

A Comparative Analysis of Female and Male Language Features in The Movie “The Idea of You”

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Abstract

This study focuses on gender language patterns within sociolinguistic, analyzing the women and men language features used by the two main characters in “The Idea of You” movie by Robinne Lee. The aim is to identify and describe the women and men language features reflected in the dialogues from two main characters. A descriptive qualitative method was conducted to analyze the data, which was sourced from the interactions between the two characters. The observation method was utilized to collect the data, and two theories were applied: Lakoff (1975) to identify women language features whereas to identify the men language features proposed from Coates’s theory (2004). The findings revealed nine out of ten features were present by the two main characters, with the exception of precise color terms. All five features of men language features were also identified. Mostly, intensifier is the most frequently used women language features, reflecting how the main characters communicate more expressively. In contrast, command and directives were the dominant men language features that employed by the two main characters, revealing their tendency to assert control and direct actions in their interactions.

Keywords: women language features, men language features, movie

INTRODUCTION

One type of social interaction that can happen in a number of settings is language use. Language is a communication tool capable of expressing information, feeling, emotion, intentions and ideas. In establishing communication, individuals engage with each other and the way they communicate is shaped by the social environment around their conversations. Wardhaugh (2006) represents gender is a social construct that includes the differences between women and men in the terms of genetic, psychology, society, and cultural. Based on Holmes (2008:157) argues that among the topics covered in sociolinguistic is language and gender.

In sociolinguistic, the research for language and gender underscores the importance of examining how gender affects language use. Sociolinguistics focuses on the interaction between language and its environment (Holmes 2012:504). Any collection of linguistics forms that make up a pattern arranged in accordance with the social conditions is referred to as a variation (or code) in sociolinguistic. Variety is a sociolinguistic term referring to language in context. This may include an examination of discourse, multilingualism, creole languages, language and gender dynamics, and other related areas. In exploring gender disparities in language usage, it is crucial to

acknowledge that while there are distinct differences, the speech patterns between the two genders often share numerous commonalities.

Women and men belong to different subcultures. As mentioned by Wardhaugh (2006), women and men not only pick up but also automatically develop speech patterns that are appropriate in their own gender. According to Lakoff (1975), the way that women and men utilize a certain language differs significantly. Many dialectologists believed that women's and men's vocabularies differed varied because of their respective roles. The conversational behavior of women indicates distinct interpretations of complimenting and apologizing. For example, between women and men in a friendship environment when they interact with the opposite sex. The language used by men tends to be firmer and loud compared to women who tend to be more polite and not rude. It tends to prove that women and men have many differences in certain things. According to Robertson and Davidson (2013), there are numerous distinctions between women and men. The differences between women and men are often exhibited by a tendency to reject or dispute with one another opinions while women typically accept and expand on them. Moreover, women and men approached discussing their problems differently which is men tend to provide circumstantial descriptions, while women more inclined to be more personal. In summary, women appear to be far more inclined than men to use language to convey their social standing.

The analysis of women and men language are interesting to discuss because the exploration is more complex which can assume that between women and men have distinct viewpoints on what they do and believe. Therefore, one way to study the language of men and women in their communication is to analyze movies. In this

study, movie is used as a form of language representation, which represents the different characteristics of communication used by women and men. Afterwards, this study was chosen for reasons beyond simply describing more the variations in speech function. In addition, this study also looks into possible conclusions on behavioral similarities and other aspects between women and men from both gender in this movie. Thus, the goal of character development. For instance, is to demonstrate how the characters change over time. Then, from this way can have a big influence and deepen the audience's comprehension of the two characters.

Next, the review of related literature that was conducted in this study consisted of five studies. Three previous studies were taken from an article conducted by Aisah et al (2020), second article was conducted by Afief et al (2023), and thesis by Anggraeni (2023) were found the same results, namely nine out of ten of women language features meanwhile for five features of men language were found in their studies. Followed with the third article from Putra et al (2019) obtained six out of ten of women language features while found three of men language features. Different from the thesis was conducted by Prizelia (2021), in her thesis more concentrated on examining the types and functions of women language features. She found nine out of ten of women language features.

