The Language of Power: A Sociolinguistic Study of Social Status in little women by Greta Gerwig

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this sociolinguistic research is to provide an in-depth analysis of language use as a reflection of power dynamics and social status in Greta Gerwig little Women (2019). This research uses a combination of film analysis and sociolinguistic theory to examine how language is used to communicate and influence power dynamics and social differences among the characters. Data was collected by closely observing the film, focusing on the language choices and communication strategies used by the characters. The analysis explores the complex nuances of language use in the context of social relations, examining differences in language use among different social groups, and the role of gender in shaping language patterns. The results highlight the interplay between language, power and social status in the story of the film "Little Women", providing valuable insights into the field of sociolinguistics and highlighting the importance of language in describing and challenging social dynamics. The analysis focuses on language use in the context of social relations, including language use by characters from different social groups and differences in language use between male and female characters. The research provides insights into the relationship between language, power, and social status in the context of film and makes a contribution to sociolinguistics.

Keywords: language; power; social status; gender; sociolinguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of linguistics focuses on the study of the structure and function of language in communication. For those interested in learning a foreign language, studying linguistics can provide a deeper understanding of vocabulary and syntax, allowing for effective communication and greater cultural appreciation. Linguistics as a field can be divided into several areas, including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. This thesis specifically focuses on sociolinguistics, which examines how language use can reveal and reinforce social identities such as status, gender, and how language can be used to challenge power dynamics in society.

Little Women (2019) directed by Greta Gerwig is an adaptation of the novel of the same name by Louisa May Alcott which was first published in 1868. Set in the 19th century, the film follows the lives of four sisters in a middle-class family who face social challenges and opportunities as women. The film received critical acclaim for its portrayal of female empowerment and its exploration of social class and gender roles.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the language used in the film as a reflection of power and social status. The study examines how different characters in different social groups use language and how language use differs between men and women. The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between language,
power and social status in film. Little Women (2019) was chosen as the subject of this study because of its unique ability to examine language use in a historical context and analyse how language is used to construct and negotiate social class and gender roles. In addition, the film has received much attention and praise for its realistic and nuanced depiction of social dynamics, making it a suitable subject for sociolinguistic analysis.

The main purpose of this study is to advance our understanding of how language is used to create and maintain power dynamics and social hierarchies, and to illuminate the role of language in shaping notions of gender and social class. By examining the language used in Little Women (2019), this research advances the field of sociolinguistics and our understanding of how language use reflects and reinforces social power structures.

A. The Definition of Linguistics

The word "Linguistics" comes from the word "Lingua" which means language in Latin, often people misinterpret between "Linguistics" and "Linguistics". Therefore, to avoid such misunderstandings, the author deliberately quotes the statements of experts who explain the difference between linguistics and linguistics.

García-Díaz, J. A., Cánovas-García, M., Colomo-Palacios, R., & Valencia-García, R. (2020). Detecting misogyny in Spanish Tweets. An approach based on linguistic features and word embedding. Future Generation Computer Systems: This research delves into the field of linguistics by investigating misogyny detection in Spanish tweets. Utilising linguistic features and word embedding, this research explores how linguistic patterns and semantic associations can be leveraged to identify instances of misogyny. This research underscores the versatile application of linguistic tools in understanding and addressing social issues within digital communication platforms.

HALL, J. K. (2019). Contributions of Conversation Analysis and Interactional Linguistics to Usage-Based Language Understanding: Expanding a Transdisciplinary Framework. The Modern Language Journal, 103, 80-94: This scholarly article extends the boundaries of linguistic exploration by highlighting the contributions of conversation analysis and interactional linguistics. By focusing on spoken discourse and the complex dynamics of language use in social interaction, this research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of language grounded in real-world use. This approach emphasises the interaction between linguistic structures and communicative practices.

According to Weiyun He (2017) in "Discourse Analysis: A Handbook of Linguistics" (pp. 445-462), linguistics is a scientific field that studies language systematically and interdisciplinarily. It encompasses various subfields, including phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. The goal of linguistics is to understand the nature and rules of language, how language is used in communication, and how language is shaped by social, cultural, cognitive, and psychological factors.

Rampton, Maybin, and Roberts (2015) in "Theory and Methods in Linguistic Ethnography" (pp. 14-50) defines linguistics as the study of language in its social and cultural context. Linguistics studies how language is used by individuals and groups to construct and negotiate identities, relationships, and meanings. Linguistics also studies language variation, language attitudes, language politics, and language ideologies, and how these aspects affect communication in different social settings.

