CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Language serves as a reflection of society, social values, and interpersonal interactions in addition to being a tool for communication (Guessabi, 2021). Gender is one important social factor that is frequently included in language. Language usage, including terminology, labels, and expressions, both reflects and perpetuates gender roles and societal norms (Uhing et al., 2021).

Language frequently contributes to gendered language use and, frequently, reinforces sexism by reflecting societal expectations about how men and women should behave (Aries, 1996; Andriychenko et al., 2024). Examples such as the general use of "he" or "mankind," which subtly marginalise the female perspective, demonstrate how masculine forms are frequently given precedence in language practices (Heilman et al., 2023).

These linguistic patterns have an impact on women's self-expression and often correspond with social norms of indirectness, courtesy, and emotional expression— qualities that are typically linked to what Robin Lakoff (1975) referred to as women's language features. These include intensifiers, tag questions, empty adjectives, lexical hedges, and other markers that indicate stress or tentativeness, according to Lakoff. Social demands on women to seem kind, submissive, or amiable are frequently reflected in this language use (Hall et al., 2020).

Gendered communication methods are also highlighted by Deborah Tannen (1990). She points out that whereas men usually use language to establish control or communicate

facts, women are more inclined to show emotion, provide encouragement, and seek connection.

Women's language features appear across various modes of communication, including films, literature, everyday conversation, and digital interactions on platforms like Instagram. This study specifically examines how these features manifest in Instagram comments made by female users on the popular account @girlyzar. The account, widely followed by women, offers rich linguistic data that aligns with Lakoff's theory.

Robin Lakoff is one of the specialists who identified the traits of women's language. In her 1975 book "Language and Woman's Place," Lakoff posits that women's speech patterns reflect and reinforce traditional gender roles and differ significantly from men's. Tag enquiries, which are more prevalent among women than men, are one example of a feature, according to Lakoff (1975).

GirlyZar's Instagram profile, known under the handle @girlyzar, has grown into a prominent hub for feminine pop culture and humor, amassing approximately 2.8 million followers as of August 8, 2022. Recent third-party trackers estimate its audience closer to 3.0 million followers in mid-2025. On average, each post receives around 41,700 likes and approximately 223 comments, which translates to an engagement rate of about 1.35%. The account regularly posts relatable memes and lifestyle quotes—typically around eight uploads per day—covering themes such as fashion, girl power, self-love, and shopping humor. GirlyZar is often featured across platforms like Pinterest and meme communities, reinforcing its reach and appeal within young women's digital culture.

This research addresses the research gap by analyzing the features of women's language on Gilryzar's Instagram comments. Furthermore, there are still questions about whether the communication style with those characteristics in online communication is

genuine and whether women's language features can be classified according to Lakoff's theory.

Strong instances can be found in @girlyzar's comment sections. For example, a comment like,

"This is so cute! I think it might work for me, right? However, I am not sure if I can pull it off," illustrates multiple features identified by Lakoff: hedges (*"I think"*, *"I am not sure"*), intensifiers (*"so cute"*), and a tag question (*"right?"*). Other comments, such as *"This shade looks amazing, doesn't it?"* and *"I think this might look good on me, but I am unsure,"* demonstrate how elements like tag questions and hedging are used to convey uncertainty or look for validation.

There are still gaps in our knowledge of how gender and language work in regular online encounters, despite the fact that these topics have been discussed extensively in both traditional and digital contexts. In particular, nothing is known about the existence and function of women's linguistic elements in comments on social media. By examining the kinds and communicative purposes of these traits in female users' comments on @girlyzar's Instagram photos, this study seeks to close that gap.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the research above, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of women's language features are used by female commenters on the @girlyzar Instagram account?

2. What are the communicative functions of these features in the context of their online interactions?

1.3 The Objective of the Research

According to the research questions above, the objectives related to the study are:

1. To identify the women's language features used by females in commenting on Instagram

2. To describe the function of women's language features used by females in commenting on Instagram

1.4 Focus of the Research

The main goal of this study is to find and examine the characteristics of women's language used by female commenters on the Instagram account @girlyzar. The study intends to investigate the communicative purposes of these linguistics traits as well as how they appear in online speech. The study uses Holmes's (2013) viewpoint on the pragmatic functions of women's language and Lakoff's (1975) framework of women's language features to accomplish this.

