Women's Language Features Used by Indonesian Female Bloggers

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ABSTRACT

The study entitled *Women's Language Features Used by Indonesian Female Bloggers* aims to investigate women's language features, the frequency of the features, and the possible reasons of using the features by female bloggers. The data were in the form of written text of *Blogspot.com*, published from October 2011 to September 2012, which consists of several bloggers' activities such as their routines, business, fashion, and special events. The main theory of Robin Lakoff (1975) was used to analyze the data. Lakoff (1975) proposed ten women's language features but this study only adopted nine features in the form of written text namely *lexical hedges* or *fillers*, *tag question*, *empty adjectives*, *precise color terms*, *intensifiers*, *hypercorrect grammar*, *superpolite forms*, *avoidance of strong swear words*, and *emphatic stress*. The findings reveal that there were ninety-seven postings which can be categorized into eight features. However, *intensifiers* tend to be the most frequent feature used by the female bloggers (34.92%), followed by *empty ajectives* (5.71%), and the least is *avoidance of strong swear words* (0.27%). Moreover, regarding the reasons by using the features is most respondents claimed that they use those features because they tend to reflect uncertainty and reflect women's lack of confidence in conversation. In contrast, only few of respondents who stated that they use those features because women have higher level of vocabularies than men.

Keyword*: Women's language features; Blog*

INTRODUCTION

Woman as described by Hornby (1989) in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is an adult female human being or female sex. It is believed that women are talkactive and like gossiping. Moreover, it seems that any kind of topic would be an interesting topic to be told and shared, for example women spend a chunk of their day discussing who is dating who, shopping, TV shows, and diets (Shaadilive, 2013). As stated by Coates (2004, p.9) that "If three women gather together, it will become clamorous".

In contrast, women are also claimed to have less confidence to talk than men because women are powerless. Lakoff (1975, cited in Holmes, 2011) argues that women are generally lacking status in society because they are more subordinate than men. Therefore, women are more aware of the way they talk by hedging and boosting their utterance to attrack the addressee's attention. "Hedging devices explicitly signal lack of confidence, while boosting devices reflect the speaker's

anticipation that the addressee may remain unconvinced and therefore supply extra reassurance". (Lakoff, 1975, cited in Holmes, 2001, p. 287).

Furthermore, in a certain situation, women are also expected to be polite and should speak with standard forms because they are guardian of society (Holmes, 2001). Moreover, according to Holmes (2001), it aims to protect their face and also their addressee's face. It also relates to the opinion that women are not allowed to show their temper or complain in rage (Lakoff, 1975).

Regarding the general stereotypes of women above, this study intends to investigate women's language features particularly in social media, such as blog. Nowadays, as reported in the article *Technologies Influence Over Societies* ("Hub Pages", 2010) social media such as facebook, twitter, blog, youtube, and etc. cannot be separated from our daily life. The changes of information technology and communication formats have

influenced the way people talk (Mahoney, 2010).

For those reasons, the present study is interested in analyzing blog's postings using women's language features, proposed by Robin Lakoff framework (1975) as a tool of analysis. This study aims at examining women's language features, the most frequent features, and the possible reasons of using the features.

LITERARY REVIEW

In a book entitled *Language and Women's Place*, conducted by Robin Lakoff (1975), she claims that women's language features are several aspects of language used by women to differentiate between women and men's language characteristics. Those features namely, *lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation on declaratives, 'empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers such as just and so, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'superpolite' forms, avoidance of strong swear words,*

and *emphatic stress* (cited in Holmes, 2001).

To focus on written text, only nine features that were used in this study. First, *lexical hedges* or *fillers* are signal of lack of confidence or expressing of uncertainty in the conversation, which aim to fill the gap between the conversation or to take and hold on the turn of the conversation, to begin the conversation, and to keep the conversation on the track. *Well, you know, think, seems, may, can, believe, looks* are the examples of *lexical hedges* or *fillers*.

Next, women assert their confidence by using *tag question*. "A *tag* is midway between an outright statement and a *yes-no question*: it is assertive than the former but more confident than the latter" (Lakoff, 1973, p. 54). The examples of language used in 'tag question' are *isn't it?, right?, don't we?*, and so on that appear in the final statement.

