

Language Ideology towards the Categories of Gender in Langsa

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Abstract

The study deals with language ideology linked with gender categories and the research is conducted by using descriptive qualitative method (Cresswell, 2008). Language ideology and gender categories are closely related. Language ideologies are thus best understood as beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language that are socially shared and relate language and society in a dialectical fashion (Voloshino, 2006). The paper highlights the influence of the society and the area in which the language is communicated as one of the main contributors to the speech differences between men and women, which later on contribute to their social differences. In other words, the differences or similarities, if existing, between male and female speech characteristics will be presented in the paper, taking into consideration the attitude of speakers and their communication habits and characteristics. Therefore, the research shows that ideology may not be divorced from the material reality of the sign and the sign may not be divorced from the concrete forms of social intercourse. From the data, it is seen that fifteen respondents, that is 90% states that there are differences while women and men talking, especially differences in gesture and intonation. This means that language only exists in actual interaction; but language ideologies give it a life outside of that interaction and link it to other interactions. Language only exists in interaction in context, but language ideologies including the language ideologies of professional linguists abstract from interactions in context and thus open language to social manipulation.

Keywords: language ideology, gender, social norm, social differences

1. Introduction

Sociolinguistics is a study or discussion of language related to the language. Sociolinguistics consists of two elements of the word that is socio and linguistics. Linguistics is the study of language, especially the elements of language (speech, word,

sentence) and the relationship between speakers who are part of the members of society.

Sociolinguistics places the position of language in relation to its use in society. This means that sociolinguistics views language as primarily a social system and communication system, and is part of a particular society and culture. Hence, language and use of language are not observed individually but are always associated with their activities in society.

Every human being born into the world is elected into two types, women and men. Gender refers to differences in male and female characters based on cultural construction, relating to the nature of their status, position, and role in society as well as socially-culturally constructed gender differences.

In sociolinguistics, language and gender have a very close relationship. There is the phrase "why do women talk differently from men?" In other words, we are concerned with several factors that make women prefer to use standard language compared to men. In this regard, it is worth examining the language as a social part, a deed of value, reflecting the complexity of social networks, politics, culture, and age and society relations.

Sociolinguistics is also related to language ideology, that is ideas and beliefs about what a language is, how it works and how it should work, which are widely accepted in particular communities and which can be shown to be consequential for the way languages are both used and judged in the actual social practice of those communities. In the community of western intellectuals, for instance, one key language ideology is inherited from the tradition of ideas whose major exponents include John Locke in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and Ferdinand de Saussure in the reconstructed and posthumously published work whose English translation is titled *A Course in General Linguistics*. In this tradition, signs (or words they are usually treated as being the same thing) stand for ideas, language is the means for conveying those ideas from one mind to another, and the process is underwritten by a sort of social contract, whereby speakers of a given language agree to make the same signs stand for the same ideas. (Woolard, 1994)

The focus of the study is to analyse the language ideology of teenagers towards the categories of gender in Langsa, a town in the province of Aceh, North Sumatra.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sociolinguistics

In general sociolinguistics discusses language relationships with speakers of language as members of society. This relates the function of the language in general as a means of communication. Sociolinguistics is commonly defined as the study of the

characteristics and variations of language and relationships among the speakers with the characteristic functions of language variation in a language society. Silverstein (2010) states that sociolinguistics is a study of the characteristics of language variation, the function of language variation, and the use of language because these three elements interact within and mutually change each other in a speech society, the social identity of the speakers, the social environment in which the speech event occurs and the degree of variation and linguistic variety.

Sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary study that studies the cultural influence on the way a language is used. In this case the language is closely related to the community of a region as the subject or language actor as a means of communication and interaction between groups with one another. Chaer (2007) formulates sociolinguistics as a combination of the word sociology and linguistics. Sociology is an objective and scientific study of people in society and about institutions, as well as the social processes that exist in society. Linguistics is a language science or language study, so sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary field of studying language in society.

The social identity of the speaker can be known from the statement of what and who the speaker is, and how it relates to his or her opponent. The level of variation and linguistic variety, that in relation to the heterogeneity of members of a society said, shows the existence of various social and political functions of language, as well as the degree of perfection of the code, and the human communication tool called the language becomes diverse that has its own social function.

