

Do They Write Differently? Exploring Gendered Linguistic Differences in Academic Writings of Saudi Writers

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Abstract—This study examines linguistic differences between male and female academic writing in Saudi Arabia, focusing on published research papers. Using Biber's multidimensional analysis as a model, the study examines both male and female authors' inherent lexical and grammatical preferences. A dataset of 20 research papers from each gender was tagged to analyze the linguistic features. ANOVA analyses were then conducted to identify patterns and variations. The research study provides interesting perspectives on the complex relationship between language and gender in academic settings. Though there are some similarities in the use of lexico-grammatical features between male and female research papers, noticeable differences suggest that gendered perspectives have an impact on scholarly writing. Both male and female research papers fall on the same polarity of the continuum across all five dimensions but with varying degrees. The findings suggest that male research writers tend to use more informational, explicit, and non-argumentative language while using less non-narrative and abstract discourse than their female counterparts. This study emphasizes how gender impacts the linguistic choices.

Index Terms—corpus, gender, linguistic variation, multidimensional analysis, Saudi academic writing

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a complex and ever-changing tool that reflects various sociocultural factors influencing its form and function. Many studies have shown the profound influence of social norms, cultural shades, and individual identities on linguistic expression (Eckert, 2019; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Nonetheless, the determination of these factors shows that gender has been discussed regarding the complexity of language affairs, where gender relations are discussed in terms of what happens with language both within and across it (Aikhenvald 2016; Bergvall 2014; Coates 2015; Litosseliti 2014).

In academic discourse, research papers provide a unique avenue where the language attitudes embody the author's professionalism and other general sociocultural factors (Hyland, 2021; Douglas, 2016; Maringe & Carter, 2007). Saudi Arabia, as a multicultural nation with a developing gender relations context, offers researchers an opportunity to investigate the gendered linguistic differences in academic writing (Waterkeyn, 2021; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2017; Alsubhi, 2016; Alswael, 2013). Although extensive research has been carried out on culture and society and their influence on language (Bonnell & Hunt, 2023; Soh, 2020; Dixon et al., 2012), little is known about how female and male Saudi scholars express themselves from a gender perspective.

This research investigates Saudi male and female papers' linguistic features considering dimensions developed by Biber. Biber's multidimensional framework enables a comprehensive analysis of the lexico-grammatical tendencies of language use in academics. Hence, the proposed study will be of tremendous importance in the ongoing discourse in sociolinguistics and gender analysis since it analyses the language of both genders.

To fill this gap, the current research intends to compare and contrast male and female Saudi researchers' academic writing language. Its research questions focus on how women's role in academia has evolved regarding Saudi Vision 2030. Therefore, this research can be useful in establishing the basis for further research as it looks at the language used among the two genders. Thus, the findings of the present study give the researchers an understanding of the linguistic features in different cultural and educational settings. It gives a view of how gender impacts academic writing. Further, this research overviews the complex relationship between gender and language. It emphasizes the importance of having a more comprehensive knowledge of language variety in educational contexts. In conclusion, this study provides insight into how gender and linguistic choices are connected.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between gender and language is an area of interest for scholars, especially in the context of academic writing. Initially, studies suggested that there were distinct linguistic patterns between men and women, mainly influenced by social, cultural, and gender norms and expectations. However, the social roles of the language have changed, and people became not only aware of the differences but also appreciated the specificity of different varieties. In this regard, academic writing emerged as a severe concern in post-secondary education for academic researchers.

The analysis of academic writing is one of the most investigated topics. Coates' (2015) work found that men and women use different language strategies to reinforce or soften the given statement. It is believed that women are likely to use more hedging or politeness. At the same time, men are likely to be more assertive regarding communication, which corresponds with the power relations in society. Further, Holmes (1990) carried out an analysis of the conversational data where he pointed out that tag questions and hedges had gendered features. Women employed tag questions to confirm information or the opinion of the other speaker, while men employed tag questions less frequently and in different contexts.

