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Men and Women Language Features and Styles Used in “The End of the F***ing World”, A Netflix TV Series

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Articles Information

Abstrak

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Timbulnya perbedaan pada ciri bahasa dan gaya bahasa seorang penutur dalam suatu percakapan, diyakini dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor, seperti jenis kelamin, situasi, serta topik yang menjadi bahasan dalam percakapan tersebut. Dengan menerapkan metode penelitian deskriptif, naskah serial TV berjudul *The End of the F***ing World* dianalisis untuk mengetahui apakah cara tokoh pemain dalam memilih bahasa yang akan digunakan berdasarkan pada faktor – faktor tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa cara karakter menggunakan bahasa berbeda sesuai dengan situasi yang mereka alami. Namun, hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa jenis kelamin tidak selalu mempengaruhi ciri dan gaya bahasa seorang penutur.

Abstract

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The occurrence of different language features and language styles used by its speakers during a conversation is believed to be affected by some factors, such as gender, situation, and the topic discussed in the conversation. By implementing descriptive research method, the scripts from a TV Series entitled *The End of the F***ing World* were analyzed to find out whether the characters way in choosing the language to be used is based on those factors. The result showed that the way the characters used the language is different according to the situation they been through. Furthermore, the result suggested that gender does not always influence the language used by its speakers.



INTRODUCTION

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Language is a system of linguistic communication particular to a group; this includes spoken, written, and signed modes of communication (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). The relationship among linguistic features, social roles, and the gender of the language speakers become a major topic in sociolinguistics. Women and men are believed to have different language features and styles (Coates, 2015; Lakoff, 1973; Tannen, 1990). Fishman (2003) argued that aside from gender, there are other factors that affect the language chosen during communication, such as group membership, situation, and the topic discussed in the conversation.

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Lakoff (1973) and Leaper & Robnett (2011) mentioned six language features that commonly used by women during communication, namely lexical hedges, tag question, empty adjective, very-polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress. (Women show their uncertainty, doubt, confusion about certain information and carefulness when the information is delivered through lexical hedges, where they use certain words to indicate that they are uncertain or in doubt about particular topics (e.g. *but, seem, tend, think, probably, possibly, perhaps, and somewhat*). Another feature that used by women is called tag questions, which is a form of statements or declarative sentence that added after a question being asked. It is used to show uncertainty about certain topic that arises during communication (e.g. *isn't it?*). During communication process, rather than giving a specific information, women likely show their emotional reactions regarding the situation through the use of empty adjective (e.g. *beautiful, adorable, cute, gorgeous*). Furthermore, there are also a number of adjectives that can be used by male or neutral (e.g. *great, neat, cool, and terrific*) (Lakoff, 1973).

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Due to gender stereotypes, women are expected to speak more politely than men. Thus, women tend to avoid the use of strong swear words. Yet, it does not mean that women do not swear. Unlike men, women have different alternatives to the use of swear words. Men's preference of swear words usually in form of rude and forbidden words (e.g. *fuck, shit, damn*), while women's preference of swear words are more polite (e.g. *oh my, oh my god, goodness, oh dear*). In order to be taken seriously during communication process, women use emphatic stress, which is a strict emphasis on increasing their intonation (e.g. *what a beautiful dress!*). According to Tannen (1990), women have distinctive style when using the language to communicate. They tend to show support, which used as a negotiation for closeness; intimacy, which used to negotiate complex networks of friendship, reach consensus, and avoid superiority; understanding, due to tendency to show understanding of other's feelings, because sometimes they are not looking for advice, they just want to be understood; feelings, which is used to show their interest and attention for others; and compromise, which used to avoid the conflict and keep their closeness.

Deborah Tannen (1990) stated that the difference among men and women that occur during communication process is happened because of cross-cultural communication problem and they simply have different goals. Women language seen as unassertive and weak, while men language is described as more assertive, mature, and they tend to use on point or direct forms (Lakoff, 1973). Coates (2015)

supported this theory by naming language features that used by men. First, men tend to use minimal responses to assert dominance (e.g. *mbm*, *yeab*, and *right*). Second, men is found to often use explicit commands and directives (e.g. *gimme*, *gonna*, and *gotta*). Third, it is commonly known that men use more swearing and taboo language (e.g. *shit*, *fuck*, and *hell*) than women (e.g. *oh dear*, *oh god*, and *my goodness*). Fourth, men are also found to make use of the question. Different from women who use tag questions, men ask the question directly to gain information. Furthermore, Coates (2015) compared that rather than the interruption made by female speakers toward male speakers, male speakers were found to be more likely to interrupt others; especially female.

