

A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Gender-Bound Language Use in Turkish and English Plays: Implications for Foreign Language Education

Zubeyde Sinem Genc¹, Kıymet Selin Armagan²

¹Uludag University, Turkey

²Gebze Technical University, Turkey

Correspondence: Zubeyde Sinem Genc, Uludag University, Turkey.

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate gender-bound language use in Turkish and English languages and to identify the differences and similarities across cultures and genders in the plays with family and social themes. Four English and five Turkish plays were chosen randomly for comparison. The number of words in the plays were taken into consideration for an accurate and balanced analysis. For this reason, the closeness of the number of words used by male and female characters in the plays were more important than the number of plays in total. The Turkish plays consisted of 6781 words and the English plays comprised 7091 words. Thus, in the plays considered as samples of language, a total of 13.872 words were studied with respect to the use of intensifiers, hedges and tag questions in two major groups: (1) cross gender & same culture, (2) same gender & cross culture, within the framework of Lakoff's (1975) proposal concerning linguistic differences between males and females. A Pearson chi-square test was conducted on the quantitative data for all the analyses. The findings of the study showed that there were significant differences only in the use of hedges. No significant differences in the use of intensifiers and tag questions within the corpus under investigation were observed between the groups. This cross-cultural comparison on English and Turkish implies that Lakoff's proposition regarding gender-bound language use needs further exploration. The study sheds light upon intercultural communication, and raises awareness and understanding of whether and how language use differs between different genders and cultures, which might be helpful for teachers and learners during the processes of teaching and learning English or Turkish as a foreign language. Furthermore, when the results of the study are considered from the point of intercultural communication, this investigation unveils the similarities and differences between English and Turkish languages in terms of the use of intensifiers, hedges, and tag questions.

Keywords: gender-bound language; Turkish language and culture; English language and culture

1. Introduction

Gender difference in speech became an important issue of research within the field of sociolinguistics in the 1970s. Therefore, as a much-debated topic for years, a large number of studies have been conducted on the gender-bound language use in various languages. Since language is an enormous area of study, various aspects of language have been covered; from the purpose of language employment to different language patterns commonly used by men and women. The studies have clearly revealed that the results might change under a number of variables. Some of the defined variables influential on the results of the previous studies include culture, social norms, social status, educational background, socioeconomic level, age, and religious beliefs of the environment (Cameron 1994; Dubois & Crouch 1975; Nemati & Bayer 2007; O'Barr & Atkins 1998; Schlee 2009; Speer 2005; Tannen 1990). Since the variables are numerous, it is assuredly hard to make generalizations in the area of gender-bound language. However, the fact is that women and men are biologically coded in different ways and they have different thought systems, so the idea of gender-bound speech has been open to interpretation and research for a long time. The studies conducted so far include comparison of women and men talk in different social contexts in different cultures. It is possible to find research depending on various theories on both written and spoken discourses in the related literature. Moreover, considering that speech is a massive area with a great number of variables, literature review unfolds diversified results.

Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* (1975) is one of the first examples written about gender-bound language. In her book, Lakoff put a set of ideas about women speech forward and provided a basis for numerous studies. As she did not

give any empirical data to support her ideas, a number of researchers investigated her ideas in different social contexts. Lakoff based her proposals on popular views as men dominancy on women and women's lower status in society. She claimed that women express themselves with hesitation and indirect sentences. Empirical studies so far have provided confirmative and controversial findings, which implies that these claims depend on the society, cultural expectations, and social context.

Similarly, Spender (1980) connects the matter of women's politeness with social and cultural expectations of societies as women are expected to be more polite than men are. Continuing with politeness of female speech, the usage of slang and highly impolite vocabulary are believed to belong to male speech. For example, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) showed that women are not expected to use profanity while there is no such expectation for men. However, the same research proves that this expectation changes under such variables as religion, age and family structure, the general belief is that male speakers often use slang.

Although Lakoff (1975) and Spender (1980) propose similar theories about gender-bound speech, Spender (1980) explains the difference as the dominancy of men over women while Lakoff (1975) believes in subordinate social status of women. Both Lakoff (1975) and Spender (1980) approach gender-bound speech from a feminist point of view. Tannen (1990), on the other hand, suggests that the difference between women and men talk is caused by boys and girls growing up in different worlds. Tannen (1990: 42) claims that "interaction between women and men is alike cross-cultural communication". She mentions about 'genderlects' and states that people speak different genderlects, not different dialects.

