

**An Exploratory Study of Male and Female Language in Pilipino<sup>1</sup>**

*CARMENCITA FERNANDEZ-MONTENEGRO*  
*University of Santo Tomas*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This study is an attempt to explore differences in male and female language in Pilipino. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1.1. What linguistic features characterize male and female language in Pilipino? Here I am interested in features that include: linguistic borrowing, use of adjectives in Pilipino, syntactic complexity and perceptual selectivity. Language differences also cover topic preferences of men and women, topics considered not in good taste for conversation, taboo words and the euphemisms used to skirt them, the use of cathartic expressions, the use of cuss words, reasons for uttering cuss words, and the sources of learning cuss words.
- 1.2. Are the language differences so well-marked that one group's way of speaking is readily identifiable? This is to say – can men and women easily recognize male and female language? Given a written description can men and women identify the writer's sex by the language used?
- 1.3. How do men perceive women's language and their own? How do women perceive men's language and their own? Here I am interested in the qualities or attributes both sex groups ascribe to each other's language and their own. What are the characteristics of men's language as perceived by men and women? What are the characteristics of women's language as perceived by women and men?

**2. METHODOLOGY**

In carrying out the study, I used the following procedure:

**2.1 PROCEDURE FOR GATHERING THE DATA**

A total of 200 students from the University of Santo Tomas served as subjects for this study. These students belonged to four different classes. Two classes consisted of junior and senior students of the Faculty of Arts and Letters whose majors were Asian Studies and Political Science. The other two classes consisted of summer students from U.S.T. colleges. These summer students belonged to various major fields such as Economics,

<sup>1</sup>This is an abridged version of my Ph.D. dissertation *Towards a description of male and female language in Pilipino*. Please refer to the dissertation for the review of the literature. I am grateful to Dr. Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista, my mentor, Dr. Bienvenido Abustar, my statistician, and Dr. Mary Baron, my consultant, for their professional advice.

Engineering, Psychology, Medical Technology, Sociology, and History. Their ages ranged from 19 to 24 years.

I provided each of the students with a blank sheet on which they indicated their sex, age, major subjects, and first language. The summer group was asked to write whether they were regular students of U.S.T. or cross-enrollees. The reason for this was to limit the sample to only students of U.S.T. The first language information was asked to limit the sample to subjects whose first language was Pilipino or Tagalog.

After writing all these data on their sheets, the respondents were asked to look at a photograph exhibited on the blackboard. The visual was a colored photograph of a traditional, familiar, Filipino family scene. This photograph had been chosen after careful pretesting with three other photographs on a group of 42 second-year Political Science students of U.S.T. The pretesting indicated that the traditional Filipino family scene photograph was the most appropriate choice for the following reasons: It is non-threatening to both sexes because both sexes are represented in the picture; it is colored and therefore would elicit an expanded description based on color; it is not too poetic to rhapsodize about nor too cold to elicit criticism.

With the photograph in front of them, the students were asked to describe 'what they saw' in a manner they would use when describing it to a friend. They were asked, too, to pick out one specific feature (i.e. object, person) of the photograph that had caught their attention. The respondents were asked to write down their descriptions. They were given 20 minutes to accomplish this part of the study.

The second part of the research consisted of eliciting answers to several questions which were administered orally in order to elicit spontaneous responses and not to give the respondents time to think twice or to change their first response. The researcher, still in consultation with Dr. Baron, believed that the first thought that came to the respondents' minds could be considered spontaneous. That the responses be spontaneous was important since we were trying to approximate the respondents' actual language use (e.g. use of cuss words, euphemisms, etc.). Another reason for administering the questions orally was for the researcher to be able to improvise explanations when administering the questions.

The questions consisted of the following:

1. Pag kakuwentuhan mo ang friends mo, ano ba usually ang mga topic na pinagkukuwentuhan ninyo?  
'When you are exchanging stories with your friends, what topics do you usually talk about?'
2. Anong topic sa palagay mo ang hindi in good taste na pag-usapan ng mga magkakakilala lamang?  
'What topics do you consider in poor taste, which should be spoken about only with those whom one knows well?'
3. Pag ikaw ay galit na galit sa isang tao o pangyayari, ano ang una mong nasasabi sa pagkainis o pagkagalit?  
For example, bumababa ka ng jeep, tapos biglang umandar, tapos nadapa ka.  
'When you are very angry with someone or at something that has just happened, what is the first thing that you say in irritation or in anger? For example, you're getting off a jeep, suddenly it moves.'

## AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO

4. Anong mga bagay ang hindi mo masabi ng tuwiran o matawag sa tunay nitong pangalan, halimbawa: urinate – magjingle?  
Ilista mo nga at ibigay mo ang term na ginagamit mo para dito.  
'What are the things you cannot say directly or call by their real names, for example: to urinate-mag-jingle? List these and give the terms you use for them.'
5. Kailan ka nagmumura?  
Ano ang pinakamasakit na murang masasabi mo sa isang tao? Bakit?  
When do you cuss? What is the worst cussing you can use with a person? Why?  
Ano ang pinakamasakit na mura ang masasabi sa iyo ng isang tao? Bakit?  
'What is the worst cussing someone can use with you? Why?'
6. Saan mo natutuhan ang pagmumura – sa magulang mo ba, sa barkada, pagbabasa, t.v., movie or radio? Pumili ng tatlo.  
'Where did you learn to cuss – from your parents, your gang, from your reading, T.V., movie or radio? Choose three.'

