GENDERS' TALK ON ONLINE DISCOURSE
THE CASE OF REPORT/RAPPORT TALK AND HEDGES

خطاب الجنسين عبر الانترنت:

حالة أساليب المراوغة اللفظية و أسلوب الخطاب التقريري/ بناء حديث الألفة

Zeyneb KHALDI
Slimane BOUKHENTACH
University of Mouloud Maameri, Tizi Ouzou
University of Mohammed Seddik Benyahia, Jijel
zeynebkhaldii@gmail.com   zeyneb.khaldi@ummto.com**   s_boukhentache@univ-jijel.dz

Zeyneb KHALDI

zeynebkhaldii@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

   Differences in the ways that men and women employ language have long been of interest in the study of discourse. Despite extensive theorizing, empirical research still lacks the generalization of gender's effect on oral use of language. In this study gender's impact on language use was examined among different competent users of English as their first language (L1) or foreign/second language (L2). 30 out of 100 participants have taken part of debatable discussions on Google+ hangouts. The study focused on two main dimensions: hedges and report/rapport talk as an attempt to see whether differences of this kind have a stereotype use in the speech styles of men and women. In order to collect the data, an observation of a total 8 debatable hangouts and a semi-structured interview with 10 participants were used. The findings were analysed using SPSS. The results obtained revealed that men use the hedging devices more than women and rapport in the same way women do. Surprisingly, both sexes report equally. Moreover, the stereotypic genders' speech style is dogmatic.

Keywords: English, hedges, report/rapport talk, gender's stereotype.

ملخص

   يعتبر تباين استخدام اللغة بين الجنسين من المواضيع التي حظيت باهتمام كبير في مجال دراسة الخطاب على الرغم من التنظير الواسع في هذا المجال، مازالت البحوث التجريبية الحالية تفتقر الى مفهوم تعميمى لتأثير الجنس على اللغة اللفظية . تهدف هذه الدراسة الى دراسة تأثير الجنس على استعمال اللغة من طرف المتحدثين باللغة الانجليزية سواء كلغة ام، ثانية او اجنبية وهذا بالاعتماد على مناقشة مواضيع شتى اعتمادا على-غوغل + دردشة الفيديو الجماعية .الدراسة الحالية ابدت اهتماما كبيرا على : أساليب المراوغة اللفظية و أسلوب الكلام التقريري/ بناء حديث ألفة. من أجل جمع البيانات تم استخدام اسلوب المراقبة لثمانية فيديوهات قام المشتركون فيها بمناقشة مواضيع مختلفة وعشر مقابلات. اما بالنسبة لمرحلة التحليل،فلقد تم تقديم البيانات عن طريق SPSS . كشفت النتائج ان الرجال يستعملون اساليب المراوغة اكثر من النساء، اضافة الى استعمال حديث الالفة بنفس الوتيرة وكذلك الامر بالنسبة للأسلوب التقريري ،علاوة على ذلك،تعتبرالنمطية في اسلوب الكلام بين الجنسين عقيدة او بمعنى اخر مفهوم عالمي متباين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الانجليزية, أسلوب الكلام التقريري / حديث الألفة .المراوغة اللفظية, نمطية حديث الجنسين

Résumé :

Les différences dans l'utilisation de la langue entre les deux sexes sont considérées parmi les sujets qui ont retenus l'attention dans le domaine de l'étude du discours. Malgré cela, les recherches expérimentales actuelles sont à la recherche d'une notion générale relative à l'influence du sexe sur le langage parlé. Cette étude vise à étudier l'influence du sexe sur l'utilisation de la langue de la part des personnes qui parlent la langue anglaise, soit en tant que première, deuxième langue ou en tant que langue étrangère. Ces personnes ont pris part des discussions sur Google+ Hangouts. L'étude actuelle a montré un grand intérêt sur: les styles phonétiques équivoques/la parole déclarative et la construction d'un discours familier. Afin de recueillir les données nécessaires une observation d'un total de 8 hangouts et des 10 entretiens de rétroaction ont été utilisés. Pour l'analuse, on a choisi SPSS. Les résultats ont démontrés que les hommes utilisent plus le style équivoque que les femmes alors que le langage familier est utilisé avec le même niveau pour le style déclaratif. En plus de cela, la manière du style du discours entre les deux sexes est considérée comme un acte de foi.

<u>Mots-Clés</u> : Anglais, report/rapprot, hedges, stéréotype de langue des sexes.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the important traits that affects individual's communicative competence in virtually every language; particularly English, and one that has drawn increasing attention, is the effect of one's sex (gender) on production and performance of language. Differences between men and women talk have been noted for some time (Tannen 1986, 1990; Holmes 1987, 1991; Lakoff 1975). Among English speakers, it has reported that males use assertive, strong expletives showing freedom and deference; therefore, women are not expected to use such language. On the other hand, females use forms that sound polite, indirect, soft and less assertive showing solidarity and cooperation.

According to Deborah Tannen (1986), linguistics professor, females use language that expresses more uncertainty than men, say hedges, suggesting less confidence on what they say. Additionally, she believes that men and women differ in the focus behind their communication. Men converse with a focus on achieving social status and conversational interaction, while women focus on achieving personal connection, fulfilling their role as more elaborative and facilitative participants in an interaction; men want to report, women want to rapport.

As stated above, the use of hedges and the focus-genre on communication strongly indicate femininity and masculinity; they are often used to illustrate stereotypical women and men. These different patterns are found in disparate scripted conversations. In those written conversations, women are consistently enforcing their femininity and men their masculinity. However, according to some researchers, gender-related languages are not used as frequently in real conversations as they are in written ones, and some are even disappearing. Moreover, both rapport/report talk and hedge are subtleties drawn from different cultures and significant tapestry in individual's sociopragmatic competence. In this sense, different background of conversationalists, social distance, discourse and context are all to be considered. This paper, thus, aims at examining the impact of gender on the use and frequency of hedges and report/rapport talk by males and females participants debating on online conversations.

2. Preliminary literature review

Differences in men and women's talk attracted scholars' attention since the feminist movement in the 60's and the 70's. "The very semantics of the language reflects women's condition. We do not even have our own names, but bear that of the father until we exchange it for that of a husband" (Morgan, 1977, p. 106). This was the high time of women's feminist movement that targeted Language in particular. Since then, considerable research relating to language and

gender has been carried out focusing on different features of language (lexicon, syntax, semantics…) and shifted, later on, to gender differences in discourse. Differences in conversational styles actually turn out to disadvantage women, contributing to women being effectively silenced (Spender, 1980). Hence, the frequency of genders speech and the strategies to be adopted needed to be highlighted.

Over the years, the subject of mixed-gender conversation has entertained audiences even outside the academic frame in books by linguists such as, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, by Deborah Tannen (1990). For Tannen, it is un-negotiated to view men in any sort of conversations as vulgar, direct and confident. Men's driving force in any interaction is obtaining information and avoiding failure. Unlike women who are deemed less confident and soft avoiding social isolation rather, and willing for being more "cooperative and facilitative conversationalists, concerned for their partner's positive face needs"(Holmes 1991, p. 210). Based her research on Brown and Levinson's idea of positive and negative face and included in her book *Gendered talk at work*, Holmes (2006) suggests that the reason behind this stereotypical view is "Exposing sexist assumptions and challenging covert patterns of male domination is important, and the workplace is a significant location for such taken-for granted assumptions"(p.26). She asserts that women use more positively oriented politeness and men use more negatively oriented politeness. That is; men use language as a tool to give and obtain information where women, on the other hand, use the language as a means of keeping in touch with others.

