

Linguistic Devices Reflecting Women's Inferiority in Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*

Chusni Hadiati

chusni.hadiati@unsoed.ac.id

Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto

ABSTRACT

Inferiority is a state in which one part is lower than another. It is deliberately found in our society which consists of female and male because language choices reflect it. Utterances produced by female and male speaker carry both superiority and inferiority. In some speech communities, women's language undoubtedly reflects their inferiority. Linguistics offers devices to support the above mentioned phenomena. Literary works provide data for linguistic investigation. A novel by Ahmad Tohari, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, shows a social praxis. Applying traditional setting, Tohari describes how women's speech is portrayed. *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is Tohari's masterpiece which tells the life of a traditional dancer. The utterance produced by female characters indicates their lack of self-esteem. Using qualitative data analysis and contextual pragmatics, this article proves women's inferiority through linguistic devices. Linguistic devices to show women's inferiority as they are found in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* are as follows; (1) question tag, (2) hedging, (3) pragmatic particle, (4) conversational implicature, and (5) metaphor.

Keywords: inferiority, speech community, linguistic devices

ABSTRAK

Inferioritas merupakan suatu keadaan di mana satu pihak berada lebih rendah dari pihak lain. Hal ini sangat mudah ditemukan di dalam masyarakat yang terdiri dari laki-laki dan perempuan karena pilihan bahasa yang mereka gunakan secara jelas merefleksikan hal tersebut. Tuturan yang diujarkan laki-laki dan perempuan mengandung superioritas dan inferioritas. Dalam beberapa kelompok masyarakat, tuturan perempuan secara nyata menunjukkan adanya inferioritas. Kajian ilmu linguistic memiliki perangkat untuk membuktikan gejala inferioritas. Novel sebagai sebuah karya sastra memberikan data bagi penelitian linguistic karena novel merealisasikan bahasa sebagai suatu bentuk praktik sosial. „Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk“ sebagai mahakarya Ahmad Tohari menggunakan latar belakang sosial seorang penari perempuan untuk menunjukkan inferioritas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan analisis pragmatik, artikel ini membuktikan inferioritas perempuan yang direfleksikan melalui penggunaan (1) pertanyaan penegas (2) pemagar, (3) partikel pragmatik, (4) implikatur percakapan, dan (5) metafora.

Kata kunci: inferioritas, masyarakat tutur, piranti linguistik

INTRODUCTION

Speech community is an abstract concept which invites many linguists to broadly define it. Speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular level of usage (Labov, 1972: 120). Uniformity which is a characteristic of speech community is debatable due to the fact that variation is commonly found in everyday language use. It is in line with Gumperz who clearly states that whenever the relationship between language choices and rules of social appropriateness can be formalized, they allow us to group relevant linguistic forms into distinct dialects, style, and occupational or other special parlances (1971: 114). From these two different perspectives, it can be summed up that regardless of its uniformity in speech community, variation exists.

Variation in society may be caused by social or regional variation. Regional variation takes place due to the geographical barriers across the globe. The existence of mountain and valley may hinder the spread of certain language. So does social factors. Social factors also affect the language variation. Gender is a social factor that may differentiate women's language compare to men's. In some societies women are treated unequally and it is clearly reflected in their language.

Language as a means of communication plays an important role in people's daily life. A novel is a cultural artifact that can be used to depict social praxis. The language used by the author mirrors the social condition of human real life. Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is a clear example of social portrait that contain language variation due to gender differentiation.

Some scholars have conducted several researches on women and men language differences (Rodriguez, 2009; Balogun, 2010; Nakhavaly and Sharifi, 2013). They find that women do speak differently compared to man due to some reasons. Based on the background of the research, I intend to prove the use of linguistic devices to reflect women's inferiority in Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. It aims at proving that inferiority does exists in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech community is constituted by female and male speaker and in some cultures women are treated differently, less important to be specific. Sex is biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institution, our actions, our belief, and our desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural. Gender builds on biological sex, it exaggerates biological difference and indeed, it carries biological difference into domain in which it is completely irrelevant (Eckert and Mc Connell-Ginet, 2003: 10). Research on how society treats women shows the

evidences that parents use more diminutives when speaking to girls than to boys (Gleason et al., 1994), parents use more inner state words when speaking to girls (Ely et al., 1995), and parents use more direct prohibitive and more emphatic prohibitive to boys than to girls (Bellinger and Gleason, 1982). The different treatment eventually makes girls and boys differentiated.

