

Gender and Language: Analyzing Communication Styles in Argumentative Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates gender-based differences in communication styles within argumentative writing, focusing on syntactic elements like pronouns and noun modifiers, as well as pragmatic aspects such as argumentation strategies. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected from 30 students in the 2011 cohort of an English Department in Indonesia, evenly split between male and female participants. Quantitative analysis revealed that utilized personal pronouns more frequently, emphasizing individuality and logical reasoning, whereas women employed noun modifiers more often, showcasing precision and elaboration. Qualitative findings highlighted that men's arguments leaned towards directness and assertiveness, often grounded in bold claims, while women's arguments demonstrated greater coherence and emotional engagement, reflecting inclusivity and relational focus. These stylistic variations align with broader sociolinguistic patterns tied to gender. The study underscores the importance of understanding these differences to improve teaching methods and encourage the balanced development of argumentative writing skills across genders. The findings contribute to the growing body of research on gendered communication in second-language contexts, offering insights for educators and linguists aiming to address linguistic and cultural nuances in academic writing.

Keywords: *English, language, men and women, text communication, writing.*

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, English is used as a common language of communication. In Indonesia's education sphere, English has become more popular and is being taught at some schools to prepare students to engage globally (Alrajafi, 2021). However, in Indonesia, English is communicated differently depending on gender.

The use of English in Indonesia covers almost all aspects: politics, economics, defenses, etc. Indonesia's education saw this phenomenon of globalization and immediately responded by developing a new educational system presented in English (Willyarto et al., 2017). When learning a second language (L2), the transfer relies on the first language (L1). In contrast, overgeneralization affects the L2 exclusively, and the mother tongue plays an essential role in the second language learning process (Sidupa

et al., 2019). Therefore, students learning English in this research were affected by their mother tongue, Indonesian. Notably, over seven hundred languages are spoken in Indonesia (Rahima, 2024).

In many fields of language research, attention to gender differences as a variable has increased in recent years (Kheder & Rouabhia, 2023). Researchers have been attracted to identifying and interpreting possible differences in linguistic styles between males and females for decades (Ali, 2021). Men and women employ different strategies in setting the information and encoding the relation between author and reader in texts (Argamon et al., 2003). They also discovered males' and females' differences in processing emotional material that may have been related to the use of language (Xu, et al., 2021).

Language and gender could be carried out in one of the studies as an interdisciplinary field of study and cover several aspects of - spoken and written -in English. Speaking skills, as one of the productive skills, are commonly used to measure language ability and are widely employed in investigating the differences between men's and women's speech. Learning about people's cultures has the potential to give a mirror image as the opportunity to challenge how to learn new ways to solve problems that we had previously given up on. Then, raising the local culture can improve social status by allowing them to be more creative and have their characteristics (Wahba & Chun, 2022).

Since childhood, Lessons are conducted by humans related to three conditions that support each other to produce a good performance in the form of skills. According to their mental development, students will learn well with enough prior knowledge and then continue to a higher level. Education/teaching provided excess rather than readiness regarding mental development, leading to an imbalance of mental development and cognition. Academic values will appear about the three factors mentioned above (Willyarto et al., 2015). The experience of learning of ones will affect one's ability to develop one's writing style.

This study explores gender-based differences in argumentative writing, focusing on syntactic and pragmatic aspects to reveal distinct communication styles. By analyzing the use of personal pronouns and noun modifiers, the research highlights how men and women construct arguments differently at the syntactic level. Additionally, examining pragmatic elements provides insight into how they convey stance and engage with their audience. While this study is limited in scope, it offers a critical foundation for understanding the intersection of gender and language in written discourse, contributing to broader discussions on communication, identity, and social dynamics in academic writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

a. Gender

Gender roles are the 'social definition' of women and men. They vary among different societies and cultures, classes, ages, and during different periods in history. Gender-

specific roles and tasks are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions (Rannaweera, 2020). Gender relations are how a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women about one another (Kiram, 2024).

