

## WOMEN'S LANGUAGE FEATURES USED BY SOLÉNE IN *THE IDEA OF YOU* MOVIE (2024) A SOCIOLINGUISTICS STUDY

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### Abstract

The cultural and social changes occurring in contemporary society have significantly changed how women are represented in the media. Gender influences how language is used regarding word choice and the social conventions that govern it. Characteristics of women's language refers to the characteristics of language used by women in stereotypical societies. This research aims to determine the characteristics and functions of female language used by Soléne in the film *The Idea of You*. This research uses qualitative descriptive methods to analyze data and describe the results. Data sources were collected from *The Idea of You*. Researchers collected data through steps by searching for films and watching the film *The Idea of You*, listening to and reading sentences or conversations containing female language elements in film subtitles, and identifying and marking words that contain female language characteristics in the data. Researchers analyzed data by identifying and categorizing the characteristics of women's language in the film *The Idea of You*. The research results show that not all types of female language features are used by Soléne in the film. There are a total of 61 utterances from 9 types of female language characteristics found in *The Idea of You*: 20 lexical hedges or fillers, six tag questions, three rising intonations, four empty adjectives, ten enhancers, 13 superpolite forms, two grammatical hypercorrections, and one empathic stress. The best in terms of the number of types of dominant female language used in the film *The Idea of You*, hedges or lexical fillers were selected. The language functions used in *The Idea of You* are 19 to express uncertainty, 7 to get a response, 20 to refine speech, 4 to start a discussion, 10 to express feelings or opinions, and 15 to emphasize speech. Lexical delimiters or fillers were chosen because they best represent the diversity of female language forms commonly used in the film *The Idea of You*. *The Idea of You* uses the following language functions: 4 to start a debate, 7 to elicit a response, 20 to refine the utterance, 10 to express feelings or opinions, and 15 to highlight the utterance.

**Keywords:** women's language, language function, sociolinguistics, movie

### Introduction

Modern society's cultural and sociological shifts have significantly impacted how women are portrayed in the media. We now see various robust, sophisticated and diverse female characters on screen, a far cry from the clichés and limited representation of the past. In this regard, one famous example of the development of the depiction of women in media is the film *The Idea of You*, published by Amazon MGM Studios as a Prime Video original production on May 2 2024. The film offers a captivating



depiction of a woman who grapples with her romantic journey through the figure of Soléne. *The Idea of You* provides a broader knowledge of women's lives and roles in modern society through its compelling story and nuanced cast of characters. However, it is crucial to understand that representation encompasses more than just the visual; language also plays a role. Language is an effective means of communication that helps us perceive and comprehend fictional people in media. In daily life, communication is how people express particular intentions or messages to one another. Interaction between multiple individuals occurs during communication.

Information is always implied in talks between people. We need to use language as a tool in order to communicate. Linguistics is the science that systematically investigates language, and language and linguistics have a very close link. An explanation of the characteristics that affect how women use language in their particular contexts is provided for each kind. The description above makes it clear that examining how women use language to express their gender in writing and conversation is an intriguing area of study within language and gender studies. People can understand how women are portrayed in contemporary media by comprehending the contexts and situations in which Soléne employs language. The purpose of women's language in speaking, which may be implied in the language used by the female characters in the film, can also be determined using this study. Consequently, this study is anticipated to significantly advance our knowledge of the interplay among language, gender, and media by utilizing Robin Lakoff's theoretical framework of the linguistic characteristics of women.

## **Literary Review**

### **Sociolinguistics**

Sociolinguistics studies why people speak differently in different social circumstances and how language and society interact, according to Holmes (2013). Wardhaugh (2006) examines the connection between language and society, delving further into each idea: a society is any collection of people, and language is how those individuals interact. There is a common language spoken in this culture. Every community has its language, and every society has a different way of communicating. Holmes (2013) said that sociolinguistics allows for exploring all those characteristics. It also reveals how people transmit information across contexts by how they talk in various social settings.

### **Language and Gender**

Within the dynamic subject of sociolinguistics, language and gender research explores the complex interplay between language and societal interpretations of gender. People use language to communicate with one another. Gender also describes being a male or a woman. According to Holmes (1997), *gender* is defined as the differences in the social duties and responsibilities that men and women have, which are established by the community. The concept of gender is influenced by societal, cultural, and personal elements that a community takes into account depending on how its members view their biological sex in addition to biological sex.

### **Women's Language Features**

Lakoff (1975) defined "women's language" as language spoken only by women. The linguistic traits of women are tenfold. The following are the explanations:

#### **1. Lexical Hedges or Fillers**

Lexical hedges, such as "I think," "I'm sure," and "sort of," etc. Reduce the power of an assertion. Women employ hedging because they are not permitted to express strong ideas. According to Lakoff (1975: 53), women often utilize fillers to communicate their lack of confidence. Another study, for instance, made a distinction between 'fillers' and 'hedges', which sort of classified as a hedge, while, well, you see, were described as meaningless particles and assigned to the same category as "pause fillers' such as uh, um, and ah".

