



Schwa

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Editor's Note

Each issue of *Schwa* is unique. The staff changes as students travel the path of higher education, entering to learn and going forth to serve with their freshly acquired knowledge and skills. Each issue of *Schwa* brings its own snags and challenges, including lost information and computer problems. And, of course, each semester has different articles on a variety of fascinating subjects.

However, each issue of *Schwa*, as far as I have seen, is also the same. I've seen the same levels of work ethic and integrity from this staff as all the past ones. I work with people dedicated to producing nothing but the highest quality work, including our authors, who are a pleasure to work with. I always enjoy my time on *Schwa*.

Just as employers and clients never get the full taste of all the work a student puts into getting a diploma, our readers may never fully understand the work put into this issue. As editor in chief, it is my opportunity to applaud the staff for their contributions. They have been truly incredible, and I am grateful for the privilege of being able to work with such remarkable people.

To readers, authors, staff, and anyone interested in language, we present to you the fall 2018 issue of *Schwa*.

Ashlin Averkamp
Editor in Chief

About *Schwa*

We are an academic journal produced by the students of Brigham Young University. Our mission is to increase the amount and the accessibility of linguistic scholarship—especially for those without graduate school experience—while simultaneously training editors and designers in the ways of modern publishing.

Some of our articles are strictly theoretical and academic. Others are less technical and more personal in nature. Experiments, surveys, corpus analyses, and essays are all acceptable. We have published on all the following subdisciplines of linguistics and more:

- Phonetics, the perception and production of speech sounds.
- Phonology, the system of speech sounds used in a given context.
- Semantics, the meaning constructs of words and sentences.
- Syntax, the structure of permissible and meaningful sentences.
- Sociolinguistics, the variation of language based on sociological factors.
- Psycholinguistics, the cognitive tasks necessary for language.
- Forensics, the role of language in creating and carrying out the law.

We are always accepting submissions. Papers on any language are welcome, including cross-linguistic studies, but papers must be written in English. Because we have a high standard of quality, our staff includes both editors and graphic designers. We extend an open invitation for new staff members.

Go to schwa.byu.edu to submit a paper or to join our staff.

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Callout Post for Chomsky and Generative Linguistics

Allison Card

This paper will analyze four syntactic theories and apply them to a typologically diverse language. Generative syntactic theories such as Government-Binding, Lexical-Functional Grammar, and Relational Grammar lack utility because they claim a universality that is not permitted by their structures. They often falter when faced with complex utterances. A less generative theory, such as Role and Reference Grammar, allows for more language diversity as supported by application of all four theories to Lakhota data. Theories that allow typological diversity have more utility when applied to all languages.

Language is one of the building blocks of human civilization. In order to understand language and its structures more fully, a linguist must account for morphology, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, and syntax. The interplay between these areas varies for each language. Some languages handle meaning in a clause with morphology and word structure, while others focus more on syntax and word order. Regardless, each area will have an effect on every language, no matter how small. The focus of this article is syntax, because, as prominent linguist Robert Van Valin (2001) states, “Syntax is a central component of human language” (p. 1). I argue that syntactic theories with a generative focus that rely on either grammatical relations or constituent structures are not universally valid. I support this argument by analyzing four major syntactic theories and comparing their accuracy and utility in modelling the language structure of typologically diverse languages.

The four theories I analyzed were the Government and Binding theory (GB), Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), Relational Grammar (RelG), and Role and Reference Grammar (RRG). Throughout the article, I put forth evidence that the three more generative-focused theories (i.e., GB, LFG, and RelG) claim to be universal but contain rules, structures, and types of syntactic representation that are based on English and other Indo-European language analyses. The final syntactic theory analyzed, Role and Reference Grammar, does descend from theories of transformational grammar and thus is technically related to the generative theories. However, it examines syntax with different ideals in mind from the other three theories, such as linguistic variation and differing language grammars. Ideals like these are what set it apart from the generative linguistic theories. RRG takes account of more grammatically and typologically diverse languages, as well as introducing more communication between syntax and semantics (Carnie, 2014, p. 579).

In the article to follow, I give a brief history and summary of the four syntactic theories. This summary is meant to allow a beginning linguistics student to understand the building blocks of each theory without a heavy background in the study of syntax. Following that, I analyze some of the specific problems with Chomskian and generative syntax. The evidence I present takes the form of syntactic representations of a sentence in a non-Indo-European language to show the ways that the generative syntactic theories are inadequate

representations of the language. After the problems with generative syntax are explained, the article continues by showing how RRG deals with the problems that arise with the Chomskian theories through analysis of the theory and syntactic representations of sentences. The conclusion summarizes the research done for this article. It allows the reader to understand the problems behind generative linguistics and how a more diverse, descriptive syntactic theory would handle those problems. While the scope of this article is limited, I hope it will inspire readers to seek out syntactic research of their own so that they may more fully understand modern syntax.

History

The study of syntax is important, and as such, each theory for the description and prediction of syntactic structure in languages is also important. Theoretical syntax exists to talk about theoretical syntax. Linguists wanted a way to talk about possible structures in grammar, but they weren't certain that the structures they theorized worked in the real world. Their theories had to remain just that—theories. Linguistics requires the study of theoretical syntax in order to allow work to be done on possible real-world syntax. The great variety of languages in the world allows for a great variety of syntactic structures, and the theories a linguist hypothesizes should account for the data in all the languages they claim it accounts for. For instance, if GB is going to claim that it applies to a core grammar of all languages (Freidin, 2007, p. 101), it should actually apply to all languages.

The Government and Binding theory, or GB, is perhaps the most direct descendant of Chomsky's original theories of grammar. It relies on sets of principles that apply to a core grammar present in every language and parameters that can either apply or not apply to a language to specify varying structures (Van Valin, 2001, p. 193). For instance, the theory creates two different types of cases in order to show how it differs across languages. Abstract case is a universal property which all languages have. It is the difference between "I" and "me" in writing: one is subject case; one is object case. Only some languages display abstract case typologically, as English does with its pronouns, and that is referred to as morphological case. In GB, all noun phrases (NPs) require abstract case. Morphological

case is what can be seen within the language, such as the difference between languages that display ergative/absolutive case marking and languages that display nominative/accusative case marking. A more full explanation of the case module in GB can be found in section three of Haegeman's *Introduction to Government and Binding*. GB, and similar generative linguistic theories, have a heavy focus on prescribing all possible structures within languages. "The ultimate aim of generative linguistic theory is not to describe the details of one specific language, but rather to formulate the underlying principles that determine the grammars of human languages" (Haegeman, 1991, p. 16). The ability to predict possible clause structures while ruling out ungrammatical clause structures is an important piece of any theory of universal grammar, but these grammars should ensure that their data comes from a wide variety of languages. "Care should be exercised if the same tests [based on studies of English] are applied to other languages" (Lehonkoski, 2000, p. 61). Due to the universality claimed by GB and its ancestor, Transformational Grammar (TG), this care is not always applied as it should be.

That particular issue about universal grammar aside, GB uses its principles, parameters, and a system of classifying NPs according to how they reference both each other and real-world referents. These NPs govern domains and bind structures of languages to their own grammatical rules. A syntactic representation of the surface structure of a clause in GB is a phrase-structure tree, or a PS tree. Each type of phrase within the PS tree has a direct maximal head, and each head can be coindexed or referenced back to its original source within the sentence. In plain English, each type of phrase in a sentence is put into a particular slot in the PS tree, even if that is not the order the phrases were originally written in. Each phrase is then traced (coindexed) back to its original position. An example of this is shown in Diagram 1 on page 19, which shows a PS tree of a sentence from the Lakhota language created by GB's principles and parameters.

