HAPPLY EVER AFTER
A Linguistic Study of the Portrayals of the Female Characters in One Old and One New Disney Princess Film

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1. Introduction

The Disney Princess films are known to virtually every little girl in the developed world, and most of these little girls have at some point dreamt of becoming like one of those beautiful princesses. However, one can question how appropriate these Disney Princess films are for impressionable little girls. Most parents will not allow their children to watch anything containing violence or foul language, but they are quite happy to let their little girls and boys watch whatever animated children’s films they want. Parents rarely stop to think about the content of these children’s films or what messages the films convey. Even though the films do not contain anything offensive, one could question what underlying messages are being conveyed consciously or unconsciously by the film creators. Moreover, the films must contain some version of reality in order to make sense to the audience; thereby passing on the values of society (Harrington et al.:2008:228-229).

Children’s films and gender roles, or stereotypes, have been studied by many researchers. For example, Smith, Pieper, Granados and Choueiti (2010) have studied gender portrayals in G-rated films, which are films which contain no offensive material and are appropriate for all ages. They concluded that women were severely under-represented, and that many of them adhered to the “house-wife” stereotype; whereas men were often depicted as free bachelors and occupied a wide variety of professions, e.g. the military. England, Descartes and Collier-Meek (2011) have also studied children’s films, and like this study they have focused on Disney Princess films. Their research article investigates stereotyping of gender roles in ten Disney Princess films from different time periods. Using coded content analysis, the authors concluded that all of the Disney Princess films portrayed both stereotypical and non-stereotypical gender roles, but to different extents. However, studies of children’s films and gender roles, or stereotypes, with a linguistic perspective are conspicuous by their absence, and this study is a humble attempt to remedy this.

This study investigates the speech of the female characters in an attempt to uncover what values are hidden behind the pretty stories. Furthermore, this study seeks to establish whether time has had any effect on the portrayal of the female characters when it comes to linguistic features. The male characters’ speech will only be commented upon when it is needed for comparison with the female characters’ speech. By the end of this paper it will hopefully have been established whether the female characters are more prone to stereotypical
female speech or typical female speech; as well as whether the 60 years separating the two
films have had any effect on the female characters’ speech patterns.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate if time has had any effect on the speech patterns of the
female characters by establishing whether women’s speech in the old film (Cinderella, 1950)
and the new film (Tangled, 2010) is more representative of typical female language or
stereotypical female language. The hypothesis being tested argues that the speech should be
less stereotypical in the new film since gender issues are more highlighted today than they
were in the 1950s. The study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

♦ Which of the above mentioned linguistic profiles’ characteristics, if any, can be found
  in the old film and the new film respectively?
♦ Does the time difference between the films seem to have affected the female
  characters’ language use, if so in what way?

2. Material

The materials used in the study are the films Cinderella (1950) and Tangled (2010) along with
their transcripts (Tetsuguan [www]; Imeldasanders123 [www]). The film Cinderella was
chosen because it is representative of the classical Disney Princess, and has been viewed by
many generations of little girls since it is one of the earliest Disney Princess films. The film
contains the classical Disney Princess characteristics such as: a “perfect” female protagonist
who is beautiful, gifted and naïve; a charming prince with whom the protagonist falls in love
at first sight; an evil which stands between the two lovers; a marriage between the prince and
the protagonist resulting in everyone living happily ever after. The film Tangled was chosen
because it is representative of the modern Disney Princess and is beloved by many of today’s
generation of little girls. It is one of the more recent Disney Princess films and features a
female protagonist who is beautiful, gifted and naïve just as the classical Disney Princess.
However, she is also bold, curious and to some extent self-sufficient. She meets a man, with
whom she later falls in love and marries; but it is certainly not love at first sight, nor is the
man a gallant prince. There is an evil to overcome, but the line between good and evil is not
as clear cut as in the classical Disney Princess films.

Disney’s Cinderella (1950) is loosely based on the famous tale Cendrillon by Charles
Perrault. The Disney version tells the tale of a young woman called Cinderella who lives
alone with her abusive stepmother and two stepsisters. Her unhappy existence is brightened by her animal friends such as the talking mice, which she cares for, and, later on in the story, her fairy godmother. Cinderella's fairy godmother helps her attend a ball where she meets the prince who she later marries thereby becoming a princess.

Disney's *Tangled* (2010) is inspired by the well-known tale *Rapunzel* written by the Brothers Grimm. The film tells the story of a girl named Rapunzel who is in fact a princess. However, she was kidnapped as an infant by a witch who needs the magical abilities of Rapunzel's hair to stay forever young. The witch raised Rapunzel as her own daughter in a secluded tower "for her own protection". The story revolves around Rapunzel, and the discoveries she makes when she escapes the tower with the help of a thief called Flynn Rider.

