Femininities and Masculinities Depiction: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies offer proposal that women and men have their own way to convey a message. They share different characteristics in language production. This paper intends to reveal the language differences between women and men in writing a text. It analyzes students’ recount text writing, both women and men in the age of around 18 in a same theme. It encompasses qualitative and quantitative analysis drawn on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Fairclough (1989). It focuses on linguistic and cultural analysis. It follows three stages; description, interpretation, and explanation analyzing the lexical choice, content, and style of writing. It jumps to the result that women’s language is considered powerless and feminine, whether men’s language is powerful and masculine. It proves that language contains power relation and social status. Apparently, it reflects the patriarchal order, subordination and stereotype of women and men.

KEY WORDS: critical discourse analysis, women, men, language, linguistic analysis

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a medium to convey a message but also a portrait of speaker’s identity and social construction. The social identity internalizes in a language and
performs linguistic phenomena (see Cameron, 1985; Fairclough, 1989). This can be seen through the linguistic behaviour and linguistic variation that plays in the language. This concept brought a research about men and women that shared different linguistic phenomena. *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* was a bestselling book discussed about male-female relationship in verbal communication differences. This book emerged a new stereotype which was men’s language. Men’s language has a lack of articulatory, sensitivity, emotional expressiveness, and semantic nuance contrast to women’s language (cited in Erhlic, Meyerhoff, & Holmes, 2014).

In 1665, a research conducted in Carib reported that women and men use different phonologies and lexicons. The analysts argued that this happened because they did different things. This explanation proposed by Jesperson (cited in Cameron, 1985: 47) has become the standard of sociolinguistics analysis. Jesperson described how the different role in society created a different linguistic behaviour and variation especially when it came to men and women of Carib Indians.

Another controversy research about men and women language is Lakoff’s paper entitled “Language and women’s place (1973). In this paper, Lakoff proved that the difference in linguistic phenomena between men and women was caused by the growth of patriarchal order in the society. Lakoff characterized women’s speech in several features. One of the features described by Lakoff was the use of hedging. Lakoff ensured that this hedging showed women’s powerlessness in a mixed – sex interaction. This powerlessness reflected the women’s position in society. Although this research was criticized by many, this research remained as the prominent research about men and women language. Lakoff’s research led other researchers investigate femininity and masculinity in language (see McKluskie, 1983; Elisoph, 1987; Flynn, 1988; Young, 2000, Rizwan, 2010). Those researchers analysed discourse in conversational analysis, song, narration, and novel study.

Another research focused on femininity and masculinity was Carr and Pauwels (2006). They found boys acknowledged that males are biologically designed to do poorly in linguistic subject. If they performed well, their peer questioned their masculinity (cited in Erhlic, Meyerhoff, & Holmes, 2014).

Those previous researches mentioned above proved that femininity or masculinity is constructed through a social process. Therefore, this research intends to analyse how young men and women in their 18’s expressed their awareness of femininity and masculinities in term of language use, while employing cultural approach to dig deeper about the influence of social value in the society.

The purpose of this article is to describe, interpret and explain the identity of women and men through their writing. This article seeks how men and women differ the way of their speaking in composing a story. It attempts to link the linguistic analysis and social analysis in a text. The linkage between the discursive and social practice contributes to help us to understand the preference of identity between men and women.
METHODS

Focusing on linguistic representation and social practice, this article draws under the framework of Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis. Fairclough (1995:23) divided discourse analysis into three focus of interest; a) analysis of text, b) analysis of process of text production, and c) sociocultural analysis. Another book calls it three dimensions of discourse, which are; a) description: describe the text properties, b) interpretation: interpret the text as the process of production, and c) explanation: explain the relationship between interaction and social context (Fairclough, 1989).

This Fairclough’s framework analyzes student’s writing around 18 years old. These writings are composed in a same theme of “The scariest moment” which consist of 14 males’ writing, and 16 female’s writing. They are the first year students of Tanjungpura University in West Borneo, Indonesia. The papers had already been translated into English. This paper proceeds firstly by the analysis of the writing’s topic, the choice of vocabularies, and the content of the text. On the next analysis, this paper links the language codes, and situationaltypes of the speaker that supports the explanation on how men and women described and addressed them self.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

To be able to analyse the language performance, this paper divides it into thematic analysis, lexical analysis, conten and style and socio-cultural interpretation.

The thematic analysis displays female and male student’s preference chose the topic as the scariest moment they have ever experienced.

