

SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER PATTERNS ON FACEBOOK

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Abstract. *The purpose of this research is to look for the differences and similarities among the way sexes use internet particularly social networking site, Facebook. The differences exist on multiple levels and all these have been exhibited through language and the choices they make. The findings show that women mostly write about themselves, about their own emotions, and the way a female leaves all information blank and a male give all for public display certainly speaks volumes about their privacy concerns.*

Keywords: *Gender, Sociolinguistics, Facebook.*

Abstrak. *Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mencari perbedaan dan persamaan antara cara pria dan wanita menggunakan internet terutama situs jejaring sosial, Facebook. Perbedaannya ada pada berbagai tingkatan dan semua ini telah diperlihatkan melalui bahasa yang digunakan dan pilihan yang mereka buat. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kebanyakan wanita menulis tentang diri mereka sendiri, tentang emosi mereka sendiri, tidak mengisi semua informasi dan pria yang memberikan semua informasi pribadi untuk ditampilkan ke publik.*

Kata kunci: *Gender, Sosiologi, Facebook.*

Introduction

As technological advances, and the possibilities they offer, have become more widely integrated into society, young people are among those adopting new technologies into everyday practices (Kreps, 2010). Among the advantages offered by the digital age is the ability for increased communication. Whether this communication is synchronous, as in live chat streams, or asynchronous, as in message boards, people now have the ability to make, or remain, in contact with others via the global internet community. Moreover, the rise in popularity of social network sites (SNS) in recent years has further fostered the ability for contact with

others, regardless of geographic locale.

The increasing prevalence of online social media for informal communication has enabled large-scale statistical analysis of the connection between language and social variables such as gender, age, race, and geographical origin. Whether the goal of such research is to understand stylistic differences or to build predictive models of 'latent attributes', there is often an implicit assumption that linguistic choices are associated with immutable and essential categories of people. Indeed, strong aggregate correlations between language and such categories enable predictive

models that are disarmingly accurate. But this gives an oversimplified and misleading picture of how language conveys personal identity.

A social theory approach of clarifying the notion of 'social media' can be advanced by identifying three social information processes that constitute three forms of sociality which are cognition, communication and cooperation (Trottier & Fuch, 2014). According to this view, individuals have certain cognitive features that they use to interact with others so that shared spaces of interaction are created. 'Social media' such as Facebook support cognition, communication/networking and cooperation (communities, collaborative work, sharing of user-generated, and other content). Therefore a lot of personal and social data about users is generated. The question of broader social phenomena on social media, such as politics, protest, crime, and revolutions, rests on an understanding of these concepts, as well as an understanding of their relation to modern society (Trottier & Fuch, 2014).

Facebook is one such site wherein this fast-paced world, one can keep in touch with his friends and it is growing like the wind. What makes sites like Facebook distinct is that they are integrated platforms that combine many media and information and communication technologies, such as a webpage, webmail, digital image, digital video, discussion group, guest book, connection list or search engine. Facebook's popularity began when it swept across college campuses after creator Mark Zuckerberg first introduced the site on February 4, 2004. The distinctiveness that Facebook originally held was that users had to have a

'Edu' email address; this college the only appeal was what set Facebook apart from other major social networking sites at the time such as Myspace and Friendster. Facebook grew rapidly after repealing the condition of requiring a '.Edu' email address (Wikipedia, retrieved on May 2017). According to Statista (2017), the statistics portal which provides information on the most popular networks worldwide as of April 2017, ranked by the number of active accounts, Facebook was the first social network to surpass 1 billion registered accounts and currently sits at 1.97 billion monthly active users.

The fact that surveys have found differences between men and women in Internet use is not in itself surprising. Media exhibit patterns of use that differ between men and women. The general theory that the Internet is somehow "gendered" encompasses many possibilities. Some theorists argue that male values have been institutionalized in the technology through its creators, embedding a cultural association with masculine identity in the technology itself (Wajcman, 1991; Gill and Grint, 1995). The present study aims to figure out gender patterns on social networking site Facebook. It is a sociolinguistic research which is language is studied.