The subjects wrote down their responses as I presented each question. This part of the study took another 20 minutes.

The third part of the study consisted of finding out how each sex group perceived the other group's language and their own too. This was done by blinding the data. Five male and five female compositions were chosen at random from the first class that was surveyed. The researcher read the five female compositions first, then the five male compositions later.

The respondents were asked to identify the sex of the writer of the description that was read to them. They were asked, too, to cite reasons for their particular guesses. Here again, the respondents wrote down their answers. This portion of the study took another 20 minutes.

### 2.2 PROCEDURE FOR ANALYZING THE DATA

A total of 200 descriptions were gathered. The male-written descriptions were separated from the female-written descriptions. There were 72 male-written descriptions and 128 female-written descriptions. Then I eliminated those descriptions that did not come up to the criteria I had set: the respondents' first language should be Pilipino and the respondents should be students of the University of Santo Tomas. Of the 200 students, only 60 males and 100 females met the criteria.

For the first part of the study, only 50 male-written descriptions were used. This was because 10 of the 60 descriptions were either very short, unfinished, or were written in English. Since there were only 50 available male-written descriptions, I followed the advice of a statistician and took 50 female-written descriptions to match the number of the male-written descriptions. Fifty descriptions from each sex group appeared adequate.

For the study of linguistic borrowing, I prepared tables of loanwords used by both sex groups and used percentages in comparing the two groups. Then the adjectives that were most common to both groups were analyzed and statistically treated for significance.

In the analysis of syntactic complexity, the Mean Length of Sentence (MLS) and the Type-Token Ratio Method (TTR) were used. Both results were statistically treated for significance.

In the analysis of perceptual selectivity, a frequency count of items selected by both groups was made. A table was drawn and computed for statistical significance.

The second part of the study consisted of the analysis of responses to orally administered questions. Frequencies of responses were tabulated and analyzed and statistically interpreted by a statistician and myself.

The third part of the study included an analysis of male and female perception of each other's language and their own. Here again, frequency counts of each group's correct and incorrect guesses in identifying the sex of the writer were made. General characteristics were derived from the males' and females' reasons for their guesses. Frequency counts of the characteristics which they associate with their correct guesses were made. Correlation tables regarding the accuracy of their guesses were drawn and statistically treated and interpreted by both the statistician and myself.

### **3. MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES IN WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS**

#### **3.1. THE HYPOTHESES**

Four null hypotheses formed the basis of the analysis:

Hypothesis 1: There are no significant differences in male and female linguistic borrowing. This is to say that men and women borrow words to the same degree.

Hypothesis 2: There are no significant differences in male and female use of adjectives in Pilipino. This means men and women have the same repertoire of adjectives and that both use these adjectives in the same degree and frequency.

Hypothesis 3: There are no significant differences in male and female perceptual selectivity. This is to say that men and women will choose the same item when given a choice from a wide range of items in the picture.

Hypothesis 4: There are no significant differences in the syntactic complexity and diversity of male and female language. Men and women will have the same Mean Length of Sentence (MLS). And using the Type-Token Ratio for language diversity, it was also hypothesized that there are no significant differences in male and female language diversity. This means that men and women have the same number of different words at their command.

#### **3.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

##### **3.2.1. LINGUISTIC BORROWING**

The findings refute the hypothesis made that there are no significant differences in male and female linguistic borrowing. The female respondents employed more linguistic borrowing than the male respondents. The women had a total of 87 loanwords compared to the men's 19 loanwords.

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND  
FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO**

**TABLE 1**

**LOANWORDS USED BY MEN AND WOMEN IN WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS**

<b>Loanword Classification</b>	<b>Men (N = 50)</b>	<b>% of Loan- words Used</b>	<b>Women (N = 50)</b>	<b>% of Loan- words Used</b>
No uns		73%		60.9%
people	1		10	
things	5		16	
color	6		8	
others	2		19	
Adjectives	5	27%	20	23.1%
Verbs	--	--	10	11.4%
Adverbs	--	--	2	
Conjunction	--	--	2	4.6%
Total	19	100%	87	100%

Why do women employ more linguistic borrowing than men? Hager (1973) says that the reason for borrowing is social prestige. Lynch (1976) observed that in the Philippines, generally speaking the women are more status conscious than men. For this reason they are more conscious of the social significance of language. English is considered the more prestigious language (as compared to Pilipino). This being the case, women consciously or unconsciously use it in their language in an attempt, wish, or desire to be socially 'in' with the prestige bracket of society. It is also possible that more linguistic borrowing and code switching are the marks of female language while fewer of these is the mark of male language.