#### **2. Tag Question**

A straightforward, clearly worded yes-or-no question is called a question tag. When the addressee and the speaker know the answer and do not need confirmation, tag inquiries are frequently used. One instance would be if a speaker initiated a conversation with the recipient by having a "small chat." A tag question

indicates more confidence than a yes-or-no question, but not as much as a statement itself, according to Lakoff (1975: 15), who claims that tag questions act as a link between a statement and a yes-or-no question.

### **3. Rising Intonation on Declarative**

Lakoff (1975: 53) asserts that women use declarative responses more frequently than questions. Like yes/no questions, rising intonation on declarative questions conveys hesitancy. This demonstrates the speaker's reluctance to answer and request the addressee's confirmation. Women's speech is considered more "polite" than men's because of the rising intonation on declaratives, which does not impose the speaker's opinion on the listener and promotes candid dialogue.

### **4. Empty Adjectives**

A class of adjectives in the lexicon expresses speakers' approval or appreciation for something while simultaneously having a particular connotation. The term "empty adjective" refers to these adjectives because they solely discuss the word's feelings about the particular facts. Some of these adjectives, according to Lakoff, were gender neutral, so native speakers of any gender may use them; yet, others gave the idea that they were exclusively intended for use by women. Adorable, lovely, heavenly, charming, sweet, magnificent, gorgeous, and cute are great, friendly, and gender-specific neutral words.

### **5. Precise Color Terms**

Compared to men, women are far more accurate in naming phrases and providing specifics about colour. Men believe that conversations on precise colour terms are ridiculous because they view these issues as trivial and unimportant to the real world. While beige, lavender, and maroon are frequently seen in women's active vocabularies, men were not referred to by this phrase. When a man uses the name of a colour that women frequently wear, one could assume that he is humorously copying women, passing himself off as gay, or trying to look like an interior designer.

### **6. Intensifier**

Thus, quite, just, and very are a few intensifiers that are more frequently used in the language of women. Although men can also use it, Lakoff (1975) asserts that women's language uses the word "so" more frequently than men's. Women frequently use intensifiers to express strong feelings about things without revealing how powerful they are. According to Lakoff, words or phrases that bolster a statement to ensure the listener gets the speaker's message across are known as intensifiers in women's language. Intensifiers highlight a speaker's feelings, viewpoints, or confidence regarding a particular assertion. Women use them more often to make their statements more powerful and grab the audience's attention, making up for what they see as their social inferiority.

### **7. Hypercorrect Grammar**

It is more common for women to use the standard "hypercorrect" terminology. According to Holmes (2013: 303), women usually use regular verb forms. "Hypercorrect" grammatical usage is linked to being courteous. Women are expected to speak politely and in standard English at all times. Women are required to act appropriately and politely. Lakoff (1975: 55) asserts that women are not expected to speak harshly. Boys talk a lot. They use words like "goin," "singin," and "ain't." Lakoff (1975: 55) asserts that women only use conventional words, such as "going" and "singing." Holmes (1992) asserts that because women value their needs and desire to be acknowledged, they utilize more standard English forms than men.

### **8. Superpolite Forms**

People often address women exceptionally "politely" because they are perceived as the guardians of morality and decency (Lakoff, 1975 p. 51). Women are expected to speak more sweetly than men, related to their tendency to use hypercorrect grammar (Lakoff, 1975, p. 55). According to Holmes (1995: 193–197), women focus more on emotive and interpersonal significance throughout a conversation. Conversely, men tend to focus more on the conversation's objectives (Coates, 2016, p. 107).

### **9. Avoidance of Strong Swear Words**

To be nice, women frequently refrain from using powerful swear words. Lakoff (1975) found that while Middle Americans might put up with men using profanity, they would not put up with women doing the same. That is the reason why. From a young age, women are pushed to behave like ladies. "They are

allowed to complain and fuss, but not flinch or yell like men when upset." According to a different study, swearing is a type of interjection or exclamation used to convey intense emotion and is regarded as a potent form of expression Eckert (2003). This is regarded as a potent language that occasionally can have quite striking results.

Additionally, it is deemed unsuitable for usage by minors and women. Because men are more frequently utilized in speech than women, the usage of swear words is more commonly linked with men. Put another way, using profanity is closely associated with the language used by men since it is a practice that is exclusive to men.

### **10. Emphatic Stress**

One may use adjectives like "brilliant" or "amazing" to highlight or enhance a point. Lakoff discovered that some phrases are used more frequently by women than men to convey uncertainty and a lack of confidence. Boosting gadgets can provide the audience with more comfort, which makes them more likely to believe what the speaker is saying (Holmes, 2013, p. 304). According to Lakoff, women should use attention-getting gadgets to gain respect and recognition.

