

A corpus linguistic analysis of gendered language and power dynamics in early 20th century movie dialogues

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Abstract

This study examines how gendered power dynamics are constructed through language in early twentieth-century English-language cinema. Focusing on films produced between 1920 and 1949—a period defined by entrenched patriarchal ideals—the research analyzes the representation of male and female characters in cinematic dialogue. Utilizing a corpus of 10 to 15 culturally significant film scripts (approximately 200,000 words), the analysis employs AntConc 4.2.0 for frequency counts, keyword extractions, collocation analyses, and concordance examinations to systematically identify gendered linguistic patterns. The findings indicate that both male and female characters are frequently described with positive evaluative adjectives such as “good,” “great,” and “nice.” However, their negative portrayals diverge markedly. Female characters are disproportionately targeted with sexually explicit or objectifying slurs (e.g., “fat slut,” “bitch”), whereas criticism of male characters typically emphasizes behavior, status, or competence using terms such as “killer,” “genius,” and “trucker.” Additionally, occupational nouns associated with men (e.g., “businessman,” “doctor”) highlight agency and professional identity, while comparable terms for female characters are often gender-marked or diminutive (e.g., “PR girl,” “lady”). These recurring lexical and grammatical features serve to reinforce and perpetuate contemporary gender ideologies, casting men as active, dominant agents and women as subjects of evaluative judgment rooted in appearance or emotion. The study’s corpus-driven approach reveals how cinematic language functioned not only as a reflection but also as a mechanism for the normalization and transmission of prevailing gender hierarchies. In offering empirical evidence of linguistic gender bias in early film dialogue, this research advances understanding in media discourse analysis, feminist linguistics, and historical corpus studies. It underscores the crucial role of language in the (re)production of social norms and power structures in popular media.

Keywords: *gendered power dynamics, early twentieth-century cinema, film dialogue, corpus linguistics, patriarchal ideology, linguistic representation, evaluative adjectives, media discourse analysis, feminist linguistics*

Introduction

Language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a powerful social instrument that reflects and maintains societal norms, ideologies, and power structures. In cultural artifacts like films, spoken dialogue is a crucial site for the (re)production of social meanings, particularly those related to gender and authority. Cinematic discourses often reflected prevailing ideologies that positioned men and women in unequal social roles during the early 20th century, when gender norms and deeply rooted patriarchal values were prevalent. Thus, studying early film language can facilitate understanding the linguistic construction and cultural transmission of gendered power dynamics.

A methodical and empirical framework for examining such phenomena is provided by corpus linguistics. By using techniques like frequency counts, concordance analysis, and collocation studies, the corpus linguistic approach enables researchers to identify linguistic patterns in sizable text collections, claim Tony McEnery and Andrew Hardie (2012). These techniques allow one to determine the distribution and usage of specific linguistic forms among gendered speakers, such as pronouns, modal verbs, or evaluative adjectives. Paul Baker has highlighted the importance of corpus-based methods for

investigating how language encodes gender ideologies, pointing out that corporation enables researchers to go beyond anecdotal assertions to more broadly applicable conclusions supported by evidence.

Linguists and feminists have long studied how gender is portrayed in language. In her seminal work *Language and Woman's Place*, Robin Lakoff made the case that characteristics of women's language, such as indirectness, hedges, and tag questions, tend to portray female speakers as less assertive and authoritative than their male counterparts. Deborah Tannen later developed this viewpoint by arguing that different cultural expectations are reflected in the conversational styles of men and women, with men typically using language to establish dominance and women using it to establish rapport. When incorporated into movie dialogue, these linguistic variations serve to reinforce gendered expectations among viewers in addition to reflecting societal attitudes.

