Conversational Topic in FB Posts: Highlighting Gender Preferences on Lexical Features

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Abstract – Crystal (2005) believed that language has no independent existence apart from the people who use it. He stressed that language changes because of the end-users. Hence, this study tried to identify the gender differences in relation to language choice and linguistic features from the official Facebook page of the College of Education, NEUST. All of the posts of the faculty and students from the page from June-October, First Semester, S.Y.2018-2019 were collected. This employed Baustista's (1997) description of word formation - compounding, acronyming, clipping and innovation. The formation processes revealed that more women university students often use different word processes than male. There was only one word formed under compounding, 48 in acronyming (16 by male and 32 by female); 48 in clipping (22 by males and 26 by females) and 88 in innovations (21 by male and 67 by women). The results apparently revealed that women are fond of using the different word formations than men. It was then recommended to use the power of Social Media Network (SMN) as springboard of language classroom discussion because of the diversity of word formation offered among learners. Since all of the respondents are future educators, it is also recommended that their professors must establish the demarcation about the usage of the linguistic innovation in and outside the classroom, i.e., formal and informal context. Other researchers may dwell on other linguistic aspects of language innovation such as the morphological structure of the newly coined word, blending, functional shifting and other language innovations.

Keywords – acronyming, clipping, compounding, innovation, word formation

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever observed how men and women speak? Do you think they have different speaking styles? Have you observed the language they often use? Language, according to Crystal (2005), has no independent existence apart from the people who use it. He stresses that language, indeed, changes because of the people who use it. One of the very first linguists who claims that gender indeed influences how speakers converse is Robin Lakoff (1975). His claim included that women tended to use language differently from men. In her 1975 book, *Language and Women's Place*, Lakoff (1975) claimed that women's speech forms tended to express uncertainty, politeness, respect, insecurity and emotionality. For example, women were said to prefer the use of empty adjectives like 'adorable' and 'divine', to avoid the swear words men typically used, replacing them with euphemisms like 'goodness' or 'oh dear', and to end statements with tag questions to play down the certainty of their opinions or observations.

As a matter of fact, gender has been a social variable in quantitative studies of language variation as early as 1960s and most of the findings revealed that women tend to use more standard or "prestige" language features and men use more vernacular language features. This supports the result of Women Movement in 1970s that women tend to use more supportive or cooperative speaking styles while men are more into competitive styles. This resulted to myriads of interpretations, not solely to the language per se, but the speakers as well. Even *Holmes (1995) and Mills (2003)* found out that women"s and men"s language use has also been interpreted in relation to politeness theory, where women are seen as more linguistically polite than men.

Moreover, *Coates (1993)* outlines the historical range of approaches to gendered speech in her book Women, Men and Language. She contrasts the four approaches known as the *deficit, dominance, difference,* and *dynamic approaches*. *Deficit* is an approach attributed to *Jespersen (1922)* that defines male language as the standard, and women's language as deficient. This approach created a dichotomy between women's language and men's language. *Dominance,* on the other hand, is an approach whereby the female sex is seen as the subordinate group whose difference in style of speech results from male supremacy and also possibly an effect of patriarchy. This results in a primarily male-centered language. Scholars such as Dale Spender and Don Zimmerman and Candace West support this view. *Difference* is an approach of equality, differentiating men and women as belonging to different 'sub-cultures' as they have been socialised to do so since childhood. Deborah Tannen (1990) is a major advocate of this position. Tannen (1990) compares gender differences in language to cultural differences. Comparing conversational goals, she argues that men tend to use a "report style", aiming to communicate factual information, whereas women more often use a "rapport style", which is more concerned with building and maintaining relationships. The "*dynamic*" or "*social constructionist*" approach is, as Coates (2011) describes, the most current approach to language and gender. Instead of speech falling into a natural gendered category, the dynamic nature and multiple factors of an interaction help a socially appropriate gendered construct. As such, West and Zimmerman (2013) describe these constructs as "doing gender" instead of the speech itself necessarily being classified in a particular category. This is to say that these social constructs, while affiliated with particular genders, can be utilized by speakers as they see fit.

On the other hand, the communication revolution since the birth of the Internet and Social Media Networks (SMNs) had greatly changed the linguistic landscape. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content, which come in different forms including internet forums, weblogs, social bogs, micro blogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, and rating among others that are used for interactions by billions of Internet users or what they termed as "netizens" around the globe. This advancement in technology and communication prompted academic researchers to explore its impact on language learning and language acquisition.

