

Conversational Topic Preferences, Taboo Words and Euphemisms: The Case of Philippine Male and Female University Students

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Abstract

The present study investigates the conversational topic preference, taboo words, euphemisms, and cathartic expressions of private and state university male and female students. Among the important findings were: 1) the *opposite sex* is not ranked as the most preferred topic of conversation with friends by students although they are among the favorites. Instead, *sports*, is the most preferred topic by male students from the private university while *school matters*, *girls* and *computer games* were listed with almost the same frequency by males from the state university. *School matters* and *lovelife* topped the list of female students from the private and the public university; 2) despite the seeming openness, teen-agers feel it improper to discuss personal problems, love life, secrets and sex with mere acquaintances; 3) there is more tendency for Manila-born and bred students to express irritation or anger more strongly through cathartic words than their counterparts who were born and bred in the province; 4) when provoked, both groups of respondents tend to utter harsh words to inflict insult or hurt on other people. What is remarkable is the capacity of males from the private university to utter more varied and more degrading expressions; 5) pertaining to the use of taboo words, the private university students prove to recognize more taboo words than do state university students. Contrarily, some of the terms used to refer to *sexual intercourse*, *excretory process* and *masturbation* were not meant to soften the taboos for their negative connotations and vulgarity; and 6) as can be expected, friends prove to be the most influential in the teenagers language and behavior, followed by media and neighborhood. backgrounds. These findings suggested that gender differences may be influenced by socio-economic backgrounds.

Key words: taboo, euphemisms, cathartic words, gender differences

Introduction

There has been a remarkably large number of studies conducted on the characteristics of men's and women's language

(among others, Lakoff, 1975; Poynton, 1989; Cameron, 1990; Coates, 1986; Batibo & Kopi, 2008; Tannen, 1990; Hysi, 2011; Bakhtiar, 2011). Such studies highlighted gender differences in language. According to Hysi (2011) gender differences in communication cross linguistic borders and take cultural, ethnic and psycho-social dimensions. For instance, women tend to use linguistic forms which are closer to the polite language variety and are more hesitant to use taboo in public and while men have more freedom in using taboo language, women have always been expected and trained to talk 'lady like' (Bakhtiar, 2011, p. 15). Similarly, Gumperz (1982) maintained that women and men have different cultural rules for friendliness, and these different rules can sometimes create miscommunication between them. Jones (1990) shows that, "women are not only sharing information, but are asking each other" (p. 246). With respect to topic preferences in conversations, Holmes (1991) emphasizes that women tend to talk about their feelings and their relationship, while men tend to compare their knowledge, experiences, and recount competitive exploits. The same finding was found in Eschholz, Rosa and Clark (1990), who established that men could practically talk about anything except personal feelings. In Poynton (1989), it was concluded that men's greatest conversational interests seem to be business and money, followed by sports and amusements, while women tend to talk about men and clothes. Besides, topics about person play a larger part in women's conversation than in men's. In an analysis of conversations of males, female and mixed-sex groups of some university students, Nugroho and Agustin (2003) found that 'persons' is the typical topic in female group, while 'objects/belongings' is the most favorite topic in a male group. Interestingly in the mixed-sex group, topics are chosen depending on how well male or female participants negotiate a particular topic they like for discussion.

Aside from topic preferences, another focus on the sociolinguistics of male and female language is the use of euphemisms. According to Cabej, (1978, in Hysi, 20011), euphemisms emerge out of the fear and shame, fear of hurting other people's feelings or breaking the rules of society. They are used to hide unpleasant or embarrassing ideas even in those cases where the direct words are not necessarily offensive. According to Hysi, (2011) it is a

given fact that use of euphemisms is a distinct linguistic feature employed by women. In her investigation of categories of female speakers that frequently use euphemisms and the main areas in women's language that abound in euphemistic expressions, Hysi (2011) found that the use of euphemisms is not only gender-related but is closely related to other factors such as education, culture and social class especially in environments where women have a secondary role in communication and where women's freedom of expression is suppressed. A very interesting study on sex-related euphemisms in Setswana with the incidence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic was conducted by Batibo and Kopi (2008). Among the important findings were: (1) more euphemisms have been created for private parts, sexual activities, sexual secretions, sexual diseases and related phenomena; (2) these euphemisms have slang origins and use; (3) most of these euphemisms are used by the younger generation; the incidence of HIV/AIDS has created more lexical items for sex-related euphemisms especially those that are related to safe sex, abstinence, and condoms; (4) attitudes toward sexual indulgence has shifted from positive to somewhat negative; and (5) euphemisms that began as casual expressions of slang nature have spread and have become officially part of the Setswana language

