

## The Effect of Gender on the Use of Language in the English Media

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### Abstract

*Mass media play a fundamental role in modern societies .newspapers for instance , are responsible for influencing the perception of society and consider the most influential mass media that reach millions of people . Writers of newspapers articles tend to appeal persuasion of their readers by certain persuasive strategies. There are several studies discussed the role of media over the status of gender as a socio-culture factor and how gender affect the persuasive process in the language of newspapers. The current study discusses the socio-pragmatic aspects of persuasion according to gender in the language of newspapers .There is qualitative analysis of two articles according to the persuasive speech acts and a statistical analysis that is used to quantitatively support the validity of the finding of the qualitative analysis .The results showed that assertive speech act is the dominate one and obviously , there is an approximate use of persuasive Assertive speech act in both genders which proves that such persuasive speech acts are necessary in persuading readers at newspapers texts whatever the gender is.*

**Keywords:** Gender, persuasion, newspaper, speech acts, Socio-pragmatics

### 1-Introduction

Sociology refers to a science of society; and linguistics refers to a science of language. The term sociolinguistics emerged in 1952 in the work of Haver C. Currie as a combination of the word sociology and linguistics (Paulston, 2006,p. 1). Trask (2007,pp.264-265) considers sociolinguistics as the study of the variation of language within speech communities and it can be defined as a branch of linguistics that studies all aspects of the relationship between language and society.

Language and gender is a topic that is of interest in its own right; it is also important because of what it can add to our understanding of language and how it works, and to the sociolinguistic study of language.

Language has a means of social interaction not only for the transmission of ideas, expression and readiness for activity in society, but may also in different media tools such as newspapers. Through language, people exchange ideas, information, and feelings with each other. The current study discusses the socio-pragmatic aspects of persuasion according to gender in the language of newspapers. Precisely, it attempts to answer the following question:

- 1-What are the persuasive speech acts according to gender in the data under scrutiny?
- 2-what is the most used speech act according to gender in the data under scrutiny?

### 2-Speech acts

Yule (1996,p.134) defines speech act as "an action performed by the use of an utterance to communicate". As a term, speech act is originated from the German term "sprechakt" of Buhlar (Lyons,1977,p.726). The theory is presented as lectures by Austin (1955) whose lectures were collected and published in (1962) as a book (Mey,2001,pp.92-93). Searle (1969) lays the foundations of the current theory.

According to Schiffrin (2005,p.49), Austin (1955) and Searle (1969) formulate their theory depending on the basic belief that language is used to perform actions or how meaning and actions are related to language. Searle (1969,p.21-22) discusses the taxonomies of acts and how a single utterance can be uttered with more than one act. In his book "How to do things with words", Austin (1962) states that saying something that has a certain sense is also doing something other than just the act of saying, as giving a promise, for example (Levinson,1983,pp.226-283).

According to Mey (1993,p.110), the limitation of the semantic theory which depends upon truth-conditional aids to explore the speech act theory since the semantic theory deals with what is called statement or declarative which requires to say whether the sentence is true or false. On the other hand, Austin (1962,p.12) indicates that language is a social activity rather than merely stating truly or falsely. According to him (1962,p.12), language is used to make promises or declarations, etc.

Austin (1962,p.100) believes that an utterance is produced with three related acts: the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary. They are explained in the following example:  
"Bring it!"

1. The Locutionary act (Locution).

Someone said to me "Bring". He uses "bring" to mean (bring) and "it" to refer to (it).

2. The Illocutionary act (Illocution).

He told (or ordered) me to bring it.

3. The Perlocutionary act (Perlocution).

He persuaded me to bring it.

Searle (1969,pp.65-71) formulates certain general dimensions concerning illocutionary acts. There are twelve dimensions, but Searle depends on four (Mey,2001,p.119):

1. Illocutionary point which deals with logic in performing an act. The illocutionary point of request is to get the hearer to do something, but for promise, the speaker commits himself to an obligation to do something (Searle,1969,pp.65-71).

