

THE USE OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN WHATSAPP DISCUSSIONS ABOUT SENSITIVE TOPICS

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ABSTRACT

The studies about language use in the past several years showed the existence of gender inequalities. According to Lakoff (1975), women are pressured to show the feminine qualities of weakness and frequently subordinate status toward men in a male-dominated society. However, nowadays, women's position in society is equal to men's position. The evidence that women are now equal to men invites the writer to study men's and women's language features and the politeness strategies used by men and women, especially in CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication). This study was a Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) study used to describe the meaning of qualitative data systematically. The result did not align with the previous studies: it showed that women were also aggressive when giving an argument, and politeness strategies were not the most used in the forum discussion; it was bald of record instead. In sum, Herring's (1993) features of women's and men's language were not valid in this study, and some of them need to be revised. Further studies about politeness strategies in CMC should be explored more.

Keywords: politeness strategies; language features; computer-mediated communication (CMC)

ABSTRAK

Kajian tentang penggunaan bahasa beberapa tahun terakhir menunjukkan adanya ketidaksetaraan gender. Menurut Lakoff (1975), perempuan ditekan untuk menunjukkan kualitas feminin dan seringkali statusnya didominasi laki-laki. Namun, saat ini posisi perempuan dalam masyarakat setara dengan posisi laki-laki. Bukti bahwa perempuan sekarang setara dengan laki-laki mengundang penulis untuk mempelajari ciri-ciri bahasa laki-laki dan perempuan serta strategi kesopanan yang digunakan oleh laki-laki dan perempuan, khususnya dalam CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication). Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) yang digunakan untuk mendeskripsikan data kualitatif secara sistematis. Hasil penelitian ini tidak sejalan dengan penelitian sebelumnya: hal ini menunjukkan bahwa perempuan juga agresif dalam berargumentasi, dan strategi kesantunan tidak banyak digunakan dalam forum diskusi, sebaliknya mereka bersikap berterus terang (strategi bald on record). Secara ringkas, fitur Herring (1993) tentang bahasa perempuan dan laki-laki tidak berlaku dalam penelitian ini, dan beberapa bagian perlu direvisi. Oleh karena itu, penelitian lebih lanjut tentang strategi kesopanan di CMC harus lebih dieksplorasi.

Kata Kunci: strategi kesopanan; fitur bahasa; komunikasi yang dimediasi komputer (CMC)

INTRODUCTION

Sexually prejudiced stereotypes about men and women's polite speech have become the hottest issue since the last decades. There are some claims that women speak more politely and more formally than men. Lakoff (1975) claimed that women's less persuasive speech would be manifested in their tendency

to swear less, speak more politely, and use more tag questions, intensifiers, and hedges. Holmes (1995) characterizes women's speech as more polite than men. He also claimed that the female interactional style is always cooperative and facilitative, whereas the male style is always more aggressive and verbally aggressive. In addition, in terms of language features, Smith et al. (1997) stated that women

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are more likely to thank, appreciate, apologize, and be upset by politeness violations. On the other hand, men generally appear to be less concerned with politeness. They issue bald face-threatening acts such as unmitigated criticisms and insult, tolerate, or even enjoy 'flaming' and tend to be more apprehensive about threats to freedom of expression than with appearing to other social "face" (Herring, 1994, 1996, 1999). As a result, society generally placed women in a lower position.

Nevertheless, nowadays, women's position in society is equal to men's position. Women have taken some subtle positions where men used to lead, such as politics, economy, education, and other fields. The evidence that women incorporate nowadays invites the writer to study men's and women's language features and the politeness strategies used by women, especially in CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication). According to Androutsopoulos (2014, p. 75), Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is one of the current sociolinguistic research areas covering private and public communication via digital media examples and emails, texting, social network sites, and discussion forums. Maros and Rosli (2017) claimed that positive politeness is used the most in CMC because of CMC's nature, promoting interpersonal communication and expression among its users. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), people would apply specific politeness strategies to develop face between themselves and their hearers and avoid damaging both speakers' face and hearers' conversation.

Accordingly, this study was conducted to examine whether the variances between genders can still be detected or transformed from those early studies in the field. It was also conducted to examine politeness strategies used by males and females on WhatsApp group discussion about sensitive social issues and whether Maros and Rosli's claim was valid in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and gender

According to Androutsopoulos (2014, p. 75), Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is one of the current sociolinguistic research areas covering private and public communication via digital media examples and emails, texting, social network sites, and discussion forums. Herring (2001, p.612) stated that sociolinguistic research on CMC emphasizes language use in networked computer environments using discourse analysis methods to report that attention. Moreover, at the beginning of gender studies in CMC, Herring (1993) suggested that new technologies can afford a more neutralized and more self-ruled medium for communication as CMC interactions lack the social status cues, such as appearance, accent, a race that are generally present indirect interactions. As Kress (as cited in Navela, 2015, p. 17) stated, the more current communication trend indicated a change from a "world told to a world shown," which also applies to the communication online.

