

Gender variations in language use by male and female bloggers: A corpus-based comparative analysis

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Abstract. The present study endeavours to investigate the influence of gender on language use among male and female bloggers by identifying Lakoff's "features of women's language," as listed in her seminal work *Language and Woman Place* that is widely credited as the pioneering and most influential feminist study on the relationship between language and gender. She discovered some variations on how women and men used language and proposed a Deficit model which described how women's lower status and inferior role in society are exacerbated by this language use. In the present study, Lakoff's deficit theory was chosen as a model for analysing gender's influence on linguistic use among male and female bloggers through a modest-sized quantitative comparative analysis. To identify the "features of women's language" as listed by Lakoff and analyse the gendered linguistic variations, the researcher used stratified random sampling and generated two gendered corpora from the Blog Authorship Corpus, one for male bloggers and the other for female bloggers. The researcher then used the KWIC and WORDS functions in the Lancsbox (v4.5) to calculate the frequency of each language attribute in the blogs. The results revealed that linguistic features found by Lakoff differed substantially between male and female languages (1975). Furthermore, the existence of some common language use differences and similarities showed that Lakoff's arguments regarding gender effects on language use are still valid and should be studied using broader corpora of written and spoken language grounded in various cultural settings since different uses of language often result in multiple variations in communication. This research may help writers, readers, and teachers better comprehend gender differences, especially in terms of linguistic characteristics as identified by Lakoff.

Key words: Bloggers, deficit model, gender variations, lakoff's theory.

INTRODUCTION

As social beings, men and women have interacted among themselves. Language is used by people to convey their thoughts and ideas to one another, but its use has certain fundamental differences, just as humanity has gender differences. According to Graddol and Swan (1989) "...differences between women and men seem such a natural and obvious part of our existence that we are usually unaware of their full extent. The way we talk is one of these all-pervasive and unobtrusive aspects of gender behaviour" (p. 8). Some stereotypes about linguistic differences between men and women exist. Montgomery (2013) gives examples of widely held 'folk-linguistic views,' which may not be validated by evidence.

Women, it is said, are less assertive (more tentative) in their speech than men; ...they use fewer taboo forms and

more euphemisms than men, that they talk more than men, or conversely that they talk less than men; that they are inclined to gossip; that they are more conservative in their speech and at the same time more sensitive to matters of correctness; that their speech is more polite, and so on (Montgomery, 2013, p. 151).

According to McKay *et al.* (1996), women in the United States started to investigate and criticize social patterns that promoted gender discrimination in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the intersection of language and gender became an object of research in sociolinguistics in the mid-1970s (p. 218). Since 1972, Robin Tolmach Lakoff, a linguistics professor at the University of California at Berkeley, has been looking for specific characteristics of women's language. Lakoff (1973) made a distinction

between men's and women's language in her article, *Language and a Woman's Place*, which was one of the first experiments to separate women's and men's vocabulary, and later sparked a slew of follow-up research.

Our use of language embodies attitudes as well as referential meanings. [...] In appropriate women's speech, strong expression of feeling is avoided, expression of uncertainty is favoured, and means of expression regarding subject-matter deemed 'trivial' to the 'real' world are elaborated. [...] The personal identity of women thus are linguistically submerged; the language works against the treatment of women, as serious persons with individual views. (Lakoff, 1973, p. 45).

Later, in 1975, Lakoff published *Language and a Woman's Place*, an extension of her 1973 article of the same title, which is said to have introduced the idea of studying gender not only within linguistics but also within other disciplines (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004, p. 3). She published a collection of basic observations on what distinguishes women's language and proposed hypotheses on women's language in daily life in her seminal and immensely influential book among sociolinguists. She stressed gender's social importance and distinguished between male and female speech patterns. She posed questions like: Do women's vocabularies differ from men's? Do they employ a greater number of adjectives? Are there any gaps in their sentences? As a result, researchers began to investigate both linguistic inequality as well as the variations between how men and women apply the code. The concepts explored in that pioneering work have continued to inspire sociolinguistic studies, including the present study that aims to explore how much Lakoff's features of women's language, as listed in her book *Language and Woman Place*, are reflected in the language of female bloggers, and to compare it to the language of male bloggers. Therefore, being one of the pioneers and the most influential authors on the subject of gender and language, Lakoff's theory has been selected as a paradigm for the present study since it discusses and defines the linguistic characteristics of language used by men and women .

Research questions

Centred on the above-mentioned comprehensive introduction of the study's context, the research questions of the study could be stated as follows:

a) Which of Lakoff's language features of women's

language are most frequently used in posts by male and female bloggers?

b) What is the frequency of each linguistic feature in the posts of male and female bloggers?

Objectives of the research

The following are the study's goals, which are based on the research questions:

- To distinguish between male and female bloggers' linguistic features as propounded by Lakoff.
- To determine the frequency of each linguistic feature in male and female bloggers' language.

The study's significance

The present research could help authors, readers, and teachers gain a better understanding of gender differences in language use. It primarily highlights the linguistic features identified by Lakoff (1975) as used by male and female bloggers belonging to different age groups

THEORIES OF LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Language and gender

Gender and sex have been separated by sociolinguistic researchers. In the Oxford English Dictionary, gender is defined as, "in modern especially feminist use, a euphemism for the sex of a human being often intended to emphasize the social and cultural, as opposed to the biological, distinctions between the sexes" (Unterbeck *et al.*, 2000, p. 573). The World Health Organization's viewed that "gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.". Moreover, it considered that the words 'masculine and 'feminine' are gender terms that a given culture deems suitable for both males and females .

Gender signifies more than just biological or physiological sex. It is more than a complex construct with sociocultural and socio-psychological components. Male and masculine are two distinct concepts: the former applies to genetics, while the latter to identity. Maleness is incomplete without masculinity. Even some masculine traits are easily identified as biological aspects of maleness (Mills, 2003). In addition, men and women are expected to act and respond accordingly in response to societal representations of masculinity and femininity. Maleness or femaleness, according to Hearn and Kimmel (2006), is influenced by society and the world in which one resides, rather than being solely a biological feature. Gender norms have shifted increasingly today, and

perceptions of men as masculine and women as feminine are no longer widespread. Men seem to be embracing feminine traits in their lives, while women adapt to masculine roles and occupations. As a result, for today's men and women, language and gender stereotypes have lost all their significance.

Gender and language perspectives

There have been many discussions so far about gender and language studies using sociolinguistic approaches. From the perspective of sociolinguistic science, some well-known linguists such as Lakoff (1973, 1975), Tannen (2013) and Cameron (1992) investigated gender distinctions in accent, tone, lexis, and speech style as well as the most recent theories for these variations (Wenjing, 2012). Furthermore, well-known authors such as Robin Lakoff and Deborah Tannen have expressed their perspectives on language and gender theories based on specific methods. Robin Lakoff (1975), for example, an eminent feminist author, has experimented with multiple perspectives on gender and language. After a thorough review of research studies on language and gender, the researcher has identified three approaches namely deficit, domination, and difference approaches.