Similarly, Shurta (1999, in Hysi, 2011, p. 245) found that euphemisms as a category of vocabulary in Albanian, have undergone a significant decrease among the young owing to the development and changes in spiritual and cultural world of the Albanians in cities and across villages. Another important finding by Hysi (2011) is that one very rich area of euphemisms is that of diseases (e.g. *the big C* for cancer, *the earth disease/the evil of the world* for epilepsy and other dangerous diseases), death (e.g. *left/ lost one's life/ deceased/departed* for the term 'dead'), and sexuality (e.g. *bird, chick, grapes, peach* and *plum* for 'penis' or 'vagina. 'Moreover, such euphemisms abound in women's language.

In a similar study by Simkins and Rinck (1982) on the terminologies used by male and female to refer to male and female genitalia and the act of copulation, it came out that regardless of the interpersonal context (i.e. mixed company, friends and lovers) both gender prefer the formal terminologies (i.e. penis, vagina and sexual intercourse) although when discussing with same-sex friends, males

tend to use slang (i.e. use pussy to refer to female genitalia; use 'fucking' or 'screwing' to refer to sexual intercourse) while females tend to use euphemism (i.e. making love to refer to sexual intercourse).

Still another focus of studies on gender differences is the use of taboo words. *Taboo* (a borrowed word from Tongan, an Austronesian language) means 'prohibition' because something is believed to be dangerous for individual or society. Societies whether primitive or modern have their own set of taboos for certain objects or names. Many euphemisms are product of superstition that words have the power to attract bad things. In most societies that frown at the use of taboo language by women, it is generally held that men use taboo words more than women. In such societies, women therefore tend to use what are described as "polished" and "more refined" words than men (see also, Lakoff, 1975; Salami, (2004).

Philippines is a country where women are expected to be less aggressive, more polite and more circumspect in their speech. Especially in the old days, women's modesty, indeed, is considered a virtue. With the western influence on fashion, speech and behavior and the advent of technology, some changes must have taken place. Montenegro, in her 1982 dissertation, made an exploratory study of Filipino university students' language dealing with linguistic features characterizing male and female language in Filipino, analysis of conversational topic preference, topics not considered in good taste, taboo words, euphemisms, cathartic expressions and cuss words and the analysis of male and female perception of each other's language and their own. Specific findings revealed that the opposite sex tends to be male and females' favorite topic in conversation although female tend to prefer gossips too. A significant difference in the use of cathartic expressions was found. While 53% of the males were predisposed to the use of cuss words, women on the other hand, tend to be less explicit, more repressed in their use of cathartic expressions. For the use of taboo words and euphemisms, Montenegro (1982) found that men and women's taboo words centered around the excretory processes, sexual organs and sexual acts where euphemisms are used. Overall, the study confirmed some 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 male and female share similarities. Acknowledging the fact that the data for the study were taken from one type of respondents only, the author was careful not to generalize the differences found in male and female language. Rather, the study suggested that future study involving rural, lower class and middle age respondents may alter some findings in her study. The study conducted by Montenegro was then the first of its kind in the Philippines. Since it focused on a single type of samples, university students who are Manila-born and bred, the author admitted that the research did not investigate variables like socio-economic status and place of residence.

Statement of the Problem

The present study replicated Montenegro's study with some modifications. This time, the data were taken from two groups of respondents. Secondly, the paper concentrated on the description and analysis of conversational topic preferences, use of taboo words, euphemisms and cathartic words of the respondents. Moreover, the paper is interested in determining whether some changes have taken place in Filipino youth's language after more than two decades. Specifically, it aimed to satisfy the following questions:

1. Do male and female respondents from a private and a state university differ in the following:
 - a. topic preferences
 - b. use of taboo words
 - c. use of euphemisms
 - d. use of cathartic words
2. Which among the following are the sources of students' cathartic words?
 - a. parents
 - b. peers/friends
 - c. neighbors
 - d. media (e.g. newspaper, TV, movies, radio)

Method

The corpus of study came from two groups of respondents. The first group consists of 101 undergraduate students from a prestigious private university in Manila, consisting of fifty one males and fifty females. The second group consists of 114 students of a state university in Region IV-Mimaropa, composed of fifty-nine males and fifty five females. The private university students belonged to four different classes. One class came from the College of Liberal Arts whose majors were Developmental Studies, Political Science and International Studies. Another class came from the College of Computer Science whose specializations were Computer Science and Information Systems. The third class came from the College of Biological Sciences whose majors were Premed Physics and Phy-Mat. The fourth class came from the College of Business whose major was Accountancy. The respondents from the state university also came from four classes consisting of BS Civil Engineering, BS Petroleum Engineering, BS Electrical Engineering and BS Psychology students. The students ages from both groups ranged from 16 to 19 years old.