Herring (1993) expected that CMC interaction could offer more balanced gender interactions; however, it failed. Herring (1996, p.137) proved that there are gender differences in public discourse on the internet. Those differences are not randomly distributed across the individuals but rather follow organized patterns of distribution where males tend to be more confrontational females are generally more attenuated and supportive behaviors. Yates (1997, p.289) added that although the realities of differences based around gender and computing are tangible and should not be disregarded, CMC technologies also afford the opportunity of creating gender identities that can discharge from those fixed forms of real life.

Most of the current studies attempt to investigate if women and men in online communication, especially on social media, can free themselves from the constructed gender norms that tend to rule their behavior both in face-to-face settings and online, or do

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they still repeat the same forms that are thought to rule the variances in communication between the genders. Besides, it is also significant to explore whether there are prominent differences in the way men and women communicate online.

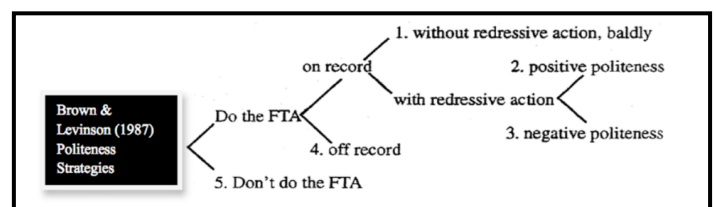
Politeness Strategies

Goffman (1967) is the first person who introduced the theory of politeness in 1963; not only that, but he also created the term Face Threatening Acts (FTA) based on the concept of 'face' in his *On Face-Work*. Then, in 1978 Brown and Levinson developed that concept as The Face Theory by signifying three basic concepts of the face: face, face-threatening acts (FTAs), and politeness strategies. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the face is expressively devoted; it can be lost, maintained, or boosted, and must be continuously appeared in communication. Meantime, Face-Threatening Act (FTA) is an act that fundamentally damages the face of the speaker by acting in disagreement with the wants and desires of the others. Brown and Levinson believed that everyone has a positive face and negative face. Thus, Katz (2015) states that politeness emphasizes the effect a speaker proposes on an interlocutor's self-image or face.

The first theory of politeness strategies based on pragmatics and turned into excessive significance was Grice's Cooperative Principles (1957, 1975). Grice presented four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Then, Leech (1983) responded to Grice's offer and suggested his politeness principle, which consists of six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Coulmas (2006) believed that speakers make choices when communicating and the politeness level of their utterances. Leech (1983) defined politeness as forms of performance to make and maintain interaction. Besides, Lakoff (1975) supported by stating that politeness helps the speakers to minimize the possible conflict and clash in interaction and communication. Therefore, it is suggested for speakers to use specific strategies to minimize

the threat to avoid the damages of the speaker's face by acting in disagreement with the wants and desires of the others. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed four politeness strategies: bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness strategy.

Figure 1. Politeness Strategies



Bald-on record is when the speaker explicitly expressed an intention, directly and bluntly, for example, 'Shut up!' and 'Close the door!'. In contrast, a bald-on record with redressive action includes positive politeness and negative politeness. According to Bengsch (2010) positive politeness is used to save the hearer's positive face by considering the hearer as a part of an in-group which reassure that the FTA is not understood as a negative evaluation of hearer's face. It is shown by demonstrating closeness, friendship, and creating common ground. For instance, 'We're not hungry, are we?' (inclusive form 'we') Moreover, 'Hey Jer, where are you going?' (using the first name).

On the other hand, Negative politeness is oriented toward the hearer's negative face by signifying distance and caution. For example, 'Sorry, would you mind helping me?' and 'could you give me a little time?' Moreover, apologizing, hedging, and questions are usually used to evade daunting on the other hearers. The last strategy is an indirect strategy known as off the record. Giving hints, clues, and the utterances are ambiguous instead of bald-on records without redressive action are off the record's characteristics. For example, 'it is too cold in here' (asking someone to turn off the AC indirectly).

