
A Comparison of Semantic Roles on Adjectives Found Between the Articles of Online Gay's Magazine *Bent* and Online Lesbian's Magazine *Diva*

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Abstract

The study concerns the different style of gay and lesbian language represented in online mass media, *Bent* and *Diva* where specific adjectives are used to keep close to their readers. The study aims to find out the similarities and differences on semantic roles of adjectives used in the articles of online gay's magazine *Bent* and online lesbian's magazine *Diva*. Sixteen articles from several topics which are *Entertainment*, *Fashion*, *Travel*, and *News* were chosen. There were 546 adjectives taken from *Bent* and 304 attributive adjectives taken from *Diva*. To analyze the data, the writer uses qualitative method and Biber's theory of semantic roles which distinguishes adjectives into two main groups, descriptor and classifier. The findings show that *Bent* tends to use emotive and miscellaneous and *Diva* uses color, time, and size more frequently than *Bent*. In addition, *Bent* has high percentage in using relational and affiliative adjective, while *Diva* has high percentage in topical adjective. These shows that gay's magazine tends to be more informative and has higher tendency of women's language especially in the use of adjectives than lesbian's magazine.

Keywords: adjectives, gay language, lesbian language, online magazine, semantic roles

Introduction

Nowadays, homosexuality has become a hot issue and an interesting topic in Canada, Netherland, Spain, United Kingdom, etc., where the same-sex marriage is legalized (www.freedomtomarry.org). Consequently, the communities of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex (LGBTI) burgeon rapidly. This is supported by Integrated Household Survey (2014) stating that in London, there were 1.2% of adult males and females coming out as gay or lesbian in 2013. It was higher than the number of males and females identified as bisexual (0.5%) and other sexual identities (0.3%). The lesbian and gay communities have their own magazine, named *Bent* dedicated for gays and *Diva* dedicated for lesbians. Gay readers can access *Bent* at mag.bent.com, while lesbian readers can visit *Diva's* website at www.divamag.co.uk.

Bent and *Diva* as online mass media have vital role-play in establishing and spreading the information for their gay and lesbian readers. In order to keep close to their readers, the magazines usually use some terms which have been shared and known by the target readers. Those terms are called as register referring to a term for specific vocabulary related to certain group of people (Holmes, 2008). The selection of certain vocabularies in the magazines such as adjectives is influenced by the target market themselves (Ekasari, 2008: 2). For examples, the word formation presented by gay in *GAYA NUSANTARA* magazine where the gays are the target readers is more various (Perdana, 2010) than that in magazine that is not dedicated for gays. Another example can be seen from Dang's study (2013) where some women's language features like high-pitched tone, rising intonation and word lengthening are also commonly used by gay communities in Ho Chi Minh City. Meanwhile, it has widely been known that women's speech has their own linguistic features as opposed to men's speech such as rising intonation on declaratives, emphatic stress, empty adjectives, etc. (Lakoff, 1975).

As the previous studies mentioned above, gay have their own language terms and they have similar linguistic features to women's speech. Gays are believed that they have similar speech styles to women, and lesbians are also like men in speech style (Cameron and Kulick (2003). It is clear enough that gay and lesbian have different style in spoken language. Meanwhile, in language and gender, male and female also have differences in spoken and written language. From this, the writer has a curiosity whether gay and lesbian also have differences in written language especially in how the gay's and lesbian's magazines use adjectives for their own target readers.

In this study, the writer analyzed the semantic roles of adjectives found in gay's magazine *Bent* and lesbian's magazine *Diva*. Those are the online versions of gay and lesbian magazines published in United Kingdom. The articles of *Bent* and *Diva* are chosen as the object of this study because these magazines can be accessed easily by visiting their official website anytime. Both are also published in the same country, United Kingdom, the fifteenth country which has legalized the same sex marriage constitutionally.

The writer chose adjectives because the adjectives are frequently used to modify nouns, thus adding to the informational density of expository registers such as news and academic prose (Biber et al., 1999). Although adjectives usually modify nouns, there are also other word classes which can modify nouns. Berk (1999) states that the words from adjective word class which modify nouns are called prototypical adjectives, but there are also non-adjectives words which can modify nouns called as non-prototypical adjectives.

In English, these adjectives have three roles which can be distinguished by their morphological, syntactic, and semantic roles (Biber et al, 1999: 505). In this study, the writer focused on semantic roles. In semantic role of adjectives, it is more concerned with semantic function of adjectives which are categorized as nominal expression (Biber et al, 1999: 506). In this case, they distinguish semantic as two groups, descriptor (color, size, time, emotion, and miscellaneous) and classifier (relation, affiliative, and topical). Furthermore, in the study, the writer analyzed the adjectives found in the articles of gay's magazine *Bent* and lesbian's magazine *Diva* based on semantic roles. Furthermore, the writer would identify the similarities and differences of semantic roles of adjectives between *Bent* and *Diva*.

