

Gender-related Differences in Language Use

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ENGLISH D

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Variations in language.....	5
2.1 Linguistic change.....	7
2.2 Theoretical views related to survey	10
2.3 Discourse factors for politeness	12
2.4 Conversations	14
3. The survey.....	15
3.1 The dialogue.....	15
3.1.1 The female character uses	16
3.1.2. The female character’s choice of topic	16
3.1.3. The male character uses	17
3.2 The test situation.....	17
3.3 The data.....	18
4. Documentations and results, task 1: ”Write your choice (male/female)”	18
5. Documentations and results, task 2: ”What was the first thing you thought about?”	19
5.1 Female comments: Females age 14 and 17 years old	19
5.2 Male comments: Females age 14 and 17 years old	19
5.3 Female comments: Males age 14 and 17 years old	20
5.4 Male comments: Males age 14 and 17 years old	20
6. Documentations and results, task 3: ”Underline words in the dialogue that you find ‘typical’ for males and females”.....	21
6.1 Results and analysis 1 (female language): females age 14 and 17	21
6.2 Results and analysis 2 (female language): males age 14 and 17	23
6.3 Results and analysis 3 (female language): comparison between females and males	25
6.4 Results and analysis 4 (male language): females age 14 and 17	26
6.5 Results and analysis 5 (male language): males age 14 and 17	27
6.6 Results and analysis 6 (male language): comparison between females and males	28
7. Documentations and results, task 4: ”Did you find it hard to make a decision about the character?”	29
7.1 Comments from females age 14.....	29
7.2 Comments from males age 14	29

8. Documentations and results, task 5:	
“Do you like to add something?”	29
8.1 Females age 14	30
8.2 Females age 17	30
8.3 Males age 14	31
8.4 Males age 17	31
8.5 Summary of the comments	32
9. Conclusion.....	33
Bibliography.....	37
Appendices.....	38
Appendix 1: The dialogue	38
Appendix 2: The questionnaire	39

1. Introduction

The major thing that distinguishes human beings from animals is basically our way to communicate with each other by using language. We have words for specific things, emotions, expressions and it appears as though we have words for everything when thinking about it. In each language; words are constructed in a certain way. When working with language, it is quite possible to determine whether a word belongs to one stem or another just by looking at it even if the person has no clue of the word's meaning which is quite fascinating.

Through time, society has gone through great changes which have influenced our languages. New vocabularies have been added to our languages and old-fashioned words have been replaced. Each language has its characteristics and reflects society to a great extent. Many studies have been carried out through the years. During the 1970's, vast sociolinguistic investigations were made and one focused mainly on syntactic, phonology and morphology variations. At first, gender was regarded as a sociolinguistic variable, just like social class, age, ethnicity and social status. It was not until the midst 70's when Robin Lakoff's essay *Language and Woman's Place* was released, science about gender and language was established (Lakoff, 1975. In Nordenstam, 2003:10). Even so, studies about gender and language were regarded as pure feministic research in the beginning. Why is that?

One researcher named Deborah Cameron has divided science in gender and language into three different categories: *deficit*, *dominance* and *difference*. She claims that all research in the referring area can be placed in one of three hypotheses. The hypotheses stands for different convictions regarding female's use of language and the reasons for possible differences between male's and female's way of expressing themselves. 'Deficit' stands for a conviction about female's lack in language and one famous early supporter of this conviction is a Danish professor of English language called Otto Jespersen. 'Dominance' stands for men's power and dominance of women. Women's submissive role in society is being reflected in language according to those who believe this to be the truth. The last and final hypothesis is the one called 'difference'. According to Cameron, if you support this conviction you believe that the reason for possible language differences between males and females are merely a result of their belonging in different cultures (Cameron(eds), 1992. In Nordenstam, 2003:14-15).

When working with language one sometimes hears the expressions “female language” and “male language”. Are females speaking in a special way in comparison with males or do the expressions, female and male language, refer to something else? Since society changes the use of language must certainly change too due to the fact that language reflects society. If differences are to be found, are they related specifically to gender or are we actually talking about status and power?

The aim with this D-essay is to give some possible answers whether one can find differences between male’s and female’s way of using language. Furthermore, is it possible to find differences between different age groups coming from the same gender? By looking back at history as well as presenting research about language and gender, this essay will raise questions about our way to communicate. The essay also contains a study made on 80 students at the age of 14 and 17 years old. The study consists of a written dialogue where certain attributes are implemented in order to test different theories presented in this essay.

2. Variations in language

There is a long history to refer to when it comes to the general opinion about the way women should behave and speak. Even the philosopher Sophocles himself is supposed to have uttered something like ‘silence gives the proper grace to women’ which gives the image of a good woman as a silent woman in the western tradition (Kaplan, 1976:28). In other words, if a woman is expected to be quiet, then any woman who opens her mouth can be accused of being talkative (Spender, 1989:9). A silent woman is held up as an ideal which is cherished in the old English proverb: ‘Silence is the best ornament of a woman’. One can easily find this in early literary texts, for example, in the Arthurian romances, in stories such as Erec and Enyd. This exists in versions by Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1170), in *The Mabinogion* (c. 1300), and in Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* (1859). In the story it is a crucial episode which involves Erec (Geraint in *The Mabinogion* / Tennyson) and Enyd when they are riding alone on a journey during which Erec tests his wife’s loyalty to him. Erec says:

and this

I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,

Whatever happens, not to speak to me,

No, not a word!

(Coates, 1993:34-35, quotation from Tennyson, *Geraint and Enid*)

There are also other literary works worth mentioning, such as ‘The Clerk’s Tale’ in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. In the story Griselda’s loyalty is being tested just like Enyd’s loyalty to Erec. Even though her children are taken away from her, she does not protest since, after all, she is an obedient woman: ‘Ne in this thyme word ne she spak she noon’ (Coates, 1993:35, quotation from ‘The Clerk’s Tale’, 1.900).

In 1646, a linguist named Poole is supposed to have made the remark: “The masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine” (Poole, 1646:21). At that time it was quite obvious that the way men talked was regarded as the norm while women’s language was deviant. From a linguistic perspective, Cherish Kramer describes women’s situation in today’s society:

English speakers believe- and linguists appear to be no exception- that men's speech is forceful, efficient, blunt, authoritative, serious, effective, sparing and masterful; they believe that women's speech is weak, trivial, ineffectual, tentative, hesitant, hyperpolite, euphemistic and is often marked by gossip and gibberish.

(Kramer, 1977:43-56)

In order to find some possible answers about gender differences in language one has to go back in time and look at the historical background. Old letters, novels, diaries and poems provide us with evidence of folk linguistic beliefs regarding gender differences in language. Jennifer Coates, a well-known linguist, makes a really important reflection: "In other words, academics and scholars are as much the product of the times they live in as are non-academics, and their work on language can be as subject to prejudice and preconception as are the comments of lay people" (Coates, 1993:16). Women's subordinate role in society is explained by the Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith and she says that the differences between men and women have their ground in our way of living and our way of organizing society which began to develop in Western Europe 300-500 years ago (Klein, Steinberg, 1989:3).

History reveals that it was only women from the middle classes and above who were likely to be literate during the nineteenth century. Literate in this context means in the vernacular. Languages such as classical Latin and Greek were not spoken as mother-tongues. They only survived as tools in the male world of school, the university and the church which ultimately limited women's chance of education. According to Coates even Milton was supposed to have replied to the question whether his daughters would learn other languages besides English: "One tongue is sufficient for a woman" (Coates, 1993:28). Fortunately, there were people who thought differently about women's education even during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jennifer Coates mentions Thomas Wilson (1663-1755) who was convinced that it was of great importance to educate the mothers of the nation's children. Prior to the late nineteenth century, women were denied access to any form of higher education beyond the skills of reading and writing. Therefore, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, in

both Europe and North America, opportunities for women in higher education were a major focus of women's struggle (Coates, 1993:28-29).