Deficit approach

The 'deficit method,' pioneered by Lakoff in the early 1970s, is the first approach to language and gender (1973). This perspective views women as being at a disadvantage when it comes to language use because their language has been shaped by an implicit male standard. The overall image that emerges from Lakoff's research, according to Finch (2013), is that women's expression has historically been regarded as inferior to men's, indicating their feelings of personal and social ineptitude (p. 137). Women's speech style, according to Lakoff, includes features that reflect doubt, lack of trust, and undue cordiality or subordination (p. 137). Hedges, tag questions, rising intonation are instances of these features. As a result, since female language is distinguished by uncertainty and lack of confidence, it is believed to be ineffective. However, Lakoff's analysis was not centred on empirical research.

Dominance approach

In 1975, Lakoff published *Language and Woman's Place*, which he described as "less of a final phrase... than a provocation to further investigation" (p.40). She advocated for the dominance theory, which linked gender differences in language to male dominance in society. Men and women, according to dominance theory, lived in

a cultural and linguistic environment with unequal power and status. Furthermore, male dominance and gender division were emphasized. To put it another way, men were believed to play a major role in shaping social values, resulting in differences in men's behavior and treatment. Although the dominance perspective did not mean that female expression was unacceptably offensive, it did indicate men's dominant position in society as manifested in their encounters with women (Han, 2014, p. 96). Talbot (1999) questioned this paradigm as representations of a patriarchal social system (p.131), claiming that this approach, besides the difference approach, provided a significant paradigm for the study of language and gender impact in the social sciences (p. 132).

Difference approach

In her book, *You Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, Deborah Tannen (1990), a classmate of Lakoff's, built on this study and pushed the gap approach. She advocated the "Two-culture" male-female model, which divided children into two groups. According to the distinction hypothesis, often within the same culture, men and women lived in separate or distinct cultural cultures, promoting different modes of communicating (Uchida, 1992). Cross-gender communication was defined as either cross-cultural or bi-cultural in this theory. The difference theory was summarised in Tannen's book which listed six contrasting components for both men and women speech:

- Status vs. Support
- Independence vs. Intimacy
- Advice vs. Understanding
- Information vs. Feelings
- Orders vs. Proposals
- Conflicts vs. Compromise

Talbot (1998) claimed that conduct that was once perceived as men attempting to exploit women was now reinterpreted as a "cross-cultural" phenomenon (p.131). The distinction system, according to Johnson and Meinhof (1996), may be disputed because it ignored the reasons why men and women existed in different subgroups (p. 9). "Men and women...are doomed to misinterpret each other until they accept their highly socialised differences," Crawford (1995) wrote. He further expounded how the "fundamental differences between women and men shaped the way they talked" (p. 1). Moreover, he added it would be a misconception to say that all men overpowered all women because there were exemptions. While the difference approach confirmed that each gender had a fixed and distinct style, it lacked evidence to explain why men and women should be divided into two subcultures. The dominance approach

has been criticized, according to Talbot (1999), for suggesting a “blanket conception” of male dominance.

Lakoff's features of 'women's language'

Language is often thought to be gendered, with men and women having different languages (Jendra 2012, p. 51). Since lexis is a highly complex component of language, differences in vocabulary can distinctly indicate the relationship between gender and language use. In terms of grammar, vocabulary structure, or syntax, there are no rules for females in English. According to Wenjing (2012), the variations in vocabulary usage between men and women are often found in everyday life and are often ignored (p. 219). To Lakoff (1975) men and women speak English differently as, since childhood, they've been taught to communicate in different ways: girls should use a passive voice, while boys should use a more active voice known as "rough speaking." She asserted that women's language use, as well as the language used regarding them, reinforced their auxiliary status in American society (Holmes, 2001, p. 285). She cited several linguistic items that she claimed women used more often and that she believed represent women's "unpredictability and lack of confidence." She claimed that linguistic characteristics such as the following could be used to identify women's voices.

- Hedge: using phrases like “sort of”, “kind of”, “it seems like”, and so on.
- Make use of (extremely) respectful expressions: “Would you mind...”, “I'd appreciate it if...”, “...if you don't mind”.
- Use tag questions: “You're going to dinner, aren't you?”
- Italicize everything: Intonational focus equals underlining words - so, very, quiet.
- Use empty adjectives: divine, lovely, adorable, and so on
- English prestige grammar and clear pronunciation.
- Use of direct quotation: men paraphrase more often.
- Use of the special lexicon: Men use more sports words, while women use more colour words.
 - Use of questioning tone in declarative sentences by raising the volume of their voice at the end of a sentence, women transform declarative statements into questions, voicing confusion. For instance, “What school do you attend? Eton College?”
- Use “wh-” imperatives: (For instance, “Why don't you open the door?”)
- Women speak less often than men.
- Qualifier overuse: (such as, “I think that...”)
- More apologies: (for example, “I'm sorry, but I think that...”)
- Use of modal structures: (for example ought, could can, should, would, - “Should we turn up the heat?”)
- Avoid using expletives or coarse words.
- Make use of passive modes.

- Use requests and indirect commands: (for instance, “My, isn't it cold in here?” - a request to turn on the heat or shut a window)
- Use of Additional intensifiers: especially very, so, etc. (for instance, “I am so glad you came!”)
- A witty personality: unlike male women struggle to say jokes and sometimes misunderstand the punch line. (Holmes 2001: 286)

Women's language, according to Lakoff (1975), is childish, extra-polite, and non-dominant; however, men's language is assertive, mature, and explicit. As a result of the preceding clarification, it is evident that male and female languages use varies significantly (p. 58).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Over the last decade, several researchers have investigated male and female expressions have distinct forms, topics, content, and uses (Haas, 1979). The previous research revealed that men were more garrulous and commanding because they mostly used non-standard language predominantly discussing sports, money, and industry, etc. Women, instead, were more likely to be positive, respectful, and articulate speaking more about home and family, and used more terms that suggest feelings, appraisal, perception, and psychological condition. However, it cannot be inferred that gender disparities in expression are universal.

Gender disparities in spoken discourse

This section summarises research findings of studies on linguistic variations between men and women in spoken, written, and online settings .

Sunderland (2006) cited Jespersen (1922), who in his book *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin* included a chapter titled "The Woman." He claimed that women have limited vocabulary knowledge, used more adjectives and adverbs, 'broke off without finishing their sentences more often than men, so they mindlessly started their talk without having to know what they had to say,' and created less complicated sentences than men (Jespersen 1922, p. 251). Jespersen's observations were largely based on subjective "evidence" (and literary texts), which reflected concepts and paradigms about language at the time. The intuitions of analysts and native speakers were then more than adequate substitutes for empirical evidence (Sunderland, 2006, p. 5). Since men and women, according to Wood (2014), grow up in different gender speech environments, they develop different speaking styles. Wood (2014) considered that a speech culture occurred when people exchanged understandings about communication goals and methods

for achieving those goals. He further concluded that gender stereotypes were the basis of male-female communication differences (p. 125). In another study, Newman *et al.* (2008) explored the communication differences between males and females found that gender disparities in language usage were a dynamic combination of social goals, situational influences, and social interaction. Men used language to convey information, while women used verbal expression to simply socialize, according to their findings. Men used language to disseminate knowledge, while women mainly used it for social contact. They discovered that, while women talk about feelings, perceptions, experiences of other people, negations, and the current surroundings and past tense verbs whereas men talked about their jobs, money, sports, and articles.