2. Direction of fit refers to two directions, first the words to world and second the world to words. For example the commissives are based on the relation between words to world direction of fit (Searle,1969,pp.65-71).

3. Expressed psychological state of commissives, for example, is intention, while for the representatives the psychological state is belief (Searle,1969,pp.65-71).

4. The content which is a proposition carried by the speech act, presupposed by it or in some other way involved in it, for example, a promise, has the content of future (Griffiths,2006,p.151).

Searle (1977,p.34) categorizes the illocutionary act into 5 classes: assertive, directive, commissive, expressives, and declaration.

### **2.1 Assertive (Representatives)**

Searle (1977,p. 34) maintains that these are the statements that describe a state of affairs in the world which could be true or false. They commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition; for example, verbs like assert, conclude, identify, state, inform, etc. For example, "The earth is round" gives the speakers assertion about the earth.

### **2.2 Directives**

Searle (1977,p. 34) states that these are the statements that compel or make another person's action fit to the propositional element. It is usually used to give order thereby causing the hearer to take a particular action, for example request, ask and command or advice. For example, "Shut the door, please!" represents a speaker's request to make a hearer shut the door.

### **2.3 Commissives**

Searle (1977,p.34) argues that these statements commit the speaker to certain future action; it could be in a form of promise while Mey (2001,pp.120-121) states that commissives work on making a change in the world by creating an obligation, on behalf of the speaker, the most used verb is 'to promise'. For example, "I'll help you." Represents the speaker's promise to help. Such help is an action in the future.

### **2.4 Expressives**

Searle (1977,p. 34) notes that the purpose of the expressive statements is to express speech acts that are used for making excuses and sympathy. And it has no direction of fit between words and world and it is considered as an expression of psychological state. In other words, it expresses the inner state of the speaker. For example, "Come on! Feel as you are in home" represents the speaker's intention to welcome someone.

### **2.5 Declarations**

These statements are used to say something and make it so, such as pronouncing someone guilty and declaring a war. They make immediate change in the institutional state of affairs (Searle, 1977,p. 34). For example, "Henceforth, you are my enemy!" represents an immediate change in the relation between the speaker and the hearer.

To sum up the persuasive speech act model refers to sentences have their direct meaning, but pragmatically they have their illocutionary force of persuasion. Most of the speech acts are directives which make another person's action fit to a certain propositional element.

## **3- Data Collection**

The data under scrutiny are 2 articles randomly collected from the main English newspapers: The Guardian . The data are collected in 2022.

The selected data articles of English newspapers are written by well-experiences reporters, rhetorical people who are selected accurately to keep the credibility of these press institutions. Since the study is concerned with pragmatic analysis of persuasion according to gender, there is an article written by a male and another one written by a female. The two selected articles that deal with the same general topic have an approximately similar length. The difference in lengths may lead to unreliable statistical analysis. Then, the whole analysis of persuasion, whether according to gender or topic, may be unreliable too. There is a qualitative analysis of the data according to speech act and a statistical analysis is used to quantitatively support the validity of the findings of the qualitative analysis.

#### 4 -Data Analysis

##### Text No. 1

Title: Who pays the P&O ferryman? The 800 staff thrown overboard, of course.

By: Marina Hyde (Opinion/ Female)

From: The Guardian , on Sat.19 Mar, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/18/p-o-ferries-staff-dubai-ferry-employees>

##### Topic:

This text is written by Marina Hyde in The Guardian (Opinion). The writer criticizes P&O Ferries announcement to lay off 800 employees in order to replace them with cheaper agency workers.

