A WORD-LEVEL FEMINIST STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION ON TIKTOK

THESIS

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG

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THESIS

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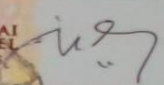
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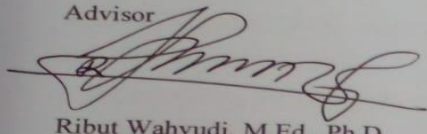
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i

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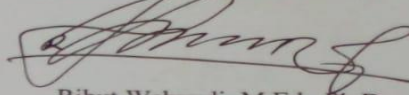
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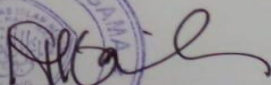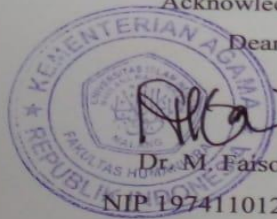Head of Department of English Literature

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ii

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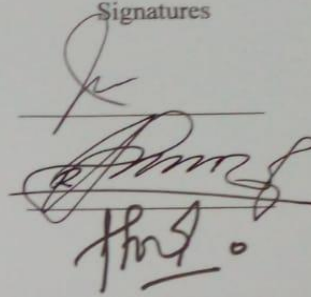2. Ribut Wahyudi, M.Ed., Ph.D. (First Examiner)
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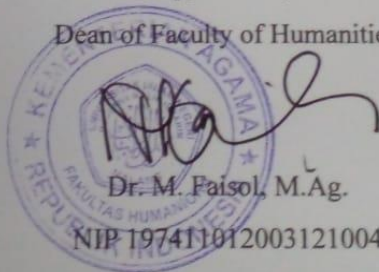NIP 197003071999032002

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iii

MOTTO

"All the things that are real and you want but can't achieve are fiction, but all the
dreams that are fiction and you work for are real."

-Fredrik Ornata-

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved father and mother, who have always prayed for me and supported me through every step, allowing me to strive and complete my education. I also dedicate it to my two younger siblings, who have always offered their prayers and encouragement. A special thanks goes to all my lovely kitties, who kept me company while I worked on this thesis. Without the prayers and support from all of them, this thesis would not have been completed. Lastly, I would like to thank myself for being willing to learn and for staying strong throughout this journey.

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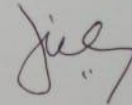
Malik Ibrahim Malang, whose insights and instruction have significantly enriched my academic journey.

I am deeply indebted to my beloved parents, Sutrisno and Khususiyah, for their endless prayers, support, and unconditional love. I also extend my gratitude to my siblings, Lutfi Alfattah and Ahmad Aulia Ali Alfattah, for their constant encouragement and inspiration. A special mention goes to my dear cats—Chiko, Piyu, Yupi, Gimbul, and Yanto—who never failed to cheer me up during the long and tiring process of completing this thesis.

I fully acknowledge that this thesis may still contain shortcomings. I welcome constructive suggestions for its improvement and sincerely hope that this work can serve as a useful reference for future research on related topics.

Malang, June 2025

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ABSTRACT

The growing presence of sexist language in TikTok content reflects ongoing gender-based issues within contemporary digital culture. Although gender representation has been widely examined, limited attention has been paid to how TikTok content perpetuates sexist ideologies through linguistic strategies, particularly from a feminist stylistic perspective. This study focuses on how women are represented in TikTok videos using Sara Mills's feminist stylistics, specifically at the lexical level. This research is based on qualitative data collected from purposively selected TikTok videos that highlight gender-related issues. The data were analyzed using Sara Mills's (1995) framework of feminist stylistics, which allows for the investigation of how language constructs gendered meanings and reflects underlying ideological positions. The findings reveal that women are frequently represented in negative ways, often through sarcastic expressions, derogatory terms, and other lexical choices that reinforce traditional gender stereotypes. These patterns of representation suggest that linguistic features in TikTok content can function as a vehicle for digital misogyny. This study contributes to the field of stylistics and gender studies by demonstrating how feminist stylistic tools can be applied to analyze emerging media forms. It also emphasizes the importance of critical linguistic awareness when engaging with popular digital content that may appear entertaining but subtly perpetuates harmful gender ideologies.

ABSTRAK

Alfattah, Nabila Lis. (2025). *Analisis Stilistika Feminis Tingkat Leksikal terhadap Representasi Perempuan dalam Konten TikTok.* Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dosen Pembimbing: Dr. Ribut Wahyudi, M.Ed., Ph.D.

Kata kunci: Feminisme, Representasi, Bahasa Seksis, Stilistika, TikTok

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Meningkatnya penggunaan bahasa seksis dalam konten TikTok mencerminkan persoalan gender yang terus berlangsung dalam budaya digital kontemporer. Meskipun representasi gender telah banyak diteliti, perhatian terhadap bagaimana konten TikTok mereproduksi ideologi seksis melalui strategi kebahasaan masih sangat terbatas, terutama dari perspektif stilistika feminis. Penelitian ini berfokus pada cara perempuan direpresentasikan dalam video TikTok dengan menggunakan pendekatan stilistika feminis dari Sara Mills, khususnya pada tingkat leksikal. Penelitian ini didasarkan pada data kualitatif yang diperoleh dari video TikTok yang dipilih secara purposif karena memuat isu-isu terkait gender. Data dianalisis menggunakan kerangka stilistika feminis dari Sara Mills (1995) yang memungkinkan penelusuran bagaimana bahasa membentuk makna yang berorientasi gender dan mencerminkan posisi ideologis yang tersembunyi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa perempuan sering kali direpresentasikan secara negatif, melalui ekspresi sarkastik, istilah merendahkan, dan pilihan leksikal lainnya yang menguatkan stereotip gender tradisional. Pola-pola representasi ini menunjukkan bahwa fitur kebahasaan dalam konten TikTok dapat berfungsi sebagai sarana misogini digital. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi bagi bidang stilistika dan kajian gender dengan menunjukkan bagaimana alat analisis stilistika feminis dapat diterapkan dalam menelaah media baru. Penelitian ini juga menekankan pentingnya kesadaran kritis terhadap bahasa saat mengakses konten digital populer yang tampak menghibur namun secara halus mempertahankan ideologi gender yang merugikan.

تجريدي

الفتاح ، نبيلة ليس (2025) من تحليل أسلوبي نسوي لتمثيل المرأة في محتوى TikTok. رسالة قسم الأدب الإنجليزي بكلية العلوم الإنسانية مولانا مالك إبراهيم جامعة الدولة الإسلامية مالانج. المشرف الدكتور ريبوت وحودي ، دكتوراه في التربية ، دكتوراه

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الجنسية ، التمثيل ، الأسلوبية ، النسوية ، تيك توك

يعكس الاستخدام المتزايد للغة الجنسية في محتوى TikTok قضية النوع الاجتماعي المستمرة في الثقافة الرقمية الشعبية. عالجت العديد من الدراسات السابقة هذه المشكلة بطرق وتحليلات مختلفة. Tiktok هي المنصة التي ستكون موضوع تحليل هذا البحث. وذلك لأن Tiktok وقضايا النوع الاجتماعي ، وخاصة التمييز على أساس الجنس ، لها علاقة وثيقة. على الرغم من أن التمثيل الجنسي قد تم بحثه على نطاق واسع ، إلا أنه لم يتم إيلاء اهتمام كبير لكيفية إعادة إنتاج محتوى Tiktok لأيديولوجية التمييز على أساس الجنس من خلال الخيارات اللغوية ، لا سيما من منظور أسلوب اللغة النسوية. يعتمد هذا التحليل على البيانات النوعية التي تم جمعها من مقاطع فيديو TikTok المختارة التي تم اختيارها بشكل هادف لمحتواها المتعلق بالجنس. تم تفسير البيانات باستخدام إطار أسلوب اللغة النسوية لسارة ميلز. تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيفية تمثيل النساء في محتوى TikTok باستخدام أسلوب اللغة النسوية لسارة ميلز ، مع التركيز على المستوى المعجمي. تشير النتائج إلى أن النساء غالبا ما يتم تصويرهن بشكل سلبي من خلال التعبيرات الساخرة واللغة المهينة بشكل علني ، مما يعزز الصور النمطية الجنسانية. يقدم هذا البحث منظورا لغويا حول كراهية النساء الرقمية ويوسع تطبيق أنماط اللغة النسوية على خطاب وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي المعاصر.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the topic of the study and explains why it is important. It begins with the background of the study, which explains how social media, especially TikTok, has become a place where gender issues, including sexism, are often seen. The chapter also presents the research problem in the form of a question, followed by the objective that guides the direction of the study. It then describes the scope and limitations to show what the study focuses on and what it does not cover. Lastly, the definition of key terms is provided to help readers understand important concepts used throughout the research. This introduction sets the foundation for analyzing how women are represented in TikTok content using feminist stylistics at the word level.

