



GENDER AND POWER REPRESENTATION IN THE FILM MINANG MAMINANG

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses gender and power representation in the Minang society. The source of the data is the well-known Minang film called Minang Maminang, selects as it has successfully captured changes in the way Minang women, as the dominant party in the traditional matrilineal Minang ethnic group, change their position and reposition themselves within the current post-modern Minang lifes. Downloading the film from youtube, the study then transcribed it and then mechanically identified expression relevant with gender and power. The dialectical interplay between gender role and power relation in the data were used as the bases for representing gender roles and power relation in the Minang society. The study shows that, although advancement of technology, education, opportunity and equality is fast and overarching and marriage is contemporarily seen as equal and egalitarian in husband-wife relation, Minang women are still reflected in the film and elsewhere as socially dominant, more powerful, and more responsible for the family.

Key words : gender, power, representation and film

1. INTRODUCTION

Almost all Indonesians still believe and stick on cultural tradition as their rule of life. One of the well-known ethnic groups in Indonesia is the Minangkabau community from West Sumatra as the world's largest matrilineal society has one tradition called Minang Maminang as portrayed in this film. In this community, women have the highest position in society and also as a decision maker in every aspect of life, including marriage. Minangkabau's women are asking men to marry them, then men are supposed to obey the rules. Men also should move to women's house after marrying. That unique culture named "maminang", a tradition in Minangkabau where the woman's family ask or propose a man for a marriage. All men are picked up by the woman's family and should stay at the women's house. This culture still exists today and the society also faithfully keeps this tradition alive. A conflict based on this tradition can clearly be seen throughout this movie even the position of women in this ethnic group is the side of benefit. A woman being heart-broken after a fail marriage proposal made a promise not to be faithful to this term. She was just so depressed because of her proposal was rejected by the man she loved and his rejection was due to the tradition. She moved to another city, started hating the tradition and disobeyed it altogether.

Men and women are two different types of human being which have differences in terms of sex, gender, hierarchy in society, style of interaction and many others. Society has known about how gender differs from men and women in every aspects of life. Mostly, men take dominance position in society, at office and in the family. The phenomena brings men with the potential to be a leader or has the highest position in society. In addition, men are more capable of being a leader according to their characteristics and, at the same time, office life appear to be more appropriate for men. The higher amount of salary which is supported by educational background and the expertise formed the boundaries of comfort zone to men.

Being women are complicated as well. Society and some tradition placed them as an inferior party. Women only follow what men said. In Indonesia, most of the tribes are patriarchy which men are dominated. Otherwise, Minangkabau is the example of

matriarchy existed. In fact, Minangkabau's regulation placed women as the superior. They as the voice of dominance party on this society. The film Minang Maminang represent gender and power in an unique ways.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The distinction between men and women is visible through linguistic features that they use¹. Gender roles and ideologies create different ways for men and women to experience life, culture, and society. "*Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do² – something we perform³*". That sentences clarify gender as the thing that has already adhered on every single person in this world. It has role, function, status and also responsibility to the society. In every aspects of life, both gender have their own class and it defines by the society.

Men and women also use different kinds of language. Women's language has been said to reflect their conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity, and men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, and control⁴. Those characteristics make them in different side of society.

The existence of both genders also impends above power. Power is examined as the possibility of man or woman in a social relationship to carry out his or her own will even despite reciprocal⁵. Power is a mutual factors of human being and it is exist in all appearance of social relationships. Power takes people to be the decision maker of his or

¹ Lakoff, Robin. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York : Harper & Row.

² Zimmerman, D. and West, C. (1975). *Sex Roles, Interruption and Silences in Conversation*. In Thorne & Henley.

³ Butler, Judith. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London And New York: Routledge.

⁴ Eckert and McConnell-Ginet. (2003). *Language and Gender*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Weber, Max. (1978). *Economy and Society : An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkley : University of California Press.

her owns. It creates authority. Power can be categorized as three : power of action (performed on the basis of bodily superiority), instrumental power (power outcomes from the ability, e.g punishment etc) and authoritative power (approving agreement, related to superior and inferior position)⁶. There is another term called ‘authorized language’; the power of words and world views is ‘nothing other than delegated power of the spokesperson’⁷. The important thing is the power have by the speaker which given by the society based on the social structural. “What creates the power of the words is actually a power with the potential to maintain or subvert the social order; it is based on the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them; needless to say, the words alone can not create such a belief”⁸.

Film as gender representation is mostly used nowadays. There are many films captured the relationship among society, men, women, modern life and so on. Many values and ideas can be delivered in the movie including an interesting issue in academic field related with the tradition and society. They are ‘system of representation’...all the practices ‘work like language’, not because they are all written or spoken (they are not), but because they all use some element to stand for or represent what we want to say, to express or communicate a thought, concept, idea or feeling..”⁹. The film *Minang Maminang* portrays the life of Minangkabau’s women. They have authority but banded over it. In fact, the tradition arranged the life of society, including marriage.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research which seeks answers of the questions through examining various social setting and the individuals who inhabit the setting, and how inhabitants of the settings make sense of

⁶ Popitz, Heinrich. (1992). *Phanomene der Macht*. Tubingen : Mohr.

