

How gender is described: An insight from a spoken corpus

Risako Azemoto
Lancaster University
risako.azemoto@gmail.com

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1. Motivation

Gender is currently a subject of great research interest, and numerous attempts have been made by scholars to show the relationship between language and gender. For example, Pearce (2008) discovered that the collocates of the noun lemmas “man” and “woman” represent gender stereotypes. Schmid (2003) showed the gender difference regarding the tendency to use certain words. What seems to be lacking, however, is an examination of the difference in attitude toward each gender by females and males.

2. Purpose

The purposes of this study are 1) to reveal the differences between females and males in terms of how they describe gender and 2) to show which gender displays a larger discrepancy in describing “she” and “he”.

3. Methodology

To consider how females and males describe each gender, first, the word she was searched for Spoken BNC 2014, using a restricted query to select only female speakers. Second, we searched for she’s adjective collocations (e.g. mad, cute, and etc.). Third, the collocations were annotated using University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language Semantic Analysis System (USAS) tag sets. Fourth, the collocations were classified according to the tag. In this study, this procedure is called “female-she” (how FEMALES describe SHE) analysis. Therefore, after “female-she” analysis, the same procedure was applied to “male-she”, “female-he”, and “male-he” analysis. After that, the result of the “female-she” analysis was compared with that of the “male-she” analysis, whilst the result of the “female-he” analysis with that of the “male-he” analysis. Building on these results, we examined the degree to which females and males use the same adjectives when they describe different genders.

4. Result

By comparing the collocations of she and he in terms of the speakers’ gender, it became evident that males tend to describe gender using a narrow variety of innocuous words, whereas females tend to use words that express a negative judgment towards a person’s nature. By looking at the expressions females and males use to describe each respective gender, it is clear that females use distinct words between when they describe men and women.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that while males identify people in a relatively neutral way, females tend to identify people differently on the basis of sex and they tend to be more judgmental.

References

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