## **Research Method**

Jain (2023) states that qualitative research aims to capture the richness and depth of human experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze a phenomenon in real life—in this case, women's language. It makes it possible to look closely at the problem and explore the complexity and variety of women's communication in everyday situations. Researchers can learn much about the complexity of women's language behaviours by documenting the breadth of experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. The writer uses the following procedures to gather data through observations. The first is searching for a movie, *The Idea of You* (2024), a film containing notable female characters and a range of interactions. Second steps is reading and observing: the researcher reads the English subtitles. Next steps is recognizing: reconstructing the dialogue and sentences, the researcher finds instances of the language elements and functions used by women in *The Idea of You* (2024)

## **Results and Discussion**

The study explores the usage of women's language features by Soléne in "*The Idea of You*" movie and the functions of each feature. The analysis is divided into several features commonly associated with women's language.

### **1. Lexical Hedges or Fillers**

**Datum 1:** Soléne uses "I think" and "um" during a conversation about turning 40. These hedges express her feelings and soften her statement, indicating uncertainty.

**Datum 2:** In a conversation about a broken fridge, Soléne uses "sort of" and "um" to express uncertainty and lack of confidence.

**Datum 3:** Soléne uses "you know" while talking about her young motherhood to express uncertainty and engage the listener.

### **2. Tag Questions**

**Datum 4:** Soléne uses the tag question "aren't they?" to emphasize her statement about the quality of sandwiches, not seeking confirmation but reinforcing her opinion.

**Datum 5:** When thanked by her ex-husband, Soléne softens her response by asking, "Right?" showing politeness and respect despite their past issues.

### **3. Rising Intonation on Declarative**

**Datum 6:** Soléne uses rising intonation in "Really?" to express shock and seek a response from Hayes about an inappropriate question.

**Datum 7:** Soléne raises her intonation in "What? Are you kidding me?" to express disbelief and demand a response from Daniel regarding his sudden change of plans.

### **4. Empty Adjectives**

**Datum 8:** During a video call, Soléne uses "beautiful" and "good" to compliment her daughter's new hairstyle, emphasizing her admiration.

**Datum 9:** Soléne uses "cool" to compliment a man's job at her birthday party, showing respect and maintaining a polite conversation.

#### 5. Intensifiers

**Datum 10:** Soléne uses "so so" to emphasize her apology to her daughter Izzy, expressing deep remorse for lying.

**Datum 11:** Soléne uses "very, very" to stress her opinion about Hayes's attractiveness, highlighting her feelings and emphasizing her point.

**Datum 12:** Soléne uses "really" to emphasize her disinterest in Daniel's relationship advice, reinforcing her statement.

#### 6. Superpolite Forms

**Datum 13:** Soléne uses "sorry" to soften her response when seeking clarification from Hayes, maintaining politeness in a professional setting.

**Datum 14:** At a concert, Soléne uses "Do you mind if I...?" to politely ask for a seat, showing respect to a stranger.

**Datum 15:** Soléne uses "thank you so much" to show politeness and gratitude towards her friend Todd for his compliment.

#### 7. Hypercorrect Grammar

**Datum 16:** Soléne uses "He is" instead of "He's" when describing a high-profile client to emphasize her respect and politeness.

**Datum 17:** Soléne used hypercorrect grammar "Can I" to ask permission to take pictures of Zeke and Hayes; hypercorrect grammar would likely be used to maintain a formal and polite tone.

#### 8. Avoidance of swear solid words

**Datum 18:** Soléne uses the term "*shoot*" as a form of avoidance of using the swear word "shit". She uses the term "shoot" to express her feelings.

#### 9. Emphatic Stress

**datum 20:** Soléne uses emphatic stress "fantastic" to express her opinion and to emphasize her utterances.

Soléne employs each feature to navigate social interactions, express uncertainty, show politeness, emphasize statements, and maintain respect, aligning with traditional views on women's language as described by linguists like Lakoff.

## Conclusion

The researcher can draw inferences based on the data analysis from the previous chapter's analysis. The study focuses on how women's language traits are used and function in the film *The Idea of You*. Numerous conclusions can be reached from the given analysis. The first thing to note about the conclusion is that Soléne, the film's central female character, is said to use linguistic traits specific to women. Nine out of ten characteristics of women's language are used by Soléne. There are twenty instances of lexical hedges or fillers, six tag questions, three instances of rising intonation on declarative, four instances of empty adjectives, ten instances of intensifiers, thirteen instances of extremely polite forms, two instances of hypercorrect grammar, two instances of avoiding swear solid words, and one instance of empathic stress. According to the statistics, emphatic stress is the least used feature, while lexical hedges or fillers are the most frequently used. Precise colour phrases are a kind of female language absent from Soléne utterances. The study's findings about the function of women's language include 19 instances of expressing uncertainty, seven instances of getting a response, 20 instances of softening the utterances, four instances of starting a discussion, ten instances of expressing feelings or opinions, and 15 instances of emphasizing utterances.

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