The Analysis of Text No.1

##### Speech Acts

Speech acts vary in Text No.1. There are 21 speech acts (9 assertive acts, 6 directive acts, 3 expressive acts, 2 declarative acts, and one commissive act). Table 1 below shows the total variation of speech acts in Text No.1:

**Table 1: Speech Acts in Text No.1**

Speech Acts Scores	Assertive Acts	Directive Acts	Commissive Acts	Expressive Acts	Declarative Acts	Total
	9	6	1	3	2	21
Percentage	42.8%	28.5%	4.7%	14.2%	9.5%	100%

According to the observance of speech acts force in text No.1, it is obvious that the assertive acts are the most occurred. Then, directive acts is in the second rank. The following examples are pragmatic analyses of some persuasive appeals used in text No.1:

##### 1. "Even the government seems appalled, while a lot of people have a lot of questions".

The utterance has an assertive act. The locutionary action is that the government is afraid of the company. Yet, the illocutionary action reveals that the writer is obliged to assert the main topic by showing the government as helpless and unable to react against the decision of the ferry company. Here, the writer aims to make a strong appeal to the government for decisive intervention.

To sum up, the illocutionary force of the utterance is to enhance the goal of persuasion and to reinforce the creditability of the writer in presenting his views.

##### 2. "P&O Ferries apparently followed up the video message by sending balaclava-wearing, handcuff-trained private security guards on to the boats to clear away all remaining ... colleagues, is it?"

The logos appeals in the above statements are two. There are questioning and giving data. The direct act is a group of heavily armed guards are dispatched to expel the employees from the ships. But, the speech act of the statements is directive one. The writer infers an intended meaning and he wants to prompt the readers to understand it. The indirect sense is that the ferry company declares a war against the employees. It fights them for their livelihood. It wants to impose its decision by force. Such illocutionary act is used to enhance persuasion.

**3. "On Thursday morning, P&O Ferries recalled its vessels to port with the most ominous words in the shipping forecast – “all-colleague announcement” – promising that “long-term viability” was about to be secured. Sounds good!"**

There is a commissive act by the use of the verb (promise). The writer mentions the promise of the company as a direct act when it promises its employees to adopt "long-term viability", but the fact is revealed by the illocutionary act when the company contradicts itself by dismissing the employees. Such pragmatic use of "promise" enhances the writer's goal to persuade her readers of the cruelty of the company's decision.

**Text No.2**

Title: Do voters still value honour and integrity? Sir Keir Starmer is staking his career on it.

By: Andrew Rawnsley (Opinion/ Male)

From: The Guardian , on Sun.15 May, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/15/do-voters-still-value-honour-integrity-sir-keir-starmer-staking-his-career-on-it>

**Topic:**

This text is written by Andrew Rawnsley in The Guardian (Opinion). The writer expresses his personal opinion of Sir Keir Starmer, a Labor Party official in the United Kingdom. The writer expresses Starmer's seriousness in work, but he committed a legal violation during the ban on gatherings. A day after campaigning in northern England last April, Starmer, his associates and local activists went to celebrate in a restaurant. This act sparked a major media outcry. Hence, the writer describes the gambling of someone who is meticulous about his work.

The Analysis of Text No.2

**Speech Acts**

Speech acts vary in Text No.2. There are 24 speech acts (9 assertive acts, 1 directive acts, 12 expressive acts, 2 declarative acts, and no commissive act). Table 2 below shows the total variation of speech acts in Text No.2:

**Table 2: Speech Acts in Text No.2**

Speech Acts Scores	Assertive Acts	Directive Acts	Commissive Acts	Expressive Acts	Declarative Acts	Total
	9	1	0	12	2	24
Percentage	37.5%	4.1%	0.0%	50.0%	8.3%	100%

According to the illocutionary force of speech acts in text No.2, it is obvious that the expressive speech act is the most dominant. By the use of different appeals of persuasion, the writer intend to implicate his psychological state towards Sir Starmer. He defends him by implicating intended meanings. The illocutionary force of expressive speech acts reflects the writer's inner feeling. The following examples have expressive speech acts:

1. **"Better at running a meeting than inspiring the crowd."**
2. **" Some will dispute my suggestion that he has taken a gamble."**

According to the illocutionary force of expressives, the writer reflects his inner feeling towards the topic or the personality of his topic. The write of Text No.2 implicate his sympathy with Starmer either by presenting of his positive attributes directly or by presenting them indirectly. In (1), there is a direct presenting of Starmer's positive merits. In (2) the writer attacks Starmer and he predicts that the readers would defend him. The illocutionary force of (2) is stronger and more effective than it of (1).

