



Examining Language Power Through Lakoff's Language Features Utilization in the Movie *Before Sunrise*

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Abstract

This research investigates the use of language power by male and female characters in the movie *Before Sunrise*, directed by Richard Linklater. Utilizing Text-Oriented Discourse Analysis (TODA) in qualitative analysis, the study examines how Jesse and Celine assert language power, as categorized by Wareing (1999), through their language features, as identified by Lakoff (1975). The research aims to uncover patterns of language use that reflect gendered communication and power dynamics within the film. It explores the differences in the aims of language features utilization to assert power exhibited by the characters. The findings indicate that the linguistic features used by Jesse and Celine serve different goals, leading to shifts in power dynamics and promoting communicative strategies that support gender equality. These findings contrast with Ardener's muted group theory, which posits that marginalized groups, particularly women, often have their voices suppressed. In *Before Sunrise*, Celine's portrayal as a strong, independent, and assertive character challenges this notion by demonstrating that women can and do exercise significant language power. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how language functions as a tool for power assertion within cinematic contexts, offering perspectives on gendered communication patterns and the representation of language power in movie as the product of contemporary literature.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender significantly influences language utilization in communication. LoCastro (2013) observes that "gender" has largely supplanted "sex" in academic disciplines such as literature studies and sociolinguistics, as well as in mass media and popular culture, with "sex" being reserved for references to biological differences. Cameron (2005) highlights that the term "gendered" frequently appears in contemporary language and gender studies, suggesting that gender is not merely an inherent trait but a dynamic and socially constructed concept. Eckes and Trautner (2012) and Pratama (2018) further note that gender shapes communication styles and perceptions, with societal norms often expecting women to be more expressive and emotional, while men are viewed as more assertive and logical. These stereotypes can result in biases and misunderstandings, affecting how individuals perceive and evaluate each other's communication (Blackstone, 2003). On the other hand, Ardener's (1975) muted group theory classifies women as a marginalized group whose voices are often silenced. Referring to that, this research aims to explore how communication strategies, particularly those identified by Lakoff (1975), reveal the language power exhibited by individuals. To achieve this, the study uses the film *Before Sunrise* as its subject.

According to Kusumarasdyati and Luo (Nuriswara, 2014), films provide authentic language used in natural settings, reflecting the culture in which the language is spoken. As a means of communication, the language in films encompasses critical elements, including gender roles (Handyanta, 2019). *Before Sunrise*, a film centered on the interactions between two characters, Jesse and Celine, is an excellent case study for examining gendered communication. Numerous previous research on language and gender relations have been conducted. Previous research, such as that by Gu (2013) and Tupamahu (2017), has explored gender differences in language use from various perspectives. Gu's study reviewed prior research on gender differences and emphasized the need to

focus on similarities in male and female language use. Tupamahu's research examined gender differences in social media usage, revealing distinct communication styles between men and women. These studies highlight the importance of understanding both differences and similarities in gendered language use. Additionally, Amalia (2020) analyzed women's language features in Tina Fey's book *Bossypants*, identifying specific linguistic strategies women use to assert power and navigate social interactions. Putra and Prayudha (2018) investigated gender language features on *America's Got Talent*, demonstrating how men and women utilize language differently in competitive and performative contexts. Similarly, Paramitasari (2020) examined the linguistic features used by teenage girls, providing insights into how young women employ language in their conversations.

Text-Oriented Discourse Analysis (TODA), as proposed by Fairclough (1992), is a suitable approach for this study. TODA examines language use through textual analysis in social contexts to uncover power relations and ideologies. Sheibeh (2016) used TODA for analysing Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), a novel portraying significant discursive challenges in post-war American society, aligning closely with Fairclough's theoretical framework. One of the most apparent aspects in Nabokov's works is the exploration of social identity and subject formation. His characters depiction often navigates complex social landscapes, constructing and negotiating their identities through language and discourse.

This study aims to bridge the gap by analyzing the use of language features to assert power by the male and female characters in the movie *Before Sunrise*, as movies serve as modern cultural products that effectively portray gender communication dynamics (Jones, 2018). Furthermore, this study explores the use of these language features by comparing how the characters assert power. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How do male and female characters in *Before Sunrise* utilize language features to assert power?