3. Method

To begin with, it is important to note that the transcripts used are not made by professionals and, therefore, they contain some discrepancies. Any faults discovered during the analysis have been left uncorrected to ensure the repeatability of the study. Any singing or reading, as well as the introductory storytelling in *Cinderella*, were disregarded, and everything else was considered conversational speech. The mice's speech in *Cinderella* was excluded since the mice are not people, and also because the speech patterns had been designed to sound like "mice speech". However, Cinderella's utterances in the mice conversations remain, since Rapunzel's utterances to her chameleon friend were included in the *Tangled* script. Below is a table presenting the word size of the revised transcripts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cinderella</th>
<th>Tangled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2,655</td>
<td>2,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>1,039</td>
<td>2,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,694</td>
<td>5,053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two linguistic profiles described in section 4.2 and 4.3 with help from the term definitions in section 4.1, were applied to the transcripts in order to reveal if any of the stereotypical or typical linguistic features of female speech were present in the conversations. To account for the differences in the amount of words uttered by women and men, as well as the different
word lengths of the transcripts, the features are presented as frequencies of 1 per 100 words. This is done through a process of normalisation: e.g. the total number of words uttered by women in the old film is 2,655, and the total number of politeness markers uttered by women in the old film is 20, hence the normalised frequency is \( \frac{20}{(2,655/100)} = 0.75 \). Every one feature was only counted one time under one category; hence, e.g. if a hedge is part of a softened directive that hedge will not be counted; only the softened directive as a whole will be counted. Furthermore, the total frequencies of the stereotypical features and the typical features were examined by the UCREL log likelihood wizard to reveal if there was any statistical significance (Rayson, Computing Department, University of Lancaster).

4. Theoretical Background

In this study the works of Lakoff (2004), Coates (2004) and Holmes (2013) are used to create two linguistic profiles: stereotypical female speech and typical female speech. Lakoff’s (2004:40) claims about ‘women’s language’ are based on introspection and her own intuitions, i.e. Lakoff presents no empirical research to support her claims. Coates (2004) and Holmes (2013), on the other hand, base their claims on empirical research. As will be shown, many of Lakoff’s claims are contradictory to the claims of Coates and Holmes. Therefore, the linguistic features of female language stated by Lakoff will be used to create the stereotypical profile, whereas the linguistic features of female language stated by Coates and Holmes will be used to create the typical profile. It should be noted that Lakoff, Coates, and Holmes mention more features of female speech than those presented below. These features have been omitted either because they are deemed irrelevant due to the nature of the material, or because it would be too time consuming to properly investigate the features in this study.

4.1 Definitions of relevant terms

Some of the terms which are of importance to the speech profiles described are somewhat ambiguous. Therefore, they have been described below, using definitions from Huddleston and Pullum’s *The Cambridge grammar of the English language* (2002) and Cambridge University Press’s *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* ([www]).

**Hedges** appear in many forms, such as mental verbs, modal auxiliary verbs and adverbials, certain expressions, and are used to convey uncertainty/certainty or to soften utterances. Mental verbs can be used either to express uncertainty/certainty, e.g. “I think we were supposed to read chapters six to eight for Monday.”; or to soften utterances for the sake of
politeness, e.g. "I wondered if I could borrow your pen?". Modal auxiliary verbs can be used to express uncertainty/certainty, e.g. "It could be she is late because she missed the bus."; or to soften directives, e.g. "Could you pass me the salt?". Modal adverbials are used to express uncertainty/certainty, e.g. "Maybe this isn’t such a good idea.". Certain expressions are used to express uncertainty/certainty, e.g. "The blue whale weighs like a hundred ton."; or to soften utterances, i.e. to protect ‘face’, e.g. "I kind of like you." (Cambridge University Press [www]: hedges; Cambridge University Press [www]: vague expressions).

**Tag questions**, or interrogative tags, come in many shapes. Firstly, they can have reversed polarity, e.g. "It’s such a lovely day, isn’t it?" here the main clause is positive and therefore the tag is negative; or constant polarity, e.g. "He said that, did he?" which is usually only accepted if the main clause is positive. Reversed polarity tags are of most interest for this study since they can be used to express uncertainty/certainty, which is not the case with constant polarity tags. Constant polarity tags are used to repeat or infer from something oneself or someone else has said, or to express sarcasm (Huddleston & Pullum, 2012:922ff). Secondly, there are so called ‘informal’ tag questions, e.g. "This ride’s awesome, right?" (Coates, 2004:91); these informal tag questions will not be included in the analysis, and are only mentioned in order to clarify what is meant by ‘tag questions’ in this study.

**Directives** are often imperatives and vary in how strongly they seek compliance. Strong directives such as commands and demands force full compliance, whereas softer directives such as requests and pleas simply ask for compliance. There are of course other directives, e.g. advice, instructions, permission, but they are not relevant for this study; since the typical profile feature ‘softened directives’ refers to “a speech act which tries to get someone to do something” in a direct manner comparable to explicit commands (Coates, 2004:94). Directives can also come in the shape of interrogatives. These indirect directives are considered more polite, especially when combined with modifiers such as please. Interrogative directives are most often based on: ability, e.g. “Can you give me a hand?”; desire/willingness, e.g. “Would you close the curtains?”; necessity/obligation, e.g. “Must you do that now?”; and reason, e.g. “Why don’t you have some more?”. Furthermore, directives can come in the shape of declaratives. Declarative directives are either direct, e.g. “I demand you release me.”, or indirect, where they are commonly based on: wants/needs of the speaker, e.g. “I want some more candy.”; future actions of the addressee, e.g. “You’re going to make this up to me.”; and necessity/obligation, e.g. “You must eat your vegetables.”. Lastly, directives can be verbless. They are often used in haste or in the military, e.g. “Everybody
inside!” or on signs etc. in the form of noun phrases, e.g. “No smoking!” (Huddleston & Pullum, 2012:924ff).

