

WOMEN'S VULNERABILITY IN THE SWIMMERS (2022): AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST ANALYSIS FROM AN APPLIED LINGUISTICS PERSPECTIVE

Alya Choirunia¹, Misbahus Surur²

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 220301110198@student.uin-malang.ac.id

²Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, misbahussurur@uin-malang.ac.id



©2025 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License-(CC-BY-SA) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)



DOI : <https://doi.org/10.30983/mj.v4i2.10528>

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Submission: September 11, 2025 | Revised: October 23, 2025 | Published: December 31, 2025 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|

Abstrak

Kerentanan merupakan pengalaman yang kerap melekat dalam kehidupan perempuan, terutama ketika mereka berada dalam situasi sosial yang tidak setara. Dalam konteks konflik dan migrasi paksa, kerentanan tersebut menjadi semakin berlapis dan kompleks. Film *The Swimmers* (2022) menghadirkan representasi pengalaman perempuan pengungsi melalui kisah dua bersaudara asal Suriah yang menghadapi perang, perpindahan lintas negara, serta berbagai bentuk diskriminasi. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana kerentanan perempuan direpresentasikan dalam film *The Swimmers* dengan menggunakan perspektif feminisme interseksional. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan sumber data berupa 10 adegan utama yang dipilih secara purposif karena menampilkan persinggungan antara gender, status pengungsi, dan relasi kekuasaan. Data dianalisis melalui pembacaan dialog dan visual film dengan menaunkannya pada konsep interseksionalitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kerentanan perempuan dalam film tidak hanya ditampilkan sebagai kondisi keterpinggiran dan ketidakberdayaan, tetapi juga sebagai ruang munculnya agensi, ketahanan, dan solidaritas. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada upaya memperkaya kajian feminisme interseksional dalam analisis film, khususnya dalam membaca representasi perempuan pengungsi secara lebih kontekstual dan berlapis.

Kata Kunci: Feminisme Interseksional, Film *The Swimmers*, Kerentanan Perempuan, Linguistik Terapan

Abstract

Vulnerability is an experience that is often inherent in women's lives, especially when they are in socially unequal situations. In the context of conflict and forced migration, this vulnerability becomes even more layered and complex. The film *The Swimmers* (2022) presents a representation of the experiences of refugee women through the story of two sisters from Syria who face war, cross-border displacement, and various forms of discrimination. This article aims to analyze how women's vulnerability is represented in the film *The Swimmers* using an intersectional feminist perspective. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data sources consisting of 10 main scenes selected purposefully because they show the intersection between gender, refugee status, and power relations. The data were analyzed through reading the film's dialogue and visuals by linking them to the concept of intersectionality. The results of the study show that the vulnerability of women in the film is not only portrayed as a condition of marginalization and powerlessness, but also as a space for the emergence of agency, resilience, and solidarity. The contribution of this study lies in its effort to enrich the study of intersectional feminism in film analysis, particularly in reading the representation of refugee women in a more contextual and layered manner.

Keywords: Intersectional Feminism, *The Swimmers* 2022, Women's Vulnerability, Applied Linguistics

1. Introduction

Vulnerability is an experience that is often inherent in women's lives, both in private and public spaces. Women are often perceived as having gifts such as beauty, kindness, gentleness, empathy, and grace, which in many cultures are attached as ideal characteristics of femininity. However, these characteristics do not always provide protection (Al Farizi et al. 2020). On the contrary, the traits attributed to women often become a loophole for various forms of violence and injustice to arise uninvited. Crime can occur anywhere, in various forms and guises, and operates through power

relations that are often hidden in everyday social practices, including through language and the way women are represented. Therefore, women's vulnerability cannot be understood solely as an individual problem, but rather as a social condition shaped by unequal cultural, economic, and political structures.

Women's vulnerability becomes even more complex when they find themselves in situations of armed conflict and forced migration. In this context, women not only lose their safe space and stability in life, but also face multiple risks, such as gender-based violence, exploitation, restrictions on mobility, and limited access to basic services (Hooks 2000). Refugee women are often placed in extremely vulnerable positions because their identities intersect with various social categories, such as gender, nationality, and legal status. Data from UNHCR (2024) shows that women and girls are the most affected group in the global refugee situation. However, these statistics often stop at numbers and do not fully describe how vulnerability is experienced, interpreted, and negotiated in the daily lives of refugee women (Syria Emergency 2024).

The experience of forced migration due to armed conflict often places women in a position of multiple vulnerability, both as victims of war, refugees, and subjects whose bodies and voices are controlled by unequal social structures (Ni'mah 2023). This experience is represented in the film *The Swimmers* through the figures of two female athletes from Syria whose lives have been torn apart by war and cross-border displacement (Hosaini 2022). In this context, war is not only present as the backdrop of events, but as a discursive space that reveals gender-based power relations. Scenes depicting interactions with armed forces, including experiences of sexual harassment, show how verbal language, silence, and bodily expressions serve as markers of women's limited agency. Broken speech, weakened tone of voice, and silence become linguistic representations of women's subordinate position in oppressive situations, while also reflecting how power is manifested through linguistic and non-linguistic practices (Ningsih et al. 2022).

On the other hand, the narrative of migration presented does not stop at depicting suffering, but develops into a discourse on the resilience and solidarity of women in extreme conditions (Chi et al. 2022). One crucial moment shows how women's bodies become a medium of struggle when they have to swim for hours to save the boat carrying the refugees (Kara 2023). This situation represents a vulnerability that is not passive, but rather fraught with moral responsibility, empathy, and courage. Linguistically, the contrast between intimate personal dialogue and a threatening atmosphere builds meaning that language and intonation serve as tools to negotiate fear, hope, and strength. Thus, refugee women are represented not merely as objects of pity, but as subjects capable of building agency and resilience in the midst of a complex humanitarian crisis (Dijk 1998; Qomariyah et al. 2024).

In an effort to understand this experience, film can serve as an important medium of representation. Film not only presents stories, but also reproduces and shapes social meaning through visual narratives, dialogue, language choices, and character construction. As a cultural text, film records social reality while offering a particular perspective on the groups represented (Hall 1997). From an applied linguistic perspective, language in film is understood as a social practice that contains ideology, power relations, and specific subject positions. The representation of women in film, especially women in marginalized positions, is often caught between reinforcing stereotypes and attempting to present alternative narratives through dialogue and interactions between characters (Fairclough 1995).

On the other hand, growing awareness of feminism and gender inequality has led to the emergence of various cultural works that highlight women's struggles (Hidayah et al. 2022). In this context, films play an important role as a visual medium that represents women's experiences. *The Swimmers* is not just a story about two female refugees, but also a critique of the social and political structures that place women in a subordinate position (Musfikin 2024). The development of digital technology has made

films more accessible and popular due to their visual power and closeness to reality, making them an effective means of conveying social messages. Many films now dare to raise sensitive themes about women and gender inequality (Penley 1988). From an applied linguistic perspective, film becomes a space for discourse analysis to see how narrative structure, word choice, and visual expression shape gender ideology (Fairclough 1995).