2. What language power is employed by the male and female characters in *Before Sunrise*?
3. How does the comparison of language feature utilization by male and female characters to assert power?

This research not only advances the theoretical understanding of language and power but also provides practical insights into gendered communication in media as a product of contemporary literature.

METHOD

This study employs a Text-Oriented Discourse Analysis (TODA) approach to analyse the language power dynamics in the movie *Before Sunrise*. Fairclough (1992) describes TODA as focusing on both the linguistic features of specific texts and the broader social structures that shape and are shaped by discourse. Unlike some other forms of discourse analysis influenced by social theory, which may overlook detailed textual analysis, TODA incorporates a close examination of language while also engaging with the social and ideological dimensions of discourse (Van Dijk, 1997; Fairclough, 2000). This dual focus aligns well with this study's objective to analyze how male and female characters in *Before Sunrise* use language to assert power, as it allows for an understanding of how specific language features in the characters' dialogue reflect and reinforce broader patterns of gendered communication and power dynamics within society.

This research employs the subtitle transcript of *Before Sunrise* as the primary data source, specifically analyzing the interactions between the characters Jesse and Celine. The data comprises the complete set of conversations between Jesse and Celine, captured as subtitles. To facilitate systematic analysis, each line of dialogue was organized into tables, with segments aligned according to their respective timestamps. This methodical arrangement allows for a detailed examination of language features in their temporal context, providing insights into how specific language choices contribute to the

power dynamics in the characters' interactions. Each segment or subtitle line was then analyzed to identify and interpret the linguistic features embedded on the statements that reflect the underlying themes of gender and power.

Investigating how language features are utilized to assert power in the interactions between Jesse and Celine in *Before Sunrise*, this study applied Text-Oriented Discourse Analysis (TODA) in a structured series of steps. The subtitle transcript, organized into tables during the data collection process, served as the main data source. This transcript provided a basis for analyzing each line of dialogue in its specific context. Using Lakoff's (1975) categorization of linguistic features, the study systematically identified language features utilized in the conversations, such as tag questions, questions intonations, lexical hedges, and so on. In alignment with TODA's framework, this step also involved considering the broader social, cultural, and conversational contexts such as tone of voice as well as face expression that influence how language is produced and interpreted.

Following the identification of language features, the analysis focused on how each feature was utilized by Jesse and Celine to convey power or assert influence within their dialogue. A detailed comparison of the frequency and function of these language features across both characters highlighted patterns specific to each, revealing how gendered communication dynamics shaped their interactions. This comparative analysis ultimately allowed for the development of insights regarding the distinct ways each character uses language to assert power, addressing the research questions and enhancing our understanding of language, gender, and power as portrayed in contemporary media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings in relation to the research questions, focusing on how language features are utilized by the male and female characters in *Before Sunrise* to assert power. In addition, through a comparative

analysis, the study reveals how these features reflect and reinforce societal power structures, contributing to shifts in the power dynamics between Jesse and Celine.

Lakoff's Language Features in *Before Sunrise*

The analysis of language features in *Before Sunrise* identifies a total of 906 subtitle lines, each corresponding to a specific timestamp, where the characters employ distinct linguistic strategies. These language features, as categorized by Lakoff (1975), are often used to highlight differences in male and female communication styles and to explore how these styles can reflect and reinforce societal power dynamics. The table below summarizes the frequency of each language feature and provides a brief explanation of their significance in the context of gendered communication.

Table 1. Lakoff's Language Features in *Before Sunrise*

| No | Language Features | Frequency |
|----|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Tag questions | 47 |
| 2 | Question intonations | 220 |
| 3 | Lexical hedges or fillers | 146 |
| 4 | Empty adjectives | 32 |
| 5 | Precise colour terms | 2 |
| 6 | Intensifiers | 99 |
| 7 | Hypercorrect grammar | 135 |
| 8 | Superpolite forms | 135 |
| 9 | Avoidance of strong swear words | 29 |
| 10 | Empathic stress | 61 |
| | Total | 906 |

The findings show that tag questions, with 47 instances, are used to turn statements into questions, often seeking confirmation or agreement from the listener. This indicates a desire for reassurance and a collaborative conversational style. For example, a statement like *"It's nice out today, isn't it?"* invites the listener's participation and validation. Similarly, question intonations, with 220 instances, involve raising the pitch at the end of statements, making them sound like questions. This feature encourages participation and maintains conversational engagement, as seen in the implicit question *"You're going to the party?"*.