Baker (2012) analyzed British National Corpus (BNC) and noted certain words concerning the particular gender. For example, men incorporated more aspects connected to work and success into their texts than women; women, in turn, referred to family and emotions more often than men. Mulac et al. (2013), in a similar study that included both experimental and corpus data, found out that women's use of such language was deemed more likeable though less competent.

It has been found through research that even though some gendered linguistic patterns are embedded, it is still possible to realize change in language use. For example, research on 'up talk', or high-rising terminals, has demonstrated shifting practices of this so-called women's style of speech to cross-gender communication and varying contexts (Tyler 2015). In the same way, the corpus studies have revealed how the media language reinforces gender stereotypes. Tools such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) have revealed biased representations in media discourse, with a particular focus on sports reportage (Aull & Brown, 2013).

Current theoretical frameworks and research strategies in linguistics have benefited significantly and have been directed by Biber's (1991) Multidimensional Analysis. As such, this perspective of linguistic analysis emphasizes the fact that to consider all of the variables effectively, one must adopt a broad view of language that includes all of its aspects, both micro and macro, ranging from word choice and syntax to the overall organization of discourses and the use of various types of rhetoric. These concerns may be, for example, aimed at providing the students with a better and broader understanding of the language variations, idiosyncrasies, and features within a wide range of genres, registers, and contexts, which is possible in the framework of an integrated approach to the teaching of English (Biber & Conrad, 2009).

Numerous academic studies have been conducted to investigate and clarify the various linguistic features, trends, and patterns observed in research papers written by scholars from different cultural, disciplinary, and geographic backgrounds (Hyland et al., 2022; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2017; Alsubhi, 2016; Alswael, 2013). However, there is a lack of research which can help identify the differences and distinctions between the papers written by female and male Saudi researchers in otherwise overlapping fields and the precise language use, choice of lexemes and phrases in the sources within the specific Saudi socio-linguistic, academic and cultural setting.

The rigorous scholarly research (Bonnell & Hunt, 2023; Soh, 2020; Dixon et al., 2012) has provided scientific outcomes and apprehensions that correspond to the theory, paradigm and research paths which exist and which are based on the variations and impacts of the societal, cultural and gender factors on speaking and writing, and also on the discursive practices. Moreover, these studies have made a ground-breaking contribution by expertly leveraging and deploying Biber's multidimensional analytical framework and paradigmatic lens.

Previous studies have utilized Biber's multidimensional analytical framework to analyze female and male written language gender patterns as well as sociocultural factors and academic writing practices. All these studies have greatly helped enhance and expand the general literature on this topic. Many researchers, including Ali (2024), Abdulhaleem and Ali (2024), Ali, S. and Ali, M. (2023), Omidian (2021), Staples (2016), Biber (2006), and Gray and Biber (2018) presented new and relevant ideas in this field studying multicultural contexts, environments, and literary landscapes.

Studies using corpora have been essential in helping understand the intricate connection between gender and language. The works under discussion shed light on the topic of gender differences in language use and the role of social relations in this context. The availability of larger datasets and improved research techniques have offered new possibilities for the study, challenging traditional assumptions and revealing the complex relationships between gender and language. Although there are some recent studies which focus on the differences in languages used by female and male Saudi students, the need to carry out an analysis of the different dimensions of academic writing of this group is very significant.

This study aims to conduct a detailed analysis of academic publications from Saudi research writers. The study will look at these publications' linguistic variations and patterns. The objective is to clarify the complex relationship among gender and academic writing in the particular setting of Saudi Arabia.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research study aims to analyze the differences in language use between Saudi male and female academic writers in their published research papers. The study uses a quantitative research method, and the data size used is an equal number of twenty research papers written by male authors and another twenty written by female authors. The sources had to be, therefore, of high quality, and only research journals and reliable databases were considered. Articles published in the previous three years were randomly selected for inclusion. The text files ranged in length from 4000 to 7000 words, but a procedure known as normalization was applied to bring them down to 1000 words (Biber, 1991). The raw word counts are normalized per 1000 words to provide an accurate comparison. For instance, an analysis of the adjective usage in Texts I and III revealed that while Text II contained more adjectives overall, Text I had a greater frequency of adjective usage per 1000 words.

