Gender-Related Usage of Direct and Indirect Directives in Children's Elementary English Storybooks

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Abstract

The study provides a further perspective on Robin Lakoff's gender-related assumptions. It examines the differential use of direct/indirect directives by males and females in children's storybooks of level two. The researcher attempts to find out whether this feature has been considered in storybooks. To compare the usage of direct/indirect directives by males and females in children's storybooks of level two, five subcategories of detective, ghost, life, love and social were selected randomly. Among each subcategory, two books were also selected randomly (stratified random sampling). The statistical analyses reveal some significant differences between men and women regarding the use of direct/indirect directives only in social storybooks of level two. This study found little distinction between men and women in the detective, ghost, life and love storybooks of level two at $p<.05$ level. The results and findings can be useful in determining the gender related of women in literature. EFL book compilers and curriculum planners can also benefit from the results to teach the gender related nature of language.

Keywords: gender, gender-related features, direct directives, indirect directives

INTRODUCTION

It is assumed that people produce utterances for communicative intentions, but the speakers often mean more than what they utter, or conversely, express things that they actually like to suppress. Directives as *illocutionary acts* provide the hearers with a reason to act and bring about the truth of propositional contents. In *direct directives*, content is explicitly represented by utterances but in *conventionally indirect directives*, the speakers using non-imperative sentence types intend to produce in the hearer that requests have been made to them (Jary & Kissinie, 2013). Cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another act are the main focus of the research.

The directive speech act was examined for two reasons: it is the typical *face-threatening* act allowing more observations and investigations. Secondly, it is the frequent type of speech act used in interactions in EFL situations.

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A major reason for choosing children's storybooks is the educational value of short stories in developing language learners' skills as supplementary materials or as mini-syllabi. The decision was motivated by their significant role in helping language learners acquire the sociocultural information of their own gender-related behavior in an EFL situation like Iran, where they don't have the opportunity of being directly exposed to the language.

Although the researchers have focused on the characteristics of men's and women's language, these features have not been studied in children's story books. So, the researcher has selected elementary level randomly to study.

It may be taken as a step forward in determining the gender-related roles of women in literature. To the best of my knowledge, there is no single study mainly concerned with this area of investigation. It will point to new directions in the process of formulating a theory of English as a gender-bound language that needs further consideration.

The first group that can benefit from the results is EFL textbook compilers and curriculum planners. The research may be of general interest to the English language students, as well as anyone with a general interest in sociolinguistics.

Review of the Literature

According to Conrick (2000), Crosby (2000), Wallmann (2000) and Moore (2002) women tend to use fewer imperative forms and more indirect directives. Thanasoulas (2003) also claimed that since overt orders carries the assumption of the speaker's superiority to the hearer, women use indirect directives leaving the decision to comply with the request to the hearer.

To confirm the view (2002), Booher gave this example:

> When a female manager asks a male employee, "Do you think you can have the proposal ready by Friday?" and he answers affirmatively, she expects it on Friday. When Friday comes and the proposal isn't ready, the(female) manager looks at the situation as failure to comply with the directive while the (male)employee considered her comment a preference, not a directive. (p. 2)

According to Hill (2010), politeness strategies are associated with female speech. Indirect speech acts as politer speech acts allow the speakers to save face more. Such protective behavior has also been associated with women. He also found that mothers use more indirect speech acts than fathers while talking to their children.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher attempts to answer these major questions:

1. Do the women talking in the detective storybooks use more indirect directives than the men do?

2. Do the women talking in the ghost storybooks use more indirect directives than the men do?

3. Do the women talking in the life storybooks use more indirect directives than the men do?

4. Do the women talking in the love storybooks use more indirect directives than the men do?

5. Do the women talking in the social storybooks use more indirect directives than the men do?

METHODOLOGY

Data for the Study

Among a series of simplified storybooks, the second level referred to as Elementary with 500 words has been selected randomly. Among children's storybooks of level two, five subcategories of detective, ghost, life, love and social were selected randomly. Among each subcategory, two books were also selected randomly (stratified random sampling). The detective storybooks are *Jaws* and *Money to Burn;* the ghost ones are *The Canterville Ghost and the Model Millionaire* as well as *The Room in the Tower and Other Ghost Stories;* the love stories are *Persuasion* and *The Fox;* the life stories are *Fly Away Home* and *Grandad's Eleven* and finally the social stories are *The Scarlet Letter* as well as *We Are All Guilty.* The Speech in the fictional conversations has been studied exactly.

Data Collection Procedures

Some steps are conducted in the collection of the data:

1. Children's storybooks of the elementary level were selected randomly.

2. Subdividing the population into subgroups on the basis of their different topics, some strata have been identified. They consisted of social, legend, ghost, fairy, love, life, detective, fable, tragic and adventure stories.

