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"Drop your 'Hello!' here!":
Investigating the Language Variation Used in Online Classroom for Tertiary Level in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic situation in 2020 puts the entire educational sector into online activity globally. The communication process in teaching and learning activity has moved into computer-mediated communication and the explosion of the online classroom has become the most favorite media. One of the phenomena in some online classrooms is the variation of the language used by teachers and students to engage with each other. Both teachers and students need to produce a communicative language to interact while showing the possible turn to give the floor. For English language teachers and learners in Indonesia, the variation is also used as the negotiation of meaning as they are also the non-native speaker of the language. Thus, the conversation turns resulting in various types of language used. There were24 online classroom activities in tertiary education analyzed in this research to see the possible variation expressions used for a turn. The procedure for analysis was much on text analysis combined with some basic interviews which were done virtually. The result shows that the variation of the language used as a way to minimize the disparity between teacher and learner as the language behaviour to maintain the relationship in digital communication

Keywords: *Computer-mediated communication, teacher, online classroom, language variation, turn*

1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has already been a serious talk since the early 1990s. Through linguistics perspectives, this phenomenon starts with how internet technology has influenced the language since the usage of new media such as *chatroom*, e-mail, and social media platforms to this current date. In some ways, language issues in computer-mediated communication context however contribute to the development of linguistics studies of online communication in every circumstance.

In 2020, where the world has to face the pandemic of COVID-19 internet utilization becomes the most popular way of solving some social problems since people have to keep their social and physical distancing. Here the internet helps anyone in anyplace to connect without having face-to-face interaction. One of those internet usages is the trend of online

learning. The COVID-19 pandemic puts the entire educational sector into online activity globally. In this situation, the classroom building has changed into a virtual zone and teacher-student interaction replaced into computer-mediated activity. Thus, the communication process in this type of teaching and learning somehow has gained the impetus of new media interaction studies such as the language used by teachers and students to engage with each other.

Focus on Indonesia, the implementation of the internet in teaching-learning activity is not considered as the new method for the tertiary level. Years ago, some prominent campus has already implemented both blended and fully online learning. And for today, during this pandemic situation all stages of educational level 'be induced' to turn into full online learning. However, since the nature of university-level students where mostly are in teenagers age (18-21 years old), they have been conversant with the use of technology as a digital-native, therefore a university

teacher should also be very adaptive and attractive to engage their student.

One of the phenomena in some online classrooms at this level is the variation of the language used, especially in the English language classroom. Both teachers and students need to produce a communicative language to interact while showing the possible turn to give the floor using their English as a foreign language. Since Indonesian is the non-native speaker (NNS) of English, the communication used also functioned for the negotiation of the meaning by using certain language choices. In L2 learning context-especially at a lower level of proficiency-the cognitive, linguistic, and sociolinguistic demands are particularly substantial [1]. However, as Lamy and Hampel [2] stated that NNS learners could engage with the communicative aspect of their study by exchanging language online rather than in conversation classes.

The study of sociolinguistic through online activity, like genre, turn-taking, identity, and community language, has gained the enhancement in the context of new media discourse studies today. One of the studies that have been done related to CMC and sociolinguistics perspective is Damanhouri [3] that examines the relationship between language use in CMC and the social identity of the users (young adults and middle-aged adults). He found out that the mutual relationship between language use in CMC and the user's social identity is to reflect and co-construct the identity.

Smit [4] simply stated that classroom interaction is different from the non-institutional talk or what is often considered 'normal' language use. The transactional talk that is used in the classroom presumably functioned "to convey factual or propositional information" (Brown and Yule)[4]. However, more from Smit, since the dense social environment in the educational setting usually engage in a long-term relationship and spends a considerable amount of time together so the language use also most probably can be varied.

In the other hands, Lightbown and Spada [6] have argued that language use depends on many factors that shape an individual's social identity including the social history of the individual, such as social class, gender, religion and race, and the involvement of individuals in various social institutions. One of the sociolinguistic variables that typically lead to variation in language use is the speaker's gender. The relationship between language and gender has long been interested in sociolinguistic and related disciplines. In particular, it looks at how males and females use language differently and on the assumption that it will also play an important role in the shaping of their way of communication.