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Features of Women's and Men's Language Online

Herring (2003, p. 207) describes some of the female and male characteristics in CMC based on her studies of gender in asynchronous CMC that she studied on discussion lists and newsgroups on the internet and Usenet. Herring (2003) found out that males tend to post longer messages, start and end discussions in mixed-sex groups, give opinions strongly as facts, use crude language (such as insults and profanities), and in general, manifest an adversarial orientation towards others. In contrast, females are more expected to post shorter messages; they are likely to be eligible and validate their assertions, apologies, express support, and, in general, they manifest an associated orientation towards others. These features align with Tannen's (1990) findings on gendered communication styles, showing that gender differences also exist in online environments.

Table 1. Herring's Women and Men Language Features

WOMEN'S LANGUAGE	MEN'S LANGUAGE
attenuated assertions	strong assertions
apologies	self-promotion
explicit justifications	presuppositions
questions	rhetorical questions
personal orientation	authoritative orientation
supports others	challenges others
	humor/sarcasm

Women are claimed to be more polite in asynchronous CMC. Besides, Lakoff (1975) agreed that women had been labeled powerless. However, Amakye (2010, p.139) argues that it may not be the case in an online setting. She said that instead of classifying women's language powerless, women's competence of knowing what style of language to use to be involved in a message more professionally should be seen as expertise (Amakye, 2010, p.142). Therefore, Navela (2015) has developed Herring's (1993) features of women's and men's language online by collecting from previous studies (Herring,

2011; Amakye, 2010; Guiller & Durndell, 2007).

Table 2. Herring's Women and Men Language Features (new version)

Female style	Male style
Attenuated assertions	Strong assertions
Tendency to apologise	Tendency to self-promote
Explicit justifications	Presuppositions
Questions	Rhetorical questions
Express support	Challenge others
Post shorter messages	Post longer messages
Less involvement in public discourse	Control public discourse: start and end discussions in mixed-sex groups
Personal orientation: References to personal experience, own feelings, self-disclosure	Authoritative orientation: impose opinions strongly as facts or take an authoritative stance
Use polite language, express appreciation and empathy	Use crude language, profanities and flame
Hedge and express doubt, introduce ideas in the form of suggestions	More information-oriented, make controversial statements and use humour or sarcasm

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was a Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) study. Schreier (2012, p.1) explained that QCA is a method developed to describe qualitative data's meaning systematically. Moreover, since the focus was on the participants' comments and were more empathetic to the text, it is part of 'CMC as text' (Androutopoulus, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The problems of this study were drafted as follows:

1. What are the most dominant politeness strategies used in the WhatsApp discussion forum of sensitives social issues?
2. What kinds of language features are used by males and females in the WhatsApp discussion forum of sensitives social issues?

Data Collection

The data was taken from participants' responses to the WhatsApp group discussion

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about sensitive social topics (religion and LGBTQ). The writer found the participants randomly by announcing the research on Instagram; five males and five females. The standard of the participant was that they were willing to communicate in English.

After the participants were collected, they were explained about the discussion, and they were all invited to the WhatsApp group. Six of them are undergraduate degree students majoring in English Language and Culture, two of them are majoring in another degree, and the rest were senior high school graduated. Although five of them were majoring in the same field, they did not close to each other because they studied in different batch. All the participants were under the thirties. Then, on May 1, 2020, the writer made a stimulus-response by giving some argumentation statements one by one to the group. The statements were, "When good or bad things happen, I believe they are a part of God's plan," "LGBTQ is a sin, so they should not be taught in schools," and "Abortion should be legal." The participants were allowed to give their opinion as many as they want, including counter-arguments.

Data Analysis

To analyze the first research question's data, the writer was examined and analyzed based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies (1987) framework, which suggested four politeness strategies: bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness strategy. For bald on record, the writer adapted the description from Grace (as quoted in Vinagre, 2008), and the rest strategies' description was adapted from Brown and Levinson (as quoted in Vinagre, 2008). The writer read all the comments on the WhatsApp group one by one and matched them with all the descriptions. After that, the writer counted the percentages of each category.

For the second research question, the writer divided females and males' comments per group. Then, the comments collected into four groups; female style, male style, mixed style, and neutral style, a remaining group for

comments that cannot be enforced to belong to any of the three first categories by assigning Herring's features of women's and men's language online which taken from Navela (2015, p. 48). After that, the writer totaled the percentages of each category.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Politeness Strategies

The table below shows the summary of politeness strategies employed by females and males on the WhatsApp group discussion on May 1, 2020.

