The Analysis of Language Features Used by Male and Female Fitness Influencers in Tiktok Videos

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Nowadays, the number of fitness influencers from both genders is rapidly increasing in the fitness industry. Both genders have their language features and characteristics that can be seen in their Tiktok videos. This study aimed to investigate the features and typical characteristics of the language used by Indonesian male and female fitness influencers. This study applied a qualitative descriptive research method by analyzing the video script based on Lakoff's Theory (1973) and Tennan's Theory (1990). The findings indicated that male fitness influencers typically speak with greater directness and assertiveness. Also, basic and simple words are mostly used by male influencers. On the contrary, female fitness influencers mostly use extensive vocabulary in their rapport talk. It is intended that this study would serve as the foundation for further investigation related to language gender.

INTRODUCTION

People in the world had the right chance to show their unique way of expressing themselves verbally which led to the variety of language used. As a result, language variations can emerge for a variety of reasons, including gender differences (Wardhaugh, 1992; Wahyuningsih, 2018). Gender was defined as the role of feminine and masculine that was constructed by society (Schroth and Davis, 2020). The different roles held by men and women in society then lead to a belief that men's and women's speech differs in form, theme, substance, purpose, and use (Lakoff, 1973; Erickson-Schroth and Davis, 2021). Since then, men and women could be assumed to have a different range of perspectives about what to do and what to think. Therefore, these differences may lead to their contextual interaction.

Male and female speech features differ not only in real-world interactions but also in digital ones, including those on social media like Tiktok. TikTok, a well-known social media app, attained history's highest download volume in a single quarter (Guo, 2022; Hiebert & Kortes-Miller,

2021). Users can create short videos using popular songs and watch various content. Among the most popular content that can be seen and searched on Tiktok are content made by fitness content creators. The people that create fitness content are also known as fitness influencers. Those people are famous since they contribute good videos to maintain the healthiness of the people. Furthermore, their video becomes an example of a good lifestyle to many people.

Apart from making workout tutorial content, especially at the gym, the content about endorsement and review of sportswear or other products related to fitness is also created by fitness influencers. As fitness influencers, products are typically marketed to men. Moreover, the fitness industry is frequently associated with men because of the gender stereotype theory's belief that men are more powerful and masculine than women (Kachel et al., 2016). Most people think that males are the majority of fitness influencers. Nowadays, society no longer restricts one's career options based on their gender (Seehuus, 2021). Therefore, women also have a right to decide and pursue careers as fitness influencers and even fitness trainers.

Although either gender can select a profession that is not associated with gender stereotypes, such as a fitness influencer, the language differences between men and women still exist. This is because each person's surroundings and how they were nurtured in their family influence how they speak (Eckert & McConnel-Ginet, 2013). Additionally, in diverse social circumstances, communication between men and women differs since their speech reflects their current roles as well as the issue, setting, communication medium, and listener (Eunson, 2015; Rahmi, 2015). Because of that, the disparity between men and women in terms of speech was unavoidable. Hence, these differences need to be analyzed to get a better understanding between men and women, especially when they are at the gym.

Several studies have investigated the different language features used in social media. According to research by Fatin (2015), men and women used distinct word choices on the social media platform Twitter, with men using harsher language than women. Meanwhile, polite language was mostly used by the women. Park et al. (2016) highlighted that the woman's language topic mostly used more woman-only adjectives such as "beautiful", "lovely, "wonderful", etc to share their warm feelings or moments through Facebook status. Meanwhile, men mostly discussed logic and factual information. Furthermore, Sari et al. (2020) found that both fashion-themed male and female Instagram captions frequently used intensifier features as it was used to advertise a product to persuade consumers or strengthen the claims.

However, male and female captions in this study differed in terms of their use of empathy adjectives which showed that men were more assertive than women.

The prior studies mostly discussed the differences in language features used by men and women in social media in terms of written form. However, almost no research examines the distinctions in spoken form between language features utilized by men and women in social media, especially in the context of the fitness industry. Thus, this study tried to fill the gap by identifying and analyzing the features and typical characteristics of the language used by Indonesian male and female fitness influencers based on Lakoff's Theory (1973) and Tannen's Theory (1990). Thus, the research question of this study, "What distinctive language features do Indonesian male and

female fitness influencers display in their videos?" will be answered through the data obtained in this study.

