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*Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching*

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## **Conversational dominance and politeness strategy on a political discussion among peers**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to explore the differences of female and male linguistic features analyzed using the conversational dominance analysis and the common politeness strategies when discussing *Kabinet Indonesia Maju* (Onward Indonesia Cabinet). The participants were a group of Master Degree students consisting of two male and two female students. The data was gathered by conducting a focus group discussion, then the verbal utterance was orthographically transcribed. The writer used quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse the data. The finding showed that other-oriented interruption was the most-occurred dominance, in which both male and female participants interrupted the conversation to exhibit the agreement, support the speakers, and reinforce the flow of the conversation. The female participants did self-oriented interruption more than male participants to ask questions. This finding conversed Lakoff (1973), Coates (1991), and West and Zimmerman (1987)'s female language features in which the female participants stood for their own opinion, shared their critic, gave suggestions, and asked questions. This study found that the participants showed mostly positive politeness strategy which they agreed to each other's statement, supported one another's idea, and contributed new topics to the discussion to maintain the discussion. This paper concluded that gender is not the only factor determining linguistics features and politeness strategy in this discussion among peers. The other possible influencing factors were the participants' relationship closeness, different cultural backgrounds, topic mastery, and their equal education level.

**Keywords:** conversational dominance, politeness strategy, language and gender

### **Introduction**

Gender and language have been debatable concerns in the sociolinguistics research field, bringing out several arguments about the male and female language that emerged from linguists. Passing through different decades,

males and females play different fluid and keep-developing roles in society. Choucane (2016) states that historically we can see women's language from a superiority and inferiority view. In past society, women are associated with taking care of domestic life and obeying men. However, the women's rights and liberation movements in the 21st century led to further studies on gender and language use as the development in women's social role (Choucane, 2016).

One aspect which is highlighted in the male and female language is the gender on dominance conversational interaction. Some views are stating that men tend to dominate the conversation. Women are seen as a suppressed group, and they construe linguistic differences in terms of male domination and female submission. (West & Zimmerman, 1983 as cited in Coates, 2004). According to Merchant (2012), males and females value the purpose of conversation in different ways, in which females utilize conversation to juxtapose social connection and relationship building, yet men utilize conversation to expose their dominance. Some communities also view the male as having a higher hierarchical social order. Therefore, males view conversation as a tool to maintain their social order and defend themselves from the others who push them around (Tannen, 1990).

The studies of gender conversation dominance result in dubious findings. In the past, conversation dominated by males has been consistently reported in pragmatics and discourse analysis (Finlay, 2015; Tannen, 1984, 1985, 1989, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1983 as cited in Pakzadian & Tootkaboni). However, nowadays, the results of research findings on conversational dominance have shifted. Dunbar (2015) argues that dominance is influenced not only by gender but also by the principle of least interest. Dunbar (2015) proves that among dating couple, one who is likely to dominate and even end the conversations is the one who is less emotionally involved in the conversation. Itakura and Tsui (2004) observe a conversation of eight mixed-gender pair of Japanese university students. They find out that both male and female speakers are complementary and supporting one another. In Indonesia context, Faizah and Kurniawan (2016) finds out in Mata Najwa talk show, whose participants are Syahrini, Raditya Dika, and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, the female tends to interrupt more than males. The finding also exhibits that female speaker tends to interrupt and overlap in same-sex speakers. In the other hand, male speakers are more inclined to interrupt in opposite-sex speakers.

Another issue discussed is gender and politeness strategy. Holmes (2013) mentions that one of the linguistics features, tag questions, serves a different function for men and women. Women use tag questions to express politeness and men use tag questions to express uncertainty. Holmes (2013) also explains her study on gender and politeness in the Mayan community in

Mexico. The result showed that women used more politeness devices than men, thus women's language became the official language and men's language was considered as an unusual variety.

Noting that there are the various research findings in conversational dominance and gender and also generalisation on gender and politeness, the writer tries to investigate the issue of linguistics feature in conversational dominance analysis and politeness strategy a group of Master degree students consisting 2 males and females when they were discussing political theme namely *Kabinet Indonesia Maju* (Onward Indonesia Cabinet). The writer also tries to decode the data based on the various factors they render to dominate the conversation and their politeness strategy.

This study is guided by the following research questions

1. What are the differences of female and male linguistics features when talking about *Kabinet Indonesia Maju* (Onward Indonesia Cabinet) analyzed using the conversational dominance analysis?
2. What are the common politeness strategies used by male and female in the conversation?