With the advent of technology, researches in the field have substantially grown and scholars have studied language and gender in cyberspace (Herring, 1993; Sutton, 1994; Wofe, 1999). Danet (1998) proposed that typed text becomes a mask in which gender becomes obscured. She explains because only text is visible in computer-mediated communication (CMC), men and women could become freer to experiment with different gender identities through communication and women could take advantage of this medium to "avoid being harassed sexually or to feel free to be moss assertive" (p.130). Other studies have shown that in chatrooms, discussion boards, instant messaging (IM), and emails, that equality in cyberspace is not present (Baron, 2003; Herring, 1992; Soukup, 1999). Typed text is not a mask for gender and online participation is not equal between genders. In short, men are still always dominant and report, women are uncertain and rapport. However, in spite of such hopes, oral conversations between socially distant genders do not yield practically the same findings.

3. Talk across genders

The past three decades were characterized by a zeal for the linguistic discussion on gender based communication among opposite sexes. Books such as Deborah Tannen's (1990) *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation* and (1994) *Talking from 9 to 5*, Marian Woodall's (1990) *How to Talk so Men Will Listen*, and John Gray's (1992) *Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars* have widely contributed to the recognition of this hot issue. The aforementioned scholars among others; Janet Holmes and Robin Lakoff, attempt to call the attention of the public to differences between genders' talk in different discourse, emphasizing different features of one's communicative competence. Commonly, gender identity is created and performed through language on the basis of conventional male and female language features established in previous research of these scholars and many others.

Features of gender's language may be numerous but of great importance to this paper: stereotypical use of genderlect, report/rapport talk among gender theories, and hedging. This research, then, will be an attempt to shed light on the different forms used by men and women talk, speaking English, relating to gender stereotypes, male's/female's talk theories, and the frequency of hedges used by both.

3.1. Gender stereotypes

Gender differences begin at very early ages. It is deemed as an inherently communicative process that is constructed and performed broadly via language. Effectively, gender stereotypes are nurtured at a very young age when boys are brought up to be strong and powerful, and girls to be more mince and lady-like. All children around the age of four have a wide understanding of their gender and combat in order to adhere to these existing roles (Eddleston, Veiga, & Powell, 2003). Surrounding family, friends and media represent factors that all persuade individuals to adapt to their stereotype causing them to strive for constancy between their biological sex and what is expected of them (Eddleston, Veiga, & Powell, 2003). It is very common that when the speaker describes a color as baby blue, pink, mauve or lavender the speaker is more likely to be imagined as a woman than a man. The latter is expected to use strong expletives and less standard language.

Gender stereotype roles direct subconsciously how a person is to communicate relating to their gender. Schneider 2005 supplies common female stereotype traits are affectionate, emotional, friendly, sympathetic, sensitive, and sentimental; stereotypic males' traits include dominant, forceful, aggressive, self-confident, rational, and unemotional. Lakoff (2004) believes that these sex roles cause women to convince themselves they are marginal to men leading to the perception of women as second class to men in a hierarchal order. In turn, this leads to the association of men's high status as seen as superior to women. This puts women at a disadvantage seen as marginal and less serious because they are not exposed to males' opportunities due to their gender stereotype.

3.2. Males/Females' talk theories

Since the late 1980s, there has been tremendous wave of studies in male and female communication. The explosion of these studies has been dominated by one word: differences. The differences model, which argues that males and females are vastly different, captivated both the public and popular media.

John Gray's (1992) *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, which argued for enormous psychological differences between women and men, has sold over 30 million copies and been translated into 40 languages. Deborah Tannen's (1990) *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* argued for the different cultures hypothesis: that men's and women's patterns of speaking are so fundamentally different that men and women essentially belong to different linguistic communities or cultures. That book was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for nearly four years and has been translated into 24 languages. Other little hard-edged scientific works to be read including; Deborah Blum; *Sex On The Brain* (1997), Anne and Bill Moir; *Why Men Don't Iron* (1999), Allan & Barbara Pease; *Why men Can't Listen & Women Can't Read Maps* (2011), Simone Baron-Cohen; *The Essential Difference* (2003) and dozens of others like them, have argued for the differences hypothesis: that males and females are, psychologically, socially and biologically, different. Similar to our work, the following are the main gendered talk theories

supporting the differences hypothesis: nature versus nurture, report versus rapport, and the psychological approach.

3.2.1. Nature versus Nurture

Nature/nurture controversy continues to be largely influential in the psychology of gender differences. Since ever, it was known that men and women have different evolvements which allow each to different complementary functions; men hunted, women nurtured (Blum, 1997). As their bodies are physically contrastive to adapt to particular tasks, so do their minds. So far, the debatable question that blew the world apart is whether these evolvements are natural or environmental. Historically, cultural determinists have assumed that the mind is a blank slate on which culture, parents could write whatever on that blank slate, and biology is totally ignored when explaining behavior; including linguistic behavior (Pease & Pease, 2011). Women are better communicators just because their mothers were too and their foremothers also. Scientists, on the other hand, offer a somehow rigorous evidence of why we think differently and contend that biology and chemistry are highly responsible.

Indeed, Gender-related speech in linguistic behavior has been investigated over the years through two main contradictory sources; socio-cultural studies and biological studies. The socio-cultural approach focuses on the environment and heritage in general. It emphasizes the socialization processes for the development of appropriate gender speech styles which provide a cultural understanding and explanation of the diversities among the sexes because the differences themselves changes from one society to another. As Gal, an anthropologist linguist, pointed out "male-female differences in speech have been found in every society studied; but the nature of the contrasts is struggling, occurring in different parts of the linguistic system: phonology, pragmatics, syntax, morphology and lexicon" (1991, pp. 181-182). Another example which highlights cultural differences is Keenan's (1974) found that unlike Anglo-Saxons norms of speech of men and women, Malagasy men are characterized by using indirect, polite speech while women tend to use more direct, straightforward style.

Years later, the biological approach shows that we are more a product of our biology than the victims of social stereotypes thanks to advanced computer brain-scanning equipment using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), which measures electrical activity in the brain. This equipment has helped to locate different brain functions and allowed to see the brain operating live and answered many questions about male and female differences (Pease & Pease, 2011). Biological approach highlights the functions of brain's two hemispheres. As it has been hypothesized, women might use both hemispheres for language functions, thus being better verbally skilled. On the other hand, men predominantly use left-hemisphere for language functions, which might lead to less well-developed verbal abilities (Cameron, 2009).

3.2.2. Report versus rapport

Numerous psychology books have been written describing men and women as alien beings and their communication breakdowns as a catalogue of misunderstanding (Cameron, 2007). The most popular deputy of this formula is Deborah Tannen, professor of linguistics at Georgetown University. As a student of Robin Lakoff, Tannen had been introduced to Lakoff's works on gender and language, then decided to research gender differences more profoundly and ended up by contributing articles on language to numerous scholarly books on conversational styles of both sexes, including: *That's not What* I *Meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Your Relations with Others* (1986), and *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation* (1990). In her book *You Just Don't Understand,* Tannen treats gender linguistic differences taking a sociolinguistic approach since she believes that "because boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures...talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication" (Tannen, p. 18).