Lexical hedges or fillers, occurring 146 times, such as *"kind of," "sort of,"* and *"you know,"* are used to soften statements, express uncertainty, or fill pauses in conversation. They make communication appear less direct and more tentative. For instance, *"I think it might rain, you know?"* opens the door for the listener's input. Empty adjectives, with 32 instances, are evaluative words like *"cute," "nice,"* and *"lovely"* that convey emotional responses rather than specific information, reflecting an emphasis on expressing subjective feelings and opinions.

The use of precise color terms is limited, with only 2 instances, suggesting less emphasis on detailed visual descriptions in the dialogues. Terms like *"bright magenta"* instead of *"pink"* add specificity and clarity but appear less frequently in casual conversation. Intensifiers, occurring 99 times, such as *"very," "really,"* and *"so,"* amplify the meaning of adjectives or adverbs, adding emotional weight and urgency to statements. For example, *"I am really excited"* emphasizes the level of excitement, making the expression more impactful.

Hypercorrect grammar, noted in 135 instances, refers to the meticulous use of standard language rules, often to appear more formal or educated. This feature signals a speaker's attention to linguistic propriety and a desire to be perceived as competent and authoritative. For example, using *"whom"* instead of *"who"* demonstrates a focus on grammatical precision. Similarly, superpolite forms, also with 135 instances, include extremely courteous expressions and polite language that go beyond standard politeness, such as *"Would you mind if I..."* or *"I would be very grateful if you could..."*. The avoidance of strong swear words, with 29 instances, involves choosing milder expressions to maintain a respectful and non-confrontational tone. Instead of saying *"damn,"* a speaker might say *"darn."* Lastly, empathic stress, with 61 instances, emphasizes certain words to convey strong emotions or highlight important points, enhancing the speaker's emotional involvement and the impact of their communication. For example, stressing *"really"* in *"I really need your help"* underscores the urgency and importance of the request.

The data above represents the accumulated frequency of language features used by both characters in the film *Before Sunrise*. In the following section, a detailed analysis is provided

on the specific language features employed by each character, Jesse and Celine.

Lakoff's Language Features Utilized by the Male Character of *Before Sunrise*

The analysis of the language features employed by Jesse reveals several linguistic strategies that illustrate his communication patterns. These features not only deepen their conversation but also reflect Jesse's thoughtful and considerate personality. Examining these linguistic features provides insights into how Jesse's communication style contributes to their relationship's development and the film's narrative. The results of this detailed analysis are presented in the following table, highlighting the specific language features and their impact on the characters' interactions.

Table 2. Lakoff's Language Features Utilized by the Male Character of *Before Sunrise*

| No | Language Features | Frequency |
|-------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Tag questions | 28 |
| 2 | Question intonations | 114 |
| 3 | Lexical hedges or fillers | 102 |
| 4 | Empty adjectives | 19 |
| 5 | Precise colour terms | 0 |
| 6 | Intensifiers | 46 |
| 7 | Hypercorrect grammar | 69 |
| 8 | Superpolite forms | 88 |
| 9 | Avoidance of strong swear words | 5 |
| 10 | Empathic stress | 34 |
| Total | | 505 |

- Tag Questions by Male Character

Jesse frequently uses tag questions, with 28 instances noted. An example includes: "*You think about all those guys you've met in your life and what might've happened if you picked up with one of them, right?*". Tag questions serve to transform declarative statements into interactive queries, inviting Celine's reflection and validation. This usage fosters an engaging and collaborative conversation, encouraging mutual input and enhancing the communicative dynamics between them. Tag questions also indicate Jesse's need for reassurance and confirmation, highlighting his desire to ensure that his ideas are understood and supported by Celine.

