

# Women and Her Language

## *Gender Perspective Through Speech Features Dialogue Used by Najwa Shihab and President Joko Widodo*

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Abstract: Discussion of women and their language, or language and women's issues usually leads to the exposure of language differences between women and men. Many things underlie the emergence of differences between women and men from language use perspective. Previous studies described that the male language is more assertive, mature, and men like to speak openly with the right vocabulary. On the other hand, the language spoken by women is not firm, not overtly, and careful when expressing something, and often uses a more polite words or gestures. One way to learn women language is by examining their utterances while communicating, including interviews. This study aims to describe the features of the speeches of Najwa Shihab and President Joko Widodo from gender perspective. The data source in this study is an interview between Najwa Shihab as presenter, and Joko Widodo as a political figure as well as seventh Indonesian President, in a television program called "Mata Najwa". The results showed that in the interview, Najwa Shihab's emotions were very influential when interviewing President Joko Widodo and gave impact on the features of the speech she used when giving questions to the President.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays respect for women is a necessity. Female figure is still discriminated from the male figure. Research on language and gender emphasizes the focus of his study on the influence of gender on language use. Research on the diversity of the language of men and women has revealed the characteristics of differences in the use of language between men and women. One of them is the difference in communicative ability that is common feature of language usage.

In Sociolinguistics, the talk of language differences between men and women is still interesting to talk about, although various works containing various theories about the condition have emerged. Female and male language terms are often found in language and gender research. Research on language and women or women and language refers to the exposure of language (way) differences between women and men. Kent (1923) states that women are somewhat shy when referring to their limbs openly, unlike young men who call them shamelessly. Jespersen also reveals that women use

adjectives more often than men in language, for example, women often use adorable, charming, sweet, or lovely compared with neutral words, such as great, terrific, cool, or neat.

Lakoff (1973) as a linguist who pioneered the research with a focus on the study of the relationship between language and gender on the theory of the existence of the female language argues that there are some things that underlie the emergence of differences between women and men in the language. Men are described speaking more firmly, maturely, and like to speak openly with the right vocabulary. As with the language of women who are not firm, not openly (using figurative words) and be careful when expressing something, and often use a more polite and polite words or through cues (meta-message). In the field of morphology, Lakoff states that women often use words for colors, such as mauve, beige, aquamarine, and lavender that are rarely used by men. In addition, women also often use adjectives such as adorable, charming, divine, lovely, and sweet. Viewed from diction, women have certain vocabulary to show certain effects on them, for example, words and phrases like so good, adorable, darling, and fantastic.

Men in the eyes of women at the time of speech, said that they are more impressed linear, simple, not comprehensive, do not show emotions, usually in short sentences, and in the form statement and hierarchical orientation. In contrast, women in the eyes of men are usually those at the time of unstructured speaking, sentence construction usually in passive form, many use conditional expressions to show modesty, are more questionable, and tend not to be focus on the subject. Women are also said to be good listeners and easier to interact.

Furthermore, through their speech women are indirectly inclined to show hidden messages or wishes. For example the use of question tags by women is not only used to ask questions, but also as an expression of hope for answers to these questions. In addition, women also often use high intonation in declarative sentences to show their emotions or empathy toward something. Based on the above-mentioned characteristics, it can be concluded that men speak more directly to the point and are clear, while most women usually speak indirectly.

One way to learn the language of women is to look at the features of female utterances she uses in communicating and one of her real examples through interviews. Najwa Shihab (abbreviated as NS) is one of the female reporters in Indonesia who is famous for the choice of firm and straightforward words when conducting interviews with resource persons.

Najwa Shihab interview is interesting to investigate because therein there are features of women's speeches proposed by Lakoff (1975) so it is known which features are used by Najwa Shihab. In some of the spoken dialogues, NS uses the features of speech commonly used by women. In addition to being known as a straightforward, firm, and spicy reporter in every speech, NS also still has a feminine character which is shown by the use of female speech features when NS responds to answers from the interviewees it interviews. In the interview can be seen features female utterances that are used based on Lakoff's theory of female speech features.

Women's language indicates the characteristic of women's behavior. Because someone's language shows their role in the society, women should have certain speech features to be shown in their society. Lakoff said that women experience linguistic discrimination in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language treats them. Both of them are related with the function or the role of women in their society. So women have to choose their best language when they interact with other people. Women have to talk like a lady, if

they refuses it they are ridiculed and subjected to criticism as unfeminine (Lakoff, 1973).