2.1 Linguistic change

One of the linguistic consequences of gender differentiation in language seems to be linguistic change, where men's and women's language are regularly associated with changes in language. When it comes to the linguistic study of changes within language it is quite recently sociolinguistic factors have been taken into consideration. According to Coates, linguistic change occurs in the context of linguistic heterogeneity. Before we claim that a linguistic change has taken place, a new linguistic form has to be used by some sub-group within a speech community. Furthermore, this new form has to be 'adopted' by other members of that community and accepted as the norm.

It is possible to find linguistic variation in all known societies. A great many factors affect people's way of speech. One aspect is *social variation* which usually distinguishes people's affiliation regarding social class. There is also something called *stylistic variation* which refers to the speech of a given individual in different contexts. When studying language in its social context one focuses on linguistic variation, which is to a great extent dependent on the environment the speaker finds him or herself in. The speech of different individuals varies depending on age, gender, social class and ethnic groups. Regardless of whether the speaker is a man or a woman it appears to be the right assumption to believe that the speaker adjusts him or herself to the situation in order to 'fit in'. In other words, the way we speak is influenced by several factors.

During the nineteenth-century, the neogrammarians argued that linguistic change was caused by the twin mechanisms of sound change and analogy. The neogrammarians claimed that the sound change altered the system and analogy made the system regular again. While the neogrammarians were quite convinced in their belief, there was another group of linguists who were very much convinced of another explanation for the changes within language, namely, the functionalists. They 'argued that change occurs because of the opposing demands of the need to communicate and the desire to make as little effort as possible' (Coates, 1993:168-170).

These two different ways of viewing the possible causes of changes in language give a clear picture of two competing convictions where both parties show great interest in language.

However, one cannot look upon language as a 'thing'. Neither the language, nor the language user can be looked upon in isolation. One thing comes with the other where language does not exist apart from language users and speech does not exist independently of speakers. Even researchers of today seem to be segregated in different 'camps'. Those joining the same camp share the same opinion about the differences between male's and female's ways of speaking.

Moreover, another variation worth mentioning is different kinds of *dialects* in a language. Dialectologists focus on changes in pronunciation and vocabulary within a language system. They also focus on changing patterns of bilingualism. Since languages change it is of great importance to make a record of rural dialects before they cease to exist. Among dialectologists in the beginning of nineteenth-century, the question whether women played an important role or not seemed to be of great interest.

A dialectologist named Gauchat made a study in 1905 of the dialect of Charmey, a village in Switzerland. His observation showed that the forms used by the old inhabitants were phonetically older than those used by young people. His study revealed yet another important issue, namely, women used more advanced pronunciation in comparison with men. Therefore, women were to be considered as an innovatory force rather than a conservative force. Gauchat stated that since women usually were the ones taking care of the children at home, it was from their language the innovation would be passed on to the language of the young. What he meant was that children tend to follow their mother's example, which is why women as primary caretakers of children are the natural initiators of linguistic change (Coates, 1993:169-171).

One can assume that the differences between men's and women's way of speech have been, and will always be, a topic for continuing debate. Do women speak differently compared to men? In 1922 Otto Jespersen stated that women much more often than men break off without finishing their sentences, because they start talking without having thought out what they are going to say (Jespersen 1922:250). One can not help questioning the evidence on which Jespersen must have based his assumption about women's speech since he referred to women as one group regardless possible differences in age, social class and education. Even though one might have different opinions about Jespersen's somewhat biased conviction, he did have a point in his remark regarding 'half-finished' sentences. This will be discussed further on in the essay.

Barrie Thorne, professor of Sociology and Women's Studies and Nancy Henley, professor who specializes in research on language and nonverbal communication declared that 'women compared with men of the same social class, age, and level of education, more often choose the form closer to the prestige, or "correct" way of talking' (Thorne, Henley, 1975:17).

Another researcher, Peter Trudgill, agreed and said that women produced linguistic forms which were closer to standard language or had higher prestige. He also mentioned one possible explanation to why that was the case, namely because women were not rated by their occupations which is why 'other signals of status, including speech are correspondingly more important' (Trudgill, 1975:92). When it comes to comparing men and women with each other, Trudgill claims that women are "better" speakers than men. They are more polite, less forceful and technically more correct participants (Spender, 1980:36-38).

When working with language and viewing it from a sociolinguistic aspect, several questions arise. For instance, one talks about the 'ordinary language', where words do the talking but there is also something one might refer to as 'the hidden language', or if you like, 'the silent language'. In other words, people use different strategies in order to get their way. One can say a lot about people's interaction with each other but is it possible to notice any differences between men's and women's use of strategies?

In 1922, H.T. Moore found that men talked about their work far more frequently than did women. Since women did not usually work outside their home at that time, it was quite natural that men used words more linked to their work outside their home. According to Moore, the vocabulary associated with work was to be regarded as serious, while women's vocabulary was just trivial (Spender: 1980:34). Just like Jespersen, Moore did have a point in his discussion because at that time, it is likely to assume that women's language was more narrowed and restricted.

If one adds the school-system as well where women were not allowed to participate at the same level as men did, it is quite obvious that men had an advantage in language as well as in the society on the whole. Women worked just like men but they have largely been excluded from the work of producing the forms of thought and the images and symbols in which thought is expressed and ordered (Klein & Steinberg, 1989:3-11).

In 1978, Smith argued that language is a cultural artefact which has been invented by human beings and since males have been primarily responsible for the production of cultural forms

and images it would be surprising if language were to be an exception. She talked about a circle effect. 'What men were doing was relevant to men, was written by men about men for men' (Klein & Steinberg, 1989:4). She explained that this is simply how a tradition is formed because a way of thinking develops in this discourse through the medium of the written and printed word as well as in speech.

2.2 Theoretical views related to survey

When it comes to men's and women's way of using *slang* it is confirmed by many researchers, for example by Flexner (1960) that it is an exclusive property of males. When dealing with old researchers one has to take into consideration that evidence and so called facts are often somewhat subjective. In 1975, Robin Lakoff claimed that everybody, without exception, knew that the word *shit* is part of male vocabulary, while the expression *oh dear!* is part of female vocabulary (Spender, 1980:34). Since languages change it is now one has to think about these statements. The word *shit* and the expression *oh dear!* may have another meaning today compared with their meaning when Lakoff made the statement in 1975. Moreover, languages reflect our society and at that time, in 1975, perhaps there were not so many women using taboo words.

Jespersen (1922), who had many things to say about women's speech, made it clear that women lack precision in their speech. He did not only have an opinion about that, he also explained that it was because women frequently used something called *intensifiers* in their speech. Others agreed with Jespersen, such as for instance Lakoff (1975) and Mary Ritchie Key (1972). According to Lakoff women used *so* more often than men while Key said that women used *such* more often than men. Spender argues about the classification of *intensifiers* and *hyperboles*. She also criticises the non-objective linguistic research where the result is indeed dependent whether it is an utterance made by a woman or a man. If the utterance is made by a woman one finds the word to be an *intensifier* and if made by a man the word will be categorised as a *hyperbole* (Spender, 1980:32-38).

