A FEMINIST-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TAYLOR SWIFT SONG ENTITLED THE MAN

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Abstract: The Man song by Taylor Swift focuses on kinds of feminism and explains about feminism expressed about women’s social aspects. This research is intended to find out the message of The Man song based on Mills’ perspective on feminist stylistics. The lyrics in this song are the main object of research. The song presents the perspective of a woman reflecting on how her life would be different if she were a man. This research employs a qualitative content analysis by presenting data in the form of descriptions and tables. The objectives of this research include examining how the song expresses writing styles related to gender across three levels: word level, sentence level, and discourse level. It was found that The Man by Taylor Swift conveys a message about gender inequality or feminism, stereotypes, and gender roles in society. The song strongly highlights the observable differences in the lives of women and men and also double standards. The words, phrases and sentences chosen explain the gaps and challenges faced by women in society, thereby encouraging listeners to question and challenge these norms.

Key Terms: Feminist Stylistic, Taylor Swift, Gender Roles

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INTRODUCTION

Gender is a popular issue. Gender topics can be found in various aspects, such as in songs, movies, advertisements, and various social media platforms. This makes gender issues an interesting object to research in various fields within the scope of language. The term "gender", encompasses the socially and culturally constructed roles, behaviors, expectations, and attributes assigned to individuals based on their perceived or assigned sex. Gender is a complex concept that extends beyond biological differences, encompassing the societal norms and expectations associated with being male or female. Women often face systemic injustice and discrimination in a variety of areas, including education, employment, health, and political participation. Strong gender stereotypes, expected gender roles, and patriarchal social norms have limited women's freedom and opportunities to develop their full potential. In addition, gender-based violence such as domestic violence and sexual harassment are also serious problems faced by many women around the world. All of this points to the need to continue to push for social change and fight for gender equality in order to create a more inclusive and just society for all individuals, regardless of their gender.
Stylistics is a field of linguistics that discusses in detail the individual language styles of other individuals. Simpson (2004: 2) mentioned that stylistics is a study dealing with technique of creativity and invention in a language. Leech and Short (1981:12) define stylistics as “the linguistic study of style. It is undertaken as an exercise in describing what use is made of language. In another opinion, stylistics refers to the systematic study of language choices, structures, and literary devices used in texts to convey meaning and evoke certain effects. According to Leech (2007), the discipline of stylistics involves the analysis of linguistic style, acting as a bridge between linguistics and literary criticism. Leech argues that style reflects the author's attitude and the communicative purpose of the text, emphasizing how linguistic choices can convey a range of emotions, values, and beliefs. By examining the stylistic choices made by authors, stylistics provides a deeper understanding of the ways in which language shapes thoughts and perceptions, as well as the complexity of human communication. Mills' feminist stylistics extends this by scrutinizing language through a gender lens, revealing how stylistic elements contribute to the representation of women.

Feminism is a movement of women fighting for women's rights. According to Bhasin and Khan (1995, p. 5), feminism is the awareness that women are oppressed in various ways by men and plans of action to combat these oppressions. Meanwhile, according to Gordan (2002, p. 6), feminism is also a study of the subordination of women to find ways to change them. She stated that feminism includes increasing the influence of women in the home, community, and society. On a different occasion, she characterized feminism as an examination of male dominance, implying a change in perspective. The merits and drawbacks of this feminist ideology are a subject of extensive discussion. A common misperception is that feminist theory predominantly centers on women's superiority over men, whereas in truth, it strives to address gender inequality and injustice by dismantling the factors that uphold inequality, oppression, and injustice. Feminism, in brief, is a social and political movement advocating for the equality of the sexes. Regarding Sarah Mills' theory, without specific details, it's challenging to provide a precise connection. Mills is known for her work in cultural geography, often examining how gender shapes people's experiences in different spaces. Her theories may align with feminist perspectives, emphasizing the importance of understanding gender dynamics in various contexts. Mills may argue that traditional gender roles and stereotypes limit individuals based on their assigned gender, reinforcing inequalities. Her work might highlight how spaces and places contribute to the construction of gender identities and influence the experiences of men and women differently. In essence, Mills' feminist lens would encourage an understanding of gender as a social construct, challenging rigid distinctions and advocating for a more equitable and inclusive society that recognizes and addresses these constructed differences.

