



**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDERED LANGUAGE AND GENDER
IDENTITY IN DISNEY'S MULAN (1998)**

GABRIELLE TAVANYA ANTHONY

21AAB02774

SUPERVISOR: MOHAMAD IQBAAL BIN MOHD WAZIR

UALZ 3023 - FYP2 REPORT

**SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) ENGLISH EDUCATION
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**

JAN 2025

© 2025 Gabrielle Tavanya Anthony. All rights reserved.

This Final Year Project Report is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Language at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). This Final Year Project Report represents the work of the author, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text. No part of this Final Year Project Report may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means, whether electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author or UTAR, in accordance with UTAR's Intellectual Property Policy.

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between gendered language and gender identity in the Disney film *Mulan* (1998) using a qualitative discourse analysis method. By applying the gendered language and gender performativity frameworks by Mary Crawford and Judith Butler on the data collected through Robin Lakoff and James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's theorised gendered language features, this research identified the use of gendered language in the movie's dialogue. This study analysed how media portrayals affect the formation of gender identity and how such language both supports and contradicts conventional gender norms and stereotypes. The data of this study revealed four main findings. First, gender is not innate but constructed. Second, language can be used to shape and construct gender identity. Third, while *Mulan* (1998) reinforced and reproduced certain societal and gender norms, it simultaneously resisted gender stereotypes to reveal the complex nature of gender and gender performance. Another conclusion that can be drawn is that language can be used to reflect and construct gender identity. Fifth, an audience's understanding and perception of gender and gender identity can be shaped and constructed by the representation of gendered language in the media. These findings support Mary Crawford and Judith Butler's theories on gender and language while encouraging Disney audiences to question and resist the stereotypes and norms set on men and women.

Keywords: *Gendered language, gender performativity, Disney's Mulan (1998), gender stereotypes, media representation, discourse analysis, language and gender*

P302-302.87 Discourse analysis

Table of Contents

List of Tables	4
Chapter 1.....	5
Introduction.....	5
1.1 Background of Study	5
1.2 Statement of Problem	6
1.3 Research Objectives	8
1.4 Research Questions.....	8
1.5 Significance of Study	8
1.6 Definition of Key Terms.....	9
1.7 Scope and Limitations of Study	10
Chapter 2.....	12
Literature Review	12
2.1 Theories on Gender and Language	12
2.2 Media and Gender Representations	13
2.3 Disney and Gender Studies	13
2.4 Gender Studies on Mulan.....	15
2.5 Gendered Language and Stereotypes in Dialogue.....	17
2.6 Gaps in Existing Knowledge.....	19
2.7 Theoretical Framework	21
Chapter 3.....	24
Methodology	24
3.1 Research Design	24
3.2 Instruments	24
3.3 Sample (sampling method)	25
3.4 Data Collection	26
3.5 Plans for Data Analysis	26
Chapter 4.....	28
Findings	28
Analysis	36
4.1 Contradictions to Lakoff's theory in Mulan (1988)	36
4.2 Contradictions to Pennebaker and Mehl's theory in Mulan (1998)	38
4.3 Mulan's speech evolution (Before, during, and after the army)	40
Chapter 5.....	44
Discussion	44
5.1 The gendered language features identified in Mulan (1998)	44
5.2 The relationship between gendered language and gender stereotypes	47
5.3 How language was used to represent and shape Mulan's different genders and social identities	51
5.4 How the representation of gendered language and gender stereotypes can shape the gender identities of the audience of Mulan (1998).	55
Conclusion	58
References.....	61
Appendices.....	70

List of Tables

Table 1: Robin Lakoff's Gendered Language Features in Mulan (1998)

Table 2: James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's Gendered Language Features in Mulan (1998)

Table 3: Gendered language features in Mulan's speech before, during, and after the army

Table 4: Contradictions to Lakoff's theory in Mulan (1988)

Table 5: Contradictions to Pennebaker and Mehl's theory in Mulan (1998)

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

In the study of gender and language, it can be seen that media, whether it be in social media, music, books, television series, or movies, plays a significant role in the shaping and reinforcement of gender stereotypes and gendered language (Wood, 1994). Media often acts as a magnifying glass, with its content usually emphasising the current state of the world in terms of trends, stereotypes, relationships, etc. In this way, the media has a powerful influence on determining what gets portrayed and reflected to society. The study of media's influence on gender stereotypes and gendered language is important in contributing to the study of gender identity. Ton (2018) found that Judith Butler's 1990 theory of gender performativity argued that gender identity cannot exist without first being influenced by gendered acts. Gendered acts, as described by Judith Butler, are the actions, behaviours, and language used by the genders that are sorted and categorised as more masculine or feminine (Wilson, 2015). According to Salih (2007), Butler argues that gender is not innate but rather an identity that is constantly changing based on the repetition of the gendered acts that then create the impression of a fixed gender identity. These gendered acts can be seen in media in the form of gendered language such as speaking in a manner and tone, and with words that are deemed more feminine or masculine, as well as in gender stereotypes such as men being labelled weak if they cry or women being more attractive if they smiled more and talked less.

That being said, this study will focus on analysing gender stereotypes and gendered language in the media as portrayed through Disney's 1998 film, *Mulan*. It will focus on revealing how gender identity and gender related language is learnt in society through the portrayal of men and women and their use of language in the media by analysing the male and female characters

in the movie chosen. It will analyse the ways in which gendered language also helps to shape and reinforce the identities commonly attached to male and female gender such as sons, daughters, husbands, wives, etc.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The depiction of gender, through both language and stereotypes, in the media has been a well-studied field in sociolinguistics. It has been analysed with its relation to the construction of gender norms and values in society. The reasoning behind this research paper is a desire to understand how media portrayals of gender and gendered language contribute to the shaping of gender identity. The choice of *Mulan* (1998) being the media for this study's analysis came from having been raised on Disney movies as a child and favouring the movie for its unique gender switching main plot. During the screening process for the choice media for this study, *Mulan* (1998) immediately came to mind as it perfectly displayed both men and women's language as determined by society. This was portrayed not only in one movie, but in one character as well, making it an ideal sample for this research. Moreover, the movie, being the creation of Disney, a staple company in many children's upbringing, proved to be an ideal sample for this research as it is one that many children and adults alike have watched in the process of growing up, thus playing a part in the forming of their perception of gender and gender identity. Having been intrigued by *Mulan*'s charismatic portrayal of both genders throughout the movie raised the question of if and how such narratives on gender challenge or reinforce traditional norms.

While many studies have been conducted on *Mulan* (1998) and have contributed greatly to the studies on various aspects of gender such as equality, sexism, power, and patriarchy, there have been limited studies that focus on gender reinforcement through *Mulan* and its contribution to gendered language and gender stereotypes. Furthermore, there have been even fewer studies

that analyse the movie in a perspective that reveals masculine language use, stereotypes, and gender reinforcement. Most, if not all, the studies conducted on Mulan focus solely on the main character, Fa Mulan, and her contributions to feminist studies. Aside from focusing on the character Mulan, many studies on gender in Mulan (1998) tend to focus more on its cultural and historical background and its contributions to gender equality or sexism such as the studies by Begum (2022) and Limbach (2013). The studies also mainly consist of comparison studies between Mulan (1998) and Mulan (2020) to analyse the development of feminist movements and cultural and gender issues (Wang, 2021). Additionally, there are studies that analyse the psychological impacts the movie's gender stereotypes have on both the characters and the viewers such as the study *The Impact Of Gender Stereotypes On The Main Character's Psychological Development In The Disney Movie Mulan (1998)* by Fahiratunnisa (2023) and the study *Gender Stereotypes And Its Psychological Impact Portrayed In Mulan 1998 Movie* by Wulandari and Fahiratunnisa (2024). A study carried out by Manaworapong and Bowen (2021) titled *Heteronormativity in Children's Discourse: Gender Binaries and Sexism in Mulan* touches on similar topics that will be discussed in this study, however based on the data collected, Manaworapong and Bowen focused more on sexism as portrayed in Mulan, both the 1998 and 2020 films, and how that affects children's understanding of gender binaries, sexism, and gender equality. The focus of the study lies heavily in discussing the impact of Mulan on children. It is also one of the studies that mainly focus on comparing language between the two Mulan movies to show a development or recession of feminism and sexism in children's movies. Moreover, the study focused on language in relation to women and femininity and its contributions to gender studies and only touched on men and masculinity to further study sexism and feminism as portrayed in children's films.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify the women and men's language features displayed in the movie Mulan.
2. To analyse the relationship between gendered language as portrayed in the media and gender stereotypes.
3. To examine how language was used to represent Mulan's different identities; woman, daughter, soldier, and how it contributed to the shaping of gender identity.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the features of women's language and men's language as depicted in Mulan?
2. What is the relationship between gendered language as portrayed in the media and gender stereotypes?
3. How was language used to represent Mulan's different identities throughout the movie and how does it contribute to the shaping of gender identity?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study is important as it is able to contribute to the current studies related to media and its representation of gendered language. It helps to understand the roles and impacts media can have on the development of gender identity as well as analyse how gendered language is reinforced through the dialogues presented in media. It will allow for a clear view of whether dialogues in movies continue to reinforce gendered language and, by default, gender stereotypes, or if they break down these stereotypes to offer viewers a different perspective in what is defined as 'masculine' or 'feminine' speech.

On its own, this study will present a variety of linguistic information on gendered language in the overall study of gender and language. This study, once paired with the current studies available, both on *Mulan* and on other media and gendered language studies, will be able to provide a deeper understanding of media representations of gender through gendered language and gender stereotypes. As mentioned earlier, there have been many studies conducted on *Mulan*, with one study containing research objectives similar to this study, however, this research paper will be a more linguistically centred analysis on gender portrayals on *Mulan* which will focus more on the language use related to gender rather than language use related to feminist theories which will allow future scholars to gain a fuller understanding on the topic.

This study could impact Gender Studies and Linguistic scholars as well as Media scholars by providing more information on the gendered language and linguistic features presented in movie media and the impacts of media representation on shaping the identities of viewers. Film makers could also find this study useful in understanding the power media has over its audiences and allow them an understanding on the many ways they could curate meaningful, inclusive media. Furthermore, the information revealed in this study could be beneficial to educators when teaching and explaining gender, linguistics, and media studies by displaying the intricate relationship between language and identity through this study paired with the movie *Mulan* (1998). Moreover, this study could bring awareness to parents and guardians on the effects media, in the form of Disney movies, could have on a child's perception and identity.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The key terms frequently mentioned in this paper include:

1. Gendered language: a language that shows bias towards one specific social gender
(*Teachers, what is gendered language?*, n.d.).

2. Masculine: displaying qualities or features that are commonly associated with boys or men (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).
3. Feminine: displaying qualities or features that are commonly associated with girls or women (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).
4. Media: communication tools used to both deliver messages and store information; the internet, publishing networks, broadcasting networks (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).
5. Gender stereotypes: the shared view or assumption about characteristics, qualities or roles that are or should be found in or displayed by men and women (United Nations, n.d.).
6. Gender identity: the internal and usually personal sense of self as either male, female, either, or other (Frcpc, n.d.).
7. Hedging: statements that do not contain an absolute statement and oftentimes makes things “fuzzier or less fuzzy” (Vlasyan, 2018).
8. Tag Questions: a statement converted into a question by attaching a smaller question at the end of the statement (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).

1.7 Scope and Limitations of Study

The scope of this study will be a gender studies analysis on Disney’s 1998 film *Mulan* and the relationship between language and gender identity. It will analyse the dialogue of the movie, including the song lyrics. The research will contain primary research to collect the needed data. This will be carried out by both watching and observing the movie *Mulan* (1998) as well as analysing the script of the movie to dissect and extract the information on gendered language and gender stereotypes.

One of the main limitations this research faces is the possibly outdated use of men and women's language portrayed in the movie. As the movie was released more than two decades ago and was written and directed by people of a different generation than those who control the media now, there may be a variation in language currently spoken by men and women in this current generation. Additionally, in this current generation, Generation Z, gender stereotypes are continuously broken down or challenged in everyday life, including in conversations and language use. Moreover, words are often given new meanings or new words are created almost daily, so what was considered distinctly male or female language in 1998, may not be considered so in 2024.

