

**GENDER DETERMINES LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ONE'S SPEECH:  
HEDGING AND INTERRUPTIONS IN MALE/FEMALE DIALOGUES IN ONE-  
ACT PLAYS BY MALE AND FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS**

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***Abstract:** This study is based on certain gender-specific linguistic features which several researchers like Lakoff, Holmes, Coats, and West & Zimmerman have pointed out in their studies. As writers belong to one or the other gender, they must be influenced by their own gender-specific way of speaking, that must, in turn, influence the kind of language they choose for their characters in an interaction. To support our hypothesis, we selected six one-act plays three each by a male and a female writer. The research analysed the dialogues of the characters. The Chi-square test of association was applied to reach a conclusion. The study established that the male playwright could present a realistic portrayal of his male characters but was not able to present his female characters' speech realistically. Similarly, the female writer could portray her female characters to speak like women in real life but was not able to portray her male characters to speak like men in real life.*

**Keywords:** Language and Gender, Stereotypes, Hedges, Interruptions, Characters, Language and Literature

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### **Introduction**

That men and women are different in the use of language has been extensively researched and discussed. Most of the research on this subject has focused on two main theories. The first is the “dominance approach” (supported by Lakoff, 1975; Fishman, 1983), which argues that the difference in language between male and female is the result of male dominance and female subordination. On the other hand, supporters of the “difference approach” (Coates, 1986; Tannen, 1990) have the belief that male and female belong to different subcultures and that any linguistic differences could be accredited to sub-cultural differences. However, the dynamic approach considers gender as a social construct (Coates, 2013); that is, we ‘do gender’ depending upon a situation, rather than be a specific gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Other researchers like Rabia et al. (2019), Bostenaru (2017) and Kanwal et al. (2017) believe that several stylistic and conversational differences exist between male and female speech. As a corollary, we may as well propose that it would be difficult (if not outright impossible) for male and female playwrights to write realistic dialogues for the opposite-gender characters. To test this hypothesis, this study focuses on the dialogues of male and female characters in modern plays written by male and female playwrights. This research may also support the feminist stylistics view that male hegemony is perceptible in characterisation of women in literary works.

As most of the research in this area was carried out in natural conversations, there was a niche to locate gender-specific

linguistic features in a piece of literature, which makes this study distinctive in its nature and scope.

### **Literature Review**

Hiatt (1977) in her book “The way women write” argues that women speech is considered inferior to the “masculine idiom” which is oversimplification and masculine bias. After analysing 100 books, 50 by men and 50 by women writers including both fictional and nonfiction texts, she suggests that there is a clear distinction between the speech of women and men. She analysed 200,000 words of contemporary prose and finds out that generally it is men who more often use the words “casually”, “thickly” and “stiffly” while women use “cheerfully”, “desperately” and “bravely”. When analysing similes, she finds out that women tend to use the wider perception of the social world while men tend to be cliché-ridden and constricted. Further, she argues that contrary to popular beliefs, women tend to be more “terse” than men whereas men tend to be more “hysterical” and exclamatory in their speech which shows that the speech of women is more balanced, moderate and even conservative. Moreover, she asserts that if the “feminine” styles are not obvious in the speech of a female writer, the behaviour is inappropriate and even the gender identity is a possible suspect. Hiatt makes a strong case that women's speech is inherently different in many ways from the speech of men.

Robin Lakoff in the mid 1970s pioneered extensive research at the University of California on the speech characteristics of men and women. Her work was crucial and was used as a source in the feminist linguistic theory. She highlighted the

difference in language of genders and sexism in society.

In her book, (Language and Women Place, 1975) she made a number of observations of women's speech. According to her, generally, women are indirect and less assertive than men's. Lakoff, in her book she published certain parameters which can mark a feminine speech. In those parameters, she argued that women show some linguistic features in their speech. The gender-specific linguistic features (Hedges and Interruptions) selected for the study is being discussed here.

### **Hedging**

Hedging devices are empty phrase which don't affect the sentence if taken out, like *you know* or *I think*. According to Holmes (1996) the more hedging devices in a statement suggest that the speaker is unsure about what is said and is using hedges to avoid direct sentences in an effort not to hurt the listeners feeling. Lakoff (1975) and Fishman (1983) considered hedging devices often as the feature of female language.

