

MEN AND WOMEN DIFFERENCES IN USING LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS AT STAIN KUDUS

Sri Wahyuningsih
STAIN Kudus, Indonesia
wahyuningsih@stainkudus.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This paper mainly investigates the differences of using a language both men and women especially the students' conversation at STAIN Kudus. These differences are viewed from a number of aspects including vocabulary, attitudes, syntax and non-verbal differences. This research belongs to a qualitative research. Data were collected through transcripts of a video documentation played by the students of Sharia Department at STAIN Kudus. The result shows that male and female students have shown differences in their forms, contents, and uses. Men tend to be more directive. Besides, they use more simple words. On the other hand, women are more expressive and polite in using language. In addition, they use more gestures and words signifying the feeling, emotional and psychological states.

Keywords: *Men, Women, Differences, Language, Students*

I. INTRODUCTION

The way of men and women speaks has become an interesting topic to study. In some cases, men and women have different ways in using a language. These differences could arise from the structure, form, vocabulary, syntax, and so forth. In term of the voice, Wardhaugh (2006) advocates that men and women have different voice in term of the characteristics such as the difference of using verbal skills. In term of vocabulary, for instance, women normally tend to use colorful words and maintain adjectives such as lovely, sweet, and beloved which are rarely used by men. In short, men and women have different styles of using a language because they are brought up in different ways and they possess different roles in society.

A number of studies related to the differences of language use both men and women were previously conducted by researchers. Men and women had a number of differences in some ways (Lakoff, 1973; Haas, 1979; Robertson,

2013). Likewise, at STAIN kudus, students coming from Syariah Department got English materials both spoken and written. Uniquely, they are not English students and their background is business and management in Islam, it looks definitely interesting hence the writer conducts a research focusing on the differences of using language between men and women.

Having mentioned the previous researches related to the differences of using a language both men and women, the writer focuses both on investigating and discussing several differences of using a language both men and women through transcripts of a video documentation played by the students of Sharia Department at STAIN Kudus. This article begins by detailing the background of research within the area, analyzing the transcripts and discussing the differences of the languages used by men and women.

II. DISCUSSION

This research belongs to a descriptive qualitative research which is simply in the form of the descriptive analysis or interpretations. It is immediately or potentially observable and it can be inferred that there is no manipulation of treatments. In order to investigate numerous differences of using language between men and women, the conversation in the video was transcribed and analyzed to provide data by which this issue could be discussed. The conversation involved three men and three women. After having transcribed, the scripts of the video were analyzed from the vocabulary, attitude, syntax and non-verbal aspects using Wardhaugh's testable claims about gender differences in using language.

Gender

The term "gender" cannot be avoided in our life as it belongs to a part of societies. Gender and sex itself could have divergent meanings. Some people use those terms synonymously. Indeed, it is needed to define the basic terms and its concepts as it has been separated by the sociolinguistic researchers. Schilling (2011) elaborates that gender is not simply to a biological or physiological sex. It is more than a complicated construct of sociocultural and socio-psychological aspects. With regard to this, gender is often held to be

grounded in biological sex. She then emphasizes that gender has to do with matters such as social and economic roles and relations (including, crucially, power relations), conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity, and often also with sexual orientation and sexual identity. It can be inferred that sexuality tends to have to do with biological aspects. On the other hand, gender is a social construct or socioculturally determined.

Eckert and McConnell-Giner in Wardhaugh (2006) assert that the force of gender categories in society makes it for us to move through our lives in a non gendered way and impossible not to behave in a way that brings out gendered behavior in others. In other words, gender is a key component of identity. In line with Wardhaugh, Salihu (2014) gives more explanation about gender by advocating that gender is so persuasive that in a society we assume it is bred in our genes. He added that most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and recreated out of human interaction, out of social life and is the texture and order of that social life. Having a look at the descriptions, it could be deduced that the term 'gender' can be interpreted as culture that belongs to humans' production depending on everybody constantly 'doing gender'.

Apart from the language point of view, Madjdian and Bras (2017) elaborate the differences between men and women in food and health aspects. Women tend to be liable in preparing food, while men usually tend to focus on distributing food. Further, the differences of gender bias and cultural power in the context of households may have an influence on females' food and the security of nutrition through decision-making processes, and liabilities for producing, getting, purchasing, preparing, and consuming food (Ramachandran in Madjdian and Bras, 2017).

