

## **Gender Representation in Men's and Women's Fashion Magazine**

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### **Abstract**

*This research aims to study the use of basic and specific color terms used in men's and women's magazines. The use of specific color terms was proposed by Lakoff (1973). The specific and basic color terms may distinguish the gender of the writers in the magazines. The study analyzed women's writings in Cosmopolitan Magazine published electronically by <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/> and men's writings in GQ Magazine published electronically by <https://www.gq.com/>. The data was analyzed using Lakoff's (1975) and Steinvall's (2002) theoretical frameworks. Lakoff (1973) argued that women used language features differently. One of the language features stated by Lakoff (1973) was the use of specific color terms. The findings of the research show that there has been a change of specific color term usages, both genders are now using basic and specific color terms. However, men use less specific color terms. The use of language features may be affected by values – ideology, culture and personality from the language users.*

*Keywords: Basic Color Terms, Specific Color Terms, Gender, Language Use*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although discussions about gender have been started a long time ago, the discussion of this topic still attracts many researchers. Some researchers conduct studies on the use of language features by women and men in social media (Bamman, Eisenstein, & Schnoebelen, 2014; Burger, et al, 2011; Argamon, et al, 2007). Other studies (Zimman, 2017; Collins, 2016) discuss whether gender is binary or not. Lakoff (1975; 1973) and Holmes & Wilson (2017) study women language and powers in society. Lakoff in one of her studies (1973) suggested that women and men had different language features. Many studies of language features had been done before Lakoff (1973), but Holmes & Wilson (2017) argue that the studies of language features that have been done before Lakoff (1973) are methodologically unsatisfying. The studies of language features before Lakoff (1973) had been recorded the data in a laboratory and with a given topic. In addition, Holmes & Wilson (2017) support the language features suggested by Lakoff (1973). They state that the Lakoff's study is not recorded in a lab. Moreover, the topics in the conversation are not chosen by the researcher. It may hinder the study from biases.

In her study, Lakoff (1973) suggests that there are ten language features which are specifically only used by women. It means that men will not use specific language features in daily life. One of the features is the use of specific color terms. Lakoff (1973) states that the use of specific colors by women happen because men hand over things that do not become their concerns, such as color discrimination, to women. This argument also implies that women are not expected to make decisions, hence they focus on small matters.

The theory (Lakoff, 1973) was introduced in 1973. In the time, men still dominated powers. At the time, there was not any country in the world whose women led on the highest political position. In the government, industries, and military institutions men still dominate the highest positions (Harris, 1977).

In fact, there are many changes in the working world and society power. Now many women around the world do the jobs that are used to be handled by men. Many women are on the highest political positions. Today, there are 20 women manage the office of Head of State or Head of Government all over the world (2018, Women and Political," 2018, para. 1). From 193 countries all over the world, women lead 9241 out of 39034 seats in the lower house or single house parliaments. In upper house or senate, women lead 1634 out of 6926 seats (Women in National Parliaments, 2018). In Indonesia, people recognize Ms Susi, Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and Ms Mulyani, Minister of Finance. Because of many changes in political positions and the working world, men and women may need to assimilate in job positions as well as language features. Many men work as models, stylists, and fashion designers. In doing the jobs, men may need to use women's language features, specifically the use of specific colors.

This paper aims to observe the differences of basic and specific color terms used by men and women in magazines published electronically. Since some linguists (Holmes, J., & Wilson, N, 2017; Holmes, 2014; Lakoff, 1973) suggest that women use specific color terms which are not used by men. Besides, there are small numbers of studies which conducting women language features in online magazines. This study complements the study of language features, especially the study of color classification terms used by men and women in magazines.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section discusses some important points regarded to the use of colors by men and women including gender and problems of binary gender, women language features, and definition of colors and color classification.