Besides the social and cultural expectations, Lakoff (1975) also states that women are person-oriented while men are object-oriented. The theory of having different orientations has also been a basis of several theories. The place of women in the society is an effective factor on women talk but this is not the only substance of gender-bound talk. By defining gender in terms of biological sex, the biological theory assumes that men are more powerful than women, implying that there are gender differences in language use. Gender-marked theory of Maltz and Borker (1982) is based on the biological theory. According to gender-marked language model, male speech is competitive while female speech is collaborative. Males employ language to state their dominance whereas females employ language to build close relationships and keep conversations going. To achieve their aim, women talk elegantly with more supportive sentences, ask more questions and make more interpretations (Sheldon, 1990).

The model proposed by Gilligan (1982; 1987) is also based on the biological theory of gender, which proposes that males' conflict is justice-oriented whereas females' is caring-oriented. It claims that females pay attention to others' needs, use more cooperative speech acts and try to find solutions to save the relationship. On the other hand, males try to solve the rules and reasons of conflicts. Both Gilligan's (1982; 1987) and Maltz and Borker's (1982) models assume that males will always reflect their own needs, rules, and their dominance to their speech whereas females will always employ a collaborative, supportive and others' needs-oriented language (Sheldon, 1990).

Cameron (1994) uses the terms "deficit, dominance and difference" to cover all the theories about gender and language. Cameron (1994) claims that all the ideas related to male and female speech can be explained with one of these terms. 'Deficit' is about female's lack in language and Jespersen (1970) supports this theory. In Bloomfield's (1922) work, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin*, male language is normative and the languages of others; namely the 'child', the 'foreigner' and the 'woman', are considered extra to that norm, namely deficient. 'Dominance' is about men's power and dominance on women. Lakoff's (1975) belief about the subordinate status of women, Spender's (1980) explanation for gender-bound language and male dominancy can be put together under the hypothesis of dominance. The last term, 'difference', is about men and women being from different cultures. Tannen's (1990) different 'genderlect' explanation can be covered by difference hypothesis.

The variety of approaches and theories related to gender-bound language shows that this is and has always been a controversial subject for researchers. Since there are numerous contexts, cultures, and discourse types, drawing definitive conclusions is hardly possible. However, doing research on cultural and/or contextual level and comparing findings retrieved from different cultures and contexts may shed light onto a number of debates and provide a basis for further research.

1.1 Scope of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to analyse gender-bound language use in Turkish and English languages and to find out the differences and similarities across cultures and genders in terms of the use of intensifiers, tag questions, and hedges through analysing plays in both languages. It is possible to find cross-cultural studies on gender-bound language in the literature. However, previous studies did not focus on gender-bound language in Turkish context comparing Turkish and English languages. Thus, the present study holds crucial importance in terms of making analyses across cultures and genders because no other previous studies have been conducted on gender-bound language use in Turkish before, to the

researchers' knowledge. The plays were chosen for this cross-cultural comparison because they were written in spoken language and provided the most natural-like data. As the number of words used in the plays were of crucial importance for the present study, five Turkish and four English plays were analysed and compared to investigate gender-bound language use.

Lakoff's ideas included many different points ranging from grammar to intonation. Analysing all of her claims in the scope of one study would lower the credibility of the research. In order to have the control on as many variables as possible, the scope of the study was limited to some specific areas. While choosing the areas to be studied, data credibility was considered. Analysis of politeness, hesitation, hypercorrect grammar and intonation in speech creates the problem of various independent and detrimental variables. These variables are the social context, the status, personal differences, and gender issues in a society, religion, the topic, and anything influent on the conversation. For this reason, the discussion of these categories was excluded from the study.

Three grammatical categories were selected for the investigation as they were purely dependent on the number of words used by both genders and provided a more credible ground for the analyses; tag questions, hedges and intensifiers. These three categories were determined in order to narrow down the focus of investigation for the credibility of the study. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to analyse the usage of hedges, intensifiers and tag questions in Turkish and English plays and to make comparisons under two major categories: cross gender-same culture, and same gender-cross culture. Therefore, the research questions of the study are:

1. Do women use intensifiers, tag questions and hedges more than men do in English in the plays investigated?
2. Do women use intensifiers, tag questions and hedges more than men do in Turkish in the plays investigated?
3. Do Turkish women use intensifiers, tag questions and hedges more than English women do in the plays investigated?
4. Do Turkish men use intensifiers, tag questions and hedges more than English men do in the plays investigated?

