

Gender Differences in the Use of Boosting Devices in Spoken Language among Kurdish Speakers

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Abstract---A prevalent component of metadiscourse is the way in which authors and presenters reflect themselves in their writings, remarks, and messages. As a subclass of discourse markers, boosters are used to strengthen claims and demonstrate the speaker's and writer's commitment to their claims (Hyland, 1998). With regard to the employment of boosting devices in their casual daily encounters, this study attempted to compare any potential disparities between Kurdish female and male speakers. A quantitative research paradigm was used to achieve this goal. After being manually recorded, inspected, and transcribed from observations, data were used to calculate the number of boosters. The frequency counts and percentages of booster usage were computed, and the chi-square test was employed to compare booster usage depending on gender. It can be inferred that Kurdish women were more likely to convey their ideas with a higher degree of conviction and assertiveness because the results showed a substantial difference in the use of boosters between the two genders. This data lends credence to Lacoff's (1975) assertion that women tend to use some particular linguistic elements more frequently than men, including boosters, lexical hedges, tag questions, empty adjectives, and emphatic stress.

Keywords: Boosters, Conversation, Gender, Metadiscourse markers

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of language in use is known as discourse analysis. It is a "method for assessing the contributions made by different linguistic features to the interpretation of texts in their varied contexts," according to Barton and Stygall (2004). (p.57). Discourse analysis focuses on a language's forms, and functions, as well as its social and cultural characteristics, leading to deeper comprehension and more successful communication. Metadiscourse indicators are tools for establishing communication and social connection. One of the key characteristics of an underlying community can be expressed through the author's usage of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2004). In order to steer readers rather than enlighten them,

metadiscourse is defined as a speech about other discourse (Williams, 1981). Metadiscourse is known to be context-dependent and to closely relate to the expectations and conventions of those who utilize it in specific discourse groups (Hyland, 2000).

Position-taking is one of the main and most important aspects covered in metadiscourse research. According to Hyland (2001, p. 176), posture is "a textual voice," reflecting the author's attitude. The term "stance" refers to the portrayal of a speaker's or writer's attitude, point of view, viewpoint, or posture toward the objects or ideas they are expressing and speaking about (Hunston & Thompson, 2000). Posture is the way a speaker or writer encourages readers or listeners to rely on their own knowledge, opinions, and/or immediate understanding. Posture includes personal judgment, assessment, and encouragement. 2008 (Xu & Long). According to Biber, the Oxford Dictionary describes the stance as "the expression of many different kinds of personal feelings and assessments, including attitudes that a speaker has about certain information, how confident they are about its veracity, how they were able to access the information, and what perspective they are taking" (2006). (p. 99). In this regard, Jaffe (2009) contends that choosing a position is evident in every contact between people and that adopting a neutral viewpoint also constitutes taking a position. Hyland (2005) divided stance markers into hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions in light of the significance of stance. To be more explicit, the current study concentrated on the second part of stance, or boosters.

The use of metadiscourse markers varies depending on the communities, genres, communities of learning, and culture (Hyland, 2005). It has been observed that men and women speak in various ways. There are a variety of factors that contribute to the difference between men and women, but biological, social, and psychological ones appear to be the main contributors to the differences that are noticed (Zunaidah, 2020). Tannen (1990) uses the stark contrast between how men and women perceive the world to explain the usage of gender-specific terminology. Although women see themselves as individuals functioning in a network of connections, men see themselves as individuals living in a hierarchical social society. Males and females use different language styles because of these varied orientations toward social communities. There has always been a lot of interest in the differences between how men and women use language. A consistent picture of gender variations in language hasn't been produced despite the

availability of various ideas, and earlier research has produced contradictory results in this area.

Theoretically, despite the fact that metadiscourse devices have been studied for more than 20 years, it appears that our knowledge of their use in oral production is still in its infancy. However, it is unclear to what extent the social context and gender alone have a significant impact on how these gadgets are used. The influence of gender on the use of metadiscourse markers in everyday speech in general and in a Kurdish context, in particular, has not been extensively studied, if at all. This is true despite the fact that a large body of research in the field of education has looked at the usage of metadiscourse markers from a variety of angles and explored the impact of personality traits on academic writing. Because of this gender discrepancy, the researcher decided to investigate how male and female Kurdish speakers apply boosters differently in the context of informal interactional communication.

Last but not least, a cursory survey of the reviewed literature reveals that there aren't many studies that particularly address stimulants in spoken conversation, especially in natural situations. Although written discourse was the subject of the majority of studies on boosters, further investigation in this area seems worthwhile.