Another limitation faced in this study is that the language used to portray gender in the movie may be more stereotypical and forced than natural speech conducted in a real-life setting. Script writers may have tried to force a clear difference between men and women's language to allow for better differentiation for viewers. Though this may make the study a little less authentic, this factor may contribute to the findings of how media reinforces gendered language and certain stereotypes in its audience and play a part in the increased use and continuation of gendered language in the following generations.

On the other hand, another limitation this research faces is that the language difference between men's and women's language may not be portrayed as accurately as it is when used in real life situations. This can be due to the fact that the motives and message of the company, Disney, as well as the writers and producers of *Mulan*, may be added into the film to promote a sense of self-worth and empowerment into the female audience. Once again, this limitation may aid the findings of this research as it will reveal how *Mulan* was used to break gender stereotypes and object against typical gendered language characteristics.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Theories on Gender and Language

There are three main theories related to gender, language, and gender identity that are crucial to the study of Gender and Language; Judith Butler's theory on Gender Performativity, Robin Lakoff's theory on Language and Gender, and James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's theory on men and women's language.

The theory on Gender Performativity proposed by Butler (2006) states that gender identity is not something one is born with but is rather something that is picked up and constructed through the viewing of certain acts that are pronounced distinctly 'feminine' or 'masculine'. The theory also states that the forming and performativity of these gender identities and gendered acts are not ones that are done consciously but subconsciously, having been learnt and internalised without even being realised and then reenacted instinctively. This subconscious behaviour ultimately leads to the reinforcement of gender roles and identities as presented by society.

Robin Lakoff's theory on Language and Gender states that women are wired through social interactions and representations of women in society to communicate through language use in ways that display a sense of deference and uncertainty (Lakoff, 1975). Ways of speaking such as using a more polite vocabulary, speaking softer, including hedges and tag questions in speech, and being more apologetic, among others. This socially influenced way of speaking fuels the stereotypical gender roles pushed onto women and limits a woman's freedom, power and authority to communicate.

Lastly, the theory by James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl (2003) on Men and Women's language states that there is an obvious difference between men and women's language when

using a language. It states that this variety in language use reflects the distinct societal and gender roles faced by each gender. The theory reveals that women are prone to using more words and pronouns that reflect social relationships such as “friends”, “we”, “our”, “family”, etc., compared to men, who use words and pronouns that are more self-related such as “I”. Additionally, Pennebaker and Mehl discovered that men tend to use more articles such as “the” and “a”, while women often use more emotion-related words in speech.

2.2 Media and Gender Representations

The link between gendered language and gender stereotypes in the media and gender identity are important to understanding how gendered language and gender stereotypes are fostered and passed from generation to generation, or if they are being broken down on media representation at a time. Studies conducted on the relationship between gender identity and media representation of gender reveal that media plays a significant role in the construction and reinforcement of gender identity in not only children, but adolescents and sometimes even adults as well (Strasburger, Wilson & Jordan, 2009). Studies such as the one conducted by Kågesten et al. (2016) illustrates the factors that contribute to the construction of gender attitudes and gender identity, highlighting that media representations of gender are one of the significant factors in this development. Another study by Holtzman and Sharpe (2014) explains how media representations are consistently being digested through media content and inadvertently contributes to one’s understanding and perception of gender using language, behaviours, expectations, etc.

2.3 Disney and Gender Studies

Disney is an entertainment and media company commonly known for its huge role in shaping many cultural narratives surrounding gender. As a result, many scholars have conducted gendered studies on the portrayal of Disney characters ranging from the Disney princesses to

the humanised cars in the Cars trilogy and their impacts on reinforcing or challenging gendered language, roles, and stereotypes.

Gender studies conducted on Disney movies reveal a consensus held by researchers studying gender as portrayed in Disney films, specifically the Disney princess series, is that Disney movies are ‘unhealthy’ for children, more specifically female children. This is because the ways in which Disney portrays its female characters leads young girls to conform to the physical negative female stereotyping, the patriarchal societal role of women as victims who need saving, and the behavioural attributes of being submissive and silent (Maity, 2014). All these values being fed to young girls through the media ultimately lead to the idea that women are damsels always needing to be saved by a man. Furthermore, a study conducted by Streiff and Dundes (2017) on the gender stereotypes found in Frozen concluded that Disney feeds into the stereotypes surrounding women, either by victimising them and alluding to the fact that they need a male saviour as can be seen in Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White, or by completely removing the presence of a male romantic figure from the character’s life, insinuating that an independent woman has a desire for only power and not love, as can be seen in Frozen.

Gender portrayals feeding into gender stereotypes in Disney are not just limited to female characters, however. A study conducted by Michael et al. (2012) titled *Gender Roles in Animated Films* revealed that in the Disney trilogy, Cars, male gendered language and gender stereotypes are reinforced by the male characters in the series. Stereotypes such as men being more arrogant and dominant, competitive and sportsmanlike, while women are more docile and supporting.

That being said, some studies oppose the idea that Disney feeds into gender stereotypes and instead challenges them through the creation of their newer characters such as Ariel, Rapunzel,

Merida, and Elsa to suit the varying cultural context and audiences (Karma & Bhad, 2023). It was viewed that Disney began adapting the portrayals of their male and female characters to suit the changing cultural and societal trends, having been accused repeatedly of stereotyping their characters (Towbin, et al., 2004).

2.4 Gender Studies on Mulan

In the nearly three decades since *Mulan* (1998) was released many researchers have used the film as a base to study the depictions of gender in media, questioning whether the movie broke away from Disney's gender stereotyping or reinforced their stance on stereotypical gender depictions. When *Mulan* (2020) was released, even more studies were released on if there were any changes and developments present in the newer adaptation and its contributions to the portrayal of strong female characters in a more 'woke' feminist society.

A study by Zuhaimi (2023) titled *Unveiling The Identity Of Ping Fa Zhou In The Movie Mulan* went with a different approach at analysing gender in *Mulan* (1998). The study applied Robin Lakoff's theory on Language and Gender onto the language use of Ping Fa Zhou, the male disguise Mulan donned on her entrance to the army and analysed the depiction of female language as 'powerless' even when attempting to appear as a powerful male. Additionally, another study implementing Robin Lakoff's theory on Language and Gender on the dialogue from *Mulan* (1998) explored the ways in which language in media reiterated sexist tropes and ideologies (Begum, 2022). However, this study focused on the effects the language used in *Mulan* (1998) had on the reinforcement of misogynistic language and its contribution to sexism in the media. The study applied Lakoff's theory by comparing language features such as Direct Commands, Gender Bias, Direct Speech, etc., used by female and male characters and how this reinforces sexist speech patterns and stereotypes.

On the other hand, Kusen et al. (2024) applied Judith Butler's theory on Gender Performativity on Mulan's character in *Mulan* (2020) and how she defies female stereotypes and gender roles that have been passed down through generations while keeping her identity as a woman. Proving that the concept of gender is fluid, with traits such as bravery and strength not being innately male or kindness and patience not being innately female, but rather traits taught to be sanctioned wholly 'masculine' or 'feminine' through society.

Other studies focused less on gendered language in *Mulan* and instead analysed the gender stereotypes displayed throughout *Mulan* (1998) (Wulandari & Fahiratunnisa, 2024). With that focus, the findings were then linked to the impacts the gender stereotypes had on the main character, Mulan, revealing that gender stereotypes on both male and females resulted in negative psychological development. These portrayals of gender stereotypes and their effects on the movie characters ultimately lead to the movie's audiences' also displaying similar psychological developments.

Comparing the two versions of *Mulan*, 1998 and 2020, studies reveal that many gender related issues presented in *Mulan* (1998) were addressed in *Mulan* (2020). Qingli and Ying (2020) note that in *Mulan* (2020) more female characters were introduced and some male characters, such as the dragon Mushu, were changed to have more feminine origins. Furthermore, the ending of the movie having been changed to Mulan earning a place in a military establishment rather than getting into a relationship with her superior emphasised that a woman does not need to abide by traditional rules but can make independent decisions, breaking many gender stereotypes surrounding a woman's future. *Mulan* (2020) is viewed as a success at breaking down gender stereotypes through the subtle changes in very prominently male characters present in *Mulan* (1998), breaking the stereotype known as 'toxic masculinity' (Wang, 2021).

Manaworapong and Bowen (2021) also compared *Mulan* (1998) and *Mulan* (2020) in their study titled *Heteronormativity in Children's Discourse: Gender Binaries and Sexism in Mulan* which analysed sexism as portrayed in *Mulan* (1998) and *Mulan* (2020) through the use of gendered language and its effects on children's understanding of gender binaries, sexism, gender equality. The study dives deep into analysing gendered language features of the female characters in *Mulan* and contrasts the results with male language features, linking the findings with sexist behaviours and beliefs. In the final analysis, it was concluded that while both movies aimed to empower women, they both fell short to cultural and societal norms that segregated and discriminated women into roles that were sexist, such as marriage being the happily ever after for a woman.

2.5 Gendered Language and Stereotypes in Dialogue

Since the creation of the very first film in 1888, there have been several studies conducted on the presence of gendered language and gender stereotypes in film dialogues (Dixon & Foster, 2018). Based on a study conducted by Fregolent (2024), it can be seen that to understand the presence of gendered language and stereotypes in film dialogue, we must first understand the concept of gender norms, gender identity, gender roles, and gender stereotypes, to then understand gender socialisation, which connects back to gendered language in recent media. Ryle (2011) explains gender norms as the ideas and rules about how men and women should conduct themselves in a manner that is deemed appropriate by society. From these gender norms, a gender identity is constructed. As stated by Evans (2011), gender identity is an individual's self-perception as a man or a woman, this perception of their own gender most often, but not always, aligns with their sexuality as a male or female. Based on one's gender identity, gender roles are established, these gender roles are the ways in which one is expected to speak, act, dress, and behave in a manner that is associated to the individual's gender and/or

sex (Blackstone, 2003). Hilton and Von Hippel (1996) revealed that gender stereotypes stem from these gender roles and are the generalised preconception of the characteristics and attributes that are expected to be found and performed in a man or woman. These stereotypes can be found in a negative manner or a positive manner. Gender socialisation is then the process of passing down both gender norms and gender roles through the generations (Leal Filho et al., 2023). It is through the process of gender socialisation that gendered language and gender stereotypes are so present in film dialogue.

When tied to Fregolent's study, the study by Nalabandian and Ireland (2022) titled *Linguistic gender congruity differentially correlates with film and novel ratings by critics and audiences* further elaborates on how gendered language and stereotypes are passed on through film by examining the film writers and their distinct styles of writing. Nalabandian and Ireland revealed that women writers tend to write in styles reflecting their femininity and men writers tend to write in more masculine tones, using words and cues that befit their gender norms and roles. This then leads to dialogues in movies to reflect the gendered language of the movie's script writers, starting a new cycle of gender socialisation amongst the movie's audiences.

It can also be seen that in the attempts to make movies as accurate to real life interactions and discourse, films may exaggerate or punctuate certain gendered language stereotypes that ultimately end up reinforcing gendered language and gender stereotypes in the movie and in its audiences (Sundqvist, 2005). This leads to the forming and reinforcing of gendered language stereotypes that may be perceived to be accurate but, in reality, is not. As studied by Sundqvist, movie media stereotypically portrays women as the more talkative gender, ignoring turn taking rules when speaking, however, research shows that men are more often the talkative gender, speaking more out of turn and overlapping each other in conversation. Sundqvist's study also shows that tag questions and hedging are features in language that is used by both genders,

though women display the feature more in their interactions. However, when audiences consume media with these stereotypical language features, their gender identities are constructed based on these stereotypes and are then either broken down or passed onto the next generation, repeating the cycle of gender socialisation (Holtzman & Sharpe, 2014).