Gender disparities in written discourse

Since officially published documents such as books and journals are devoid of intonational or phonological cues, gender inequality in written language studies was restricted in comparison to gender disparities in spoken language. Olsson (2000) investigated gender-relatedness in introductory letters, drawing on Lakoff, Jespersen, and Crawford's (1995) perspectives on male and female language to analyse her results. She discovered that, while there were variations in the vocabulary the two genders use, discourse and listening styles vary, which explained the variations.

Jones and Myhill (2007) concentrated on adverbial usage, repetition of the same words, particularly nouns, and the use of synonyms and hyponyms to investigate gender variations in language. According to the findings, men and women had somewhat different linguistic characteristics.

In another study, Gyllgard (2006) investigated gender gaps in Swedish students' writing and examines how students recognised linguistic features of female and male discourse. Another research on language used by female bloggers in the Malaysian sense was undertaken by Akhmaliyah (2009), who focused on female undergraduate students (ages 20 to 23) who regularly updated their blogs. As a preliminary step, she used data from two weblog hosts as her baseline data: Friendster and Blogspot, and she only discovered four features using Lakoff (1975) features. Lexical hedges, tag queries, intensifiers, and the avoidance of forbidden words were all examples of these characteristics. As a result, she concluded that the three lexical features that Lakoff observes in female blog posts were lexical .

Gender and online language

Men are more interested in expressing their viewpoints to show an authoritative contribution to the discourse,

according to Rosseti (1998), whereas women are more concerned with the contribution itself. Women use many more phrases that provide encouragement and strengthen their interaction with the audience. Furthermore, women express gratitude and appreciation more openly, while men express gratitude and appreciation more tightly and indirectly. Teenagers are the most frequent users of blogs and other CMC tools, according to Gender disparities and variations in online identification and language usage were examined by Huffaker and Calvert (2005). They examined teen bloggers' use of explicit words, as well as the length of their blogs, and discovered that male speech is more assertive and dynamic than female language. They discovered that since the forum is a private space, only about half of all teenage bloggers use graphic language in their blogs. To put it another way, this group of adolescents liked to communicate using slang over formal language. The researchers discovered that language use in CMC develops in lockstep with the populations involved.

Nature of blogs

The word "blog", a shortened version of weblogs, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, "is a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks, videos, and photographs provided by the writer". Nowson (2006) considers that "blogs are web pages frequently updated with posts in reverse chronological order and the language used is less constrained by formality" (p. 34). Blogs, according to Levy (2009), are "online pages with daily diary or journal posts, using text or video," and "blogs promote self-expression, imagination, ownership, and community development through informal language" (p. 773).

The current research

This study aims to investigate to what extent linguistic features identified by Lakoff (1975) in women's speech can be noticed in the language used by female bloggers and to draw a comparison with that of male bloggers. In personal blogs, the language informally comprises certain features of spoken language. The study uses a corpus-based approach to highlight gender gaps in language among female and male bloggers who use their journals as a diary to share their everyday issues.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research investigates the influence of gender on the language used by male and female bloggers using a

Table 1. Details of the specialized blog authorship corpus.

Size of the corpus	140 million words
Total no. of bloggers	19,320
Distribution of blogs overage	8240 "10s" blogs (ages 13-17) 8086 "20s" blogs (ages 23-27) 2994 "30s" blogs (ages 33-47)
Distribution of blogs over gender	9,660 (Male) 9,660 (Female) =19,320
Total posts	681,288 posts
Posts and words per person	35 posts and 7250 words per person
The minimum criterion of a blog	200 occurrences of common English words
Corpus type	Written
The period of the blogs selected	August 2004

small-scale, quantitative comparative analysis.

Population and sampling

For the investigation of linguistic features enlisted by Lakoff (1975) in male and female bloggers, a mini corpus has been developed out of the Blog Authorship Corpus. The current research uses stratified random sampling. In the case of the present study, the population is divided into male and female bloggers and further divided into different age groups; the sample is taken from each age group. The number of male and female participants is equal.

Data source

A specialized corpus The Blog Authorship Corpus of blog posts containing 140 million words and collected posts of 19,320 bloggers gathered from blogger.com in August 2004 available for free downloading for noncommercial research purposes at <https://u.cs.biu.ac.il/~koppel/BlogCorpus.htm> has been used for the present study for certain reasons. Firstly, it represents a general variety of English which is the requirement of the present study. Secondly, the bloggers' data has been gathered from Blogger.com which is one of the best blog publishing sites for multi-user blogs. Blogger.com is a Google-owned free site where everyone can create a blog and post anything they want. It may be a personal or technical blog on a specific subject. It is a pilot study to investigate the validity of Lakoff's arguments about gender differences in language use. Details of the specialized Blog Authorship Corpus are as under. (Table 1)

Each blog is treated as a separate file, with the name representing the blogger's id# as well as the blogger's

gender, age, industry, and astrological sign, which are all self-provided. (While all are labelled for gender and age, many are labeled as unknown in terms of industry and/or sign.)

Specialised gendered corpora

The current study necessitated the development of two gendered specialised corpora, one of which consisted of male bloggers and the other of female bloggers. The study's data was collected at random from The Blog Authorship Corpus. The details of the two specialized gendered corpora are as shown in Table 2.

Data analysis

The LancBox (V 4.5) was used to aid in the investigation process of frequency of the linguistic features propounded by Lakoff (1975) reflecting the gendered difference in language use. Using KWIC and WORDS function in the Lancbox the researcher identified each language feature's frequency in blogs and presented the findings in the form of tables containing no. of occurrences for each feature of language and relative frequency, bar charts trends, and pie charts to show the overall distribution of some feature.

Limitation of the study

The present study is limited to finding the occurrences of linguistic features identified by Lakoff in the posts of male and female bloggers and drawing a comparison of the frequency of these features in the posts of male and female bloggers. However, ascertaining the factors behind the differences, if any, does not fall under the

Table 2. Details of the two specialized gendered corpora.

Corpus details	Corpus 1 male bloggers	Corpus 2 female bloggers	Total (sub)corpus size
Files	18	18	36
Tokens	942612	960431	1,903,043
Types	51709	43092	94801
Lemmas	49946	41820	91766
Distribution of blogs over age and gender	{15,16}3 each {24.26}3 each {35,40}3 each	{15,16}3 each {24.26}3 each {35,40}3 each	18+18=36
Posts and words per person	35 posts and 7250 words per person	35 posts and 7250 words per person	630*2= 1260 posts
Corpus type	Written	Written	

Table 3. Frequency of intensifiers used by male and female bloggers.