Hedges can be used for a number of purposes. Most often it means that the speaker is unsure and is neither willing to commit to what s/he is speaking nor wants to handover the speaking turn yet. This gives us an indication of what phrases can be termed as hedging devices. According to Coates(1996), there are quite a few phrases like *maybe*, *sort of*, *may*, *might*, *you know* and *I mean* etc. Holmes adds up an extra layer and includes *Hmm*, *eh* in the hedges category as it can easily be used by a reluctant speaker to avoid direct speech. Holmes (1996) further added *pitch*, *rising* and *falling intonation*, *modal*

*verbs* and *tag questions* as *I think* and *sort of* to the list.

In her research regarding speech politeness, Holmes discovered that women tend to use tag questions in a positive politeness device while men use it to affirm their assumptions and gather further information with those hedges devices. More differences identified in hedges devices between women and men suggested by Holmes; included lexical items like *sort of*, *I think* and *you know*. Women are comfortable to use *you know* with people who they believe already have the knowledge on the subject as a positive politeness device when they need to be sounding and looking positive. On the other hand, men use the same *you know* as a reference to assume shared knowledge or as a hedge to validate a supposition.

In the data gathered by Holmes, *I think* was mainly used to emphasize and positive politeness device by women and also function as an agreement with the listener more frequently than men. The hedge *sort of* is used more commonly in informal contexts and can be seen as an agreement marker. Holmes argued that *sort of* is much frequently used by women than men. Hirschman (1994) used a different term in contrast with Holmes and Coates in the paper presented in 1973 where she researched female and male attributes in conversations and analysed cross-sex conversations as well single gender conversations. Instead of hedges she named them as filler and qualifiers. Fillers as the name indicate are those phrases which won't affect the content of the whole sentence if removed.

Hirschman (1994) has further divided fillers into two groups. *Um* and its variants

*ah* and *uh* and the word *like* when it is not used as a verb or preposition, and *well* when it is not used in the begging of a sentence were put in the first group. In the second group the author gathered words like *you know* and *I mean* which are most commonly used when the speaker is searching for more words but don't want to handover the conversation to the addressee yet.

Hirschman (1994) named the second category as qualifiers and the main attributes of these phrases are that they affect the assertiveness of the sentence when they are removed but they don't affect the utterance in general. There are certain subdivisions to the category of qualifiers. The type of phrases like *I assume*, *I think* and *I mean* and also the adverbials like *relatively*, *maybe* and *generally* with its negative forms like *(not) very* and *not (really)* falls into the category of the qualifiers. Generalised adjuncts like *something*, *kind of*, *sort of* and *whatever* also work as qualifiers. Modals and quantifiers for example *some* and *many* and sentence operators like *it seems that* are also qualifiers which can be deleted without changing the syntax of the sentence. Lakoff (1975) claimed that it's obvious and clear that the word *Shit* is easy to associate with men's speech while *Oh Dear!*, is part of female vocabulary. Although before the 1960s women speech was considered deficient as argued by Spender (1980:34). According to Jespersen (1922), women tend to use more intensifiers in their speech which reflect lack of precision. Many others agreed with Jespersen for example Lakoff (1975) and Key (1972). According to Lakoff women very often use "*so*" while Key was arguing that women use "*such*" more

than men. Spender (1980) further argues on classifying hyperboles and intensifiers. She refers to the non-objective research which is entirely based on the fact that the utterances are made by men or women. If the speech is that of a man it's categorized as hyperbole and is considered an intensifier if the utterance is of a woman. According to Baalen (2001) there are six categories of linguistic forms of hedging devices.

1. "fall-rise intonation patterns;
2. phrases like I mean, I think, I assume, I guess, sort of, kind of, you know;
3. adverbials such as maybe, probably, relatively, generally, really;
4. the modal verbs *may*, *might*, *would* and *could*;
5. lexical items such as perhaps, conceivably, or whatever, or something;
6. Tag questions such as isn't it, are you, can't she."

Hedging devices are not only used for expressing opinions but they also sugar coat the phrases in the process. One of the significant functions of hedging devices is to protect face needs as stated by Coats (1996).

A face-threatening act (FTA) is that which challenges the face wants of an interlocutor. According to Brown & Levinson (1987&1978), face-threatening acts may threaten either the speaker's face or the hearer's face, and they may threaten either positive or negative face.