Text I: (20 adjectives / 1,000 words) x 1,000 = 20 (adjectives)

Text II: (30 adjectives / 2,000 words) x 1,000 = 15 (adjectives)

Text III: (20 adjectives / 1,330 words) x 1,000 = 15 (adjectives) (Biber, 1988, p. 76)

Therefore, in the present study, the same standard was used to normalize the raw frequency count for the process of computation. For the consideration of the linguistic characteristics in the identified research articles, Biber's specialized tool for multidimensional analysis was used. This tool allows for the consideration and analysis of a wide range of aspects of language: lexical and grammatical preferences. Specific grammatical, syntactic, and lexical variables determined in the research included lexical density and richness. The gender of the author (male or female) served as the independent variable to examine its influence on linguistic expression in academic writing.

Due to the divergence of the results that the gender of the authors might have on the language use, we use the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test. This statistical method enabled the researchers to compare the means of different groups and test for significance between the means. To protect confidentiality and prevent biases, all research papers were anonymized before analysis.

This study has some limitations also. The results are based solely on academic research papers from Saudi Arabia and cannot be generalized to other contexts or genres. Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the broader discourse on language and gender within academic settings by using a structured approach to analyze the linguistic differences between female and male academic writings in the KSA.

The tagger assigned a grammatical function to each word in all the text files of the male and female writing corpus. Below is an example of an extract from the corpus along with its tagged version.

More ideas are represented in this article pertaining to the uses, impact, and challenges of nano-learning in education, where social and communication technologies have changed the bases on which the knowledge and learning are based and constructed.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The lexico-grammatical patterns employed by male and female research writers are analyzed in this article. To find any possible variations or parallels in the writing preferences and styles of male and female research paper writers, this study compares each group's vocabulary, syntax, and semantic choices. The analysis, which focuses on academic language used by male and female writers, is based on more than 150 linguistic features.

"Involved vs. Informational discourse" is the first dimension. It includes positive language features such the deletion of "that," verbs (imperative, uninflected present, and third person), First-person pronoun/possessive, Verb 'Be', Adverb/Qualifier-Emphatic, Demonstrative Pronoun, Modals of Possibility, Verb 'Do', Second-person pronoun/possessive, Adverb/Qualifier-Emphatic, Co-ordinating conjunction-clausal connector, & Wh-clause and negative linguistic features such as Nouns, Attributive Adjective and Preposition. The distribution of these characteristics is complementary to one another.

The mean scores for the linguistic traits utilized by male and female writers are displayed in table 1. The findings show that compared to female writers, male writers use more nouns, prepositions, and adjectives.

TABLE 1
LINGUISTIC VARIATION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE WRITERS' RESEARCH PAPERS ON DIMENSION 1
Descriptive
Dimension 1

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Err	95% CIM Lower Bound
Male	20	-17.3130	3.07971	.68864	-18.7543
Female	20	-16.4370	4.71886	1.05517	-18.6455
Total	40	-16.8750	3.95800	.62582	-18.1408
Model					
Fixed Effects			3.98448	.63000	-18.1504
Random Effects				.63000a	-24.8799a

The study's findings contrast Simon's (2021) finding that male and female college students utilize more adjectives in their academic writing. The writings of male students, with a mean score of -17.31, are more informational than those of female writers (16.43).

Verb-perfect Aspect, Third-person pronouns, and Past Tense Verbs show the presence of narrative discourse on the second dimension. In contrast, on negative polarity features like Present Tense verb, Place adverbial, That deletion, and Pronoun 'it' indicate the presence of non-narrative discourse.

Table 2 shows that female research writers use more past tense verbs, third-person pronouns (except 'it'), and verb-perfect aspects than male research writers.