1.2 Literature Review

The main idea behind gender-bound language is the belief that women and men talk differently because of the social structure, culture, religion, and women's place in a society, status, conditions and various other factors. According to Lakoff (1975), gender-bound language is the result of women's place in a society. Women's subordinate social status causes women to talk hesitantly, indirectly, and politely. Lakoff (1975) has a feminist approach to gender-bound language and she defends her claims concerning her observations and experiences. Spender (1980) connects the difference between men and women speech to the social gender expectations just like Lakoff (1975). Spender (1980) also defends men's dominancy and power. However, Spender (1980) separates form from function; in this way, she is one of the first to investigate the place of gender in language. To Spender (1980), men are dominant in both form and function of the language. Resulting from this dominancy, gender-bound differences are inevitable. The differences and claims that have been proposed so far ranged from word choices, interference, politeness, intonation, empathetic interpretation, talking time, hesitation, and grammar to introducing new words to a language. For this reason, when gender-bound language is considered as an area to be investigated, it is quite important to determine the scope of the study carefully.

After the publication of *Language and Women's Place* by Lakoff (1975), a great number of studies have been conducted, and several theories have been put forward for and against her ideas. Because of women's subordinate social status, Lakoff claims that men and women have different ways of talking despite the lack of empirical evidence to prove her ideas. She concludes that women have large vocabulary related to woman's work, and they use adjectives, tag questions, hypercorrect grammar, super-polite forms, hedges and intensive 'so' more often than men do. She relates all these conclusions with cultural expectations of the society from a woman. Because of man dominancy, and cultural and social expectations, women cannot express themselves with direct sentences in a way that men do. Under the name of politeness, women talk with indirect words.

Lakoff (1975) states a number of features for women speech in *Language and Women's Place*. According to Lakoff's theory, women use hedges (kind of, sort of, seems like, etc.), super polite forms (I'd appreciate it if..., Would you mind...,etc.), tag questions (.isn't it?, etc.), indirect commands and requests (Isn't it cold here?), empty adjectives (lovely, adorable, etc.), question intonation on declaratives, large stock of words related to their specific interests (magenta, shirr etc.), intensifiers (just, so, etc.), apologies, emphatic stress, hypercorrect grammar, and direct quotation more often than men do. Moreover, to Lakoff (1975), women avoid using coarse language while men have no such intention.

A number of researchers such as Fishman (1980), and Eakins and Eakins (1978), conducted empirical studies supporting Lakoff's claims whereas some other researchers reported contrasting results (Dubois & Crouch, 1975). The previous studies imply the idea that the differences between men's and women's speech have been, and will probably be a topic for continuing debates in any period of time. There are many differences between women and men talk, which

may depend on many variables, and it is not possible to evaluate all of these variables together in some limited contexts. For example, Schleef (2009) conducted research on discourse markers and tag questions in spoken academic discourse with respect to gender discourse role and concluded that women do not use tag questions more than men do. He also agreed that academic discourse and different status might lead genders to change their discourse, a conclusion that is in opposition to Lakoff's claims.

Nemati and Bayer (2007) whose aim was to find out cross-cultural and cross-gender differences in the use of tag questions, hedges and intensifiers conducted a study in Iran. They analysed English and Persian film scripts and compared them according to cultures and genders. The results showed no significant difference either between genders or between cultures. According to their research, neither English nor Persian speakers use the chosen features of language more. The results of their research also negate the claims of Lakoff.

O'Barr and Atkins (1980) tested Lakoff's (1975) ideas in courtroom cases and witnesses' speech. Taking Lakoff's proposals as the basis for their study, they examined three men and three women. The results of the study showed that women used the stated features of language related to status and power. In their study, they discovered that when the people felt powerless, they showed signals of "women language" whereas the women and men with higher status showed no signals of Lakoff's claims. Because of their findings, O'Barr and Atkins (1980) renamed "women language" as "powerless language" and they pointed out that chosen discourse is not about gender but about power, social context and status.

A study by Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1985) in University of Washington also shows that Lakoff's claims are not related to gender but power and status. They designed their study to determine whether different discourses are linked to power, gender, or both. They analysed the interactions of intimate couples and the results showed that power dynamics created a diversion on discourse. Their findings supported O'Barr and Bowman Atkins's (1980) powerless language and were against Lakoff's claims.