Face needs can be both positive and negative. When we need to be liked and acknowledged, we need positive face and when we have to send a strong message or need personal space, we need negative

face. Hedging devices can give a person the cover he/she needs to avoid people. According to Tannen (1990) and Coates (1996) women use hedges identical to their speaking style and the type of conversations they have.

Women's speech is generally tentative, and this can be seen by the use of hedges in women's speech. Hedges are linguistic forms for example *perhaps, I think, I'm sure, you know, sort of*. Lakoff (1975) also tends to agree with the statement that women use more hedges in sentences than men in speech. The reason put forward for that kind of speech is that women don't want to appear "assertive" and "strong" and it's best to be more feminine. Another researcher Preisler (1986) also agrees with the above statement. His research is based on a survey conducted among group of 4 people of single sex and mixed sexes. The discussion was held on the controversial subjects of violence on TV and corporal punishment. According to Coates (1993), the lower usage of hedges by men is mainly due to the choice of topics as men prefer to talk about impersonal subjects. Another researcher Janet Holmes argues that hedges reflect the certainty and uncertainty in speech and hedges are therefore multi-functional.

Coats (1997) claims that male conversation is different from that of female. In the conversation of men, the overlap is smaller, as the statements made can be related to individuals instead of the male group. Male friendship does not take talk into much consideration rather doing activities together is more important for it, such as sports and teamwork. Further, men take exchange of information more seriously.

According to Meinhof and Johnson (1997), in informal inter-gender conversations women more often are the ones who drive the conversation by asking more questions. According to Fishman (1983), women tend to give more space to men to let them having their conversation going even if they lose their turn in the process. Men generally are the ones who define the subject of a conversation as well as select newer topics during the conversation. According to Holmes (1992), men more often take command during formal and informal conversations which is in the same line with Tannen's observation that men are more comfortable in "report talk" and public speaking since they follow the speaking pattern from their friends to formal occasions. In this regard it is obvious that men won't be using many hedging devices in cross-sex conversation as they are in control anyway. Kanwal et al. (2017) also concluded in their study that women use more hedging than men do. Bourmal (2016) claims that, however, there is a difference of opinion among many scholars regarding to what level the differences of gendered speech be analysed as the interpretation entirely depends on the approach that is taken.

### **Interruptions**

Sacks et al. (1974) suggest that generally in speech (i) only one person speaks at a time (ii) change of speaker repeats alternatively. The same pattern is followed in informal conversations as well debates and big ceremonies. Analysing this we can argue that speech exchange follows certain pattern in our daily speech exchanges. The same authors further suggest that turn taking is not only a

temporary duration of speaking but rather an obligation to allow the other to speak. Interruption is the situation when someone speaks to someone who is already talking. Zimmerman and West (1975) researched that in male to male and female to female interactions, the interruptions were equal by same sex speaker, however, in intersex communication, almost all the interruptions were made by the male speakers. In another research in 1983, the same authors conducted controlled experiment where the interruptions by men hugely decreased but still the male partner triggered them.

West and Zimmerman (1983) coined the definition of interruption as a tool for taking control in conversations and exhibiting power. Other researchers, like Schegloff (1972), Bennet (1981) and Murray (1985), further elaborated the definition based on function and location where they argue that instead of speaking by having the intention in mind that the other speaker have finished the thought, the interruption is rather an intended disruption of someone right to speak. Zimmerman also argues that in mixed-sex pair conversations, the interruptions were mostly coming from men. In two other studies the interruptions by men were 96% and 75% alternatively. Rabia et al. (2019), Bostenaru (2017) and Kanwal et al. (2017) also affirm in their studies that women are mostly interrupted by men in a mix-gender conversation.

It is very important to study interruptions as it contains many subliminal messages. According to Wang (2016), subliminal messages are:

- That one is not interested to listen to the argument.

- The one don't care what the other is talking about.
- The other considers the speaker worthless.
- The other considers oneself in control and more dominant.

### **Methodology**

It is claimed that since characters in plays represent human beings in a human society, being a microcosm of the macrocosm, we would expect them to replicate real human speech — male characters replicating the speech of men in real life and female characters that of women in real life. However, two questions seem to arise here:

1. A male playwright, being a man himself, may be able to replicate the language of men realistically when writing dialogues for men, but will he be able to do the same with his female characters?
2. Similarly, a female playwright, being a woman herself, maybe able to give realistic language to her female characters, but will she be able to give realistic speech to her male characters?