Based on several occurrences above, there was a gap between the language used by men and women, especially when they are at the gym to the response to the audience. That is why, understanding language is a must to avoid misunderstanding among people. It is important to understand the culture of each society since social media was well-known and easy to be accessed by the people. By understanding the culture, it is expected that people understand and be tolerant toward each other. Therefore, the objective of this study was to investigate the features and typical characteristics of the language used by Indonesian male and female fitness influencers.

METHODS

The data in this study were expressed in words or sentences and a qualitative descriptive technique was adopted to help analyze the obtained data in this study. The descriptive method emphasizes gathering information to test theories or provide answers to inquiries regarding the study's objectives (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). This research aimed to analyze the language features used by Indonesian male and female influencers in reviewing a product, particularly sportswear. Four Tiktok videos featuring two male and two female Indonesian gym influencers were used as the sources of the data for this study. This study was analyzed through several procedures, namely 1) collecting the data by selecting the video based on the Tiktok search bar using 2 keywords namely 1) Review Sportswear Male and 2) Review Sportswear Female [taken on December 13th, 2022] in which Pseudonyms were applied in this study to protect the identities of Tiktok Influencers. After that, the data were reduced and analyzed by identifying the speech features based on Lakoff's Theory (1973) and Tannen's Theory (1990). This study used several language features based on Lakoff's Theory (1973) such as precise colour terms, harsh language, hedges, empty adjectives, and intensifiers. In addition, this study used several language features based on Tannen's Theory (1990) such as rapport vs report talk, directness vs indirectness, quotation, and apposition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Precise colour terms, harsh language, hedges, empty adjectives, intensifiers, rapport, rapport vs report talk, directness vs indirectness, quoting, and apposition are 10 language features that have their unique traits for each gender. The traits can be seen in the videos of fitness influencers talking about similar things. The overall data can be seen in the following table:

Language Features	Man 1	Man 2	Woman 1	Woman 2	Percentage
Precise colour terms	√	√	√	√	100%
Harsh language	-	-	-	-	0%
Hedge	-	-	√	√	50%
Empty adjectives	√	√	√	√	100%
Intensifiers	√	-	√	√	75%

Rapport vs Report Talk	√	√	√	√	100%
Directness vs indirectness	√	√	√	√	100%
Quoting	-	-	-	-	0%
Apposition	-	-	-	√	25%

Table 1: The Use of Language Features

Based on the table above, it can be assumed that not all of the language features from Lakoff were used by both genders. Some features are not used by both females and males. This data was further explained in the following paragraphs.

Precise Colour Terms

One of the language traits of women that allows them to mention colour in detail is defined as a precise term (Lakoff, 1973). Lakoff believed that women have a broader understanding of colour than men, thus they can name a variety of specific colours. The following Table 2 contains examples of how male and female fitness influencers use colour terms differently in their expressions.

The Expressions of Male Influencers	The Expressions of Female Influencers
<u>Man 1</u> : "*Aku lagi pake yang warna **biru** nih* (I'm wearing the **blue** one)"	<u>Woman 1</u>: "*Ada warna **beige, ivory, blue sky, broken white** dan **black*** (There are **beige, ivory, blue sky, broken white** and **black** colours)"
<u>Man 2</u>: *Jadi buat atasan simpel aja **Black Cutoff Tanktop*** (So, I just use a simple top, **Black** Cutoff Tanktop)"	<u>Woman 2</u>: "*The colour is **blue turquoise** gitu like biru telor asin* (The colour is **blue turquoise,** like **salted egg blue**)"

Table 2: The Use of Colour Terms in the Expressions of Male and Female Fitness Influencers

From Table 1, it can be seen that female fitness influencers described the colours precisely and used associative words. Instead of only saying blue, Woman 2 tended to differentiate the type of blue itself by saying blue turquoise. Also, the words salted egg blue play a role as associative words. Associative words have a similar meaning to the real colour, for example, the grape is applied to explain dark purple and the apple to explain light green (Karjo & Wijaya, 2020). These words are usually used to make listeners understand more about the colours by correlating them with real objects that are well-known by society. In addition, female influencers conveyed more colours. Meanwhile, both male speakers only stated the basic colours like blue and black. The colour of the product used by Man 1 was the same as the colour used by Woman 2 (blue turquoise). It is supported by a study proposed by Paramei et al. (2017) highlighted that women have a considerably larger vocabulary of colour words, including a wide range of monolexemic (non-basic colour terms) and fancy colour names that assist them to differentiate colours better than men. Conclusively, women are better at seeing varied hues of the same colour than men.