Table 3. Politeness Strategies Results

POLITENESS STRATEGIES	PERCENTAGE (%)	
	WOMEN	MEN
BALD ON RECORD	43.3%	47.2%
POSITIVE POLITENESS	40.1%	22.2%
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	13.3%	16.7%
OFF RECORD	3.3%	13.9%
TOTAL	100%	100%

The findings show that bald on record is employed the most by the women (43.3%) and men (47.2%) in WhatsApp group discussion. Followed closely by positive politeness strategy where women were 40.1% and men were 22.2%. However, women are higher on using a positive politeness strategy than men. Negative politeness is the third most employed strategy by all women (13.3%) and men (16.7%), yet men are frequently used negative politeness. Then, followed by off record, 3.3% of this strategy was used by women and 13.9% used by men.

Bald on Record

As the writer has explained above, bald on record politeness strategy is a direct strategy where the message is clear,

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unambiguous, and concise, and it frequently sounds impolite. Examples are:

- (1) [21:09, 5/1/2020] W2: **I don't care if it's a sin or not, people always sin anyways and judging them is also a sin, so we shouldn't be taught in schools too then ehehe**
- (2) [21:27, 5/1/2020] W3: **Totally disagree. Kids, especially in their adolescence should be made aware of this kind of thing. ...**
- (3) [21:02, 5/1/2020] M3: **No. Love is love. You may not find LGBTQ in any religions. ...**
- (4) [21:39, 5/1/2020] M2: **It's not a sin, and it should be taught in schools.**
...

From the findings, the most famous bald on-record strategy is a maxim of manner where the speakers were perspicuous, clear, and concise in explaining their arguments, for example, on the first example, when she was asked her argument about LGBTQ is a sin. They should not go to school; she directly said that she does not care whether it is a sin; she was forthright and spoke the truth of her opinion about it. She does not pay attention to what people think about her by giving that argument. Also, many comments are categorized in the maxim of quality, where the speakers said based on fact, and they believe to be accurate, for instance, in the third sentence, where the speaker said that love is love. That is true if love cannot be substituted by something else, if we truly love someone, nothing can be changed that love, not our religion nor region. Besides, they also used maxim of quantity where they gave comments as informative as required, they argued and explained something in brief and orderly. If you pay attention to all the shreds of evidence (see on the appendix), most of the comments included all of the bald on record strategies. Most of the participants gave their arguments directly and concisely. When they did not agree, they would state it directly and vice versa.

Politeness Strategies

Positive politeness is the second most generally used strategy in the discussion. Positive politeness strategy is usually used to expressing friendliness and attention in the hearer's needs to be respected. Below are some instances of tweet updates which are positive politeness:

- (1) [19:46, 5/1/2020] W2: **... I said that because most people don't always get what they give equally But for some cases, I think it depends on your mindset and your respond, if you're an optimist, you can turn bad things into a good things, and vice versa. (p+13).**
- (2) [20:06, 5/1/2020] W2: **... I don't believe everything happens for a reason bcs sometimes life just wants to make fun of us. (p+13)**
- (3) [20:25, 5/1/2020] W4: **I personally agree with some of you guys' opinions ...**
- (4) [19:33, 5/1/2020] M2: **Because honestly speaking, with what we have in our world right now (where some people can be very wealthy, ... (p+13)**
- (5) [19:42, 5/1/2020] M3: **But I do believe in God's plan ... (p+2)**

Most of the politeness strategies applied in this forum were p+13, where participants gave what they believed. They gave the reasons to make their argument valid and believed with others. As you can read in the example above, they used the word "because" as a sign if their reasons. Besides, another politeness strategy they used was p+2 when they wanted to approve. For example, in the ninth sentence, the participant stated that he believed in God's plan when the argumentation was, "When good or bad things happen, I believe they are a part of God's plan." He approved that statement by stating that sentence.

Negative Politeness

Negative politeness is believed to show formality and unemotional. It is found

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out that 13.3% of women's comments used negative politeness strategy, and 16.7% of men's argumentations applied this strategy.

- (1) [20:15, 5/1/2020] W3: **I believe that "you reap what you sow", regardless of whether it's God's plan or no. ...**
- (2) [21:15, 5/1/2020] W1: **Hmm.. I am not a religious person myself. So, I do feel LGBTQ should be taught in schools.**
- (3) [21:15, 5/1/2020] W1: **... And it may lead to misconception because they may misunderstood the whole thing in result there are many sex before marriage, teen moms and teen dads..**
...
- (4) [22:53, 5/1/2020] W5: **... Maybe its not normal because religions only have Adam and Eve, but in now on I think LGBTQ is kinds of gender identity and equality. ...**
- (5) [19:07, 5/1/2020] M1: **It depends on whom you're talking to.**
- (6) [22:31, 5/1/2020] W3: **I'm sorry but in case you missed it, the topic is related to "sin"**
- (7) [22:44, 5/1/2020] M4: **Ah sorry, I am focussed on the school part.**

'Apologizing' (p-6) and 'hedges' (p-2) are part of negative politeness strategy. Hedges such as 'hmm,' 'may', and 'maybe', are also part of negative politeness and an important politeness marker when identifying politeness utterances. The usage of hedges is to soften the FTA, and the examples are found in sentences 11, 12, and 13. Next, in sentence 15, the speaker tried to minimize the FTA by apologizing and was trying to save the negative face of 'those who need to entertain' the speaker. Another example of apologizing is sentenced to 16.