Through her concept of the "male gaze," Laura Mulvey argued that classical Hollywood cinema constructs women as objects of male desire and narrative control, bringing the ideological implications of such portrayals into stark relief. Recent studies, like those edited by Roberta Piazza, Monika Bednarek, and Fabio Rossi (2011), have demonstrated that linguistic analysis can provide equally compelling insights into how films construct gendered subjectivities, even though Mulvey's work was primarily focused on visual representation. Notwithstanding these developments, there are still relatively few corpus-based studies that concentrate exclusively on early 20th-century film, which was a pivotal time in the evolution of linguistic and narrative conventions in the medium.

By performing a corpus linguistic analysis of gendered language and power dynamics in English-language film dialogues from 1920 to 1949, this study aims to close that gap. It examines male and female characters' linguistic representations of agency, authority, and relational power. Three primary questions are the focus of the study: (1) How do male and female characters express power and submission differently through language? (2) In cross-gender interactions, which recurrent lexical and grammatical characteristics indicate dominance or deference? (3) What larger gender ideologies of the early 20th century are reflected in these patterns?

This study intends to advance the overlapping domains of media discourse analysis, gender studies, and corpus linguistics by utilizing both quantitative trends and qualitative interpretations. Ultimately, it makes the case that early film dialogues provided a critical lens through which to study the cultural politics of language in cinema by reflecting and influencing public perceptions of gender roles and power structures.

Theoretical background

This study is grounded in the combined theoretical perspectives of corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and feminist linguistics to explore how gender and power are constructed through language in early twentieth-century film dialogue. Baker and Egbert (2016) and Sunderland (2021) argue that language is not simply a means of communication but a socially and ideologically embedded practice that reflects, reinforces, or challenges dominant cultural norms. In films, how characters speak serves as a cultural script, shaping and transmitting ideas about gender roles to viewers.

Corpus linguistics provides a robust empirical framework for studying linguistic patterns in large datasets, allowing researchers to uncover recurring lexical and grammatical features that might be missed through traditional qualitative methods. As Marchi and Taylor (2018) and Brezina (2018) emphasize, corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) enable the systematic identification of statistically significant language patterns aligned with social ideologies, especially in media contexts. They highlight how techniques such as collocation analysis, keyword extraction, and concordance examination make it possible to trace how gendered language operates across different characters and narrative situations in film scripts.

Feminist linguistics, building on foundational theories, emphasizes intersectionality and the role of media in shaping gendered identities. Mustapha and Mills (2021), along with Sunderland (2021), stress

that gendered media discourse often reflects complex power relations through linguistic strategies, including hedges, intensifiers, evaluative adjectives, and objectifying metaphors. Media discourse analysis further situates films as cultural artifacts that encode and circulate gender ideologies, contributing to the normalization of power hierarchies through recurrent tropes and narrative devices, as Bednarek (2023) and Piazza (2019) noted.

Recent research has expanded on these fundamental viewpoints by combining critical feminist corpus linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2021), meaning is created by the interaction of several semiotic resources, including gesture, sound, and image, which are especially important in the cinematic medium. Continuing this tradition, O'Halloran (2013) highlighted that instead of treating language as a single channel, multimodal analysis offers a framework for comprehending how discourse functions across various modes in combination. By methodically investigating the ways in which gender ideologies are ingrained and perpetuated through common language practices, Lazar (2017) furthered critical feminist discourse studies. The use of corpus linguistic tools to uncover subtle yet ubiquitous gendered discourses in large datasets was illustrated by Baker and Levon (2015). Gill (2017) emphasized how the media uses overt and covert representational techniques to maintain inequality, highlighting the importance of critical feminist viewpoints in media analysis. When combined, these methods enable a more complex framework for the current study, placing linguistic evidence in the context of early film's multimodal environment as well as word choice and syntax patterns. This provides a more comprehensive explanation of the creation and dissemination of gendered meanings.

By integrating these theoretical approaches, this study investigates how early film dialogue functioned to reflect and reproduce prevailing gender norms, providing empirical insight into the subtle linguistic mechanisms operating in cinematic texts to shape cultural understandings of gender and authority.