Harsh Language

The following feature that will be discussed is harsh language. Coates (2016) believed that the use of harsh words is more frequently found in men's utterances than in women's utterances. It

correlates with society's expectation that women should be more polite and graceful than me so women tend to avoid constructing their utterances using harsh words (Lakoff, 1973). It is supported by Holmes (2008) who stated that women are assigned the responsibility of serving as role models for the right behaviour in society. To not insult men and to provide a good example for future generations, they must speak more considerately and wisely. Meanwhile, the strength of men's position in society provides freedom for men to express themselves strongly (Lakoff, 1973). However, both male and female influencers in this study did not use harsh words. It might have happened as they are known as influencers. As an influencer, of course, they have to be a good example, as well as in terms of speaking and arguing on social media. Thus, both male and female speakers have to watch what they have to say.

Hedges

Hedges become the next feature that would be discussed. A hedge is a technique used by women to soften and diminish the impact of their statements to indicate their preferences and dissatisfaction without being explicit about it (Lakoff, 1973). The use of hedges can be seen in the following table:

The Expressions of Male Influencers	The Expressions of Female Influencers
Man 1: -	Woman 1: "...***menurut gue**, dari sisi kenyamanan itu ...* (… **I think**, from a convenience point of view …)"
Man 2: -	Woman 2: *"One thing yang bikin **aku ragu** itu ... (One thing that makes me **doubt it** …)"*

Table 3: The Use of Hedges in the Expressions of Male and Female Fitness Influencers

From Table 3, it can be seen that female influencers used hedges in their videos, meanwhile, the male influencers did not use any hedges in their videos. Woman 1 used the hedge I think to make a statement about the product. On the other hand, Woman 2 used the hedge I doubt to express the uncertainty in her statement. That hedge was also intended to make the utterances more polite and less direct. Moreover, it can be used to avoid a rushed judgment and direct blame toward the products that they were reviewing. It is supported by Sholikhatin & Indah (2019) who suggested that women tend to use more hedges to avoid disagreement and give more constructive criticism than men so that the listeners feel satisfied and accepted. In contrast to women, men will utilize hedges in their utterances if they talk about their sensitive or personal issues (Azizah, 2021).

Empty Adjectives

Lakoff (1973) also mentioned empty adjectives or women-only adjectives as one of the women's language features. Women frequently used the adjectives pretty, sweet, divine, adorable, and lovely to amplify the emotional feelings of their speech (Rahadiyanti, 2017). Meanwhile, men prefer to use neutral adjectives such as good, neat, and simple. The following Table 4 is an example of how male and female fitness influencers use adjectives differently in their expressions.

The Expressions of Male Influencers	The Expressions of Female Influencers
Man 1: *"Baju ini **cocok** banget buat kalian ... (This sportswear is really **suitable** for you…)"*	Woman 1: *"... tapi yang ivory juga **cantik*** (… but the ivory one is also **beautiful**)"

Man 2: *"Jadi buat atasan **simpel** aja ... (So, I just use a **simple** top...)"*	Woman 2: *"This **lovely** set is from @miniletics"*

Table 4: The Use of Empty Adjectives in the Expressions of Male and Female Fitness Influencers

From Table 4, it was found that more adjectives were used by female influencers than by male influencers. It was discovered that female influencers used more women's adjectives to convey their adoration (Lakoff, 1973). Besides, it can be seen that women used more adjectives to ensure the viewers about the quality of the product such as matched, safe, premium, comfortable, and tight. It can be said that women tended to use more adjectives than men (Qaisiya, 2017; Simon, 2021). Meanwhile, male influencers only use neutral adjectives such as simple and suitable for once.

Intensifiers

Intensifier serves as a modifier to add more emphasis and to make the words after it sounds stronger, for instance so, very, totally, extremely, etc (Lakoff, 1973). The use of intensifiers in the expressions of male and female fitness influencers can be seen in Table 5 below.