**3.2.2. THE USE OF ADJECTIVES IN PILIPINO**

The findings show that both the males and females had approximately the same stock of adjectives. However the significant finding is in the women's more frequent use of these adjectives. Women used the adjectives *maganda* 'beautiful' *malinis* 'clean', *makintab* 'shiny' *mabuti* 'good' four to five times more than men did. (See Table 2.)

Another significant finding is that the females used more positive adjectives than the males. The most frequently used adjective by the women was *maganda* 'beautiful' while the most frequently used adjective by men was *makalumá* 'old-fashioned'. But the females' obvious and frequent use of the adjectives as compared to the very limited and sparse use of the males may signify that women are better adjective users than men.

**3.2.3 MALE AND FEMALE PERCEPTUAL SELECTIVITY**

After the respondents had described the picture, I asked them to single out one specific item in the picture that caught their interest or merited a closer look. Perceptual selectivity involves choosing a particular item from a range of many. I had hypothesized that given the same visual stimulus men and women will not have differences in the choice of particular objects that caught their attention. The findings confirm the hypothesis.

There is no statistical significance in the choice of the males and females of a particular object. Both males and females chose the same items from a range of several items. (See Table 3.)

**TABLE 2**  
**COMMON PILIPINO ADJECTIVES USED BY MALES AND FEMALES**

Adjectives	Frequency of Using Adjectives By		Z Value	Probability
	Males (N = 50)	Females (N = 50)		
1. Maganda	10	60	8.26	p < .01
2. Makintab	8	36	8.64	p < .01
3. Malinis	8	30	4.53	p < .01
4. Maligaya	6	24	3.92	p < .01
5. Mabuti	4	24	4.45	p < .01
6. Makaluma	14	8	1.44	N.S.

**TABLE 3**  
**MALE AND FEMALE CHOICE OF A PARTICULAR ITEM IN A PHOTOGRAPH**

	Grandmother	Boy	Family	Flower Vase	House	Total
Male	12	20	8	6	4	50
Female	23	13	8	2	4	50
Total	35	33	16	8	8	100
$\chi^2 = 6.9$		$4\chi^2 .05 = 9.4$		NOT SIGNIFICANT		

**3.2.4. SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY**

Length never precisely measures syntactic complexity, for it cannot give an analysis of what contributes intrinsically to such complexity, but it is presumed to correlate highly with complexity, according to Van der Geest. The table that follows shows the Mean Length of Sentence (MLS) for both sex groups.

**TABLE 4**  
**MALE/FEMALE MEAN LENGTH OF SENTENCE (MLS)**

	Male X	(N = 68) S	Female X	(N = 100) S	Z-Value	p
No. of words in a sentence	14.38	3.8	14.5	4.2	1.86	N.S.

## AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO

The table shows there is no significant difference between male and female length of sentences. Males and females tend to use the same number of words in a sentence.

### 3.2.5. SYNTACTIC DIVERSITY

The Type-Token Ratio was used to measure the number of *different* words each sex group has in a sentence. The next table shows the results.

**TABLE 5**  
**MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE DIVERSITY**  
**(TYPE-TOKEN RATIO)**

	Male (N = 60)		Female (N = 100)		T-Value	p
	X	S	X	S		
Sentence length using Type-Token Ratio	.60	.0656	.55	.09	3.128	p < .01

There is a significant difference in the test for language diversity among males and females. The males in the sample appeared to have more different words in their repertoire compared to the women. This finding refutes my hypothesis that there are no significant differences in the syntactic complexity of males and females. While it is true that there are no differences in the average number of sentences for each sex group, however, they differ in the language diversity as shown by the results using the Type-Token Ratio.

## 4. THE ANALYSIS OF CONVERSATIONAL TOPIC PREFERENCES, TOPICS CONSIDERED NOT IN GOOD TASTE, TABOO WORDS, EUPHEMISMS, CATHARTIC EXPRESSIONS AND CUSS WORDS

### 4.1. THE HYPOTHESES

This part of the study tested the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences for males and females in

1. Conversational topic preferences : Males' and females' first choice of topic for conversation is the opposite sex. The second and third choices are due to chance.
2. Topics considered not in good taste for conversation: Both sex groups consider sex as a topic not in good taste to discuss in conversation with mere acquaintances.
3. Use of cathartic expressions: *Putang-ina* "Mother-is-a-bitch" is the males' as well as the females' favorite cathartic expression.
4. Use of harsh cuss words: *Putang-ina mo* 'Your mother is a bitch' is the cuss word men and women consider the harshest they can utter to anyone and anyone can utter to them.

5. Reasons for uttering cuss words: Anger is the first and foremost reason males and females cuss.
6. Sources of cuss word acquisition: The home is the first source where males and females learn to cuss.
7. Use of taboo words and euphemisms: Both sex groups consider sexual and excretory parts and functions as the most taboo words. For the males there are more euphemisms for sex functions while for females there are more euphemisms for sexual parts.

