
GENDER PATTERNS ON TWITTER: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

PROCEEDING

REINFORCING EDUCATION,
LANGUAGE, AND SOCIO-
CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Social media comes in various interconnected forms such as Facebook, podcasts, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and many more. Gender orientation may influence preferences for certain social media use. Therefore, the emphasis of this study is on gender differences in using social media, especially on Twitter. This study used qualitative methods and descriptive qualitative design. The data collection technique was an observation. The subjects were taken from 6 randomly selected Twitter profiles consisting of 3 men and 3 women as samples. The results revealed that men and women showed differences in writing and displaying their photo profiles on social media. Most women write about themselves, life's problems, their feelings, and their emotions. Besides, they use more expressive and polite language. Meanwhile, men prefer to write about quotes, jokes, hobbies, and current news. Sometimes they also tend to be harsh, using expletive or taboo words in writing tweets. Relating to photos, women prefer to use close-up photos that look more pleasing, beautiful, sweeter, and cuter; whereas men use full body shots with a masculine impression.

Keywords: Social Media, Gender, Differences, Twitter

INTRODUCTION

Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that focuses on the social aspects of language¹. The sociolinguistic concept refers to the study of the relationship between language and society. It is a topic of study which believes that human society is shaped by various interconnected patterns and behaviors, including linguistics. Since language is used as a tool of human communication, language is also closely related to gender. In this study, I use the term gender rather than sex because "sex" refers to the categories that biologically differentiate individuals; absolute categories, while "gender" is more suitable to be used to define individuals based on socio-cultural behavior; continuous variables. Therefore, gender can be the more suitable concept for sociolinguistic discussion than sex. The gender definition provides an overview of masculine and feminine attitudes. Femininity refers to the characteristics of women, while masculinity is a masculine trait that refers to male characters.

Different people, environments, and genders will have various perspectives in using social media. According to Trottier², there are three processes of social information, namely cognition, cooperation, and communication/networking, which can be used to clarify the meaning of social media. Twitter, for example, supports all three processes of social

¹ Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4. ed, Learning about Language (London: Routledge, 2013), 1.

² Daniel Trottier and Christian Fuchs, "1 Theorising Social Media, Politics and the State," n.d., 36.

information, such as forming a community (cognition), collaborating with other users on a project (cooperation), and sharing content with other users (communication/networking). According to this concept, individuals have several cognitive characteristics that are used to interact with other people. As a result, much social or even personal data about users is generalized and forms a pattern.

In this study, the researcher conducted an observation on one of the social media applications that have 19.5 million users in Indonesia³, namely Twitter. Twitter is one of the social media apps where we can interact with others through short messages named tweets⁴. Tweeting is posting a brief message or even photos and videos to anyone who follows you on Twitter and hopes that the post will be useful and interesting to the audience. People post tweets for various reasons: to show off, to attract attention, as a media promotion, following current issues, and more. The differences themselves relate to men and women which belong to gender. If there are differences in the use of spoken language between men and women, then the use of written language also has differences, especially on social networking sites because it connects people around the world. In this study, the researcher is interested in investigating the differences in behavior between men and women on Twitter. The research problems in this study are; (1) how men and women represent themselves in using profile photos on Twitter, (2) how the writing style is used by men and women in writing twitter updates.

Based on those reasons, this study focuses on gender differences patterns in social media Twitter according to sociolinguistic perspectives. Hopefully, this study can provide useful information about sociolinguistic perspectives on gender patterns in social media. This study is expected to be a reference for other researchers to research in the sociolinguistics field.

METHOD

This study was conducted using qualitative research which aims to describe the results in detail. The focus of qualitative research is on qualitative phenomena⁵. Qualitative research is very important in behavioral science because it aims to find out the motives that underlie human behavior. Through this research, we can explore the various causes that drive people to behave in a certain way or that cause people to like or dislike certain things.

This study was descriptive qualitative research. Instead of using numbers and statistics data, descriptive qualitative research is concerned with data that is presented in words or pictures from⁶. The result of the study is presented using data from records, field notes, and interviews, and also quotes from video recordings, audiotapes, and electronic communications. The data collection for this study was conducted by observing randomly selected Twitter accounts to determine gender patterns. The researcher acted as an observer. As a result, the data will be analyzed and presented in a description form.