Women's way of speech is often connected with tentativeness and the reason for this might be their way of using *hedges*. These hedges are linguistic forms such as for instance *I think, you know, I'm sure, sort of, perhaps*. Lakoff appears to be rather convinced that women's speech contains more *hedges* than men's speech. She explains that it is because 'women are socialised to believe that asserting themselves strongly is not nice or ladylike, or even

feminine' (Lakoff, 1975:54). Another researcher named Bent Preisler (1986) also claims that women use more *hedges* in their language. Preisler's conclusion is based on his survey, where he recorded groups consisting of four people of both single-sex and mixed sexes. The participants discussed controversial subjects such as violence on television or corporal punishment for children. Coates gives a possible reason for men's lower usage of *hedges* and that is their choice of topics. She explains that men prefer to talk about impersonal subjects (Coates, 1993:116-118). Yet, another researcher named Janet Holmes has made a study concerning *hedges*. Her analysis proves that hedges are multi-functional. *Hedges* reflect the speaker's certainty as well as uncertainty in a conversation.

Tag questions, such as *I did- didn't I?*, *He was- wasn't he?* etc. are also one of the linguistic forms that are connected with tentativeness according to Lakoff who claims that females use more tag questions than males. Coates mentions a survey made by Siegler and Siegler (1976). The participants in the survey were given sentences and they were told that the sentences came from conversations between college students. The sentences involved tag questions or strong assertions. Some of the sentences had tag questions and some had strong assertions. The participants' task was to establish whether the sentence was originally produced by a female or a male. The participants in the survey answered that females were most likely to use tag questions while males were believed to use strong asserted sentences. This study confirms Lakoff's assumption about the usage of tag questions even though Lakoff never provided any empirical evidence about the usage of tag questions (Coates, 1993:118-119).

According to Coates, the sociolinguist has to deal with real language data from a wide variety of situations. Dell Hymes (1922) used the term *communicative competence* for the first time. This concept marks the beginning of this revival of interest in language in its broadest sense. Dell claimed that it was essential to incorporate social as well as cultural factors into linguistic description. To have communicative competence means so much more than knowing what is right in a grammatical sense. One needs to know how to speak, when to speak and when it is time to be quiet. As a speaker, one needs to know, for example, when it is time to pause in a conversation and give room for other speaker/s. One simply needs to know what is appropriate to do or say at a specific moment in a conversation.

Some researchers connect politeness in language with women and their communicative competence. One researcher named Gleason (1980) made a study on child language, where

she focused on the way parents teach ‘polite language’ to their children. She found that parents were consistent in convincing their children to respond with socially appropriate items, such as greetings and *thank you*. Both parents were eager for their children using polite language but provided different models. It turned out that the mothers themselves used far more polite language than the fathers which was also observed by the children.

Furthermore, there are indications that politeness appears to be a relevant dimension for the speech act of requesting. Walters (1981) made a study where he observed the requests of thirty-two bilingual children in four different contexts. Walters found there were no significant differences in terms of the speaker’s gender. Nevertheless, he discovered something else of importance: The gender of the addressee was significantly correlated with the politeness of the request. The children in the study were more polite when the addressee was female and less polite when the addressee was a male.

2.3 Discourse factors for politeness

Is it possible to connect politeness with women and their way of speech? Spender (1980:36-38), explains that females are expected to be more polite than males. However, she states that the evidence of this assumption about females’ politeness in language is not convincing. People expect women to be polite but that may not always be the case. How does one know when to speak in a conversation? Who starts the conversation and who ends it? These questions are impossible to answer because every situation differs depending on so many aspects. People usually adjust themselves to the present speaking situation. In other words, one talks about communicative competence.

In a conversation, the current speaker may ‘invite’, introduce the other speaker by asking him/her a question or simply by addressing them by name. If the other person chooses to be quiet and not respond to the invitation, the current speaker continues to talk or the conversation ceases to exist. In 1975, Zimmerman and West taped thirty-one conversations involving two participants in drug-stores, coffee/ shops and in other public places on the campus of the University of California. Ten of the conversations took place between two women. Ten other conversations were between two men and finally eleven between one woman and one man. According to Zimmerman and West, it seems that participants in a conversation anticipate the end of the current turn by using syntactic and semantic clues. The evidence for this close and semantic monitoring one does of other people’s speech is provided by cases where one

speaker makes comments about what the previous speaker has said or when one speaker completes another's turn. (West, Zimmerman, 1975:108-9). The following examples illustrate this:

Example: (1) A: but we've got four still alive now
B: four
(Coates, 1984)

Example: (2) A: the continentals I suppose they came in an
B:
A: they built them
B: properly
(Crystal, Davy, 1975:21)

As the quotation shows by ending the other speaker's turn the conversation floats very smoothly. There are also other ways to keep the conversation going and that is by giving minimal responses such as 'yeah' or 'mhm'. These minimal responses indicate the listener's positive attention to the speaker and it is also a way of supporting the speaker in his/ her choice of topic. The result of Zimmerman's and West's investigation showed that there were actually profound differences between the conversations involving two speakers of the same sex and those involving one speaker of each sex. They found two sorts of irregularities which they refer to as *overlap* and *interruption*.

An overlap is an instance of slight over-anticipation by the next speaker, that is, the next speaker begins to speak at the very end of the current speaker's turn and 'overlaps' part of the last word or the whole word. An interruption is a violation of the turn-taking rules of conversation. In this case, the next speaker begins to speak while the current speaker is still speaking. The most striking thing is that the next speaker is even doing this though he/ she knows that the current speaker has not finished. Of course, these interruptions break the symmetry of the conversational model where everyone should know that one has to wait for

one's turn. Not only does the interruption prevent the current speaker from finishing the sentence, the next speaker also gains a turn for him/ herself.

According to Candace West, men use a variety of 'devices' which serve to maintain male control of the topics of conversation. In West's study, men tended to complete women's sentences and they gave minimal responses to topics initiated by women. Furthermore, men seemed to get away with their behaviour without women protesting. 'Her study describes how men control conversation through the use of interruption and by withdrawing active participation when women are developing their topics' (West, 1974, In Klein & Steinberg, 1989:17).

2.4 Conversations

Pamela Fishman (1977) says in her study of mixed-sex talk that women are required to do the "shitwork" in conversation. They do all the routine and invisible chores which keep conversation going and which, of course, put women in the position of developing the men's talk and topics at the expense of their own (Spender, 1989:20).

Another linguist, Dale Spender made an interesting survey. According to Spender, she was challenged by a group of feminists when claiming that females did not have the same opportunities to talk as men. The feminists appeared to take great pride in their talking achievements with men and they did not agree with Spender's conviction. Spender decided to prove her theory. She recorded twenty tapes of academic feminists in conversation with an assortment of academic men. She set up a concealed tape recorder and not until the conversation ended did she introduce herself. She asked for permission to use the conversation as materials for her study. Her study was really simple. She counted the minutes taken by each speaker. Four of those who took part in the conversation did not give their approval, due to the fact that their conversation was too private. When Spender asked the participants who approved of the survey, whether they thought they had their fair share of the conversation all of the women said yes and one of the woman said that she had more than her fair share. Twelve men said yes and four said no.

When analysing the tapes Spender found that fourteen feminists spoke between 8% and 38% of the time. All of these women believed they had a fair share of the conversation. In the same group were two of the men who had claimed they had not had their fair share of the conversation. These men spoke for 67% and 75% of the time respectively. The woman who

claimed that she had more than her fair share of the conversation spoke for approximately 35% of the time. Yet, in another group, consisting of two women and two men the women spoke 40% and 42% of the time respectively. In the conversation both of the men stated that they had not enjoyed a fair share and according to the survey, they spoke for 58% and 60% respectively (Spender, 1989:9-10). The obvious question is of course what is fair and to whom?