However, there are still many films that portray women as weak and passive figures, even turning them into sexual objects. Such representations are not only unfair, but also reinforce biased views of women. However, in recent years, there has been a gradual change in the way women are portrayed in films. Now, women are more often represented as independent, strong individuals who are brave enough to face injustice (Dzulfikar 2023; Susilawati et al. 2024). This change reflects a shift in the global feminist paradigm towards an intersectional perspective that highlights the relationship between gender, class, and cultural identity (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989). Furthermore, from a linguistic perspective, changes in the representation of women can also be observed through the transformation of cinematic language from dialogues that were once subordinative to ones that are more affirmative and reflective of gender awareness (Robin 2009).

Film as an audiovisual medium serves not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a space for producing meaning that shapes society's perspective on social issues. In representing the experiences of female refugees, film presents language, visuals, and bodily expressions as elements that work simultaneously to construct an understanding of identity and power relations. An examination of these aspects opens up opportunities to see how women are not merely presented as narrative figures, but as subjects whose positions are negotiated through discursive practices. In this context, a study of *The Swimmers* is relevant for analysis of the language, discourse, and verbal and nonverbal representations that accompany women's experiences in situations of migration and humanitarian crisis. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how the film constructs discourse on gender and humanity without stopping at the storyline alone. Thus, an analysis that combines intersectional feminism and applied linguistics offers a different perspective in understanding the complexity of women's representation in contemporary films.

Several previous studies have examined *The Swimmers* from different perspectives, including migration representation, the sociology of war, and refugee experiences. One relevant study is by Jain and Farkas entitled "*Head Above Water: The Inspiring Journey of The Swimmers (2022): A Survey on Audience Perception for the MigraMedia Project*". This study highlights audience perceptions of the representation of migrants in *The Swimmers*, particularly among those with a migrant background (Jain et al. 2024). Second, research conducted by Çelik entitled "*Cinematic Orientalism: East-West Perception in Netflix's 'Swimmers'*". The study analyzes the film *The Swimmers* through an approach of ideological criticism and orientalism, focusing on how the film reproduces Western narratives that position the East as backward and inferior (Çelik 2024).

Third, research that examines the socio-cultural perspective, namely Ni'mah research entitled "*Potret Perjalanan Pengungsi Suriah Menuju Jerman dalam Film Netflix 'The Swimmers'*". ("*Portrait of Syrian Refugees' Journey to Germany in the Netflix Film 'The Swimmers'*"). This study uses a sociological approach to literature to examine how the film represents the social and cultural realities of Syrian refugees who fled to Germany due to conflict in their country (Ni'mah 2023). Fourth, research conducted by Taşkan Ali Can & Gülcan ÇİTİR Öztürk entitled "*The Swimmers Filminin Savaş ve Göç Bağlamında Sosyolojik Analizi*" ("*The Sociological Analysis of The Swimmers Film in the Context of War and Migration*") uses a sociological approach to examine the impact of the Syrian civil war on women and children and how migration shapes their identities and social lives oleh (Taşkan et al. 2025).

Fifth, relevant research conducted by Yilmaz Gaye Gökalp & Bengisu Hilal Buyuran, entitled “*Yüzücüler (The Swimmers) Filmi Üzerinden Düzensiz Göçmenliği Okumak*”. This study discusses the migration experiences of two Syrian sisters who tried to escape the war and reach Europe. In their study, the authors use a migrant network theory approach to analyze how the film *The Swimmers* represents the various challenges and struggles faced by migrants, especially in the context of irregular migration (Yilmaz & Buyuran, 2023). Sixth, research by Yinding Chi, Yaoye Hong, Yao Zhao, Yanbin Li, Jie Yin entitled “*Snapping for high-speed and high-efficient butterfly stroke-like soft swimmer*” presents an innovation in soft robotics that mimics the butterfly swimming style to achieve high speed and efficiency. Although not a film study, this research is still relevant because it highlights the symbolism of the butterfly swimming motion, which is also an important element in the film *The Swimmers* as a representation of endurance and strength (Chi et al. 2022).

Seventh, research conducted by Sathe Rajwardhan Jaydeep & Abhishek Baghwat Shinde entitled “*Voices of War: A Feminist Perspective of Arab Women in Contemporary War Films*”. This study examines how Arab women are portrayed in war-themed films, focusing on two films, *Mosul* (2019) and *The Swimmers* (2022). In their study, the authors use feminist film theory, postcolonial theory, and trauma studies to analyze how the voices and emotional experiences of women, particularly in the context of conflict and forced migration, are represented in films (Sathe & Shinde, 2025). However, there has been no in-depth study analyzing *The Swimmers* from an intersectional feminist perspective that highlights the vulnerability and agency of refugee women. This is the new area that is the focus of this study. To gain a deeper understanding of the representation of women's vulnerability in the film *The Swimmers*, this study uses the theory of intersectional feminism developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins (K. Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000).

This study shares a number of similarities with previous studies that also use the film *The Swimmers* as an object of analysis, particularly in examining issues of migration, war, and the experiences of female refugees. Several previous studies, such as those conducted by Ni'mah, Taşkan Ali Can & Öztürk, and Yilmaz & Buyuran, place this film within a sociological and migration studies framework to examine the social reality of Syrian refugees and the impact of conflict on their identities. Meanwhile, the studies by Jain and Farkas highlight audience perceptions of the representation of migrants, and Çelik's research critiques the film through the lens of Orientalism and East-West relations. Another similarity can be seen in the studies by Sathe and Shinde, which both use a feminist perspective to interpret the representation of Arab women in war films. However, these studies generally still focus on grand narratives such as conflict, migration, ideology, or trauma, without elaborating in depth on how the vulnerability and agency of refugee women are constructed through linguistic practices and discursive representations in films. Unlike previous studies, this study does not only focus on what is represented, but also on how representation works through language, dialogue, silence, intonation, body gestures, and visual relations as part of the practice of power and the negotiation of refugee women's identities.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to fill a gap in previous studies, namely by combining intersectional feminism and applied linguistics perspectives in the analysis of the film *The Swimmers*. Although a number of studies have discussed this film from the perspectives of sociology, migration, general feminism, and even orientalism, no study has specifically highlighted how the vulnerability and strength of refugee women are negotiated through language and verbal and nonverbal representations in the film. In fact, as shown in the introduction, women's vulnerability is not only structural but also produced and maintained through everyday discursive practices, including in audiovisual texts. Therefore, this study fills the gap by reading *The Swimmers* as a multimodal text that

represents the intersection of gender identity, refugee status, culture, and power relations through language and visual symbols. Using Crenshaw and Collins' intersectional feminism framework, this study offers a more in-depth and contextual reading of the experiences of refugee women, while expanding the contribution of applied linguistics to film studies and contemporary humanitarian issues.

The theoretical framework in this study uses intersectional feminism introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor of law at UCLA and Columbia University, through her writing *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*. Crenshaw argues that legal and social systems often fail to understand the forms of oppression experienced by black women, because they are caught between two categories of discrimination, race and gender. She uses the metaphor of a “crossroads” to explain how a person can experience systemic collisions from various directions of social identity. In her other work, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991), Crenshaw divides the concept of intersectionality into three main forms: structural, political, and representational. All three help to understand how dual or layered identities create specific vulnerabilities that cannot be explained through a single dimension (Crenshaw 1989; K. Crenshaw 1991). This approach also opens up space for analyzing language and discourse in films as representations of gender ideology. Through an applied linguistic perspective, intersectional analysis can be linked to how word choice, speech structure, and film narratives shape understandings of women's vulnerability and power. In other words, Crenshaw's concept of “intersecting identities” can also be interpreted linguistically, namely through the interaction between language, social context, and ideological meaning produced by the speech of female characters (Fairclough 1995; Lazar 2005).