Furthermore, (p-1) where the participant was conventionally indirect and (p-4) where the participants tried to minimize the imposition, R_x also used in this forum. In sentence 10, it shows the woman gives her opinion indirectly; she gave parable instate

stating directly stating agree or not. Besides, in sentence 14, the man did not force the readers or other participants to agree with his statement. He used the word "depend" and give two perspectives instead. (see the appendix for other examples).

Off Record

Off-record politeness strategy is also known as an indirect strategy. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), off-record happens when a speaker resolves to leave it up to the addressee to choose how to mean the utterance while doing the FTAs. Hence, the hearer may not discover the tidings, and the meaning can be interpreted differently. In this forum, some of the users tended to use off-record in their comments, such as:

- (1) [21:10, 5/1/2020] W2: **and I don't think your sexuality has anything to do with education????**
- (2) [19:56, 5/1/2020] M5: **Saying good things happen because of God's plan sounds "reasonable" But bad things?**
- (3) [19:56, 5/1/2020] So, for example, when Abel was being killed by his own brother, Cain, (which is a very bad thing) did that a part of God's plan?
- (4) [21:01, 5/1/2020] M5: **Wow... There are two things to discuss in one statement**

In sentence 17, the participant used off-record strategy on-off 15, where she used an ellipsis at the end of the sentence "????". In sentences 18 and 19, the participants used a question mark, yet the meaning behind the sentence was not clear yet; therefore, it included to off 11 where the speaker is ambiguous, whether he wanted to ask a question or being sarcastic. It also same goes for sentence 19. Moreover, although in sentence 20, the speaker did not use a question mark, he wrote "wow" which also ambiguous, whether he wanted to compliment the argumentation sentence or to be critical.

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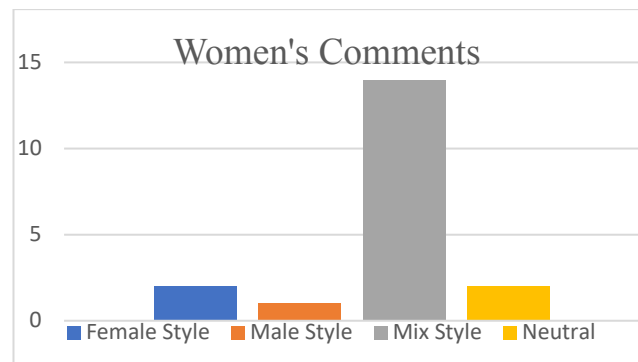
The findings reveal that all of the participants employed all four politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their discussion. Bald on record was the most frequently used politeness strategy by women and men in WhatsApp forum discussion. It is not in line with Maros and Rosli (2017), who claimed that positive politeness is the most used in CMC due to CMC's nature, which promotes interpersonal communication and expression among users. It was then followed by a positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and off the record. It can be happened because of the forum itself, which asked them to state their own opinion about the topics, which turned out that maxim of manner was used the most where the speakers were perspicuous, clear, and concise in explaining their arguments. Logically, every participant wants to show that his/her thought about the issues, no matter what the gender was.

Men's and Women's Language Feature

The comments' results and discussion were divided into four categories: female style, male style, mixed and neutral, that will be presented. This study found 17 comments, seven comments were women's, and ten comments were men's, for the topic about God. Besides, there were 26 comments, 12 comments were women's, and the rest were men's comments for LGBTQ.

Out of 19 comments created by women, two comments (10.4%) were assigned to the category of female style; there is one comment (5.2%) which showed features of male style, 14 comments (74%) portrayed features of both styles, hence, belong to the category of mixed and two comments (10.4%) were considered neutral because there was nothing in precise that stood out in them, in which occasion forcing these comments into a detailed group would have been rather pointless. They are also presented graphically in figure 2 (below).

Figure 2. Women's Comments Results



Some comments illustrate the particular category in question to give some concrete examples of the features that appeared in the comments posted by women. The first examples are to illustrate the female style:

Example 1:

[21:10, 5/1/2020] W2: and I don't think your sexuality has anything to do with education????