Method

Online gay's magazine *Bent* and online lesbian's magazine *Diva* must have their own writing style, especially the pattern of adjectives use. The writer identified the similarities and differences of semantic roles on adjectives found in these magazines. The writer used the qualitative method to analyze the data taken from a number of articles of the magazines because the research in qualitative approach can take wide range of data such as documents, and audiovisual information and qualitative research can start with reviewing the data and organizing them into categories or themes (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the writer worked with public document of articles in online gay's magazine *Bent* and online lesbian's magazine *Diva*.

In this study the data were divided into two major groups based on semantic groupings: descriptor and classifier. Descriptor consists of color, time, size, emotive, and miscellaneous. Classifier can be divided into relational, affiliative, and topical.

The writer chose the online gay's magazine *Bent* and online lesbian's magazine *Diva* as the object because at first the writers would like to find out whether gays have the same characteristics in writing as women, and lesbians have the same characteristics in writing as men or not. Furthermore, those online gay's and lesbian's magazines are good choices for the writer to be the population of the research because both are online magazines which have different target readers based on their sexualities, gay and lesbian.

To determine the sample of this study, the writer used purposive sampling. The writer randomly took more less 16 articles in May 2015 from some rubrics such as *Entertainment*, *Fashion*, *Travel*, and *News*. These rubrics could be found in both magazines, *Bent* and *Diva*. The writer chose three *Entertainment* articles of each magazine such as "One Man Breaking Bad – The Unauthorised Parody", "How Does He Do That?", and "Hotwired Sports" from *Bent* and three other articles from

Diva; “5 Reasons To See Poet/Activist Andrea Gibson Live”, “How Do They Write The Sex Scenes In Orange Is The New Black?” and “Festival With A Difference”. Three News articles were also taken from each magazine, “Parade to mark 45 years of Pride”, “Manchester Pride Announces More Big Weekend Artists”, and “Bent USA – Chicago Gets Bougie This Pride” from *Bent*. “Ruth Davidson Urges Ireland To Vote Yes To Marriage Equality”, “Homophobia Holds Young People Back, Says Report”, and “Austria Gives The Green Light To Same-sex Couples” are the news articles of *Diva*. Meanwhile, only one *Fashion* and *Travel* articles from each magazine, “truTV welcomes RuPaul’s Drag Race to the UK” and “Travel – Fabulous Fethiye!” from *Bent*, while “Only High Heels For Women On The Red Carpet? You Cannes Not Be Serious” “Imperial City The Other Way Round: Vienna For Gays And Lesbians” from *Diva*.

There were some steps in the data collection. First of all, the writer visited the official website of *Bent* and *Diva* magazines. *Bent* can be accessed easily at <http://mag.bent.com>, while *Diva* can be accessed at <http://www.divamag.co.uk>. After entering to the website, the writer decided the same four rubrics of the articles provided in both magazines’ websites. In this case, the writer chose *Entertainment*, *Fashion*, *Travel*, and *News*. Then, the writer read all the articles. The writer marked and counted every word, and then the writer classified and identified every single word based on their semantic roles by using Biber’s theory (1999).

There were several steps for analyzing the data. After the writer identified and categorized the adjectives found in those articles, the writer put them on the tables separately based on the semantic roles of adjectives. After the data have been categorized and gathered on the tables, the writer started counting the frequency of adjectives used and writing the total quantity of each category. In the final analysis, the writer identified the similarities and differences of semantic roles on adjectives found in the articles of *Bent* and *Diva* magazines. Finally, the writer made interpretations of the categorized data supported with recent and related studies.

The Comparison of Descriptor Adjectives between *Bent* and *Diva* magazines

In this section, the writer discusses descriptor adjectives used in *Bent* and *Diva* magazines. Biber et al (1999) states that descriptor adjectives can be divided into five categories: color, time, size, emotive, and miscellaneous. Generally, the function of descriptor adjectives is to describe additional information of the noun. The descriptor adjective is usually gradable and can be added by intensifier.

Based on the data collection and data analysis, the writer found 850 adjectives, in which 546 adjectives are from *Bent*’s articles, and 304 adjectives are found in *Diva*’s articles. Of 546 adjectives found in *Bent*, they are categorized into two groups, 292 descriptors and 254 classifiers. Meanwhile, *Diva* has 159 descriptors and 145 classifiers. This can be seen in Table 1.