In 2016 Qodriani and Muti'ah [7] explored a case study that was carried out with 2 male and 2 female NNS of English teachers through direct observation of classroom interaction for investigating the classroom discourse within both genders. The result shows that male teachers more focus on the goal of teaching to maintain their status meanwhile female teachers are more concerned about the process of teaching to build a relationship with the students. Seeing this difference theory stated by Tannen [8] it is agreed that men and women speak in particular ways because they have been formed by the gender cultures into specific conversational roles and are thus most comfortable in them. So, the differences that may appear are caused by the culture which both men and women experienced according to their gender. Generally, difference theory as postulated by Tannen is summarized into six categories, each of which pairs a contrasting use of language by males and females, (i) Status v Support, (ii) Independence v. Intimacy, (iii) Advice v. understanding, (iv) Orders v. proposals, (v) Conflict v. compromise, and (vi) Information v. feelings. Furthermore, this research tries to explore more about their difference in new media communication within online learning activity.

Androutsopoulos [9] has already proposed set the stage for exploring textual aspects of language use in new media, by orienting to the different ways of interacting, as embedded in the locally situated context to these current developments in new media sociolinguistics. According to him, digital communication has allowed vernacular writing to spread into new areas of practice shaped by different writing styles and norms. Some strategies also applied in this type of communication such as (a) mingling of spoken and written features; (b) linguistics economy due to constraints on message size and the necessity of speed in synchronous exchange; and (c) compensatory means for visual cues, facial expressions, and intonation patterns. Thus, it is subsequently become interested in this research for the particular use of the teacher's language on how they produce language in an opening session in their online teaching-learning activity in accordance to this new media context and how their gender can influence the word choice that used to engage with their classroom virtually. The importance of this study relates to the current issue of online learning activity includes the strategy of how to maintain a social relationship through digital communication.

2. METHODS

There are two methodological applied in collecting and analyzing the data. First, the interactional sociolinguistics proposed by Gumperz in examining

the dialogic process in which interactionts display shared perception of which they are [10]. The second, ethnographical microanalysis by Erickson in examining the relationship between the participant and the situation [11].

The early stage of data collection consisted of the selection of a sample and appropriate participants. The empirical data under discussion here concerns the transactional exchanges of online learning classroom talk in a private university in Lampung province, Indonesia. The reason to choose this institution was on the entry access of the researcher to open and join the online classroom. The sample was 24 opening rituals from 10 males and 14 females teachers which analyzed through virtual observation for the detailed-text analysis and virtual interviews for the additional qualitative data. The interview part applied to contribute to an emic understanding of the direct practices of CMC communicants related to the reason why they choose a certain code, phrases, or clauses in their expression or statement. The material object was gathered by recording the exchange of classroom activity from Learning Management System (LMS) of SPADA Indonesia platform.

In a digital discourse, a scholar of new media language Susan Herring (1996, 2001,2004)[12],[13],[14] explains that some priorities in analyzing this communication aspect divided into 3 (three) variables; technological, situational, and linguistic. Discussing this research analysis, the technological variable comprises the usage of LMS of online learning platform where teachers and students can interact in some features such as *chatroom, forum discussion, announcement post,* and *assignment link*. The exchange organized in synchronous (chat) and quasi-synchronous (forum). The situational variable is in an educational setting and Linguistics variable is in the form of the language use by the teacher in an online learning activity.

The tone used in each post was typically formal since the situation was in an academic context; however, several threads seemed to be informal too. In the end, for ethical consideration, the participants were informed about the nature of the study. They also were given assurance regarding the confidentiality and security of information.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Result of online interview (24 online teachers)

The preference of classroom situation (out of 24 teachers)	16 Formal 66,67%	8 Informal (33,33%)
The preference of teaching style (out of 24 teachers)	Teacher-centered (68% of female)	Student-centered (72% of male)
Reason to vary the language (code, phrases, or clauses)	Female: - To get close to the student - To make student feels enjoy the class - To make the classroom more alive - To eliminate the distance between teacher and student - To give clear information - To give attention to student - To show sympathy	Male: - To make the student more independent - To make the student get clear information - To give clear instruction - To state the clear order - To give attention to student - To ease the student in understanding the order

Excerpt 1:

A Female teacher wrote in her classroom initiation

"Hi, everyone.

In this first meeting, you are going to be introduced the learning contract of Child Development subject and several reasons why you need to study this subject as a student of English Education Department.

To make you clear, you can watch the video and the attached file below.