Another popular generative syntactic theory, Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), broke off from GB with the idea of simplifying GB's complicated rules by bundling the PS rules and laws for government and binding into the lexicon for each verb. Each lexical verb would have an entry in the lexicon, which would lay out the arguments it required in a clause. A clause would have two different

structural layers which informed each other through this lexicon, the c-structure (an attribute-value matrix construction) and the f-structure (a phrase-structure tree). More information on this system can be found in Dalrymple, Kaplan, Maxwell III, and Zaenen's *Formal Issues in Lexical-Function Grammar*.

LFG attempted to solve some of the problems inherent in the generative GB through simplifying the rules involved and splitting its syntactic representation into the structures mentioned above. PS trees are not suited for many diverse languages, and the c-structure allowed LFG-favoring linguists to represent varying languages and grammatical structures more clearly (Dalrymple, 1999, p. 2). However, it is still very clearly a generative theory, with much analysis done on Indo-European languages such as English or Icelandic. While they may be superficially different, these two languages alone do not constitute enough evidence for LFG as a universal grammar.

The third generative syntactic theory, Relational Grammar or RelG, also has heavy roots in Transformative Grammar (TG)—roots that the theory remains very similar to. Like TG, it posits different layers of syntactic representation for clauses. Unlike TG, it posits multiple levels of these representations. The initial stratum is common to all languages, while the changes across strata that bring it to the final stratum account for variation among languages (Blake, 1990, p. 2). RelG focuses more on relations between constituents and thus, logically, their positions relative to each other. It constrains possible strata and clauses by enacting laws on the possible changes between each layer in the syntactic structure.

Some of RelG's laws are as follows. The Stratal Uniqueness law disallows any two dependents in the same stratum to bear the same term relation. On a single layer in the syntactic representation of a clause there can only be one subject. The Final 1 law states that in every final stratum, there must be a subject, or a 1 arc (Blake, 1990, p. 13). RelG applies a similar set of rules in its syntactic representations, which I shall refer to as a syntax jellyfish. I find metaphors to be helpful when conceptualizing syntactic representation. If one looks at Diagram 3 on page 21, the jellyfish-like nature of the syntactic representation can be seen in action. RelG's representation consists of layers, connected to each other by lines that resemble the tentacles of a jellyfish. It connects to the final layer, or stratum, in a graceful arc much like that of a jellyfish's top. Each layer in the

syntax jellyfish constitutes a change in the language, removing it a step further from the initial stratum that all languages share. RelG can account for much change within a language, but it can also lose some sense or meaning from a clause in the process of change across strata. In addition, while simple sentences in Indo-European are incredibly easy to represent with a syntax jellyfish, the process becomes much more difficult with more complex sentences or when attempting analyses of typologically-varying languages and language families. This complexity can be seen when interpreting Diagram 3.

Now that we have covered the generative syntactic theories, we can move along to a theory that actually works for many different languages. This would be the last of the four theories, Role and Reference Grammar, or RRG. It also descends from TG as its precursors did. RRG, as mentioned earlier, examines syntax by having a different focus than the other theories. This theory focuses on how a language works naturally, rather than attempting to shove it into the same mold as English or other Indo-European languages. RRG allows for a focus on typologically diverse languages and provides a better answer to the questions about interaction between semantics and syntax. Many generative theories insist on a clear division between syntax and other areas of linguistics, a division that is unsupported by real-world data. RRG, on the other hand, allows for more interplay between the areas of study (Van Valin, 2001, p. 205).

We can think of the core of RRG as the syntax onion. It works in layers as well, but not the deep structure and surface structure layers referenced in other theories. RRG focuses on the few things that every language has in common—predicate elements, arguments of the predicate, and non-arguments of the predicate. Every language contains these in grammatical clauses in some way. The predicate is the nucleus of the clause, the arguments and predicate together form the core, and the non-arguments are peripheries to the core (Van Valin, 2001, p. 206).

Further analysis of languages in this theory does require more knowledge of the language itself, as RRG is not a universal grammar theory that attempts to predict every possible sentence in every natural language. Instead, it uses the lexical representation of the predicating element (often a verb, but not every language has the equivalent to an English verb phrase [VP]) in order to create a

decompositional syntax for the language. A decompositional syntax is a system that allows a linguist to take apart the grammar of a language and study the base elements of that grammar. The basic predicate types outlined in RRG are stative, achievement, accomplishment, and activity (Carnie, 2014, p. 584). English examples of these are as follows: stative-->*dead*, achievement-->*explode*, accomplishment-->*melt*, activity-->*sing*. These verbs all have causative forms as well, which play into the syntactic representations of clauses in RRG. The lexical entry for each predicating element shows its logical structure, which contains the rules for its required arguments and its position in a clause in that language. This can be translated into the syntactic representation of the language in complex clauses, rather than the straightforward syntax onion (which works for extremely simple examples). The representation of a Lakhota sentence in RRG can be seen in Diagram 4 on page 23.

Problems with Generative Linguistics

When one looks deeply into the application of generative theories, several problems come to light. These theories propose universal grammars that apply to all natural languages, but the sheer variety of natural languages mean that it is incredibly difficult to predict every grammatical utterance in every language. “The greatest weakness [of work in GB theory] is the tendency to construct complicated and sophisticated theories of the workings of universal grammar that are scarcely ever as well-supported as one would like by the available evidence” (Horrocks, 1987, p. 316). There are many complex rules and possibilities in the GB and LFG theories attempting to make the grammar systems predict languages universally, but they lack a focus on describing what is actually occurring in each language. The dream of creating a grammar that can predict everything with the data linguists currently have is difficult, especially when given theories often do not even account for the data linguistics *do* have (Postal, 2004, p. 5).

Even in Indo-European languages, problems with GB arise. The ideal of a “subject” rather than the actual c-commanding NP being what is relevant for binding is not yet explained (Freidin, 2007, p. 196). Freidin (2007) notes, why is it that “in many languages (e.g., Romance and Germanic [excepting English and Icelandic] and

Japanese) the only possible antecedents for anaphors are subjects” (p. 196)? Anaphors can be defined as NPs that reference themselves, such as “My friend said she was sad,” in which *my friend* is the antecedent for *she*. According to GB’s principles, an anaphor’s only possible antecedent should not be the subject (Freidin, 2007, p. 195). And yet, a construction that uses an anaphor’s antecedent as the subject can occur in English.

One would think that if they do not accurately predict possible constructions in all languages as they claim to, generative theories would at least predict a universal English grammar. Unfortunately, this is not the case. GB cannot predict every grammatical English sentence, and the similar LFG also has this issue. Take, for instance, the preverbal preposition phrase. This phrase is a possible construction in English. In the examples below, the preverbal preposition phrase is italicized.

“*On the banks* rested the hippopotamus.”

“*From our first rule* the rest can be inferred.”

These constructions are grammatical in the eyes of native speakers. Bresnan, a proponent for LFG, is referenced by another linguist as counting these preverbal prepositional phrases (PPs) as being the stand-in for the subject in those sentences (Postal, 2004, p. 17). Postal disagrees with Bresnan, on the basis that the evidence for preverbal PPs as subjects in a generative LFG construction is far outweighed by the evidence *against* them as subjects. These preverbal PPs, also referred to as null expletive subject clauses or NEX clauses, are argued by Bresnan to be licensed in LFG by a locative PP in the same position as wh-phrases (phrases that begin with words such as *what*, *why*, *when*, etc.) would be. This can be disproved by an English example brought up by Postal (2004): “To those questions correspond the following answers” (p. 18), in which the PP is decidedly not locative. It has nothing to do with the location-related possible function in PPs. There has been no other explanation for these NEX clauses in LFG, which is a problem as it should be able to predict the grammaticality of these phrases (Postal, 2004, p. 82).

In order to fully evidence a few of the problems in the three generative theories I have mentioned, I will tree a Lakhota sentence in each of their proposed methods.

