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by Hendi Pratama

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IDENTIFYING SEXIST LANGUAGE ON YOUTUBE COMMENT SECTION

Hendi Pratama

Universitas Negeri Semarang
hendipratama@mail.unnes.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Bad commenting behavior is now rampant especially on social media especially Youtube. Recently, a video of a female patient accusing a male nurse for physically harassing her at one of the famous hospitals in Indonesia has gone viral. Various positive comments supporting the patient are written by most viewers. However, a few sexist comments are also found. This article aims at investigate the use of sexist language on YouTube comment section posted on these viral videos. Two types of sexism: overt and indirect sexism as proposed by Mills (2008), were examined. A number of 420 comments from four different YouTube channels are taken as data sources. Results of the study reveal that 55 sexist comments are identified out of 420 comments. Hence, 13% of the comments are considered sexist. It shows that 6 out of 15 types of overt and indirect sexism were found within the sexist comments with the details: 43.63 % were Jokes, 25.45 % were Presupposition, 18.18 % were Humor, 5.45 % were Reported speech, 5.45 % were Naming, and 1.81 % were Insult terms for women. Other types of sexist language including dictionaries, pronouns, semantic derogation, surnames & titles, transitivity, conflicting messages, script & metaphor, collocation, and androcentric perspective are not found in the data set.

Keywords: sexist language, Sara Mills, discourse analysis, overt sexism, indirect sexism

INTRODUCTION

YouTube, a platform for sharing and viewing videos is extremely popular today. Simply with one click, everyone can get many services such as uploading, viewing, liking, subscribing, commenting or even disliking the video it provides. It is not surprising if it records an amazing statistics. It can be noted that "YouTube has over a billion users – almost one-third of all people on the Internet – and each day those users watch a billion hours of video, generating billions of views" (YouTube, 2018).

The emerging of YouTube viewers is affected by the notion of virality. The virality of a content is marked by the high likes, shares, and comments that reflects the acceptance and prevalence of the advocated behavior or attitude (Alhabash, S. et al., 2015). They also discovered that "commenting on news and political videos on YouTube tends to be negative rather than positive, thus suggesting that individuals engage in forms of releasing the emotional arousal experienced during message exposure".

The idea of virality initiating this study to look closer into a popular news in late January 2018 about a video that has gone viral on YouTube. The video displayed a female patient looking frustrated, depressed and annoyed because a male nurse at the hospital allegedly has physically harassed her the day before. In the video, the male nurse is also present and confesses that he did the wrongdoing. Most viewers have left comments condemning the male nurse and providing support for the female patient. However, there still exist sexist comments and remarks written by a number of viewers of this particular platform.

This study attempts to identify the sexist features of the language used by those particular viewers. The researcher mainly makes use the sexist language framework on overt and indirect criticism created by Mills (2008). Overt sexism is classified into two types: (1) words and meaning, (2) processes; in which the former consists of naming, dictionaries, pronouns, insult terms for women, semantic derogation, also surnames and titles; while the later is comprised of transitivity, reported speech, and jokes. Mills (2008) further classified the indirect sexism into six types

including humour, presupposition, conflicting messages, scripts and metaphors, collocation, and andro-centric perspective. The deeper explanation about these matters would be provided on the next section.

It is worthy to note that Nayef & Nashar(2015) found numerous studies on sexist language have also been done in language other than English such as in Chinese(Lee, 2007), French (Dornbrook, 2003), Spanish (Wasserman and Weseley, 2009) and Italian (Sabatini, 1993). Studies were also conducted in non-European languages such as Hebrew (Gaunt, 2012; Jacobs, 2004; Muchnik, 2014), Japanese(Marjorie, 2005; Saito, 1997) and Nigerian (Yusuf, 2013). It is nonetheless still scarcely studied in Indonesia.

In addition, many researchers have studied sexism in various circumstances such as: in everyday discourse (Nneka, 2012), in theology (Tavard, 1975), in textbooks (DeShazer, 1981; Graci, 1989; Sabater, 2015; Syarifuddin, 2004), in bilingual dictionary (White, 1989), in fiction book (Ochieng, 2012), in newspaper (Dayhoff, 1983; Dai & Xu, 2014; Bekalu, 2006), in television newsroom (Kanagasabai, 2016); in Hip-Hop music videos (Chung, 2007); in the media (Mendes & Byerly, 2015), in advertising (Groza & Cuesta, 2011). Recent's researches begin to get much interest on the use of sexist language in social media (Dubrofsky & Wood, 2014), for example on Facebook (Strain, Saucier, & Martens, 2015), on tweeter (Foster, 2015), on internet memes (Drakett et.al., 2018); and the most recent study that mostly related with our is sexism on YouTube (Thelwall & Mas-Bleda, 2018).

This study attempts to help linguists to understand deeper on sexist language identification especially in Indonesian language on the YouTube comment section of the viral video as I priorly discussed. This study is also intended to help Indonesian citizens to avoid using sexist language on social media at all costs.