In line with it, men also have the power of bargaining to determine about allocating food inasmuch as they are considered as contributing most to the family and household finances. In a health aspect, Madjdian and Bras (2017) clearly assert that women tend to have at a detriment compared to men only in term of particular life course events or in specific stages of life, including menstruation, pregnancy and lactation, or in certain periods of the year. It has been exemplified by Das Gupta (1987) that women in the condition

of pregnancy and lactation were not freely eat more nourishing food producing in undernourishment during these life stages, and did not possess a voice about having medical care during labor resulting in higher maternal mortality.

Based on the elaborations above, it could be inferred that there are possibly differences of applying a language experienced by men and women viewed from the numerous perspectives such as in health, biology, body, language, and so forth. In term of a speech or interaction, Holmes in Wardhaugh (2006) offers some testable claims about gender differences in using language. Those cover men and women develop different patterns of using language, women usually focus on the affective functions of an interaction more often than men do, women tend to use linguistic devices that stress solidarity more often than men do, women usually communicate in some ways which will maintain and increase solidarity while men tend to communicate in some ways which will focus on the power and status and women are stylistically more flexible than men.

Wardhaugh's statements above show that there have been numerous ways of differences of the language use applied by men and women. These include language patterns, ways of interaction, topics or subjects, and styles of using language. The differences in the language use are accordance with the statements of Rasekh & Saeb (2015) emphasizing that men and women are also different in linguistics. Gender differences in the use of linguistic forms exist in any speech community with varying degrees of intensity and the linguistic forms used by women and men contrast to some extent in all speech communities. In line with Rasekh and Saeb, Hanafiyeh and Afghari (2014) describes that in the area of interaction, women prefer discussing personal topics to debating private issues. Regarding this, it is likely clear that the language use both men and women is different in some ways.

Language, Community, Social Class and Status

Humans could be different from one person to another in using language particularly in the way they speak. One of the aspects of differences is associated with a biological part, for instance their pitch differences. Besides, Guy in Mesthrie (2011) emphasizes that in many societies some of

the most important of the sociolinguistics divisions are associated with differences in social prestige, wealth, and power. Regarding this, humans identify themselves as belonging to a particular group and social identity for a number of reasons such as social, religion, politics, culture, family, and so forth.

Associated with class, some people may assume that class is dealt with the scale of position of a person determined by a number of characteristics. It is in line with Guy in Mesthrie (2011) that class is a relatively continuous scale on which individuals are ranked in accordance with assorted personal characteristics such as level of income, education, occupation, etc., which collectively indicate certain degrees of social regard. The various classes then will dramatically reflect in the linguistic usage.

The study of the class differences reflected in the language use was early conducted by Trudgill (1972) finding out that the calculation of the (ng) variables variants indicated that there were very marked differences between the usage of working-class males and working-class females: the (n) variant was favored by males, ie: pronunciations such as 'singin' rather than singing) much more than did females. This shows that women had stronger preferences for standard forms than men. Then, Labov (1981) points out that the highest status of group in society usually adopts a formal style. Further, women generally overcome men in term of tendency in adopting or supporting the correctness of behavior. In short, women get much more tendency to use language to show their social status than men.

In relation to research on language and gender, it look definitely interesting that both male and women students at STAIN Kudus have shown some differences when they speak in English though they actually are not from English Department. These differences could be investigated through several aspects as follows:

Vocabulary Differences

From the students' conversation, it shows that men and women students had different style of choosing words in order to express their feelings. These differences of vocabulary choices can be seen in the numerous aspects below:

a. *Adjectives*

From the transcript, it was shown that women students preferred using more adjectives such as soft, wonderful, sweet, good, nice, and so forth. On the other hand, men seldom use adjectives. The use of more adjectives indicates that when women would like to describe their feeling and everything in the world, they tend to be more heedful and sensitive to the environment. In addition, women were fond of expressing their emotions by using vivid words that men seldom used. From their conversation, it was found that women used 11 words of adjective, while men just used one adjective. Thus, this is in line with Wardhaugh's claim that women tend to use linguistic devices that is the use of more adjective in their conversation to show their solidarity and more vivid conditions.

