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THE DIFFERENCES IN LINGUISTIC FORMS USED BY MEN AND WOMEN

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Abstract

This study was conducted to find the differences in linguistic forms, tag questions, preferred conversation topics, and polite linguistic forms used by men and women. The quantitative method was employed using descriptive statistics, where data were collected through online questionnaires. A set of questionnaires was designed to gain primary data from the respondents about the differences in linguistic forms, tag questions, preferred topics of conversation, and polite linguistic forms used by men and women. SPSS software was used to analyse data, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability and validity of the questionnaire in each item. The findings show that women respondents applied more tag questions than men, and the most preferred conversation topics by men were current issues. Meanwhile, women love to talk about themselves, their feelings, their homes, and family. This study also found that most respondents disagreed that men are more polite than women. This evidently signifies that women demonstrate higher maturity and courtesy levels in conversational behaviour.

Keywords: Genders, linguistic forms, preferred topics of conversation, polite linguistics forms, tag questions

1. Introduction

There has been an astronomical increase in the quantity and quality of studies on language differences between men and women since 1970 due to the women's liberation movement. These studies focus on gaining insights into how men and women communicate and their tendencies. In this instance, all worldwide languages are addressed instead of just one or two. Over the past thirty years, gender issues have become connected with the issue of language. The study of gender is essential to the study of language, and the first step to studying gender is to explore the differences between men and women. Men and women have different ways of using language to converse. Blommaert and Jie (2020) claim that differences in the structure of lexical and syntactic elements, such as tag questions, disclaimers, polite forms, few to no expletives, greater discrimination in colour naming, and intonational patterns that essentially make declarative sentences sound like questions, may explain the differences. They have different language styles because they are brought up differently and possess different societal roles.

There were also a large number of pieces of research into differences in grammatical structures women and men use, as the traditional belief that women are more polite than men (Obidovna, 2022) use fewer vulgar terms (Lukacs, 2022) and language closer to Standard English were examined (Ghyselen et al., 2022). Moreover, according to Folger et al. (2021), men and women have different communication styles when it comes to resolving crises or reaching an agreement. The most common communicative mistake between men and women occurs when discussing and resolving conflict. When attempting to fix a problem, men naturally offer a solution, while women seek empathy and understanding and are naturally inclined to provide unsolicited advice.

There are many differences in the way they communicate and utter words in their daily life. The differences in how they communicate can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations between them. Knowing the differences in their communication, they can consider communicating well and giving better solutions for any problems. McClure (2021) highlighted that men use more profanity than women, whereas women speak more softly. This indirectly can be seen and lead to miscommunication in their conversation because it is, in a way, showing them the effects on the politeness of using language.

On the other hand, the respondents' varied locations and upbringing could also impact how well men and women communicate verbally. The geographical areas in linguistics can be referred to as regional dialects. When various linguistic differences accumulate in a particular geographical region, the language spoken has its character (Crystal, 2018). As we know, the geographical area is a prominent indefinite location on the earth's surface. The different geographical areas will display various features in linguistics. Therefore, this study consists of three research objectives:

   i.   To determine which gender used the most tag questions in the conversation.
   ii. To find out the most preferred topics of conversation by men and women respondents.
   iii. To identify which gender used more polite linguistics forms.

1.1. language and gender: the differences of linguistic features; tag questions between men and women speech

Men and women use different communication styles when expressing their opinions or feelings. They show their differences in uttering the expressions. For example, men usually solve problems directly in problem-solving, while women tend to express panic by showing sympathy to others (Wahyuningsih, 2018). Much information regarding this topic can be found in various sources on the internet, such as journals, books, and articles written and published by different authors.

The existing literature has revealed that women use language to create relationships, whereas men use it to show power (Maltz & Borker, 2018). Other than that, Harvey (2020) also said that women choose to study language because they can articulate it better than men. Besides, women prefer to utilise question marks, retraction, polite forms, no exclamation, unfair use of colours, and various pitch levels that were necessarily asserting something, along with grammar and vocabulary (Talbot, 2019). This is somehow true. For example, if it is related to colour, women tend to discriminate more precisely in naming colours than men (Paramei et al., 2018).