b. Language

Gendered language manifests across phonological, pragmatic, and structural aspects, shaping communication styles in both spoken and written discourse (Ginarti et al., 2022). Everyday interactions reflect these patterns, as differences in speaking styles, body language, and linguistic preferences reinforce traditional gender roles, particularly in languages with grammatical gender like French and Spanish (Salsabila et al., 2024; Ashrafova, 2024). Such distinctions extend to argumentative writing, where male students favor action verbs to convey leadership and decisiveness, while female students more frequently use mental verbs to express introspection and emotional engagement (Ridha et al., 2024). Although these tendencies highlight linguistic differences, they risk perpetuating stereotypes that may limit expressive freedom in academic and professional settings, necessitating a critical examination of gendered language for more inclusive communication (Sylvia & Syarifudin, 2023).

c. Writing

Writing, as a structured mode of language production, extends spoken communication by relying on graphic symbols while retaining the cognitive processes and communicative intent of speech (Siburian, 2024; Syathroh et al., 2020). However, proficiency in speaking or reading does not necessarily equate to ease in writing, as written expression requires distinct skills and continuous practice. Much like mastering a physical skill, writing improves with persistent effort and engagement, reinforcing its role as a learned competence rather than an innate ability. This distinction is particularly crucial in argumentative writing, where clarity, coherence, and persuasive reasoning depend on both linguistic proficiency and critical thinking.

d. Argumentative Writing

Argumentative writing is a powerful tool for shaping perspectives, influencing opinions, and fostering critical reflection. Beyond mere text production, it serves as a means of engaging with the world and enhancing readers' awareness of their surroundings (Ferguson, 2021). By articulating viewpoints, defending reasoning, and addressing opposing perspectives, individuals contribute to intellectual discourse while also navigating the dynamics of social control, as writing plays a role in regulating societal structures and shaping collective thought (Ismail et al., 2022). A well-crafted argumentative text not only persuades through logical reasoning and evidence-based claims but also encourages dialogue and critical analysis, reinforcing its significance in both academic and public discourse.

e. Gender and Language

Gender differences in language use influence syntactic choices, cognitive processing, and argumentative strategies, shaping distinct communication styles. Men tend to favor noun modifiers for precision, while women more frequently use personal pronouns to foster shared understanding and contextual clarity (Argamon et al., 2003). These tendencies align with broader rhetorical patterns, as men often exhibit assertive argumentation through bold claims and direct engagement with evidence, whereas women, despite their structured reasoning, may display lower confidence in argumentation (Pilcher & Smith, 2024; Wong et al., 2020; Gotian, 2023). Furthermore, men's inclination toward originality sometimes comes at the expense of clarity, underscoring key differences in how gender shapes both the construction and presentation of arguments (Jannah et al., 2025).

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected from 30 students from the 2011 cohort of the English Department at a School of Foreign Language. Using purposive sampling, a method that selects participants based on predefined criteria to meet specific research objectives, the study ensured that all subjects were proficient in English grammar and familiar with argumentative writing conventions. The participants, comprising 15 male and 15 female students, were enrolled in Composition 3 and had completed Composition 2 with a minimum grade of B. None of the students had lived in an English-speaking country, but all had been learning English since childhood, ensuring a relatively uniform linguistic background.

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses to comprehensively examine the object of research (Nuzirwan & Sukandar, 2021; Yunus et al., 2023). The quantitative analysis focused on measuring the frequency of noun specifiers and personal pronouns in students' compositions to identify gender-based linguistic tendencies. Concurrently, qualitative analysis explored differences in argumentation style, revealing that male students tended to employ logical reasoning and assertive claims, whereas female students often incorporated personal experiences and relational discourse strategies. This dual approach provided a nuanced understanding of how gender influences linguistic choices and rhetorical structures in academic writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Men and Women in The Argumentative Writing

As highlighted in this study, men and women exhibit distinct stylistic tendencies in their argumentative writing. One key difference is using syntactic elements, such as noun modifiers and personal pronouns. Women, for instance, often employ more noun modifiers to create nuanced descriptions and emphasize specific details. On the other hand, men tend to use fewer modifiers, favoring more straightforward expressions. This

difference reflects broader linguistic patterns tied to gender, where women's language often leans toward precision and elaboration, while men's language exhibits a more direct and assertive tone.

