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GENDERS PATTERNS ON FACEBOOK: A JORDANIAN SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The emergence of social media has demonstrated impacts on Jordanian males' and females' culture and language. These impacts highlighted the differences between women's and men's usage patterns on social media that have been a subject of interest to scholars. Jordanian culture is bounded by values, traditions, and norms from Islam and Arabic values. Thus, the present study aims to figure out gender prototypes on social networking sites, namely Facebook, taking Jordan society as the norm. It also investigates how much Fakebook's use has changed males' and females' social, cultural, and linguistic behaviors. The study is a mixture of sociolinguistic and anthropological research as both language and culture are studied. Discourse and thematic analysis were performed to analyze the collected data from 80 Facebook active users whose ages range from 19 to 45 (40 male and 40 female). The results showed the differences between males and females users at different levels. Females tend to use informal language to comment on females' posts and formal language to comment on males' posts. Further, most males explicitly use their real images as profile pictures, while females hide their real pictures. Females disclose their real names on their profiles just as males, but females tend to hide their contact information due to privacy concerns. Females and males are almost the same in using Facebook for social purposes, either in topics or groups. The results can be interpreted as reflections of Jordanian culture and social values that shape women's and men's positions and attitudes in Jordanian communities. This study recommends further research on social networks, considering other social variables such as education, age, and geography to pinpoint the exact patterns of users that are relatively diverse according to the speech communities.

Keywords:

Gender, Jordanian Sociolinguistics, Facebook, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), Speech Communities

Introduction and Background

Differences between women and men have always been a subject of interest to people. These differences exist at multiple levels at any given society. However, with the emergence of social networking, these gender differences have been influenced and changed. Facebook is one of these social networking sites that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, share information, and create a personal background. Consequently, Facebook has opened the door for the scrutiny of gender differences in terms of language and profile picture, profile identity, language variation, privacy issue, groups, and topics both gender use (Nazir, 2012).

Nevertheless, Herring (2000) deduced that both face-to-face interaction and computer-mediated interaction share the same linguistic features that signal gender, including verbosity, assertiveness, use of profanity, politeness, rudeness, typed representations of smiling and laughter, and degree of interactive engagement. On the other hand, Herring and Stoerger (2013) argued that CMC had been claimed to make gender invisible on online communications; this allows women and men to participate and be recognized for their contributions equally. In contrast with traditional male dominance observed in face-to-face communication, the results run counter to the claim that gender is invisible or irrelevant in CMC or that CMC equalizes gender-based power and status differentials.

Naveed (2014: 9708) indicated that countless studies, including that from Lakoff (1975) and Coates (1988), were aimed at identifying differences of gender in face-to-face interaction, where "females were disadvantaged, given less turns to speak, and dominated by the presence of men." With the emergence of social media applications, Facebook, in particular, such dominance has become questionable. Both genders share knowledge and ideas equally, and the traditional women, who are either not allowed to speak up and share their feelings with others or do not have the time or opportunity to do so, can express their feelings without restrictions (Naveed, 2014).

Social networks have infiltrated into the Jordanian society due to communication development that enabled most citizens to own Facebook profiles. As these various emerging social media platforms offer its users' liberal tools, freedom of expression, self-presentation methods, and equalizing both genders (Naveed, 2014), it is unclear how Jordanian males and females Facebook users are going to stereotype themselves on these social platforms, namely Facebook. The blogger Jean Turgeon (2017) indicated that people's communication ways in the new digital era have reshaped, and technology has changed every aspect of human life. In this regard, an individual's identity in real life has been transformed by the created digital identity, and the culture of real life is also transformed to a commonly created digital culture (Çöteli, (2019).

Thus, whether Jordanian males and females users would reshape and represent themselves on Facebook according to the community, cultural norms, and the Arabic language would remodel

itself and deviate from the standard Arabic are under question. However, it is critical to mention that Jordan's situation is identified with a firm culture, various dialects and diglossic language situations, and different understandings of gender (particularly females), where the Islamic and tribal values dominate prevail. For example, Al-Amadihi (1989) revealed that the prejudicial attitudes in the language use demean women and honor men such as gender naming. Mostly, women in Jordan take part in their identity by relating to men. This social practice and women's presentation as sex objects might set hurdles in front of women's liberal presentation. Because of that, gender language patterns and self-presentation of Jordanian Facebook users, which are mainly conveyed by language and other features on Facebook, might be or might not be bounded by cultural limitations; however, such bounds within the Arab community, specifically in Jordan, are vivid in different levels.