Women and men comprise speech community. Due to social and cultural background, those two sexes speak differently. Women are supposed to be politer than men with respect to their language. Ancient history has noted that women are weak creature as it can be traced back to Plato's and Aristotle's work. According to Plato (427 - 347 BC), women came about through a physical degeneration of the human being. "It is only males who are created directly by the gods and are given souls. Those who live rightly return to the stars, but those who are 'cowards' or [lead unrighteous lives] may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation." Aristotle also has similar perspective. Aristotle (384 - 322 BC) considered women 'defective' human beings. It has two clear explanations as follows. First, women were 'infertile males'. The female, since she is deficient in natural heat, is unable to 'cook' her menstrual fluid to the point of refinement, at which it would become semen (i.e. 'seed'). Therefore her only contribution to the embryo is its matter, and a 'field' in which it can grow". Her inability to produce semen is her deficiency. Second, the reason why the man dominates in society is his superior intelligence. Only the man is a full human being. The relationship between male and female is *by nature* such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled. It is deliberately found that women speak differently due to some social and cultural constraints.

Lakoff (1975) identifies a woman register which serves to maintain woman's inferiority role in society. She argues that woman tend to use linguistic terms that reflect and reinforce a subordinate role. These include lexical hedges or filter, tag question, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjective, precise color term, intensifier, hypercorrect grammar, super polite form, avoidance of strong swear word and emphatic stress. Men tend to communicate differently with other men than they do with women, on the other hand, women tend to communicate the same with both men and women. What is introduced as a woman register is then developed by Coates as deficit approach (1986). She highlights that deficit approach is attributed to Jespersen that defines adult male language as the standard, and women's language as deficient. It emerges dichotomy between men's language and women's language. It is still questionable why it is men's language that becomes the benchmark as standard language and that women's language is the 'other'. As it is considered as the 'other', women's language is labelled as the 'wrong' language.

Whether it is conscious or not, language becomes a tool to show inferiority. Nowadays, linguists are challenged not only to be able to produce a grammatical utterance but also to know what really happens in the world once an utterance is uttered. A contribution a speaker gives in a conversation does not only count on how she or he can produce an utterance but also how their interlocutor receives and

interprets it. Conversation in a novel can depict a real condition of a society in a certain time as it can be seen in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*.

The setting of *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* portrayed the 1965's Indonesian chaotic political situation in Banyumas, a district in southern part of Central Java. The main character was Srintil, a beautiful and talented traditional dancer. She was in love with her childhood friend, Rasus; somehow; fate took them to different part and they could not be together. She was trained to be a dancer as well as a prostitute. Srintil's godmother always pushed her to date any man as long as they can pay her. Srintil could not refuse whatever her godmother command since she felt her godmother has done a lot for her. Life treated Srintil fiercely and pushed her in any situation that ruin everything she loved. Srintil felt so inferior to the world particularly after she has lost everything. The conversations in the novel make use of some linguistic devices to show female inferiority in that era.

METHOD

I use qualitative research utilizing contextual analysis. Context becomes crucial in determining message in conversation since it helps participants to extract the information. Besides, speaker sometimes conveys the message directly, thus, understanding context can be very helpful. Halliday explicitly highlight the three parts of concept. It includes field, tenor, and mode of discourse (1989: 12). These three concepts are employed in this research. In addition, context includes linguistic context and non-linguistic context. Linguistic context are those accompany the text. It can be utterance preceding or following the data. Non-linguistic context can be the situation or participant of the conversation.

This article proves the use of linguistic devices in reflecting women's inferiority towards men. The research is conducted qualitatively. Cresswell (1994) mentions that a qualitative research is an exploratory research where the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon (the case) bounded by time and activity and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time. The data used in this research are women's utterances containing linguistic devices which reflect their inferiority as they are found in the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data shows that linguistic devices used by female speaker to show her inferiority include facilitative tag, hedging, pragmatic particle, conversational implicature, and metaphor. Those linguistic devices reflect how women's are treated by their society. Tag question found in the novel that reflect women's language characteristic is facilitative tag. Facilitative tags are used as positive politeness devices because they invite the addressee to contribute to the discourse (Holmes, 1995: 81).