Each student was provided with a blank sheet on which they would indicate their sex, age, major subject and first language. The first 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 students time to think twice or to change their first response. It is important that the responses be spontaneous since what is being studied is supposed to be 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 provide explanations while administering the questions.

The questions consisted of the following:

1. Pag kakuwentuhan mo ang friends mo, ano ba usually ang mga topics 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 pagusapan ng mga magkakakilala lamang? (What topics do you think should be spoken about only with those whom one is intimate with?)
3. Pag ikaw ay galit na galit sa isang tao o sa 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 you say in irritation or in anger? For example, you're getting off a jeep then suddenly it moves.)

4. Anong bagay/mga bagay ang hindi mo masabi ng tuwiran o matawag sa tunay nitong pangalan, halimbawa-magjingle? Ilista mo at ibigay mo ang mga ters 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 nasabi mo o masasabi mo sa isang tao? Bakit? (When do you cuss? What is the worst thing you have used or you can use with a person, Why?)

6. Kanino mo natutuhan ang pagmumura- sa magulang mo ba, sa barkada, kapitbahay, pagbabasa, T.V., pelikula o radio? Pumili ng tatlo. (From whom did you learn to cuss- from your parents, your gang/peers, neighbors, from your reading, TV. movies or radio? Choose three.)

The subjects wrote down their responses as each question was presented to them. Frequencies of responses were tabulated and analyzed.

Results and Discussions

The Conversational Topic Preference of Men and Women

Data revealed that sports (43%) tops among the list of favorite topics in conversations with friends of male students from the private university while *school matters* ranks first (42%) among the list of most favorite topics by their female counterparts. As a matter of fact, *school matters* is not listed among the males' most favorite topics. In contrast, state university males listed *school matters* with the same frequency as *computer games* and *girls* while sports ranks fifth only. This suggests that while males maintain their interest in the opposite sex and the usual favorite *computer games*, *school matters* remains high in their list.

The difference in topic preferences of males from the two groups may have been influenced by their economic backgrounds. The private university students mostly come from financially well-off families who by virtue of their entry to that prestigious university in Manila are also well-performing students. Sports and sports clubs abound in Manila and for male teen-agers whose parents can afford to support their enthusiasm for sports, it is not surprising that male students from the private university have taken so much interest in them. Male students from the state university however, generally come from low-income families although a few are raised by middle class families. The hard work therefore, that male students show during college is generally motivated by the desire to prove themselves, please their parents and the desire to prepare themselves for a better future. Such interest in education is reflected in male students' conversations along with their interest in *computer games* and *girls*. Except when students are also athletes, sports are not much a priority by male students from the state university.

The ability to balance their interest in school matters and lovelife are reflected by female students from the private and the state university. Both groups listed school matters and lovelife with almost the same frequency. This is not surprising since females are generally known to be hardworking, sometimes more hardworking than males.

It can be noted however, that there is no one to one correspondence in the responses given by respondents since they were allowed to list as many preferred topics without ranking them. Most respondents if not all, tend to list as many as three favorite topics when conversing with friends. What is worth noting is that while the males in both groups have high preference for 'chicks' or girls, boys do not seem to receive very high preference in females in both groups. This is contrary to Montenegro's findings that males and females have the opposite sex as their first choice for conversational topic.

Topics Considered Not in Good Taste by Students

For topics that should be discussed with intimates only, both male and female students from the private and state university rank

personal problems and family matters first and while *lovelife* ranks second among the private university students, *secrets* ranks second among the state university students, followed by *sex*, *lovelife* and *gossip* as third, fourth and fifth respectively by females from both groups and males from the state university. It was noted that the private university males did not list gossip as among those topics which should be discussed only with intimates, most probably because males generally are not fond of gossip.

Male and Female Use of Cathartic Expressions

Cathartic expressions include a whole range of obscenity, blasphemy, profanity and invectives (Montenegro, 1982, p. 188). These expressions are usually said within a level of awareness and spontaneity caused by strong emotions.

Table 1.1 and 1.2 shows the respondents' favorite cathartic expressions.