Structural intersectionality explains how a person's social position can hinder access to protection and resources. In the film *The Swimmers*, Yusra and Sara face discrimination as women, athletes, and refugees, highlighting the overlapping injustices within the social system. Political intersectionality highlights the position of women who are caught between various global power agendas and policies. The representation of Yusra as an athlete on the Refugee Olympic Team illustrates how humanitarian politics often ignore the aspirations of migrant women. Meanwhile, representational intersectionality focuses on how Western media and cultural stereotypes often portray Middle Eastern women as passive victims. The film attempts to challenge these stereotypes by presenting Yusra and Sara as strong, independent figures with their own social agency (K. Crenshaw 1991).

Patricia Hill Collins thinking expands on Crenshaw's concept through the idea of a matrix of domination, which highlights that power relations such as race, class, gender, and nationality work together to create a system of oppression. In the film *The Swimmers*, global power structures, migration policies, and cultural perceptions of Arab women are part of the matrix of domination that shapes Yusra and Sara's experiences. Collins also introduces the term controlling images, which are stereotypes attached to minority groups to justify social injustice. Stereotypes of refugee women as a burden or weak victims appear in this film, but the visual narrative reverses this view by highlighting strength, empathy, and solidarity among women (Collins 2000). In the context of discourse analysis, the controlling images described by Collins can be understood as the construction of meaning through language. The choice of terms attached to refugee women, such as “burden,” “weak,” or “victim,” shows how linguistic representation can reinforce or oppose systems of domination. Therefore, the linguistic approach in this study helps to reveal the ideological layers hidden behind the text and speech in the film (Dijk 1998).

Crenshaw and Collins theoretical framework is important in this study because both reject a one-dimensional approach to injustice. Through an intersectional perspective, Yusra and Sara's experiences in the film *The Swimmers* are not only read as a story of migration or the struggles of athletes, but as a

complex representation of female identity in an unequal social system. This approach allows for a deeper analysis of how women's experiences are shaped by overlapping identities and power, and how they build agency amid vulnerability (Jumitasari et al. 2023). In addition, an applied linguistic approach, specifically critical discourse analysis, is used briefly to examine how the language and speech of the characters in the film reflect ideology, power, and resistance. By reading the film as a discourse text, this study combines intersectional feminist theory with linguistic analysis to show how women's identities and vulnerabilities are constructed through verbal and nonverbal language (Amertawengrum 2025).

This study aims to analyze the representation of women in the film *The Swimmers* (2022) through an intersectional feminist approach. The main focus is on how Yusra and Sara Mardini are portrayed as athletes and refugees, and how gender identity, immigration status, and cultural background shape their experiences (Halliday et al. 2014). This study highlights vulnerabilities such as sexual harassment, cultural pressure, and limited access as a minority group, while also examining linguistic aspects in the film's dialogue, including diction choices, speech, and language strategies that construct feminist meanings and resistance ideology (Luna et al. 2024). The analysis is based on Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional feminism theory, which emphasizes the overlap of social identities, as well as Patricia Hill Collins' concepts of the matrix of domination and controlling images. By integrating critical discourse analysis, this study shows how language can both reproduce and challenge gender inequality. Theoretically and practically, this study enriches our understanding of women's agency and solidarity in vulnerable conditions and demonstrates the integration of feminism and applied linguistics in reading ideology and power through film language (Ni'mah 2023).

2. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an intersectional feminist theoretical framework to analyze the representation of women's vulnerability and agency in the film *The Swimmers* (2022). This approach was chosen because it is able to explore the social experiences of female characters in depth, especially experiences shaped by the intersection of gender identity, migration status, cultural background, and class position (Creswell et al. 2018). The film is treated as a cultural text that not only presents a story but also produces social meaning through dialogue, visuals, and inter-character relationships. With a qualitative approach, this study focuses on the meaning of female representation rather than statistical measurement, allowing for contextual and interpretive analysis (Denzin et al. 2018).

The object of this study is Sally El Hosaini's film *The Swimmers*, which was watched on Netflix. The film was watched repeatedly more than three times to ensure the accuracy of observations and consistency in data interpretation. From the entire film, this study purposively selected 10 main data points in the form of scenes and dialogues that were considered most representative in portraying the issues of vulnerability, subordination, and the fighting spirit of female characters. The selection of data was based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) scenes that portray the female characters' experiences of migration and displacement, (2) dialogues that reveal gender-based power relations, both within the family and in social spaces, (3) situations that show psychological pressure, symbolic violence, or restrictions on women's bodies and choices, and (4) moments that show forms of resistance, negotiation, or solidarity among women. Scenes that are not directly related to this focus were not included in the analysis (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991; 1991).

Data collection was conducted through film observation and literature study techniques. Observations were made by systematically recording dialogues, characters' actions, and supporting

visual elements in each selected data. Relevant dialogues were transcribed, then supplemented with contextual information such as intonation, facial expressions, and body gestures of the characters. In addition, the researcher also noted linguistic aspects such as word choice, style of speech, and forms of speech acts that indicated the female characters' positions of power, obedience, or resistance. The literature study was conducted by examining books and scientific articles related to intersectional feminism, particularly the thoughts of Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, to strengthen the theoretical basis and assist in the data interpretation process (Moleong et al. 1989).

Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding. The first stage was to identify units of meaning from each piece of data, namely parts of dialogue or scenes that contained issues of gender, migration, and identity. The second stage was to group these units of meaning into main themes such as structural vulnerability, patriarchal control, symbolic violence, and female agency. At this stage, linguistic aspects were analyzed contextually to see how language plays a role in constructing meanings of inequality or resistance, without making it a stand-alone critical discourse analysis. Thus, linguistic analysis served as a support to clarify the relationship between linguistic representation and the social experiences of female characters (Fairclough 1995).

To maintain data validity, this study applied several validation strategies. First, consistency of observation was ensured by repeatedly watching the film to ensure that the selected data was truly relevant to the focus of the study. Second, theory triangulation was carried out by linking the data findings with the concept of intersectional feminism from Crenshaw and Collins. Third, the researcher critically re-read the analysis results to ensure the relevance between the data, theory, and conclusions. These steps were taken so that the research results were not purely subjective, but had a systematic basis for analysis and were academically accountable.

3. Results and Discussion

This study found that the representation of women in the film *The Swimmers* (2022) is not constructed through a single identity, but rather through the interconnection of various social positions that influence each other (Siahaan et al. 2023). Based on thematic coding of ten main data points, the research findings were grouped into five broad categories, namely: (1) gender vulnerability in the domestic sphere, (2) structural vulnerability due to migration status, (3) violence against women's bodies in the context of migration, (4) cultural identity negotiation, and (5) women's agency and solidarity. This grouping was done to avoid overlapping concepts and to clarify how each form of vulnerability works at different levels, yet is interrelated (Crenshaw 1989).