- Question Intonations by Male Character

With 114 instances, question intonations are prominently used by Jesse to keep the conversation dynamic. For example, "*You got a boyfriend waiting on you back in Paris or anything like that?*" This technique involves raising the pitch at the end of statements, converting them into questions. It encourages Celine's participation, maintaining an interactive dialogue, and ensuring that she remains engaged and involved in the conversation. Question intonations soften Jesse's inquiries, making them less direct and more polite, which helps to create a comfortable and respectful conversational environment.

- Lexical Hedges by Male Character

Jesse uses lexical hedges or fillers 102 times to soften his statements and create a conversational tone. An example is: "*You know, it would start with a guy waking up in the morning and, you know, taking a long shower.*" These hedges convey uncertainty, hesitation, or a desire to mitigate the force of his statements. By using phrases like "*you know*," Jesse makes his speech less direct and more inclusive, inviting Celine to engage and share her thoughts, thus promoting a collaborative dialogue. Lexical hedges also serve as conversational fillers, allowing Jesse to think while speaking and making his speech appear more spontaneous and natural.

- Empty Adjectives by Male Character

There are 19 instances where Jesse employs empty adjectives, such as in: "*He's got a great voice.*" Empty adjectives are descriptive words that add emotional emphasis without providing detailed information. They convey Jesse's feelings or attitudes, making his speech more expressive and engaging. The use of words like "*great*" reflects his admiration and enthusiasm, adding an emotional tone to his statements. This emotional expressiveness helps to build a connection with Celine by sharing his subjective impressions and feelings.

- Intensifiers by Male Character

Jesse frequently uses intensifiers, with 46 instances, to add emphasis to his statements. For example, "*Tell me something that really pisses you off.*" The word "*really*" amplifies the meaning of the verbs or adjectives it modifies, emphasizing the intensity of his inquiries or assertions. Intensifiers make his questions more engaging and compelling, conveying strong emotions and

highlighting the significance of his statements. This use of intensifiers helps to communicate the depth of Jesse's feelings and make his speech more impactful.

- **Hypercorrect Grammar by Male Character**

Jesse's use of hypercorrect grammar is evident in 69 instances, reflecting his concern for correctness and formality. An example is: "*Yes, I am the cow, and the cow's a bit weird.*" Hypercorrect grammar involves adhering to precise language rules, often exceeding standard communication requirements. This meticulous language usage adds formality and precision to his speech, enhancing his credibility and demonstrating his attention to linguistic propriety. By using hypercorrect grammar, Jesse aims to present himself as articulate and well-educated, which may also be intended to impress Celine and show respect for the conversation.

- **Superpolite Forms by Male Character**

With 88 instances, Jesse often employs superpolite forms to show respect and consideration. An example is: "*Would you like to come with me?*" Superpolite forms include highly courteous expressions that go beyond standard politeness. By using phrases like "*would you like to,*" Jesse demonstrates a high level of respect and consideration for Celine's preferences, creating a respectful and positive conversational environment. This high degree of politeness helps to build rapport and ensure that Celine feels valued and comfortable in their interactions, resulting in the more engaging conversation.

- **Avoidance of Strong Swear Words by Male Character**

Jesse avoids strong swear words in 5 instances, opting for milder expressions to maintain civility. For instance, "*Oh, yeah? Oh, I see, so I'm just a dumb American momentarily decorating your blank canvas, huh?*" The avoidance of strong swear words reflects his intention to keep the conversation respectful and accessible. By choosing less severe language, Jesse ensures that his messages are clear and impactful without being aggressive or offensive. This approach helps to maintain a positive tone and prevents potential conflict or discomfort.

- **Empathic Stress by Male Character**

Jesse uses empathic stress 34 times to emphasize key words and convey strong

emotions. An example is: "*I have an admittedly insane idea, but if I don't ask you this, it's just gonna haunt me the rest of my life.*" Emphatic stress involves placing strong emphasis on specific words or phrases to highlight their importance and emotional weight. This technique makes his speech more compelling and emotionally resonant, drawing attention to the intensity of his feelings and the urgency of his statements. Emphatic stress helps to convey Jesse's passion and seriousness, making his communication more persuasive and engaging.

