

**GENDER IN CONTEXT:
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S WRITTEN DISCOURSE**
(ON THE BASIS OF COMMENTS TO BBC NEWS)

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Subject Matter

In the paper we examine speech features specific to men and women on lexical and syntactic sublayers of written discourse

Despite the interest of modern linguistics to gender differences the topic is still not well covered. Quite disconnected studies and the lack of materials sometimes do not allow making precise, definite conclusions and often lead to the fact that on one and the same issue there may be conflicting data. Therefore, the existing theories need to be confirmed and clarified, taking the peculiarities of rational mentality into account.



The aim of the paper

To determine the characteristics of English male and female written discourse.



Object of the study

70 samples of written discourse (35 male and 35 female comments to BBC news on Facebook).



The methods used

The method of linguistic description, including the techniques of observation, interpretation, comparison, generalization and classification.

Contextual analysis (comprehensive interpretation of the meaning and functions of a component based on the broad context of communicative situation).

Novelty and originality of the material presented.

- o The research is conducted on the basis of comments to various events in the popular social network Facebook, which has an indisputable advantage - we studied the features of written discourse not within a certain region of the UK, but within the whole country, which helped us to make more accurate test results in clarification of the existing judgments of male and female speech behavior.



Theoretical significance

- o The identification of the features of speech of men and women complements and refines the results of the research in the field of gender linguistics and discourse in general and breaks some popular stereotypes.





**Scientific results and
conclusions**

Distinctions in communicative strategies

Women

- **Friendly communication**

Men

- **Exchange of information.**
- **Try to play a dominant role.**

! However, contrary to the popular belief that women's speech is much more emotional than that of men, it was found that emotionality of both genders is almost the same.

Men's lexical layer



1. Aimed at persuasion, as well as to demonstration of their own intellectual superiority, which is associated with the psychological desire for competition.
2. Characterized by the frequent use of abstract nouns, terminology, vocabulary from various areas of knowledge and journalese cliché: *corruption, tax avoidance, amason, google, spying technique, single market, government, bridge loan, EU, EMF, HSBC , Standard Chartered.*
3. Because of this the judgments sound concrete and thorough.
4. Emotional attitude to the situation can be transmitted through the expressive, but stylistically reduced funds, deliberate coarsening of speech and the use of obscene language: *The UK should stay in the EU and kick out all the racist bigots as clearly seen on this post; Leave and rid the country of the scum it let in; WTF ???? Why ?.*

Women's lexical layer



1. Seeks to pass attitude towards the situation and more frequent use affective vocabulary, intensifiers, which serve to transfer their emotional state and feelings: *Interesting!; Very interesting in my case ... ???; Oh, neat !; Wow.* In some cases, women may directly talk about their feelings: *So they need a loan to pay the bill for a loan they can not afford to repay.?. i'm confused.*
2. A wide use of a large number of introductory words that help mitigate the categoricity of statement: *Please, get a job and stop bothering animals; Honestly, what are those parents afraid of.* There are a lot of modal structures that express varying degrees of prediction, uncertainty and emotion: *Bankers should go to the jail; It would be a madness to leave; That might help them to stay afloat.*

The syntactic layer

- During the research one of popular stereotypes was disproved.
- **! Actually, contrary to a popular belief men talk more than women.**
- The average size of the male comment is 19.7 words or 87 characters, while female 15, 8 words or 71, 4 characters.
- (However, men's sentences are shorter, because men are more categorical in their judgments).



Type of a sentence	Male discourse	Female discourse
Types of the sentences based on the structure:		
Simple:	36 (56%)	24 (45%)
Composite:	28 (44%)	30 (55%)
Types of the sentences based on the purpose:		
Affirmative:	37 (58%)	29 (53%)
Imperative:	10 (16%)	10 (19%)
Interrogative:	10 (16%)	9 (17%)
Exclamatory:	7 (10%)	6 (11%)
Total:	64 (100%)	54 (100%)

Compare female and male comments on the article: *"What culinary delights are you craving this lunchtime?"*:

Female example:

"This is interesting in the fact that what you "crave" or eat while pregnant influences how/what your children eat.. and crave.. very interesting in my case...??? ..."

Male example:

" 15 pints of premium lager and a fight, that's what I like for lunch"

- 0 **Women tend to use various modal structures and rhetorical questions, expressing indirect motivation: «Instead of using technology on top of technology, why not sit down and have an honest chat with your kids? Where is the trust within the family nowadays? Honestly, what are those parents afraid of? If you don't know what your kids have been up to, it's not an app that is going to solve parenting/family issues. Let's be honest».**
- 0 **In the example above, we can trace typical female manner of speaking softly, without giving direct orders and advice, which, however, should not be regarded as submission.**
- 0 **You can also note the presence of uncharacteristic of men statements in the form of questions: «You need an app for that? I just call it Parenting »; «Are we not able to leave the EU and still trade fairly? We do with other countries».**





o Male language much more focused on the status. Often in conversation men unconsciously provoke companions by rhetorical questions and imperative mood. They do not do so because of the natural anger, but in order to bring the interlocutor to a verbal duel and find out who is the best: *«Kids Mode? Web Browsers set to Safe? Don't let kids have a Smart Phone (there are other phones available)»*. Actually, all men conversations somehow revolve around the competition and winning, strengths and weaknesses.



o Also in men's discourse, the frequent lack of correspondence between punctuation and emotional tension of speech was observed: *"Why are none of the major parties willing to do / say anything about tax avoidance."*; *"French and Italian food always, any time."*; *"Good job"*.

o All the above-mentioned signs and distinctions were observed by us in the mixed group. However we can't exclude that in the same-sex groups — only male or only female, the commentators would behave differently as their behavior in the mixed and restricted groups may differ.



Practical significance

- o The results of the research can be used in works on the effectiveness of verbal communication.**
- o This research may be of some interest for psychologists and marketers in order for them to be aware of how to communicate with male and female clients, and how to advertise and distribute a variety of goods and services to different audience.**
- o Also, this work could be useful for other researchers and provide support to the theoretical framework of the works specializing in gender linguistics.**



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**

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