3. Detective, ghost, life, love and social storybooks were also selected randomly.
4. The names of two books from each stratum have been drawn randomly out of a hat to be compared.
5. Each dialog of these books was studied carefully and the directives produced by males and females in each book were counted.
6. This step was concerned with determining direct or indirect directives based on searle's algorithm. Then, the number of direct and indirect directives in each book was counted.

Issues of Experimental Bias

To estimate the intra-rater reliability of frequency counts, a correlation coefficient between the two frequency counts provided by the researcher on two separate occasions was calculated.

Table 1. The Correlation Coefficient Between the First and the Second Frequency Counts Provided by the Researcher

S	X	Y	X²	Y²	XY
1	96	94	9216	8836	9024
2	62	64	3844	4096	3968
3	26	24	676	576	624
4	13	11	169	121	143
5	66	68	4356	4624	4488
6	18	21	324	441	378
7	21	23	441	529	483
8	11	9	121	81	99
9	49	50	2401	2500	2450
10	35	37	1225	1369	1295
11	48	48	2304	2304	2304
12	36	39	1296	1521	1404
13	30	32	900	1024	960
14	18	18	324	324	324
15	16	17	256	289	272
16	14	16	196	256	224
17	74	72	5476	5184	5328
18	29	29	841	841	841
19	42	42	1764	1764	1764
20	33	30	1089	900	990

Since the correlation coefficient was high (df=18, .9965>4436), the strength of the relationship between two frequency counts of the same rater was highly significant not only in* $p< .5$ but also in other levels (** $p< .02$, *** $p< .01$, **** $p< .001$).

To estimate the inter-rater reliability, the researcher and a professor of linguistics of Shiraz University coded these books based on the Searle's algorithm.

Table 2. The Correlation Coefficient Between the Frequency Counts Provided by the Researcher and the Second Rater

S	X	Y	X²	Y²	XY
1	94	96	8836	9216	9024
2	64	66	4096	4356	4224
3	24	24	576	576	576
4	11	13	121	169	143
5	68	68	4624	4624	4624
6	21	21	441	441	441
7	23	21	529	441	483
8	9	11	81	121	99
9	50	51	2500	2601	2550
10	37	38	1369	1444	1406
11	48	48	2304	2304	2304
12	39	37	1521	1369	1443
13	32	32	1024	1024	1024
14	18	17	324	289	306
15	17	16	289	256	272
16	16	15	256	225	240

17	72	74	5184	5476	5328
18	29	28	841	784	812
19	42	42	1764	1764	1764
20	30	32	900	1024	960

The results showed that there was a significant degree of correlation between the frequency counts provided by the two coders not only in* $p < .05$(df=18, .9985>4436) but also in other levels (**$p < .02$, ***$p < .01$, ****$p < .001$). Regarding this fact, the researcher has a lot of confidence in the conclusion.

Data Analysis

The data were subjected to simple descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage and chi-square. The comparison was done using the chi-square test because of its suitability to find out the interaction among dependent and independent variables while dealing with frequency counts. In order to illustrate the results, the data were tabulated.

RESULTS

The Choice of Directives by Males and Females in the Detective Storybooks

Table 3. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *Jaws*

		Male (Di= 112)	Female (Di= 8)
Directives	D	62	5
	I	50	3

D=The frequency of direct directives **I=** The frequency of indirect directives
Di= The frequency of directives for the specific gender

Table 4. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *Money to Burn*

		Male (Di= 50)	Female (Di= 29)
Directives	D	34	19
	I	16	10

Table 5. The Effect of Gender on the Use of Directives in the Two Detective Storybooks

		Male (Di= 162)	Female (Di= 37)
Percentage	D	59.26	64.86
	I	40.74	35.14
		$\chi 2= 0.39 p< .05$	

There is not a significant distinction between men and women in the use of direct/indirect requests (Table 5). Therefore, the first null hypothesis, at least in the storybooks analyzed, cannot be rejected (0.39<3.84). It shows that the differences in the number of directives produced by the men and the women in the detective storybooks cannot be given any weight ($p < .05$).

The Choice of Directives by Males and Females in the Ghost Storybooks

Table 6. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *The Canterville Ghost and the Model Millionaire*

		Male (D= 43)	Female (D= 15)
Directives	DD	30	10
	I	13	5

Table 7. The Frequency of Directives in *The Room in the Tower and Other Ghost Stories*

		Male (Di= 46)	Female (Di= 17)
Directives	D	38	11
	I	8	6

Table 8. The Effect of Gender on the Use of Directives in the Two Ghost Storybooks

		Male (Di= 89)	Female (Di= 32)
Percentage	D	76.40	65.62
	I	23.60	34.38
		χ^2= 2.37 p<.05	

The data lacks statistical significance at 05 level. It means that the second null hypothesis cannot be rejected (2.37<3.84).