These findings illustrate how Jesse employs various linguistic strategies to engage Celine, maintain an interactive dialogue, and convey his emotions effectively. The specific use of these language features not only enhances the depth of their conversations but also reflects Jesse's thoughtful and considerate communication style, contributing to the development of their relationship and the narrative of the film.

Lakoff's Language Features by Utilized by the Female Character of *Before Sunrise*

Analyzing Celine's linguistic features provides insights into her character and communication style. Through Lakoff's (1975) classification, it becomes clear how her speech patterns contribute to her character development and interactions with Jesse. These insights are crucial for understanding their relationship dynamics and the broader themes of communication and connection explored in the movie. The results of this analysis are presented in the following table, highlighting the linguistic features that enrich her interactions and illustrate her intellectual curiosity, emotional depth, and genuine interest in forming meaningful connections.

Table 3. Lakoff's Language Features Utilized by the Female Character of *Before Sunrise*

| No | Language Features | Frequency |
|----|---------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Tag questions | 19 |
| 2 | Question intonations | 106 |
| 3 | Lexical hedges or fillers | 44 |
| 4 | Empty adjectives | 13 |
| 5 | Precise colour terms | 2 |
| 6 | Intensifiers | 53 |
| 7 | Hypercorrect grammar | 66 |

| | | |
|-------|---------------------------------|-----|
| 8 | Superpolite forms | 47 |
| 9 | Avoidance of strong swear words | 24 |
| 10 | Empathic stress | 27 |
| Total | | 401 |

- Tag Questions by Female Character

Celine employs tag questions 19 times to seek confirmation and facilitate interaction. For example, "*She was only 13 when she died. That meant something to me, you know?*" By adding "*you know?*" at the end, Celine invites Jesse to acknowledge her sentiment, making the conversation more engaging and dynamic. The primary goal of tag questions is to seek agreement or validation from the listener, thus promoting an interactive and responsive dialogue.

- Question Intonations by Female Character

Celine uses question intonations 106 times to maintain conversational flow and express curiosity. An example is, "*You were visiting friends or just on your own going around?*" The rising intonation at the end converts a statement into a question, encouraging Jesse to provide more information and keeping the dialogue interactive. The aim of question intonations is to invite the listener to participate actively, ensuring that the conversation remains fluid and engaging.

- Lexical Hedges by Female Character

Celine uses lexical hedges or fillers 44 times to soften her statements and create a more conversational tone. For instance, "*We kind of wrote these little declarations of love to each other at the end of the summer and, you know, promised we would keep writing forever and, like, you know, meet again very soon.*" Phrases such as "*kind of*" and "*you know*" reduce the assertiveness of her statements, introduce vagueness, and engage the listener by suggesting a shared understanding. The goal of lexical hedges is to make the conversation less confrontational, more inclusive, and to allow for flexibility in the interpretation of her statements.

- Empty Adjectives by Female Character

Celine employs empty adjectives 13 times to express her emotions without providing detailed information. For example, "*Oh, look, there's a rabbit. It's so cute.*" The adjective "*cute*" conveys her affection and admiration in a subjective manner. Empty adjectives function to express the speaker's feelings or attitudes rather

than provide specific characteristics. The aim is to enhance the emotional expressiveness of her speech and engage the listener on an emotional level.

- Precise Colour Terms by Female Character

Celine uses precise color terms 2 times to provide specific visual descriptions. An example is, "*He had bleached-out chlorine hair and green eyes.*" These terms create a vivid and clear image, enhancing the listener's understanding and engagement. The use of precise color terms indicates attention to detail and helps the listener visualize the described scene or person accurately. The goal is to make the descriptions more vivid and relatable.

- Intensifiers by Female Character

Celine frequently uses intensifiers, with 53 instances, to emphasize her statements. For example, "*My parents have never really spoken of the possibility of my falling in love or getting married or having children.*" The word "*really*" amplifies the assertion, highlighting the significance of her point. Intensifiers function to strengthen the meaning of the words they modify, adding emphasis and emotional weight to the statements. The aim is to make her expressions more forceful and to convey the depth of her feelings more effectively.