The study conducted by the researcher has a close relationship with the study conducted by Ahmad Mohammad Ahmad Al-Harabsheh (Yarmouk University, 2014) entitled *Language and Gender Differences in Jordanian Spoken Arabic: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. This study aims to investigate the gender differences between men's and women's language in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. It studies

both genders' conversational styles and phonological variations. The findings of the study indicate that Jordanian women and men have

different linguistics styles that distinguish their gender in conversations, and women are more linguistically conservative than men.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are formulated as follow:

1. How is the language functioning in the social networking site?

2. How is the difference of the linguistic behavior of men from women?

Research Methodology

This research is covered descriptive qualitative research. In order to carry out the research, 30 profiles were selected randomly out of which 15 are male and 15 female or at least they presented themselves in this

way. The data was collected for a time period of one month. All the participants belong to various areas of Indonesia and have different ages. The saved profiles served as the stimuli for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The increasing prevalence of online social media for informal communication has enabled large-scale statistical analysis of the connection between language and social variables such as gender, age, race, and geographical origin. Whether the goal of such research is to understand stylistic differences or to build predictive models of 'latent attributes', there is often an implicit assumption that linguistic choices are associated with immutable and essential categories of people. Indeed, strong aggregate correlations between language and such categories enable predictive models that are disarmingly accurate. But this gives an oversimplified and misleading picture of how language conveys personal identity.

Observations of the differences between the way males and females speak were long restricted to grammatical features, such as the differences between masculine and feminine in morphology in many languages. The

issue of women interacting differently from men has been discussed for hundreds of years. However, feminist movements in the 1960s realized that language was one of the instruments of female oppression by males. As a matter of fact, language not only reflected a patriarchal system but also emphasized male supremacy over women.

Much of the existing academic research on Facebook has focused on identity presentation and privacy concerns (e.g., Gross & Acquisti, 2005) or on language change. The gender issue is taken up only by very few. Since Mid-1990's there has been growing interest in male linguistic behavior alongside women's because it is believed that focusing exclusively on women is not sufficient. According to Crawford (1995:61), studies ranging from late 1960 have shown that women are stereotypically easily influenced, submissive, sneaky, tactful, very aware of others feelings,

passive, lacking in self-confidence, dependent, unlikely to act as the leader and uncomfortable about the process of behaving aggressively. For Lakoff (1975), women's language is rife with such devices as mitigators and inessential qualifiers (really happy, so beautiful). She believes that it is part of their learning, imposed by societal norms and in turn, it keeps women in their place.

Siibak (2007) found that female users of the dating site Rate were more likely to display a profile photo of themselves smiling than men and more likely to choose a photograph at a close personal range, showing only the head and shoulders. In addition, Siibak reports that women tend to display themselves in more seductive poses and wear clothing that emphasizes their sexuality. However, we cannot automatically expect that these findings will apply to Facebook, an online environment that is significantly different than a dating site in that users are attempting to present an identity that appeals to both genders, with the goal more often being friendship than romantic attachment.

One of the primary functions languages has is to enable man to describe the world or communicate with other people. In this sense, language is a neutral tool for man to communicate with each other. On the other hand, language reflects, if it does not determine, the thoughts, attitudes, and culture of the people who make and use it. In this sense, a language needs to be viewed as a social practice, and many parts of the different language behaviors by women and men will possibly be explained in terms of socialization as well as

biological criteria. Both language and gender are embedded in social practice deriving their meaning from human practices. Butler (1990) said that identities are not fixed but achieved through repeated performances of specific acts suggested by culture. Gender has constantly to be re-affirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norms which define masculinity and femininity.

Gender differences in emotional expressiveness is not a new area of study by any means. There are many different studies which analyze the way in which males and females are seen to express different levels of emotion and how each possesses some stereotypical emotions which are deemed socially acceptable for males and females to display.

Facebook, with its open membership to anyone, is a 'public' site, yet the ability to control individual privacy settings offers an illusion of 'private' space. Furthermore, individual profiles and pages are under the control of the profile owner, offering a semblance of privacy, yet the public, searchable nature of Facebook means that profiles and postings are often publically available. Schools, too, are complex structures of public and private. With restricted access to the community, a school is 'private' to the general public, whilst at the same time 'public' to those members of the community. Within the school, there are further divisions of class, age, subject, gender, and social cliques, which separately can be both public and private in different contexts.

