

Gender Specific Features of Language Use on Joe Biden's and Kamala Harris's Speeches

GILANG BAGASKORO¹

¹*University of Sumatera Utara, Dr. T. Mansyur Street, Medan, Indonesia*
gebagaskara@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the gender-specific features of language use in Joe Biden and Kamala Harris's victory speeches. The use of these language features is seen from several aspects, including vocabulary, attitudes, syntax, as well as other aspects such as the choice of diction whose meaning is studied by semantics. This research includes qualitative research. The data was collected through transcripts of speeches downloaded from the internet. The results showed that every language feature possessed by a gender will adapt to the context, condition, time, and form of communication, so it cannot be applied to all features in speech considering speech as a form of one-way communication.

Keywords: language features, man and woman, speech



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Fitur Khusus Gender dari Penggunaan Bahasa pada Pidato Joe Biden dan Kamala Harris

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki penggunaan fitur spesifik gender dari penggunaan bahasa khususnya pada pidato kemenangan Joe Biden dan Kamala Harris. Penggunaan fitur bahasa tersebut dilihat dari beberapa aspek antara lain perbendaharaan kata, sikap, sintaksis, juga aspek lain seperti pemilihan diksi yang maknanya dikaji dengan ilmu semantik. Studi ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, dan pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui transkrip naskah pidato yang diunduh dari internet. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setiap fitur bahasa yang dimiliki oleh sebuah gender, akan menyesuaikan dengan konteks, kondisi, waktu, dan bentuk komunikasinya, sehingga tidak bisa diterapkan semua fitur dalam pidato mengingat pidato sebagai bentuk komunikasi satu arah.

Kata kunci: fitur bahasa, laki-laki dan perempuan, pidato

INTRODUCTION

Ideally, linguistics theories are able to explain and explore the creative use of language created by the cognitive process of a language user, even in the form of incarnations that defy general rules in linguistic disciplines, which mostly occur in semantic processes, in this case speech. As an object with different grammatical rules, speech becomes the focus of linguistic investigation because of the abstractness inherent in the speech itself, the speaker may bring his own linguistic characteristics in speaking and ignore grammatical rules. In using language, man and woman have different ways to express it, especially the term of abstract production. These may appear in structure, vocabulary, syntax, and numerous traits in using language. In terms of voice in language, man and woman proposed by Wardhaugh (2006), that they have significantly different characteristics, such as differences in the use of verbal skills. Similarly, Salihu (2014) explanation more about gender by advocating for gender so persuasively that in our society we presume that it is raised in our genes. In terms of the vocabulary use, women tend to retain adjectives that are rarely used by men; they use words that are more flowery and attractive. Generatively, men and women how different styles of language use, can be influenced by the community, the different ways they are raised, and also the role they play in society.

Lakoff & Lakoff (2004) suggests that there are many other important aspects that lead to the emergence of language differences between women and men. In some cases of language use, male and females have different ways of communicating conceptual information through language, especially with the linguistic boundless freedom they use in speech, because linguistically is primarily speaking, the rules of speaking are not as strict and are often not taken into account by the rules of language when writing. As in the research that has been done (Robertson & Davidson, 2013), men and women differ in numerous ways. Similarly, what happened in the case of speeches made by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the president and vice president at the time of delivering their victory speeches had the same opportunity at that time, but used different languages according to their position in society and the nature of gender. Hernández-Campoy & Schilling (2012) describes that gender is not just a matter of concentration of biological or physiological sex, but more of a complex construction of sociocultural and socio-psychological aspects that shape the structure of their communication and language applications. The researchers conducted a study that focused on the differences in the use of language between man and woman in making speeches.

The analysis of language features in terms of gender can focus on expressions that can be listened to and paid attention to in the video (Anggara Putra & Prayudha, 2019). In the video that is used as a research source, the research object's utterances and the language feature they use are examined, and found typical language features that are often used by men and women. In the case of other studies, there are differences between the language used by men and women. This view has led to several theories from researchers that there are certain characteristics of the language used by both men and women. Literary works in the form of the novel presents how the speech of men and women should be described. In this case, the purpose of the study is to find out whether there are similarities or differences between the diversity of language features in men or women in real life and fictional stories (Priyadi, 2015). The phenomena studied are adapted to the use of language in their lives ta. The difference is in the research that looks at the application in the form of a movie. It can be seen in real terms how men and women can be identified from their emphasis and expressions when communicating and speaking with the interlocutor (Oktapiani et al., 2017). Similarly, the application of speech which is directly seen in the original activity of videos on the internet, that the behaviour of the speaker could be different depending on the situation that was going on at that time. In this study, it was found that the language features used by both genders could have distinctive characteristics, both by male and female beauty influencers and this language feature can be clearly distinguished from the characteristics of comments from their audience (Karjo & Wijaya, 2020). Language features in men can vary widely according to situations and interests for the purposes and intentions of the speaker.