A. Background of the Study

Gender issues have historically been embedded in cultural practices and have gradually evolved into social values that persist within communities (Bado, 2022). The distribution of gender roles is often influenced by perceptions of physical and cognitive capabilities. Men are traditionally viewed as stronger than women, as reflected in early labor divisions. For example, during the prehistoric era, men were tasked with physically demanding activities such as hunting, while women were assigned roles requiring less physical strength, such as gathering food and preparing meals (Wulan & Degaf, 2025). This historical division indicates that sexist assumptions and practices have existed long before the formal development of language systems. These ingrained

assumptions have shaped contemporary gender inequalities, particularly under patriarchal systems that continue to govern societal structures. Haslanger (2012) categorizes patriarchy into two types: organized patriarchy, in which male dominance is normalized through gendered norms in daily life, and disorganized patriarchy, which rigidly imposes gendered expectations onto society.

In reality, patriarchal systems continue to marginalize women across various domains. Women are frequently perceived as inferior to men, leading to reduced access to leadership positions and opportunities. This disparity is evident in both employment and politics. For instance, when applying for overseas jobs, the recruitment process often favors men, granting them quicker and more frequent placements. Furthermore, the dominance of men in political leadership positions is evident in both local and national elections. Such patterns reflect the marginalization of women by prevailing patriarchal power structures. These gender inequalities contribute to sexist ideologies that reinforce discriminatory views and behaviors. Therefore, addressing the position of women within these systems necessitates an analysis of how feminist ideologies respond to and challenge these structural injustices.

While gender issues disproportionately affect women, they are not exclusively women's concerns. These issues are closely linked to the ways women are represented and discussed in public discourse. Research has shown that women are often subjects of discrimination in media platforms, such as news outlets (Ramli et al., 2019) and television (Dwirahayu et al., 2019), where they are frequently portrayed in reductive

or stereotypical ways. Wulandari et al. (2017) observed that men tend to dominate discourse, positioning women as linguistically and socially subordinate. Pauwels (2003) also noted that many representations of women in language tend to be harmful, with established linguistic norms targeting women's sexuality and reinforcing male authority. Bodine (1975) further emphasized the grammatical structures in language that reflect male dominance, pointing to inherent biases that shape how gender is encoded linguistically.

Nuryani and Isnaeni (2019) discussed in their study that women are often viewed as the source of pornography, as victims, and as problems in cases of violence between genders. They revealed a recurring tension between sexism and anti-genderism in news texts, reflected in narratives of sexual violence and responses supported by feminist discourses. However, their study did not explore how gender-discriminatory language manifests in digital content, particularly in newer platforms such as TikTok, which this current study aims to address.

Building on this gap, Liu (2021) argued that women on digital platforms are frequently represented through bodily imagery. She noted that TikTok, as a popular social media platform, plays a significant role in shaping body image standards and promoting problematic gender ideologies. While Liu's focus was on the impact of body stereotypes and humiliation trends, the current study extends this conversation by exploring how gender-discriminatory language is used to reinforce sexist ideologies through stylistic choices in TikTok content.

This research, therefore, sets out to investigate not only the linguistic forms of gender discrimination on social media, but also to examine how feminist ideology is negotiated and challenged within digital spaces like TikTok. Unlike previous studies which largely focused on traditional mass media such as newspapers and television, this research highlights the relevance of stylistic analysis on contemporary platforms. It specifically addresses how linguistic expressions in TikTok videos contribute to the representation of women and the reproduction of gender bias. By doing so, this study aims to offer new insights into feminist stylistics and the linguistic construction of gender in digital discourse.

Sexism is broadly understood as a form of gender-based discrimination. According to Merriam-Webster (2021), "sexism means gender-based prejudice." Barreto and Ellemers (2013) explained that sex discrimination reflects negative attitudes toward a specific gender and perpetuates structural gender inequality. Umera-Okeke (2012) also discussed sexist language as one that unintentionally biases communication toward one gender over another. Drawing on Atkinson (1993, as cited in Umera-Okeke, 2012), she defined sexist language as "verbal practices that silence women or humiliate them as people who interact." These definitions emphasize the power of language to influence social relations, perpetuate inequality, and construct gender roles. In relation to this, Mills (2008) categorized sexism into overt and indirect forms, with overt sexism involving explicit discrimination and indirect sexism emerging through implicit or normalized discourse structures.

Women, as portrayed across both mass and digital media, continue to be subjected to stereotyping and objectification. On platforms such as Instagram, body-image-related content has been linked to self-objectification, particularly among young women (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2018). These findings are consistent with the broader themes of this study, which seeks to examine similar gendered portrayals on TikTok. While numerous studies have examined the representation of women on television or in print media, research that focuses on the stylistic construction of women's identity on platforms like TikTok remains limited.

Garcia (2021), for example, explored the presence of toxic responses to TikTok content and observed that women often become targets of verbal aggression and stereotypes, which reinforces misogynistic ideologies. In contrast, Wardani, Purnomo, and Lahade (2013) emphasized that women also participate in conversations and create content that presents them as active agents rather than passive objects. They noted that in the public sphere, women are increasingly involved in professional and social domains. However, domestic responsibilities are still predominantly attributed to them. This dual representation of women, as empowered in certain contexts yet constrained in others, reflects the complex role of gender in digital discourse. In response to this complexity, the present study investigates how such contradictions are linguistically expressed in TikTok content through sexist language and specific stylistic choices.

To further establish the novelty of this study, several previous works are reviewed in depth. The first relevant study is by Fardouly, Willburger, and Vartanian (2018),

titled *Instagram Use and Young Women's Body Image Concerns and Self-Objectification: Testing Mediational Pathways*. This quantitative study examined the link between Instagram use, self-objectification, and body image concerns among women aged 18 to 25 in the United States and Australia. Their findings revealed that increased exposure to Instagram is associated with heightened body dissatisfaction and self-objectification among young women. This study lays a foundation for understanding how social media platforms influence gender perceptions.

In a similar vein, Shofiyya and Rusadi (2018) explored identity negotiation among Muslim women through the article *Negosiasi Identitas Perempuan Muslim dalam Ideologi Agnostisisme di Majalah-Web Feminis: Analisis Feminist Stylistics Artikel di Majalah-Web Magdalene.Co*. Using a qualitative approach and Sara Mills's feminist stylistics within a critical discourse framework, they found that feminist web magazines provide a safe space for ideological expression. Their findings demonstrated the complexities of female identity formation in conservative contexts and highlighted the ideological tensions between personal belief systems and familial expectations.

Another relevant study is by Liu (2021), titled *The Influence of the Body Image Presented through TikTok Trend-videos and Its Possible Reasons*. This qualitative research analyzed the negative impact of TikTok trends on users' perceptions of body image. Liu concluded that TikTok not only reinforces stereotypical beauty standards but also contributes to psychological and social harm through its visual and linguistic

content. This study is highly relevant to the current research as it underscores TikTok's influential role in shaping gender perceptions.

Utami and Suwarso (2023) conducted a critical discourse analysis titled *'Ngondek' Celebration in Variety Shows on Television: A Critical Discourse Analysis*, using Sara Mills's model. They analyzed the portrayal of feminine male performances in televised programs and found that the audience is often guided to interpret gender non-conformity through humor. This normalization of feminized male behavior, though presented as entertainment, reflects deeper issues of gender representation and audience manipulation.

Plieger et al. (2024) conducted a cross-national study titled *Cultural Differences in the Perception of (Self-) sexualizing Instagram Content and Their Associations with Sexism and Self-sexualization Tendencies: Evidence from Six Countries*. This study surveyed 2,055 individuals across Germany, Spain, Italy, South Africa, and the United States. The findings revealed a positive correlation between Instagram usage and acceptance of sexualized content, suggesting that digital platforms contribute to the normalization of sexist representations across cultures.

Akalonu and Ha (2024) in their study *The Role of Online Comedy Skits in the Sexual Objectification of Women in Nigeria* used a mixed-methods approach to analyze YouTube comedy skits. They found that sexual objectification was perpetuated through male gaze, sexually suggestive language, and gendered humor. These elements

reinforced harmful stereotypes and potentially influenced the broader social treatment of women.

Sierra and Reina (2024), in their content analysis study *Women in Video Games: An Analysis of the Biased Representation of Female Characters in Current Video Games*, analyzed 313 characters across major gaming platforms. The results indicated that women were underrepresented and often depicted through stereotypical lenses, such as unrealistic body proportions and submissive behavior. This mirrors the findings from other digital platforms, including TikTok.

Carmona and Gómez-Ledo (2024), in their theoretical work *A Performative Feminist Hinge Epistemology: Making Room for Feminist Hinges*, proposed a new epistemological framework to integrate feminist thought into hinge epistemology. Their performative approach argues for the evolution of epistemic practices that align with feminist goals, highlighting the need to reconsider foundational assumptions in knowledge production.

Fitriyah (2024) conducted a feminist stylistic study titled *Sexist Utterance and Gender Stereotyping in the Novel Queen Alexine: Sara Mills' CDA Approach*. She categorized sexist language into overt and indirect forms and found that the narrative reinforces patriarchal ideologies through subtle and explicit linguistic choices. This study aligns with the present research in its use of Mills's framework and its focus on sexist discourse.

