

Research Article

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The implementation of gender language features in
The Prince & Me Movie

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Abstract

Language features are the foundation of effective communication. Learning language features are essential for effective interpersonal and intercultural communication. The research aims to identify language features used by male and female main characters in *The Prince & Me* movie. In addition, this study will examine the factors that influence the use of language features by male and female main characters. This research will fill this gap by exploring how language feature traits are related to certain factors that influence language use in the context of *The Prince & Me* movie. This study analyzes the data using Coates's (2013) theory of language features and Holmes's (2013) social factor theory. This descriptive qualitative research uses the purposive sampling technique—the data collected from *The Prince & Me* movie (2004). The findings show that women and men used the same language features with similar frequency. According to the research, Paige, the female character, and Eddie, the male character, used the question feature the most. This study also shows that the topic is the most frequent factor that influences the utterances of female and male characters.

Keywords: Language factor; Jennifer Coates; Janet Holmes; gender; movie

1. Introduction

Since we live in a society, learning a language is important. Language itself is essential for humans to communicate with each other. Sociology and linguistics combine to form the term “sociolinguistics,” which describes this field of study. Different people use many language characteristics based on ethnicity, race, social class, and gender. One of the most general topics in sociolinguistics that is often discussed is the language features in men and women.

Language features are deeply intertwined with society, serving as a powerful mirror that reflects the values, norms, and intricate dynamics of the communities in which they evolve. It is like a mirror reflecting our communities' beliefs, rules, and how things work. Culture and society deeply influence the language choices we are part of, including the words we pick and how we say them. As society changes, our language changes with it, adapting to new technology, politics, and how people relate to

each other. So, language is not static; it grows and changes as our society does. Studying language features can help us understand how people communicate and behave in social groups.

According to Coates in her book *Women, Men, and Language*, Coates meticulously dissects language features, delineating seven key aspects: minimal response, hedges, tag questions, questions, commands and directives, swearing and taboo language, and compliments. Her exploration of these linguistic intricacies in the context of gender serves as a foundational pillar for understanding the malleability of language in reflecting and perpetuating societal norms. The resonance of Coates' emphasis is strikingly reaffirmed by the findings of this research, further validating the premise that gendered language is a dynamic construct shaped by societal influences. As Coates delves into the nuances of language features between men and women, the exploration extends beyond the academic realm into the captivating landscape of popular culture, particularly manifesting in the cinematic realm. The intriguing observation of how these linguistic variations play out in movies adds a compelling layer to the discourse, underscoring the pervasive impact of language in shaping societal perceptions of gender. In essence, Coates' revelations echo resoundingly through the lens of this research, solidifying the understanding that gendered language is a nuanced product of social construction rather than an inherent, predetermined reality.

For instance, in "The Prince & Me", a romantic comedy directed by Martha Coolidge, we can observe how gendered language dynamics play out in the interactions between the movie's main characters. This movie has two main characters, one female and one male character. The movie was about a typical college pre-med woman who meets a prince from Denmark disguised as an ordinary college student. Their first meeting was terrible enough to make them hate each other for quite some time. However, love grows between them as time goes by. In addition to an exciting storyline, this film has an interesting selection of main characters: a prince and an ordinary woman. The two characters, of course, have differences in choosing everyday speech. These differences can be affected by many factors; as explained by Holmes (2013), social factors also influence it. Their differences are what make this film enjoyable to study further. Also, by looking closely at language features, we can discover how they connect human communication with our societies. It is like solving a puzzle; as we dig into these language details, we learn more about the meanings hidden in our words and how things like our social background affect the different ways we talk. This helps us understand how language brings people and communities together.

2. Methods

The researcher used a descriptive qualitative method to process the data in the utterances spoken by Edvard and Paige. The outcome of this study will be written in descriptive form. The researcher focused on Edvard and Paige's utterances that contains language features proposed by Coates (2013). The population of this study is composed of utterances spoken by Edvard and Paige in the film. In addition, purposive sampling is utilized in this study to attain study objectives by focusing on the main characters' utterances containing language features proposed by Coates (2013). Furthermore, the existing data will be classified and categorized based on each language feature to examine the social factors that influenced the utterances according to Holmes's (2013) theory.

3. Results

To achieve the purpose of the implementation gender language features in *The Prince & Me* movie as well as the social factors that influence the choice of words used by the main characters.

