulan* tells the story of a Chinese girl named Mulan who disguises herself as a man to join the army in place of her father, protecting both him and her country from the Huns. Under the alias ''Ping,'' Mulan undergoes military training and proves herself as a determined warrior, ultimately saving the Emperor and bringing honor to her nation. The film is based on the Chinese legend of Hua Mulan and is Disney's 36th animated feature, released during the Disney Renaissance. Mulan is seen as a significant shift in the portrayal of female characters in Disney's late 90s films, highlighting themes of gender discrimination and challenging traditional gender roles ("Mulan" 1998).

3.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sara Mills in her feminist stylistics model of analysis (2005) highlights a variety of topics and skills that would help researchers in analyzing texts from a feminist perspective. Her model of analysis provides a feminist theoretical scheme, where she uses explicit

language study and linguistic theory to explain the reasons for feminist text analysis. She provides various tools of analysis on three different levels: word level, phrase/sentence level and discourse level. These tools help in analyzing sexuality, political correctness, the position of the reader, narration, discourse, and the roles of characters. The word level deals with the subject of gender stereotypes on the level of individual words. It touches upon the more general and conceptual perspectives of sexism. The phrase/sentence level is concerned with the way of analyzing "language-use beyond the level of the word" (Mills 2005, 98). In other words, it focuses on the way that phrases and sentences "make sense in relation to their co-text, their context, the history of their usage and also the background knowledge which is needed for their making sense" (Mills 2005, 98). The discourse level focuses on analysis above the sentence level. This level is associated with larger constructions and orders that determine the recurrence of individual words, and the implication of such words and larger constructions on readers.

3.2.1 Analysis on the Word Level

Mills (2005) suggests naming and androcentrism as a tool to be utilized on the word level. Naming has always been controversial in feminist analysis (Mills 2005). Languages are sexist mainly because they depict the world from a male viewpoint and in accordance with gender stereotypes (Mills 2005). For example, the terms "vagina", "vulva", "cunt", and "clitoris" are considered derogating and insulting to women, especially when they are used publicly. Previous research has shown that certain words referring to sexual intercourse are specifically generated from a male perspective to show that sex is active for males and passive for females (Mills 2005).

3.2.2 Analysis on the Phrase/ Sentence level

Mills (2005) suggests presupposition and inference as a tool to be utilized on the phrase/sentence level. Pragmatics scholars such as Brown and Yule stress on the importance of background knowledge in interpreting phrases or sentences (Mills 2005). Background knowledge mainly includes "gender suppositions, stereotypes, and beliefs that exist in society" (Mills 2005, 100). For example, in a phrase like "A woman's place is within the home", there is a presupposition that a woman is not proficient of successfully doing and finishing things that are not related to housework. The inference to this would be a woman is destined or intended to be a housewife or someone who is stuck in the house and that is the only role she can play in her life. It is as if the statement is saying that woman belongs to the house and nowhere else.

Throughout the history of linguistics, transitivity has been explained in many different ways; it was understood to be a semantic phenomenon (Halliday et al. 2014). This paper analyzes transitivity choices from a feminist stylistic perspective on the level of phrase/sentence. In fact, the idea of transitivity is associated with Halliday's work in systemic linguistics from the late 1960s onwards. In discussions of transitivity, there are two types of material process: material action intention and material action supervention. Material action intention refers to an action that is done deliberately, for example, "I broke the window, in order to get into the house." (Mills 2005, 111). On the other hand, material action supervention refers to actions that are not done deliberately. Transitivity choices about agents reflect a worldview in which characters act within, they are sometimes the receptors of these actions rather than the doers (Halliday et al. 2014). Thus, readers could easily view the position of the characters and their relations to others by analyzing the order of the sentence. This helps in determining whether the character is in control of the sequence of actions, active, or they are passive, victim of circumstances (Mills 2005). To illustrate, if a character is in charge of their decisions and actions, they consequently tend to do a number of material-action intention processes. Moreover, a character who does internalized mental processes is seen as "very introspective" (110). Likewise, a character who does externalized mental processes, tends to be "incomplete in some way" (110). Furthermore, a character who does supervention processes tend to be "somehow out of control of themselves" (110).