2.2 Language and Gender

2.2.1 Language

Language as one elements of culture has a very important role in human life. Language allows a person communicating with others in meeting their needs. Thus, it can be said that the main function of language is a communication tool. This does not mean that the language has only one function. Another function is as a tool to express self-expression, a tool to make intergration and social adaptation, as well as a tool to hold social control. (Keraf, 2006).

2.2.2 Gender

Gender is also something we cannot avoid; it is part of the way in which societies are ordered around us, with each society doing that ordering differently. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) say, "The force of gender categories in society makes it impossible for us to move through our lives in a non gendered way and impossible not to believe in a way that brings out gendered behavior in other."

Thomas and Shan (2007) explain that sex is a biological category, while gender is a social category. Sex is a biological category because before someone was born it was already formed, while gender is a particular behavioral pattern performed by men and women.

Gender is a key component of identity. We will look at some of the evidence that there are gender differences in language use. There has been an inherent relation between the language and gender. In other words, the patterns of language use of men are different from those of women in terms of quantity of speech and the intonation patterns.

A study of language and gender therefore treats language as an instrument for articulating and reflecting the various gender orders and resultant categories. It also looks at language as what constructs and maintains these categories.

Linguistics conventions and ideology in establishing the gender order therefore constitute the variables and domains of consideration and analysis. The gender order, being a system of allocation based on sex-class of assignments is supported and also supports structures of convention, ideology, desire and emotion making it difficult to separate gender from other aspects of life. Convention and custom are furthered by the fact that ways of being and of doing are learnt without much thought on why, reasons behind them and recognition of the larger structures that they fall into. They signify timelessness of habit as opposed to change. The following labels illustrate the gender order.

2.3 Language Ideology

Language ideology (also referred to as linguistic ideology) is a concept used primarily within the fields of anthropology especially Linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and cross-cultural studies to characterize any set of beliefs or feelings about languages as used in their social worlds. When recognized and explored, language ideologies expose connections between the beliefs speakers have about language and the larger social and cultural systems and they are a part of, illustrating how these beliefs are informed by and rooted in such systems. By doing so, language ideologies link the implicit as well as explicit assumptions people have about a language or language in general to their social experience and political as well as economic interests. Language ideologies are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices. Like other kinds of ideologies, language ideologies are influenced by political and moral interests and are shaped in a cultural setting.

Language ideologies are thus best understood as beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language that are socially shared and relate language and society in a dialectical fashion: Language ideologies undergird language use, which in turn shapes language ideologies; and, together, they serve social ends, in other words the purpose of language ideologies is not really linguistic but social. Like anything social, language ideologies are interested, multiple, and contested in social matters. Given the fact that language ideologies constitute a social theory, research into language ideologies needs to bring to get data and analysis from both these fields. Therefore, Voloshino (2006) insists on the following methodological prerequisites:

1. Ideology may not be divorced from the material reality of the sign.

2. The sign may not be divorced from the concrete form so social intercourse (seeing that the sign is a part of organized social inter course and hence cannot exist outside of it, reverting to physical artifact).
3. Communication and the forms of communication may not be divorced from their material basis.

This means that language (“the sign”) only exists in actual interaction; but language ideologies give it a life outside of that interaction and link it to the interactions. Language only exists in interaction in context, but language ideologies including the language ideologies of professional linguists, abstract from interactions in context and thus open language.

This allows language ideologies to perform social work: They are beliefs about language that represent the interests of a particular group in society. This principle is best demonstrated with reference to a well-studied language ideology that can be found in many societies, namely the so-called “standard language ideology.”

The standard language ideology refers to the belief that a particular variety usually the variety that has its roots in the speech of them is powerful group in society, that is often based on the written language, that is highly homogeneous, and that is acquired through long years of normal education and is esthetically, morally, and intellectually superior to the ways of speaking the language.