Politeness can be expressed in many ways, some of which have already been mentioned above. To recognise politeness one only has to know that it is used either to show respect for the addressee or to soften utterances. Respect is expressed through using titles such as Mr, Dr, sir, as well as through the use of please and varieties of thank you, which are used to show politeness and gratitude. Softening utterances, such as requests, are often accomplished through the use of various hedges, such as “Maybe you shouldn’t do that.” or “Please don’t do that.” instead of the curt “Don’t do that.”. It can also be accomplished by using if with modal auxiliary verbs, e.g. “if you would look over there you can...” instead of “Look over there and you can...” (Cambridge University Press [www]: politeness; Cambridge University Press [www]: please and thank you). However, as mentioned earlier, hedges can be used to mark uncertainty which is an important feature of the stereotypical profile, making it necessary to have hedges in their own category. In the analysis a hedge used to mark politeness or to soften a directive will be marked as such; however, if the hedge is used for any other purpose it will be marked as hedging.

4.2 Profile 1: Stereotypical female speech

Lakoff (2004:84-85) states that women can choose to use women’s language or not. However, she also points out that this is not much of a choice. Either a woman uses women’s language and is accepted as a proper, feminine woman, or she does not use women’s language and becomes an outcast deemed unfeminine, a lesser woman. To be included and accepted is what most people seek, but if a woman chooses this she also consents to the role of an unintelligent and unimportant person; she is not even a full person, just “a bit of fluff” (Lakoff, 2004:85). Lakoff describes women’s language as constituted by several linguistic features, which are all linked to politeness and tentativeness.

To begin with, Lakoff states that women’s language is full of empty adjectives such as adorable, sweet, and lovely, which they use to express their approval or admiration. They are considered empty since they would appear “frivolous, trivial, or unimportant to the world at large” (Lakoff, 2004:46). These empty adjectives belong to women’s language and would be ridiculed if used in a formal setting such as the workplace, i.e. if a woman wants to be taken seriously she should use neutral adjectives, e.g. terrific, neat, great. Compare for example “What a divine idea!” with “What a terrific idea!”; the first option indicates that the idea is
unimportant whereas the second option indicates that the idea has merit (Lakoff, 2004:45-46). Therefore, **divine** would be considered an empty adjective. However, it is very difficult to define empty adjectives in a foolproof manner; but by considering the context in which the adjective is used and the alternative adjectives which could have been used, it is possible to make an assumption of whether the adjective is “empty” or not.

Furthermore, Lakoff states that women’s language is distinguished through syntax. She claims that women tend to use more tag questions, and to use them in situations where it is not necessary. Lakoff describes tag questions as the combination of a statement and a yes-no question. It is used when the speaker is either uncertain of his or her claim, or if the speaker does not want to force the addressee to agree with him or her. According to Lakoff, using tag questions when discussing personal feelings or opinions is not a legitimate use of tag questions, since only the speaker himself or herself knows the answer, e.g. “I’m feeling sick, aren’t I?”. Similarly tag questions can be used when one dare not state one’s opinion straight out, e.g. “The colour of these pants is terribly ugly, isn’t it?”. Lakoff claims that these “illegitimate” tag questions are more often used by women than men. If a woman uses this sort of tag questions she does not have to commit herself to the claim thereby avoiding the development of a conflict with the addressee (Lakoff, 2004:47-49). The only way to conclude if a tag question is “illegitimate” is by analysing the context in which it is used.

Tag questions lead us to hedges which are another linguistic feature typical for women’s language according to Lakoff. She describes hedges as words which are used when the speaker is uncertain or unable to support the truthfulness of his or her statement, e.g. *perhaps*, *allegedly*, *sort of*. Hedges can also be used to soften a statement which might be considered offensive, i.e. to express politeness. These hedge functions are perfectly acceptable, used both by women and men. However, Lakoff states that when one uses hedges where neither of the previously stated conditions are present, it is a sign of lacking self-confidence. Women are not supposed to express strong statements according to society, and therefore they use hedges to “weaken” their statements. Hedges such as *I guess*, *I think*, *I wonder* is another way to avoid being held responsible for one’s statements. Lakoff claims that an excessive use of hedges, typical for women’s language, is perceived by others as a sign of lacking authority or lack of understanding. According to Lakoff, the intensive *so* is a hedge which is typically used more by women than men. It allows the speaker to express his or her strong emotions or make strong statements without specifying exactly how strongly; for example, one could say “I like you so much” instead of “I like you very much” (Lakoff, 2004:79-80).
Lakoff presents hypercorrect grammar and superpolite forms as two other linguistic features which are characteristic for women’s language. She claims that women use more hypercorrect grammar, e.g. going instead of goin’ and aren’t instead of ain’t, than men in cultures where knowledge and learning are not valued by themselves, whereas in cultures where the opposite is true men will use more hypercorrect forms. According to Lakoff, women’s use of superpolite forms, e.g. Won’t you please close the window?, relates to their status in society. She states that women are supposed to be quiet and demure, whereas men are supposed to be authoritative and are excused when offending someone, the expression “Boys will be boys” illustrates this. Women, on the other hand, are supposed to avoid strong statements and conflicts. They should be careful not to offend anyone, which is why they should use plenty of politeness markers (Lakoff, 2004:80). Since women are supposedly more polite than men in general, all politeness markers will be counted. However, hypercorrect grammar relates to Coates and Holmes (Holmes, 2013:167-170; Coates, 2004:61) discussion of women’s use of standard forms, which is discussed under the next heading. Coates and Holmes support their claims about women’s use of standard forms with empirical evidence; and since that is not the case with Lakoff, hypercorrect grammar/standard forms will be part of the typical female speech profile since it reflects reality.