- Hypercorrect Grammar by Female Character

Celine uses hypercorrect grammar 66 times to convey her thoughts with precision and clarity. For instance, "*I visited this as a young teenager. I think it left a bigger impression on me than any of the museums we went to.*" This meticulous language usage enhances her credibility and demonstrates a high level of linguistic propriety. Hypercorrect grammar indicates a concern for correctness and formality, reflecting a desire to be perceived as articulate and well-educated. The goal is to ensure clarity and precision in communication, making her statements easily understood and free of ambiguity.

- Superpolite Forms by Female Character

Celine employs superpolite forms 47 times to show respect and consideration. For example, "*Yeah. I was visiting my grandmother. She's fine. How about you? Where are you going?*". This courteous language creates a respectful and positive conversational environment. Superpolite forms

involve using highly respectful and deferential language to make requests or suggestions, emphasizing consideration for the listener. The goal is to foster a polite and engaging interaction, ensuring that both parties feel valued and respected.

- **Avoidance of Strong Swear Words by Female Character**

Celine avoids strong swear words 24 times, opting for milder expressions to maintain civility. For instance, "*Oh, god. Why do we make everything so complicated.*" This choice of words keeps the conversation respectful and accessible, preventing potential conflict or discomfort. The avoidance of strong swear words reflects a conscientious approach to communication, where Celine is mindful of expressing her feelings without causing offense. The aim is to maintain a positive tone and promote a respectful dialogue.

- **Empathic Stress**

Celine uses empathic stress 27 times to emphasize key words and convey strong emotions. For example, "*And I'm so scared of those few seconds of consciousness before you're gonna die, when you know for sure you're gonna die.*" The emphasis on "so" and "for sure" highlights the intensity of her fear, making her feelings more compelling and relatable. Empathic stress involves placing strong emphasis on specific words or phrases to highlight their importance and emotional weight. The goal is to convey the depth of her emotions and ensure that the listener fully grasps the significance of her statements.

The specific use of these language features not only enhances the depth of Celine and Jesse's conversations but also reflects Celine's thoughtful and empathetic communication style. Through these linguistic strategies, Celine effectively engages Jesse, maintains an interactive dialogue, and conveys her emotions with clarity and emotional resonance. This nuanced approach to communication fosters a deeper connection between them, enriching their relationship and the narrative of the film.

Language Power Employed by the Male and Female Characters of *Before Sunrise*

The analysis of linguistic features used by Jesse and Celine in *Before Sunrise* reveals distinct ways they exercise language power, as

conceptualized by Wareing (1999), who categorizes power into social position-based power and communicative strategies-based power. Both characters demonstrate personal and influential power, reflecting their relational dynamics rather than formal authority.

Jesse's use of tag questions, question intonations, lexical hedges, and hypercorrect grammar illustrates his personal power. Tag questions like "*You know?*" seek validation from Celine, fostering interactive dialogue. Question intonations turn statements into inquiries, inviting Celine's input. Lexical hedges like "*kind of*" soften his statements, promoting inclusivity, while hypercorrect grammar enhances his credibility. Celine employs tag questions, empty adjectives, intensifiers, and superpolite forms to exercise her personal power. Tag questions like "*That meant something to me, you know?*" seek empathy from Jesse, engaging him interactively. Empty adjectives like "*cute*" add emotional depth, intensifiers like "*really*" amplify her statements, and superpolite forms create a respectful environment.

Both characters use influential power through strategic language. Jesse's emphatic stress highlights key points, making his speech compelling and drawing Celine into the conversation. Celine's avoidance of strong swear words maintains civility, ensuring her expressions remain respectful. This approach promotes positive dialogue and indicates a dynamic power shift, challenging traditional gender roles. Jesse's inclusive style and Celine's expressive style foster mutual understanding, underscoring language's role in shaping interpersonal dynamics and promoting effective communication.