Example 2:

[22:31, 5/1/2020] W3: I'm sorry but in case you missed it, the topic is related to "sin"

Example 1 is one of the comments about participants' views about LGBTQ is a sin, so they should not be taught in schools. From the example 1, one of characteristics that we can find such as personal orientation, which references personal experience and own feeling, the participant used words "I don't think ..." which refer to her own opinion based on her particular experience. It also contains question marks that refer to questions. Besides, in example 2, it shows the tendency to apologize when she intended to correct someone's observation because it was not related to the topic. The comment is also short if it compares to others' comments and uses polite language, consistent with the previously attributed female style. Those favor settling the results of some of the previous studies, which claimed women tend to be more

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supportive and polite in their postings online (Herring 1993, 1996).

Moreover, this part will discuss the comments posted by women that were assigned to the male style. It is the only example of this category illustrates clearly a style generally associated with men.

Example 3:

[21:27, 5/1/2020] W3: Totally disagree. Kids, especially in their adolescence should be made aware of this kind of thing. If they're not aware and some times in the future are faced with LGBT people, they would judge (which is also a sin🙄) because it's just against everything they HAVE BEEN taught in religion class at school.

This comment differs significantly from the examples given in the previous paragraphs. It shows strong assertions. It can be seen from the sentence above that the writer uses capital letters to show her persuasive argumentation, and it makes the tone in the comments was authoritative instead of being attenuated. There is also one emoticon that makes the tone of the sentence like a sarcasm, *which is also a sin🙄*. Therefore, there all features in this comment suggest a style generally associated with men the majority feature of the comment (written by women) that were assigned to this category of male style in men's communication patterns online. Even though there is only one comment containing strong or aggressive language, but the fact that these kinds of features were also found in the comments posted by women, nonetheless, contradicts the concept of attenuated and supportive female style reported earlier by Herring (1993, 1996).

Next, the writer will discuss comments posted by women assigned to the tendency to combine gendered features in the postings, 15 of 19 comments in total. The first illustration of this category illustrates clearly a style generally associated with men (example 3):

Example 4:

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[19:16, 5/1/2020] W1: Realistically speaking any outcome whether it's good or bad reflects on one's decisions.. Not necessarily destiny or God's plan..

Let's say we did have our life planned by God, but as an individual we have choices. So, I think the outcome can be different depending on how we want it to be.

In example 3, the woman respondent used the word "realistically" to give an argumentation whether they consider that when good or bad things happen, it is a part of God's plan. The choice of her words shows strong assertions. The tone in the comment was authoritative instead of being attenuated, which is more typical for men's communication patterns online. She takes an authoritative stance by using the phrase, *let's say we did our life planned by God ...* She is trying to show the evidence. After all, at the end of the sentence, she used personal orientation, which refers to self-disclosure by using, *I think ...*

Example 5:

[20:06, 5/1/2020] W2: So, my point is I don't believe this (eventho I used to) and also, I don't believe everything happens for a reason bcs sometimes life just wants to make fun of us.

The comment in example 4 also shows a mixed category. The participant shows her orientation, which is female style oriented in an online setting by stating *I don't believe this (eventho I used to)*. In contrast, the second sentence shows an authoritative orientation by imposing opinions actively as facts; *I don't believe everything happens for a reason bcs sometimes life just wants to make fun of us*. Thus, this comment's tone also tends to use humor, which refers to the male style.

Example 6:

[21:15, 5/1/2020] W1: Hmm.. I am not a religious person myself. So, I do feel LGBTQ should be taught in schools. In my personal opinion, especially in Indonesia generally we are lacking in sex

education, because even to the "normal" sex education the older generation still think it's a taboo to bring the topic to the kids, hence why some search the information on their own or practice by their own..

And it may lead to misconception because they may misunderstood the whole thing in result there are many sex before marriage, teen moms and teen dads..

As for the LGBTQ.. Yes I do believe again such knowledge should be taught to the kids, for it is not wrong to love anyone that they have an eye or whether it's the same sex or not. Everyone is human and has the right to feel what th...