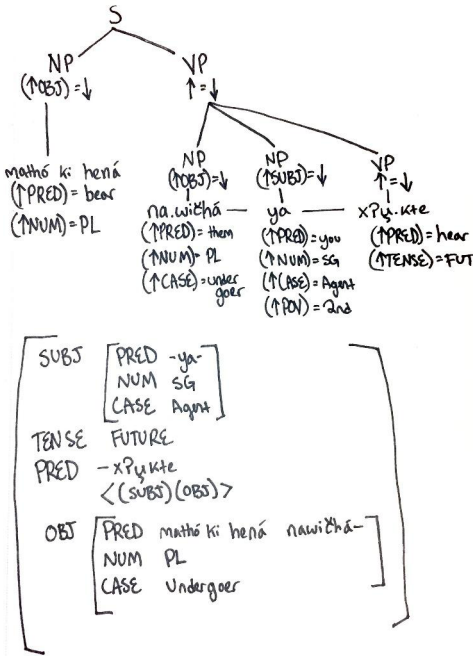


Diagram 2. Lexical-Functional Grammar C- And F-Structures

word order of the sentence. In the f-structure, LFG wants the subject to be the first thing within the brackets. In the head-marking construction of Lakhota, where the subject is a bound morpheme on the verb, LFG forces Lakhota to split apart the bound morpheme to be properly analyzed.

The Relational Grammar jellyfish (Diagram 3) is the easiest to comprehend of the three generative theories, but it also loses the most information. It categorizes the three pieces of the sentence as follows—P::predicate/verb, 1::agent/subject, and 2::undergoer/object. There is no case marked within the verb phrase. Just as its sister theories, RelG does not concern itself with the differences between the dependencies of *Mathó ki hená* and *nawičhá-*. RelG, GB, and LFG all attempt to put Lakhota into a system designed for English, and the result is inelegant and not useful for analyzing Lakhota's grammar.

Solutions with RRG and Less Generative Theories

Some of the main benefits to Role and Reference Grammar are the acceptance of the interplay between semantics and syntax and the diversity allowed in its structure. Syntax does not exist in a vacuum,

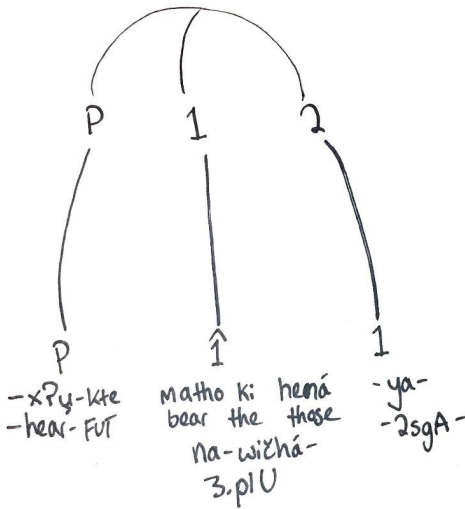


Diagram 3. Relational Grammar Jellyfish

no matter how much Chomsky would like it to. Different languages handle meaning differently, and some communicate more meaning within their morphology than they communicate through syntax. RRG considers the question “How can the interaction of syntax, semantics, and discourse pragmatics in different grammatical systems best be captured and explained?” to be fundamental (Van Valin, 2001, p. 205).

RRG takes account of grammatically diverse languages in a way that generative linguistics does not. Not every language has the equivalent to English grammatical relations, like subjects or verbs. To allow for this diversity, instead of “subject,” RRG uses the term Privileged Syntactic Argument (PSA). Rather than “verb,” it uses the predicate of a clause (Carnie, 2014, p. 587). These allow it to be applied to a larger variety of language. While RRG does not attempt to predict grammar universally in the manner of generative theories, it does work well within its focus of describing and explaining the grammar of a variety of languages. It is a descriptive theory in that it describes the way languages work. In contrast to this, prescriptive theories attempt to tell languages how they should work. Generative linguistics often creates prescriptive theories. In generative linguistics, describing the grammar of a particular natural language that gets all of the facts right does not count as a real result. According to

such linguists as Postal and Chomsky, nothing is *real* until a true universal grammar has been reached (Postal, 2004, p. 5).

A grammar derived from RRG, in this point of view, would not be considered a *real* result according to generative linguistics. However, the ability of RRG to analyze multiple diverse languages and relate them at a core level feels like a real result to me. Its ability to work with diverse languages can be seen in the way it can be used to describe East-Asian grammar, a grammar famous due to its difficulty for English speakers and differences from English. *Describing East Asian Grammar: An Application of Role and Reference Grammar* by Ritva Lehonkoski is an excellent analysis of this. Lehonkoski (2000) explains possible applications of various grammar theories on languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, concluding that “Role and Reference Grammar could account for most of the kinds of problems raised in the first half of [Lehonkoski’s] dissertation” (p. 225). The distinction in RRG between arguments and non-arguments solves many of the marking-related problems that appear in other generative theories “such as accusatively marked NPs in Korean which are not semantic undergoers, or sentence-initial NPs in Chinese which are not subjects” (Lehonkoski, 2000, p. 224).

The usefulness of RRG as a syntactic theory is evidenced by its application to both English and other languages, including those that are very different from English. It can account for many problems inherent in generative linguistics. In Diagram 4, RRG is used to syntactically represent the same Lakhota example from earlier.

Lakhota: Mathókihenána-wičhá-ya-xʔu-kte

Gloss: bearthethose3.plU-2sgA-hear-FUT

English translation: “You will hear those bears.”

RRG was designed with typologically diverse languages in mind. It can elegantly and clearly tree the dependencies between the two appositive noun phrases, *Mathó ki hená* and *nawičhá*, in a way all three other theories failed to do. The word order is not distorted, which is what happened when I attempted to tree the sentence in the GB x-bar tree style. The tense marker is noted, as it was not in RelG. RRG also does not force a split between the bound morpheme *-ya-* and its head, *xʔu*, to analyze their meaning.

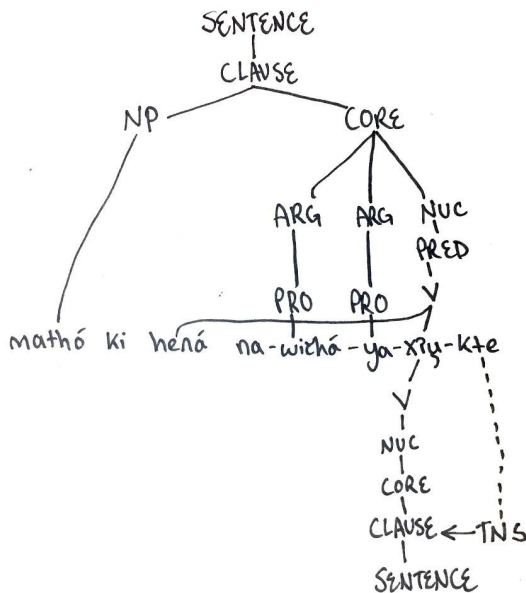


Diagram 4. Role and Reference Grammar Lakota Representation

Conclusion

My article analyzes four different syntactic theories and thereby shows that generative syntactic theories are inadequate for proper syntactic representation of all languages. There are other syntactic theories besides the four mentioned in this article, but due to its limited scope I was unable to analyze their utility. The generative theories that I was able to analyze claim to be universal, but problems quickly arise when attempting to apply them to diverse languages. Furthermore, these problems are solved by *not* attempting to apply the theories to diverse languages. There are many books on syntactic theory, specifically generative syntactic theory, and there is an inordinately large number of them that focus solely on English or other Indo-European languages. Postal's book *Skeptical Linguistics Essays* is, to put it informally, a detailed call-out post for not only the problems that come with applying generative linguistics to English, but also the ideas at the very core of the theory. Postal (2004), in a chapter entitled "The Most Irresponsible Passage," analyzes a section of text from Chomsky defending generative linguistics. "Faced with . . . the contradiction between his claim that NL [natural language] is mind/brain internal and the fact that

sentences cannot be . . . the author has retreated to a distinct but equally incoherent position, one that denies sentences even exist” (p. 304).