2.6 Gaps in Existing Knowledge

There have been many studies conducted on gender and language in *Mulan*, with many researchers touching on various topics stemming from gender studies. However, a vast majority of these studies focus solely on analysing *Mulan* in a feminist centred view. Studies such as the one conducted by Wang (2021) titled *From Mulan (1998) to Mulan (2020): Disney conventions, cross-cultural feminist intervention, and a compromised progress* which focused mainly on the contributions *Mulan* made in the progression of feminism across media or the study by Limbach (2013) titled *'You the man, well, sorta': Gender binaries and liminality in Mulan* which tackled the constraints *Mulan* has placed on gender fluidity and the free thinking culture of the modern world. Furthermore, most studies on *Mulan*, should they focus on the movie rather than the Chinese folksong, the Ballad of *Mulan*, tend to compare *Mulan* (1998) with *Mulan* (2020) such as the studies by Manaworapong and Bowen (2022) and Cabaluna et al. (2022). Amongst these research articles, there have been very few that touch on gendered language as represented in the media and its involvement in gender stereotyping and gender identity. The studies that have been conducted thus far skip over this topic and delve straight to its contributions to other factors surrounding gender. Therefore, this study will act as a filler to fill in the blanks found in the studies mentioned above, giving this field of study a better understanding and depth.

The first gap that will be addressed in this study is the focus on specific linguistic features that distinguish a language as gendered. This study will analyse speech styles, speech patterns, and gender specific words, among others.

The second gap being addressed in this study is the focus on the reinforcement and breaking of gender stereotypes through language features. This focus will elaborate how certain stereotypes are constructed and reiterated throughout the movie. Moreover, through the analysis of the supporting characters' dialogue, this study will reveal how gendered expectations and norms, related to gendered language and gender stereotypes, are reinforced or challenged in the movie. This will demonstrate how gendered language and gender roles are viewed by society and how it is projected on the main or supporting characters by the other characters.

Another gap that will be addressed through this study is the link between gendered language and gender identity. Through the application of Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity on the discourse found in *Mulan* (1998), this study will reveal how gender identity is actively being constructed and performed by linguistic choices made by the influence of media.

Lastly, this study will focus on gendered language and its effects on all audiences without focusing on just females, adolescents or children. The study will review the impacts the gendered language and gender stereotypes reinforced or challenged in the movie have on all its audiences and its relation to the perception and internalisation of the gender roles and language differences displayed in *Mulan*.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

2.7.1 Foundations of Crawford's framework

Mary Crawford's framework on Gender and Language was heavily inspired by researchers in gendered language fields such as Robin Lakoff, however her studies on language exceed those of other scholars because of the foundations in which her framework is based upon (Crawford, 1995).

Crawford critiques frameworks such as Lakoff's "deficit model" that focus solely on comparing how women's language is generally weaker, less authoritative, and less assertive than men's language. She argues that gendered language and their linguistic features must be analysed with the context of both social and cultural hierarchies for a clear understanding of power perspectives in society. Moreover, Crawford believes that language is not something that is neutral. She views language as a method of constructing and reflecting power relations in society. As such, when analysing language and gender, Crawford considers the ways that patriarchal and hierarchical structures are shaped and reinforced through men and women's linguistic patterns in speech (Strebel et al., 2006). Patterns such as conversational dominance, turn taking, interruptions, etc, as well as speech patterns that are deemed emotional or submissive.

2.7.2 Key Concepts in Crawford's Framework

In the study of gender and language, Mary Crawford highlights several key aspects that should be taken into consideration when conducting research.

Firstly, the perspective when conducting gender studies research must be one that is neutral (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Crawford noted that most studies pitted female language and speech patterns against male language and speech patterns, often treating men's language as the

standard and women's language as the abnormality. This view ends up painting women's language as a problem that needs improving, unnecessarily burdening women with the need to change instead of facing society's communication system that has been filled with inequalities.

Secondly, Crawford reiterates that language cannot be perceived as a culmination of individual characteristics but instead should be viewed as an interpersonal occurrence (Crawford, 1995). She explains that the ways in which gendered language plays a part in shaping social interactions and in turn how social interactions shape gendered language are factors that should be examined thoroughly. Crawford advises that language be seen as a tool for constructing the different identities in society, specifically gender identities.

Crawford also highlights the ways that language reflects and emphasises the different power dynamics between the genders (Crawford, 1995). She observed that women are often disempowered in conversations when men, most commonly, begin interrupting and dominating throughout the interaction. Crawford notes that men not only dominate conversation in terms of how much they speak, but also in what they say, dictating the flow and topic of conversation. She theorised that these conversational patterns are not present just because of inherent qualities but are also present due to cultural norms that are conditioned to sustain male privilege. Therefore, Crawford's framework implores researchers to examine how conversational structures, and linguistic patterns can either challenge or reinforce these power variations between men and women.

Fourthly, Crawford presents the concept of "doing gender". This idea explains the ways that individuals portray their gender identities through language in their interactions. This concept focuses on gender performance in everyday interactions, understanding the complex nature of gender identities while still being fluid and changeable. In this way, Crawford highlights that though language is often used in reinforcing repressive gendered language stereotypes, it can

also be used to resist these stereotypes by rejecting conversational norms through the assertion of female dominance in conversation and invoking conversation that differs from patriarchal narratives (Strebel et al., 2006).

Additionally, Crawford acknowledges the importance of intersectionality in the study of language and gender, analysing how race, sexuality, class, culture, etc., coincide with gender to shape and construct linguistic patterns and communication styles (Crawford & Marecek, 1989). Broadening the perspective on gender and language allowed for a more specific and detailed understanding of how different identities influence language use in social interactions. Crawford emphasises that the narratives stemming from these different societal aspects play a huge role in shaping linguistic practices. It is these narratives that influence what is considered “proper” or “suitable” speech for men and women. Most often these “appropriate” norms align with women’s language being more submissive and men’s language being more authoritative.

2.7.3 Relevance of Crawford’s Framework to Media and Discourse Studies

Applying Mary Crawford’s framework to media and discourse studies is beneficial as the framework allows for a clear analysis of how male and female characters assert dominance and display their power dynamics through the use of language (Stamou, 2014). Based on their language use, it can be determined whether the characters conform to gendered language stereotypes and power hierarchies, reinforcing the stereotypes, or if they break through the traditional gender roles, challenging the stereotypes. Relating to gender identity studies, the study of gendered discourse in films reveals how societal and cultural expectations and norms are portrayed in the media to young audiences whose gender identities are continually being shaped and constructed by their interactions with gendered language and gender stereotypes.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research that will be carried out for this paper will consist of qualitative research. This data will be collected through an analysis of Mulan (1998).

The research design for this study is a qualitative research design with a discourse analysis methodology. As discourse analysis generally focuses on the way social situations and circumstances are reflected through language, this methodology is ideal in the examination of how characters in Mulan (1998) apply language, and other language features, to perform or reinforce gendered language, gender roles, and gender stereotypes. A thematic analysis will be used to categorise the linguistic features displayed by the characters into themes such as “tag questions”, “hedges”, “super-polite forms”, etc. The data will then be analysed through the theoretical framework mentioned above to reveal the relationship between gendered language and gender identity.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Data Collection

The primary source for this research’s data will be the full and completed transcript of the movie found at <https://imsdb.com/scripts/Mulan.html>. Certain sections displaying features of gendered language and gender stereotypes will be highlighted and segmented into scenes to then be analysed according to the theoretical framework.

3.2.2 Analysis

A scene categorisation template will be applied once the data has been collected to analyse the data in segments according to the scenes which they were taken from. These tables will include the linguistic features present in the film according to Lakoff and Pennebaker and Mehl's theories on gendered language.

A descriptive coding framework will also be applied during the analysis process. The framework will be based on Robin Lakoff and James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's theories of Gender and Language features such as 'Lakoff's Language Features' and 'Pennebaker and Mehl's Language Features', grouping the data into understandable and specific codes that make it easier for an in-depth analysis when Crawford and Butler's theoretical frameworks are applied to the data.

3.2.3 Documentation

The tools used for the data collection and management will be Microsoft Word. When creating the coding system for data analysis, Microsoft Word will be used to highlight the linguistic features suited to the codes created for this study. Furthermore, any tables and graphs needed for the data collection and management will be created in either Microsoft Excel and exported to Microsoft Word or will be created in Microsoft Word itself for easier management and data tracking.

3.3 Sample (sampling method)

The sample for this research will be the dialogue from the Disney movie *Mulan* (1998). This sample is ideal for this study on gendered language and gender stereotypes as it contains multiple characters stemming from the male and female gender. Furthermore, the switching of *Mulan*'s gender from female to male and back again throughout the movie, allows for

observations on the presence, if any, of the switch in gendered language when Mulan's identity is shifted. Additionally, Mulan's different gender and societal roles allow for a detailed study on how language use changes according to the performance of said gender and societal roles, relating to one of this paper's research objectives.

3.4 Data Collection

The primary research will be conducted through the analysis of the full and completed transcript of the movie found at <https://imsdb.com/scripts/Mulan.html> and through the observation of the characters as depicted in the moving film.

The data collected will be obtained through the analysis of Mulan (1998)'s movie transcript using Robin Lakoff's and James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's theories on Gender and Language. The transcript will first be segmented according to the scenes in the movie before applying the theories for data collection. This will be done to display the different contexts and situations the characters are in and how the environment impacts language use. Once segmented, the transcript will then be analysed according to the theories to extract words, sentences, or phrases that are distinctly male or female language features. Features such as tag questions, "super-polite" form, interrogative intonation, etc. After the data is collected, a thematic analysis will be conducted to sort the data into tables containing the linguistic features displayed in the film using the codes created for this study.

3.5 Plans for Data Analysis

Based on the data collected from the Mulan (1998) transcript, Mary Crawford's framework on Gender and Language will be applied to reveal how gendered language and gender stereotypes are reinforced or broken down in Mulan (1998) and explain the relationship between language and gender.

Mary Crawford's framework will be applied to analyse the data collected from the army camp scenes to study how the environment in the army camp shapes Mulan's language use and pushes her to adopt more masculine speech patterns. Her transitions between female and male modes of speech as her character travels between a family setting and an army setting will be studied through this perspective.

Furthermore, Crawford's framework will be applied to analyse Mulan's transformation from female to male and the way her language is altered to "perform" in a more masculine manner when she disguises herself as a man. Through this analysis, a comparison can be made in the way her altered "male" speech conflicts with her previously socially deemed "feminine" speech patterns.

Lastly, Crawford's framework will be applied by analysing Mulan's gender performance. It will study how Mulan constructs and executes her gender through language use. In the movie *Mulan* (1998), Mulan undergoes a switch in gender from female to male and in doing so adopts a different manner of speaking and acting to conform to the socially expected male gender norms. This change in her language and behaviour displays how gender is a social construct rather than an innate quality. The framework by Mary Crawford, paired with Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity, allows for an examination of how Mulan's gender identity and gendered acts shifts along with her speech, reflecting or challenging the societal expectations set on what is considered masculine or feminine. Applying Butler's theory will also allow for an examination of Mulan's speech patterns based on the different identities she creates and embodies during the duration of the movie.

Chapter 4

Findings

Lakoff's Language Features	Examples from Mulan	Characters
Hedges	<i>"Ahh, notes, in case I forget something?"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Could I just take that back... one moment?"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"I don't think I can do this."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Ahh, I, uh, uh, I uh—"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Uh, I've got a name"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Um, he doesn't talk about me much"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Uh, how about a girl who's got a brain, who always speaks her mind?"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Uhhh"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Uh... Uh... you forgot your helmet."</i>	Shang
Tag Questions	<i>"I think it's going well, don't you?"</i>	Grandma Fa

	<i>"Ah but well, actually it's your helmet, isn't it?"</i>	Shang
Rising Intonation	<i>"How about a girl who's got a brain? And always speaks her mind?"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"You're a woman?"</i>	Shang
	<i>"Why is Mulan any different?"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Woo! Sign me up for the next war!"</i>	Grandma Fa
Intensifiers	<i>"We'll need more luck than I thought."</i>	Grandma Fa
	<i>"Please, PLEASE, help her."</i>	Fa Zhou
	<i>"I really don't want to take him anywhere."</i>	Mulan
Super-Polite Forms	<i>"Remember, the doctor said three cups of tea in the morning—and three at night."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Pardon me."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"We could just close our eyes and swim around."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Please believe me,"</i>	Mulan

	<i>"Sir, the Emperor's in danger!"</i>	Mulan
Hypercorrect Grammar and Punctuation	<i>"Quiet and demure... graceful... polite... delicate... refined... poised... punctual."</i>	Mulan
Avoidance of Swear Words	<i>"You are a disgrace!"</i>	Matchmaker
Indirect Requests	<i>"Can you help me with my chores today?"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"You shouldn't have to go."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Could I just take that back... one moment?"</i>	Mulan
	<i>"You said you'd trust Ping! Why is Mulan any different?"</i>	Mulan
Empty Adjectives	<i>"Too skinny. Not good for bearing sons."</i>	Matchmaker
	<i>"My, my, what beautiful blossoms we have this year."</i>	Fa Zhou
	<i>"All right, rise and shine sleeping beauty."</i>	Mushu
	<i>"Honourable Fa Zhou, I—"</i>	Shang

Apologies	<i>"Stop! I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'm just nervous. I've never done this before."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Sorry, uhh, I mean, sorry you had to see that."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"I'm sorry."</i>	Mulan
	<i>"Sorry, your Majesty"</i>	Chien-Po

Table 1: Robin Lakoff's Gendered Language Features in Mulan (1998)

Table 1 shows the presence of gendered language in *Mulan* (1998) according to Robin Lakoff's theory on women's language features (Lakoff, 1975). The gendered language features identified in *Mulan* (1998) include hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, intensifiers, superpolite forms, hypercorrect grammar and punctuation, the avoidance of swear words, indirect requests, empty adjectives, and excessive apologies. The data shows that the majority of the "feminine" speech patterns are spoken by female characters such as Mulan, Grandma Fa, and the Matchmaker. However, some of the male characters can also be seen conversing with speech patterns that are attributed to women's language.