The most essential implication to Tannen's work is arguing for the different cultures hypothesis; that men's and women's patterns of speaking are so fundamentally different that men and women essentially belong to different communities of practice or cultures. Tannen advocates that women and men have different speech styles, and she defines them as: rapport-talk and report-talk respectively. The term rapport or relationship-oriented talk displays the connection that is cultivated between us and the people that we come in contact with. It is the reason why we feel comfortable and trust people, and lack of rapport is why we would feel unease and skepticism with others. Report or task-oriented talk, in contrast, is a way to give information and produce solutions to problems achieving higher status and power in conversation. It is to maintain superiority and dominance over others and feel independent. Generally, women use language for Intimacy and connection, thus rapport-talk. "Girls are socialized as children to believe that talk is the glue that holds relationships together" (Tannen, p.85), so as adults conversations for females are "negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus" (Tannen, p. 25). In contrast, conversations for males are for information, hence Tannen's term report-talk. When having part in a conversation, men aim at keeping the upper hand and protecting themselves from others' attempts to suppress them, so conversation for adult males becomes a contest "in which he [is] either one-up or one-down" (Tannen, p. 24).

Since then, writers become fond of highlighting the difference in genders speech patterns presenting men and women communication as a "cross-cultural communication" which has itself became a principal, "an unquestioned article of faith" (Cameron, 2007). Yet another scholar who advocates Tannen's hypothesis singling a scientific approach is Simone Baron-Cohen. *The Essential Difference* (2003) of Baron-Cohen is a little harder-edged popular scientific book that discusses gender differences. According to Baron-Cohen, both sexes communicate differently, and women do it better, because of the wiring of their brains. In fact, the female brain tops in verbal functions than a male brain which is better adjusted to visual-spatial and mathematical functions-Women love discourse, men like action. He considers the gulf between the two to be the "essential difference" on their brains.

The report/rapport dichotomy caused the widespread of many stories explaining identity of both genders, shaped individuals' beliefs and attitudes, and hence had consequences in all life walks of the real world. Deborah Cameron, an American linguist and one prominent opponent to the

"essentialism" of Baron-Cohen and others states that the differences hypothesis is quite patronizing to men. In 2007, she remarks in an ironic manner:

> Perhaps men have realized that a reputation for incompetence can sometimes
>
> work to your advantage. Like the idea that they are no good at housework,
>
> the idea that men are no good at talking serves to exempt them from doing
>
> something which many would rather leave to women anyway (p. 11).

3.2.3. Venus versus Mars: The psychological approach

Another view on the differences in male and female communication comes from marriage therapist John Gray, PhD, and author of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (1992) that had topped the bestseller lists on both sides of the Atlantic selling over 30 million copies and been translated into 40 languages (Gray, 2003). Gray, unlike Tannen, didn't distinguish the different driving forces behind conversation in men and women speech, but the overall styles of communication in the sexes.

John Gray's (1992) *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, that argues for enormous psychological differences between women and men, claims that both males and females have inversely different natures and he exemplifies this gulf by means of a metaphor: that men and women are from distinct planets; men from Mars and women from Venus, and that each gender is adapted to its convenient "planet's society". These differences, he suggests, often cause communication breakdown, leading to conflict and misunderstanding. John Gray's (1992) suggestion of Mars and Venus was humorously pointing to the communication difficulties and misunderstandings males and females often encounter. One best example that portrays these misinterpretations is men's complaint that if they offer solutions to problems that women bring up in conversation, the latter will not be happy or interested in solving those problems, after all they want mainly to get them out of their chests. Although taking a distinct approach of the differences hypothesis, Gray is supporting Tannen's claims on report/ rapport talk when asserting that each gender can be understood in terms of distinct ways they respond to stressful situations. "To men, talk is for information. To women, talk is for interaction" (Tannen, p.175). Imagine the stress and frustration of a son listening to his mother think through her job's problem out loud; veering often off the subject then returning to it, to find that she didn't really want him to offer solution, but just to be her problem sounding board. Imagine her hurt feelings when he replies "if you hate your job that much, then just quit!"

Gray's work has been extremely influential, proven to be spectacularly popular and done much to stimulate discussion of gender/communication differences but has attracted fierce criticisms. Dr. Deborah Cameron criticized Gray's work in a whole book entitled *The Myth of Mars and Venus* (2007). Cameron argues that "what linguistic differences there are between men and women are driven by the need to construct and project personal meaning and identity". Cameron conducted a similar work to Janet Hyde, Mark Liberman and Cordelia Fine who all challenges the belief that men and women communicate very differently is a "fact". The book argues that there is as much similarity within each group of men or women as across genders. Cameron concludes that

we have an urgent need to think about gender in more complex ways than the prevailing myths and stereotypes allow. Moreover, Gray claims that seven years of theoretical research, in which "90 percent of the 25,000 individuals questioned… enthusiastically recognized themselves in the descriptions" (1992, p. 4) of relationships, went into the creation of his book.

Meanwhile, he offers no empirical evidence of how and where this research was conducted, nor a list of references or citations. Rather Gray, who declares that the different planet idea inspired him while watching the movie E.T. (Peterson, 2000). Other scholars have questioned the overemphasizing of differences between genders, for being far away to the fundamental end of gender differences ideas (Wood, 2002; Buzzard, 2002). Zimmerman, Haddock and McGeorge (2001) take Gray to task because he maltreats the negotiation of power in relationships between the genders and rather, authorize for men power over women. They contend:

> Gray's basic thesis that men and women are instinctively different in all areas of life
>
> and his recommendations for dealing with these differences serve to reinforce and
>
> encourage power differentials between men and women, thereby eroding the
>
> possibility of deep friendship and sustained intimacy in their relationships. As
>
> mentioned, this position is counter to a growing body of research that underscores
>
> the importance of shared power for achieving an intimate and effective relationship
>
> (p. 63).

3.3. Hedging

Robin Tolmach Lakoff (1975) introduces the phrase "woman's language" to refer to a set of linguistic forms that serve women's subordinate status via their unassertive style that lacks authority, including hesitations, intensive adverbs, empty adjectives and tag questions. Hedges form part of this set. The term hedge refers to particular devices which are assumed to mitigate and lessen the impact of utterances by indicating non-commitment. Used in everyday communication, Lakoff (1975) proposes that hedges devices exist as a sort of communicative strategy; in academic discourse it is used as an expression of degree or, as he labels it, "fuzziness". Dixon and Foster (1997) say that "hedges refer to a class of devices that supposedly soften utterances by signaling imprecision and non-commitment" (p.90). Hedging devices examples include the pragmatic particles "about, sort of" and "you know" and the modal terms "actually, possibly" and "perhaps". Beginning with Robin Lakoff's (1975) pioneering work, hedges have emerged increasingly in research on gender and communication. Based on hedging devices occurrence in males and females speech, researchers have concluded to audacious claims: greater females use hedges which, in turn, makes women's language indecisive and deficient (Lakoff, 1975; Priesler, 1986).

Unfortunately, Lakoff original work has since been challenged as lacking empirical validity, being based mainly on personal observation and hypothetical examples where later research, using real speech as data, has often failed to support her conjectures. Some research; however, have affirmed that women employ more hedges than men do (e.g., Carli, 1990; McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, & Gale, 1977). The most delicate work among these, Priesler (1986) found that British

women taking part in mixed-group discussions used more marks of tentativeness than men, which was interpreted as their social insecurity indicator. Yet several paradoxical results have also featured to prove the opposite (e.g., Baumann, 1976; Dubois & Crouch, 1976; O'Barr & Atkins, 1980; Schultz, Briere, & Sandier, 1984). In recent years, evidence supporting the existence of gender differences in hedging has been investigated at the level of specific phrases which are referred to as uncertainty verb phrases. Uncertainty verb phrases, especially those combining first-person singular pronouns with perceptual or cognitive verbs; "I wonder if", "I think", have been found more often in women's writing (Mulac & Lundell, 1994) and speech (Hartman, 1976; Poole, 1979), a result interpreted as indicative of women's resistance to force their views on another person.