Assuming that it is indeed the case, we would expect differences in the speech of male characters created by male and female playwrights and similarly, in the speech of female characters created by male and female playwrights. In other words, male characters created by male playwrights may appear more realistic in their use of language than female characters. The opposite may be true of female playwrights whose female characters may appear more realistic in their use of language than their male

characters. This project is an attempt to ascertain that this may indeed be the case. We selected six one-act plays, three each by one male and one female playwright. The male writer selected for the study was Douglas Hill and the selected plays were:

- 1) *Heresy at the crossroad* (1998)
- 2) *Heart in the ground* (1996)
- 3) *Roulette*(2001)

The female writer selected for the research was Ann Wuehler and the selected plays were:

- 1) *Whalegirl* (2006)
- 2) *Free Range Chickens* (2006)
- 3) *King Leer*(2008)

Researchers have found several distinctive features of male and female speech, which

**Table 1:** Comparison of gender-specific linguistic features in the speech of male and female characters created by male and female playwrights

Douglas Hill (male)	vs.	Ann Wuehler (female)
Male characters		Male characters
Female characters		Female characters

Our hunch is that male characters created by male playwrights would be more realistic in displaying male-specific linguistic feature than those created by female playwrights. Similarly, female characters created by female playwrights will be more realistic in exhibiting female-specific linguistic feature than female characters created by their male counterpart. Since we use the Chi-Squared test to ascertain whether the differences will be significant, we frame the following hypotheses for the study:

**3.1.1 HYPOTHESES**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There will be no significant association between the speech of male characters created by male and women playwrights as well as in the

they refer to as gender-specific characteristics. However, we selected only two features for this study: Interruptions (a male speech characteristic) and Hedging (a female speech characteristic). Although both genders use both these features, the difference lies in the frequency of their use (Braun, 2004:16).

**Research Design**

The study adopts the qualitative research design as both and has focussed on the selected gender-specific linguistic features.

A cross-comparison of the linguistic features will be carried out in accordance with the following scheme to arrive at conclusions:

speech of female characters created by male and female playwrights.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There will be significant association between the speech of male characters created by male and women playwrights as well as in the speech of female characters created by male and female playwrights.

**Statistics**

To test our two hypotheses, we will use the Chi-Squared test for an association between our categories. The frequencies will be presented in the contingency tables. The Chi-squared, represented as  $\chi^2$ , is the Greek letter chi, pronounced *Ki* as in *kite*. Chi-Squared test is applied to determine whether there is a significant association between the two categorical variables. We have two variables *Writer*

and *Characters* and both the variables have two categories: male/female writer and male/female characters. This test compares the observed and expected values of both the categorical variables to be tested for having association. For using the Chi-Squared test of association for two criteria of classification, we will use the

Contingency Table (Table 3.1 below) to test two attribute/ categorical variables for association, where

$c = \text{number of categories of } A$ , and  $r = \text{number of categories of } B$

A contingency table of  $r \times c$  classification will be as follows.

**Table 3.1 Contingency Table**

		Variable A			Total
		Category 1	...	Category $c$	
Variable B	Category 1	$n_{11}$	...	$n_{1c}$	$R_1$
	.	.	...	.	.
	.	.	...	.	.
	.	.	...	.	.
	Category $r$	$n_{r1}$	...	$n_{rc}$	$R_r$
Total		$C_1$	...	$C_c$	$n$

The main six steps for running a statistical test are as follows:

- i. **Hypotheses:** Describing the Null and Alternative Hypotheses.

$H_0$ : There is no association.

$H_1$ : There is association.

- ii. **Level of Significance:** Selecting level of significance,  $\alpha$ .
- iii. **Test Statistics:** The Test Statistics for Pearson chi-square test of association is:

$$\chi_{cal}^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

- iv. **Computation:** Calculating the value of  $\chi_{cal}^2$  using contingency table.
- v. **Critical Region:** Reject  $H_0$ , if  $\chi_{cal}^2 \geq \chi_{tabulated}^2$  where tabulated value of chi-square,  $\chi_{tabulated}^2$ , comes from the chi-square table for suggested values of  $\alpha$ ,  $r$  and  $c$  as  $\chi_{\alpha, (r-1), (c-1)}^2$ .
- vi. **Conclusion:** Describe the conclusions of the test on the basis of critical region
- vii. under the selected significance level.