Intensifiers	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Very	1030	10.93	1374	14.31
Quite	415	4.4	294	3.06
Rather	314	3.33	217	2.26
So	4195	44.5	6471	67.38
Too	913	9.69	1690	17.6
Really	1545	16.39	2088	21.74
Just	3132	33.23	3789	39.45
Such	661	7.01	505	5.26

scope of this study .

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section introduces linguistic features identified by Lakoff (1975) and provides occurrences of linguistics items and their relative frequency in the posts of male and female bloggers in tabular form. The results are presented in the form of line charts and pie charts to give a better explanation and develop a visual understanding of the gendered difference in language use.

Intensifiers

The word intensifier is used to emphasize a statement, like so, very, really, do absolutely, and quiet. In language, intensifiers function as augmenting devices (Olsson, 2000). Lakoff (1975) classified intensifiers with hedging in which they weaken the speaker's feelings in language. Intensifiers are a characteristic of women's vocabulary, as men find it impossible to use this construction in non-emotional sentences. For example:

I felt so nervous when I saw a stranger staring at me .
The sight of the bloody/ brutal fight made me really upset.

Hence the researcher examined eight intensifiers: really, quiet, very, so, too, very, just, and such. (Table 3, Figure 1)

The findings seem consistent with Lakoff's hypothesis that women use intensifiers more frequently as the graph demonstrates the higher use of intensifiers by women such as "very", "so", "too", "really" and "just" whereas in the case of "quiet", "rather", "such" male hits seem higher than female.

Hedging

Hedge, according to Lakoff (1973), is a feature of female language primarily used to conveying ambiguity and convince the intended audience to take them seriously. 'Such,' 'sort of,' 'like,' 'you know,' 'well,' 'kind of,' 'I think,' 'suppose,' and 'it seems like' are some of the phrases

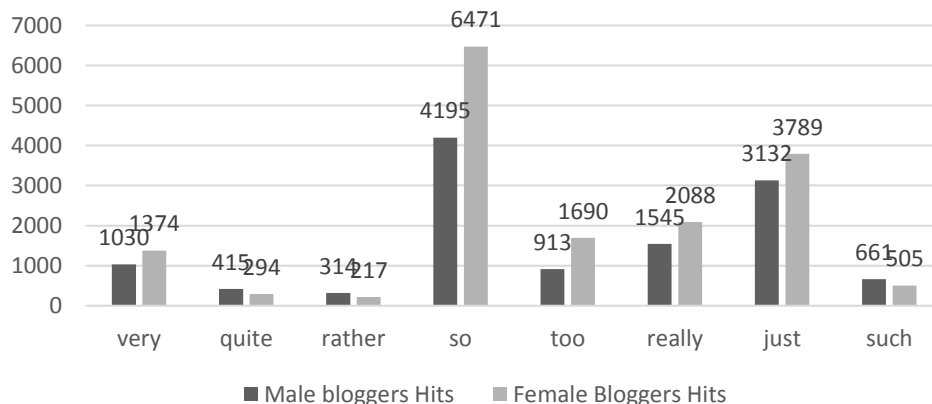


Figure 1. Intensifiers.

Table 4. Frequency of hedges used by male and female bloggers.

Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers hits	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Male bloggers hits	Hedges
1.21	116	1.47	139	sort of
3.45	331	2.99	282	Kind of
0.29	28	0.29	27	It seems like
14.76	1418	8.82	831	I think
1.78	171	2.64	249	Perhaps
1.21	116	1.81	171	I believe
1.15	110	0.65	61	Looks like
1.99	191	2.58	243	May be

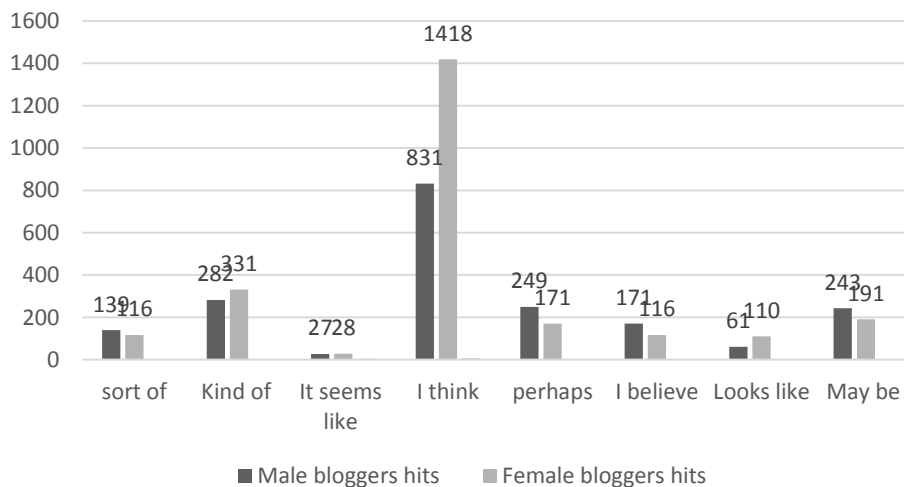


Figure 2. Hedging.

used (p. 45). Hedging, according to Holmes (2001), is a way of expressing ambiguity and softening utterances. If the hedge is used in a different context, it has a specific connotation (p. 291). Moreover, it is used to alter certain forms of speech actions, such as demands and apologies (Olsson, 2000). (Table 4, Figure 2)

The search results for hedges demonstrate mixed trends. The most used hedge “I think” appears to be in use of female bloggers at a much higher frequency than male bloggers. A similar trend is evident about “may”, “looks like” and “kind of”. The hedges such as “sort of”, “perhaps” “I believe”, “maybe” are used more frequently

Table 5. Frequency of tag questions used by male and female bloggers.

Tag questions	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Isn't it?	9	0.31	34	0.35
Aren't you?	4	0.04	11	0.11

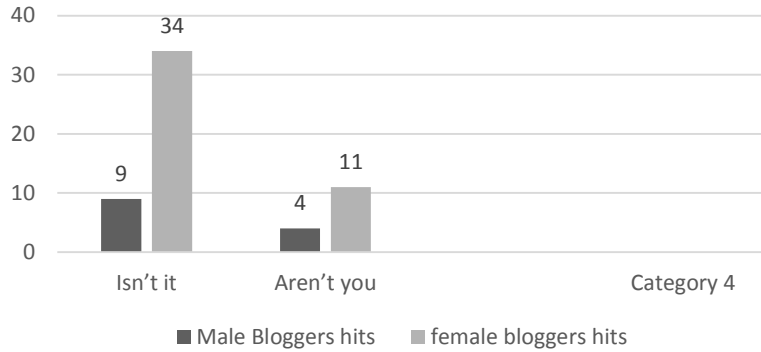


Figure 3. Tag questions.

by male bloggers.