In *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Coates (1998) compares different groups and concludes that men are power-oriented while women are support-oriented and act with solidarity. According to Coates (1998)'s observations, women are flexible, cooperative, affectionate and concerned while men are dominant and competitive. Coates (1998) named these features as "women's cooperative discourse" and two features of this discourse are hedges and questions. According to Coates (1998), women use interrogatives and hedges to encourage participation. Her ideas are consistent with Lakoff even though the reasoning is different.

Thimm, Koch, and Schey (2003) carried out a study on hedges, intensifiers, softeners, vagueness, and emotive statements expressing personal involvement such as I like, I hate. The findings of the study showed slight and non-significant differences between women and men speech. Even though the researchers accepted that the results of their study are open to interpretation, their conclusions are opposed to Lakoff's proposals.

Jespersen (1970), who reviewed Bloomfield's work "Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin", proposed a set of ideas about women's language. He claims that women talk a lot, and they use intensifiers and adjectives such as "pretty" and "nice" too much. On the other hand, men are responsible for introducing new words to language and they are better communicators than women are. Lakoff (1975) published her ideas about gender-based speech later than Jespersen (1970). When the two books are compared, they are similar in terms of men dominancy. However, Lakoff talks as a feminist while Jespersen talks as a man. Neither one offered empirical evidence; for this reason, it is not possible to fully accept their ideas.

Tag Questions

Grammatically, a tag question is composed of an anchor and a tag. The anchor's subject can be any kind of subject; however, the tag's subject must be a personal pronoun. Although the verb in the anchor can be a lexical, a modal or an auxiliary verb; the tag's verb must be an auxiliary or a modal verb. The combination of anchor and tag is called tag question. Huddleston and Pullum (2005) clarify that there are two types of tag questions and they serve for different purposes. Reversed polarity tags (You have called him, haven't you) are used for confirmation. On the other hand, constant polarity tags are used to express an attitude such as surprise (You got the job, did you? Congrats!)

According to Lakoff (1975), a tag question is neither an outright statement nor a yes-no question. Tag questions are pointers of low self-confidence because people using tag questions are in need of approval. As tag questions are a way of confirmation seeking, Lakoff gives only the examples of reversed polarity in *Language and Women's Place*. Because Lakoff's claims are used as the basis of the current comparisons, only reversed polarity tag questions were counted and analysed in the plays investigated in this study.

Although tag questions are commonly used in English, there are not a lot of types of tag questions and they are not as common in Turkish. They are called as "eklentî soru" in Turkish (İmer-Kocaman-Özsoy 2011: 346; Açıklın 2003:246) and they are as follows: öyle mi, değil mi, tamam mı.

Hedges

Hedges are defined as “*an intentionally noncommittal or ambiguous statement*” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1992). They are used to show that the speaker is not sure about, and not totally involved in what is being said. Namely, hedges show that the speaker is weakening the impact of the talk. Fraser (2010) suggests that modals (may, might etc.), lexical verbs (think, believe, seem, guess, etc.), adverbs and adjectives (perhaps, presumably, probable, possible, etc.), concessive conjunctions (although, though, while, whereas, even though, even, etc.), impersonal pronouns (one, it, etc.), modal noun (assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, suggestion, etc.) and a lot more phrases can be interpreted as hedges as long as they are used to lower the impact of the meaning.

Lakoff (1975) defines hedges as phrases like "sort of", "kind of", "it seems like", "I think", "I guess", and "you know". For this reason, only Lakoff's definition was taken into consideration and the other hedges were ignored in the present study. During the analysis of Turkish plays, direct translations of English hedges were considered to get the most reliable data. Hedges in Turkish are words and phrases as “belki”, “sanmam”, and “emin değilim”.

Intensifiers

According to Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), intensifiers are adverbs that are used to boost the meaning of an utterance (so, very, pretty, totally, incredibly, etc.). Considering the definition of intensifiers, it is clear that any adverb that serves to intensify the meaning can be counted as an intensifier. For this reason, narrowing down such a vast topic into just a number of adverbs would not be correct.

Lakoff (1975) reveals that the only intensifiers claimed to be used more often by women are “very” and “so”. Since Lakoff's claims are taken into consideration as the basis of the present study, only the uses of “so” and “very” were examined in this study. For gathering the most accurate data, direct translations of “so” and “very”, namely “çok”, and “oldukça”, were counted as intensifiers in the Turkish plays chosen.