These variations extend beyond mere stylistic preferences and may reveal deeper social and cultural influences on language use. The choice of personal pronouns, for example, could indicate differing levels of self-representation or interpersonal focus in argumentative contexts. Women might prioritize inclusivity and connection, frequently using pronouns like "we" or "our," whereas men might emphasize individuality with pronouns such as "I" or "my." By understanding these linguistic tendencies, educators and researchers can gain valuable insights into the interplay between gender and communication in academic and professional writing.

b. Women’s Argumentative Writing

After analyzing women’s writing, the author found that women tend to use noun modifiers more than personal pronouns. The figure below shows this.

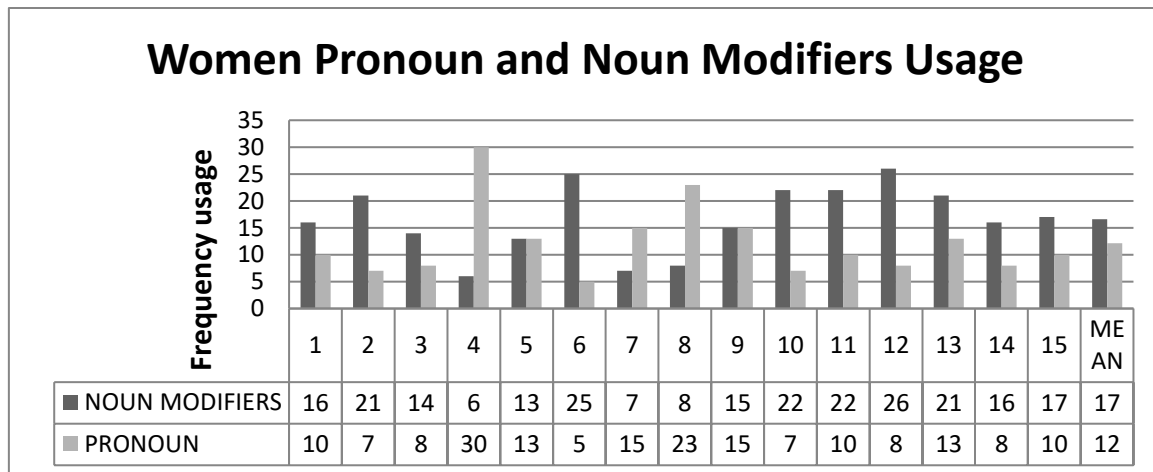


Figure 1. Women Pronoun and Noun Modifiers Use (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

An analysis of women’s argumentative writing reveals that they tend to employ noun modifiers more frequently than personal pronouns. As shown in Figure 1, women’s average use of noun modifiers was 17 occurrences per text, ranging from 6 to 26 instances. In comparison, their average use of pronouns was slightly lower at 12 occurrences, ranging from 5 to 30 instances. While the data indicates that noun modifiers are prominent in women’s writing, the narrow gap between the use of pronouns and noun modifiers suggests an almost balanced reliance on both syntactic features.

This finding supports earlier studies suggesting that women’s writing is characterized by elaboration and specificity, often conveyed through the use of noun modifiers. The tendency to use descriptive language might stem from women’s preference for providing clarity and emotional context in their arguments. On the other

hand, the use of pronouns, while slightly less frequent, reflects women’s ability to personalize their narratives and establish a connection with the reader.

The relatively close statistical mean between the use of noun modifiers and pronouns highlights an important nuance in women’s argumentative writing. While noun modifiers emphasize precision and detail, the use of pronouns suggests a parallel effort to maintain relatability and cohesion in their arguments. This balance indicates that women’s writing tends to integrate clarity and personal engagement, a combination that enhances the persuasive quality of their arguments.