For the years onwards, researchers have gone beyond questioning only the existence of gender differences in hedging to Lakoff's interpretation of their social and linguistic functions. Early research testing Lakoff's hypotheses (Carli, 1990; Crosby & Nyquist, 1977; McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, & Gale, 1977) used to facilitate the form and function's relationship (Cameron, McAlinden, & O'Leary, 1988; Coates, 1986; Holmes, 1984a). Woman's language features were supposed to mirror tentativeness, thus, interpretations were often based on frequency enumerations. What this neglects is the functional variation of speech styles, their ability to serve different ends through diverse sociolinguistic contexts. Regarding hedging, the New Zealand linguist Janet Holmes has, during the past decade, highlighted the problems of this approach when reanalyzing women's language and points out; "hedges may not only express uncertainty, but also have other functions" (1992, p. 318). Holmes has investigated usage of several hedging devices in everyday conversation, notably the pragmatic particles "I think" (Holmes, 1990), "you know" (Holmes, 1986), and "sort of" (Holmes, 1988). Basing her analysis on a range of contextual and grammatical information, she has revealed that hedges can serve a variety of functions and eventually distinguished between two significant functions: affective and epistemic. Functioning as affective, hedges convey speakers' desire to keep interpersonal relations. Epistemic function, on the other hand, is when hedges convey speakers' uncertainty about statement's validity. Although locating few global sex differences in the frequency of hedging, Holmes (1995) has clarified the relationship between gender and communication, when applying her framework to a corpus of New Zealand English, demonstrating that men and women use hedges in distinct ways but much more in the same rate. Women typically employ them as strategies of "positive politeness" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Holmes (1995) states that "hedges attenuate or reduce the strength or directness, mitigate face-threatening acts, and avoid imposition on the addressee" (p.74). For example, women commonly use "sort of" to soften the impact of statements in order to show solicitude for others' feelings (Holmes, 1988). Likewise, they use "you know" as a simplified feature for attracting others to a conversation (Holmes, 1986). Men's use of "sort of and you know", however, generally avails goals of an epistemic role; i.e. men hedge to record grades of verbal uncertainty.

Holmes' work, then, challenges the bold famous claim that women are unconfident speakers. She interprets women's language as sensitive and attentive rather than deficient (Dixon & Foster, 1997). Ironically, her research evidence has argued that it is typically men who employ hedges to convey imprecision and incertitude condemned by Lakoff and others. However, Holmes herself has confessed that her work's findings on gender and hedges are temporary. Her framework has been tested only in New Zealand, questioning the solidity of her evidence on different samples

across diverse cultural contexts. Thus, the effect of situational influences on men and women use of epistemic and affective hedges remains unclear. Finally, her results have been based primarily on interpretation of descriptive statistics, a permissive test of gender differences.

4. EXPERIMENTAL

Seeking a more appropriate design to correspond the nature of the study, the researchers opted for a mixed method with both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the sake of understanding the impact of gender on the stereotypical report/rapport talk and hedges in I-tech oral conversations and to meet the research aims, two research instruments will be used: a participatory observation through Google+ live hangouts and interviews.

In order to examine stereotypes in genders' talk, report/rapport talk, and the frequency of hedges between the two, answers of the following questions were sought:

- ✓ Is hedging gender-differentiated?
- ✓ To what extent are females and males using hedges compared to one another?
- ✓ How do compare males and females aim to report or rapport talks?
- ✓ Is there a stereotype judgment among people on gender's use of language?

Hypotheses: The hypotheses on which the present work is based run as follows:

- *Hypothesis 1:* Hedging is gender differentiated and females use hedges more than males.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Females aim at rapport whereas males aim at report talk exclusively.
- *Hypothesis 3:* There exists a stereotype judgment among participants on gender's language.

4.1. Participants

The sample consists of 30 competent speakers of English (N=30), eighteen men and twelve women. All participants were volunteers who were recruited using an advertisement pinned to Google+ debate hangouts with native speakers. The participants were directly oriented to a Facebook page, created by the researchers themselves for ethical considerations, to update the participants with all details concerning the study. Only individuals, who speak English appropriately and fluently; whether being it their first language or a foreign/second language, are selected for the study, and their ages ranged from 20 to 40 years.

4.2. Data instruments

Participatory observation is in some ways the most natural and the most challenging of qualitative data collection methods. The researcher in participatory observation can participate and observe or only observe as a neutral participant. But still in this case, the researcher has to fulfill his role of taking note, recording voices, sounds, images and asking questions that are designed to uncover the meaning behind the behavior (Participant Observation, 2015). Choosing the most appropriate means of research is certainly a matter of many factors. "While factors such as time and costs certainly play an important part in deciding how to approach a particular research problem, the subject of the research itself should ultimately determine the methods used" (Beiske, 2002).

Since the current research is partially of a qualitative nature and based on a participatory observation, the researchers opted for interviews as a data collection instrument. Kvale (1983) defines the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions

of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.174). Collecting these descriptions can be done in several ways. Face-to-face interviews are the most common, but also interviewing using the internet is rising. Due to developments in computer technology, all kinds of computer mediated communication (CMC) tools have been developed. In the main study one-to-one video call interviews were conducted via hangouts. To obtain detailed information on whether men and women are stereotypical, the researchers conducted interviews with 10 participants (6 men and 4 women) taking 1\3 from the sampling population that was previously taken from 1\3 of 100 members on the group, which is basically 30. The one-to-one interview was conducted individually with each subject to elicit some detailed information on her/his personal opinion concerning genders speech diversity. The interviewees were selected randomly on the basis of their availability. Each interview took 15 to 20 minutes per participant and was recorded.

4.3. Procedures for data collection

In order to gather the data, the researchers took part in online planned hangouts in order to discuss different topics agreed upon by the participants themselves. The hangouts were in terms of 08 planned classes that encompass at more 10 participants, in each hangout. Participants in each hangout were randomly designated to meet all up on air together and discuss a debatable topic for 45 minutes.

The selection of debate topics required some further justification as there is evidence that gender-biased topics may affect male and female talk (Brown, Dovido & Ellyson, 1990). Only topics about which the genders possess roughly equivalent knowledge were employed. Thus, the topics were chosen on the basis of a survey, administered to a participant sample on the Facebook group discussed previously (10 men, 10 women) drawn from the same population that supply the experiment. This survey requires participants to respond to a position opinion (e.g., "Salaries or job payments are considered to be not enough") indicating: (a) their agreement, (b) disagreement. Topics on which the genders will score about equal, or merely the same, on both of these dimensions will be selected for the hangouts. From an original list of 15, 8 topics are eventually chosen (equality between men and women, drugs legalization, death penalty, language and culture, salaries, pills industry, home or abroad, working women).

On the other hand, the interviews were conducted on 10 participants from the total population (N=30). The 10 recruited participants were basically those who spotted frequently online. The interviews were online and conducted on a private hangout between one of the researchers and one of the participants aiming only at finding the existence of a stereotype in linguistic styles among genders.