TABLE 2
LINGUISTIC VARIATION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE WRITERS' RESEARCH PAPERS ON DIMENSION 2
Descriptives
Dimension 2

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Err	95% CIM Lower Bound
Male	20	-2.2085	1.71065	.38251	-3.0091
Female	20	-2.7730	1.09035	.24381	-3.2833
Total	40	-2.4908	1.44449	.22839	-2.9527
Model			1.43443	.22680	-2.9499
Fixed Effects					
Random Effects				.28225	-6.0771

Female research writers, with a mean score of -2.77, use more narrative language than male researchers (-2.20). The study's results conform with Hartshorne and Ullman's (2005) study that indicates that gender can be a factor which impacts the acquisition and computation of language, and further, they elaborate that females are better than males at verbal memory tasks. Hence, they use more past tense verbs.

Dimension 3, titled "Explicit versus Situation Dependent Discourse," has the following features: Wh-pronoun-relative clause-subject position, Wh-pronoun-relative clause-object position, conjunction-phrasal coordination, singular noun-nominalization, and prepositional fronting. In contrast, on negative polarity, linguistic features like the Adverb of place, the Adverb of time, and the Adverb of Other create the presence of situation-dependent discourse. The result of the study indicates that both male and female writers produce explicit discourse but on a varying discourse.

TABLE 3
LINGUISTIC VARIATION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE WRITERS' RESEARCH PAPERS ON DIMENSION 3
Descriptives
Dimension 3

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound
Male	20	8.5575	2.05509	.45953	7.5957
Female	20	7.5700	2.61285	.58425	6.3471
Total	40	8.0638	2.37351	.37529	7.3047
Model			2.35058	.37166	7.3114
Fixed Effects					
Random Effects				.49375	1.7901

Table 3 indicates that male writers, with a mean score of 8.55, use more explicit discourse than female writers (7.57). Although there is little difference in clear discourse production by males and females, they produce explicit discourse to varying degrees. In contrast, the study of Mondorf (2011) suggests that men and women use adverbial clauses (the features associated with situation-dependent discourse) in their language. Still, women tend to be prolific users of adverbial clauses compared to men.

Dimension 4 is named 'Overt Expression of Argumentation /Persuasion' by Biber (1991), and it only consists of positive features (Adverb within auxiliary, Modal of Prediction, Infinitive Verb, Persuasive Verb, Modal of Necessity, and Subordinating conjunction-conditional). However, the result of the present study indicates that both men and women produce non-argumentative discourse on this dimension. Linguistic features like Private verbs, Public verbs, Third-person pronouns, and Hedges mark the presence of non-argumentative discourse on this dimension.

In comparison with Engstrom's (2018) study, where the results indicate that female writers use more hedges than men, the results of Table 4 indicate that male writers (-2.73) produce more non-argumentative discourse than female writers (-2.25).

TABLE 4
LINGUISTIC VARIATION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE WRITERS' RESEARCH PAPERS ON DIMENSION 4
Descriptives
Dimension 4

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Err	95% CIM Lower Bound
Male	20	-2.7335	2.09041	.46743	-3.7118
Female	20	-2.2525	1.68498	.37677	-3.0411
Total	40	-2.4930	1.88981	.29881	-3.0974
Model			1.89855	.30019	-3.1007
Fixed Effects					
Random Effects				.30019a	-6.3072a

Positive linguistic features include Passive Post-nominal modifiers, Agentless Passive verbs, Passive verb + by, Adverbial-conjuncts, and Subordinating Conjunction-Other fall on the positive polarity of Dimension 5, i.e., "Impersonal (Abstract) vs Non-impersonal (Non-Abstract Style)". There was no linguistic feature on negative polarity in Biber's 1991 study. The results of the present study also indicate that there are no negative features on this dimension. The findings of this study show that both males and females produce abstract discourse in their writings.