b. *Colour Words*

A sense of feminism usually belongs to women and they tend to use more colour words to make something more vivid and colorful that men rarely use. For example: amazing, extraordinary, unique, and so forth. This finding is in line with Wardhaugh's statement that women are more likely focus on the functions of affective in the communication more often than men do.

c. *Adverbs*

The language usage of differences between men and women could be seen in using adverbs. In this case, women more prefer using a number of adverbs as "so", "quite". For instance: of course. Heemmmm so nyummy, It's so nice to be here, I'm quiet tired Ida. Meanwhile, men tend to prefer using adverb "very". For example: People say that the museum is *very* unique.

d. *Expletives and swear statements*

Women perhaps are stylistically more flexible and gentle than men. Hence, they try avoiding uttering swear words because these words are considered to be uncomfortable and they belong to taboo words for women. Besides, those words are considered to be able to annoy the friendship with their friends. Indeed, women tend to apply linguistic

devices that focus more on solidarity than men do. From the conversation, it shows that the woman students rarely utter swear words as “damn”. They used “oh my god” instead to express their feelings. For example: Wow Oh, my God! It’s so wonderful view!. Consequently, women more focus on the manners and politeness of using language. From the conversation, it also finds that man students did not use swear words like “damn” at all. They may consider that the environment where they study is based on religious study. Therefore, neither men nor women students uses both swear words and expletives.

e. Diminutives

From the conversation, it apparently showed that women tend to like using words that indicate affections, as *so sweet, oh dear*. Such words will be problematic if they are uttered by the men particularly in accordance with psychological aspects and their manly characteristics. Besides, woman students tend to appreciate politeness and increase solidarity such as please, sorry. It was definite that there are different ways in choosing vocabularies in order to get emphatic effects. Indeed, this finding is in line with Wardhaugh that women prefer focusing on the affective functions of an interaction more often than men do.

f. Pronouns

Based on the conversation, woman students are fond of using first person plural pronouns to express something. On the other hand, the man students are more likely focus on using first person singular pronoun and the second person pronoun.

Example:

Women : **We** want to see more the identity monument.

Men : Next turn left until **you** find T-junction. Finally just follow the way around 200 meters and **you** will see Museum Kretek.

Men : No, **I** don’t know. **I** need to ask someone

Attitude Differences

Man and woman students tend to have different style and attitude when they express something. In certain moments, men and women show their differences in uttering the expression. Men usually try to find out solutions directly when they have problems. Meanwhile, women tend to show their sympathy by expressing panic statements and melancholic gestures. Further, women often protest or complain when they find unlucky situations supported by emotional expression, instead of solutions. As it has been expressed by the woman students of STAIN Kudus in their conversation in which they felt panic when her friend got headache.

For example:

Woman 1: Emmm, I have a headache, help me friends!

Woman 2: Oh my god, where can we find a clinic here?

Different from women, man students tend to find solutions when they faced a problem. As it has been described by the following example:

Man 1: Do you know the way to Museum Kretek?

Man 2: No, I don't know. I need to ask someone. People say that the museum is very unique.

Man 1: ok, let's go.

From the above conversation, it shows that men do not get panic when they find such problem. Indeed, they are fond of trying to find a solution by asking someone else. Besides that, women tend to get more attention to use standard language than men. Therefore, they are reluctant of breaking the language rules. From the conversation, it also indicates that power is quite fundamental for men's linguistic behavior. As stated by Kiesling (1998, p. 71) emphasizing that men struggle for powerful juxtaposition of roles because of a societal ideology of hegemonic masculinity. This shows that male students have power roles of taking decisions and risks. On the other hand, men outperform roles over women and men over other men.

Example:

Man : Excuse me, sir. My name is Ali. I **wanna** to go to Museum Kretek. Do you know the way to go there?

Woman : Good Morning, I **want to** introduce myself, my name is farah as a tour guide.

From the above conversation, it seems that women tend to use the standard rules. Further, this is showed in the different pronunciations.

Syntax Differences

The syntax differences showed by men and women students at STAIN Kudus include:

a. Modulation

From the conversation, it seems that women mostly take something into consideration. They seldom impose their own opinions and claims on others. In fact, they give an open decision for others. Further, they tend to use more modulation than men. On the other hand, men simply tend to express something directly. As it has been exemplified as follows:

Women : **Would** you please take a picture of us?