3.1. Minimal Response

Minimal response, known as back-channeling, has a form such as *yeah*, *right*, and *mmhm*. In Coates's book, she asserted that women use minimal responses more frequently than men. The use of minimal response in male and female main characters in the movie can be seen as follows:

Data 1

Stacey: So at this point in the trip, me and the other tour leaders are just... We're fed up with all these

Paige : ***Okay Okay***

Stacey: rich, snotty kids and all of their complaining
(*Paige Morgan*, 09:34—09:39)

In this situation, the participants are Paige and her friend. It means that they are intimate and also, they share the same gender and age. The setting of this conversation is in the hallway leading to the campus bar because they want to hang out before class begins. At that time, the topic of the conversation is about Paige's friend's summer holiday. Stacey talked about her annoyance towards a group of wealthy kids she met during her holiday. In Paige's response it indicates as a minimal response and as an interactional conversation without turn-taking the conversation. The use of minimal response in Paige's dialogue most likely got affected by the topic of the conversation, where Paige, as Stacey's friend, should be an active listener in order to make Stacey feel heard.

This explanation is supported by Fishman's (1978) theory that women engage in interactional conversation by inserting minimal responses throughout the flow of speech rather than at its conclusion. In addition, the preceding dialogue supports Coates's (2013) claim that women use minimal response to indicate active listening and mutual support.

Data 2

Stu : Hey, kid. I need you to go outside and hose down the mats.

Eddie : **[nods]**

(*Eddie*, 32:54—32:59)

In the excerpt above, the participants are Eddie and Stu. It can be concluded that they are not intimate and do not share the same age. The setting is at the bar where Eddie works as a waiter, and Stu is the manager. It shows that Stu has more power than Eddie because he has a higher status. The topic of the situation is Stu asking Eddie to do his chores, to which he responds with a head nod. In this situation, his gesture counted as a minimal response because it serves as direct feedback, and also, nodding his head means he understands what Stu said and will do what he said. The social factor that assumably has a significant influence is the participant in the conversation because, as a waiter, Eddie must do all of the chores that his manager told him to.

3.2 Hedges

The use of hedges, as in linguistic terms, begins in the early 1970s; it has a form such as I think, I am sure, sort of, and you know, which expresses a doubt and uncertainty about the proposition under discussion.

Data 3

Eddie : Oh. Was that this morning?

Paige : Yes! *You know*, I know exactly who you are
(Paige, 27:02—21:06)

In the excerpt above, the participants are Eddie and Paige. They share the same age but lack familiarity with each other. The conversation takes place in Eddie's room. It happens in the morning when Eddie should have been at the lab to do his chemistry class with Paige. This dialogue is about Paige expressing her annoyance with Eddie because instead of coming to the chemistry class, Eddie was sleeping and missed the class. In Paige's response, she said you know, it includes a type of linguistic device known as hedges, which may indicate her confidence level in the forthcoming statement. After interacting with Eddie for a few days, she has formed her assessment of his attitude, which unfortunately appears to be negative. Especially at that time, Paige was irritated with Eddie, so it is unsurprising that she was so resentful that she wanted to tell him her evaluation of him. The use of hedges features in this dialogue is most likely affected by the function of the phrase because, in the dialogue above, hedges expresses her certainty about her judgment toward Eddie.

Data 4

Eddie : The last thing I need right now is to have the press all over me.

I think it's gonna be fun.

(Eddie, 16:40—16:45)

In the excerpt above, the participants are Eddie and Soren. They have a close relationship because Soren is Eddie's helper. However, the two of them do not share the same age; Soren is older than Eddie. The scene occurred in the car while they were going to the dormitory. Eddie was talking to Soren about what he wanted during his college time. While describing Eddie's opinion about what will happen in college, he used the phrase *I think*. Eddie used hedges in his utterances because he wanted to express his opinion, which indicates some uncertainty about the future. The setting of the conversation most likely influenced the use of this feature because the car was in the campus area where several students were passing by. Eddie, who sits in the car, sees several students laughing with their friends; therefore, he uses hedges to express his opinion while looking at them.

3.3 Tag Question

The tag question is among the linguistic structures commonly associated with expressing tentativeness. A tag question also can be a positive politeness device or conversation opener, depending on the context.