Facilitative tag is found in Srintil's utterance as it is described by the conversation below.

- Context : Approaching the *bukak klambu* contest, Srintil meets Rasmus in the village's cemetery. Srintil intends to give her virginity to Rasmus. Instead of giving her virginity to the man who can pay the highest price in *bukak klambu* contest, Srintil chooses to give it to Rasmus because she loves him. After putting off her clothes, she asks Rasmus.
- Srintil : "Rasmus, do you want it, *don't you?*"
- Rasmus : "Srin, this is the cemetery and it is near the sacred place of Secamenggala. We may get cursed. We are not allowed to make such a thing here".

Bukak klambu contest is a traditional contest in which *bukak* means 'to open' and *klambu* means 'a sheet to cover a bed'. Contextually, *bukak klambu* is a contest when a virgin dancer sells her virginity to those who give the highest payment or to the highest bidder. A dancer is a symbol of prosperity, fertility and motherhood, whoever can buy a dancer's virginity he will be highly respected in the society. As a virgin dancer, Srintil is supposed to sell her virginity to the man who can give the highest offering. In fact, Srintil is in love with Rasmus but he is only a poor village man who does not have much money. Consequently, he cannot join the contest. A day before the contest, Rasmus meets Srintil in Secamenggala cemetery, a sacred place in their village. She seduces Rasmus to have sexual intercourse, however Rasmus refuses it.

The conversation depicts the use of *don't you*. *Don't you* is classified as facilitative tag. This tag is used by the speaker to invite addressee to contribute in the discourse. By using *don't you*, Srintil invites Rasmus to accept her offering. It is not only a yes-no question. Srintil invites Rasmus to accept her offering to make love with her. Asking a man to make love with her is considered as impolite in Javanese traditional culture. A woman is supposed to give her virginity to her legal husband. By using facilitative tag, Srintil intends to invite Rasmus to give respond.

Srintil does not ask Rasmus using direct request such as, *will you make love to me?*, in fact, she uses facilitative tag to soften her offering. She ignores the use of direct offering because as a woman she feels ashamed asking a man to make love with her. The embarrassing feeling caused by her invitation shows that woman feels inferior to man. The conversation clearly shows how women's inferiority is hidden in her utterance.

The second conversation shows the use of hedging to show women's inferiority. Hedging are linguistic devices which are aimed at reducing the imposition experienced by the person that the directive is addressed to. They attenuate or reduce the strength of the utterance (Holmes, 1995: 74) as it is found in below conversation.

- Context : After being released from jail, Srintil does not dance anymore. She does not have any income even though she still has some assets. Mrs. Kartareja tries to convince her to continue her relation with Marsusi, a man who once loved her very dearly.

- Mrs. Kartareja : "It goes like this my dearest one. You are different from me. You are still young and no one says that you are not beautiful. Beautiful girl will be different from the ugly one until whenever. Do you agree on that?"
- Srintil : "Hold on Mrs. Kartareja. What do you actually want to say?"
- Mrs. Kartareja : "Well, it is like this my dear beauty. You said that you do not have income, so what if you work like you used to be? It is easy for you, if only you want to".
- Srintil : "Mrs. Kartareja, please say it directly".

Mrs. Kartareja persuades Srintil so that Srintil is willing to dance again. She wants Srintil to dance again because of their financial condition. They do not even have enough money to live. However, Mrs. Kartareja does not express her intention explicitly. In fact, she uses hedging "*It goes like this my dearest one. You are different from me. You are still young and no one says that you are not beautiful. Beautiful girl will be different from the ugly one until whenever. Do you agree on that?*" In spite of the fact that Srintil has asked her to speak directly, Mrs. Kartareja still uses hedging in her second reply as she says "*Well, it is like this my dear beauty. You said that you do not have income, so what if you work like you used to be? It is easy for you, if only you want to*". By using hedging, Mrs. Kartareja intends to reduce the strength of her directives. Knowing that Mrs. Kartareja has unspoken message, Srintil then asks her to say it directly by uttering "Mrs. Kartareja, please say it directly".