### **2.1 Gender and Problems of Binary Gender**

Studies of gender have been conducted by many researchers (Holmes, J., & Wilson, N, 2017; Zimman, 2017; Collins, 2016; Bamman, D., Eisenstein, J., & Schnoebelen, T. 2014; Holmes, 2014; Burger, et al, 2011; Argamon, et al, 2007; Lakoff, 1973). Somehow, people still discuss the topic until now. Although the term “gender” has been mentioned in many studies, people may misunderstand it.

Sometimes gender and sex are translated wrongly. The terms have different meanings (Ferguson, 2016). To understand gender term, we need to define “sex” term firstly. Holmes & Wilson (2017) state that “sex” refers to a genital part in a human's body. Eckert and Ginot (2003) state that the term “sex” is a biological categorization. It is a female or a male. On the other hand, “gender” term is not the same as “sex” term. Gender is not obtained biologically. Gender is constructed socially. It is a part of identity (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005; Ferguson, 2016). Gender identity itself refers to someone's belief of who she or he is (Ferguson, 2016). Moreover, gender representation refers to the way someone represents himself or herself in a community.

Gender identity and gender representation of a person may not match with his or her sex. When gender identity and gender representation do not match with the sexes, the people may obtain insulted from others. Abused experiences are commonly experienced by them who call themselves transgenders (Ferguson, 2016). On the other hand, transgender has not been really accepted by society, such as in the school system and sports where people only acknowledge women and men (Coakley, 2015; Segrave, 2017). Some studies argue that gender is not binary (Collins, 2016; Ferguson, 2016; Zimman, 2017). Because gender is not binary, they argue that society should permit and acknowledge transgender.

In the gender perspective, society determines how people behave, such as a man is supposed to work in a motorcycle shop and a woman is aimed to cook in a kitchen. However, Glick and Fiske (1997) argue that many societies believe in two forms of sexism. They are hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism believes the establishment and justification of male power through traditional gender roles. In the perspective, men should protect women. Moreover, women should be controlled. Women are sexual objects. On the other hand, benevolent sexism believes in a kinder relationship between men and women. In this point of view, men's dependence on women is acknowledged. A more romanticized relationship between men and women are embraced.

What is seen appropriate to each gender may differ in different societies and eras (Asher & Simpson, 1994). However, a longitudinal study from 1950 – 2000 reports a decrease in stereotyping of men and women in society (Mager and Helgeson, 2011). The stereotype and appropriateness may be influenced by media. Some studies have shown that media, such as magazines participate in constructing gender perspective in society (Tsiehla & Zotos, 2016; Bazzini, et. al, 2015). Moreover, advertising is accused as one of the contributors to gender

inequality by promoting ‘sexism’ and distorted body image ideals as valid and acceptable (Kilbourne 1999; Lazar 2006).

## **2.2 Women Language Features**

In her studies, Lakoff (1973) states that women use specific language features. The language features are classified into ten features. They are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, ‘empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers such as just and so, ‘hypercorrect’ grammar, ‘superpolite’ forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). The researchers will only focus on one of the features, namely the use of specific color terms. Lakoff (1973) describes in her studies that in a daily life woman use more color terms than men. This happens because men overhand things that do not become their concerns. Since classifying colors do not become men’s concerns, women handle them.

Holmes and Wilson (2017) agree with the language features which are suggested by Lakoff (1973). They argue that Lakoff’s study is authentic. Other studies before Lakoff’s study had a methodological problem. The studies were recorded in a lab. The topics of the conversations were given. Additionally, the participants were university students. The conditions may not represent real conversations in a daily life.

Holmes and Wilson (2017) state that people should approach gender as a construction process. Gender is not a fixed condition. This perspective can be applied to women who adapt to masculine contexts or men who adapt to feminism contexts. For example, women who work as police officers. The women are expected to talk “tough” and smile “less”. They wear uniforms and gain upper-body strength.