Sexism and Sexist Language

Sexism study was historically invented as there is daily gender imbalance between men and women. This shows a wide disparity between men and women concerning with the access to and control of resources, and in participation in decision-making. Hence, feminists have relied heavily that sexism is by definition any practices that discriminate against women and in favor of men by stereotyping them on the ground of their sex and gender role, "when it is not the most salient feature" (Mills, 2008). It conservatively represents men as the "power, dominant, authoritative, and aggressive" whilst the women are defined as the "submissive, subordinate, trivial, and passive" (Spender, 1980; Lakoff, 2004). Moreover, Mills (2008) argues that

"Sexism is not just about statements which seem to excessively focus on gender when it is not relevant. It since discourse plays such an important role in the construction and negotiation of identities, despite this anachronistic feel to a concern with sexism, discursive structures which are available as a resource to degrade and trivialize those activities associated with women, must still be analyzed."

³ The term sexist language then refers to "any language that is supposed to include all people, but, unintentionally (or not) excludes a gender—this can be either males or females³ (Nneka, 2012). English language has identified as one of those sex⁴t languages one since it favors the masculine gender as opposed to the feminine (Nneka, 2012). Feminists have noted that the lexicon and grammatical system of English contains features that exclude, insult and trivialize women.

Overt and Indirect Sexism

Overt sexism is explicitly conveyed and usually marked by certain set of linguistic usages or features. The use of such items as generic pronouns such as 'he' (when used to refer to both males and females); word endings such as '-ette' used to refer to women (for example 'usherette'), nouns referring to men and women (such as 'landlord' and 'landlady', 'manager' and 'manageress',

which seem to have a different range of meanings), insult terms which seem to differ for men and women, the names we are given and those which are used for parts of our bodies, and so on.

Mills (2008) argued that it is rather difficult to identify indirect sexism as it is does not explicitly uttered as the overt, because it is usually wrapped and furnished with humor and irony. We cannot directly judge it as being sexist with just looking at its' linguistic features. The difference between overt and covert sexism is the way it is used, and "it does not change the sexism itself, but it changes the way it can be responded to" (Mills, 2008, p.134). It has a more subtle form of contextualized sexism. The categories of indirect sexism are humor, presupposition, and scripts and metaphor.

Table 1. Overview of Overt and Indirect Sexism (Mills, 2008)

Overt Sexism: It is explicitly conveyed and usually marked by certain set of linguistic usages or features.	Words and Meaning Subtypes: (a) naming (b) dictionaries (c) generic pronouns and nouns (d) insult terms for women (e) semantic derogation (f) first names, surnames and titles
Indirect Sexism: It has a more subtle form of contextualized sexism.	Processes Subtypes: (a) transitivity (b) reported speech (c) jokes Subtypes: (a) humour (b) presupposition (c) conflicting messages (d) scripts and metaphor (e) collocation (f) andro-centric perspectives

METHODS

The data in this study are collected from the comment section of four different YouTube channels presenting the same video in late January 2018. In this video, a female patient blaming a male nurse for physically harassing her at one of the famous hospitals in Indonesia. This kind of video was chosen as its virality makes many people watch, like, comment, and subscribe it. As it deals with the sexual harassment, it is predictably that sexist comments might appear out of this video. The researcher records all of the comments written by the viewers and then analyses them using the framework of overt and indirect sexism by Mills (2008).

As this includes as a textual and contextual analysis, discourse analysis is chosen as the most appropriate way to undertake this study. Discourse analysis is above the level of analysing sentences. It is much more than to "see content, the substance of texts, as something which is the negotiation of textual elements and codes and forces outside the text which influence both the way that the text is constructed and the way that we decipher what is written" (Mills, 2005)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the overt and indirect sexism using Mills' (2008) framework, the following is the results of the study.

Table 2. Overall Sexist Language Expressed by the Commenters

Types of Overt & Indirect Sexism	Occurance	%
Naming	3/420	0.71
Dictionaries	0/420	0
Pronouns	0/420	0
Insult terms for women	1/420	0.23
Semantic derogation	0/420	0
Surnames & titles	0/420	0
Transitivity	0/420	0
Reported speech	3/420	0.71
Jokes	24/420	5.71
Humor	10/420	2.3
Presupposition	14/420	3.33
Conflicting messages	0/420	0
Script & metaphor	0/420	0
Collocation	0/420	0
Androcentric perspective	0/420	0
TOTAL	55/420	13

As we can see in table 2, the total of sexist language found were totally 55 out of the 420 comments left by the viewers of the video. The 3 comments (0.71%) were naming; 1 (0.23%) comment was Insult terms for women; 3 comments (0.71%) were reported speech; 24 comments (5.71%) were jokes; 10 comments (2.3%) were humor; and 14 comments (3.33%) were presupposition.

