

ESTEEM

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MK7003 with Various Water Binder Ratio**

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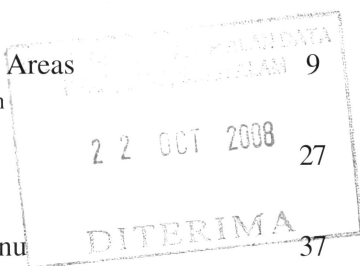
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Foreword

Welcome to ESTEEM Volume 2. In this issue, we address a gamut of topics from the engineering disciplines to language education. We hope that ESTEEM, by publishing articles from a diverse range of disciplines, will encourage debate and exchange among researchers from assorted academic backgrounds.

I would like to thank our advisor, Prof. Madya Mohd Zaki Abdullah for his distinctive imprint on this edition. His leadership of the journal in its 2nd year of growing impact and reputation has been outstanding. His vision, commitment to excellence, and attention to detail are widely recognized by the Penang academic community as determining factors in the journal's success so far. We will do our best to continue and expand on this tradition of excellence.

Since its launch in 2003, ESTEEM is indeed fortunate to have a dynamic Editorial Team. These people have provided the journal with an outstanding service of reviewing submissions for publications. The journal follows the established policy of a blind review process consisting of at least two peer reviewers per submission. We depend upon their knowledge and judgement in advancing the scope and utility of this journal. Without their support and enthusiasm none of this would have been possible. Also, my thanks to all the contributors, both the successful and not so successful.

Our vision of the ***ESTEEM*** journal is that it should be the journal that belongs to you, the academic and research community. This includes all engineers and academicians working to unravel the mysteries of research, teaching and learning, in all its facets. We wish the journal to be responsive to your needs and your interests. Please feel free to contact any of us in the editorial board to give us your ideas and suggestions for the development of the journal. We look forward to working with you all in expanding this emerging venue for communicating high quality research on the many aspects of academia.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to invite all authors and readers to contact me at esteem@ppinang.uitm.edu.my to share their comments and advice on how to further enhance the journal's value to the wider research community in knowledge and how to move ESTEEM to the next level of excellence.

The Chief Editor
May, 2005

The Language of Genders in the “Labour of Love”

Suzana Ab. Rahim

ABSTRACT

This paper is based on Lakoff's conviction that there are certain features that exist in the language used by a certain gender. The paper aims to look at the ways selected men and women converse in the video clip “Labour of Love” and to analyse whether the existing patterns as claimed by Lakoff do occur in the conversations ensued. The results of the study revealed that hedges or back channel support were frequently used in these conversations, making it a dominant feature in their utterances. Apart from that, redundancy and “empty” adjectives were also observed as featured in the dialogues among the non-native English Language speakers selected.

Introduction

A lot of debate has been raised in many societies around the world pertaining to the differences in the way men and women use language (Jesspersen, 1922, Lakoff 1975, Zimmerman & West, 1975, Fishman, 1980, Maltz & Borker, 1982 and Tannen, 1994). Their studies had shown that there are gender differences from various perspectives, as well as negative stereotypes relating to women and language. Among the studies that touch on gender differences in using language in conversation was Robin Lakoff's that looked into the existing language features in female practice (cited in Goddard and Patterson, 2000). Her findings include women interrupting less than men in mixed- sex conversation, using more indirect speech than males, using more conversational support such as ‘minimal responses’ than males and using features which indicate tentativeness such as question tags, hedges and other expressions.

Purpose of the Study

Convinced that specific linguistic features more often than not, are used by women than their opposite gender, Lakoff in Holmes (2001) claims that women's language through the use of these features indicates uncertainty and hesitancy resulting in women's triviality and lack of conviction in their use of language. Upon considering the above statement and previous studies made by other linguists, this study will look into the way women converse in the Malaysian context based on the recorded conversations. The study will also look at whether there is an existence of a certain pattern that does adhere to the features specified by Lakoff's studies.