There is incoherency at the heart of generative theories of linguistics. When one attempts to move beyond the theoretical problems and actually apply the language, even more problems arise. Lehonkoski details issues that GB has in assuming that no loss of information is allowed when using the move α principle. This makes sense in English because of the function of the passive to change the focus of the sentence rather than information given. In East-Asian languages, there may be additional information given. Generative linguistic theories would not account for this information.

From the analyses done on these four major syntactic theories, three of which (GB, LFG, and RelG) are far more generatively-styled than the fourth (RRG), the problems with generative linguistics can be clearly seen. The data and research compiled in this article support my thesis, that syntactic theories with a generative focus that rely on either grammatical relations or constituent structures are not universally valid. If a linguist is looking for a theory to analyze the grammar of a language, they will be able to put together a more complete grammar that accounts for language variation if they use RRG. There are thousands of languages in the world; committing to syntactic theories that prescribe impossible structures upon all languages takes away from the diversity and cultural value of these languages. Taking that into account, please consider using syntactic theories that are less generative and allow for diverse typological constructions when analyzing languages.

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And & But: Sentence Starters or Sentence Killers?

Anessa Pennington

And and but have become non-starters, both literally and figuratively. Many people have been taught that they cannot begin a sentence with and or but, so they either never use the words or they use the words rebelliously. However, some of the most conservative grammar and usage books allow their use; one research article claims sentence-initial and (SIA) and sentence-initial but (SIB) are sometimes the preferred sentence-initial words over the use of however or moreover. This paper investigates the assumptions behind this rule and how people use SIA and SIB in academia and mass media.

When I started college, I began to experiment—not with substances, but with conjunctions. In my essays and research papers, I would begin an occasional sentence with *and* or *but*. I usually did this confidently, but when the thought of TA retaliation sunk in, and I considered the two points I would miss in the grammar section of the rubric, I retracted my rebellion and hit the backspace key. Why was I getting so nervous over one word? For as long as I can remember, my teachers have forbidden beginning a sentence with *and* or *but*. I never knew why I could not, and I am not sure they knew why either. But what if I did it skillfully? And if it is an actual rule not to begin a sentence with *and* or *but*, is that a rule worth upholding? In this article, I will explore reference books, scholarly journals, corpora, and the media to understand how the world treats sentence-initial *and* (SIA) and sentence-initial *but* (SIB).

A linguistic detective who plans to solve a grammatical mystery will first seek out prescriptivists, those who give us our stalwart linguistic standards and who are the source of many of our grammatical grievances. Being the modern Nancy Drew that I am, I hunted down Huddleston and Pullum, the foremost contributors to *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. In a small box in a single bullet point, I read a shocking sentence: “Such coordinators such as *and*, *or*, and *but* can occur in sentence-initial position” (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, p. 1277). There you have it. According to these grammar experts, SIA and SIB are acceptable.

That case is closed, but another mystery persists: Where did the rule come from, if not from a prescriptivist grammar book? In search of an answer, I turned to usage guides.

Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage provided a likely explanation for the origin of this rule:

Everybody agrees that it’s all right to begin a sentence with *and*, and nearly everyone admits to having been taught at some past time that the practice was wrong. . . . The prohibition is probably meant to correct the tendency of children to string together independent clauses or simple declarative sentences with *ands*. . . . Consequently, many of us go through life thinking it wrong to begin a sentence with *and*. (Merriam-Webster, 1994, p. 93)

If people have learned never to begin a sentence with SIA or SIB, they will swiftly “unlearn it” (Merriam-Webster, 1994, p. 212). Almost all usage guides clarify that SIA and SIB are acceptable in writing, but each guide carries a warning: Use wisely. In reference to SIA, Ebbitt and Ebbitt (1990) said that “used sparingly, it will also contribute to the movement and emphasis. Overused, it will damage both” (p. 24). With SIB, there are two main rules for effective use: never follow with a comma unless absolutely necessary, and never follow a *but* with another *but* (Ebbitt & Ebbitt, 1990; Merriam-Webster, 1994; Greenbaum, Whitcut, & Longman, 1988). SIA and SIB are not ordinary sentence-starters; therefore, they must be used deliberately and conservatively to be effective.

Scholarly research supports the acceptability and practicality of SIA and SIB. After conducting an analysis of one million words from eleven scholarly journals, Bell (2007) found that sentence-initial conjunctions perform special functions in academic writing that their more formal connective counterparts (*moreover, however, in addition, etc.*) cannot, and the fact that *and* and *but* are short also gives them an advantage: “Whereas *in addition, furthermore* and *moreover* require a slight pause before a following word or phrase, often indicated by a comma, *And* is able to attach itself to a following word or phrase rather like a clitic” (Bell, 2007, p. 192). Dorgeloh (2004) found that “*And*, though marked as colloquial by modern prescriptive grammar, is nonetheless functionally motivated both at the sentence and the discourse level” (p. 1777). She also found that SIA was an acceptable connective in earlier texts and would not be surprised by its return. Instead of making our writing more colloquial, SIA and SIB can serve a syntactical function in academic writing.

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) shows that both SIA and SIB are alive and well in American English writing over the last thirty years. Figure 1 shows that while SIA is much more frequent in speech than writing, SIB is more common in writing (Davies, 2008–). In academia, SIA and SIB frequently occur in history and the humanities, with other subjects not far behind (Davies, 2008–). Another corpus that caught my interest was the Corpus of US Supreme Court Opinions. Because court opinions are formal legal documents, I wondered whether the style used in the papers would reflect the more traditional style of not using

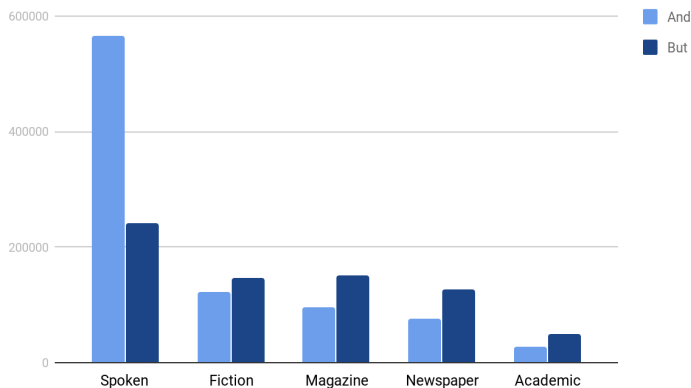


Figure 1. Frequency of Sentence-Initial *And* and *But* from 1990–Present

SIA or SIB. Interestingly, SIA and SIB appeared over 55,000 times and 90,000 times, respectively. In a 1793 court case about slave ownership, SIB marks tension in the sentence that would be otherwise lost:

The master might have put them in a much worse situation; and, having run that chance, they ought not now to be placed on the same footing with those born after the act. But the greatest difficulty in the cause still remains; that is, the sixth section of the act. (Davies)

If editors thought using SIA and SIB was so abhorrent, they would have plucked these words from writing long ago. But they haven't. From light reading to legal documents, SIA and SIB maintain their place.

