

## THE ROLE OF GENDER IN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION: A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*Language is an important communication tool in everyday life, and an understanding of how language reflects and shapes gender roles can provide valuable insights into the social construction and perception of gender in society. The purpose of this study is to explain gender roles in language and communication from a linguistic perspective. This research uses a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques in this study were carried out by exploring books, journals and other information relevant to the research. Data analysis in this study involves identifying gender-related language patterns and structures, using linguistic theoretical frameworks such as sentence structure analysis, pragmatic analysis, sociolinguistic analysis, and so on. The results show that in everyday language use, there are clear patterns in the use of words, phrases, and language constructions that perpetuate gender stereotypes. This reflects the way people perceive and understand gender roles in social contexts. In addition, research also shows differences in communication patterns between men and women, including speaking styles, body language use and communication preferences. These differences reflect social and cultural influences that affect how individuals express themselves and interact.*

**KEYWORDS** Gender, Language, Communication, Linguistics



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## INTRODUCTION

Language is a complex communication system used by humans to convey thoughts, ideas, feelings, and information to others (Mailani et al., 2022). Language is a distinctive feature of humans and plays an important role in everyday life, culture, and social development. With language, we can express our thoughts and feelings to others, understand and communicate with others, and build social relationships (Usman, 2015).

Language enables us to convey messages in a structured manner, using words, phrases, and varied grammar (Sagenda, 2014). Furthermore, language reflects and shapes identities, including gender identity. Language can reflect gender differences through the use of words, phrases, or language constructions that refer to males or females (Agata & Saifullah, 2022).

Language plays a role in reinforcing or constructing gender stereotypes in society. Gender stereotypes are common views or beliefs about roles, characteristics, and behaviors considered typical or appropriate for certain genders. Gender stereotypes can be formed and maintained through the use of language in various contexts (Rokhmansyah, 2016).

The use of language can reflect gender stereotypes by using words, phrases, or language constructions that associate males or females with certain characteristics. For example, in some cultures, there is the use of words or phrases that refer to males as symbols of strength, dominance, or authority, while females are associated with words or phrases referring to gentleness, weakness, or dependence. Additionally, language can also reinforce gender stereotypes through the use of pronouns that exclusively refer to males or females. The use of pronouns that separate males and females in certain contexts can reinforce the perception that gender roles and identities are binary and separate.

The use of language that reinforces gender stereotypes can impact social perceptions and behaviors in society. By understanding how language reflects and shapes gender roles, we can recognize the social constructions embedded in language, critique existing gender stereotypes, and promote gender equality in communication. This understanding can also provide broader insights into how gender is understood, practiced, and perceived in society. The aim of this research is to explain the role of gender in language and communication from a linguistic perspective.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach that focuses on a deep understanding of the role of gender in language and communication. Qualitative method is a research approach used to understand phenomena in-depth through interpretation and analysis of descriptive data. This method is more focused on meaning, context, and understanding contained within a phenomenon, rather than numerical measurement or statistical generalization (Kuncoro, 2018). Data collection techniques in this research involve exploration of books, journals, and other relevant information related to the research topic. The collected data can include written texts, such as books, articles, and documents related to language

and communication. Data analysis in this research involves the identification of patterns and language structures related to gender. The linguistic approach used in data analysis includes various frameworks of linguistic theory, such as sentence structure analysis, pragmatic analysis, sociolinguistic analysis, and so forth. In data analysis, the researcher will identify language usage related to gender roles, stereotypes, social constructions, and different communication patterns between males and females. The analysis method used in this research will take into account the cultural, historical, and social contexts that influence the use of language and gender communication.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Language Structure and Grammar**

Language structure refers to the rules and patterns that govern how words are arranged and organized in a language. Language structure encompasses grammar, which consists of rules and principles that govern the formation of sentences and the relationship between words in those sentences (Alfin, 2011). Grammar regulates the word order in sentences, the appropriate use of word forms, the use of appropriate tenses, and the use of pronouns. Additionally, grammar also influences the use of words that indicate relationships between words, such as prepositions, conjunctions, or connectors (Pujiawati, 2018). Understanding language structure and grammar is crucial in effective communication because proper and consistent use of language rules and patterns helps others understand messages clearly.

Gender differences in the use of words, sentence constructions, grammar, and pronoun usage reflect how language addresses and represents gender differences in society. Language often has words that specifically refer to males or females. For example, in some languages, there are different third-person singular pronouns for males and females, such as "he" (male) and "she" (female) in English. The use of these words reflects gender differences in language and can convey specific connotations related to the roles, characteristics, or gender stereotypes associated with those words.

