CASE STUDY

HOW GRASPING GENDER-RELATED ASPECTS OF SPEECH IS INCREASED BY MULTI-MODAL TEXT ANALYSIS – A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a short overview of how men and women differ in male–female conversations. It also tests gender differences as well as three linguistic tools: tag questions, hedges and controlling talk. The article shows differences on the basis of gender and that men and women alter their strategies to increase their power through talk. Men practice their power overtly, while women do so politely. The article also presents a solid outcome of the different significant linguistic devices in multi-modal text analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Multi-modal text analysis is an essential element of research, practice, and teaching for many academic disciplines. According to Barker and Galasinski (2001), such analyses result in groups of techniques, theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Gender variations appear in discourse; for example, speech strategies, powerlessness and politeness (Mills, 2002; Coates, 2004). In addition, males and females differ in terms of their use of linguistic devices such as tag questions (Lakoff, 1975) and hedging; this difference is particularly the case for the latter device when constructing discourse (Cameron, 2009). There are differences between males and females in the way in which they talk and control mixed-gender conversations. This article tests three situations –hedging, tag questions and discourse control – with respect to gender variation dependent on gendered speech characteristics, and how this variation is enhanced by multi-modal examinations.

Gender Differences

According to Broadbridge and Learning (2003), there are significant cultural variations in the way in which females and males talk and react. Lakoff (1975) noted that one such gender-related difference in speech involves politeness, a

phenomenon which may have been developed by societies to reduce disputes. According to Holmes (1995), women utilise more facilitative strategies than men. Males tend to control conversations in audience settings; for instance, they are more talkative than females, interact more, and even ask more questions. Furthermore, when males stop talking, they often do not agree and tend to stop anyone else speaking. Moreover, females tend to provide supportive and encouraging comments and agree more than males. Maltz and Borker's (1982) gendered-marked language usage model is dependent on the biological theory. Their model postulates that male and female discourse owns various content and serves different objectives. Male discourse is competition oriented, employing language to assert control. Males confirm themselves while others own the floor. In contrast, female speech is participation oriented, and they employ language more co-operatively. For example, they answer to and clarify what others have said, provide more encouragement, ask more, and speak in order to keep the conversation going. Moreover, females utilise language to make and keep associations of parity and closeness, to criticise others in accepted ways, as well as to exactly explain other females' speech (Sheldon, 1990). According to Maltz and Borker (1982), there are indications that the variations between female and male speech could be clarified utilising an anthropological theory in terms of studying social and cultural organisation. Holmes (1998) developed this theory for use by the next group of sociolinguistic researchers. It has five main concepts: 1) women and men improve various patterns of language use, 2) women concentrate more on the interaction's

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feeling functions, 3) women are more flexible in terms of style 4) women use more linguistic devices that assert solidarity, and 5) women react by using approaches that increase solidarity. According to O'Barr and Atkins (1980), power tends to be associated with male's use of language, but woman tend to be more powerful in the community. Women often utilise powerless language; however, that tends to be the result of their place in society, rather than their gender. According to Coates (2004), there are many aspects of partices in conversation: 1) minimal responses, often referred to as back channels, and its forms such as 'mhm', 'yeah' and 'right'. However, minimal response use by gender differs, with females utilising them to encourage the speaker as well as to present their convention, while men use them to avoid having to illustrate their positive notice to the speaker, 2) instructions, which are considered speech acts, allow someone to do something. Both males and females utilise instructions, particularly while conversing with someone of a similar age. Boys use stronger words in this context, such as 'Gimme', whereas girls tend to use more comprehensive phrases such as 'Let's play', 3), women utilise more questing enquiries than men, particularly to keep conversations more active, 4) women give more compliments than men. Men tend to enjoy complimenting each other on their possessions and expertise, while women tend to compliment each other based on other aspects. Other concepts such as taking control, hedging as well as tag questions will be analysed in the next section.

Tag questions

According to Lakoff (1975), one of the most controversial issues in speech analysis is tag questions. These are known to be influenced by gender, and demonstrate a speaker's lack of confidence in utilising feedback, in combination with tentativeness. The author noted that females utilise tag questions more than males, with utterances such as (1b), that includes the tag question, '*isn't she*', whereas men tend more to use the sentence (1a).

a. She is a Turkish teacher.
b. She is a Turkish teacher, isn't she?