2. Method

Quantitative research paradigm was adopted for the study. The frequency counts and percentages of the uses of hedges, intensifiers and tag questions in the data were calculated (Sugita, 2016), and a Pearson chi-square test was conducted in order to compare and contrast the groups of different genders in two different cultures. Chi-Square test gives a p-value, that tells if the test results are significant or not (Creswell, 2014). It was necessary to use this type of test in order to address the research questions that this study sought to answer.

2.1 Data Collection Procedure

Data for the present study were collected from four English and five Turkish plays chosen randomly. The plays included female and male characters focusing on social and family themes. The only criteria for the selection of the plays was the number of words used by female and male characters for an accurate analysis. For this reason, English and Turkish plays were chosen to achieve balance and closeness in the total number of words used by these characters. Since the purpose of this study is to make comparisons across cultures and genders, the authors preferred the plays written in the spoken language providing natural-like data for both languages and cultures under investigation. The English plays are as follows: Buyer's Market, The Brown Shoes, Beer Girl, and Trifles. The Turkish plays are: 3G Hızında Kız İsteme, Üniversite Hazırlık, Bir Rüya Yorumcusu, Kan Aranıyor, and Hesaplaşma. The plays were chosen randomly. However, each of them has both male and female characters and ordinary people in natural situations. To control the length of the documents, one-act plays were chosen and, the words were counted to balance the English and Turkish data. Data collected from the plays included 13.872 words in total. Turkish plays consisted of 7091 words. The number of words used by female characters in Turkish plays was 3199, and male characters used 3892 words. As for the English plays, 6781 words were examined. Out of this total number in English plays, female characters used 3685 words and male characters used 3096 words.

2.2 Data Analysis Procedure

The plays were chosen for the study because they provided spoken language in written form, which ensured one of the most reliable data sources for authentic and natural language use. Moreover, plays provided the convenience of choosing the length among one or more act plays. When the spontaneity and variety in terms of length are taken into account, the plays were found to provide the most convenient data for the scope of the present study.

In the procedure of opting the plays, the researchers focused on the number of words used by the female and male characters in the plays. Moreover, all the plays were one-act plays due to achieve variability and convenience of counting process in the data. First, only the women's speech in each play were separately examined for the total number of words they used. Afterwards, the same procedure was used to gather data for male characters. Because the study included analysis and comparison between groups, some parts were eliminated right after the first count in order to achieve balance and

closeness in the number of words in the English and Turkish plays, as presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

After the plays were determined, the total number of words for both female and male characters were counted. Tag questions, hedges, and intensifiers were counted as one word in order not to change the results since hedges in both languages can be one or more words, tag questions are two words and intensifiers in Turkish can be more than one word.

After the second count, the number of female characters' words, the number of male characters' words, the number of hedges, tag questions and intensifiers were recorded in terms of genders and cultures. Microsoft Office Word 2012 program was used to count the total number of words used by female and male characters.

Randomly selected parts of the data for the use of the hedges, intensifiers and tag questions were re-examined and double coded by the first author and an independent expert in order calculate inter-rater reliability. The agreement between both coders was 85.28%, which has been characterized as almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

3. Results

The analyses of the collected data were divided into two groups in terms of "same culture-cross gender" and "cross culture-same gender". For both analyses, the frequency of tag questions, hedges, and intensifiers were quantified and compared between the groups. According to the results of chi-square test, the only significant difference was found in the use of hedges, as shown in Tables 10, 11 and 12 below. No significant difference was discovered in terms of the use of tag questions and intensifiers.

a) Results for Tag Questions

Table 1. The use of tag questions by the female and the male characters in the Turkish plays

	Tag questions N (%)	Total
Female characters	12 (0.37)	3199
Male characters	11 (0.28)	3892
Total	23 (0.32)	7091

$$\chi^2 = 0,465 \quad P=0,637 \quad p>0,05$$

As shown in Table 1, the female characters in Turkish plays used 12 tag questions out of 3199 words while the male characters in the same plays used 11 out of 3892 words. There was not a significant difference between male and female characters in Turkish plays in the use of tag questions. In other words, the results of the analysis showed that Turkish women and Turkish men were not prone to use tag questions more frequently than each other ($p>0,05$).

