Talking Time in Children's Adventure Fiction: Which Gender Controls the Discourse?

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Abstract

It is nowadays widely agreed that gender identity is socially and culturally constructed. This construction is enabled by parental and other adult models, parental treatment, peer pressure and the media. Today television has a powerful impact, but in the mid-twentieth century books were more influential for many children. Did popular children's fiction of this period merely reflect society's bipolar gender constructs, or did it in any way challenge these? Whereas folklinguistics would suggest that females are more verbose than males, sociolinguists have found the opposite to be true in many contexts; public discourse such as meetings and the classroom tends to be dominated by males. There have been a number of studies of verbosity in real-life contexts; this cross-disciplinary study of four children's adventure books examines the discourse to see who is given the most 'talking time'. It was hypothesised that the authors would be influenced either by the folklinguistic view and give their girls long speech turns, or by the actual discourse they themselves experienced and give the boys the lion's share. The actual picture that emerges is far more complex, suggesting that while some writers did indeed reflect and support the accepted gender roles of the society in which they wrote, others created discourse which interwove gender, age and personality, with personality the most powerful factor in determining dominance.

Keywords

Gender Roles, Children's Fiction, Dominance, Verbosity, Talking Time

Full Text:

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References

Blyton, E. (1967) Five Go Adventuring Again. Leicester: Knight Books
your child loves to read adventure fiction, this book is the ideal pick. It not only creates a sense of interest in your child, but also encourages them to read more. Recommended age group. While talking rabbits are usually adorable, the ones in this book by Smith aren't. This fantasy world has more to do with heroic rabbits that embark on adventures and reclaim the land that was once there. Picket and Heather are the two main rabbits who live a simple life, until a series of catastrophic events changes their lives. Did popular children’s fiction of this period merely reflect society’s bipolar gender constructs, or did it in any way challenge these? Whereas folklinguistics would suggest that females are more verbose than males, sociolinguists have found the opposite to be true in many contexts; public discourse such as meetings and the classroom tends to be dominated by males. There have been a number of studies of verbosity in real-life contexts; this cross-disciplinary study of four children’s adventure books examines the discourse to see who is given the most ‘talking time’. Erickson, F. (1990) The social construction of discourse coherence in a family dinner table conversation. In B. Dorval (ed) Conversational Organization and its Development (pp. 207-38)

Norwood, NJ: Ablex. This book addresses the question of gender in poststructuralist theoretical discourse, postmodern fiction, and women's cinema. It examines the construction of gender both as representation and as self-representation in relation to several kinds of texts and argues that feminism is producing a radical rewriting, as well as a rereading, of the dominant forms of Western culture. eISBN: 978-0-253-01792-5. Subjects: Anthropology, Sociology, Film Studies. In the feminist writings and cultural practices of the 1960s and 1970s, the notion of gender as sexual difference was central to the critique of representation, the rereading of cultural images and narratives, the questioning of theories of subjectivity and textuality, of reading, writing, and spectatorship. 28. Discourse and Gender

SHARI KENDALL and DEBORAH TANNEN Subject Linguistics » Discourse Analysis Key-Topics gender DOI: 10.1111/b.9780631205968.2003.00029.x 0 Introduction The study of discourse and gender is an interdisciplinary endeavor shared by scholars in linguistics, anthropology, speech communication, social psychology, education, literature, and other disciplines. The authors concluded that “just as male dominance is exhibited through male control of macro-institutions in society, it is also exhibited through control of at least a part of one micro-institution” (1975: 125). Building on Maltz and Borker’s reinterpretation of the research on children’s interaction Introduction From language to discourse Discourse as power/knowledge Gender as discourse Social constructionism and gendered speech styles as discourse Gender and language in discursive psychology Chapter summary. 75. 75 76 79 80 83 88 94. Around that time a number of articles and books were written which voiced two questions that have, until recently, divided research in the field. The questions asked about the nature and significance of gender bias in language and of gender differences in lan-guage use. In what is now a classic paper, Lakoff argued that “the margin-ality and powerlessness of women is reected in both the ways men and women are expected to speak and the ways in which women are spoken of” (1973, p. 45).