As you have joined this course this semester and this becomes our first meeting, please drop your "Hello!" as you are attending this course and you are ready to join this online learning."

Excerpt 1 is a female teacher statement in opening her class. She teaches Child Development subject in the English Education department. In writing her post, the teacher uses small case. She opens her class by greeting, explains the activities, and closes by asking the student to reply to her post.

Excerpt 2:

One of male teacher statement in opens his classroom

"HI, STUDENTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

WELCOME TO THE NEW ODD SEMESTER IN THE ACADEMIC YEARS OF 2019/2020

YOU ARE HIGHLY RECOMMENDED TO READ ALL THE IMPORTANT INFORMATION RELATING TO THIS COURSE BEFORE GOING TO START THE ONLINE ACTIVITIES.

THERE WILL BE SOME SECTIONS TO BE READ TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THIS COURSE, INCLUDING COURSE DESCRIPTION, COURSE OBJECTIVES, STANDARD COMPETENCE, LEARNING STRATEGY, EVALUATION, ASSIGNMENT, & REFERENCES.

PLEASE FILL OUT THE ATTENDANCE LIST AFTER YOU FINISH YOUR ACTIVITY"

While excerpt 2 is a male teacher in opening his class. He teaches Educational Psychology subject in English Education department. In writing his post, the teacher uses all capital letters. He opens his class by greeting, explains the activities, and closes by asking the student to fill out the attendance.

From excerpt 1 we can slightly see the difference of word choice by both teachers. Seeing from the writing style the FT uses the lower case in her writing while MT uses capital. In the study of neography (Crystal, [15]; Danet, [16]; Herring, [17]; Raymond, [18]) the capital letter used in textual communication in CMC to exhibit the user's ego and be more expressive.

In greeting the student, the FT uses the word "Hi everyone!" and the MT greet by "HI STUDENTS". Both expressions contain different tones. The word 'everyone' in FT creates the situation to be closer and the teacher shows the relationship way dense. The FT expression seems to show the teacher know the class well and each of the class member. While on the other hand, the word 'student' used by MT makes the conversation to be more formal. The MT has already put the stands on his own to make the conversation will be in a formal situation where this action then can

create the distance between the communicants. The different formality words used by both teacher explained that FT tends to be more informal though in a formal situation, however, the MT decides himself to be formal.

Excerpt 3:

Dear students,

> *Welcome to the psychology of literature class. In this first meeting, I will share the learning contract. Please download and read the learning contract carefully. Today, you are also required to answer 5 questions regarding the psychology of literature. You have 72 hours (3 days) to answer the questions.*
>
> *But first, you need to watch this video and understand the concepts of conscious and unconscious and the interpretation of a dream.*
>
> *I understand that you have many assignments and you need to submit all of the assignments on time. So, if you think that you are not able to finish your assignment on time. Please Whatsapp me on 0xxxx or text me on 0xxxx.*
>
> *There will be personal information that I would share to you regarding the assignments and the deadlines. Please inform me before the end of this academic year (January 4, 2019). Thank you. I hope you are all in good condition.*

The excerpt 3 is the opening scene of a female teacher for Psychology of Literature class. She opens with the greeting and some procedural activity for her student in doing the class. In the end, she gives the closer attachment by giving the information on her phone number.

Excerpt 4:

> *Good day ladies & gentlemen,*
>
> *I'm XXX, just simply call me XY. I'll be with you discussing and directing what to do during this semester in this 'on-line' popular literature class. First of all I do really need your personal identity as detail as possible, so that please ensure that you reply this message by informing your own identity immediately after you read this massage. Other than that, you are pleased to ask anything related to the temporary learning contract I'll upload below. Remember, we only have approximately 100 minutes to*

discuss all things needed, and each of you are required to post something in this forum.

Thanks in advance.

The excerpt 4 is a male teacher in open his online class. After the greeting, he introduces himself and ask the student to introduce theirselves. At the end he asked the student to post to the forum discussion.

Since the classroom interaction situated a formal setting 16 out of 24 teachers agreed that they will keep the situation be in a formal circumstance. While the rest 8 teachers considered this mediated-communication of online learning need to have a different style of communication so they need to attract the student with the informal yet educated nuance. However, though most of the teacher confirming their idea to keep the class situated formally, the use of language can be used vary, both formal and informal language.