Lastly, Almelinda and An-Nur (2024), in their study *Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Stereotypes in Webtoon "I Wanna Be U"*, investigated gender stereotypes in visual narratives. Using Mills's feminist stylistics, they found that patriarchal structures are embedded in character portrayals, reinforcing the perception of women as weak and submissive.

Taken together, these studies provide a comprehensive foundation for the present research. However, this study contributes a unique perspective by focusing on TikTok content through the lens of feminist stylistics at the lexical level. While previous research has addressed gender representation across various platforms, the stylistic mechanisms through which sexist ideology is embedded in TikTok discourse remain underexplored. Based on these foundations, this study aims to examine how women are represented through word-level language choices in TikTok content using Sara Mills's feminist stylistic framework. It explores the lexical patterns that contribute to the construction of female identity and investigates how these patterns reflect or challenge sexist ideologies. This study contributes to the broader field of feminist linguistics and stylistics by extending its application to contemporary digital media and offering critical insight into the intersection of language, gender, and social media representation.

B. Problem of the Study

How are women represented in TikTok content according to feminist stylistics at the word level?

C. Objectives of the Study

To identify and analyze the representation of women in TikTok content using feminist stylistics, particularly at the word level.

D. Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on sexist attitudes toward women as represented in TikTok content. The object of this research is selected TikTok videos. The study is limited to data collected from TikTok videos that contain linguistic elements relevant to the representation of women. Furthermore, the analysis is conducted using the feminist stylistics framework proposed by Sara Mills.

E. Definition of Key Terms

The following are key terms used in this study:

1. **Sexist language** refers to language that assigns characteristics or roles to individuals based on gender, often resulting in gender discrimination.

2. **Representation** is the act of depicting, describing, or symbolizing someone or something in a particular way.

3. **Stylistics** is a branch of linguistics that examines language use and style, particularly in literary and media texts.

4. **Feminism** is an ideology that opposes gender inequality and advocates for women's rights and social justice.

5. **TikTok** is a widely used social media platform that allows users to create, share, and explore short-form videos.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW ON RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explains the theories and key concepts used in this study. It helps to give a better understanding of the topic and support the analysis. The discussion starts with the theory of sexism, which describes how unfair treatment based on gender appears in language. Then, it moves to the ideology of feminism, which fights against gender inequality and supports women's rights. After that, the chapter discusses stylistics, which is the study of how language is used in different contexts, especially in texts. This leads to the explanation of feminist stylistics, a specific approach that looks at how language can reflect or challenge gender bias. Lastly, the chapter focuses on the analysis at the word level, which is the main part of this research.

A. Sexism Theory

Sexism refers to biased attitudes or discrimination based on gender. In this study, the focus is on women as the subjects of such bias. In Indonesian culture, for instance, women are often marginalized by patriarchal norms, which reinforce the idea that women are inferior to men. According to Mills (2011), sexism can be categorized into two types: overt and indirect. Overt sexism is explicit and easily recognizable, often using direct language that clearly reflects gender bias. In contrast, indirect sexism is subtler and embedded within seemingly neutral expressions. This form of sexism typically arises from traditional gender roles that portray women as fragile beings who need protection. Such notions not only shape societal attitudes but also influence

language use.

Language, particularly English, has often been identified as a medium through which gender bias is subtly reinforced. For example, in English, the term *man* is frequently used as a generic term for humanity, as seen in words like *mankind* or in the tendency to associate *man* with *human.* This practice reflects the underlying assumption that men are the norm, while women are the exception, thereby implying a lower status for women. Pauwels (2003) emphasized this idea by noting that men are frequently viewed as "powerful speakers," possessing authority in language use, which further consolidates their dominance in discourse.

Cameron (1988) also discussed the presence of sexist language and its emotional and psychological effects. She introduced the concept of *language alienation,* which describes the discomfort individuals may feel when the language they use does not represent their identity. According to her, studying gender differences in language serves two purposes: first, to validate feminine modes of communication and link them to women's culture; and second, to reveal how sexual power dynamics are embedded in linguistic behavior. These observations point to how language use can perpetuate patriarchal values. Griffith (1988) responded to Cameron's ideas by arguing that although English contains many instances of sexist language, feminist analysis often overlooks how these expressions are retained. She cited examples such as Blackman's phrase *"Man's attitudes towards abortion,"* which ignores women's perspectives entirely. Griffith further noted that sexist forms persist because their

alternatives may be grammatically inconvenient, aesthetically unappealing, or imposed externally rather than adopted by speakers. She concluded that feminist linguistic theory must go beyond merely describing language and its oppressive features; it must also propose new practices that challenge the idea that language inherently controls its users.

Transitioning to more contemporary debates, defining sexism remains complex and contentious. Scholars like Vetterling and Braggin (1981) observed that individuals differ in their understanding of what constitutes sexism. Some view it as language that represents women negatively, while others regard it as the result of entrenched gender stereotypes applied to both men and women. While sexism has often been associated with outdated gender roles, it continues to be a site of struggle for gender equality. Those advocating for women's full participation in society frequently confront resistance from those who prefer traditional roles.

Interestingly, modern perspectives on sexism also highlight its impact on men. Society often assumes that men must be strong, resilient leaders, an expectation that imposes emotional constraints. This notion marginalizes men by discouraging them from expressing vulnerability. For instance, men are frequently told not to cry, reinforcing the idea that emotional expression is a sign of weakness. Such social norms, though aimed at upholding masculine ideals, inadvertently contribute to gender-based discrimination against men as well. Thus, sexism is not only a women's issue but a broader societal problem that affects individuals of all genders.

B. Feminism Ideology

Feminism, in its broadest sense, refers to a movement that challenges patriarchal structures and advocates for gender equality. It is not merely an ideology but also functions as a tool to promote fairness between men and women in both private and public spheres. According to Mills (2011), feminism can be interpreted through different lenses, depending on each thinker's political standpoint. In her view, feminism is defined through two main perspectives. First, it is a movement that explores how men and women construct their own identities and how they perceive the sexual orientations of others. Second, it serves as an emancipatory effort to resist and dismantle gender inequality. Mills further emphasizes that feminist thinkers generally agree that society is structured in a way that favors men over women. This reveals the existence of a patriarchal system. However, she also notes that this does not imply all men benefit equally from the system. Men, too, may face oppression in different forms and some may even actively oppose such inequalities. Nevertheless, the systemic disparity in how men and women are treated remains evident, shaping not only societal roles but also self-perceptions and external judgments of gendered individuals.

This nuanced understanding of feminism has led scholars to consider intersections between gender and other forms of discrimination (Wulan & Degaf, 2025). In recent decades, feminist theory has increasingly acknowledged that sexism often overlaps with racism, classism, and homophobia. Feminists are cautious about generalizing the experiences of all women as if they form a single, homogenous group. Butler (1990) argued that feminism must confront the difficult question of how a

political movement can be sustained when shared identity cannot be taken for granted. This perspective urges feminists to remain critical of exclusionary tendencies and to recognize diverse experiences within the category of "women." It also challenges the prioritization of certain representations of women over others, which may reinforce internal hierarchies even within feminist discourse.

Building on this foundation, feminism seeks not only to analyze social conditions but also to change them. It promotes a vision of society that is less oppressive to women and, arguably, to men as well. Feminism aligns with educational practices that emphasize skill development and critical reflection on dominant ideologies (Bado, 2022). While academic disciplines often claim objectivity, feminist scholarship is transparent about its advocacy and theoretical grounding. Rather than disguising its standpoint, feminism embraces its role as a catalyst for social transformation. It resists academic elitism that excludes those unfamiliar with specialized discourse. Instead, feminist research values accessibility and empowerment, aiming to equip women with the knowledge and tools they need to navigate and challenge oppressive systems.

C. Stylistics

Stylistics refers to the study of language in literary texts, employing linguistic theories to examine how meaning is constructed through stylistic choices. It draws upon linguistic frameworks to analyze the patterns, structures, and features of language that characterize particular texts or genres. According to Simpson (1992), stylistics utilizes linguistic analysis to uncover the techniques that shape and define a given

literary or textual work. This approach offers a systematic way of interpreting how language choices influence meaning and reader response.

Carter and Simpson (1989) further distinguished stylistics into two main categories. The first is linguistic stylistics, which focuses on developing models for analyzing style and language to contribute to broader linguistic theory. This branch aims to enhance the understanding of language patterns, often extending its application beyond literary texts to include non-literary discourse. The second is literary stylistics, which centers on interpreting and appreciating literary texts through close linguistic examination. This approach highlights how linguistic features contribute to the artistic and aesthetic qualities of a work and offers deeper insight into an author's style and intent.