**Results**  
**Comparing the Male Characters**

**Male characters by Douglas Hill**  
**Use of Interruptions (male characteristic)**

The male characters in the first play, *Heart in the Ground* the male character Lee used the male-specific linguistic feature *Interruptions* eight times in the course of the play. In the second play, *Heresy at the Crossroads* male character is Darius interrupted his interlocutor, the female character, Polo, 10 times in the course of the play. In the third play *Roulette* the male character Matt interrupted his interlocutor, the female character, Janine, 13 times in the play.

**Total Interruptions by male characters= 31**

For instance, in Lines (85-87) of the play *Heresy at the Crossroads*, the female character, Polo, told Darius that she loved to travel and that she was a great cartographer. Polo wanted to mention and praise the ability of Prince Henry as a navigator but Darius interrupted her, as he did not like Prince Henry for his religious beliefs. Darius called Prince Henry anti-Christ. Darius was exhibiting the dominant behaviour of a man. This interruption was very significant as Darius being a male knew his superior position and had the control of the conversation. He was taking enough advantage of his gender role provided by language and society. He was manipulating the conversation, as he liked.

**Use of hedging (female characteristic)**

On the other hand the male character, Lee, in the play *Heart in the Ground* used the female-specific linguistic feature hedges eight times. In the second play *Heresy at the Crossroads* male character Darius used hedges five times. In the third play *Roulette* the male character Matt used hedges eight times.

**Total Hedges by male characters = 21**

**Male characters by Ann Wuehler**

**Use of Interruptions (male specific feature)**

Robert Gressley, the male character in the play *Free Range Chickens* exhibited the male-specific linguistic feature *interruptions* only three times in the course of the play. In the second play *Whalegirl* Ralph the male character interrupted his interlocutor, the female character, Helen, only two times in the course of the play. In the third play *King Leer*, the male character Mike interrupted his interlocutor; the female character, Hazel, five times in the course of the play.

**Total interruptions by male characters = 10**

For instance, in lines (240-241) the interruption is very abrupt; Robert even does not let Celerina complete the word she was uttering. We could not even guess what she was going to say.

The situation in the play is very precarious: Celerina discovers that Robert is the one who was killing little children. Robert is upset about the situation, so he interrupts Celerina.

**Use of Hedging (female specific feature)**

Robert Gressley, the male character in the play *Free Range Chickens* exhibited the female-specific linguistic feature, *hedging*, 17 times in the course of the play. In the second play *Whalegirl* Ralph the male character used hedges on 10 occasions. In the third play *King Leer*, the male character *Mike* used hedges six times.

**Total Hedges by the male characters = 33**

The use of hedges like *oh and just uh* shows reluctance and hesitation in the speech of Ralph, which suggests his weakness as a male interlocutor in a conversation. On the other hand, Helen seems to be dominant by using male-specific linguistic features more than Ralph, which presents the female character dominant and the male character submissive.

### **Comparing The Female Characters**

#### **Female characters by Ann Wuehler**

##### **Use of Hedging (female specific feature)**

Helen, the female character, used the female-specific linguistic feature *hedges* in her speech 15 times in the course of the play *Whalegirl*. In the second play *Free Range Chickens*; Celerina used 34 hedges in the course of the play. The female character of the play *Hazel* used the female-specific linguistic feature *Hedges* 20 times in the course of the play *King Leer*.

##### **Total Hedges by the female characters = 69**

For instance, in lines (6-10) of the play *Free Range Chickens* Robert was shown very reserved, while Celerina was shown talkative and frank. She was the one who broke the ice of strangeness. She asked Robert where he was going and he in a reticent manner replied “places”. He did not specify his destination. She was self-praising and therefore wanted to confirm it to save her face. She needed a positive face and was, therefore, using a *modal tag* for the confirmation of her statement. In the second instance, she was once more using a *modal tag* for confirmation. It again showed her lack of confidence. Lakoff (1975) would call it the subordination of women and Tannen (1990) would argue that it was because of

sub-cultural differences to which men and women belong. The phrase *just like* is listed in the category of hedges by Baalen (2001). Celerina used the phrase *just like*, which revealed the tentativeness in her speech. It showed the inferiority of female gender to which Lakoff alluded in her study. Again, she used hedging sort of tag *huh* twice in this speech. The blending of tag with a hedging device showed the strength of her femininity. As Holmes added up an extra layer and included *Hmm, eeh* in the hedges category. A reluctant speaker can easily use them to avoid directness of speech. It also shows the skill of the writer to use the important female-specific linguistic features blended together. The writer, Ann Wuehler, has efficiently brought out these linguistic features, which implies that she is very successful in portraying her female character Celerina linguistically realistic.