SIA and SIB also carry semantic value in magazine and news media. In *GQ*'s "What Ever Happened to Brendan Fraser?" the use of SIA and SIB seems superfluous:

And Fraser, who was bluff and hunky but also had acting chops, was for a while the film's breakout discovery. But though as the decade wore on he'd continue to take more traditional leading-man parts, he ultimately found most of his success with his shirt off. (Baron, 2018)

The sentences could do without the unnecessary conjunctions, but I don't think the story could. Baron wants the readers to feel

Frasier's pain as he tells the strange and somewhat sad story of Brendan Fraser's life. Using *and* and *but* helps Baron achieve that intimate feeling. SIA not only maintains the integrity of a story, but it also binds important ideas together. Without the use of SIA in *The Atlantic's* "Is It Time for the Jews to Leave Europe?" the third sentence would seem like an afterthought instead of the completion of the thought:

Others noted that life in Israel is not especially tranquil. Jews die violently in Israel, too. And while the presence of so many Jews in one narrow place has created a dynamic country, it has also created a temptation for those inclined toward genocide. (Goldberg, 2015)

One of the aims of news writing is to convey information, but some sentences are bursting at the seams with statistics, titles, and attributions. In a genre that relies on readability, news media needs SIA and SIB to clarify the clutter. Such was the case in this news article about the US Census:

Wilbur Ross, the commerce secretary, acknowledged concerns about decreased response rates in a memorandum released on Monday night. But he said asking about citizenship would enhance the results by helping calculate the percentage of the population eligible to vote. (Tankersley & Baumgaertner, 2018)

There is so much information in both of those sentences that putting them together would overwhelm the reader. Inserting a transitional *but*, however, links the sentences together without interrupting the flow of one idea into another. These examples show us that to use SIA and SIB well, one must use them purposefully.

The debate over SIA and SIB has divided writers into three categories: those who know how to use SIA and SIB well; those who don't know but try, fail, and then suffer the consequences; and those who are too scared for their grades to go against the grain. Still, style guides and scholars (prescriptive or otherwise) can't seem to shake SIA and SAB—and perhaps they should not. SIA and SIB are here to stay. Rather than ignore or suppress their existence, English instructors should learn how to use SIA and SIB effectively and

teach their proper use to the masses. If more people understood how to use SIA and SIB in writing, we might see a decrease in their use, as people only use them for the delightful nuances they bring—nuances unachievable by other connectives. Only through educated usage can we see grammar for what it truly is: not a science, but an art.

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First Lines in Bestselling Fiction Novels

Ashlin Awerkamp

The opening line is part of a book's first impression. Its goal is to catch readers' attention. The purpose of this study was to discover what features first lines of best-selling books have in common. The study included an analysis of the first lines of each book on the New York Times Best Seller List of 2017 according to several quantitative categories, and words from each sentence were sorted according to Kenneth Burke's four categories of words. Although there is no one perfect formula, the results of this study provide possible strategies that could be used to write engaging openers.

You go to the bookstore and browse the shelves. One catches your eye. You pick it up and flip to the first page. You read line one. Is it engaging? Is it boring? Most important, do you read on?

They say “don’t judge a book by its cover,” but people do—by its cover, by its title, and by its opening sentences. As hard as they might try not to be, people are influenced by the way a book begins. First impressions can lead to later success. Recognize these? “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.” “Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much.”

As we can see, first lines are important, and some are more distinctive and effective than others. A good first line piques the reader’s curiosity and encourages him or her to continue into the story. As one researcher in the *American Journal of Semiotics* puts it, “We can open the doors to a whole new world merely by writing down a first sentence and handing it to someone else to read” (Baker, 2012, p. 12). First sentences set readers’ expectations for what will follow.¹ Effective first lines could be part of the reason certain books make it to the *New York Times* Best Seller List and others do not. It is possible that the first lines from those books share certain features that make them successful, features that are indicative of current trends in literature. For this study, I decided to look at first lines from recent popular fiction novels to see what features they have in common.

The scope of my study includes all the books that topped the *New York Times* Best Seller List in 2017.² (See Appendix A for a complete list of the first lines and the books they came from.) I analyzed the first sentence from each of these thirty-seven books in the following categories: sentence length (based on word and syllable counts), point of view, tense, and voice. The results of these analyses can be found in Appendix B. I also sorted the words that compose these sentences into the four word categories developed by the literary

1. See Stewart’s essay entitled “Judas Lurking in an Opening Sentence” for an interesting discussion about the effect a misleading opening sentence had on readers’ perceptions of an author’s opinion.

2. This list came from the Wikipedia page “*The New York Times* Best Seller List of 2017,” accessed July 18, 2018.

theorist Kenneth Burke: natural, socio-political, logological, and supernatural, which I will explain later (Becker, 1995, pp. 350–51). In this article, sentences used as examples will be indented. Through my analyses, I found trends and patterns among the first sentences, which suggest there are certain strategies that may be used to create effective openers in modern fiction novels.

Sentence Length

My analysis of sentence length showed that first sentences tend to be short and simple. This trend can be seen in the two histograms provided in Appendix C, which show the number of words and the number of syllables in each sentence. Though the range of number of words per sentence went from one to forty-eight, most of the sentences were made of twenty-five words or fewer. (The average number of words per sentences was 16.95.) The longest sentence was

They charged from the cover of the elephant grass toward the LZ, five of them swarming the slick on both sides, one among them yelling, “Go! Go! Go!”—as if each man needed to be prodded and reminded that these were the most dangerous seconds of their lives.

The shortest sentences were

“Again!”

and

I sit.

Although the range of sentence lengths was quite large, showing that not all opening sentences need to be the same length, the trend appears to lean toward shorter or medium-length opening sentences. Further studies could compare these recent sentences with older best-selling first sentences (some of which can be five hundred words long) to see a potential decline in sentence length, perhaps due to the speed of our modern society. People nowadays tend to want things quickly and immediately, and attention spans

are declining.³ Text messaging and social media platforms encourage conciseness. Shorter sentences in novels may be a response to these societal preferences.

As I studied the number of words and syllables per sentence, I noticed that the number of syllables per sentence is never more than double the number of words per sentence. The only time the number of syllables is exactly twice as much as the number of words is in the single-word sentence,

“Again!”

This means the majority of words in these sentences are monosyllabic. This could suggest people prefer simpler sentences with fewer complex, polysyllabic words. However, this phenomenon of more monosyllabic words may occur merely because function words are typically monosyllabic and sentences generally need function words in order to be grammatical. Further studies could be performed to determine how much weight function words have on syllable counts and how much they influenced the results presented here.

Point of View

My analysis of point of view in terms of first person, second person, and third person shows that out of thirty-seven sentences, the majority (twenty-six) were written in third person, that the next highest number of sentences were written in first person (eight), and that the fewest number of sentences were written in second person (three). The three sentences in second person were

“Did you think you were going to die?”

“Again!”

and

“State your name, please.”

These three sentences are all pure dialogue. This means that, although they are technically written in the second person, they are

3. One study performed by Microsoft showed that people now have shorter attention spans than goldfish (Watson, 2015).

not truly second person because the *you's* in these sentences refer to other characters in the book, not to the reader as in the case of true second person. This data supports the well-established claim that third-person narration is the most popular point of view for novels and second person is the least popular.⁴ Based on these findings, it appears that a book written in second person may not be as likely to make it onto the *New York Times* Best Seller List. Yet the reason behind this phenomenon could be difficult to pin down, resembling the conundrum of the-chicken-or-the-egg: Are second-person books not popular because fewer books are written in second person, or are fewer books written in second person because second person books are generally less well-received? Though the purpose of this study was not to answer this question, the conclusion can nevertheless be drawn that books that make it to the *New York Times* Best Seller List usually are not written in second person.

Tense

My analysis of tense showed that only eight sentences were written in the present tense (two of which were imperatives or commands in dialogue); the other twenty-nine were written in the past tense.⁵ None of the sentences were written in the future tense. These findings support the fact that past tense is the most popular tense for novels.⁶ As was the case with point of view, we have a chicken-or-egg conundrum for the reason behind this phenomenon: Are books written in past tense because past tense is popular (or even simply the standard marker for narratives), or are past-tense books popular because they are written in the past tense? Again, the purpose of this study was not to find an answer to this question, but rather to show that for whatever reason, past tense is the most common tense used in modern fiction.

4. A Google search pulls up plenty of websites that discuss and support this claim.

5. One book switches between present and past tense; however, the first chapter is in present tense, and that is the category I counted it under.