Data 5

Paige : He's a very good watch-moose. Not once I was attacked by a monster under my bed or something scary in the closet. *Isn't that right, Gus?*
(Paige, 47:09—47:13)

In the situation above, the participants are Paige and Eddie, and at that time, they both became closer than before. The scene happened in Paige's room at Paige's house. Eddie and Paige were talking about Paige's doll, which helped her to get rid of her fears when she was afraid. In her dialogue, she used the phrase *isn't that right* with a falling intonation to express her confidence in the statement and expect the listener to agree, which is her because she will answer it too. The topic of the conversation most likely affected how Paige talked because Paige and Eddie were talking about her doll, and it made Paige tell him more about her doll.

Data 6

Eddie : Ecuador and El Salvador. They're not exactly tourist destinations,
are they?
(Eddie, 46:15—46:20)

In the situation above, the participants are Paige and Eddie. They have a close relationship, and the scene occurred in Paige's room. They were talking about Paige's dream place that she wanted to visit. Eddie's utterance contains a tag question because he used the phrase *are they* with rising intonation at the end of the sentence. The rising intonation at the end of Eddie's sentence expresses his uncertainty and seeks additional information about the unusual place that Paige wants to visit. The topic of the conversation likely affected Paige's utterance because Paige was talking about several places that she wanted to visit, and Eddie engaged with the topic by using a tag question to seek additional information about the place.

3.4 Question

Questions are a fundamental component of the conversational structure known as Question + Answer. In a conversation, questions and answers are interconnected, as questions require a response from the person being addressed.

Data 7

Eddie : I like you like this
Paige : *Like what?*
(Paige, 47:19—47:24)

The situation above happened between Eddie and Paige in Paige's room. When both of them were chatting about their childhood stories, Eddie suddenly complimented Paige. Paige responds with a question; in her dialogue, the question serves as a tool to seek a further explanation about Eddie's compliment because she found it unclear. The use of the question feature on Paige's utterances is most likely affected by the topic. It is because she wants to know the further explanation about his

compliment to understand and share the same meaning. As a result, according to the data above, a question is not always intended to make a conversation more interesting, but it can also be used to seek new information.

Data 8

Eddie : **How fast do these things go?**

Mike : We clocked it at 52.

Eddie : I can make it faster.

John : Okay, come on let's go

Eddie : **What? Oh, you don't believe me? I can.**

(Eddie, 49:43 - 49:54)

The situation above happened between Eddie, Mike, and John. The three have a close relationship as they spend the holiday together. The scene took place at the garage after they worked at the farm. They were talking about a modified lawnmower that was in the garage. In Eddie's utterances, several questions have a different purpose. In dialogue one, Eddie uses questions to express his curiosity about how fast the lawn mower can go.

Meanwhile, in dialogue two, he used questions to express his emotions. He expresses his disbelief that John and Mike underestimated him. The topic of conversation most likely influenced the way Eddie spoke. Eddie is an automotive enthusiast who has not modified his cars in a long time, so when he saw the lawnmower in the garage, it prompted him to ask about it.

3.5 Commands and Directives

A directive can be defined as a speech act that indicates someone to do something, such as an action. This linguistic behavior can reflect assertiveness, dominance, or a straightforward communication style.

Data 9

Paige : Eddie, finals are coming up. **You need to be serious.**

Eddie : I am serious.

(Paige, 01:01:15—01:01:19)

The excerpt above happens between Eddie and Paige when their relationship becomes more intense after Eddie spends Thanksgiving with Paige's family. The setting of the place was the library while they were studying for the final exam. Both of them were fooling around with each other. However, Paige feels they must be severe because finals are coming. In Paige's dialogue, she whispered a directive sentence you need to be serious to remind Eddie to be serious. Paige is using declarative because it is a fact that they were in the library, and Eddie was supposed to be studying and not fooling around. Paige stresses the word need to ensure that Eddie understands that he distracted Paige's focus. The scene's setting most likely influenced how Paige speaks because both of them were at the library where they were supposed to be quiet and study, yet they were fooling around and making a noise.

Data 10

Paige : It kind of bothers me.