Table 2. The use of tag questions by the female and the male characters in the English plays

	Tag questions N (%)	Total
Female characters	12 (0.32)	3685
Male characters	6 (0.19)	3096
Total	18 (0.26)	6781

$$\chi^2 = 1,105 \quad P=0,293 \quad p>0,05$$

Table 2 shows the comparison of English women and English men using tag questions. The female characters in the English plays used 12 tag questions out of 3685 words while the male characters in the same plays used 6 tag questions out of 3096 words. The results of statistical analysis display similarity to the results in Table 1. There was no significant difference between English women and men in terms of the usage of tag questions ($p>0,05$).

The cross-gender/same-culture analyses of data in Table 1 and Table 2 show that when women and men from both English and Turkish cultures are considered, no gender from both cultures used tag questions more frequently.

Table 3. The use of tag questions by the female characters in the Turkish and the English plays

	Tag questions N (%)	Total
Female characters in Turkish plays	12 (0.37)	3199
Female characters in English plays	12 (0.32)	3685
Total	24 (0.34)	6884

$$\chi^2 = 0,121 \quad P=0,728 \quad p>0,05$$

In Table 3, cross-culture/same-gender analysis is shown for women. The female characters in the Turkish plays used 12 tag questions out of 3199 words while the female characters in the English plays used 12 tag questions out of 3685 words. Statistical analysis of data revealed no significant difference between women from the two cultures ($p>0,05$).

Though the total number of words used by both group of women were different, tag questions were used in similar frequency by both Turkish and English women.

Table 4. The use of tag questions by the male characters in the Turkish and the English plays

	Tag questions N (%)	Total
Male characters in Turkish plays	11 (0.28)	3892
Male characters in English plays	6 (0.19)	3096
Total	17 (0.24)	6988

$$\chi^2 = 0,561 \quad P=0,454 \quad p>0,05$$

The cross-culture/same-gender comparison of the use of tag questions by men is shown in Table 4. The male characters in the Turkish plays used 11 tag questions out of 3892 words while the male characters in the English plays used 6 tag questions out of 3096 words. The results of chi-square test showed no significant difference between men from distinct cultures ($p>0,05$). Neither one of the groups used tag questions more often than the other.

The statistical analysis for the frequency of tag questions across cultures and genders revealed that there was no significant difference between Turkish and English male characters. In other words, the results showed that both English and Turkish men used tag questions similarly.

b) Results for Intensifiers

Table 5. The use of intensifiers by the female and the male characters in the Turkish plays

	Intensifiers N (%)	Total
Female characters	18 (0.56)	3199
Male characters	25 (0.64)	3892
Total	43 (0.60)	7091

$$\chi^2 = 0,185 \quad P=0,667 \quad p>0,05$$

Table 5 shows the comparison of intensifiers used by female and male characters in Turkish plays. Female characters used 18 intensifiers out of 3199 words and male characters used 25 intensifiers out of 3892 words in the Turkish plays. The analysis showed no significant difference between groups and the usage of intensifiers used by Turkish women and men displayed similarity.

Table 6. The use of intensifiers by the female and the male characters in the English plays

	Intensifiers N (%)	Total
Female characters	20 (0.54)	3685
Male characters	17 (0.54)	3096
Total	37 (0.54)	6781

$$\chi^2 = 0,001 \quad P=0,972 \quad p>0,05$$

The use of intensifiers by the female and the male characters in the English plays is reported in Table 6. The female characters used 20 intensifiers out of 3685 words while the male characters used 17 intensifiers out of 3096 words. The analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between the groups and that English women and English men used intensifiers similarly ($p>0,05$).

Table 7. The use of intensifiers by the female characters in the Turkish and the English plays

	Intensifiers N (%)	Total
Female characters in Turkish plays	18 (0.56)	3199
Female characters in English plays	20 (0.54)	3685
Total	38 (0.55)	6884

$$\chi^2 = 0,012 \quad P=0,911 \quad p>0,05$$

The comparison of the female characters in the Turkish and the English plays in terms of the use of intensifiers is displayed in Table 7. The female characters in the Turkish plays used 18 intensifiers out of 3199 words and the female characters in the English plays used 20 intensifiers out of 3685 words. The results of chi-square test showed no significant difference between female groups ($p>0,05$). Neither Turkish nor English women used intensifiers significantly more according to the results of the analysis.