Rubric	Descriptor									
	Color		Size		Time		Emotive		Miscellaneous	
	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>
Entertainment	1	0	20	9	4	7	36	18	32	11
Fashion	0	4	7	4	4	4	23	10	14	5
Travel	0	0	18	5	16	4	21	6	19	9
News	1	1	13	10	9	19	32	15	22	18
Total	2	5	58	28	33	34	112	49	87	43
(%)	0.68	3.14	19.86	17.61	11.30	21.38	38.35	30.81	30	27.04

Tabel 1: the comparison of descriptor between Bent and Diva

In the use of adjectives based on semantic roles, the table shows that *Bent* and *Diva* magazines use all types of descriptor, but they have different percentages of each type. The first type of descriptor is color. It denotes color and brightness (Biber et al, 1999: 508). The data show that *Diva* magazine tends to use color descriptor more frequently than *Bent*. It can be seen from the table above which

shows that *Diva* obtains higher percentage with 3.14%, while *Bent* only obtains 0.68%. *Diva* uses more color descriptor (e.g. **red** carpet outfit, the **red** carpet, etc).

Relating to the use of color term, Lakoff (1975) points out that color term is associated with women's language. Women, of course, have richer specific color vocabulary or color terms. They are usually more detailed in describing color of something like shirt, dress, and many others which are related to their world. From the data, both gay's and lesbian's magazines use color terms, but gay's magazine *Bent* does not use this adjective as frequent as lesbian's magazine *Diva*.

In addition, Barrett and Queen point out that one of the characteristics of stereotyped gay's and lesbian's language is the use of specific color terms (cited in Hall and Livia, 1997: 192-193 & 240). In this finding, the writer gives two interpretations. Firstly, although the specific color terms were not found in both magazines, the use of color descriptor could reflect how frequently lesbians use these adjectives. Secondly, *Diva* uses ordinary color terms in order to be more masculine as man's language in which men avoid to use specific color terms.

The second type of descriptor is size. According to Biber et al (1999), they say that size descriptor describes size, quantity, extent, and weight. From Table 1, it shows that gay's magazine *Bent* tends to use size descriptor more frequently than *Diva*. The data also show that size descriptor such as **high**, **large**, and **big** are the most commonly used in both magazines. However, *Bent* uses numeric quantity more frequently such as '**80,000** local inhabitants', **3½** hours, **40** miles etc., than *Diva*. It means that gays are very detailed in describing the information relating to the size, quantity, and extent compared to lesbians.

The next type of descriptors is time. Time descriptor is an adjective expressing the chronology, age, and frequency such as **new**, **recent**, **old**, etc., (Biber et al, 1999: 509). From Table 1, both magazines have different frequencies. *Diva* obtains higher percentages with 21.38%, while *Bent* obtains 11.30%. The data also show that the most frequent time descriptors are **young**, **new**, and **old**. They are the most common attributive adjectives especially in time descriptors that occur more than 200 times per million words (Biber et al, 1999: 512). It indicates that the use of time descriptor is to show the characteristic of lesbians in which they are very conscious about time.

The fourth descriptor is emotive. Emotive descriptor denotes judgments, evaluation, emotion, affect, and emphasis (Biber et al, 1999: 509). This adjective usually indicates personal emotion, feeling, and evaluation. The data from Table 1 surprisingly show that emotive descriptors are more frequently used in *Bent* than in *Diva*. *Bent* magazine obtains 38.35%, while *Diva* only obtains 30.81%. *Bent* uses more various emotive descriptors such as awesome, fabulous, beautiful, etc. Relating to one of women's linguistic features, emotive adjectives can be considered as the empty adjectives. Lakoff (1975) points out that empty adjective is a group of adjectives which denotes to another function as admiration of something, for example **adorable**, **charming**, **sweet**, **lovely**, **great**, etc. These adjectives can define the feminine side of the speaker. From Table 1, *Bent* uses some adjectives that identically belong to feminine adjectives such as **fabulous**, **fancy**, **fierce** etc. According to BNCweb (2002), those adjectives are commonly used by female speakers. Furthermore, the feminine side of gay is represented in the use of emotive descriptor.

The last descriptor adjective is miscellaneous. Miscellaneous descriptor actually does not have a specific category. It is only a complement when some descriptor adjectives cannot be categorized into four other types such as color, size, time and emotive. Biber et al (1999) provides examples of miscellaneous descriptor such as hot, serious, hard, etc. However, *Bent* obtains higher percentages with 30%, while *Diva* obtains 27.04% in which it indicates that *Bent* tries to give other additional information excluding the other descriptors.

Over all, from Table 1, it shows that both magazines use all the types of descriptor adjectives, but they use the descriptors in different frequencies. *Bent* uses size, emotive and miscellaneous descriptors in higher frequencies than *Diva*. Meanwhile, *Diva* obtains higher frequencies in color and time descriptors. These findings show the consistency of women's language used in gay language. The use of adjectives is to give informational expository registers (Biber et al, 1999: 504). It means that gay tends to be more informative than lesbian by giving more detailed information of something.

