

The language features used by Indonesian food-vloggers of different genders

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the language features used by Indonesian food-vloggers of different genders as well as the functions of each feature in their utterances. Six Indonesian food-vloggers of different genders were selected as the data. This study used a descriptive qualitative method and differential language analysis to analyse the data. The results show that out of seven features, there were only six features that have classified as women and men's language features used by both women and men food-vloggers; namely, lexical hedges (30 times in women utterances and 40 times in men utterances), followed by compliment (25 in women utterances and 15 times in men utterances), command and directives (13 times in women utterances and 14 times in men utterances), swear and taboo words (14 times in women utterances and 11 times in men utterances), question (11 times in women utterances and 9 times in men utterances), tag question (6 times in women utterances and 11 times in men utterances) and no minimal response feature is found. Regarding functions, the food-vloggers use hedging to damp down the statement force; say positive compliment to show satisfaction; give command and direct to make the interaction done properly; swear to show dissatisfaction; ask questions to make their viewers more involved in the interactions; use tag questions to confirm what the speakers have said. The findings show that males tend to be the dominant ones who applied the language features compared to the females' food-vloggers. This may be due to the image of men in the society which is depicted as the masculine one, and to have masculine character means that they have to perform it. Therefore, these male food-vloggers make sure that their character as the food-vloggers could match with the viewers' expectations of how good vloggers should be, and one of the strategies is by communicating well enough with the viewers by using the language features.

Keyword: *food-vlogger; gender; language features*

INTRODUCTION

Culinary business is one sector that is happening nowadays (Cristo, Saerang & Worang, 2017). In fact, the latest advancement in information technology has made the job of restaurant owners to promote their businesses become easier, and one of the strategies is by using social media (Hassan, Nadzim & Shiratuddin, 2015). Food review which is considered as word-of-mouth marketing strategy can be counted as part of the marketing strategy that restaurant owners can apply on social media such as vlogging or a video blog (Bennet, 2017; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). People are now familiar with the term vlogging, and it has become a platform that can be used by these food enthusiasts to put things related to cooking. The activity of food vlogging involves the use of language to explain about the food and their intentions to their viewers through videos

Coates (2013) believes that when people speak, they produce some language features such as lexical hedges, compliment, command and directives, swear and taboo words, question, tag question and minimal response. In addition, some scholars suggest that language features have their own specific categories. For example, Elokwidiyati (2015) proposed several variety of hedging such as auxiliary verb modal (*mungkin, dapat, akan, seharusnya*), lexical verbs modal (*terlihatannya, nampaknya, mengindikasikan, memperkirakan, cenderung, memikirkan, berpendapat.*), nominal adjective and adverb modal phrase (*kemungkinan, umumnya, agaknya, kira-kira, sekitar, sering, kadang-kadang, umumnya, biasanya, bagaimanapun juga*), introduction phrase (*saya percaya, berdasarkan pengetahuan kita, pandangan kita bahwa, dan kita merasa bahwa*), if clause (*jika benar dan jika apapun*), and combined hedges. Prokem language is also believed as part of lexical hedges since its function is similar with hedging in general

(Kridalaksana, 2008). For compliment, Herbert (1998) classified three categories which are first person (e.g. I love your rings!), second person (e.g. Your rings are beautiful!) and third person focus (e.g. nice rings!). Nabilah (2019) then merged types of command and direct into two branches which are aggravated (giving order explicitly) and mitigated directives (giving order in a softer manner). For swear and taboo language, Ljung (2011) mentioned six types of swearwords which are religious or supranatural (e.g. Jesus, Holy, God – or in muslim, Allah or The Prophet), scatological (e.g. asshole, shit, crap), sex organ (e.g. cunt and prick), sexual activities (e.g. fuck you, don't give a fuck), mother type (e.g. motherfucker and son of a bitch), and last is the minor (e.g. including animals, death, diseases and prostitution). According to Holmes (1992), there are two types that are considered as tag questions which are modal tag (required yes or no answers) and affective tag, the affective tag (required longer response) is further subdivided into two categories which are facilitative (gives positive response, usually wanting to keep conversations on going) and softener (negative impacts of something as it is similar to criticism).