## Literature review

### *Theoretical view on gender and language*

As one of the gender and language pioneer researchers, Lakoff proposes the background and study area of the deficit model. Lakoff (1973 p. 45) mentions, "the marginality and powerlessness of women are reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak and the ways in which women are spoken of." She argues women should speak without showing strong, specific, and non-trivial expressions (1973). The women language aspects researched are lexicon (color terms, particles, evaluative adjectives), and syntax (tag-questions and intonation). Lakoff (1973) proposes that women use special color terms, particles, and evaluative adjectives in the lexicon area. Women prefer using meaningless particles, such as "oh dear" to state annoyance since women cannot fuss in rage (Lakoff, 1973). According to Lakoff, women's tag questions indicate uncertainty, leave the decision open, and tend to avoid conflict with the interlocutor. Cameron, McAlindern, & O'Leary (1988) add that tag question is associated with the desire to be confirmed.

Some researchers conclude that this model demonstrates that male and female speak distinctively since they are socialized in disparate sociolinguistics subcultures (Coates, 1991). Coates (1991) also disputes that men are always depicted as competitive and women are depicted as cooperativeness. Women tend to emphasize similarities, match experiences



and focus on addressee-oriented, while men underline their status and independence, exhibiting knowledge and skill, showing the verbal performance (story-telling, joking, or imparting information), seek information, demonstrate power and expertise, and introduce new topics (Coates, 1991)

Also, Tannen (1990) contrasts women's and men's language features into six points: status vs. support, independence vs. intimacy, advice vs. understanding, information vs. feelings, orders vs. proposals, and conflict vs. compromise. Tannen mentions that women talk too much, speak in a private context and symmetrically, build relations and overlap, and speak symmetrically. In contrast, men get more air time, speak in public, negotiate status, speak one at a time, and speak asymmetrically.

### ***Conversational dominance***

The remark "doing power is often a way of 'doing gender' too" (West & Zimmerman, 1983 in Coates, 2004, p. 2) shows that the dominance model considers female as a suppressed group and construes linguistic differences in terms of male's domination and female's submission. In the early study, West and Zimmerman (1987) state that gender different power affects male and female language. Men tend to dominate women, and women are subservient, resulting in men's speech interruptions and topic shifting. Interruptions involve "violations of speakers", as a result, a device for exercising power and control in conversation (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Similarly, Tannen (1994) proposes that interruptions are a symbol of power overcast or control in a conversation.

There are some types of conversational dominance. According to Murata (1994), interruption is divided into cooperative and intrusive interruptions. Cooperative interruptions contemplate facilitating the interlocutor by supporting the conversation continuously, while intrusive interruptions contemplate disturbing one's ongoing content utterance. Meanwhile, Itakura and Tsui (2004) propose conversational dominance is derived from sequential, participatory dominance. Sequential dominance is explained as "an overall pattern in which one speaker tends to control the direction of the conversation." (Itakura & Tsui, 2004, p. 227). Participatory dominance is the speaker's tendency to restrict interlocutor's speaking rights through interruptions, overlaps, and completion offers.

Some studies about gender and conversational dominance have been conducted across decades. Zimmerman and West (1975, as cited in Faizah & Kurniawan, 2016) investigated the interruptions and overlapped in 31 mixed-sex casual conversations, resulting in the majority of mens' tendency to control the conversation by taking women's right to take their turns by

interrupting and overlapping. Dhanesschaiyakupta, Sapabsri, Thep-Ackrapong, and Phimswat (2018) conducted a research on analysing gender and status affecting conversational interruption in an English TV program namely *Be My Guest*. The result was the woman with either a higher or equal social status to the men interrupted less than men. On the other hand, woman with a lower status than the man tended to interrupt more frequently than the man did. Both man and women did cooperative interruption. Meanwhile, Pakzadian and Tootkaboni (2018) conducted a research on the role of gender of graduate EFL learners while discussing about Iranian social life. The results were men showed some dominant speech characteristics such as interrupting woman to take control of the conversation, imposing their power on female speakers, shifting the topic, and criticizing the women's ideas. On the other hand, the women tended to support the men by showing interest, enquiring for more details, endorsing male partners' claim of superior knowledge and experience, deferring to their power, and opening up opportunities to demonstrate their superior knowledge and expertise.

### ***Pragmatic and politeness strategy***

Griffiths mentions that "pragmatics is about the relationship of our semantic knowledge with our knowledge of the world, taking into account contexts of use" (2006, p.1). His idea is supported by Cutting (2002) who proposes that semantic is an approach to language relation to the contextual background features. Therefore, it could be concluded that pragmatic is a study of aspect of meaning and language used that is affected by the speakers, addressees, and other features of the context of the utterance and also on how speakers comprehend and produce a communicative act of speech act in a concrete speech situation in form of utterances (Wijayanto, 2014).