Language can also use different sentence constructions depending on the gender of the subject or object being referred to. For example, in some languages, there are differences in sentence constructions when talking about males or females. This can reflect gender roles and positions that are considered typical or appropriate for a specific gender in society.

Grammar in a language can indicate gender differences by adjusting words or phrases based on gender. For example, in some languages, adjectives or nouns may change form depending on whether they refer to males or females. This reflects gender differences in the use of grammar and can influence how language conveys messages related to gender roles and characteristics.

The use of pronouns is also an important aspect in understanding gender differences in language. Third-person pronouns (he, she, they, etc.) are often used to refer to specific individuals or groups in communication (Chairunnisa, 2018). In some languages, there are pronouns that exclusively refer to males or females. In French, there is the pronoun "il" which refers to males and the pronoun "elle" which refers to females, in Spanish, there is the pronoun "él" which refers to males and

the pronoun "ella" which refers to females, in German, there is the pronoun "er" which refers to males and the pronoun "sie" which refers to females, in Arabic, there is the pronoun "huwa" which refers to males and the pronoun "hiya" which refers to females. The use of gender-separated pronouns can reflect views or understandings of gender roles and identities in society.

### **Gender Stereotypes in Language**

Gender differences in the use of words, sentence constructions, grammar, and pronoun usage reflect how language plays a crucial role in reflecting, shaping, and reproducing gender differences in society. Understanding these differences can help us become more aware of the gender social constructs present in language and promote the use of inclusive and fair language in communication.

Language is a powerful and complex communication tool that can be used to build and perpetuate gender stereotypes in society. Gender stereotypes are perceptions or beliefs commonly understood by society about the roles and characteristics considered appropriate for certain genders. Gender stereotypes can be reflected in language through the use of specific words, phrases, or language constructions that assume or depict gender differences stereotypically (Purwanti, 2020). Language is used to construct and perpetuate gender stereotypes through several mechanisms:

#### ***Use of words and phrases related to gender***

Language often uses words and phrases specifically associated with males or females (Muhammadun, 2016). For example, words like "tough" or "emotional" are often stereotypically linked with males and females, respectively. The use of such words leads to the understanding that males and females have different characteristics and reinforces existing gender stereotypes.

#### ***Sentence constructions and grammar***

Language also employs sentence constructions and grammar that reflect gender roles and characteristics deemed typical or appropriate (Setiyawan, 2014). For instance, in some languages, nouns or adjectives may change form depending on the gender being referred to. One example is Spanish, where nouns and adjectives often have different masculine and feminine forms. For instance, the word "book" in masculine form is "libro," while in feminine form, it is "libra." This difference in form reflects existing gender differences in Spanish. It reflects the understanding that males and females should be identified separately in language, reinforcing the separation of gender roles and identities.

#### ***Use of pronouns***

Third-person pronouns (he, she, they) can reflect and perpetuate gender stereotypes. In some languages, pronouns exclusively referring to males or females can reinforce the view that gender roles and identities are binary and separate. For example, the use of "he" is commonly used to refer to individuals not explicitly specified, assuming that the individual is male.

#### ***Use of jokes, insults, or demeaning words***

Language can also be used to demean or belittle someone based on their gender. Jokes or insults related to gender can reinforce stereotypes and influence how people perceive and treat males and females.

All these mechanisms collectively contribute to building and perpetuating gender stereotypes in language. Gender stereotypes reinforced by language can influence perceptions, behaviors, and thought patterns in society (Aisyah, 2013). It is important to become more aware of language use that perpetuates gender stereotypes and strive to use language that is inclusive, fair, and mindful of gender diversity. The use of words, phrases, and language constructions related to gender role stereotypes can reflect societal perceptions of strengths, gentleness, or household roles associated with certain genders (Wibowo, 2012). Here are some examples of language use related to gender role stereotypes:

#### ***Perception of strength***

Language often uses words associated stereotypically with strength for males, such as "strong," "brave," or "assertive." Conversely, females are often associated with words like "delicate," "fragile," or "sensitive." The use of such words reflects the perception that males are expected to have physical strength and strong leadership, while females are considered weaker or vulnerable.

#### ***Perception of gentleness***

Language can also reflect gender role stereotypes through the use of words related to gentleness or emotions. For example, words like "nurturing," "caring," or "compassionate" are often associated with females. In contrast, males are often associated with words like "tough," "stoic," or "rational." This reflects the perception that females are expected to have greater tenderness and care, while males are expected to have more controlled emotional strength.