The use of hedging shows that Mrs. Kartareja feels inferior to Srintil. Mrs. Kartareja is in the position of begging. She feels that she is in lower position compared to Srintil. In her opinion, Srintil is young and very talented dancer and it is easy for Srintil to earn money. Meanwhile, Mrs. Kartareja is old and she cannot dance as beautiful as Srintil. It is hard for her to earn much money that she needs. Based on the situation, it can be seen that Mrs. Kartareja feels inferior to Srintil so that she cannot directly ask Srintil to date a man. Mrs. Kartareja persuades her by using hedging to make her utterance more polite. Mrs. Kartareja needs to smoothe her utterance because she is in lower position compared to her interlocutor.

Pragmatic particles or commonly recognized as verbal fillers in Brown and Levinson' term are described in language and gender research as characteristic of women's language (Holmes, 1995: 86). The most frequently investigated of pragmatic particles are *you know*, *I think* and *sort of*. Based on her research, Holmes further explains that pragmatic particles have similar patterns. First, it reveals a complexity of functions which emphasises the futility of simply counting unanalysed forms. Second, there are differences in the distribution of such forms in women's and men's speech, women tend to use pragmatic particles to express positive politeness more often than men do. In this novel, pragmatic particle is also used to express women's inferiority. The conversation below portrays the use of pragmatic particle in the novel

- Context : When Srintil is going to meet her guest, she asks Mrs. Kartareja to accompany her.
- Srintil : "Grandma, you should accompany me here."

Mrs. Kartareja : “*Eh*..... What happens to you? You act as if you were a virgin.”

When Srintil asks Mrs. Kartareja to accompany her, Mrs. Kartareja simply can answer it by saying yes or no. However, she chooses to use pragmatic particle *eh* before uttering her reply. By using pragmatic particle, Mrs. Kartareja has more time (any second) to think about her respond. Pragmatic particle can be used by the speaker to make some preparation before answering a question. After uttering *eh*, Mrs. Kartareja can save some second to prepare her next utterance. In fact, Mrs. Kartareja can answer Srintil’s request by saying directly that she does not want to accompany her but she does not do that because she feels inferior to Srintil. Mrs. Kartareja needs Srintil as her financial source. Due to the fact that she needs Srintil, Mrs. Kartareja needs to behave politely in front of her.

Pragmatic particle *eh* as it is shown in the conversation above reflects Mrs. Kartareja politeness. Her politeness emerges as the clue of her inferiority. Mrs. Kartareja feels inferior since she is afraid of saying directly that she does not want to accompany Srintil. To support her inferiority, she uses pragmatic particle ‘*eh*’ to show her reluctance. Her reluctance is a realization of her politeness. Her politeness as well as her inferiority are realized in pragmatic particle *eh*. It can be grasped that women express their inferiority to other women by using pragmatic particle.

The fourth linguistic devices used to show women’s inferiority is conversational implicature. Conversational implicature is defined as an attempt at explaining how a hearer gets from what is said to what is meant, from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning (Grice, 1975). Thomas further says that they (conventional and conversational implicature), in the case of conventional implicature, the same implicature is always conveyed, regardless of context, whereas in the case of conversational implicature, what is implied varies according to the context of utterance (1996: 57). The use of conversational implicature to show refusal indirectly is portrayed by the conversation below.

Context : Mrs. Kartareja persuades Srintil who has just finished sexually serving Dower, to sexually serve Sulam. She tantalizes her with a golden ringgit and ensures her that she will be the only girl in Dukuh Paruk who has more than just a golden ringgit.
Srintil : "Do I also have to sexually serve Sulam?"
Mrs. Kartareja : "It is OK, isn't it? You will be the only girl in Dukuh Paruk who has a golden ringgit".
Srintil : "*But I feel I have a stomachache. It hurts so much*".

Mrs. Kartareja as Srintil spiritual dancer trainer asks Srintil to serve both men who join *bukak klambu* contest. Srintil says that she gets stomachache. She says that she was sick because she does not want to sexually serve Sulam, the man who can pay in *bukak klambu* contest. Srintil does not explicitly express her disagreement on Mrs. Kartareja’s request. In fact, she says that she is sick. Her reply is considered as indirect reply which carries hidden meaning. Expressing intention indirectly in a conversation can be categorized as conversational implicature. A speaker has additional meaning in her utterance.