Women also convey their emotional reaction rather than give specific information by using *empty*

adjetives. It is a group of adjective in terms of vocabulary and it is indicating speaker's approbation or admiration for something, such as *gorgeous, fabulous, lovely*, and etc. (Lakoff, 1973). Then, women also seem to talk like a lady that shown in the choice of lexical items by making far more discriminations in naming colors or called *precise color terms*, for example *mauve, turquoise, mustard,* and etc.

The following feature is *intensifier* which is used to emphasize or strengthen the meanings of the following words (Hornby, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1989). For example *so, very, totally,* and *awful*. Deal with politeness and the use of standard verb forms, *hypercorrect grammar* features is also used by women, such as sounding the final *g* in words such as "going" instead of the more casual "goin". As proposed by Holmes (2001), women are subordinate to men, so they must avoid offending them and should speak with standard forms.

Another feature relating to the politeness is not only *hypercorrect grammar* but also *superpolite forms*. It is described by Lakoff (1973) as "leaving a decision opens, not imposing your mind, or views, or claims, on anyone else" (p. 56). By using more standard speech forms, women can protect her 'face' and the addressee's face.

Next, *avoidance or strong swear words* feature. Eckert (2003) suggests that "swearing is kind of interjection that can express extreme statements. He also states that swearing as an expression of very strong emotion (Eckert, 2003, cited in Permatasari, 2010, p. 25).

The last is *emphatic stress* features. It occurs when women want to strenghten an assertion (Lakoff,1973)). In stressing the opinion in written text, women may use *italic, bold, coloring, repeat, capital letter*, or *typing with longer letter* to give more emphasize or strengthen of those words. Kennedy (2008) describes that bold is used to make text stand out strongly by higlighting the important words,

phrases, and sections and it may be applied within body text, the title, and etc.

RESEARCH METHODS

In analysing the data, descriptive qualitative method was used as the research design. This method attempts to obtain deeper understanding of a target statement of problems and to make findings more valid (Key, 1997). However, although this study is qualitative in nature, quantifications were also needed in order to support the qualitative findings in revealing the percentage of women's language features used by Indonesian female bloggers. As proposed by (Benz, & Newman, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1984) that qualitative research also focuses on the products, the figures collected when a test, scale or questionnaire, and numbers are used (with the help of statistics) to explain phenomena.

The data on this study were collected from three Indonesian female bloggers, ranging from 20 to 30 years old, who have passion in fashion and business. This study employed *Blogspot.com* from October 2011 to September 2012 as the data to be observed. Then, the postings that have been selected were bloggers' activities such as daily life, business, fashion, and special events.

There were some steps in analysing the data, such as asking permission in copying the data by sending an email or tweet to each bloggers to avoid copy right violation and collecting the data by copying several posts in each selected blog. Next step was identifying the data by underlining every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in every post that has been selected randomly. In identifying the data, this study also interviewed the bloggers to explore more about the possible reasons of using the features. After identifying, the data were classified into the relevan theory based on Lakoff's framework. (1975).

Then, quantifying the features to discover the frequency and the percentage of each feature. After the data were interpreted, finally

discussing the results of data analysis. At the final stage, this study drew conclusions and proposed some suggestions for future studies in the same areas.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study found there were ninety-seven postings that have been collected from three bloggers from October 2011 to September 2012 and all postings consist of women's language features. From the findings, this study only found eight features namely *Lexical Hedges or Fillers, Tag Questions, 'Empty' adjectives, 'Superpolite' Forms, Intensifiers, Emphatic Stress, Precise Color Terms*, and *Avoidance of Strong Swear Words* and *'Hypercorrect' grammar* one that did not occur.

Furthermore, the measurement of frequency of each features of women's can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 The Frequency of Women's Language Features by Indonesian Female Bloggers

Features	Blogger 1	Blogger 2	Blogger 3	Total	Percentage
Lexical Hedges/Filler	30	207	9	246	33.42%
Tag Questions	2	9	0	11	1.50%
Empty' Adjectives	10	28	4	42	5.71%
Precise Color Terms	3	11	1	15	2.04%
Intensifiers	41	210	6	257	34.92 %
Hypercorrect' Grammar	0	0	0	0	0
Superpolite' Forms	1	9	0	10	1,36%
Avoidance of Swear Words	0	2	0	2	0,27%
Emphatic Stress	22	119	12	153	20,79%
TOTAL				736	100

Table 1 shows that *intensifiers* feature took the first position which was mostly used by Indonesian female bloggers (34.92%), followed by *lexical hedges or fillers* features in the second position (33.42%), and *emphatic stress* (20.79%) took the third position. After emphatic stress, there was *empty adjectives* that took fourth position (5.71%), precise *color terms* (2.04%) took the fifth position, followed by *tag questions* (1.50%) in the sixth position, *superpolite forms* (1.36%) in the seventh, in the eighth position there was *avoidance of strong swear words* features (0.27%), and the last was *hypercorrect grammar* feature (0%) which did not occur in the data.