Moreover, Spender explains that men do not have the same responsive way towards other speakers as women do. Men use different strategies than women. Men do not use the small amount of talking time they have available to encourage the talk of an authoritative woman. Spender talks about a gender and language “minefield” and what is permitted and what is not permitted is not always so clear. When women give their opinions they can be regarded as rude, “bitchy”, pushy and aggressive while men who give their opinions are being regarded as masterful, forceful (Spender, 1989:9-10). Spender summarizes women’s situation like this: “So women are damned if they do and damned if they don’t: Damned if they are assertive (and talk like men), and damned if they are supportive- ‘hesitant’- and polite, and talk like women!”(Spender, 1989:21).

3. The survey

In this essay, several of theories have been presented. Many experts are convinced that there are differences between females’ and males’ way of speech. However, there are those who believe the opposite. They do not believe in certain differences, instead they claim that the differences are random and have nothing to do with the sex of the speaker. Is it possible to distinguish typical attributes for females and males? In order to test these theories, I have written a dialogue that is implemented with specific words, expressions and comments typical for females and males, all according to various experts. The dialogue is between a man and a woman.

3.1 The dialogue

Following attributes are implemented in the dialogue and they are specified below according to genders. Moreover, there is also a discussion about the written dialogue, the female’s and the male’s comments and actions.

3.1.1 The female character uses:

- Intensifiers: *So, such,*
- Hedges: *I think, you know, I really, I mean, I'm sure, I suppose*
- Tag questions: *You didn't- did you?*
- Minimal responses: *Yeah, mhm, right*
- Words which are supposed to be used more frequently by women than men:

Oh, my goodness,

- Polite language: *Please*
- Formal language: *I can not...*

3.1.2 The female character's choice of topic: personal relationship.

The female character in the test dialogue really tries to get a conversation going but she receives so little back from the male character. She uses hedges in order to explain what she means and invites the man to participate in the conversation (line 4). Apparently, that does not work so instead she decides to use a tag question: 'You didn't feel bad for him, did you?' (line 4-5). According to folk knowledge, she uses stereotypical 'female expression' such as 'Oh, my goodness!' and she also uses polite language (*please*). Even though she is being interrupted (line 14, 16 and 18) she stays as the submissive part in the dialogue. Obviously, she is the 'underdog' in the conversation and she accepts it. She even gives the man minimal responses (line 21) after he has interrupted her in order to take control of the conversation (line 20). She tries to stick to the correct forms and she even makes the man aware of that. She does not like the man's swearing and she is annoyed with him when he commands her (line 9, 22). In line 10 she answers: 'You might say '*please*' it wouldn't hurt, you know', and in line 23 she says: '*Please*, will you hand me the *Sport Magazine* by the sofa?'. She tries to make a point but she is more or less dismissed by the man no matter what.

3.1.3 The male character uses:

- Strategy in order to control the conversation: No feed back (line 2) on the female's comment.
- Minimal response in order to let the woman know he is not interested in what she has to say (line 3 in the text).
- Taboo- words: The man uses taboo-words which are supposed to be more frequently used among males than females. The words are: *Shit!*, *God damn it!*
- Commands: 'Give me some paper!', 'Hand me the *Sport Magazine* by the sofa!'

The male character in the test dialogue controls the conversation by using different kinds of strategies. In line 2 he dismisses the female's comment and remains silent. The woman tries to explain to him, as if she might feel that his is not following in the conversation (line 4). Furthermore, he also interrupts the female. Instead of answering the question: 'You didn't feel bad for him, did you?' the man says: 'Shit!'. He does not seem interested in the choice of topic and he interrupts the female frequently (line 14, 16 and 18). He 'steals space' from the female and he ends her sentences in a very rude way. He commands her twice in the dialogue. Firstly in line 9: 'Give me some paper', secondly in line 22: 'Hand me the *Sport Magazine* by the sofa!'. Instead of talking about a mutual acquaintance, the man wants to end the conversation and read his *Sport Magazine*.

3.2 The test situation

The students who took part in this survey had brief information about my work (male and female language). I divided females and males into two different groups in the classroom. All students were seated at special places one by one and had the instruction not to change places. The study was carried out during different occasions since there were so many participants in the survey.

3.3 The data

First of all the students read the dialogue and they filled in their choice of genders at the bottom of the page. I asked them to remember their choice of gender and collected their dialogues. Next the students were given two different papers: one dialogue (identical with the first one) and one questionnaire. The reason for the new identical dialogue was because I wanted to know if someone changed his/her mind after had studied the dialogue one more time. Every paper in this survey was marked with M (for males) or F (for females) and they were also marked with a number which represented each and every student. Since I had marked all papers in the survey it was very easy to combine them afterwards and separate males from females. Moreover, since all the papers were marked with a special number I was also able to separate different age groups from each other and find every student's papers. Every student had a total of three papers each which made a total data collection of 240 papers in the study.

In this study there are four different test groups and I have tested students at the age of 14 and 17 years. Each test group consists of 20 students which make a total sum of 80 participants in the survey. The reason why I decided to test two different groups of females and two different groups of males respectively was because I am interested in possible differences between students of the same sex as well as differences between the two sexes. In the survey, number stands for the number of females /males that have chosen the specific expression, comment or word. The results will be presented with numbers as well as with the percentages in order to make it easier to interpret. All results are also presented with a total percentage which represents the total sum of the sex.

4. Documentations and results, task 1: "Write your choice (male/female)"

In this task the students were supposed to choose the gender of the characters and the result was unified. Everyone marked character A as a female and B as a male.

Gender and age	Correct answer (A= female and B= male)
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	<u>number:%</u>
--	------------------------

Females age 14	20= 100%
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Females age 17 20= 100%

Males age 14 20= 100%

Males age 17 20= 100%

5. Documentations and results, task 2: “What was the first thing you thought about?”

In task number one the students made their choice of gender and in task number two they answered what kind of proof that led to their decision. The students were not led in any kind of direction but instead they were free to write whatever they wanted to. The outcome of this question was twofold. First of all, I received the students “first evidence” and second of all, I was able to distinguish if the first evidence came from the male or the female character in the dialogue. The results are presented according to gender and age respectively.

5.1 (Female comments)

		<u>Females age 14</u>	<u>Females age 17</u>	
<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression/ Words</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>Tot. %</u>
1	‘... quite horrible...’	2=10%	3=15%	5=12,5%
4	‘Well, you know...’	4=20%	-----	4=10%
4	‘I really felt...’	4=20%	3=15%	7=17,5%
4	‘Such a nice boy...’	1=5%	2=10%	3=7,5%
8	‘Oh, my goodness...’	2=10%	2=10%	4=10%

5.2 (Male comments)

		<u>Females age 14</u>	<u>Females age 17</u>	
<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression/ Words</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>Tot.%</u>
2	‘(B looked at A ...)’	2=10%	4=20%	6=15%

3	‘...mhm...’	1=5%	-----	1=2,5%
6	‘Shit!’	-----	4=20%	4=10%
9	‘God damn it...’	4=20%	2= 10%	6=15%

5.3 (Female comments)

Male age 14

Male age 17

<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression/ Words</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>Tot. %</u>
1	‘...quite horrible...’	2=10%	8=40%	10=25%
4	‘Well, you know...’	1=5%	4=20%	5=12,5%
4	‘Such a nice boy!’	1=5%	3=15%	4=10%
8	‘Oh, my goodness...’	2=10%	-----	2=5%
10	‘You might say...’	1=5%	-----	1=2,5%

5.4 (Male comments)

Male age 14

Male age 17

<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression/ Words</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>Tot. %</u>
2	‘(B looked at A...)’	3=15%	5=25%	8=20%
6	‘Shit!’	5=25%	-----	5=12,5%
9	‘God damn it...’	5=25%	-----	5=12,5%

The outcome whether the first evidence was discovered in the female or the male’s utterance varied among the participants. The results are presented below:

<u>Gender</u>	<u>First evidence</u>	<u>number. %</u>
Females age 14	Female comment	13=65%
Females age 17	Female comment	10=50%
Males age 14	Male comment	13=65%

Males age 17

Female comment

15=75%

6. Documentations and results, task 3: “Underline words in the dialogue that you find ‘typical’ for males and females”

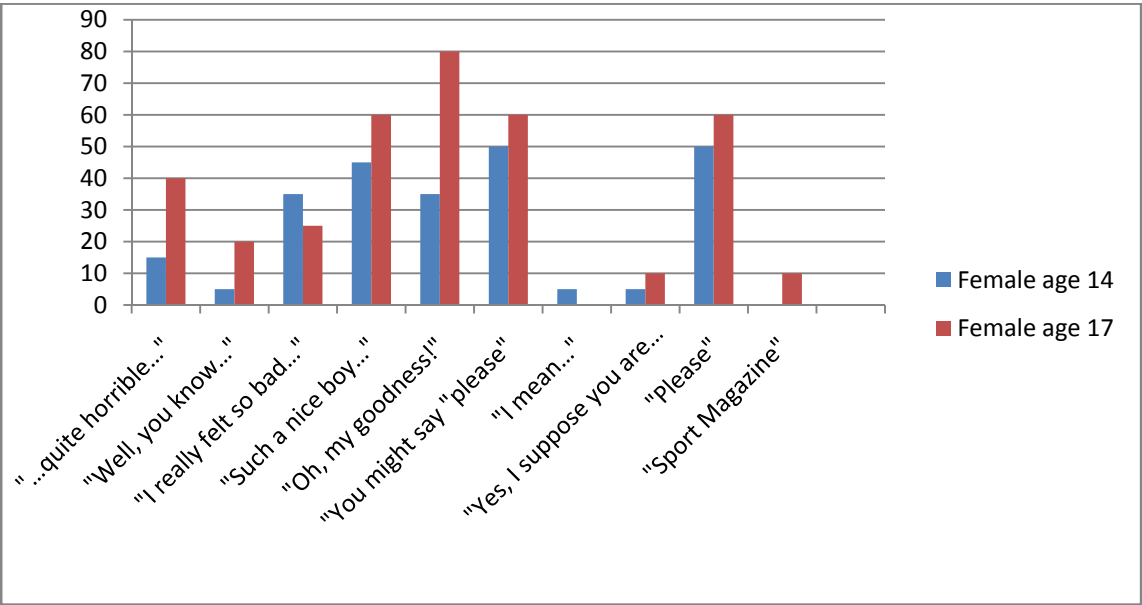
In the following presentation you will be given information about the specific expressions, comments or words that were considered to be part of ‘*female language*’ and ‘*male language*’ according to the test groups. In ‘Results and analysis 1’ (female language) you will find the individual results in each age groups as well as the representative result of all females (age 14 and age 17). Besides numbers and percentages you will find comments added to the results.

The survey continues with ‘Results and analysis 2 (female language)’ where you will find the results of the two groups of males followed by comments. In ‘Results and analysis 3: (comparison between female and males)’ you find a comparison between females and males regarding female language. The rest of the survey, ‘Results and analysis 4-6’, follows the same structure, although it focuses on male language.

6.1 Results and analysis 1 (female language)

<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression/ Words</u>	<u>Females age 14</u>	<u>Females age 17</u>	<u>Tot. %</u>
		<u>number: %</u>	<u>number: %</u>	
1	‘... quite horrible...’	3 = 15%	8 = 40%	27,5%
4	‘Well, you know...’	1 = 5%	4 = 20%	12,5%
4	‘I really felt so bad...’	7 = 35%	5 = 25%	30,0%
4	‘Such a nice boy!’	9 = 45%	12 = 60%	52,5%
8	‘Oh, my goodness!’	7 = 35%	16 = 80%	57,5%
10	‘You might say ‘please’	10 = 50 %	12 = 60 %	55,0%
12	‘I mean...’	1 = 5%	-----	2,5%

19	'Yes, I suppose you are right...'	1 = 5%	2 = 10%	7,0%
23	'Please'	10 = 50%	12 = 60%	55,0%
23	'Sport Magazine'	-----	2 = 10%	5,0%



According to the test results among the females, 'Oh, my goodness' appears to be an expression connected with female language. In both female groups, it receives high percentage although there is a distinct difference between the results. Among females at the age of 14 only 35% answered it was a female expression while a total of 80% at the age of 17 answered likewise. Overall, even though the result differs, 'Oh, my goodness' is to be considered as a female expression among females in both test groups.

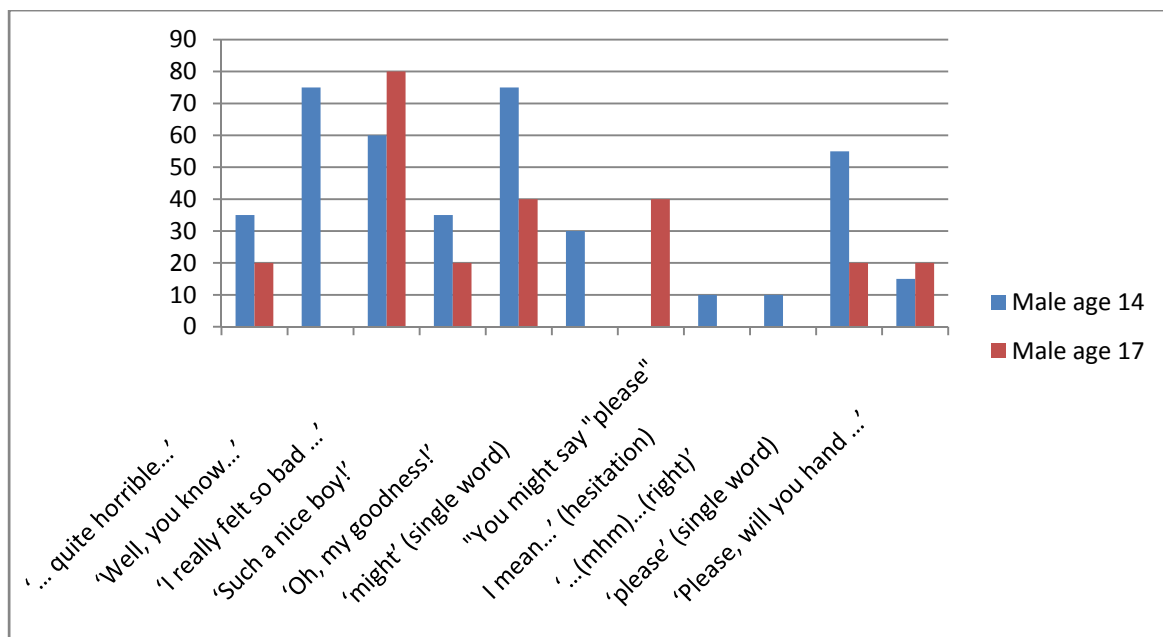
The comment 'I really felt so bad about the boy' received 35% among females at the age of 14 compared with 25% among the females at the age of 17. Furthermore, the single word 'please' appears to be connected with female language according to the findings.

Approximately 50% of the females age 14 and 60% of the females age 17 considered it to be a typical female attribute. The expression 'Such a nice boy' received a percentage of 45% among females age 14 and 60% among females age 17. The expression 'quite horrible' did not raise any high figure among females at the age of 14. Only 15% considered it to be an

expression connected with female language. Among the older group of females the figure reached 40%.