Data Analysis

Different categories were formed which are given below:

Profile Pictures

The researcher looked at the choices people make when choosing profile images on Facebook. Although

both men and women are equally likely to display images of family and romantic relationships, the interpretations of such images may vary by gender.



Figure 6. Female 2 Figure 7. Female 3 Figure 8. Female 4

Facebook profile images can be seen as a form of "implicit" identity construction (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008) in which users display personal characteristics through images.

Profile Identities

Whenever someone opens an account on Facebook, she or he has to choose a particular username that is displayed. It is up to one's own choice

which name one acquires. Looking at Facebook i.d.'s through the gender lens, revealed that women and also men who, somehow, like to have i.d.'s not on their own names but on nicks and also that they acquire names which symbolize some traits of them. Different names that noticed in their profiles are:

1. *Nyong Tupamahu* (male 5)
2. *Iannone Kailola* (male 7)

3. *Jong Rio Chalaboer (male 13)*
4. *Patrick Lopu (male 14)*
5. *Josh Nunumete (male 15)*
6. *Padhy (male 10)*
7. *Vhany Swethy (female 11)*
8. *Uthiie Sormin (female 12)*
9. *Yousee kastanya (female 13)*

All this shows the particular mold in which men and women want

to be identified with and perceive them to be.

Privacy Issues

Facebook is a site on which users share their personals along with maintaining social reputation. Information about Me is a part of facebook profile in which users give the information about them.

