
Language, Culture, And Gender: A Sociolinguistic Study

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ABSTRACT: Culture is indeed a social force. When this social force is dominated by a specific gender, various forms of repression of subject terminology, initially considered equal in gender contexts, occur. Due to the dominance of a specific gender, culture is engineered to favor one gender, with males considered superior to females. Discussing language, culture, and gender essentially involves examining everyday life around us. From the moment of birth, one cannot escape the cultural webs created by previous generations, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on. Sociolinguistic studies conducted will reveal strong factors influencing language usage between men and women. Surveys were distributed across several aspects: nature, word choices, openness, courage, communication intonation, roles, and responsibilities among 50 male respondents and 50 female respondents. Gender refers to the differences between men and women based on social construction, culture, language, status, as well as roles and responsibilities in society. However, there are many differences in language use related to gender. Overall, the average results from respondents indicate that gender influences language usage. Men tend to be rougher, more open, and bold when expressing themselves. In contrast, women must consider numerous factors when expressing themselves. Word choices and intonation are carefully observed, as women tend to be gentle and empathetic.

KEYWORDS: language, culture, gender, sociolinguistics

INTRODUCTION

Language is a system used as a means of communication. The use of language can reflect the tendencies of the speaker's society. Therefore, explaining language must involve various social aspects of a particular community, such as social strata, age, gender, environment, and others.

Halliday's first fundamental perspective is language as social semiotics. This means that language forms encode socially constructed representations of the world. Halliday emphasizes the presence of the social context of language, which determines the social function of language and how it evolves (Anang, in Halliday, 1977, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Language, as one of several systems of meaning, along with traditions, livelihood systems, and etiquette systems, collectively shapes human culture. Halliday attempts to connect language primarily with a crucial aspect of human experience, namely social structure. One characteristic related to language use is the gender factor.

Gender refers to the differences in male and female characteristics based on social construction, culture, language, status, as well as roles and responsibilities in society. However, there are many differences in language use related to gender. For example, in political language, the language style and spirit of communication differ between males and females in terms of physical characteristics, voice, and speaking skills.

Gender culture gives rise to injustice, especially for women. Awareness of this gender injustice underlies the emergence of the feminist movement. The emergence of feminism reflects an awareness of the oppression and exploitation of women in society, the workplace, and the family, as well as a conscious effort by both women and men to change these conditions.

Feminists in Europe have been advocating for the equality of roles and positions of women since the 17th century (Ilyas, 1998), aiming for fair treatment of women. However, the reality is that gender bias nuances still persist in society. The perpetuation of gender culture plays a significant role in hindering the feminist struggle and the persistence of gender culture. Does gender bias also influence the language used in community life?

THEORETICAL STUDY

Gender inequality manifests in various forms of injustice, particularly against women, such as the marginalization, subordination, negative stereotypes, and discriminatory treatment of women, violence against women, as well as a heavier and longer workload. These manifestations of gender injustice are interconnected, inseparable, and dialectically influential. Many processes in society and the state marginalize communities, and one of them is the exploitation process in development. One form of exploitation in this process is the impoverishment of a specific gender, namely women, due to prevailing gender beliefs.

Language, Culture, And Gender: A Sociolinguistic Study

Rachman (1998:6-7) metaphorically describes the subordination of women as glass and firewood. In the glass analogy, women are the ones who have to experience cracking and breaking. In the firewood analogy, men play the role of fire, while women are the firewood. Men have the opportunity to burn and reduce the wood to ashes because women have the potential to be burned into meaningless dust. This analogy depicts the aspects of sexuality, with men as the lustful fire causing the glass to crack and break, and the wood to burn to dust. According to Wolfram (1967:76), women demonstrate higher sensitivity than men. Labov (1990:205) found that women consistently use pragmatic language forms more frequently than men. In conditions of stable sociolinguistic stratification, men tend to use more nonstandard forms compared to women.

Surveys prove that women exhibit language values higher than men. This is evident in everyday interactions between men and women. Women's language is often more polite compared to men, who frequently use coarse language. On average, women use more polite and refined language, using words like 'please,' 'sorry,' 'thank you,' and so on. However, when a woman is angry or displeased, she tends to use euphemistic words to maintain the feelings and emotions of others, especially in conversation, unlike men.

The assertiveness in language use by men may be attributed to their bold, mature, rational, powerful, and courageous nature compared to women. Men have heavier responsibilities, especially in providing for the family. However, unlike men, women often use variations of women's language, and conversely, women with masculine traits tend to prefer variations of men's language.