Furthermore, the variability in the frequency of these linguistic elements—ranging from as low as 5 occurrences to as high as 30—demonstrates individual stylistic differences among women writers. This variability may reflect differences in topic familiarity, personal expression, or rhetorical strategies employed by individual authors

Table 1. The example of Noun modifiers and Pronoun Use

Noun modifiers	Pronoun
1. The students will study from ... The teacher needs to use ... although the lecture can do, the subject needs	1. They also use the ... We know that ... It will be useful to ...
2. The subject is difficult that ... The score can be given ... Their future not only depends on ...	2. He/she will face the ... It will be their obstacle I prefer to use ...
3. The materials can be studied ... The time can be use However, the fairness is questionable because...	3. They can use the internet ...
4. Their level is almost the ... Their Score is higher than ... The E-learning is a new ...	4. We are not ... It is very unreasonable ... They need to work.
5. Presents are the most thing... Critical Thinking is improving ... Fairness is the only one that ...	5. It will be better if ... We have some activity ...
6. The method is more boring... The guidance is unclear ... The module is useless ...	6. We are not... They asked us to ... It is funny when ...
7. ... Model that we need to ... Their absence is counted as ... Lecture absence is an unavoidable thing	7. We are not only ... It is very ... They see that they ...
8. The students can't learn The lecture needs to be given... Materials need to be delivered and ...	8. They only see the positive... We need to see from ...
9. E-learning method something new ... The seminar method is very ... Students felt bored.	9. He/she cannot explain It is a technology that ... We , as a student, need...
10. E-mail is needed to send the assignment ... The handout can be sent ... The book can be downloaded ...	10. It (as an e-mail) is beneficial... It (as the Book) can be downloaded from ...

Noun modifiers	Pronoun
	<i>We, as a student, need the internet</i>
11. <i>Assignment</i> must be done in <i>The method</i> is not practiced at all. <i>The ways of thinking</i> do not have improvement ...	11. <i>They</i> only want to ... <i>We</i> still need to be ...
12. <i>Students</i> cannot underestimate ... <i>The lecture</i> needs to improve ... <i>The classroom</i> needs to be comfortable	12. <i>They</i> are some key ... <i>We</i> must find ...
13. <i>Chat room</i> is something useful ... <i>Technology</i> is something that people use ... <i>Internet</i> is the leading eye ...	13. <i>It</i> has been in every ... <i>We</i> cannot live ... <i>There</i> are some key factors ...
14. <i>The E-books</i> exist because ... <i>The classroom</i> is something ... <i>All universities</i> need to have ...	14. <i>It</i> is the key ... <i>They</i> can access the ...
15. <i>The lecture</i> can only give ... <i>The test</i> cannot be ... <i>Students</i> can be cheating in their ...	15. <i>We</i> felt that presents are... <i>They</i> can be a clue ...

Source: Data Collected by Author, 2023

In Table 1 above, we can see the use of pronouns and noun modifiers. On the other hand, we could see another result of pronoun use. Labov, in 1990, stated that language is also used for showing their social class. They use noun modifiers to make it more transparent. (Deuchar, 2020)The level could vary. Labov stated that it can be from their educational background or their position in the workplace. It also stated that men are generalized as the “leaders” in every section of their lives. On the other hand, if we see women's positions, they must be divided into some background. It could be their position or their education.

Another linguist, Robin Lakoff, argued that pronouns are used for some reason. One reason is to show any “neutral” or “unmarked” position. (Loureiro-Porto & Hiltunen, 2020)He stated that they are changing. He argued that when male authors use the pronoun, they mention a class thing specifically. On the other hand, when women used the pronoun, it meant connecting to a person or another subject to mention.

4.3 Men’s Argumentative Writing

We can see the difference between the men’s authors. They used the opposite of the women’s writing. The researcher also found the answers in men’s writing. Compared to the women’s writing, they used noun modifiers more often than pronouns. Men used pronouns more often than noun modifiers, especially when we wanted to compare the results to the women’s authors. In Figure 2, it is shown statistically that men were using the noun specifiers more often. The difference was almost fifty percent between the use of noun modifiers and pronouns. Table 2 states that men use 9.07 for the noun specifiers. They used 5 noun modifiers as the lowest frequency and 13 as the highest. On the other hand, men were statistically proof that they used more pronouns. They used about 18.6 pronouns in their writing. We could see that they are using 24 times as

the highest and 15 times as the lowest of the use of pronouns. So, it meant men use about 18,67 pronouns when they write in one passage.