To sum up, the stereotypical female speech profile consists of the following linguistic features:

- Empty adjectives
- “Illegitimate” tag questions
- Unnecessary uncertainty hedges
- Politeness markers

4.3 Profile II: Typical female speech

Coates (2004) and Holmes (2013) mention several linguistic features where differences between women’s usage and men’s usage can be distinguished. To begin with, they state that women tend to use more standard forms, whereas men use more vernacular forms. Holmes discusses four different explanations which might explain this phenomenon: the “social status” explanation, which argues that women can raise their social status by using linguistic capital constituted of standard forms or otherwise prestigious forms; the “woman’s role as a guardian of society’s values” explanation, which states that society expects better behaviour, in the form of proper language use, from women than men; the “subordinate groups must be
polite” explanation, which says that women use more standard forms to protect their ‘face’ and avoid offending others; the “vernacular forms express machismo” explanation, which argues that vernacular forms carry a certain ‘covert prestige’ considered to be more masculine and tough. Holmes states that all of these explanations have certain limitations, and that none of them can fully explain why women use more standard forms (Holmes, 2013:167-170; Coates, 2004:61). There are many vernacular features and they vary from region to region. The films studied are set in fantasy lands which are not representative of reality, but the films were made in the US and the characters speak American English. Therefore, this study will focus on general features of vernacular American English, e.g. gonna, goin’, gotcha, c’mon. Standard forms are considered the norm and therefore this feature will be studied by counting the exceptions, i.e. vernacular forms.

Like Lakoff, Coates states that women use more hedges than men. However, she points out that studies have shown that women and men use different kinds of hedges. Women use hedges to soften their statements, e.g. to avoid boasting, more often than they use them to mark uncertainty, which contradicts Lakoff’s claim that women use uncertainty hedges as a result of their lacking self-confidence. Furthermore, Coates states that women use hedges to distance themselves from sensitive subjects. Compared to men, women discuss sensitive subjects often which could explain why women appear to use more hedges than men. When discussing sensitive subjects, hedges help to soften statements thereby protecting the speaker’s face and the addressee’s face (Lakoff, 2004:79; Coates, 2004:88-90). Hedging is present in both stereotypical female speech and typical female speech, but with different purposes. Hedges used to facilitate conversation and protect ‘face’ will be part of the typical profile. Hedges expressing unnecessary uncertainty will, as mentioned earlier, be part of the stereotypical profile. The context will decide to which profile a hedge belongs.

Coates and Holmes also state that women tend to use more tag questions than men, but once again one has to take into account the different functions they fulfil. They show that there are tag questions which express uncertainty, as Lakoff (2004:47-50) states, but this kind is mostly used by men. They also state that tag questions can have an affective function where the tag questions are used to facilitate conversations or to soften statements. Coates and Holmes show that these affective tags are the ones most often used by women. Moreover, they present studies which have shown that these affective tags are never used by powerless conversation participants. This defies Lakoff’s argument that women use tag questions to express uncertainty (Lakoff, 2004:47-50; Coates, 2004:90-92; Holmes, 2013:306-308). As
with the hedges, the context will decide whether the tag questions belong to the stereotypical profile or the typical profile.

Holmes says that women are stereotypically described as talking too much. However, she presents research which, in fact, shows that men are the ones who talk the most, at least in situations where talking increases status. Holmes states that men dominate interactions through interruptions. No matter the power relationship between the speakers, e.g. doctor-patient, employer-employee, women are always interrupted by men. She claims that women are taught since childhood that this is the way of things, thus they are socialised to give up the floor to men (Holmes, 2013:311-315). Interruptions are a very straight forward feature, which is easy to distinguish and is deemed in no need of further explanation.

Coates claims that male dominance is also notable when one looks at how men and women use directives and commands. She states that men tend to use explicit commands whereas women tend to use softened directives. She says that this could be explained by men’s tendencies to be more hierarchically organised and women’s tendencies to be more non-hierarchically or equality organised. Moreover, it is worth noting that female doctors who use softened directives are more successful in getting their patients to comply than male doctors who use explicit commands (Coates, 2004:94-96). In accordance with many of the other features, what is considered a softened directive versus an explicit command will be distinguished by the context.