3.2.3 Analysis on the Discourse Level

Mills (2005) suggests two tools on the discourse level: fragmentation and schemata. She defines fragmentation as the practice of describing characters in writing in terms of their physical parts rather than as humans. Female fragmentation is associated with objectifying women and male focalization. It is associated with the way women are perceived by the male gaze. However, the description of male characters is shown in terms of their whole body not as fragmented parts. Mills (2005) explains that female fragmentation is represented in terms of "anatomical elements" that recurrently appear more than the representation of men (133). She explains that female fragmentation is more likely to be shown in advertisements, pornographic material, love poetry and romances. This technique has been widely noted in pornographic literature.

Mills (2005) defines schemata as a group of predetermined narrative possible choices which are associated with a bigger scale that highlights the roles that women are assigned in any piece of writing. Mills (2005) explains that schemata constitute a range of frameworks that could be utilized in a great number of texts to communicate different visions of males and females. She discusses that schemata of texts in previous studies have shown that females are depicted as sexual objects, who are actively engaged in their own downfall. They are often seen as having difficulties and writing to someone to ask for guidance. This indeed communicates a wrong image of women that they are dependent on others, and they need someone to give them advice all the time.

3.3   Analytical Tools

As the data understudy primarily includes conversation exchanges, the application of CA tools becomes particularly relevant in this context. Liddicoat (2007) defines CA as the systematic order and structure of the social interaction among participants, he sees that this interaction starts with the hypothesis that the behaviour, including verbal and non-verbal behaviour, of day-to day life is produced as rational and meaningful. He highlights that the major aim of using CA is describing and explaining the competencies that speakers use and focus on when they are involved in intelligible socially systematic interaction. Liddicoat (2007) develops his tools of analysis based on Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's studies on CA. Indeed, these tools of analysis such as turn-taking, adjacency pairs, overlap and taking the floor help in analyzing the conversation exchanges between participants in certain contexts.

First, turn taking organizes the flow of conversations among interlocutors to keep the conversation continuous (Liddicoat 2007). It refers to the process by which interlocutors in conversation decide who will speak next. After the speaker finishes their utterance, the listener may take a turn. Second, Liddicoat (2007) discusses that adjacency pairs are the fundamental unit in constructing a sequence in any conversation. It is a pair of related utterances delivered by two speakers, for example, question–answer, greeting –greeting, offer-acceptance, and the second utterance is always a response to the first. Third, Liddicoat (2007) defines repairs as the procedures through which speakers deal with difficulties that arise during a conversation. Repairs can take several forms not only changing the faulty word or utterances, but they could also appear in a silent form. Indeed, people strive to remain silent for a time in order to find the right words to communicate their thoughts. Fourth, overlapping is

a key aspect of communication that interlocutors use to create a dialogue interactively. In fact, the floor is exchanged among participants as they speak at the same time. The interrupter interrupts the first speaker even though they do not stop to finish their utterance. The interrupter always grabs the floor when the first speaker stops, but there is no gap in the simultaneous speech.

3.4   Procedures of Analysis

The data understudy is stylistically analyzed on three levels: word, phrase/sentence, and discourse levels together with the CA. It is chosen according to two main parameters: gender stereotypes, and patriarchy. The conversation exchanges between interlocutors are clustered in a table followed by the analysis using the CA tools. Also, the stylistic choices on each level are grouped in a table followed by the feminist stylistics analysis employing Mills' model of analysis.

4.   ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The selected scene highlights two main themes in the movie which are gender stereotypes and patriarchy. The analysis shows the construction of gender stereotypes and how Disney displays gender representation of the Chinese women is identity.