Table 1. Findings and Forms of Intersectionality in the Film *The Swimmers* 2022

| NO | Vulnerability Aspects | Description in the Film |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Gender Vulnerability in the Context of Family | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Their father said that having three daughters is better than having a thousand sons. 2. Yusra and Sara's father is a strict coach with high aspirations. He does not like to be called "baba" when he is at the pool. 3. Their father forbade Yusra and Sara from going to Europe because he was worried, but their mother supported her two daughters in pursuing their |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | | dreams. |
| 2. | Social Vulnerability and Access for Women Refugees | 4. In Germany, Yusra was not accepted into a swimming club despite her achievements. 5. Yusra competed under the flag of the refugee team, not that of her country, Syria. |
| 3. | Migration, Structural Violence, and Female Bodies | 6. Soldiers touched Sara inappropriately while checking her identity, then Yusra was almost harassed by a man who worked at the workshop/place where the refugees were temporarily staying. |
| 4. | Culture, Identity, and Self-Adjustment | 7. Yusra was asked by other refugee women why she did not wear a headscarf, and the Eritrean woman took off her headscarf so as not to stand out in the West. |
| 5. | Women's Agency and Solidarity | 8. Yusra and Sara showed their solidarity by swimming while pulling a boat filled with refugees. 9. Sara cut her hair short and chose to return to Lesbos to become a volunteer. 10. Sara's message to Yusra before the race was, "Swim for all those who cannot be in your position." |

Based on Table 1, each piece of data is not treated as a stand-alone piece of dialogue, but rather as part of an intertwined construction of meaning in the narrative of the film *The Swimmers* (2022). The numbering of the data (Data 1–10) is used to facilitate systematic reading and tracing of the analysis, while also indicating that each piece of data has undergone a process of selection and thematic coding. Each data point contains the context of the scene, dialogue excerpts, and categories of findings that represent forms of female vulnerability or agency. In the following discussion, each data point will be described sequentially in two stages of analysis. The first stage presents the dialogue and scene context descriptively to preserve the integrity of the narrative meaning. The second stage analyzes the data analytically by relating it to the intersectional feminism theory of Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, as well as critical linguistic aspects that include diction choices, speech acts, power relations in language, and the position of women as subjects in discourse. With this approach, the analysis aims to show how women's experiences in the film are shaped not only by gender, but also by migration status, family relations, and social structures that work simultaneously (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989; 1991).

1. Gender Vulnerability in the Family Context

This subsection explains how gender relations emerge in the home and family environment, particularly between the father, mother, and two main female characters. In this case, patriarchy manifests not only as overt domination, but also through symbolic control, excessive expectations, and power structures wrapped in family affection. Intersectional feminism helps us understand how women's position in the home is also influenced by social and cultural norms that often require them to meet double standards.

Data 1:

The first scene in the film, at 04:32-04:45, depicts the warm atmosphere of a large family as they surprise Yusra with a birthday celebration in the living room (Hosaini 2022). In the midst of this happy moment, the father says something that sounds very proud:

اب: "أشكر الله ليلا ونهارا لأنه أنعم عليّ بثلاث بنات قويات، أقوى من ألف ابن. لكن لا تنسوا كم هن محظوظات هؤلاء الفتيات لأنني والدهنّ ومدرهنّ."

Father: *"I am always grateful to God for blessing me with three daughters who are stronger than a thousand sons. Don't forget how lucky these children are to have a father and coach like me."* (Hosaini 2022).

This opening scene shows the close bond between a father and his children. With pride, he says that having three daughters is far better than having a thousand sons. At first glance, this statement seems admirable, as if challenging social norms that tend to favor sons. The camera zooms in on the smiling faces of the children, showing a moment of warmth within the family. However, upon closer inspection, this statement actually reinforces patriarchal values in an indirect way: women are considered valuable only if they can exceed the standards set for men (Setiawan 2025).

Narratively, this dialogue appears to be a form of pride from a father towards his daughters. At first glance, this statement seems progressive because it places daughters as subjects who are superior to sons, something that often contradicts traditional patriarchal values. The audience is led to feel the warmth and unity of the family through visual expressions and the father's confident tone of voice. However, upon closer examination, this dialogue has a more complex layer of meaning (Setiawan 2025). Linguistically, the phrase "أقوى من ألف ابن" (stronger than a thousand sons) is a hyperbolic comparison that implicitly places men as the standard of strength. Women are only considered valuable when they are able to exceed the benchmark of masculinity. In other words, recognition of women remains framed within a patriarchal logic that measures women's value based on male parameters (Fairclough 1995).

Within the framework of intersectional feminism, this situation can be interpreted as a form of representational intersectionality as proposed by Crenshaw (1991). Female identity is presented through seemingly positive representations, but remains limited by dominant categories (K. Crenshaw 1991). Girls are not valued as whole subjects, but rather as "women who are capable of resembling or surpassing men." Such representations have the potential to obscure the experiences of women who do not conform to these standards. This analysis is reinforced by Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) concept of controlling images. The praise given by fathers is not neutral, but conditional. Girls are valued because they are strong, accomplished, and under the guidance of male figures (Collins 2000). Thus, the language of praise functions as a symbolic control tool that maintains the father's power structure as the center of authority. Discursively, language not only conveys affection but also regulates women's position in the family hierarchy (Fairclough 1995).

Data 2:

The next scene, at 11:25-11:33, shows Yusra practicing swimming under the direct supervision of his father, who stands at the edge of the pool with a stern and serious expression. This moment seems simple, but it has a deep meaning. When Yusra asks about her swimming time and calls out “baba,” her father insists that she not use that name but rather “coach” when she is in the pool. Sara, who is at the edge of the pool, hears their conversation and remains silent. There is a dialogue between Yusra and her father (Kara 2023).

يسرى: "كم كان وقتي؟"

اب: "أنت متعبة."

يسرى: "كم كان وقتي يا أبي؟"

اب: "بل 'أيها المدرب'. سأراك في المنزل."

Yusra: *"How much time do I have?"*

Father: *"You're exhausted."*

Yusra: *"How much time do I have, Baba?"*

Father: *"Call the coach. See you later at home."* (Hosaini 2022).

Situationally, this dialogue depicts the coach-athlete relationship. However, because the relationship is between a father and daughter, the professional and emotional boundaries become blurred. Yusra's request to know her time record is also an attempt to seek validation, not only as an athlete, but also as a child. The father's refusal to be called “baba” and the replacement with “coach” is a strong sign of the limitation of the affective relationship (Pakpahan et al. 2024). Linguistically, the father's utterance is a directive speech act that asserts authority. The use of the implicit imperative “call me coach” serves to control the way Yusra interacts with him. Here, language becomes an instrument of discipline that affirms the father's position as a dominant figure, while Yusra is placed as a subject who must obey (Fairclough 1995).

From the perspective of structural intersectionality, Yusra is at the intersection of her identities as a daughter and an athlete. She is required to perform well, but at the same time loses the space to express her emotional needs. This burden is not experienced equally by male subjects in the same structure (K. Crenshaw 1991). Collins (2000) adds that in hierarchical systems, the father figure is often positioned as the center of control, so that family relationships are reproduced in a manner similar to rigid institutional relationships. As a result, emotional closeness is sacrificed for the sake of discipline and performance, which has a greater psychological impact on women (Collins 2000).

Data 3:

The next scene at 20:34 - 21:02, there was a small argument between the father and mother about their children's decision to go to Europe, and at 26:47-27:28, the mother hugged Yusra and Sara, who were going to Europe, with an emotional expression and full support for her two daughters and their choice (Kara 2023).