[21:16, 5/1/2020] W1: *they have to just be respectable

Another comment shows a mixed category, one of the most extended comments made by women in the LGBTQ discussion. This evidence proves that not only men who post longer messages, but also women do. Besides, the participants on this comment also show the strong assertions by stating *Everyone is human and has the right to feel what th....* Also, she imposes her opinion firmly as facts by explaining that even to the "normal" sex education the older generation still thinks it is a taboo to bring the topic to the kids, hence why some search the information on practice by their own. However, most of the sentences also use the female style. For instance, in the first sentence, *Hmm.. I am not a religious person myself. So, I do feel LGBTQ should be taught in schools.* There is a hedge (hmm, another one is *may*), which shows the female style. Thus, the writer also shows explicit justification, *I am not a religious person myself*, and use personal orientation, such as *So, I do feel LGBTQ should be taught in schools; for it is not wrong to love anyone that they have an eye or whether it's the same sex or not.* From those statements, they show that the writer gives an argumentation by using their feeling.

Lastly, the writer will give some examples of the comments allocated to the category of neutral. Two comments did not

feature any particular characteristics describing the female or male style, and hence, imposing these comments into a specific category would have been rather pointless.

Example 7:

[21:58, 5/1/2020] W3: 100

Example 8:

[22:43, 5/1/2020] W5: PERFECTO 100

Both comments expressed support for one of men's argumentation [21:39, 5/1/2020] M2: *It's not a sin, and it should be taught in schools. LGBTQ is part of sexuality, and it deserves some recognition and respect. The schools can simply teach the young generation that LGBTQ exists, without pushing them to be. In the end, sexuality is personal preference and must not be interfered by anybody else.*

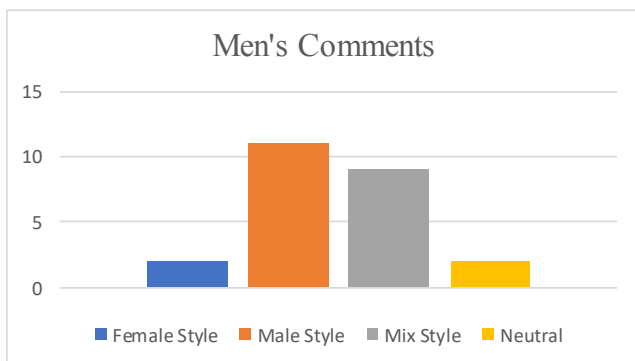
Those comments actually could be assigned to female style based on covering agreement since the comments are expressing support, which is more typical for women as men have been said to be more prone instead challenge others could have been sent by any gender and does not comprise enough evidence of either female or male style. However, it was concluded that this particular comment is not evident enough to be categorized as female style due to as men could also write comments of agreement and was hence assigned to the category of neutral.

There were 24 comments posted by men, 11 comments (45.8%) represented male style features clearly enough to be assigned to this category. Conversely, two comments (8.3%) were considered to show traits of female style, nine comments (37.6%) was seen to show characters of both styles, thus, assigned to the category of mixed, and two comments (8.3%) were considered neutral based on not portraying any specific features to enable categorization. Figures are also presented graphically in figure 3 on the following page.

Figure 3. Men's Comments Results

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To demonstrate some of the features that appeared in men's comments, the writer will start with the comments (example 9), which illustrate the typical types of men's style in online settings.

Example 9:

[19:29, 5/1/2020] M2: **everything that happens in someone's life is based on his/her choice in the past. none of them are the part of the so called "God's plan"**

[19:33, 5/1/2020] M2: **Because honestly speaking, with what we have in our world right now (where some people can be very wealthy, yet the others live in extreme poverty) and we justify the term "God's plan", then I think "God" must be really unfair to his creation.**

Example 9 demonstrates the characteristic types of comments that appeared in this group. Its tone is more authoritative than personal, and the writer states his thoughts as facts rather than showing forms of personal orientation, such as references to own feelings, all of which is reported to be reliable with the male style of interactive online (Herring 1993, 1996). Another example is on example 10:

Example 10:

[21:08, 5/1/2020] M5: **I'll focus on whether LGBT should or shouldn't be taught in schools.**

I believe, school is a place where people get education, get knowledge. So regardless it's a sin or not, people need to know about sex,

including same-sex attraction or gender identity. It's important because there are people who are straight, gay, bi, or having gender identity crisis. They need to know and understand who they are and why they are having such condition. And school, as an educational institution should provide this knowledge to their students.

If people worry because it's a sin, they are welcome to go to the nearest churches, mosques, or madrasa/pesantren. :)

Unlike the previous one, this participant also shows his strong assertion and an authoritative orientation by imposing strong opinions as facts. Besides, at the end of the comment, he put his humor or sarcasm by stating *If people worry because it's a sin, they are welcome to go to the nearest churches, mosques, or madrasa/pesantren. :)* Besides, the participant also uses emoticon, which makes the tone into sarcasm. Those styles are in line with Herring 1993, 1996, 2003.