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS
5.1. Results from Hangouts
5.1.1. Hedges

Frequency percentage of hedges dimensions uttered by participants of both genders is shown in Table 1. As anticipated, there is a differentiated effect of the speaker's gender on the linguistics' dimensions investigated. Contrary to prediction, all the hedges categories columns accept of hesitation markers show a high frequency in males' use over females.

Hedges dimensions%	Pragmatic particles%		Modal terms%		Uncertainty verb phrases%		Hesitation markers%	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Language and culture	55	45	46	54	42	58	33	67
Genders' equality	88	12	25	75	81	19	50	50
Home or abroad	71	28	54	45	75	25	27	72
Salaries	80	20	00	00	50	50	44	55
Death penalty	59	40	00	100	69	31	83	17
Working woman	50	50	40	60	67	32	44	55
Drugs legalization	48	52	83	17	43	57	45	55
Pills industry	67	33	24	76	66	34	27	73

Fig.1. Frequency of hedges uttered by both genders

Preliminary manual analysis indicated in Table 4 was replicated using ANOVA analyses from the SPSS software in order to support these findings. In the following analysis, the independent variable gender was divided into men and women and taken at random each time we investigate one dependent variable set before: pragmatic particles, modal terms, uncertainty verb phrases, and hesitation markers.

5.1.1.1. Pragmatic Particles

This section focuses on the theme of pragmatic particles. Pragmatic particles are defined as a word or a phrase that is used to fill gaps in discourse. It is a lexeme (a word or a phrase) that adds no direct semantic meaning to the context of the sentence, having rather a pragmatic function; it indicates the speaker's attitude like "you know, like".
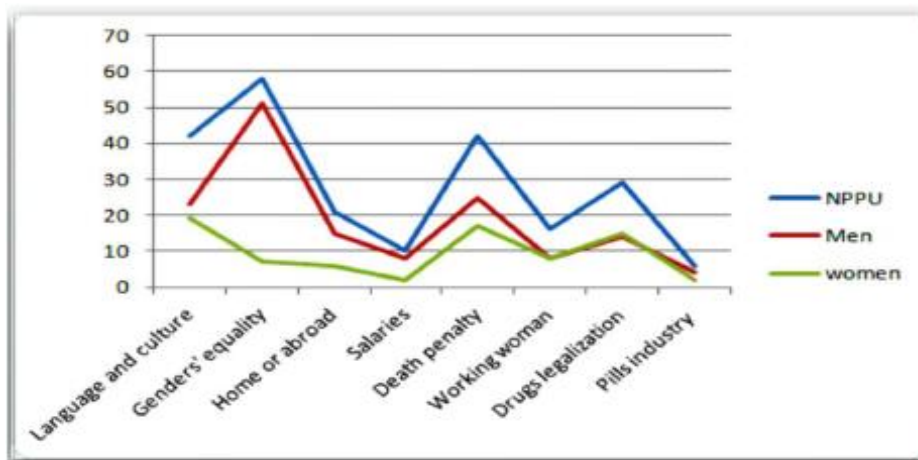
NPPU: Number of Pragmatic Particles Uttered. X axe: Discussions. Y axe: Frequency percentage
Source: based on data from table 5-EXCEL

Fig.2. Number of pragmatic particles uttered in total and by both genders

As seen in the Line graph, the men's number of pragmatic particles (NPPU) is dominant. Though the total of pragmatic particles uttered changes all along the Line graph, the men's curve, unlike women's, changes in much more the same way. The women's curve, however, is far away of being approximate to the total and to that of men. Only at the few last debates, both genders used convergent number of pragmatic particles. The significant difference between men and women use will be confirmed using Summary modal and ANOVA tables.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,936[a]	,876	,855	5,71799

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Pragmatic Particles Uttered
b. Dependent Variable: Men

Fig.3. Summary modal of NPPU and men correlation

R= 0.936 ≈1. So there exists a high correlation between NPPU and gender of being men.
R^2= 0.876 ≈ 87.6% which means that 87% of NPPU is uttered by men.

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1385,828	1	1385,828	42,386	,001[a]
	Residual	196,172	6	32,695		
	Total	1582,000	7			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Pragmatic Particles Uttered
b. Dependent Variable: Men

Fig.4. ANOVA table of NPPU frequency

H0: NPPU are less employed by men.
**H1:** NPPU are more employed by men.
Sig.= $0.01 \leq 0.05$, so H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.

According to the results obtained, the first hedges dimension: pragmatic particles is utilized frequently by men. A defining feature of pragmatic particles is to express imprecision which is, according to our results, likely to be a male's characteristic. One example of this can be seen in Allen's opinion about language and culture: "Uhh I think umm... *you know* the culture and the language basically are two topics that are strictly connected within each other *you know* (...) *I mean* to get a culture, to learn a culture, uhh(...), when you speak, *you know* (...). So, I think it s very important to umm...to learn the culture beside, *I mean* along the language, whatever *I mean*, it is not just useful to be a good speaker, *you know* what I mean?" This extract contains many pragmatic particles of the kind you know and I mean. The interesting thing lies within the high percentage of pauses and hesitation markers used by the speaker in the first extract that demonstrates that both you know and I mean are being used to express imprecision. The accuracy of this interpretation is put beyond doubt by the speaker's obliging gloss "you know what I mean?" which clearly betrays a struggle for exactitude.

5.1.1.2. Modal Terms

Apart from modal verbs, there are a lot of words which also express modality. There are adjectives and adverbs which express degrees of certainty or obligation. For i1nstance; "actually, maybe, perhaps, possibly".
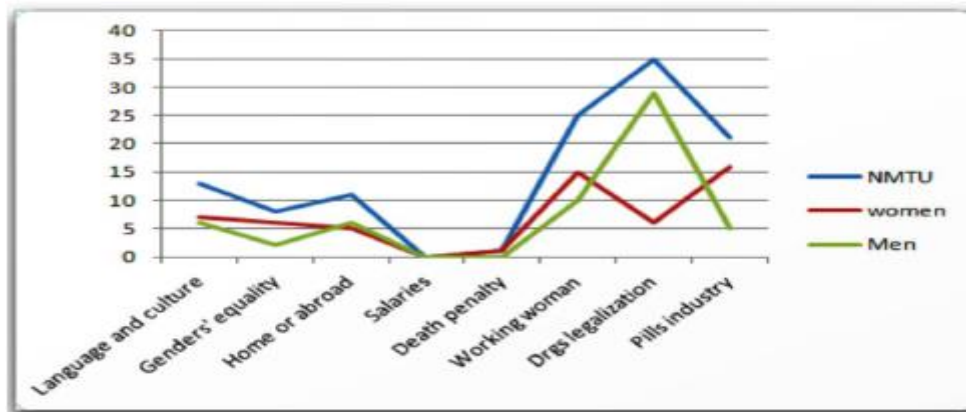
NMTU: Number of Modal Terms Uttered.   X axe: Discussions.   Y axe: Frequency percentage.

Source: Based on data from table 5- EXCEL

Fig.5. Number of modal terms uttered in total and by both genders

According to the Line graph, the number of modal terms uttered (NMTU) of women is dominant at first. The graph at debatable hangout 3 until 5 reaches a neutral extent and then the men's curve decreases highly. The women's curve, in contrast, is far away of being approximate to the total and to that of men. The significant difference between men and women use of modal terms will be confirmed using Summary modal and ANOVA tables.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,648[a]	,419	,323	4,77850

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Modal Terms Uttered

b. Dependent Variable: Women

Fig.6. Summary modal of NMTU and women correlation

R = 0.648. So there exists a high correlation between Number of modal terms uttered and gender of being women.