Table 1. Distribution of thematic analysis of student’s writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male students</th>
<th>Number of Writings</th>
<th>Female students</th>
<th>Number of Writings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sank</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ghost</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get lost</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sank</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get scared of animal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nightmare</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get scared of riding flying fox</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scared of animal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightmare</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Motorcycle accident</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get scared of gay and drunk men</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle accident</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghost</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the distribution table above, the difference of chosen theme between male and female students are viable. Girls consider ghost as the scariest thing they ever know with 56.25%. While only 4 boys discusses this theme with the percentage of 28.
57%. This theme manifests how boy or man and girl or woman talk about their fear. Most of the female students are frightened of illogical thing, whether most of the male student get feared of something that they can see or touch. There are same topic coincidentally chosen by both, such as sleep paralysis, sank, scared of animal, nightmare, and motorcycle accident. Although they present the same topic, they write it in a different way.

“Scared of darkness” is chosen only by the female students. It shows the stereotype of femininity of women that easily get scared by darkness or something spooky. As Fairclough (1995: 41) argued that identity could be created though forces from social formation and the institution. The researcher believes that men have fear on something illogical such as women but considered prohibited for them to speak because their masculinity will be questioned. This matches with the stereotype of men’s masculinity in “Martian” stereotype. “Martian” stereotype believed that men have no skill to express linguistically and emotionally. In this student’s writing, this stereotype seemed to be embraced by some men and boys as the part of their masculinity identity. Niobe Way (cited in in Erhlic, Meyerhoff, & Holmes, 2014) also showed that around 17 years old, boys began to stop talking about their feeling frequently. This was because the view of men that never talked about sensitivity. Young (2000) found that men decided their hobby based on how the society react. They tried to find a hobby that could reflect masculinity. This kind of awareness already acknowledged by 13 year old boy. Whereas, women also tended to show their emotional performance (Flynn, 1988). In this case, the female students shows it through the thing they scared the most, ghost.

1.2. Lexical analysis

Wording is the important part in this research, since words represent identity and social practice. To show how scared the women are, they use some expression in their writing.

1.2.1. Repetition of intensifiers

In women’s writing, the intensifiers tends to be used frequently. It highlights the point on how they feel towards something or what they want to show to other rigidly. As mentioned previously that women tends to show their emotional performance. The researcher has picked up some examples of repeated intensifiers in a sentence:

a) “I was really really scared.”

The use of two intensifiers followed by adjectives of “scared”. This happens in most of the female’s writing. It has doubled the emotion of fear.

b) “it is a very very big spider”

Besides modifying adjectives, it happens to modify noun phrase or a noun. In this sentence, it is used to express the fear of animal.

It supports the argument of Lakoff (cited in Holmes, 1992) that one of the characteristics of women’s speech is the using of intensifiers. This intensifiers are used to strengthen the meaning of the expression.

However, repetition of intensifiers does not appear in the male’s writing. The male’s writing tends to say their fear without using double intensifier. Despite
expressing their biggest fear, the men chose to write it in some kind of way to implicitly show off their bravery.

a) “I am a little bit scared”

This sentence shows that men tend to hide their truest fear to others. However, this sentence does not support the whole text. In other sentences, this male writer describes how scary it is. It is the contrary with the opening sentence.

1.2.2. Overlexicalization

Zhang (2015) used the term of overlexicalization to refer to the word that were synonymous or near synonymous used in the text. In the male’s writing the use of overlexicalization is rare. However in female’s writing, all 16’s paper are used overlexicalization, for instance, “panic”, “frighten”, “horror” and “scary”. Those words refer to the same meaning which was “feeling that fill with fear”. These kind of expressions is often used by the female students to show their fear. In this sentence,

a) “I was afraid and panic”

There are redundancy since afraid and panic has the same feeling to express fear. It has already mentioned in Lakoff (1973) that women tend to use adjectives to express feeling. The same word in one sentence indicates the degree of fear. This kind of sentence rarely does not happen in men’s writing. The men use adjective of fear in only one form.

1.2.3. The verb “cry”

No paper written by male used “cry” as the verb. This verb only appears in women’s writing. From 16 women’s papers, 8 of them mentions the word “cry” to express their fear. This expression in a society considered as the characteristics of women which are powerless and tender.