The Choice of Directives by Males and Females in the Life Storybooks

Table 9. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *Fly Away Home*

		Male (Di= 50)	Female (Di= 77)
Directives	D	34	47
	I	16	30

Table 10. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *Grandad's Eleven*

		Male (Di= 39)	Female (Di= 8)
Directives	D	17	1
	I	22	7

Table 11. The Effect of Gender on the Use of Directives in the Two Life Storybooks

		Male (Di= 89)	Female (Di= 85)
Percentage	D	57.30	56.47
	I	42.70	43.53
		χ^2= .01 p<.05	

There are no statistically significant differences between men and women in the use of direct/indirect requests (Table 11). Therefore, the third null hypothesis, at least in *Fly Away Home* and *Grandad's Eleven,* cannot be rejected*.*

The Choice of Directives by Males and Females in the Love Storybooks

Table 12. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *persuasion*

Directives		Male (Di= 17)	Female (Di= 10)
	D	9	7
	I	8	3

Table 13. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *The Fox*

Directives		Male (Di= 32)	Female (Di= 21)
	D	23	9
	I	9	12

Table 14. The Effect of Gender on the Use of Directives in the Two Love Storybooks

Percentage		Male (Di= 49)	Female (Di= 31)
	D	65.31	51.61
	I	34.69	48.39
		χ^2= 1.48 p<.05	

The results of the chi-square reveal that the finding is not significant at .05 level (1.48<3.84). Therefore, the fourth null hypothesis, at least in the books investigated, cannot be rejected. This shows that there is not a significant difference between men and women in the use of direct and indirect directives in the love storybooks.

The Choice of Direct/Indirect Directives by Males and Females in the Social Storybooks

Table 15. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *The Scarlet Letter*

Directives		Male (Di= 48)	Female (Di= 57)
	D	36	31
	I	12	26

Table 16. The Frequency of Direct and Indirect Directives in *We Are all Guilty*

Directives		Male (D= 54)	Female (D= 18)
	DD	38	11
	I	16	7

Table 17. The Effect of Gender on the Use of Directives in the Two Social Storybooks

Percentage		Male (Di= 102)	Female (Di= 75)
	D	72.55	56
	I	27.45	44
		χ^2= 5.23 p<.05	

Table 17 indicates that the difference between the two genders in social English storybooks of level two in the use of direct and indirect directives gains significance (3.84<5.23). So, the null hypothesis will be rejected at .05. This finding is consistent with Lakoff's assumptions (1975and also with the previous research made by Bellinger and Gleason (1982).

There is only a significant distinction between the men and women in the social storybooks of level two at the .05 level (5.23>3.84). The difference is significant not only at the .05 level (*p< .05) but also at the **p< .025 level (5.23> 5.02) Table 19.

Table 18. The Comparison of Chi-Square Tests Regarding the Use of Direct/Indirect Directives in the Five Subcategories

Story Books	Detective	Ghost	Life	Love	Social
χ2	0.39	2.37	0.01	1.48	5.23*

* p< .05

The results propose that these storybooks designed for teaching English as a foreign language might possess different gender-linked features from real conversational situations.

CONCLUSION

This research may serve as the initial step of looking at the characteristics of children's storybooks of different levels. Although women were particularly encouraged to change their patterns of speech, this research focused on identifying the characteristics of communicative behaviors of women to declare that women's way of talking, often unnoticed, has its own value.

The EFL textbook compilers and curriculum planners can be aware of the results and might need to select other materials effective and appropriate for promoting gender-linked roles in students of diverse characteristic. In general, if men and women can recognize the differences, then the subsequent problems in communication may be minimized.

In order to generalize the findings to storybooks, interested researchers can test the hypothesis in children's storybooks of different topics as well as in children's storybooks of different levels .The results can provide a clear framework of choosing the pedagogical instruments used for transmitting gender and culture roles in Iran as an EFL situation.

Interested researchers can also look into the impact of social status as well as writers' genders on the differential usage of direct/indirect directives. This study may also serve as a productive hint in connection with Lakoff's assumptions regarding women's usage of indirect directives in other conversational situations, like interviews, different TV channels, movies, chat rooms or conversations in public places (restaurants, supermarkets, libraries, etc.). Iranian researchers can also identify whether the features specified for women's language do exist in Persian or it is culture-specific.

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