



Linguistic Behavior of Young Adults: A Gender- Based Study

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Abstract— The goal of this research paper is to analyze the differences of linguistic behavior between male and female students when they are subjected to an equal opportunity of education. This research has been conducted by employing a mixed method to collect data from recordings of random conversations of the students (60) studying in the Department of English in Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). The collected data has been analyzed with the help of conversation analysis (CA). The results have revealed several gender differences of language use, especially in their topics of discussion, pronunciations, attitudes, usage of certain words and tone of talking. These differences will lead to further researches on whether or not the stereotypical gender roles have changed in a controlled environment like that of BUP. Besides, the result is also expected to help future researchers to comprehend feminism or sexism in modern era with regards to distinctive linguistic expression of men and women.

Keywords— Linguistic behavior, Gender, Language, Sociolinguistics, Gender-based identities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings have been bestowed with the gift of speech which lets them express themselves. Unlike other animals, the unique power of language enables us to form profound relationships with one another. Language is the basis of this communication.

With the passage of time, several factors have influenced language to develop multifarious variations. One such variation can be noticed on the basis of the difference of gender. Society has evolved in a way that men and women resort to different styles of expression or communication through language. These different styles are regarded as their individual linguistic behavior.

When proverbs like “Three women make a market” (Sudan) gain recognition or when Shakespeare declares “She has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman [11].” These raise the question of distinction between men’s and women’s speeches. The pioneering work of [5] opened up the discussion on how women and men differ in terms of their linguistic behavior. These dissimilarities are based on intonation, choice of vocabulary, syntactical elements, styles of conversation and also in the attitudes of men and women. According to [8], men tend to speak the language of independence and status whereas women tend to speak of connection and intimacy.

In brief, there exists a contrast between men and women in terms of their linguistic behavior. The male and female students of the English Department of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) are the focus of this study. They are provided with equal opportunities of

education and other academic facilities. So, the purpose of this research paper is to identify if there are such gender based differences of linguistic behaviors among these young adults of a similar age group under the same discipline.

II. RELATED WORK

[1] conducted a research on the differences of the language use between the male and female students of different private universities of Dhaka. In her paper, she found several key differences such as the female students tend to use more tag questions, hedges, taboos, adjectives, code mixing, minimal responses or they interrupt more while engaged in a conversation. Conversely, breaking away from the hypotheses set by [5], [1] has found that men tend to speak more softly in conversation, they use expressions like “I think,” “actually,” “I believe” etc and intensifiers. They also chose direct speech over indirect speech unlike the female students.

On the other hand, the research in [4] brings forth quite different results from the survey done on the students of private universities of Dhaka. In this study, it is seen that females were more likely to use intensifiers, hedges, tag questions, minimal responses, polite and more formal language. The female participants also leaned towards personal relationships when it came to choosing a topic of discussion. Whereas, the male participants used strategy to control the conversation, minimal response to show nonchalance to the others, taboo- words and imperative sentences to dominate the conversation, unlike the female candidates.

[13] conducted study on the language difference of male and female hosts of a talk show called Hitam Putih talk show. The study shows evidences of how the male host of the talk show attempted to use expletives often to connect to the audience. Besides, the paper focuses on how the male host satirized and provoked the guests to get things out of them, whereas the female host maintained a calming composure and conducted the show as such that a harmonious relationship had been initiated between the host and the guest.

[9] states the differences in use of language between the male and female students of Stain Kudus, Indonesia. In this study, it has been shown how the women were more prone to using adjectives, adverbs, colour words, diminutives, modulation, first person pronouns and interrogatives. Conversely, the male students at Stain Kudus tended to use more taboo and swear words, expletives, second person pronoun and imperative sentences while speaking. Besides these, the attitudes of the female students were complaints, protests and sympathizing, whereas the male students focused on giving out advices and solutions.

[14] has done a comparative analysis on the gender difference of language use in American and Thai movies. In this research paper, several variations of language use have been noticed between the male and female characters. The study has been based on five American and five Thai movies that show a distinctive difference between the speeches of the female and the male characters. The female characters in all the movies reportedly showed more tendency to use hedges, tag questions and intensifiers than the male characters.

[15] proved in her research paper "Gender Differences in Emotional Content of EFL Written Narratives" that men use more negative emotional words in their narratives, women are prone to using positive emotional words and women tend to be more expressive of their emotions than men. These differences bring forth how men and women use language differently to express their emotions even when the medium is a written narrative.

