

# Language Variations in Instagram Caption Gender Analysis with a Sociolinguistic Approach

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## ABSTRACT

This research discussing the language variations that are used by gender in the Instagram caption. The purpose of this research is to analyse language variations that are used by women and men in Instagram captions and to find the language variations that are realized by men and women in the Instagram captions. In order to finish this study, a descriptive qualitative method is applied. This study also uses data collection techniques with non-participatory observation methods and documentation. This study applied Lakoff's (1975) theory of gender feature to analyze the data. According to Lakoff (1975), dan Jiyun (2014) Women and men have different access to different languages. In this research, there are seven language features used by men and women in the Instagram caption. They are, lexical hedges or filler, tag question, hypercorrect grammar, empathy adjective, intensifiers, super polite forms dan empathic stress. The results of the study found that the language used by men and women in the Instagram caption is having some have similarities and differences in the use of language features.

**Keywords:** *Gender, Instagram caption, language variation*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Everyone has a different way or language variation in expressing something, be it in the form of an opinion, argument, or judgment. Different ways or variations of language occur due to several factors. The language used by men and women is one factor in the occurrence of differences in language variations. The use of different languages for men and women is formed because the use of language across genders has different characteristics.

Gender is one of the factors in the occurrence of language differences, such as the opinion given by Wardaugh (in Meyerhoff, 2006) which states "Gender is a key component of identity". Gender is used as a differentiating factor to see the ways and styles of language that eventually give birth to the term's male and female. This term implies that men and women do have their own peculiarities in language. This opinion is the same as the understanding described by Robin Lakoff about language and gender in the book *Language and Women's Place* (1975). He argued that the language features used by men and women were different. When viewed biologically, men and women are indeed different and socially different in life.

When discussing language and social relations, it means discussing sociolinguistic studies in linguistics. Sociolinguistics is the study of language and society in society and discusses language use and language variations in the social environment of society. In sociolinguistic studies, gender is distinguished from sex. Gender is based on social constructs that have nothing to do with biological traits, whereas sex is based on the biological traits of an individual (Milroy & Gordon, 2003).

The use of men's and women's language varies and is realized in different ways, such as expressing their opinion on something in different ways on social media (Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook). The phenomenon of using language, especially in the form of writing on social media such as Instagram captions, Facebook status, and Twitter tweets, describes the thoughts, characteristics, and attitudes of language users.

The media used in this research is Instagram. Indonesia is the 4th largest country using Instagram after America, Brazil, and India, with a total of 56 million based on the *liputan6.com* article. Instagram is one of the social media that is often used by the community in communicating such as providing information or expressing opinions and expressing what they want to

convey. The language used in writing captions on Instagram to express something has different ways so that new language forms emerge to express something that you want to convey. That's why every language used on Instagram can describe the reality of language that occurs in society.

Instagram is a social media that is used to upload a photo and write a caption to express or convey an opinion related to the uploaded photo. Caption Instagram can provide information in the form of news, business, activities, or convey opinions, arguments, assessments, and so on. In addition, Instagram users can also comment on a photo uploaded by other Instagram users. Captions on Instagram are in the form of text or sentences to explain an uploaded photo. The topic that people often discuss on Instagram social media today is fashion. Each person in writing a caption on Instagram to describe or describe a photo has a variety of different languages.

Language variation is a science in sociolinguistic studies. According to Kridalaksana (in Chaer and Agustina, 2014, p.61) "sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that seeks to explain the characteristics of language variations and establish the correlation of the characteristics of these language variations with social characteristics". The occurrence of language variations is caused by several factors such as social, geographic, and gender factors. Social factors occur because of differences in social levels, geographic factors occur because of differences in place or origin, while gender factors occur because of differences in characteristics in expressing or conveying something.

Language variation can be explored through the use of language in a social context directly or indirectly such as in social media. Coates (1986) views linguistic differences as a reflection of social differences. Men and women in a social environment have differences, one of which is language. Everyone has a different idiolect or language style, especially men and women. The use of language in men and women has differences such as in the way of speaking and the form of language.

Gender is one part of determining language variation in sociolinguistic studies. So far there have been several studies that discuss gender, one of which is research from Jiyun (2014) which aims to analyze and examine the connotations of gender differences in language and social sources. The result of this research is that the occurrence of gender differences in language reflects that the cultural psychology and social value orientation of language users are influenced not only by social and environmental pressures but also culture and family experiences.

