

Representation of women in magazine articles

Sociology, Identity



It is known that men and women use language differently. Men and women's speech do share features, but they also have some differences. Gender might be an influence on how men and women use language. Lakoff (1973) claims that people's feelings towards other things in the world "governs the way [they] express [themselves] about these things" (p. 45). In a way, since men and women grow up differently, how they express themselves is reflected in their language use. Be it in speech or in writing, it seems that there are certain characteristics that are present in texts that represent gender, especially women.

This essay aims to put emphasis on the representation of women in texts, more specifically media prints. Two articles from a magazine *Girlfriend* were analysed to observe how people, in particular the authors and editors of the magazine, use language to represent women. Some grammatical aspects of language such as a large lexical inventory, certain use of adjectives and pronouns as well as verbs, were explored to determine if there were aspects used in the magazine and how those constructions were observed to represent women. It appears that females are likely more prone to detail and are assumed to have a bigger lexical capacity than men; these characteristics are often reflected in writing.

In order to describe a subject matter, a large quantity of lexicals or nouns were utilized to achieve a level of accuracy and was said to be characteristics of most texts written by and for women (Beloedova et al. , 2017, p. 202). Women were also said to have a larger capacity for lexicons due to the commonness in a variety of expressions that women were observed to use on a daily basis. Lakoff (1973) mentioned in her study that <https://assignbuster.com/representation-of-women-in-magazine-articles/>

women are more accurate in identifying different colours, a capability which is more common among them compared to men (p. 49). Within the lexicals, there are two different classes of nouns: concrete nouns, nouns that can be determined through the five senses, and abstract nouns, nouns that are conceptually solid, but unidentifiable through the five senses.

According to Beloedova et al. (2017), among the abstract nouns, women tend to clearly distinguish subjectively psychological lexicals such as love, fidelity and happiness (p. 203). From the article titled (" Do you have imposter syndrome? ", 2018), nouns such as " self-worth" (p. 37) as well as " worthiness" (p. 37) are used: these are examples of subjectively psychological lexicals and shows that women are expected to have the ability or access to a large lexical vocabulary. Moreover, such results demonstrate that the meanings of those words are somewhat important to women and are associated with how they think about themselves. The fact that both of those words are semantically related is further evidence of this, showing that women, arguably, place importance on such concepts.

Additionally, women are also expected to be sensitive enough to be able to identify the differences in order to be able to use their lexical capabilities. Other than nouns, it seems that adjectives also play a role in representing women in texts.

As mentioned previously, adjectives also represent women in texts. It appears that women place a certain degree of importance in spreading positivity as well as motherly qualities for others through the use of adjectives. Signifying the speaker's admiration and praise towards

something is also another use for adjectives, other than their explicit and literal meanings (Lakoff, 1973, p. 51). For example, while some adjectives great, terrific, cool and neat are claimed to be gender neutral adjectives, others such as adorable, lovely and sweet, are seen to be used predominantly by women (Lakoff, 1973, p. 51). With women commonly portrayed as being deeply emotional (Lee & Collins, 2009, p. 355) and more caring compared to men (Lee & Collins, 2009, p. 357), it is not shocking that women will try to care and give comfort to those who need it.

This is claimed to be accomplished through the use of adjectives with positive judgements (Beloedova et al. , 2017, p. 203). In the article, (“ The social media rules for dating”, 2018), the use of the phrase “ super-amaze” (p. 41) suggests that people feel or appear very amazing: this is expressing positive feelings. In article, (“ Do you have imposter syndrome? ”, 2018), words like “ successful, confident, wonderful and killin’ it” (p. 36-37) are used. The phrases used project positive sentiments of being amazing, as well as encouraging one to be full of self-confidence and seeks to show how great someone is. This suggests that these adjectives were adopted with the intention to comfort and boost the reader’s motivation and self-esteem.

The large usage of the particular classes of adjectives further confirms the stereotype that women are assumed to always spread positivity and express motherly or womanly qualities such as sympathy, care and delicacy. Aside from adjectives, women seem to also have a special way of using verbs, too. Positivity and encouragement seem to play a big part in texts written either by and/or for women through objectifying verbs. Generally, women are

associated with terms relating to family or home making, emotions, domestic characteristics, weak and physical appeal (Lee, 2016, p. 382). For example, in (“ Do you have imposter syndrome? ”, 2018), the sub title was “ How to stop feeling like a fake” (p. 36).