Feminist Stylistics is a sub-branch of stylistics, where feminist stylistics discusses gender which focuses on language styles according to gender and social gender position. In the context of feminist stylistics, including Sarah Mills, delve into the relationship between language and gender. Mills' theoretical framework becomes instrumental in analyzing how language, through linguistic choices and structures, plays a pivotal role in the construction and perpetuation of gender norms. Linguistic analysis within feminist stylistics, informed by Mills' perspective, unveils the ways in which texts contribute to the reinforcement or subversion of these societal expectations. Feminist stylistics, guided by theorists like Mills, employs linguistic analysis to scrutinize texts from a feminist perspective. It aims to uncover how language choices and patterns reflect and influence gender ideologies, offering insights into the intricate ways in which language contributes to the construction and reproduction of gendered meanings and power dynamics. The combined insights of experts like Montoro, Mills, and others in the field contribute to a richer understanding of gender within the realm of linguistic analysis and feminist studies.

In this case, researchers can analyze how a person is speaking based on gender and social position. Taylor Swift was born on December 13, 1989. She is a ten time Grammy Award Winner.
winner, the youngest person to receive the highest honor in the history of the music industry, the Grammy Award for Album of the Year, and she is the only woman in Grammy history to win album of the year twice. One of Taylor Swift's songs titled “The Man” has interesting lyrics because it contains feminism. In this song, it is about the perception of women in society in general, where it is clear that there is a difference in the position between women and men in real life. Every lyric in The Man implies a meaning related to this.

The author uses five previous studies as a reference for conducting the latest research.

Rahmad syah Rangkuti, Siti Hafifah (2022): Conducted a qualitative content analysis on Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way”, aiming to decipher the lyrics' meanings across different language levels, specifically exploring phonetic devices. Focused on revealing how stylistic devices function within the context of LGBTQA+ representation.

Amsaldi Wahyu Kristian Sinulingga, M. Yurilsya, M. Barru Siddiq (2020): Utilized descriptive qualitative methods to identify gender-specific language aspects in the novel “Woman at Point Zero” at various linguistic levels word, phrase/sentence, and discourse within a feminist-stylistic framework.

Saskia Febiola Siregar, Eddy Setia, Siamir Marulafau (2020): Employed feminist stylistics in analyzing Rupi Kaur’s “The Sun and her Flowers” focusing not only on linguistic structures but also on portraying women and men within the texts, considering societal implications and the presentation of ideas or events.

Hussain, Jabeen (2019): Investigated “Broken Verses” by Kamila Shamsie, highlighting dominant linguistic features at word, phrase/sentence levels that consistently foreground female consciousness and experiences while also shedding light on preventing male dominance in the text.

Motivated by concerns related to gender disparities and social injustice expressed in texts, there is a demand for a stylistic analysis conducted from a feminist perspective (Mills, 1998). While not all feminist analyses of texts explicitly highlight the oppressive nature of texts toward women, feminist stylistics offers valuable insights and raises awareness about underlying messages. Ultimately, it enables a comprehensive examination of texts to unveil how they represent and depict women specifically (Mills, 1998).

METHOD

The research method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research was chosen because this research aims to provide insight into the feminist-stylistic analysis of the song “The Man” by Taylor Swift. Qualitative research, as defined by Gay (2006), involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insight into a particular phenomenon. Qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis of data, which means critical themes emerge from the data (Patton, 1990). On the other hand, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) state that qualitative research is research that investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials. This technique is designed to describe everything related to the research topic. Where the writers explain the findings on the word level, sentence level, or discourse that shows feminist stylistic analysis.

In this study, the participant involved is the song “The Man” by Taylor Swift. The research design used is feminist stylistic analysis. The data collection process is done through listening and understanding the song lyrics as well as analyzing the text and its social context. The data collected were song lyrics, observations of narrative structure and language style, and
the social context in which the song was made. The data was then analyzed using a feminist stylistic approach to reveal the gender messages contained in the song. In the feminist stylistic analysis, the writers analyze the use of language, style, and narrative structure in the song The Man to identify elements that show gender construction and stereotypes associated with feminist backgrounds.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Informed largely by Halliday's social-semiotic theory, feminist stylistics illustrate the interconnectedness of language, ideologies, and dominance. It proposes a framework for analyzing texts from three distinct perspectives: 1) word, 2) clause/sentence, and 3) discourse.