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose four politeness strategies, which are:

#### 1. Bald on

Bald on strategy does nothing to minimize threats to hearer's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The example of bald on strategy is showing disagreement, giving suggestions, requesting, and warning.

#### 2. Positive politeness

"Positive politeness is directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that he wants should be thought of as desirable" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 101). It could be simplified that positive politeness oriented to satisfy the positive face of the listener. The example is exaggerating the interest, giving approval, showing sympathy, intensifying interest to the hearer, avoiding disagreement, and presupposing common ground.

#### 3. Negative politeness



Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 129) defines negative politeness as “redressive action addressed to the addressee’s negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded.” It could be said that negative politeness oriented to satisfy the negative face of the listener. It includes some acts like being conventionally indirect, being pessimistic, minimizing imposition, giving deference, and apologizing.

#### 4. Off-record politeness

By occupying off-record politeness, the speaker provide himself with some defensible interpretation or vague statement which the hearers need to interpret what his act means (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The example of this act is giving hints, giving association clues, presupposing, understating, overstating, and using tautologies and contradiction.

### **Research methodology**

A group of a classmate of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of Master Degree students were chosen as the participants of this study. Two men and two women participated in this study (see Table 1; pseudonyms are used for the participants). For the purpose of this study, the writer recruited them considering 1) the equal number of each gender could contribute fair research result, 2) their close relationship as classmates will bring a natural occurrence in the focus-group discussion, 3) their various ages, origins, and occupations will contribute to the research results, and 4) their willingness to be videotaped and participate in this study.

The data was collected on October 31, 2019. The writer invited the participants to have a focus-group discussion about *Kabinet Indonesia Maju* (Onward Indonesia Cabinet). The discussion lasted for 16 minutes 37 seconds.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic information of the participants*

No	Name	Age	Occupation	Sex	Cultural Background
1	Ari	53	Teacher	M	Javanese (previously residing in Cilacap for a long time)
2	Eva	25	Private employee	F	Batakese (residing in Bekasi)
3	Hannah	30	Entrepreneur	F	Sundanese (previously residing in Kuwait for a long time)
4	Michael	24	University student	M	Javanese and Flores (previously residing in Salatiga for a long time)

The writer chose a political topic in particular about Kabinet Indonesia Maju. KIM is the latest Indonesian cabinet lead by Joko Widodo and Ma'ruf Amin, officially announced on October 23, 2019. Kabinet Indonesia Maju consists of 4 minister coordinators and 30 ministers.

KIM discussion is one of the latest interesting topics to discuss. The cabinet formation arouses some debatable issues regarding the controversial ministers due to their job experiences and political track record. The exit and existence of some former ministers and the previous ministers' performance are also compelling topics to discuss among intellectual groups.

The political topic is a non-gender neutral topic. There is a common assumption in Indonesian society that women are less interested in politics. It is supported by Andersen (1975, p.440 as cited in Campbell & Winters, 2008) that "it has been widely argued – and demonstrated empirically – that the political socialization of women, as distinct from that of men, tends to produce a lack of concern with the sphere of politics, a sense of distance between one's daily concerns and political events." One reason is that the socialization of girls leads them to focus on the family need and is likely to increase their interest in social welfare but that the framing of politics as a competitive sport, with an emphasis upon partisan politics, may prevent this interest from being perceived as directly "political" (Campbell & Winters, 2008). Therefore, this paper would like to explore the linguistics features in conversational dominance analysis and the politeness strategies among men and women by selecting this topic.

The writer invited the participants to have a focus-group discussion about KIM on October 31, 2019, at a common space for students. The discussion lasted for 16 minutes 37 seconds. The writer audiotaped the conversation. All the verbal utterances were orthographically transcribed for the analysis.

The writer then analyses each piece of data. To analyse the data in detail, the writer uses two tables and a checklist. The first table (see table 2) is for analysing the distribution of male and female linguistics features in conversational dominance analysis and the second table (see table 3) is for analysing the distribution of male and female politeness strategy. To deliver the results, the writer has to integrate and summarize her findings by counting the occurrences and delivering them in the form of percentage using this formula:

$$N = \frac{n}{\sum n} \times 100\%$$

This formula is for counting the distribution of male and female linguistics features in conversational dominance analysis and the distribution of male and female politeness strategy. For the first research question, N is the symbol of percentage of particular linguistics feature in conversational dominance analysis, n is the amount or particular linguistics feature in conversational dominance analysis occurrence, and  $\sum n$  is the total amount of all the linguistics features in conversational dominance analysis. For the second research question, N is the symbol of percentage of politeness strategy, n is the symbol of the amount to politeness strategy, and  $\sum n$  is the total amount of politeness strategy. Lastly, the writer used qualitative method to analyse the occurrence based on the situation happened.