Indeed, one of the most notable effects of social media is evident in language and communication system such as usage of a great number of neologisms, strange words and almost unidentifiable linguistic expressions, which are more likely to obfuscate people than help them in getting their message across.

Moreover, Sim and Pop (2014) conducted an experimental study investigating the impact of SMN on vocabulary acquisition of English as foreign language (EFL) students in Romania. The relevance of gender to linguistic analysis was first noted in the early 20th century when descriptive linguists observed differences in female and male vocabularies and patterns of speaking in non-European languages. Thus, the study attempted to identify the differences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study attempted to identify the differences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features.

Specifically, the study sought answer to the given question:
1. Identify the language preferences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features in terms of:
   a. compounding;
   b. acronyming;
   c. clipping; and
   d. innovation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methods

The study used the descriptive method of research on students' posts on the College of Education's official Facebook page from June October, First Semester, S.Y. 2018-2019 which were also utilized and used in identifying the language preferences of men and women university students. The school was chosen for being the most populated state university in the locale.

To solidify the feasibility of the study, the researcher visited the University Management Information System Office from the General Tinio Campus to check and ask for the veritable roster of Official Facebook Pages of the different colleges in the University. The researcher also asked the Dean of the College of Education, the Technical Assistant to the Dean of the College of Education, the Teacher Education Student Council President and the Adviser about the official Facebook page of the College of Education since they initiated the creation of the said page. Afterwhich, the researcher collected all of the posts of the students from the College of Education official Facebook page, COED News and Fora, from June-October, First Semester, S.Y. 2018- 2019.

The study employed Baustista's (1997) description of word formation or creation such as compounding, acronyming, clipping and innovation. From Baustista's (1997) original study, functional shifting, nominal expansions, coinage, affixing and echoing were included. However, the latter ones were not included in the study because they are not applicable to the recent study.

The posts were then used in analyzing, evaluating, and identifying the language preferences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features in terms of compounding, acronyming, clipping, and functional shifting.

Materials

The COED News and Fora, the official Facebook page of the College of Education, includes all of the announcements, greetings, messages, broadcasts, and pronouncements of all of the faculty members of the College of Education, clubs and organizations and all of the students in the College. For the purpose of the study, the researcher only used all of the posts from June-October, First Semester, S.Y. 2018- 2019. However, the researcher only got and used the posts of the students in analyzing, evaluating, and identifying the language preferences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features in terms of compounding, acronyming, clipping, and functional shifting. The Facebook page posts were used in this study because they can supply data needed for descriptive survey which could measure the language preferences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Language preferences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features

This part of the study presents the language preferences of men and women in relation to their language choice and linguistic features.

Compounding

Table 1 presents the post of the College of Education student which uses Compounding. It was found out that students of the College of Education are not accustomed to use this lexical innovation in their Facebook post, hence, only one word fell in this category.

Table 1
Compound Word Coined

Compound word	Student (man or woman)
Zai-zoned	Woman

The newly coined compound word signals that it is a woman who coined the lexeme because of the creativity of the creation. The word originated from the newly coined word of the 2018, seenzoned, which is also used by the millenials in their Facebook posts. When respondents were asked, it was found out that only women use the term because they confessed that it is very feminine to use the said newly coined word.

This supports the idea of Carib Indians of the Lesser Antilles (West Indies), whose language was documented by Rochefort in 1665 and was quoted by Jespersen (1922). He said that "the men have a great many expressions peculiar to them, which the women understand but never pronounce themselves. On the other hand, the women have words and phrases which the men never use, or they would be laughed to scorn. Thus, it happens that in their conversations it often seems as if the women had another language than the men." (1922: 237).

It is interesting, if Rochefort is to be believed, that the reason men avoided certain "feminine" words and phrases was to avoid ridicule, since this was not cited as a motivating factor for women. Such rigid boundaries surrounding masculinity can still be seen, including in Western cultures.

Acronyming

Acronyms are formed by taking the initial letters of the words in a title or phrase and use them as new words. Table 2 presents the lexical innovation through acronyming used by the men and women university students.

Table 2
Acronyming by men and women students

Acronyming by men	Acronyming words by women	
BEED	ACTS	otw
BSIE	asap	atm
CMBT	AVR	GAEC
COE	COED	COG
DepEd	CPTE	cr
gf	GenSci	GT
MAPEH	id	FS
lol	INC	LCD
MIS	NEUST	pm
MOA	NSTP	ppt
PAEC	NEUST LHS	pw
PAG-ASA	PDRRMC	PT
PC	SETLE	sm
PS	TESC	UCC
PTA	TLE	ty
SWAK	UD	USG

It revealed that there are indeed differences among the usage of acronyming among men and women. Men tend to use the more formal way of acronyming, i.e. most of the samples are the standard acronyms while women are still conversational.