With all these in mind, this study intends to answer the following research question:

1. Is there any significant difference between Kurdish males and females in employing boosting metadiscourse markers?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Conversation

The conversation is a discourse that is "mutually formed and negotiated in time between speakers; it is typically informal and spontaneous," according to Joan (2002). (p. 28). He goes on to say that interactions have a part in even the most casual chats. The practical purpose of "determining whether future social cohesion is possible or desirable and, for some, whether forming an intimate relationship is going to be feasible" can be accomplished through daily regular conversations (e.g., at parties) (p. 28).

B. Boosters

Metadiscourse, in the words of Hyland (2000, cited in Hyland & Tse, 2004), is the author's viewpoint on the proposition being made or the reader, or the language devices employed to frame a discourse. It is "discourse about discourse," as well as "linguistic material in texts, written or spoken, which adds nothing to the propositional content but is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret, and evaluate the information offered." (1993, p. 40; Crismore, Raija, & Margret).

It has been proposed to examine metadiscourse markers using several taxonomies (e.g., Crismore 1984, Dafouz-Milne 2003, 2008, Hyland 2005, Vande Kopple, 1985). Discourse markers are typically classified as either textual or interpersonal depending on their kind. Textual metadiscourse indicators, according to Hyland and Tse (2004), "order the discourse" by identifying topic transitions, suggesting sequences, cross-referencing, connecting ideas, previewing information, and

other techniques (p. 158). The illocutionary markers, tropicalized, sequencers, reminders, announcements, logical markers, and code glosses (such as parenthesis and punctuation) are among the textual markers (such as additives and adversatives). Dafouz-Milne (2008). The interpersonal metadiscourse markers, on the other hand, "alert readers to the author's stance towards both the propositional material and the readers themselves, therefore contributing to a writer-reader interaction and predicting the subjective negotiability of assertions" (Hyland, 1998, p. 443). "Essentially an evaluative kind of speech, interpersonal metadiscourse expresses the writer uniquely defined, yet disciplinary restricted, persona" (Hyland, 1999, p. 8). They consist of hedging words like "maybe," "assume," "can," and "reasonably," "boosters like "truly," "certainly," and "it is clear," attitude words like "I agree," and "surprisingly," engagement words like "you recognize that," followed by a self-mentioned (e.g., I, our, me). In the conversational exchanges of Kurdish speakers, the present study only looked at boosters as a subcategory of interactional metadiscourse indicators.

Boosters increase and accentuate an utterance's illocutionary force, both favorably and negatively, making it a stronger, more emphatic remark. Some researchers have given different names to boosters. For instance, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) referred to boosting devices as "intensifiers," Brown and Levinson (1997) referred to them as "strengtheners," and House and Kasper referred to them as "upgraders" (1998). (Holmes, 1995, p.73). Boosters "may augment or raise the influence of words with negative as well as positive intention or result," according to Holmes (1995). (p. 76). According to Holmes (1982) and Meyer (1997), lexical words that allow the author to clearly demonstrate their confidence in an assertion are referred to as "boosters." Similar to Hyland (1998; 2005), boosters are a strategy used to support a claim by demonstrating the author's assurance and conviction. Additionally, he made the idea that readers might be united through the usage of boosters.

The purpose of intensifiers is to increase or decrease the impact of sentence components or entire propositions. They are frequently used in spoken and conversational discourse and include phrases like "a definite truth," "a tremendous failure," and "a perfect success." Similar to hedges, intensifiers can be made up of a variety of lexico-syntactic components, but the bulk of them serve adjectival or adverbial modifying functions. In a speech, intensifiers have the purpose of underlining the truth of an assertion, emphasizing a specific point or the entirety of a statement, or exaggerating the actual state of circumstances (Brown & Levinson, 1987). When intensifiers are employed to project more politeness, sincerity, and honesty, their textual functions in other languages, including English, are frequently similar to those of hedges (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Quirk, et al., 1985) You helped me a lot, for instance, and I really appreciate it. In Kurdish, as in many other languages, there are a variety of intensifiers, most of which have complex contextual meanings.

C. Gender Differences

The 1975 book *Language and Woman's Place* by Lakoff was the catalyst for the study of gender and language. According to Lakoff (1975), there is a "language" or "register"

for women that represents their inferior status in society. She claims that the way women speak reflects how society perceives them and the behavior that is expected of them. Because only women use it, this language is not seen to be conventional enough when compared to men. As a result of being straightforward, succinct, and unambiguous, Lakoff thought that men's language was superior to that of women. 57 (Weatherall, 2002). In other words, Men use assertive, mature, and direct language, while women use indirect, undeveloped, overly formal, and quasi-language language, according to Lakoff (1975).