As the situation in Syria worsened, the Mardini family was faced with a difficult choice: to stay or to flee. The father insisted on keeping his children, especially his daughters, at home for their safety. On the other hand, the mother supported Yusra and Sara's desire to go in search of freedom, which was to participate in the 2016 Rio Olympics. The situation was filled with strong emotions; the father

shouted protectively, while the mother spoke firmly but attentively. The tension in this family revealed a clash between two views: patriarchal protection and women's freedom (Hosaini 2022).

The father rejected his children's decision to go to Europe on security grounds, while the mother supported their choice. Verbally and nonverbally, the father was portrayed as loud and protective, while the mother spoke more calmly but firmly. The mother's embrace of Yusra and Sara symbolized the emotional support they did not receive from their father (Fairclough 1995). Within the framework of political intersectionality, Crenshaw explains that women's interests are often marginalized when decisions are dominated by male perspectives, even in the domestic sphere. The protection offered by the father is actually a form of control that limits women's autonomy. In contrast, the mother acts as an agent who opens up space for her daughters' choices and freedom (K. Crenshaw 1991). Collins interprets this position of mothers as a form of self-definition, namely when women redefine their roles not as guardians of the status quo, but as subjects who enable resistance. Linguistically and visually, the mother's support functions as a counter-discourse to the father's authority. This scene confirms that female solidarity can emerge even in private spaces, and becomes the initial foundation for female agency in Yusra and Sara's life journey (Collins 2000).

2. Social Vulnerability and Access for Women Refugees

This subsection discusses how social strata and migration status affect access to spaces related to achievement and recognition, particularly in the field of sports. In this film, although the main characters demonstrate clear abilities, their status as refugees creates exclusion and structural barriers. This illustrates that society often focuses more on an individual's background than on their abilities.

Data 4:

At 1:32:25-1:33:20, upon arriving in Germany, Yusra and Sara visited a swimming club in hopes of continuing their training. Yusra brought her record of achievements as a national athlete from Syria and tried to convince the coach to give her a chance to join. Unfortunately, they were rejected on the grounds that the club was full and not accepting new members. Despite their clear experience and ability, their status as refugees meant they were looked down upon (Hosaini 2022).

Although the dialogue in this scene is relatively minimal, it is precisely the absence of lengthy conversation that is an important marker in the analysis. There are no in-depth questions about Yusra's abilities, no serious interest in looking at her track record. The rejection is conveyed briefly, coldly, and administratively. Linguistically, the reason "the club is full" functions as an exclusive statement that closes access without the need to explicitly state discrimination. This kind of bureaucratic language is often used to disguise practices of inequality in social institutions. Upon further examination, this scene shows that access to spaces of achievement is not solely determined by individual ability, but is greatly influenced by social status and migrant identity. Yusra was not rejected because she was incompetent, but because of her position as an immigrant and refugee. Thus, the vulnerability experienced by Yusra is not a personal vulnerability, but a structural one.

From an intersectional feminist perspective, Crenshaw refers to this condition as a form of structural intersectionality. The discrimination experienced by Yusra cannot be understood through a single category of identity. She experienced exclusion because she was at the intersection of being a woman, a refugee, and a non-European citizen. These three identities reinforced her marginalized position within the institutional structure of sports in her destination country. A system that appears neutral actually works selectively against certain subjects (K. Crenshaw 1991). Collins (2000) adds to the

analysis through the concept of a matrix of domination, in which power does not work singularly, but through a network of institutions, norms, and discourse. The swimming club in this scene is not just a sports venue, but a representation of a social institution that has the power to determine who is “worthy” of entry and who is not (Collins 2000). The brief and impersonal language of rejection reinforces the power distance between the institution and the refugee women. Thus, this scene shows how institutional language plays a role in reproducing social inequality in a subtle but effective way (Fairclough 1995).

Data 5:

At 1:56:14-2:05:42, the scene shows Yusra trying hard to prove her abilities so that she can be accepted into the swimming club and continue training to achieve her dream. She earned the opportunity to compete in the 2016 Rio Olympics because of her hard work, but not on behalf of her country, Syria, but as part of the ‘refugee team’ (Ni’mah 2023).

Narratively, this scene is often interpreted as the pinnacle of success and victory. However, a more critical analysis reveals ambivalence in this representation. Yusra did indeed earn the opportunity to compete in the Olympics, but she did not represent Syria or Germany. Her identity was subsumed into the category of “refugee,” a collective identity not tied to any particular nationality. Symbolically, the Refugee Team flag signifies recognition, but at the same time affirms alienation. From a linguistic and visual perspective, the absence of national symbols changes the meaning of the competition. The Olympics, which are usually a venue for national representation, in this context become a space for global humanitarian representation. Yusra is present not as a complete political subject, but as a symbol of the global migration crisis. It is this visual language that shows how international recognition can still produce new forms of exclusion.

Crenshaw refers to this situation as a form of political intersectionality, in which global political policies and structures fail to fully accommodate the needs of marginalized subjects. Yusra is recognized as an athlete, but not as a citizen. Her identity is divided between personal success and political limitations. This experience shows that refugee women are often placed in symbolic positions, rather than positions that truly have representative power (K. Crenshaw 1991). Collins reinforces this analysis through the concept of symbolic representation within domination. Yusra's joining the Refugee Team does increase the visibility of refugee women, but that visibility is limited and controlled. She is presented as the face of global humanism, not as an individual with equal political rights. Thus, this scene reveals an important contradiction: global recognition does not always correlate with structural justice. The film indirectly criticizes how the international system finds it easier to celebrate symbols than to address the root causes of inequality (Collins 2000).

3. Migration, Structural Violence, and Female Bodies

This section discusses migration, which involves not only physical movement but also bodies at risk of abuse and violence. The bodies of female refugees in this film become objects of abuse, reflecting the relationship between gender inequality and socio-political vulnerability in humanitarian crises.

Data 6:



Figure 1. The sexual harassment experienced by Sara and Yusra

At 13:28-14:26, Sara and Yusra were on their way home by bus when the area was heavily guarded by civil authorities due to the war affecting their region of Syria. Halfway through the journey, the bus they were riding was stopped by civil authorities, who boarded the bus to check the passengers' identification documents. The soldiers deliberately touched Sara inappropriately. Then, at 1:15:35-1:16:28, a similar incident happened to Yusra while she was at the refugee camp, where sexual violence was committed by a worker whose workplace was being used as a refugee camp. Sara quickly and decisively came to Yusra's aid when she was about to be sexually assaulted (Kara 2023; Prasmadena et al. 2021).

Scenes of sexual harassment appear twice in different contexts: first when the bus they are riding is stopped by Syrian soldiers, and second when they are in a refugee camp in Europe. In both situations, Sara experienced inappropriate touching, while Yusra experienced sexual violence. The camera zooms in on their tense expressions, showing fear mixed with anger. There is no protection, no mechanism for justice. Once again, women's bodies become objects that are vulnerable to exploitation (Arita 2025; K. W. Crenshaw 1991).