Additionally, tag questions are interrogative segments coupled with an independent declarative clause that seeks confirmation or denial (Kimps, 2018). The sentence structure containing tag questions is meant to achieve specific correspondence purposes in agreement strategies in everyday communication among communicators. Next, Pogacar et al. (2018) claimed that the usage of tag questions might attribute to language politeness, emphasis, and irony as they used these grammatical structures more often. Usually, tag questions will always be used at the end of the statements to ask for confirmation or agreement. "What do you think?" or "Do you agree with me?" are common tag questions in a conversation.

1.2. Familiar topics of conversation between men and women

Generally, men and women have different interests in choosing topics to be in their conversation. The researcher found that when men talk, they prefer topics related to politics, stocks, sports, and current issues other than the economy. Women tend to talk about their family and friends, such as their education, relationships with others, what they love to cook for their family, and preferable fashion (Cohen & Strong, 2020). Typically, men talk more about the outside world other than economic activities, while women talk more about domestic activities. Lee et al. (2021) also stated that women speak less during formal occasions than males and more on informal events than men.

Sociolinguistics has explored women's linguistic collaborations and their decision to remain publicly silent (Song, 2019). Keenan (2018) suggested that this can be seen when women are required to gain more ground than men to develop and manage personal relationships, maintain effective communications, and demonstrate solidarity with others. This can be observed in conversations where men tend to interrupt, question, contest, and neglect more, dominate the conversation, use fillers to indicate their "agreement", decide on the issue, and are more likely to make a categorical argument (Talbot, 2019).

On the other hand, Maltz and Borker (2018) remarked that in an effort to assert their dominance over the discourse, men frequently interrupt women. They also claimed that women tend to ask more questions than men and inspire others to speak, utilising fillers to imply that they are listening and interested in the topics. They also do not argue as often as men when they are disrupted. Moreover, Kanze et al. (2018) stated that men perceive "questions" as a call for explanation, whereas women see the inquiry as a means of keeping the lines of communication open. Women treat offensive verbal activities as personally oriented, antagonistic, and disruptive, whereas men view such action as coordinating a conversation. In addition, women prefer to talk, share, and seek approval for every problem they face. In contrast, men tend to seek alternatives or ways, offer guidance, and even give lectures to their listeners (Maltz & Borker, 2018). These characteristics, in a way, may affect politeness to a certain extent in their daily conversation.

1.3. polite linguistic forms

Linguistics can be justified as an utterance that not only expresses a preposition but is used to perform various speech acts. It also contains information about the representations and how to manipulate them. There are many differences between men's and women's speech due to linguistics forms from various characteristics. These differences can be explained by how men and women use language in social interaction. Maltz and Borker (2018) claimed that women spoke less forcefully than men, and men swore much more than women. This may affect politeness because of the voice intensity in the speech of men and women and other features. Furthermore, Amalia et al. (2019) claimed that women's language is immature, hyper-polite, and non-assertive, while men use language which sounds assertive, adult, and direct.

Maltz and Borker (2018) claimed that when men are among themselves, they mainly focus on competitive matters, teasing, and sports. While women, when talking to the same sex, the contents of the conversation usually consist of feelings, self-esteem, and affiliations with people close to them. On the other hand, to maintain a personal relationship, women tend to gain more significant ground than men to keep the interaction smooth and show goodwill toward other people. Conroy et al. (2020) explained that women frequently eavesdrop on discussions to establish rapport and cooperation. They also tend to ask more questions than men other than encouraging them to speak using fillers like 'emm' or 'hmm.' This demonstrated that they paid attention and did not even protest as much as men when others cut off their talk. In contrast, men use fillers like 'emm' or 'hmm' to show they agree or decide on the topic. Maltz and Borker (2018) also claimed that men ask questions to ask for information while women ask questions as a part of conversational maintenance.