The Man
Taylor Swift

I would be complex
I would be cool
They'd say I played the field before I found someone to commit to
And that would be ok
For me to do
Every conquest I had made would make me more of a boss to you

I'd be a fearless leader
I'd be an alpha type
When everyone believes ya
What's that like?

I'm so sick of running as fast as I can
Wondering if I'd get there quicker
If I was a man
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again
'Cause if I was a man
Then I'd be the man
I'd be the man
I'd be the man

They'd say I hustled
Put in the work
They wouldn't shake their heads and question how much of this I deserve
What I was wearing
If I was rude
Could all be separated from my good ideas and power moves?

And they would toast to me, oh
Let the players play
I'd be just like Leo
In Saint-Tropez

I'm so sick of running as fast as I can
Wondering if I'd get there quicker
If I was a man
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again
'Cause if I was a man
Then I'd be the man
I'd be the man
I'd be the man

What's it like to brag about
Raking in dollars
And getting bitches and models
And it's all good if you're bad
And it's okay if you're mad
If I was out flashing my dollars
I'd be a bitch, not a baller
They paint me out to be bad
So it's okay that I'm mad

I'm so sick of running as fast as I can
Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man (you know that)
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again (coming at me again)
'Cause if I was a man (if I was a man)
Then I'd be the man (then I'd be the man)
I'm so sick of running as fast as I can (as fast as I can)
Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man (hey)
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again (coming at me again)
'Cause if I was a man (if I was a man), then I'd be the man

I'd be the man
I'd be the man (oh)
I'd be the man (yeah)
I'd be the man (I'd be the man)

If I was a man
Then I'd be the man

Gender-Specific at Words Level

According to Mills (2005:84), language shapes our perception of the world. In other words, language plays a significant role in generating a perception for every reader, and, of course, each person can have a different perception. In this section, the researcher focuses on several words found in the lyrics of Taylor Swift's song "The Man" that indicate gender specificity. Mills (1995) uses sexism in language as a foundation for investigating word choice. Finding occurrences of sex-specific pronouns, incorrect use of generics, address phrases, and derogatory depictions of women can be used to investigate word choice (Mills, 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Words Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMININE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bitches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bitch</td>
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<td>Models</td>
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<td>Leader</td>
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<td>Dollars</td>
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<td>Leader</td>
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*KLAUSA: Kajian Linguistik, Pembelajaran Bahasa, dan Sastra* | 119
There are four words found in the song "The man" that represent the feminine. First, the words “bitches” and “bitch”. This indicates feminine in gender because this term is often used derogatorily to refer to women, which reflects a gender-specific and disrespectful language commonly aimed at women. In other words, bitch is a derogatory term for a lady who is deemed nasty or unkind.

There are also seven words found in the song "The man" that represent the masculine, such as the word “man”. This word is inherently masculine, representing the male gender. In the context of this song, the repeated use of “man” highlights the societal privilege and advantages associated with being male. Use of the word "Leo" (Leonardo DiCaprio), in reference to a male celebrity, in this case, Leonardo DiCaprio, aligns with societal perceptions of successful and admired male figures. "Baller". This word is associated with extravagance, success, and confidence in men, reflecting traditional masculine stereotypes. "Dollars", the mention of "flashing dollars" can be associated with traditional notions of male financial success and wealth, making it a gender-specific term. "Brag", the act of bragging, is often associated with masculine expressions of confidence and dominance, suggesting gender-specific expectations regarding assertiveness.

In addition, the words "models" and "leader" represent both feminine and masculine genders. In the context of the fashion or entertainment industries, the term "model" can refer to both male and female individuals. It is a genderless term. The word "models" is not inherently gender-specific in the lyrics you provided ("getting bitches and models"). It refers to people who work as models, and they can be of any gender. Rather than a specific gender, the line appears to emphasize a lifestyle associated with wealth and success. The word "leader" itself is a gender-neutral term, because "Leader" refers to someone who guides, directs, or takes charge of a group or organization, and it can apply to individuals of any gender. In the context of the song lyrics, the line "I'd be a fearless leader" suggests that the speaker is imagining themselves as a leader, and it doesn't specify the gender of this hypothetical leader. The use of "leader" here is not gender-specific; it simply describes a person in a position of leadership and authority.