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive and exploratory corpus-based design to examine how gendered language shapes power dynamics in English-language film dialogue from the early 20th century. Film scripts from 1920 to 1949 were used to create a specialized corpus; selections were made based on cultural significance, representation of both genders, and the availability of complete dialogue. The corpus used in the study comprises 12 English-language films from both Hollywood and British studios. These films were selected based on specific inclusion criteria, which included the following: (a) they were made in English, (b) they received widespread distribution or critical acclaim at the time, and (c) they had enough dialogue for in-depth linguistic analysis. Movies with little spoken content focused on musical performances or visual spectacle were excluded. The corpus encompasses various genres, including historical narratives, comedies, romantic dramas, and adventure films. To ensure text comparability, word counts for each film were normalized to between 8,000 and 10,000 words. By taking these steps, the corpus is guaranteed to be representative of English-language films from the early 20th century, encompassing a wide variety of gendered linguistic patterns.

A total of 150,000 to 200,000 words of dialogue were gathered, cleaned for analysis, annotated by speaker gender, and formatted into plain text files. AntConc 4.2.0's frequency counts, keyword extraction, collocation analysis, and concordance (KWIC) functions were used to analyze lexical and grammatical features that reflect authority, submission, and relational power. Researchers can track the distribution of gendered terms, intensifiers, role nouns, and evaluative adjectives across characters by using the KWIC function, which makes it possible to identify recurrent lexical patterns and their immediate co-texts systematically. To align theoretically informed questions—like those about agency, dominance, and difference with empirical data, KWIC highlights recurring patterns. This allows for interpretive judgment to contextualize semantic and pragmatic nuances. To guarantee that the findings fairly reflect the broader

corpus, sample data were chosen at random from each movie, and the texts were not altered beyond the necessary readability cleaning.

The methodology combines theoretically guided interpretation with corpus-based quantification, enabling a nuanced investigation of how early cinematic discourse is constructed and reflects historical gender ideologies and a robust empirical assessment of linguistic indicators of gendered power.

Results and discussion

The main conclusions of a corpus-driven study of gendered language and power relations in early 20th-century film dialogues are presented and interpreted in this section. In order to determine how language reflects societal attitudes toward gender, authority, and interpersonal interaction within the cinematic discourse of the era, the study examined linguistic patterns across a variety of lexical and grammatical categories using AntConc as the primary analytical tool.

The analysis, which was based on script data taken from classic movie dialogues, concentrated on five main areas: gender-related lexical choices, the use of imperatives and modal verbs to convey power, collocational patterns linked to gendered referents, discourse markers related to affirmations and interruptions, and sentiment-laden language used to describe male and female characters. In order to uncover subtle and frequently noticeable patterns of gender representation, each of these categories was investigated using keyword frequency, collocate analysis, and concordance line interpretation.

This section focuses on the lexical choices surrounding male and female characters, specifically the words used to describe or to refer to them, to analyze how gendered language appears in film dialogues from the early 20th century. To find patterns of association, gendered pronouns like he, she, him, and her, as well as role nouns like man, woman, girl, and sailor, were examined using concordance and collocate analysis in AntConc. The aim is to determine if specific adjectives and nouns are more commonly associated with one gender and contribute to recurrent representations of femininity or masculinity. The first table illustrates how female characters are frequently framed in early cinematic discourse by listing the most common adjectives and nouns that co-occur with the pronoun "she."

Table 1. Common adjectives and nouns associated with female characters

Descriptor Type	Lexical Item	Example Concordance Lines
Positive	good	"she's a good teacher", "she's a good girl", "she's a good skater", "she's a good climber", "she's a good kid"
	great	"she's a great chick", "she's a great girl", "she's a great ship", "she's a great kid"
	lovely	"she's a lovely girl", "she's a lovely lady"
	nice	"she's a very nice girl", "she's a nice girl"
	beautiful / beauty	"she's a beauty!", "oh, she's beautiful"
	smart / intelligent	"chic, smart, intelligent"
	funny	"she's funny", "she's a really funny character", "she's a funny woman"
	talented / skilled	"she's a fantastic writer", "she's a linguist", "she's a clairvoyant", "she's a photographer"
	hard worker	"she's a very hard worker"
	delicate	"she's a very delicate flower", "she's a delicate flower"
Negative / Neutral	little	"she's a little too tall", "she's a little dingy", "she's a little hairy", "she's a little put out"