METHOD

The sociolinguistic study conducted aims to identify influential factors affecting language usage between men and women. Surveys were distributed covering various aspects: nature, word choices, openness, courage, communication intonation. Fifty male and fifty female respondents provided responses, with nearly identical results. Forty-six respondents, both male and female, indicated 'yes' that gender influences language usage, while four respondents, both male and female, stated 'no.'

Table. 1 Research Questionnaire

No	Aspect	Man	Woman
1.	Characteristic	44	46
2.	Communication Intonation	43	47
3.	Openness/courage	46	44
4.	Role	45	45
5.	Responsibility	48	42

DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted research, it appears that both male and female respondents agree that men tend to be rougher than women. It is suggested that, due to their physical strength, men exhibit behaviors that are more aggressive, strong, firm, harsh, and assertive. Male respondents explain that these characteristics are attributed to men being considered leaders in the family and other aspects of life. In terms of word choices, men tend to select clear and straightforward language, reflecting their assertive and open nature. The Nusantara tradition has long been patriarchal, and societal views have always been intertwined with the legitimization of intentional myths that are socialized and sanctified. Many expressions, such as "kasur sumur dapur" (bed well kitchen), "konco wingking," "surgo nunut neroko katut," "wong lanang jangkaha ombo," and others, signify the power that men have concerning the language used.

The language used by women also follows a similar pattern. Ethnic cultures, particularly Javanese culture, exhibit a significant gender bias. Many expressions imply gender bias, placing women as inferior beings. Expressions like "kanca wingking," "swarga nunut neraka katut," and "perempuan cukup di dapur" emphasize that women in Javanese culture occupy a lower class structure. During Kartini's time, the role and position of women had not shifted from being subordinate. The situation is a determinant factor in the text. According to Halliday (1978:141), meaning is created by the social system and exchanged by members of society in the form of text. Meaning is not created in isolation from its environment. Halliday clearly formulates that "meaning is a social system." Changes in the social system will be reflected in the text. The situation will determine the form and meaning of the text.

Kartini's letters reflect her rebellion against the position of women in the culture of her time. She questioned the fate and position of Javanese women who still lived as objects of men. Polygamy, for example, was a subject Kartini criticized, and she demanded why women were not given the same opportunities as men to develop intellectually and contribute to society.

Kartini's protests align with the findings of research conducted by Kartodirdjo and colleagues (1993). Javanese women, especially among the priyayi class, still occupied a subordinate and marginalized position. Women lacked freedom compared to men. In their adolescent years, they were secluded and equipped with skills for domestic roles such as cooking and maintaining

Language, Culture, And Gender: A Sociolinguistic Study

beauty. Women were directed toward the domestic sector, while their participation in public sectors was limited, with schools not encouraging higher education. If they insisted on contributing to the public sector, they had to choose jobs categorized as feminine. Therefore, up to this point, Javanese culture, albeit with varying qualities, still positions women as secondary figures. Women are viewed as primarily suited for roles in the domestic sector, involving cleaning the house, cooking, washing, and caring for children. If they work in the public sector, they not only have to choose a job that aligns with their nature but also remain as assistants to their husbands in providing for the family's livelihood. In short, it can be concluded that Javanese culture is quite permeated with gender bias.

Over the past 15 years, several negative impacts of the gender role socialization process have been documented. For instance, women tend to experience higher levels of depression (Hirshfeld & Cress, 1981) and are often perceived by others (especially men) and many women themselves as inferior beings. These perceptions are attributed to socialization factors and status. Similarly, men face problems rooted in their own roles, related to sexual issues, anger and violence, substance abuse, and stress associated with efforts to meet masculine stereotypes. Women tend to be triggered by their low-status gender roles, striving to conform to the ideal image they desire when achieving various accomplishments. On the contrary, men face issues when confronted with the necessity to achieve a high status that they find challenging or even impossible to attain.

In the past, most women worked solely within the confines of their homes, and their achievements were directed towards household activities or other areas related to their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Nowadays, there are many instances of women working in various fields that were previously dominated by men. Lidz (1983) states that women's careers and success, whether in education or employment, bring psychological impacts such as conflicts. These conflicts involve dilemmas between their self-image of having the ability and opportunity to pursue a career and the societal expectations that emphasize that achievement is a masculine trait unsuitable for women.