When choosing linguistic features to express attitudes, viewpoints, opinions, and judgments, genders may behave differently. Del (2006) asserts that gender has a substantial influence on the usage of rhetorical devices and that different genders may employ different types and numbers of metadiscourse indicators. The sort of discourse markers used affects how gender affects their use, according to Croucher (2004). (p. 44). According to Chun (2008), who makes a similar claim on page 33, "there are some substantial discrepancies observed in the use of inferential and emphatic markers," i.e., "female students employed more emphatic markers, whereas male students prefer to use more inferential markers" (Chun, 2008, p. 34). Men and women speak English differently in oral settings based on variable utilization of discourse markers, claims Mei (2006). More often than men, women tend to talk about their emotions. Men appear to favor impersonal topics, such as sports and news (pp. 66-67). Similarly, Yeganeh and Ghoreyshi (2015) found that gender disparities influence how discourse is used. They learned that Iranian women preferred to use more hedges when they wrote. Gender, according to Tse and Hyland (2008), has little effect on how men and women use language. These studies show that there are some discrepancies between male and female speech and writing tendencies.

D. Studies on Gender Differences in the Use of Metadiscourse Markers

Gender differences have gained prominence in the study of linguistics as a result of the differences in language use between men and women (Newman, Groom, Handelman, & Pennebaker, 2008). These studies have explored the nature and existence of these differences. Studies that were gender- and language-bound, however, revealed varying results. In contrast to some other researchers, several scholars, including Tannen (1994), Coates (1996), and Priesler (1986, as reported in Dixon & Foster, 1997), agreed with Lakoff's assertions (Dubois & Crouch, 1975, Nemati & Bayer, 2007).

For example, Crismore et al. (1993) looked into the effects of gender on male and female writers in Finland and the United States. The findings revealed that although Finnish women used hedges the most frequently, US men used them the least. Hedge usage was also higher among Finnish women than American women. Thimm, Koch, and Schey did research on emotive statements that imply personal engagement, such as "I like," "I dislike," and hedges, intensifiers, softeners, and ambiguity, in 2003. The study's conclusions showed that there weren't many significant differences between males' and women's speech. The researchers disagreed with Lakoff's suggestions in their final analysis, even though they allowed the

study's results may be interpreted in a variety of ways. Francis, Robson, and Read (2001) and Tse and Hyland (2002) found that male writers were more forceful and self-assured than female writers (2008). Bradac, Mulac, and Thompson (1995; cited in Kuha, 2005) looked at using intensifiers among 58 male and 58 female students. A statistically significant difference was found in the results. Males used intensifiers on average 0.8 times per 100 words, while women used them 1.1 times per 100 words. Also, women used a few intensifiers, such as really and so, more frequently than males. Nemati and Bayer (2007) conducted a study in Iran with the goal of examining cross-cultural and cross-gender variations in the usage of tag questions, hedges, and intensifiers. They contrasted the gender and cultural aspects of 6 English and 8 Persian cinema scripts through analysis. They made an attempt to pick social and family-themed situations that would faithfully represent the speech of common people in their daily lives. The results show that there is no appreciable distinction between Persian and English speakers. There was no obvious difference between English males and girls with regard to the three linguistic categories mentioned above. Iranian males and females both shared the same conclusion, namely that there were no discernible variations between them in how they used tag questions, hedges, and intensifiers. Finally, speakers of Persian and English employed the selected linguistic features to similar degrees utilized. The findings of this study also ran counter to Lakoff's theories regarding language distinctions between the sexes. Matei (2011) examined the impact of age and gender on the selection of discourse markers in Romanian and English speakers. The findings revealed a considerable difference in the conversational styles of men and women, with women having a penchant for using far more discourse markers with inferences, indirectness, and implicatures. Tajeddin and Alemi (2012) investigated the use of five interactional metadiscourse categories (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions) in online discussion forums using Hyland's (2004) model as a framework (ODF). They wanted to see if there were any notable differences in the usage of interactional metadiscourse markers between male and female university EFL students. Female EFL learners used metadiscourse markers more frequently than male EFL learners, according to the results of chi-square tests, but the differences were small and inconsequential; in other words, gender had no appreciable effects on the use of interactional metadiscourse markers. Sharp (2012) looked into the ways in which both men and women employed intensifiers so and truly in modern television programming. The findings showed that female characters benefited from intensifiers much more than male characters did. The research shows that female speech in current television programs frequently uses intensifiers so and truly.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

A quantitative research paradigm was used for this investigation. Data were manually counted to determine the number of boosters after being collected by observation and

transcription. The study's goal is to quantify the data and extrapolate relevant findings from a sample to the target population.