In contrast to previous studies, such as those by Tobing (2013) and Yu and Zheng (2022), which focused on cultural aspects and news reports respectively, this study delves into gendered communication within a cinematic context. Tobing's analysis of *8 Mile* and Yu and Zheng's comparison of news reports reveal cultural and sociopolitical dimensions of language but do not address gendered language power in interpersonal communication. By focusing on *Before Sunrise*, this research fills the gap by providing insights into gender roles and communication strategies in media narratives,

advancing the theoretical understanding of language and power.

Comparing Lakoff’s Language Features Assertion of Male and Female Characters in *Before Sunrise*

According to the preceding analysis, it is evident that both characters, Jesse and Celine, exhibit comparable language power in their interactions. This parity in language power suggests that both characters are able to assert themselves and influence the conversation effectively. However, the difference of how they use specific language features reveal deeper layers of meaning and intention.

As discussed in Lakoff’s (2004) seminal work, *Language and Woman’s Place: Text and Commentaries*, the use of particular language features can serve distinct functions and convey varying indications depending on the context and the speaker’s intentions. For instance, a feature such as hedging, which involves the use of phrases like "sort of" or "maybe," can be employed to soften statements and appear less assertive. In one context, this might be a strategy to avoid confrontation or appear more polite. In another context, it could be a tactical move to invite further discussion or collaboration.

Drawing on this theoretical framework, the goals of language feature assertions by Jesse and Celine in *Before Sunrise* can be discerned as follows, with LF1 representing tag question, LF2 representing question intonations, and so on:

Table 4. Comparison of Lakoff’s Language Features Assertion of Male and Female Characters in *Before Sunrise*

| LF | Assertion Functions by Male Character | Assertion Functions by Female Character |
|-----|---|--|
| LF1 | Asking questions, seeking validation | Fostering openness, seeking confirmation |
| LF2 | Seeking information, ensuring engagement | Expressing curiosity, inviting participation |
| LF3 | Softening assertions, reducing assertiveness | Creating conversational tone, indicating tentativeness |
| LF4 | Conveying positive feelings, enhancing expressiveness | Expressing admiration, conveying emotions |
| LF5 | Not applicable | Creating vivid imagery, enhancing narrative |

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| LF6 | Emphasizing points, amplifying assertions | Amplifying emotions, enhancing expressiveness |
| LF7 | Ensuring clarity, demonstrating meticulousness | Demonstrating thoughtfulness, maintaining precision |
| LF8 | Showing respect, maintaining politeness | Indicating consideration, fostering respect |
| LF9 | Maintaining respect, avoiding conflict | Promoting civility, ensuring politeness |
| LF10 | Highlighting importance, emphasizing key points | Conveying intensity, emphasizing emotions |

The comparative analysis of language features used by Jesse and Celine in *Before Sunrise* demonstrates that while both characters utilize similar linguistic strategies, their communicative goals vary significantly. Jesse’s use of language features tends to focus on gathering information, ensuring engagement, and maintaining respect, reflecting his desire for mutual understanding and a balanced dialogue. Conversely, Celine’s use of language features aims to foster openness, express curiosity, and convey emotions, highlighting her empathetic and inclusive communication style. These distinctions underscore the unique conversational styles of each character and illustrate how similar language features can serve different communicative purposes, contributing to the overall dynamics of their relationship.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research, utilizing Text-Oriented Discourse Analysis (TODA), reveal that both male and female characters in *Before Sunrise* strategically employ language features to assert power, although with notable differences in their approaches. Both characters demonstrate personal and influential power through their use of language, yet the male character does not employ the full spectrum of linguistic features observed. Instead, the female character, Celine, frequently displays strength and assertiveness in her dialogue, indicating a shift in power dynamics traditionally associated with gender. This analysis shows how each character’s unique linguistic choices reflect distinct communicative objectives, with Celine’s

assertive and independent style providing a model of empowered female communication. By comparing their use of language, this study highlights both similarities and differences in how power is negotiated through dialogue, offering insights into gendered communication and challenging conventional stereotypes. Overall, this research underscores language as a tool for asserting social influence, advancing the understanding of how gender and power are expressed through linguistic interactions in contemporary media.

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