It was different with the women. Men’s pronoun and noun specifiers have a massive gap between them, almost reaching 50 percent. A points difference is a big gap if we compare it with the women, who only have a points gap. We can see it in the table below to make it clear to preview.

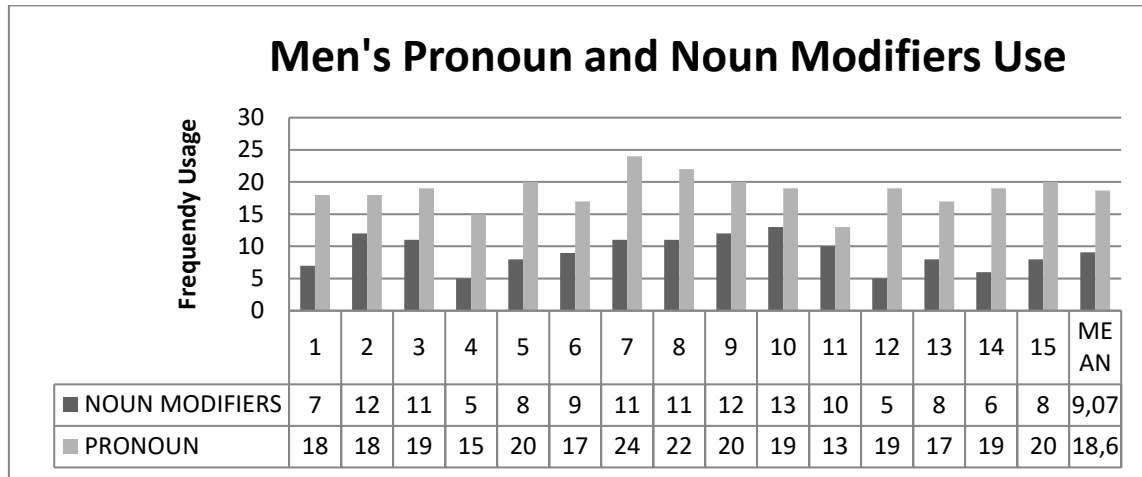


Figure 2. Men’s Pronoun and Noun Modifiers Use (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

It was different with the women. Men’s pronoun and noun specifiers have a massive gap between them, almost reaching 50 percent. A points difference is a big gap if we compare it with the women, who only have a points gap. We can see it in the table below to make it clear to preview.

Table 2. The Example of Noun Specifiers and Pronoun Use in Men

Noun Specifiers	Pronoun
1. The lecture needs to send Student, however, needs ... Material is not as easy	1. We as a student do not have ... They cannot be learned by
2. Subject can be learnt ... Students can use the ... Lectures do not need to ...	2. It is a technology ... He/She cannot always ... They can send the materials ...
3. Material can be found in the ... E-book is a useful ... The Internet needs to be explored ...	3. They can be the instruments ... we have to be active ...
4. Subject is difficult if ... Students need to ... The thesis is not something ...	4. We need the lecture to ... It will be difficult ... They need to make sure that ...
5. Subject can be learnt ... Student needs to see and ... The lecture must take the ...	5. It is impossible to ... We have to count ... I never agree ...