The hidden meaning which is realized in conversational implicature indicates speaker's inferiority. Srintil feels inferior to Mrs. Kartareja because she is Srintil's guardian angel. When her parents passed away, Srintil was adopted by Mrs. Kartareja. She is indebted to Mrs. Kartareja for everything she has done for her. This feeling arouses Srintil's inferiority to Mrs. Kartareja. The use of conversational implicature in her utterance shows Srintil's inferior feeling to Mrs. Kartareja. The use of conversational implicature indicates that the speaker hides 'something'. In other word, speaker uses indirect language to express the feeling. It can be summed up that conversational implicature can be used to show women's inferiority.

Metaphor is also found in the data as a linguistic device to show women's inferiority. Metaphor is interpreted because an utterance calls to mind a metaphorical meaning. This meaning has to be (a) restricted to some ways of calling to mind and (b) systematic, shared between speakers and hearers (Jaszczolt, 2002: 349). When a speaker uses a metaphor, the hearer is supposed to be able to grasp the additional meaning so that the communication can run smoothly. If the interlocutor cannot fully understand the speaker's meaning, the participant cannot reach the communication's goal.

The conversation below depicts the use of metaphor to show women's inferiority.

- Context : When Srintil feels so upset, she decides to go to the market. There are many sellers who know her and are curious to know her condition.
- Seller 1 : "What happens on earth so that Srintil's world is completely dark (*jagate kayong peteng dhedhet*)?"
- Seller 2 : "Well I guess if there is a sad dancer, there must be something wrong with her boss."
- Seller 1 : "Mrs. Kartareja?"

Metaphor is hardly a manifestation of analogical reasoning; it reveals how humans go about creating analogy. In the metaphor *jagate kayong peteng dhedhet*, there are topic (tenor) and vehicle. The combination of topic and tenor creates a new meaning and it is called ground. The utterance *jagate kayong peteng dhedhet* is a metaphor describing a condition in which a person's life is in sadness and despair. *Jagate* means 'the world' and *peteng dhedhet* means 'very dark'. Seller 1 compares Srintil's life to a dark night particularly after everything happens in her life. She feels sorry for her. The participants in the above conversation belong to similar group, similar society hence they share similar schemata. They know Srintil's story so that metaphor *jagate kayong peteng dhedhet* can be clearly understood. Describing a life with something very dark shows that life is miserable.

Using metaphor to express something indirectly indicates that the speaker feels inferior to hearer. Srintil as a famous and talented dancer has a higher social status compared to the sellers in traditional market. Not everyone can be a dancer. She needs more than talent to become a dancer. Hence, by being a famous dancer, Srintil has achieved higher social rank in her society. Knowing that Srintil is higher than herself, the speaker feels inferior to her and consequently she expresses her

feeling by using metaphor. It is noted that metaphor can be used to show inferiority in women's utterances.

CONCLUSION

Society which consists of female and male speaker has various linguistic realization. The language used by a group may reflect something happened in the society itself. In some culture male linguistic choices is regarded as the benchmark of the standard language. It implies that female linguistic form is the subclass. Being the member of the subclass group, female tend to show her inferiority through her language choice. Realizing that language choice reflects speaker's mind, female speaker makes use of linguistic devices to express inferiority. A novel is a miniature of the society. What happens in the society can be genuinely and clearly illustrated in a novel. A novel can be a linguistic resource since it contains utterances showing the imaginary life of the characters.

Linguistic provide significant devices to express any feeling experienced by society member. The article has proven that inferiority are expressed by using various linguistic devices includes question tag, hedging, pragmatic particle, conversational implicature, and metaphor. By utilizing context, those linguistic devices are clearly depicted to show women's inferiority in Tohari's *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. To gain a deeper insight what embodied those phenomenon, a more comprehensive reserach can be conducted.

In addition, this research, however, does not consider other linguistic realization such as honorific to show inferiority. Honorific plays important role in Javanese culture since it reflect the positioning. Considering honorific in Javanese culture would be linguistically beneficial for further research.

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