Due to different multilingual settings among each other, Fishman (2003) describes some factors that affect a person when choosing the language that will be used in communication. The first factor is group membership. Consideration regarding this factor should be taken not only in a supposedly objective sense, i.e. in terms of physiological, sociological criteria (e.g. age, sex, race, religion, etc.), but also, and most importantly, in the subjective socio-psychological sense of reference group membership (e.g. friends and family). The second factor is situation, which includes the presence of participants, the physical place and time, the subjects and purposes of conversation, and the style used. People tend to choose the language that will be used in a certain social occasion by considering those aspects. The last factor is the topic of the conversation. The topical regulation of the choice of language used implies that some particular topics are anyhow handled better in one language than in another, in a certain multilingual contexts. In line with this, Plug et al. (2021) mentioned that the vital keys in the relationship of speakers during communication are the speakers' roles and the goal of the interaction.

A study conducted by Erwiarti (2021) about women and men language used in mixed-sex interviews showed that men showed more of their dominance and control, rather than the women interviewees. It was shown through the use of command, directives, and swear and taboo words. Other study conducted by Ningsih (2018) showed that women language features also found to be used by man during a talk show. However, compared to features used by the woman herself, the man only showed a small use of that. The features used by man are lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation, and super-polite forms. In addition, an analysis reported by Mulyani (2021) about the use of indirect questions and tag questions in a court's trials showed that those features were mostly used by powerful women, such as the judges and the prosecutors or the lawyers. Another study related to the language used in courts was also done by Harrell (2018). Her study showed the frequent use of powerless speech, such as hesitations and intensifiers, was mostly used by male attorneys. Furthermore, in his study, Dharma (2021) found out that male characters in Aladdin Movie tend to use the language to clarify or illustrate the situation, while female characters use language to convey her feelings.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the way and the reason men and women portray differences in the use of language features and styles are commonly shown in various media with different setting and genres. However, there are limited study conducted to analyze the language features and styles used by men

and women, and in this case, in a TV program which genre is black comedy drama. Thus, this paper aims to analyze the language features and styles used by a man and woman in a TV series aired on Netflix entitled *The End of the F***ing World*.

METHOD

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Since it aims to describe the language features and styles used by the two lead characters of the TV series, descriptive research is used in this paper. Dulock (1993) mentioned the purpose of descriptive research, which to (1) describe the facts and characteristics of a topic; (2) to provide the characteristics of a particular topic; (3) to discover the relationship among selected variables; and (4) to answer questions based on the ongoing events of the present.

Three episodes of the series—episode 2, 3, and 4, were the subject of this research. Several steps were done in order to collect the data. First, set of codes were created based on the theories about women language styles (Tannen, 1990), women language features (Lakoff, 1973), and men language features and styles (Coates, 2015). Then, the scripts are read thoroughly. During the reading process, the suitable utterances found from the scripts are directly classified mapped to the set of codes that have been created. Last, the data collected through reading process, was analyzed and described based on the explanation stated in the theories mentioned above.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher has obtained the result. The researcher analyzed the language styles obtained by women based on the theory by Tannen (1990) who stated that during conversation, women's utterances tend to show (1) support, (2) intimacy, (3) understanding, (4) feelings, and (5) compromise. After analyzing and classifying the data, it was found that the female character showed 4 language styles, while the male character also showed 4 language styles during their conversation and monologue.

1. Support

Support is described as a form of negotiation for closeness.

- a) James : "It's a Glock 17MB. Ambidextrous magazine catch. Recoil-operated. 19 rounds"
Alyssa : "Yes, James!"

The conversation happened when Alyssa and James tried to rob a convenience store and James threatened the owner by lying to her that he had a gun in his pocket. The store owner thought that he lied, so he tried asking him for more information about the gun. Since James is familiar with weapons, he was able to perfectly describe his imaginary gun, and the respond showed by Alyssa was indicated that she was impressed and supportive to her friends' way of lying.

2. Intimacy

Intimacy is used to negotiate complex networks of friendship, reach consensus, and avoid superiority

a) Alyssa : **"Do you feel bad about what we did?"**

James : "About the man?"

James : [*"I was pleased Alyssa used "we" in relation to the incident"*]

The conversation happened after James killed a man because he tried to rape Alyssa. Here showed that Alyssa asked James about his feeling regarding the thing that **they** did. It implied that Alyssa did not try to say that James did that, but both of them. James showed his relief through his monologue.