Tag questions

According to Lakoff (1975), a tag question is a hedging mechanism because it shows that the speaker is ambivalent about making a statement (p. 46). Men, on the other hand, often use tag questions to express their opinions on specific topics, whereas women are indecisive and lack a strong opinion. The researchers in this study focused on verbal tags that appear at the end of sentences, for instance ‘...right? Isn't it?’ (Table 5, Figure 3)

The results seem consistent with Lakoff’s hypothesis as the female bloggers use tag questions such as “isn't it” and “aren't you” at a higher frequency than the male which demonstrates a lack of definiteness or certainty about what they say or believe.

Empty adjectives

Robin Lakoff defines “empty adjective” or feminine adjective as “adjectives that seem to be devoid of anything but a vague positive emotive meaning”. An empty adjective is difficult to describe owing to its abstractness and proximally correlation with thoughts and emotions. Some adjectives are gender-neutral such as ‘great’, ‘terrific’, ‘cool’, ‘neat’ etc. which can be used by both men and women, while others are exclusively used by women such as ‘adorable’, ‘charming’, ‘sweet’, ‘lovely’, ‘divine’, ‘gorgeous’ etc. An empty adjective, like all other adjectives, is typically positioned before a noun (Olsson,

2000). The researcher has only looked for empty adjectives listed in Table 6.

The search results demonstrate much frequent use of empty adjectives such as ‘nice’, ‘wonderful’, ‘awful’, ‘adorable’, ‘gorgeous’, ‘beautiful’, ‘cute’ and ‘good’ by female bloggers whereas the adjectives such as ‘charming’, ‘divine’, ‘fantastic’, ‘lovely’, ‘sweet’ don't show any significant difference in usage (Figure 4). So, it seems partially consistent with the claim made by Lakoff.

Adverbs

An adverb is the type of word that “describes the circumstances of an action: where it is done (here, elsewhere, overhead), when it is done (tomorrow, often, rarely, never) or how it is done (fast, well, carefully, dramatically, resentfully)” (Trask, 1999, p. 3). Intensive adverbs, such as ‘very,’ ‘really,’ and ‘quiet,’ are used to indicate a strong stance to alter adjectives, Moreover, research abounds in the gendered difference in the use of intensive adverbs in English. Women use more intensifying adverbs, like “very”, “really” and “so.” (Table 7)

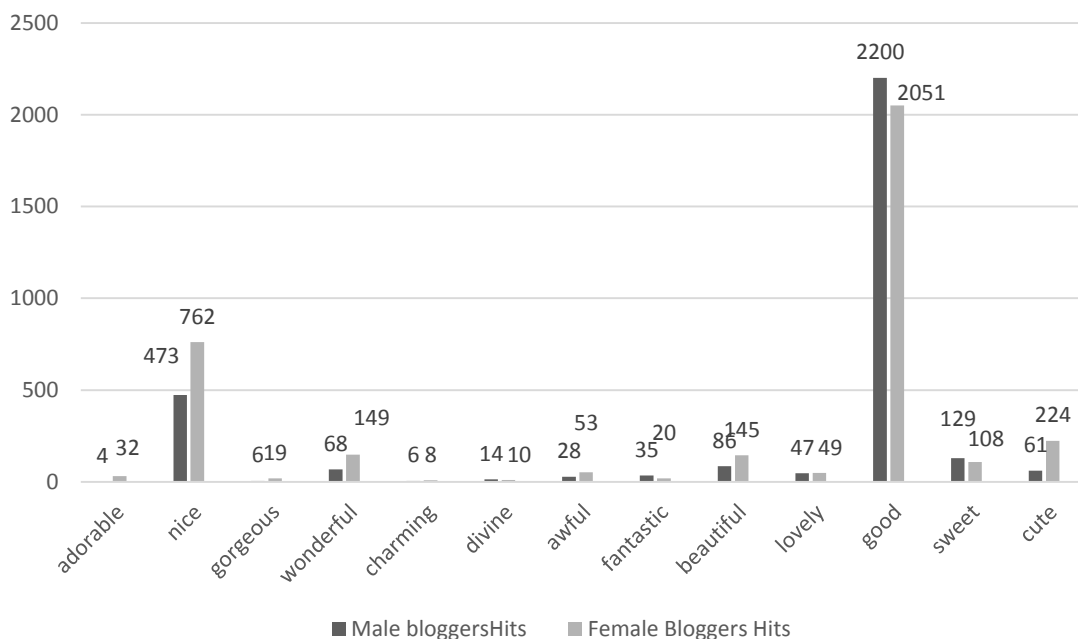
The figure displays that female bloggers use adverbs more frequently in the case of ‘probably’, ‘pretty’ ‘terribly’ ‘really’ ‘utterly’ and ‘definitely’ whereas male bloggers seem to use ‘certainly’ “slightly” more frequently (Figure 5).

Swear words and expletives

Swear words are interjections that can convey strong

Table 6. Frequency of Empty adjectives used by male and female bloggers.

Empty adjectives	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Adorable	4	4.04	32	0.33
Nice	473	5.02	762	7.93
Gorgeous	6	0.06	19	0.2
Wonderful	68	0.72	149	1.55
Charming	6	0.06	8	0.08
Divine	14	0.15	10	0.1
Awful	28	0.3	53	0.55
Fantastic	35	0.37	20	0.21
Beautiful	86	0.91	145	1.51
Lovely	47	0.5	49	0.51
Good	2200	23.34	2051	21.35
Sweet	129	1.37	108	1.12
Cute	61	0.65	224	2.33

**Figure 4.** Empty adjectives

emotions. In either case, it is a truism that men use the stronger expletives, while women use the weaker ones. Instead of using terms like 'damn', 'hell', or 'oh, my god' women prefer to use "oh, dear, my god." to express their feelings. Women are supposed to have control over their emotions, according to Jay (2000), while men are free to speak in an offensive and hostile manner (p. 81). Men are thought to swear more often than women, to have a greater repertoire of curse words than women, and to use more offensive curse words (Jay, 2000, p. 166). According to Lakoff (1975), men prefer using more swear words in extreme circumstances, and in contrast, women are more mindful of their manners and politeness

in using language. (Table 8)

The results shown Figure 6 display higher usage of swear words and expletives by male bloggers as compared to the female bloggers in case of 'hell' 'f***' and 'shit' whereas female bloggers seem to use 'damn' and 'oh, my god' more frequently indicating that use of swear words and expletives is making its way in the language of female bloggers.

Diminutives

Women prefer terms like 'bookie', 'hanky', and 'panties',

Table 7. Frequency of adverbs used by male and female bloggers.