Men : Do you know the way to go there?

The above examples show that women much more focus on respecting politeness in asking something. Meanwhile, men tend to ask something in simple and direct ways. Simply speaking, it could be inferred that women tend to show the politeness than men.

b. Interrogative sentences

Women use more interrogative sentences than men. From the students' conversation, it indicates that women used six interrogative sentences while men used three interrogative sentences. The use of interrogative sentences seems to have a meaning that women are more likely to continue more conversation with other people. As it has been exemplified by the following sentences:

Women : Good morning, nice to meet you, miss. We want to see more the Identity Monument. **Could you help us?**

Women : **Would you please take a picture of us?**

Women : Hey, **what is it?**

Women : This is a traditional food from Kudus, Jenang. **Do you want to try it?** the taste is so sweet and soft.

Women : **Do you want to buy it?**

Women : **Are you Ok, Rohmah?**

Women : Oh my God, **where can we find a clinic here?**

Different from women using more interrogative sentences, men merely used three ones as has been exemplified by the following sentences:

Men : **Do you know the way to Museum Kretek?**

Men : Excuse me, sir. My name is Ali. I wanna to go to Museum Kretek. **Do you know the way to go there?**

Men : Yes, from here, you go straight, and then you will find interjection. Next turn left until you find T-junction. Finally just follow the way around 200 meters and you will see Museum Kretek. **Do you understand?**

c. Imperative Sentences

From the conversation, it shows that woman students applied more imperative sentences by using more “let’s patterns”. Further, they use the imperative sentences of modal verbs, such as can, may, could, should, etc.

Example:

Women : Yes, of course. **Just follow me**, I will show you. **Look at the picture!** It is a mosque which is popular in Kudus, mosque of Menara Kudus.

Women : That’s right. **Let’s move there.** It’s a miniature of Menara Kudus established by sunan kudus.

Women : Ok, **you can pay it at cashier later.**

Women : By the way, **let’s go to the third floor.**

Women : huuuhh I’m quiet tired Ida. **Let’s have a rest for a while!**

Women : ehmmm, I have a headache, **help me friends!**

Women : Yes, you are right. **Let’s take a picture.**

Women : Once again, very good. Ok miss, Thank you very much for taking us here. **We should go now to have a lunch.**

From the students’ conversation, it is also found that men only used three imperative sentences. In addition, they seldom use “let’s pattern” and modal verbs in giving orders.

Example:

Men : **Ok, go now.**

Men : Yes, from here, **you go straight**, then **find interjection**. **Next turn left until you find T-junction**. **Finally just follow the way around 200 meters** and you will see Museum Kretek. Understand?

Men : **Let's go**

d. Correctness of Grammar

The research shows that women tend to use more a standard grammar of English than men do. This indicates that women focus more on the correctness of grammar by using clear utterances of precise grammar.

Example:

Women : Good Morning, I *want to* introduce myself, my name is Farah as a tour guide. Welcome to Monument of Kudus.

Men : Excuse me, sir. My name is Ali. I *wanna go* to Museum Kretek. Do you know the way to go there?

Non-verbal Differences

As it has been described previously that women tend to show politeness and pay more attention to correctness of grammar in their conversation that men seldom do. From the students' videos, it is found that women used more expressive gestures in their utterances by moving their hand, face, and other parts of body signifying the feeling, emotional and psychological state in their conversation, while men used less gestures.

III. CONCLUSION

To sum up, people normally have different ways in using a language. Likewise, the language used by man and woman students of Sharia Department, STAIN Kudus is different in some ways. Uniquely, they are not English students and their background is business and management in Islam. It is surprising when they show the differences in their English conversation. These differences could be seen from the different aspects such as vocabulary, attitude, syntax and non-verbal differences. In term of vocabulary differences, women prefer using more adjective and vivid words that rarely men use such as soft, wonderful, good, extraordinary, and so forth. In term of non-verbal differences, women use more expressive gestures in their utterances by

moving their hand, face, and other parts of body, while men use less gesture. It should be noted that this study has investigated only the language used by the students of Syaria Department at STAIN Kudus. It is kindly suggested that future researchers conduct studies of linguistics in other fields from various disciplines as well as from different countries. By conducting such research, we would possibly obtain wider insights on how cultures and sub-cultures influence the language usage.

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