In addition, there are some possible reasons of the use of women's language features by Indonesian female features.

Table 2 The Reasons of Using Women's Language Features

Features	The reasons of using women's language features
Lexical Hedges or Fillers	To express uncertainty and lack of confidence in the conversation; to differentiate one topic into another topic and as a filler in the conversation; to give the speakers sequence time to think what they will say next; to greet the addressee; to keep the conversation still on the track.
Tag Questions	To emphasize what the speakers are talking about; to make the readers more believe of what the speaker said.
Empty Adjectives	To give more emphasize of what the speaker said; to reveal the emotional reaction rather than give specific information about the speaker's opinion.
Precise Color Terms	To make the conversation simpler; to reflects that women have nature knowledge in their mind about naming colors; to prove that women have richer vocabularies than men.
Intensifiers	To emphasize or strengthen the words that have different things or speciality to be expressed or hyperbole; to attrack the addressee's atention.

Hypercorrect Grammar	To avoid a gap between bloggers and the readers because *hypercorrect grammar* is the consistent use of standard verb forms.
Superpolite Forms	To ask the addresee politely.
Avoidance of Strong Swear Words	To emphasize or strengthen the expression of the speaker's opinion

From Table 2, it can be seen that most women use women's language features when they want to emphasize or strengthen their utterance. It is related to Lakoff's (1975) statement that women have less confidence and uncertainty in conversation than men because women are powerless. Lakoff (1975, cited in Holmes, 2011) asserts that women are generally lacking status in society. Therefore, it is argued that women are more subordinate than men.

Meanwhile, only few of respondents who stated that they use those features because women have higher level of vocabularies than men. It is likely to reflect that women rarely try to talk like a lady especially in the choice of lexical items by making discrimination in naming colors. It also reveals that women have higher vocabularies than men and they are relegated the non-crucial decision as a sop (standard operating procedure) (Lakoff, 1973).

CONCLUSIONS

Ninety-seven postings from October 2011 to September 2012 were collected and it can be concluded that there are eight women's language features used by Indonesian female bloggers. Those features are *Lexical Hedges or Fillers, Tag Questions, 'Empty' adjectives, Precise Color Terms, 'Superpolite' Forms, Intensifiers, Emphatic Stress*, and *Avoidance of Strong Swear Words*. Meanwhile, one feature of women's language which did not occur in Indonesian

female bloggers is *'Hypercorrect' grammar*. It seems that this feature did not occur because the female bloggers mostly used informal language in their blog to shorten the gap between the blogger and the readers. As stated by Beal (2007) that the way bloggers write some postings in their blog the same as the way they write in the diary book.

Furthermore, *intensifiers* tend to be the most frequent feature of women's language used by Indonesian female blogger with the percentage of 34.92%. It indicates that female bloggers want to emphasize or strengthen their utterance deeply to attract addressee's attention using intensifier. As said by Lakoff (1975, cited in Homes 2001) that women "use intensifying devices to persuade their addressee to take them seriously" (p. 287) because they are lacking status in society.

In addition, there are some possible reasons of the use of women's language features by Indonesian female features. First, to express uncertainty and lack confidence in the conversation. Second, to fill the gap or as the filler in the conversation. Third, to start a conversation as grettings. Forth, to emphasize what have been talking and invite the readers or addressees in believing of what speakers said. Fifth, to convey emotional reaction rather than convey specific information about the speaker's opinion. Sixth, to prove that women have higher vocabularies than men. Eighth, to attract the addressees' attention. Ninth, to protect the speaker's face or politeness. These possible reasons are influenced by the female bloggers themselves and their status in society.

To sum up, Indonesian female bloggers mostly used women's language features in their postings because they tend to reflect uncertainty and they are lacking confidence in conversation by doing some efforts to keep the conversation still on the track.

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