³ PDSI KOMINFO, "Kominfo : Pengguna Internet Di Indonesia 63 Juta Orang," Website Resmi Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika RI, accessed May 1, 2021, http://index.php/content/detail/3415/Kominfo+%3A+Pengguna+Internet+di+Indonesia+63+Juta+Orang/0/berita_satker.

⁴ Paul Gil Writer Paul Gil et al., "What Is Twitter? And How Does It Work?," Lifewire, accessed April 13, 2021, <https://www.lifewire.com/what-exactly-is-twitter-2483331>.

⁵ C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (New Age International, 2004), 5.

⁶ Donald Ary et al., *Introduction to Research in Education*, 8th ed (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2010), 424.

Data collection is the collection of concrete evidence that allows the researcher to analyze the results of all activities according to the research design and procedures. The data collection method defines the approach used to collect data, such as observation, interviews, document analysis, and so on⁷. In this study, the researcher used observation techniques to collect data. The researcher collected data by observing 6 randomly selected Twitter accounts; 3 males and 3 females as samples. After obtaining the data, the researcher observed those accounts through their Twitter activities. The researcher then analyzed the gender patterns from the collected data.

Data analysis is the process where the researcher searches for and organizes their data to increase their understanding of the data and enable them to present their findings to others⁸. This study is analyzed in three parts; data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDINGS

The language used by the people has many differences. Gender is one of the various factors that influence this difference. Men and women use social media differently, not only in terms of spoken language but also in terms of written language. Twitter is one of the most popular social networks and is one of the tools for communication. When people updated status, it has differences from each other. Besides, differences are not only seen in status updates, but also in how men and women represent themselves through the profile photos they use on social media.



Based on the results of observations made by the researcher on several randomly selected Twitter accounts, the researcher found information related to gender patterns on Twitter. The results were as follows:

1. Profile Pictures

The researcher compared the profile photos of 6 randomly selected Twitter accounts, consisting of 3 men and 3 women. From the data obtained, the researcher found that most of the female users used Twitter profile photos with close-up photos and use filters or make-up that look cute and adorable. Men, on the other hand, use more formal poses and do not use selfie photos. Some of them even don't use their photographs.

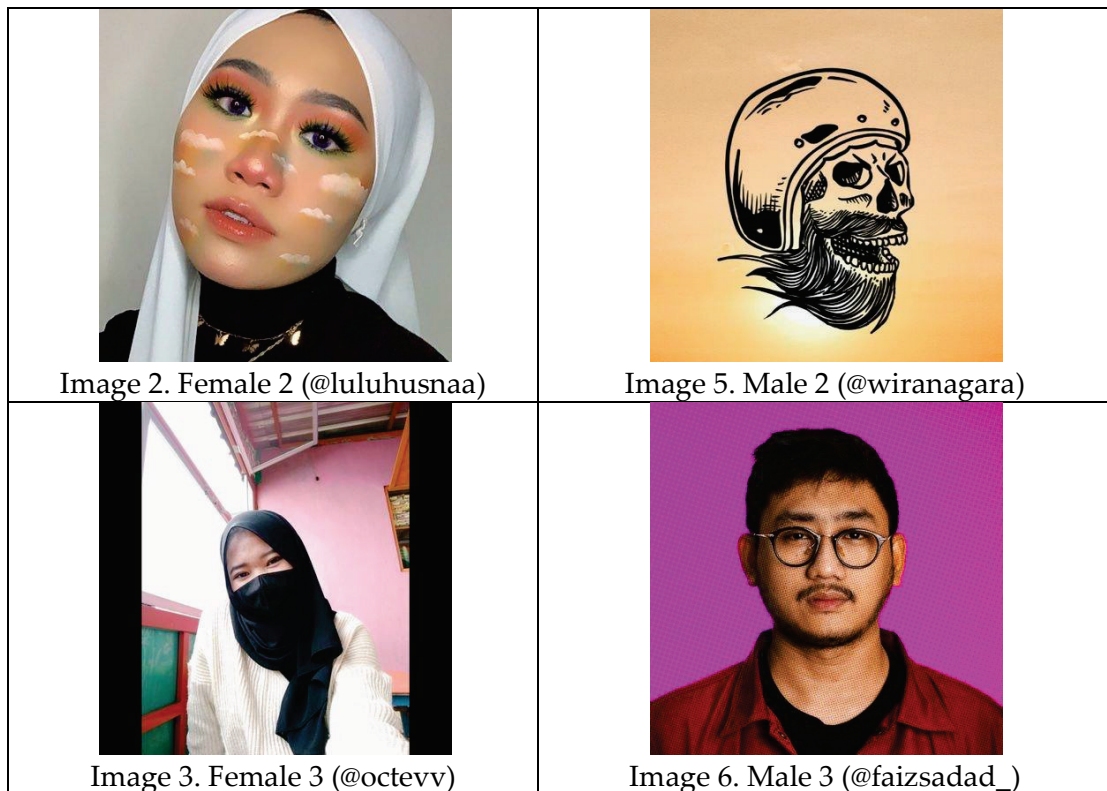
These findings are presented in the following table:

Table: 1.1. the Differences in Profile Photos between Men and Women

Females' profile pictures	Males' profile pictures
 <p>Image 1. Female 1 (@aishakinaaa)</p>	 <p>Image 4. Male 1 (@FiersaBesari)</p>

⁷ Ary et al., 492.

⁸ Ary et al., 480.



From the observation above, as compared to men, women tend to present themselves with the appearance as attractive as possible in front of a virtual world audience. The researcher concluded that the selection of photos used as profile pictures is based on the extent to which other people would like them.

2. Topics of Tweet

The researcher selected 3 males and 3 females who are the most active users on Twitter. Then the researcher takes at least 5 tweets from each selected user. In this case, the researcher takes data from Twitter. The data is in Bahasa Indonesia. The results showed that female users mostly share about social life, daily activities, their relationship with men, and their life's trouble. In writing tweets, female users tend to use flowery or more expressive sentences accompanied by the use of emoticons. Here is the data of females' tweets.

Table: 2.1 Tweets activity of Female 1 (@aishakinaaa)

Tweets	Time
"Kucing kelakuannya makin ke sini makin aneh apa dari dulu udah aneh tapi ga kerekam aja ya"	Tweeted on 9:41 PM · Apr 23, 2021
"Kehadiranku di hidupmu hnyalah figuran belaka"	Tweeted on 8:56 PM · Apr 22, 2021
"Bekerja untuk ngasih self reward karena sudah lelah bekerja"	Tweeted on 2:30 PM · Apr 22, 2021
"Ko orang bisa minum yakult langsung glek glek abis emang ga geter lidahnya"	Tweeted on 12:02 PM · Apr 22, 2021
"Ya Allah orang-orang sekitarku baik-baik dan suportif banget. Nangis. Semoga banyak kesempatan aku buat bahagiain mereka (Pleading face)"	Tweeted on 12:00 PM · Apr 14, 2021

Table: 2.2 Tweets activity of Female 2 (@luluhusnaa)

Tweets	Time
"Sabtu minggu berdua saja dengan suami di rumah, di bulan puasa ini, adalah sebuah tantangan (Flushed face)"	Tweeted on 1:17 PM · Apr 25, 2021
"Ada tuh yang pas sebelum nikah selalu marah tiap ditanya "kapan nikah?" Pas giliran dia nikah, di pelaminan dia nanyain ke temen2nya yang belum nikah "kapan nih nyusul?" Adaaaaa~"	Tweeted on 4:42 PM · Apr 22, 2021
"Kenapa ya aku ngerasa aku bau atau ada sesuatu yang bau di sekitarku, padahal kata orang ngga (Loudly crying face)"	Tweeted on 3:37 PM · Apr 22, 2021
"Menu sahur aku hari ini niqmat banget bun, dapet goodie bag cumi teri cabe ijo sama sambel bawang dari kak @adelladellaide. Enaaaakkkk bangettt!!! (Sparkles)"	Tweeted on 3:48 AM · Apr 22, 2021
"Eyeliner rapih adalah jalan ninjaku"	Tweeted on 9:21 PM · Apr 21, 2021