6. As is the case with point of view, a Google search pulls up plenty of websites that discuss and support this claim.

Voice

My analysis of voice revealed that all the sentences were in active voice; none were passive. These results support the editors' maxim of preferring active voice to passive. As Nigel Fabb (1997) notes, "If the story is about the transfer of action, as many stories are, then transitive clauses [clauses full of action] are the best suited to carry the storyline," active voice being one marker of transitive clauses (pp. 173–75). Active voice facilitates the storyline by focusing on someone doing an action rather than on something being merely acted upon.

Time for an Interesting Break

I will pause at this point to discuss two unusual sentences. The first sentence

Had a family once.

was unusual because it did not explicitly state the subject of the sentence, though it can be inferred. The subject elided here was the first-person singular pronoun *I*. This is an interesting case because sentences are typically only considered grammatically complete when they have a subject and a verb. A sentence like this one, missing a first-person pronoun subject, is considered a fragment and is usually corrected by editors. In my personal experience, however, I have seen and heard this construction informally, especially in some set phrases. Examples include "Hope you're feeling better," "Looking forward to it," and even "Thank you." For some reason this construction (first-person subject elision) made its way past the editors who guard the gates of grammar, and this phenomenon suggests that first-person subject elision is becoming more common and more accepted.⁷

Similarly, the one-word adverbial sentence

"Again!"

7. There are other languages, such as Spanish, French, and Russian, that regularly omit pronouns because of verb inflection. Perhaps English is on its way to joining these languages.

is also missing a subject. However, because there is a trend toward implied first-person subjects, the subject is not truly missing. “Again!” is an imperative, a command for some person to repeat an action. The subject is nearly always elided in imperatives by general rule, and that subject is always the second-person *you*. Thus we can see that leaving out the subject here is typical and standard. The real elision here is the elision of the verb; this sentence is the only sentence without a verb. The sentence does not reveal what action is supposed to be repeated. This creates a sense of mystery and curiosity in the reader. Not only does the reader not know who is giving the command or who is receiving the command, he or she also does not know what action is supposed to be repeated; all the reader knows is that someone is commanding someone else to repeat an action. The reader is given the freedom to imagine what could be happening in the scene, but in order to satisfy his or her curiosity and discover what is actually happening, the reader must read on.

These two sentences and their unusual constructions reflect what one researcher says about creativity in his article “The Creative Use of Sentences”: “What we normally expect of creativity is . . . non-conformity, violations of rules, [and] challenges to accepted conventions” (Widdowson, 1990, p. 2). Based on this definition of creativity and the two example sentences discussed, it appears that breaking rules, doing something unexpected, or leaving out information are possible effective methods to use when writing hooks.

Four Categories of Words

The next analytical approach I used to examine these first lines is taken from the work of researcher Kenneth Burke, who says that there are four realms to which words may refer. The following summary of each of the realms is taken from A. L. Becker’s summary of Burke’s work *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Becker, 1995, pp. 350–51).

The **natural realm** includes words “for things, for material operations, physiological conditions, animality, and the like.” These words “name the sorts of things . . . there would be in the universe even if all ability to use words . . . were eliminated from existence.” Examples include *sun*, *hunger*, and *change*.

The **socio-political realm** includes words “for social relations, laws, right, wrong, rules and the like.” Examples include *good*, *out-of-bounds*, and *monarchy*.

The **logological realm** includes words about words. This realm and the words in it are the subject of dictionaries, grammars, rhetoric, poetics, literary criticism, philology, and the like. Examples include *noun*, *palindrome*, and *alliteration*.

The **supernatural realm** appears to include words for everything else, for that which is not part of our everyday experience. It encompasses things outside of our empirical knowledge. (As Burke notes, one does not have to believe in the supernatural to acknowledge that there are words to describe it.) Examples include *god*, *heaven*, and *grace*.

I modeled the first lines of my study after the four categories in order to better understand the sentences and to look for patterns. I gathered all the sentences into a single document and sorted the words by color: **natural** = green, **socio-political** = orange, **logological** = gray, and **supernatural** = blue. For simplicity’s sake, I ignored verbs; they are marked with a strike-through. In my analyses, I have included only colors relevant to the present discussion. The complete list of categorized sentences can be found in Appendix D.

Some of the kinds of words that fell into the natural category were characters and places, as in this sentence:

Jack Reacher and **Michelle Chang** spent three days in **Milwaukee**.

A different sentence included an example of a word that at first glance seems as if it should be in the natural category but upon further examination fits better in the socio-political category:

Simon Diggery and **Ethel**, his **pet boa constrictor**, were about fifty feet from Simon’s rust bucket double-wide.

The word *pet* was included in the socio-political category and not the natural category because it describes a social relation between the boa constrictor, Ethel, and her owner, Simon Diggery, which makes it a feature of the socio-political realm.

As I marked the character names, I began to notice a pattern. Generally, when a name was introduced, both a first name and a last

name were given. There are plenty of examples of this (in fact, most of the characters fit into this category), such as Edmond Kirsch, Jack Reacher, Michelle Chang, Patti Harney, Richard Conklin, Alice Bodine, Ross MacLeod, and Garvin Poole. Other times, only one name was given. Examples of single names include Ballard, Jenkins, Bosch, Carlos, Ethel, Iris, and Evie. The pattern I noticed was that the adults, especially the main characters, are introduced by first and last name. The few adult main characters not introduced by first and last name—Ballard, Jenkins, and Bosch—were introduced by last name only. The character Carlos is different from those three characters; he is not a main character, and he is introduced by first name, as can be seen in the sentence

I was standing at the bar in the Green Parrot, waiting for a guy named Carlos . . .

The other characters introduced by first name are Ethel, a boa constrictor, and Iris and Evie, apparently children. Thus, based on this data, we see different formulas for introducing a character in an opening sentence: (1) If the character is an adult main character, use their first and last name, last name alone, or nickname, with the first and last name combination being most common; (2) If the character is an adult non-main character, use their first name only; (3) If the character is a child or an animal, use their first name only. There are likely exceptions and nuances to these rules; further research should be conducted to add to this limited data set.

Some sentences did not include any words from the natural category (remembering that the natural category includes all “things” and does not include words that indicate social relations). Three of those sentences are

“Did you think you were going to die?”

I sit.

and

Had a family once.

Once I crossed out all the verbs, few words remained. Some were pronouns, such as *you* and *I*. Pronouns fit into the socio-political category because they are deictic terms that imply a relationship between who is talking, who is listening, and who is being talked about. The word *family* also indicates a relationship between people. The word *once*, though it does not express a relationship between people, does express a different relation: a relation of time. Function words, like *a*, were not explicitly categorized by Burke, so I decided to put them in the logological realm. I sorted them this way because they lack lexical meaning; their purpose is purely grammatical.

I was surprised there were sentences without any natural words. I previously assumed all the sentences would have natural words because creative writers focus on creating concrete imagery by evoking the five senses, by using words pulled from the real world and everyday life (i.e., using words from the natural realm). As I studied the sentences that lack natural words, I realized that nearly all of them were in either first or second person. This may be because first and second person evoke a feeling of dialogue (the second person sentences are in fact straight dialogue), and as Sol Stein (1995) says in his book on writing, dialogue creates “immediate scene,” another way of saying concrete imagery (p. 111). Thus, these first- and second-person sentences can get away with not including natural words because they create their own imagery by being dialogue (or being similar to dialogue). The third-person sentences, on the other hand, are not composed purely of dialogue. Because these sentences lack dialogue, they must use natural words to create concrete imagery. In summary, these findings lend support to the idea that successful writing uses imagery, and this imagery may be created either by using words from the natural realm (typical of third-person sentences) or by being dialogue (typical of first- and second-person sentences).

Another surprising detail I found as I sorted the sentences was an incredible lack of words from the supernatural realm. Only one sentence included words from this category, and it included only two words at that. That sentence is

Grief is the most solitary **emotion**; it makes islands of us all.

