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“MULAN”: TWENTY YEARS APART (COMPARISON OF THE MAIN CHARACTER’S LANGUAGE IN THE 1998 ANIMATED MOVIE AND THE 2020 LIVE-ACTION ADAPTATION)

Summary. This article explores speech patterns of male and female characters in multimedia texts. Our study focuses on the protagonist’s speech in the animated movie “Mulan” released in 1998 and the live-action movie of the same name released in 2020. Both movies tell us the story of Mulan, a young woman who challenges the traditional gender roles of her time. She possesses impressive sword-fighting abilities and resists the pressure to get married. To save her injured father from fighting in war and risking his life, Mulan disguises herself as a man named Ping (1998) / Hua Jung (2020) and joins the army to protect the Emperor. We used LIWC-22 (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) to identify changes in different categories defined in the program. Only the categories that underwent significant changes are shown in the article. The results were largely consistent with our expectations, but still, some discrepancies were found in both movies which need further investigation. For example, both male characters showed higher indexes of using social words, despite being widely believed that women tend to be more socially oriented in their speech than men. The same goes for the category that shows the usage of polite words, where an increased index was only seen in 1998 characters’ speeches. Category “Emotions” was the most controversial, since there is no common opinion on whether men or women are more emotional in their speech. If we consider the category overall, female characters appeared to be more emotional than males, though Mulan’s indexes in both cases fall within the norm. But at the same time, if we delve into reviewing the expression of different emotions separately, we can see that Hua Jung’s indexes in many cases go beyond the mean, while Ping’s indexes are equal to 0. The variations in speech patterns among the characters in both animated and live-action movies might be explained by various factors. One possible reason is that Mulan, who was pretending to be a man, could not fully change the way she speaks. Additionally, the differences in the way characters speak in both movies may be due to the change of gender roles in society, which also impacts the stereotypes associated with speech patterns.

Key words: gender differences of speech, female and male speech, LIWC, Mulan.

Problem statement. Numerous studies have explored the differences in communication patterns between men and women. Various techniques are used to conduct these studies, from interviewing individuals to analyzing the speech patterns of male and female characters in movies. However, what if we examined a character who alters their gender identity throughout a movie? Would there be any inconsistencies in their speech patterns or would there be no notable changes? To further explore this notion, we conducted a speech analysis of Mulan in both the 1998 animated movie

and the 2020 live-action movie, comparing her speech when she is a woman to when she disguises herself as a man to join the Imperial Army.

Literature review. The study of gender linguistics has been a topic of interest among researchers for a considerable time, resulting in appearance of numerous contributions. One of the early contributors to this field was Lakoff R., who established a trajectory for further investigations. With the advance of new technologies, conducting in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis has become easier. Consequently, researchers have been able to produce numerous works on the subject, showing results obtained from different perspectives. In this article, we will refer to works written by various researchers, including: Boyd R. L., Ashokkumar A., Seraj S., Pennebaker J. W., Yu B., Givon E., Berkovich R., Oz-Cohen E., Park G., Yaden D. B., Schwartz H. A., Kern M. L., Eichstaedt J. C., Kosinski M., Jones J. J., Al-Yasin N., Rabab’ah Getc, etc.

The paper aims to determine if changes in gender identity affect a character’s speech patterns and how. The study employed a quantitative research method. LIWC-22 (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) [1] was used for conducting the analysis. By comparing the obtained results and determining which category indexes increased or decreased, we referred to the numerical data provided by LIWC. The dataset for the study was created from randomly selected subsets of text from 15 different English language sets [2, p. 8], specifically, we used the movie-related indexes from the presented table.

Main findings. The article is based on the Disney animated movie “Mulan” released in 1998 and the live-action movie of the same name released in 2020. Both movies share the story of a girl who defies the social norms of her time, causing her to be seen as a disappointment to her family. She possesses exceptional sword-fighting skills and is uninterested in finding a husband. When a group of invaders threatens China’s security, the emperor mandates that each family must provide a male representative to join the army. However, in Mulan’s case, her father is too injured to serve, prompting her to take his place by disguising herself as a man called Ping (1998)/Hua Jung (2020) and joining the Emperor’s Army to save him.

This article will focus on significant changes in categories presented in LIWC, rather than covering all of them. Starting with the “Emotion” category, it’s worth noting that there is no consensus on whether men or women are more emotional in their speech. However, it’s commonly believed that women tend to express their emotions more than men. This belief was confirmed by an investigation by Bei Yu in “Language and Gender in Congressional Speech”, where emotional expression was seen as a signature characteristic

of feminine language [3, p. 2]. However, in the article “Are women truly ‘more emotional’ than men? Sex differences in an indirect model-based measure of emotional feelings”, it is stated that there was no sex difference in the bias to report negative emotions and positive emotions, but at the same time women generated negative emotions more efficiently than men across nine different experiments conducted [4]. In our case, the results show that Mulan’s indexes in both movies were higher compared to Ping and Hua Jung, but the numbers were within the norm: 1.69 (1998) and 1.08 (2020). Ping’s and Hua Jung’s indexes were equal to 0 and 0.81, respectively. It’s noteworthy that the 1998 version of Mulan was more emotional according to the index, which might lead us to the conclusion that her speech was more emotional according to the standards of the time. Let us dive further into considering emotion categories in detail.