Noun Specifiers	Pronoun
6. The Internet is something that ... Presence is not a must in ... Students can learn in their ...	6. We do not need to spend ... They can be used to ... It is a digital era that ...
7. Material is not as difficult as ... Students can learn by ... Lectures do not need ...	7. They need to ... We are busy.
8. Thesis cannot do by ... Speaking needs to take ... Writing need to write ...	8. They are not reasonable ... It is not dependent on ... I suggest ...
9. The Internet is something to ... E-learning is a new method ... Students are very ...	9. It is possible to not ... We can use the technology ...
10. Students need to see the ... Lectures have some rights to ... Subjects cannot be scored if ...	10. I still want to ... They still need guidance ... We are still learning ...
11. Lecture is not a God ... Students still have some rights to have ...	11. They sometimes take ... We cannot get good judgment ... I want to make my career also ...
12. Materials can be taken in ... Lecture also can use ... Technology is beneficial if ...	12. It is weird ... They need to use the technology ...
13. IT is something ... Technology is everywhere ... The computer is not a thing ...	13. It needs our consideration ... They have to learn
14. Subjects , for several, cannot ... Writing needs a text that ... Reading , on the other hand, ...	14. They are some skills ... I also agree that ...
15. Subjects is difficult ... Lectures have the guidance to the ... Students need the guidance ...	15. They are still learning ... We can be arrogant ... I still need the ...

Source: Data Collected by Author, 2023

Table 2 above shows us that there are some indicators for using the pronoun. (Argamon et al., 2003) They were also developing a system for indicating the use of noun modifiers or pronouns. The system is divided into three categories: first-person, second-person, and third-person. They stated that when noun modifiers are used, it means the author wants to clarify the “things” that they discussed.

4. 4 The Differences Between Men and Women in The Argumentative Writing

After doing the research, the author found some differences between men and women authors. The first is in the syntactical aspect. In this aspect, the author finds that men authors more often use personal pronouns than women. We can see this thoroughly in Figure 3 below.

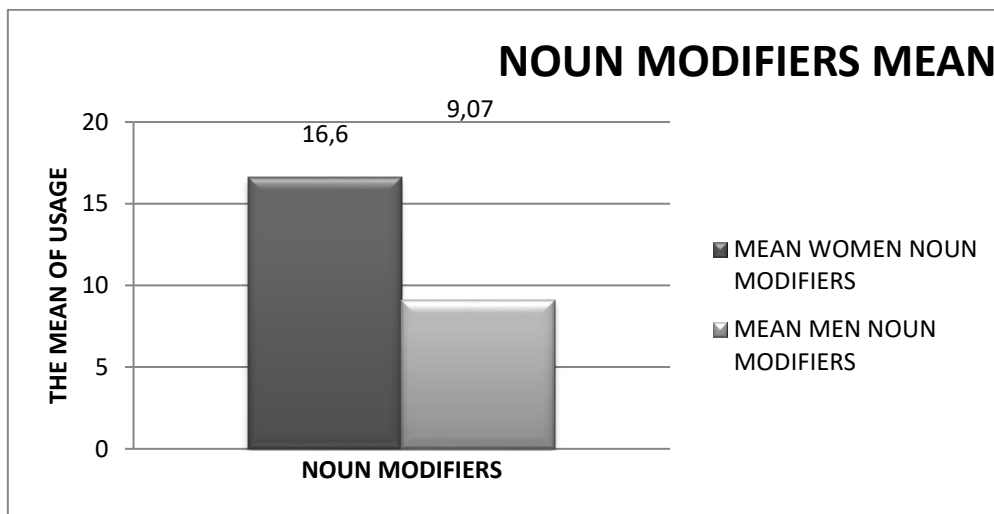


Figure 3. The Mean of Noun Modifiers (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

When noun modifiers are used, the mean of differences between men and women is almost half. This could have happened because the backgrounds of the samples were in different areas.