Based on this background, the writer aims to discuss "the Expression of the Use of Men and Women in the Caption on Instagram." The theory used in this study is the theory of gender language variation based on Lakoff's (1975) theory. This study seeks to look at the use of male

and female language in Instagram captions, thereby increasing understanding of gender language variations in sociolinguistic studies and providing knowledge of language variations that are often used on Instagram. Based on the problems presented, everyone has different language variations due to several factors such as gender and usage. So, we need to know how male and female language variations in Instagram captions are seen from a sociolinguistic perspective.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Language and Gender**

Discussing language and gender has a relationship in studying language variations in sociolinguistic studies because gender is one of the factors that influence the occurrence of gender language variations. Lakoff (1975) argues about language and gender, developed by Mariyama and Lisetyo (2017) in the journal *Gender Feature in Women and Men Skin Care Advertisement*.

Lakoff (1975) explains that women and men have different access to languages. The language of men is more assertive, adults and men like to speak openly with the right vocabulary. In contrast, the language used by women is indecisive, not open (to use words figuratively), and is careful when presenting something, and often uses gentle and polite words or gestures.

### **2.2. Language Features of Men**

Lakoff (1975) made several differences in the characteristics of the language used by men and women. The use of language cannot be separated from one's stereotype so that in many contexts, it is divided into two ideas that are sexual in nature. A woman will be more positioned to use language that is more feminine while men will use more masculine language. When viewed from a biological perspective, men and women do have differences, as well as in socializing or communicating there are differences. Holmes (1992) also states that there are several characteristics of masculine language, namely, ungrammatical form, multiple negations, pronounced- in form, delete-ed at the end of the form in pronunciation, dan impolite forms.

### **2.3. Language Features of Women**

According to Lakoff (1975) in the book *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* by Holmes (2001), that women have characteristics in language. These characteristics are called "features of women's language" or features of the female language. Identify a set of characteristics that are stated to occur more frequently in women's speech than men's, and that speech is referred to as women's language. The features of women's language according to Lakoff's (1975) theory are as follows: lexical hedges or filler, tag question, hypercorrect

grammar, rising intonation, empathy adjective, precise color terms, intensifiers, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words and empathic stress.

### 3. METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method as a research design, to determine how the use of male and female language in Instagram captions. The qualitative descriptive method is used by researchers because the data is in the form of words, phrases, or sentences regarding related linguistic phenomena. This research not only describes but also finds the characteristics of the speech of men and women in describing photos on Instagram.

This research also uses data collection techniques with non-participatory observation methods and documentation, because there is no need to join in the activities carried out by the object of research. The use of this method is based on the data used, namely in the form of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences found in Instagram captions because the data from this study are captions uploaded on fashion-themed social media Instagram.

In this study, the data analysis process was carried out using the following steps: first, identifying data by looking at and determining the characteristics of language objects in the form of language use based on men and women in Instagram captions. Second, classify data according to the language variation features of Lakoff's theory (in Mariyama & Lisetyo, 2017) and Hymes (1974). Third, presenting data in order to understand what is happening and what to do further analyze or take actions based on the understanding obtained from these presentations. Fourth, describe the data that has been presented in a clear and detailed manner. Fifth, explaining the data. Sixth, interpreting the data that has been explained is not just what it is, but also what is implied by expressing one's own opinion. Seventh, draw conclusions and verification from the analyzed data. So, this conclusion will answer the problem formulation that has been formulated since the beginning.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Fashion-themed Instagram captions are the data in this study. There are 30 captions from the fashion theme, 15 captions about fashion written by men, and 15 captions about fashion written by women, the use of language used by men and women in Instagram captions can be seen from the results of the analysis of gender language variations based on Lakoff's theory (in Mariyama & Lisetyo, 2017). This theory can show in detail what variations of language are often used by men and women and what forms are realized. Based on the results of the analysis that has been carried out, the

language variants that are often used in fashion-themed Instagram captions consist of 7 features of language variations based on Lakoff's (1975) theory, namely lexical hedges or filler, tag question, hypercorrect grammar, empathy adjective, intensifiers, super polite forms dan emphatic stress.

#### *Caption SL*

*"Happy Monday semua!  
Thanks buat @itsgreenlight  
t-shirtnya bikin aktivitas gue lebih nyaman"*

The Instagram caption above is by promoting indirectly. He wrote that he would start his day wearing these shoes and mentioned the name of the shoe brand without providing detailed information about the product being promoted. He only mentioned the brand of the shoes he used, which served to promote. The Instagram caption of the SL account has 1 language feature, namely, hypercorrect grammar. The sentence used in the caption is a good and good sentence to indirectly explain the product that is being promoted. From the style of writing the caption written by SL looks short but in an indirect way in promoting the brand or product being promoted.

#### *Caption SP*

*"Kanaka scarf @wearingklmby ini ide designnya bagus bgt loh... alute sama @nadinegaus yang selalu terinspirasi dengan alam Indonesia. Udah keren idenya, bagus pula hasilnya. Luvvv"*

Write a caption about feminine fashion, namely scarf. The style of writing the Instagram caption is by directly promoting the scarf of the Klamby brand. In writing, give praise to the design of the scarf he is promoting. The Instagram caption from the SP account has 2 language features, namely the intensive features and empathy adjectives to strengthen the statement he conveyed when promoting Scarf. Sentences or words that contain intensive features are in the sentence "Kanaka scarf @wearingklmby, this is a really good design idea..." from that sentence, SP account tries to convince people that the design of the Klamby's scarf is very good. In the empathy adjective feature which aims to give a reaction of his admiration for the product being promoted, he really likes the inspiration for the ideas used by Klamby.