However, the frequent function of each feature was to express feelings by the female character. Thus, five reviews related literature that applied in this study are frequent to analyze the data source from movies. On the other hand, the theories that dominantly used from Lakoff (1975) to propose women language features whereas the theory from Coates (2013) contained to analyze the men language features. In conclusion, the type of women language features is a precise color term that is not

found in the above five reviews. In addition, the previous studies dominantly to identify the women and men language only. The analysis of five related literatures were often using a qualitative descriptive method. While, the primary distinction between this study and previous research lies in its focus on comparing the differences in how the two types of language emerge through the main characters.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to investigate if both characters highlight certain language kinds in an equal manner or whether one character tends to utilize a particular style of language more frequently than the other. The purpose of this research is to gain a more in-depth understanding of the linguistic inclinations and personalities of each character by analyzing the manner in which they use language. Additionally, the research aims to determine the potential ramifications that these distinctions may have within the setting of the story.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the data was derived from the dialogues between female character, Solene and male character, Hayes Campbell which include women and men language features in the movie entitled: "The Idea of You" by Robinne Lee. The selection of these two characters were based on their central roles and significant screen time, which allowed for the observation of diverse linguistic patterns. The data collection process utilized the observation method, as defined by Widoyoko (2014:46), which observation method is a methodical observation and documentation of components that manifest as symptom in a study subject. In practice, this involved watching the movie multiple times, reading the film script and applying note-taking technique to capture instances of relevant dialogue. These utterances were then

transcribed and categorized according to the women and men language features. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) highlight the fact of qualitative method generates data in the form of words, pictures, or both to depict social phenomena and uses analytical induction to interpret the data. A descriptive qualitative method states by Moleong (2010:6) is an investigation that provides a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation, such as including behavior, perception, action, motivation as well as the means of expressing the findings in phrases and words.

A descriptive qualitative method was obtained to analyze the language features used by female and male main characters. The objective was to identify and compare the language features associated with gender, as portrayed through the dialogue between the main characters. Afterwards, to analyze the language features, this study applied two key theories. First, Lakoff (1975) was a theory used to analyze women language features, as outlined in "Language and Women's Place (1975)". Second, the theory from Coates (2004) from her book title "Women, Men and Language (2004) was contained to analyze the men language features. Next, in order to achieve final results, the analytical process included identifying instances of women and men language features in the transcribed dialogues, categorizing them based on theories, and describing how these two features were manifested in the context of character interactions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Following data analysis, the result indicated nine out of ten belonging as women language features while all types of men language stated by male character were identified. Next, the data information presented as the two tables and as shown in the table that follow as below:

Table 1. Data of Women Language Features used by main characters in “The Idea of You” Movie

Women Language Features				
No	Type	Women	Men	Qty
1	Lexical Hedges or Fillers	7	3	10
2	Tag Question	3	1	4
3	Rising Intonation on Declarative	2	0	2
4	Empty Adjective	2	2	4
5	Intensifier	9	2	11
6	Hypercorrect Grammar	2	0	2
7	Superpolite Form	3	3	6
8	Avoidance of Strong Swear Word	4	2	6
9	Emphatic Stress	2	0	2
Total				47

The total 47 utterances that both main characters used were categorized as women language features traits based on table.1. Intensifiers was the commonly type that employed by both main characters, as seen in the table above which total for ten utterances. In addition, intensifiers are supported because they primarily aim to emphasize her statement about what they want to convey to the speaker, such as *really*, *so*, *such*, *quiet*, and *very*. The usage of rising intonation on declarative, hypercorrect grammar followed with emphatic stress were among the least common types of women language features, with two examples of each kind discovered in the movie. After examining the data, the precise color term was not found.

Table 2. Data of Men Language Features used by main characters in “The Idea of You” Movie

Men Language Features				
No	Type	Women	Men	Qty
1	Minimal Response	3	4	7
2	Command and	5	4	9

Directive				
3	Swearing and Taboo Language	1	1	2
4	Compliments	1	5	6
5	Questions	3	3	6
Total				30

The data presented in Table.2 indicates that 30 of the utterances evaluated were categorized as male language traits. The employment of command and directions led to the discovery of nine utterances that belonged to a kind that was frequently utilized by both of the important characters. The fact that males are normally more direct in their interactions with other people is brought to light by the usage of command and directive in this context. However, the least prevalent type was the use of profanity and language that was considered prohibited, with only one instance of each character being found.