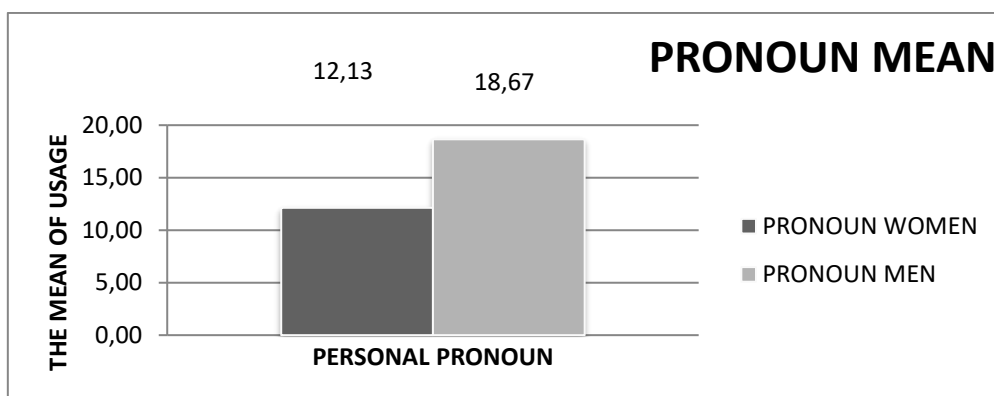


Figure 4. The Mean of Pronoun (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

Figure 4 above shows that the result did not differ from the noun specifiers graphic. The result was also different from the result from the previous study. In contrast, in women's writing, pronouns connect to a person or another subject mentioned. Meanwhile, when men used noun specifiers, they wanted to clarify something they wrote. On the other hand, when a woman uses the noun specifiers, she is in a higher position or more professional than the reader.

4.5 Men's and Women's Argumentative Writing

Another theory says that men and women differ in how they present their writing, not only to show their arguments but also to show how confident they are with their arguments. On the other hand, women authors often used their personal response to

give the solution or to solve the problem. There were many indicators of the strength of the arguments. We can see the difference in the table below.

The author only discussed the use of the facts, and I am sure the arguments or the facts follow that. The author chose it because of the facts, which I am sure could show how confident they are with their arguments. It was possible if one text used more than one of those phrases. It was because they needed more than one argument when they needed to show their arguments in the argumentative writings.

It is assumed that male authors more often use strong indicators to express their arguments. On the other hand, we could not argue that men were not using weak arguments. It was because the author only sees their argumentative writing, not interviews or observes them.

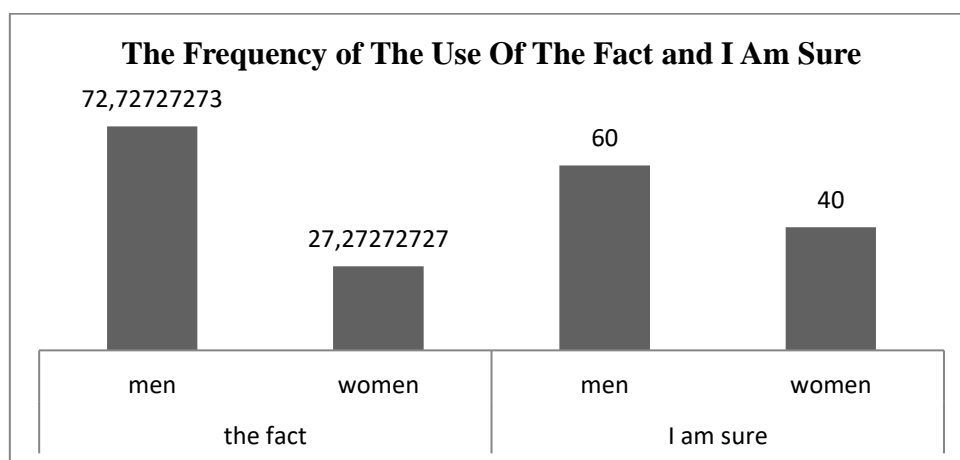


Figure 5. The frequency of the use of the fact and, I am sure (Data Collected by Author, 2023).

As we can see from the table, men use the fact more often, I am sure with 60%. On the other hand, women use it more often, I am sure with 40%. The same situation happened in fact. Men use the fact more often, 72%, while women use it for 28%. We can see the use of the fact in Table 3 below.

Table 3. I am sure of the use of fact in men’s writing.