Private University		Private University	
Male	f	Female	f
1.Putang-ina	27	1.Putang-ina	6
2.Fuck	12	2.Nakakainis	6
3.Gago	11	3.Shit	5
4.Shit	6	4.Buwisit	5
		5.Gago	4

Table 1.1

Private University Respondents' Commonly Uttered Cathartic Expressions

Table 1.2

State University Respondents' Commonly Uttered Cathartic Expressions

State University		State University	
Male	f	Female	f
1.Shit	10	1. Shit	13
2.Putang-ina	7	2. Buwisit	8
3.Buwisit	6	3. Nakakainis	6
4.Putik	5	naman	

5.Fuckshit	4	4.Ay putik	5
		5. Ay asar talaga	3

As shown in Tables 1.1 and Table 1.2, while almost 53% of the private university males would utter *Putang-ina* and its variations, 12% only of their female counterpart would utter the same. Interestingly, barely 12% of the state university males would utter the expressions *Putang-ina* while remarkably none of their female counterpart reported uttering it. Instead, state university female students use the less offensive *Nakakainis naman*, *Ay putik* and *Ay asar talaga* to express irritation about a person or event. This shows to some extent the female abhorrence for the *Putang-ina* and what it connotes. Similar to Montenegro's findings, males tend to be more explicit and intense in their use of cathartic expressions and while there is a tendency for few females to be expressive as well, a greater number of the female in both groups appear to be less explicit, more repressed in their use of cathartic expressions. What is remarkable in the present study is the state university female's use of softer cathartic expressions, which is an act of hedging and reflects Jespersen's (1922 in Coates, 1986) observation that women feel an instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions.

Use of Cuss Words

Cuss words, unlike cathartic expressions, are deliberately meant to hurt or insult (Montenegro, 1982, p.189). Tables 2.1 and 2.2. present the harshest words men and women respondents can utter to anyone.

Table 2.1
The Harshes Cuss Words One Can Utter to Anyone

Private University Students		Private University Students	
Male	F	Female	f
1. Putang-ina mo	30	1. Putang-ina mo	23
2. gago ka	5	2. gago/gaga	5
3. fuck you	5	3. bullshit ka	3
4. wala kang kuwenta	4	4. ulol	2
5. mamatay ka	3	5. asshole	2
6. pokpok nanay mo	2	6. I hope you die	1
7. tarantado	2	7. bitch	1
8. shit	2	8. fuck you	1
9. utak ipis	1	9. mamatay ka na	1
10. bobo ka	1	10. fucking hell	1
11. baho ng puwet mo	1	11. tae mo	1
12. dugong aso ka	1	12. tanga	1
13. mamatay sana mama/papa mo	1	13. worm	1
14. linti	1	14. letse ka	1
15. son of a bitch	1	15. landi	1
16. damn you	1	16. buwisit	1
17. asshole	1		
18. tanga	1		

Table 2.2.
The Harshes Cuss Words One Can Utter to Anyone

State University Students		State University Students	
Male	f	Female	f
1.Putang-ina mo	30	1. putang-ina	10
2. gago ka	9	2. shit ka	6
3. bobo	3	3. gago ka	6
4. ulol	3	4. tang-tanga	5
5. putang- inang		5. bullshit	3
buhay yan	2	6. punyeta	2
6. bullshit ka	2	7. fuck you	1
7. shut the fuck up	1	8. mamatay ka na	1
8. pucha	1	9. puta ka	1
9. fucker	1	10. lintik	1
10. wala kang kuwenta	1	11. pangit	1
11. walanghiya ka	1	12. gagong hayop ka	1
12.pesteng yawa ka	1	13.walanghiya ka	1
13. tarantado	1	14. tangala ka talaga	1
14. tanga ka pala e	1	15. what the fuck	1
15. buwisit	1	16. insane	1
16. badtrip ka	1	17. darn you	1
		18. tirim	1

As shown in Tables 2.1 and Table 2.2, both males and females in the two groups of respondents rated 'Putang-ina mo' as the harshest word they can utter to anyone. The males and females in both groups have almost the same number of words they consider harsh. What is remarkable is the capacity of male from the private university to utter more varied and more degrading expressions such as *wala kang kuwenta, pokpok nanay mo, dugong aso ka, utak ipis, baho puwet* among others. On the contrary, both the private university and state university female cuss words are relatively the same except that the state university females make use of *Putang-ina* without the *mo* which may be considered less harsh. According to Montenegro (1982, p. 190), *Putang-ina* may not be considered insulting anymore, for it can be uttered in jest, out of frustration, or sometimes even a way of complimenting. It is the *putang-ina mo* with the *mo* that is considered insulting and derogatory.