Language Used Percentages

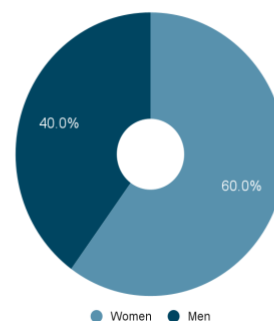


Figure 1. The Comparative of Women and Men Language Features in “The Idea of You” Movie

The percentages of language used by two main characters in this movie are displayed in the pie chart above. It shows that 60% of the overall language that attributed by women. While only 40% of the features are followed by men. To summarize, it demonstrates that women utilize a broader variety of words than males do, which brings to light a substantial difference between the main characters.

A. Women Language Features

Based on theory of Lakoff, she argues women language consist of linguistic features that indicate and reinforce women inferior position in society. According to Lakoff via Holmes, 1992:314) employs when women use language for communication, they typically use specific linguistic elements. Then, Lakoff (1975) claimed ten types of women language features. However, this study only mentioned two types of women language features that are frequently found in the movie based on table.1 between lexical hedges or fillers and intensifier. Thus, the description of each types can be seen in the following expert.

1. Lexical Hedges or Fillers

This type contains the use of language give the impression that the speaker is unsure of what they are saying or is unable to attest to the truth of the claim. Next, the example of lexical hedges or fillers such as: *well, you know, kind of, sort of, I guess, I think*, and so on. Then, as can be seen this style of discussion below:

Data 1

Solene: And what if I could just be the sort of person that goes camping by herself?

Tracy: Okay. Well, is that what you want?

Solene: **Maybe** that's all I want.

(IOY: 00:02:58)

In one interaction at Solene's house when her friend is Tracy visited her house. Solene uses the word "*maybe*" which reflects one type of women language features as identified by Lakoff (1975) specifically lexical hedges or fillers. Rather than offering a firm statement, Solène softens her expression, signaling her internal hesitation and emotional vulnerability. This use of hedging serves a dual function: it protects her face in a moment of self-doubt and maintains social harmony in the conversation with

Tracy. In this context, the hedge functions not only as a linguistic marker of uncertainty but also as a tool for managing interpersonal dynamics. Solène's role as a cautious and considerate communicator is emphasized here, especially as she navigates a complicated personal situation. This aligns with Lakoff's findings that women often use hedges to appear less assertive in emotionally sensitive or socially complex settings. However, it also shows how hedging can be a strategic choice rather than simply a sign of powerlessness, echoing more recent perspectives in gender and language studies that emphasize the pragmatic and context-dependent nature of such features.

Data 2

Hayes: So, **I guess** what I'm doing here is just trying to get to know you better.

Solene: Well... I do appreciate your honesty.

(IOY: 00:35:41)

The location of their discussion was Solene's friend's warehouse in Glendale. In this conversation, Hayes uses hedges or lexical fillers, especially in his statement "*I guess*", signaling a moment of uncertainty and emotional restraint. This choice reflects his tentative stance in the dialogue, possibly influenced by the sensitive or ambiguous nature of the topic being discussed. While hedging is often associated with feminine speech patterns, as noted by Lakoff (1975), its use by Hayes suggests a shift in traditional gendered language roles. Here, the hedge serves not as a sign of weakness, but as a deliberate strategy to soften his message and create space for dialogue. It indicates a desire to approach the situation with caution and empathy, qualities not typically emphasized in stereotypical male communication styles. This aligns with more recent studies in sociolinguistics that argue men, too, adapt their language depending on emotional context and relationship dynamics (Coates,

2004). Hayes uses of this feature highlights his awareness of Solène's emotional state and his effort to maintain a respectful, non-confrontational interaction.

2. Intensifier

Women are afraid of being ignored (Lakoff 1975). Therefore, women typically employ more intensifier than men. Intensifiers are employed to emphasize the meaning that the speaker wants to convey. Lakoff (2004:48) states that the use of intensifier appears to be a tactic for avoiding strong opinions and that they also resemble question marking. For examples such as *really*, *so*, *such*, *quiet*, and *very*. The description of the conversation using intensifiers in both main characters can be seen in the following data below.

Data 1

Izzy: You know, I could have handled that were dating him. It pisses me off that you lied to me. Like, Dad lied, and that sucked. I thought I could count on you.