With regard to language features, Nabilah (2019) also adds that several aspects such as education, status, race, age, gender, culture, and setting of conversation can cause differences in the way people use language, including the use of language in vlogging. This is also in line with Lakoff (1973) who proposed a theory of women's language and Haas (1979) came up with men's language. Therefore, examining language features used by different gender is interesting.

There have been previous studies related to language features such as a study done by Pebrianti (2013) which investigated women's language features in the Indonesian female bloggers' utterances. Another study came from Indra et al. (2018) which examined linguistic

features of three British female beauty youtubers, and also a research by Lee (2017) who specifically focused on style-shifting, which is part of language features, in vlogging. Moreover, other studies are found where they focused on analysing language features used by different genders such as a study done by Nabilah (2019) who examined language features on social media specifically on Youtube vlogs. Meanwhile, Samar and Alibakhshi (2007) focused on linguistic features in face-to-face communication and Xia (2013) specifically elaborated differences of language use uttered by men and women.

Those previous studies have investigated how language are used differently by different gender either in face to face interaction or in social media. However, they have not examined language features used by the food-vloggers. On account of the fact that this content on Youtube, food-vlogging content, has become marketable and well-known, this research is sought to fill the gap by analyzing the language features used by Indonesian food-vloggers of different genders and also the function of each feature in their speeches. A theory of language features by Coates (2013) is applied for this study which consists of several features such as questions, command and directives, compliment, swearing and taboo languages, minimal responses, hedges, and tag questions.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature as it aims to gather a deeper understanding of specific events (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) particularly, the use of language features by Indonesian food-vloggers. Six Indonesian food-vloggers’s videos were selected as the main data for this study to be analysed, and they are Ria SW, Tanboy Kun, Mgdalena, Anak Kuliner, Nex Carlos and Farida Nurhan. Their popularity, which was by looking at their number of

subscribers, was the consideration as to why these vloggers were chosen. The participants consist of three female food-vloggers and three male food-vloggers. The reason for having more than one food-vloggers videos as the main data was because it wanted to make the result of the study more generalizable and reliable since the participants were varied either from their genders, backgrounds, and also ages. As mentioned by Nabilah (2019), these aspects were said to be the one which can affect the way people use language.

There were several steps taken in analyzing the data. To support the analysis, differential language analysis approach by Kern, Park, Eichstaedt, Schwartz, Sap, Smith and Ungar (2006) was used for this study to help the researcher analyze the speech of the food-vloggers with the appropriate language features. According to Kern et al (2016), three stages were required when using DLA (Differential Language Analysis). For this study, the first stage was identifying the utterances of the food-vloggers which consist of words, phrases and other linguistic features. Then, the second stage was categorizing and correlating each word or phrase with the suitable language features (e.g. lexical hedges, compliment, swear and taboo language, minimal response, command and directives, question, and tag questions), and the last stage was interpreting the findings and drawing conclusion. For quantification, the researcher looked at the frequency of each features occurred from the videos, for example, which feature often appeared on these food-vloggers’ talks. Below is given the table of the example of the data analysis.

Table 1. Table of Data Analysis

No	Participant (s) and Video title	Statements	Analysis Language Features
1.	Ria SW - Korean Street Food #03	Eh cakwe, eh ini cakwe kan? Em iya ini	Tag question – confirming the viewers

semacam about her
cakwe thought of
cakwe cakwe

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study has discovered that there were 199 features that occurred in both female and male food-vloggers' utterances taken from six different videos. There were 99 features found in female food-vloggers' speeches and 100 features appeared in male food-vloggers' statements. The Figure 1 below displayed the overall findings on language features used by the Indonesian female and male food-vloggers:

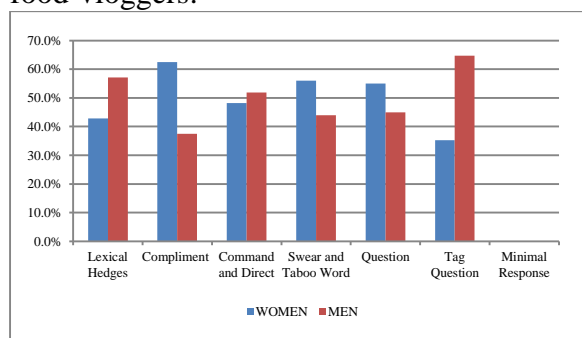


Figure 1. Overall Findings on Language Features used by Indonesian food vloggers

The most frequent feature that both male and female food-vloggers asserted was lexical hedges, 70 statements in total. The reason why hedging feature was mostly appeared is due to its function which it could improve interpersonal relationship between the food-vloggers and their viewers so that their interaction with one another could be smoother (Sujana et al., 2019). However, the minimal response seemed to be the only feature that did not emerge in both male and female food-vloggers' speeches, while the rest of the features were recorded on the data analysis for this study.

It is found that there were variations in the number of appearances of the features and also the functions of them when they were applied in the speeches of both male and female food-vloggers.

Lexical Hedges

This study found that men food-vloggers tended to be the dominant speakers who applied hedging in their utterances more than female food-vloggers. The finding is contradictory with Nabilah (2019) study and it is believed that both males and females could use hedging based on their situation and intention of the talk. Moreover, this study has done deeper analysis by focusing on different kinds of hedging by Elokwidiyati (2015) and Kridalaksana (2008) that appeared on these food vloggers' utterances. The most category of hedging that existed in this study is prokem language, followed by lexical verbs modal, introduction phrase, auxiliary verb modal, and the least is nominal adjective and adverb modal phrase. Below is the example of hedging found in the food vlogger utterance:

E1: "*Tapi kalo misalkan satu doang kalo kata gua sih engga. Gua yakin kalian juga pasti bakal kuat.*" (But, if you've tried for once, you won't taste it, **in my opinion**. I'm sure you guys could cope it)

The E1 above is categorized in the introduction phrase which is also part of hedging. Using "in my opinion" could reduce the force of the statement uttered by the speaker, because the food-vlogger still not sure whether his point could be agreed by his viewers. Therefore, it is necessary to use hedging in this sentence so that the meaning of the speaker is conveyed correctly. Overall, the function of hedging in the context of food-vlogging is to express the certainty and uncertainty about the vloggers' thoughts toward the cooking they reviewed and also the situation they tried to elaborate to their viewers. This was also to make the statements sounded more polite since they were trying to damping down the force of their claims by using these hedging examples.

Compliment

For compliment, this study found that women tended to give compliments more than men did during the review session on their videos. To be more

specific, this study has classified the compliment into several types according to Herbert (1998), and it is found that there were 38 third person focus forms of compliment out of 40 compliments uttered by the participants, and only 2 first person focus forms of compliment appeared. Furthermore, in terms of the frequency, this study found that both female and male participants showed equal used of the third person focus and first person focus form. It was evidenced that there were 19 times of third person focus form appeared in female speeches and male speeches. Below is the E2 of compliment found in this study:

E2: “*Apalagi pajangan topengnya, keren banget.*” (The mask display though, **so cool**)

In here, the food-vlogger complimented on the mask displayed which is very impressive. It is considered in third person form of compliment because the statement is pointed to the thing which she admired, though it could be in the first person form of compliment if the statement sound like “*I really like the mask, it’s very cool!*” because the speaker included the word ‘I’ when commenting toward something she or he liked. Overall, the function of compliment uttered by these food-vloggers allowed their audiences to know their amazement regarding the cooking they reviewed and also other things that happened during the review.

Command and Directives

For this study, it unveiled that males tended to be the one who asserted command and directive feature more in their utterances compared to the female food-vloggers’ statements. In addition, for the type of directives, women preferred to use aggregative than mitigated whereas men enjoyed to use the mitigated directives type more than females did. The outcome for this study was in compliance with what Nabilah (2019) have unveiled about the fact that women used more aggregative directive than mitigated directive compared to the men. In addition,

it is compelling to see the result about the one who applied mitigated directives, who was the men. As far as the society realized, men tended to be more aggressive in terms of their behaviour and when it came to imperative statements, they tended to be more direct and explicit with what they want (Xia, 2013). However, this study showed the different sides of men where the data proclaimed that they tended to be the one who asked for command and directive in a more polite way, or known as mitigated directives. Below is the E3 of command and directive features that appeared in this study:

E3: “*Sebelum makan kita baca doa dulu sebelum kita mulai. Aamiin.*” (Before we eat, **let’s pray first** before we start. Aamiin.)