Pennebaker and Mehl's Language Features	Male Speech in Mulan	Female Speech in Mulan	Difference between Male and Female Speech
Use of First-Person Pronouns	Emperor: <i>"I won't take any chances, General."</i>	Mulan: <i>"Look at me", "I will never pass for a perfect bride", "I've got an idea.", "I did!", "I brought you the sword of Shan-Yu and the crest of the Emperor."</i>	Women tend to use more personal pronouns to communicate in a relational manner, while men in leadership tend to use first-person personal pronouns when asserting control and expressing power, authority, or announcing decisions.
	General Li: <i>"Forgive me, Your Majesty, but I believe my troops can stop him."</i>	Grandma Fa: <i>"I've got all the luck we'll need."</i>	
	Fa Zhou: <i>"I will DIE doing what is right"</i>	Fa Li: <i>"Of all days to be late. I should have prayed to the ancestors for luck."</i>	
Use of First-Person Plural Pronouns	General Li: <i>"We'll set up defences around your palace immediately."</i>	Fa Li: <i>"We must go after her. She could be killed!"</i>	Men in power tend to use first-person plural pronouns when discussing group military actions to convey a sense of unity. They also tend to focus on hierarchal structures, while women use first-person plural pronouns to in a more personal, relational manner.

Direct vs Indirect Speech	Emperor: <i>"Send your troops to protect my people."</i>	Mulan: <i>"So you'll die for honour?", "You said you'd trust Ping. Why is Mulan any different?"</i>	Women tend to use more indirect and polite forms of speech, while men tend to use directives and commands to convey messages and meaning.
	General Li: <i>"Shan-Yu is leading them."</i>		
	Chi Fu: <i>"Silence! You would do well to teach your daughter to hold her tongue in a man's presence."</i>		
	Fa Zhou: <i>"Mulan, you dishonour me."</i>		
	Mushu: <i>"Get your clothes on."</i>		
	Shang: <i>"Retrieve the arrow"</i>		
Emotional Words vs Articles	Emperor: <i>"A single grain of rice can tip the scale."</i>	Mulan: <i>"Quiet and demure... graceful... polite...", "I never want to see a naked man again!", Why else would I come back?", "No one will listen!"</i>	Women are more likely to use words or phrases that convey emotions, while men are more likely to use articles in speech with a focus on objects over emotions.
	Fa Zhou: <i>"It is an honour to protect my country and my family."</i>	Matchmaker: <i>"You are a disgrace"</i>	

	Chi Fu: <i>"The Huns have invaded China!"</i>	Fa Li: <i>"You must go after her. She could be killed!"</i>	
	Shang: <i>"This represents discipline, and this represents strength."</i> , <i>"Did they send me daughters when I asked for sons?"</i>	Grandma Fa: <i>"Woo, sign me up for the next war."</i>	
Hedges and Qualifiers	Soldier: <i>"I want her paler than the moon,"</i> (lack of hedges)	Mulan: <i>"Um, pardon me", "Could I just take that back...one moment", "Hey, I'm making this up as I...go."</i>	Women are more often seen to use hedges or qualifiers to soften statements or express uncertainty, while men tend to be more direct and certain.
Rising Intonation		Grandma Fa: <i>"Yep, this cricket's a lucky one."</i>	Women most often end sentences sounding like a question to seek validation from listeners, a feature not shared with men's language.
		Mulan: <i>"Who's the smartest doggie in the world?"</i>	

Aggressive Speech vs Descriptive Language	Yao: <i>"Yeah, 'cause I owe you a knuckle sandwich!", "My girl will marvel at my strength, adore my battle scars."</i>	Mulan: <i>"Delicate... refined... poised... punctual."</i>	Men tend to use more aggressive language, while women tend to use more descriptive language.
	Shang: <i>"With all the strength of a raging fire."</i>	Fa Li: <i>"When we're through, you can't fail. Like a lotus blossom, soft and pale."</i>	
Task Oriented and Action Based Language	Soldier: <i>"Marching off to battle," "Marvel at my strength"</i>		Men tend to use words and phrases to explain tasks or describe actions, a language feature unlike women's language.
Use of Questions		Mulan: <i>"Why else would I come back?", "Now where are you going?", "Would you like to stay for dinner?"</i>	Women's language is often filled with questions to seek validation, to ask for confirmation, and to convey messages indirectly rather than directly.

Table 2: James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's Gendered Language Features in Mulan (1998)

Table 2 shows the presence of gendered language as theorised by James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl (2003) in Mulan (1998). The gendered language features identified in Mulan (1998) include the use of first-person pronouns, the use of first-person plural pronouns, hedges and qualifiers, emotional words and articles, direct and indirect speech, aggressive speech and descriptive language, rising intonation, task oriented and action-based language, and the use of

question. The data shows how the characters perform their language in accordance with Pennebaker and Mehl's theorised male and female gendered language features.

Analysis

4.1 Contradictions to Lakoff's theory in Mulan (1998)

As seen in Table 1, Mulan (1998) contains a variety of the gendered language features theorised by Robin Lakoff. Lakoff's theory mainly focuses on women's language features and how they make women's speech less powerful compared to men's (Lakoff, 1975). However, in the movie there are many contradictions to this theory. These contradictions can be found throughout the movie in the form of female characters speaking in a manner that does not align with Lakoff's predictions and in male characters speaking in Lakoff's theorised women's language features.

The first contradiction found in Mulan is to Lakoff's prediction that women's language tends to contain more **hedges** in speech to express uncertainty. Hedges are defined as statements that do not contain an absolute statement and oftentimes makes things "fuzzier or less fuzzy" (Vlasyan, 2018). Mulan contradicts this prediction as there are instances in the movie when she speaks with certainty to assert herself and in doing so, she drops hedges from her speech. This can be seen in when Mulan reassures her father in an assertive manner saying, "*Don't worry father. I won't let you down.*".

Another prediction that is contradicted in Mulan is that women's language tends to contain more **tag questions** to seek confirmation from listeners. As defined by Oxford Dictionary (n.d.), tag questions are a statement converted into a question by attaching a smaller question at the end of the statement. This prediction is contradicted as Mulan often forgoes tag questions when she stands up for her beliefs and opinions, noticeably not trying to seek validation from her audience. In the movie, this can be seen in scenes where Mulan speaks confidently such as

when she confronts her father saying, "*You shouldn't have to go!*". Moreover, this prediction is further contradicted when Shang, a stereotypically masculine soldier, adds a tag question to his sentence to express uncertainty. By Lakoff's theory, this is considered to be unusual as not only is Shang a male, but he is one who is in a position of authority in the military. This can be found in the scene in which Shang nervously utters, "*Ah but well, actually it's your helmet, isn't it?*", in the presence of Mulan's father.

The prediction by Lakoff that women's language tends to contain sentences that contain **rising intonation** at the end of a sentence that indicates a lack of confidence when speaking is also contradicted in Mulan (1998). When Mulan exclaims "*So you'll die for honour!*", she ends her statement with an exclamation instead of a question, showing that she is willing to stand up for her belief, even when challenging a man.

The fourth prediction that is contradicted in Mulan is that women's speech patterns and language structure tend to contain **hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation**. Hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation refer to a way of speaking that is totally correct, both in pronunciation and grammar, that can appear quite unnatural (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Mulan contradicts this prediction in her display of imperfect grammar "*Reflect before you snack—act!*", wherein she was displaying her confusion and anxiety in her examination with the Matchmaker that she did not hold in high regard.

The prediction proposed by Lakoff that is contradicted in Mulan is that women tend to **avoid making jokes** due to the rules and uncertainty of social expectations on women. Two characters in Mulan (1998) contradict this prediction. First is Grandma Fa who actively jokes around in attempts to lighten the mood and encourage casual conversation. She does this when trying to distract and comfort Mulan saying "*How lucky can they be? They're dead!*", and another time saying, "*I think it's going well, don't you?*". Second is Mulan who joked around

with Shang saying “*Hey, I’ll hold him, and you punch, heh, heh...*” when he was distressed in attempts to comfort him.

Another prediction contradicted in *Mulan* is that women’s language tends to contain **more apologies** that are spoken even when unnecessary. Though this language feature is characterised as a female speech pattern by Lakoff, Chien-Po, a male soldier, uses it when apologising unnecessarily to the Emperor while trying to protect him saying “*Sorry, your Majesty*” before carrying him off to safety.

4.2 Contradictions to Pennebaker and Mehl’s theory in *Mulan* (1998)

From the data displayed in Table 2, it can be seen that *Mulan* (1998) contains many of the gendered language features theorised by James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl. Pennebaker and Mehl produced a list of language features that are often used to distinguish male and female language from one another. The language features they theorised as distinctly male or female saw that women’s speech leaned to being more submissive, emotional, and uncertain, while men’s speech leaned toward being more confident, commandeering, and aggressive (Pennebaker & Mehl, 2003). However, in the movie, the characters, both male and female, often spoke in a manner opposing Pennebaker and Mehl’s theory. These contradictions can be found in the form of female characters speaking in a manner alike to men’s theorised speech and male characters speaking with the theorised women’s language features.

The first contradiction to Pennebaker and Mehl’s theory that is found in *Mulan* is to the prediction that women tend to **avoid assertive language** in favour of more polite speech. Assertive language, as defined by Cambridge University Press (n.d.), is a form of communication that is clear and direct about the beliefs of the individual but still respectful and considerate to the feelings and opinions of others. *Mulan* contradicts this theory twice in the

movie. Once when she speaks in an assertive manner to encourage her father to trust her saying “*Don’t worry, Father. I won’t let you down.*”, and a second time when she conveys her beliefs to the soldiers in a confident, certain manner, declaring “*I know they’re here*”.

The second contradiction found in *Mulan* (1998) is the prediction that women tend to **avoid direct commands or requests** in favour of more polite, indirect phrases, while men use more direct and commanding speech. Direct commands or requests are defined as a clear and straight to the point way to ask someone for something and is usually devoid of indirect language traits or implied meaning (Yule, 2020). This is contradicted by *Mulan* as she uses direct commands when in battle to lead her fellow soldiers, as seen in two scenes wherein *Mulan* commands her superior “*Shang, GO!*”, and her comrade “*Chien-Po, get the Emperor.*”. Furthermore, both the Emperor and Shang contradict this prediction as the Emperor uses the indirect phrase “*You don’t meet a girl like that ev’ry dynasty.*” to encourage Shang to pursue *Mulan* and Shang uses polite speech patterns in the sentence “*Honourable Fa Zhou, I—*”, which has the presence of empty adjectives (a female language feature), to address *Mulan*’s father.

Another prediction proposed by Pennebaker and Mehl that is contradicted in *Mulan* (1998) is that men tend to use more **harsh and dominant speech**, while women avoid it in favour of more polite speech. In the movie, this is contradicted by the Matchmaker as she uses harsh and dominant language to express anger and disappointment at *Mulan*’s display with the phrase “*You are a disgrace!*”.