The researcher focuses on research and discussion on some of the differences in the use of language features in man and woman through speech transcripts. This article begins by detailing the phenomenon of language use from a gender aspect, analyzing transcripts, and discussing the language features differentiation in the language used by men and women.

METHOD

This study was designed with a descriptive-qualitative methodology. The data were obtained from speech transcripts. This study only focuses on speech by Joe Biden compared to speech by Kamala Harris. Miles et al., (2014) states "Qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of human processes". This study also uses the principle of qualitative content analysis, which

is a method for understanding the symbolic message of an object of research by paying attention to its context. The symbolic message referred to in this study is the gender aspect of the diction in the speech transcript, while the context is the background of the situation between the two speakers.

Since this study discusses language features in the speeches delivered by men and women in their utterances using distinctive diction, the data used in this study is the text in Joe Biden's and Kamala Harris's victory speeches transcript. Joe and Kamala were selected by the researcher according to the needs and research criteria. The data obtained to complement this research are in the form of texts that are reduced to a choice of diction which is identified by the researcher as dominant or adequate to be used as data that can ideally be research related to the comparative study of the use of diction. At the same time, the data sources obtained in this study are speech transcripts by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, which are taken directly from internet, specifically *Washington Post*. Data processing and data sources above makes it easier for researcher to compare diction into semantic studies.

The data analysis of this study considers the following steps. First, by observing the prospective data in transcripts found on the internet with some of the considerations described. Second, after obtaining the data, the researcher takes a transcript from the Washington Post website that consider appropriate for the purpose of the study. Third, observing the utterances in the speeches. And the last step is sorting the data to draw the conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings and discussion are combined in each part that uniforms men language features and women language features. All aspects of the criteria required for this research will be discussed below in a structured manner.

A. MEN LANGUAGE FEATURES

Lakoff & Lakoff (2004) suggests that there are many other important aspects that lead to the emergence of language differences between women and men. It is explained that the language features in men were more assertive, focused on points, more mature in speaking, often interrupted, and tended to use the direct form. This section explains the men language features used by Joe Biden in his speeches.

Direct Forms

There are forms in speech that characterize the speaker. Direct forms are related to the purpose of the speaker who directly states the intent of his utterance, without intermediaries and tends to be firm. Men tend to use this form because of their orientation that prioritizes effectiveness.

JB: And work with all my heart, with the confidence of the whole people, **to win the confidence of all of you.**

In this sentence JB expresses an opinion that he firmly believes in without a doubt very straightforwardly. This makes the form to be direct to the audience so he can be trusted.

Interrupt

In using language as a communication tool, someone often produces language components that indicate disagreement or rejection of a statement. If the communication is two-way, the interrupter usually interrupts the other person's speech on the statement. Meanwhile, when the context is brought to the speech, this interruption becomes a form of disapproval of a statement, then affirmation with a new statement that is considered more relevant. Since speech is a one-way communication, interruptions are almost non-existent here. The form of sentences and expressions that are closest to interruption is rethinking of an expression. The researcher found expressions similar to this form that can also be categorized as interruptions to the communication process itself.

JB: **Don't tell me it's not possible in the United States.** It's long overdue, and we're reminded tonight of those who fought so hard for so many years to make this happen. But once again, America has bent the arc of the moral universe more toward justice

The form of expression put forward by JB is a form of rethinking and denial of the opinion that "it is impossible". This sentence aims to calibrate opinions and build trust, especially to ensure opinions.

Assertiveness

In keeping a communication within a clear corridor of information, assertiveness means understood as the speaker's ability to express his thoughts in a clear and unambiguous manner. The information that is usually stated is regarding the strength and position of the speaker so that assertiveness in this form is successful in bringing influence to the listener. A speaker should prioritize

assertiveness in expressing his opinion in public. The same thing happened in this case.

JB: We have an opportunity to defeat despair, to build a nation of prosperity and purpose. **We can do it.** I know we can.

In his statement on the issues that occurred in the United States, he firmly believed that he was able to carry this country and could do so with high confidence. This expression conveys the assertiveness commonly used by men in speaking.

B. WOMEN LANGUAGE FEATURES

Lakoff & Lakoff (2004) put forward the habit of women's language features, using lexical hedges, variations in intonation in declarative words or sentences, using adjectives more often; women tend to use super polite forms, avoiding strong swear words. This part explains the women language features used by Kamala Harris in her speeches.

Lexical Hedges

Lexical hedge is defined as expressions for expressing temporary possibilities. In this theory, this feature tends to be more perceived as a form of doubt about the information to be offered. This kind of feature is often found in the daily use of women's language, because it is related to their role in the community.