R^2= 0.419 ≈ 41.9% which means that 41% of NMTU is uttered by women. A contradiction occurred here, where the R^2 did not match R's results. The significance scale in ANOVA table will prove one of the measures.

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	98,996	1	98,996	4,335	,082[a]
	Residual	137,004	6	22,834		
	Total	236,000	7			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Modal Terms Uttered

b. Dependent Variable: Women

Fig.7. ANOVA table of NMTU frequency

H0: NMTU are less employed by women.

H1: NMTU are more employed by women.

Sig.= 0.082 > 0.05, so H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected.
So, the hedges dimension relating to modal terms is utilized less frequently by women. Here again, the preliminary manual results are proven. Holmes (1988) provided a functional variance of the modals investigated: epistemic and affective.

The following exchange evinces these two functions of modal terms in which women are said to use the epistemic function and men the affective function:
**Jefferson:** You can't put a label on it, because it s too general so I try to, I don't know, *maybe* I got it right, *maybe* I am wrong I don't know (...)
Hilda: Honestly, uhh it is *kind of* frustrating like, like *sort of* you have a will deep down to support this law (laughs) let me guess! For personal needs! (Laughs).

In this exchange, the male speaker was very uncertain about what he is trying to explain and gave up at last saying "I don't know". Importantly, this example supports the results and what even have been discussed in the literature about the modal terms functions. On the other hand, the female speaker script is of another function. Here the hedge is used not so much to express uncertainty as to register disagreement. Because sort of lends utterances a nebulous quality, it is well suited to the art of "face protection" (Goffman, 1955), both for self and other. The affective role of sort of often becomes salient in contexts where speakers are discussing confrontational topics (Dixon and Foster, 1996) as in this extract, where two participants debate the drugs legalization laws. This extract also indicates the importance of interpreting hedges together with possessing background knowledge about the speakers. When we recognize that the speaker here is a new converted lady to Islam, that the second speaker is a Christian lay person with opposing views, and that this information has been broadcast earlier in their conversation, interpretation becomes easier. Given this sociolinguistic context, we can appreciate that what Hilda asked for is not an innocent request for clarification: It is a disagreement, though one phrased indirectly in question form and diminished by hedging devises.

5.1.1.3. Uncertainty verb phrases

Uncertainty verb phrases, especially those combining first-person singular pronouns with perceptual or cognitive verbs; "I wonder if, I think…"
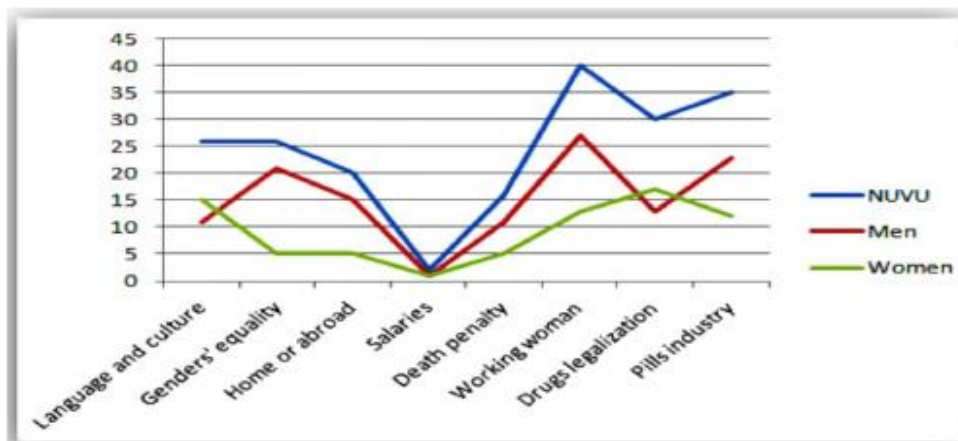
NUVU: Number of Uncertainty Verb phrases Uttered. X axe: Discussions. Y axe: Frequency percentage.
Source: Based on data from table 5-EXCEL
Fig.8. Number of uncertainty verb phrases uttered in total and by both genders

As seen in the Line graph, the men's number of uncertainty verb phrases uttered (NUVU) is controlling. The men's curve in the Line graph changes all along the total curve in the same rate. The women's curve, however, is very low comparing to the two, except of the two last debatable hangouts where it matches the men's curve. The significant difference between men and women use of uncertainty verb phrases will be confirmed using Summary modal and ANOVA tables.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,894[a]	,799	,765	3,99479

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Uncertainty Verb-phrases Uttered

b. Dependent Variable: Men

Fig.9. Summary modal of NUVU and men correlation

R= 0.894 ≈1. So there exists a high correlation between NUVU and gender of being men.
R²= 0.799 ≈ 79.9% which means that 79.9% of NUVU is uttered by men.

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	379,750	1	379,750	23,796	,003[a]
	Residual	95,750	6	15,958		
	Total	475,500	7			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Uncertainty Verb-phrases Uttered

b. Dependent Variable: Men

Fig.10. ANOVA table of NUVU frequency

H0: NUVU are less utilized by men.
H1: NUVU are more utilized by men.
Sig.= 0.03 ≤ 0.05, so H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.

Therefore, the hedging dimension: uncertainty verb phrases are utilized frequently by men. The following example illustrates these findings.

Omer : Ok! *I honestly think* this point can be look at from different perspectives, nowadays *I think* it's very difficult for man on his own, generally speaking to support his family financially speaking, right! therefore *I believe* having a working wife could be very beneficial, on the other hand *I think* that this, I mean that the children have to go to the kindergarten, and this is a debatable point because I am not sure if children can learn in this places, are they! I mean the things will expose to, maybe they'll be too young to see something, as I said and *I think* it'll effect negatively the growing up of the children...

According to the extracts, the speaker's utterance lacks confidence, signaling imprecision, or a need for reassurance. Holmes (1986) believed that whenever a speaker uses an intonation pattern or tag question, it is assumed that it is an unconfident utterance. The example above includes two dimensions of this kind "right:" and "are they!". The final interpretation became lot easier due to the confession of the speaker himself during the interview when defending his position "whenever I use these cognitive verbs, it means I am 100% sure of what she is saying."