The Expressions of Male Influencers	The Expressions of Female Influencers
Man 1: *sangat direkomendasikan* (**really** recommended); ***bener-bener** favorit aku* (**absolutely** my favorite); *cocok **banget*** (**really** suitable)	Woman 1: *elastis **banget*** (**very** elastic)*; oke* **banget** (**really** okay)
Man 2: -	Woman 2: ***really** love the style; **se-**premium itu* (**so** premium)*.*

Table 5: The Use of Intensifiers in the Expressions of Male and Female Fitness Influencers

From Table 5, it can be seen that male and female influencers had similar frequency in the use of intensifiers. It is supported by Fuchs (2017) who pointed out that the use of intensifiers by both genders has become increasingly similar. In this case, they applied intensifiers to maximize the effectiveness of the information delivered to the audience. They wanted to make sure the audience could notice the positive features of the product. Karjo & Wijaya (2020) found that men tended to use intensifiers that are viewed negatively. However, there was no negative intensifier used by both male and female influencers in this case.

Rapport vs Report Talk

Rapport talk is defined as a means of communication used primarily by women to establish emotional bonds and warmer relationships through personal matters (Tannen, 1990; Ubando, 2016). On the contrary, Tannen (1990) believed that men tend to use report talk in which they prefer to discuss their expertise and skills rather than personal problems. Table 5 below the examples of how male and female fitness influencers use rapport talk and report talk in their videos.

The Expressions of Male Influencers	The Expressions of Female Influencers
Man 1: *"Bahannya **dry-fit sehingga mudah menyerap** keringat* (The material is **dry-fit** so it absorbs sweat easily)."*	Woman 1:

	• *"**Pernah ga sih** kalian ngerasa bingung buat nyari sport bra yg nyaman ga bikin sesek?* (**Have you ever** felt confused about looking for a comfortable sports bra that doesn't make you feel tight)" • "*Jadi **buat kalian yang punya bustnya lumayan gede enggak usah takut** ada kok ukuran kalian* (So for those of you who have **pretty big busts, you don't need to be afraid** that your size is there)"
<u>Man 2</u>: *"Gue suka Black **Cutoff** Tanktop ini karena bikin **perut samping gue ga keliatan** (I like this Black **Cutoff** Tanktop as it can **cover your side belly**)"*	<u>Woman 2</u>: *"**Pas aku coba pake workout,** topnya ternyata aman dan nggak geser sama sekali (**When I tried this during a workout, t**he top proved to be secure and didn't slide at all)."*

Table 6: The Use of Rapport and Report Talk in the Expressions of Male and Female Fitness Influencers

From Table 6, it can be seen that women tended to use more rapport talk than men by expressing their personal feeling or previous experiences related to the topic that they were talking about (Khaldi & Boukhentach, 2020; Park et al., 2016; Tannen, 1990). Before mentioning the product, female influencers began the review by asking about the audience's experiences. They also validated the audiences' feelings and recommended many choices of that product. The purpose of those expressions was to make the listeners, through this form of speech, feel sympathetic and connected to the speakers. Even though the context is public, it is meant to give the addressee the impression that the speaker is speaking in a more intimate atmosphere. Contrarily, men influencers tended to share knowledge and facts about the products rather than their intimate feelings and thoughts with their audiences. Instead of discussing intimate and private personal experiences, the report talk was used by men to share their knowledge, abilities, and facts which indicates that men are more assertive than women (Balachandra et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2020; Tannen, 1990).

Directness vs Indirectness
Tannen (1990) emphasized the use of directness and indirectness as the communicative feature of males and females. Zhang and You (2009) as cited in Aliakbari et al. (2015) defined indirectness as the method of conveying one's meaning indirectly through verbal or nonverbal gestures to attain a specific aim. Several researchers have found that female speakers are more indirect than male speakers (Aliakbari et al., 2015; Liu & Qian, 2018; Tannen, 1990). The use of directness and indirectness in the expressions of male and female fitness influencers can be seen in Table 7 below.

The Expressions of Male Influencers	**The Expressions of Female Influencers**
<u>Man 1</u>: *"Baju seperti ini benar-bener favorit aku karena bisa banget buat nampilin latimus dorsi, bahu dan juga lengan kalian*	<u>Woman 1</u>: "*Kalau semisal kalian pakai olahraga itu enggak yang bikin sesak gitu loh*

(This kind of wear is my favorite as it can show your latissimus dorsi, shoulders and arms too)".	(For example, if you use it when doing sports, it won't make you feel cramped)"
Man 2: *"Gue suka Black Cutoff Tanktop ini karena bikin perut samping gue ga keliatan* (I like this Black Cutoff Tanktop as it can cover your side belly)"	Woman 2: *"Aku ragu kalo topnya bakal copot* (I doubt that the top will fall off)".