According to Lakoff (1975), tag questions impact women's discourse, which is generally slower than men's. Males normally utilise tag questions regarding their observations, in order to express ownership of their opinions, and to avoid becoming inconclusive speakers. According to Cameron et al. (1988), females ask tag questions to facilitate effectiveness in negation, whereas males utilise these aspects to explore verification over the conversation. Furthermore, both females and males utilise tag questions more often when they are called on to create a facilitative strategy in their activities (Unger, 2004).

The researcher has analyzed data gathered by Luchjenbroers (1997) from an Asian male (Yoshi) and an Australian female (Hariette). The latter utilised tag questions (80% of the time) more than the former (20%) (Table 1). Luchjenbroers concludes that females utilise tag questions because they may not have an opinion at that specific time, or that they are inconclusive speakers. This impacts the female's voice tone and creates more uncertainty (see Example (2) below). Hence, these findings assert Lakoff's (1975) statement regarding female and male usage of tag questions during a conversation. Furthermore, in Example (1), Hariette utilises a tag question to

create a facilitative strategy for activities and interaction in the conversation, thus supporting Cameron and colleagues' (1988) declaration about female usage of tag questions. Hochschild (1983) agreed with this concept, but stated that women and men utilise tag questions when facilitating interaction.

Table 1. Tag Question usage by Gender

Grammatical Terminology	Females	Males
Tag Questions	4 (80%)	1 (20%)

Example (1)

Hariette: it's close through isn't it
Yoshi: it's it's close but it's ah I don't know
                              Luchjenbroers (1997)

Example (2)

Hariette: so that's plagiarism too

Yoshi: but it's kind of hard isn't it
                              Luchjenbroers (1997)

In example (2), Yoshi utilises a tag question to present his understanding on plagiarising literary work. The result is in agreement with Lakoff's (1975) proposal concerning male usage of tag questions, with Yoshi utilising the tag question because he wants to explore verification over the conversation with Hariette.

Hedging

The second main point of discussion of this article involves hedging. It is also considered to be influenced by gender.

(2) You're running rather fast, aren't you?

(3) Well, I guess it's probably four feet high

                              (Lakoff, 2004)

Lakoff (2004) analysed the above sentences (1) and (2). The most noticeable stylistic difference is the usage of reduction to escape direct statements. Two separate tools are utilised – in (1), the woman decreases her behaviour criticism language. In (2), the man utilises 'rather', which is a hedge term for the observation 'fast'. According to Lakoff (1975), hedging is an element more typical of female language. Phrases such as 'it seems like, 'kind of' and 'sort of' are used as hedges and demonstrate insecurity, powerlessness and unwillingness of the speaker to express their ideas or avoiding explicit statements of voicing. Furthermore, a hedge is over whelmingly utilised by the current talker when stating a claim, without feeling confident about whether or not their claim is correct, consequently avoiding making a powerful statement about this claim (ibid.). According to Holmes (1995), usage of hesitations and pauses such as '*mmmhh*' as well as '*eeh*' are hedges that confirm the reluctance of the speaker to do something. Another hedge variation between females and males includes employment of lexical items, for example, 'you know', 'sort of' and 'I think'. The author noted that females often resort to use the solidarity indication 'you know'. Holmes (2001) stated that this is overwhelmingly utilised between two recognised individuals to confirm familiarity with

a particular concept. It is utilised by the addressee in order to demonstrate affirmative politeness as the style of saving the affirmative experience demands of the current speaker. In contrast, Sunderland (2011) states that males utilise 'you know' more for referential purposes to indicate the presupposition of participated familiarity or playing the part of hedges with respect to how useful a supposition is. Speer (2005) declared that females overwhelmingly utilise hedges as a way of expressing unwillingness, insecurity, uncertainty or powerlessness in order to indicate their point of view. In any case, males tend to utilise hedging more often for rather coherent functions.

Coates (1996) suggested that females resort to negotiate sensitive matters that could excite powerful feelings when they address or speak to someone. They tend to avoid developing arguments, and prefer hedging their affirmation. While telling people about their individual expertise, it is easier for them to do this in a mitigating style using hedges. Females utilise collaborative floor, which includes communal intimacy, and the group's voice is considered more substantial related to an individual opinion (ibid.). Although the author agrees with these experts' suggestions to a certain extent, the reasons for female hedge usage in casual situations seems rather unclear. It may be that these are designs of speaking that partially enforce speech. Hedge usage could depend on regional language and speaking style. Thus, hedges such as 'sort of' and 'you know' may in fact be used equally between genders in the USA. However, the concept that males utilise such phrases more can be demonstrated in (4):

> (4) I could not talk to her like this, you know. It is sort of tricky allowing her go.