##### **4.2.1.2 Use of Interruptions (male specific feature)**

Helen, the female character, in the play *Whalegirl* interrupted her male interlocutor, Ralph four times in the course of the play. the second play *Free Range Chickens* Celerina interrupted her male interlocutor four times The female character of the play *Hazel* in the play *King Leer* interrupted her male interlocutor Mike two times.

##### **Total interruptions by female characters = 10**

#### **Female characters by Douglas Hill**

##### **Use of Hedging (female specific feature)**

In play *Heart in the Ground*, the female character Karen used hedges only on two occasions. The female character Polo used hedges on six occasions in the course of the play, *Heresy at the crossroads*. In the third play *Roulette* The female character

of the play *Janine* used the female-specific linguistic feature *Hedges* 10 times in the course of the play.

**Total Hedges used by female characters= 18**

We can take an example from the play *Heresy at the crossroads*. In lines (26-29) Polo used a hedging device *Mmm-hmm*. It showed her lack of interest in the conversation. She was letting Darius continue his talk. She was not interested to keep the floor and gave it back to Darius by expressing a hedge.

**Use of Interruptions (male specific feature)**

In play *Heart in the Ground*, the female character Karen interrupted her male interlocutor, Lee, eight times in the course of the play. In 2<sup>nd</sup> play *Heresy at the*

*crossroads*, the female character Polo interrupted her male interlocutor, Darius, six times. In the third play *Roulette* the female character of the play *Janine* interrupted her male interlocutor, Matt, 10 times.

**Total interruptions by female characters = 24**

Table 4.1 shows the comparison of the male-specific linguistic feature *Interruptions* among the male and female characters of the six selected one-act plays three each written by a male and a female playwright. The male characters of the male playwright exhibited higher frequencies of male-specific linguistic feature *Interruptions* than the male characters portrayed by the female playwright.

**Male-Specific Linguistic Feature (Interruptions)**

<b>Table 4.1:</b> Comparison of male and female characters of the male and female playwrights for the male-specific feature (Interruption).				
<b>Author</b>				
<b>Character</b>		<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>Male</b>	31	13	44
	<b>Female</b>	24	10	34
	<b>Total</b>	55	23	78

We have also considered the alternative data of the male-specific linguistic feature, *Interruptions*, in the female characters created by male and female to confirm any significant association between them.

Significant association will be confirmed by the application of the Chi-Squared test. Table 4.2 (below) shows the comparison of the female-specific linguistic feature *Hedges* among the male and female

characters of the six selected one-act plays three each written by a male and a female playwright. It suggests that the female characters of the female playwright have exhibited higher frequencies of the female-specific linguistic feature *Hedges* in their dialogues than the female characters of the male playwright.

We have also taken into account the alternative data of the female-specific linguistic feature *Hedges* in the male characters created by male and female playwrights to confirm any significant association between them.

**Female Specific Linguistic Feature (Hedging)**

**Table 4.2:** Comparison of male and female characters of the male and female playwrights for the female-specific feature (Hedging).

Author				
Character		Male	Female	Total
	Male	21	33	54
	Female	18	69	87
	Total	39	102	141

**Chi-Square Test**

The data of gender-specific linguistic features are collected from the dialogues of male and female characters created by male and female writers. The Chi-squared test was applied on the data to know whether there were significant differences among the gender-specific linguistic features in the male and female characters created by male and female playwrights. The Contingency tables 4.1 & 4.2 express the frequencies of gender-specific features by the male and female authors while portraying their male and female character. The chi-square test of association applied for measuring the association between the Gender of Author and Gender of Portrayed Characters. Our hunch was to know whether there would be a significant difference between the male and female authors while portraying male and female characters. For the

mentioned objectives the relative frequencies of gender-specific linguistic features are compared in the male and female characters created by male and female playwrights.