Eddie : Right. **Come with me.**

(*Eddie*, 01:34:53—01:34:58)

The excerpt above occurred between Paige and Eddie at Eddie's house. The two of them were avoiding the crowd since there was a big event at Eddie's house. They went to a room where there were no people, and quieter. However, guards are still in every room at his house, making Paige uncomfortable. In Eddie's dialogue, he used directives to instruct Paige to follow him. Eddie's directive type is commonly used in everyday communication when people want to give someone a straightforward order. The topic of the conversation probably influenced Eddie's utterances because Paige felt uncomfortable that the guards could hear the conversation. Therefore, Eddie feels the urge to take Paige somewhere where there are no guards.

3.6 Swearing and Taboo Language

Swearing and taboo language are features of language use that involve the use of offensive, vulgar, or socially unacceptable words and expressions. These linguistic features encompass words or phrases that are considered impolite, offensive, or inappropriate in certain contexts.

Data 11

Paige : What **the hell** was that? Why were they calling you Prince Edvard?

(*Paige*, 01:04:18—01:04:23)

In the excerpt above, it happens between Eddie and Paige. It was raining when they talked in the tunnel. Paige and Eddie were talking about the fact that several paparazzi took their photo while calling Eddie a prince. Paige's dialogue contains swear words because she is confused about what has happened before. The use of the word *hell* in this context is a swear word that portrays Paige's annoyance towards Eddie. The topic of the conversation most likely affected the sentence that Paige used because Eddie's never told her about his real identity, and she just found out from the paparazzi that shouted him as a price.

Data 12

Keith : [punched Eddie]

Paige : Hey!

Eddie : Right. I'm gonna **kick your ass.**

(*Eddie*, 57:25—57:34)

In the data above, the participants are Eddie, Paige, and Keith. Paige and Keith know each other; meanwhile, for Eddie, it is his first time meeting Keith. The scene occurs on a field where the race is held, and Eddie wins. Keith does not accept that he got defeated by Eddie, the newcomers; therefore, Keith approaches him and punches him in the face. When Eddie got punched, he said the phrase kick your ass which consider swearing. The phrase has a meaning to threaten someone with physical harm

or violence. As Eddie got punched by Keith, he said that phrase to make Keith scared. The participant of the conversation most likely influenced how Eddie talked because Keith is the one who punched Eddie first and Eddie does not accept what happened to him. Therefore, he said that phrase.

3.7 Compliments

A compliment can be defined as an expression of respect or admiration towards the addressee. Holmes's (Cited in Coates 2013:98) study finds that men likely use a minimal pattern (e.g., Nice Shoes!) while women use a more extended pattern (e.g., What a charming dress!).

Data 13

Paige: Hey. Oh, Mike, **you look great!**

(Paige, 44:54—44:56)

In this situation, the participants are Paige and Mike, Paige's brother, and they are close. The scene takes place in Paige's front yard when she comes back home for the first time after several months of going to college. Paige's utterance contains a complimenting feature because she says you look great and finds Mike's appearance impressive. The participant plays a significant role in Paige's compliment because it has been a while since Paige had seen Mike, which is why she could see an impressive difference in his appearance.

Data 14

Paige : Eddie! Hey. Look, it's my Shakespeare midterm. A-minus.

Eddie : **That's brilliant. That's really really good. Well done.**

(Eddie, 41:54—41:57)

In the preceding text, it happened between Paige and Eddie in the kitchen where Eddie worked. Paige talked about the result of the final that she used to fail. In responding to Paige's utterance, Eddie used several compliment features such as brilliant, really good, and well done. The compliments have the same meaning to acknowledge and praise Paige's effort to pass the exam. The topic most likely influenced how Eddie talked because Paige brought up her exam result, making Eddie feel he had to praise her.

4. Discussion

The implementation of gendered language features in "The Prince & Me" movie is evident through various linguistic elements exhibited by the main characters. The analysis reveals how social factors influence the choice of words, providing insights into the characters' communication styles.

The gendered pattern of communication, evidenced by minimal responses like "okay," aligns with Coates's findings on women's back-channeling cues. Paige and Stacey's interaction illustrates the influence of an intimate setting and shared gender/age on minimal responses, supporting Fishman's theory of women using these cues for active listening and mutual support. Conversely, the power dynamics between Eddie and Stu in a bar setting emphasize how social factors, such as their professional relationship, shape linguistic choices. Another gendered feature, hedging, is demonstrated by Paige's use of uncertainty expressions in expressing annoyance with Eddie, aligning with Coates's observations. The evolving relationship and irritation in the conversation further highlight the social factors influencing language use.