1.5 Method of the Research

The language elements used by women in comments on the Instagram account @girlyzar are examined using a descriptive qualitative methodology. The qualitative approach works well for documenting social occurrences and examining language usage in real settings. The specific emphasis of this study are on the lexical and pragmatic characteristics of women's language, as suggested by Lakoff (1975).

User-generated comments on a chosen post from @girlyzar's Instagram account serve as the study's main source of data. A personal Instagram account was used for data collection in order to view and extract pertinent comments. The documentation process

included screenshots and diaries of comments written by women. After that, the remarks were analysed for linguistic elements including hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, and others that are commonly seen in women's language.

The study's main source of data is user-generated comments on a particular post from the @girlyzar Instagram account. In order to access and extract pertinent comments, a personal Instagram account was used for data collecting. As part of the documentation procedure, screenshots and logs of comments written by women were gathered. Then, linguistic elements commonly found in women's language, like intensifiers, hedges, and tag questions, were analysed in the comments.

The post that was chosen for examination was published on March 7, 2025, and it discusses the problem of women's anxiety when they use public transit at night. It focuses on ways to deal with verbal harassment and catcalling in public places. With 40,896 likes, 137 comments, and 61 shares, the post—which is presented as a meme video—reflects current gender-related social concerns and has garnered significant audience involvement, demonstrating its relevance to the study's topic (Lubis & Rahmayanty, 2024). This article was selected because it generated insightful comments from female followers, who provided valuable insights regarding the use of gendered terminology in online communication. The @girlyzar account is a valuable source of data for this study because women primarily follow it and is well-known for posting content about women's everyday lives.

1.5.1 Data Collecting

In collecting the data, it is important to establish clear criteria to ensure that the data selected is relevant and suitable for the research objectives. The criteria applied in this study were that the comments to be analyzed had to be written in English and posted by

a female user, as identified through visible information such as username, profile picture, or bio. Then the comment must contain at least one of the Female Language Features identified by Lakoff (1975) that is relevant to the content of Girlyzar's Instagram posts.

This entails gathering textual data from Girlyzar's Instagram account's comments area, with a focus on identifying specific language features used by particular women.

In this instance, non-participant observation using note-taking methods was used to collect data (Purwanza et al., 2022). Observation is defined as the methodical observation and documentation of a study. There are two types of observation: participant observation and non-participant observation. The study responded to the memes using data from a single Girlyzar post and excerpts from user comments.

The data were collected through observation, documentation, and note-taking. This study observed the subject, recorded relevant data, and organized it for analysis. All data were collected from @girlyzar's Instagram comment section during this study.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (2002) describe data analysis in three stages. The first stage is data reduction. Data reduction involves selecting, simplifying, and grouping data— the goal here is to align the comments of female users of Instagram Girlyzar with the research objectives. The data is then grouped and compared with Robin Lakoff's theory (1975) to identify and categorize female language features before being refined for analysis. The structured approach ensures a clear and systematic analysis from data reduction to conclusions.

The following is a methodical technique for analyzing this research, according to Miles and Huberman (2002):

a.   Recognizing the selected Instagram post

b.   Classifying women's language features

c.   Identifying the comments that contain women's language features (Lakoff, 1975)

d.   Checking and discussing the relevance of the data

e.   Data will be coded using Lakoff's 10 features, and frequencies will be calculated to determine dominance

f.   Conclusion and recommendations

1.6   Definition of Key Terms

Sociolinguistics: Sociolinguistics is the science that studies the relationship between language and society. It functions to understand language structure and communication better (Lakoff, 1975).

Women's Language Features: According to Robin Lakoff's (1975) theory in Language and Woman's Place, women's language features are specific language features frequently connected to women's speech. These characteristics add to women's projected lack of authority and reflect their lower social standing. (Lakoff, 1975).