**Feminist Discourse at the Sentence Level**

The level of sentence in the stylistic feminism of Taylor Swift's song “The Man” is empowering and thought-provoking. Through her lyrics, Swift addresses the double standards and gender inequalities that women face in society. She challenges societal norms and expectations placed upon women, highlighting the disparities between how men and women are perceived and treated.

“*I'm so sick of running as fast as I can, wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man.*”

The sentence expresses the despair and tiredness that many women feel as they seek to achieve success in their work and personal life. It highlights the unfair advantage that males frequently have in gaining success and asks why women must work twice as hard to earn the same recognition.
“I'd be just like Leo in Saint-Tropez.”

This sentence refers to the freedom and carefree lifestyle that males are frequently permitted to lead without criticism or condemnation. Swift subtly underlines the double standards that exist when males are lauded for their decisions while women are frequently questioned by using the image of Leonardo DiCaprio, who is known for his bachelor lifestyle.

“When everyone believes ya, what's that like?”

Shows the uncertainty and doubt that women frequently confront when standing up or exerting themselves. It reveals the inclination to call women's trustworthiness into question and undermines their experiences and perspectives. This statement expresses the aggravation of not being taken seriously due to one's gender.

Overall, the sentence structure in "The Man" reflects the strong feminist message of the song. Swift uses her lyrics to shed light on the inequalities and challenges faced by women in society, encouraging listeners to question and challenge these norms.

Feminist Discourse at the Discourse Level

Narrative perspective, also known as point of view, is the lens through which a story is told. It determines who is telling the story and how the events and characters are portrayed. Narrative perspective can greatly influence the reader's understanding and interpretation of the story. There are different types of narrative perspectives, such as first-person, second-person, and third-person. In first-person perspective, the story is narrated by a character within the story, using pronouns like "I" and "me." This perspective provides a personal and subjective view of the events, allowing the reader to experience the story through the narrator's thoughts and emotions. The lyric "I would be complex, I would be cool" shows the perspective of the speaker imagining life as a man, exploring how they would be perceived and treated differently.

Challenging gender stereotypes involves questioning and breaking down the traditional beliefs and expectations surrounding gender roles and characteristics. These stereotypes are deeply ingrained in society and often limit individuals' choices and opportunities based on their gender. Gender stereotypes typically assign certain traits, behaviors, and roles to men and women, reinforcing the idea that they should conform to specific norms. For example, men are often expected to be strong, assertive, and dominant, while women are expected to be nurturing, submissive, and focused on domestic responsibilities. These stereotypes can be harmful as they restrict individuals from expressing their true selves and pursuing their interests and aspirations freely. "Every conquest I had made would make me more of a boss to you". This lyric shows the challenge of gender stereotypes by suggesting that traditionally masculine qualities, such as being a "boss," would be more readily accepted.

Double standards refer to the application of different sets of rules, expectations, or judgments to different individuals or groups in similar situations. It occurs when different standards are applied based on factors such as gender, race, social status, or other characteristics. One common example of double standards is gender-based double standards. These occur when different expectations or judgments are placed on men and women for the same behavior or action. For instance, a man who is assertive and confident may be seen as a strong leader, while a woman displaying the same traits may be labeled as aggressive or bossy. Similarly, certain behaviors or choices may be praised or accepted for men but criticized or frowned upon for women. "I'm so sick of running as fast as I can, Wondering if I'd get there quicker If I was a man". This lyric shows critiques of double standards by comparing the speaker's experiences as a woman to how they imagine they'd be treated if they were a man.
Power and privilege are interconnected concepts that play a significant role in shaping social dynamics, opportunities, and experiences within societies. Power refers to the ability to influence or control others, resources, or institutions, while privilege refers to the advantages and benefits that certain individuals or groups enjoy simply because of their social position or characteristics. Power can be both formal and informal. In the context of gender, power and privilege refer to the societal dynamics that confer advantages or disadvantages based on one's gender identity. These concepts are integral to understanding how social structures and norms contribute to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and influence between genders. "And I'm so sick of them coming at me again 'Cause if I was a man, Then I'd be the man". The lyrics highlight the concept of power and privilege, suggesting that being a man would grant the speaker more respect and status.