5.1.1.4. Hesitation markers

Two basic hesitation markers (also referred to as fillers or filled pauses) are common in modern English language: the UM form, which consists of a neutral vowel followed by a final labial nasal, and the UH form, which consists of a neutral vowel in an open syllable. Um and uh are considered as uncertainty markers in spontaneous discourse.
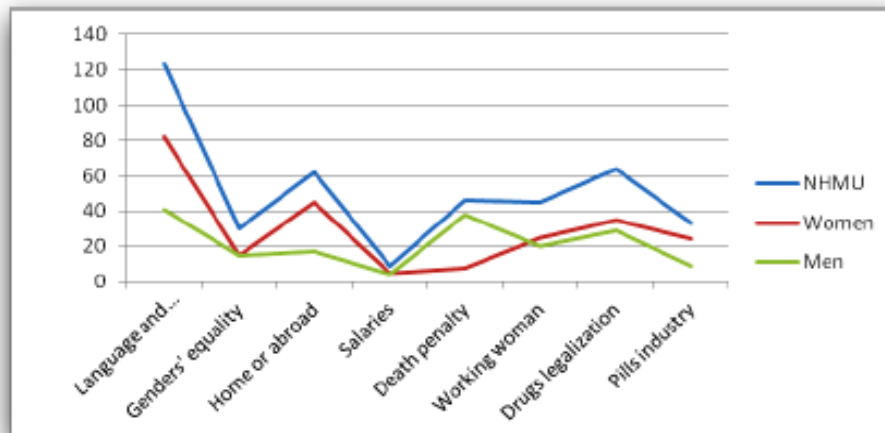
NHMU: Number of Hesitation Markers Uttered.   X axe: Discussions.   Y axe: Frequency percentage.
Source: Based on data from table 5-EXCEL

Fig.11. Number of hesitation markers uttered in total and by both genders

As seen in the Line graph, the men's number of hesitation markers uttered (NHMU) is dominant. Though the total of hesitation markers changes all along the Line graph, the women's curve, unlike men's, changes in much more the same way. The men's curve, however, is far away of being approximate to the total and to that of women. Only at the few last debates, both genders used convergent number of hesitation markers. The significant difference between men and women use will be confirmed using Summary modal and ANOVA tables.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,944[a]	,890	,872	8,91036

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Hesitation Markers Uttered
b. Dependent Variable: Women

Fig.12. *Summary modal of NHMU and women correlation*

R= 0.944 ≈1. So there exists a high correlation between NHMU and gender of being women. R^2= 0.890 ≈ 89% which means that 89% of NHMU is uttered by women.

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3872,508	1	3872,508	48,775	,000[a]
	Residual	476,367	6	79,395		
	Total	4348,875	7			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Number of Hesitation Markers Uttered
b. Dependent Variable: Women

Fig.13. ANOVA table of NHMU frequency

H0: NHMU are less employed by women.
H1: NHMU are more employed by women.
Sig.= 0.00 ≤ 0.05, so H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.

According to the findings obtained the hedging dimension: hesitation markers are utilized more frequently by women. Effectively the results are to be advocated. Women are great users of such hedging device which everybody thinks it is natural. The feedback interview conducted with the same participants yielded this interpretation. All the participants disagreed on the functional variance of the former hedges dimensions except of hesitation markers which are thought to be a natural phenomenon. Still, women, as one participant said, think a lot before uttering anything. Again, it is a matter of politeness and the others' face to be saved. The following example highlights this:

Hiba: //[*Uhh* sometimes, *umm* when we compare for example your country to another country, or countries near to it, *uhh* for example the middle Europe for a teacher *uhh* they give him/her a very good salary, *umm* a very good *uhh*, a good amount of money, I guess...Since you gave the example of a teacher…
The female speaker appears to be a bit unconfident due to the use of "I guess" and "since you gave the example of a teacher!" We can consider this as lessening the impact of her utterance in the hearer which was advanced as an argument so far.

5.1.2. Report/rapport talk

Frequency percentage of report and rapport talk by participants of both genders is shown in Table 14. In contrast to what have been anticipated already, both genders aim mutually at both types of talk. Surprisingly, females aim at report the same way males do.

Report/rapport codes	Task-oriented talk%		Emotion-oriented talk%	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Language and culture	00	100	25	75
Equality between men and women	37	62	40	60
Home or abroad	00	00	44	56
Salaries	00	00	25	75
Death penalty	64	36	100	00
Working woman	00	100	25	75
Drugs legalization	37	62	40	60
Pills industry	00	00	44	56

Fig.14. Frequency of report /rapport talk

Hereafter in report/rapport, unlike hedging part, we will provide a multiple investigation of both genders' coding. This is mainly due to the hypothesis set before, which includes the two contradictory dimensions and both genders.

5.1.2.1. Task-oriented talk

Task-oriented talk or report talk is a way to give information and produce solutions to problems achieving higher status and power in conversation. It is to maintain superiority and dominance over others and feel independent.
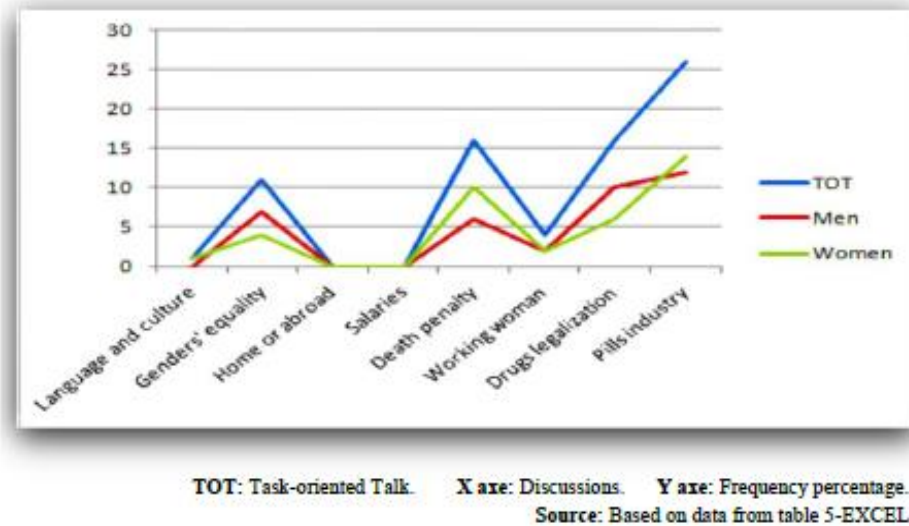

TOT: Task-oriented Talk.   X axe: Discussions.   Y axe: Frequency percentage.
Source: Based on data from table 5-EXCEL

Fig.15. Frequency of task-oriented talk in total and by both genders

As seen in the Line graph, men and women's task oriented talk frequency (TOT) is convergent. Though the total of task oriented talk changes all along the Line graph and get higher at the last debates, women's curve, similar to men's, changes in much more the same way. The significant similarity between men and women use of TOT will be confirmed using Summary modal and ANOVA tables.

- **Men**

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,964[a]	,930	,918	1,37502

a. Predictors: (Constant), Task-Oriented Talk
b. Dependent Variable: Men

Fig.16. Summary modal of TOT and men correlation

R= 0.964 ≈1. So there exists a high correlation between TOT and gender of being men. R^2= 0.930 ≈ 93% which means that 93% of the total TOT is employed by men.

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	150,531	1	150,531	79,617	,000[a]
	Residual	11,344	6	1,891		
	Total	161,875	7			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Task-Oriented Talk
b. Dependent Variable: Men

Fig.17. ANOVA table of TOT rate

H0: TOT is less employed by men.
H1: TOT is more employed by men.

Sig.= 0.00 ≤ 0.05, so H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.

- **Women**

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,981^a	,963	,957	,99172

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotion-Oriented Talk
b. Dependent Variable: Women

Fig.18. Summary modal of EOT and women correlation

R= 0.981 ≈1. So there exists a high correlation between EOT and gender of being women. R²= 0.963 ≈ 96% which means that 96% of the total EOT is employed by women.

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	153,974	1	153,974	156,555	,000^a
	Residual	5,901	6	,984		
	Total	159,875	7			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotion-Oriented Talk
b. Dependent Variable: Women

Fig.19. ANOVA table of EOT rate

H0: EOT is less employed by women.
H1: EOT is more employed by women.
Sig.= 0.00 ≤ 0.05, so H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.