According to Holmes (1995), women's linguistic behavior can be seen mostly when women used more standard forms than men. In many speech communities, when women use more of a linguistic form than men, it is generally the standard form which overtly prestigious form that women favor. Holmes adds that women used more standard form because of four reasons, they are appeals to social class and its related status, refers to women's role in society, relates to women's status as a subordinate group, and relates with

The function of speech expressing masculinity. Women have role as guardian of social's values. The fact that women use more standard forms than men points to the way society tend to expect better behavior from women than from men (Holmes, 1995).

Standard forms are commonly associated with more formal and less personal interactions so the society expects women to use them because women are serving as models for children's speech. Women are also designated the role of modeling correct behavior in the community. Women's language forms are associated with female values and femininity. In the other hand, women don't use vernacular forms because they don't want the society looks their masculinity than their femininity.

Lakoff (1975) suggested based on her intuitions and observations that women's speech was characterized by linguistic features such as the following: lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation on declaratives, 'empty' adjectives, specialized vocabularies (precise colors terms), intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'super polite' form, avoidance of strong words, and emphatic stress. Lakoff also divided those features into two groups. First, there are linguistic devices which may be used for hedging or reducing the force of an utterance. Hedging devices are lexical hedges, tag questions, question intonation, super polite forms, and euphemism. Secondly there are features which may boost or intensify a proposition's force. They are intensifiers and emphatic stress. Lakoff claimed that hedging devices explicitly signal lack of confidence, while boosting devices reflect the speaker's that the addressee may remain unconvinced and therefore supply extra reassurance. So, women use hedging devices to express uncertainty, and they use boosting devices to persuade their addressee to take them seriously.

## 2 METHODS

In analyzing women's speech features that used by character Najwa Shihab as a presenter, descriptive qualitative method is used by the researcher since the data are in forms of the words and descriptively based on Lakoff's theory of ten types of women's speech features.

Flick et al. (2004) said in that qualitative research claims to describe life worlds 'from the inside out', from the point of view of the people who participate. By so doing it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features.

In qualitative research, the data is gotten from the form of words or sentences then describing the phenomenon that found in the data. Qualitative method helps the researcher to study things in natural setting, and then interpret the phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The use of qualitative research also involves the study used in variety of material and case study in people's live such as their personal experiences. This research analyzed the conversation that used by Najwa Shihab as a presenter in Mata Najwa as the data source. The data are from the words,

Phrases, clauses, or sentences that found in the dialogues of Najwa Shihab with President Joko Widodo in her conversation. The source of data is taken from the dialogues in Mata Najwa then it is subscribed. The data which is used by the researcher is taken from the conversations or dialogues of character Najwa Shihab where it can be found the use of ten types of women's speech features based on Lakoff's theory.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are differences in language characteristics used by men and women in community life. Some language characteristics are often used by women, but rarely used by men. The characteristics are color words, empty adjectives, question intonation/intonational pattern, hedge, intensifier, hypercorrect grammar, super polite form, question tag, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress.

The results of the research on the transcripts of interviews between presenters Najwa Shihab and President Joko Widodo, there are interesting findings in which the linguistic characteristics put

forward by Lakoff (1975) are used by male informants and female presenters.

The following is the use of linguistic characteristics according to Lakoff found in Najwa Shihab's speech during an interview with President Joko Widodo in the "Mata Najwa" in Metro-TV on Wednesday, 21 October 2015, at 20.04-21.28 WIB downloaded from YouTube with a total time duration of 55 minutes 46 seconds.

### 3.1 Color Words

Women are considered to have more detailed and meticulous properties than men. This can be seen from the number of vocabulary possessed by women in terms of interest, for example in terms of color mention. When mentioning the color of an object, women not only mention the colors commonly used, such as red, yellow, black, blue, and so on. Women prefer to divide colors into smaller classes, such as grey, pink, salem, blue tosca, lilac, and so on. These types of color vocabularies are rarely or even never used by men. From the source of data transcripts speech Najwa Shihab in an interview with President Joko Widodo not found the selection of vocabulary on the mention of color.

### 3.2 Empty adjectives

According to Lakoff, there are adjectives that tend to be more widely used by women. Empty adjectives are adjectives used by women to express acceptance and admiration for something.

*"Can you sleep **soundly** at night?"*

### 3.3 Question intonation

Sentence intonation patterns used by women in answering a question with a statement using a high pattern of intonation. The reason is because they are unsure of their own statements. In the data transcript of dialogue between Najwa Shihab and President Joko Widodo not found the characteristics of the language in the form of question intonation. Because Najwa Shihab as presenter still hold firm ethics to ask the informant, who incidentally is a president.