The use of hedges, conveying doubt or uncertainty, adds complexity to linguistic analysis. In Eddie and Paige's dialogue, expressions like "you know" reveal Paige's confidence in expressing annoyance, showcasing the impact of emotional states on language choices. The social setting, in Eddie's room during chemistry class, contextualizes the use of hedges, indicating certainty in Paige's judgment. Eddie's conversation with Soren in the car introduces hedges in discussing the future, using uncertainty to navigate the complexities of college life. Shifting to questions, Paige employs them not only for interesting conversation but also to gather information, as seen in her inquiries about Eddie's compliment and childhood stories.

Tag questions, expressing tentativeness, feature in Paige and Eddie's dialogue. In Paige's room, her use of a tag question about her doll reflects their evolving closeness, using language to engage Eddie. Eddie's tag question about unusual tourist destinations demonstrates how the topic shapes linguistic choices, with rising intonation revealing his uncertainty about Paige's preferences. This dynamic interplay between conversation topics and linguistic structures, like tag questions, navigates uncertainties and seeks understanding. Swearing and taboo language in Paige's expressions of confusion stem from the emotional intensity of discovering Eddie's real identity, showcasing the impact of the conversation's topic on language choice.

Questions play a crucial role in Eddie and Paige's interaction. Paige's use of a question as a response to Eddie's compliment goes beyond creating interesting conversation—it becomes a tool to seek clarification and deeper understanding. In another context, Eddie's questioning about a modified lawnmower reflects curiosity and emotional expression, driven by the unique object in the garage and his disbelief in the face of underestimation by others.

The analysis of directives in Paige's whispered command in the library illustrates the impact of the setting on language choices. Paige's directive, stressing the need for seriousness during study sessions, is shaped by the library environment and impending finals. It serves as a reminder to Eddie, aligning with the expected behavior in a quiet study setting. Eddie's use of directives to guide Paige to a quieter room at his house highlights how the conversation topic and discomfort caused by guards influence linguistic choices, with directives serving as a tool for Eddie to assert control and ensure privacy in a guarded environment.

The swearing and taboo language in Paige's reaction to Eddie's identity highlights the emotional impact of the revelation. Paige's use of swear words reflects her confusion and annoyance, emphasizing the significance of Eddie being a prince. In the confrontation with Keith, Eddie's threat using swearing language is a response to Keith's aggression, showcasing how participants and their actions influence linguistic features in intense situations.

The study of compliments between Paige and Mike showcases the impact of participant relationships on linguistic choices. Paige's expression of admiration for Mike's appearance is influenced by their close sibling relationship, emphasized in the front yard setting. Similarly, Eddie's complimentary language in response to Paige's academic achievement reflects the influence of the conversation topic on compliment features, aligning with patterns observed in Holmes's study.

Future research in the field of gender-based language features in media should delve into the dynamic interplay between linguistic elements and social factors, exploring how these patterns evolve over time and across diverse cultural contexts. Cross-cultural analyses would enrich our understanding of the universality or cultural specificity of these language patterns. Investigating audience perceptions of gendered language in media and its real-world impact could provide valuable insights into the broader societal implications of such portrayals.

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that both men and women utilize the same language features proposed by Jennifer Coates. Through analysis, the researcher determined that Paige produced a total of 85 utterances that contained a Coates-proposed language feature. Meanwhile, for Eddie, he produced 69 utterances indicating language features proposed by Coates. The result shows that the most features used by both characters are questions; however, the frequency is different, with Paige using it more often than Eddie. Other than questions, Paige dominated two features: compliments and swearing & taboo language. Meanwhile, Eddie dominated tag questions and command & directives.

The following research question concerns the supporting factors of language features proposed by Holmes (2013). The social factors that affect the variety of language are the participant, setting, topic, and function. This research shows that the utterances produced by Paige and Eddie in the *Prince & Me* movie are affected mainly by the topic factor in almost all spoken utterances. From all of the seven language features proposed by Coates (2013), the topic has always been the supporting factor influencing each of them. Participants also dominated most of the features: minimal response, question, command and directive, and compliment. Meanwhile, the function factor has a significant role in questions, hedges, and tag questions. The last factor is setting; it influences all language features, but the frequency is not significant.

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