According to the results found on report/rapport: emotion-oriented talk is employed approximately in the same rate by both genders. We will exemplify as follow:

Assil: Yes, I am, you know I always watch TV programs about cultures and languages, I love Arabic culture it is amazing. I love Morocco, Moroccan people make some tattoos on their hands, I love it and uhh, Egypt is beautiful, you know Pyramids, historical places are amazing and uhh Romania is near Turkey and I am, I wanna visit it, I have many friends, they visited Romania and they said Romania is really beautiful uhh, Romanian people can speak English well, fluently and this is really good umm. Brazil uhh wow! It's so far and I wish like to visit it one day InchAllah uhh carnival I wanna see it (laughs), I had met a guy from Senegal and he studies umm here at the university and it was uhh it's great to meet all of you because I love to learn many languages, different cultures and thank you (laughs) that's all...

In this extract, the speaker is debating on very crucial topic which is language and culture. The participant at a particular point made a turnabout and started complementing about the different countries that each of the participants with her on air are from. Somehow it looks irrelevant, but it is relevant. The lady here wanted to build rapport, lessen the frustration of the topic and started saying things that are into culture but at a personal level.

5.2. Results from interviews

So far, it is so obvious that the interview was meant for two purposes. From a one hand, it is a feedback for the general conclusion of the reason behind hedges. From the other hand, it is to investigate whether there exists beliefs on genders' stereotype speech or not.

	Gender speech stereotype and hedges' use					
	Yes		No		Neutral	
Gender	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Hedges are used to show uncertainty	2	-	4	4	-	-
Females are marginal	2	-	4	2	2	-
Gender' speech is stereotyped	6	4	-	-	-	-

Fig.20. Interviewees' answers on marginality and stereotypical speech of genders

As the table 20 records, there was a significant difference between genders on the questions. Surprisingly, all the females felt about themselves as marginal to the real concerns of life. The same question was answered by (no) by most of men. It is very important to consider that the personal feeling of being marginalized comes from the spread beliefs about women's styles of communication. That is; the stereotypical of genders' speech.

Afterwards, we continue with the last section which will be devoted for the interpretation and discussion of these analyses.

6. DISCUSSION
6.1. Hedges

This study examined how frequently genders use hedges and aim at report and rapport spontaneously when debating live. The most surprising finding was the existence of gender's effect but quite distinct from prior works when answering the current research questions. Similar to the study by Dixon and Foster (1997) from a one hand, and unlike the evidences provided by Holmes (1986, 1988) from the other, our results did not show that women used hedges devices relating to pragmatic particles (you know and I mean) more frequently than men. But it did find that men used modal terms hedges (maybe, sort/kind of) more frequently than women. Concerning uncertainty verb phrases, it has been indicated that men and women show approximate number of these perceptual verbs (I think, I believe) with high use for men over women in some debates which disagree with Poole's findings in 1979 who found that women use these cognitive verbs more often as indicative of resistance to force their views on another person. Furthermore, contrary to Laserna et al. (2014) who reported a significant correlation between genders and hesitation markers; the present study did not show that women made lower use frequency for both uh and um than men. In short, opposed to some previous research (e.g., Fishman, 1978; Lakoff, 1975), there existed evidence of sex differences in the overall usage rate of hedged speech where men hedge more than women. That is, disconfirming hypothesis 1, hedging was gender-differentiated in our experiment where males utilized the language dimensions investigated more frequently than females.

It might be considered that cultural norms can lay behind the results obtained. Bodine (1975) demonstrated that cultural backgrounds can influence the relations between gender and language use. Another explanation regards our sample characteristics specifically that of age. Whereas Dixon and Foster (1997) have employed a sample of students' age means of 18 years for men and 19 years

for women in their research, this study employed a wide-ranging sample of people whose age means are 28 years for men and 32 years for women. Commonly, youngsters are less gender-typed than members of other social categories (Mulac & Lundell, 1980), our research findings then may be because of the difference in social categories. Another reason for the incompatibility of our findings to previous research in the field may be because of the statistical method for analyzing data. Holmes for example adapted a descriptive analysis when providing means, and proportions as evidence of gender differences in hedging. The current study, however, applied inferential analysis to data on hedging differences.

6.2. Report/rapport talk

In contrast to the findings for hedges, the speaker's gender had an influence upon report and rapport talk in the same typical way. This pattern, which holds two subcategories, supports Tannen's results (1986) reporting a tendency in women's use of rapport talk and men's of report talk. However, the findings of the subcategories were a bit different. Though the results were approximate, it was found similar to Holmes (1988) that both women sought for relation-oriented language more than men did. Likewise, the results indicate, in contrast to previous works by Baron-Cohen (2003), that emotion-oriented talk was expressed explicitly by women and men with a low difference significant. Yet, women used a task-oriented speech in the same way men did. Surprisingly, this finding is new in the area. Unlike what was predicted by hypothesis 2, women were found to aim significantly at rapport and report in the same way men did.

The results indicate an identical match of what have been found in previous works except of that relating to task-oriented talk. How might this discrepancy be explained? One possible explanation might be the age. Age is a crucial variable that was likely behind the sexes' equalities in task-oriented speech. As shown already in hedges discussion part, the participants to this study were of mature age means which might be the reason for the sexes' practicality in speaking.

6.3. Genders' stereotype speech

In addition, relying on the interview data, the present paper draw on a conflicting picture of what past research evidence showed on the phenomenon of gender stereotypic speech. Schneider (2005) contends that some common female stereotype traits are sympathetic, sensitive and marginal whereas stereotypic males' traits include dominant, serious and rational. In contrast, the majority of our interviewees believe that women of nowadays are as serious as men; they can reason and be rational. Concerning genders' speech features, the results provide a 100% approval to Lakoff's (1975) work on Language and Woman's Place, they affirm the existence of some clues in one's speech. As a total, the stereotypic speech investigation of genders was correspondent to prior works i.e. hypothesis 3 is to be accepted.

The generalization for genders' speech stereotype was due to the numerical presentation of data especially that of 100% positive answers of the interviewees. The interesting point is within the negative answers. Females believe that they are marginal. Guiller and Durndell (2006) indicate that females conveyed dissatisfaction and marginality with the negativity in a mixed gender discussion. For example in feedback interviews one female stated how marginal she felt and pissed off she was about the reaction of the males participants concerning her ideas. Quoting from the interview with the female participant who was asked about her opinion concerning whether women are marginal in a mixed conversation, she surprisingly spoke about her experience in the hangout:
"I can remember accurately, this is exactly what I felt like in the hangout that day. So at the beginning of the conversation I felt those male participants reacted in a way that minimized the ideas I put forward and this is why maybe I felt at the beginning the desire to fight or to leave."

7. CONCLUSION

In short, this paper has certified that hedges are a flexible factor that both genders use in distinct ways. Although the results to our work did not match what have been shown already in the field, it clarifies even more how gender is a very crucial key in communication. The findings challenge the popular dogma in the field of both "difference" approach; that gender inequalities reflect power differences, and "dominance" approach: that gender influence the flow of communication. In applying Tannen's approach, however, report/rapport speech confirmed to some extent what have been previously found in the literature. Certainly, the discrepancy in men and women's similar employment of task-oriented speech makes it immature to over generalize females' marginality to real life concerns. Prior works headed for assuming that females are less serious and emotional rather than practical in talking issues over. Despite the fact that this research did not match some of the findings in the field, we remain convinced that this mixed investigation of gender differences we have recorded would be one beneficial avenue for future research which would enable for a more complete understanding of the ways in which social roles and relationships between speakers contribute to differences in language use.

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