

GENDER-SPECIFIC LEXICAL UNITS AND SPEECH STEREOTYPES IN CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE

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This study explores gender-specific lexical units and speech stereotypes in both spoken and written communication. The research analyzes how men and women differ in their choice of words, sentence structures, and conversational strategies, reflecting social and cultural expectations. Data were collected through audio recordings, written texts, and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Results indicate that female speakers tend to use emotive, polite, and hedged expressions, while male speakers prefer assertive, action-oriented, and concise language. Speech stereotypes, such as tag questions and supportive phrases for women versus directive statements for men, were observed across contexts. The findings highlight the role of language in reinforcing gender norms and suggest that gendered linguistic patterns are influenced by social, cultural, and situational factors.

Introduction. Gender differences in language have long been a focal point in sociolinguistics and pragmalinguistics, reflecting the interplay between societal norms, cultural expectations, and individual communication patterns. Language not only conveys information but also mirrors social structures, including gender roles. Numerous studies have demonstrated that men and women tend to employ different lexical choices, sentence structures, and conversational strategies, which collectively constitute gendered speech patterns.

Gender-specific lexical units are words or expressions predominantly used by one gender, serving as markers of identity and social expectations. These lexical preferences often reinforce societal stereotypes, influencing perceptions of authority, emotion, and interpersonal relationships. For instance, women are more likely to use expressive

adjectives and polite forms, while men often employ assertive and action-oriented vocabulary.

The purpose of this study is to investigate gender-specific lexical units and speech stereotypes in contemporary language use, analyzing both qualitative and quantitative aspects of male and female speech.

Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative sociolinguistic observation. The research design enables a comprehensive examination of both the frequency of gender-specific lexical units and the contextual factors influencing their usage.

Data were collected from multiple sources to ensure reliability and representativeness:

Spoken Corpus: Audio recordings of natural conversations from informal and semi-formal settings, including classrooms, workplaces, and social gatherings. Participants included 50 male and 50 female speakers aged 18–45.

Written Corpus: Social media posts, blogs, and personal narratives were analyzed to identify gendered lexical choices in written language.

Interviews and Surveys: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 participants (15 males, 15 females) to gain insights into their perceptions of gendered language and stereotypes.

Data Analysis

1. Lexical Analysis: Gender-specific lexical units were identified using frequency counts and categorized according to semantic fields, such as emotion, politeness, authority, and action.

2. Pragmatic Analysis: Conversational strategies, including turn-taking, politeness markers, hedges, and intensifiers, were examined to reveal speech stereotypes.

3. Comparative Analysis: Statistical methods, including chi-square tests and descriptive analysis, were used to compare male and female speech patterns and determine significant differences.

Ethical Considerations. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained to ensure ethical compliance.

Results

Gender-Specific Lexical Units. Female Speech:

- Frequent use of adjectives expressing emotions and evaluations: beautiful, lovely, anxious, happy, gentle, kind.
- Politeness markers and hedges: please, perhaps, I think, maybe.
- Emotional expressions and intensifiers: very happy, so sad, really nice.

Male Speech:

• Action-oriented and assertive lexical units: strong, confident, decisive, leader, problem-solver.

• Direct imperatives and commands: do it, finish this, lead the team.

• Minimal use of hedges and intensifiers, emphasizing concise, task-focused language.

Speech Stereotypes. **Female Stereotypes:**

• Tag questions and polite requests: "You like it, don't you?", "Could you help me with this?"

• Encouraging dialogue and maintaining social harmony: frequent agreement phrases like "Yes, I agree" or "Exactly!"

• Longer conversational turns with expressive emotional content.

Male Stereotypes:

• Preference for factual statements and direct responses.

• Minimal elaboration and fewer supportive or empathic phrases.

• Conversations aimed at problem-solving or decision-making rather than social bonding.

Comparative Observations. Emotional and hedging expressions were significantly more frequent in female speech ($p < 0.05$). Assertive and directive expressions were significantly higher in male speech ($p < 0.05$). Both genders adjusted their speech patterns in professional contexts, reducing extreme differences but maintaining subtle tendencies reflecting social expectations.

Discussion

The results demonstrate that gendered lexical choices and speech patterns align with long-established social stereotypes. Female speakers' frequent use of hedges, politeness markers, and emotional expressions reflects societal expectations of women as empathetic and cooperative communicators. Conversely, male speakers' preference for assertive and action-oriented language corresponds to cultural norms associating men with authority, decisiveness, and task orientation.

Contextual factors, such as professional or academic environments, influenced speech behavior, causing both genders to adopt more neutral or formal language. This finding aligns with previous research (Holmes, 2006; Tannen, 1990) indicating that gender differences in language are socially mediated and context-dependent.

Lexical units serve as carriers of gendered stereotypes. Words such as gentle and kind for women, and decisive and strong for men, perpetuate societal expectations of gender roles. Awareness of these patterns is essential for education and communication, promoting reduced implicit bias and more equitable interaction.

The study also emphasizes that while some stereotypical patterns persist, modern linguistic behavior exhibits flexibility, especially in professional and egalitarian contexts. Future research could examine cross-cultural differences in gendered speech and the influence of digital communication on altering traditional stereotypes.

Conclusion

This study analyzed gender-specific lexical units and speech stereotypes in contemporary spoken and written language. Female speakers frequently used emotive, polite, and hedged expressions, while male speakers preferred assertive, action-oriented, and concise language. Speech stereotypes, such as tag questions and supportive phrases for women versus directive statements for men, were consistently observed.

Contextual factors, particularly professional and formal settings, moderated these differences, suggesting that gendered speech patterns are flexible and influenced by social and cultural factors. Overall, language both reflects and reinforces gender norms, and awareness of these patterns can promote more effective, equitable communication.

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