## **Findings and analysis**

### ***Linguistic features in political discussion***

The writer investigated the issue of conversational dominance by five parameters: 1. interrupting- self oriented, 2. interruption- other oriented, 3. topic shifting, 4. asking questions or raising topics, and 5. criticizing and engaging in conflict (Pakzadian & Tootkaboni, 2018).

**Table 2.****Male and Female Linguistics Features in Conversational Dominance Analysis**

Linguistics Features	Male	Female
Interruption-self oriented	2 %	13.2 %
Interruption-other oriented	63.4 %	52.8 %
Topic shifting	16.8 %	5.7 %
Question and raising topic	8.9 %	13.2 %
Criticizing and engaging in conflict	8.9 %	13.2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>

***Dominance by interruption***

Tannen (1993, as cited in Pakzadian & Tootkaboni, 2018) mentions that interruption is the main reason for conversation failure. Interruption is also a strategy for men to dominate women in a conversation (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The interruption may break the conversational engagement since one party doesn't break other parties' privilege to finish the utterance.

According to Pakzadian & Tootkaboni (2018), dominance by interruption is categorized into self-oriented and other-oriented. The transcript analysis showed that the female speakers did self-oriented interruption more (13.2%) than the male speakers did (2%). Yet, male speakers did more other-oriented interruptions (63.4%) than female speakers (52.8%). The female speakers tended to interrupt when they had another opinion, did not understand the topic, and asked for clarifications. On the contrary, male speakers interrupt mostly when someone stated the ideas and readily supported their topic's resumption. The following excerpt from the data illustrates instances of self-oriented interruption:

### Excerpt 1

(The participants were talking about Anies Baswedan as Jakarta governor who performs without vice governor).

- Eva : *Kemarin kan juga pas kasusnya si Ahok, si Djarot kan juga sendirian kan, ya nggak sih?*  
 [When Ahok got arrested, Djarot stood himself, right?]
- Michael : *Sendirian tapi kan dalam, untuk menyelesaikan periodenya itu aja.*  
 [Yes, but only until he finished his term]
- Eva : *[Oh iya.. melanjutkan ya.*  
 [Oh yes, just continuing.]
- Ari : *[Ya, berapa*  
*bulan, 5 bulan.* [Yes, for 5 months]
- Michael : *[Cuma kalau Anies kan masih lama dia mesti butuh wakil.*  
 [But Anies still leads for a long period, he needs a vice.]
- Eva : *[Kalau aku nggak liat*  
*apa-apa sih dari Anies.* [I see nothing from him]

From the excerpt we could see that Eva (female) interrupts his interlocutor to state her own opinion. Sometimes the women also interrupted to ask something they did not understand such as the following excerpt example of self-oriented interruption:

### Excerpt 2

(The participants were talking about the relation of Indonesian rupiah and stocks)

- Ari : *Iya, tapi nanti reaksi pasar bagus nggak? Rupiah menguat atau habis?*  
 [Yes, but how will the market react? Will Rupiah strengthen or weaken?]
- Michael : *Oh menguat! Menguat!* [Oh, it strengthens!]
- Hannah : *[Antara apa tuh?]* [Among what?]
- Ari : *Saham?* [Stocks?]
- Michael : *Saham...* [Stocks...]
- Hannah : *[Saham menguat!]* [The stocks rose!]
- Ari : *Oh ya berarti kan. Oh ya berarti kan pasar menerima kan.*  
 (I see, so the market accepts that, right?)
- Michael : *[Menguat.* [They rose.]
- Michael : *Iya pasar menerima kan, berarti pilihannya bagus.*  
 (Yes, since the market accepts that, so it was a good choice.)
- Helena : *Iya, iya.* [Yes].
- Ari : *Karena menteri keuangannya masih...* [Because the ministry of finance is still...]
- Michael : *[Masih Sri Mulyani.* [Still Sri Mulyani.]
- Ari : *Sri Mulyani.*
- Michael : *Nah itu... itu..* [That was...]
- Hannah : *[Nah itu apa ada hubungannya sama saham?]* [What to do with stocks then?]
- Michael : *Pasti!* [Of course, there is!]
- Ari : *Oh ya...* [Yes]
- Hannah : *[Aku nggak tau.* [I don't know.]
- Michael : *Mempengaruhi investor kan ngeliat itu. Itu...*  
 [It affects the investors, they observe it. It's... ]
- Hannah : *[Enggak, taunya untungnya aja gitu. Siapa*  
*sih menteriya nggak pernah ini...* [I don't know, I just know the profit. I never notice the minister...]