B. Participants

To achieve the goals of this study, 34 (17 males and 17 females) subjects were chosen. They were all Kurdish native speakers, ranging in age from 18 to 45. The selection of these contributors was based on their presence in the place the researcher was present, in the context in which they were engaged in face-to-face conversation.

C. Data Collection Procedure

Because the goal of this study was to examine the distinctive linguistic aspects of spoken communication, an analysis based on actually occurring language data sets was required. In order to do this, a substantial number of daily conversations between Kurdish male and female speakers were painstakingly conveyed and analyzed. Based on Hyland's classification of boosters, which includes lexical and discourse-based categories, the frequency of occurrence of the boosters was estimated. The study's data were gathered through observation. First, the researcher visited various locations in Bukan to acquire genuine and natural data (e.g., family gatherings, shopping, restaurants, and so on). The researcher occasionally alternated between participating (acting as an active participant) and observing (functioning as an observer) (non-active participant). Because all of the study's data were collected while the participants were going about their regular business, they are all considered to be natural speech. Each conversation's participants were aware that their statements were being recorded. They also had assurances that the speech they recorded would be kept confidential and only used for scholarly purposes. The speech was captured for three hours and forty minutes for Kurdish speakers. There are several instances of unfinished sentences or clusters of words that are delivered without pauses to demonstrate they function as independent sentences. Thus, it's crucial to remember that utterance was first thought to be the basic unit of speech.

D. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was chosen after taking into account a number of parameters. Because the study concentrated on communicative oral interaction between participants happening in natural settings, the sentence cannot be a suitable choice for the analytic unit due to the significant frequency of unfinished sentences. Furthermore, it could be difficult to distinguish between one sentence's finish and another's beginning because spontaneous speech frequently stops. Therefore, it appeared that the objectives of this inquiry were best served by Nemati and Bayer's (2007) utterance unit of analysis. They define a speech as "the full linguistic invention of each individual, in a discussion, at each turn, whether it be in a single sound, a word, phrase, sentence, or even a succession of sentences" (ibid, p.192). After tallying the total number of utterances in each language, the utterances were divided into two categories: female and male utterances.

E. Data Analysis Procedure

The transcribed talks were painstakingly word-by-word reviewed to locate and identify the boosting devices in order to conduct the study. To guarantee there were no mistakes in categorizing and tallying the amount of each category across the full corpus, the researcher double-checked all the data. Items were coded by hand rather than by computers due to boosting's very contextual character and the fact that a certain form can be used for either a propositional or metadiscourse purpose. To ensure inter-rater reliability, one-third of the corpus was also provided to a second rater. Hence, it can be said that both intra- and inter-rater reliabilities are used in this study. The most recent SPSS software was then used to process the acquired data. Secondly, a descriptive analysis technique was utilized to estimate the frequency of boosters employed by male and female Kurdish speakers. To determine the differences in the category distribution of boosters between the two groups of speakers, the frequency of incidence of boosters for 1500 utterances (750 utterances for each gender) and their percentages were separately determined. In order to discover potential differences between the two groups and establish whether or not this difference is statistically significant, the non-parametric statistical test of Chi-square was performed. To evaluate the data, the Alpha level for the statistical significance of the Chi-square test was set at 0.05.

IV. RESULTS

The research question addressed what separates male and female speakers in terms of the application of booster markers in their daily conversations. A chi-square test was performed to see whether there is a statistically significant difference in the frequency of boosters between the two genders in the Kurdish data sets. Table 4.1 provides a descriptive investigation of the use of booster markers by male and female Kurdish speakers. Table 4.1.

Frequency of boosters used by Kurdish males and females

	Number of boosters	Number of utterances	Percentage of booster use
Female	275	750	36.67
Male	135	750	18
Total	410	1500	27.34

This result suggests that, in general, the use of booster markers in the Kurdish data is more frequent among females compared to males. Boosters emphasize the speakers and writers' certainty about their argumentation. The Kurdish corpus had a total of 275 boosters, of which 275 were used by females (36.57%), and 135 by males (18%).

The chi-square test was used to determine whether or not there are disparities in the overall use of booster markers between the various genders. Table 4.2 shows the results of the chi-square test for the male and female data.