Literature Review

The anecdotal evidence of differences in the way men and women talk can be found in the long list of female and lexical variations as put forward by Otto Jespersen whose focus on sex differences in language is prophesied in his highly rated "Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin (1922, as cited in Goddard and Patterson 2000). Now, 90 years later, the issue of gender and speech styles is still very much a relevant issue since a considerable amount of research leading to findings of undeniably dramatic differences in the way these opposite genders converse is something that cannot be ignored.

Condemned by Jespersen, as to have a dulling effect on language use, women are further portrayed to be a limited lexical user in that "the vocabulary of a woman as a rule is much less extensive than that of a man. In addition to this, while men are relegated as the dominant renovators of language, women take a backseat and are "innately conservative". As such, women being the objects of ridicule have not much say especially when power itself is magnetized to male behaviour and male discourse. Women, having to live up to society's expectations of being lady-like and thus sounding like "ladies" leaves them second to none. To them, it is Hobson's choice; to talk like ladies will land them labelled as powerless and trivial, whereas to ape men's use of language will result in their being unfeminine. Spender (1980) sums up this dilemma by stating that female compliance to the societal forms has resulted in an endless social imprisonment in contrast to men's powerful language which denotes their freedom of speech.

Thus, to progress further into the chronological events that contribute to the understanding of the studies on gender differences in speech, it is only pertinent that we observe the brief findings that researchers of yesteryears have dawned upon the society. As it is, take note that in looking at this issue at hand, the theory of social networks dictates that a better understanding of gender differences in language include observations on the women's and men's lifestyles in different communities, the people they interact with and the factors that prompt them to adopt certain varieties. Thus, on language being a reflection of society, the American sociolinguists Labov (1966) and Trudgill (1972) as noted in Trudgill (1983) pioneered the study of genderlects in Western societies highlighting those females, regardless of their socio-economic level age or race; had used a more standard language as opposed to men.

On another note, prior to this research, Jespersen's overt prejudice against women had him asserting that women speak more politely than men and have smaller and less varied lexis, hinting at women being a deviant user of the language and men, being the norm. Moreover, he claimed that there are specific adjectives and adverbs that women use resulting in a more predictable use of language. However, Jespersen's work invited endless criticisms as his data was based on women's dialogues in novels written by men and not from actual conversations of women.

Meanwhile, Lakoff who was one of the prominent feminist critiques also could not help but be criticised since her own data was based on her own intuitions rather than a collective corpus of data. It was in 1975 that Lakoff's work gained prominence and marked the beginning of the twentieth-century linguistic interest in sex differences. Her assertion that there is a tendency for women to use empty adjectives and intensifiers, more tag questions and more hedges, more rising intonations and more polite forms than what men use entail explanations that these characteristics of "women's language" are due to linguistic subordination. Echoing the sentiments of the earlier society in which Jespersen authorised, Lakoff is of the opinion that in order for one to avoid being criticised as unfeminine by society, she must learn to speak the "women's language". Lakoff's assumption of women being less superior to men merely exemplifies the stereo- typicality nature in society towards women.

Wareing (2000) on explaining the existence of stereotyping in observing the findings of a research related to gender differences in speech, states that despite the obvious evidence that men do talk more

than women, the society at large would choose to ignore as there is a higher tendency for them to be convinced otherwise. In addition to this, Wareing also cited works of Trudgill (1972), Milroy (1987) Thomas (1989) and Coates (1993) in highlighting the difference in the level of phonology that both genders may vary in their pronunciation in which in his point of view are “remarkably many and varied”. On the other hand, syntactic differences are made evident in Coates (1993) as highlighted in Mesthrie et.al (2000) who highlighted an overview of common stereotypes and prejudices pitted against these genders.

Moving back to Lakoff’s theory (1987), who put forward a list of language items featuring the female usage of the language as cited in Goddard and Patterson (2000) we can see that Lakoff’s itemising of language is suggesting that a language feature has one possible meaning and that the meaning is embedded in the structure. Lakoff’s features of language in female conversations as cited in Holmes (2001) consist of the following elements:

- Lexical hedges or fillers
- Tag questions
- Rising intonation on declaratives
- “Empty” adjectives
- Precise colour terms
- Intensifiers
- “Hypercorrect” grammar
- “Super polite” forms
- Avoidance of strong swear words and
- Emphatic stress

We also need to understand certain events leading to the incidence of women’s language being viewed as a product of the androcentric ideology that suppresses women.