Both types of stylistic inquiry make use of established linguistic models. These include Noam Chomsky's theory of generative grammar, Michael Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, John Searle's theory of speech acts, and Malcolm Coulthard's discourse analysis. Although these models may differ in focus, they provide tools for uncovering how language functions within texts. The primary distinction between linguistic and literary stylistics lies in their purpose. While the former seeks to develop linguistic theory, the latter applies linguistic tools to interpret the meaning and effect of literary language.

Style in the context of this usage is the author's way of expressing thoughts through language in a distinctive way that can show the soul and personality of the language user, therefore language style is referred to as a way of using language. Each

person's style is certainly different. This style is hereinafter known as 'style' (Keraf, 2010: 113). The ability of an author when imagining and creating in literary rhetoric is a stile that distinguishes one author from another. In addition, if an author is proficient in expressing ideas, his ideas through the embodiment of his creativity in empowering the above rhetorical means, then the reader will be able to clearly imagine the events or circumstances described by the author.

D. Feminist Stylistics

Feminist stylistics offers a critical rethinking of traditional stylistic analysis by emphasizing the role of gender in language use and interpretation (Bado, 2022). Rather than treating gender as an optional variable, this approach places it at the center of linguistic analysis. Feminist stylistics examines how language not only reflects but also perpetuates gender ideologies, particularly those rooted in patriarchal systems (Wulan & Degaf, 2025). It focuses on how texts construct, reinforce, or challenge gendered representations, especially of women, through specific linguistic choices. As Mills (1995) states, feminist stylistics draws attention to the ways language can marginalize or empower individuals based on embedded gendered assumptions, particularly through vocabulary, sentence structures, and narrative perspectives.

This study applies feminist stylistics at the word level, focusing on how individual lexical items contribute to constructing women's identities in TikTok content. The word-level analysis explores how vocabulary is used to represent gender, with attention to evaluative terms, derogatory expressions, and the connotative

meaning of specific words. Lexical choices often carry subtle ideological meanings that help sustain traditional gender roles and societal expectations about women.

Examination of word choices in TikTok content reveals whether women are portrayed through language that empowers or undermines them. These lexical patterns reflect broader social attitudes toward gender and function as linguistic tools that either support or resist sexist ideologies. Feminist stylistics in this context serves as a lens for uncovering how everyday language in digital spaces contributes to the ongoing negotiation of gender roles and identities.

E. Analysis of the Word Level

This analysis addresses the question of gender bias at the level of analyzing individual words. The first section focuses on more general and theoretical aspects of sexism and provides an account of common usage. The second section examines types of sexist language use. In both sections, Mills (1995) looked at the ways in which feminist critics address sexism in language and the effects which they claim this kind of language use has on readers, particularly women. By examining examples of usage such as the use of gender-specific pronouns, the misuse of common pronouns, terms of address, and negative descriptions of women in various texts, it is hoped to show that language use can present and perpetuate certain views of women. Mills (1995) described gender-free language use that avoids unnecessary gender-specific terms and uses generic terms to refer to both women and men. In addition to providing examples of ways to use gender-free language, this theory also provides examples of strategies

that can be used to counter sexism in general. In essence, this analysis identifies data based on word-by-word analysis. Mills then divided this analysis into two parts, as follows:

a) **Sexism in Language**

Sexism in language can be interpreted in various ways depending on how gender bias is perceived in communication. Braggin (1981) provides one commonly discussed perspective, stating that a statement is sexist if it promotes, reinforces, or contributes to the oppression of women. However, she notes that this definition may be too narrow because it focuses only on language directed at women. To offer a broader understanding, she proposes another definition: a statement is sexist if its use creates, supports, or takes advantage of an unfair or irrelevant distinction between the genders. This definition recognizes that language can reinforce inequality not only toward women but also in gendered relationships in general.

This issue leads to an ongoing debate within feminist linguistic theory about whether language merely reflects social reality or actively shapes it. Mills (1995) explores this debate, contrasting the referential view, which considers language as a neutral tool for describing the world, with the concept of linguistic determinism. The latter argues that language shapes thought and influences how individuals perceive reality. This view is supported by the Sapir Whorf hypothesis, which suggests that the existence or absence of specific terms in a language can affect what speakers see as meaningful or important.

Sexist expressions can appear in many forms, including the use of generic pronouns, gender marked terms, and words that position women as secondary or passive (Wulan & Degaf, 2025). For example, the use of the word "man" to represent all humans can imply that men are the default and women are the exception. Such examples reflect how language can reinforce gender hierarchies. Moreover, language structures that treat women as marked or derivative forms compared to men contribute to the normalization of gender inequality. These issues are further discussed in the following sections, which focus on key areas such as generic nouns, marked forms, the consequences of sexist language use, and the development of gender inclusive alternatives. Through these discussions, this study aims to clarify how sexist language operates and how it can be challenged.

b) **Linguistic Determination**

The idea of linguistic determinism proposes that the ways languages are structured influence how different societies understand the world. Moreover, it suggests that the language of a society influences how its speakers perceive their surroundings. This idea can be looked at in two steps. The initial step where people label the world in various ways, focusing on different elements based on what matters most to them is relatively straightforward. A common example is the various terms for snow that the Inuit use, compared to the few English terms for. Snow is not a big part of daily life in Britain, which is why we have fewer words for it. However, certain groups of English speakers, like competitive skiers, British Rail workers, geographers, and mountain climbers, need to discuss the qualities of snow as a part of what they do.

It is assumed that a language meets the needs of its users, and the existence of many terms in some languages for specific things, while others lack them, indicates what those cultures consider significant and essential for their lifestyle.

However, linguistic determinism takes this idea a step further by claiming that our language shapes how we view the world. According to this second step, our thought processes are shaped by the language of our community, meaning our understanding of 'reality' is limited by the language structures we have as members of that group. "The reality we perceive is largely unconsciously formed by the language habits of that group. No two languages are quite alike enough to be seen as showing the same social reality. The realities of different societies are separate worlds, not just the same world with different names" (Sapir in Mandelbaum 1949:162). Therefore, Sapir-Whorf (1949) stated that if a speech community lacks a specific way to express an idea, it follows that the members of that community do not have that concept readily available in their understanding of the world. Of course, there are countless degrees to which people believe this view. Most who agree with linguistic determinism do so to varying extents. It has also faced significant criticism due to its potentially racist implications. For instance, one could use this theory to suggest that some cultures are inferior because their languages are seen as lacking.

   c) **Generic Pronouns**

The generic pronoun 'he' is probably the best-known example of language that is biased toward one gender, and this type of language is often called 'he-man' language. For instance, a generic pronoun can be seen in the sentence, 'When an author finishes

his manuscript, he can send it to the publishers.' The usual argument states that 'his' and 'he' are not specifically about males, but meant to apply generally; meaning even though the terms grammatically point to a single male writer, they are intended to encompass both male and female writers. However, many studies have indicated that this is not how people actually understand generic pronouns. In most of these studies, participants were asked to finish incomplete stories that included the pronoun 'he', and in many instances, they filled in the stories assuming 'he' referred specifically to a male or included a male character. Research by Robertson (1990) on visualization and generic pronouns also backs up the idea that individuals tend to picture male subjects when the term 'he' is used as a generic pronoun.

d) Generic Nouns

Sexist language refers to words that depict experiences related to men as if they are the standard or the usual. A clear example of this occurs when discussing all of humanity, where words like "mankind" and "man" are frequently used. Studies have indicated that instead of being perceived as neutral terms, readers see these words as specifically referring to males. In a book called Prehistoric Man, although the term 'man' might appear to be a general term, it refers to male individuals whose actions are described in detail, while women's activities are only mentioned in a supporting role. This is also evident when prehistoric 'man' is shown as male. The illustration demonstrates that the generic man' does not imply both genders since it only includes male species within the evolution narrative.

There are specific phrases that include 'man' which are linked to gender, like 'to be man enough' or 'to be the right man for the job'. The gender-specific nature of this phrase becomes obvious when attempting to apply it to females; for instance, the statement, 'Man is a mammal which breastfeeds his young' sounds odd to many. When 'man' refers to a female, it cannot serve as a true generic term. This example highlights that 'man' is typically used as a gender-specific word rather than a general one. Changing these into terms that do not indicate gender is challenging because replacing 'man' with 'person' leads to phrases like 'to be person enough', which does not carry the same meaning or implications. Additionally, fixed phrases are hard to modify into gender-neutral language due to their specific structures.

e) **Women as the Marked Form**

The female gender is often considered the specific term, whereas the male gender is viewed as the general term. There are many different prefixes and suffixes used to describe women, such as 'lady' and endings like '-ess', '-ette', '-enne', and '-trix'. These words often carry negative meanings, which the male words do not have. Phrases like 'lady poet' or 'lady doctor' make the person sound less professional. Mills (1995) also gave examples like female poets often do not earn a living from their writing. In the more neutral writing of 'woman' (e.g., 'woman writer'), women were still marked with gender, while men are simply called 'writers'. Other example terms such as 'actress', 'author', 'hostess', 'flight attendant', 'poet', 'comedian', and 'aviator' also implied insincerity, specifically compared to equivalent terms for men (such as 'aviator'). Many of these words are smaller or lesser versions of the male term; for

instance, '-ette' suggests something that is 'less than' or 'smaller than'. It is also worth mentioning that words like 'usherette' (related to cinemas) do not have a male counterpart. These terms present a challenge for feminist studies and for many theorists, these words should be avoided due to their negative meanings.

f) Effects of Sexist Language-Use

Using language that reflects sexist assumptions can result in several consequences (Bado, 2022). First, it can make women feel excluded or invisible in communication. When language consistently centers male experience as the norm, women may feel that their presence and perspectives are not acknowledged. This sense of exclusion can be subtle but pervasive in both spoken and written discourse.