This supports the study of Tannen (1990) who compares gender differences in language to cultural differences. She argues that men tend to use a "report style", aiming to communicate factual information, whereas women more often use a "rapport style", which is more concerned with building and maintaining relationships.

It also revealed the idea of "sex-exclusive" which refers to the use of language which occurs rarely and contrast with the much more common (and frequently studied) "sex-preferential" uses. These refer to differential tendencies, that is, ways in which women and men tend to talk differently from each other in a given context.

Clipping

Clipping refers to the process whereby a lexeme (simple or complex) is shortened, while still retaining the same meaning and still a member of the same class (Bauer, 1983). According to Berg (2011), there are four types of clipping: fore-clipping, back-clipping, mid-clipping, and combination of fore- and back clipping.

Table 3 presents the lexical innovation which uses clipping.

Table 3

Clipping

Clipping used by men		Clipping used by women	
		,,raulo	acct.
,,nak	,,yung	ala	be
audi	bro	cab	choreo
dept.	educ	confed	congratz
fest	hal.	div	Eng.
info	irreg	esp.	Fil
lab	lab high	,,ge	,,la
lit	Phil	,,lam	repre
pre	prof	req	sched
quad	Sat	Sept.	subj
sem	tol	Thurs	til
univ	wag	tom	Wed
		,,yoko	yun

The result shows that more women are fund of using clipping when they converse. Most of the words of the men mirror their disposition in the society. The use of "*tol*" and "*pre*" simply implies that even it is the official Facebook page of the College of Education, they could not take their identity away as male, as if they always address their peers.

This supports the idea of "speech community" which uses linguistic social practices. It has been defined as an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour, which also include the jargon they use, the ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour. Community of Practice is also defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1998: 490).

Innovation

This category may also use analogy and clipping but the result stands out because of the creative effect of the word structure. Moreover, it refers to the creation of the new way to spell the words out.

Table 4 presents the innovative way used by men and women university students in their Facebook posts.

Table 4
Innovation

Innovation used by men	Innovation used by women	
	,,un	akuh
	aq	areng
	awts	awtsu
	beks	besh
	bessy	bgo
	bkt	char
	charot	che
akis	chos	cm8
alryt	cnu	cpag
aq	cya	dto
bes	ganern	ganian
bessi	gud	guyses
brad	guyz	hanes
cge	hnd	Idhol
cguro	jip	kc
dre	Khuya	klasmeyt
kmi	koyah	kyeme
maesters	labyu	lamma
orayt	lezz	magash
pakner	mggng	nd
paps	ninja moves	
seeyah	nio	nlng
slmt	nxt	okays
tayis	Okhei	okie
yas	oryt	paandarz
yayz	pde	pes
Yeah	pls	prend
yup	pressy	q
	sb	siempre
	skn	soklop
	wat	wiz
	yea	yep
	yonoh	yown
	zana	zno

The result obviously shows the choice of words of men and women in their Facebook posts. It is found out that women mostly use innovation when they converse in Web 2.0.

This supports the study of Tannen (1990) who compares gender differences in language to cultural differences. She argues that men tend to use a "report style", aiming to communicate factual information, whereas women more often use a "rapport style", which is more concerned with building and maintaining relationships. It is very apparent that women tend to use and create more words than men, it is because they tend establish rapport among their interlocutors.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the researcher concludes the following in this study:

1. The products of linguistic innovations revealed that most women tend to utilize the processes than men.
2. It is also found out that women tend to be more creative and establish rapport among their interlocutors than men.
3. Based on the findings, it is tempting to conclude that Facebook posts or social media networks are productive means in manufacturing new words or new ways of word formation or in setting a new language fashion.
4. Finally, result of this study strengthens the claims of previous researches (e.g. Al-Sa"di & Hamdan, 2005; Berg, 2011) and the long-standing assumption that SMN is an effective tool for fast, easy, and concise communication.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are provided in this study:

5. Social media network (SMN) may be used as springboard of Language classroom discussion because of the diversity of word formation offered among learners.
6. Other researchers may dwell on other linguistic aspects of language innovation such as the morphological structure of the newly coined words.
7. Since all of the respondents are future educators, it is also recommended that their professors must establish the demarcation about the usage of the linguistic innovation. Since the threads of conversations among Web 2.0 are open to everyone, students need to know when do they need to utilize the processes. They shall have the idea on when and where to use the language innovations.

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