In light of the social media impacts on Jordanian society, this study explores the extent to which gender patterns social, cultural, and linguistic behaviors are being changed due to the use of Facebook as it has drastically penetrated our society and language. Precisely, this study aims to explore gender choices, differences, and patterns in terms of language, profile picture, profile identity disclosure, groups, and topics on Facebook pages. Accordingly, the current study is a mixture of sociolinguistic and anthropological research as both language and culture are studied.

Although many studies Hall (1996); Kapidzic and Herring (2011); Shafie et al. (2012); Alnawasrah (2017) have been carried out on gender differences at multiple levels, much of the literature has focused on the English-speaking countries and other contexts. According to Banikalef and Bataineh (2017), Facebook provides social experts with a unique chance to observe behaviors in a real-life setting. Thus, online users' behaviors are culturally specific. None of the previous Jordanian studies explored users' identities, personal and contact information disclosure, users' profiles pictures patterns, and users' group choices on Facebook to the best of the researcher's knowledge. Therefore, this study will extend and provide more insights on previous research and contribute to the field of Jordanian sociolinguistic and anthropology linguistic as it uncovers whether Jordanian males and females social and language patterns on Facebook profiles mirrored their real-life behaviors.

Literature Review

Gender linguistic preferences have been analyzed at diverse levels that include stylistic variations and social variations. Scholars like Lakoff (1975) indicated that discrimination against women has usually been blatant in society because of the way females are taught to use language. For example, girls do not ask questions, and they should be polite. Herring (2013) stated that men dominated CMC, but as more women began to venture online, gender studies on CMC started appearing with greater frequency. Remarkably, Kramarae and Taylor (1992), Sutton (1994), and Hall (1996) indicated that in CMC, males are more likely to post longer messages, begin and close discussions in mixed-sex groups, assert opinions strongly, use crude language (including insults and profanity), and demonstrate an adversarial orientation towards their interlocutors. In contrast, females tend to post relatively short messages and are more likely to qualify and justify their assertions, apologize, express support of others, and in general, manifest an "aligned" orientation towards their interlocutors.

In a recent study in Jordan that investigates written speech differences between Jordanian males and females on Facebook, Ammari (2019) highlighted that males were more likely to use swear

words than females while using comments made by males featured chat language just as females. However, a small proportion of males' comments in the news section used standard language while most comments made by males used colloquial language. Ammari (2019) added that while emojis were fairly equally used by both genders in the comedy pages but less in the news pages, females are less likely to comment on politically sensitive news pages, preferring to remain more conservative comment on more neutral topics on satirical pages. Notably, Al- Qabbani (2014) reported that the most used status is social, and the least used one is the economic purpose status among Jordanian males and females. Males used political statuses more than religious statuses while females used religious statuses more often than males.

Gender differences were also found at the level of paralinguistic features of emotional expression on CMC. Banikalef & Rababah (2018) revealed that women showed greater emotional expressivity, especially positive emotions and internalizing negative emotions such as sadness. Kapidzic and Herring (2011) also illustrated that gender differences were exhibited at the discourse-pragmatic level, where boys tend to use language that is more assertive, resolute, and active. Meanwhile, at the stylistic level, boys' communications tend to adopt a more flirtatious and overtly sexual tone.