Adverbs	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Probably	387	4.11	463	4.82
Pretty	450	4.77	506	5.27
Terribly	13	0.14	23	0.24
Really	1545	16.39	2088	21.74
Utterly	16	0.17	17	0.18
Certainly	119	1.26	101	1.05
Definitely	15	0.16	21	0.22

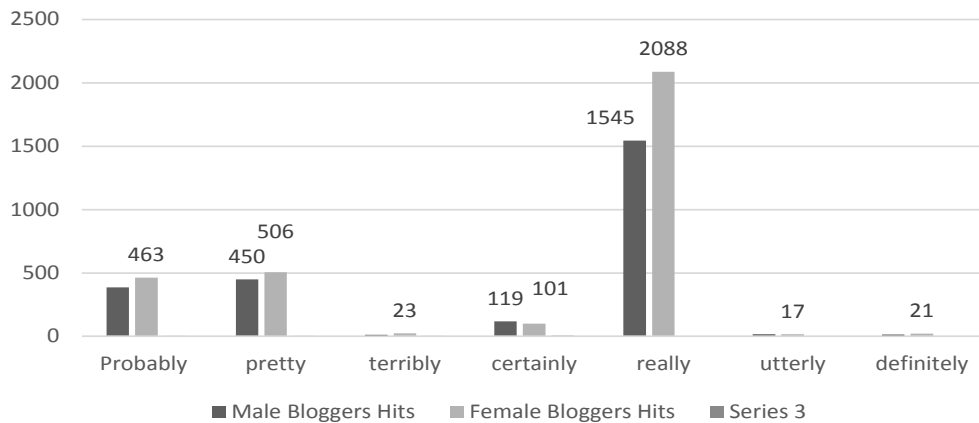


Figure 5. Adverbs.

Table 8. Frequency of swear words and expletives used by male and female bloggers.

Swear words and expletives	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency Per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Oh, My god	5	0.05	16	0.17
Hell	310	3.29	236	2.46
damn	194	2.06	228	2.37
F***	221	2.34	121	1.26
Shit	321	3.41	227	2.36

which all mean ‘thin’. They also like using affectionate phrases like ‘dearie’ and ‘sweetie’. People would assume a man has a psychological disorder or is not manly if he often uses these terms. (Table 9)

According to Lakoff (1975), women employ more diminutives as the figure displays interesting statistics. Although women use ‘hubby’ more frequently than men but at the same use ‘husband’ exactly with equal frequency. Moreover, females use ‘kitty’ more frequently than male bloggers (Figure 7).

Use (super) polite forms

Indirect requests and euphemism are two examples of

the super-polite form. To put the listeners at ease and maintain a positive relationship, a super-friendly form is used. Women are expected to use the words ‘please,’ ‘I’m sorry,’ and ‘thank you’ with great caution, as well as maintain the rest of the social conversation (Lakoff, 1975, p. 80).

The results of Table 10 do not show any significant use of the polite forms by male and female bloggers.

Pronouns

When a woman suggests something, she prefers using first-person plural pronouns, even though she is referring to someone else, while men prefer using first-person

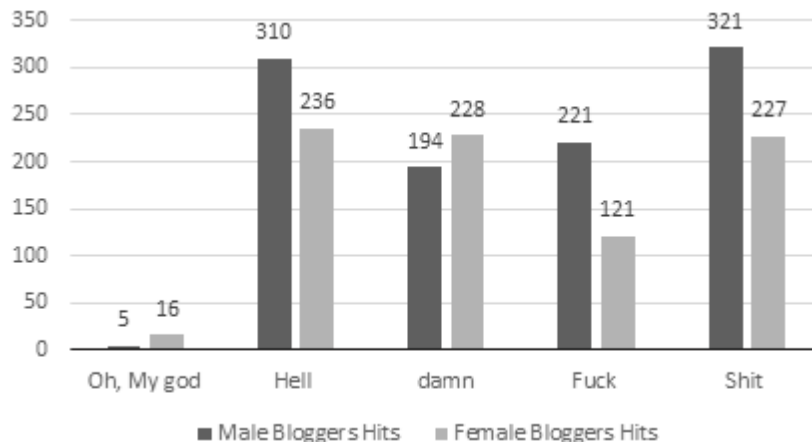


Figure 6. Swear words and expletives.

Table 9. Frequency of diminutives used by male and female bloggers.

Diminutives	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Sweetie	13	0.14	3	0.13
Husband	153	1.59	21	0.29
Hubby	0	0	153	1.59
kitty	3	0.03	31	0.32

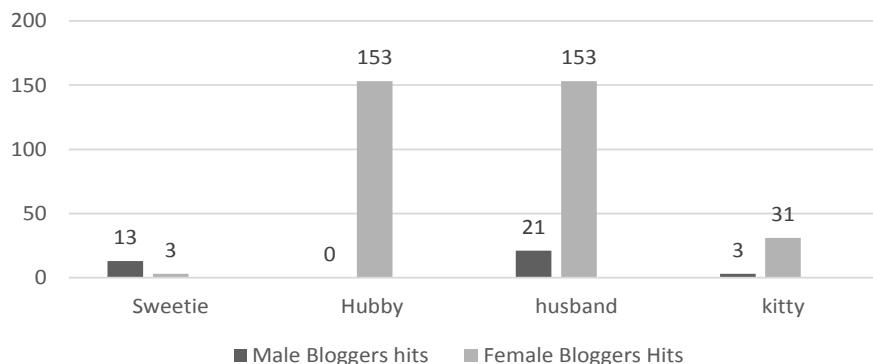


Figure 7. Diminutives.

Table 10. Frequency of polite forms used by male and female bloggers.

(Super) polite forms:	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Would you mind	1	0.01	-	-
I'd appreciate it if	-	-	-	-
If you don't mind	3	0.03	2	0.02
Would it be ok if	-	-	-	-

singular pronouns and if he's referring to somebody else, he'll use the second person pronoun explicitly (Table 11).

Figure 8 displays those female bloggers make use of the pronoun "I" far more frequently which is indicative of

Table 11. Frequency of pronouns used by male and female bloggers.

wh-" imperatives/pronouns	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
I	20023	212.42	31488	327.85
We	4258	45.17	4574	47.62
You	9965	105.72	8315	86.58
Why don't you	12	0.13	6	0.06
Why don't we	0	0	3	0.03

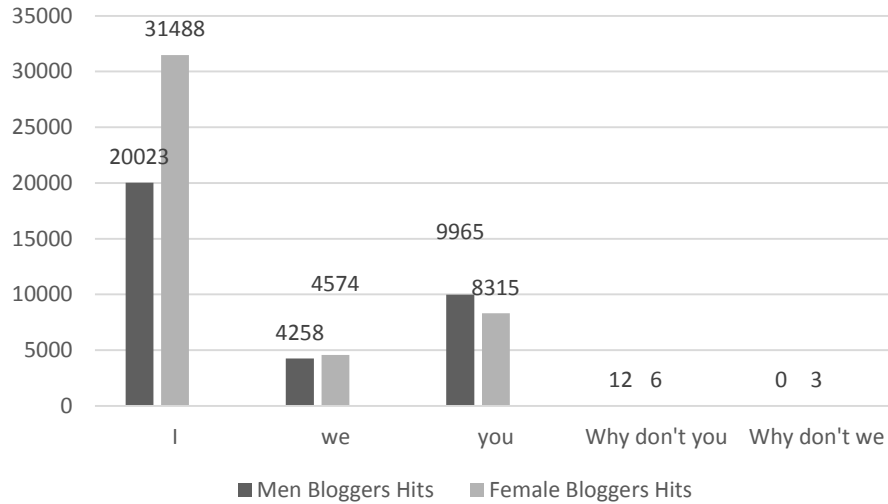


Figure 8. Pronouns.

self-assertion contradicting Lakoff’s claim. The use of “we” shows slightly different results whereas male bloggers seem to use the pronoun "you" more frequently than female bloggers. Moreover, consistent with the claim of Lakoff, female bloggers seem to use ‘why don’t you less frequently than male bloggers when giving a suggestion and rather use ‘why don’t we’.