## 4.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### 4.2.1. THE CONVERSATIONAL TOPIC PREFERENCE OF MEN AND WOMEN

Table 6 shows the conversational topic preferences of men.

**TABLE 6**  
**CONVERSATIONAL TOPIC PREFERENCES OF MEN**  
**(N = 60)**

<b>First Choice</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Second Choice</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Third Choice</b>	<b>f</b>
1. Girls	28	1. Girls	20	1. Political issues	12
2. Happenings	16	2. Love & Sex	16	2. Girls	10
3. Studies	6	3. Happenings	10	3. Studies	8
4. Political issues	6	4. Gossip	6	4. Love & Sex	8
5. Problems	4	5. Problems	4	5. Problems	6
		6. Studies	4	6. Movies	6
				7. News	6
				8. Sports	4

Table 7 shows the conversational topic preferences of women.



**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND  
FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO**

**TABLE 7**

**CONVERSATIONAL TOPIC PREFERENCE OF WOMEN**

(N = 100)

<b>First Choice</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Second Choice</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Third Choice</b>	<b>f</b>
1. Boys	36	1. Gossip	27	1. Happenings	24
2. Love Life & Sex	18	2. Problems	22	2. Gossip	20
3. Gossip	14	3. Boys	16	3. Problems	17
4. Happenings	12	4. Love Life & Sex	13	4. Boys	14
5. Studies	6	5. Happenings	10	5. Love Life & Sex	17
6. Problems	4	6. Studies	12	6. Studies	8

The next table, Table 8, is a contingency table showing frequency of first choice of topics made by males and females.

**TABLE 8**

**CONTINGENCY TABLE SHOWING FREQUENCY OF  
FIRST CHOICE OF TOPICS MADE BY MALES AND FEMALES**

	Frequency of First Choice of Topic		TOTAL
	Opposite Sex	Not the Opposite Sex	
<b>Male</b>	28 (56%)	32 (44%)	100%
<b>Female</b>	36 (36%)	64 (64%)	100%
	$x^2 = 1.36$	$.05 x^2 = 3.8$	Not Significant

Table 8 shows there is no significant difference in the first choice for conversational topic made by the males and females. They both have as their first choice the opposite sex.

The next table, Table 9, is a contingency table showing the frequency of second choice of topics made by males and females.

**TABLE 9**

**CONTINGENCY TABLE SHOWING THE FREQUENCY  
OF SECOND CHOICE OF TOPICS MADE BY MALES AND FEMALES**

	Opposite Sex	Love & Sex	Happenings	Problems	Gossip	Studies	Total
<b>Male</b>	20 (33%)	16 (26%)	10 (17%)	4 (7%)	6 (10%)	4 (7%)	60
<b>Female</b>	16	13	10	22	27	12	100
<b>Total</b>	36	29	20	26	33	16	160
	$x^2 = 21.95$		$.05 x^2 = 11.07$				Significant

There is a significant difference between the males and the females in their second choice of topic for conversation. The males' second choice is still *girls* while the females' second choice is *gossip*. Both males' and females' choices for the third topics are due to chance.

**4.2.2. TOPICS CONSIDERED NOT IN GOOD TASTE**

The next Table, Table 10, shows the topics not in good taste by men and women.

**TABLE 10**  
**TOPICS FOUND NOT IN GOOD TASTE BY MEN AND WOMEN**

Male	(N = 60)	f	%	Female	(N = 100)	f	%
1. Gossip		30	50%	1. Personal Life		42	42%
2. Sex		14	23%	2. Sex		30	30%
3. Personal Life		12	20%	3. Gossip		24	24%
4. Problems		4	7%	4. Problems		4	4%
	Total	60			Total	100	

There is a significant difference in the opinion males and females have regarding topics considered not in good taste for conversation. Thirty of the 60 males (50%) considered it not in good taste to talk about gossip while 42 of the 100 females (42%) are disinclined to talk about their personal life. This refutes the hypothesis that both groups would consider sex as the most tasteless topic to discuss with mere acquaintances.

**4.2.3. MALE AND FEMALE USE OF CATHARTIC EXPRESSIONS**

Cathartic expressions include a whole range of obscenity, blasphemy, profanity, and invectives. Whatever noise one chooses to utter, whether it be a priest's 'Oh God' or a driver's most ear-searing and blood curdling eruption of the unprintable, is a cathartic word.

Table 11 shows the male and female favorite cathartic expressions.