According to the results, upon considering different categories such as “Positive Emotions”, “Negative Emotions”, “Anxiety”, “Anger”, and “Sadness”, it was found that Mulan and Ping from the 1998 movie showed less emotional expression compared to Mulan and Hua Jung from the 2020 movie. Ping’s indexes were the lowest, with all categories’ numbers being equal to 0. Hua Jung had the highest index of positive emotions at 0.85, which falls within the norm, followed by Mulan (1998) at 0.27 and Mulan (2020) at 0.18. Both Mulan’s indexes were slightly below the mean.

In the analysis of negative emotional expression, it was found that Mulan from the 1998 movie showed an index of 0.54 which falls within the norm, while Mulan from the 2020 movie showed the highest index of 0.9 among all the characters reviewed. Hua Jung’s index was close to Mulan’s (2020) at 0.85. All three characters showed an increased number in anxiety expression: Mulan (1998) at 0.54, Mulan (2020) at 0.36, and Hua Jung at 0.42. Mulan (2020) and Hua Jung expressed anger in their speech, with their indexes at 0.18 (within the norm) and 0.42 (beyond the mean), respectively. Mulan’s (1998) and Ping’s indexes were both at 0. An interesting observation was made in the expression of sadness, as only Mulan from the live-action movie had an index of 0.18, which was slightly higher than the mean. The indexes of all other characters were at 0.

Some interesting findings were discovered in the “Affiliation” category. Mulan’s index in this category exceeded the mean in the initial animated movies, being equal to 4.21. However, after disguising herself as Ping, her index dropped to 0. In the 2020 movie, Mulan’s index in this category was also higher than the mean, but slightly lower than in the original movie: 3.78. While acting as Hua Jung, her index was within the norm at 2.97.

Such indexes can be explained by her caring about her surroundings, specifically her family. The “Family” category index supports this notion, particularly when analyzing the numbers from the 1998 animated movie. Mulan’s index for this category is exceptionally high at 2.17, whereas Ping’s index is 0. In contrast, the live-action movie portrays minimal distinction in the indexes for both Mulan and Hua Jung, whose scores are 0.72 and 0.85, respectively.

Another noteworthy category is “Social”. The researches “Women are Warmer but No Less Assertive than Men: Gender and Language on Facebook” (Park G., Yaden D. B., Schwartz H. A., et al.) [5] and “Talk ‘Like a Man’: Feminine Style in the Pursuit of Political Power” (Jones J. J.) [6] both suggest that women tend to use warmer and friendlier language that is focused on people, while men use language that is more socially distant, disagreeable,

and focused on objects. Jones also highlights that feminine language is socially-oriented, expressive, and dynamic, while masculine language is impersonal, long-winded, and unemotional.

The results obtained in the category show a controversial situation for our protagonist. Mulan’s indexes as a girl fall within the norm, with scores of 17.92 and 18.88 for 1998 and 2020, respectively. However, when she is disguised as a man, the indexes exceed the norm at 24.35 (1998) and 24.15 (2020). Let us delve deeper into the categories that constitute the “Social” category, namely “Socbehavior” and “Prosocial”. In this regard, all four indexes surpass the norm, with Mulan’s (1998) number being slightly elevated at 5.97. There was a more significant increase in Mulan’s (2020) speech, with an index of 6.47, and Ping’s being equal to 6.96. Hua Jung’s number was the highest at 9.32. As for the “Prosocial” category, Mulan had the highest indexes in both 1998 and 2020: with scores of 2.17 and 1.8, respectively. Ping’s index was also above the norm at 1.74, while Hua Jung’s index (0.85) was equal to the norm.

Based on the aforementioned findings, it’s worth noting the categories of “Female” and “Male” which indicate the frequency of references to women and men respectively. The results show that only Ping and Hua Jung’s speeches have higher indexes. Hua Jung has a higher score of 3.37 in the “Female” category due to his many talks about women with other soldiers. Meanwhile, Ping has a higher index of 4.35 in the “Male” category, mainly because he frequently refers to the commander of their army and the Emperor. The indexes of other characters in these categories are within the normal range.

After analyzing the data, it appears that the statements previously mentioned do not apply to the overall “Social” category in our characters’ speech. However, when looking at different types of emotions separately, there is some truth to the statements. It’s important to note that males still showed a strong focus on social interactions. This could potentially be explained by the plot, as Mulan is initially seen as a disappointment to her family and community, limiting her interactions with villagers. Most of her social interactions occur after she reveals her true identity and leads soldiers to protect the emperor. On the other hand, Ping and Hua Jung are required to interact with other soldiers and commanders during training and battles, which could account for the high social indexes.