6.2 Results and analysis 2 (female language)

<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression / Words</u>	<u>Males age 14</u>	<u>Males age 17</u>	<u>total:%</u>
		<u>number: %</u>	<u>number: %</u>	
1	'... quite horrible...'	7 = 35%	4 = 20%	27,5%
4	'Well, you know...'	15 = 75%	-----	37,5%
4	'I really felt so bad ...'	12 = 60%	16 = 80%	70,0%
4	'Such a nice boy!'	7 = 35%	4 = 20%	27,5%
8	'Oh, my goodness!'	15 = 75%	8 = 40%	57,5%
10	'might' (single word)	6 = 30%	-----	15,0%
10	"You might say 'please'"	-----	8 = 40%	20,0%
12	'I mean...' (hesitation)	2 = 10%	-----	5,0%
21	'...(mhm)...(right)'	2 = 10%	-----	5,0%
23	'please' (single word)	11 = 55%	4 = 20%	37,5%
23	'Please, will you hand ...'	3 = 15%	4 = 20%	17,5%



'Oh, my goodness!' reached a high percentage among the two male test groups. However, the results showed upon rather distinct difference. In the group of 14 years old males, fifteen out of twenty participants, which is a total of 75%, answered that 'Oh, my goodness!' was a typical female expression while among the older males the figure reached 40%.

The comment 'I really felt so bad about the boy...' reached a figure of 60% among males at the age of 14 and 80% at the age of 17. In other words, both groups of males appeared to consider the comment 'I really felt so bad about the boy' as something most likely uttered by a woman. The single word 'please' reached a figure of 55% among males at the age of 14 years old and 20% among males at the age of 17 years old. 'Well, you know...' showed big differences in results between the two groups of males. Among males at the age of 14 a total of 75% answered that it was connected to female language whereas no one among males at the age of 17 considered it to be connected to female language.

Moreover, the utterance 'Such a nice boy!' is a typical female comment according to 35% among males at the age of 14 and among males at the age of 17 it only reached a percentage of 20%. The expression '...quite horrible...' got the same result as the utterance 'Such a nice boy!'. 'Might', the word that indicate insecurity, reached surprisingly low percentages among males. Among males at the age of 14 it reached a percentage of 30% and among males at the age of 17 the result was zero (0)%. Nevertheless, it appears that males at the age of 17 did

choose another alternative. According to the survey, 40% of the males at the age of 17 chose to underline a whole sentence instead of one word which is to be noted.

6.3 Results and analysis 3: female language (Comparison between females and males)

When comparing the results between the two genders one finds similarities as well as differences. One finds that the expression '*Oh, my goodness!*' seems to be regarded as a typical female expression among females and males. A total average of 57,5% underlined the expression in the survey while the percentage was exactly the same among males. Nevertheless, among males the comment '*I really felt...*' received an average percentage of 70% among males, the highest percentages overall. In other words, that was the most striking comment that *really* could be connected with female language according to males. When comparing that result with the groups of females' total percentage one finds striking differences. Among females the comment only reached a total percentage of 30%.

There are also big differences between the results when it comes to polite language. Among females, the average percentages were high in both cases of polite language occurring in line 10: '*You might say 'please''*', and line 23: '*Please*'. The percentages were 55% in both cases. Among males, the average percentages reached only 20% in line 10: '*You might say 'please''*', and 37,5% in line 23: '*Please*'. When comparing the results with the males' average percentages one finds that in line 10, 30% of the group of males age 14 have underlined the single word '*might*'. In the older group of males no one underlined the single word. Moreover, no one among the females underlined the single word which is interesting. The comment '*Well, you know...*' received a very high percentage among males at the age of 14: 75%, whereas the results among males at the age of 17 was zero (0)%. The total average percentage among males reached 37,5% and among females it reached 12,5%. The average percentage for the expression '*...quite horrible...*' showed 27,5% among females as well as among males.

There are also differences to be noted regarding the average percentages for females and males in line 4: '*Such a nice boy!*'. Among females it reached a percentage of 52,5% and among males it reached only 27,5%. According to the results, hesitations are not a typical attribute for female language. In all four test groups, the occurring hesitations in line 12 and 19, received low average percentages. Line 12: '*I mean...*' reached only 2,5% among females

and 5,0 % among males. Line 19: ‘*Yes, I suppose you are right...*’ received 7,0% among females and was not even underlined among the males.

6.4 Results and analysis 4 (male language)

<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression/ Words</u>	<u>Females age 14</u>	<u>Females age 17</u>	
		<u>number: %</u>	<u>number: %</u>	<u>Tot. %</u>
3	‘...mhm...’	7= 35%	8= 40%	37,5%
6	‘Shit!’	14= 70%	14= 70%	70,0 %
9	‘God damn it’	14= 70%	10= 50%	60,0%
14	‘(own fault)’	1= 5%	2=10%	7,5%
16	‘(What? Probably what?)’	-----	2= 10%	5,0%
18	‘(I damn would...)’	6= 30%	4= 20%	25,0%
22	‘Sport Magazine’	-----	2= 10%	5,0 %
22	‘Hand me the Sport Magazine’	11= 55%	10= 50%	52,5%
24	‘ Yeah, yeah. Whatever...’	12= 60%	10= 50%	55,0%

Among females at the age of 14 and 17 years old, 70% found the swearing ‘*Shit!*’ to be part of male language. However, there is a slight difference in the results between the two age groups when it comes to the expression ‘*God damn it!*’. Similar to the previous result, 70% of the females at the age of 14 thought the same about the ‘swearing expression’ while only 50% of the females at the age of 17 connected the expression with male language.

‘*Yeah, yeah. Whatever...*’ received a percentage of 60% among females age 14 and 50% among females at the age of 17. ‘*Hand me the Sport Magazine*’ is a comment connected to male language according to both test groups of females. Among the younger group of females 55% answered that it was something uttered most likely by a male, and 50% among females

age 17 gave the same answer. The interruption and swearing ‘(I damn would...)’ reached 30% in the group of 14-year-old females and in the group of 17-year-old females it reached 20%. The title of the magazine, ‘Sport Magazine’, did not appear to be connected specifically with males according to the younger groups of females. None of them underline the title whereas the percentage in the older group of females reached 10%.

6.5 Results and analysis 5 (male language)

<u>Line</u>	<u>Expression/ Words</u>	<u>Males age 14</u>	<u>Males age 17</u>	
		<u>number:%</u>	<u>number:%</u>	<u>Tot.%</u>
3	‘...mhm..’	5= 25%	-----	12,5%
6	‘Shit!’	17= 85%	12= 60%	72,5%
9	‘God damn it!’	19= 95%	2= 60%	77,5%
14	‘(own fault)’	1= 5%	4= 20%	12,5%
16	‘(What? Probably what?)’	2= 10%	4= 20%	15,0%
18	‘(my family. I damn would...)’	2= 10%	-----	5,0%
18	‘(I damn would...)’	4= 20%	8= 40%	30,0%
22	‘Sport Magazine’	3= 15%	4= 20%	17,5%
22	‘Hand me the Sport Magazine’	4= 20%	4= 20%	20,0%
24	‘Yeah, yeah. Whatever...’	11= 55%	4= 20 %	37,5%

According to the results, 95% of the males at the age of 14 found the swearing expression ‘God damn it’ to be an utterance most likely made by a male. In the older test group 60% thought the same. Among the younger group of males there is a difference in the result when it comes to the single word and swearing ‘Shit!’. The result showed that 85% connected it with male language in the younger group of males, whereas the result in the older group of

males reached 60%. Moreover, there are other differences as well. *'Yeah, yeah. Whatever...'* reached a percentage of 55% among males at the age of 14 and only 20% among males at the age of 17. The minimal response *'...mhm...'* received a low figure among males at the age of 14. It reached a percentage of 25%. Nevertheless, it was far more than the percentage among males at the age of 17 where the result showed zero (0)%. In other words, 0% among males at the age of 17 answered that the minimal response *'...mhm...'* is a male attribute. The result also showed upon low percentages concerning interruptions made by the man in the dialogue. The highest figure reached the interruption and swearing (*'I damn would...'*), with 20% among males age 14 and 40% among males age 17.

