



**An Analysis Of Language
Features Used By English
Language Education (ELE)
Students Through
WhatsApp Group**

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Abstrak

Bahasa merupakan alat penting yang digunakan oleh pria dan wanita dalam berkomunikasi dengan banyak orang di lingkungan. Banyak faktor yang mempengaruhi cara orang berkomunikasi atau cara mereka menggunakan bahasa, seperti geografi, usia, status sosial, jenis kelamin, dll. Faktor yang dapat menciptakan variasi bahasa adalah jenis kelamin. Salah satu variasi bahasa yang disebabkan oleh faktor sosial seperti gender memunculkan istilah yang disebut fitur bahasa. Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis fitur bahasa mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris melalui Grup WhatsApp. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjawab jenis fitur bahasa pria dan wanita apa yang digunakan oleh siswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris melalui Grup WhatsApp. Desain penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif. Dalam penelitian ini peneliti menggunakan dua instrumen yaitu lembar observasi dan wawancara. Data dianalisis dengan mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan sepuluh jenis fitur bahasa yang diusulkan oleh Lakoff (1975). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa hanya ada lima fitur yang diklasifikasikan sebagai fitur bahasa pria dan wanita yang digunakan oleh siswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di grup WhatsApp yaitu leksikal hedges, tag question, intonasi naik, intensifier, dan bentuk kesopanan. Setiap bagian dari fitur bahasa memiliki fungsi dalam berkomunikasi.

Kata kunci: Fitur Bahasa; Bahasa dan Gender; WhatsApp

Abstract

A language is an important tool used by men and women in communicating with many people in society. Many factors influence the way people communicate or how they use languages, such as geography, age,

social status, gender, etc. A factor that can create language variation is gender. One of the language variations caused by social factors such as gender gives rise to a term called language features. This study focuses on analyzing the language features used by English Language Education students through WhatsApp Group. The purpose of this research was to answer what types of language features are used by men and women English Language Education students through WhatsApp Group. The design of this research was the descriptive qualitative method. In this study, the researchers used two instruments an observation sheet and an interview. The data were analyzed by identifying and classifying the ten types of language features proposed by Lakoff (1975). The findings showed that there were only five features that have been classified as language features used by English Language Education students on WhatsApp group. Those are lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, intensifiers, and super polite forms. Each features has a function in communication.

Keywords: Language Features; Language and Gender; WhatsApp

Introduction

The communication skills possessed by humans allow them to exchange information, ideas, opinions, and etc. This allows them to show their point of view and position. Language is a system symbol that comes from within each individual that is used in communicating to convey certain goals and objectives (Ehrlich, 2019). Language has a function as a means of communication, as an expression of identity, imaginative expression, and emotional release, through language we can express ideas through the sound of speech combined into words (Wardhaugh, 1992). Many factors influence the way people communicate or how they use languages, such as geography, age, social status, gender, etc. A factor that can create language variation is gender. The possible relationships between language and society can be various. It depends on their regional aspect, social, ethnic social, and gender (Wardhaugh, 1992). The natural gender comes from the distinction in English between reference to male entities (he, his), women entities (she, her), creatures and things (Yule, 2005). The language variations caused by social factors such as gender gives rise to a term called language features.

Language feature refers to the characteristic of language which is used by people when they communicate with others (Coates, 2013). Language features refers to the sentence structure, punctuation, noun, vocabulary, phrases, etc. used in content support, provides meaning to the communication

(Yule, 2005). Supporting by Coates (2013) and Yule (2005), it can be concluded that Language features are components or characteristics of language which include sentence structure, vocabulary, diction, grammar, intonation, punctuation, phrase, pronunciation, and the way men and women used a partical language in a communication. Deborah (1990) stated that gender differences in language result from the different goals men and women have in conversation. The difference in the language used can be seen from the words choice that men and women use in communicating. The characteristics of men are described using language that is more assertive, strong, and well-spoken, and powerful. It is different with women who use figurative words, polite, soft, and powerlessness (Lakoff, 1975). The difference in men's and women's language affects their different language styles, environments, and topics in every conversation. There are ten Language Features such as lexical hedges, tag question, rising intonation, adjective, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress (Lakoff, 1975).