This respective ideology has delivered many a stereotype of the women’s language and has thus resulted in the language being unworthy. Prior to that, it is of importance to note that these stereotypes – a product of observation done on the speech, have been found to characterise certain features of a woman’s language. Documented findings done on empirical studies indicate that these specific features of conversational style as discussed in (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert & Leap, 2000) have differentiated the male and the female speakers under the following fields:

- Amount of talk
- Interruptions
- Conversational
- Tentativeness
- Compliments

The question arises so as to whether all women do stereotypically speak in this manner or do their own different communities and contexts bind them culturally? These static stereotypes of women's language are believed to enhance the polarisation between the sexes since we are all but compliance to our society's norms. Goddard and Patterson (2000) citing the work of Lakoff (1987) said that stereotypes gain power and credibility through wide use in everyday talk and texts as a result of the fact that they are well-understood or easy to perceive rather than that because they are true. They go on to say that the stereotypes are very bound up with the social and political structures of the culture one is in. Tannen's view (1991) that utterances by men and women cannot be sorted into distinct categories of dominance and sociability is supported by her conviction that the same language can be used to accomplish both functions and she illustrates her research with ambiguities in gender studies and various discourse strategies.

Nonetheless while criticisms flung at women emphasized on us being users of a disadvantaged group known to some as “a deficit model of a language” – it is worthwhile to mention that attempts have been made to verify these stereotypes of women's language. The existence of two conflicting theories after Lakoff's hypothesis is that of the dominance approach and the difference approach. The former views women as the marginalized lots and interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech as a reflection of men's dominance and women's subordination.

In addition, the dominance factor emphasizes on the unequal distribution of power in society in which males are blessed with, thus enabling them to define and control situations. Wareing (1999) is convinced that the difference theory does not only seem to cast women as powerless victims but also men as undermining and demeaning women. As for the difference theory that underlies different styles that both gender had, for instance; in upbringing prior to their encounters in interactions could have contributed to these misunderstandings. It's only natural according to this approach that girls are to mind their politeness- their p's and q's whereas boys, who are active and spirited are deemed worth of praises.

In light of this study, we will find out if there are any differences and similarities in the language features used by both gender in conversations as discussed by the previous studies.

Methodology

This study was conducted by using four conversation texts from two male speakers and two female speakers. The conversation texts were obtained from a recorded Video CD published by The Star entitled “Labour of Love” 2003. The researcher chose these particular texts because they contained a selection of speakers who come from the same socio-economic background. In addition, this study will highlight how these target samples of non-native speakers of English use the language in the Malaysian context.

Significantly, it is hoped that this study will be the stepping-stone for further research and discussion pertaining to the study on gender differences in speech in Malaysia.

Firstly, the researcher viewed the material and selected four speech samples. Then, the selected conversations were recorded in a digital voice recorder and were uploaded in the form of DSS file to the personal computer. Next, the conversations were transcribed and word-processed. Finally, the printed texts were analysed by observing its language features.

Findings and Discussion

Text A & B (Female 1 & 2)

Text A was a conversation made by a female speaker. It was found to have quite a number of adjectives, which can be seen in the first line *emotional* person, *ashamed* (4th line), *united* (6th line), *understanding* (7th line) and *precious* (10th line). Unlike Lakoff’s conviction that women’s language featured the use of ‘empty’ adjective in showing the speakers lack of confidence, this study proved otherwise as the speaker’s use of the above adjectives indicates that she was able to relate and reflect well to the related subjects. In addition, this text also highlighted a frequent use of pause fillers such as ‘*aaa, daa..*’ and the use of hedges such as ‘*you know*’. Reinforcing Lakoff’s ideas, Fishman (1980) cited in McKay and Hornberger (1996) reports that the women more than

men use questions and hedges to facilitate their conversations. The female speakers in this study also more frequently use features such as minimal responses that can be seen to provide support and encouragement for the interviewer/ interviewing session to progress further. It can also be inferred from the study on these female speakers that they tend to use more conversational support than men. This is further supported by Fishman’s idea that in differentiating the women’s to men’s language this feature is visible and that she adds on by saying that it indicates the women speakers’ involvement. She said that it is something natural and expected of a woman to be keeping the flow in a conversation.