Second, sexist language may influence how women view themselves and how they are perceived by others. When women are repeatedly associated with limiting or stereotypical roles through language, it can affect their self-image and the way others evaluate their capabilities. These linguistic patterns help reinforce social expectations about what women can or cannot do, often diminishing their perceived agency.

Third, the use of gender-biased language can create confusion for listeners or readers, particularly when it is unclear whether a noun or pronoun refers to people in general or to a specific gender. Ambiguity in language can undermine effective communication and further entrench gender assumptions.

Choosing gender inclusive or anti-sexist language is a conscious effort to challenge these patterns. Speakers and writers who opt for such language demonstrate an awareness that the world is not defined solely through a male lens. For instance,

using expressions like "he or she" instead of defaulting to "he" not only improves clarity but also signals a rejection of traditional gender norms. In this way, language becomes a tool for recognizing and validating women's experiences and contributions in all areas of life.

g) Gender-Free Language

Mills (1995) explained that when you write to a person whose gender or relationship status you do not know, you can use these methods. The first one is to avoid thinking that everyone who uses initials instead of their first names is male. The second is to use the name provided to you instead of guessing their relationship status. If you need to include a title, use 'Mr./s' as it can refer to anyone; for instance, you can say 'Dear Mr./s Brown', which applies to both women and men.

h) Sexism and Meaning

In this part, Mills (1995) posed questions regarding meaning, especially how meanings can sometimes be related to gender. The earlier part looked into sexism in language, mainly focusing on how generic terms are used, and suggested using language that does not focus on gender. That section also acknowledged that sexism in language isn't just about finding harmful words and suggesting replacements. This part focuses on describing language structures that seem to influence how gender-related terms adopt specific meanings, particularly how terms linked to women gain clear connotations. The structures that produce this effect are not always obvious to us as speakers, so the analysis in this chapter aims to highlight some of the subtler forms of sexism present in language. Meaning is typically viewed as something neutral

contained in a word. However, the process of creating meanings is much more complicated than this. Thus, this section deals with whether we must merely accept the meanings offered within our culture.

i) Naming and Androcentrism

Naming has always been prominent in talks about language among feminists. As Cameron (1990) pointed out many parts of the feminist critique focus on how language represents people and ideas. They generally agree that our languages are biased against women. It means that they describe the world from a male perspective and follow traditional stereotypes about genders. Cameron also mentions that many feminists believe that the names we use for things are not just simple reflections of reality or random labels. Instead, names are a way for culture to decide what is considered real in a world which is full of confusing sensations, each carrying many possible meanings. Some feminists have taken the strong stance that language is created mainly for men's benefit and is essentially a product of men.

Because of this, women often have to view their experiences through men's perspectives, and they don't have much say in creating new meanings. It isn't necessary to argue that "men created language" to recognize a clear male bias in many parts of the English language. To support this argument, Mills (1995) examined the words that people use to talk about female genitals and the language often used when discussing sexual activities. Many feminists believe that the differences in the terms available for male and female genitals show how attitudes toward women and female sexuality shape the language used by English speakers. As English speakers, we can see that there aren't

enough proper words to connect the clinical terms for female genitalia, like "vagina" and "vulva," with the most casual and often considered inappropriate term: "cunt."

j) The Semantic Derogation of Women

Feminists have found that numerous languages contain a fundamental semantic or grammatical principle that associates positivity with the male and negativity with the female, meaning that the principles of male dominance are embedded in the language. For example, word "courtier" is identified for men and word "courtesan" is for women. This is a word that has historical links, yet the female-specific version carries a different implication compared to the male-specific one, typically designating a person of inferior rank and often implying a sexual undertone. The masculine term has preserved its interpretation associated with royal circles, whereas the feminine term has evolved to signify a sexual worker or prostitute, although this usage is infrequent today and generally applied in a historical context. Another example is the words 'Adventurer' and 'adventuress,' which are comparable in that the word for the female has sexual implications, as do several other terms referring to women.

k) Endearments and Diminutives

Words that are identified as insults are hurtful. It can be more difficult to explain how some affectionate terms can also be disrespectful. Mills (1995) stated that there are words that some men use for their female partners, like 'my bird' or 'my chick',that seems sweet but suggest a comparison between women and small, cute animals. Likewise, there are many nicknames often used by men for women—like 'doll', 'baby', 'babe', 'chuck', 'chick', 'duck', 'ducky', 'hen', 'pet', 'flower', 'petal', and others.

Women can also use these words and refer to men with them, but it happens less often and typically in specific situations, like when an older woman speaks to a younger man, suggesting a parent-child dynamic with an uneven power balance. These terms are similar to the use of last names and first names in English. Essentially, affectionate terms can be a way for equals to show closeness and affection but could also be used by someone who feels they are in a higher position. Additionally, words like 'honey', 'sweety', 'sweetheart', 'sugar', and 'cheesecake' are often used for women more than for men, implying that the person being referred to is something tasty and desirable.

l) **Female Experience: Euphemism and Taboo**

Euphemism, according to Fowler (1989) referred to using gentle or vague words instead of straightforward or unpleasant facts. A significant area of women's experiences that has many strong taboos attached to it, generating numerous euphemisms, is menstruation. In various cultures, menstruation is a forbidden topic, marked by unique rituals and specific language, sometimes leading to a menstruating woman keeping her distance from others while she is on her period. Euphemisms often cast menstruation in a negative light: phrases like "the curse" or "the wrong time of the month" are common. In ads for menstrual products like pads and tampons, there is a clear avoidance of words like "blood" and "bleeding." Instead, they tend to use less direct terms like "flow" or "moisture."

m) **Lexical Gaps: Male Point of View**

There are clear examples of ideas that were not noticed until they had their own words, since there was no specific term for them and no common understanding of

those concepts within the existing vocabulary. One example is the word 'sexism' which made its way into conversation in the 1960s in the United States. The issue of lexical gap in language is part of a larger linguistic challenge—the struggle to communicate effectively within the accessible language structures.

n) Dictionaries and Gatekeepers

A dictionary can typically tell you what words used to signify, where they came from, and what they mean now. Dictionaries are primarily descriptive in nature, as they are created by people compiling information about how words are used and have historically been used. However, due to prevailing attitudes regarding dictionaries, they are frequently viewed as prescriptions for what words should signify rather than descriptions. Many individuals consult dictionaries to determine the 'proper' meaning of a word; dictionaries are frequently used as arbiters in debates concerning word meaning. Some dictionaries support this view: they consider their role as maintaining specific standards in how language is used, acting as protectors of the language. For instance, if a word begins to be used in a different way, that definition may not make it into the dictionary if the editor believes it is too temporary or only used by a small number of people. A new definition or word must demonstrate that it can last over time before many dictionary editors will accept it. It is essential to note that it is imperfect humans with limited exposure to the language of the larger community who determine what should be included in the dictionary and what can be excluded, and every decision will be influenced by their beliefs.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the method used in this study. It describes the research design, where the data came from, how the data were collected, and how they were analyzed to study how women are represented in TikTok content. This study uses a qualitative method because it aims to explore how language, especially words, can show certain views about women. The analysis is based on Sara Mills's feminist stylistics. This chapter also explains in detail how the researcher chose, collected, and studied the data. All of this helps make the research clearer and more organized so that the study can show how language on social media can support or question certain ideas about gender.

A. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, which focuses on descriptive data that are not derived from statistical procedures or numerical calculations. According to Rahardjo (2020), qualitative research is also referred to as field research, in which data are collected through direct observation, interviews, or documentation of events. It is often described as naturalistic inquiry because the data are gathered in the natural context of the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, it is aligned with post-structural perspectives, recognizing that social reality is complex, dynamic, and shaped through interaction.

This study uses a qualitative method to explore how women are represented in TikTok content. It focuses on analyzing the language used, especially at the word level, based on Sara Mills's feminist stylistic theory. According to Mills, language can be analyzed at different levels such as words, phrases or sentences, and the overall discourse. However, this research only focuses on the choice of words. It looks at how certain words are used to describe women and how these word choices may support or challenge sexist views in social media. TikTok is chosen as the source of data because it offers a fresh context for analysis, especially since short video content like this is still rarely studied in feminist stylistics.