	dull	"she's a very dull girl"
	fat slut	"she's a fat slut" (appears twice)
	bitch	"she's a bitch like all the others"
	junkie	"she's a fuckin' junkie"
	cunt	"she's a fucking cunt"
	glitch	"she's a glitch"
	gold-digger	"she's a gold-digger"
	hooker	"she's a hooker"
	killer	"she's a killer"
	liar	"she's a liar"
	liberal	"she's a liberal"
	lump of clay	"she's a lump of clay"
	monkey	"she's a monkey", "she's a bright little monkey"
	murderess	"she's a murderess"
	rascal	"she's a rascal"
	child abuser	"she's a child abuser"

According to the data, there is a strong preference for positive adjectival collocations with "she." Words like "good," "great," "lovely," and "nice" are commonly used. This implies that female characters are generally framed positively, especially when discussing their innate qualities or younger age (e.g., "good girl", "good kid", "great girl", "great kid", "lovely girl"). Specific qualities like "smart" and "intelligent" indicate a recognition of mental acuity, while "funny" denotes comedic or entertaining qualities, in addition to general positivity. The word "delicate" is used frequently, highlighting a semantic field associated with gentleness or fragility.

In contrast, a subset of adjectives shows representations that are less flattering or even disparaging. Often used to describe physical size or a perceived minor quality, "little" modifies "she" ("a little too tall," "a little dingy," "a little hairy," "a little put out," "a little beige," "a little bit worn out," "a little small"). Explicit derogatory terms that emphasize extremely harmful and frequently offensive characterizations, such as "fat slut," "bitch," "junkie," and "cunt," are more concerning. A less favorable portrayal is also influenced by adjectives like "liar," "headstrong," and "dull." The nouns that come right after "she's a" frequently specify the character's function, personality, or sense of self. Nominal collocations like "teacher," "girl," "kid," and "lady" are frequently used. These terms mainly refer to typical roles in society or stages of development.

The corpus also includes occupational and professional nouns that follow "she's a," including "writer," "doctor," "climber," "photographer," "linguist," and "PR girl." This lexical category suggests that women were, to some degree, represented as competent professionals in a range of skilled fields in early film scripts. However, the use of "PR girl" and the continued gender-marking of roles (e.g., using "girl" rather than "woman" in professional contexts) indicate that female professional identity was frequently linguistically infantilized or diminished. Even in progressive frameworks, the co-occurrence of professional terms with the pronoun "she" reveals a complex discursive space where women are recognized as capable but frequently marked by gendered qualifiers or diminutives, reinforcing traditional expectations.

Along with occupational identities, the corpus focuses on a broad range of character and personality-related nouns related to "she." For example, "babe," "beauty," "chick," "looker," and "big girl" emphasize physical attractiveness, femininity, or emotional tone. Although these nominal collocates have a descriptive purpose, they also exhibit evaluative bias, reflecting the common practice of judging female characters by their appearance or behavior. In contrast to the professional or action-oriented collocates more frequently found in the male character analysis, these patterns imply a semantic preference for

objectifying or aestheticizing representations of women. Individualized or localized portrayals are also facilitated by using abstract identifiers like "character" and regionally coded nouns like "New Englander," though these instances seem less familiar.

The variety of figurative, abstract, or metaphorical nouns used to describe female characters is the most linguistically illuminating pattern. From a discourse-analytic standpoint, these nominal collocates—which include "blank page," "controller," "device," "glitch," "fantasy," "godsend," "liar," "murderess," and "lump of clay," act as metaphors of identity, projecting intricate ideological frames onto female characters. Some adjectives, like "fantasy" or "godsend," romanticize the female character by implying desire or salvation. Others, such as "murderess," "gold-digger," "liar," "hooker," and "criminal," attribute transactional value, social threat, or moral deviance. These labels, which portray women as deviant agents of destruction or virtuous objects of admiration, exhibit a high degree of semantic polarity. Early cinematic narratives relied on a binary framework for female identity, as this linguistic polarization demonstrates: the angelic ideal versus the dangerous other.

