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Gender Differences in Political Speeches: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract:

Human beings are the only species using languages, thereupon, the goal may not be the only viewpoint of linguistics studies, but more have to be people-oriented. Nonetheless, the most substantial distinction between humans is a gender difference. In the use of Language, humans will have their gender trait. consequently leading to gender differences in Language. The main objective of this study in the field of sociolinguistics is to investigate gender differences in the use of language. These differences are viewed from several aspects, including linguistic features, turn-taking, and speech rate. Taking political speeches as corpus data, using Mike Pence's (a male politician) and Kamala Harris's (a female politician) vice presidential debate, which lasted 90 minutes on October 7, 2020, as a selected political speech. The study aims to answer questions such as: Do the men and the women have differences practically in using political discourse? Moreover, Which specific variable is used more than the other by the two groups? To reach the aim of the study, a content descriptive analysis of the transcribed form of the debate is applied. During the analysis of the collected data, number significant conclusions are gained. The female politician is exposed to be less breaking the rules of turn-taking, speaking less, and take more extended time than The male politician. The male politicians are more culturally oriented and extravagant, invading the stage more than the female. Also, the female politicians focus on direct quotations to provide support for their answers. The male politicians focus on paraphrasing to show power and dominance.

1. Introduction

Language use has been impacted by significant social changes that have occurred over time. Languages now use new vocabularies instead of their outdated ones, and obsolete words have been replaced. Each language possesses traits that to a large extent reflect the society it

represents. Numerous research has been conducted over the years. Numerous sociolinguistics research was conducted in the 1970s, focusing mostly on differences in syntactic, phonological, and morphological structures. Gender, along with social class, age, ethnicity, and social status, was initially thought

of as a sociolinguistic variable. The science around gender and language was not established until the middle of the 1970s, when Robin Lakoff published an essay titled "Language and Woman's Place" (Lakoff, 1975 cited in Nordenstam, 2003)

Generally, public speakers have always had a sense of authority and power over females, and this area of speaking publicly was a male area for an extended time. Together with various social changes such as the Women's Movement, females became more liberated, contributing to the public sphere to a larger and broader extent and influencing the area of political discourse too. Some studies work on the modifications between languages spoken by men and women in terms of phonology, syntax, lexicon, and conversation analysis. According to Wardhaugh (2000: 309), "a major topic in sociolinguistics is the connection, if any, between the structures, vocabularies, and ways of using particular languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages". Due to this, this study will aim to determine how gender and language interact, and the paper will explain how language might reflect and reproduce social disparities.

1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are being investigated in this study:

1. Are there disparities between men and women in their use of language in political discourse? 2. Which specific variable is used more than the other by the two groups male and female?

2. GENDER VERSUS SEX

According to Feminist theorists, there needs to be a distinction made between the ideas of sex and gender, according to some. Both phrases are widely, but wrongly, used synonymously. In the medical dictionary Medilexicon, sex is

described as "the biologic character or quality that distinguishes male and female from one another as expressed by analysis of the person's gonadal, morphologic (internal and external), chromosomal, and hormonal characteristics." According to Holmes (2001: p. 28), a person is assigned to sex at birth based on biological characteristics; as a result, there is male sex and female sex. Gender is a trickier idea, on the other hand. A socio-cultural construct is implied regarding the term gender which refer to "social, cultural, and psychological constructs that are imposed upon these biological differences,". To Shapiro (1981: p. 448), gender addresses "all those cultural expectations associated with masculinity and femininity that go beyond biological sex differences. "An individual's biological sex is determined at birth. While growing up, a person is capable of accepting the social norms and their own set of gender labels that are based on sex. Lipman-Blumen (1984: p. 3),

3. LANGUAGE AND GENDER

It is believed that gender variations in language use are both linguistic and social phenomena. In the meantime, it has gained popularity as a topic in sociolinguistics and linguistics. The mention of gender differences in language is seen as a type of language phenomena that reflects society, culture, conventions, and other aspects of language users, Jinyu,(2014: p. 92–93)..Many academics have tried with the research of Language and gender differences, including Leonard Bloomfield, McConnell-Ginet, Haas, Zhao Yuanren, etc. In the course of their research, they came to the following conclusion: Men and women differ to some extent in phonology, vocabulary, and grammar, as well as in the syntax choices made in different settings of language use. Men have higher social standing due to conventional social variables, which results in their privileges

in speech, according to Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003: p. 116). In addition, he clarifies how gender and language interact to produce certain outcomes. There are two important aspects of the reason that the variety of Language is caused by various gender and age:

- 1) Both men and women have and play different roles in society, in addition to having endless differences in their participation to social activities as well as the extent of their activities.
- 2) The relative gender disparities generally show that men and women perform significantly different characteristics and frequently produce gender variations when speaking the same language.

4. POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Language depends on politics in general and political discourse in specifically, using it to frame their ideas and deliver them to their audience as Sivrić (2014: p. 2) clarifies that politicians should be able to select the right time and way of delivering their thoughts and believes so as for the process to be highly effective. As politics assume communication and audience persuasion, language use is required. This association works in two forms as Language reflects both the community setting and social changes, which then relates to the effect of politics on social changes. For that reason, one may ask about the kind of Language and linguistic tools used in politics and by politicians.

Gender discourse, like political discourse, has rapidly become a subject of everyday communication. Comparatively, The study of gender is recent. But gender observance has been acknowledged for a very long time prior to the actual scientific study of it. Men and women's speech patterns differ from one another in key ways, which were emphasized .Sivrić (2014: p. 2)

5. DIFFERENCES FOUND IN MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SPEECH

Throughout history, most of the studies regarding the analysis of Language have mainly been done with male language production—for instance, Labov's study in (1972). In the 1960s, after the feminist movements, it was realized that Language was among the tools of female domination via males. Language highlighted male authority over women. Then, many linguists began to be interested in studying the observable distinctions in the production of Language by men and women speakers.

5.1 Who speaks more

Different studies are found regarding whether women talk less or more than men. For instance, at the end of his study regarding gender identity in conversation, Drass (1986: p. 300-301) concludes that "men speak more than women." Then Brizendine (1994) wrote 45 pages of study on "The Female and Male Brains in Psychiatry." In the result of her study, she states that "women are able to talk three times as much as men." However, it is stereotyped that women talk more than men do. As Holmes (2011: p. 244) clarifies:

"The stereotype may come from the male observation of an all-female conversation group. Since there is an unconscious expectation that women will not speak much, a female conversation group violates that expectation"

As cited by Rowe and Levine (2016: p. 212), Swacker (1975), as a result of his observations, "Men spoke up to 400% longer than women did." and men took 12.0 minutes in describing a picture while women took only 3.17 minutes". Moreover, The amount of conversation is influenced by the people we are with and what we are doing, claim Cameron and Coates (1985: p. 147).. They also add that little differences

are found regarding the amount men and women talk if once observe a different large number of studies.

5.2 Breaking the rules of “turn-taking.”

Fishman (1980) states that in a mixed-sex speech context, superiority can be understood because men are likelier than women to disrupt conversation. The potential reason he has Men are more prone to dominate, which is one reason provided for this finding and influence discussions compared to women; this is due to the idea that they have more status and power than women. Agreeing with Fishman, in Tennon’s (1990: p. 232-233) research, it has been shown that in a conversation between men and women, men interrupt the speech of others more than women do. Explaining that women typically interrupt to demonstrate agreement with or endorse the speaker's speech by providing an example. Although when males obstruct a conversation, it is generally to shift the conversation's focus or direction. Men have a feeling of monitoring the conversation. On the other hand, in reviewing studies examining gender and interruption. James and Clarke (1992: 297) show that in 17 out of 32 studies, no significant differences in interruption by women and men were detected.

5.3 Indirect and assertive speech in conversation

Lakoff, in 1975, wrote an important and powerful description of women's Language in her book named “*Language and Woman’s Place.*” Her work can be considered a starting point in writing about women's Language. After writing several articles about that topic, Lakoff (1975: p. 45-79) sums up the general features of women’s speech in conversations of mixed sex as the following:

- **Hedge:** regular use of phrases such as: "sort of," "kind of," "it seems like, “it looks like,” etc.
- **Usage of polite formal forms** such as: “Would you mind...”, “I would appreciate it if...”, “...if you don't mind,” “would you like to...”. [SEP]
- **Usage of tag questions** such as: “she passed the exam, didn’t she?”
- **Usage of direct quotation:** more often, men paraphrase.
- **Use adjectives** (empty) such as divine, lovely, adorable, heavenly, etc. [SEP]
- **Use a particular lexicon:** The vocabulary of women is larger. such as colors, and men for sports. [SEP]
- **Usage of “WH-” imperatives** such as: “Why don't you close the window?”
- **Speak up less often** [SEP]
- **Excessive qualifiers** such as: “I think that...”
- **Offer more excuses,** such as: “I’m sorry, but I think that...” [SEP]
- **Employ modal verbs and phrases** such as: (can, would, should, may, and ought - “Should we switch on the radio?”) [SEP]
- **Usage of indirect orders and requests** such as: “The room is dirty?” – indirect request to clean the room)
- **Utilizing more intensifiers:** so, too, and very such as: “I am so delighted you passed the test!”
- **Avoid taboo words and coarse Language or expletives in general.** [SEP]

6. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to reach the aim of the study, a content descriptive analysis method has been utilized. The corpus data of the study that has been analyzed is a political debate, held on October 7, 2020, between American Vice President Mike

Pence and the nominated vice president Kamala Harris. Susan Page hosted it, a reported working on USA TODAY's news channel. Due to the fact that this study depends only on recorded videos as the source of data, the researcher worked with one tool; that is, descriptive content analysis for data collection. A transcribed form of the data was used with almost the same duration of time from vice-presidential-debate-full-transcript-mike-pence-and-kamala-harris on /2020/10/08. However, tone, intonation, and stress, as well as other paralinguistic features and impacts, excluded from the study. Finally, a conclusion was drawn depending on the results and discussions.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

A) Who speaks more

Depending on the content analysis of the transcript of the chosen political debate of the vice presidential election between Harris and Pence, , it is shown that Kamala Harris uttered 5,111 words throughout the debate. While Mike Pence utters 6,357 words. The overall time of Harris's speech in the debate was 35 minutes, and Pence's speech took 31 minutes.

Table (1) who speaks more

Genders	Number of words	Duration of time
Woman (Harris)	5,111	35 minute
Man (Pence)	6,357	31 minute

In almost all societies, it has been stereotyped that within a shorter time, women talk more than men. The above table rejects the idea of stereotyping and agrees with Drass's (1986) and Swacker's (1975) study, which also analyzed that women talk less than men. As a matter of fact, the different quantity of speech is not only affected or related to gender, since besides gender, context, type of topic, type of communication, power, and the way speakers utter words are all essential elements in conversation.

B) Breaking rules of turn-taking

The turn-taking process is how speakers keep or cross the floor while engaging in an interactive conversation. Smooth, sufficient turn-taking is typical of polite communication and guarantees that others do not dominate the exchange and that there are minimal gaps and overlaps (Kostaki - Psoma 2016, p.4). Many research projects have shown that social role, age, gender, and background culture are connected to turn-taking behavior. The content analysis of the speech by both Harris and Pence in their vice-presidential debate has shown that Harris broke the rules of turn-taking 23 times and Pence 57 times.

Table (2) Breaking rules of turn-taking

Gender	Number of breaking rules of turn-taking
Woman (Harris)	23
Man (Pence)	57

From the table above, one can analyze that Pence holds the floor of speech, and he is trying to dominate the debate. This is due to his gender as being a man and trying to control the conversation, and he is violating her right to have a turn or interrupt her speech. As Sacks et al. (1974: p. 672) observe, "A turn includes both the time allotted for a speech and the speaker's assigned right (or obligation) to speak" This could also be because men have almost always dominated the vice-presidential position, and Harris is the first woman to be in that position. For that reason, she struggles in having a smooth way of taking her turn or taking a turn without being interrupted.

C) Indirect and assertive speech in conversation

An assertive speech refers to phrases used to shape a particular concept for the addressee, Suggestion, or assumption "Out for a while," 'they lost the match! With statements. Speakers are committed to being true to everything. An indirect act of speech is an utterance, including the markers of illocutionary force for one sort

of Illocutionary act, which is exploited to execute another type of illocutionary act (Searl,1979: p.30-31).