In a linguistic context, Sara's silence can be interpreted as a form of forced silence, a condition in which the subject does not have access to language to express her traumatic experiences. Fairclough (1995) refers to this kind of silence as part of a non-neutral discursive practice, because silence can be the result of unequal power relations. Sara is not silent by choice, but because her social and physical circumstances force her to be silent (Fairclough 1995). When linked to Crenshaw's theory (1991), Sara's experience reflects a very complex intersectional vulnerability. She is at the intersection of identities as a woman, a young person, and a refugee without state protection. The violence she experienced was not merely individual sexual violence, but a form of structural violence that arose from the collapse of the legal protection system in a situation of forced migration. Her identity as a refugee exacerbated her pre-existing gender vulnerability (K. Crenshaw 1991).

Collins, through the concept of controlling images, explains that women's bodies, especially those of marginalized women, are often positioned as bodies that can be controlled, exploited, and violated. In this scene, Sara's body is represented as a body that has no social protection. The film deliberately avoids showing scenes in a vulgar manner, instead emphasizing the psychological and symbolic impact of the violence. Thus, the film rejects sensationalism and instead shows how sexual violence works as a mechanism of domination in an unequal social structure (Collins 2000).

4. Culture, Identity, and Self-Adjustment

This subsection discusses how the cultural identity of migrant women is questioned and even changed due to the influence of a different environment. The depiction of the hijab and responses to

women's bodies in public spaces in Western countries are the focus, highlighting the conflict between efforts to maintain identity and the need to adapt for the sake of security and acceptance by society.

Data 7:



Figure 2. The hijab issue between Yusra and the Eritrean woman

The first image at 1:04:20-1:05:25, when the refugees are resting on the side of the railroad tracks, shows Yusra and Shada (a woman from Eritrea) chatting. The woman asks Yusra why she does not wear a hijab and is surprised to learn that Yusra is a swimmer. The following is their conversation:

شادا: "أنت لا ترتدين الحجاب وتسبحين, لم أقابل فتاة مثلك من قبل."
 يسرى: "في الواقع, كان أبي سباحا محترفا, كان يمثل 'سوريا' في البطولات الدولية, وأحبّ ذلك كثيرا. لكنه اضطر الى التوقف. وفي الواقع, لم ينبج إلا البنات, فلم يكن أمامه سوى تدريبننا. كان مدربا لي ولأختي."
 شادا: "والآن أنتما طموحه."
 يسرى: "أجل. وأنا أعشقها. السباحة هي وطني. أشعر بأنها المكان الذي أنتمي إليه."

Shada: "You don't wear a hijab and you can swim. This is the first time I've met a woman like you."

Yusra: "My father is a professional swimmer, he's a Syrian national swimmer and loves it. Unfortunately, he had to quit. My father only has daughters, so he trained us. He became my coach and my sister's coach."

Shada: "Now you're carrying on his ambition."

Yusra: "Yes, I like it. Swimming is like my home. I feel destined to be there." (Hosaini 2022).

Scene in the second image at 1:09:09-1:09:35, when the refugees arrive at a rest stop in the middle of the forest, then Shada takes off her hijab so as not to stand out in the West. A conversation arises among the female refugees about wearing the hijab. Some of them decide to remove their hijabs to reduce the risk of negative attention in the transit country. The camera focuses on a scene where a woman hesitates to remove her hijab, while her friend says that removing it is safer. This decision is not just about clothing, but a survival strategy in threatening conditions.

The first scene when the refugees are resting beside the railroad tracks. In this relatively calm situation, Yusra engages in conversation with Shada, a woman from Eritrea. Shada expresses her surprise that Yusra does not wear a hijab and is a swimmer. Shada's statement, "أنت لا ترتدين الحجاب" (You don't wear a hijab and you swim, I've never met a girl like you before), indicates certain cultural expectations regarding the body and identity of Muslim women. Yusra's response is a long narrative about her father, her background in swimming, and her important statement: "السباحة هي وطني. أشعر بأنها المكان الذي أنتمي إليه" (Swimming is my homeland. I feel that it is the place where I belong). Linguistically, Yusra's statement uses the metaphor of "homeland" to define her identity. She does not refer to a country, religion, or specific cultural symbol, but rather to personal practices that shape her life experience. This metaphor becomes a discursive strategy to assert identity outside the categories often attached to migrant women. In discourse analysis, such metaphors function

as tools for reframing identity, where the subject attempts to regain control over how she is understood by others (Fairclough 1995).

The second scene shows a more tense situation when the refugee women arrive at a rest stop in the middle of the forest. In this scene, Shada decides to take off her hijab so as not to attract attention in the West. The conversation between the women reveals debate and doubt, especially among one woman who seems hesitant to remove her hijab, until she is finally convinced that it is safer to do so. The camera focuses on their expressions of uncertainty and anxiety, emphasizing that this decision is not a matter of fashion, but a survival strategy (Robin 2009).

Within the framework of Crenshaw's thinking, this scene reflects representational intersectionality, where the religious identity of migrant women is framed through negative stereotypes in European public spaces. The hijab becomes a symbol that makes women's bodies more vulnerable to surveillance, suspicion, and even violence. The decision to remove the hijab shows how public representation limits the way women express their identity, forcing them to constantly negotiate between personal beliefs and physical safety (K.. Crenshaw 1991). Collins interprets this action as a form of self-definition. Removing the hijab does not necessarily mean losing one's identity, but rather a conscious choice made by women to maintain control over their bodies and safety. The language that emerges in conversations between women becomes a space for identity negotiation, where collective experiences shape individual decisions. Thus, this data shows that the identity of migrant women is not static, but is continuously shaped through social interactions, structural pressures, and everyday discursive practices (Collins 2000).

5. Women's Agency and Solidarity

This subsection shows that despite being in a vulnerable position, the women in this film are still able to demonstrate agency and solidarity. Agency does not only mean winning or succeeding in competition, but also taking moral courage and contributing to others. The intersectional feminist perspective allows us to see how agency can emerge from suffering.

Data 8:



Figure 3. Yusra and Sara swam while pulling a rubber boat in the open sea.

At 47:57-52:35, there is a very emotional and tense scene where Yusra and Sara have to swim in the middle of the ocean while pulling a rubber boat that is about to sink. The boat's engine has died and it is overloaded, while there are many other refugees on board, including women, children, and several men. In this emergency situation, Yusra and Sara chose to jump into the water. The camera focused on their exhausted but determined bodies, while the faces of the passengers were full of hope. This moment changed the narrative of female refugees from passive victims to active saviors (Chi, Yinding et al, 2022; Hosaini 2022).

This scene is almost entirely devoid of dialogue, so meaning is constructed through body language and visuals. In multimodal linguistic studies, physical actions can be understood as a form of nonverbal discourse that is laden with ideological meaning (Lazar 2005). Yusra and Sara's bodies become a "language" that signifies courage, solidarity, and resistance to life-threatening conditions. Without words, they articulate female agency in its most concrete form.

Crenshaw asserts that vulnerability and agency often coexist in intersectional experiences. Yusra and Sara are women, refugees, and athletes. It is this intersection of identities that allows them to have a resilience that other passengers do not have. The ability to swim, which was previously associated with competition and achievement, becomes a tool for collective rescue. Structural vulnerability does not erase agency, but rather gives birth to a unique form of strength (K. Crenshaw 1991). Collins reinforces this analysis through the concept of standpoint epistemology. The knowledge possessed by Yusra and Sara stems from their life experiences as marginalized subjects. Their actions demonstrate that oppressed experiences can be a source of practical knowledge that saves lives. This scene shifts the representation of refugee women from passive victims to active subjects who save their community. The film affirms that vulnerability and strength are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other in the experiences of migrant women (Collins 2000).