B. Data Source

The primary data source in this study is TikTok content that includes representations of women. The data consist of five selected TikTok videos featuring female content creators and gender-related discussions. These videos were chosen based on their relevance to sexist language and gender representation. The data analyzed include captions, spoken words within the videos, and viewer comments, especially those containing notable lexical items reflecting gender bias or stereotypes. These linguistic elements serve as the basis for investigating how women are represented through specific word choices.

C. Data Collection

The data collection process involves several steps. First, the researcher selects TikTok videos that explicitly or implicitly engage with themes of gender and sexism.

Next, the researcher transcribes the relevant parts of the videos, including captions, spoken content, and viewer comments. These texts are then filtered to identify words and lexical expressions that may contribute to gender representation. The focus is exclusively on the word level, and only data containing relevant lexical items are retained for further analysis.

D. Data Analysis

The analysis in this study applies Sara Mills's feminist stylistics framework, focusing specifically on the word level. The researcher examines lexical items such as pronouns, nouns, marked and unmarked gender terms, generic nouns, and gender-neutral expressions. Each of these words is analyzed within its immediate context to understand how it contributes to the representation of women, particularly whether it reinforces or challenges traditional gender roles or sexist ideologies. The interpretation seeks to uncover how word choices construct women's identities in ways that may either support empowerment or promote objectification and stereotyping.

For instance, in the comment *"Wow! You are so pretty! You really like this image,"* the pronoun *"you"* clearly refers to a female content creator. The adjective *"pretty"* emphasizes physical appearance and aligns with stereotypical gender expectations, especially when associated with the phrase *"you really like this image"*, which suggests admiration based on visual representation. This seemingly flattering comment reflects a limited view of femininity that centers on looks, thus serving as a

relevant example of how word choices on social media can subtly reinforce gendered assumptions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part explains the results and discussion of the study. The findings show how women are shown or described in TikTok content that uses the hashtags *#feminism* or *#feminist*. The focus is on the words used in captions and comments. To analyze this, the study uses Sara Mills's feminist stylistic theory, especially looking at the word level, to find examples of sexist language. The discussion then explains what these findings mean in the context of social media and compares them with results from previous studies. Both the findings and the discussion help us understand how language on social media can shape and influence the way people see gender roles.

A. FINDINGS

Gender issues are not a new topic of discussion. Several previous studies have explored this issue using various methods and analyses. Even on social media, gender-related discussions remain prominent, often generating both supportive and opposing responses. TikTok serves as the platform and object of analysis in this study, as it demonstrates a close connection with gender issues, particularly sexism. This chapter presents the findings based on Sara Mills's feminist stylistics theory. It investigates five TikTok videos that contain sexist content and are tagged with #feminism or #feminist, including their captions and user comments. The chapter also discusses how women are represented in TikTok content and how feminist ideology, according to Mills's theory, responds to such representations.

34

The analysis focuses on captions and comments from the selected TikTok videos tagged with #feminism or #feminist. In each video, a minimum of three comments are selected for analysis using the theoretical framework. The main aim of this study is to identify and examine the representation of women in TikTok content through the lens of feminist stylistics, specifically at the word level. The analysis begins by examining individual lexical items found in the captions and comments to uncover any hidden biases or deeper implications related to the portrayal of women. This approach aims to identify stylistic patterns or choices that may shape public perception of women in the content. Using Sara Mills's word-level feminist stylistics, the researcher seeks to gain deeper insight into how women are represented based on the collected and organized data. The data include lexical items that reflect sexist ideas as seen from a social media perspective. The researcher collected five videos, including their captions and at least three comments per video, focusing on relevant content for the analysis.

Datum: Video 3 – Posted by a Female Creator on December 21, 2021

This video features a clip from an interview with Zendaya in which she shares her thoughts on feminism. The female content creator includes her own perspective, suggesting that the feminist movement should not push too forcefully for equality to the point of excluding men. In her view, feminism should empower women without disregarding other genders. This idea is reflected in the caption of the video: *"A feminist is someone who believes in the power of a woman the same way they believe*

in the power of anyone else." The statement emphasizes that women's strength should be acknowledged equally, just like anyone else's, without gender-based bias.

The video received a range of responses. One user, Emma, commented on December 17, 2021, criticizing Zendaya for what she saw as hypocrisy. She recalled how Zendaya had once insulted her friend Taylor Swift by calling her a "snake," despite publicly advocating for female solidarity. This comment points out a perceived contradiction between public feminist messaging and personal behavior.

Another comment came from BoYLonDoN on February 4, 2022. He claimed that "feminism is demonic and is destroying relationships today." This reflects a misogynistic stance that portrays feminism as divisive and harmful, suggesting a rejection of the idea of equal rights for women.

A further response was posted by Aladdin 2.1 on February 24, 2022. He remarked, "Until they choose to be housewife," implying that the call for equality is pointless if women still end up choosing traditional domestic roles. This comment dismisses women's freedom to choose their own paths, subtly mocking the idea that a woman can be both empowered and decide to become a homemaker.

These comments highlight the conflicting views on feminism and how female representation on platforms like TikTok continues to spark debates around gender roles and equality.

Datum: Video by kuteblackson, posted on November 13, 2023

The video features a male content creator expressing his disagreement with the concept of complete equality between men and women. He argues that equal rights should not apply in every part of life, using biological differences such as pregnancy, which only women experience, as an example. His caption says *Why I Don't Believe in Equality*. This statement clearly shows that he does not support feminist ideas about equal treatment. It suggests that some social roles and life experiences are naturally different for men and women, and therefore should not be seen as the same.

The comment section reveals support from like-minded viewers. Nia, on the same day, comments, *"This man sound like him have sense,"* affirming her agreement, albeit with informal and grammatically incorrect phrasing. Another user, *Bee*, adds, *"God bless this man,"* signaling moral or religious approval of the creator's views. Similarly, It's Alex joins in with enthusiasm, stating, *"Tell me man!! I say the same things and they call me crazy,"* using exclamations and informal tone to express frustration over being misunderstood for sharing similar opinions. These responses reflect a shared resistance to feminist discourse and a preference for traditional gender roles.

Datum: Video by noname, posted on April 27, 2024

This video compiles a series of protest images featuring feminist activists during a demonstration. The female creator overlays the images with powerful captions to voice strong feminist messages. One caption reads: *"Don't tell me how to dress! Tell them NOT to rape!"* highlighting frustration over victim-blaming narratives that focus on women's attire rather than condemning male perpetrators. Another caption states:

"If u don't fight for all women, u fight for no women," advocating for intersectional feminism that includes all racial identities. A third caption declares: *"A woman is somebody, not some body,"* which critiques the objectification of women and emphasizes their humanity.

The comments on this post reveal both ridicule and support. SimonVonWinterfell comments, *"ur first home was a balls not a woman,"* using vulgar language to undermine the creator's message while revealing a lack of grammatical correctness, suggesting impulsivity or mockery. Another user, keegan, responds with, *"haha women 🙄,"* mocking the content with humor and emojis, likely to minimize or dismiss the feminist discourse. On the other hand, FemGirlySkye adds nuance to the discussion with, *"I prefer woman in power as a boy who likes being girly, it's scary,"* expressing solidarity but also highlighting discomfort with how feminists sometimes treat LGBTQ supporters. These responses illustrate the polarized nature of gender discourse on TikTok and the varied audience reactions to feminist content.

Datum: Video by Nahanni Fontaine, posted on May 11, 2024

In this video, Nahanni Fontaine, a female feminist creator, responds to another user who mocked feminists by saying they cannot cook. Fontaine stitches the video with footage of herself cooking, proudly asserting, *"I am a feminist…Watch me cook."* Her message challenges the stereotype that feminists reject domestic roles, showing that women can embrace both empowerment and traditional skills.

The comment section includes both admiration and critique. Hannah Wallace enthusiastically comments, *"No ma'am your not just a feminist, you're an icon,"* mistakenly writing "your" instead of "you're," which suggests emotional excitement over grammar. Her response frames the creator as a role model. Conversely, a male user named Him writes, *"Is it so wrong for women to know how to cook and be proud of it? Most Kenyan women do both marvelously, both make the perfect woman,"* implying that traditional gender roles are essential to womanhood, subtly reinforcing a patriarchal ideal. Amanda responds with exaggerated support, *"SHE SAID WATCH ME COOK BUT SHE AAATTTEEE,"* using all capital letters and expressive spelling to emphasize her enthusiastic agreement with the video's message. This range of comments reflects both the reinforcement and rejection of gender stereotypes, captured through language choices and stylistic features.

Datum: Video by h6stns, posted on February 15, 2025

The video features a woman delivering a passionate speech about feminism, with the caption stating: *"feminism, the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the EQUALITY of the sexes."* The capitalization of the word *EQUALITY* signals the creator's emotional intensity and possible frustration over the continued lack of gender equality in practice. The emphasis placed on this word reflects a linguistic strategy often used to signal resistance and urgency within feminist discourse.