The article and sentence itself essentially implied that women constantly fall into a state where they feel as if they do not have any individual or unique qualities of themselves. In order to overcome that, it appears that women often objectify the meanings with the help of verbs (Beloedova et al. , 2017, p. 203). This was done as a sign of pledge towards the action itself as well as a manifestation of a woman’s personality, not just as a contribution to the pragmatics of the text, urging the action to be executed (Beloedova et al. , 2017, p. 203). Amongst the verbs, imperatives seem to be a popular choice in articles across women’s magazine prints (Beloedova et al. , 2017, p. 203). This form was mostly “ built as a set of tips and each is represented by an imperative design” (Beloedova et al. , 2017, p. 203). This is also to create an effect of encouragement towards the readers’ commitments. In (“ Do you have imposter syndrome? ”, 2018), many imperative verbs are used in the article. For example, “ Celebrate your success,” (p. 37) “ Remember your self worth” (p. 37) and “ Get a reality check” (p. 37). All of the imperative verbs that were utilized show that the author(s)’ purpose was to offer advice as well provide encouragement and motivation for their readers to commit towards action. The author(s)’ use of the imperative form of verbs encourages the readers to celebrate all of their accomplishments and to always regard themselves as people worthy of respect and dignity.

Furthermore, they also challenge readers to reflect on themselves and their actions by asking self-reflective questions.

In (“ The social media rules for dating”, 2018), imperative verbs such as “ don’t feel nervous” (p. 40) and “ it’s important to own what makes you so individually you” (p. 41) are used. Identical to the last article, the author(s), once again, encouraged their readers to be unconcerned about what others think about them and to always be their unique selves. This proves that providing comfort and stressing the importance of encouragement is an integral part in magazines to represent women. As observed earlier throughout the essay, there are many ways in which language can be used to represent women. One other way this is done in women’s or girl’s magazines is the use of 2nd person singular pronouns. Beloedova et al. (2017) state that using 2nd person singular forms ‘ reduce the officiality and create a more trusting atmosphere’ (p. 203).

Examples of this in the magazine article called “ The social media rules for dating” (2018) are, “ It’s official, you and your crush are on,” (p. 40), “ He should do the same for you!” (p. 40) and “ Yep, you’re on cloud nine right now” (p. 41). As one can see, these examples include 2nd person singular forms, either possessive—as seen in the first example with “ your—” or personal pronouns—also seen in the first and second example with “ you” and the third example with “ you’re”. The tone of all the sentences given are also very informal and convey quite a friendly atmosphere; the use of 2nd person pronouns contribute to this as those forms are generally associated with informality and used amongst people who are rather familiar with each

other. Another article that shows 2nd person singular forms is “ Do you have imposter syndrome? ” Some examples include, “ Have you ever aced a school assignment, but instead told yourself it must be some kind of fluke? ” (p. 36), “ You might even cringe whenever your parents rave about how talented you are” (p. 36) and “ you’re definitely not alone” (p. 36).

The possessive pronoun is shown in the second example with “ your”, while the personal pronoun is shown in all of them with the words “ you”, “ you’re” and/or “ yourself”. Similar to the previous article, the sentences provided in this one also give a friendly atmosphere as they are using the same 2nd person pronouns. By giving the impression of closeness and familiarity, the examples provided represent women in a way where their inclination for being in a group is demonstrated. This is seen in the use of 2nd person singular forms, plausibly making the readers feel like they are part of a close community. This is because the examples of the 2nd person singular forms not only show a sense of familiarity, but also their uses in the sentences give the impression that the readers are not alone and that there are more people who understand what they are going through. This only further reinforces the expectation that women are caring and nurturing. After much research, it is fitting to assume that there are multiple ways of how people use language to represent women, especially in magazines.

This essay discussed a number of grammatical aspects that suggest how language is used to portray women. Firstly, it begins by viewing parts of the language that have a wide and vast lexical capacity which, among women, is seen as a normality as opposed to males. Secondly, an emphasis on the

choice of positive adjectives is explored and deduces that it is correlated with how naturally women want to provide comfort and encouragement to others. Thirdly, embodying meanings of verbs for the purpose of extending positivity or what are considered 'good vibes' as well as guidance and encouragement further represent women as sensitive and emotional beings. Finally, seeking and longing to create a comfortable and safe environment with others as a group through use of 2nd person singular singular pronouns gives off the effect of intimacy and fondness between women of the same group. This essay concludes that women are portrayed positively and it is emphasised that they are caring and compassionate. In addition, they are encouraged to advocate the same positivity for other women, creating a supportive community.