6.6 Results and analysis 6: male language (Comparison between females and males)

The most striking results in male language are without doubt the examples with swearing. Among females as well as among males, the examples with swearing reached high average percentages. In line 6, *'Shit!'* received an average of 70% among females and 72,5% among males. *'God damn it...'* received a total average of 60% among females and 77,5% among males and that was also the highest percentage all over in this survey. Even so, the percentages among different age groups showed rather various results which is to be noted.

The interruptions and violations of the turn-taking in the conversation made by the male character in line 14 and 16 showed low percentages among females. The percentages were only 7,5 and 5 respectively compared with the results among males: 12,5% and 15% respectively. However, there is also another interruption in the text, namely, in line 18: *'I damn would'* and that specific comment received higher percentage among females. The average percentage was 25 which is to be compared with the other examples of the interruptions. In line 22, the male character uses impolite language. The results among females and males differ clearly where females have an average percentage of 52,5 compared with the average percentage of 20 among males. Moreover, it is also interesting to find that there were some participants in this survey who just underlined the title of the magazine *'Sport Magazine'*. Among females, 5% underlined the title instead of the whole sentence while a total average of 17,5% did likewise among males. Last but not least, *'Yeah, yeah. Whatever'* received a total average of 55% among females and 37,5% among males.

7. Documentations and results, task 4: “Did you find it hard to make a decision about the character?”

The results of task four are presented according to gender and age with number as well as percentage and added comments from students where available.

Gender and age	answered “yes” (number: %)
Females age 14	1= 5%
Females age 17	-----
Males age 14	4= 20%
Males age 17	-----

7.1 Comments from females age 14:

“I swear myself and I like sports so it was a bit hard. I mean, a girl can also read sport magazine and still be like a girl (nice).”

7.2 Comments from males age 14:

“Men and girls can both swear so it was hard to make a decision.”

“I didn’t really know because females can also swear. I know girls who swear!”

8. Documentations and results, task 5: “Do you like to add something?”

When it comes to question number five the students were free to add whatever they wanted to. There were surprisingly many comments from the participating students. The comments are quoted below, according to gender and age.

8.1 Females age 14

“I noticed that person A talked more polite and person B asked for the Sport Magazine.”

“I think it was simple to decide the characters. It feels so typical for a boy to say ‘mhm’ and talk about sports. And girls does (sic) care a lot and I think they talk in a more polite way.”

“‘Such a nice boy’. That is so ‘girly’. ‘Mhm’- I don’t think that a woman would respond like that. I think ‘mhm’ is a typical male word.”

“I think it was pretty obvious that person A was a woman because men don’t talk like that.”

“A= woman because the person used more words and seemed to be quite sensitive and that’s more usual for females. Men usually use few words.”

“A sounds like something a woman would say. Sounds almost like a mother talking to her son.”

“You might say please, it wouldn’t hurt you- it must be a girl because she uses ‘please’. Also, she teach (sic) the boy.”

8.2 Females age 17

“I felt that A must be a girl because she could say she felt bad for someone.”

“B’s attitude is that of an interested and somewhat brutish man. A has a caring and more careful attitude. She thinks about manners and wants B to say ‘please’. B also swears.”

“B was into his Sport Magazine. So B is a man!”

“B was not interested in what A had to say. He just kept on reading which is rude.”

“The sentimentality of person A! Women tend to care about other people in a mother’s love kind of way.”

“B looked down in the newspaper and just said ‘mhm’ like he didn’t really care.”

“B didn’t response to A. He didn’t care what she was saying.”

“The female is telling more words than the male. The male is not telling more than he needs.”

“The female seemed to go around things. Trying to make a long sentence while the male has shorter and more direct sentences.”

“In line one I suspected A to be a woman and at line ten I was sure!”

“B talked with short sentences and didn’t care about the subject. That is why I thought B was a man.”

“Most male friends that I have do not talk as much as I do. So simply the lack of answers revealed who was the man and who was the woman.”

8.3 Males age 14

“At the first sentence when B looked down in the newspaper and said ‘mhm’ that marks that he is a man!”

“Men and girls can both swear so it was hard to make a decision but men do it more...”

“I think that B was a male because he/she was swearing”

“When the male spilled coffee the female became upset. A was a female. Only females become upset for spilled coffee.”

8.4 Males age 17

“B didn’t seem to care so much- It’s a man.”

“A is a female because they like to talk about others.”

“B was rude and not polite. Females is (sic) nice.”

“Mostly there are situations like this, but often when you turn on the TV you’ll see how the men are self-centred and grumpy most of the time. Women cares (sic) a lot and is (sic) trying to improve their surroundings.”

“The male often use stronger words. The female in this dialogue want (sic) the male to ask her nice (sic) if he want (sic) something. Typical female thing!”

“First I noticed that person B wasn’t really paying attention to what person A said. So person B had to be a man because men never listen to women. When person A shows concern about if person B got some coffee on him he just ‘dodge’ the question (that is not revealing his weakness or any emotion) by asking for some paper. Typical for a man.”

“B often used a rough language and also talks about sport. A uses a very polite language.”

“It is not about the words. It’s about the sentences and emotions. Men don’t show emotions. ‘mhm’ is a very typical male answer. Short.”

“When B looked down in the paper I knew that it was a man. So typical for an (sic) man and then he just said ‘mhm’ in line 3 like if he wasn’t interested.”

“In line 2 and 3 I think is (sic) big proof (sic) that B is a male. His answer is short and he does not care about what the female says. The male doesn’t care about anyone.”

8.5 Summary of the comments

According to the students’ comments females appear to use polite language even though ‘Results and analysis 2’ show different results. Females are also being described as caring and like to talk about other people. There are also comments about the females’ way of speech as if she was about to ‘teach’ the male. According to one quotation from a female age 14 the female in the dialogue ‘sounds almost like a mother talking to her son.’ Furthermore, in order to be sensitive and gentle, females have a tendency to use more words which lead to longer sentences according to one comment from a female age 14.

According to the comments about males it is typical for males to give minimal responses, swear and to be interested in sports. Furthermore, the male character’s short and direct sentences are being discussed and according to one representative from males age 17: ‘It is not about the words. It’s about the sentences and emotions. Men don’t show emotions.’ Moreover, one can find comments about the male’s rude way of not responding on the female’s comments. The male is being described as rude and brutish.

9. Conclusion

First and foremost, since this essay contains a quantitative and qualitative investigation there is always a possibility that the investigating itself may have affected the result. There were 80 participants in the survey and they read a dialogue with implemented attributes. They were given a questionnaire and the participants were on the one hand obliged to answer definite questions (yes or no). On the other hand, the questionnaire also contained questions with “free answers” which ultimately led to a great variety in answers. When dealing with lots of data one has to consider validity and reliability. When it comes to the dialogue it is possible to consider it to be a “stereotypical” one. There is also a chance that the implemented attributes in the dialogue did not fit into the participants’ vocabulary use. However, there is also a chance of the attributes being too “stereotypical” or even found to be old fashion. The questions in the questionnaire could possibly have been asked in a different way.

There are also limitations in this essay’s survey which is important to mention. One limitation is the essay’s sources. Some sources may be regarded old fashion since they represent the past. The investigation tests one particular choice of theories. Moreover, the implemented attributes in the dialogue are just a selection and do not represent all discussed attributes in the on-going research concerning “female and male language”. The participants represent a selection of 80 students from two different schools in a small town in the north of Sweden. It is possible that the result would have turned out differently if the survey had been made in a big town in the south of Sweden. Therefore, this would be an interesting research area for a future investigation.