Social critique involves a critical examination of societal elements, such as institutions, cultural practices, economic systems, or power relations. This examination is driven by a desire to uncover hidden or overlooked issues, challenge established norms, and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society. Scholars, activists, and individuals engaged in social critique often employ various theoretical frameworks, including those from sociology, cultural studies, and critical theory, to deconstruct and analyze social structures and behaviors. The ultimate goal is to foster positive social change and create a more just and compassionate society. "If I was out flashing my dollars I'd be a bitch, not a baller". This lyric shows critique societal norms that judge women for similar behaviors that are celebrated in men, such as financial success.

Empowerment in the gender context is a dynamic and ongoing process that requires collaboration across various sectors of society. It aims to create a more equitable and just world where individuals can exercise their rights and contribute meaningfully to social, economic, and political life, irrespective of their gender identity. "So it's okay that I'm mad". The lyric empowers women to express their frustrations with gender-related disparities and challenges societal norms.

Repetition is a linguistic and rhetorical device where specific words, phrases, sounds, or structures are intentionally repeated within a piece of communication to create emphasis, reinforce meaning, or evoke a certain effect. It involves the deliberate use of repetition for various purposes, such as emphasizing a point, enhancing rhythm, or making an idea more memorable. In essence, repetition is a conscious and strategic choice by speakers or writers to repeat elements within their expression to achieve specific communicative goals. "If I was out flashing my dollars I'd be a bitch, not a baller", the repetition of "I'd be the man, I'd be the man" emphasizes the central theme of the song and the speaker's desire for equality.

Comparison is a communication and cognitive process where similarities and differences between two or more things, ideas, or concepts are identified and highlighted. It involves examining the features, qualities, or characteristics of the items being compared to better understand their relationships or to make a point more vividly. Through comparison, individuals draw parallels or contrasts, aiding in the clarification, illustration, or evaluation of the subjects under consideration. In essence, comparison is a mental or verbal tool that helps convey the relationships between different elements, making information more accessible and facilitating a deeper understanding of the subject matter. "I'm so sick of running as fast as I can, Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man", the artist is using comparison to express frustration and contemplation about the challenges and inequalities they perceive. The comparison is drawn between their own experience, running as fast as they can, and a hypothetical scenario where they wonder if they would achieve their goals more quickly if they were a man. The comparison is used to highlight gender-based disparities and the artist's perception that being a man might offer advantages or expedite success. The act of running symbolizes the artist's efforts and struggles, and by contrasting it with the hypothetical scenario of being a man, they suggest a reflection on societal expectations and biases related to gender.
The tone in song lyrics refers to the overall attitude or character conveyed through the words. It involves the choice of language, style, and perspective that shapes the mood of the lyrics. Tone can be playful, somber, romantic, defiant, or a combination of various emotions. Meanwhile emotion in song lyrics is the expression of feelings and sentiments. It involves the use of words and imagery to convey a specific emotional experience or response. Emotion in lyrics is often connected to the artist's personal experiences, storytelling, or the intended impact on the listener. "And I’m so sick of them coming at me again", this line reflects the emotional impact of gender-based disparities on the speaker. The use of the phrase "so sick of them coming at me again" suggests a weariness and annoyance with a recurring or persistent issue. The tone may convey a sense of being fed up or tired of dealing with external pressures or challenges. The emotion conveyed in this lyric is likely one of frustration, irritation, or discontent. The artist expresses a feeling of being overwhelmed or bothered by others who are constantly approaching or confronting them. The emotion is captured through the use of the word "sick," which implies a strong negative reaction to the repeated interactions

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that "The Man" by Taylor Swift reveals a strong critique of gender-related issues and societal norms. The song highlights the concept of power and privilege, highlighting how being a man often commands more respect and status. Through its lyrics, the song serves as a social critique, against society's norms that unfairly judge women for behaviors that are celebrated in men. By empowering women to express their frustration with the gender gap, "The Man" calls for greater gender equality. This study contributes to our understanding of the role of music in addressing social issues and promoting inclusivity.

REFERENCES


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