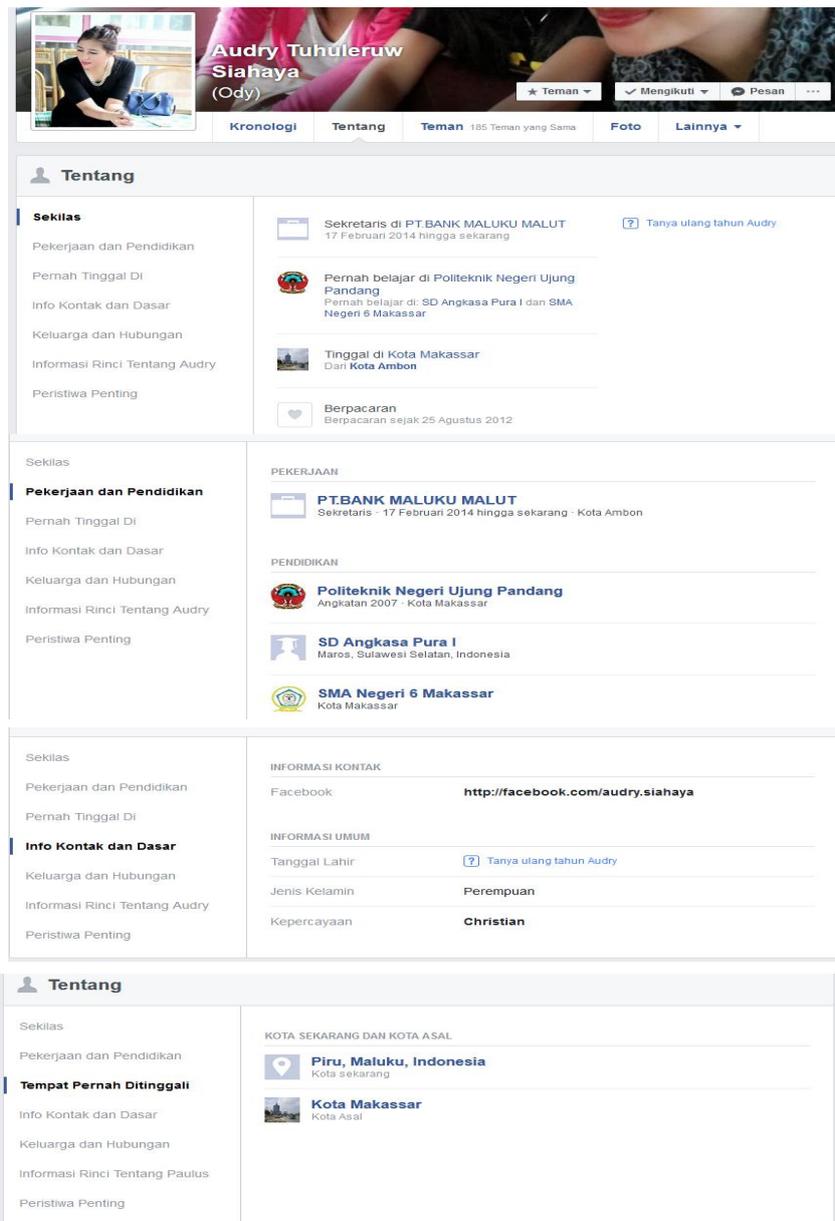


Figure 9. Female 1

Though both are conscious to maintain their privacies, it is mostly men who have given their contact numbers on site. As far as political

affiliation is concerned, men display it much more than women who leave it blank.

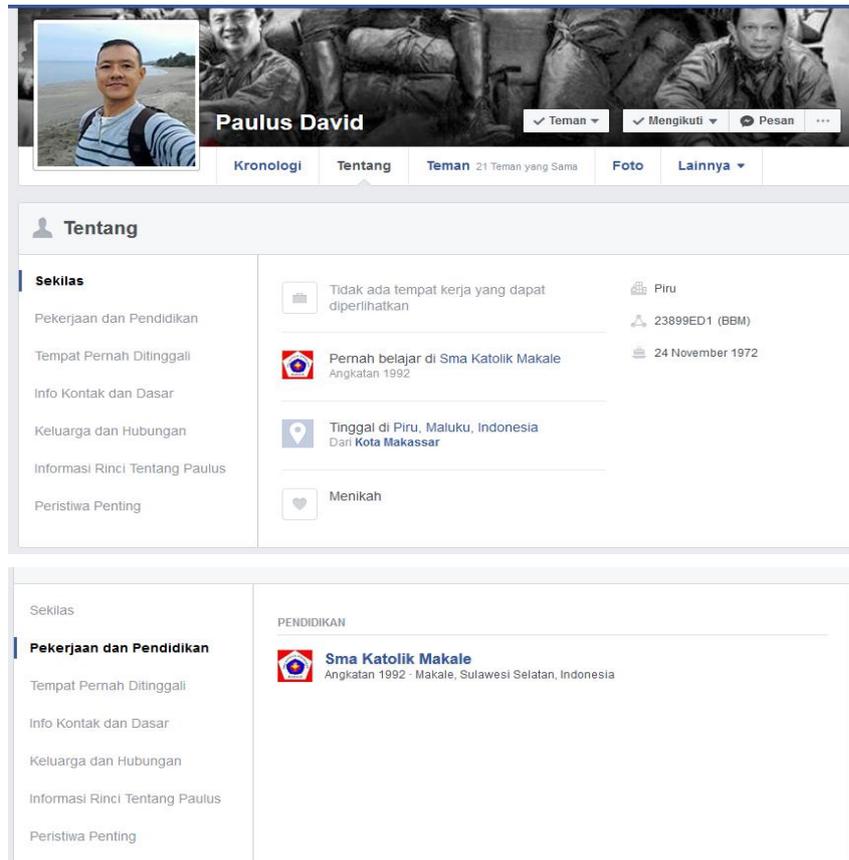


Figure 10. Male 1

The way a female leaves all information blank and a male give all for public display certainly speaks volumes about their privacy concerns.

Applications & Groups

Facebook consists of a large number of applications, pages, and groups which people use. The interesting thing to note is that the use

of applications also varies by gender. Games like Soccer, Texas Holdem Poker, and Plants vs Zombies are popular in men while women are not interesting to play games. In groups, girls generally go for those groups related to fashion and gossip newswile men for news and community-related groups, other choices do not differ much.



Figure 10. Male's game



Figure 11. Male's game



Figure 12. Male's group/community



Figure 13. Female's app



Figure 14. Female's group



Figure 15. Female's group

Topics

On Facebook, one can update its status by writing on the wall. According to my research, 73% men do not update their status, even if they are not related to their ownself but about the world around them, about motivational stuff or about the political scene. While women mostly write about themselves, about their own emotions mainly conveyed through poetry.