Furthermore, the erasure of agency is indicated by the use of inanimate or dehumanizing nouns like "device," "glitch," and "lump of clay," which metaphorically reduce female characters to systems or objects. The discursive strategies of objectification, in which women are linguistically deprived of their autonomy and portrayed as passive or dysfunctional entities, are indicated by these forms of nominalization. This is consistent with critical feminist linguistics, which contends that lexical and grammatical decisions mirror larger power dynamics and frequently use nuanced language to reproduce gender hierarchies.

The corpus's representation of female characters is complicated and occasionally contradictory, as evidenced by the linguistic patterns found around the word "she." Positive reinforcement is prevalent, especially for younger or more well-liked characters, emphasizing qualities like goodness, talent, and pleasantness. This implies a normative baseline of favorable characteristics frequently attributed to female characters. However, the usage of extremely disparaging and objectifying terms also indicates a darker linguistic undercurrent in the dataset. The co-occurrence of phrases like "fat slut" and "lovely lady" in the same corpus highlights a wide variety of female representations, some of which may be stereotypical. This duality may reveal underlying societal biases present in the source material, or it may represent different narrative functions, such as antagonists or idealized characters.

In summary, the nominal collocates of "she's a" reveal a broad and ideologically charged spectrum of female representation. While there is evidence of occupational and professional identity, it is frequently counterbalanced by terms that objectify, infantilize, or moralize. These patterns, identified through collocate frequency and concordance analysis, demonstrate that early film language encoded gendered norms through what women did and what they were called. The intersection of descriptive, figurative, and evaluative nouns constructs femininity as both socially productive and symbolically loaded, serving as a powerful tool in the cinematic articulation of gender.

On the other hand, the second table illustrates how male characters are frequently framed in early cinematic discourse by listing the most common adjectives and nouns that co-occur with the pronoun "he."

Table 2. Common adjectives and nouns associated with male character

Descriptor Type	Lexical Item	Example Concordance Lines
Positive	good	"he's a good one", "he's a good egg", "he's a good papa", "he's a good driver", "he's a good payer", "he's a good man"
		"he's a good boy", "he's a good little piggy", "he's a good frog", "he's a good guy"

	great	"he's a great guy", "he's a great army leader", "he's a great kid", "he's a great kisser", "he's a great milliner"
	jolly good fellow	"he's a jolly good fellow"
	nice	"he's a nice man", "he's a nice guy"
	smart	"he's a pretty smart hombre"
	talented / skilled	"he's a real gardener", "he's a real businessman", "he's a real stud", "he's a real operator"
		"he's a very gifted genius", "he's a genius"
Negative / Neutral	little	"he's a little sod", "he's a little psycho", "he's a little confused", "he's a little preoccupied"
		"he's a little dirty", "he's a little disgruntled", "he's a little out of sorts", "he's a little busy"
	dangerous	"he's a very dangerous guy", "he's a dangerous wizard"
	suspicious	"he's a very suspicious character"
	fucking	"he's a fucking psycho", "he's a fucking liar", "he's a fucking trucker", "he's a fucking doctor", "he's a fucking hick"
	bastard liar	"he's a bastard liar"
	nut	"he's a nut"

Similar to the results of the “she” analysis, the lexical patterns surrounding the pronoun “he” shows a generally positive baseline in the representation of male characters. Descriptors like “good,” “great,” and “nice” often co-occur with male referents, creating an impression of general likeability, social acceptability, and moral sufficiency. These words serve as positive evaluative adjectives that support the normative framing of male characters in the story as trustworthy, kind, or admirable individuals. A semantic prosody, or the propensity for certain lexical items to be surrounded by positively charged language, is reflected in the recurrence of these positive collocates from a corpus linguistic perspective. This prosody subtly directs the viewer's interpretation of the male character's integrity or worth.