Table 8. The use of intensifiers by the male characters in the Turkish and the English plays

	Intensifiers N (%)	Total
Male characters in Turkish plays	25 (0.64)	3892
Male characters in English plays	17 (0.54)	3096
Total	42 (0.60)	6988

$$\chi^2 = 0,251 \quad P=0,616 \quad p>0,05$$

Table 8 shows the comparison of the male characters in the Turkish and the English plays in terms of the use of intensifiers. The male characters in the Turkish plays used 25 intensifiers out of 3892 words while the males in the English plays used 17 intensifiers out of 3096 words. Statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the groups ($p>0,05$). According to the results, neither one of the groups were inclined to use intensifiers more often.

c) Results for Hedges

Table 9. The use of hedges by the female and the male characters in the Turkish plays

	Hedges N (%)	Total
Female characters	15 (0.46)	3199
Male characters	14 (0.35)	3892
Total	29 (0.40)	7091

$$\chi^2 = 0,514 \quad P=0,473 \quad p>0,05$$

The comparison of the use of hedges by the female and the male characters in the Turkish plays is shown in Table 9. Turkish women used 15 hedges out of 3199 words and Turkish men used 14 hedges out of 3892 words. Statistical analysis showed no significant difference between the groups. The results revealed that the number of hedges used by both genders was similar.

Table 10. The use of hedges by the female and the male characters in the English plays

	Hedges N (%)	Total
Female characters	57 (1.54)	3685
Male characters	25 (0.80)	3096
Total	82 (1.20)	6781

$$\chi^2 = 7,698 \quad P=0,006 \quad p<0,001^*$$

As shown in Table 10, the female characters in the English plays used 57 hedges out of 3685 words while the male characters in the same plays used 25 hedges out of 3096 words. The results showed that English women used hedges more frequently than English men did ($p<0,001$). When the use of hedges by English women and men was analysed, the results revealed that English women used hedges more frequently than English men did.

Table 11. The use of hedges by the female characters in the Turkish and the English plays

	Hedges N (%)	Total
Female characters in Turkish plays	15 (0.46)	3199
Female characters in English plays	57 (1.54)	3685
Total	72 (1.04)	6884

$$\chi^2 = 19,224 \quad P=0,0000 \quad p<0,001^*$$

The analysis of the female characters' use of hedges in the Turkish and the English plays is displayed in Table 11. The female characters in the Turkish plays used 15 hedges out of 3199 words while the females in the English plays used 57 hedges out of 3685 words. Statistical analysis revealed significant difference between English and Turkish women in terms of using hedges ($p<0,001$). According to the results, English women used hedges more frequently than Turkish women did.

Table 12. The use of hedges by the male characters in the Turkish and the English plays

	Hedges N (%)	Total
Male characters in Turkish plays	14 (0.35)	3892
Male characters in English plays	25 (0.80)	3096
Total	39 (0.55)	6988

$$\chi^2 = 6,230 \quad P=0,013 \quad p<0,001^*$$

Table 12 shows the difference between the male characters in the Turkish and the English plays in the use of hedges. The males in the Turkish plays used 14 hedges out of 3892 words and the males in the English plays used 25 hedges out of 3096 words. The results showed that English male characters used hedges significantly more than Turkish male characters in the data investigated ($p < 0,001$).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

As stated earlier, Lakoff (1975) has put forward a number of claims about women language and stated that women use intensifiers, tag questions, and hedges more often than men. Lakoff based her claims on men dominancy on women and women having a lower status than men in society. In this study, neither cross-cultural nor cross-gender analyses of the use of tag questions and intensifiers verify Lakoff's claims. The findings of this study are similar to that of Dubois and Crouch (1975); O'Barr and Atkins (1980); Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1985); Thimm, Koch, and Schey (2003); Nemati and Bayer (2007), and Schlee (2009). Schlee (2009) researched tag questions and discourse markers usage in spoken academic discourse and he concluded that there was no difference between genders. Nemati and Bayer (2007) compared Persian and English genders to reveal the differences in tag question, intensifier, and hedge use. The results of their study are also opposite to Lakoff's (1975) claims. Nemati and Bayer (2007) found out no significant difference either between cultures or genders. The results of this study are coherent with the results of the studies mentioned above except for the hedge usage.