Data 9:

At 1:52:17-1:53:57, the scene shows Sara cutting her hair short. This action is not just a change in appearance, but also a symbol of an important decision she made: to leave behind her dream of becoming an athlete and choose a new path as a volunteer supporting refugees. Although at the beginning of the film, Sara had the same enthusiasm as Yusra to participate in swimming competitions. However, her bitter experiences during her migration journey changed her perspective, and she decided to return to Lesbos, a place full of difficult memories, to help people who were experiencing a situation similar to the one she had faced. The decision made by Sara shows a form of agency that is not always seen in a person's achievements or successes, as demonstrated by Yusra at the Olympics (Hosaini 2022; Ni'mah 2023).

Symbolically, women's hair is often associated with feminine identity, attractiveness, and social self-image. In visual discourse analysis, the act of cutting hair can be interpreted as a rejection of old identities and the formation of new ones. Sara no longer defines herself through sporting achievements, but rather through social roles and humanitarian solidarity. Crenshaw views this change as the result of complex intersectional experiences. Sara is a woman, a refugee, an athlete, and a trauma survivor. The intersection of these identities shaped the change in her life priorities. Her decision cannot be understood as a failure, but rather as a response to the structural experiences that shaped her consciousness (K. Crenshaw 1991).

Collins refers to this action as a form of strong self-definition. By cutting her hair, Sara took control of her own life narrative and rejected the identity imposed on her by the world of sports and social expectations. She showed that women's agency is not always manifested through victory or achievement, but also through the courage to choose a different path in life. Sara's transformation confirms that marginal experiences can give rise to more autonomous and empowered identities (Collins 2000).

Data 10:

At 1:59:09-2:01:53, Sara is seen giving Yusra support before the Olympics. Sara also tells him:

سارة: "أنتذكرين ما كان يقوله أبي؟ 'حدّدي مسارك وأكملي سباقك' كل هذا هراء."
 سارة: "يجب أن تسبحي من أجلنا جميعا، يجب أن تسبحي من أجل أبي لأنه لم يفعل، اسبحي من أجلي لأنني لم أستطع، اسبحي من أجل 'سفين' لأنه لم يستطع، اسبحي من أجل 'شادا'، اسبحي من أجل 'رزان حدّاد'، و من أجل كل من مات محاولاً إيجاد حياة جديدة."

Sara: "Remember what Baba said, 'Focus on your lane, race against yourself' it's all nonsense."

Sara: "Swim for all of us, swim for Baba who couldn't make it happen, swim for me who couldn't make it happen, swim for Sven who couldn't make it happen, swim for Shada, swim for Razan Haddad, and for all those who died while seeking a new life." (Hosaini 2022).

This scene shows that success is not only about individual achievement, but also about representing the voices and stories of people who are often overlooked. The scene is emotional, highlighting Yusra's silent face as she realizes the heavy burden on her shoulders. Sara's words transform the race from a mere sporting event into a symbol of collective struggle (Lazar 2005).

In a highly emotionally charged dialogue, Sara quotes her father's advice, then dismisses it as "nonsense," before delivering a repeated moral command: "اسبحي من أجلنا جميعا" (swim for all of us). This statement is followed by the names of individuals and groups who failed to reach safety. Linguistically, Sara's speech is a form of directive speech act laden with ideology. She is not merely encouraging, but shifting the meaning of the race from individual competition to collective representation. The repetition of the phrase "swim for" reinforces the meaning that Yusra carries the historical burden and experiences of many people (Fairclough 1995).

Crenshaw refers to this condition as political intersectionality, in which Yusra stands at the intersection of identities as a woman, an athlete, and a refugee. She represents not only herself, but also communities that have long been excluded from global politics. Yusra's body in the Olympic arena becomes a medium for complex political representation (K. Crenshaw 1991). Collins interprets this moment as a form of political solidarity born out of marginal experiences. The knowledge and awareness conveyed by Sara stems from the life experiences of refugee women. Yusra's victory, if it happens, is not just a personal achievement, but a symbolic victory for those who have lost their chance at life. This scene confirms that sport is never politically neutral, and that refugee women are not merely objects of pity, but subjects of resistance who carry a collective voice (Collins 2000).

4. Conclusion

This study shows that *The Swimmers* (2022) represents the experiences of female refugees as a social reality shaped by the intersection of various identities, such as gender, migration status, social class, culture, and political position. Through an intersectional feminist approach, the vulnerability experienced by Yusra and Sara is not understood as a personal condition or the result of conflict alone, but rather as the result of social structures that place women in an ambiguous position between limitation and resilience. This finding shows that women in the film are not represented as passive victims, but as subjects who continue to negotiate with structural pressures in the family sphere, the social sphere, and even global institutions such as international sports.

In the context of applied linguistics, this study confirms that language in the film *The Swimmers* functions as a medium of discourse that shapes and disseminates meanings about power, identity, and female agency. The choice of diction, metaphors, directive speech acts, as well as the use of silence and body language show that meaning is not only constructed through verbal dialogue, but also through

nonverbal and multimodal communication practices. The language in this film is not neutral, but rather an ideological arena where power relations and gender representations are negotiated. Thus, the film can be understood as a discursive practice that both reflects and challenges the unequal social structures faced by female refugees.

Although this study successfully demonstrates the relationship between language, identity, and the representation of women in films, it still has limitations because it focuses only on one object of study using a descriptive qualitative approach. Therefore, further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies of films with themes of migration and displacement from different cultural contexts, or to combine film discourse analysis with audience reception studies. This approach is expected to broaden our understanding of how representations of women are constructed through language and visuals in cinema, as well as strengthen the contribution of applied linguistics to film and gender studies.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express his gratitude to Misbahus Surur as the supervisor and co-author for his guidance, direction, and input, which were very helpful in the process of writing and refining this article. The author also thanks his parents, Moch. Choirul Anwar and Heni Sulistyowati, for their prayers, support, and trust throughout the research process. Their support was a significant source of strength for the author in completing this research.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

Alya Choirunia played a role in formulating the research idea, determining the focus and design of the research, collecting data in the form of selecting and recording film scenes, analyzing and interpreting data, and writing the initial draft of the manuscript up to the revision stage.

Misbahus Surur contributed to the conceptual and theoretical direction, critical review of the analysis and argumentation, substantive input on the structure and depth of the discussion, and final approval of the manuscript submitted for publication. All authors were involved in the discussion and refinement of the manuscript and have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding Statement

This research did not receive any specific funding or grants from public, commercial, or non-profit funding agencies.

Data Availability Statement

The data in this study comes from the films that were the subject of the study and the author's analysis notes on scenes and dialogues relevant to the focus of the study. This data was used as the basis for analysis as presented in this article.

The film as a research source is a copyrighted work and therefore cannot be provided as open data. Meanwhile, the analysis notes were compiled by the author for the purposes of this research and have not been published separately. If necessary for academic purposes, additional explanations regarding the analysis process can be obtained by submitting a request to the corresponding author.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or non-financial, that could influence the design of the study, the analysis process, the interpretation of data, or the writing of this manuscript.