Gorter (2013) in "Linguistic Landscapes in a Multilingual World" (Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 33, pp. 190-212) defines linguistics as a field of study that studies language in the context of multilingualism and language diversity. This includes analysing the linguistic landscape, i.e. the presence of different languages in the public sphere, and how language is used to communicate, assert power, control and dominance in social interaction. Linguistics also examines language policy, language planning, language education, and language hierarchies, and their implications for language use in multilingual societies.

B. The Definition of Sociolinguistics

Chun, C. W. (2019). Language, discourse, and class: What next for sociolinguistics? Journal of Sociolinguistics: In this article, Chun discusses the role of sociolinguistics in analysing social class and shifts in sociolinguistic studies. He illustrates how language and discourse can reveal social class dynamics and contemplates future directions for sociolinguistic enquiry in the modern era. Chun's work underscores the ever-evolving nature of sociolinguistics and its continued relevance in understanding the structure of society.

Heyd, T., & Schneider, B. (2019). Sociolinguistics of late modern society. Journal of Sociolinguistics: This article explores sociolinguistics in the context of late modern society, investigating how language and communication are affected by social change, technological advances, and shifting identities. The research relates sociolinguistics to the interconnected and complex dynamics of contemporary society. Heyd and Schneider emphasise the importance of considering sociolinguistic phenomena in a rapidly evolving globalised world.
Sociolinguistics is a field of study that examines the relationship between language and society, focusing on how social factors influence language variation, language use, and language attitudes. Verhoeven (2017) defines sociolinguistics as the study of how language is used in social interaction and how it is shaped by social, cultural, and contextual factors. Sociolinguistics studies how language is used by individuals and groups to establish social identity, build relationships, and convey meaning in different social contexts, including education.

Svendsen (2018) defines sociolinguistics as the study of the dynamic and complex relationship between language and society, especially from the perspective of the average person. Sociolinguistics examines how people use language in everyday communication to negotiate social identity, build solidarity, or establish power dynamics, and how language choices are influenced by social, cultural, and situational factors. Svendsen's definition also emphasises the importance of considering individual volition and participation in shaping sociolinguistic practices.

Gumperz (2015) defines sociolinguistics as a field that focuses on the interactive aspects of language use in social contexts. Sociolinguistics studies how language is used as a tool of communication, negotiation, and socialisation in different settings, such as face-to-face communication, group discussions, and institutional contexts. Gumperz's definition emphasises the importance of studying the social aspects of language use, including the role of context, discourse patterns, and social norms in shaping communicative practices.

C. Language and Power

Ridealgh, K., & Gómez, L. U. (2020). Potestas and the language of power: Conceptualising the Power and Wisdom politeness approach in ancient languages. Journal of Pragmatics, 170, 231-244: Ridealgh and Gómez embark on an in-depth exploration of the complex interplay between language and power, especially in the realm of ancient languages. This research introduces the concept of "Potestas" as a lens through which to view power dynamics in relation to the nuances of politeness strategies. By investigating linguistic features that signalled authority and influence in ancient texts, the researchers shed light on how power was negotiated and maintained through linguistic choices. This research significantly contributes to our understanding of the historical role of language in shaping social hierarchies and power relations.

Lewis, J. (2019). Equity in Music Education: The Music We Talk About: Language and Power in the Urban Music Classroom. Music Educators Journal, 105(3), 66-68: Lewis's research enters the realm of music education to reveal the ways in which language and power intersect. With a focus on urban music classrooms, it investigates how language functions as a mechanism for asserting and negotiating power. By analysing the linguistic interactions between educators and students, Lewis underscores how language is used to establish authority, convey cultural meaning, and influence students' perceptions of musical knowledge. This research underscores the important role of language in shaping equitable access to education and fostering a sense of belonging in diverse educational contexts.

Language and power are interrelated concepts and are widely studied in sociolinguistics. Kohn (2012) examines the relationship between language and power in the context of institutional discourse. Institutional discourse refers to language used in formal settings such as government, education, and other organisations, where power dynamics play an important role. Kohn reviews the book "Language and Power: An Introduction to Institutional Discourse" edited by Mayr Andrea, which provides insights into how language is used to establish and maintain power relations in institutional contexts. The book explores how language is used as a tool for persuasion, negotiation, and control in institutional settings, explaining the ways in which language shapes power dynamics and affects social structures.

Barkhuizen (2016) uses a narrative approach to study language, identity, and power in language teacher education. The research focuses on how language teachers construct their identities and negotiate power relations through their narratives in the context of language teacher education programmes. Barkhuizen argues that language teachers' identities are closely related to issues of power, as teachers negotiate their roles, identities and professional relationships through the use of language. This research highlights the importance of understanding the role of language in constructing identity and power dynamics in the field of language teacher education.