TABLE 5
LINGUISTIC VARIATION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE WRITERS' RESEARCH PAPERS ON DIMENSION 5
Descriptives
Dimension 5

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Err	95% CIM Lower Bound
Male	20	4.0875	2.16670	.48449	3.0735
Female	20	5.1545	1.99820	.44681	4.2193
Total	40	4.6210	2.12703	.33631	3.9407
Model					
Fixed Effects			2.08415	.32953	3.9539
Random Effects				.53350	-2.1578

Table 5 provides an insight into the preferred writing styles of male and female writers. Boettger and Wulff (2019) think that the overuse of passive voice is associated with a lack of writing clarity and concision. The results indicate that female writers with a mean score of 5.15 tend to use passive voice more frequently than males 4.08. Overall, the study results on all five dimensions indicate that though the writings of both female and male researchers fall on the same side of the continuum of each dimension, they vary considerably.

V. CONCLUSION

The research shows a comprehensive comparison about the linguistic characteristics that male and female writers employ in five textual dimensions. It provides statistical evidence of the choices which male and female writers make while using lexico-grammatical features. They use these features to different degrees.

This study clarifies the connection between gender and the use of language. The linguistic patterns used by male and female writers differ. The results indicate that while female researchers write less non-narrative and abstract discourse, male researchers prefer more explicit, informative, and non-argumentative language. Numerous factors, including socialisation, cultural influences, and individual writing styles, may cause these variances.

The results of the study demonstrate how gender has a multifaceted influence on language use. It is crucial to acknowledge that people of each gender use language differently. Both genders use a wide variety of linguistic traits; however, their frequency of usage varies.

The fundamental causes of these gender-based variations in language use can be investigated by further research in this field. This study provides sufficient evidence that there are sufficient linguistic differences between both genders. Further, more studies can be conducted to investigate the cause of these linguistic variations. We can better understand the complex interaction between gender and linguistic choices by looking at other factors such as genres, registers, and individual traits.

APPENDIX

CO-OCCURRING LINGUISTIC FEATURES ON FIVE TEXTUAL DIMENSIONS OF 1991 MD ANALYSIS

Dimension 1: Involved vs. Informational Discourse	Dimension 3: Explicit vs. Situation Dependent Discourse
Positive Feature 'That' deletion Verb (uninflected present, imperative & third Person) Second Person pronoun/Possessive Verb 'Do' Demonstrative Pronoun Adverb/Qualifier-Emphatic (e.g., just, really) First-person pronoun/possessive Verb 'Be' (uninflected present tense, verb, and auxiliary) Sub-ordinating Conjunction-Causative Discourse Particle Nominal Pronoun Adverbial –Hedge Adverbial/Qualifier-Amplifier Wh-question Modals of Possibility Co-ordinating conjunction-clausal connector Wh-clause Negative Features Nouns (excluding gerund) Preposition Attributive Adjective Dimension 2: Narrative vs. Non-narrative Concerns Positive Feature Past Tense Verb Third-person pronoun (except 'it') Verb-perfect Aspect Negative Features Present Tense verb Place adverbial That deletion Pronoun 'it'	Positive Feature Wh-pronoun-relative clause-object position Wh-pronoun-relative clause-subject- position Wh-pronoun-relative clause-object position With prepositional fronting (pied-piping) Nominalization Coordinating Conjunction –phrasal connector Singular noun-nominalization Negative Features Adverb of time Adverb of Place Adverb Other Dimension 4: Overt Expression of Argumentation /Persuasion Positive Features Infinitive Verb Modal of Prediction Persuasive Verb Subordinating conjunction-conditional Modal of Necessity Adverb within auxiliary Negative Features Private verb Public verb Third-person pronoun Hedges Dimension 5: Impersonal (Abstract) VS. Non-impersonal (Non-Abstract Style) Positive Features Adverbial-conjuncts Agentless Passive verb Passive verb + by Passive Post-nominal modifier Subordinating conjunction-Other Negative Features (no negative features)

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