On the other hand, some studies show no gender differences in politeness because there is an inaccuracy throughout the study's results contributing to the politeness of men and women in conversations. Mansoor (2018) believed that different cultures identify different ways of politeness behaviour. He continued by saying that to understand what is stated during a dialogue, several characteristics related to social proximity and distance must be considered.

2. Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach using a questionnaire that was developed and distributed online. The instrument used to collect the data was a set of questionnaires containing 25 questions divided into two (2) sections adapted from a study by Aliakbari and Moalemi (2015). Closed-ended questions with different types, such as multiple-choice and Likert scales, were used in this study. The different sections of the questionnaire were Section A: Demographic information and Section B: Questions regarding three (3) research questions in this study. Before actual data collection, the questionnaires were piloted to 20 students to assess their validity before being distributed. This has also aided to establish the instruments' content validity and improved the questions, format, and scales used (Hajjar, 2018). All data obtained from the respondents were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. The feedback and responses from this pilot test were scrutinised for improvement and adaptation purposes.

2.1. Reliability and validity

2.1.1. Content validity

The survey design study for the differences in linguistics forms, tag questions, preferred topics of conversation, and polite linguistic forms used by men and women used a set of questionnaires to determine the differences. The researcher used simple questions related to the targeted population since it relates to their communication skills and behaviour between the two genders in their daily lives. The researcher also uses a variety of prior researchers' previous research on this study as a source when constructing the questionnaire. Next, the question has been selected and altered for few times in order to avoid sensitivity issues and can be understood easily.

2.1.2. The reliability of instruments

In order to check the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha analysis was performed. The finding in Table 1 shows that Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.58 and it is reasonable.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised items	N of Items
0.56	0.58	25

3. Findings

The researcher applied quantitative methods to collect the data. The questionnaire distributed to the respondents using Google Forms served as the data source. Next, the researcher compiled all the questions regarding three (3) different research questions, as mentioned above, in one table. The results of the findings, including Cronbach Alpha and the other statistics, were provided in the tables below:

Table 2. Statistics of Gender

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Men	40	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Women	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Statistics of Age

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-21	27	33.8	33.8	33.8
	22-25	32	40.0	40.0	73.8
	26-30	21	26.3	26.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 and Table 3 provide statistics and frequency for all of the respondents' complete and honest responses to the survey. The researcher's target population is 80 respondents, consisting of 40 men and 40 women aged 18 to 30.

From the tables 2 and 3 shown above, we can see that the statistics of all items in the questionnaire related to three (3) Research Objectives. The mean and standard deviation for each question is shown in the table above accordingly. From the statistics of the items, the mean score is distributed onto a 5-point Likert scale range from 0.0 – 1.0 (Strongly Disagree), 1.1 – 2.0 (Disagree), 2.1 – 3.0 (Neutral), 3.1 – 4.0 (Agree), and lastly, 4.1 – 5.0 (Strongly Agree) were used for this study.

Table 4. Item Statistics for Tag Questions used by men and women

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I am aware there are differences between men's and women's speech.	3.78	1.05	80
Men usually go straight to the point in their speech.	3.93	0.81	80
Women usually are more indirect than men in speech.	3.82	0.91	80
I think men are more soft-spoken than women.	2.75	1.13	80
Men are more talkative than women.	2.89	1.22	80
Women usually ask for more details in their questions than men.	4.48	0.86	80
Men tend to conquer the conversation when they are having a group discussion.	3.31	0.94	80
Women love to share about their relationship life during conversations.	4.19	1.10	80

The finding in table 4 depicts t,he highest mean score for Tag Questions used by men and women is 4.48 (SD = 0.85) for the item "*Women usually ask for more details in their questions than men.*" This indicates that most of the respondents agreed with the item. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score is 2.75 (SD = 1.13) for the item, "I think men are more soft-spoken than women". This demonstrates that most responders disagreed with the assertion. Tag questions may lead to soft-spoken behaviour because it is somehow a way to ask for confirmation from the receiver. As has been claimed by Bongelli et al. (2018), tag questions can be defined as interrogative segments where it is required for requesting confirmation

and disconfirmation. Escouflaire (2021) also claims that question tag usage could be attributed to language politeness, emphasis, and irony.