KH: When she came here from India at the age of 19, she **maybe didn't quite** imagine this moment.

The use of lexical hedges in expressions or utterances is usually intended to mean uncertainty and something "somewhat". The ornament of a sentence that contains this expression also maintains the uncertainty of the possibility of an event or condition. The use of hedges in the sentence above is intended to maintain the most-polite form of statements that tend to be sensitive.

Declarative

Compared to men, women more often use declarative expressions to express feelings through their speech. women, in this case in the context of speech, put forward a more tangible expression that elaborately brings up the listener's feelings to gain empathy. Declarative features basically provide confirmation accompanied by an opinion on a subject.

KH: And Joe is a healer. A uniter. A tested and steady hand. A person whose own experience of loss **gives him a sense of purpose that will help us as a nation reclaim our own sense of purpose.**

Women tend to be declarative in expressing expressions in order to build trust. This declarative expression is also followed by intonation that fits the context. In this case, KH provides facts and claims against the president.

Empty Adjective

Adjectives, when accompanied by nouns behind them, will become phrases. Women, in the process of their speaking, often throw adjectives in every sentence, and these words are often in positions that they tend to prefer. The use of empty adjectives as a language feature is a form of responding to an information, by making it a form that has an adjective.

KH: And to the American people, who make up our **beautiful** country — thank you for turning out in record numbers to make your voices heard.

The adjectives used by KH in this sentence kind of describe the feelings and connotations of America, which is full of beauty. This expression becomes very reflective for the speech and language used by women.

Intensifiers

In linguistics, intensifiers are included in the lexical category as reinforcement and modifiers, but do not contribute to the propositional meaning of the clause, but serve to enhance and provide additional emotional context to the modified word. Intensifier serves to provide emotional confirmation without taking away the proportional meaning of a word or clause.

KH: I **really** got to know him as the father who loved Beau, my dear friend, who we remember here today.

The speaker uses intensifiers to express seriousness in expressing an opinion. The purpose of intensifiers is used as reinforcement for the audience to participate in the seriousness.

Super Polite Forms

Regarding the position of women in the community, they have their own guidelines in taking a role in the community. This makes them have their own way of speaking and using language features. Compared to men who tend to take advantage of power in society and are outspoken, women express themselves by

maintaining politeness in conveying information more sensitively. This politeness in language then becomes a form of super polite if they understand the situation related to the communication atmosphere at that time. In this process, women as best as possible position themselves as someone who respects the other person or audience so that this awareness also affects the way they utter.

KH: Good evening. So, **Congressman John Lewis, Congressman John Lewis**, before his passing, wrote:

The speaker really maintains her politeness in using language so that what comes out is like a very thoughtful thing or condition. On that occasion, the speaker said "Congressman John Lewis" twice and it was very reflective of her politeness and prudence.

Language features on gender have their own peculiarities in specific situations. In this study, the researcher has found the results of the research and revealed that each gender has their own concentration of language features, and can change and adapt in certain situations. The position of a speaker can also affect the way someone uses language features, which will also bring diversity to the interpretation of the meaning of each word, phrase, clause, or sentence produced. As the research focuses directly on the language produced by two people, in the same situation and at the same time, the time lag and mood changes have no effect on other influencing factors. Cases like this, such as in the form of one-way communication, for example in monologues containing presentations, or speeches with various audiences, of course only the speaker who has a hand in changing the information at that time. Future research is expected to focus more on the actions and behavior of speakers so that they affect changes in the use of language features. Findings related to language and gender vary widely in academia and research, but the researcher confirms that this research is very specific in discussing the features of language in gender in the same situation as one-way communication, specifically in speech.

CONCLUSION

The language features used by men and women are different, and this study focuses on analyzing the language features of men and women in speech, especially the speech of Joe Bide and Kamala Harris. After analyzing speech transcripts from existing data, the researchers found that, of the 3 male language features in this study, three of them were found in Joe Biden's speech. They are direct forms, interrupt, and assertive forms, with the direct form is the most common and often

appears in speech. In another case, the 10 language features of women in this study, Kamala Harris in her speech, the researcher only found 5 characteristics, namely the use of lexical hedges, declarative and intonation, intensifier, empty adjective, and super polite form. The most commonly found in speech are declarative forms and intensifiers. The rest adjusts the context in the speech.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that in Joe Biden and Kamala Harris's victory speech, every language feature possessed by a gender will adapt to the context, condition, time, and form of communication, so it cannot be applied to all features in speech considering speech as a form of one-way communication. The researcher examines language features with gender aspects and their relationship is seen from other aspects outside gender such as position and role in society. The identification that has been carried out contains that in speaking, all language features can be used and override the formal rules in using language. So, this research can be used as a reference to become a simple way to identify lexical and language features in the context of communication in society, and become a point of reference for future researchers with similar concentrations of research.

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