I have tested different theories by writing a dialogue with implemented attributes. The attributes were randomly picked from different theories discussed in the background. When it comes to female language there were some interesting results. According to Bent Preisler (1986) females use more hedges and the expression “*I really felt so...*” showed big differences in result between females and males. A total of 30% of the females connected the expression to female language while a total of 70% answered likewise among males. In the groups of females the differences were not that big. According to the results males did find “*I really felt so...*” to be most likely uttered by a female which is interesting. In addition, when it comes to other hedges in the dialogue (for example; ‘you know’, ‘I mean’, ‘I suppose etc’) the results are rather convincing. According to the result, hedges in general do not appear to be connected to

female language, especially not among females. Perhaps it is possible that the reason for the differences relates to Janet Holmes's theory about multifunctional hedges. Moreover, the combination 'really' and the intensifier 'so' in the same sentence can also have made a difference. The high percentages among males can not be explained in this survey due to its limitation. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to investigate that further.

According to Gleason (1980) and Trudgill (1975) females use more polite language. Furthermore, Trudgill argues that females are less forceful which is also mentioned by some of the students who took part in the survey. Spender (1980) argues that females are expected to be more polite than males but that may not always be the case. However, in this survey it proved to be the case at least according to the females' results. A total of 55% of the females considered the utterance: "*You might say 'please'*" to be most likely uttered by a female while the utterance only received a total of 20% among males. This example showed big differences between females and males in general. The groups of females were rather unanimous in results while the groups of males differed in results.

However, since task 3 was a "free answer question" some students have underlined single words as well. One underlined single word is "*please*" in line 23 and among females it reached a total of 55%. The results among the groups of females differed slightly and reached the same result as in the previously mentioned example: "*You might say 'please'*". Among males the result differed and only 37,5% of the males considered '*please*' in line 23 to be connected to female language. Furthermore, it is important to mention that no one among males age 14 underlined '*You might say please*' as part of female language. Again, there are more similarities in the results among females than among males.

The modal auxiliary '*might*' (that belongs to hedges) was underlined by one of the test groups in the survey. Males at the age of 14 underlined it and the percentage reached 30%. That is very interesting and perhaps it is due to the fact that no one in the group of males at the age of 14 underlined the earlier mentioned: "*You might say 'please'*".

Moreover, Key (1972) states that females use the intensifiers '*such*' more than males. This appears to be the assumption among females too, considering the result of the sentence: "*Such a nice boy!*". The result showed a total of 52,5% among females compared to the result among males: 27,5%. In this survey, no one of the participants underlined the single words: '*so*' or '*such*'. Therefore, it is not possible to draw any conclusion about the frequency of

usage. When it comes to minimal responses “...(*mhm*)...(right)” uttered by the female character in the dialogue it is quite clear that it is not connected to typical female language among females. No one underlined it while only a total of 5% underlined it among males. Nevertheless, there are results in this study that show unanimous results between the genders. The examples are the expression: “*quite horrible*” and “*Oh, my goodness!*”. A total of 27,5% connected “*quite horrible*” to female language while 57,5% thought likewise about “*Oh, my goodness!*”.

When dealing with male language there were rather interesting findings. To begin with, a total of 37,5% among females underlined line 3 “...*mhm*...” as part of male language and the result among males was 12,5%. When analyzing this finding it is obvious that line 3 can be regarded as a minimal response as well as an act of dismissal and then we are talking about dominance in a speech situation. In this case, the two different meanings can be seen as each others opposites. In line 16 the male character interrupts the female character while she is speaking and he violates the rules of conversation. According to West (1974, In Klein & Steinberg, 1989:17) men are using these kind of devices in order to control the topics of the conversation. West also claims that men do get away with it without females protesting. The male character in the dialogue interrupted the female on three different occasions and neither females nor males connected interruptions specifically to male use of language. According to the survey in this essay only 5% of the females considered the interruption in line 16 to be part of male language. Among males 15% answered likewise. It appears as though West’s statement fits in to my survey since the percentages were so low. The result implies that interruptions are not to be connected to male language just like West claimed in her survey.

There has also been a discussion about different kinds of topics of conversation in the background in this essay. In line 22 ‘*Sport Magazine*’ was underlined by 5% of the females while 17,5% underlined it among males. A total of 52,5% of the females underlined the whole sentence: “*Hand me the Sport Magazine by the sofa!*” while only 20% answered likewise among males. The comment uttered by the male is not only about the topic sport but here is also something else, namely: commands and directives. The male character is not using polite language. According to the results, there are big differences to be noted between the females and males results regarding commands and directives. Last but not least, there is a statement uttered by the male: “*Yeah, yeah. Whatever...*” Among females a total of 55%

underlined it while 37,5% underlined it among males. The comment is definitely to be considered as a dominant act in the speech situation.

According to Flexner (1960) slang is an exclusive property of males and in 1975 Lakoff stated that everybody without exception knew that the word '*Shit*' is part of male language. That is not true according to the survey in this essay. Lakoff refers to 100%, but for example the word '*Shit!*' only reached a total of 70% among females, while the percentage reached 72,5% among males. Nevertheless, even though the results did not reach 100% as Lakoff stated, swearing appears to be connected to male language.

This essay and its survey have presented facts and tendencies showing differences as well as similarities between the two genders. Moreover, it is stated that there are differences as well as similarities between different age groups of the same gender. According to the survey, females appeared to be more unanimous in their answers. When dealing with language there are so many things that have to be taken into consideration. The reasons for all differences can not be explained in this essay since the survey is rather limited. However, it would be of great interest to research further and find evidence that explains the reasons for the differences between the two genders and age groups.

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Dialogue

- (1) **A:** I think it was quite horrible...
- (2) [*B looked at A and then looked down in the newspaper.*]
- (3) **B:** ...mhm...
- (4) **A:** Well, you know... I really felt so bad about the boy. Such a nice boy! You didn't feel
- (5) bad for him, did you?
- (6) **B:** Shit!
- (7) [*B spilled coffee all over the floor.*]
- (8) **A:** Oh, my goodness! Did you get any coffee on you?
- (9) **B:** God damn it... Give me some paper!
- (10) **A:** You might say 'please'. It wouldn't hurt, you know.
- (11) [*A gave B some paper.*]
- (12) **A:** I mean... I'm sure that he will get all the help he needs now, being alone and
- (13) everything... I can not understand why some people think it's his
- (14) **B:** (own fault. Well, I can.)
- (15) **A:** If it happened to you, you would probably
- (16) **B:** (what? Probably what?)
- (17) **A:** Well, you would probably have had help from
- (18) **B:** (my family. I damn would, wouldn't I?)
- (19) **A:** Yes, I suppose you are right.
- (20) **B:** He certainly had his warnings but still he married her.
- (21) **A:** (mhm) (right)
- (22) **B:** Hand me the *Sport Magazine* by the sofa!
- (23) **A:** Please, will you hand me the *Sport Magazine* by the sofa?
- (24) **B:** Yeah, yeah. Whatever...

.....

	Male	Female
A:
B:

Male Female

1. Write your choice! A:

B:

2. You have made a choice and you have written your answer above. Now, look at the dialogue. Somewhere in this dialogue you found proof that led to your decision. Perhaps it was a simple word or a whole sentence in the text. What was the first thing you thought about? Please, mark in what line you found your first evidence.

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Now, look at the dialogue again. Underline words in the dialogue that you find 'typical' of males and females.

4. Did you find it hard to make a decision about the characters? YES NO

5. Do you like to add something?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your co-operation!