⁷ Bourdieu, Pierre. (1991a). *Authorized Language : The Social Conditions for the Effectiveness of Ritual Discourse*. In Thompson JB (ed). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge : Polity Press, pp. 107-116.

⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. (1991b). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge : Polity Press.

⁹ Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage.

their surrounding through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles and so forth¹⁰. As I am conducted to analyze the utterances which represent the Minang society, I use documentation method as the technique to collect the data. A document is something that we can read and which relates to some aspect of the social world, includes visual document (the film *Minang Maminang*). I only focus on the utterances which defines gender and power. Document analysis is also used in the study and it includes into an important research tool in its own right. Documentary work involves reading lots of written material (the transcript of the movie to do a qualitative analysis package).

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores and reveals a social or humanity problem¹¹. I classify the utterances which defines gender and power then analyze the utterances. How gender and power captured in this movie as the representation of gender roles and power in the Minang society. After all, explain the result of analysis.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

I have analyzed the data and took 10 utterances spoken by some characters in the film *Minang Maminang* which defined gender roles and power.

a. The statement on the scene 1 (Maminang Process), **“if we may ask, we want to pick up your son”** represent the position of men in Minang culture in the process *Maminang* as the one who accept proposal. Depends on Minang’s culture, women come after and propose men because of the women’s position on this ethnic group.

b. Rizal’s mother said, **“remember, we are coming from the same group. She should know how to act as the Minang’s woman”** represent Minang’s women as superior should know how to behave including be faithful to the rules. The attitude towards rule drive them to act like how it supposed to act. In this case, women minang should take a step ahead to ask the man’s family about their marriage. How Minang culture organize a

¹⁰ Berg (2001, p. 6-7). *Qualitative Method for the Social Sciences* 4th ed. California State University : Long Beach.

¹¹ John W. Creswell. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing among five approaches* 2nd ed. Sage Publication.

marriage and how women can feel unfortunate although they are in the superior side in their society. They should go for purposing men to marry them and Rina feels that term confines herself.

c. The discussion about how women's life in Indonesia when R.A Kartini lived is the reason Rina make the statement happened on scene 8 at colloquium. People on the group discussion create some images according to characteristic of women on the past time. They are confined, live as subordinate on the society. Even getting education they are forbidden. Only men can do anything freely without any warns. Rina as the woman who came from Minangkabau is totally proud of herself. She explained how Minang society honor and respect women. Women take the highest position in this society. They can do anything they want to.

d. After having a group discussion on colloquium (scene 8), Rizal tries to fix the condition by looking for Rina. He tries to calm Rina down but failed. Rina said Rizal does not want to propose her but Rizal swerve it. Rina guess it because something by saying **“tradition? Your dignity? Your mom?”** Rina said it with emotional and sad. It represents the proposal can not be done by Rizal because of the tradition or dignity or Rizal's mother. Those three things are relates each other. Rizal respect his mother by respect their culture.

e. On the scene 12, Rizal's mother said **Rina is impolite person**. It represents Minang's women who disobey the tradition seems like women with no attitude and impolite. The following statement which is also on the same scene to strengthen that point. People will be talking behind them and all of them will think that the women are rude and unkind. That is taboo and disallowance.

f. On the scene 13, at the Coffee Shop, Rina said **“being Minang's women is so precious. Or too strong? Or Minang's men are too weak? Therefore we should ask and pick them up to marry?”** Rina tries to find the reason why women should propose men in their culture. She pulls out her idea by serious expression likes she really needs the answer of her question and little bit disappoint (on the last sentence). Sounds like she

finally realized there is no answer or reason of her question. That is her own tradition's said.

Conclusion

The film *Minang Maminang* represent gender and power in such a good way to deliver the idea and feeling. The Minang culture has very strong influence in arranging the life of Minang' society. They believe in their tradition and stick into it. They follow the rules and it makes them proud and has dignity in their society. Disobey the rules is not allowed. People will see them in a bad way. Although their term is different with what usually happen in common, they accepted it. The women have the highest position or called in authoritative power in this society and men as the subordinate. They will be proposing by the women and moving to the women's house. This is not because the women are more strong or men do not have guts, but it is all because the tradition has written the regulation of how marriage procedures should be done.

In interaction, women in this film used expression in speaking. The lexical choices, the pattern of utterances and intonation are variatif. Women's talk seems like show more feeling. Even in Minangkabau women are more powerful, it can not erase the originality of women's personality. They tend to be more visible and honest in delivering their sense. Crying is the way women usually express their feeling. If it is hurt, they cry. If it is happy, they cry. Different reason to cry but still they do. Intonation also plays an important part in women's speaking. Pitch range included, different types with men who speak more toneless than women. This happened almost in every women speak in this film. Even men to do so, they are not using that pattern too much.

As the majority in Minangkabau, Islam has the big influences of how culture contracts their regulation. Many deliberations come up from consideration of Islam's regulation. Most of ethnic groups in Indonesia including the Minang society walk on their life following tradition's regulation which are mostly similar or taken from islam's regulation (scene 14, similar with Rizal's father statement). Society placed regulation of religion and tradition side by side. It means, religion and tradition are having each other to play an

important part in the Minang society therefore the hierarchy, class and position of men and women related to the power in which tradition has given.

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