Male 3: *Stay safe! (this status related to the Dutch Paper ask just how safe are Dutch tower blocks after the horrific fire in London)*

Female 5: *Akan merindukan momen ini. (will be miss this moment)*

Emoticons

According to Crystal (2001), Emoticons are combinations of keyboard characters designed to show an emotional facial expression. For example, the sign ☺ is used to express joy and good mood while the symbol ☹ is used to express sadness. Research shows that women use emotions much more than men, infact as their role in the society is to maintain face and to keep the conversation going, the use of emotions make it possible.

Female 7: *Happy Mother's day my mom Evhie Tuhuleruw& mama Nona.. 😘😘 Always love u.. 😘😘 ..JESUS Bless u.. 😊 (Happy mother's day mom Evhie Tuhuleruw & mom Nona, always love you, Jesus Bless you)*

Female 15: *Omaigat!! Pipi melebar hidung + pesek(oh my God!! Cheek widened, nose flatter)*

Language

As far as language is concerned, previous research shows that women either maintain standard language or go for more fashionable variety. Eckert (2003) claims “women, deprived of access to real power, needed to get closer to the mainstream by using symbols of social membership, that is, the standard language” (p. 265). Men may speak a nonstandard language to express their feeling of freedom and creative power, in which, however, females are not allowed to do so (Spender, 1980). Research shows this that women are much more adaptive to the current trend of new a language in which boundaries are merging but this phenomenon is not that much visible in young generation in which all no matter to which gender category they belong tends to follow norms of new ‘net lingo’.

Female 4: *D'Gurlzz 😊😊 Happy Birthday [Elmhy Toegi](#) 🎉🎉*

[#sundaycelebration](#)
[#Birthdayprayers](#)
(the girls, happy birthday Elmhy Toegi)

Female 10: *Sapa yg plg bsar ee???*
😊😊😊😊 (siapa yang paling besar ya? – who is the biggest one?)

Female 8: *Boz. 😞 Jun.... Bc inbox dolo.... (Bos Junnissa Uny, baca inbox dulu – Boss Junnissa Uny, please read the inbox message)*

Some general features of ‘Netlingo’ as explained by Thurlow et al (2003) are given in the following:

Phonological aspects of everyday speech in real-life are found in a purely text-based world of electronic communication. This is done in order to create a similarity between speech and writing. Let’s have a look at some examples:

Male 6: *Tuhan ampuni beta dosa dosa jua Aaaammmmiiiiinnnnn 😊😊😊 (Tuhan tolong ampuni dosa saya, amin. – God, please forgive my sin)*

Female 14: *Hahaeeeeee paLeng Lucu kapaaaaaa!!!! (Haha, sangat lucu sekali! – LOL, too funny!)*

Code switching and Code-Mixing

Code switching and code-mixing are common features of spoken language. These two features are important because these are present only in spoken language.

Female 12: *Mau SALE barang Readyy .*

*Edisi Lebaran 😊
(want to sale ready stuff,
Eid edition)*

Conclusion

Gender is a powerful force in structuring our social lives, and one cannot deny the social reality of 'male' and 'female' social categories. But categories are never simply descriptive; they are normative statements that draw lines around who is included and excluded (Butler 1990).

Facebook is a popular utility medium and recent interest in language has caused linguists to question this area as well. As we have seen, there are gender-related differences (level of language and information display) in terms of

Code switching means 'changing back and forth between two language varieties, especially in a single conversation' (Trask, 1999). Code-mixing is a common characteristic of speech among bilingual speakers. Hudson (1996) elaborates that the bilingual speakers balance the two languages against each other as a kind of linguistic cocktail- a few words of one language, then a few words of the other, then back to the first for a few more words and so on.

choices men & women make. Women were more likely to go to Facebook to maintain existing relationships, pass time and be entertained. On the other hand, men were more likely to go to Facebook to develop new relationships or meet new people. Language change focuses on how people are attempting to modify gender, maintaining identities and blurring boundaries. That is why, in the virtual world, gender does not matter is not true but its gender that forms identity is also inadequate.

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