

# CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S LANGUAGE IN *KIM JIYOUNG: BORN 1982* BY CHO NAMJOO

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# INTRODUCTION

- Language and gender study in linguistics sparked feminist revolution in late 1960s to early 1970s.
- Lakoff, 1973: Women have faced two forms of language discrimination.
- Phenomenal release of *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82년생 김지영) by Cho Namjoo in 2016.
- To spread awareness about women's language.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Holmes (p. 302), citing Lakoff, presented ten variations of women's language from the study *Language and Woman's Place*, including the use of empty adjectives, precise color terms, hedging, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, question tags, emphatic stress, and rising intonation on declaratives. Jeon (2004) presented the same finding of some of the women's language characteristics in Korean language supporting Lakoff's theory, which are closely related to the use of honorific systems in the Korean language and their culture.

According to Cixous (as cited in Yuniarti, 2015), women's language in literature is characterized by the use of figures of speech such as hyperbole, figurative language, repetitions, and rhetorical questions. She also stated that writing is crucial for women as it serves as a medium to emphasize their existence and express their importance to society.

# METHOD

- A qualitative descriptive research to investigate the variations of women's language in the novel *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82년생 김지영) by Cho Namjoo.
- The data studied are words, phrases, and sentences that characterize women's language appearing in the novel.
- Observing and note-taking technique.

# FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In Cho Namjoo's *Kim Jiyoung: Born 1982* (82년생 김지영) was found 377 data that consist of 52 data of EA, 2 data of PCT, 53 data of H, 116 data of I, 21 data of SPF, 14 data of ASW, 13 data of QT, 43 data of ES, dan 64 data of RID. *Intensifier* is the most common variation yet *hypercorrect grammar* is not found in the novel.

- *Intensifier* / Data 173.01  
“... 완전 어렵고, 완전 재밌어. 이것 좀 봐. 이게 진짜 서울 간선버스 번호 시스템이거든? ... 너무 재밌지 않아?”

Translations: “ ... It's **really difficult and really fun**. Look at this. This is **the real** Seoul City Public Bus numbering system. ... Isn't this so interesting?” (Cho, 2020)

In Chapter 2016년, which is narrated from Kim's psychiatrist's perspective, his wife tells him why she enjoy doing math from their child's book. The wife uses three

different intensifiers: 완전, 진짜, and 너무, all of which emphasize the meaning of the respective objects she is pointing out.

- *Rising Intonation on Declaratives* / Data 91.03  
“저 선배한테 힘 돼 주려고 나오는 게 아니거든요? ....”

Translations: “**I’m not here to support you? ....**” (Cho, 2020)

In Cha Seungyeon's character, she is confronted by a senior male member of the hiking club who underestimated her by assuming she wants to be treated the same as the other boys, without any special treatment. She raises her voice to explain that her reason for joining the club is not to be a supporter like how he deemed true.

# FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- *Hedge* / Data 45.02

“급식 먹는 순서를 바꿔야 한다고 생각합니다.”

Translations: “**I think** that we should change the order in which we eat lunch.” (Cho, 2020)

This statement is made by Yuna, one of Kim's classmates. Yuna suggested to the teacher that they should change the lunch order because the girls are having difficulty eating within the short amount of time given to them, as the boys are prioritized to eat first. However, Yuna chooses to use the word “생각하다” (to think) as she doesn't want to cause a fuss with her request, despite her insistence on the need for the change.

- *Empty Adjectives* / Data 17.06

순간 김지영 씨의 두 볼에 사르르 홍조가 돌더니 표정이 부드러워지고 눈빛은 따뜻해졌다.

Translations: At this, Jiyoung's expression softened, **her cheeks flushed a gentle pink, and a warm smile appeared in her eyes.** (Cho, 2020)

Writer Cho illustrates the rapid changes in Kim's character by employing feminine expressions such as “her cheeks flushed pink” and “a warm smile.” In her study (1973), Lakoff stated that men often avoid using these types of expressions because they are considered too feminine and clash with their masculine image.

# FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- *Emphatic Stress* / Data 28.06

“만약에, 만약에, 지금 배 속에 있는 애가 또 딸이라면, 은영 아빠는 어쩔 거야?”

Translations: “**What if ... What if** the baby is another girl? What would you do?” (Cho, 2020)

The character of the mom said “what if” twice to emphasize that she doesn’t mean what she said is real; it is merely a hypothetical scenario.

- *Super Polite Forms* / Data 18.05

“... 그 댁 따님이 집에 오면, 저희 딸은 저희 집으로 보내 주셔야죠.”

Translations: “... **You should at least allow** our daughter to come home when your daughter visits you.” (Cho, 2020)

Context of the utterance above is when Kim is talking like her mother trying to defend herself in front of her father-in-law. As Mom, she asks indirectly that he should let Kim come home during the holidays instead of serving her in-laws like this.

- *Avoidance on Strong Swear Words* / Data 56.04

학교 앞에는 유명한 바바리맨이 있었다.

Translations: There was an infamous **burberry man** who lurked around the school gate. (Cho, 2020)

A “Burberry man” is a milder term used to describe a person who behaves inappropriately by exposing his genitals in front of young girls. The term is derived from the long coat he wears to conceal his naked body. If a boy were the victim of such an incident, he would simply be called a pervert.

# FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- *Question Tag* / Data 150.03

“엄마는 우리 키울 때 어땠어? 힘들지 않았어? 후회하지 않았어? 그때 엄마는 위대했어?”

Translations: “What was it like when you were raising us? **Wasn’t it tough? Didn’t you** regret having so many? Were you also almighty?” (Cho, 2020)

After giving birth to her daughter, Kim asks her mother how it felt when she gave birth to her and her siblings. She wonders if it was tough and if her mother regretted having so many children, just as she feels at the moment. However, she is unsure and uses “~지 않다” as a question tag to confirm her curiosity.

- *Precise Color Terms* / Data 77.02

... 어머니가 서랍에서 남색 카디건을 꺼내 주었다

Translations: .... and the mother handed him an **indigo** cardigan from the drawer. (Cho, 2020)

The color indigo is a purplish shade of blue. Women can distinguish between purple and blue, as well as indigo in between, and consider it important to recognize the difference. However, men, on the other hand, often fail to perceive the distinction and tend to label it either as purple or blue.

# CONCLUSION

Intensifiers are the most prominent among the ten variations that Lakoff stated as characteristics of women's language. Intensifiers are used to emphasize a point and should not be underestimated. However, hypercorrect grammar is absent in the novel, as the majority of the characters engage in informal situations, and the author, in general, uses correct grammar. As educated women, both the female characters and the author herself use correct and polite expressions to convey their opinions to the public. However, they face oppression due to patriarchal rules and gender inequality. Cho successfully portrays women's life experiences in this novel. This achievement is facilitated by the use of figures of speech such as intensifiers as hyperbole, figurative language, repetitions, and rhetorical questions, which are unique characteristics of women's language in literature. The novel explores feminist themes, fulfilling Cixous's vision of women using writing as a means to highlight their existence and express their importance in society.

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**THANK YOU!**