The relation between language and gender can be explored through language behavior in various social contexts directly, even in the context of social media such as Whatsapp. One of the most widely used social media applications by the Indonesian people is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is one of the most popular social media in the world. Many people

in different countries use the platform to communicate. Based on Statista data, Indonesia is the country with the third most WhatsApp users in the world. The results of the We Are Social survey shows that WhatsApp is the second popular social media for internet users around the world. WhatsApp is an online chat platform with the most users compared to other online chat platforms (Wan, Dastane, Mohd, Satar, & Ma'arif, 2019). It is common knowledge that conversations go in different ways if we compare in real life and online conversations because online conversations use written speech. These statements encourage the writer to further analyze the characteristics of the language features of men and women in written conversations on the online chat platform, namely WhatsApp. This research was conducted to find out the language features used by ELE students through WhatsApp group. The objective of this research are the types and the functions used by ELE students in communicating through WhatsApp group. So, this research focused on an analysis of language features used by ELE students in communicating through WhatsApp group.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the types of language features used by English Language Education (ELE) students in communicating through Whatsapp Group?
- 2) What are the functions of language features used by men and women of English Language Education (ELE) students in communicating through WhatsApp Group?

Research Method

The research design of this research was descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative is a method of research that focuses and produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words or the form of pictures and not numbers obtained from research subjects observed by researchers. The data in this study were taken in language features in their

conversations/communications about asking and giving information of the study between male and female students in the Whatsapp group class. The subject of the research is English Language Education students of E class in 7th Semester. There are 30 ELE students joined in the WhatsApp Group class. The sample of this study was the utterance containing certain language features of Lakoff theory (1975) that were used by men and women of ELE students in communicating through WhatsApp group. The instruments used by the researcher were observation sheets, and interview. The observation sheet helps the researcher to note and classify the types of language features used by men and women of ELE students especially in 7E class through Whatsapp Group. The interview helps the researcher to find the function of language features used by men and women of ELE students in communicating through WhatsApp Group. There were three level of analyzing the data: data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 1992). In data reduction, data will be identified of all conversations focusing on each conversation, and then classified by selecting the important data that is related to the use of language features. In displaying the data, it will be simplified in the form of a sentence, and table. In drawing and verifying, the data was collected and concluded accurate data obtained in language features used by men and women of ELE students through Whatsapp Group.

Result and Discussion

Result

The researcher found 67 conversations between men and women of ELE students in communicating through WhatsApp group. The conversation was analyzed and classified based on the types of language features by Lakoff's theory (1975). From 10 language features, only 5 of them existed. They were lexical hedges, tag

questions, rising intonation, intensifiers, and super polite forms.

Table 1. The Result of Language Features Used by ELE Students Through WhatsApp Group

| No | Types of Language Features | Men | Women |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----|-------|
| 1. | Lexical Hedges | 0 | 9 |
| 2. | Tag Question | 8 | 12 |
| 3. | Rising Intonation | 2 | 5 |
| 4. | Empty Adjectives | 0 | 0 |
| 5. | Precise Color Term | 0 | 0 |
| 6. | Intensifier | 0 | 8 |
| 7. | Hypercorrect Grammar | 0 | 0 |
| 8. | Super Polite Form | 11 | 12 |
| 9. | Avoidance of Strong Swear Word | 0 | 0 |
| 10. | Emphatic Stress | 0 | 0 |

In table 1, the result shows the different number of each language features used between and men and women of ELE students through WhatsApp group. In Men's utterance, the total of language features used is 21 times. While on women's utterance, the total of language features used is 46 times.

1. Lexical Hedges

The type of lexical hedge used were I think, I guess, perhaps, and possibly. According to Lakoff (1975), the use of hedge of I think is for being a preface to speaker's utterance. The example of using I think on women's utterance as follows:

(1) “*Kayaknya berdasarkan topik*”

(*I think* it based on the topic)

The women used *I think* because she felt unsure about what she was saying, and felt uncomfortable with the situation. She might

feel not confident or sure enough whether it's topic-based or not.

2. Tag Question

The finding of using tag questions on men utterances, as follows:

(2) “*Gak ada tugas English tour and travel, kan ya?*”

(There is no task of English tour and travel, *right?*)

The men asked whether there was an assignment or not in the English for tour and travel course. He might felt not sure enough and doubts about the question being asked. Meanwhile, on women utterances, the finding of using tag question as follow:

(3) “*King Cross itu tempat kriminal ya? Bener?*”

(King Cross is a crime place, *isn't it?* Right?)