**TABLE 11**  
**MALE AND FEMALE CATHARTIC EXPRESSIONS**

Male	(N = 60)	f	%	Female	(N = 100)	f	%
1. Putang-ina/ Putang/Tangna		32	53%	1. Shit		28	28%
2. Gago		16	27%	2. Puñeta		24	24%
3. Animal		8	13%	3. Puta		20	20%
4. Tarantado		4	7%	4. Buwisit		18	18%
				5. Bastos		10	10%
	Total	60			Total	100	

There is indeed a significant difference in male and female cathartic expressions. While 53% of the males would utter *Putang-ina* and its other variations, 28% of the females would utter *Shit*. It seems that women still cringe at the word *Putang-ina*. *Shit*, an English word, seems less gross, more stylish, less ear-searing. *Puñeta*, another foreign word, rates second highest in the women's list of cathartic expressions. Again the use of a foreign

## AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO

word here is significant. Linguists say that one uses the language nearest to his heart when expressing himself intensely. Men appear to be more explicit and intense in expressing strong emotions like anger, irritation, provocation and frustration. Their strong use of *putang-ina* proves this. Women on the other hand, appear to be less explicit, more repressed in their use of cathartic expressions. By using foreign words to express their feelings, women indeed hedge, and reflect Jespersen's (1922) observation that women feel an instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions.

### 4.2.4. USE OF CUSS WORDS

Cuss words are different from cathartic expressions in that cuss words are more deliberately meant to hurt or insult. Cathartic expressions are usually said within a level of awareness and spontaneity caused by strong emotions.

Table 12 shows the harshest word the men and women respondents can utter to anyone.

**TABLE 12**  
**THE HARSHTEST CUSS WORD YOU CAN UTTER TO ANYONE**

Male	(N = 60)	f	%	Female	(N = 100)	f	%
1. Putang-ina mo/ Tangna mo		50	83%	1. Putang-ina mo		53	53%
2. Gago		3	5%	2. Gaga		9	9%
3. Tanga		1	2%	3. Tanga		5	5%
4. Inutil		3	5%	4. Buwisit		8	8%
5. Animal		1	2%	5. Malandi		1	1%
6. Puñeta		2	3%	6. Puñeta		6	6%
				7. Demonyo		4	4%
				8. Bastos		5	5%
				9. Inutil		8	8%
				10. Hayup		1	1%

The results confirm the researcher's hypothesis that *putang-ina mo* will be rated highest by both sex groups. The females had more words they considered harsh (10) than the males (6).

As to the harshest cuss word anyone can utter to them, both males and females agree that *putang-ina mo* is the harshest cuss word anyone can utter to them. The reason for this is that *putang-ina mo* insults someone's mother and this is very hurting.

One thing worth noting here is the difference in the cathartic expression *putang-ina/tangna/* and *puta* and *putang ina mo*. The first *putang-ina* (and its other varieties) is not considered insulting anymore. It can be uttered in jest, out of frustration, or sometimes even as a way of complimenting. It is the *putang-ina mo* with the *mo* that is considered insulting and derogatory.

The results for instances or reasons when the respondents cuss are shown in Table 13.

**TABLE 13**  
**CONTINGENCY TABLE SHOWING REASONS FOR SAYING**  
**CUSS WORDS BY MALES AND FEMALES**

	When Angry	Surprised	Provoked	Embarrassed	Having a Problem	Total (N)
Male	34	2	4	14	6	60
Female	60	17	11	4	8	100
	94	19	15	18	14	160
$\chi^2 = 19.02$			$.05 \chi^2 = 13.28$		Significant	

Males and females differ significantly in the reasons for uttering cuss words. Sixty percent of the women say they cuss when they are very angry while 56% of the men say they cuss when they are angry. The women's next reason for cussing is when they are taken by surprise (*pag nagulat*), followed by when provoked (*pag ininis*), then when confronted with a problem, and when embarrassed (*pag napahiya*).

On the other hand, the men cited 'when embarrassed' as their second reason for cussing, followed by when confronted with a problem, then when provoked and when caught by surprise.

As to the source of cuss word acquisition, the findings refute my hypothesis that the *home* would be the first source for learning cuss words. Friends (peer group) were considered first source for learning cuss words by both groups.

#### 4.2.5. USE OF TABOO WORDS AND EUPHEMISMS

Taboo words comprise a small proportion of the total lexicon of any language and they vary in the degree of revulsion they cause with their use in public. Semanticists have suggested, however, that the shock power of taboo words is not entirely in their reflection of primitive superstition but in their ability to evoke emphatic identification. That is, any person can hear the word *copulate* without a blush; it is dry, technical, devoid of any striking imagery. But the word *fuck* seems to call to mind the act itself, complete with all the attendant psycho-sexual repressive tensions which the act inspires in the individual — feelings of desire, repugnance, enjoyment, shame or whatever.

For this part of the study, I hypothesized that both male and female groups would consider excretory functions, sexual organs and sexual acts as the most taboo words. Table 14 shows the results of what items the male respondents considered taboo and their respective euphemisms.

Men's taboo words centered around the excretory processes, sexual functions, sexual organs. The items considered taboo by all men were: to urinate, to defecate, male genitals and female genitals. The items that had the most number of euphemisms were: sexual intercourse (7), to defecate (6), and to masturbate (5).

A curious characteristic of the euphemisms used by the males for sexual intercourse is that they seem to convey connotations of distaste, mechanization, or blunt hostility as in *yumari*. The ambivalence of attraction and repulsion showed up in such words as *yak-bi* (inverted form of *biyak*), *biyak*, *magjakol*, *slice*, *tonting*. These words do not connote joyous actions but tiring, hurtful and negative ones.