[16] in his article named "Untypical Linguistic Features of Males and Females and Gender Linguistic Crossing" has found results quite contrary to the widely accepted features of the male and female linguistic behaviors. For example, the study is based on debates between the male and female candidates which revealed that men used more hedges than women in particular contexts. They also used intensifiers more often than the female candidates in order to emphasize on their points. Besides, men also leaned towards using more first person pronouns in order to hold their power on the topic of discussion and to manipulate the audience's emotion. On the other hand, the only atypical linguistic behavior that the female candidates showed was the use of interruptions more than the male candidates.

A. Research Objectives

The following points are the objectives of this research in order to paint a picture of the gender differences of language use in a setting of similar age group and academic discipline.

- a. To explore the linguistic behavior of the young adults at BUP based on their gender identities.
- b. To identify if there is a distinction between men and women in their linguistic expression.
- c. To find out the linguistic differences existing between men and women of a similar age group and academic discipline.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The research has been conducted with the help of a mixed method by integrating elements of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Recorded conversations of 3 Focused Group Discussions (FGD) on Zoom were the primary tool for the collection of data. With the help of conversation analysis (CA) of the recordings, the data has been analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively to get a thorough understanding of the linguistic behavior of the participants.

B. Participants

The research has been administered among 60 students of the Department of English at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). The participants were chosen through simple random sampling. 3 focus groups were formed with Group A having 20 male students, Group B having 20 female students and Group C having 10 male and female students. Due to the restraints of the COVID-19 situation, all the conversations required for this research have been conducted online with the help of the Zoom application.

C. Data collection tools & procedures

The researchers have ensured confidentiality of the participants to take part in spontaneous conversations without having to worry about their identities being revealed. To conduct a conversation analysis, 3 groups were formed, each consisting of 20 students. The students were grouped such that analysis could be done on random conversations between only males in one group, only females in another and finally, within a mixture of both male students and female students.

The participants in each group were asked to develop a conversation on any random topic on Zoom and had been informed on the procedure of attending a Zoom meeting at a given time. Each group has engaged in random conversations of 30 minutes on Zoom which has been recorded for the purpose of data collection and conversation analysis.

D. Data Analysis

The recordings have been transcribed and then analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively by the researchers

who compared how men and women differ linguistically in terms of their syntax, phonology, style of conversation etc on the basis of the theories that have developed around the gender differences of language use. The researchers have also noted down the noticeable features of each of the participants and then compared them to each other to figure out the differences between men and women in their linguistic behavior.

The researchers have used the methods of conversation analysis (CA) by writing down the transcripts of the recorded conversation and then analyzing the vocabulary, syntactical structure and grammar of the sentences used by the participants. The researchers have also used quantitative analysis approach to quantify the data analyzed through CA in order to compare the frequency and percentage of language use between the male and female students. The recordings also disclosed the flow of the conversation, the intonation of the participants, how they expressed their emotions and if there were any interruptions or silences during their conversation.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Qualitative analysis

The recorded conversations have been qualitatively analyzed according to the rules of conversation analysis to determine the notable linguistic features of the male and female respondents of the study.

Group A consisted of 20 male students from the Department of English, BUP. The following observations have been made on the basis of the results of the conversation analysis. The prominent data collected from Group A are shown below in table 1.

TABLE 1. ANALYSIS OF GROUP A (ONLY MALE)

Parameters	Observation
Talking time	Long conversations
Kind of language	Informal
Topic of discussion	Country economy, vehicles, body- building, gaming, jobs etc
Tone of talking	Commanding tone
Pronunciation	Regional & standard
Code mixing & code switching	Code mixing present
Attitude	Inclined towards giving advices
Interruption	Present while debating
Silence/ Pause	No noticeable pause/ silence

Group B consisted of 20 female students from the Department of English, BUP. The following observations have been made on the basis of the conversation that has been recorded on Zoom according to these parameters. The prominent data collected from Group B are shown below in table 2.

TABLE 2. ANALYSIS OF GROUP B (ONLY FEMALE)

Parameters	Observation
Talking time	Long conversations with some exceptions
Kind of language	Formal
Topic of discussion	Food, studies, relationships and other personal hobbies
Tone of talking	Amicable
Pronunciation	Standard, articulate
Code mixing & code switching	Code switching> Code mixing
Attitude	Inclined towards listening to each other
Interruption	Less
Silence/ Pause	Frequently present

Group C consisted of 20 male and female students from the Department of English, BUP. The following observations have been made on the basis of the conversation that has been recorded on Zoom according to these parameters. The prominent data collected from Group C are shown below in table 3.