A lack of supernatural references could mean that books about religion, divinity, or supernatural forces are currently out of fashion. I do not believe this is wholly true because I know that the subject of at least one of the 2017 best seller books focuses on God.⁸ I think a more likely explanation is that people like to start books with what they understand. They like to start with things that are familiar to them: things from nature and from life, things they can actually see and touch and hear and feel. (Compare this with the idea of concrete imagery being part of successful writing, discussed previously in this article.) The book can then progress from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the known to the unknown, from the natural to the supernatural. Further research looking to support this claim could compare first lines of novels that have obvious supernatural or religious themes with each other and with first lines from other genres.

Conclusion

The analyses of first lines presented here have led me to the following conclusions: (1) Typically, first lines from popular modern fiction novels are short and simple. They are written in third person, in the past tense, and with active voice. (2) Breaking conventions and doing something atypical or unusual can be creative and eye-catching. (3) When introducing a character by name, adult main characters are usually given a first and last name, whereas minor characters, children, and animals are typically referred to by first name only. (4) There are two ways to create imagery—either by using dialogue when writing in first or second person, or by using words and images from actual things in nature when writing in third person. And finally, (5) books tend to start by discussing the familiar real world and not by jumping into the unfamiliar supernatural.

Though in literature there is no one correct way to write a first sentence, writers and editors may use the findings presented here to guide themselves as they work to create effective opening sentences.

8. That book is *The Shack*, which is about a man conversing with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit about a recent tragedy in his life.

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Appendix A

The First Lines of Books That Topped the *New York Times* Best Seller List in 2017

1. Baldacci, David. *The Fix*. New York: Grand Central Publishers, 2017.

It was normally one of the safest places on earth.

2. Brown, Dan. *Origin*. New York: Doubleday, 2017.

As the ancient cogwheel train clawed its way up the dizzying incline, Edmond Kirsch surveyed the jagged mountaintop above him.

3. Brown, Sandra. *Seeing Red*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2017.

“Did you think you were going to die?”

4. Cameron, W. Bruce. *A Dog’s Purpose*. New York: Forge, 2010.

One day it occurred to me that the warm, squeaky, smelly things squirming around next to me were my brothers and sister.

5. Child, Lee. *The Midnight Line*. New York: Bantam Books, 2017.

Jack Reacher and Michelle Chang spent three days in Milwaukee.

6. Connelly, Michael. *The Late Show*. New York: Little, Brown, 2017.

Ballard and Jenkins rolled up on the house on El Centro shortly before midnight.

7. Connelly, Michael. *The Wrong Side of Goodbye*. New York: Little, Brown, 2016.

They charged from the cover of the elephant grass toward the LZ, five of them swarming the slick on both sides, one among them yelling, “Go! Go! Go!”—as if each man needed to be prodded and reminded that these were the most dangerous seconds of their lives.

8. Connelly, Michael. *Two Kinds of Truth*. New York: Little, Brown, 2017.

Bosch was in cell 3 of the old San Fernando jail, looking through files from one of the Esme Tavares boxes, when a heads-up text came in from Bella Lourdes over in the detective bureau.
9. DeMille, Nelson. *The Cuban Affair*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017.

I was standing at the bar in the Green Parrot, waiting for a guy named Carlos from Miami who'd called my cell a few days ago and said he might have a job for me.
10. Evanovich, Janet. *Hardcore Twenty-Four*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2017.

Simon Diggery and Ethel, his pet boa constrictor, were about fifty feet from Simon's rust bucket double-wide.
11. Follett, Ken. *A Column of Fire*. New York: Penguin Books, 2017.

We hanged him in front of Kingsbridge Cathedral.
12. Gardner, Lisa. *Right Behind You*. New York: Dutton, 2017.

Had a family once.
13. Grafton, Sue. *"Y" Is for Yesterday*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2017.

Iris stood at the counter in the school office, detention slip in hand, anticipating a hand-smack from Mr. Lucas, the vice principal.
14. Grisham, John. *Camino Island*. New York: Bantam Books, 2017.

The imposter borrowed the name of Neville Manchin, an actual professor of American literature at Portland State and soon-to-be doctoral student at Stanford.
15. Grisham, John. *The Rooster Bar*. New York: Bantam Books, 2017.

The end of the year brought the usual holiday festivities, though around the Frazier house there was little to cheer.

16. Grisham, John. *The Whistler*. New York: Bantam Books, 2016.
The satellite radio was playing soft jazz, a compromise.
17. Hawkins, Paula. *Into the Water*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2017.
“Again!”
18. Iles, Greg. *Mississippi Blood*. New York: William Morrow, 2017.
Grief is the most solitary emotion; it makes islands of us all.
19. James, E. L. *Darker: Fifty Shades Darker as Told by Christian*. New York: Vintage, 2017.
I sit.
20. Kellerman, Jonathan. *Heartbreak Hotel*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2017.
I lead a double life.
21. King, Stephen, and Owen King. *Sleeping Beauties*. New York: Scribner, 2017.
The moth makes Evie laugh.
22. Macomber, Debbie. *Any Dream Will Do*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2017.
“I need the money.”
23. Patterson, James, and Candice Fox. *Never Never*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016.
“If you reach the camp before me, I’ll let you live,” the Soldier said.
24. Patterson, James, and David Ellis. *The Black Book*. New York: Little, Brown, 2017.
Patti Harney stops her unmarked sedan two blocks shy of her destination, the narrow streets packed with patrol cars, the light bars on top of the units shooting a chaos of color into the night.

25. Patterson, James, and Maxine Paetro. *16th Seduction*. New York: Little, Brown, 2017.

That muggy morning in July my partner, Rich Conklin, and I were on stakeout in the Tenderloin, one of San Francisco's sketchiest, most crime-ridden neighborhoods.
26. Patterson, James, and Maxine Paetro. *The Medical Examiner*. New York: Little, Brown, 2017.

Inspector Richard Conklin was conducting what should have been a straightforward interview with a female victim.
27. Patterson, James. *The People vs. Alex Cross*. New York: Little, Brown, 2017.

From inside a rambling white Colonial home on a shaded street that smelled of blooming wildflowers, a woman called in a pleasant Southern accent: "TW-Two? Where are you? Mama needs you to go to the store now."
28. Penny, Louise. *Glass Houses*. New York: Minotaur Books, 2017.

"State your name, please."
29. Robb, J. D. *Echoes in Death*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017.

Was she dead?
30. Robb, J. D. *Secrets in Death*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017.

It wouldn't kill her.
31. Roberts, Nora. *Come Sundown*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017.

Alice Bodine relieved herself behind a thin screen of lodge-pole pines.
32. Roberts, Nora. *Year One*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017.

When Ross MacLeod pulled the trigger and brought down the pheasant, he had no way of knowing he'd killed himself.
33. Sandford, John. *Golden Prey*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2017.

Garvin Poole slipped out of bed, got his lighter off the fireplace mantel, and walked in his underwear through the dark

house to the kitchen, where he took a joint out of a sugar jar, then continued to the garden door.

34. Silva, Daniel. *House of Spies*. New York: Harper, 2017.

For something so unprecedented, so fraught with institutional risk, it was all handled with a minimum of fuss.

35. Steel, Danielle. *The Mistress*. New York: Dell, 2017.

It was dusk on a warm June day, as the enormous motor yacht *Princess Marina* lay at anchor off the coast of Antibes in the Mediterranean, not far from the famous Hôtel du Cap.

36. Ward, J. R. *The Chosen*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2017.

Firelight thrown from a shallow pit clawed across the damp walls of the cave, the rough rock face bleeding shadows.

37. Young, William P. *The Shack*. Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 2007.

March unleashed a torrent of rainfall after an abnormally dry winter.