Conversation Analysis and Feminist Stylistics Analysis

The selected scene takes place in the beginning of the movie at the matchmaker's. Mulan pays a visit to the matchmaker looking for a suitable suitor. This scene shows how gender stereotypes and patriarchy are vividly embedded in Disney's representation of the Chinese society through the vivid depiction of the matchmaker and how she judges Mulan for her appearance and her gender role in society as a woman.

In terms of allocated turns, the matchmaker has taken nine turns, while Mulan has taken six turns. The following table highlights the conversation exchanges between both participants:

Table 1. The Conversation exchanges between Mulan and the Matchmaker

Speaker	Line	Dialogue
Matchmaker	1	"Fa Mulan"
Mulan	2	"Present"
Matchmaker	3	"Speaking without permission"
Mulan	4	"Oops"

Matchmaker	6	"Huh, Hmm, too skinny. Not good for bearing sons. Recite the final admonition"
Mulan	7	"Mmm-Hmm"
Matchmaker	8	"well"
Mulan	9	"Fulfil your duties calmly and respectfully. Reflect before you snack act. This shall bring you honour and glory. Huh"
Matchmaker	10	"Hmmm, this way. Now, pour the tea. To please your future in-laws you must demonstrate a sense of dignity and refinement. You must also be poised."
Mulan	11	"Um, pardon me"
Matchmaker	12	"And silent!"
Mulan	13	"Could I just take that back...one moment"
Matchmaker	14	"Why you clumsy-- Wooo, woooo, wooooooo..."
Matchmaker	15	"Ahhhhhhhhhhh"
Matchmaker	17	"Put it out! Put it out! Put it out!"
Matchmaker	18	"You are a disgrace! You may look like a bride, but you will never bring your family honour!"

Source: Script from https://imsdb.com/scripts/Mulan.html.

From Table 1, it is deduced that the matchmaker is the one who moderates the conversation, she gives Mulan some commands such as **"Pour the tea"** and **"Recite the final admonition"**. Adjacency pairs are seen in the matchmaker calls out for Mulan saying **"Fa Mulan"** and Mulan replies **"Present."** Moreover, there are two interruptions in this scene. First, when Mulan is pouring a cup of tea to the matchmaker and she notices Cri-kee in the tea-cup, the matchmaker was says **"You must also be poised"**, and suddenly Mulan interrupts her saying **"Um, pardon me"**, she makes a polite interruption to garner the matchmaker's attention. Consequently, the matchmaker interrupts Mulan saying **"And silent"** to show disagreement that Mulan is speaking while she is giving her a number of tips to be a good wife. Indeed, she wants to grab the floor to take her turn and interrupts Mulan to deliver her message without altering the subject.

In this scene, there are many fillers such as **"Huh"** **"Hmm"**, **"Mmm..."** and **"Well"**. The matchmaker's turns are varied among statements, fillers, orders, and questions. However, most of Mulan's turns are fillers, she uses one statement, and she asks for only one request, **"Could I just take that back...one moment."** The fillers that are used by the matchmaker

show that she takes the floor with being fully prepared to observe Mulan and take notes of the traits she sees in her and describe her body. However, the fillers that are used by Mulan show that she is doing a hesitant start, and she is not really having preparation when she starts the conversation.

The conversation exchanges between Mulan and the matchmaker show that the matchmaker is seen as a traditional Chinese woman, who reinforces patriarchy in the society. This shows that she has considerable power, since women at that period were considered to uphold family honour via marriage and childbearing. The conversation exchanges also show that the matchmaker grabs the floor by interrupting Mulan. She represents patriarchy in this scene as there is some hierarchal power relationship so that Mulan cannot speak without permission. The fact that the matchmaker's allocated number of turns is more than Mulan's shows that women in Disney's representation of the Chinese society are oppressed by those who represent patriarchy whether male or female figures.