Kapidzic and Herring (2011) indicated that social media platforms had proposed new prospects for sharing self-presentational content, producing oneself online identity, managing impressions, and promoting personality in various ways. Accordingly, Kapidzic and Herring (2011) highlighted that gender differences were found in users' profile photographs on social media platforms. Notably, girls, more often than boys, showed suggestive clothing or would undress, and more often than boys would present seductive behavior. In this regard, Shafie et al. (2012) indicated that online identity and visual impression were reconstructed based on values associated with peer perception, social connection, and popularity on social media. Shafie et al. (2012) found out that students upload pictures and information representing their real identities and ideal self as their online identities. Notably, male users used their real names as their Facebook usernames and used their pictures as their profile pictures more frequently than female users. Similarly, Alnawasrah (2017) examined Facebook status updates for 50 Saudi participants in text-only, text and a photo, text and a video, text, and a URL link, or a photo only. The findings revealed that males and females did not differ significantly on any disclosure levels, except for females' profile photos, which continue to be considered sensitive information and even possibly stigmatizing information.

Gender differences were also found in the purpose of using Facebook. Nazir (2012) indicated that women were using Facebook to maintain existing relationships, pass the time, and be entertained. On the other hand, men were more likely to go to Facebook to develop new relationships or meet new people. In a similar vein, Mazman (2011) illustrated that making new contacts was the main aim of males while females use Facebook to maintain existing relationships, make new relationships, and for academic purposes.

In the view of the above literature, gender differences were approached and found in various levels with a large scale of focus on gender marked language on CMC. However, little attention was given to the self-presentations like users' choices of profile photos, identities disclosure, user groups, and topic choices, particularly in Jordan.

Research Methodology

Generally, the study adopted the qualitative descriptive research design as it aligns with the content analysis used in this study. Although this research belongs to the qualitative realm, the percentages and occurrences were used to support the qualitative results.

Participants and Sitting

The research's sample comprises 80 Facebook users, precisely 40 males and 40 females, whose first language is Arabic. Creswell (2014) stated that the number of sites or samples engaged in qualitative research has no specific limits. However, the size of the sample could be determined upon data saturation. Therefore, the current sample size is expected to provide rich data about Facebook users' profiles contents. All participants were students from Yarmouk University and Jadara University in Irbid city who attended classes with the researcher. The researcher used his Facebook account to choose the sample, making it easy to access the participants' Facebook accounts. Users were selected randomly apart from their region, social class, education level, and majors, but their ages ranged between 19 and 26 because these ages were relatively young and were considered active users on Facebook according to the statistics in 2014 (<http://www.statista.com>). The researcher chose recognized users to avoid any gender-swapping.

Data Collection

All users' accounts and profile names were downloaded and saved on the researcher's laptop and notebook to avoid missing information. The researcher did not inform any selected user of the sample about monitoring their Facebook accounts. In this study, Facebook was the only source for compiling the data. The selected users' profiles were systematically monitored for three weeks, and the researcher gathered natural occurring data and patterns from the users' profiles' based on the research aims. Data included comments, written posts, links (videos, pictures), user groups, users' profiles' pictures, users' identity, users' personal and contact information, and any updates in the users' profile walls. The data were categorized based on the gender and the emerged patterns that fulfill the research aims, then copied and printed on word documents, and then refined.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was employed to analyze the refined and categorized data and then provide full descriptions of the findings. According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), Content analysis enables the researcher to define the codes before and during data analysis, and the codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings. Accordingly, the textual data analysis includes comments on users posts and written posts based on any gender marked linguistic features like emoticons, netspeak features, pragmatic discourse patterns, and any deviations from modern standard Arabic. Further, the analysis aims to identify the occurrence of these linguistic features and interpret the attitudes and behavioral responses to the comments to understand the gender's patterns.

Users' profile pictures were analyzed based on whether their profiles contained a photograph and the substitutes for images. Those with photographs were further coded for the variable dress used by Kapidzic and Herring (2011), including demure, suggestive, and partially clad. The posture and the gaze of users' pictures were explored, attempting to read the users' intent behavior. However, users' identities patterns were explored in terms of usernames, personal,

and contact information levels of disclosure. Users' group and topic choices were analyzed and categorized as they emerged from the data.

The findings were interpreted in light of the previous gender CMC research, Jordanians' socialization patterns, and Jordan culture norms in real life. Due to privacy reasons and cultural sensitivity, the researcher did not publish any pictures or names that might disclose the selected sample's identity.