We have tested the hypotheses for the possible association between the Gender of the Authors and the Gender of the Portrayed Characters.

The calculated value for interruptions in table 4.1 is  $\chi^2_{cal} = 4.946$ , which is greater than the tabulated value  $\chi^2_{0.05,1} = 3.841$ , therefore we reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ : there is a significant association between the gender of author and the gender of the portrayed characters. There is a significant association between the speech of male characters created by man and woman playwrights as well as in the speech of female characters created by both the playwrights.

Similarly the calculated value for hedges is  $\chi_{cal}^2 = 5.68$ , which is greater than the tabulated value  $\chi_{0.05,1}^2 = 3.841$ , therefore we reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ : there is a significant association between the gender of author and the gender of the portrayed character. There is a significant association between the speech of male characters created by man and woman playwrights as well as in the speech of female characters created by both the playwrights.

In both cases the calculated values are greater than the tabulated value, which affirms our hunch that the female writer has successfully portrayed her female characters linguistically real as compared to the male writer, whose female characters are not speaking as persons in real life.

### **Discussion**

The results of the Chi-square test assert that the gender of the writer influences the creation of their characters. In other words, we can argue that the male playwright was successful in creating his male characters linguistically real as compared to his female characters. Similarly, the female playwright was successful in creating her female characters linguistically real as compared to her male characters.

As writers belong to one or the other gender, they must be influenced by their own gender-specific way of speaking that must, in turn, influence the kind of language that they choose for their characters in an interaction. As already pointed out, this study aimed to investigate differences in the speech of male characters created by male and female playwrights and, similarly, in the speech of female characters created by

male and female playwrights. The research studied the dialogues thoroughly to discover gender-specific linguistic features in the speech of male and female characters. The study tried to establish whether the playwrights were able to present a realistic portrayal of their male and female characters and to what extent the selected writers were successful in putting realistic gender-specific language in the mouths of their created male and female characters; that is, whether their male characters spoke like men in real life and female characters spoke like women in the real world.

The result of Chi-Square test showed that in both situations the calculated values were greater than the tabulated values. So we can conclude that there were significant differences among male-specific linguistic features in the male and female characters created by the male writer than created by the female writer; similarly, there were also significant differences among female-specific linguistic features in the male and female characters created by the female writer than created by the male writer.

### **Conclusion**

In the light of the result of Chi-squared test and our finding and analysis of the gender-specific linguistic features from the dialogues of male and female characters created by male and female writers, the study comes to the conclusion that:

The male playwright, Douglas Hill, being a man himself, was successful in portraying his male characters linguistically real. In other words, his male characters spoke the language of men in real life. In contrast to his male characters, his female characters were not

speaking the language of women in real life. They only seemed characters of the world of fiction who do not exist in the real world, regarding the use of language. It means they were not portrayed linguistically successful.

The female writer, Ann Wuehler, being a woman herself, was successful in creating her female characters linguistically real. They were speaking the language of women in real life; however, her male characters were not portrayed linguistically real. They did not speak like men in real life.

To conclude that both the writers were excellent in portraying characters of their own gender linguistically realistic; that is to say, the male characters created by male writer were speaking the language of men in real life and the female characters created by female writer were speaking the language of women in the real world. In other words, we can say that the male writer was not successful in portraying his female characters linguistically real as compared to the female writer whose female characters were portrayed linguistically realistic. Similarly, the female writer was not successful in creating her male characters linguistically realistic as compared to the male writer whose male characters were portrayed linguistically realistic.

We can argue that gender plays an important role in influencing writers to write in gender biased language. This biased approach towards different gender may be unconscious or conscious, we can't say for sure. The influence of their own gender was quite obvious in the choice of language they gave to the characters belong to their own gender and to the different gender. The language of

their respective gender characters was linguistically realistic while the characters different from their gender did not speak realistic languages.

In certain situations in which the male characters would find themselves being interrogated for their wrong doings, they would use submissive, non-dominant language whereas their female interlocutors, finding themselves in a position of strength, would speak strong, masculine type language; however, such instances were so rare that they did not affect the Chi-Squared results. Thus, we conclude that gender determines the linguistic features of one's speech and that this fact induces writers to make their characters speak accordingly with rare deviations.

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