The prediction that women are known to use more **expressive and emotional language** while men tend to be more calculative, and object focused is also contradicted by multiple characters in *Mulan* (1998). By societal expectations, men often do not express vivid or expressive emotions. However, in *Mulan* (1998), the male characters Fa Zhou, Mushu, and Shang all use expressive and emotional language, a trait known to be more feminine, when addressing or

talking about Mulan. In the sentence “*Please, PLEASE, help her.*”, Fa Zhou uses expressive language to show his distress and anxiety over his daughter’s matchmaking appointment. Additionally, Mushu uses descriptive and expressive language when pep-talking Mulan with phrases such as “*Look, you get porridge, and it’s happy to see you!*”, “*Oh, that’s my tough-looking warrior.*” and “*Now, c’mon, get out before you get all pruny and stuff.*”. Moreover, in the statement “*You are the craziest man I’ve ever met*”, Shang expresses shock and appreciation to Mulan when she saved his life.

The fifth prediction that Mulan contradicts is that women often **avoid the use of negative language**, opting for softer and more understanding language. Mulan contradicts this theory by using negative language to express her opinions and beliefs, saying words such as “*You shouldn’t have to go.*” to oppose her father’s decision and phrases such as “*No!*” when correcting or standing up to men.

4.3 Mulan’s speech evolution (Before, during, and after the army)

Gendered Language Features	Before Army	During Army	After Identity Reveal
Hedges	<i>"Ahh, notes, in case I forget something?"</i>	<i>"I don't think I can do this."</i>	<i>"Ummmm."</i>
	<i>"Could I just take that back... one moment?"</i>	<i>"Ahh, I, uh, uh, I uh—"</i>	
		<i>"Uh, I've got a name"</i>	

		<p><i>"Oh hi guys, I didn't know you were here. I was just washing, so now I'm clean and I'm gonna go. Bye, bye."</i></p>	
		<p><i>"Uhhh"</i></p>	
Rising Intonation		<p><i>"How about a girl who's got a brain? Who always speaks her mind?"</i></p>	<p><i>"Why is Mulan any different?"</i></p>
Intensifiers		<p><i>"I really don't want to take him anywhere."</i></p>	
Super-Polite Forms	<p><i>"Remember, the doctor said three cups of tea in the morning—and three at night."</i></p>	<p><i>"We could just close our eyes and swim around."</i></p>	<p><i>"Please believe me,"</i></p>
	<p><i>"Pardon me."</i></p>		<p><i>"Sir, the Emperor's in danger!"</i></p>
Hypercorrect Grammar	<p><i>"Quiet and demure... graceful... polite... delicate... refined... poised... punctual."</i></p>		
Indirect Request	<p><i>"Can you help me with my chores today?"</i></p>		<p><i>"You said you'd trust Ping. Why is Mulan any different?"</i></p>

	<i>"You shouldn't have to go."</i>		<i>"Would you like to stay for dinner?"</i>
	<i>"Could I just take that back... one moment?"</i>		
Use of Jokes		<i>"Hey, I'll hold him and you punch, heh, heh..."</i>	
Apologies	<i>"Stop! I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'm just nervous. I've never done this before."</i>	<i>"I'm sorry"</i>	
Direct Speech	<i>"Remember, the doctor said three cups of tea in the morning—and three at night."</i>	<i>"No we don't. We could just close our eyes and swim around."</i>	<i>"Please, you have to help me,"</i>
			<i>"Shang, GO!"</i>
Certainty	<i>"Don't worry father. I won't let you down"</i>	<i>"I never want to see a naked man again"</i>	<i>"I know they're here."</i>
Uncertainty	<i>"Fulfill your duties calmly and re...f-spectfully."</i>	<i>"I don't think I can do this."</i>	<i>"Ummmm."</i>

Table 3: Gendered language features in Mulan's speech before, during, and after the army

Table 3 shows the evolution of Mulan's speech over the course of her journey from daughter and woman to man and soldier in *Mulan* (1998). Mulan's speech patterns are identified according to Robin Lakoff and James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's theories on gendered language features. The findings show how Mulan's speech patterns change and adapt in

accordance with the environment and the gender she is trying to portray, evolving from a more feminine dominant speech style to a mixed masculine-feminine speech style.

Analysing these findings according to the framework by Mary Crawford (Crawford, 1995) revealed how the environment within which Mulan is in shaped her language use and gendered acts to perform the gender she is expected to portray. When comparing Mulan's use of gendered language features throughout the film from before the army, during the army, and after the army, there is a notable difference in the reduction of female language features and the addition of male language features. During her time before the army, Mulan is seen to use more female gendered language features such as hedges, super-polite forms, and indirect requests, revealing how the context wherein she is in a lower hierarchical and social position than those around her forced her to perform in a manner deemed socially acceptable for her status and position as a young woman. However, a shift begins to occur when Mulan enters the army disguised as a male and begins incorporating male gendered acts that she sees displayed by the other male soldiers around her to perform in a more masculine manner. As seen in Table 3, Mulan mimics behaviours such as making jokes, using direct speech, and using lesser indirect requests. That said, there is still the persistent presence of female gendered language features, such as hedges, super-polite forms, and apologies, which shows a conflict between her previous female gender and her current male gender performance. Finally, after Mulan's identity is revealed, her language shifts to include the presence of both male and female language features, mixing the two according to the context and the position of power that she is in. Her language begins to go against societal expectations of male and female gendered language and instead reflects her own identity as a woman in a respectable military position.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 The gendered language features identified in *Mulan* (1998)

Applying Robin Lakoff's and James Pennebaker and Matthew Mehl's theories on Gendered Language to identify the gendered language features present in *Mulan* (1998) revealed the presence of a number of language features used by the male and female characters, occasionally also used by both the genders alike.

The most common of the women's gendered language features was found to be **hedges** and was most often present in *Mulan*'s speech. In the movie, *Mulan* hedges whenever in situations where she was uncertain or unconfident in herself or her reply, which usually occurred in the presence of a woman in a higher position than herself or in the presence of a man. However, while *Mulan* was the main source for hedges in the movie, as seen in Table 1, Shang was the singular male character who had hedging in his speech. While a characteristically female language feature, Shang, a characteristically male character, hedges as he speaks nervously to *Mulan*'s father and previous war hero, Fa Zhou. In the setting of uncertainty and in a lower position than Fa Zhou, Shang is found conversing in a manner attributed to women who often find themselves in similar positions.

Another common feature in *Mulan* (1998) was **rising intonation** and, true to Robin Lakoff's theory on women's language, was used mostly by female characters (Table 1). Rising intonation is the increase in pitch at the end of a question or statement to show confusion, uncertainty or emotions such as excitement or frustration (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). It was used to show uncertainty, confusion and frustration when used by *Mulan* in the presence of a man, while it was used to show excitement over a man when used by Grandma Fa. Similar to Hedges, throughout the movie, Shang was the only male character to have this female

language feature present in his speech. In the same manner, the feature was used by Shang to express confusion and shock, revealing that surprising situations elicit Shang to use language features common to women.

Super-polite forms were another frequently used gendered language feature that was present in film. As defined by Cambridge University Press (n.d.), super-polite forms refer to the extremely or excessively polite form of speech and behaviour. Unlike the previously mentioned features, super-polite forms were only used by one character. Mulan used this feature throughout the movie regardless of the environmental or societal context, and it differentiated her speech from the soldiers' speech during her time in the army (Table 3).

Similarly, a feature present in the movie that was used only by Mulan is **indirect request**. Similar to super-polite forms as well, indirect requests were present throughout the different situational context in the movie (Table 3). However, in relation to the situational context, the tone with which this feature is used can either oppose or reaffirm gendered language stereotypes. In *Mulan* (1998), indirect requests were used to show how some female gendered language features are still present even when the female characters may not be acting in a distinctly 'feminine' or 'polite' manner.

In contrast, a women's language feature that was more often used by male characters is **empty adjectives** (Table 1). Empty adjectives refer to descriptive words that are emotionally based, vague or subjective (Universitas Nasional, n.d.). While usually associated with a women's tendency to be more emotional and descriptive, *Mulan* (1998) shows how both men and women alike are able to express emotions, such as affection and judgement, that may not align with typical gender norms. It shows how Fa Zhou shows affection to his daughter, while the Matchmaker passes harsh judgement on her applicants.

Another women's gendered language feature that was used by both genders were **apologies**. The feature is considered to be a characteristically female language feature as it represents a

woman's awareness of others' feelings and emotions as well as the understanding that a woman should be less assertive and more apologetic (Schumann & Ross, 2010). Though mostly used by Mulan in the movie, a male soldier, Chien Po, uses the language feature towards the end of the film, indicating that Mulan's influence could have spread to her soldier comrades.

For the gendered language feature **first-person pronouns**, the presence of this feature in the movie aligns with Pennebaker and Mehl's theory. Stating that women have a tendency to use personal pronouns to communicate in a more relational manner, while men in leadership tended to use personal pronouns to assert control and express power and authority (Pennebaker & Mehl, 2003). As seen in Table 2, the male characters used this feature to announce their position of power and authority over their subordinates, while the female characters used first person pronouns to express their emotions and feelings.

In the same way, the presence of the language feature **direct speech** showed the clear difference between men and women's language in Mulan (1998). For women, their speech patterns tend to have more indirect and polite forms, as seen with Mulan wanting to be heard and respected but still following societally acceptable women's language patterns (Table 3). However, with men, their speech patterns tend to have more directives and commands to convey messages and meaning, as seen with most of the male characters in positions of power commanding action from their subordinates.

Another feature proposed by Pennebaker and Mehl (2003) identified in Mulan (1998) is **emotional words and articles**. In the movie, the female characters, such as Mulan, the Matchmaker, and Fa Li, used words or phrases that convey more emotions, while the male characters, the Emperor, Fa Zhou, and Shang, often used articles in their speech with a focus on objects rather than emotions. This emphasised the difference in focus on women's speech and men's speech throughout the movie.

5.2 The relationship between gendered language and gender stereotypes

According to Leaper and Bigler (2004), there is a prominent relationship between gendered language and gender stereotypes that points to gendered language being a form of gender stereotyping. This link has also been proven through various other studies conducted by other gendered language researchers, such as Goodhew et al. (2022) and Lewis and Lupyan (2020), to show that the repeated reinforcing of certain gendered language features eventually leads to the reinforcement of certain gender stereotypes. Relating to the gendered language features present in *Mulan* (1998), a variety of gendered stereotypes were both reinforced and challenged through the use of male and female language features by both male and female characters. With each gendered language feature present in the movie, a gender stereotype of similar calibre is reinforced or challenged.

In *Mulan* (1998), the gendered language traits present that are linked to the stereotype that women are more submissive and less authoritative in comparison to men are hedges, tag questions, and rising intonation (Lakoff, 1975). This stereotype is reinforced in the movie by portraying women, specifically *Mulan*, as more hesitant and in need of approval or affirmation in the presence of other male characters or female characters in higher positions of authority. As such, the idea that women lack confidence and are therefore considered to be incompetent and should be taken less seriously compared to men is reiterated in several scenes throughout the movie. This can be seen when *Mulan* speaks in the presence of Chi Fu, a member of the Emperor's council, and is completely disregarded for the sole reason that she, as a woman, speaks in a man's presence. Additionally, Fa Ping, *Mulan*'s alter ego, is also dismissed when his reply to the soldiers in the song *Girl Worth Fighting For* ended with a raise pitch. This dismissal agrees with the study by Zuhaimi (2023) that highlighted the powerless depiction of female language even while trying to mimic male speech to appear powerful and respectable. Additionally, the presence of this stereotype supports the study conducted by Maity (2014)

which revealed how Disney's portrayal of female characters often highlights negative female stereotyping such as behaving or performing in a submissive, polite, and quiet manner, reaffirming and conforming to the societal expectations set on women. However, the findings from this study also contradicts the study done by Maity, as it reveals how *Mulan* (1998) also breaks the stereotype that these are language features attributed only to women to portray a woman's submission and lower social status to man. This is done by having Shang, an authoritative male in a high military position, use hedges, tag questions, and rising intonation in response to being nervous and uncertain. By making a high ranking, stereotypically male character use these distinctly female language features due to nerves, the stereotype that the features are linked to women's meekness is broken and instead links them to common and human emotions such as nervousness, shock, confusion, and frustration. It shows how all the instances wherein *Mulan* uses these language features are a result of emotional reactions rather than an innate need to appear submissive and polite before men. *Mulan* also challenges this stereotype by speaking assertively in situations where her gender and social status require her to appear polite, docile, and submissive, as seen in Table 2.