## **2.3 Definition of Colors and Colors classification**

The studies of classifying colors have been done by many researchers. One of popular works is the establishment of basic colors by Berlin and Kay (1969). This study had been done a long time ago before Lakoff (1973) stated that women used specific color terms. In their study, Berlin and Kay (1969) examined twenty languages and investigated the literature on color- term semantics for 78 additional languages. In the study, the researchers purposed eleven universal basic color terms. Basic color terms refer to all color terms which universally used by languages. Berlin and Kay (1969) proposed eleven basic color terms which are used universally: black, white, red, orange, yellow, brown, green, blue, purple, pink, and grey.

Beside basic color terms, Steinvall (2002) mentions some specific color terms in his study. The specific color terms are amber, maroon, aqua, mauve, azure, mustard, beige, navy, olive, brown, peach, carmine, pink, charcoal (grey), plum, chartreuse, puce, cream, purple, crimson, emerald, rose, fawn, rust, fuchsia, scarlet, gold, silver, golden, tangerine b, teal, indigo, turquoise, lavender, ultramarine, lemon, vermilion, lilac, violet, lime, and magenta.

Beside basic color terms and specific color terms, there are some other colors types. They are derivation colors and luminosity terms (Steinvall, 2002). Derivation colors are such as reddish, pinkish, and rosy. Luminosity terms are such as light or dark. Somehow, this research only discusses basic color terms and specific color terms.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

In this section, the researchers describe in detail how the study was conducted. There are three parts involved in this section. They are 1.) subjects, population and sample, 2.) instruments and 3.) data analysis

#### 3.1 Subjects

This research aims to observe the use of basic and specific color terms in Cosmopolitan Magazine and GQ Magazine. Therefore, a quantitative research was used in this study (Rahman, 2016). Moreover, the quantitative method helped the researchers collect big data. It also simplified the time-consuming in conducting the study.

This study gathered basic and specific color terms which were used by men in men's magazine and women in women's magazine. There were some articles written by women writers in the men's magazine and by men writers in the women's magazine, but the researchers did not include the articles. The researchers only focused on the articles written by women in Cosmopolitan Magazine and the articles written by men in GQ Magazine. The women's magazine was Cosmopolitan Magazine published electronically by <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/> and the men's magazine was GQ Magazine published electronically by <https://www.gq.com/>.

All of the articles, both in Cosmopolitan Magazine and GQ Magazine, were taken from styles and fashion columns. The two magazines used the English language in all the writings. There were 30 articles, 15 from men's magazine and 15 from women's magazine, which were analyzed. The data were the articles which were published between February 2018 to May 2018.

#### 3.2 Instruments

The use of two different magazines aimed to compare the use of basic and specific colors terms by men and women writers. The researchers identified the colors which were mentioned in the articles. After scanning the words which were classified as colors in the articles, the researchers put the words into a table in Microsoft Excel to count and classify the colors.

Table 1: Colors in the fashion magazine

Name of magazine (Ex: Gq.com)		
No	Articles and Findings	Articles' authors and date of publication
1	<a href="https://www.gq.com/gallery/best-dressed-men-of-the-week-4-30-18">https://www.gq.com/gallery/best-dressed-men-of-the-week-4-30-18</a> : grey, white, white, red, pink, navy, blue, brown, green, silver (Example)	Tyler Watamanuk May 15 2018
2	<a href="https://www.gq.com/gallery/met-gala-2018-red-carpet-menswear">https://www.gq.com/gallery/met-gala-2018-red-carpet-menswear</a> : white, red, cream (Example)	Tyler Watamanuk May 15 2018

After the colors were put into the table, the researchers classified the colors into two terms: **basic color and specific color terms** (Steinval, 2002). The data were put into Microsoft

Excel program to be counted and categorized into a percentage. It aims to simplify the findings and discussion.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

In interpreting and analyzing the data, the researchers used critical discourse analysis method (Fairclough, 1992). Based on Fairclough’s (1992) framework (figure 3.1) the use of critical discourse analysis helped the researchers to connect between the words in the magazines (texts) and the social-cultural practice, such as genders and society (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In this study, the researchers collected the colors in the magazines and connect them with genders and society.