The conversation exchanges between Mulan and the matchmaker highlight gender stereotypes at that time, where women are expected to be pleasant, quiet, feminine, and graceful, which requires Mulan to be attractive, neither too skinny nor too overweight. Starting with the opening of the scene where the matchmaker calls Mulan to enter the house, the matchmaker monitors her to determine if she is a suitable bride for the man being matched or not. Also, the matchmaker's description of Mulan as ''**too skinny**'' reveals the underlying assumption that a woman's body must conform to specific physical ideals, primarily tied to marriage and bringing up children.

The following table highlights the feminist stylistics choices on the word, the phrase/sentence and the discourse level.

Table 2. Feminist Stylistics Choices

Level	Example
Word Level	"poised," "silent," "clumsy," and "disgrace"
Phrase/ Sentence Level	"Speaking without permission," "You must demonstrate a sense of dignity and refinement," "This shall bring you honour and glory," and "You may look like a bride, but you will never bring your family honour"
Discourse Level	"Too skinny"

Source: Script from https://imsdb.com/scripts/Mulan.html.

In terms of androcentrism on the word level, the words **"poised"**, **"silent"**, **"clumsy"** and **"disgrace"** reflect the patriarchal view of society on women. This scene shows that the only way women can bring honour to their families is by becoming good wives; knowing how to serve their husbands with grace and obedience. Moreover, it shows that there are some traits women should have to be a good wife, they should be good for bearing sons, **"poised"**, **"silent"** and they should not be **"clumsy"**. Such construction of feminine identity reveals a societal valuation of women solely based on their adherence to prescribed domestic roles and their capacity to inflate male ego. The scene further exposes a disregard for women's intellectual and emotional lives, reducing them to the status of mere housewives.

In terms of presupposition and inference on the phrase/ sentence level, the phrases **"speaking without permission,"** **"you must demonstrate a sense of dignity,"** **"this shall bring you honour and glory"** and **"you may look like a bride, but you will never bring your family honour"** presuppose how women are viewed in Disney's representation of the Chinese society and how a girl should be. These constructions presuppose a social order in which girls are expected to be deferential and composed. Specifically, they imply that women must seek permission from elders before speaking and carefully consider their actions. The phrase **"this shall bring you honour and glory"** carries further implications. It infers a gendered expectation that a woman's primary role is domestic, confining her to the house chores and limiting her potential to other spheres; it is the sole pathway to bring honour to her family.

According to the matchmaker, demonstrating dignity for a girl is manifested in pouring the tea elegantly and pleasing her future in- laws by not speaking without permission, being good enough for bearing sons and having a physical beauty. It is assumed that a young lady who lacks these qualities would be unsuitable for the role of wife. A girl must exhibit specific characteristics in order to be considered a good and desired bride. Otherwise, she would not bring honour and glory to her family. In this scene, the matchmaker represents each female figure in Disney's representation of the Chinese society who reinforces patriarchy. They cultivate the idea of gender roles in the society, which is women are housewives, but men are warriors and should protect the family, fight for women and serve the Emperor. Consequently, young girls grow up with these stereotypical ideas on their minds and start working on looking good and behaving respectfully. However, Mulan is unsuitable to be a desired bride from the matchmaker's point of view; she does not recite the admonition correctly, she writes it on her arms so that she could memorize it, she pours the tea in a wrong way, and she speaks without permission. All these markers showed that Mulan was different. Most girls wanted to get married and honour their families. Yet, Mulan tends to bring glory and honour to her family but in an unstereotypical way. The societal norms burden her with superficial feminine traits that she could not stand. She sees that she has a real role in serving the Emperor rather than married.