2.4 Categories of Gender

Gender, like all social identities, is socially constructed. Social constructionism is one of the key theories sociologists use to put gender into historical and cultural focus. Social constructionism is a social theory about how meaning is created through social interaction through the things we do and say with other people. This theory shows that gender is not a fixed or innate fact, but instead it varies across time and place.

Gender norms (the socially acceptable ways of acting out gender) are learned from birth through childhood socialization. We learn what is expected of our gender from what our parents teach us, as well as what we pick up at school, through religious or cultural teachings, in the media, and various other social institutions.

There are variations across race, class, sexuality, and according to disability and other socio-economic measures. One's gender can be determined in many ways, such as behavior. In most societies, for example, humility, and submissiveness are considered feminine behavior and women are expected to behave that way. Men, on the other hand, are expected to be dominant, and aggressive.

2.4.1 Masculinity

Connell (2005) defines masculinity as a broad set of processes which include gender relations and gender practices between men and women and *“the effects of these*

practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.” Connell (2005) argues that culture dictates ways of being masculine and “unmasculine.”: hegemonic, subordinate, compliant and marginalized.

In Western societies, gender power is held by White, highly educated, middle-class, able-bodied heterosexual men whose gender represents hegemonic masculinity, the ideal to which other masculinities must interact with, conform to, and challenge. Hegemonic masculinity rests on tacit acceptance. It is not enforced through direct violence; instead, it exists as a cultural “script” that are familiar to us from our socialization. The hegemonic ideal is exemplified in movies which venerate For white heterosexual heroes, as well as in sports, physical prowess is given special cultural interest and authority.

Masculinities are constructed in relation to existing social hierarchies relating to class, race, age and so on. Hegemonic masculinities rest upon social context, and so they reflect the social inequalities of the cultures they embody.

Through a research it is found that young working-class American boys police masculinity through jokes exemplified by the phrase, “Dude, you’re a fag.” Boys are called “fags” (derogative word for homosexual) not because they are gay, but when they engage in behavior outside the gender norm (“un-masculine”). This includes dancing; taking “too much” care with their appearance; being too expressive with their emotions; or being perceived as incompetent. Being gay was more acceptable than being a man who did not fit with the hegemonic ideal but being gay and “unmasculine” was completely unacceptable. One of the gay boys in Pascoe’s study was bullied so much for his dancing and clothing (wearing “women’s clothes”) that he was eventually forced to drop out of school. The school’s poor management of this incident is an unfortunately all-too-common example of how everyday policing of gender between peers and inequality within institutions reinforce one another. (Abercrombie, 1980)

2.4.2 Femininity

Lorber (2009) argues that the social constructionist perspective on gender explores the taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to be “male” and “female,” “feminine” and “masculine.” They explain: women and men are not automatically compared; rather, gender categories (female-male, feminine-masculine, girls-boys, women-men) are analyzed to see how different social groups define them, and how they construct and maintain them in everyday life and in major social institutions, such as the family and the economy.

Femininity is constructed through patriarchal ideas. This means that femininity is always set up as inferior to men. As a result, women as a group lack the same level of cultural power as men. Women do have agency to resist these ideals. Women can actively challenge gender norms by refusing to let patriarchy define how they portray and *reconstruct* their femininity. This can be done by rejecting cultural scripts. For example: Sexist and racist judgments about women’s sexuality; Fighting rape

culture and sexual harassment; By entering male-dominated fields, such as body-building or science; Rejecting unachievable notions of romantic love disseminated in films and novels that turn women into passive subjects; and by generally questioning gender norms, such as by speaking out on sexism. Sexist comments are one of the everyday ways in which people police and maintain the existing gender order.

As women do not have cultural power, there is no version of hegemonic femininity to rival hegemonic masculinity. There are, however, dominant ideals of doing femininity, which favor White, heterosexual, middle-class women who are able-bodied. Minority women do not enjoy the same social privileges in comparison.

3. Research Method

In this study the writer used descriptive qualitative method. Creswell (2007) states that descriptive qualitative method was one used to make descriptive of situation, even or accumulate the basic data. This means that this research found the evidences to prove the truth of certain theory but didn't intend to find a new theory. Bogdan & Biklen (1982) states that descriptive means the data collected were in the form of words rather than numbers. Descriptive qualitative design tried to analyze the data with all of their richness as closely as possible to the form in which they were recorded and transcribed, and the written result of the research contains quotation from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation.