3.4. Use of Taboo Words and Euphemisms

Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 present the taboo words listed by private university males and the euphemisms they employ to soften them.

Table 3. 1

Taboo Words and the Corresponding Euphemisms Employed by Males from the Private University

Taboo Word	f	Euphemisms Used
1. to defecate	14	mag-oo, napupu, tawag ng kalikasan, magjejeb, japoints, , jerbax, nafloflowbert, ebak
2. penis	6	etits, chix, ari
3. sex	5	making love, tutut, sisibak
4. naiihi	5	jingle, maccr, magwawashroom
5. vagina	4	kepkep, pussy
6.masturbation	2	zonrox, my time, jakol

As shown in Table 3.1, *defecating* is the most tabooed word among males followed by *penis*, then *sex*. *Defecating* has the most

number of euphemisms among the six enumerated taboo words. In addition, male taboos seem to surround on the excretory process, private body parts and sex. Compared to their male counterparts, the state university males identified only three taboo words which are related to excretory process and sex. It should be noted however, that some of the euphemisms identified by males from the private university are not really euphemisms because they prove to be more vulgar and have negative connotations. For instance, while *mag-oo*, *napupu* and *tawag ng kalikasan* may be considered euphemisms for defecating, *ebak* and *jerbax* are considered vulgar and offensive for they connote at the same time that the act is disgusting and 'does not smell good'. In the same way, the 'tutut' and 'sisibak' although identified as euphemisms for sexual intercourse, do not really soften the term instead highlight the negative connotations of the word.

Table 3.2

Taboo Words and the Corresponding Euphemisms Employed by Females from the Private University

Taboo Word	f	Euphemisms Used
1. to defecate	14	call of nature, maccr, jebbs, shit, pupu, poop
2. penis	9	dick, yung sa boys, male thing, oh-okay , thing
3. vagina	8	flower, perky perk, oh, yung ano
4. naiihi	6	wiwi, jingle
5. sex	6	ginagawa, ah, yung, you do it?
6. breast	2	nagganun, nagchuchu, tut boobs
7. bad odor	1	BO, may jabar
8. menstruation	1	thingy, meron ako

As shown in Table 3.2, aside from excretory, sex and private parts, private university female taboos include those which are related to personal hygiene (i.e. *bad odor*, *menstruation*). It can be noted that the euphemisms identified by the female are not vulgar and offensive in nature except the 'shit' for defecating.

Table 3.3 presents the state university female students' recognized taboo words and the euphemisms for them.

Table 3.3
State University Female Taboo Words and Their Corresponding Euphemisms

Taboo Word	f	Euphemisms Used	f
1. to defecate	17	magejebes, pupu, natotoot, deposit mag-bodywaste, padumi, papoosh, magbabawas muna, tawag ng kalikasan	9
2. to urinate	7	wiwi, jingle churva, nagdutdut, jirjir,	2
3. sex	4	chukchak	4
4. vagina	2	flower	1
5. menstruation	1	red tide	1

It can be noted from Table 3.3 that compared to their counterparts from the private university, the state university females did not include *breast* and *bad odor* in their list of taboo words. Except the 'churva' and 'chukchack' which are identified as gay language and are quite vulgar, the rest of the terminologies listed may be considered as euphemisms.

Overall, similar to Montenegro's findings, male and female's taboo words centered around the excretory processes, sexual organs and sexual functions. The respondents in both groups have almost the same number of euphemisms for the act of defecating. It can be noted also, that the state university male and female have less number of taboo words compared to the private university male and female. Although majority of what the respondents listed as

euphemisms are supposed to be softer terms for the taboo words, some terms connote mechanization and vulgarity of the act itself. Some of these are *nagdutdut*, *sisibak* and *chukchak* for sexual intercourse, *naebak* and *shit* for to defecate, *dick* for male genitals, and *zonrox* and *jakol* for masturbation. A similar observation was made by Montenegro on the data from her male respondents. According to her, the euphemisms used by males for sexual intercourse tend to convey connotations of distaste or blunt hostility. The use, for example of *yumari*, *slice*, *tonting* and *biyak*, to refer to sexual intercourse, and *magjakol* to mean masturbate, according to her, does not connote joyous actions but tiring, hurtful and negative ones. As a matter of fact, the present study considers the actual words a lot more refined than their substitute names.

Sources of Cuss Words

Table 4 presents the sources of cuss words of the two groups of respondents.