According to Homer, this conflict arises because the socialization process women undergo does not prepare them to manipulate success-oriented behavior. Society perceives successful women as those capable of raising, guiding, and educating their children to succeed in education while also encouraging their husbands to achieve success in their careers. Therefore, even if women succeed in their jobs, if they are less successful or even fail as wives and mothers, society's appreciation for them as women decreases. Consequently, women feel a loss of their femininity. They also believe that society will reject them in social settings.

Because women do not want to lose their femininity, be undervalued, or rejected by their environment due to success outside the home, women are less inclined to showcase themselves and their potential. The lack of achievement motivation in women is due to a motivation to avoid success within women. This motive arises because women suspect negative consequences, such as losing their femininity or being rejected by the environment due to their success. This situation causes women to fear the negative consequences. In other words, the fear of success is a barrier for women to achieve.

Gender, as a cultural construct, can be found in many ethnic cultures in Indonesia. Women in the domestic sector and men in the public sector are generally based on the assumption that women are physically weak but patient and gentle. Meanwhile, men are physically stronger and exhibit rough behavior. Based on these assumptions, the division of roles occurs, with women deemed more suitable for working at home, caring for children, and preparing all the needs of their husbands/men at home. On the other hand, men are considered more suitable for working outside the home, meaning earning a living to meet the needs of their families/women. Consequently, women become subordinate to men and marginalized in public life.

Gender constructs are also found in Indonesia's official religious culture. Ethnic and religious cultures are central elements in shaping national culture, as acknowledged by the 1945 Constitution, particularly in the explanation of Article 32, stating that national culture grows from the people's culture. Since the people's culture cannot be separated from ethnic and religious national culture, it can be concluded that ethnic and religious cultures are significant elements in coloring the formation of national culture.

It is reasonable to strengthen gender cultural constructs found in ethnic and religious cultures into national culture. According to these guidelines, an ideal wife/mother/woman must fulfill five aspects: (1) a wife as a husband's companion; (2) a mother managing/handling household affairs; (3) a mother continuing the family line, educating children, and guiding the younger generation; (4) a worker contributing to the husband's income; and (5) a member of social community organizations, especially women's organizations. In Halliday's view (1978:113-114), social structure is related to social context, patterns of social relationships, and social class or hierarchy. Social structure determines and gives meaning to various types of social contexts where these meanings are exchanged. Social groups significantly determine the characteristic forms of situations. For example, the relationship between status and the roles of participants will clearly produce a certain social structure, which can be a co-ordinative-egalitarian or hierarchical-subordinate structure. Patterns used as rhetorical means indicate characteristics associated with discourse "strategies."

Social structure enters through the influence of social hierarchy. According to Halliday (1978), social structure is born in the forms of semiotic interaction and becomes real through "oddness" and "chaos" in the semantic system. In reality, gender differences in terms of traits, roles, and positions, as described above, are not an issue as long as they do not result in injustice. However, in practice, these gender differences have given rise to various injustices, affecting not only women but also men. Gender injustice is a system and structure that places both men and women as victims of that system.

Language, Culture, And Gender: A Sociolinguistic Study

Gender injustice manifests in various forms, particularly against women, such as the marginalization of women, subordination of women, negative stereotypes or labels, and discriminatory treatment towards women, as well as violence against women, and a heavier and longer workload. These manifestations of gender injustice cannot be separated, are interconnected, and have dialectical effects. Many processes in society and the state marginalize communities, one of which is the exploitation process in development. One form of this exploitation is the impoverishment of a specific gender, namely women, caused by gender-based beliefs.

Rachman (1998:6-7) describes the subordination of women as a glass and firewood. In the glass analogy, women are the ones who must undergo cracking and breaking events. In the firewood analogy, men play the role of fire, while women are the firewood. Men have the opportunity to burn and char the wood, as women are potential to burn into ashes, becoming worthless. This analogy depicts the realm of sexuality. Men are the fire of desire that makes the glass crack and break, causing the wood to burn into ashes.

The subordination of women can also be observed in the use of the term "wanita" (woman) to refer to females, especially in Javanese culture. In Javanese, the term for woman is written and pronounced as "wanito," which is a shortened form of "wani ditata." This implies that being or having the female gender requires accepting being arranged, particularly by one's husband. The priority for women in this perspective is to serve and please their husbands. This indicates that the position of women, especially within the household, becomes subordinate under the shadow of their husbands'/men's authority.