These two hedges are utilised to define an individual in the negotiated talk. In any case, females utilise such linguistic tools more than males to flatten their speech in an attempt to summarise their powerlessness.

Controlling negotiated talk

The last area for discussion concerning multi-model text analysis is a gender-related linguistic device termed yielding control. Females tend to take more control while they talk, due to the fact that males often interrupt them. Tannen (1994) stated that women's language is ultimately 'rapport-talk', in which confirmation is set on posting dealings and promoting sameness. However, men utilise language as 'report-talk', as an intermediary of defend autonomy though jointly exhibiting expertise and information (ibid.). Cameron (2009) mentioned that these various elements of relationships are evident in negotiating attempts to form solidarity with females, and contain hierarchical schedules and status between men. Consequently, the resultant frustration between women and men in negotiated conversation can depend on the systematic opposing strategies in terms of how men and women attempt to present understanding during a conversation. A lack of being able to grasp these meaning signals can lead to communication difficulties (Coates & Cameron, 1988). According to Lakoff (2004), in an attempt to take control of any conversation, females tend to utilise indirectness, while employing questions to push the point home. Hence, their attempt to control is demonstrated as a statement prepared to obtain information from other individuals in order to do

something (ibid.). Men and women often phrase their controls in various manners. While men overwhelmingly utilise simple and direct statements, women use language controls as comprehensive proposals for behaviour (Holmes, 2001). To demonstrate this, Andrew (2003) presents the following negotiated conversation:

(23) Ann: Mmmm... office phone.

(24) Larry: What office?

(25) Ann: My office. What is my telephone number? Are you gonna connect it?

(36) Ann: Mmmm... How many? Do you want it big or small?

(37) Larry: Smallish

(38) Peter: This stuff is interesting.

(39) Ann: What's interesting?

(40) Larry: Mmmm.... even smaller.

(41) Ann: Smaller? You want to put smaller in there? Why not just bite?

(Andrew, 2003)

Ann is determined to extend her control in the questions' form, as observed in lines 25 and 41. Rather than creating controls, she utilises a more indirect concept. In this manner, she yields control of the negotiated conversation. Indirectness, as clarified by Tannen (1994), has two advantages: defensiveness and rapport. Rapport means that one person obtains their path not from issuing demands, but by speaking to fulfil their aim, and consequently indirectly enhancing the popular objective (ibid.). Defensiveness indicates the predilection of the speaker to not go on record with a notion by denying, cancelling, or altering it, which does not achieve an affirmative answer (ibid.). According to Tannen (1994), males tend to interrupt females to take control of the conversation because females like talking more than males. West and Zimmerman (1983) clarify interruption as an important linguistic device to exercise power and take control of a conversation. It is often intended as a violation of someone's right to speak. In a female-male conversation, West and Zimmerman (1983) found that interruption was more likely to be utilised by men. One study found that 96% of interruptions were issued by males, while another found this figure to be 75% (Tannen, 1994). Variations occur because females interact in various manners that increase and maintain solidarity. The most commonly occurring domination strategy for males is interruption, while females utilise questions and indirectness in their negotiated speech to draw attention from the addressee. For example, individual sentences by females are often filled with questions; while males tend to compete, females more often collaborate in a female-male conversation (Coates, 2004).

Conclusion

Both females and males are observed to alter their strategies during conversations to increase their power. Males tend to exert their strength, whilst females are more polite. There are many variations between females and males in terms of gender-related aspects of multi-model test analysis. In order to take control of a discourse, males utilise interpretations as a key device, while females tend to talk more in male-female conversations; thus, males feel that they must interrupt females in order to be given an opportunity to express their views. Females utilise indirectness due to their insecurity and powerlessness. To command conversations with males, they employ questions and tags to enhance their existence and audibly express their needs. With respect to hedges, women and men utilise this linguistic device for different purposes –

for women, it allows them to present their powerlessness, insecurity and unwillingness to present their point of view or avoid issuing direct statements, while for men, hedges are primarily used for particular objectives, such as for enhancing spoken propositions and ensuring that they maintain control of a debate.

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