Apology

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1983) “apology is performed when social norms are broken, and it is meant to re-establish social relationships” (p.23). Holmes (2001) views apologies as “primarily social acts, carrying effective meaning” (p. 155). Apology, for Garcia (1989), is “an explanation offered to a person affected by one’s action that no offense was intended, a frank acknowledgment of the offense with an expression of regret for it, by way of reparation” (p. 4). Women are often stereotyped as the more apologetic sex which can be attributed to being “socialized into a passive mindset” and people-pleasing conduct from a young age. Lakoff considers women to be using apology words and phrases such as "sorry /I'm sorry" Excuse Me” more frequently

than men.

Figure 9 displays that the female bloggers are more apologetic than male bloggers as the results show more frequent use of apology words or phrases such as “I’m sorry”, “excuse me”, and “sorry” by female bloggers. This seems in concordance with the claim made by Lakoff.

Colour adjectives

Color variance in women is characterised in precise terms and is thought to have a larger repertoire of colour words, comprising of French colour words such as mauve, lavender, aquamarine, azure, and magenta, unlike men. This observation is explained by Lakoff (1975), who argues that women spend more time than men in our society on color-related behaviors like clothing collection. The evidence from the sub-corpora supports the assertion that women have a larger colour vocabulary than men.

Figure 10 demonstrates the use of ‘blue’, ‘red’, ‘silver’, ‘orange’, ‘lavender’, ‘golden’, and ‘pink’ at a higher frequency by female bloggers whereas male bloggers seem to be using colour words such as ‘orange’, ‘silver’, ‘purple’, ‘pink’. Color discrimination is much more precise

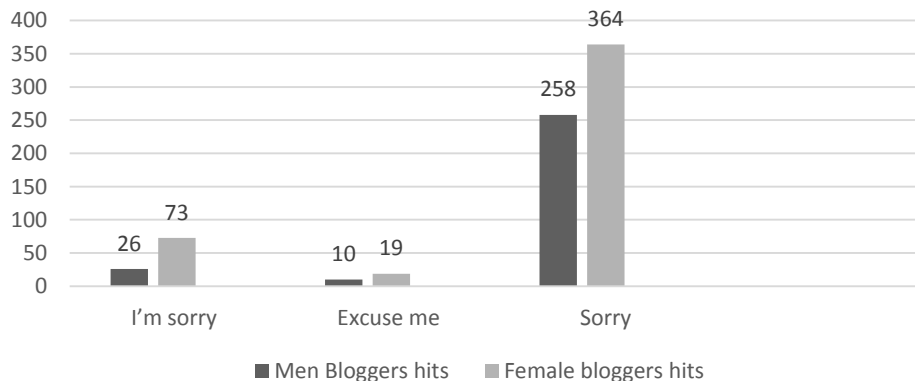


Figure 9. Apology.

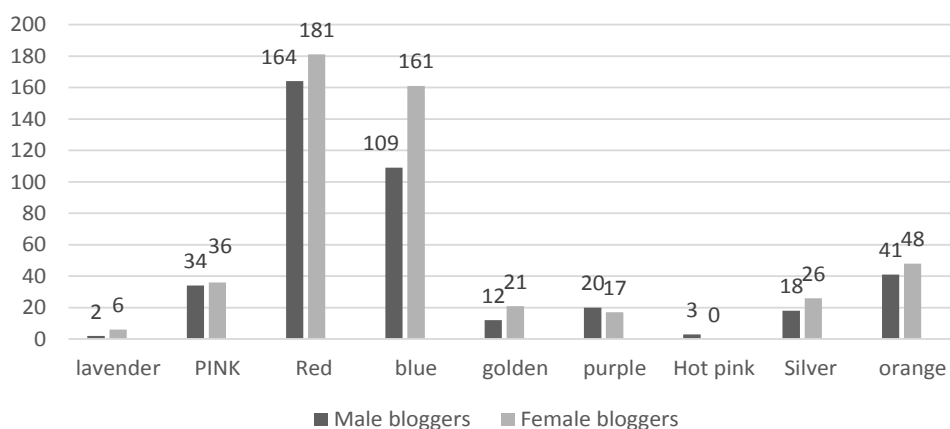


Figure 10. Colour adjectives.

Table 12. Frequency of apology phrases /words used by male and female bloggers.

Apology phrases	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
I'm sorry	26	0.28	73	0.76
Excuse me	10	0.11	19	0.2
Sorry	258	2.72	364	3.79

in women than in men but interestingly and in contradiction of Lakoff's claims, French colour words such as 'mauve', 'lavender', 'beige', and 'aquamarine' are neither used by male nor female bloggers in this study.

Use of modal construction

The role of the main verb that it regulates is revealed by a modal auxiliary verb. Modals have a broad range of communicative roles, but they can all be categorised on a scale from possibility ("may") to requirement ("must"). A modal verb provides details about the role of the main verb, allowing various meanings or moods to be co-created in different situations. It is used to express

modalities such as probability, capability, permission, request, power, recommendations, order, obligation, or advice. Women's comments are more ambiguous and insecure than men's (Lakoff, 1975). Another common technique used in the female language is the use of modal verbs. Women commonly use modals to convey whether something is definite, likely, or possible, or not. (Table 14)

There is no discernible distinction in the use of modals by male and female bloggers, as seen in Figure 11.

Passive forms

Otto Jespersen (1922) popularised the notion that women

Table 13. Frequency of colour adjectives used by male and female bloggers.

Colour adjectives	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Lavender	2	0.02	6	0.06
Pink	34	0.34	36	0.37
Red	164	1.74	181	1.88
Blue	109	1.16	161	1.68
Golden	12	0.13	21	0.22
Purple	20	0.21	17	0,18
Hot pink	3	-	-	-
Silver	18	0.19	26	0.27
Orange	41	0.43	48	0.51

Table 14. Frequency of modal constructions used by male and female bloggers.