In terms of transitivity, there are a number of material, mental, and behavioural processes this scene. The following tables show the material, mental and behavioural processes employed by Mulan and the matchmaker:

Table 3. Material, Mental, and Behavioural Processes Employed by Mulan

Verb	Process
1. **Jumping** up	material action intention
2. **Raising** her hand	material action intention (female body part)
3. Mulan struggles to **catch** him	material action intention
4. Mulan **puts** Cri-kee in her mouth	material action intention (female body part)
5. Takes out fan	material action intention
6. **Covers** her mouth	material action intention (female body part)
7. **Fulfil** your duties	material action intention
8. **Fanning** herself rapidly	material action intention
9. **Pours** some tea	material action intention
10. **Grabbing** the teacup	material action intention
11. **Jumps** down	material action intention
12. **Grabs** her fan and briskly **fans** the charred area on Matchmaker's behind.	material action intention (female body part)
13. Mulan **takes** the teapot	material action intention
14. **Throws** the tea on Matchmaker and **puts out the fire.**	material process supervention (female body part)
15. She **bows, hands** the teapot back to Matchmaker.	material action intention
1. **"Reflect** before you snack"	mental process
2. Mulan **looks** at her arm	mental process
3. **notices** Cri-kee in the teacup	mental process
1. **Nodding and smiling**	behavioural process

Source: Script from https://imsdb.com/scripts/Mulan.html.

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Table 4. Material Mental, and Behavioural Processes Employed by the Matchmaker

Verb	Process
1. Matchmaker **turns** around to face her.	material action intention
2. **Takes** the cup.	material action intention
3. **Knocks** over her pot.	material supervention (female body part)
4. **Sits down** on the coals.	material supervention (female body part)
5. **Jumps** around.	material action supervention
6. **Hands** the teapot back	material action supervention
7. **Covers** her face.	material supervention (female body part)
8. **Throws** the tea pot	material action supervention
1. **Looking** over Mulan	mental process
2. **"Please** your future in- laws"	behavioural process
3. **Feels** Cri-kee in her dress	mental process

Sources: Data from https://imsdb.com/scripts/Mulan.html.

Tables 3 and 4 show that the matchmaker employed fewer material intention processes than Mulan. Most of the material processes used by the matchmaker are supervention. The matchmaker has used two material action intention processes and six material action supervention. However, Mulan has used fourteen material action intention processes and only one material action supervention. This shows that Mulan is in control of the sequence of actions, she is an active agent. However, the matchmaker is a victim of the circumstances. Tables 3 and 4 also show that the affected entity in the five material processes employed by Mulan is part of a female body: Mulan's hand and mouth, and the matchmaker's face and behind. Yet, the affected entities in the three processes of the material processes employed by the matchmaker are parts of a female body: hands, her behind and face.

The number of mental processes used by Mulan and the matchmaker are equal. Mulan's mental process **"reflect** before you snack" emphasizes the construction of gender stereotypes in the society, it asserts that a girl should think wisely before she acts so that she would not tease her partner or her future in- laws. The matchmaker's mental process of looking over Mulan reassures the fact that the society imposes gender roles upon people, women are judged by their physical appearance, and this consequently decides whether they will be desired brides and good for bearing sons or not. There are two behavioural processes, one used by Mulan which is **"nodding and smiling"** and shows that Mulan is trying to be obedient after the matchmaker has asked her to "recite the final admonition," and the second one employed by the matchmaker in **"Please** your future in- laws". This reflects that all girls should listen to their partners and their inlaws' words, obey them, and carry out their commands.

In terms of fragmentation on the discourse level, **"too skinny"** emphasizes the fact that women are judged by their physical beauty and bodies. Mulan has been seen as a "disgrace" because she is too thin to be a good housewife and not good at bringing up kids. This claims that females are meant to be mothers and that all they have to do is devoting their lives from girlhood to finding a partner and bearing children.

In terms of schemata, girls are objectified and manipulated by the chains of gender stereotypes. Marriage in Disney's representation of the Chinese society is all about making a deal that pleases both the suitor and the girl's family; it has nothing to do with love or friendship. This asserts that women are objects, they are treated as a part of a deal in which they do not have a say. It is the family's call to shape the future of their daughters apart from seeing what they really desire and aspire to. Ironically, this is how girls keep their fathers stand tall. The society imposes some superficial qualities, roles and rules on young girls and then judges them if they do not have such qualities or do not fulfil their roles, or even violate such rules. Imposing gender roles on females creates some sort of hierarchal power relation between men and women. Women are seen to be silent and have no right to object to what is being imposed on them. They just have to please their suitor's family and be good housewives.