The next table (Table 15) shows the list of female taboo words and their euphemisms.

Terms that pertain to excretion (to urinate and defecate) and sexual organs were considered 100% taboo or unmentionable by women. The next four items considered taboo by more than half of the women respondents still had something to do with sex (male erection, sexually aroused, sexual intercourse), and sexuality (menstruation). In fact even the last nine items had something to do with sex and excretion with the exception of *ugly*.

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND  
FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO**

**TABLE 14**

**MALE TABOO WORDS AND THEIR CORRESPONDING EUPHEMISMS**

(N = 60)

Taboo Word	f	Euphemism Used	No. of Euphemisms Employed
1. To urinate	60	ji-jingle, bumbero, may 10-100, mag-CR	4
2. To defecate	60	mag-CR, call of nature, magbabawas, magrereport kay McKoy, magkakat ng lagim	6
3. Male genitals	60	bird, mine	2
4. Female genitals	60	flower, yours, kipyas	3
5. To masturbate	56	magbabate, magtebats, magjakol, magpapaos, magshaky-shaky	5
6. Sexual Intercourse	55	yumari, yak-bi, magkoljak, maglaspag, biyak, slice, tonting	7
7. Sexually aroused	49	na-L, tinigasan, nagalit si Pedro, nagkambiyo	4
8. Female breasts	36	boobs, dibdib, joga	3
9. To suck	26	tsupa	1
10. To lick	15	brotsa	1
11. To pet	10	boating, fingering	2
12. Blowjob	5	BJ	1
13. Diarrhea	3	LBM, TNT	2

TABLE 15

## FEMALE TABOO WORDS AND THEIR CORRESPONDING EUPHEMISMS

(N = 100)

Taboo Word	f	Euphemisms Used	No. of Euphemisms Employed
1. To urinate	100	jingle, pee-pee, wee-wee, no. one, CR, John, magpapa-beauty	7
2. To defecate	100	magbabawas, magde-deposit, to relieve oneself, magbubuhos ng sama ng loob, No. 2, ta-boom	6
3. Male genitals	100	birdie, deadly weapon, yung ano, samurai, tetot, cock	6
4. Female genitals	100	flower, potating, kuwan, yung ano, alam mo na, ping-ping	6
5. Menstruation	86	visitor, meron, may dalaw, may bisita, period, monthly sickness, pregnant	7
6. Male Erection	58	nag-12 o'clock, nagalit	2
7. Sexually aroused	57	basa, na-A, dripping, tulo, na hotsy, na-L	6
8. Sexually intercourse	53	LM (lovemaking), the real thing, the act, mutual benefit	4
9. To be devirginated	28	Naano ka na ba?	1
10. Female breasts	10	boobs, chocolate hills, bumper, joga	4
11. Sanitary Napkin	9	sandwich	1
12. Ugly	8	chapter, puwede na rin, kadire to death	3
13. Diarrhea	7	LBM, TNT	2
14. Motel	5	doon sa biglang liko	1
15. Bowlegged	4	walking parenthesis	1
16. Lesbian	3	T-bird	1
17. Homosexual	3	sward, manay, charing	3

## AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO

The taboo words with the most number of euphemisms were: to urinate (7), to menstruate (7), to defecate (6), male genitals (6), female genitals (6), and to be sexually aroused (6). These findings confirm my hypothesis that sexual and excretory parts and functions (or acts) are considered most taboo by both men and women. It is evident that females have more highly taboo words than males.

### 5. THE ANALYSIS OF MALE AND FEMALE PERCEPTIONS OF EACH OTHER'S LANGUAGE AND THEIR OWN

#### 5.1. THE CATEGORIES DERIVED

This part of the study deals with how men and women perceive each other's language and their own. The five male and female written descriptions were chosen randomly. I read five male-written descriptions and five female-written descriptions to all the respondents. The respondents were to guess the sex of the writer and then to give reasons for their guess. After analyzing and sorting out data, I evolved several categories that characterize male and female language according to the male and female respondents.

The categories that I evolved from both the males' and the females' list of reasons were: a) detailed description, b) aesthetic bent, c) sentimental or cultural overtones, d) choice of words, e) use of Taglish, f) manner of description.

'Detailed description' was the actual word that the respondents gave and is self-explanatory. 'Aesthetic bent' was a term I used to group several reasons that seemed to fall under that category, e.g. the mention of flowers, the mention of clouds or the rays of sunlight. 'Sentimental and cultural tones' is a catch-all term that I used to group reasons that have something to do with mention of sentiment or culture, e.g. 'because the writer mentioned that the picture reminded him of his childhood'. 'Choice of words' here means the intuitive judgment of the respondents as to the kind of words used by the writer — whether the words are masculine sounding or feminine sounding. 'Choice of words' was the actual terminology used by the respondents. 'Use of Taglish' means the use of loanwords by the writer. 'Manner of description' is again a catch-all phrase I improvised for all the reasons posited that have something to do with how the writer described the picture — 'the writer was factual; he was direct to the point; her description was concise, brief . . .'. All the reasons that more or less sounded like these were grouped under 'manner of description'.

