

Original Paper

A Literature Study Investigating the Relationship between Language and Gender

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Abstract

Present the literature review focused on the true pictures of language and gender research conducted by scholars abroad and home. The current thesis aims at the differences and similarities in presenting female and male from lexical perspective and through lexicon related discourse analysis explores the connection between the vocabulary and the dominant gender ideologies of the magazine. There are differences and similarities in lexical choice. Reports on men and women both tend to use words, such as children, spouse, and business. Female images constructed by target lexicon differ from men' and female were regarded as the second gender which is sealed in discourse.

Keywords

Linguistics, Gender and Language (GL), Gender differences

1. The Significance of This Study

It is very meaningful to investigate the embedding of gender in language, and the main significances are as follows:

First, the research aims to explain concrete manifestation of asymmetry and similarity in male and female language. The research conclusion is available in language teaching practice.

Second, gender language is not a pure one, but a mixture of ideologies, cultural background or social moves, therefore, this research can also give some useful suggestions for cross-culture communication and the sociolinguistic.

2. Research Questions

In the light of the research objectives presented in the previous part, the research questions in this study are mainly composed of the following four ones, accordingly, they are:

- 1) What is the concrete manifestation of difference in male and female language?
- 2) What is the concrete manifestation of similarity in male and female language?
- 3) What is the relationship between the most frequent vocabulary in the magazine and their preferred gender ideologies?

The first two research question will be answered based upon the outcomes of the empirical study and also analyzed on the basis of theories of markedness; the last question will be explored in considerable detail with theories about social-linguistic.

3. Studies in China

There are considerable academic works both abroad and home investigating the relationship language and gender. These articles are divided 3 categories on the basis of research topic, respectively: GL in English, the comparison of GL between Chinese and English, and GL in Chinese. Those studies conducted from 12 aspects: GL in transmission; GL in advertisements; GL in oral discourse; GL in verbal communication; GL in cyber language; GL and language teaching; GL and culture; GL in the whole register of English ;Among these is *Review on Language and Gender Study* written by Zhao Ronghui. This article makes a specific introduction about the origin of the formation of language and gender, respectively from fragmentary study period and systematic study period; the results in each period and propose her idea on the theory status and prospect. Wang Lieqin is the representative research gender language. In her article *Discussion of the Research on Gender Language and Its Prospects* a comprehensive analysis is made on GL from dwelling on its range, domains, and major views. Finally the author predicts the prospects of gender language research .another article about GL research review is: *Review on Linguistic Gender Difference Study* which is published by Qian Jin in 2004. The paper made a comprehensive description on studying purpose, present studies and studying results both at home and abroad.

Articles about GL in English Translation are represented by *Gendered Positionality in Translation*, published by Yang Wenhui in 2007. By empirical studying on translation practice in university, this paper discusses the gendered pragmatics in translation and argues that gendered positional translation is universal and visible: the translators, based on their own gendered language culture and ideology, reorganize the language in the translation, “intervening” an “tampering” the pragmatic meaning of the original texts, which brings on different editions. The author proposes that the application of the strategies of “collaboration” would be a good solution to the dispute of gendered positionality in translation so as to realize equivalence and a more accurate translation.

Besides, there are many articles about studies on the GL in English advertisements. Liang Lujin analyses discourses in advertisements of the lexico-grammatical level from a functional perspective in her article *Construction of Gender Identity in English Advertisements*.

In addition, articles about GL on verbal communication occupy a large proportion, which represented by *A Tentative Study on Male and Female Language Behavior Difference*, published by Wang Gaiyan.

The article reveals three major views on gender behavior difference. The author emphasizes that the further deep understanding on gender behavior difference should stand on the concrete social cultural environment.

Yu Weina and other scholars discuss gender difference in cyber language, written gender and computer-mediated communication. The study leads to the recognition of a gendered computerized environment and indicate that gender-linked linguistic differences will not disappear even the communicative medium is new and virtual.

Articles about GL on teaching still attract scholars, which represented by *Sexism in English and Construction of EFL Textbooks in China*, written by Wang Jingyuan. In these articles, the impact of GL on the modern teaching is analyses. The authors also put forward some reasonable suggestion of how to response to this impact for the modern teaching. Some of them also talk about Chinese teaching and language policy.

Many articles concentrating on GL difference from the whole English register perspective. The typical one is *On the Gender-related Differences in English* published by Zhang Ruolan. This article discusses and contrasts, from the sociolinguistic perspective, the gender differences as manifested in English phonology, lexical choice, syntactic structure and language communication. The discussion made a scientific, accurate and objective explanation of the gender differences in language use.

Furthermore, there is also elaborate comparative analysis on GL between English and Chinese. In these researches communication channel and methods are introduced and compared with which of ordinary language. *A Comparative Study on Sexism in English and Chinese* is quite representative of the articles in which GL are studied from different angles. Whereas some scholars like Zhu Li and Song Nannan make research on comparative analysis on GL between English and Chinese. In their works is introduced and the author's own opinion is aroused.

Gender Differences in Apology Strategies in Chinese, written by Guo Min discussed the practical application of GL. There are some other articles talking about CL regarding to Chinese.