Despite stating different reasons, Jespersen (1922), Lakoff (1975), Fishman (1980), Spender (1980), Tannen (1990), Coates (1998), and Speer (2005) allege similar theories on women language. By analysing the results of this study, it can be stated that English women use hedges significantly more than English men. On the other hand, when the results of intensifiers and tag questions were analysed, previous claims are disconfirmed. At the same time, there was no such difference when Turkish groups were analysed. For this reason, it may not be possible to conclude that there are certain gender-bound differences between languages according to the findings of this study. Although the results of intensifiers and tag questions are inconsistent with Lakoff's (1975) ideas, English women used hedges more than English men in data examined in this study. For this reason, it cannot be said that Lakoff's (1975) claims have all been negated. Three areas have been investigated in this study and the results for the use of hedges prove Lakoff's (1975) allegation that women use hedges more often. However, the results also showed that there was no such difference between Turkish genders. Accordingly, it is not possible to generalize this claim.

This study showed that English people used hedges more often than Turkish people and also English women used hedges more than English men. The difference between cultures might be the result of differences in the use of languages. In Turkish, hedges are not as frequently used as they are in English. There are no differences between Turkish women and Turkish men from the point of hedge usage. By taking this result as the basis of the conclusion, the cultural difference might be derived from linguistic features of both languages.

Four research questions were asked in this study. The first question was whether women used intensifiers, tag questions and hedges more than men do in English. When the results were analysed, it was found out that there was no difference between English women and English men from the point of stated language features except for the hedges. The only significant difference between women and men was the overuse of hedges by women. English women used hedges more than English men. In this regard, this result verifies Lakoff's claim. On the other hand, the results of usage of intensifiers and tag questions invalidate Lakoff's claims.

The second research question was if women used intensifiers, tag questions and hedges more than men do in Turkish. When the results were analysed, no significant difference was found out in any of the language features. The analysis invalidated Lakoff's claims on women language in Turkish. Different cultures, different languages, different status of women may be the reason laying behind the results.

The third research question was if Turkish women used mentioned language features more often than English women. When the results were analysed, it was observed that English women used hedges more frequently than Turkish women. However, no significant difference was found for either intensifiers or tag question usage. This shows that cultural difference may affect the way women talk around the world. Even though Lakoff did not mention any generalizations or specifications about women language, the results may imply that Lakoff's claims are not valid worldwide.

The answer for the fourth research question was that English men used hedges more frequently than Turkish men. However, no significant difference was found for intensifiers or tag questions. The similarity of the answers for the 3rd and 4th questions raises the question of whether hedge usage is related to linguistic or cultural differences between English and Turkish. The frequency of hedges is higher in English language than in Turkish. The reason might be related to the linguistic differences between the two languages. For this reason, further research is needed in order to find out whether the difference is the result of cultural, linguistic or some other factors.

The results of this study should be interpreted taking into consideration of its limitations. It is important to note that the plays in both English and Turkish languages, which were used for the data collection, make the study limited. Further research should be conducted with data naturally occurring in the discourse of men and women in both cultures.

One of the striking findings of this study is that English people used hedges more than Turkish people in the data under investigation. The difference in terms of use of hedges as revealed in the present study can be explained through cultural and linguistic differences. William O'Barr and Bowman Atkins (1980) took Lakoff's claims as the basis of their research and found out that Lakoff's definition of women language was not about gender but about the status, power, and social context. Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz's (1985) research findings also supported O'Barr and Atkins's findings. Thimm, Koch, and Schey (2003) also mention in their study that there is no link between gender and speech even though they admit that the results are open to discussion. When the findings of this study and the others mentioned above are considered, there is no link between gender and intensifier or tag question use.

This cross-cultural investigation can help raise awareness and attention of researchers and practitioners in the field of foreign language education on the use of gender-bound language. The differences and similarities explored may help to organize materials and activities to practice the use of certain structures such as intensifiers, tag questions and hedges in target languages.

English and Turkish languages come from different language families. This fact sometimes makes language teaching difficult. However, discovering similarities and differences in grammatical usages and features in languages may help teachers put more focus on specific subjects such as hedges, intensifiers, and tag questions. According to the results of the study, the only significant difference was found in the use of hedges. When the findings of the present study is considered from the point of language teaching, one may misunderstand that there is no need for teachers to put specific focus on intensifiers and tag questions. However, the results pointed out that English women and men use hedges more often than Turkish women and men; thus, extra focus on hedges may help Turkish learners of English understand the difference and the importance of the topic. When this subject is not specifically focused, Turkish learners of English may not be aware of the fact that hedges are used often in English and may not pay enough attention to the topic. Similarly, pointing out the fact that hedges are not used in Turkish as often as they are in English to English learners of Turkish, the learners' language awareness may be raised and more efficient language learning can be achieved.

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