Table (3) Indirect and assertive speech in conversation

Features	Women (Harris)	Men (Pence)
Hedge	1	1
Use of polite form	6	7
Use of tag question	0	0
Use of direct quotation and paraphrasing	9 quotations and 4 paraphrasing	12 paraphrasing
Use of empty adjective	2	6
Use of special lexicon	0	0
Use of <i>Wh</i> -imperative	1	0
Speech frequency	146 words per minute	203 words per minute
Use of qualifiers	11	17
Apologizing	0	0
Use of model construction	6	9
Use of indirect order or request	1	0
Use of intensifiers	14	9
Use of taboo words and coarse Language	0	0

Lakoff's (1975) collection includes hedges and tag questions, which are language features that express indirectness and uncertainty. Hedge usage does not appear to vary significantly. Table (3) demonstrates the various parallels and contrasts between men's and women's speech as being indirect and assertive in speech. Starting with the similarities, Harris and Pence used the feature of Hedge only once. Moreover, they score 0 in using tag questions, a special lexicon, apologizing, taboo words, and coarse Language. This indicates that depending on the context and politics, both men and women use the Hedge and tag question feature. In addition, both genders refrain from using tag questions since they are not in a position to show their voters that they are uncertain about their answers or the information they provide while answering questions in the debate.

Slight differences are noticed in using some features, such as the use of polite form, in Harris's speech, this feature is noticed 6 times and, 7 in Pence's speech. They are indicating that Pence uses more polite forms than Harris. This number rejects Lacoff's study that "women use more direct form than men.", this might be

because Pence has the experience of being vice president for four years and is more accustomed to how a politician may answer questions. Each feature of the use of *Wh*-imperative and indirect order or request used only once in Harris's speech and 0 times in Pence's speech.

Noticeable differences are found in the usage of direct quotation and paraphrasing in which direct quotation is used by Harris 9 times, by Pence 0 times, and Harris's speech consists of 4 paraphrasing features. In comparison, it scores 12 times in Pence's speech. Harris usually quotes from other politicians; domestic ones were more frequently mentioned than foreign ones. Typically, those were either fellow politicians or politicians who held significant governmental positions. This indicates that Harris is not only trying to provide her ideas and plans, but she also supports her answers with relevant actual evidence, unlike Pence, who fully relied on paraphrasing other politicians' speeches instead of quoting them. However, this characteristic could not be considered as fully related to men nor limited only to men since it has also been used by Harris with less frequency.

The empty adjective is used by Harris 2 times, but it is used by Pence 6 times. In the use of qualifiers, Harris scores 11 times and Pence 17 times. Harris uses model construction 6 times, and Pence use it 9 times. Another different feature is the use of intensifiers found in Harris's speech 14 times but in Pence's speech 9 times. This rejects the hypothesis of Lacoff (1975) by arguing that women are more expressive than men since they are emotionally conveyed by society. Although men are expected to regulate their emotions, they must also refrain from employing words that have marked emotional expressiveness. This indicates that the use of empty adjective,

intensifiers, qualifiers, and modal construction is not gender specific. Instead, it relates to the context and the question that needs to be answered in a certain way with specific grammatical and lexical forms.

Regarding speech frequency, Harris speaks 146 words per minute, while Pence speaks 203 words per minute. The fact that Pence used longer utterances as a male politician could be viewed as his effort to place himself in a hierarchical order or to indicate that he is in a position of being more assertive. It suggests that male politicians are more at ease speaking in front of the public than female politicians are.

8. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The descriptive content analysis of the corpus data shows a very slight variance concerning the number of remarks and words spoken by both men and women. In this research, The average word count for the female sample was 146 per minute, scoring less than the sample of men who talked 203 words per minute. As was already established, there are certain variables that can affect this disparity in word count without necessarily affecting gender. The discourse was generally divided between turns, as noted that the men sample was the one who kept interrupting and not following the rule of turn-taking, scoring 57 times. Due to the atmosphere of the debate and the competitive relation between participants that creates a not socialized setting, both the sample of men and women used almost equally the same forms, indicating no correlation with gender.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This study's primary goal was to address and answer the following questions: 1) Do men and women use language differently in political discourse? 2) Which specific variable is used more than the other by the two groups? The data above showed, some language differences

between the two genders are found, but gender is not the only reason. It could be attributable to other variables, like the participants' unity, where men and women did not have the same chance and time in a way that, during the dialogue, they can voice their opinions and experiences with the subject and political context. This is consistent with research showing that speaking style has more of an impact on women than on men. In sum, as the researcher collected the data and analyzed them results of this study rejected or disagreed with Lakoff's study of the linguistic features of women's speech.

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Appendix:

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