Solene: I am so, **so sorry**. It will never happen again. I promise.

(IOY: 00:25:35)

In an emotionally charged moment with her daughter, Solène uses the intensifier “*so*”, a common feature of women's language as outlined by Lakoff (1975) to emphasize her feelings which highlights the importance and sincerity of her message. By saying “*so sorry*”, Solene conveys a deep and sincere apology, underlining her regret and the seriousness of the situation. This linguistic choice emphasizes not only the depth of her regret but also her emotional vulnerability, signaling a strong desire to restore trust and connection. Intensifiers like “*so*” function to amplify meaning and are often used in emotionally significant contexts, particularly by speakers aiming to convey empathy and earnestness. In this

case, Solène's language aligns with her role as a mother seeking reconciliation, reinforcing the relational function of her speech. Compared to prior studies, this use supports Lakoff's view that women often employ intensifiers to express emotion and involvement in discourse. However, it also reflects a more nuanced understanding of gendered communication that suggesting that such features are not simply markers of gender, but powerful tools for navigating emotionally complex relationships.

Data 2

Hayes: (mouth full) This is **very good**.

Solene: Thank you.

(IOY: 00:40:70)

Solene's house was the setting for Solene and Hayes. Hayes uses the intensifier “*very*”, which is often associated with expressiveness to emphasize his positive reaction to Solene especially about the sandwich that was made by Solene. While intensifiers are more commonly linked to women language (Lakoff, 1975), Hayes uses of “*very*” in this context illustrates how men may also adopt expressive forms to convey appreciation and emotional responsiveness.

Rather than serving a merely descriptive function, the word enhances the emotional tone of his compliment, reflecting both admiration and a desire to build rapport. This usage reveals Hayes' sensitivity and emotional openness, traits that contrast with traditional expectations of male speech being more reserved or neutral. His choice aligns with more recent findings (Coates, 2004) that suggest men increasingly use emotionally expressive language in personal or intimate contexts, especially when aiming to strengthen relational bonds. Hayes's use of vocabulary in this context provides acceptance to the view that gendered language patterns are formed by relational dynamics rather than set roles, and that they

are based on the environment in which they are utilized. This idea is supported by the fact that Hayes uses particular terminology in this context.

B. Men Language Features

Based on Coates (2004:157) discovers that men speakers were more prone to interrupt other people's conversation rudely. In addition, they were far more likely to interrupt women rather than the other way around. The types of men language features that are proposed consist of five types. In the discussion, only two types out of five that will be discussed namely minimal response and also command and directives which can be seen in the following data as follows:

1. Minimal Response

Coates (2004) argues that minimal response is the type of men language to show that you are paying attention to what the speaker is saying. Afterwards, the example expressions such as *yeah*, *right*, *uh huh*, *mhm* are forms of minimal response. Next, as demonstrated by the two main characters use of intensifiers in the example below.

Data 1

Hayes: Well, that was incredibly rude for me.

Solene: Does that happen a lot?

Hayes: **Yeah.**

(IOY: 00:29:36)

This conversation happened in Solene's house. The word "*yeah*" spoken by the male character was categorized as a minimal response in his statement. It signifies agreement and conveys his agreement with a simple expression. Rather than offering a detailed explanation, "*yeah*" functions to affirm understanding and subtly validate the shared experience being discussed. This linguistic choice demonstrates Hayes's attentiveness and emotional alignment with Solène, indicating empathy and a willingness to engage without dominating the

conversation. His brief but meaningful response also illustrates how men can employ minimal responses not merely to signal agreement, but to foster relational closeness. This supports more recent studies that challenge rigid gender binaries in language use and suggest that language choices are shaped more by context and relationship dynamics than by gender alone.

Data 2

Daniel: Framed photograph of the car wrapped. You can give it to her when you pick her up at camp.

Solene: **Okay**

Daniel: Great.