Findings and Discussion

Different themes were formed to address the research purpose that are given below:

Language of both genders on Facebook

In contrast with Abdaoui (2013), the current research findings indicated that both males and females were likely to use the colloquial language (informality), with relative speech community differences, to communicate with each other; this trend was adopted due to the speech-like features of Facebook mixed with written ones. The example below illustrates the informality of language that both genders used.

يسعد قلبك هديوول والله انك طيووية جدن جدن

*God bless you Hadeeel I swear you are very very kind
.God bless you Hadeel. I swear you are very kind*

Meanwhile, females are mostly inclined to comment on their peers' posts (females) and do not tend to comment on males' posts. When they do so, they use standard language to comment on males posts. In contrast, they use informal language when they do comment on their female friends' posts. On the other hand, males generally comment on both male and female posts. This finding relates strongly to the females' social position as subordinate to males in Jordanian society and the social restrictions imposed on females.

Another remarkable finding concerning females is the use of chat rooms language (Arabizi) to comment on their female friends. About 20% of the females tend to use this pattern with their peers while males seldom use this pattern to comment. Moreover, it was apparent that the speech community is a determinant factor when females use this pattern because it is not easy to understand the phonemic variation used in such language. The examples below illustrate the use of Arabizi language:

la wallah ma shtt 3na zikom bl ordon.

I swear that I did not see anyone like you in Jordan.

7beebte l zoooooog bkol eshi.

My love, you are nice in everything.

Contractions, letter insertions, excessive use of punctuation, and spelling mistakes are common in both genders' comments and posts but are more frequent in female comments and posts. These patterns are likely to occur in chat rooms because they are categorized as synchronous while Facebook is characterized as asynchronous online communication where authors are able to plan, review and control their texts more than in synchronous media like chats (Sapter, 2012). Thus, it seems that CMC language in general and chat rooms language specifically are transferred to Facebook. Examples are illustrated below:

norms. In addition, female users' real pictures on Facebook might be misinterpreted by males or even copied to be used in other media, which might inflame social troubles. Furthermore, it is the females' responsive position in Jordanian families which tighten the grip on females' behaviors. Females who tend to use their real images belong to an open and high social class (urban areas) where the Jordanian conformist norms are less critical than the rural and Bedouin areas where conformist tribes are relatively committed to social norms.

Gender	Sample	100%
Males	40	87.5 %
Females	40	17.5 %

Table 1: Males and Females Using Real Pictures

Both Females and males who do not use their real pictures tended to represent themselves by using other options instead of their real pictures. Females had a tendency to present themselves by selecting other women's pictures who either look like them or admire them. The second favorite option for females is beautiful kids' images that match with their soft feelings and femininity. The overall profiles pictures substitutes made by females are friendly and express beauty such as beautiful eyes and cars while men were inclined to express their sorrow by portraying condolence transcripts. Sometimes men used pictures of a handsome man or an attractive flower.

The attire of both males and females was culture-specific and demonstrated the norms in Jordan. On the one hand, men were likely to wear a casual outfit without any embellishments and according to social norms while women who used their real picture violated the social values by wearing seductive fashions, but it was obvious that odd outfits such as shirts and t-shirts were missing. Another significant finding was that most males tended to present their whole figure and present themselves as serious by gazing directly at the viewer (almost without a smile) and adopting the confronting posture. On the other hand, females who used their real pictures had a tendency to smile, slide their body in a seductive posture, and use backgrounds with beautiful colors and beautiful females (females' group images) which might be interpreted as a self-commodification. Although Facebook had liberalized some females in their dress or behavior, most of the above features assured the traditional Arabic male prototype characterized by demureness and the conformist Arabic females who hide their identity.

Genders' Identities Patterns (Names, Basic Information, and Political Attitudes Disclosure)

Contrary to prediction, females had a tendency to use their real names on their profiles just as males. It seems that Facebook had equalized both genders in this respect. Both genders' overall trend was to use first and last names on their profiles, which somewhat identified the user's identity. Names patterns appear to be aligned with popular Jordanian names for both genders except for a few females who were inclined to use western names, such as: "Riva," "Dania," and "Madleen."