The next two instances also continue to encounter the argumentative male style as they are illustrations of female style, to which 8.3 percent (2 out of 24 comments) written by men were assigned based on the structures that appeared in these comments. Example 11 features with clear female-linked patterns:

Example 11:

[19:09, 5/1/2020] M1: **For me personally, everything happens now and tomorrow, its because of the choices that I made before**

Example 12:

[22:19, 5/1/2020] M4: **I think homosexuality and sexuality in general should be taught in Biology classes and explained in scientific ways and don't add any religious opinion on it.**

Example 11 contains personal orientation, which refers to his personal experience by saying *for me personally* and *.... I made before*. He put himself on this comment rather than showing his opinion as facts or take an authoritative stance. Besides, this comment is shorter than others', which is one of the female style's critical characteristics in online settings

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(Herring 1993, 1996, 2003). It same goes, for example, 12, where the participant also comments in a small way.

The next is an example belonging to the category mixed, further showcases how binary categorization of male vs. female style might not be sufficient nowadays to define discourse taking place in online settings. A corresponding number of male and female comments, namely 37.6% (9 out of 24 comments) posted by men, were assigned to this category.

Example 13:

[19:56, 5/1/2020] M5: Personally, I believe that statement, along with other similar statement such as "Life and death are in God's hand", is just empty words used to comfort believers who are in bad circumstances. Because if we think about it, that statement is somewhat ridiculous. Saying good things happen because of God's plan sounds "reasonable" But bad things? So, for example, when Abel was being killed by his own brother, Cain, (which is a very bad thing) did that a part of God's plan? And then Cain was being punished by God for the killing. So not only that Abel was killed as a part of God's plan, but Cain who made the plan work, also suffered from it. That statement makes God sounds very cruel and that humans are just toys for him. It's like me burning houses or drowni...

Example 13, thus, can be seen to contain features from both male and female styles. It starts with a personal orientation (female style), shown by using word *personally*. Thus he uses a question such as *But bad things?, did that a part of God's plan?*. Furthermore, the participants show his strong assertion and challenging tone. The participant also gives more information by illustrating the example, which is considered a more masculine way of communicating. The general tone of the post remains imposing as the commentator is sustaining his point of view through the comment and also expresses it very clearly, e.g., by stating, "That statement makes God

sounds very cruel and that humans are just toys for him. It is like me burning houses or drowni...". These structures were seen to be very representative of the comments assigned to this particular category. For instance, comments with authoritative or information-oriented tones, nonetheless, also fairly often contained personal orientation. It is also a strong indication that the current discourse online might favor the mixing of male- and female gendered features, as suggested, e.g., by Hall (1996).

Lastly, to give an illustration of the comments that fell under the category of neutral, 2 out of 24 comments (8.3 percent), in which neither of the gendered styles was particularly apparent, the writer presents two examples, which also highlights the necessity of this type of residual category.

Example 14:

[21:01, 5/1/2020] M5: Wow... There are two things to discuss in one statement

Example 15:

[21:10, 5/1/2020] M5: Hear hear

This type of comment presented in examples 14 and 15 did not contain enough evidence to enable thoughtful analysis and was allocated to this residual category. However, it was determined that this particular comment is not apparent enough to be categorized as female style since men could also write comments of agreement and were hence assigned to neutral.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to show whether Maros and Rosli (2017) claimed that positive politeness is used the most in CMC is exist on this study and also to prove whether the new version of women and men's language features by Tanner has still existed on the WhatsApp forum discussion.

The finding on politeness strategies showed that all of the participants employed all four politeness strategies by Brown and

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Levinson (1987) in their discussion. Bald on record was the most frequently used politeness strategy by women and men in WhatsApp forum discussion. It does not coordinate with Maros and Rosli (2017), who claimed that positive politeness is the most used in CMC due to CMC's nature, promoting interpersonal communication and expression among users. It was then followed by a positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and off the record.

Furthermore, most women used a mixed style of language features based on Herring's new language features. In other words, most of the women participants used women's language features and men's language features. It can be caused by the forum and the topics themselves, forcing them to state what they think and make all the arguments as a fact. It also does not align with Herring, who (as cited in Navela, 2015) claimed that women's language tended to be more uncertain, and women were often dominated. On the other hand, men's more aggressive and often use particular language use because they showed that women were not overshadowed; most of them clearly and precisely gave their thought. Also, some men used women's language features, which post shorter than others. In sum, the new version of Herring's Women and Men Language Features was still not valid in this study.

Suggestions

The suggestion for future studies on politeness strategies and language features on CMC is that the researchers should consider the participants' status and pay attention to how they conduct the discussion or give stimulus responses – the rules and the topics.

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