Modals	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency Per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
Can/Can't				
Could/Couldn't				
Would/Won't				
Should/Shouldn't	15006	159.2	15615	162.58
Ought to				
May /May not				
Might/Mightn't				

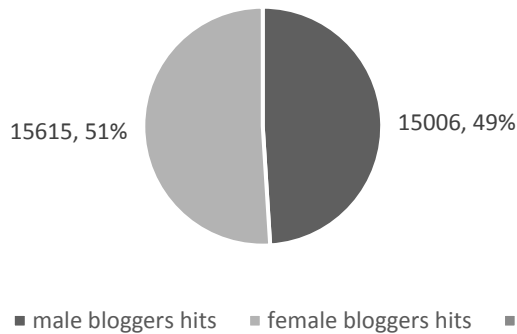


Figure 11. Use of modal constructions.

speaking in a more passive, excessively formal manner. Jespersen, a pioneering language theorist, considered male syntax to be the standard, and any language structure that differed from that was considered deficient. In his book *Language: Its Nature and Development*, he labelled female syntax as deficient for the first time. Women are more likely to apologise and use passive ways because they are socialised to have a passive mentality and people-pleasing actions from a young age (Table 15).

The result in Figure 12 validates the claim made by Lakoff regarding the higher use of passive form by females than by males. Female seems to have used

passive forms more frequently than male bloggers which show their unconsciously dominated position in the society.

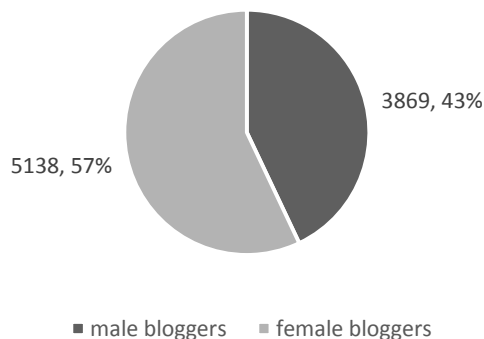
DISCUSSION

Gender disparities in language usage, according to Lakoff (1975), represent separate and unequal roles and positions. Women are under pressure to speak in a ladylike manner due to their lower social standing. Consequently, women use more hedges and intensifiers than men. Women and men speak in ways that conform to society's expectations of how both sexes can interact. The results obtained from the study reveal that men and women use different amounts of hedges, intensifiers, tag queries, swear words and expletives, colour words, diminutives, apology expressions, passive construction respectful forms, first-person, and second-person pronouns and modal constructions, etc.

The results for hedges demonstrate mixed trends. The most used hedge "I think" appears to be in use of female bloggers at a much higher frequency than male bloggers. A similar trend is evident about 'may', 'looks like' and 'kind of'. The hedges such as 'sort of', 'perhaps' 'I believe', 'maybe' are used more frequently by male bloggers. An empty adjective is difficult to describe owing to its abstractness and proximally correlation with

Table 15. Frequency of passives used by male and female bloggers.

Passives	Male bloggers occurrences	Frequency Per 10 k tokens	Female bloggers occurrences	Frequency per 10 k tokens
	3869	41.05	5138	53.5

**Figure 12.** Use of passive forms.

thoughts and emotions. In the case of empty adjectives women are found to be using 'nice', 'wonderful', 'awful', 'adorable', 'gorgeous', 'beautiful', 'cute' and 'good' more frequently whereas the adjectives such as 'charming', 'divine', 'fantastic', 'lovely', 'sweet' don't display any significant difference in usage between male and female bloggers. So, it seems partially consistent with the claim made by Lakoff. Since women, according to Lakoff (1975), are more verbal and emotional than men, they tend to exaggerate their emotional response when illustrating or discussing something, which makes the whole thing look better. Moreover, Lakoff (1975) believes that men use expletives and swear words more frequently than women. The findings seem partially consistent with her claim as results in the figure display higher usage of swear words and expletives by male bloggers as compared to the female bloggers in case of 'hell' 'f***' and 'shit' whereas female bloggers seem to use 'damn' and "oh, my god" more frequently indicating that use of swear words and expletives is making its way in the language of female bloggers. According to Lakoff, women employ more diminutives as the figure displays interesting statistics. Although women use 'hubby' more frequently than men but at the same use 'husband' exactly with equal frequency. Moreover, females use 'kitty' more frequently than male bloggers. In the case of pronouns, female bloggers make use of the pronoun 'I' far more frequently which is indicative of self-assertion contradicting Lakoff's claim. The use of 'we' shows slightly different results whereas male bloggers seem to use the pronoun 'you' more frequently than females. Moreover, consistent with the claim of Lakoff female bloggers seem to use 'why don't you' less frequently than male bloggers when giving a suggestion and rather use 'why don't we.' In the case of color vocabulary, the research shows the use of blue, red, silver, orange,

lavender, golden, and pink at a higher frequency by female bloggers whereas male bloggers seem to be using colour words such as 'orange', 'silver', 'purple', 'pink'. Color segregation is much more precise in women than in men, but, contrary to Lakoff's arguments, neither male nor female bloggers in this sample use French colour terms like 'mauve', 'lavender', 'beige', and 'aquamarine'. Female seems to have used passive forms more frequently than male bloggers which in line with Lakoff's claim shows their unconsciously dominated position in the society. Tag questions, in Lakoff's view, serve two purposes: they soften the impact of claims and convey confusion. The facilitative tags 'isn't it' and 'aren't you' are often used by women. Women, according to Lakoff (1975), employ hedges more frequently than men. She differentiates among three types of hedges: the ones which indicate the speaker is uncertain, the ones used for civility, and finally, the ones that typify women's speech, or the language of the powerless in the community. As per the findings, female bloggers use more hedges than male bloggers. In terms of the use of intensifiers, a significant difference was discovered between the groups under study as the female bloggers use intensifiers in their speech more often than male bloggers.

Women use modal verbs more often than men, according to Lakoff, but the findings of this study contradict his claim. Although both male and female bloggers use modals at a higher rate, the difference is not very significant. According to the results, both males and females used adverbs, and there was no statistically significant disparity in adverb use between male and female bloggers. The results regarding the use of passives validate the claim made by Lakoff that women use passive forms more frequently than males which shows their unconsciously dominated position in society.

CONCLUSION

Finally, Lakoff's groundbreaking work (1975) sparked off the investigation into gender differences in linguistic use because she believed that gender discrimination was rooted in language. She believed that women's identities were linguistically masked and under-influenced as they are marginalized in serious life issues as compared to men's position and voice. As a result, she identified two ways in which such disparities were conveyed; first, there is the vocabulary used to refer to them, and second, there is the language used by women about their ability to communicate. Her grouping in many lexical and syntactical respects has helped to distinguish between

men's and women's vocabulary. The current study demonstrates that male and female languages vary significantly in terms of linguistic characteristics found by Lakoff (1975). Furthermore, there are some common variations as well as some similarities in language use. Based on the findings of the present study it may be claimed that Lakoff's hypothesis about the determining influence of gender on language use is still valid and that they can be investigated further by constructing larger corpora of written and spoken language grounded in different cultural contexts since different ways of using language result in several different types of communication. Finally, Lakoff's trajectory has unfolded countless possibilities for researchers to discover ever-more-complex distinctions between male and female language.

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