Seeing the language tone in excerpt 3 and 4 we can see that the female teacher tends to make the situation become informal and the male teacher maintaining the formality of academic situation; the similar situation we found in excerpt 1 and excerpt 2. The use of the phrase "I understand your situation.." in excerpt 3 shows that the teacher has close relation with the student, they have known each other, then she 'understands' how is the current situation of her student. By using this word she also tries to give her sympathy and attention to the class. It also supported by her statement in giving her personal number to make sure her feeling. In other form, the male teacher open the class by introduce himself and ask the student to introduce theirs. This sentence shows that there are distance relation between the teacher and the student that they haven't known each other well. It also shows how firm the conversation is. These two language choice also puts the different between both teacher that the female is better to express their feeling through words and male teacher is more straightforward.

Back to excerpt 1, after they open the class both teachers are welcoming their student. FT choose the word "you are going to be introduced" while MT give the command with "you are highly recommended to read" The FT uses the phrase 'you are going to be introduced' which explain to her student that she has the responsibility to accompany the student by introducing them and get along with them. The word 'to be introduced' also means this activity will be more on teacher action. It is also proven in other expressions with the same tone given by the teacher such as 'to make you clear..' where the teacher shows her sympathy intention to make the student understand something. Yet, the MT uses the phrase 'highly recommend' which the preceding word gives more

tension as an order. Besides, this phrase also means the activity will be the students' action. Based on the lexical expression used by both teachers we can slightly see that they use a different style of teaching method, FT applies the teacher-centered and the MT uses student-centered.

According to Tannen, the way FT expresses her student that she will help them to know the subject define the intimacy that offers by a female teacher, it also shows the support given by the teacher. Other where, the MT has pointed out that they asked the students to be more independent in their online learning activity. Independent learner that proposed by MT is considered as their psychological influence on his classroom activity. Additionally, it also explains the students his status that can clarify their position one as a teacher to give the command and as a student to do the command. The interview result from both gender also resulting that 68% of female teachers tend to use teacher-centered style and 72% of male teachers choose student-centered classroom activity. Though both genders using different preference in their teaching method, but the aims of the process is still to give a better understanding of a certain topic or subject to their student.

Another unique language used that show 'genderlect' teacher in this data is on how they ask their student to show their presence in this virtual classroom. The FT teacher uses a metaphorical phrase by expressing "…drop your Hello! here.." as the requirement for the student to respond to their existence in its virtual classroom. In face to face interaction, the phrase 'dropping Hello' is not appropriate in both settings not in a formal nor informal communication. However, this expression suddenly becomes acceptable when it comes to the nature of CMC where Androutsopoulos also stated that digital communication then can mingling both spoken and written forms of communication. Here, since the interaction has changed into a textual form of language and the 'Hello' greeting can not be heard, so completing 'Hello' by 'dropping' them as the informal form of a command as the activity of writing is an attractive expression. It also explains that FT shows her spiritful feeling to start the class to her student.

In closing his opening session, the MT teacher also asked his student to confirm their presence on their online learning by checking the attendance of the students. Here, the teacher stated 'PLEASE FILL OUT THE ATTENDANCE…'. The expression which produces by MT is in a formal style. The choice of 'PLEASE' in initiating the phrase means that the language tone is formal and rigid. In conclusion, MT teacher expresses as informative as it requires and FT teacher shows more feeling in her language.

From the qualitative information that is taken based on a virtual interview, most of the teachers express their textual language unconsciously or without any intention. This can happen when the activity of online learning utilizes the synchronous platform so the interaction will be more spoken-like by having real-time communication.

4. CONCLUSION

In a textual computer-mediated communication where both communicants do not have face-to-face interaction, the language use is the most important point that can help the effectiveness of the communication. The word choice can influence the reader to find out the main information and meaning negotiation. On the other hand, word choice also can show the relation, feeling, emotion, and status of the speaker.

It is very important to keep in mind that the analysis of this research is the early assumption for the language and gender discussion since there is the limitation of the data. However, it leads to have further discussion since the actual development of the sociolinguistic competence in classroom teaching especially in computer-mediated communication is more flexible and adaptive. Regarding the classroom interaction, in the end, this sort of analysis shows that the variation of the language used by both gender teachers is a way to minimize the disparity between teacher and learner as the language behavior to maintain the relationship in digital communication. The migration of teaching-learning activity from face-to-face interaction to virtual activity somehow also needs the creativity of each participant to be more adaptive in the situation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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