In the 2nd excerpt, Hannah interrupted three times to ask questions since she was interested in the topic, yet she needed more information about the topic. Those two excerpts showed that women were bold enough to interrupt to state their own opinion and ask whenever they did not understand. This condition might have happened considering their close relationship as classmates. Both men and women participants also were at the same education level; no one was less than the others. Their condition as classmates, which probably also often discussed and debated kinds of stuff regularly in the class, made them brave enough to contribute their opinions.

Pakzadian & Tootkaboni (2018) proposes the second type of interruption, namely other-oriented interruption. People did other-oriented interruptions to support the interlocutors' ideas and encourage the interlocutors to deliver their ideas more. The 3rd excerpt was an example of other-oriented interruption.

### Excerpt 3

(The participants were talking about Susi Pujiastuti's resignation)

- Ari : *Nggak tau... Susi tadinya saya juga...* [I don't know. I was thinking that Susi...]  
 Michael : [*Oh kalau Susi udah pamitan dia itu.* [Oh Susi has resigned.]  
 Eva : *Kalau Susi...* [I think Susi...]  
 Hannah : [*Dia katanya resign ya?* [Hasn't she resigned?]  
 Michael : Resign.  
 Hannah : *Permintaan berhenti sendiri kan?* [As her request, right?]  
 Michael : *Mungkin itu faktor keluarga kali ya? Menurutku sih, karena anaknya yang pertama kan udah meninggal.* [I think maybe it is because of family matters because her oldest child has passed away.]  
 Ari : Ooh...  
 Michael : *Anaknya yang pertama kan...* [her oldest child ...]  
 Eva : [*Bisa jadi nggak sih dia pengen kerja sendiri? Kaya usaha sendiri.* [Is it possible that she wants to build her own business?]

There were 3 sentences showing other-oriented interruption. Those speakers interrupted to show that they mastered the topic, wanted to contribute more in the conversation, and gave information for others, and reinforce the interlocutors to come up with more ideas in order to carry out the conversation.

### Dominance by topic shifting

Pakzadian and Tootkaboni propose "the changing of a topic of conversation is a topic shift and signals a conversational dominance or potential avoidance of a subject. Demonstrating power in a conversation means

utilizing topic shifts to your advantage” (2018, p.8). Men are considered as having more tendency to switch the topic (Tannen, 1990).

The result demonstrated that male speakers (16.8 %) changed the topic more than the female speakers (5.7%). The following excerpt illustrated male dominance by shifting the topic.

#### Excerpt 4

(The participants were talking about Erik Tohir, the BUMN minister. Then, one male speaker switched the topic into another minister, Jonan)

- Eva : *Iya, Erik Tohir tim suksesnya Jokowi kan* [Yes, Erik Tohir is Jokowi's supporter, isn't he?]
- Michael & Ari : *Iya.* [Yes]
- Ari : *Dan dia juga pengusaha kan ngurusin BUMN , saya pikir cocok.* [And he is also a business man, so I think he is suitable to handle the state- owned enterprises.]
- Michael : *Menteri BUMN ya sekarang ya?* [Is he the Minister of State Owned Enterprises?]
- Ari : *He'em.. E... terus yang menteri-menteri yang kira-kira kok nggak njabat lagi kayak Jonan?* [Yes, and why don't some ministers such as Jonan serve again?]

The findings revealed that the male speakers tended to do topic switching when the participants ran out of topic to discuss. Another silent moment incident happened, and mostly male speakers proposed a new topic to discuss by shifting the topic. Those things happened since the male speakers might have mastered the political topic more than the female speakers have. Therefore, they might have had more new topics to discuss. This phenomenon could support Andersen's statement that women produce a lack of concern with the sphere of political issue (Campbell & Winters, 2008).

#### *Dominance by question and raising a topic*

According to Pakzadian & Tootkaboni (2018) one way for men to dominate the conversation is by asking question for their own advantage, refusing to talk about uncomfortable issue, challenging women, and getting control of the conversation. This research result exhibited that women were the ones who questioned more. The following excerpt illustrated the occurrence.