Young (2000) had discussed with her students about men who was crying. One of the student argued that men should not cry, while others admitted that boy or man can cry when he was extremely sad. Yet, all the boys agreed that women tended to cry a lot compared to men. It showed that crying for men was still considered as the femininity. Therefore, in male’s students writing there is no “cry” as the verb.

a) Suddenly there was a big wave came. I was drowned. I was really afraid and panic. I tried to ask for help by waving my hand. Hopefully, there was a man who helped me. I cried. I was scared.

b) I drowned slowly. I couldn’t breathe. I started to lose awareness. Suddenly, I felt my body was dragged by someone. My mother told me what happened before. I was so thankful to God that I could be rescued.

Those sentences above show differences. Sentences in (a) is written by a female student while (b) is written by the male student. In (a), the writer use “cry” positioning as material verb. Whereas, in (b) there is no “Cry” in the sentence. The male writer expresses the fear by mentioning that he drowned and hard to breathe without telling the reader how frightening the situation is. Although they are in the same topic, they have a different way to deliver their fear.
1.2.4. Figurative Speech

If women and men differ in verbal communication, we will expect to find it in the way of how the students present their essay. As discussed above, they already have different interest in choosing a topic about “the scariest experience”. There are similar topics chosen by male and female students. It will be easier to describe the difference through this topic by analysing the content.

The first similar topic is “scared of animal”. Three female students describes how they are firstly attacked by the animal until they got trauma. The first student talk about the fear of spider. She describes spider as a giant animal that is disgusting.

a) Suddenly, there was a spider. It was black with eight disgusting legs. It was a giant and scary spider I’d ever seen.

Here, she writes it in a figurative speech by exaggerate the thing. She describes spider is a big and dangerous thing. In reality, spider has a small size. It happens in the other two stories. The two stories talk about dog and chicken. The female writer describes chicken as the fastest runner that like to bite. While the female writer who writes about dog, then described the dog as an animal which likes to chase everyone. It is contrast to reality. The important point here is the effect after the incident, those female writers get a trauma by that simple thing. They are scared to see those animals.

It appears differently with male writer. Only one male writer writes a story about scary animal. The scary animal is a snake. The writer sees it while he is on camping.

b) At that night, I got panic because there was a snake in our tent. I couldn’t sleep that night. All of the people in the tent were scared. We couldn’t sleep that night. But, I had to sleep because I participated in a competition on the next day. Thank God, I won.

The paragraph above shows that male describes his fear in a different way. He does not overemphasize the fear. He attempts to show that he can overcome the fear although it is hard in sentences “We couldn’t sleep that night. But, I had to sleep ...” Most of the male writer showed that he succeeds to overcome the fear. In this paragraph the writer would like to show us his success gaining from a hardship he went through along the night. This young man does not consider it as a trauma.

1.3. The Content and Style of the Written Story
1.3.1. Supported Character

In writing the story, the female and male students have a different way of choosing the appearance of supported actor. From 16 women’s papers, 10 papers include the figure of mother and father in the story. In male’s story, the appearance of mother is only in two papers, while the rest of them are talking about friends, and even individual experience.

By mentioning father and mother in a story, the female indicates that they still need someone to depend on. It clearly seen from how they present the story. Either father or mother is the only person whom they run to when they get afraid of something.

In contrast to the men’s writing. Only two of them mentioning mother. The role of the mother is also different from how the women see it. The male does not put it as the one whom they should depend on. They picture mother as the person who cherish them. The men tends to mention more about their individual experience without having interaction with other. They appear as the solitaire main actor that can handle their own fear. When the male writer mentioned their friend. They play as the saviour or the bravest one in a story.
1.3.2. Content

Discussing about the ending, most of the female writers took it as a trauma, or in the end they cry and hug their parent. Male writers always show they can overcome the fear to show their strength and independency.

a) I am scared to ride a flying fox. I am scared of height... To get there, we need to climb the stairs that was very high. Finally, I lost my fear. I wanted to ride flying fox again.

b) My brother and I went to a river. But, we could not swim at that time. My brother told me that the river was not as deep as another river. I gained a courage and decided to go to the river..... Suddenly, my brother and I got drowned...I gained a strength to save my brother. Finally I could save him. We both alive.

Those two paragraphs have a similar ending. In the first paragraph, the writer overcomes the fear of height. The second paragraph presents as the manly side of male. He is able to save another although he can not swim. In the end, the both males succeed in their own way. Most of the story from the male students ends up this way. While female writers need another counterpart to lean on, whether it is their parents or friends.