Based on the findings of language variations used by men and women in Instagram captions, namely: (1) Lexical hedges or filler, (2) Tag question (3) Hypercorrect grammar, (4) Empathy adjective, (5) Intensifiers, (6) Super polite forms, (7) Emphatic stress. Of all the language variations found, the intensive features are the dominant features in Instagram captions. This can be seen from the finding that the number of appearances of the Intensifiers features from 30 Instagram captions was 30.35% or 17 that used intensifiers, 9 from male captions, 8 from female captions.

The use of intensifier features equally dominates between male and female Instagram captions. The intensifier feature is used to indicate strengthening the statement written in the Instagram caption to convince other Instagram users. This is in line with the research, Mariyama, and Lisetyo (2017) said that the feature intensifiers in advertisements are used to emphasize sentences. As already attached to the description of the findings of intensifier features from the fashion-themed Instagram caption. The intensifiers feature that appears on the fashion-themed Instagram captions often use the word "really" to promote a product to convince people or support the statements it delivers.

The use of 7 features found from the analysis results, there are 2 features that are not used by women but are used by men, namely the lexical hedges or filler and empathic stress features. The use of lexical hedges or fillers is intended to avoid saying anything definite. Emphatic stress aims to emphasize a phrase to be convincing. These findings differ from the opinion expressed by Holmes (2001) that Hedges is one of the characteristic features of the feminine language.

The empathic stress feature also differs from the results of the analysis with Lakoff's opinion (in Jiyun, 2014) which states that women use firm emphasis by increasing intonation in speech. This phenomenon can occur because men learn their first language from their mothers who speak the language of women. Like Lakoff's statement (in Mariyama & Lisetyo, 2017) that the first person who is most important for children's development is the mother. Thus, their language is influenced by the language of women.

The next language feature that has differences in its use is the empathy adjective feature. The difference in the use of empathy adjective features between men and women in choosing words to show admiration for something or things discussed in the caption to support statements made in the Instagram caption in the form of providing information or promoting products so that people believe in the product being promoted. This is in line with the research, Mariyama and Lisetyo (2017) say that features that contain adjective vocabulary indicate the speaker's admiration for something.

The use of empathy adjectives between men and women has differences in word choice. Women are more likely to use words whose phonemes have changed or slang, for example, the word *games* is changed to *gemuy*. Meanwhile, men use the correct phoneme without changing it, such as the use of the word 'cool'.

The next feature difference that is used by men and women is the super polite forms feature. The findings on the super polite forms feature used by women are the phrase 'the lying down' which means people who like to lie down or sleep. The use of the term sentence was only found in the female caption. But the use of words that are

proper or more polite, such as the word *alhamdulillah*, to express gratitude. *Bismillah*, to start a speech and *Assalamualaikum*, for the greeting sentence, which people usually use the sentence hi guys in the sentence of greeting replaced with *Assalamualaikum* to make it look polite.

These findings are in line with Lakoff's opinion (in Jiyun, 2014) explaining that women and men have differences at the level of phonology, vocabulary, and grammar, choice of syntax. The language of men is more assertive, adults and men like to speak openly with the right vocabulary, such as in the choice of words used by men and women in the empathy adjective feature from the findings of data analysis.

Furthermore, Mariyama and Lisetyo (2017) also argue that the language used by women is not open (to use words figuratively), and is careful when presenting something, and often uses soft and polite words or gestures. This opinion is in line with the discovery of the super polite shape features in the data. The use of words or phrases found in women's captions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis above, the data used in this study came from fashion-themed male and female Instagram captions that were analyzed to answer the research questions. The aim was to determine the use of male and female language in Instagram captions. From the results and discussion, it can be concluded in a number of points.

First, not all types of gender language features according to Lakoff's (1975) theory are used by men and women in Instagram captions, based on the findings. The language features contained in the use of male and female language in Instagram captions are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, hypercorrect grammar, empathy adjectives, intensifiers, super polite forms, and emphatic stress. The use of these features has similarities and differences. The equation is the use of intensifiers features that aim to strengthen statements such as the use of very words.

The difference between these features is the use of empathy adjectives which aim to show admiration for something. The difference in using empathy adjectives lies in the choice of words to show admiration or praise for the fashion products discussed in the Instagram caption. So, the characteristics of male and female speech in Instagram captions have differences. These differences in characteristics can therefore convey the meaning or the intention of men and women in using their Instagram caption.

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