**Excerpt 5**

(The participants were discussing about Wishnutama, the Indonesian Tourism Minister and CEO of NET TV)

- Michael : *Tapi kalo Wishnutama itu juga kayak ngorbanin NET juga nggak sih?*  
(But don't you think Wishnutama was also like sacrificing NET?)
- Eva : *[Iya, itu gede banget loh NET. Makanya orang - orang tuh kayak...]* [Yes, whereas NET was such a huge company. Therefore, people were like...]
- Michael : *[Iya, itu kayak. kayak... Tonight show itu udah pamitan.]*  
[Yes, it was like ... Tonight show has ended.]
- Eva : *Iya.* [Yes]
- Michael : *Udah mengundurkan diri.* [It has ended]
- Eva : *Mm.*
- Ari : *Iya... banyak yang menurun ya.* [Yes, much decreasing].
- Michael : *[Banyak yang menurun ya. Padahal itu bagus ya TV bagus ya.]*  
[Much decreasing. Whereas the TV programs are good]
- Eva : *Iya* [Yes]
- Michael : *Banyak variasi.* [Many variations]
- Ari : *Dan cepat gitu, naiknya cepat.* [And the rating is quickly increasing.]
- Hannah : *[Apa sih?]* [What was it?] (ask the friends)
- Michael : *[Net TV. (answer Hannah)]*
- Ari : *Tapi...* [But...]
- Eva : *[Tapi bukannya dia ada isu yang mecat-mecatin orang nggak sih?]*  
[But didn't he got issues on firing his employees?]
- Michael&Ari : *Iya.* [Yes]
- Michael : *Iya, pemotongan.* [Yes, employee cuts]
- Ari : *[Iya, makanya pemotongan. Mm... dikurangi.]* [Yes, employee cuts.]

This study's findings revealed that women were the ones who question a lot, yet they had various tendencies for asking, and it was not merely for showing their dominance. That excerpt demonstrated that Eva popped up with the question since she needed confirmation for her statement. The other incidents indicated that the women asked questions since they did not understand and asked for information or clarification. Therefore, in this case, instead of showing dominance, it could not be indicated that female speakers asked questions and raised the topic to raise more understanding and get more engaged to the topic.

***Dominance by criticizing and engaging in conflict***

The research results showed that female speakers (13.2%) criticized more than male speakers (8.9%). This finding was totally against some gender and language theories, such as a statement that women should speak without showing potent, specific, and non-trivial expressions (Lakoff, 1973). Women are depicted as cooperativeness who emphasize similarities (Coates,

1991). The following excerpt illustrated the women's dominance by criticizing.

### Excerpt 6

(Previously the participants were discussing about Nadim Makarim as the new minister. The participants agreed that he was the most controversial minister since his background did not suit education field. Then a female participant came up with her critic that the one who was controversial was Prabowo as the Minister of Defence and she criticized Prabowo's track record).

- Hannah** : *Kalau aku sih nggak terlalu fokus e Nadim Makarim ya karena menurut aku sih Nadim Makarim oke-oke aja. Yang aku fokuskan itu ke menteri pertahanan ya lebih ke ...*  
[I don't really pay attention to Nadim Makarim, I think he is just fine. I pay attention more to Minister of Defense.]
- Michael : *Oh Prabowo?* [Do you mean 'Prabowo'?]  
Eva : Mmm.
- Hannah** : *Lebih kontroversial menurut aku, karena apa?* [He is more controversial in my opinion]
- Eva : Mmm Mmm
- Hannah** : *Karena rekam jejaknya aja apa.... nggak bagus gitu yah.*  
[Because his track record.... was not good.]
- Michael : *Iya.* [Yes.]  
Eva : Mmm
- Hannah : *Jadi kalau menurut aku Nadim Makarim.. ya Jokowi dulu kan juga pebisnis, Nadim Makarim juga dia pebisnis kok, menurut aku dia nggak terlalu kontroversial yang penting kita bisa aksep saja gitu, selama dia, ke politik kan bisa belajar gitu.*  
[So, what I think about Nadim Makarim... yeah, Jokowi was a businessman, and so is Nadim Makarim, so I think he isn't that controversial as long as we could accept that. And as long as he would learn politics.]
- Eva : *He-em.* [Yes.]
- Hannah : *Cuma yang saya pertanyakan itu ya itu , pertahanan gitu.. kenapa...menunjuk menteri pertahanan?* [I only questioned why he was chosen as the Ministry of Defense.]

The finding showed that the female speaker was quite frank and trivial in stating opinion whenever she disagreed with a specific condition or statement. Based on the situation, she might have been frank to criticize the political issue, which was a sensitive topic, since the setting was in a private place with her close friends. In this focus-group discussion, female speakers criticized more than male speakers, countering some related gender and language theories. The possible reason why women criticized more than men was because of their cultural backgrounds. Both men were Javanese

who previously resided for a long time in Central Java area, and Javanese people did not possess frankly speaking habit.