(IOY: 01:19:08)

According to what Solene and Daniel said, it happened at Solene's house, when Daniel and Eva visited her house to give a car as a birthday gift from Daniel to their daughter, Izzy. When they were talking, Solene expressed the word "*okay*" which is classified as a minimal response in her statement. Minimal responses, like "*okay*", are commonly employed to acknowledge a statement without delving into deeper emotional or cognitive reflection, a strategy that helps maintain social harmony (Lakoff, 1975). In Solène's case, her use of "*okay*" seems to serve as a way to acknowledge the situation with her ex-partner, Daniel, and their daughter without confronting any potential underlying tensions. This is consistent with her position as a controlled and emotionally guarded individual who is attempting to manage a potentially awkward or emotionally heated interaction. She opts for a brief, neutral reaction rather than expressing her genuine sentiments or engaging in dispute, which may be a reflection of her attempt to preserve decorum and control in a family dynamic that is delicate. This choice resonates with the findings of Coates (2004), who observed that

both men and women may use minimal responses to avoid emotional confrontation, though the contexts and emotional stakes may differ.

2. Command and Directives

Commands and directives are expressions employed to convince or persuade another individual to take a particular action. Male typically give clear instructions, especially in situations involving other males rather than women. The example expressions such as, *gimme, gonna, and gotta*. An illustration of conversation utilizing command and directives may be found below.

Data 1

Claire: Solene. We need you up front

Solene: Okay, okay. **Just give me a second.**

Claire: Really, Solene, we need you up from, like, now

Solene: Okay, okay. Is everything all right?

Claire: Yeah, we just need you.

(IOY: 00:25:15)

The setting of the place according to the conversation above was placed in Solene's gallery. During their conversation, Solene uses command and directives, particularly evident in the statement "*just give me a second*" which she expresses when Claire suddenly call her repeatedly to leave the office because Hayes is looking for her. The use of this sentence, especially in stressful or high-pressure situations, reflects Solène's role as a figure of authority in the gallery, where she must assert control over her time and interactions. This choice highlights her need to manage a potentially overwhelming situation while maintaining composure, which is a key aspect of her character. Directives like this also align with gendered communication patterns, as women in leadership roles often employ more authoritative language to assert control

without appearing overly aggressive (Coates, 2004). Solène's tone and request for patience suggest a nuanced balance between authority and empathy, reinforcing her role as a leader who is navigating both professional demands and personal stresses. These findings are in line with the observations made by Coates, which state that women employ commands deliberately in situations that need them to create boundaries or manage expectations, particularly when dealing with complex marital dynamics.

Data 2

Hayes: **Give it to me.** Let me have a taste, yeah.

Solene: What?

(IOY: 00:37:53)

Based on the conversation between the two main characters, the male character uses commands and directives in his statements. By using commands and directives, especially in the sentence "*give it to me*". By issuing this demand, he is demonstrating his desire to exert power and instruct his interlocutor to swiftly fulfill his request. Through the utilization of comments that are so forthright and imperative, she effectively communicates a sense of urgency and authority, so highlighting her intention to take possession of the situation. In addition, this tendency to issue orders indicates a dominant and assertive personality, which aims to ensure that her needs and desires are immediately met by her interlocutor (Coates, 2004).

In contrast to the more polite or indirect language often associated with women, this male character's use of direct commands highlights his preference for efficient and clear communication, reinforcing the power dynamics in the relationship. This is a mode of communication in which authority and control are valued in order to obtain the

intended outcome. This is a pattern that is also noticed in leadership roles of both men and women when they communicate with one another in professional or personal contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the use of gendered language features in a film to highlight the communication differences between women and men. The analysis reveals that female language features are more dominant, as the female character (Solene) uses more nuanced and sophisticated language, reflecting emotional maturity and wisdom. In contrast, the male character (Hayes) often uses more direct and informal communication, emphasizing action over emotion. This contrast not only highlights the different communication styles of the two characters but also reflects broader patterns in gendered communication.

The study's findings suggest that understanding these language differences can improve communication in various social settings and reduce gender-based misconceptions. Additionally, the portrayal of this language in the media can influence how viewers perceive gender roles, either reinforcing or challenging traditional communication norms.

It is the representation of gendered communication strategies in the media which assists to influence the public's perceptions of men and women, as well as the expectations that society places on them. This can contribute to an improvement in mutual understanding.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the scope of this study is limited to a single film, which may not be typical of the complete spectrum of gendered language use across various genres or cultures. Future research could expand the scope to include different movies, genres or even non-Western media to see if similar patterns are

found. Comparative studies with real-life interactions could also provide a deeper understanding of the congruence or differences between cinematic dialog and everyday gender communication.

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