To sum up, the typical female speech profile consists of the following linguistic features:

♦ Standard forms
♦ Facilitative/‘face’ protecting hedges
♦ Affective tag questions
♦ Interruptions
♦ Softened directives

5. Results and Discussion

This section will present the results of the analysis in table form as well as separate discussions for all features; and will be concluded by a discussion of how the results answer the research questions.
5.1 Profile I: Stereotypical female speech

Table 2. Frequency of stereotypical features: per 100 words (absolute numbers in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The old film</th>
<th></th>
<th>The new film</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty adjectives</td>
<td>0.11 (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.04 (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary uncertainty hedges</td>
<td>1.09 (29)</td>
<td>0.96 (10)</td>
<td>0.60 (15)</td>
<td>0.67 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Illegitimate&quot; tag questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness markers</td>
<td>0.75 (20)</td>
<td>3.37 (35)</td>
<td>0.40 (10)</td>
<td>0.43 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.95 (52)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.33 (45)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.04 (26)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.10 (28)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.1 Empty adjectives

The empty adjectives frequency for women in the old film is 0.11 compared to 0.04 in the new film. Men did not use any empty adjectives in either of the films. In the old film, only Cinderella and the Fairy Godmother, the only “good” female characters, use empty adjectives. In the film Cinderella is portrayed as the ideal woman, she is beautiful, talented, hardworking, and good natured; in other words she is what many would consider the definition of femininity. It could be a coincidence that only Cinderella, and the matronly Fairy Godmother, use empty adjectives, but it could also be because they are the most “feminine” characters. In example (1) Cinderella uses the empty adjective *lovely* when she could have used the neutral adjective *pleasant*. Likewise, in example (2) the Fairy Godmother uses the empty adjective *lovely* when instead she could have used the neutral construction *very nice*. These three instances of *lovely* are the only times when empty adjectives are used in the old film.

(1) Yes I know it's a *lovely* morning but it was a *lovely* dream too. [Cinderella]
(2) Yes it's *lovely*, dear. [The Fairy Godmother]

In the new film, the only empty adjective used is *adorable*, and it is only used once, by the Witch. As can be seen in example (3) the Witch uses *adorable* when she could just have omitted that comment, or replaced with a more neutral expression.

(3) (...) I'm just teasing, you're *adorable*, I love you so much, darling. [The Witch]
The Witch, comparable to the Stepmother in the old film, is very feminine but not in the same sense as Cinderella. The Witch is sultry and seductive, quite the opposite of the virtuous Cinderella, not to mention “the bad guy” of the story. Therefore, the Witch’s use of empty adjectives could be attributed to her attempts to maintain a façade of motherly love. One could argue that Cinderella’s and the Fairy Godmother’s use of empty adjectives are “genuine”; whereas the Witch’s use of empty adjectives is just a play on stereotypes in an attempt to make the role she has chosen to play more believable.

It is important to note that ‘empty adjectives’ is a very elusive term. It is difficult to define and decide what is and what is not an empty adjective. As mentioned earlier, Lakoff defines empty adjectives as “frivolous, trivial, or unimportant to the world at large” (2004:46), which is a very broad description. This study has attempted to use Lakoff’s broad definition of ‘empty adjectives’ which undoubtedly leaves room for disagreement. In other words, there is no guarantee that what is considered empty adjectives in this study, would be considered empty adjectives by other researchers.

5.1.2 Unnecessary uncertainty hedges

Women in the old film use 1.09 unnecessary uncertainty hedges per 100 words, and men 0.96. In the new film, women use 0.60 unnecessary uncertainty hedges per 100 words, and men use 0.67. Evidently, unnecessary uncertainty hedges are among the more frequent stereotypical features. The by far most frequent hedge used is well. Other unnecessary uncertainty hedges used are (I) guess, maybe, so, and kind of, but they are very few. Below are some examples of the hedges’ usage. Example (8) might need some explanation in order to make sense. Lakoff states that women tend to use so when they feel it might be “unseemly” to reveal their strong emotions (2004:80). A chaste maiden like Cinderella probably would not want to tell her friends how very attracted she was to a man she just met, hence the use of so.

(4) Well I see no reason why you can’t go (...) [The Stepmother]
(5) Oh. Well, I was hoping you would take me to see the floating lights. [Rapunzel]
(6) Guess my dress will just have to wait. [Cinderella]
(7) Well maybe it's a little old-fashioned (...) [Cinderella]
(8) And he was so handsome (...) [Cinderella]
(9) That’s the funny thing about birthdays—they’re kind of an annual thing! [Rapunzel]
*Well* is a convenient word which can be added to almost any utterance. It is both a hedge and filler which could explain why it is so frequent, both with women and men. Instead of just saying what they want to say, they use *well* to postpone their statements. In the old film, the reason for men’s high frequency is due to the Duke using many unnecessary uncertainty hedges when speaking to the King. It is worth noting that here the use of unnecessary uncertainty hedges seems to be the result of the power relation between the Duke and the King, and not gender. Moreover, *well* mostly occurs at the beginning of utterances, Cinderella often begins her utterances with *well*, perhaps because it allows the speaker a few extra seconds to figure out how to express themselves without offending anyone.