It's very hard to make sure about when gender research came into being in China although it's very early to start gender research in the west. As far as the author is concerned, gender language was commented by Gu Hongming in 1915 his article *Chinese Women*, a Part of his famous monograph *The Spirit of Chinese People*. Gender language research, as a new branch of study, made a start after Cultural Revolution, with the publication of Chenyuan's sociolinguistics and his *Language and Social Life* and Chen Songcen's "*Introduction To social' Linguistics*". Their books filled the gap in gender language research in contemporary China and are typical textbooks of gender language research in Chinese linguistics. In early 1980s, gender language research in China also came up in foreign language research field. But most of the books and articles are only introduction to western theories and findings on gender language research. Zhu Wanjin's *General Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, Wang Dechun's *Social-psychological linguistics* and Sun Rujian's *Gender and Language* etc. they are often cited books.

Unfortunately, these study of this topic in China mainland hasn't made much progress despite the above mentioned, especially that of gender differences in conversation among Chinese people. It seems that not much quantitative research method or interdisciplinary approaches are employed in gender language studies in China. As to the field of education, some attention has been given to gender differences in various curriculums, but little consideration has been given to gender similarity and the study of gender differences in context.

Along with the progress of feminist movement in China, the concentration on topic is booming rapidly. Many researches have been witnessed and a great many of outcomes relevant to it has come into being in the recent years. Viewing on the previous studies, most of them mainly and respectively investigate the sexism, features of feminine language, gendered images either in the perspective of linguistics, translation, teaching or communication, social psychology, etc. There exist some critical articles and monographs investigating gender and language in communication and conversation, discussing the issues of gender and language while most of them are stable researches, put it in another way, they mainly focus on language in the whole register instead of language in concrete text, one vital factor in creating, participating and fostering the development of gender language. The language is in constant dynamic changes according to the social status of each gender, especially with the effect of feminist movement and people's attitude on gender, thus, the research mentioned above cannot be much convincing in short of abundant live examples supports because they are mostly and basically descriptive researches focusing on difference between two gender without concerning on the similarity between male and female (Qian Jin, 2004).

The present study is empirical one with innovations as follows: firstly, the present study employs the combination of difference and similarity. Looking over the previous studies, there is hardly any research *study on similarity between male and female language*. Secondly, this is a research based on a large data. The researcher collects the data from *Reader's Digest* where language is best modern English. They serve as the data in this research which is just not found so far in the previous studies on gender language. So to speak, this study will be more comprehensive and objective, seeking to fully understand language and gender.

4. Studies Abroad

According to Zhao Ronghui in 1999, studies on language and gender can be divided into two period times. One is called fragmentary period which is before 1960s. People in ancient Greece realize the important relationship between language and gender in order to make an explanation of genus in grammar. They believed that genus in grammar is the symbol of sexus. The point was generally accepted by many linguists and had an impact on the later linguists' research, such as J.Grimm and W.Von Humboldt, etc. In the 17 century, European invaded into Asia and America and they found with a start that the usage of the local original language have a great difference in male and female. Since then there were more description reports on the topic. But studies didn't step into linguists' sight until

20th century, such as F. Mauthner and O. Jespersen. In 1992, O. Jespersen's influential book *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* has a whole chapter described features of female language. Studies in this period features as fragmentary and not systematic.

Since 1960s, researchers made use of statistical investigation method which used to mainly in sociology to measure the concrete number in linguistic gender difference with the prevalence of social-linguistics. Those quantitative researches showed that gender affect speech behavior and ideologies in a certain way. Many excellent linguists drove studies on female language forward. They are Lakoff, Trudgill, Zimmerman, West, Thorne, Henley and Bolinger. Meanwhile, feminist movement launched out in which women request having equal right with men in every field. Feminist movement drove linguists into further studies on language and gender. Then the study was raised in many other countries and did not only refined in English, but also refers to Chinese, Japanese, Germany, Russian, etc.

Much research has been done on language and gender in English. Most of them are based on data from whole register of English, while few of them focus on the concrete text such as magazines, newspapers and adv, etc. Edward Sapir said "language is a guide to social life". Media language not only guide social life but also contributes to the formation of public opinion and play an essential role in the upholding of the capitalist system (Talbot, 1995). It is dedicated to all ages and features as easy understand style, rich broad and interesting. The magazine aims to provide readers information, broaden their horizons, and cultivate physical, mental, spiritual motivation from various cultural backgrounds.

Marisol del-Teso-Craviotto analyzed gender and language in his article *Words that matter: Lexical choice and gender ideologies in women's magazines* (2006). The researcher explore the connections between the vocabulary and the dominant gender ideology of magazines in America. The research argues that magazines are powerful instruments in maintaining and challenging gender ideologies in US society and propose that the ideological weight of each magazine is partly sustained by particular uses of the lexicon.

S.J. Yates, in his article *Gender, language and CMC for education* (2000), present overviews on the role of gender in computer-mediated communication (CMC) interactions. It uses linguistic and sociological research to criticize the frequent claim that CMC is free from gender-based inequalities due to the lack of face-to-face cues. The paper makes clear the important role of social context in both providing and limiting opportunities for equality in instructional interactions taking place via CMC systems.