A prominent form of subordination towards women is that all activities categorized as reproductive work are considered inferior and subordinate to productive work dominated by men. One evidence of the lack of appreciation for reproductive work is that it is almost not economically valued, despite the complexity and time spent on such work not being lighter than that of productive work. This situation leads both men and women to eventually perceive domestic reproductive work as lower and abandon it.

In general, stereotypes are labels or markers for a particular group that are detrimental and result in injustice. One such stereotype stems from gender bias views. Gender bias stereotypes represent a form of ideological and cultural oppression, where assigning specific labels corners women and disadvantages their existence (Faqih, 1997:149). The consequences lead to injustice against women based on these stereotypical views.

One labeling is that of women as beings obsessed with appearance. Women who groom themselves are assumed to be attractive and draw the attention of the opposite sex. Therefore, if cases of violence or sexual harassment occur against women, they tend to be associated with this labeling. In other words, if harassment or even rape occurs, society will tend to blame the victim, who is none other than the woman. Another stereotype or labeling is that of women as homemakers. As a result of this labeling, if women want to be active in areas considered male territories, such as politics, intense sports, and the like, it is deemed unsuitable for their nature as women.

The stereotype of men as breadwinners also leads to the marginalization of women. As a result, this stereotype considers anything produced by women as secondary or additional in meeting their family's needs, even though it is not uncommon for a woman's/wife's income to be higher than that of a man/husband. This also hinders or delays career advancement and achievement opportunities because it is perceived as not too serious in pursuing their careers, as it is only considered a part-time endeavor.

Violence against women is generally caused by gender-related views (Gender-Related Violence). The forms of violence can be both physical and non-physical, occurring at the household level, national level, and so on. One form of physical violence is rape, including marital rape. It may sound strange that rape occurs in the lives of married couples. However, with the understanding that rape is a sexual relationship where one party does not desire it (Dzuhayatin, 1997), it is very possible for the type of rape referred to here to occur and persist in the lives of married couples. There are often conversations, usually among women, expressing their reluctance to engage in sexual activities with their husbands because they are tired, for example, but they still oblige. However, this unwillingness is often not expressed due to various factors, mostly influenced by gender culture. Gender culture and religious interpretations teach that wives must always please, serve, and obey their husbands. This teaching plays a role in covering up rape within marital life, allowing it to persist.

Gender culture gives rise to injustice, especially for the female gender. Awareness of this gender injustice underlies the emergence of the feminist movement. The feminist movement arose as an awareness of the oppression and exploitation of women in society, the workplace, and within families, as well as a conscious effort by both women and men to change these circumstances. Feminists in Europe have been fighting for the equality of roles and positions for women since the 17th century (Ilyas, 1998), so that women are treated more fairly. However, in reality, gender bias nuances are still apparent in society. The long-standing nature of gender culture plays a significant role in hindering the feminist movement and perpetuating gender culture.

Position and Role of Women: Program for improving the quality of women's lives, Program for the development and harmony of Women's Empowerment policies. Program for enhancing community roles and strengthening the institutionalization of the Women's Empowerment Agency. Gender education can be implemented from childhood in family upbringing, through school years, up to higher education. Gender education should be carried out integratively in learning or lectures, especially in religious studies, moral education, language, social sciences, biology (science), and physical education. These subjects are considered suitable for instilling insights, critical thinking skills, and attitudes of concern regarding gender issues. Gender education is integrated into goal formulation, teaching material development, learning strategy selection, and evaluation tool development.

Language, Culture, And Gender: A Sociolinguistic Study

In current conditions, research with a gender perspective trend is conducted in various Gender Studies Centers (PSG) in collaboration with relevant institutions. One important goal of this research is to bring to light the knowledge and experiences of women that have been concealed as an effort to discover new paradigms to overcome their incapacity. Research should offer alternative solutions to the problems faced by women.

The implementation of gender perspectives in community service can be carried out through various activities within the community, such as work practices, community service programs, and student field experiences, armed with a set of knowledge and skills to contribute to building a gender construction that is favorable to both men and women. This way, both genders have access, participation, control, and benefit from development. This hope can be realized if policymakers establish programs that support gender-perspective development.

CONCLUSION

Every region has diverse cultures, languages, and communication intonations. Indeed, there are differences between men and women caused by various factors. Overall, respondents, on average, stated that gender influences language use. Men tend to be rougher, open, and bold when expressing themselves. In contrast, for women, many factors need to be considered when expressing something. Word choices and intonations are highly observed because women tend to be gentle and empathetic.

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