AI Use Statement

In preparing this manuscript, the author made limited use of ChatGPT (OpenAI) for language editing purposes, including grammar correction, sentence clarity, and text readability. The entire content of the research was reviewed and revised by the author, who is solely responsible for the substance, accuracy, and academic integrity of this article.

Additional Information

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to: Alya Choirunia, 220301110198@student.uin-malang.ac.id

ORCID iD

Alya Choirunia, ORCID iD not available

Misbahus Surur, ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9370-5004>

References

- Amertawengrum, Indiyah Prana. 2025. *Sastra Feminis: Perspektif, Tokoh, Dan Karya*. edited by W. Yuliani. Klaten: Lingkar Edukasi Indonesia.
- Arita, Vikila Diyah. 2025. "Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Di Pengungsian: Tinjauan Teoritis Dan Temuan Studi Literatur." *Humaniora Sains* 2(3):381–85.
- Çelik, Kemal. 2024. "Cinematic Orientalism: East-West Perception in Netflix's 'Swimmers.'" 4(Apa 7):43–63.
- Chi, Yinding; Hong Yaoye; Zhao, Yao; Li, Yanbin; Yin, Jie. 2022. "Snapping for High-Speed and High-Efficient Butterfly Stroke-like Soft Swimmer." *Science Advances* 8(46):1–15. doi:10.1126/sciadv.add3788.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought*. Routledge.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." (1). doi:10.4324/9780429499142-5.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. 1991. "Race , Gender , and Sexual Harassment RACE , GENDER , AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT *." *Southern California Law Review* 65(1241):1467–76.
- Creswell, John W. et al. 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publication, Inc.
- Dijk, Teun A. van. 1998. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. 1st ed. London.
- Dzulfikar, Daris. 2023. "Resistensi Para Tokoh Perempuan Dalam Film Yuni: Kajian Feminisme Kekuasaan." *Besaung: Jurnal Seni Desain Dan Budaya* 8(1):64–69. doi:10.36982/jsdb.v8i1.2832.
- Fairclough, N. L. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis*. 1st ed. London: Longman.
- Al Farizi, Muhammad, Salman et al. 2020. "Krisis Iklim, Gender, Dan Kerentanan: Potret Perempuan Petani Di Kabupaten Karanganyar, Jawa Tengah." *Journal of Politic and Government Studies* 9(4):369–85.

- Hall, Stuart. 1997. *REPRESENTATION Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.
- Halliday, M. A. K. et al. 2014. *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 4th ed. Newyork: Routledge.
- Hooks, Bell. 2000. *Feminism Is For Everybody*. Vol. 45. 1st ed. Canada: South End Press Cambridge, MA.
- Hosaini, Sally El. 2022. *The Swimmers*. Britania Raya.
- Jain; Farkas. 2024. "Head Above Water: The Inspiring Journey of The Swimmers (2022): A Survey on Audience Perception for the MigraMedia Project." 277–95. doi:10.17951/nh.2024.9.277-295.
- Jumitasari, Jumitasari et al. 2023. "Ketidakadilan Gender Pada 'Tokoh Perempuan Dalam Novel Sengketa Rasa Karya Penabila: Tinjauan Feminisme.'" *Kande : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia* 4(1):73. doi:10.29103/jk.v4i1.11413.
- Kara, Forde. 2023. "Swimming Toward a Dream: Yusra Mardini's Incredible Journey from Refugee to Olympic Swimmer by Reem Faruqi." *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* 2(77):56–57.
- Lazar, Michelle M. 2005. "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis." Pp. 372–87 in *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*.
- Luna, Zakiya et al. 2024. "On Joy and War : Black Feminism / Intersectionality." *Annual Reviews* 50:61–83. <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-soc-090123-032434>.
- Moleong, Lexy J. et al. 1989. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Remadja Karya.
- Nada Musfikin, Naelul Muna. 2024. "Analisis Semiotika Feminisme Radikal Dalam Film Poor Things." *PIKMA* 7(September):224–37.
- Ni'mah, Evayatur. 2023. "POTRET PERJALANAN PENGUNGSI SURIAH MENUJU JERMAN DALAM FILM NETFLIX 'THE SWIMMER.'" *MAJALAH ILMIAH TABUAH* 27(2):80–94. http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM_PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI.
- Ningsih, Yuniati et al. 2022. "Aufklarung : Jurnal Pendidikan , Sosial Dan Humaniora Upaya UNHCR Dalam Mencegah Terjadinya Sexual Gender Based Violence Terhadap Pengungsi Perempuan Di Indonesia." 2(3):276–83.
- Norman, K. Denzin; Yvonna, S. Lincoln. 2018. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Pakpahan, Gernaida Krisna R. et al. 2024. "PARTISIPASI PEREMPUAN DALAM PENDIDIKAN DI." *Diegesis* 9(1):1–30.
- Penley, Constance. 1988. *Feminism and Film Theory*. 1st ed. London: Rotledge New York.
- Prasmadena, Eugenia et al. 2021. "Pemaknaan Kekerasan Simbolik Dalam Pelecehan Seksual Secara Verbal (Catcalling)." *Journal of Development and Social Change* 4(1):90–114. <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/jodasc/article/view/52498>.
- Qomariyah, U'um et al. 2024. "The Impact of Women's Roles in the Preservation of Nature: Analysis of Ecofeminism on Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk." *Bahasa Dan Seni: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Pengajarannya* 52(1):1–10. doi:10.17977/um015v52i12024p1.
- Robin, Lakoff. 2009. "Language and Woman 's Place." *Cambridge University Press* 2(1):45–80.
- Sathe, Rajwardhan Jaydeep; Shinde, Abhishek Baghwat. 2025. "Voices of War : A Feminist Perspective of Arab Women in Contemporary War Films." *The Voice of Creative Research* 7(2):384–91.

- Setiawan, Yohanes. 2025. "Membaca Ester Sebagai Simbol Resistensi Perempuan : Analisis Interseksional Gender Dan Identitas Etnis." *Danum Pambelum* 5(1):107–17.
- Siahaan, Melinda et al. 2023. "Cinta, Keperawanan, Dan Rasa Malu." *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 11(1):109–37. doi:10.46567/ijt.v11i1.336.
- Surya Nurul Ainun Hidayah, Haslinda, Aco Karumpa. 2022. "Feminisme Dalam Film Yuni." *Jurnal Konsepsi* 11(1):143–57. <https://p3i.my.id/index.php/konsepsi>.
- Susilawati, Udin Kamiluddin, Lilik Herawati. 2024. "Representasi Perempuan Dalam Film Habibie & Ainun 3 Karya Hanung Bramantyo: Kajian Feminisme Liberal." *D Sastra* 6(2):278–97.
- Syria Emergency. 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/syria-emergency>.
- TAŞKAN, Ali Can; Gülcan ÇITIR ÖZTÜRK. 2025. "The Swimmers Filminin Savaş Ve Göç Bağlamında Sosyolojik Analizi." *New Era International Journal Of Interdisciplinary Social Researches* 10(27):1–9.
- Yilmaz, Gaye Gökalp, Bengisu Hilal Buyuran. 2023. "Yüzücüler (The Swimmers) Filmi Üzerinden Düzensiz Göçmenliği Okumak." *IJOESS* 14(54):1436–52.