In here, the speaker used the word “kita” (lets) which means that he included him too in the action that he asked. Further, his intention for saying the statement above was to invite the viewers to do the same thing as what he is did, and according to Kasmilawati and Agustina (2019), there are different types of command and directive statements, and one of them is called solicitation command sentence. The example of this type is what the vlogger has uttered in above. This type is rather softer and more polite as the statement does not make the speaker so dominating or forcing the viewers to follow what he asked. Overall, the function of command and directives was to ask their viewers to do the same thing as what these food-vloggers did, the difference was the character of the command itself whether it was softer or harsher. Also, this might be part of a strategy to invite their viewers to be more attached, therefore, by inviting them to do the same thing might help them succeed the strategy.

Swear and Taboo Words

For this study, it is found that female food-vloggers often asserted swear words and taboo language more compared to male vloggers in their review videos. There were six types of swear words that

Ljung (2011) have proposed but only 3 types occurred in the statements of these food-vloggers. They were the minor, religious and scatological. It was found that the minor was the most frequent swear words that the participants like to use during the review, and it was the female food vloggers while men used more of the scatological type. Below is given the E4 of swear and taboo words appeared in this study:

E4: “A:*Anjing keras banget..*” (**damn**, its so hard)

In here, the participant used the word “anjing” to express his disappointment towards the cooking because it was very hard to chew. It was explained by Kurniawan, Agustina and Ngusman (2018) that people asserted swear words to express their annoyance about something, along with that, Agustina (2018) stated that the word *anjing* is considered rude and very harsh when it comes to swearing which can also be considered as verbal abuse activity. As Ljung (2011) have classified the different types of swear words, the use of animals’ names is categorized in the minor type. Overall, the function of swear and taboo language in the context of food-vlogging is to show the food-vloggers aggravation or to emphasize their anger to the viewers.

Question

This study found that the number of statement uttered by women food-vloggers seemed to have more of questions form compared to men, 11 questions were being asked by women and 9 questions by men. It is interesting to realize that this finding is rather contrasting with the result covered by Hinsley, Sutherland and Johnston (2017) where they found that men asked more questions than women did in the scientific conference. Therefore, it can be said that there were different results depending on the context of the conversation that took place. According to Nabilah (2019), women were more likely to be the ones who kept the conversation going more than males did. As a result,

perhaps this is the reason why this study found women to be the one who asked more questions than men. Below is the E5 of question that appeared in this study:

E5: “*Hai temen temen, apa kabar kalian semuanya disana.*” (Hi guys, **how you guys doing there?**)

In here, the speaker is asking the normal question to her viewers though this type of question can be left without answer because she wanted to leave it to the audience. The question above told the viewer about the speaker’s intention for being kind and cares enough to ask their interlocutors’ condition. This act is also considered as phatic communion where it functioned to open up or maintain the conversation. Crystal (1991) stated that phatic communion is defined as a move that is categorized for being polite and not for sharing information. As a result, this can effected to the relationship between the vlogger and the viewer in a more positive outcome. Overall, the function of asking questions can be an action to maintain or open up conversation, or it could be included as phatic communion portraying the food-vloggers’ character to be more polite and kind to their viewers.