The Comparison of Classifier Adjectives between *Bent* and *Diva*

In this discussion, the writer analyzes the classifier adjectives found in the articles of *Bent* and *Diva*. Classifier adjective is a group of adjectives that typically are non-gradable adjectives, in which the primary function of this adjective is to delimit and restrict a noun's referent (Biber et al, 1999: 508). In classifier adjective, it can be divided into three types; relational, affiliative, and topical.

In this study, the writer found 254 classifiers in *Bent*'s articles, while 145 classifiers are found in the articles of *Diva*. The data of the classifier adjectives used in *Bent* and *Diva* magazines can be seen in Table 2 below:

Rubric	Classifier					
	Relational		Affiliative		Topical	
	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>	<i>Bent</i>	<i>Diva</i>
Entertainment	24	4	5	2	43	33
Fashion	4	3	5	1	20	15
Travel	5	3	22	3	41	17
News	17	1	14	8	54	55
Total	50	11	46	14	158	120
(%)	19.68	7.58	18.11	9.65	62.20	82.75

Table 2: the comparison of classifier between *Bent* and *Diva*

From Table 2 above, it shows that both *Bent* and *Diva* magazines use all types of classifier adjectives. The similarity is the use of topical adjectives in which it is the most frequent classifier of all classifiers of both magazines. The difference is in the frequencies of those adjectives.

The first difference can be seen in the first type of classifier, and relational adjectives. Relational adjective is restrictive to the referent of a noun and it typically provides little descriptive content such as **additional**, **similar**, and **final** (Biber et al, 1999: 508-509). In the first type of classifier, relational adjectives, *Bent* has higher percentages than *Diva*. *Bent* obtains 19.68%, while *Diva* only uses relational adjectives in 7.58%. Although these adjectives have a little content on the nouns, gay's magazine *Bent* tries to give additional information. It shows that the characteristic of gay's language is more informative and descriptive than lesbian's language.

In the second type, affiliative adjective denotes the national or religious groups to which a referent belongs, for examples, American, Italian, Christian, etc., (Biber et al, 1999: 509). In Table 2, the higher percentage is obtained by *Bent* magazine with 18.11%, while *Diva* achieves 9.65%. The data also show that affiliative adjective used in both magazines is various. It does not only include national and religious group, but it also includes the name of places (**Dalaman** airport, the **August** bank, **Birmingham** airport, etc), the name of event (**Manchester Pride** festival, the 60th**Eurovision** song contest, etc), the name of person (**Virginia Woolf** biographer), and the name of company (the larger-than-life terrestrial **TV I** channel and the **Youtube** video).

The last classifier adjective is topical. Topical adjective is a group of classifier which gives a subject area or shows the relationship with a noun (Biber et.al., 1999). Table 2 shows that both magazines use more topical adjectives than other classifiers. Moreover, *Diva* magazine tends to use topical adjectives more frequently with 82.75% than *Bent* with 62.20%. It indicates that lesbian masters various subject areas such as entertainment, fashion, travel, and news. It can be seen in how lesbian magazine *Diva* provides some topical adjectives related to the topic of the articles such as (**poetry** readings, the **sex** scenes, **dress** code, the **city** center, etc).

Over all, both *Bent* and *Diva* magazines use all types of classifier adjectives, but they have different frequencies in using them. *Bent* tends to use relational and affiliative classifiers, while *Diva* uses topical classifier more frequently. *Bent* tends to be more informative by using two types of classifier more frequently than *Diva*.

Conclusion

From the discussion, it finally can be concluded that there are some similarities and differences found in the use of adjectives based on its semantic roles. The similarities relate to the use of descriptor adjectives. Both *Bent* and *Diva* magazines use all types of descriptor adjectives such as color, time, size, emotive, and miscellaneous. It may indicate that gay's and lesbian's language are quite similar in the use of adjectives, especially in color term and empty adjective. The characteristics of stereotyped gay's and lesbian's language are the use of specific color terms and empty adjectives (Barrett and Queen, cited in Hall and Livia, 1997: 192-193 & 240).

Although these magazines indicate similarities in the use of descriptor adjectives, they still have differences in term of frequency. From the discussion, it can be seen that *Diva* tends to use color and time descriptors more frequently, while *Bent* tends to use size, emotive and miscellaneous descriptors. It may show that articles of gay magazine have greater consistency of women's language proposed by Lakoff (1975). It also indicates that gays are more specific in describing something. Besides, gays also tend to use their emotional like a woman.

In classifier adjectives, both magazines also have a similarity by using all types of classifier adjective. In addition, the topical classifier becomes the most common adjectives for both magazines. However, they also have differences like in the frequencies of the classifier usage. The data show that *Bent* tends to use two types of classifier such as relational and affiliative, while *Diva* tends to use topical more frequently. From the data, it is found that affiliative is not only about national and religious groups, but the name of places, person, event, and company should be included as well.

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