Another interesting topic is about a ghost. Male and female writers have a different way in presenting the story. The following paragraphs are written by male students.

a) I was a bit scared of an old building in our school. Many students already knew that the place was spooky... We decided to go to school at 9 p.m... I felt something heavy bumped into my back. However, I did not feel any burden in my back after I got out of school.

b) I had to pass a graveyard alone. I heard a dog barking. People said that if the dog barking there was a ghost. I ran faster. The next day, I passed the graveyard again. I have no choice because that was the fastest way to go to school.

From these two paragraphs, it shows that although the males feel scared they still get through it. The second paragraph shows independency of a men. Yet, he is scared to pass the scary place alone, he still decides to walk by the next day. He succeeds to overcome the fear. The first paragraph also shows that the writer is scared but he still decides to go there because of his curiosity. It will be different from female story.

a) I saw a women in with long hair. I got so scared. At that time, I don’t have any courage to call my mom Since that day I can’t sleep alone.

b) There was knocking in my door. But, there was no one there. I supposed that was my mother so I called my mother from my room. Again, there was no answer. I came to my mom’s room. I saw my mom and my sister already fell asleep. I jumped to my mom’s bed. I did not want to go back to my room.

The sample of some paragraphs clearly show that the style and content between male and female are different. From those two paragraphs, the writers show that they need another people to comfort them. The first and second involve the character of mom that always ready to comfort her. While in male story, they do not call or shout for mom if they get scare. They overcome it by himself.

Another difference in male and female writing is also about how they comfort their fear.

Males tend to comfort themselves as discussed previously. It differed from female.

a) My friend and I watched horror movie together. We bought the tickets for eight seats. I was always afraid of horror movie.
b) The others also got panic. We gathered in one room to stay awake until morning. We told what happened to the committee.

From these paragraphs, there is a similarity. The females tend to show that they should be with others when they are scared and feel more secure when they are surrounded by others. While man was the contrary. The male writers tended to show that their solitaire and hide their fear through many ways.

a) At that night, I got panic because there was a snake in our tent. I can’t sleep that night. All of the people in the tent were scared.

b) I thought this was the scariest moment ever because my friends and I got lost in a forest. We were scared because anything could have happened. If there was no one to help, we could have been trapped there.

Those sentences are written by male students. (a) talks about the scariest moment when he saw a snake. He keep saying that he is not the only one who get scared by the snake. It is normal to get frightened, and (b) presents in a similar way.

It is different from the women’s writing. Women seem alright to say she is easily scared and cried. It shows clearly in the writing of motorcycle accident. The female writer says that she get scared of the blood and the wound in her leg. She cried immediately. While the male’s writer talks about motorcycle accident as the scariest moment in a different way. The male writer does not write about crying. He describes the he is badly injured and took to hospital by ambulance without showing deep fear. However, it seems that the wound of female writer is less than the male write as written in the story.

4.4. Socio-cultural interpretation

Relating to the femininity and masculinity stereotype in the society, female and male recount texts refer to social belief in the society. Males as the figure of leader should be brave, independent and successful. While females should be soft-hearted. This embedded stereotype leads the female and males to act in that sort of way. They perform different linguistic behaviour. Female writers shows their soft-hearted through the use of verb “cry”, overlexicalization and hyperbole. While men shows that bravery through the saviour in every single story.

Another interesting linguistic performance relating to the social value is about how the males pictures themselves as the main actor in all their stories. The role of the main actor that the males want to show is as the leader, and as the bravest. This role reflects what the society’s hope and belief about men. In contrast to male, female writers shows their weakness and dependency.

As regards the result above, it can be concluded that language help to maintain the gender stereotype and reflect the society belief. It also represents the power and powerless actor in the society and contains the social status of female and male. This constructed gender ideology exaggerate the disparity between men and women in a society especially in patriarchal order.

CONCLUSION

As Fairclough noted that discourse reflected social condition. It related to ideological
power of one society (Fairclough, 1989). The ideological power sometimes leads a stereotype to society such as the practice of femininity and masculinity. This present paper reveals that there is a different showed by male and female writers regarding to the social belief. The male writers tend to show their femininity such as easy to get scared, exaggerated, emotionally motivated and intimated relationship with others. While, male writers tend to show their individuation rather than connection, strength and independency. They present it through the wording, content and style of composing the story.

The portrait of male and female differences are the picture of society stereotype of male and female of how they should behave. If they behave out of the social order, it will be considered as a problem. It can be concluded that stereotype of femininity and masculinity is the product of patriarchal order. Even a child has already been aware of how they should behave related to their sex. Similar to the female and male writers in this paper that was already determined by that social stereotype.

REFERENCE