Men indicator
<p>1 the fact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Even though presence is important, it will not be seen as a requirement to get a job.</i> • <i>The fact is that presence is one of the factors in the lecture that gives the score.</i> • <i>In fact, some universities have long-distance studies that use the Internet to give students a different way to study.</i> • <i>In fact, we need to fulfill the presence percentage to do the final test.</i> • <i>Students do not only study; they also need to do their job, which is to spend their time.</i> • <i>Presence is one important criterion for fulfilling the final test requirement. Some students can pass the subject with an A score even though they are often absent from the classroom.</i> • <i>It is important that the company just sees the GPA, not the percentage of presence.</i> • <i>They can use the internet, but they do not have the chance to ask the lecturer directly.</i>
<p>2 I am sure</p>

Men indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am sure that students who are often absent have lower scores than others.</i> • <i>I am sure the company sees the score, not the presence.</i> • <i>I am sure that 75% of students here are working.</i> • <i>If they do not attend the class, they will struggle to take the test.</i> • <i>I am sure because, in my company, they only see the GPA, not the presence.</i>

The researcher could only assume that men were using more logical thinking and women were using their feelings. This was because the researcher was only analyzing their writing, not interviewing or observing them.

Table 4. I am sure of the use of Facts in women's writing.

Women indicator
<p>1 in fact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because the students do not have to be in class and attend the lecture, they can find a stepping stone in their career world. • Because Indonesia has a vast area nationwide, students may come from outside Jakarta or the country. • If a student is absent for more than 40%, then the student is not allowed to take the final test. Moreover, if the student is not having the final test, it is possible for that student to not pass the subject. <p>I am sure</p> <p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you know your exact capability, I am sure you will speak English out loud with confidence. • I am sure with the presence because the lecture has said that we must be active students in the class because he will know who is serious with my subject

In Table 4 above, we can observe the significant variations in how they are presented. In contrast, some women used logical thinking. They showed their arguments, but not as strong as men. In the men, we could see the use of the fact and, I am sure. In contrast, the use of the evidence in women was less than in men. Men use 13 times to show and clarify their arguments about their writing. On the other hand, women only used 5 times to clarify their arguments. Women authors usually lacked confidence, but men authors lacked clarity. However, if we look at the result, men use bold arguments and give clarity from their arguments more often than women.

The clarity here meant that men tended to use their arguments. They only saw what had happened. Men also saw that they often obtained the evidence for their arguments from what they felt and saw. They argued from their experience. Men used more powerful assumptions than used arguments. Typically, men who were to the point of the problem made them, sometimes forgot to add some evidence to make their arguments strong enough. Not only did they forget some "good" evidence, but they also usually jumped from one argument to another. Meanwhile, women wrote differently from men. It seemed they did not have a strong argument, but they had facts that could be used. Women tend to make an orderly composition, composing their text carefully. They did not jump from one argument to another but made a "flow" in their

composition. This is what the linguist said about the lack of consistency itself. It was about the arguments and how to communicate their argument in a strong composition.

CONCLUSION

The authors discovered syntactic disparities between men and women when using pronouns and noun modifiers. Firstly, the author found the differences between men and women in using pronoun and noun modifiers. Some linguists said that the use of pronouns and noun modifiers in men and women differed. Women use the pronoun to connect from one subject to another. On the other hand, men used a pronoun to mention a specific subject. Secondly, the author found that men and women presented their arguments differently. Men seemed more confident than women. They used the indicators more often than women. Their arguments were more substantial than those of women. They lacked substantial in showing their arguments. They tended to use their arguments and assumptions to make their composition.

On the other hand, women use a more passive voice than men when they present their arguments. However, they are more clear in their arguments. They have “flow” in their compositions, which makes their compositions stronger.

BIODATA

Mario Nugroho Willyarto S.Kom, M.Pd, has been active in education since 2001, teaching at various levels, including higher education. He is a Binus University lecturer specializing in Indonesian Language, Business Process, Leadership, and Cross-Cultural Management. His research focuses on education, social education, and communication. Currently, he is studying social education and communication strategies for managing stray cat populations through Trap-Neuter-Return programs in areas like Bekasi, Bogor, Malang, Pati, and Depok, utilizing technology and information systems to support these initiatives.

Ignatius Gatot Suseno has been working in education since 2011. He is now a vice principal at St. John Gading Serpong. His passion for education brought him to the awareness of teaching in elementary school. He is now focusing on education at a younger age.

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