TABLE 3. ANALYSIS OF GROUP C (MALE & FEMALE)

Parameters	Observation
Talking time	Females> Males
Kind of language	Formal
Topic of discussion	Jokes & current reality
Tone of talking	Light & amicable
Pronunciation	Females more articulate
Code mixing & code switching	Both present
Attitude	Females more polite
Interruption	No noticeable interruption
Silence/ Pause	Present

B. Quantitative Analysis

The recorded conversations were also analyzed quantitatively by a thorough calculation of the percentage of respondents using adjectives, tag questions, hedges and intensifiers in order to understand their linguistic behaviors.

In the recorded conversations, it was seen that a significantly higher percentage of female respondents were prone to using more adjectives while expressing themselves than the male respondents. The difference in the percentages is shown below in Figure 1.

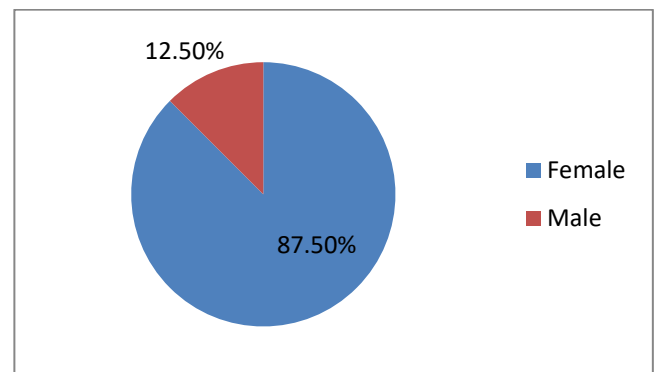


Figure 1: Percentage of Use of Adjectives (Survey, February, 2021)

In the recorded conversations, it was seen that a higher percentage of male respondents were inclined towards using more taboo words while expressing themselves than the female respondents. The difference in the percentages is shown below in Figure 2.

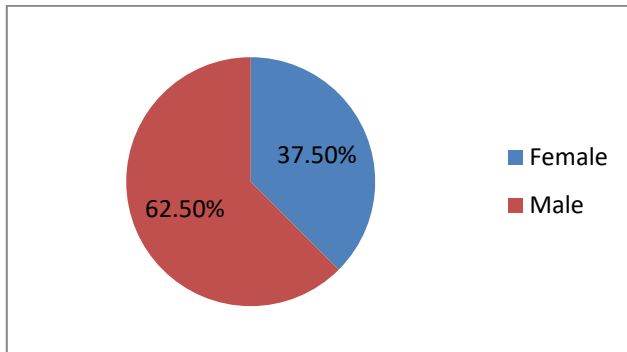


Figure 2: Percentage of Use of Taboo Words (Survey, February, 2021)

In the recorded conversations, it was seen that a relatively higher percentage of female respondents were prone to using more tag questions in their sentences while expressing themselves than the male respondents. The difference in the percentages is shown below in Figure 3.

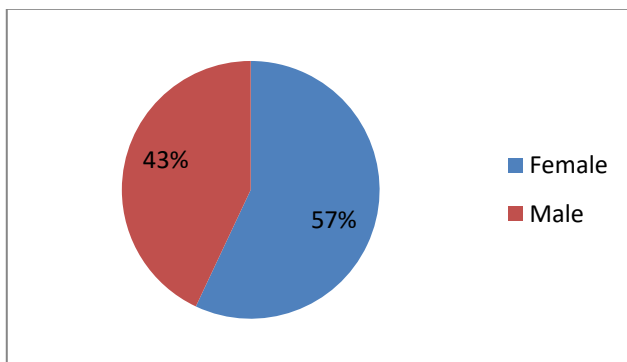


Figure 3: Percentage of Use of Tag Questions (Survey, February, 2021)

In the recorded conversations, it was seen that a significantly higher percentage of female respondents were prone to using more hedges while expressing themselves than the male respondents. The difference in the percentages is shown below in Figure 4.