## 4. FINDINGS

In this part, the discussion aims to answer the research question “How do men and women use basic and specific color terms in fashion magazines? There will be two sections. The first one is the use of basic color terms in men’s and women’s magazine. The second is the use of specific color terms in men’s and women’s magazine.

### 4.1 The Use of Basic Color Terms in Men’s and Women’s Magazine

From 30 articles (15 from men’s magazine and 15 from women’s magazine) the researchers discover that the writers mention basic color terms for 334 times. Specifically, men use basic color terms for 88 (26 %) times. On the other hand, women mention basic color terms for 246 (74 %) times. The overall use of the basic colors is presented in the table below.

Table 2: The use of the basic colors

Basic Color Terms						
NO	Cosmopolitan Magazine	Occurrence		GQ Magazine	Occurrence	
1	White	38	66%	White	20	34%
2	Black	42	71%	Black	17	29%
3	Red	27	52%	Red	25	48%
4	Orange	4	100%	Orange	0	0%
5	Yellow	19	95%	Yellow	1	5%
6	Brown	5	50%	Brown	5	50%
7	Green	23	85%	Green	4	15%
8	Blue	26	81%	Blue	6	19%
9	Purple	9	90%	Purple	1	10%
10	Pink	47	89%	Pink	6	11%
11	Grey	6	67%	Grey	3	33%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>74%</b>		<b>88</b>	<b>26%</b>

Table 2 shows that women use more basic color terms in women's magazine than men use basic color terms in men's magazine. Although these magazines' topics discuss the same topic (fashion and style), basic color terms appear more in women writings (74 %). Men writers tend to describe clothes and fashion without mentioning the colors. Even so, some of the articles do not mention colors at all.

The occurrence of each color is also different in the two magazines. In women's magazine, pink appears more than other basic color terms. It appears for 47 times (19%) in the magazine. In men's magazine, red appears more. The articles in men's magazine mention red 25 times (28%).

From the eleven basic color terms, orange does not appear in the men's writings. On the other hand, it appears 4 times in cosmopolitan.com. It seems that orange does not play much in fashion this time, because orange rarely appears both in women's and men's magazine.

#### 4.2 The Use of Specific Color Terms in Men's and Women's Magazine

In this section, the findings show that specific color terms appear in both magazines. In total, both women and men writers mention specific color terms for 144 times in 30 articles. Women mention 32 kinds of specific color terms. The overall usage of specific color terms is presented in the table below.

Table 3: The use of specific color terms

Specific Color Terms						
NO	Cosmopolitan Magazine	Occurrence		GQ Magazine	Occurrence	
1	Navy	7	70%	Navy	3	30%
2	Silver	7	64%	Silver	4	36%
3	Gold	19	76%	Gold	6	24%
4	Burgundy	2	50%	Burgundy	2	50%
5	Cream	13	87%	Cream	2	13%
6	Natural hue	1	100%	Natural hue	0	0%
7	Blush	5	100%	Blush	0	0%
8	Golden	1	100%	Golden	0	0%
9	Aqua	1	100%	Aqua	0	0%
10	Rainbow	2	100%	Rainbow	0	0%
11	Polka Dots	7	100%	Polka Dots	0	0%
12	Neon	6	100%	Neon	0	0%
13	Peach	6	100%	Peach	0	0%
14	Rose	9	100%	Rose	0	0%
15	Bronze	5	100%	Bronze	0	0%
16	Sequin	1	100%	Sequin	0	0%
17	Metallic	3	100%	Metallic	0	0%
18	Generation z yellow	1	100%	Generation z yellow	0	0%
19	Magenta	2	100%	Magenta	0	0%
20	Mint	1	100%	Mint	0	0%
21	Rust	1	100%	Rust	0	0%
22	Marigold	1	100%	Marigold	0	0%

23	Beige	1	100%	Beige	0	0%
24	Gunmetal	3	100%	Gunmetal	0	0%
25	Violets	1	100%	Violets	0	0%
26	Rosy	1	100%	Rosy	0	0%
27	Poufy	3	100%	Poufy	0	0%
28	Lavender	3	100%	Lavender	0	0%
29	Marron	1	100%	Marron	0	0%
30	Crimson	2	100%	Crimson	0	0%
31	Pastel	7	100%	Pastel	0	0%
32	Teal	4	100%	Teal	0	0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>(88%)</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>(12%)</b>

Table 3 shows that women use more specific color terms than men. Women use specific color terms 127 (88 %) times. There is a big gap between men and women in using specific color terms. Men only mention the colors for 17 times (12%).