In the new film men use unnecessary uncertainty hedges more frequently than women, which is mostly due to Flynn Rider using *well* so very often. The assumption that using *well* allows for more time to formulate utterances makes sense when one considers Flynn’s excessive use of the word. Flynn is a thief who lies and cheats, even his name is a lie, which means that he could probably use all the extra time he can get when he spins his web of lies.

### 5.1.3 “Illegitimate” tag questions

Neither of the films contained any “illegitimate” tag questions. Perhaps there was no need to use them. It may also be that Lakoff was wrong, and in fact women or people in general do not use “illegitimate” tag questions.

### 5.1.4 Politeness markers

Both women and men use politeness markers frequently. In the old film the frequency for women is 0.75 and 3.37 for men, and in the new film the frequency for women is 0.40 and 0.43 for men. However, in both of the films men use more politeness markers than women, which would mean that men are more “feminine” than women. However, in the old film, the reason that men used considerably more politeness markers than women is because the Duke adds *sir, sire* or *your majesty* to every utterance directed to the King as can be seen in example (10). The Duke’s tendency to use honorary titles excessively in combination with the fact that almost all of the male utterances are uttered in conversations between the Duke and the King explain men’s very high politeness markers frequency. As with the unnecessary uncertainty hedges, it would seem that excessive use of politeness markers can be related to power relations and not just gender.
(10) Well, come in. Come in! [The King]

Your Majesty... [The Duke]

So! He's proposed already. [The King]

Well Sire--- [The Duke]

As for the new film, men, especially the male protagonist Flynn Rider (see example (11)), simply seem to use more politeness markers than women. This would indicate that the new film does not adhere to female stereotype that women use more politeness markers than men as stated by Lakoff (2004:80).

(11) Thank you. No really. Thank you. [Flynn Rider]

5.2 Profile II: Typical female speech

Table 3. Frequency of typical features: per 100 words (absolute numbers in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The old film</th>
<th>The new film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernacular forms</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitative/&quot;face&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protecting hedges</td>
<td>0.23 (6)</td>
<td>0.19 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective tag questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.04 (1)</td>
<td>0.38 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.79 (21)</td>
<td>1.64 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softened directives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.53 (14)</td>
<td>0.48 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.59 (42)</td>
<td>2.69 (28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1 Standard forms

The old film does not contain any vernacular forms, whereas the new film contains quite a lot of them:

(12) Okay, well, what do you wanna do? [Rapunzel]
(13) Hi. How ya doin'? [Flynn Rider]
(14) A passage. C'mon men, let's go! [The Captain of the Guard]

However, one could argue that time difference rather than language stereotypes is the important element in this case. Taking into consideration that the old film was made in 1950,
one could argue that the time and age in where the film was produced has affected the language use; it was probably more important that films contained proper standard forms in the 1950’s then what it is in today’s open-minded society. Today one can assume that the speech of the film characters should reflect the language use of their audience, which is pre-adolescent children in this case. Moreover, the new film presents a modern Disney Princess story, with a princess who is adventurous and free-spirited; hence, it would only be appropriate to have the characters use modern speech patterns coloured with vernacular features. However, in the new film men use many more vernacular forms than women, which is in line with the statements about how men use more vernacular forms stated by Holmes (2013:167-170) and Coates (2004:61) in section four.

5.2.2 Facilitative/’face’ protecting hedges

The female as well as the male characters use facilitative/’face’ protecting hedges in both of the films; the frequency for women is 0.23 and 0.19 for men in the old film, and 0.32 for women and 0.27 for men in the new film. The characters in the new film use more facilitative/’face’ protecting hedges than the characters in the old film. Therefore, the new film seems to present the most reality-like female characters when it comes to facilitative/’face’ protecting hedges. Some examples of these hedges are when the Fairy Godmother mitigates the force of her statement in example (15), or when Rapunzel tries to hide her embarrassment in example (16).

(15) Serves him right I'd say. [The Fairy Godmother]
(16) Guess I'm just a little bit... jumpy. [Rapunzel]

5.2.3 Affective tag questions

Women in the old film rarely use affective tag questions, the frequency is only 0.04 compared to men’s frequency of 0.38 affective tag questions per 100 words. These results do not correspond with Coates’ (2004:90-92) and Holmes’ (2013:306-308) statements saying that women tend to use more tag questions than men. However, these results can easily be explained if one considers the tag questions as conversational tools of power. The affective tag questions are primarily used by the King and the Stepmother, both powerful authority figures:

(17) (..) why, he's bound to show interest in one of them, isn't he? Isn't he? [The King]
(18) It' can't possibly fail Can it? [The King]
(19) After all we did make a bargain, didn't we Cinderella? [The Stepmother]

There are not many affective tag questions in the new film, and women and men use them equally, 0.12 affective tag questions per 100 words. For example, Flynn Rider uses a tag question when calling out Rapunzel's bluff regarding the hiding place of the precious satchel:

(20) It's in that pot, isn't it? [Flynn Rider]

Likewise, Rapunzel uses a tag question when challenging the Witch to reveal the truth about her birth:

(21) I am the lost princess! Aren't I? [Rapunzel]

Therefore, it would seem that tag questions are used in power plays also in the new film. However, Flynn Rider also uses tag questions when he tries to comfort Rapunzel, in order to hide his real motive of trying to get rid of her; and Rapunzel uses them when comforting the Captain of the Guard's horse:

(22) Don't want you scaring and giving up on this whole endeavour now do we? [Flynn Rider]

(23) Nobody appreciates you, do they? Do they? [Rapunzel]

5.2.4 Interruptions

The highest frequency of interruptions is men's in the old film with 1.64 interruptions per 100 words. However, women in the old film also use interruptions quite frequently, 0.79, compared to the new film where women's frequency is 0.44 and men's frequency is 0.04. Moreover, although men use more interruptions than women in the old film, men use fewer interruptions than women in the new film. These results are somewhat troublesome since they do not line up with Holmes' (2013:311-315) statement that men use more interruptions than women, not the other way around. However, the results make more sense if one considers the interruptions as conversational tools of power. In the old film it is mostly the Stepmother and the King who use interruptions (see examples (24) and (25)), and in the new film it is mostly the Witch who uses interruptions (see example (26)): i.e. the most powerful/authoritative characters. Once again it appears that power relations, and not simply gender, are of importance.

(24) But—but Sire in matters of love--- [The Duke]

Love! Hah! [The King]
But Your Majesty if the prince should suspect--- [The Duke]
Suspect! Bah! [The King]

(25) Oh please, you don't think that I--- [Cinderella]
Hold your tongue! [The Stepmother]
But I was only trying to--- [Cinderella]
Silence! [The Stepmother]

(26) Okay, so mother, as I was saying, tomorrow-- [Rapunzel]
Rapunzel, mother's feeling a little run-down. [The Witch]

5.2.5 Softened directives

It would appear that women in the old film are the ones most frequently using softened directives, 0.53, followed by men in the old film, 0.48. In the new film, the frequency is 0.36 for women and 0.12 for men. In the old film they are mostly used by Cinderella and the Stepmother when addressing people they care for, e.g. when Cinderella addresses the mice, or when the Stepmother addresses her daughters:

(27) Wait a minute, wait a minute. One at a time, please. [Cinderella]
(28) Shhh. Quiet, my dear. We mustn't disturb His Grace. [The Stepmother]

The men in the old film using softened directives are the Prince and the Duke. The Prince uses them twice, in the same sentence, when pleading for Cinderella to stay at the ball. The Duke uses softened directives three times: once with the King, were he has no power to command the King; a second time when the Stepsisters are trying on the glass slipper, when he is being polite; and a third time when he addresses Cinderella as it is her turn to try on the glass slipper. The Prince’s use of softened directives seems “legitimate”, since he wants Cinderella to stay on her own free will and not because he commands it, i.e. he is considerate of her feelings. The same applies to the Duke when he addresses Cinderella. However, when the Duke addresses the Stepsisters, which he dislikes, the motive for using a softened directive is simply social etiquette. Moreover, when the Duke uses a softened directive when addressing the King, it is due to his powerlessness in relation to the King.
5.3 The old film and the new film

Fig 1. Total frequencies of stereotypical and typical features for women: per 100 words

According to the total frequencies for women, the old film contains the most stereotypical features. The difference between the total frequencies for women in the old film and in the new film is greater when it comes to the stereotypical features than the typical features. The total frequencies of the stereotypical linguistic features for the old film vs. the new film are 1.95 vs. 1.04. A log likelihood test reveals a statistical significance of approximately 1% (critical value=7.33; 0.001<p<0.01), which means that if the analysis was to be repeated it would yield the same results in more than 99% of the cases. The total frequencies of the typical linguistic features for the old film vs. the new film are 1.59 vs. 1.60. In this case a statistical significance could not be detected (critical value=0.00), which is not surprising considering the minuscule difference between the frequencies.

However, it is not enough to simply look at the total frequencies if one is to determine the answers to the research questions. To begin with, one can see that the stereotypical features unnecessary uncertainty hedges and politeness markers are the most frequent stereotypical features for women both in the old film and in the new film. The picture is the same when one looks at the men’s most frequent features. In the old film this seems to be the result of the Duke’s submissive role in relation to the King. The King has a very volatile temper which is why the Duke uses politeness markers such as honorary titles and unnecessary uncertainty hedges so as to not express any strong opinions, which could result in his immediate demise. As for the new film, it would seem that Flynn Rider’s role as the charming common and thief extraordinaire demands he use unnecessary uncertainty hedges and politeness markers to weasel out of trouble. However, there might be other reasons for
men's use of female features. In their research article on Disney Princesses and Princes, England et al. (2011) conclude that the Princes are more androgynous than the Princesses. This study's results of male speech could indicate that the androgynous character of the Princes applies to all men in the Disney Princess films.