In this text, the speaker also repeated the word “*most*” twice to show the emphatic stress on the preceding adjective “*precious*”. It was found that the speaker used the intensifier “*just*” to show a degree of the blessing. However, text B observed a number of pause fillers such as “aaaa mmmm” along the conversation and the use of hedges such as “sort of” twice. Apart from that, the speaker used intensifier “*so*”, “*just*” to show the degree of comparison.

As for the feature of compliments as one of the conversational styles mentioned earlier, both women speakers can be said to have included this feature-they both pay compliments to their husband and father, respectively.

It was found that both speakers did not use tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, precise colours terms, super polite forms and any swear words. As a conclusion, the women speakers in the study also can be said to adhere to the mainstream of other researched women speakers who in Wareing’s utterances (2000) tend to “focus more on the development and maintenance of the relationship between speakers, fostered by the exchange of intimate details and supportive listening”.

Text C & D (Male 1, 2 & 3)

The male speaker in text C used a number of hedging such as “you know” and “so” a couple of times as compared to the speaker in text D. In addition, the speaker in text C also used pause fillers such “aaaa”. Both speakers used adjectives but less frequently compared to the female counterparts in text A and B. Moreover, the male speaker in text E also included countable fillers in the beginning and towards the end of his conversation, with a smattering of adjectives throughout.

Male speakers tend to consistently demonstrate conversational assertiveness in the discussion of politics, health, economy, love and

marriage and nature. This is found to be true when the speaker in text C mentioned that his dad had sacrifices to make and career obligations to fulfil. On the other hand, the speaker in text D did not stress much on the subject of career for their age gap is totally great. Both speakers shared almost similar language features as compared to the female speakers. Nonetheless, of importance is also to note speaker in text E who portrays the use of intensifiers and a few if not many empty adjectives in the instances of "...very very caring...". Repetition does take place together with fillers of "aaaaaa, er..., hmmm," which are much similar to the features of the language used by the two female speakers. Speaker of text E also demonstrated issues of health and economy in his speech, true to the norms often observed by these linguists.

Again, Fishman's argument comes into play as "power is a human accomplishment, situated in everyday interaction" and that it is partly through this interaction that the hierarchical relations between women and men are constructed and maintained. In the case of these selected speakers, their background and upbringing also account for the way their speech is conducted. The hierarchical relations are noted and the power that is attributed to the speakers is very much visible in their speech. The male speakers are seen to have featured some characteristics that entail the difference theory in which the upbringing of a person conditions the speech he produces.

Conclusion

Although female language has been defined as polite and insecure, the finding proves otherwise. In this study, the age and status of the selected speakers was also put into consideration. The findings showed that women speakers also used hedging or back channel support more frequently as they have a better sense of the functions of hedges as opposed to Lakoff's idea that the use of hedges simply dictates a lack of conviction on the women's language. The linguistic developments that have brought about the changes in perceptions towards the gender differences in speech have viewed the features, previously considered "empty" and "redundant", as fulfilling very important functions in a conversation. These are further seen as crucial aspects of interpersonal communication for everyone, allowing speakers to sound relaxed and informal (Channel, 1994 as cited in Goddard and Patterson, 2000).

As such, it can be concluded that redundancy and “empty” adjectives were seen as dominant features among the selected non-native speakers of English in these conversation excerpts. Moreover, we can generalise that adjectives used in a speech do not necessarily label one as lacking in confidence or showing hesitancy but those adjectives used function as language features to enhance one’s description of knowledge about a subject matter in a conversation.