Table 3. Rank Sexist Language Expressed by the Commenters

Rank	Types of Overt & Indirect Sexism	Occurance	%
1	Jokes	24/55	43.63
2	Presupposition	14/55	25.45
3	Humor	10/55	18.18
4	Reported speech	3/55	5.45
5	Naming	3/55	5.45

According to table 3, it is noted that the most frequently sexist comment written by the commenters are jokes (43.63%), presupposition (25.45%), humor (18.18%), reported speech (5.45%), and naming (5.45%). The next section explains the results via data sampling and elaboration. The readers of this article are gently warned that the following explanation of the results might be subjects of disgust and profanity.

Jokes and Sexist Language

Jokes are often used in Youtube comments. Some jokes are funny but some jokes can be very offensive. Take the following datum to illustrate.

- (1) *di puter puter 3x.. Tapi sayang ga di jilat & di celupin*
(the nipples) are twisted three times, unfortunately they are not licked and dunked.

The joke makes a reference to Oreo's advertisement called 'twist, lick and dunk'. The commenter thinks that his comment is funny. However, from the point of view of feminists, this remark has

trivialized the pain and shame have been felt by the victim of sexual harassment. Sexism can hide behind a bad joke. The following is another illustration.

- (2) *pdhl suaminya sering memegang*

In fact, his husband often touches (her breasts)

This joke has been based on shallow understanding of mutual consent of a sexual encounter. Her husband, most of the time, has access to his wife. This commenter holds an assumption that the woman shall not be sad because her personal parts have been touched anyway by another man i.e her husband. There is a scary potential that the commenter will actually commit non-consensual sexual contact because he thinks that such contact is trivial. Women shall not complain because she is not pure. This view needs a correction.

Presupposition and Sexist Language

Presupposition is a class of meaning underlying an utterance. A presupposition can be reflected by an utterance. In some instances, a presupposition can be a proof of sexism. The following datum can illustrate this trend.

- (3) *Sombong lo pdahal senang di gituin*

Don't be arrogant. Actually, you enjoyed it (right)?

The presupposition of this utterance is that 'all sexual encounters are enjoyable'. The commenter does not understand the pain and shame born by the victim. The commenter also seems to fail to understand the concept of sexual harassment. This presupposition also needs correction. Some sexual encounters are painful and unwanted especially in the case of sexual harassment.

Humor and Sexist Language

The difference between humors and jokes are the fact that jokes are direct and humor are indirect. There are some data which support that humors can be sexist in certain forms.

- (4) *Kalo cewek di gituin dokter cowok nangis yak, kalo cowok di gituin dokter cewek malah girang kesenangan.*

If a girl is harassed by a male doctor, she cries. However, if a boy is harassed by a female doctor, he will be happy.

This humor is sexist on two accounts. The first is the fact that the assumption that women are weak and easy to cry. This is not relevant because everybody has the right to cry and it does not show weakness. The second is the fact that even men can be traumatized because of unwanted sexual encounter. A police report in 2017 shows that a Zimbabwean man was abducted, drugged and raped by three women and he was traumatized afterwards (Dailymail, 2017). Men being harassed by women or by people of other genders is possible and it brings the same destructive effects (Roberts, 2013).

Reported Speech and Sexist Language

In many instances, writers tend to report women's utterances on indirect speeches and those of men in direct speeches. The same instance also takes place on YouTube's comments.

- (5) *Saya suka pas dia bilang "Remas remas ..."*
I like her when she says 'Squeeze, squeeze ...'

Indirect speeches reflect the belief that women are soft and weak. This cannot continue. Women should have their voices in the forms of direct speeches. This utterance also suffers from the same foul presupposition like the one reflected by sample (3).

Naming and Sexist Language

Most languages provide sexist naming and people tend to use the naming and terms to strengthen the inequality.

- (6) *Wanita banyak jadi lonte apa perasaanmu?*
A lot of women are prostitutes. How do you take that?

The term 'lonte' or female prostitutes is a derogatory lexical item. This term cannot be applied to men. This word is not suggested to be used in any circumstances. Yet, this term has been used on Youtube's comments on which millions of people have access. The same utterance also contains wrong presupposition. If some women are prostitutes, it does not mean that all women can be treated as ones. Secondly, even prostitutes have the right to be protected from sexual harassment.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the data, the facts show that some people in Indonesia still use sexist language to discredit women. The use jokes, presupposition, humors, reported speech and naming. Those comments contain harsh language and most of the time trivializing women in general. Not only those comments are trivializing women, they also trivialize the magnitude of sexual harassment and non-consensual sexual conducts. Data from Youtube's comments in Indonesian language have partially shown that Mills' indication of sexism is real. The data however is not as rich as expected and only few forms of sexism could be found from the dataset.

Future research in this topic should involve big data from the internet. They may also consider the motives on why the viewers write sexist comment at all.

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