The next gender stereotype with its corresponding gendered language features proposed by Lakoff (1975) and Pennebaker and Mehl (2003) is the stereotype that women are more emotional, fixated on appearance, and more decorative than serious with the gendered language features intensifiers, empty adjectives, emotional language, and the use of first-person pronouns. The portrayal of this stereotype in *Mulan* (1998), while not as obvious as the previous stereotype, reinforced the idea that women are shallow, overly emotional beings who are only valued for their looks. The movie also shows how this perception is not only held by men but by women as well, seen in the song '*Honour to us all*' when the makeover ladies list all the features a woman is valued for, such as having a great hairdo, a tiny waist, and being good at bearing sons, most of which are considered empty adjectives. However, the movie also

challenges this stereotype as Fa Zhou uses intensifiers and empty adjectives to show exasperation and affection toward his daughter and Shang using emotionally charged phrases to communicate his shock toward Mulan. The male use of a women's language feature to convey emotions such as affection or shock shows once again how certain language features are not necessarily stereotypically male or female but are instead tied to emotion, which is a neurological process found in both genders, breaking the stereotype that men cannot be emotional or use emotional language and that women always overreact (Starkstein & Tranel, 2006). Additionally, Mulan came up with intricate battle plans and strategies that challenged the stereotype that women have the singular purpose of looking attractive and instead showed how they have the same purposes and value as a man. This showed that women have worth for attributes such as their intelligence, their willpower, and their loyalty.

The gendered language features apologies, super-polite forms, avoidance of swear words, and hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation in *Mulan* (1998) leads to the stereotype that women tend to abide by the societal appearances and niceties they are expected to have and are generally more accommodating to the emotions and social standings of others, and (Lakoff, 1975). This stereotype in the movie emphasises the notion that women are polite, gentle caretakers, riding on the idea that women are softer and kinder and thus more catered to motherly care. In the movie, this stereotype is portrayed when Mulan executes hypercorrect grammar while caring over her father's health. In this way, the findings from this study agree with the study conducted by Michael et al. (2012) wherein it was concluded that Disney films tend to portray men and women's language in a stereotypical manner, with women playing a more docile and encouraging role towards men or male characters. While this study agrees with Michael et al. as *Mulan* (1998) mainly reinforces the perception that women are better suited as caretakers as they are more emotionally understanding, the presence of one minor apology from the soldier Chien Po, the movie offsets the idea that only women are aware and

accommodating to the needs and feelings of others (Table 1). Chien Po's apology can be considered unnecessary in the context that carrying the Emperor will save his life, but he apologises regardless with the awareness that the Emperor might feel uncomfortable or disrespected by the action. This challenges the stereotype that men are ill suited for caring roles as even soldiers in dire situations can still be considerate to others.

There are two gender stereotypes that are linked with opposing gendered language features towards male stereotypes and female stereotypes in the movie. The male stereotype being that men are tougher and more commanding, with higher authority and dominance in leadership roles with the language features of more aggressive and direct speech (Pennebaker & Mehl, 2003). With the female stereotype being that women are more detail-oriented and creative, lacking a sense of leadership and analytical skills with the language features descriptive language and indirect speech (Lakoff, 1975). *Mulan* (1998) accentuates these two stereotypes by having the male characters, such as the Emperor, Shang, and the soldiers, speak in commanding and directing tones, conveying messages of aggression and brutality. While the female characters instead use flowery and more poetic phrases to convey their messages, without focus on high achieving goals. As such, the presence of this stereotype once again agrees with the study by Michael et al. (2012) revealing how the gendered language and gender stereotypes of males being more arrogant and dominant are reinforced in Disney media. Even so, this study once again also disagrees with Michael et al.'s study as *Mulan* challenges these gender stereotypes by conversing in a manner attributed to male speech, directly questioning her mother, directing her father on his medicinal treatment times, commanding and directing her fellow soldiers when she has come up with a strategic plan to win a battle, and even using aggressive phrases while trying to joke with Shang, another feature not associated with female speech (refer to Table 3). Additionally, Mushu also challenges the stereotype of only women using descriptive language as he elaborately describes his characteristics as well as certain

scenes around him, such as the face created in the porridge he feeds Mulan. In this way, these stereotypes are broken down to show that women can lead and direct, while men can also be descriptive in speech without a specific task to be achieved in mind.

5.3 How language was used to represent and shape Mulan's different genders and social identities

According to Mary Crawford's theory on Gender and Language (Crawford, 1995), gender is not innate, rather it is something that is learnt and constructed through societal expectations, reflecting hierarchical and power dynamics. Crawford argues that gender is performed, consciously or subconsciously, based on feminine or masculine gendered acts, such as language, that are reinforced through their repeated use in society. This framework, when applied to the scenes and genders portrayed in *Mulan* (1998), reveals how gender is indeed a social construct that is reinforced or challenged by language use, and how it can be broken down and rebuilt according to the social position and power of the speaker.

5.3.1 Mulan as a woman and daughter

In the beginning of the movie, Mulan's two main identities are that of a woman and a daughter/granddaughter. As such, Mulan uses language to "perform" these identities in a manner that aligns with the societal expectation on what a woman should speak and act like, such as being "quiet, graceful, and polite", even though it clashes with her own individual identity and personality. This can be seen when Mulan uses hyper correct grammar when conversing with her father and to the Matchmaker to appear more refined. She also conforms to the societal and hierarchical expectations set on young women, especially by the Matchmaker, to be a 'perfect bride' which expects women to be seen and rarely heard, poised and willing to submit to men, specifically their fathers and their husbands. These expectations clash significantly with Mulan's robust and intelligent personality; however, she submits to

them and attempts to appear in a more acceptable manner to uphold the respect of her family. This is displayed as Mulan still abides by society's expectation for women to be submissive and polite even in displays of emotional distress, such as when Mulan speaks indirectly to the Matchmaker and her father while in a state of panic and frustration. Based on Crawford's theory, these performances of gendered language are acts that are not particularly essential but are rather enforced through gendered norms and stereotypes placed on women. This use of gendered language can sometimes occur subconsciously, not due to its innate nature, but rather through the constant reinforcement of gendered language from a young age that makes it hard to break away from. This then corresponds with another aspect of Mary Crawford's theory whereby language is not neutral. Instead, it constantly shapes and constructs gender norms and expectations, acting as a tool that either reinforces or breaks down power structures and inequalities in society. In Mulan (1998), this is demonstrated by Mulan using female gendered language features, such as excessive apologising and emotional language, to present herself in a more socially accepted version of a woman, which ultimately reproduces the stereotypes on women's speech and behaviour. In turn this continually reinforces how she is expected to act in the presence of men or women of higher authority, even if it goes against her naturally chaotic and independent individual identity.

That said, while still attempting to perform her gender according to her roles as a woman and daughter, Mulan also uses language to resist the oppressive gender norms. This can be seen through Mulan using assertive and direct language in response to her parents, such as replying to her mother with "*What?*", when looked upon disapprovingly, or when she replied to her father with "*You shouldn't have to go*" when reacting to his stubborn insistence to join the army in his old age. Mulan speaks up to share her opinions and beliefs while knowing that her social status would lead to her idea being dismissed as a woman is often viewed as less competent than a man. In this way, Mulan uses language to resist the stereotypical image of submissive

women and submissive language as a female language trait. Moreover, she uses language to represent her gender as a woman as well as her personal identity and character, displaying her stubborn, playful, and charismatic personality that is not stereotypically accepted in females.

5.3.2 Mulan as a man and soldier

Upon cutting off her hair and joining the army under the disguise of being the son of Fa Zhou, Mulan sheds her identity as a woman and adopts that of a man and soldier. In doing so, Mulan begins to “perform” and construct these identities in a manner that aligns with her understanding of what a societally accepted male in a subordinate position is like. More specifically, she mainly performs her masculine identities linguistically as, other than cutting her hair, Mulan does not alter her physical features or mannerisms as drastically as she does when she changes her vocal pitch and language use. She begins to adopt more masculine language features that she sees repeated by the other soldiers such as making jokes, speaking more directly and with more certainty, and not using hypercorrect grammar in her speech. Based on the reactions and responses of those around her, Mulan gradually begins to construct her identity as a socially acceptable man and soldier through her language and behaviour. Relating to Crawford’s theory, it aligns with her view that gender is not an instinctive trait but is instead learnt, shaped, and constructed through the use of language in different contexts. She discovers the liberty she, as a man and soldier, has to use language to share her ideas and personality without being overlooked, dismissed or reprimanded due to her gender. In the movie, this can be seen when she jokes with Shang by using aggressive language to comfort him, saying “*Hey, I’ll hold him and you punch, heh, heh...*”. However, while this shows that gender is fluid and influenced by social context, Mulan’s mimicking of male speech also reinforces the gendered language norms that males are represented with aggressive and commanding language. Thus, breaking the stereotype of how language is used to represent

women while reinforcing the stereotype of how language is used to represent men. That said, Mulan's previous identity as a woman can still be seen being performed with her language along with her identity as a man. Seen in her continued use of hedges, rising intonation, superpolite forms and apologies. This aligns with another aspect of Crawford's theory. It reveals how gendered language is culturally projected and ingrained into women from a young age, making it harder to break away from the expectations of typical women's speech. However, it can also be interpreted that Mulan's new freedom of language representation, gained from her identity as a man, mixed with her familiarity with emotional engagement and sympathy, stemming from her identity as a woman, allowed for her to react to situations based on the context and power structure rather than based on gender and societal norms. This can be seen when Mulan uses the female language feature apologies to relay her condolences to Shang for his loss, showing respect and empathy for her military officer, while confidently speaking in the presence of a man in a high military position.

5.3.3 Mulan as a woman and soldier

In the final segment of the movie, Mulan's two previous sets of identities merge to result with her identities of a woman and a soldier. Once this integration occurs, Mulan uses language to perform her identity with a mix of female gendered language features and male gendered language features. She does this not to conform to the stereotypes still attached to those male and female gendered language features, but to reveal and represent her personality according to the context and social hierarchies. This can be seen in these sentences "*Why else would I come back? You said you'd trust Ping. Why is Mulan any different?*", wherein Mulan uses a mix of questions, rising intonation, and indirect speech when directly confronting Shang, mixing female and male language features in her speech. Mulan uses specific female language traits to convey emotional distress, confusion, empathy, and frustration instead of reverting to

her previous gender's speech patterns. This allows her to command respect and attention in a way that is appropriate to the situation wherein she is a subordinate speaking to a high-ranking military officer. Additionally, in the scene wherein Mulan directly commands Shang saying "*Shang, GO!*", Mulan does not use this male language feature in the stereotypical manner to show dominance and authority. Instead she uses the command to guide and lead Shang according to her plan to save the Emperor and get everyone to safety. As stated by Crawford, this shows how language does not need to be categorised to just female and male speech, but can be used to shape and represent a new identity that is neither completely traditionally masculine or feminine. Moreover, these scenes challenge the gender norms and stereotypes stating that women are emotional and incompetent by showing that women can use emotions and empathy and, yet still be commanding and strategic. Once again confirming that language traits are fluid and adaptable based on context. Mulan uses language to reveal her new hybrid identity, both asserting herself as a woman deserving of authority and respect and redefining the idea that leadership is tied to masculinity. In this way, Mulan's non-binary speech becomes a model for successful leadership that isn't confined to gender norms.

5.4 How the representation of gendered language and gender stereotypes can shape the gender identities of the audience of *Mulan* (1998).

According to Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity (2006), gender is not something that we are born with, but is instead acts that we repeatedly do through performance, such as gestures, behaviour, and language. Butler theorised that gender is constructed and not inherent, yet it feels natural and almost instinctive due to the repeated performance of gender according to society's expectations on masculinity and femininity. The stereotypical performance of gender is often reinforced through media representation which has a huge influence on the

understanding of gendered language as well as the construction and shaping of an individual's gender identity and behaviour (Kågesten et al., 2016; Holtzman & Sharpe, 2014).