### 3.4 Hedge

According to Lakoff (1975), women often use a phrase that shows that they feel less confident with what is said, that's called hedge. When a person uses a hedge, the speaker actually avoids saying

something definitively and letting the options remain open.

### 3.5 Intensifier

The intensifier is also called the term "warmer", i.e. The word, especially the adverb used to emphasize adjectives, verbs, or other adverbs.

*"If the Palace in Jakarta is **too** noisy, then, sir? Too much interest?"*

The word **too** is used by Najwa Shihab as an intensive form that aims to emphasize the word it is attached to and it is used by the speaker to convince his or her partners to believe what has been said.

### 3.6 Hiper-correct Grammar

Women are more likely to use standard language than men. There is a presumption that women have a more polite speech than men. In this study found the consistency of the use of formal form in the speech Najwa Shihab.

*Welcome to Mata Najwa.  
I am Najwa Shihab, the host of "Mata Najwa"  
It's been a year Jokowi lead this country.  
Become the nation's skipper.  
There are still many who praise, but critics also come barrage.  
Many things are not publicly known.  
Because work does not always have to be noisy.  
From crucial policies to unimportant noise.  
Let's see the palace kitchen.  
From seeing the chefs working up to unusual decisions.  
This is Mata Najwa, "Behind the Palace Wall"*

The above speech was revealed by Najwa Shihab as the opening of the "Mata Najwa" show aired by Metro-TV and was ministered by Najwa Shihab herself.

### 3.7 Super Polite Form

The use of a very polite form of speech is considered as something that women should do. Women should also often use phrases, such as please and thank you, to keep the social conventions.

Some examples of highly polite phrases in which this phrase is spoken by women, for example the expression to say hello (call to someone), indirect speech (indirect speech).

- "What is the most frequent way, which the **Mister President** did to find out, what the people really wanted, what are the ways to get close to them?";
- "In principle ... anyone can have lunch with **President Jokowi**.";
- "But that looks just sometimes as if **President Jokowi** let it lho, sir, do not set, not make the strains that so melodious;
- "**President Jokowi** ... thank you so much for Metro-TV this afternoon, sir."

### 3.8 Tag Questions

Tag questions are phrases contained at the end of a sentence to emphasize. This usually aims to get approval or confirm an information. Tag questions are also used when a speaker states something, but he is not sure what he has said.

In an interview between Presenter Najwa Shihab and President Joko Widodo, many Najwa Shihab sayings use the linguistic characteristics of tag questions.

*"E ... the keroncong style, the pop style, the dangdut style, the style of the skirt, sir. It's his hope of one, president, **is not he?**"*

*"So does Pak Jokowi's strategy let the difference of opinion, **right?**"*

*"To find that certainty then the style is made more informal, **more relaxed?**"*

*"Feeling rushed in time, **right?**"*

Najwa Shihab uses a lot of statement in the form of question tag which aims to get the approval of his partner that is President Joko Widodo.

### 3.9 Avoide of Strong Swear Words

Swear words are words used to emphasize what to say and become a way to insult something or someone.

In an interview between Najwa Shihab and President Joko Widodo there was no speech from Najwa Shihab who used the word curse.

### 3.10 Emphatic Stress

According to Lakoff (1973), emphatic stress has a function to give emphasis to a speech when the

speaker is not sure what is being said. This feature provides the definition of an expression of uncertainty by using the expression of the speaker himself, although this expression can be seen otherwise.

*"Are you disappointed to see, read, hear that people then question e ... see why his performance is not as expected?"*

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Character Najwa Shihab in Mata Najwa uses many types of *women's speech features* that can reflect her personality. It is found in the dialogues that each of features that she uses reflects her own figure as a woman. It is also found that in different settings, Najwa uses different speech features as she needs to complete her utterances. There are nine speech features that are used by Najwa Shihab, they are *lexical hedges or fillers, tag question, rising intonation on declaratives, 'empty' adjectives, intensifiers, 'hypercorrect' grammar, 'super polite' form, avoidance of strong words, and emphatic stress. But, there is one speech feature which is not used by Najwa Shihab, that is specialized vocabulary (precise colors term).*

Furthermore, Lakoff's theory of women's speech features is suitable to be used for this research because the researcher can analyze the character of women especially Najwa Shihab. This research also proves the good personality and attitude of Najwa Shihab as observed on her speech features.

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