### ***Politeness strategies used by male and female***

The research results showed that female speakers (13.2%) criticized more than male speakers (8.9%). This finding was totally against some gender and language theories, such as a statement that women should speak without showing potent, specific, and non-trivial expressions (Lakoff, 1973). Women are depicted as cooperativeness who emphasize similarities (Coates, 1991). The following excerpt illustrated the women's dominance by criticizing.

The writer investigated the issue of politeness strategy by four parameters: 1. bald-on, 2. positive politeness, 3. negative politeness, and 4. off-record (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

**Table 3.**  
**The Distribution of Politeness Strategies**

Politeness Strategies	Male	Female
Bald-on	6.6 %	3.5 %
Positive politeness	72.5 %	62.3 %
Negative politeness	8.2 %	18.8 %
Off-record	12.1 %	15.3 %

### ***Bald-on politeness strategy***

From the research result, it was found that man (6.6%) used bald-on politeness more than women (3.5%). The following excerpt gave an example of bald-on strategy done by men.

### Excerpt 7

(The participants were talking about Susi Pudjiastuti's record when she served as the Minister of Fisheries. Then one male speaker criticized her job)

- Ari : Kalau aku sih, dia sangat sukses dengan menenggelamkan kapal tapi harus ada follow up apa, setelah menenggelamkan harus apa? Mm... follow up nya menurut saya itu sisi lemahnya. Harus membangun industri kan.  
[I think she was very successful in ship-sinking policy for illegal fishing but there must be a follow up, what's next after that? Mm... the follow up is her weakness, I think. Since we have to build the industry.]
- Michael : Mm.
- Ari : Habis ikannya banyak, terus apa? Diapain? Terus kegiatan selanjutnya apa? Itu yang lemah disitu. Jadi Jokowi ya udah cukup, menenggelamkan.  
[After we have got a lot of fish, what is next? What is her plan? That was the hole. So, Jokowi has done with the the ship-sinking policy].
- Eva&Michael : Mm.
- Ari : Terus jumlah ikan udah banyak. Nah sekarang cari orang yang bisa eksekusi.  
[After we have got a lot of fish, now we need someone who could execute the next plan.]
- Eva : Iya. [Yes]
- Hannah : Iya! Iya betul...  
[Yes, right.]
- Ari : Kelanjutannya apa, eh.. nanti nelayannya biar ini ikan udah banyak, sekarang... [What's next for the fisherman after getting a lot of fish?]
- Hannah : Mm.
- Ari : dimanfaatkan, nah itu sisi agak lemah untuk eksekusi berikutnya untuk...  
[It must be executed, but the execution plan was her weakness.]

The excerpt demonstrated that Ari criticized Susi Pudjiastuti's work and tended to suggest that issue. The result showed that male speakers used a bald-on strategy more than the female did to show disagreement and give suggestions. This phenomenon happened since the male speakers might have got broader knowledge about political issues.

### Positive politeness strategy

Positive politeness strategy was the most common politeness strategy used by both male and female speakers in the group discussion. Male speakers (72.5 %) were slightly using this politeness strategy more than the female speakers (62.3 %). Excerpt 8 demonstrated one example of using positive politeness strategy.

### Excerpt 8

(The participants were talking about the new minister, and one speaker came out with the idea of talking about Nadim Makarim)

- Michael : *Banyak menteri yang ini ya, yang apa namanya, diambil dari professional ya. Pak Jokowi kok gitu ya?* [Don't you think many ministers chosen are the professionals? Why did Jokowi choose them?]
- Ari : *Ya mungkin kan supaya apa... kan dia udah nggak ada beban lagi dengan terpilih lagi 5 tahun itu lagi kan lebih leluasa kan.* [Yes, maybe because of.... He doesn't have any more burden by being elected again for next 5 years, right?]
- Michael : *Lebih leluasa ya?* [More freedom, right?]
- Ari : *He'em, yang utama ya itu, Nadim Makarim, menteri Pendidikan.* [Yes, and the most obvious is Nadim Makarim, the Minister of Education]

Ari's statement consisted of some functions supporting Michael's statement by saying "he'em" and contributing his idea to make the conversation flow. Overall, most of the time, the participants agreed to each others' statement, supported one another's ideas, contributed new topics to the discussion, so the discussion ran well.

### Negative politeness strategy

Female speakers showed more usage of negative politeness strategy (18.8%). Excerpt 9 demonstrated one example of using negative politeness strategy.

### Excerpt 9

(The participants were talking about Erik Tohir. Some utterances from some speakers indicated hesitation).