In *Mulan* (1998), Mulan uses language to perform the different genders she adopts throughout the movie. She performs her genders based on her understanding of the two genders as well as how she sees gender being performed by those around her. As a woman, she learns her gender and her expected performance through her mother, grandmother, and the Matchmaker, all who instruct her to portray herself in a polite, refined, and indirect manner. As a man in the army, she learns how to perform her gender from the other male soldiers around her, mimicking their direct, aggressive, and playful speech styles. This shows how gender is, in fact, adaptable and it highlights the performative aspect of gender. It also shows how gender is learnt through young boys and girls watching the men and women around them performing gender in the socially accepted and stereotypical manner, which they then adopt and continue to pass down through the generations. As such, when viewers watch *Mulan* (1998), they are exposed to the societal depiction of gendered language which can contribute to their understanding and development of their gender identities. In *Mulan* (1998), there are many language features used by the male and female characters that reinforces the stereotypes around masculine and feminine language. Through the repeated use of these language features, viewers may begin to associate the language traits to specific genders, such as polite and apologetic language being associated with women, while authoritative and commanding language are associated with men. Moreover, they may also attribute societal positions in relation to gendered language, such as individuals in power must speak “like a man” or in “manly” tones to get respect and the attention of others, while being emotional or uncertain shows that you are “like a girl” or “weak”. This can actively shape the viewers gender identities as they consume representation of femininity and masculinity as depicted in the media. In turn, this can shape the audience's

own execution of gender, reproducing gender performed through language as seen in the media and therefore reinforcing language and gender stereotypes.

With that in mind, the challenging and breaking down of language and gender stereotypes in *Mulan* (1998) also allows for viewers to understand that gender is not fixed and the language used to perform gender can be used by both the genders to represent individual identity and social standings rather than just a gender identity. *Mulan* introduces viewers to a hybrid identity, using a combination of both masculine and feminine coded language to perform her gender based on social context. Similarly, the study by Kusen et al. (2024) applied Judith Butler's theory on Gender Performativity to reveal the challenging and defiance *Mulan* shows in *Mulan* (2020) towards gender roles and stereotypes, breaking the cycle of generational gendered norms being passed to women while still revealing her identity. Kusen et al.'s study further supports the idea that the construction of gender is fluid and that qualities related to leadership roles, such as strength and wisdom, are not instinctively masculine as qualities related to nurturing roles, such as kindness and empathy, as not innately female. This was further supported as mixed or hybrid speech was introduced not only by *Mulan*, but also by other male characters such as Fa Zhou, Shang, the soldiers, and Mushu using female language features to be polite, considerate, and emotional. By having male characters in high social positions use feminine language to express themselves, it actively removes the stigma around men being feminine if they are emotional or weak. This allows for the reconstruction of gender identity in the audience as it allows for them to understand that being emotional or expressive is not a feminine trait but a human trait, and that they do not make a person less respectable or intelligent. With both *Mulan* and the male characters interchanging male and female language traits in their speech, the audience is forced to question the fixed idea of gender and therefore gender identity and challenge the norms set on gender by society. In doing so, the fixed

perception of their gender identity can be broken down and reconstructed to allow for performing their identity that is not confined by gender.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn. First is that language use should be based on context rather than confined to gender binaries. Mulan's use of stereotypical male or masculine language to reflect her position as a soldier, as well as Shang and the soldiers' use of female or feminine language to reflect their emotions in certain situations opposed the idea that gendered language is directly related to sex. The next conclusion drawn from this study is that gender is not fixed or innate but fluid and adaptable. The changes in Mulan's gender performance from a female gender performance, using language features that were timid and submissive, to a male gender performance, using language features that were assertive and dominant, agrees with Butler's theory of gender performativity. Another conclusion that can be drawn is that language can be used to reflect and construct gender identity. Mulan's use of language to represent her different identities illustrates how language was used in both reflecting gender roles as well as reproducing and performing them, such as Mulan reflecting the language used by the women in her life when she was performing her female identity and Mulan reflecting the language used by the men around her when performing her male identity. This agrees with Crawford's theory that gender is intimately tied to and reproduced through language and communication. It can also be concluded that Mulan (1998) reinforced and challenged various gendered stereotypes through its dialogue. In the beginning of the movie, many stereotypes, especially negative ones surrounding women, were reinforced through the speech of women and men alike, however, as the movie progressed, Mulan as well as the other male characters challenged these stereotypes by using language in a manner that opposed gender norms. Instead of conforming

to gendered expectations, the characters in *Mulan* (1998) proved that traits such as kindness, bravery, and respect are not linked to gender. Lastly, it can be concluded that an audience's understanding and perception of gender and gender identity can be shaped and constructed by the representation of gendered language in the media. During the construction process of one's gender identity, the exposure and consumption of gender norms and language could lead to the internalisation of concepts related to femininity and masculinity. This can then impact the shaping and reproduction of gender identity and performance of the audience.

The limitations this study faced are as follows. The first limitation faced is the controlled nature of the dialogue in *Mulan* (1998) which results in an unnatural or inaccurate representation of gendered language. As the conversations and interactions in the movie are not spontaneous or organic, the language used may not accurately reflect daily gender performance and speech patterns. Moreover, as the dialogue is scripted and edited by the movie's creators, certain language features and gender stereotypes may be exaggerated to make a clearer distinction between the expectations set on men and women, which can hinder the authenticity of the findings and analysis. Additionally, as *Mulan* (1998) is a Disney film catered to a younger audience, certain language features, such as the men's language feature of using swear words, may not be demonstrated due to the restriction of keeping the movie appropriate for kids. This adds to the limitation of an unauthentic and scripted dialogue that this study faced. The second limitation this study faced was the outdated gender norms of a movie set in 1998. Since the release of *Mulan* in 1998, the social expectations and norms have significantly evolved and developed. Though many negative stereotypes still exist and surround both men and women, this limitation may cause some of the findings to be outdated or irrelevant to the present society. The last limitation faced is the lack of data collected from the audience of *Mulan* (1998). Due to the lack of human samples in this study, the perception and impact of gender and language on the audience remains purely theoretical as the actual audiences'

reactions and understanding of the movie's representation of gendered language and gender norms have not been collected or analysed.

The following are the recommendations for future researchers. Firstly, as this study lacked data on the audiences' interpretation of *Mulan* (1998), the first recommendation would be to conduct studies with the audience with surveys or interviews to collect data on how the movie contributes to their understanding and perception of gender norms and stereotypes. It would also be recommended to conduct these studies with audiences of different genders and age groups to analyse how the portrayals of gender in the media may affect how the younger and older audiences may construct and reconstruct their gender identities. Secondly, future researchers could perform an extensive study on the male characters present in *Mulan* to reveal how male gender stereotypes and gender roles are constructed and reinforced with language. This focus could reveal how the portrayal of male characters contributes to the reproduction of negative male stereotypes and gender norms as well as the development of male gender identities. The last recommendation would be to analyse the pitch, tone, intonation, and pauses in the delivery of the dialogue instead of just focusing on the script's grammar, word choice, speech patterns, and sentence structure. Broadening the scope of the findings would allow for a deeper analysis of how gender is portrayed in the media as well as how women and men are expected to behave even down to the detailed scale of vocal tones, volume, and pitch. These recommendations would be important for future researchers when analysing *Mulan* and media representations of gender as it would reveal findings that fill in gaps in current studies related to this field as well as provide important data to gender and media studies.

References

- Al-Yasin, N., & Rabab'ah, G. (2021). Female Disney characters' linguistic features in the 1990s. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures*, 13(1), 121–142.
<https://journals.yu.edu.jo/jjml/Issues/vol13no12021/Nom8.pdf>
- Begum, S. (2022). He Said, She Said: A Critical Content Analysis of Sexist language used in Disney's The Little Mermaid (1989) and Mulan (1998). *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 23(1), 208-230. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol23/iss1/18/>
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Blackstone, A. M. (2003). Gender roles and society. In J. R. Miller, R. M. Lerner, & L. B. Schiamberg (Eds.), *Human ecology: An encyclopedia of children, families, communities, and environments* (pp. 335–338). ABC-CLIO.
- Cabaluna, L. C. L., Cagande, J. M. M., Vallesteros, P. P. A. C., & Diones, L. L. (2022). Mulan 1998 and 2020: A Structural Analysis of Difference. *International Journal of Modern Developments in Engineering and Science*, 1(11), 41-47. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5746693>
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). *Assertive*. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved May 2, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/assertive>
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). *Hypercorrect*. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved May 2, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hypercorrect>

Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). *Intonation*. In *English Grammar Today*. Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved May 2, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/intonation>

Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). *Super-polite*. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved May 2, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/super-polite>

Crawford, M., & Marecek, J. (1989). Psychology reconstructs the female: 1968–1988. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 13(2), 147–165. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1989.tb00993.x>

Crawford, M. (1995). *Talking difference: On gender and language*. SAGE Publications.

Crawford, M., & Popp, D. (2003). Sexual double standards: A review and methodological critique of two decades of research. *Journal of Sex Research*, 40(1), 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490309552163>

Dixon, W. W., & Foster, G. A. (2018). *A short history of film*. Rutgers University Press.

Evans, J. L. (2010). *Genderqueer identity and self-perception*. Alliant International University, San Francisco Bay.

Fahiratunnisa, A. (2023). *The Impact Of Gender Stereotypes On The Main Character's*

Psychological Development In The Disney Movie Mulan (1998) (Doctoral Dissertation, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung).

Festl, Y. (2022). “Be a Man” Gender and Body in Disney’s *Mulan* (1998). In *On Disney: Deconstructing Images, Tropes and Narratives* (pp. 51-66). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Frcpc, L. C. M. M. (n.d.). *Gender Identity: Definitions, Development of Gender Identity – Usual Patterns, Development of Gender Identity - Differences in sex development (DSD)*. <https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/917990-overview?form=fpf>

Fregolent, F. (2024). Gender Stereotypes Behind the Silver Screen: Investigating Gender Disparities in Cinematic Dialogues through the lens of Natural Language Processing.

Gauntlett, D. (2008). *Media, gender and identity: An introduction*. Routledge.

Goodhew, S. C., Reynolds, K., Edwards, M., & Kidd, E. (2022). The content of gender stereotypes embedded in language use. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 41(2), 219-231. [https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X211033930:contentReference\[oaicite:59\]{index=59}](https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X211033930:contentReference[oaicite:59]{index=59})

Hilton, J. L., & Von Hippel, W. (1996). Stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47(1), 237–271. [https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.47.1.237:contentReference\[oaicite:62\]{index=62}](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.47.1.237:contentReference[oaicite:62]{index=62})

Holtzman, L., & Sharpe, L. (2014). *Media messages: What film, television, and popular music teach us about race, class, gender, and sexual orientation*. Routledge.

Kågesten, A., Gibbs, S., Blum, R. W., Moreau, C., Chandra-Mouli, V., Herbert, A., & Amin, A. (2016). Understanding factors that shape gender attitudes in early adolescence globally: A mixed-methods systematic review. *PloS one*, 11(6), e0157805.
[https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157805:contentReference\[oaicite:68\]{index=68}](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157805:contentReference[oaicite:68]{index=68})
}

Karma, A., & Bhad, A. (2023). Disney Setting and Changing Gender Stereotypes. *Global Media Journal*, 21(66), 1-28.

Kusen, F. J., Noah, A., Setiawan, S. F., & Silaen, G. L. (2024). Challenging Gender Binaries in A ‘Journey to Honor’: A Feminist Critique of Performativity in Mulan (2020) Movie. *Boanerges: Makarios Education Journal*, 2(1), 74-86.

Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. Harper & Row.

Lailawati, R., Hutahaeen, S., Islami, Q., & Nursafira, M. S. (2020). The camouflage of “tough woman”: The resistance of female character against patriarchal ideology in Mulan. *Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies*, 2(3), 72-76.

Leaper, C., & Bigler, R. S. (2004). Gendered language and sexist thought. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 69(1), 128-142.