3. Understanding

Understanding is used due to tendency to show understanding of other's feelings, because sometimes they are not looking for advice, they just want to be understood

a) James : [*"I decided to put on a calmer, more relaxed demeanor to reassure Alyssa"*]

The decision that showed through James' monologue was taken because he knew that Alyssa was scared and worried about the previous encounter in which James stabbed the man who tried to rape her. Here, it showed that James did not want to scare her by acting weird, so he stated his decision to put on a calmer and relaxed demeanor so that she will not be scared or worried even more. The monologue indicated that James put the situation into consideration before he acted.

4. Feelings

Feeling is used to show their interest and attention for others

a) Alyssa : [*"It's strange. A lot of the time, you don't register the important moments in your life as they happen. You only see that they were important when you look back. Like, that was an ending."*]

Alyssa did the monologue after they tried to hide the dead-body and cleaned the house of the mess they made. Here showed that she needed to show more gratitude before it is too late to realize. Alyssa realized that after that night, everything will not be the same. Her life will be changed and she probably could not go back to where it was.

b) James : [*"That was the day I learned that silence is really loud. Deafening, I think maybe my dad spent his whole life trying to avoid silence. When you have silence, it's hard to keep stuff out. It's all there. And you can't get rid of it."*]

On the other hand, James felt the same thing. At first, he did not think much about everything that happened because he had friends that will go through the same thing. However, when that friend left him unannounced, all of the concerns arose and he could not avoid it but feel it and let it get through him. Furthermore, this showed that man also capable to show their own feelings. James able to show his feeling due to the topic occurred in the occasion.

5. Compromise

Compromise is used to avoid the conflict and keep their closeness.

- a) Alyssa : ["What if James is dead? He might literally be dead. He saved me and I left him. I'm never going to see him again. And it's my fault."]

The monologue showed that Alyssa made compromise toward herself. She realized that leaving James was a wrong thing to do because James had saved her.

- b) James : ["I was never Alyssa's protector..., she was mine"]

In the other hand, James realized that he was wrong for thinking that he is strong because all he did was hiding behind Alyssa and she protected him from all of the mess that could have been made if he was the one handle everything.

- c) Alyssa : "I'm sorry I left you"
James : "I'm sorry I killed him"
Alyssa : "I won't leave you again"
James : "Ok"

In addition, the dialogue above happened after they made compromise to themselves. They met again and both of them chose to say **I'm sorry** to avoid any conflict and keep their closeness. Furthermore, Alyssa made a promise to James by saying **I won't leave you again**, so that James will be reassured that she will not leave him. By putting the situation into consideration, James was able to compromise. In the end, both of them were successful in avoiding the conflict that might arise.

The researcher also analyzed theory by Lakoff (1973) about language features on women's utterances. The analysis showed that 5 types of language features on women's utterances are found in the series of *The End of the F***ing World*. The women's language features found are the use of (1) lexical hedges, (2) empty adjective, (3) super polite forms, (4) tag questions, and (5) emphatic stress. After analyzing and classifying the data, it was found that the female character showed all of the language features, while the male character showed only 3 language features.

1. Lexical Hedges

- a) James : "Are you okay?"
Alyssa : "Can I say something? Can we wait? Just for a bit, **like**, I don't know, for a few days, is that okay?"

The conversation happened when Alyssa realized that her dad left her because he wanted to, not because her mom asked him to. The realization came when Alyssa actually met her father. When asked about her feeling, she was not even sure about it. She was not sure of things that she wanted to do next.

- b) James : "Sometimes, I just...let things happen. Even though I did not want them to. **I'm not sure why**"

James used **I'm not sure why** because he did not know why he let things happen even though he did not want it to. It indicates that hedging does not always happen to woman, but also man. James did that because of the topic discussed in the situation confused him.

2. Empty Adjective

- a) Alyssa : ["I think he is properly **beautiful**]

The monologue happened after she saw James in disguise. She used an adjective that commonly used by woman to show some appreciation toward someone's appearance.

- b) Martin : "They're lethal, I tell ya"

James : "You were in the army?"

Martin : "Five year"

James : "**Cool**"

The conversation happened when they met a man during their escape. The man named Martin showed him his gun, and it seemed like James was interested on it. Later on, James was impressed when knowing Martin's background.

3. Super Polite Forms

- a) Alyssa : "Well, then, respect me changing my mind, and fuck off, **please**."

- b) James : [breathes deeply] "Um, stop. **Please, could you stop**."

Both Alyssa and James used the word please which commonly used to produce a polite sentence or speech. However, Alyssa used **fuck off**, which implied that the use of please was just mere of making it less rude. While James said, "**Please, could you stop**", which indicate that he politely asked the other person to stop doing what they did to him. James used polite-form because of the situation required him to use it.