Table: 2.3 Tweets activity of Female 3 (@octevv)

Tweets	Time
"wow udah hampir seminggu aku sahur cuma pakai susu coklat segelas aja, ya kadang ditambah sereal sih. terus pas baca replies menfess ini kok pada bilang kalau oat selain bikin kenyang banget juga bikin nggak ngantuk, aku jadi pengen nyoba juga."	Tweeted on 4:59 PM · Apr 23, 2021
"selama kelas metpen malah buka facebook, terus lihat status apa yg pernah ditulis. sejauh ini sih coba scroll sampai 2015 masih aman-aman aja tulisannya. tapi kalau foto emang udah banyak yg aku hapus soalnya dulu jaman SMP suka kadang pakai jilbab, kadang enggak hhe".	Tweeted on 11:15 AM · Apr 23, 2021
"jam segini belum tidur malah nonton vincenzo"	Tweeted on 1:09 AM · Apr 23, 2021
"suaranya serak, kayak orang baru bangun tidur. padahal karena lagi nggak enak badan aja. masuk angin gais :(((Tweeted on 10:22 AM · Apr 22, 2021
"nggak kerasa ternyata udah masuk minggu ke 2 puasa ya"	Tweeted on 3:24 AM · Apr 21, 2021

Unlike females, males tend to tweet about quotes, jokes, their hobbies, and talk about the latest news. In writing tweets, male users mostly use formal sentences, and sometimes also tend to be harsh, using swear or taboo words.

Table: 2.4 Tweets activity of Male 1 (@FiersaBesari)

Tweets	Time
"Turut berduka cita yang terdalam atas gugurnya awak KRI Nanggala 402. Semoga keluarga yang ditinggalkan diberi kekuatan dan ketabahan. Terima kasih wahai para prajurit pemberani, karena telah menjaga samudra negeri ini. Doa	Tweeted on 7:41 PM · Apr 25, 2021

kami menyertaimu, semoga engkau berlabuh di surga-Nya”	
“Kalau belum bisa menatap muka, setidaknya bisa menitip doa”	Tweeted on 1:25 PM · Apr 25, 2021
“Di usia berapa kamu sadar kalau “kapan-kapan” adalah “tidak akan” yang dihaluskan?”	Tweeted on 4:05 PM · Apr 23, 2021
“Menelan pil pahit kehidupan tidak membatalkan puasa”	Tweeted on 12:57 PM · Apr 22, 2021
“Apa bahasa Inggris-nya bujangan? Mother don’t. Enggak boleh marah, ya. Kan puasa”	Tweeted on 1:13 PM · Apr 19, 2021

Table: 2.5 Tweets activity of Male 2 (@wiranagara)

Tweets	Time
“NGABUBURIT. Kenangan terbuka beribu rindu menjerit”	Tweeted on 5:43 PM · Apr 25, 2021
“Atas segala harap dan rela di sepanjang samudra, doa untuk #KRINanggala402 (Folded hands)”	Tweeted on 10:45 PM · Apr 24, 2021
“Masih tersisa di ujung cangkir: senyum di ampas kopi terakhir, selepas temu sebatas mampir”	Tweeted on 7:28 PM · Apr 24, 2021
“Dulu mesra saling mengucapkan selamat berbuka, kenapa sekarang saling diam memahat luka?”	Tweeted on 5:58 PM · Apr 22, 2021
“Bersiap tarawih pertama menghapus perih dan luka lama. Esok mulai puasa, maaf atas salah yang masih terasa. Marhaban ya #Ramadhan”	Tweeted on 6:53 PM · Apr 12, 2021

Table: 2.6 Tweets activity of Male 3 (@faizsasad_)