In addition, assertive speech acts occupies the second rank. The illocutionary force of such acts to defend Sir Starmer's indignity as responsible officer of the biggest political party in U.K. The utterances of the writer informs identifies what he believes as facts and denies what is viewed as false. The following example indicates the pragmatic meaning of assertion and informing facts:

- **"The Metropolitan force was initially reluctant to investigate the partying in Downing Street until the scale of the public uproar forced it to act."**
- **" Even the government seems appalled, while a lot of people have a lot of questions."**

Table (3) Overall occurrence of speech acts according to gender

Speech act	Assertive Acts	Directive Acts	Commissive Acts	Expressive Acts	Declarative Acts	Total
Text (1) (female)	9	6	1	3	2	21
Text (2) (male)	9	1	0	12	2	24
Total	18	7	1	15	4	45
percentage	40%	15.5%	2.2%	33.3%	8.8%	100%

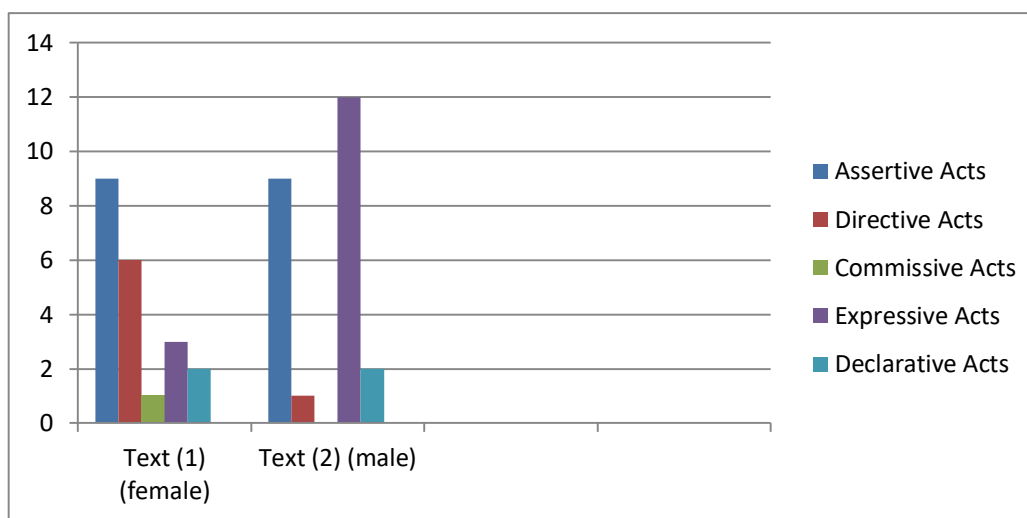


Figure (1) Overall occurrence of speech acts according to gender

## 5- CONCLUSION

Analyzing speech acts according to gender in the data under scrutiny results that the total number of speech acts in the overall texts is 45. Assertive speech acts are the dominant as they occur 18 times which amount (40%) (and this the answer for the second research question ). Expressive speech acts occupy the second rank as they occur 15 times and amount (33.3%). Directive speech acts have the third rank as they occur 7 times and amount (15.5%). Declarative speech acts occur 4 times and amount (8.8%). Finally, commissive speech acts are the least used which occur 1 time and amount (2.2%). As a result, it is obvious that there is an approximate use of persuasive Assertive speech act in both genders. Such proximity proves that persuasive speech acts are necessary in persuading readers of newspapers texts whatever the gender is. Male texts have assertive and expressive speech acts more than female texts. The use of assertive speech acts is functioned to make illocutionary forces of stating, concluding, asserting, and identifying in order to persuade the readers of facts. Expressive speech acts are prompted to make illocutionary forces that stimulate the psychological state of the reader to be convinced of the adopted views

On the other hand, female texts use directive, commissive, and declarative speech acts more than male texts. Their use of commissive speech acts is noticeably high. Their use of such speech acts is goaled to make illocutionary forces of committing the speaker to certain future actions.

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