5. CONCLUSION

Research Question 1: How do the conversation exchanges between Mulan and other characters reflect gender stereotypes and patriarchy in the animated movie *Mulan* (1998)?

The answer to this question is evident in the conversation exchanges between Mulan and the matchmaker. The conversation exchanges showed that female characters such as the matchmaker

were more likely to construct and perpetuate female ideals of obedience, calmness, and a fast pace. Such characters reinforced patriarchal notions by being very keen on getting Mulan married. They were vivid examples of patriarchy in Disney's representation of Chinese society.

The conversation exchanges between the matchmaker and Mulan implied that wives are indentured to both their in-laws and their husbands, and that they must remain ''**silent**'' in their presence. The matchmaker was dominant in her interactions with Mulan as Mulan rarely seized opportunities to speak. Even when she spoke softly, the matchmaker quickly rebuked her. The matchmaker in the selected scene portrayed how patriarchy viewed women. She reinforced the notion that girls must possess specific traits to find a suitable suitor.

The CA helped the researcher to identify whether the participants were active or passive ones, and which gender was assigned a position of power in society according to the tools proposed by Liddicoat (2007). For example, the person asking questions is often seen as the more powerful interlocutor. To elaborate, if a higher-status speaker asks questions to control the topic of conversation, a lower-status speaker is obliged to respond to their line of questioning. Likewise, a lower status speaker asks questions to seek reassurance or permission for the sake of keeping the current conversation going. This was witnessed in the selected scene, as the matchmaker kept asking Mulan questions, which showed how she was in full control of moderating the conversation. She was an active interlocutor. Meanwhile, Mulan was asking for permission to answer the questions addressed to her.

Research Question 2: How can feminist stylistics showcase gender stereotypes and patriarchy in the animated movie *Mulan* (1998)?

The feminist stylistics model of analysis helped the researcher in investigating the construction of gender stereotypes and investigating the presence of some sexist ideologies in Disney's representation of the Chinese society reflected in the use of language. The results of the study showed that language is a powerful tool for maintaining sexism. They also showed that some female characters like the matchmaker reinforced patriarchy and sexism in the society through analyzing language use on three levels: word, phrase/sentence, and discourse levels.

By analysing the chosen data on the word level, it was deduced that gender stereotypes were enhanced through naming and androcentrism. For example, the matchmaker told Mulan that she has to be ''**calm**,'' ''**poised**,'' and ''**obedient**'' to find a good suitor and consequently bring honour to her family. She also described Mulan as **"clumsy"** when the cup of tea was spilled over her.

By analysing the chosen data on the phrase/sentence level, it was deduced that phrasal items exposed sexism, patriarchy, and gender stereotypes. Presupposition and inference highlighted female experiences, where women are oppressed, segregated, and chained by societal constructs. Also, transitivity choices helped the researcher in identifying the affected female body parts in some of the scenes and in identifying whether the material processes employed by any of the agents were intentional or supervention. For example, when Mulan went to the matchmaker, the matchmaker employed fewer material intention processes than Mulan. Most of the material processes used by the matchmaker were supervention. This scene showed that the affected entities in the five material processes employed by Mulan were parts of a female body— Mulan's hand and mouth, and the matchmaker's face and behind—. Yet, the affected entities in three processes of the material processes employed by the matchmaker were parts of a female body— hands, her behind and face—.

By analyzing the chosen data on the discourse level, it was deduced that gender stereotypes were reinforced through fragmentation and schemata through which women are described according to their sensuality and charm. This reflection on the fragmentation of women revealed that there are more descriptions of the bodies of women than those of men, for example, the matchmaker described Mulan as ''**too skinny**''. Also, The schemata tool helped the researcher in highlighting stereotypical sociocultural fabrics based on stifling feminine inhibiting oppression and overbearing patriarchal ascendency in a male dominated society.

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