#### ***Household roles***

Language can also reflect gender role stereotypes in the context of household roles. For example, in some languages, words like "housewife" or "domestic duties" are often associated with females, while words like "breadwinner" or "provider" are often associated with males. This reflects the traditional perception that females are expected to fulfill the role of homemakers, while males are expected to be the breadwinners.

The use of these words, phrases, and language constructions can reinforce gender role stereotypes in society. It is important to be aware of and challenge language use that perpetuates these stereotypes, as well as strive to use language that is inclusive, fair, and mindful of gender role and identity diversity.

### **Gender Communication Patterns**

Gender communication patterns refer to differences in communication styles between men and women. Differences in communication patterns between men and women can include speaking styles, use of body language, use of word or phrase peculiarities, and communication preferences that may differ between genders (Sihabudin, 2022). Here are some examples of such differences:

#### ***Speaking Style***

Men tend to use a more dominant style of speaking, emphasizing arguments, facts, and a more assertive approach. Men prefer to speak directly, using straightforward and direct-to-goal language. On the other hand, women tend to use a more cooperative style of speaking, building relationships and paying attention to

the feelings of others. They may prefer to use more detailed language and describe emotional experiences (Wati, 2017).

#### ***Use of Body Language***

Men and women may have differences in their use of body language when communicating. Men tend to use more dominant and powerful body movements, such as large hand movements or sturdy postures. On the other hand, women tend to use more expressive body language, with smoother movements and prioritize more frequent eye contact (Tjahyadi & Faishal, 2021).

#### ***Use of Distinctiveness of a Word or Phrase***

Sometimes men and women have the peculiarities of words or phrases used in their communication. For example, in some cultures, men tend to use more rude or rude words or phrases, while women tend to use softer or polite words or phrases. This reflects differences in language preferences that may be influenced by social norms and gender stereotypes.

#### ***Different Communication Preferences***

Men and women may have different communication preferences in terms of communication goals, listening styles, or forms of social interaction. For example, men tend to focus on solutions or seek solutions to problems, whereas women may be more likely to seek understanding and emotional connection. Women also tend to use more in-depth and detailed communication in social interactions, while men tend to use shorter and more direct communication.

Each individual has a unique communication style and is influenced by other factors such as culture, environment, and personal experiences. Respect for differences and awareness of different communication preferences can enrich interactions between men and women in various communication contexts (Sumantri, 2014).

#### **Gender-Inclusive Language**

Gender-inclusive language is a form of language use that does not discriminate or refer exclusively to men or women. The goal is to avoid gender discrimination, respect gender diversity, and create equality in communication. Efforts and changes in the use of more gender-inclusive language involve assessing the use of more gender-sensitive language and changes in language that reflect diversity and gender equality (Rachmawati, 2012). Some examples of such efforts include:

##### ***Use of Neutral Nouns***

The use of gender-neutral nouns is one step to avoid using words that exclusively refer to men or women. For example, replace the word "actor" with "actor", "lecturer" with "teacher", or "male singer" with "male singer".

##### ***Use of gender-neutral pronouns***

The use of pronouns that do not exclusively refer to men or women is also an important step in gender-inclusive language. For example, the use of the word "they" as a plural pronoun to refer to individuals without regard to gender.

##### ***Gender Diversity Recognition***

Gender-inclusive language recognizes gender diversity and accepts diverse gender identities. This can be done by introducing new words or phrases that reflect different gender identities, such as "non-binary", "genderqueer", or "genderfluid".



### ***Avoidance of Gender Stereotypes***

Gender-inclusive language seeks to avoid using words or phrases that perpetuate gender stereotypes. For example, avoid using words or phrases that associate certain activities exclusively with one gender, such as "men's jobs" or "women's jobs."

### ***Awareness and Education***

Raising awareness about the importance of gender-inclusive language through education and awareness campaigns. This can involve socializing about the use of gender-sensitive language in schools, workplaces, and society in general.

Changes in the use of more gender-inclusive language are important steps in realizing gender equality and respecting the diversity of gender identities. Through such changes, language can become a tool that promotes inclusivity, equality, and respect for existing gender identities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Language not only serves as a means of communication, but also as a tool that influences and shapes social constructions about gender in society. Language is used to construct and perpetuate gender stereotypes, whether through the use of words, phrases, or language constructions related to distinctive gender roles. Communication patterns between men and women can also differ in terms of speaking style, body language use, and communication preferences, which is reflected in everyday language use. However, there have been efforts and changes in the use of more gender-inclusive language, by examining the use of gender-sensitive language and promoting the use of words and phrases that reflect gender diversity and equality.

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