In the comments, Cathy shares a personal experience, stating, *"My dad wouldn't buy pads for me because 'that's something a woman does' 😭."* This response

highlights the persistent stigma surrounding women's bodily functions, particularly menstruation, and reflects how language and behavior around gendered expectations remain deeply ingrained. The use of the crying emoji underscores emotional distress, suggesting internalized pain due to gender-based neglect. In contrast, Bestboy's comment, *"Boys rule girls drool,"* employs a rhyming phrase that infantilizes and trivializes the discourse, perpetuating traditional male dominance while mocking female capability. The comment serves as a linguistic act of derision and dismisses feminist concerns through gendered ridicule. Meanwhile, Aaban Shariff contributes a more conciliatory stance with, *"men need women and women need men,"* suggesting interdependence between the sexes. Although seemingly neutral, this phrase reinforces essentialist views that place women and men into distinct, complementary roles rather than challenging gender inequality.

Datum: Video by fio, posted on November 28, 2024

In this video, the creator shares a quote expressing exhaustion and helplessness within the medical or caregiving profession, particularly in the context of advocating for women's rights. The caption reads: *"women's lives are on the line and our hands that are trained to help them. Our hands are tied."* The closing sentence, *"I'm getting f*cking tired,"* reflects emotional burnout and desperation, signaling a breaking point in the struggle for women's safety and well-being. The choice of words portrays intense frustration, with the profanity emphasizing the speaker's exhaustion with systemic limitations.

The comment section mirrors the caption's emotional tone. Mikela responds with a sardonic remark: *"tied like my tubes bout to be,"* blending humor with commentary on reproductive agency. Her wordplay on "tied" reflects personal struggles with reproductive freedom, possibly referencing sterilization or contraceptive barriers. Fio, the video creator, later comments: *"no woman is truly free if not every woman is!!!"* The repetition of "woman" and use of multiple exclamation marks reinforces the collectivist principle of feminist solidarity and urgency. Lastly, Kabrejada cryptically comments, *"that's momma baker?"* likely referencing a recognizable feminist figure or symbol, though without further context, the intent remains ambiguous. Still, the casual tone reflects the way feminist discourse is often intertwined with cultural memory and identity on social media platforms.

Datum: Video by Fiona, posted on November 30, 2024

This emotionally charged video addresses the harmful myth that vocal responses during assault negate the experience of violence. The caption quotes a common victim-blaming phrase: *"They moaned, so it wasn't sexual assault,"* followed by a clear rebuttal: *"Still SA (sexual assault)."* The statement challenges societal misunderstandings of consent and reinforces that sexual violence is not nullified by involuntary physical reactions. The deliberate use of "Still SA" acts as a linguistic correction aimed at asserting survivor narratives.

In the comments, users contribute deeply emotional and poignant statements. MinMin repeats the word *"bear"* five times, possibly as a trauma response or symbolic

repetition, though the exact meaning remains unclear without additional context. Jacqueline responds with, *"what were you wearing? mukena,"* referencing a traditional Muslim garment, thereby highlighting the absurdity and cruelty of blaming victims based on clothing. The choice of "mukena" underscores how even conservative dress does not protect women from assault, dismantling the clothing-based justification for harassment. Eabha comments, *"you should've told him to stop. I was three,"* offering a haunting reminder of child sexual abuse and the impossibility of consent. This stark, powerful response uses minimal words to deliver a devastating critique of rape culture and victim-blaming rhetoric.

Datum: Video by It_girl_era, posted on November 9, 2024

This video captures a heated podcast dialogue between a man and a woman discussing gender roles, societal pressures, and stereotypical expectations. The conversation begins with the man questioning, *"What is the scariest animal? Man,"* suggesting that men themselves are dangerous, followed by statistics about suicide, war, and hazardous jobs that disproportionately affect men. He uses this to justify male dominance and social burden. The woman counters with sarcastic and critical responses, including, *"Men are important. Like for what?"* challenging the man's assumptions. The exchange escalates into a symbolic debate about vanity and dependency on technology, especially mobile phones and makeup, implying that women are shallow or appearance-focused. The woman defends herself by rejecting these generalizations, answering assertively with phrases like, *"Yes,"* and *"Many*

hours. Absolutely." Her tone reflects resistance to stereotyping and the reclaiming of narrative agency.

The comments include a mixture of support and clarification. Sheragade responds with, *"Ryan the man you are,"* likely expressing admiration for the male speaker's views. James and Leonardo both attempt to soften the perceived sexism by clarifying that *"man"* refers to *"mankind,"* not just the male gender. These clarifications aim to neutralize potential backlash by reframing the terminology, though they also risk dismissing the woman's valid critique. The dialogue and comments exemplify how linguistic choices, particularly pronouns and generalized terms, shape gender perceptions in public discourse.

The Lexical Analysis

In this section, Mills (1995) primarily focuses on identifying and examining words that exhibit sexism in language, as well as understanding how these words relate to their meanings. The analysis begins by highlighting general pronouns and nouns that tend to favor male terms, revealing how women are often marked as a distinct gender. Furthermore, it explores the use and effects of sexist language, including naming practices and androcentrism, which prioritize male perspectives, along with the negative connotations often associated with women. The analysis also considers terms of affection and diminutives, as these can reflect underlying attitudes toward women.

a) Generic pronouns

This section contains gender-specific pronoun like "he" or "she" which in general, refer grammatically to singular author. Pronoun "he" sometimes can be used to male and female gender in general. Mills (1995) stated that gender-specific pronouns are often used in a sexist way to refer to people working in stereotypically male and female professions.

Datum 1

When he says man, he doesn't mean men. Man means mankind

Analysis:

This comment attempts to justify the speaker's use of the word *man* by claiming that it refers to all human beings, not just males. However, according to Mills in her feminist stylistic framework, this kind of lexical choice is problematic. The word *man* is often treated as a generic term, but it actually reflects a long-standing male-centered perspective in language. Using *man* to stand for all of humanity can exclude or render women invisible, reinforcing a worldview that centers men as the norm.

Although the commenter argues that *man* means *mankind*, this explanation ignores the gendered history of the word. In many cases, women's experiences and identities are overshadowed when male terms are used as if they are neutral. The use of *he* in this statement further shows how male viewpoints are often positioned as the standard. From the feminist stylistic point of view, such language choices support androcentric discourse and diminish the presence of women in both speech and thought.

This analysis highlights how word choices, even those that may seem neutral, can reveal underlying gender biases. It also shows how speakers may try to resist or dismiss feminist criticism by relying on traditional meanings that mask the exclusionary effects of gendered language.

b) Generic nouns

This section explains how a word contains a gender-specific term that refers to the inferiority of a particular gender, mostly women. This section also explains the context of a word that contains a gender-specific term affects the meaning of the next word in a sentence.

Datum 1:

A woman is somebody not some body

Analysis:

The phrase "A woman is somebody not some body" uses wordplay to emphasize the contrast between viewing women as full human beings and reducing them to physical objects. The term *somebody* implies individuality, agency, and recognition as a person. By splitting it into *some body*, the focus shifts from identity to physical appearance, highlighting how language can subtly reinforce objectification. According to Mills, language constructs meaning within specific ideological frameworks. This expression reflects resistance against linguistic practices that diminish women's personhood. It challenges the patriarchal tendency to assess women based on their bodies, calling for acknowledgment of their full humanity.

Datum 2

Man, here is for man kind

Analysis:

The phrase "Man here is for mankind" reveals a linguistic pattern where male-oriented words are used to represent humanity as a whole. While *mankind* is semantically intended to include both men and women, the use of *man* as a generic term reflects a male-centered worldview. According to feminist stylistics, such linguistic choices are not neutral. They shape perceptions and sustain unequal gender representations. Mills emphasizes that language carries ideological weight, and in this case, the word *man* subtly positions males as the default or norm in society. Although the comment attempts to clarify that *man* refers to all people, it unintentionally exposes how women are often made invisible through supposedly inclusive language. This instance illustrates the persistence of androcentric language structures that feminist scholar's critique for marginalizing female identity in public discourse.

c) **Women as marked form**

This section refers to the linguistic elements in the form of word structure contained in the text. Mills (1995) explained the existence of a female form in words which can be characterized by the addition of affixes and suffixes in a word. For example, the word "actress" which starts from the word "actor" (male form) then affixed with -ess at the end of the word becomes a female form.

Datum 1

Until they choose to be housewife

Analysis:

Basically, "housewife" only has the female form and refers to a woman/wife. This is due to gender role practices that assign women to take care of the household. Of course, this is part of the patriarchal norm that only women are in charge of the household. Historically, in the Victorian era, women were restricted from doing work outside of their domestic work and were expected not to compete with men. Datum 1 shows that there is sarcasm in the utterance which seems to mock the role of women as housewives. Indeed, in this era, women are free to do anything, in the sense of having a career or just staying at home, but the statement implicitly belittles "housewives".

Datum 2

I prefer woman in power as a boy who likes being girly, it's scary.