The women asked the truth of the King Cross place, whether it was a criminal place or not. She might have felt not sure enough, had doubts about her statement.

3. Rising Intonation

The finding of using rising intonation on men utterance, as follow:

- (4) *"Gak bisa di download?"*

(Can't be downloaded?)

Based on the statement, the men asked a question about his uncertainty, seeking confirmation of the file sent in the group, and whether it was true that the file could not be downloaded. He might feel not sure enough and ask the truth yes or no. Meanwhile, the finding of using rising intonation on women's utterance, as follows:

- (5) *"Kamu yang presentasi besok?"*

(You give a presentation tomorrow?)

Based on the statement above, she used rising intonation to ask and need confirmation from her friend whether she is presenting tomorrow or not.

4. Intensifiers

The finding of using intensifier on women utterances, as follow:

- (6) *"Karena aku bener-bener susah sinyal kalau malam. Aku oke aja kalau pagi tapi jangan ada 'too' nya mang"*

(Cause I really have bad signal. I agree when we held it in the morning but not "too" morning, mang)

Based on the statement the woman used intensifier features to state that she had a hard time signaling at night. She used the intensifier feature that is "really" to show her condition and to express her feeling.

5. Super Polite Form

The finding of using super polite form on men utterance, as follow:

- (7) *"Done. Terima kasih semuanya, maaf atas kerichannya"*

(Done. Thank you everyone, sorry for the mess)

Based on the statement, the man used thank you to express his feeling that his friends have attended and followed the procedures in the presentation. And he used sorry to apologize for the chaos that occurred during the learning process. Meanwhile, the finding of using the super polite form on women utterance, as follows:

- (8) *"Ada yang bisa bantu jelasin tugas nya gak yang married couple tu, minta tolong"*

(Can anyone help to explain the tasks of the married couple, please)

Based on the statement, the women used "please" as a form of requesting or polite command.

Discussion

From the result, it shows that there are different numbers found between men's and women's utterance in communicating through WhatsApp group. The first is Lexical Hedges. The total of using this feature is 9 times. Women are more dominant in using lexical hedges than men. There are 9 times of women, and 0 times of men. The second is tag questions. In the use of tag questions, this study found women and men have a quite different number of the use of tag questions. The total of using this feature is 20 times. There are 8 times of men, and 12 times of women. It might because men and women make a statement when he/she is confident with his/her knowledge and sure that his/her statement will be believed. The third feature is rising intonation. Here, the researcher found women used more rising intonation than men, but they only have a little different number in the use of rising intonation. The total of using this feature is 7 times. There are 2 times of rising intonation used by men, and 5 times of women. The fourth is intensifier. In this study found that only women used this feature. There are 8 times of women, and 0 times of men. The last feature is super polite form. The total of using this feature is 23 times. There are 11 times of using super polite form by men, and 12 times of women. From the results, it shows that women use more super polite forms rather than men.

The use of five features of ten language features which are proposed by Lakoff (1975) in this present research has their own function. The function of each feature depends on the purpose of the men and women of ELE students to deliver their chat/written-communication through WhatsApp group. From the interview data and the theory by Lakoff (1975), it was found that lexical hedges have a function to express a lack of confidence, and indeed to express their own opinion. A tag question has a function to express uncertainty, less confidence in the truth of what they stated. The rising intonation is usually in the form of a declarative answer to a question, and has the rising inflection typical of a yes-no question at the end of a sentence. It is mostly used to express uncertainty or lacks knowledge, and need confirmation. The intensifiers features included the expressive function because this feature has a function to intensify the word after it to make people more certain of its meaning and telling the truth. The super polite form has a function to express their feelings, apologize, request/polite commands, avoid misunderstanding, and easy to understand.

Conclusion

From the findings, There are ten language features proposed by Lakoff (1975). Those are lexical hedges, tag question, rising intonation, empty adjective, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words and empathic stress. In the result, the research concludes that there were five language features of ten features proposed by Lakoff (1975) found in this study. Those are Lexical Hedges, Tag Questions, Rising Intonation, Intensifiers, and Super Polite Forms.

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