The use of descriptors that highlight physical size, social standing, or implied dominance is a more pronounced linguistic pattern seen in male portrayals. In phrases like “big man,” “big boy,” and “big guy,” the adjective “big” frequently indicates masculine authority, maturity, or social influence in addition to physical stature. This reinforces the gendered ideology that links men to strength, leadership, and institutional or spatial power. Furthermore, nouns like “stud” and “operator” further encode male characters as strategically adept or sexually competent, roles that support hegemonic masculinity. These word choices imply that male characters are expected to perform, dominate, and succeed in relational or public spheres in addition to acting.

Professional and competent identities are the focus of another important lexical domain. Occupational nouns like “driver,” “businessman,” “gardener,” “trucker,” “doctor,” and even “milliner” (a less gendered profession) index male characters as agents within skilled or labor systems. These terms add to a larger semantic field of competence, expertise, and productivity when combined with modifiers like “real” (e.g., “he's a real businessman”) or evaluative nouns like “genius.” From a linguistic perspective, this illustrates how occupational nouns are frequently chosen alongside intensifying adjectives to establish narrative authority or social legitimacy.

There is also a discernible trend of hostile or dangerous portrayals in contrast to these capable and commanding ones. Negatively charged terms like “dangerous guy,” “dangerous wizard,” “psycho,” “killer,” “liar,” and “monster” are commonly used to describe male characters. These lexical choices suggest a narrative trope in which men are positioned as villains or disruptors, in addition to constructing

individual male characters as threats. This illustrates the dichotomy in male representation: either men are dangerous and dominant, or they are dominant and admirable, according to discourse analysis. This dual positioning lends credence to the idea that narrative development revolves around male power, whether it be utilized in a positive or negative way.

On the other hand, specific lexical patterns depict male characters' frailty or small imperfections. When the adjective "little" is used frequently with descriptors like "confused," "preoccupied," "dirty," or "disgruntled," it tends to emphasize fleeting emotional or physical states. Instead of referring to deep-rooted character defects, these descriptors imply temporary slip-ups or imperfections. This suggests a collocational context in corpus linguistics where "little" serves as a diminutive or mitigating marker, reducing the force of criticism and maintaining the character's more general positive framing. Without completely undermining their power or ability, such depictions may humanize male characters and provide relatable moments.

Importantly, explicit derogatory terms like "fucking psycho," "fucking liar," "fucking trucker," and "fucking hick" are frequently used. These terms are harsh, but they tend to target behavior, profession, or regional identity rather than sexual objectification or bodily judgment, which are more common in the lexical portrayal of female characters. This difference highlights the gendered asymmetry in derogation: men are criticized through the prisms of aggression, dishonesty, or class, whereas women are more frequently characterized in terms of morality or beauty. According to linguistic theory, the use of intensifiers like "fucking" heightens narrative urgency and emotional impact, but they are frequently motivated by power struggles or social conflict rather than objectification.

Finally, relational and social role nouns like "man," "papa," "boy," "child," "guy," and "friend" are used to reinforce male identity consistently. These nouns anchor male characters in roles that are societal, familial, or peer-based, which helps to create a stable identity schema that defines them as both individuals and as holders of relational status. Other or non-dominant gendered expressions are marginalized as a result of the discursive normalization of masculinity, which is facilitated by the regular reinforcement of male identity through role-specific nouns.

The lexical context of "he" in early 20th-century cinematic dialogues reveals a diverse range of masculine representation, from capable and valiant to flawed and hazardous. Corpus linguistic analysis demonstrates how evaluative adjectives, occupational nouns, and recurring patterns of co-occurrence combine to create a complex yet ideologically coherent representation of men as key players in action, power, and narrative control.