Tenzler and Pudelko (2017) investigated the impact of language differences on power dynamics in multinational teams in an international business context. The study explored how language diversity affects communication patterns, decision-making processes and power relations in multinational teams. The research findings reveal that language differences can significantly affect power dynamics in such teams, with language being used as a tool to establish dominance, exclusion or inclusion. This research emphasises the important role of language in shaping power dynamics in cross-cultural business environments.
D. Power Dynamics

Turnhout, E., Metze, T., Wyborn, C., Klenk, N., & Louder, E. (2020). The politics of co-production: participation, power, and transformation. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, 42, 15-21. This study investigates the intricate web of power dynamics in collaborative initiatives known as co-production, where stakeholders from diverse backgrounds collaborate to address environmental challenges. Investigating the realm of environmental sustainability, this study underscores the critical role of power in shaping the trajectories of co-production projects. It highlights how power imbalances and different levels of participation can affect the effectiveness of co-production efforts, ultimately impacting their transformative potential. By exploring the interactions between different actors, the study highlights how power relations can be leveraged or challenged to achieve more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

Nasir, Y. S., & Guo, D. (2019). Multi-Agent Deep Reinforcement Learning for Dynamic Power Allocation in Wireless Networks. IEEE Journal of Selected Areas in Communications, 1-1. This research investigates the domain of wireless networks and their dynamic power allocation, using cutting-edge techniques such as multi-agent deep reinforcement learning. Through the lens of network communications, this research reveals how power allocation strategies impact the efficiency and performance of wireless networks. Using advanced computational methodologies, this research contributes to the optimisation of power allocation, improving network reliability and resource utilisation. The interplay between power allocation, communication efficiency, and emerging technologies underscores the intricate dynamics in this technological ecosystem.

Dallas, M. P., Ponte, S., & Sturgeon, T. J. (2019). Power in global value chains. Review of International Political Economy, 26(4), 666-694. This exploration explores the multi-faceted concept of power in the global value chains that underpin the interconnectedness of the modern economy. Through the lens of political economy, it investigates the complex interplay of power dynamics among entities involved in global production networks. It underscores how power relations influence decision-making processes, the distribution of benefits and overall outcomes in these complex chains. By highlighting the influence of power, this research provides insights into how economic structures and relationships are shaped in globalised markets.

Marini, J. J., Rocco, P. R. M., & Gattinoni, L. (2019). Static and Dynamic Contributors to VILI in Clinical Practice: Pressure, Energy, and Force. American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. This medical exploration studies the domain of ventilator-induced lung injury (VILI) in the clinical setting. By analysing static and dynamic contributors to VILI, including pressure, energy, and force factors, this study aims to improve understanding of the mechanisms of lung injury during mechanical ventilation. The concept of power was used to analyse the impact of energy and pressure transfer on lung tissue. This study underscores how power, in the context of medical care, contributes to our understanding of physiological interactions and potential interventions in critical care settings.

Hatzigiyyriou, N., Milanovic, J., Rahmann, C., Ajjarapu, V., Canizares, C., Erlich, I, Vournas, C. (2021). Definition and Classification of Power System Stability - Revisited & Extended. IEEE Transactions on Power Systems, 36(4), 3271-3281. This exploration studies the complex domain of power system stability in the context of energy systems. By revisiting and extending existing definitions and classifications, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of power system stability. The research underscores how power dynamics in energy networks affect operational stability and reliability. Through a power system lens, this research advances our understanding of the interplay between power, stability and system performance in the context of an increasingly connected energy landscape.

E. Social Status and Gender

Kern, MR, Duinhof, EL, Walsh, SD, Cosma, A, Moreno-Maldonado, C., Molcho, M, Stevens, GWJM (2020). Intersectionality and Adolescent Mental Well-Being: A Cross-Country Comparative Analysis of the Interaction Between Immigration Background, Socioeconomic Status, and Gender. Journal of Adolescent Health, 66(6), S12-S20: Kern et al.’s study explored the complex interactions among intersectionality, socioeconomic status, gender, and mental well-being among adolescents. Through cross-country analyses, the researchers explored how factors such as immigration background and social status intersect with gender to shape mental health outcomes. By examining the complex intersection of identities, this study highlights how different social dimensions can synergistically impact mental well-being in diverse adolescent populations.

perceptions. The research investigates whether double standards or social identity considerations influence how students perceive ability. By analysing classroom interactions, the research found various ways in which gender and ethnicity intertwine with social status in shaping perceptions of competence and ability.

Social status and gender are important factors that influence one's behaviour and interactions in different social settings. Lucas-Molina, B., Pérez-Albéniz, A., Fonseca-Pedrero, E & Giménez-Dasí, M. (2018) examined the relationship between bullying, defensiveness, and outsider behaviour, and how social status and gender moderate this relationship with empathy. This study examined how individuals of different social status (e.g., popular, rejected, neglected) and gender (e.g., male and female) perceive and respond to bullying situations. The findings revealed that social status and gender play important roles in shaping empathy levels and responses to bullying, self-defence, and other people's behaviour, highlighting the complex interplay between social status, gender, and empathy in social interactions.