4. Tag Questions

- a) Alyssa : "Did you bring money with you? **Didn't you?**"

- b) James : "Where are you going?"

Alyssa : "Well, we can't drive it, **can we?**"

Both conversations happened during their escape. Yet, they do share similar function of the tag questions. In the first dialogue, Alyssa wanted to make sure that James really brought the money they stole. While in the second dialogues, Alyssa wanted to emphasize that they could not drive the car anymore since it was burnt. It indicated that both tag questions are used to emphasize the point of the question asked. This is in line with study conducted by Setyani & Laila (2019) who stated that **women use tag question for as a confirmation to** the previous statement or question uttered by the speaker.

5. Emphatic Stress

- a) Alyssa : **"Oh, for God's sake!"**

Here showed that Alyssa emphasized on increasing her intonation. She showed her frustration about something particular by saying **"Oh, for God's sake!"**

Last, theory by Coates (2015) about language features on men's utterances was also analyzed. The analysis showed that 4 types of language features on men's utterances are found in the series of *The End of the F***ing World*. The man's language features found are the use of (1) explicit commands and directives, (2) swear words and taboo languages, (3) direct questions, and (4) interruption forms. After analyzing and classifying the data, it was found that the female character showed all of the language features, while the male character showed only 2 language features.

1. Explicit Commands and Directives

- a) Alyssa : **"Gimme your wallet"**

Topher : "You what?"

Alyssa : **"Give me your wallet"**

Alyssa directly and explicitly asked Christopher to do something by saying **"Gimme your wallet"**. She did it twice because the first time she said it, Christopher seemed not sure and startled about the request. Then, the second time, Alyssa tried to emphasize and enunciate the command properly by saying **"Give me your wallet"**. It indicated that Alyssa did this due to the situation. This analysis is in contrast to Sulastris & Laila (2019), who said that men prefer to use directives for a command.

- b) James : "Hey, close your eyes"

Alyssa : "What?"

James : "Close your eyes. I promise I won't look"

The second dialogue showed similarity to the first dialogue. James used the same form of commands twice in order to ask Alyssa to close her eyes. However, in the second time, James did it with adding a compromise as a reassurance that he would not take a peek at her.

2. Swear Words and Taboo Language

- a) Alyssa : **"What the fuck** are we gonna do now?"

The question was asked since Alyssa felt panic about something that they did. The swear word used indicated that there was an urgency in the question asked. The function as the swear word there is to emphasize the question.

- b) Alyssa : "Well, then, respect me changing my mind, and **fuck off**, please"

- c) Alyssa : "Hey. I've seen you skating. You're pretty shit"

James : **"Fuck off"**

However, in the dialogues b) and c) the swear words used there indicate that they did not like the things that the others do to them. It indicated the hatred towards the others' actions. This analysis is in line with study conducted by Nabilah (2019), who stated that men and women in YouTube video use swear and taboo words to express annoying feeling.

3. Direct Question

- a) Alyssa : "James?"
James : "Yeah?"
Alyssa : "Will you cuddle me?"
- b) James : "What's the matter?"
Alyssa : "The matter, James, is that last night, you fucking murdered someone"

Direct questions uttered by Alyssa and James have different purpose. Alyssa asked a direct question to James because she wanted to ask James to cuddle her. In other word, she asked a question for requesting something. This is in line with study conducted by Sulastri & Laila (2019) who said that women tend to use directive as a form of suggestion or request. Meanwhile the question uttered by James aimed to get the information from Alyssa. He wanted to know why Alyssa acted weird around him.

4. Interruption

- a) James : "Yes, but—"
Alyssa : "I'm not getting rid of it, James"

The conversation happened when James wanted Alyssa to burn her jacket so that they will not leave any trace. However, Alyssa did not want to do that because she got the jacket from her father, who is never been in a picture in her family. When James tried to give a reason on why she should burn her jacket, Alyssa interrupted and snapped at him by saying, "I'm not getting rid of it, James." It indicated that Alyssa interrupted James' utterances since she did not like it when James asked her to do something she won't ever do. It contradicted the study by Hairudin (2022) who said that women do an interruption as an attempt to disrupt the conversation flow.

CONCLUSION

This paper focused on the men and women language features and styles used by the characters of a TV series entitled "The End of the F***ing World". As presented in the result, the women language styles found to be used by both lead characters during conversation. In addition, the result showed both male and female characters in this series portrayed the use of language features and styles of men and women. Furthermore, the result of this paper indicated that the utterances produced by both of the characters are influenced by the social occasion they experienced and the topic of the conversation.

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

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