Table 4
Students' Sources of Cuss Words

Private University		Private University		State University		State University	
Male	f	Female	f	Male	f	Female	f
1.friends	38	1.media	27	1.friends	43	1. friends	35
2.media	22	2.friends	25	2.media	35	2. neighbor-	
3.neighbor-		3.neighbor-		3.neighbor-		hood	24
hood	12	hood	12	hood	9	3. media	17
4.parents	7	4.parents	9	4.parents	7	4. parents	4
5.relatives	7	5.siblings	3				

As shown in Table 4, *friends* (peer group) were the first source for learning cuss words by both private and state university students, except by female university students where *media* and *friends* with almost the same number of frequency. Media and neighborhood generally rank second and third as the major sources of cuss words. These findings are expected because friends are the constant companions of the teenagers. In addition, unlimited exposure to

movies, TV, internet and printed materials make the youth acquire behaviors which are seen, read or heard. Moreover, the direct and indirect influence of neighborhood in the youth's attitudes and behaviors cannot be underestimated.

4. Conclusion

Based on the available data, the present study has revealed the following: 1) the *opposite sex* is not ranked as the most preferred topic of conversation with friends by students although they are among the favorites. Instead, *sports*, is the most preferred topic by male students from the private university while *school matters*, *girls* and *computer games* were listed with almost the same frequency by males from the state university. *School matters* and *lovelife* topped the list of female students from the private and the public university; 2) despite the seeming openness, teen-agers feel it improper to discuss personal problems, love life, secrets and sex with mere acquaintances; 3) there is more tendency for Manila-born and bred students to express irritation or anger more strongly through cathartic words than their counterparts who were born and bred in the province; 4) when provoked, both groups of respondents tend to utter harsh words to inflict insult or hurt on other people. What is remarkable is the capacity of males from the private university to utter more varied and more degrading expressions. It was noted also that the female state university students avoided the more insulting and derogatory cuss word; 5) pertaining to the use of taboo words, the private university students prove to recognize more taboo words than do state university students. Contrarily, some of the terms used to refer to *sexual intercourse*, *excretory process* and *masturbation* were not meant to soften the taboos for they have negative connotations and vulgar; and 6) as can be expected, friends prove to be the most influential in the teenagers language and behavior, followed by media and neighborhood.

This study has supported previous findings on gender differences in communication and has shown that such differences may be influenced by socio-economic backgrounds. However, this paper does not aim to make generalizations out of the differences for there may be some sociolinguistic variables that were not investigated here. It

would be best to pursue what was started here, involving larger samples and more variables.

Language and gender is indeed a very interesting subject of research but to be more useful, it should not only serve researchers and linguists. More importantly, its results should serve the respondents themselves and the educational system. People's language, their taboos and use of euphemisms have always been inextricably linked to their culture. More than the linguistic side, the findings about teen-agers' language is a reminder to sociologists and educators how much the Filipino youth have changed. From their choice of words alone, it can be derived that they are no longer the modest and sometimes passive Filipino youth who are careful about their language. If there is anything most glaring in this study, it is the fact that regardless of the kind of homes that reared our students and whether they are a product of a Catholic school or not, their peers and the media will always be there to teach them something, like the use of obscene words. With language contact and the existence of many cultures including the culture of the internet and the media, it is not surprising that our youth speak and act differently from the way previous generations of Filipinos do. In the midst of the many things taking place in the lives of our youth at present, education has remained the most important and the most powerful tool in transforming their hearts and minds, making them better persons in thoughts, words and actions. Lessons on the sociolinguistic functions of taboos and euphemisms are best learned in school.

Teen-agers should realize this early that humility and politeness are virtues often attached to female. Vulgarity in language therefore, is not only unbecoming but a sign of lack of education. And while assertiveness and straightforwardness are qualities associated to males, they are nevertheless expected to show sensitivity to feelings of other people. To refrain from making strong remarks in order not to offend the hearer or to spare oneself from a compromising situation is an admirable attitude that should be possessed by any person belonging to any civilized society whether that person is a male or female. The ability to use euphemisms to soften an otherwise offensive expression, a taboo, and the ability to control oneself from outbursts of anger are the hallmark of a learned person.

With the advent of the internet, it is necessary that parents and teachers alike prepare the students for the real life ahead, whereby they are not just expected to demonstrate competence in their field but more importantly, that they possess the confidence and ability to communicate with people of various cultures. Numerous benefits await individuals who know how to say the right words at the right time to the right persons and under the right circumstances.

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