Moreover, it appears that in the old film the most frequent typical features are softened directives and interruptions. This reflects the speech of Cinderella, the demure maiden, and the Stepmother, the household's authority figure who only cares for her daughters and glory. The Stepmother uses softened directives when addressing her daughters, but prefers to speak sternly to Cinderella and often interrupt her. England et al. (2001) also note how women are only assertive when addressing people of lesser power, and states that this assertiveness only acts to further the stereotype of women as the submissive gender. Likewise, the King uses interruptions to dominate his conversations with the Duke. In the new film, on the other hand, the typical features' frequencies are more or less on the same level. However, this neat picture is disturbed by the tag questions. Neither of the films contains any stereotypical tag questions and there are not very many typical tag questions either. Moreover, men in the old film are the ones who use them the most frequently. They are used by the King to manipulate the Duke into agreeing with him, in other words the tag questions are used as a powerful conversational tool. In the new film women and men use typical tag questions equally frequently; for women the tag questions frequency is relatively low compared to the other typical features, but for men the tag questions frequency is more or less in line with the rest of the typical features' frequencies.

To conclude, it would seem that the old film contains many more stereotypical features than the new film, but the two films are rather evenly matched when it comes to the typical features. Furthermore, even though the old film contains almost as many typical features as the new film, the most prominent feature, the interruptions, are related to the Stepmother and her role as the "man of the house", rather than to her gender. Power relations and gender are often, but certainly not always, intertwined since men often hold more power than women; hence, perhaps some of the features here attributed to gender are actually representative of power status. In the new film women use all the typical features almost equally frequent, with the exception of the tag questions. In other words, both the old film and the new film contains stereotypical features to a certain degree, which is in line with England et al.'s (2011) findings that all Disney Princess films studied portrayed some gender stereotypes. It seems reasonable to argue that the old film, released in 1950, presents more stereotypical female characters,
whereas the new film, released in 2010, presents female characters which are more representative of reality. Moreover, the new film appears to display an awareness of stereotypical speech since the Witch uses linguistic features, such as softened directives, softening hedges and empty adjectives, when she tries to project an image of femininity and motherly love.

6. Conclusion

This study originated from the hypothesis that the old film, a classical Disney Princess film from 1950, portray stereotypical female characters, whereas the new film, a modern Disney Princess film from 2010, portray female characters representative of reality. The research questions which guided the study in its attempt to verify said hypothesis were the following: which of the above mentioned linguistic profiles’ characteristics, if any, can be found in the old film and the new film respectively? Does the time difference between the films seem to have affected the female characters’ language use, if so in what way?

The answer to the first question is that the films contained both stereotypical and typical linguistic features of female speech. The old film contained the stereotypical features: empty adjectives, unnecessary uncertainty hedges, and politeness markers; and the typical features: standard forms, facilitative/"face" protecting hedges, affective tag questions, softened directives, and (the not so typical) interruptions. The new film contained the stereotypical features: empty adjectives, unnecessary uncertainty hedges, and politeness markers; and the typical features: standard forms (although there were also some vernacular features), facilitative/"face" protecting hedges, affective tag questions, softened directives, and (the not so typical) interruptions. In both films the most common stereotypical features for women were unnecessary uncertainty hedges and politeness markers. The most common typical features for women in the old film were facilitative/"face" protecting hedges, softened directives, and (the not so typical) interruptions. In the new film the most common typical features for women were facilitative/"face" protecting hedges, softened directives, (the not so typical) interruptions, and (the not so typical) vernacular features.

The answer to the second question is that there are differences in the female characters’ language use between the two films, which would suggest that time has had an effect on the speech patterns. The female characters in the old film use stereotypical features much more frequently than the female characters in the new film. Moreover, the female characters in the old film only use slightly fewer typical features than the female characters in the new film.
However, the female characters in the new film use all the typical features relatively equally frequent. Women in the new film’s more “balanced” use of typical features and comparatively low frequency of stereotypical features, in combination with women in the old film’s much greater use of stereotypical features compared to typical features, lead to the conclusion that the new film is less stereotypical in its portrayal of women than the old film.

There are many weaknesses and limitations of this study. Firstly, this study is only focused on two films with a 60 years’ time difference which means that it is impossible to generalise for all Disney Princess films. A larger material would also have achieved more reliable results. The limited material in this study means that small differences appear much larger, and any mistakes or coincidental results will have had greater impact. Furthermore, it would have been beneficiary to analyse more films in order to better judge the effects of time. Secondly, even if one has constructed impeccable categories, it is very difficult to judge in which category each feature belongs; one must consider the context as well as using one’s own judgement which undeniably leave room for disagreements. Moreover, the categories themselves would benefit from some scrutiny. As has been mentioned earlier, some of the results seem to indicate that power relations rather than gender differences is the determining factor. In future studies, the features function as expressions of power rather than gender needs to be investigated in order to yield more conclusive results. In conclusion, this small study is limited, and one can only hope that someone with more time and resources will take interest in the linguistic perspective on the subjects of gender stereotypes and children’s films. After all, the films our children watch influence their perceptions of gender roles, which essentially decide the future of women and men’s coexistence.

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