Tag Questions

For this study, it is found that that men tended to be the one who were more frequent in using tag question during the review instead of the women. In addition, this paper has analysed tag question and categorized it into several types. Among the features introduced by Holmes (1992), it is revealed that food-vloggers often used modal tag type compared to the other types. Furthermore, the result showed that men were the one who asserted modal tag and facilitative tag more than females did. Below is the E6 of tag questions that emerged in this study:

E6: “*Eh cakwe, eh ini cakwe kan?*” (eh cakwe, wait, **this is cakwe right?**)

In here, it can be seen that the speaker was asking for an agreement whether what she said was right or not. According to Rini (2017), using modal

tags could be helpful for the speakers who felt uncertain about something; therefore, they needed confirmation from the listener about the topic that the speaker was on about. In the statement above, the speaker was asking to the audience and also asked for confirmation what she said about *cakwe* was correct or not. Even though she was asking to someone who was not present, in this case is her audience, she still said it anyway as a way to show good nature by asking and involving the audience. Applying tag question could also give similar outcome when these food-vloggers throwing questions to their viewers because both features made sure that the conversation between both parties is well-maintained, the only difference was that tag question is used when the speaker wanted for confirmation toward his or her claims.

Minimal Response

Minimal response seemed to be the only feature that did not appear in this study. This might be due to the data of this study which were taken from Youtube.com and as stated by Nabilah (2019), it was hard to gather minimal response feature on online platform since the conversation between both parties were not like the normal conversation because the viewers' responses were delayed. Therefore, no minimal response feature was found in this study.

CONCLUSION

There are six language features out of seven proposed by Coates (2013) found in this study, and those are lexical hedges, questions, compliment, swear and taboo word, command and directs, and also tag question. The only feature that did not exist in this study is the minimal response. For the males' food vloggers utterances, 100 statements were found to exhibit the language features attributes, and those are 40 of lexical hedges, 15 of compliments, 14 of command and directs, 11 of swear and taboo words, 9 of questions, and 11 of

tag questions. On the other hand, this study has revealed that there were 99 statements that have language features aspects in female food vloggers' utterances. The features are 30 for lexical hedges, 25 for compliments, 13 for command and direct, 14 for swear and taboo words, 11 for questions and 6 times for tag questions. However, the study has not recorded any statements which have minimal response attributes in both the males and female food vloggers' sentences. This might be due to the data of this paper which were taken from the vlog, and according to Trimarco (2015), any conversations that take place using computers are defined as digital talk. Digital talk is not similar to the regular talk because the response from the listeners is delayed or not happening right away during the interaction. Hence, the researcher could not record any minimal response features in the participants' statements in the present study. This also happened in the study done by Nabilah (2019) where she could not find any minimal response feature in her analysis because of the characteristics that vlogging has in terms of the way the vloggers communicate and getting the feedback or the response.

It can be concluded that males tend to be the dominant ones who applied the language features compared to the females' food vloggers. This study believes that it happened because, since the image of men in the society is depicted as the masculine one, and to have masculine character means that they have to perform it (Kiesling, 2017). Therefore, these male food-vloggers make sure that their character for being the food-vlogger could match with the viewers' expectations of how good vloggers should be, and one of the strategies is by communicating well enough with the viewers by using the language features. The function of each feature is to help the food-vloggers deliver their intention perfectly to their viewers. For example, the first feature found in this study is a compliment which is when the

food vloggers try to give comments on the cooking based on their opinions, and mostly, they are giving the positive compliments by saying the word like 'enak banget'. The second feature is swear and taboo words, and it is found when the food vloggers want to express their dissatisfaction either toward the cooking or the service they received. The third feature is tag question, and this feature emerges in a situation when the food vloggers want to ask for confirmation or agreement about the things they have said. The intention of food vloggers using tag questions is to invite their viewers to be more involved in their videos so the interaction is more engaging. The fourth feature is question which is when the food vloggers try to ask to their viewers based on their lack of knowledge toward something going on during the review, mostly, their intention is to open up or maintain the interaction between both parties, the food vloggers and their viewers so that there is no silence during the conversation. Asking questions can also function as part of the phatic communion act where it gives the visual character of the food vloggers' politeness and friendly characteristics to the audiences. The fifth feature is command and directs, and it is found when the food vloggers give order to their audiences what to do and not to do, or persuade them to do something. The sixth feature is lexical hedges, and this emerged when the food vloggers feel uncertain with the claim they uttered, therefore, they try to damp down the strength of the statement

Yet, it is important to note that the context may influence the way people use language (Nabilah, 2019). As a result, the findings of this study, which is in the context of food-vlogging, may be varied if it applies to different context.

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