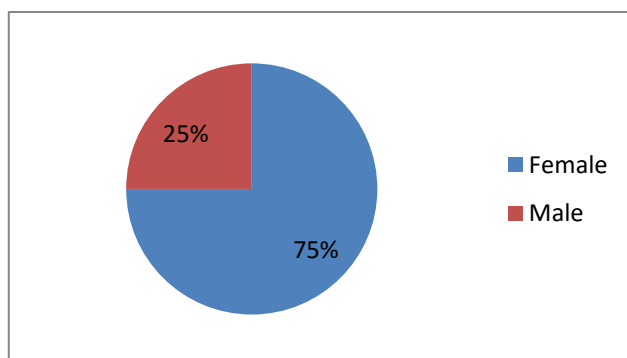


Figure 4: Percentage of Use of Hedges (Survey, February, 2021)

C. Discussion

i) Analyzing the talking time of the participants, it has been observed that the female students have a higher rate of talking time than the male participants. Although the male students talked more in the all males group, in the mixed- sex group, the females took the lead and had more to add to the conversation. This goes hand in hand with the observation of [2] on how the company we have and what topic we are discussing can influence the amount of talk. Males did talk a lot but when put in a group with the females, they chose to respond with minimal responses. Whereas the females talked less than the males in the all females group, but overtook the males in the mixed sex group. This proves that talking time does not depend on the gender but rather on the situation and the topic of discussion.

ii) Comparing the kind of language used by the male and female students, it has been observed that the females use more polite, standard and grammatically correct sentences in their speeches. The male students leaned more towards using their regional dialects and paid less heed to being grammatically correct. This proves the statements of [4] and [5] regarding women using more polite and formal form of language.

iii) As [10] and [4] have put in their research papers, men and women have differences in the topics they choose to discuss as well. In the survey it was clearly seen that the male participants chose to talk about vehicles, economy, body- building and they also inclined towards a more competitive form of discussion. Conversely, the female participants engaged in topics like education, personal lives and relationships.

iv) A noticeable will to command and control the conversation was seen among the male students, whereas the female students stuck to a friendly form of communication, devoid of any form of strategies to control the conversation. This remains aligned with results found from the results of [4] in her research paper.

v) [17] puts forth in his paper, a qualitative analysis of the conversations between the male and the female participants revealed that the women were more enunciated and clear in their pronunciations and the men chose to intentionally and unintentionally deviate from the standard forms of pronunciation, to create a sarcastic and humorous atmosphere.

vi) According to [5], women are more prone to using code-mixing than men. This statement is proved right by the results of the aforementioned conversation analysis where women have been observed to take to code- mixing and code- switching more often than the male participants.

vii) The women displayed more politeness and emotions in their speeches than the men. The men often replied with minimal responses to the women's speeches proving the insight on men's disinterest in others' opinions by [5]. The

women have been observed to use intensifiers, tag questions and hedges in a formal way of language that translated as a more polite form of language, as opposed to the findings of [6].

viii) Aligned with the results of [12] in their research paper, the aforementioned conversation analysis has proved that men interrupt others more than women do. The male students were constantly interrupting each other and thus, their speeches were overlapping with each other. Their competitive streak added to the interruptions.

ix) The all males group seemed to have a spontaneous flow and had no trouble coming up with topics to discuss, whereas the all females group and the mixed- sex groups required constant motivation. This shows how men tend to talk well and a lot in public, especially among themselves, whereas females tend to be more hesitant and out of politeness choose to remain silent at times. In the mixed sex group, both genders were noticeably contemplative of each other's speeches and focused on indirectly cracking jokes at each other.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that, there are certain differences in linguistic behavior between men and women of a similar age group and academic discipline. These linguistic differences have been investigated on the basis of parameters like talking time, kind of language, tone of talking, topic of discussion, vocabulary, pronunciation, use of code- mixing and code- switching, attitude, use of silence and interruption.

These parameters have revealed quite a few differences in the linguistic behaviour of the male and female students at BUP. With the help of CA, the conversations of the male and female students have been analysed to show that the female students have a longer talking time than the male students; their language was more standard and formal compared to that of the males; they adopted a friendly manner of speaking as opposed to the males' commanding tones; their topic of discussion varied from personal to educational whereas the males chose to talk about the economy; the females seemed to lean towards standard pronunciation whereas the males were more inclined to use regional dialects; the females came forward to be more emotional in their approaches where the males seemed quite disinterested; females were also observed to use more tag questions, hedges, adjectives and colour words whereas the male students used more taboos and tended to interrupt others more while talking.

These differences will lead to further researches on whether or not the stereotypical gender roles have changed in a controlled environment like that of BUP. Besides, the result is also expected to help future researchers to comprehend feminism or sexism in modern era with regards to distinctive linguistic expression of men and women [7]. As shown in the results of this study, it has

been proved that there are noticeable differences in the linguistic behavior of men and women, even if they are within a similar age group and academic discipline.

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