Analysis:

"Girly" refers to woman as marked form because of the affix -y after the word "girl". This word does not have a male equivalent because it clearly contains the female form word. Datum 2 also explains explicitly masculine woman is not scarier than feminine boy. This also shows that masculinity is higher than femininity, even though the gender is reversed. In reality, tomboy girls are more easily understood than feminine boys in the context of TikTok. For example, there are fyp videos of Billie Eilish's performance and Sam Smith's performance videos. Billie Eilish often wears oversized and tomboyish clothes, while Sam Smith often wears eccentric clothes and does not show the masculine side in general. When comparing Billie and Sam's performance videos, Sam gets more hate speech than Billie.

Datum 3

I am a feminist…Watch me cook

Analysis:

Feminist comes from the word "feminine" plus the affix *-ist* indicates the presence of a woman as marked form and it can be seen that feminine is a woman's trait. According to the context of the data, the author indicates that she is a feminist or someone who fights for women's rights and the phrase "watch me cook" is a form of the author's challenge to feminist haters.

 d) **Naming and Androcentrism**

This section discusses the relationship between naming and androcentrism, especially in references related to genital terms. According to Mills (1995), feminists argue that the unequal availability and connotation of lexical items to describe male and female genitalia reflect deeper societal attitudes towards women and their sexuality. Language is not neutral. It is shaped by male perspectives and often centers on male experience, which influences how women are referred to in discourse.

Datum 1

Ur first home was a ball not a woman

Analysis:

This comment reveals the androcentric bias in language through the use of the term *balls*, a colloquial word for male genitalia. The statement implies that a person's first origin is not from a woman but from male anatomy, thus prioritizing the male role

in reproduction. While it is biologically correct that sperm is required in the reproductive process, the comment disregards the essential contribution of women, including the egg cell and the uterus where the fetus develops. This kind of expression aligns with what Mills (1995) describes as language constructed through male-centered ideologies. It marginalizes women by suggesting that male biology is the starting point of life, which not only erases the female role but also diminishes it. Furthermore, the tone of the comment carries ridicule and a dismissive attitude, indicating a rejection of female importance in the reproductive process. Such language does not merely reflect biological facts but constructs and maintains a hierarchy in which male experience is central and female experience is secondary or even irrelevant.

e) **Euphemism and Taboo**

This section discusses androcentric terms that reflect the male perspective, particularly when addressing topics related to femininity. These topics are often considered taboo and are commonly expressed through euphemistic language. One clear example is menstruation. As noted by Mills (1995), menstruation is frequently treated as a taboo subject, leading to the use of euphemisms such as *the curse*, *that time of the month*, or other culturally embedded phrases. These expressions tend to carry negative connotations and are often wrapped in myths or mysticism, reinforcing the perception of menstruation as something shameful or unclean.

Datum

My dad wouldn't buy pads for me because "that's something a woman does"

Analysis:

The word *pads* in this context refers to sanitary pads, which are directly associated with menstruation. Although the term itself is not euphemistic, the reaction of the speaker's father highlights the underlying taboo surrounding menstruation. His refusal to buy pads is rooted in the belief that menstruation is exclusively a woman's issue and thus inappropriate for men to be involved with, even indirectly. This response reflects a broader societal discomfort with female bodily functions. Mills (1995) emphasizes that language surrounding menstruation often emerges from androcentric views, where male discomfort shapes how feminine experiences are discussed or avoided. The data illustrates how this discomfort translates into behavior and reveals the ongoing stigmatization of menstruation as something unmentionable in male discourse.

B. DISCUSSION

This study found that the representation of women in TikTok content is still shaped through various forms of sexist language, both directly and indirectly. The analysis of seven videos tagged with *#feminism* or *#feminist* and their comments revealed how users often reproduce gender stereotypes through lexical choices. These include the use of male-centered pronouns and nouns, words with feminine markers, gender-based naming, and references to taboo topics such as menstruation. Using Sara Mills's feminist stylistics at the word level, the findings showed how TikTok is not

only a space for feminist messages but also a place where gender bias continues to be repeated through everyday language.

The findings also showed that even when the video creators promote feminist views, many responses from users still show resistance or even mockery. Comments such as *until they choose to be housewife* and *ur first home was a ball not a woman* reflect strong gender stereotypes and dismiss the role of women in both public and private life. These examples highlight how TikTok users often use language to question, reject, or make fun of feminist ideas. Even supportive comments are sometimes framed using gendered views, for example praising a feminist who cooks as the "perfect woman," which suggests that traditional female roles are still seen as the ideal. These patterns show that people still hold on to traditional gender expectations, even when they claim to support equality.

The meaning behind these findings shows that language on TikTok is more than just a way to communicate; it is a tool that reflects deeper beliefs about gender. Words such as *man* that are used to mean *mankind*, or terms like *girly*, may look neutral or informal, but actually carry strong gender meanings. These lexical choices reflect a worldview where men are treated as the norm, while women are marked or made secondary. In some comments, female users even repeat stereotypes, showing how sexist language is already normalized in online culture. This situation reveals how hard it can be for women to express themselves freely on social media without being judged or reduced to certain roles.

Compared with previous studies, the results of this research confirm that gender bias in language is not a new issue. Researchers such as Ramli et al. (2019) and Dwirahayu et al. (2019) have shown that women are often portrayed in stereotypical ways in mass media like news and television. Liu (2021) and Garcia (2021) also found that women on digital platforms like TikTok are often represented through body image and become targets of verbal aggression. However, this study adds something new by focusing on the specific language used in captions and comments, using Mills's theory to analyze it at the lexical level. Previous studies that used feminist stylistics, such as those by Fitriyah (2024) and Shofiyya and Rusadi (2018), focused more on written texts like novels and web articles. This study brings the theory into the context of interactive social media, showing how sexism can still be found even in short comments and phrases.

In addition, a comparison can be made with the study conducted by Bado (2022), who analyzed the representation of women in Indonesian and American marriage-themed films using Mills's feminist stylistics. While both studies explore gender bias in discourse, Bado's (2022) focus was on scripted film dialogue, where representations are carefully designed as part of the narrative. In contrast, the current study investigates spontaneous language from real users on TikTok, revealing how gender bias operates casually in public digital spaces. Both studies found that patriarchal values still shape how women are represented, but this research emphasizes the role of ordinary users in either supporting or challenging those values through their lexical choices.

Another useful comparison is with the study by Wulan and Degaf (2025), who examined how Black women workers were portrayed in the miniseries *Self Made*. They applied feminist stylistics to analyze how discourse reflects both marginalization and empowerment of Black women in the workforce. Like this study, their research used word-level analysis and found that women are often described through negative language related to appearance or gender roles. However, they also highlighted positive representation in some parts of the series. While their study focuses on racial and gender intersectionality in scripted media, this research focuses on gender bias in everyday digital discourse. Both studies show that sexist language, whether subtle or direct, continues to appear in different media and affects how women are perceived.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This final chapter summarizes the main findings of the study and reflects on their significance in relation to the research objectives. It also provides suggestions for future studies that may wish to explore similar topics from broader or alternative perspectives. The chapter begins with a conclusion that outlines how women are portrayed through language in TikTok content using feminist stylistic analysis. It then moves on to the suggestions, which highlight the limitations of the current research and offer recommendations for future investigations and practical applications.

A. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to find out how women are represented in TikTok content using the feminist stylistic theory from Sara Mills. The analysis focused on how words are used in captions and comments to describe women. The results showed that women are often seen in a negative way. They are described using words that focus only on their feminine side, which is considered weaker than men. This kind of language makes women look less important and keeps the idea that men are more powerful.

At the word level, the study found the use of generic nouns, male-based pronouns, and marked forms that make women seem different or not the standard. There were also taboo words, especially related to menstruation, which showed that some topics about women are still considered shameful. Even though the phrase and sentence levels

were not analyzed in detail, some comments used metaphors and jokes that made women look like objects. While Sara Mills's theory was helpful in this research, it also has some weaknesses. It focuses mostly on men as the main problem and does not always reflect today's reality, where many men support gender equality. Therefore, more updated and complete analysis is needed in future research.

B. SUGGESTION

This study only applied one level of feminist stylistic analysis, focusing on the word level without exploring the phrase or discourse level. Because the data consisted mostly of short captions and comments, the analysis was limited and may not fully show how sexist meaning is constructed in digital spaces. Future research is encouraged to explore longer texts or conversations, so the analysis can include more complex sentence structures and broader discourse. It would also be useful to examine visual elements in TikTok videos, such as gestures, facial expressions, and background sounds, since these features also carry meaning and can support or challenge gender stereotypes.

Researchers can consider combining feminist stylistics with other approaches like critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, or media studies to get a deeper and more complete understanding. Including both male and female perspectives may also give a more balanced view of gender awareness in online content. In practical terms, this study shows the importance of media literacy, especially for young users who are active on social media. Schools and universities should help students learn how language

influences the way people think about gender, while social media platforms should continue improving their content moderation to create a safer and more respectful online environment. In addition, further researchers are expected to be able to continue this research based on the phrase/sentence level and discourse level to complete this feminist stylistics research.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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