#### 5.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

##### 5.1.1. MALE PERCEPTION OF FEMALE LANGUAGE

How do men perceive female language? What attributes do they assign to female language? My hypothesis was that men can not perceive women's language as accurately as they perceive their own and women cannot perceive men's language as accurately as their own.

Table 16 shows the male perception of female language.

TABLE 16  
MALE PERCEPTION OF FEMALE LANGUAGE

(N = 60)

Female Composition	Detailed Description	Aesthetic Bent	Sentimental Culture Tones	Choice of Words	Use of Taglish	Manner of Description	% of Accuracy of Guessing
1	24	8	8	4	4	8	93%
2	20	28	4	4	—	—	93%
3	—	—	4	—	4	—	13%
4	20	12	—	8	16	—	93%
5	4	—	4	12	—	—	33%
Total	68	48	20	28	24	8	196

Getting only the results where there is at least 50% accuracy in identifying the sex of the writer (so we eliminate rows 3 and 5), the next statistical analysis follows.

TABLE 17  
CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE LANGUAGE AS PERCEIVED BY  
MALES' FREQUENCY OF CORRECT GUESSES

	Detailed-ness	Aesthetic Sense	Use of Taglish	Choice of Words	Sentimental Tone	Manner of Description
Rank Assigned	1	2	3	4	5	6
Frequency of Correct Guesses	64	48	20	16	12	8
fo (x)	1/6	2/6	3/6	4/6	5/6	6/6
<sup>2</sup> 168 (x)	64/168	112/168	132/168	148/168	169/168	168/168
D	.21	.33	.28	.21	.11	0

D at .01 level of significance =  $\frac{1.63}{168} = .26$  Significant



## AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO

This table uses the Smirnov–Kolmogorov statistical computation.

The order of ranking of the characteristics of the female language follows the order of frequency of correct guesses made by the males. It is safe to say that the first characteristic of female language according to male perception is detailedness, second is aesthetic bent and third is the use of Taglish.

### 5.2.2. FEMALE PERCEPTION OF MALE LANGUAGE

How do women perceive men's language? What characteristics do they assign to men's language? The categories that emerged in the analysis were based on the reasons given by the female respondents as to why they thought the composition was written by a man. Three general qualities of male language emerged from the classification, namely: manner of description, choice of words and detailedness of description. Table 18 shows the percentage of correct guesses made by the women in identifying the male-written compositions.

**TABLE 18**  
**FEMALE PERCEPTION OF MALE LANGUAGE**  
(N = 100)

Male Composition	Detailedness of description	Choice of Words	Manner of description	% of Accuracy of Guessing
1	18	—	36	60%
2	—	—	24	27%
3	6	6	18	40%
4	—	18	36	60%
5	6	12	42	66%
Total	30	36	156	Total correct guesses 222

Using the results where there are at least 50% accuracy of guessing (thus we eliminate rows 2 and 3), the next statistical analysis follows (Table 19).

The order of ranking the characteristics of male language follows the order of the frequency of correct guesses made by the females. It is safe to say that the characteristic closely associated with male language is 'manner of description', that is – being direct, to the point, concise, brief and factual.

The next characteristic would be choice of words. Note that in the male perception of female language, the males pointed out the use of Taglish as a third factor for identifying the writer as female. It seems that the females are less aware of this variety of language being used by themselves while men are more perceptive in pointing it out as a determining characteristic of female language.

**TABLE 19**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE LANGUAGE AS PERCEIVED**  
**BY FEMALES' FREQUENCY OF CORRECT GUESSES**

	Manner of Description	Choice of Words	Detailedness
Rank Assigned	1	2	3
Frequency of Correct Guesses	108	30	24
fo (x)	1/3	2/3	3/3
S <sub>162</sub> (x)	108/162	138/162	162/162
D	.336	.19	0
D at .01 level of significance = $\frac{1.63}{162} = .128$		Significant	

### 5.2.3. FEMALE PERCEPTION OF FEMALE LANGUAGE

How do women perceive their own language? What characteristics do they assign to their language? The general characteristics that emerged from the women's reasons as to why they thought the writer was female were the following: detailedness of description, choice of words, aesthetic bent, sentimental overtones. The next table, Table 20, shows the percentage of accuracy of the female identification of female language.

**TABLE 20**  
**FEMALE PERCEPTION OF FEMALE LANGUAGE**  
**(N = 100)**

Female Com- position	Detailed Descrip- tion	Choice of Words	Aesthetic Bent	Sentimentality	% of Accuracy of Guessing
1	66	—	—	12	78%
2	24	—	48	0	72%
3	12	12	—	0	24%
4	12	36	18	0	66%
5	12	24	12	6	54
Total	126	72	78	18	Total Correct Guesses 294 or 59%

The language characteristic most women assign their language is detailedness of description (126), followed by aesthetic bent (78), choice of words (72), and sentimental overtones (18). No mention of the use of Taglish was made. It seems that women are less aware of the kind of language they use or men use. While men include 'use of Taglish' as one of the characteristics to identify women's language, the women never used this feature. The total number of correct guesses made by the females was 294 out of 500, which was an average of 59% of correct guesses, or 59% recognition of female-written language.