- Michael : *Pariwisata --- (1 second) kalau pariwisata belum ada apa-apa. Tapi Erik Tohir itu ternyata juga mau ini dulu--- (1 second) mau apa namanya ck, dia tu mau --- (1 second) nggak-nggak.. ternyata dia sendiri juga mengaku ada kelemahan di BUMN kan?* [Tourism---(1 second) no improvement for tourism. But it turned out Erik Tohir also planned--- (1 second) planned, he planned--- (1 second) no-no... it turned out he admitted there is weakness in the state-owned enterprises, right?]
- Ari : *Iya.* [Yes.]
- Michael : *Makanya dia minta wakil agak banyak lho dia.* [That's why he requested quite many vices, you know]

- Ari : **Ooh? (questioning)**  
 Michael : *Wakilnya banyak dia, mau.. mau.. minta wakil lebih dari 3 kayaknya.* [Yes, quite many...it seems he asks for more than 3 vices.]

Negative politeness was shown in some words such as “*nggak-nggak* (no-no)” and “*kayaknya* (it seems)”. Those words showed speaker’s hesitation of what he had said. The “ooh?” utterance here also represent a symbol of hesitation. In this discussion, most negative politeness appeared in form of showing hesitation.

### ***Off record strategy***

Female speakers showed more usage of negative politeness strategy (18.8%). Excerpt 9 demonstrated one example of using negative politeness strategy.

Female speakers (13.5%) used off record strategy marginally more than the male speakers (12.1%). Excerpt 10 demonstrated one example of using negative politeness strategy.

#### **Excerpt 10**

(The participants were talking about Ahok’s religion harassment case. Yet some speakers avoided using the bold statement, they tend to occupy vague utterances).

- Michael : *Tapi kalau Ahok itu kok nggak kepilih ya? Jadi menteri, masuk cabinet.*  
 [But why didn’t Ahok get elected? Join the cabinet as a minister]  
 Eva : *Iya.* [Yes.]  
 Eva : *Kayaknya karena ehm... kasus kemarin ngga sih?*  
 [I think it’s because ehm... the past incident, right?]  
 Michael : *Iya mungkin.* [Yeah, probably].  
 Hannah: *[Kasus apa?]* [What incident?]  
 Eva : *Kasus yang dia kemarin.* [Last time incident. When he...]  
 Michael : *[Oh yang kasus itu mmm.* [O, that incident hmm...]  
 Hannah : *[Kasus itu yang mana?]*  
 [What incident are you talking about?]  
 Michael : *[Agama itu loh.*  
 [The religion thingy]  
 Eva : *Agama.* [The Blasphemy accusation] (Explaining to Hannah)

From the conversation, it could be seen that the speakers did not explain clearly about Ahok’s religion harassment case. They tended to understate, use vague statements, and even only provided a clue at the beginning by saying “*Kasus yang dia kemarin* (last time incident)”. The sensitive issue caused it. In this discussion, females tended to use this strategy more

because they tended to soften the sense of their utterance. It could be related to the Lakoff (1973) theory which mentioned that women should speak without showing strong, specific, and non-trivial expressions.

## Conclusion

There are two issues discussed in this study. The first issue concerns the linguistic features used by male and female speakers analyzed using conversational dominance analysis while discussing *Kabinet Indonesia Maju*. The second issue concerns the common politeness strategy used by male and female speakers in the conversation. The participants were a group of a classmate of Master Degree students, consisting of 2 male and 2 female speakers. The writer analysed the research findings using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Both male and female speakers showed their dominance by showing other-oriented interruptions. They interrupted one another's idea to show their agreement, support the interlocutor's idea, and even reinforce the interlocutors to develop more ideas to carry out the conversation. Females tended to do self-oriented interruption since males mastered the topic better than females, so males could be more logical and give their supporting idea in their interruption. Females tended to interrupt and ask questions whenever they did not understand.

The research results also countered the theory of woman's language features proposed by Lakoff (1973), Coates (1991), and West and Zimmerman (1987), which this research finding demonstrated that female speakers dared to stand on their own opinion, shared their critic, gave suggestions, and asked questions.

Positive politeness is the most common politeness strategy used by the participants. Most of the time, the participants agreed to each other's statement, supported one another's idea, and contributed new topics to the discussion, so the discussion ran well.

To sum up this paper, it could be concluded that gender is not the only factor determining linguistics features and politeness strategy in the discussion. In this research, the other determiners are the participants' relationship closeness, different cultural backgrounds and topic mastery, and their same education level.

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# INDONESIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (INDONESIAN JELT) SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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