Women Identity on FacebookProfiles. A sociolinguistic perspective.

Asst .lec. Mokhalad Naji Kamil
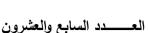## College of Basic Education.

Abstract

The current study attempts to investigate the construction of women identity on social network, namely Facebook Profiles. Generally speaking, it is recognized that women are more self-conscious than men in expressing their character. As its problem, this study investigates the linguistic characteristics of women's language on Facebook profiles. Thus, the current study aims at finding out the main characteristics of women identity online communication. The study hypothesizes that women have recognizable linguistic characteristics that reflect their character online communication. The questionnaire represents the main tool of collecting data. The study has reached a number of conclusions that validate the hypothesis of the study.

1. Gender

There are two concepts of gender, the biological gender and the socially constructed gender. It is pointed out that the image of gender is being distorted, due to gender being socially constructed. In gender theory there is also the discussion of the power aspect being built into the gender system: a system in which the male is the norm, making the female the subordinate one of the two genders (Mansson 2010: 243-245). The starting point in gender theory then is that the features/traits that we consider as being feminine or masculine is socially constructed, and has changed throughout history. The woman is described as being watched/saved, while the man the one watching/saving (**Bell** et al. 1995: 169).

2. Characteristics of Women Speech

According to Lakoff (1975: 45), women are likely to use more standard forms of the language than men. Lakoff (ibid.) was perhaps the

first to note many of the linguistic items researchers today use to identify indirect speech in women's language. Holmes (2001: 87) and O'Barr and Atkins (1998: p.43) have both constructed convenient lists of Lakoffs "women's language".

Labov (1981, p. 185) mentions that women usually out-perform men in their tendency to adopt or support 'correct' behavior; according to Labov, they do this because, in relation to men, 'women are considered a second highest status group. Trudgill (1972: p.65) points out that women shows much stronger preferences for standard forms than men. Women are expected to be more talkative than men and to err on the side of being over-polite in their word choices.
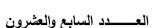
3.   Online Communication

(Hannover, 2000: p.56). Mentions Cultural notions of gender influence the behaviour of internet users .He points that the gender can be recognized whether a man or a woman depending on the cultural notions of gender .

"Interpersonal interactions may be experienced variously by young women and men as gender schemas affect and reflect differing identity and self-presentation interests. For example, women tend to use more affiliative communication strategies, whereas men tend to use more power- and status-oriented speech strategies. In addition, women reveal more than men, and both men and women self-disclose more to other women than to other men" (Dindia& Allen,.1992:p.45).

Gilligan (1982:p.67) Women discuss different kinds of subject that are recognized them from men .Women tend to converse about personal aspects of self-definition rather than political , economic and ideological aspects . A review of gender differences in identity development revealed few gender differences, except in the domains of sexuality and family roles. These findings support theory that relationships are more important to women's identity formation than they are to men's.

Features of Internet communication may affect gender self presentation. For example, physical and auditory gender cues are not present in online communications. This situation can provide a more level playing field for women and men. The anonymity of some modes of Internet communication like chat may also allow men to take greater risks in being more open, intimate and genuine

(Morahan-Martin, 1998:p. 54).

Thecyberspace might also be used as a tool for gender identification in ways not possible offline. It is reported that the experience over the Internet changed their gender to identify their identity (Smahel, 2003:p. 32). Women may take more reliable roles when communicating online; for example, a greater proportion of declared females made partner requests than did declared males in teen chat rooms (Smahel&Subrahmanyam, 2007: p.102).

4. Data Collection and Analysis

4.1 Data Collection

The investigation in this study is conducted through a questionnaire distributed to the subjects asking them some questions about their choices of certain linguistic features that they might be used by them to reflect their character.

4.1.1 Participants

Fifty facebook users are selected randomly. All of them are female. They are of different academic degrees of different scientific certificates. The meaning age was 20.5 years, and the range was 18 to 23. Participants comprised Iraqi women who use facebook for various purposes. Their main interests in facebook are communication, entertainment and reading. These women communicate and chat with both males and females.