In line with Kapidzic and Herring (2015), females tend to hide their contact information (92.5%) which might be misunderstood or misused by males in a flirtatious way whereas males had comparatively more freedom to provide either their full contact information or at least their mobile phone numbers. Also, the majority of males were inclined to provide their basic information such as gender, date of birth, religion, languages, social status, place of work or study, and their major of study, while females were less concerned in disclosing too much

information. These findings demonstrated females' greater concerns about privacy and identity disclosure on social networking sites (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009).

Despite the fact that both genders on Facebook could present themselves in a fallacious way, the selected sample chose to present themselves realistically, which supported both genders' real identity but without significant harm to the female's reputation. Expressing and disclosing political attitudes was favored by males while females were prone to hide their political positions. This fact is connected directly to real-life in Jordan where females are less involved in politics. Nonetheless, both genders' political stances were in favor of the country (Jordan) and its leadership, "King Abdullah II" expressing their patriotism and loyalty.

Gender	Basic information disclosure	Political attitude disclosure	Contact information Disclosure	Gender Identities Disclosure(names)
Females	60%	10%	7.5%	97.5%
Males	90%	40%	40%	97.5%

Table 4: Users' Identities, Basic and Contact Information, and Political Attitude Level of Disclosure

Groups That Both Gender Use on Facebook

Any user of Facebook can set up or join any group to fulfill specific purposes. Females had an overall tendency to join more groups than males did. The above finding indicated that females were more social and interactive and used Facebook more than males, which aligns with Brenner's (2012) findings. For example, one female joined 514 groups while the least one joined two groups, but the types of groups that both genders joined were relatively different. Both genders were almost the same in joining social groups to socialize and keep in touch with old and new friends; relatives, tribes' members; exchange towns and cities news, help cooperative associations which gather money for poor people. Other social groups were formed to connect expatriate Jordanians. Another social group was interested in dealing with unfamiliar ethics in Jordanian society to reform them socially. These groups would generally emulate Jordanian social structure and social dominated values, but they are varied according to users' interests.

On the one hand, sports and political groups were favored by males while females rarely joined political and sports groups. Commercial groups were also favored by males where they exchanged news about the selling and buying used items, cars, apartments, and other items. On the other hand, cooking, education (English learning is the most frequent one), and related religious groups were comparatively favored by females. Both genders similarly joined entertainment groups where users posted films, jokes, and tourism places to visit, and romantic groups where users expressed their feelings, emotions, and love experiences. Obviously, religious, educational, and social groups were the most common groups that both genders were inclined to join.

Topics Both Genders Use

Utilizing Facebook with various options, users are able to write, download links, videos, pictures, and articles to share with friends. It is clear that females and males were almost the same in using Facebook for social purposes. In line with Al- Qabbani (2014), these purposes

diverged to fulfill users' intents, social events and occasions (death, marriage celebration, volunteer work); college and work activities; and personal activities. Another social feature that could be vividly seen is wisdom and social advice which are mostly employed by males urging friends to comply with social values.

Females also favored religious topics. This finding is connected directly to the previous finding where females were inclined to join religious groups more often than males. Various multimedia options were used, such as Quran video, preaching, guidance pictures, and virtue promotion. Females favored entertainment topics while males favored political topics about Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. Economic (commercial) and education topics were the least used by both genders.

Topics	Females	Males
Social	57.5%	55%
Religious	47.5%	40%
Educational	2.5%	0
Romantic	7.5%	7.5%
Political	2.5%	15%
Entertainment	35%	12.5%
Commercial	0	2.5%

Table 5: Users' Preferred Topics

Conclusion

The paper showed that gender differentiation occurs at multiple levels on Facebook. In this study, these differences were vivid in language, the visual presentation that both gender use, genders' identities, basic and name information disclosure, and political attitudes disclosure; groups and topics both genders use on Facebook.

In terms of language, the research highlighted that females were inclined to use more emoticons, Arabizi, letter insertions, contractions, excessive use of punctuation, and spelling mistakes than males did. Profiles visual presentation and profile basic information were relatively subjected to social norms in Jordan for both genders. Both genders use Facebook mainly for social and religious purposes. These findings reflect the females' position in the Jordan community as well as the cultural norms and values dominating the Jordanian society.

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