This study involved the teenagers in *Langsa* as research subject. The subjects of this study have implemented language behavior towards the gender categories. The subjects here are male and female teenagers in *Langsa*. The main data was taken through observation technique. The data was collected by using recording and field notes.

4. Results and Discussion

The results show that:

1. Men and women talk in different ways.
2. Men talk wisely, but firmly and sometimes crude but women while talking are meek, and wise too.
3. Men are aggressive while women are commonly passive in talking.
4. Women tend to have a rather animated and lively way of talking, with very pronounced variations in vocal pitch and much more exchange of emotion in speech, and men are not.
5. Men usually talk coarsely (commonly, it depends on the personality)

In this case, the view of language ideology between men and women are first cultural effects to influence the language ideology. This mean that culture has a big impact on the use of language towards men and women in society. The second is there is clear difference between men and women in using a language.

For differences between men and women in talking, fifteen respondents said yes that there were differences while women and men talking, especially differences in gesture and intonation.

Women usually talk softly and think before speaking as they usually use the mannered words and this is different from men. For example, in *Bahasa Indonesia*, when women talk to their friends or meet their friends in the street they would say “hello or hi” and men would say “*WOY! Dari mana aja kau!*”. However not all men act or talk coarsely; it depends on their attitude and their personality. Ten from fifteen respondents said women were wiser and the language they use is politer even not all women would be like that.

Concerning soft and loud talk, 13 respondents said that women talked softly showing good attitude but 2 others respondents said women and men talked softly and this was related to gentleness of someone.

All respondents stated that everyone’s way of speaking was much influenced by cultural factor, especially their surroundings. Social surrounding has a big impact in forming someone’s personality; besides a family surrounding.

Concerning a man’s way of speaking like a woman’s three of respondents said if this happened that man might a sissy, as men should talk firmly and not meekly. But one respondent said it was good for a man to sometimes talk like a woman to show politeness, kindness and gentleness. Whether a person is a sissy or not does not depend on the way of speaking

5. Conclusion

Language ideology is ideas and beliefs about what a language is, how it works and how it should work, and widely accepted in particular communities and shown to be consequential for the ways how languages are used and judged in the actual social practice of those communities. Women and men are different in the way of speaking. Men usually use firm tone while women are in the habit of using flexible tone, that is depending on the context.

Language ideologies are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices. Like other kinds of ideologies, language ideologies are pervaded with political and moral interests and are shaped in a cultural setting. To study language ideologies, then, is to explore the nexus of language, culture, and politics. It is to examine how people construe language’s role in a social and cultural world, and how their construal is socially positioned. The construal includes the ways people conceive of language itself, as well as what they understand by the particular languages and ways of speaking that are within their purview.

Language ideologies are inherently plural because they are positioned, and there is always another position, another perspective from which the world of discursive practice is differently viewed. Their positioning makes language ideologies always partial, in that they can never encompass all possible views, but also partial in that they are at play in the sphere of interested human social action.

Language ideologies have emerged in recent years as a distinct focus for research and debate among sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists. The term “language ideologies” is generally used in this literature to refer to sets of representations through which language is imbued with cultural meaning for a certain community. In these representations of language, certain themes recur: examples include where and how language originated, why languages differ from one another and what that means, how children learn to speak, and how language should properly be used. Accounts of these matters may be more or less widely diffused. Some myths of linguistic origin are localized to a single small community. A more recent example of a “diffused” ideology of language is the representation of ancestral vernacular languages as privileged carriers of the identity or spirit of a people.

This explains what is meant by the term “language ideologies” and goes on to examine gender differences in language use as one area in which ideological representations are common. After pointing out that these representations can differ significantly across cultures and through time, the researcher discusses the emergence in contemporary societies of a specific representation of male–female difference. It concludes by considering the relationship between language ideologies and real-world linguistic practices, and suggests that this relationship makes the study of language ideologies an important part of the study of language and gender more broadly.

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