4.1.2 Procedures

The questionnaire is designed to seek information about the female participants' uses and choice of certain linguistic feature. A number of questions are issued in this regard. The questions are available in Appendix A. The questionnaire is distributed via Facebook to the subjects and their answers are received via Facebook, too.

4.2 Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data consists of six dimensions according to the

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dimensions of the questionnaire. These dimensions are the topics of discussion, the use of photos, the use of poetry or prose, the use of standard or colloquial and the use of especial vocabularies.

Table (1): Women's Choice of Topics

Topic	Politics Culture Religion Cooking fashion Food
Frequency	20% 36% 20% 20% 20% 25%

As far as the topics are concerned, the analysis shows that most of the topics are culture, politics, fashion, cooking and food. The educational level and gender seem effective elements in choosing topics. The educational level activates the choice of political and cultural topics while gender activates the usual women topics such as cooking, food and fashion. It is worth mentioning that participants choose more than one topic for discussion. The above table shows the frequency of topics:

Table (2): Women's Use of Photos

Participants	Use Do not Use
Frequency	37 13
Percentage	74 % 26 %

Concerning the use of photos, the analysis shows that most of the participants use photos as part of their posts as expressive device. It appears that (37) participants use photos in their posts. Statically, this use amounts (74%). Those who do not use photos are (13) participants amounting (26%). Those who do not use photos fall in

the forties in their age.

Poetry	Prose Both
13 (26 %)	20 (40%) 17 (34%)

The third dimension of the questionnaire is the use of poetry or prose. Most of the participants favour the employment of prose in their posts. The table below shows that participants are classified into three groups. Little number of them uses poetry. Most of them use prose while very few who use both. It seems that there is tendency to use both in high frequency. The above table shows women's use of prose and poetry:

Table (4): Women's Use of Standard Standard	Colloquial Both	
24 (48 %)	18 (36%)	8 (16%)

The participants show the preference of women to reflect their identity through the use of standard language. It has shown that most of the participants prefer to use standard language. 24 women use standard language while only 18 use colloquial language. On the other hand, only, 8 participants use both in their posts. The above table shows the frequency of women use of language.

Table (5): Women's Use of Emotions

Use Emotions	Do not use
28	22
56%	44%

As far as the use of emotions, females show tendency to use emotions highly. Most of women tend to use emotions to express their emotions. 28 of the participants use emotions while 22 do not. The above table shows the use of the emotions by the participants:

Conclusions

The study has reached a number of conclusions that validate the hypotheses of the study. It has concluded that women tend to use certain linguistic features to reflect their identity in the social communication sites.

Concerning the topics, women tend to talk about cultural issues, politics, literature, fashion, cooking and food. When they chat with other women, they discuss matters of food, fashion and cooking.

Besides, women appear to be expressive on their facebook profiles. This is done by using photos accompany the posts. Moreover, this expressive behaviour is supported by the use of emotions.

The identity of women also is characterized by the use of poetry in addition to prose. They favour to express their feelings and thoughts by the use of poetry.

Obviously, women seem more prestigious via employing the standard language in comparison with colloquial one.

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Appendix One

Dear Girls, please answer the following questions helping us to complete the requirements of the current study.

1. What are the main topics that you engage in with women in chatting?

2. What are the main topics that you engage in with men in chatting?

3. Do you use any photos in your page and why?

4. Do you publish poetry or prose in your post?

5. In case you publish poetry, state your aim beyond this.

6. Do you use high prestigious forms of language or not when you chat with men and when you chat with women?

7. Do you use especial vocabularies, adjectives, nouns or not.

ملخص

تحاول هذه الدراسة تسليط الأضواء على الهوية الحقيقية لمستخدمي شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي (الفيسبوك) ، كون الكثير من الرجال يدخل بإسم امرأة مستعار ،و للكشف عن حقيقة هذه الشخصية يكمن في ان المرأة أكثر خجلا من الرجل في عباراتها كما أنه يمكن تحديد هوية المستخدم من اللغة التي يستعملها لأننا نجد في الغالب ان لغة المرأة مميزة في كثير من الأحيان ،مما يجعل معرفتها من الأمور الممكنة كما ان الدراسة توصلت إلى نتائج أخرى تثبت صحة هذه الفرضية