Another important category to consider is “Politeness”. It is equally important as the others, as it is commonly believed that women tend to be more polite than men. Robin Lakoff was the first person to discuss this, stating that women’s speech sounds much more “polite” than men’s [7, p. 56]. This statement was confirmed in a research “Female Disney Characters’ Linguistic Features in the 1990s” by Noor Al-Yasin and Ghaleb Rabab’ah. Their research concluded that the usage of polite words was one of the most common linguistic features used by female Disney characters [8, p. 136]. Our research also confirmed this, as we found that Mulan, in the 1998 movie, used polite words more frequently with an index of 1.49. Ping’s index was even higher than Mulan’s, at 1.74. This could be attributed to the fact that Mulan was not familiar with how she was supposed to speak, and out of fear of being discovered, she tried to be as careful as possible with other soldiers. The indexes of Mulan and Hua Jung in the 2020 movie were both within the norm, at 1.08 and 0.85, respectively.

Conclusions. Based on the results discussed above, it can be concluded that our expectations were mostly met. However, a few

inconsistencies in both movies require further investigation. Surprisingly, the male characters used more social words than the female characters, despite the common belief that women tend to be more socially oriented in their speech. Similarly, only the 1998 characters showed an increased usage of polite words. The “Emotions” category was the most debatable, as there is no consensus on whether men or women express more emotions in their speech. Overall, the female characters appeared to be more emotional than the male characters, but at the same time, Mulan’s indexes fell within the normal range in both movies. However, upon analyzing the expression of different emotions separately, Hua Jung’s scores were found to be higher than the mean in many cases, while Ping’s scores in all categories were equal to 0. These inconsistencies may be attributed to the fact that Mulan was pretending to be a man, which prevented her from completely altering her speech patterns. It is also possible that the discrepancies in characters’ speech patterns between animated and live-action movies could be a result of societal shifts throughout history. As the gender roles of men and women progress, the stereotypes associated with their way of speaking also change.

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Лозовська К. О. «Мулан»: 20 років потому (зміна мовлення головної героїні у оригінальному анімаційному фільмі 1998 року та фільмовій адаптації 2020 року)

Анотація. У статті досліджуються моделі мовлення чоловічих і жіночих персонажів у мультимедійному тексті. Дослідження зосереджено на мовленні головної героїні анімаційного фільму «Мулан», що вийшов у 1998 році, та однойменного фільму, що потрапив на екрани у 2020 році. Обидва фільми розповідають історію Мулан, молодій жінки, яка кидає виклик традиційним гендерним ролям того часу. Вона має виняткові здібності володіння мечем та протистоїть тиску з боку суспільства щодо необхідності вийти заміж. Щоб врятувати свого пораненого батька від ризику втратити життя на війні, Мулан перевдягається у чоловіка, на ім’я Пін (1998) / Хуа Чжун (2020) і приєднується до армії для захисту імператора. Ми використовували LIWC-22 (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) для визначення змін у різних категоріях мовлення, що виокремлені у програмі. У статті показані лише ті категорії, які зазнали істотних змін. Результати в основному відповідали нашим очікуванням, але все ж в обох фільмах виявлені певні розбіжності, які потребують подальшого дослідження. Наприклад, обидва чоловічі персонажі мають вищі показники використання соціальних слів, всупереч поширеній думці, що жінки, як правило, більш соціально орієнтовані у своєму мовленні, ніж чоловіки. Те ж саме стосується категорії, яка показує вживання ввічливих слів, де підвищений індекс спостерігався лише у мовленні персонажів фільму 1998 року. Категорія «Емоції» виявилася найбільш контроверсійною, оскільки немає єдиної думки про те, чоловіки чи жінки більш емоційні у своєму мовленні. Якщо розглядати категорію «Емоції» в цілому, жіночі персонажі виявилися більш емоційними, ніж чоловічі, хоча показники Мулан в обох фільмах знаходяться в межах норми. Але водночас, якщо розглянути прояви емоцій окремо, можна побачити, що індекси Хуа Чжуна у багатьох випадках виходять за межі середніх показників, у той час, як індекси Пінга у всіх категоріях, що показують прояви емоцій, дорівнюють 0. Можна припустити, що відмінності у мовленні персонажів фільмів зумовлені різними факторами. Однією з можливих причин є те, що Мулан, з причини того, що вона тільки прикидалась чоловіком, не змогла через це повністю змінити манеру свого мовлення. Крім того, відмінності в тому, як персонажі говорять в обох фільмах, можуть бути пов’язані зі зміною гендерних ролей у суспільстві, що також впливає на стереотипи, пов’язані з моделями мовлення.

Ключові слова: гендерні особливості мовлення, мовлення чоловіків та жінок, LIWC, Мулан.