Table 4.2.

Results of the chi-square test regarding the use of boosters by Kurdish males and females

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.992(a)	13	.005
Likelihood Ratio	41.464	13	.000
N of Valid Cases	32		

The Chi-square observed value of 0.005 ($P = .005$) reveals that there is a substantial variation in the usage of boosters in daily discourse between Kurdish men and women. Therefore, boosters are significantly more frequent in females' speech than in males' when they are interacting in their native language (Kurdish). As a result, the null hypothesis, which predicted no discernible difference in the usage of boosters by the sexes, is disproved. This outcome is perfectly consistent with Lakoff's (1975) assertion that female speech contains a large number of emphatic examples.

V. DISCUSSION

The present study's objective was to look at how Kurdish men and women tend to use epistemic modality of assurance (boosters) in their everyday speech when interacting with others in the community. It also aimed to ascertain whether gender had any effect on the linguistic abilities of each gender.

The findings indicated that in connection to the research question that addressed disparities between genders in the number of boosters applied in the Kurdish languages, female speakers in the Kurdish corpus were more likely than male speakers to give larger commitments to the information in the offer. As was noted earlier, boosters were employed to convey a significant degree of conviction in the claims. In Hyland's words (2005, p. 53), "boosters emphasize certainty and develop rapport by invoking audience solidarity and involvement, taking a joint position against competing voices." In addition, there were 410 instances of booster usage in the Kurdish corpus (13.67% by women and 18% by men), and there was a strong correlation between gender and booster use ($p < 0.05$). This study adds to past research by Serholt (2012), who found that women were more likely than males to utilize boosters, and by Sharp (2012), who found that female TV characters were significantly more likely than male ones to use intensifiers (so and really). This is also in line with the findings of Ghafar Samar and Alibakhshi (2007), who discovered that there were substantial differences between males and females in the language strategies used in male-male and female-female conversations. The current conclusion, however, is in line with Pasaribu's (2017) findings that females were more likely to utilize boosters (40 or 3%) than males (33 or 2.5%), demonstrating females' propensity to present themselves as more certain. However, Yeganeh and Ghoreyshi (2014) discovered that males rely on utilizing more boosters, which is in opposition to this finding. It might be argued that women may utilize intensifiers as a

linguistic tactic to draw in listeners and help create and sustain personal contact, which would explain why they use boosters more frequently than men in Kurdish. In this regard, Wardhaugh (2006) notes that "women are expected to employ speech more frequently than men in order to build and sustain personal bonds. It is anticipated that they would discuss their emotions and other socioemotional difficulties related to interpersonal interactions more than men. Although discussing intimate feelings is more important in female friendships, sharing activities is more important in male friendships. (p. 325). Also, because they naturally express their sentiments and emotions more in their behavior and speech, women may need to utilize some aggressive linguistic forms to express their strong ideas and thoughts on a variety of topics. The usage of "zor" (so, extremely) as one of the most prevalent intensifiers in regular discourse among Kurdish women is evidence of this tendency. Moreover, Sheldon (1990) asserted that women speak beautifully with more sentences of support, ask more questions, and offer more interpretations in order to accomplish their goals.

VI. CONCLUSION

Boosters are employed to highlight claims and demonstrate a writer's dedication to their claims, according to Hyland (1998). Boosters, he continues, allow authors an opportunity to engage with their readership and promote a sense of community. The goal of the current research is to determine if there are any notable disparities between men's and women's performance when it comes to the use of boosters in daily Kurdish talks. The importance of gender differences in the use of boosters for each genus separately was assessed using the chi-square method. The outcomes revealed a considerable difference between Kurdish males' and females' usage of boosters, indicating that female respondents used more boosters than male respondents and were rather likely to make stronger commitments to the propositional information they gave. This result appears to confirm the claims made by Holmes (2008) that women use boosters more frequently than males and by Lakoff (1975) that boosters are a characteristic feature of women's language. The findings of this study should encourage conversation and writing instructors to teach discourse devices to English language learners from other languages. The results of this study can likewise increase the researchers' awareness of gender variations in the usage of linguistic aspects in second and foreign languages. The outcomes of this investigation can support the inclusion of boosters and other meta-discourse elements in the L2 curriculum. Furthermore, cross-cultural research on social interactions will improve our comprehension of the discourse marker problem. Also, it's critical to examine whether there are gender variations in the usage of boosters because, in accordance with Gorjian (2008), being aware of these differences will promote more enjoyable communication.

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