Bieke De Fraine, Jan Van Damme, Patrick Onghena wrote an article *A longitudinal analysis of gender differences in academic self-concept and language achievement: A multivariate multilevel latent growth approach* in 2006. This paper investigated gender difference in the development of academic self-concept and language achievement from Grade 7 to Grade 12. Latent growth curve modeling showed that both girls and boys experience a declining academic self-concept during the period of secondary education and that girls declined at a faster rate.

Rebecca M. Stowe, David H. Arnold, and Camilo Ortiz, in their article *Gender Differences in the Relationship of Language Development to Disruptive Behavior and Peer Relationships in Preschoolers* examined there are gender differences among preschoolers in how language development is related to disruptive behavior and peer relationships.

Mary Lynne Gasaway Hill discuss in the paper *Staying on topic, changing the topic: language and gender in the 1995 Louisiana governor's race* (2008) that the gendered use of topic shifting within an electoral community of practice of ten candidates for the governor of Louisiana (three female, seven male) during two political debates. The study found that his findings on men's speech and topic shifting did not support previous research; however, the findings on women's speech and meta-topic shifting did support previous research.

Stefan Heim wrote an article *Syntactic gender processing in the human brain: A review and a model* in 2008. This article provides a systematic review of the neural correlates of syntactic gender processing, based on anatomical information from cytoarchitectonic probability maps.

M. Talbot made a review in the article *Gender and Language* (2008). The researcher emphasis that the field of language and gender is multidisciplinary in scope and the field need more theoretical grounding.

Since the 1980s feminism has stimulated further research on women's ways of using language and the extent of differences between the sexes in their use(s) of language. A feminist orientation in linguists and language researchers has also been responsible for the critical re-examining of previous findings and explanations of gender differences in language use. The following influential works are some of the man impacts feminism is having on society.

Language and Women's Place (Lakoff, Robin, 1976): This book, although published nearly 20 years ago, is still referred to in more current works. This work discusses language used to describe and define the sexes, and identifies features of "women's language" in the context of women's devalued status. This is an important source to look at, not only because Lakoff is an authority in the field, but because of its excellent overview of the issue of sexism in language and the angle by which it is approached.

Man Made Language (Dale Spender, 1980): This book presents an exciting, wide-ranging feminist study of language, its rules and uses. The author argues that for women, language is man-made, for it encompasses the meaning of men who have arrived at their definitions of the world from a position of dominance, a position which women as a group do not occupy. The author demonstrates that once women expose the falseness of existing male meanings and encode their own, language and society can assume new forms, and women can move towards autonomy and self-determination and can assume a position of strength.

Language and the Sexes (Frank, Francine and Frank Anshen, 1983): This book provides an overview of the topic that is well researched and while scholarly in nature, is quite readable. The work analyzes language to reveal society's disparate views and treatment of the sexes, and explores some of the ways in which our language mirrors the sexism in our society. Both authors have published widely on the

subject of sexism and language; their work was cited often in other sources the author reviewed.

Feminism and Linguistic Theory (Deborah Cameron, 1991): This book not only points out sexist assumptions and practices, important as they are, but also questions the whole scholarly basis of linguistics and shows how the assumptions and practices of linguistics are implicated in patriarchal ideology and oppression.

Words and Women: New Language in New Times (Miller Casey and Kate Swift, 1991): First published in 1975, this book is authored by two of the more well known writers on sexual bias in speech and writing. It provides a great deal of information for the layperson, including the history of gender in English and summaries of the findings of linguists who have studied women's language. This is an especially appropriate source for those who are less familiar with the subject of sexist writing.

Women Changing Language (Anne Pauwels, 1998): It is the first book to examine feminist views and actions on language planning in different languages and different societies (mainly in Europe). The book has the merit of examining the workings of sexism in several languages, including lesser-known ones; clearly enough so that a command of the language does not prove necessary. This highlights the fact that sexist practices reflect a common reality of gender inequality: men as the norm (generic use of male terms to designate all human beings), women as a deviation from this male norm.

Many articles continue to expose the sexist nature of English: Silveira (1980) 'Generic masculine words and thinking' attempts to investigate the way in which the male is treated as the norm, or as unmarked term in English classification systems. Beardsley's article 'Degenderisation' (Beardsley, 1981) calls again for sex-neutral vocabulary to be introduced into speech, as does Duran (1981) 'Gender-neutral terms'. A whole series of articles investigate the use of 'Ms.': Levin (1981), Purdey (1981) and Soble (1981), as does Baron (1984). Korsmeyer (1981) looks at the generic uses of masculine terminology.

Discussion continues in McConnell-Ginet's "Prototypes, pronouns and persons" (McConnell-Ginet 1982). Steinmetz (1982) "On Language: the desexing of English" continues the debate. McKay (1983) carries on the debate about pronouns. Sorrels (1983) offers solutions to problems of awkwardness in expression arising from sensitivities about sexist language. Bebout (1984) reports cases of asymmetries in male-female word pairs. Both J Cheshire and J Coates have articles entitled Language and Sexism' published in 1984.

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