Table 5. Item Statistics for Preferred Topics of Conversation used by men and women

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Men always talk about current issues in their conversations.	3.56	0.92	80
Women like to discriminate in naming colours more than males.	4.16	0.97	80
Men are more complicated to understand than women.	3.02	1.12	80
Men know how to solve conflicts more than women.	2.99	1.09	80
Women usually seek empathy to solve problems.	4.02	1.11	80
I love to talk about sports.	3.13	1.52	80

Table 5 illustrates the preferred topics of conversation used by men and women. The highest mean score for Preferred Topics of Conversation used by men and women is 4.16 (SD = 0.97) for the item "Women like to discriminate in naming colours more than men". This can be shown by Paramei et al. (2018), who said that women have a larger colour vocabulary than men and tend to utilise more complex words and "fancy" hues like emerald green and cerise pink. On the other hand, they asserted that women are anticipated to advance more than men in developing and maintaining personal ties to keep the discourse flowing among others. Maltz and Borker (2018) claimed that as a part of conversational maintenance, women would ask more questions while men would only ask questions to gain information from the receiver.

Table 6. Item Statistic for Polite Linguistic Forms used by men and women

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Men love to use curse words more than women.	3.86	1.00	80
Women tend to express their feelings when they get mad.	4.10	0.96	80
I think women can solve their problems well without anyone's help.	2.93	1.51	80
Men love to share their problems with their friends.	3.20	1.10	80
Men are more open-minded in receiving advice or sharing some thoughts than women.	3.33	0.98	80
I think men are more polite than women.	2.72	1.12	80

Last but not least, as seen in table 6, the highest mean score for Polite Linguistic Forms used by men and women is 4.10 (SD = 0.96) for the item *"Women tend to express their feelings when they get mad."* Meanwhile, most respondents disagreed with the item *"I think men are more polite than women."* This item has the lowest mean score for this component, which is 2.72 (SD = 1.14), and results in the lowest mean score across all items in the questionnaire. As mentioned by the past researcher, Mansoor (2018) defined politeness as showing consciousness and consideration of another person's face. It can be negative and positive perceptions of the listener or receiver in the conversation. On the other hand, Mansoor (2018) also suggests that women are more likely than men to use constructive politeness as she

argues that women speak more regularly and clearly than males do, and they show regard for other people's sentiments through their words (Holmes, 2013).

4. Conclusions

This study has shown that the researcher achieved the targeted respondents, and most of the respondents strongly agreed with the item *"Women usually ask for more details in their questions than men"* because Maltz and Borker (2018) claimed that women asked for more details to maintain the conversation in communication. The majority of respondents disagreed with the item, "*I think men are more polite than women*" because women are typically more cognizant of the language they use to establish and maintain relationships with people.

Lastly, most respondents agreed with the item "*Women usually more indirect than men*" in speech because they were mature enough to identify this issue. They believe that women have been taught by their parents to be more courteous in behaviour and conversation. The findings of this study are extremely advantageous to a variety of parties, including both genders, government and private organisations, and the public, since they will enable them to learn critical information regarding the distinctions between men's and women's speech. This study will benefit linguistics students, giving them a foundation for future linguistics-related research. Additionally, it will provide some crucial details regarding the differences between the linguistic features of men's and women's speech.

It is also recommended that further studies be carried out on students from other schools or different samples to see whether there are any similarities or differences in the findings. Furthermore, further research could also explore the differences in the linguistic features in the speech of men and women and can identify which gender used more polite linguistic forms. Additionally, future studies could be enhanced by broadening the target population, resulting in larger samples and a higher Cronbach's Alpha value. Furthermore, from the personal researcher's point of view, this study lacks data sampling, which leads to limited answers and not much variation of knowledge that the researcher can predict.

Finally, it might be a good idea to look into The Differences in Linguistics Forms; Tag Questions, Preferred Topics of Conversation, and Polite Linguistic Forms Used by Men and Women, so that people will be able to be aware of and identify the differences in the linguistic features in the speech.

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