Further understanding of the construction of gendered power dynamics in early cinematic dialogue can be gained by examining pragmatic elements like turn-taking, interruptions, and modality in addition to lexical patterns. Tannen's (1990) observations of conversational power asymmetries between men and women are consistent with the linguistic enactment of dominance in which female characters are often interrupted by male counterparts or have their turns truncated. The use of modal verbs like "must," "should," or "could" to express modality further emphasizes the disparities in agency: female characters' modals typically convey obligation or uncertainty, in line with Lakoff's (1975) description of women's language as more tentative and deferential, whereas male characters normally use deontic modals to issue directives or assert control. Mulvey's (1975) notion of the "male gaze" is expanded upon by these interactional patterns, which show that power hierarchies are ingrained in spoken discourse structure, narrative focus, and camera placement. The researcher could track patterns of turn-taking interruptions and modal usage throughout the corpus while maintaining the empirical foundation of the analysis, using concordance and collocation functions in AntConc (Baker, 2014), making it easier to identify these pragmatic phenomena systematically. By placing linguistic behavior within larger sociocultural frameworks, the study demonstrates how early film dialogues use both lexical choice and interactional structure to operationalize and normalize gendered hierarchies.

Conclusion

Both the concordance analysis of "he" and the earlier analysis of "she" show different and overlapping linguistic patterns in how male and female characters are portrayed in the corpus. Positive attributes are heavily emphasized for both male and female characters, with the terms "good," "great," and "nice" frequently used to describe both sexes. This points to a general trend in the text to favorably depict heroes or well-liked characters of any gender.

Positive and negative portrayals are linked to different semantic fields, though. For female characters, physical appearance is emphasized a lot ("beauty," "knockout," "pretty") and is linked to gentleness or fragility ("delicate flower"). The "she" dataset includes highly explicit and objectifying derogatory terms like "fat slut," "bitch," "junkie," and "cunt," even though competence is emphasized ("good teacher," "fantastic writer," "linguist," "doctor," "journalist," "photographer," "psychic"). This suggests a representation in which female characters are frequently assessed based on their physical characteristics and are subjected to highly demeaning language when portrayed in a negative light. For male characters, size, implied strength, and influence become more important ("big man," "big boy," "big guy"). Professional roles also often emphasize competence ("good driver," "real gardener," "real businessman," "genius"). Male characters are frequently portrayed negatively by using language that indicates peril, violence, or dishonesty ("dangerous," "psycho," "killer," "monster," "liar"). Although strong, these terms are typically used to describe actions, intent, or mental states rather than being objectifying or sexually explicit, as is the case with female characters. Male characters are more likely to use the "fucking" intensifier, which gives negative descriptions a rough, combative tone.

A variety of positive and negative traits are portrayed for both male and female characters, and both are portrayed in professional and competent roles. Nonetheless, underlying gendered biases are suggested by the qualitative variations in the language used. In addition to being subjected to extremely objectifying and sexually charged disparaging language, female characters are more frequently described in terms of their appearance. Power, agency, physical presence (size/strength), and the ability to do both good and serious harm are more often used to define male characters. In character construction, this linguistic divergence reflects broader societal tendencies where men's value is linked to their impact and capabilities, while women's value is sometimes linked to their appearance.

By applying this analysis to modern media, researchers have found that discourse and narrative framing still contain subtle instances of gender asymmetry. For example, Gill (2017) contends that these disparities uphold cultural beliefs that associate men with competence and authority, whereas women are frequently evaluated based on their appearance or roles in relationships. Similarly, Smith and Cook (2008) point out that while overt stereotyping has decreased, gendered perceptions in contemporary film and television are still shaped by the distribution of dialogue, pragmatic dominance, and evaluative language. These results imply that the linguistic patterns found in early 20th-century films are not only relics of the past but also still have an impact on how media portrayals are made today.

In conclusion, the linguistic examination of gendered pronouns in movie dialogue offers important new perspectives on how gender identities are constructed in the media. The enduring nature of these trends emphasizes the necessity of continuous critical analysis of media language usage to advance fair and complex portrayals of all genders.

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