In other words, the question of whether women’s language does really exist is still fairly implausible since the features are not distinctive enough to be categorised and labelled as to carry an air of feminism with them, especially seen among the selected speakers in this video clip. Both genders illustrated some overlapping features of conversational support, hedges and also redundancy in their conversations. Though how the selected male and female speakers conversed might not have left a strong impression on the distinctive characteristics of gender language in this brief analysis, it might still be interesting to actually look at the conversations from the different social status that could possibly contribute towards a better understanding of what entails that of a woman’s or man’s language.

However, the interpretations made to this study may not be the actual representation of the real situation, as differences in gender speech have also been found according to the status and age of the speaker relative to the status of the person spoken to. In this case particularly and as most of the cases conducted, evidence to this effect of differentiating both gender according to the features listed is not fully convincing as gender differences in language use have sometimes been demonstrated and sometimes, otherwise.

In short, it is important to note that at the end of the day, no matter how objective we are in allowing our common – sense not to be goaded by the evidences present in these studies on gender differences; it is still a question of perceptions easily distorted by our own expectation.

Appendix A

Selected Conversation Texts

(adapted from “Labour of Love”, The Star, 2003)

Text A (Female 1)

He’s a very emotional person...when he talks about perjuangan UMNO and about bangsa and ...about the country ...you know... I don’t tell him he shouldn’t cry in public...because...humans...are humans and humans have feelings. Every time he cries in public he was so ashamed of himself, I said No! you needn’t have to be ashamed of yourself becoz it just aaa shows the public that you...that he’s just as human as anybody else. We have always been a united...aaaa family and daaa...and we’ve always been understanding to each other and daa..and daaa...as you’ve seen him, I’m always with him...and he wants me to be with him and for that, I thank GOD and this is just the blessing that aaa...that aaaa...a wife could wish for – A husband wanting a wife to be with him...Most of (the time)...What is most...most daaa.....precious to me is when aaaa...aaaa ...when he hugs me... and ...and that means something which aaa...which aaaa.....I treasure most.

Text B (Female 2)

I really cherished the times when we also went out for trips together aaah...mmm...even car rides after work that sort of thing...and going out to eat...and going to see fireworks, that sort of thing you know he really likes doing these family things which I think it’s hard to do these days...when parents are so busy, As adult, it’s a difficult thing altogether...aah...he became the Prime Minister when I was....He entered Government when I was 17 so...for the better part of my life, he’s been a public person, so it’s a very different dynamic aaaa...really...aaaa...I supposed to childhood when he was just a regular father.

Text C (Male 1)

So, ...we were quite used to having people coming to see him all the time even (pause) when he was a practising aaa...doctor...you know....being a doctor, you have people coming in to the home at odd hours....3,4 in the morning you know.... So...I remember him as aaa...someone who's always available aah.. to meet with people who had problems. As a doctor of course he was meeting patients...but as a politician, people come with all sorts of aaaa, issues that they want to bring up with him. You know the sacrifices that he had to make. I don't think I have it within me to....to make...So...I'll go my own way but definitely, he has had a lot of positive influence over what I do now and what I 'm going to do in the future.

Text D (Male 2)

To be honest I'm quite excited and happy for him hat he's retiring because finally you know...I can't wait to be able ...to go home and aaa just see him at home.

Text E (Male 3)

His most significant contribution to Barisan Nasional...I think...he made this country aaaa...better known...he has certainly,he has made Malaysians confident of themselves, more confident ...they think they can achieve anything...that is what he did.He himself has...has demonstrated in many ways what he personally had to do, he will do it well...and this is why the Malaysians have so readily accepted this slogan "Malaysia Boleh". You say Malaysia Boleh and Malaysians will clap their hands and somehow everybody is struck to working hard, to get achievements in the Book of Records, either the Malaysia Book of Records ot to the World Book of Records.Everybody wants...even making the big kuih..to bake the longest cake and all sorts of things but that is what...

There are other sides of him (which) shows that he's a really caring person, very very caring and especially when my wife aaaa....er...my wife....er...hmmm...had cancer and he has really shown... and had asked me many times about my wife's health but at the same time I also

noticed that if...a friend is not well and is hospitalised, he will make the effort to go....aaaa...he is a caring person..that's the side of him...huh...aaa...he likes to joke.

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