Fisk, SR, Miller, BJ, & Overton, J. (2017) examined the role of social status and gender in understanding the interaction between testosterone, economic risk-taking and gender. The research focused on how social status and gender influence testosterone levels and economic risk-taking behaviour in men and women. Findings suggest that social status and gender are important factors influencing testosterone levels and economic risk-taking behaviour, and these relationships are complex and multifaceted. This study emphasises the need to consider social status and gender in understanding the hormonal and behavioural dynamics associated with economic risk-taking.

Ferguson, Zimmer-Gembeck and Duffy (2016) conducted a longitudinal study to examine relational aggression and victimisation in early adolescence, and how gender differences are moderated by social status. The study examined how social status (e.g., popular, rejected, ignored) moderated the relationship between relational aggression and victimisation in boys and girls during early adolescence. The findings revealed that social status played an important role in shaping the relationship between relational aggression and victimisation, and this relationship differed by gender. This research highlights the importance of considering both social status and gender in understanding relational aggression and victimisation dynamics in early adolescence.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a combination of film analysis and sociolinguistic approach. The main data source of this research is the film Little Women (2019), which is analysed in detail with examples of language use. The film analysis is based on sociolinguistic theory, which helps contextualise language use and understand the social and cultural factors that shape it.

The film analysis involved watching the film multiple times to identify and record instances of language use. This includes noting the language of characters from different social groups, such as March's family, Laurence's family, and other characters, as well as differences in the speech styles of male and female characters. These examples were then analysed in the context of the film's social relations, including power dynamics and gender roles.

The sociolinguistic approach involves applying sociolinguistic theory to film analysis. This approach examines the social and cultural factors that influence language use, such as social class, gender, and how these factors are reflected in the language used by the characters in the film. The analysis also draws on previous sociolinguistic research to help contextualise the findings and provide a broader understanding of the relationship between language, power and social status.

Overall, the research methods used in this study aim to provide a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the language used in the film Little Women (2019) and its relationship to power and social status. The combination of film analysis and sociolinguistic theory provides a nuanced understanding of the complex social dynamics depicted in the film and helps to explain the ways in which language can reflect and reinforce social power hierarchies.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from this study reveal a significant relationship between language use and social status. The characters' language choices and speech patterns reflect their respective positions in society. Characters with higher social status tend to use language as a means to assert dominance and authority. Aunt March, a character portrayed as wealthy and influential, uses language to maintain control over her family and shape their future according to her society's perspective. These findings underline the role of language in upholding established norms and power relations. In addition, the research also reveals instances where language is used to challenge and subvert traditional
power. The March sisters, especially Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy, exhibit linguistic behaviours that defy gender norms and social expectations. Jo's assertive and ambitious language reflects her resistance to conforming to gender roles and her aspiration to become a writer, a profession largely associated with men at the time. Meg's more conformist language is in line with her acceptance of traditional gender roles as a wife and mother. Beth's quiet and submissive speech patterns reflect stereotypical perceptions of female submission. Amy's pursuit of femininity through language, which focuses on appearance and marriage, contrasts with Jo's defiance.

The discussion that emerges from these findings centres on the film's depiction of evolving power dynamics. While characters like Aunt March use language to maintain societal norms, characters like the March sisters use language to challenge these norms and seek individuality. The film shows that power is not fixed, but can be negotiated, disrupted and transformed through language choices. In addition, the research raises questions about the wider implications of its findings. It encourages reflection on how language can be a tool to reinforce and challenge power imbalances in real-world contexts. The analysis of "Little Women" encourages viewers to consider their own use of language and its impact on power in their lives and communities. This sociolinguistic study, against the backdrop of the film, calls for further research into how language evolves as social norms and power structures change.

4. CONCLUSION
In conclusion, Greta Gerwig film "Little Women" reveals the complex relationship between language, social status, and gender, and highlights the ways in which power is built and maintained. Through the language used by the characters, the film effectively illustrates the influence of social status on language choices and emphasises the power and opportunities among different social groups. From a future research standpoint, it would be beneficial to study the influence of language on power dynamics and social status in other cultural and historical contexts. Moreover, by examining how language use evolves and adapts to changing social norms and power structures, further insights into the complex relationship between language and power will be gained. Overall, the analysis of language and power in "Little Women" emphasises the importance of understanding how language is closely linked to social status and gender dynamics. By looking at the characters' language choices, the film invites viewers to reflect on their own language use and how language can maintain or challenge power imbalances in their own lives and society.

5. REFERENCES