To illustrate how men and women mention colors specifically in their writings, the researchers describe them in table 4 and table 5.

Table 4: The use of specific color terms by women

No	Specific Color Terms	Example
1	Rust and blush	Since it has swatches of <i>rust</i> and <i>blush</i> , the model's monochrome getup is a great choice
2	Cream	If color of any kind just isn't your thing, you can still make a bold statement by wearing <i>cream</i> or white
3	Teal	Gabriel wore the hell out of this <i>teal</i> A-line dress with a very low-cut neckline and shoulder detail
4	Burgundy	A burgundy, off-the-shoulder mermaid dress was Bryant's ensemble of choice
5	Gold	Wearing a gold lamé gown designed by Bruce Oldfield at the London premiere of the Bond movie <i>A View to Kill</i> .

Table 5: The use of specific color terms by men

No	Specific Color Terms	Example
1	Burgundy	But care for 'em right, and they'll be the last <i>burgundy</i> dress shoes you—or your next of kin—will ever have to buy.
2	Cream	Here's every wild, weird, and damn well-done menswear look worth seeing from fashion's waviest red-and- <i>cream</i> carpet.



3	Gold	... with a floor-length cape attached that hung just above his glittering <i>gold</i> shoes
4	Silver	Maybe a rugged, of-the-moment <i>silver</i> cuff is more your speed
5	Navy	take this classic <i>navy</i> suit from the office to late night

These findings are in line with (Lakoff's, 1973; 1975; Steinvall, 2002) frameworks. They argue that women use specific color terms. Somehow, the findings show the complementary to the theories where specific color terms also appear in men's writings. In this context, the use of specific color terms is caused by the need to describe men's fashion. The specific color terms appear in articles which promote some clothes. Although men also use specific color terms, the occurrence of the specific color terms underperform. There are only 5 types (12%) of specific color terms which appear in the men's magazine.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the use of language features by both genders. Additionally, it aims to complete the study of women language features suggested by Lakoff (1973). Somehow, the data is limited. The researchers do not intend to generalize genders by using this study. The use of specific color terms is one of women's language features. There are more women's language features suggested by Lakoff (1973 & 1975).

Language is complex. The complexity of language cannot be used to generalize genders (Abudahrman, 2017). The use of language features may be affected by values – ideology, culture and personality from the language users (Hosseini & Tammimy, 2016; Abdurahman, 2017). Personal factors may affect the use of language features. In this study, the use of specific color terms appears because of the need to describe fashion items.

The findings show that both genders use basic color terms and specific color terms. Women in women's magazine use almost all basic color terms, but men do not mention orange color in their articles. For specific color terms, the findings show that both genders use both basic and specific color terms. Somehow, the intensity of specific color terms used by men is limited. The specific color terms appear for 17 times (12 %) in men's magazine. Women writers are the ones who mention colors the most.

Holmes and Wilson (2017) argue that gender identity should be perceived as a construction process, not a fixed condition. In the perceptive of the writers, both in men's magazine or women's magazine may use the basic and specific color terms to adapt to the need of their jobs. This phenomenon appears in others' communities, such as women in a military context. This phenomenon could be seen from a perspective that gender is not binary (Collins, 2016; Ferguson, 2016; Zimman, 2017). This study shows that men also use specific color terms. Therefore, it inclines to support arguments that there is no clear-cut of gender differences in using language.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The findings of the research show that there has been a change of specific color term usages, both genders are now using basic and specific color terms. However, men use less

specific color terms. The use of language features may be affected by values – ideology, culture and personality from the language users.

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