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO**

**5.2.4. MALE PERCEPTION OF MALE LANGUAGE**

On the other hand, when the male compositions were read to the male respondents, they came up with five general characteristics of their own language, namely: detailedness of description, sentimental and cultural overtones, choice of words, use of Taglish, and manner of description. Aesthetic bent, a quality in the female analysis of their own language, was absent in the male categories, while the use of Taglish and manner of description were markedly absent in the female categories. It is safe to conclude that the women are *not* aware of this feature of language that men and women use while men are aware of this aspect. Also, women perceive their language to be more artistically inclined while men perceive theirs to be devoid of it. Men's average percentage of accuracy in identifying their own language is 56%. They associate their language with a certain manner of description (being direct, to the point, brief, etc.) first, then, sentimental or cultural overtones next. Table 21 illustrates the points in tabulated form.

**TABLE 21**  
**MALE PERCEPTION OF MALE LANGUAGE**  
(N = 60)

Male Com- position	Detailedness of Description	Sentimental/ Cultural Overtones	Choice of Words	Use of Taglish	Manner of Description	% of Ac- curacy of Guessing
1	4	0	0	4	20	47%
2	0	12	0	0	28	67%
3	0	4	4	0	4	20%
4	12	0	0	0	20	53%
5	0	8	8	0	0	26.6%
Total	16	24	16	4	72	Total correct guesses 28 or 56%

The next table shows the accuracy of female perception of male and female language.

**TABLE 22**  
**CONTINGENCY TABLE SHOWING THE FREQUENCY OF CORRECT GUESSES**  
**MADE BY FEMALES ON MALE AND FEMALE WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS**

	Male-Written Descriptions	Female Guesses of Female-Written Descriptions	TOTAL
Correct	222	294	516
Incorrect	278	306	584
	$\chi^2 = 19.77$	$.01 \chi^2_1 = 6.6$	Significantly Different

Interpretation: The females have a more accurate recognition of female-written compositions than the male-written ones.

The table that follows shows the accuracy of male perception of male and female languages.

TABLE 23

CONTINGENCY TABLE SHOWING THE FREQUENCY OF CORRECT GUESSES  
MADE BY MALES ON MALE AND FEMALE-WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS

	Female Guesses of		Total
	Male-Written Descriptions	Female-Written Descriptions	
Correct	128	196	324
Incorrect	172	104	276
Total	300	300	600
$\chi^2 = 30.11$	$.01 \chi^2_1 = 6.6$		Significantly Different

The males can recognize a female-written description better than they can a male-written description. It is therefore safe to conclude that both males and females have a more accurate recognition of female language than male language. Female language is more easily recognizable probably because of marked features like its being detailed, its use of Taglish, and its aesthetic bent.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that there really exist differences in male and female language and even in the way both sex groups perceive their languages. The study has also indicated in which features of language males and females share similarities.

However, the findings of this research do not intend to generalize the differences found in Pilipino male and female language. A study of this kind done with rural, lower class, middle age respondents may produce remarkably different results. Each variable – age, socio-economic status, place of residence, education, and even profession – may alter the results in this kind of study. Nevertheless, this researcher believes that there are certain differences and similarities presented here that are common among all sectors.

Many questions remain unanswered. A greater number of sex differences may exist in spoken more than in written language. Differences in written work might show up under other conditions. Age and socio-economic status may affect the writer's style or the speaker's speech. Some women and men are individualistic, and research must be careful not to make the error of simply grouping all women and men together.

Moreover, words, phrases, and sentences are not inherently strong or weak. They acquire these attributes only in a particular cultural context. If a society views female speech as inferior, it is because of the subordinate role assigned to women. Cultures are usually biased in interpreting sex differences in favor of men.

Beliefs about sex-oriented language differences may be as important as the actual differences. As long as women play a subordinate role, their speech will be stereo-typed as separate and unequal.

## AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE LANGUAGE IN PILIPINO

Linguistic sexism is not one problem but many. This was indicated in the conclusion of Sol Saporta's address to the Modern Language Association in 1974: 'Given the data, then, is language sexist or are people sexist or is society sexist? The probable answer, regrettably, is all three'.

This study is the first of its kind in the Philippines and it hopes to be the starting point for similar studies on sexism in language, sexism in people, or sexism in society.

### REFERENCES

- HAGER, F. HABER. 1973. *Sociologie und linguistik*. Stuttgart: J.B. Mezzler.
- LYNCH, FRANK and ALFONSO DE GUZMAN II, eds. 1976. *Four readings on Philippine values: IPC Papers No. 2*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- MONTENEGRO, CARMENCITA F. 1981. *Towards a description of male and female language in Pilipino*. Ph. D. dissertation, University of Santo Tomas.