Table 7: The Use of Directness and Indirectness in the Expressions of Male and Female Fitness Influencers

All male and female influencers should offer their assessment of the products since the videos were intended to review sportswear. The following characteristic of female speaking is indirectness. Instead of saying that the sportswear is comfortable due to its stretchy material, Woman 1 expressed it by saying the expression that has been mentioned in Table 6. Also, indirectness can be seen in how they communicated disapproval or unpleasant statements. Instead of declaring directly that Woman 2 didn't like a part of the product, Woman 2 tilts her head while saying "emm" and the expression that has been mentioned in Table 6. Crawford (2012) pointed out that women act in such a way to create criticism that is respectable and acceptable. Consequently, women generally used indirect and vague language when doing so. Meanwhile, men enjoyed expressing their opinions honestly and straightforwardly since their speech was intended to establish their power and domination (Leaper & Robnett, 2010). From Table 6, it can be seen that both male influencers directly conveyed their viewpoint using evidence that is visible in the video and without exaggerating.

Quotation
The following feature is a quotation. Crawford (2012) and Eldh et al. (2020) stated that using quotations from other people can help to strengthen the credibility of what is being said. Quoting others might relate to how women in society tend to depend on others instead of defending their own opinions (Xia, 2013). However, we cannot see the different quotations used between men and women in this study as none of the male and female influencers use any quotation in their videos.

Apposition
The last difference between male and female discourse is apposition, which takes place when two or more similar words or sentences are used to explain a single object (Karjo & Wijaya, 2020). Based on the overall data, it was discovered that in reviewing the items, the women used more extensive apposition than men. For instance, female influencers used the words matched, beautiful, lovely, safe, premium, comfortable, and tight. Women frequently perceive their words sensitively and accurately to other people, especially other women, which may explain the reason behind using extensive apposition (Crawford, 2012). Even female influencers tended to repeat the same adjectives to emphasize the quality of the product. For instance, Woman 2 stated "Bahannya bagus juga, safe and premium …. Pokoknya worth to buy karena bahannya emang se-premium itu (The ingredients are also good, safe and premium…. Anyway, it's worth buying as the material is so premium)". On the contrary, male influencers tended to not repeat the same adjectives in reviewing the product. The only adjectives used by the men to characterize comparable products were good, easy, and suitable.

This data was in line with several previous studies in which language variations can emerge for a variety of reasons, including gender differences (Wardhaugh, 1992; Wahyuningsih, 2018) and the different roles held by men and women in society then lead to a belief that men's and women's speech differs in form, theme, substance, purpose, and use (Haas, 1979; Lakoff, 1973; Rahmi, 2015). The same thing also happened between men and women at the gym as influencers in which some of the men did not use Lakoff's language feature compared to women since the men did not repeat the same adjectives as well not soften their language toward the audiences.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it is possible to draw several conclusions. First off, Indonesian male and female fitness influencers did not utilize all types of gender language features according to Lakoff's Theory (1973) and Tannen's Theory (1990). The language features contained in Tiktok videos of Indonesian male and female fitness influencers are precise colour terms, hedges, empty adjectives, intensifiers, rapport vs report talk, directness vs indirectness, and apposition. Second, these features' use has both similarities and distinctions. Similarities include the use of features called intensifiers to emphasize statements and ensure that the audience can perceive the product's advantageous traits. The distinctions are 1). Women were better at seeing varied hues of the same colour than men so women mostly talked about the colours precisely; 2) Women used hedges in their videos meanwhile men did not use any hedges in their videos; 3) More adjectives were used by women than men; 4) Women tended to use more rapport talk meanwhile men used preferred report talk; 5) Women generally used indirect and vague language in giving an opinion, meanwhile men directly conveyed his viewpoint using evidence that is visible in the video and without exaggerating; and 6) Women used more extensive apposition than men in reviewing a product. Thus, it can be said that although either gender can select a profession that is not associated with gender stereotypes, such as a fitness influencer, the language differences between men and women still exist.

This study recommends further studies to investigate different topics other than reviewing something, for instance when giving workout tips or fitness tutorials. TikTok Live can also be used as a source of data for future studies to compare the language features used by male and female influencers when communicating directly with audiences.

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