- Leaper, C., & Farkas, T. (2014). The socialization of gender during childhood and adolescence. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization. Theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 541–566). Guilford Publications.
- Letaief, R. (2015). Stereotypes in Disney's classics: A reflection and shaping of American culture. *University of Manouba*.
- Lewis, M., & Lupyan, G. (2020). Gender stereotypes are reflected in the distributional structure of 25 languages. *Nature human behaviour*, 4(10), 1021-1028. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0918-6>
- Limbach, G. (2013). 'You the man, well, sorta': Gender binaries and liminality in Mulan. *Diversity in Disney films: Critical essays on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability*, 115-128
- Manaworapong, M. P., & Bowen, N. (2021). *Heteronormativity In Children's Discourse: Gender Binaries And Sexism In Mulan* (Doctoral Dissertation, Thammasat University).
- Manaworapong, P., & Bowen, N. E. J. A. (2022). Language, gender, and patriarchy in Mulan: A diachronic analysis of a Disney Princess movie. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01089-9>
- Maity, N. (2014). Damsels in distress: A textual analysis of gender roles in Disney princess films. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(10), 28-31.

Michael, E., Bakar, A. R. A., Ibrahim, I. M., Veerappan, G., Noor, N. M., Heng, L. E., ... & Yann, N. K. (2012). A comparative study of gender roles in animated films. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 12(5), 72-78.

Nalabandian, T., & Ireland, M. E. (2022). Linguistic gender congruity differentially correlates with film and novel ratings by critics and audiences. *Plos one*, 17(4), e0248402.

Oxford Dictionary, (n.d.), Feminine. *Oxford Languages*.

Oxford Dictionary, (n.d.), Masculine. *Oxford Languages*.

Oxford Dictionary, (n.d.), Media. *Oxford Languages*.

Oxford Dictionary, (n.d.), Tag Questions. *Oxford Languages*.

Pennebaker, J. W., & Mehl, M. R. (2003). The psychology of word use in depression forums And groups. *Psychological Science*, 14(3), 187-193.

Qingli, X., & Ying, S. (2020). Female Gender Identity in the Adaptation of Disney Live-action Film Mulan. *English Language, Literature & Culture*, 5(3), 112.

Ryle, R. (2011). How do we learn gender? In *Questioning Gender*, p. 119. SAGE Publications.

Salih, S. (2007). On Judith Butler and performativity. *Sexualities and communication in*

Everyday life: A reader, 55-68.

Schumann, K., & Ross, M. (2010). Why women apologize more than men: Gender differences in thresholds for perceiving offensive behavior. *Psychological Science*, 21(11), 1533-1537. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610384150>

Stamou, A. G. (2014). A literature review on the mediation of stereotypes through language in children's television: Exploring language awareness in critical media literacy. *Linguistics and Education*, 28, 113–123.

Starkstein, S. E., & Tranel, D. (2006). Neurological and psychiatric aspects of emotion. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (2nd ed., Vol. 9, pp. 81–84). Elsevier. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780444520029000048>

Streiff, M., & Dundes, L. (2017). Frozen in time: How Disney gender-stereotypes its most powerful princess. *Social Sciences*, 6(2), 38.

Strasburger, V. C., Wilson, B. J., & Jordan, A. B. (2009). *Children, adolescents, and the media*. Sage.

Strebel, A., Crawford, M., et al. (2006). Social constructions of gender roles, gender-based violence, and HIV/AIDS in two communities of the Western Cape, South Africa. *Journal of the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS*, 3(3), 516–528.

Sundqvist, K. (2005). Gender specific language in animated movies.

Teachers, what is gendered language? (n.d.). British Council.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/what-is-gendered-language>

Towbin, M. A., Haddock, S. A., Zimmerman, T. S., Lund, L. K., & Tanner, L. R. (2004).

Images of gender, race, age, and sexual orientation in disney feature-length animated films. *Journal of feminist family therapy*, 15(4), 19-44.

Ton, J. T. (2018). *Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity* (Bachelor's thesis).

United Nations. (n.d.). *Gender Stereotyping*. OHCHR.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/gender-stereotyping>

Universitas Nasional. (n.d.). *BAB II: Kajian Pustaka*.

<http://repository.unas.ac.id/5172/3/bab%202.pdf>

Vlasyan, G. R. (2018). Linguistic Hedging In The Light Of Politeness Theory. *the European*

Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences, 685–690.

<https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2018.04.02.98>

Wang, Z. (2021, December). From Mulan (1998) to Mulan (2020): Disney conventions,

cross-cultural feminist intervention, and a compromised progress. In *Arts* (Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 5). MDPI.

- Wood, J. T. (1994). Gendered media: The influence of media on views of gender. *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture*, 9, 231-244.
- Wilson, L. A. (2015). Gender performativity and objectification.
- Wulandari, D. F., & Fahiratunnisa, A. (2024). Gender Stereotypes and Its Psychological Impact Portrayed In Mulan 1998 Movie. *Frasa*, 5(2), 75-84.
- Yule, G. (2020). *The study of language* (8th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Zuhaimi, N. (2023). Discourse and identity: Unveiling the identity of Ping Fa Zhou in the movie Mulan. *ARTe: Art & Expression*, March 2023, 62-65.

Appendices

Lakoff's Predictions	Contradictions in Mulan	Examples from Mulan
Women's language tends to contain more hedges and qualifiers in speech to express uncertainty.	Mulan speaks with certainty when asserting herself, dropping hedges and qualifiers from her speech.	Mulan: <i>"Don't worry father. I won't let you down."</i>
Women's language tends to contain more tag questions to seek confirmation from listeners.	Mulan forgoes tag questions when standing up for her beliefs and opinions, not trying to seek validation from her audience. Shang adds a tag question to his sentence expressing uncertainty, which is unusual for not only a male, but a male like him in a position of authority in the military.	Mulan: <i>"Don't worry, father. I won't let you down."</i>
		Mulan: <i>"You shouldn't have to go!"</i>
		Shang: <i>"Ah but well, actually it's your helmet, isn't it?"</i>
Women's language tends to contain sentences that contain rising intonation at the end of a sentence that indicates a lack of confidence when speaking.	Mulan speaks with an exclamatory statement instead of a question when standing up for herself or when challenging a man.	Mulan: <i>"So you'll die for honour!"</i>
Women tend to avoid direct commands or requests in favour of more polite, indirect phrases.	Mulan uses direct commands when in battle to lead her fellow soldiers.	Mulan: <i>"Shang, GO!"</i>
		Mulan: <i>"Chien-Po, get the Emperor."</i>

<p>Women's speech patterns and language structure tend to contain hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation.</p>	<p>Grandma Fa and Mulan both display imperfect grammar and pronunciation. Grandma Fa choosing to speak more casually, and Mulan displaying confusion.</p>	<p>Grandma Fa: <i>"How lucky can they be? They're dead!"</i></p>
		<p>Mulan: <i>"Reflect before you snack—act!"</i></p>
<p>Women tend to prefer using phrases of speech that are indirect to appear more polite and less authoritative.</p>	<p>Mulan uses direct speech patterns when expressing concern or discomfort, disregarding indirect or more polite speech patterns.</p>	<p>Mulan: <i>"Remember, the doctor said three cups of tea in the morning—and three at night."</i></p>
		<p>Mulan: <i>"No, we don't. We could just close our eyes and swim around."</i></p>
<p>Women tend to avoid making jokes due to uncertainty of social expectations.</p>	<p>Mulan jokes around with Shang when he was distressed in attempts to comfort him.</p>	<p>Mulan: <i>"Hey, I'll hold him, and you punch, heh, heh..."</i></p>
<p>Women are characterised to use more expressive and emotional language compared to men.</p>	<p>Men don't often express emotion which is more of a female trait, but Shang expresses shock and appreciation to Mulan when she saved his life.</p>	<p>Shang: <i>"You are the craziest man I've ever met"</i></p>
<p>Women's language tends to contain more apologies that are spoken even when unnecessary.</p>	<p>Though characterised as a female speech pattern, Chien-Po apologises unnecessarily while trying to protect the Emperor.</p>	<p>Chien-Po: <i>"Sorry, your Majesty"</i></p>

Women tend to use more super-polite forms during speech.	Grandma Fa forgoes super-polite forms in her distress, opting to declare the statement instead.	Grandma Fa: " <i>Mulan is gone!</i> "
---	---	---------------------------------------

Table 4: Contradictions to Lakoff's theory in Mulan (1988)

Pennebaker and Mehl's Predictions	Contradictions in Mulan	Examples from Mulan
Women tend to use more tentative language to facilitate conversation that is more collaborative and uncertain.	Mulan does not speak tentatively but with certainty when expressing her concern to her father.	Mulan: " <i>You shouldn't have to go.</i> "
Women tend to avoid assertive language in favour of more polite speech.	Mulan speaks in an assertive manner when encouraging her father to trust in her.	Mulan: " <i>Don't worry, Father. I won't let you down.</i> "
Women are seen to avoid direct confrontation and are seen to be more timid.	Mulan directly confronts her mother when she displays disappointment in Mulan's appearance and tardiness.	Mulan: " <i>What?</i> "
Men tend to use more harsh and dominant speech , while women avoid it in favour of more polite speech.	The matchmaker uses harsh and dominant language to express anger and disappointment at Mulan's display.	Matchmaker: " <i>Speaking without permission.</i> "
		Matchmaker: " <i>You are a disgrace!</i> "
Men tend to joke around more while women tend to avoid	Grandma Fa actively jokes around in attempts to lighten	Grandma Fa: " <i>How lucky can they be? They're dead!</i> "

making jokes due to fear of social expectations.	the mood and encourage casual conversation.	Grandma Fa: <i>"I think it's going well, don't you?"</i>
Women are known to use more expressive and emotional language while men tend to be more calculative, and object focused.	Fa Zhou, Mushu, and Shang use expressive and emotional language when addressing or talking about Mulan, a trait known to be more feminine.	Fa Zhou: <i>"Please, PLEASE, help her."</i>
		Mushu: <i>"Look, you get porridge, and it's happy to see you!"</i>
		Mushu: <i>"Oh, that's my tough-looking warrior."</i>
		Mushu: <i>"Now, c'mon, get out before you get all pruny and stuff."</i>
		Shang: <i>"You are the craziest man I've ever met"</i>
Women often avoid the use of negative language .	Mulan uses negative language to express her opinions and beliefs.	Mulan: <i>"No!"</i>
		Mulan: <i>"You shouldn't have to go."</i>
Women tend to use more indirect and polite speech patterns , while men tend to use more direct speech patterns.	Mulan uses direct commands when trying to convey important messages, while the Emperor uses indirect phrases to encourage Shang to pursue Mulan. Shang also uses polite speech patterns, with the presence of	Mulan: <i>"Keep your eyes open."</i>
		Mulan: <i>"Chien-Po, get the Emperor."</i>
		Mulan: <i>"Shang, GO!"</i>

	empty adjectives (a female language feature) when addressing Mulan's father.	Mulan: <i>"The Emperor's in danger!"</i>
		Emperor: <i>"You don't meet a girl like that ev'ry dynasty."</i>
		Shang: <i>"Honourable Fa Zhou, I—"</i>
Women's language tends to contain more tag questions to seek confirmation from listeners, while men's language often does not display uncertainty in this manner.	Shang adds a tag question to his sentence expressing uncertainty, which is not common for a man of high military esteem as him.	Shang: <i>"Ah but well, actually it's your helmet, isn't it?"</i>
Women's language tends to contain more hedges and qualifiers in speech to express uncertainty, while men's language does not often present this feature.	Mulan speaks with certainty without any hedges or qualifiers when expressing her discomfort and offering a solution to her male friends. While Shang displays hedges in his speech, showing his uncertainty when speaking to Mulan and her father.	Mulan: <i>"We could just close our eyes and swim around."</i>
		Shang: <i>"Uh...Uh...You forgot your helmet. Ah but well, actually it's your helmet, isn't it? I mean..."</i>
Women's language often contains uncertain words or phrases while men's language displays certainty and assertiveness.	Mulan is certain in her belief and conveys her beliefs to the soldiers in a confident, certain manner.	Mulan: <i>"I know they're here"</i>

Table 5: Contradictions to Pennebaker and Mehl's theory in Mulan (1998)