Tweets	Time
“KRIPTO SAMA SAHAM TUH BEDA YA BAJINGAN WKWKWKWKWK HADEEEEEH (Loudly crying face)”	Tweeted on 5:31 AM · Apr 24, 2021
“Baru ngeh.. gue hampir gak pernah nonton club bola indonesia dah :) mau coba nyari di yutub tapi enaknya nyari tim apa yak yang asik?”	Tweeted on 7:01 AM · Apr 23, 2021
“Dulu Toa dekat rumah gue jg gitu. Dipake buat bercanda, dipake buat bagi2 doorprize, dipake ngobrol2 sampe malem. Ganggu? Banget. Melanggar peraturan? Jelas. Apakah gue protes? Mau sih tp takut. Akhirnya gue memilih untuk pindah. Ya gitu lah. Susah”	Tweeted on 6:40 AM · Apr 23, 2021
“Setelah rutin pencet “not intrested” pada setiap konten tiktok yang gak gue suka. Akhirnya sekarang isi fyp ku lumayan menyenangkan (Rolling on the floor laughing)”	Tweeted on 5:01 PM · Apr 20, 2021
“Tim yang main di super league bakal ilang dari FIFA 22 gak y..... kalau ilang mah yaudala w maen winning eleven aja lagi”	Tweeted on 3:09 PM · Apr 20, 2021

Based on the observations above, the researcher found that there are many differences in the status updates of men and women on Twitter, including word preferences, topics explored, and the use of emoticons to show their feeling. Male users mostly share

about current issues, jokes, quotes, rather than women who tend to share their daily activities. Sometimes men tend to be harsh, using swearing or taboo words, but women are more polite in using language because they are considered reputable and prestigious.

DISCUSSIONS

Social media comes in many forms such as Facebook, podcasts, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and others. Although social media is often associated with young people social media has attracted both men and women of different ages, levels of education, and cultures from all over the world. Gender orientation may influence preferences for certain social media use. Based on the observation, the researcher concluded that men and women had different patterns in using social media, especially on Twitter.

Relating to photos for self-presentation, most women use selfie photos; while men use full body shots or use other photos that look masculine for their Twitter account profile photos. This behavior is explained by Lakoff's theory that women like being the focus of attention and view themselves as attractive, glamorous, nicer, and beautiful. On the other hand, men are considered to show masculine impressions; they are seen as bolder, louder, independent, and stronger⁹.

Another finding showed that when they updated their tweets, women used shorter sentences and used some abbreviations, while men used longer and more formal sentences. This causes the delivery of messages from tweets made by men more easily understood than tweet messages made by women. Women mostly use "feminine verbs" to describe their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. This, according to Hiatt, may be the source of the idea that women have an "intuitive" style¹⁰. Therefore, women use social media to get more emotional and social support by telling everything they have experienced, including liver problems and also their romantic relationships. This contrasts with men who are seen using social media just for fun and to fill their spare time by following the latest issues and news and telling about their hobbies. Lakoff also claims that women use language more politely and more correctly than men¹¹. It involves using fewer expletives than those used by men.

Regarding topics that are frequently updated on Twitter, Hiatt argues that men and women post and share about different topics¹². Women write about their experiences as women, including their romantic relationships, and their daily life problems. Men write on wider topics, from current issues, quotes, jokes, and hobbies.

Based on the points above, the researcher concluded that there is a gender pattern found in the use of social media between men and women that both show differences in displaying their profile photos and writing status updates on social media, especially on Twitter.

CONCLUSION

Based on research findings and discussion, the researcher stated that there were several differences in gender behavior and patterns between men and women in using social

⁹ K. S. Sterkel, "The Relationship Between Gender and Writing Style in Business Communications," *Journal of Business Communication* 25, no. 4 (September 1, 1988): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002194368802500402>.

¹⁰ Sterkel, 23.

¹¹ Sterkel, 20.

¹² Sterkel, 23.

media, especially on Twitter. Women's behavior is seen as more feminine, less manly, and has positive vibes. In contrast to men, their behavior is considered to show masculine impressions; have a bolder, louder, independent, and strong personality.

Women tend to use social media platforms for social exchange in expressing their daily lives. They mostly use "feminine verbs" to describe their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Meanwhile, men tend to be harsh, using expletive or taboo words. Women write about women's lives, while men have broader topics in using social media.

It should be noted that this study only focuses on the differences in the use of profile pictures and status updates between men and women on Twitter which then form a pattern. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers conduct other linguistic studies that are still related to gender and the use of social media. By doing such studies, we may be able to gain a better understanding of how gender influences language usage and creates a pattern between men and women.

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