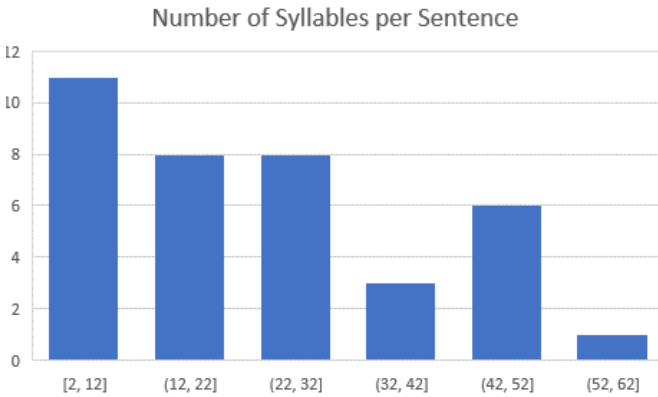
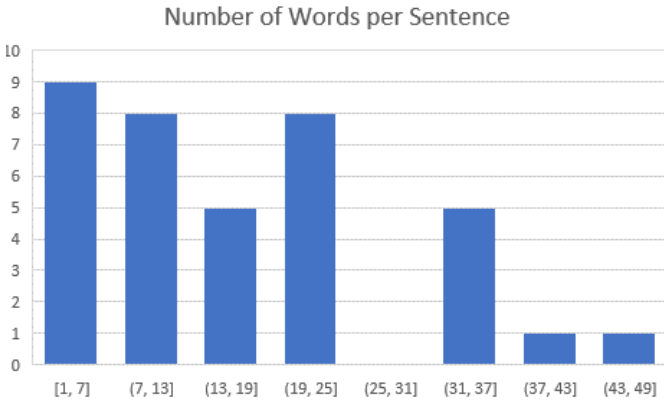
Appendix B

Quantitative Data of First Lines of *New York Times* Best Seller List of 2017

First Line	# of words	# of syllables	Dialogue	First	Second	Third	Past	Present	Future	Active	Passive
1	10	14				x	x			x	
2	20	31				x	x			x	
3	8	9	all		x		x			x	
4	22	29		x			x			x	
5	10	14				x	x			x	
6	14	20				x	x			x	
7	48	62	part (middle)			x	x			x	
8	35	50				x	x			x	
9	35	42		x			x			x	
10	17	30				x	x			x	
11	8	11		x			x			x	
12	4	5		(x)			x			x	
13	22	35				x	x			x	
14	23	45				x	x			x	
15	20	30				x	x			x	
16	9	16				x	x			x	
17	1	2	all		(x)			(x) Command		(x)	
18	12	18				x		x		x	
19	2	2		x				x		x	
20	5	6		x				x		x	
21	5	6				x		x		x	
22	4	5	all	x				x		x	
23	14	16	part (beginning)			x	x			x	
24	35	49				x		x		x	
25	25	41		x				x		x	
26	16	28				x		x		x	
27	37	52	part (end)			x		x		x	
28	4	4	all		x			(x) Command		x	
29	3	3				x		x		x	
30	4	5				x		x (would)		x	
31	11	17				x		x		x	
32	20	26				x		x		x	
33	41	52				x		x		x	
34	18	30				x		x		x	
35	34	49				x		x		x	
36	20	25				x		x		x	
37	11	19				x		x		x	
First Line	# of words	# of syllables	Dialogue	First	Second	Third	Past	Present	Future	Active	Passive
Totals	16.945946	24.27027		8	3	26	29	8	0	37	0
Lowest	1	2	4 all								
Highest	48	62	3 part								

Appendix C

Histograms for Number of Words and Number of Syllables per Sentence



Appendix D

First Lines Categorized into Burke's Four Categories of Words

natural = green

socio-political = orange

logological = gray

supernatural = blue

verbs = strike-through

1. It ~~was~~ normally one of the safest places on earth.
2. As the ancient cogwheel train ~~clawed~~ its way up the dizzying incline, Edmond Kirsch surveyed the jagged mountaintop above him.
3. “Did you think you were going to die?”
4. One day it occurred to me that the warm, squeaky, smelly things squirming around next to me were my brothers and sister.
5. Jack Reacher and Michelle Chang spent three days in Milwaukee.
6. Ballard and Jenkins rolled up on the house on El Centro shortly before midnight.
7. They charged from the cover of the elephant grass toward the LZ, five of them swarming the slick on both sides, one among them yelling, “Go! Go! Go!”—as if each man needed to be prodded and reminded that these were the most dangerous seconds of their lives.
8. Bosch was in cell 3 of the old San Fernando jail, looking through files from one of the Esme Tavares boxes, when a heads-up text came in from Bella Lourdes over in the detective bureau.
9. I was standing at the bar in the Green Parrot, waiting for a guy named Carlos from Miami who'd called my cell a few days ago and said he might have a job for me.

10. Simon Diggery and Ethel, his pet boa constrictor, were about fifty feet from Simon's rust bucket double-wide.
11. We hanged him in front of Kingsbridge Cathedral.
12. Had a family once.
13. Iris stood at the counter in the school office, detention slip in hand, anticipating a hand-smack from Mr. Lucas, the vice principal.
14. The imposter borrowed the name of Neville Manchin, an actual professor of American literature at Portland State and soon-to-be doctoral student at Stanford.
15. The end of the year brought the usual holiday festivities, though around the Frazier house there was little to cheer.
16. The satellite radio was playing soft jazz, a compromise.
17. "Again!"
18. Grief is the most solitary emotion; it makes islands of us all.
19. I sit.
20. I lead a double life.
21. The moth makes Evie laugh.
22. "I need the money."
23. "If you reach the camp before me, I'll let you live," the Soldier said.
24. Patti Harney stops her unmarked sedan two blocks shy of her destination, the narrow streets packed with patrol cars, the light bars on top of the units shooting a chaos of color into the night.
25. That muggy morning in July my partner, Rich Conklin, and I were on stakeout in the Tenderloin, one of San Francisco's sketchiest, most crime-ridden neighborhoods.
26. Inspector Richard Conklin was conducting what should have been a straightforward interview with a female victim.

27. From inside a rambling white Colonial home on a shaded street that smelled of blooming wildflowers, a woman called in a pleasant Southern accent: “TW-Two? Where are you? Mama needs you to go to the store now.”
28. “State your name, please.”
29. Was she dead?
30. It wouldn’t kill her.
31. Alice Bodine relieved herself behind a thin screen of lodgepole pines.
32. When Ross MacLeod pulled the trigger and brought down the pheasant, he had no way of knowing he’d killed himself.
33. Garvin Poole slipped out of bed, got his lighter off the fireplace mantel, and walked in his underwear through the dark house to the kitchen, where he took a joint out of a sugar jar, then continued to the garden door.
34. For something so unprecedented, so fraught with institutional risk, it was all handled with a minimum of fuss.
35. It was dusk on a warm June day, as the enormous motor yacht Princess Marina lay at anchor off the coast of Antibes in the Mediterranean, not far from the famous Hôtel du Cap.
36. Firelight thrown from a shallow pit clawed across the damp walls of the cave, the rough rock face bleeding shadows.
37. March unleashed a torrent of rainfall after an abnormally dry winter.

Round Vowels and Flat Pitches: The Gestural Language of Choral Conducting

Aspen Stander

Is music truly a universal language? In the realm of choral performance, it seems that meaning is primarily constructed by those who hold in-group status and whose identity is derived from fluency in the “language” of music. The three modalities of conducting, singing, and reading all use different symbolic systems to represent the same musical idea. A choir conductor uses gestures to elicit the desired interpretation of a musical text from choir, whose members respond by producing, shaping, and modifying sound. The conductor thus embodies the text and creates metaphors through gestures to construct musical meanings and choral identity.

The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote that “music is the universal language of mankind,” attesting to the power of song to unite people from different backgrounds and linguistic abilities. So in other words, the expression of meaning and emotion through music penetrates all cultural barriers and unites us under a common communicative system made from the infinite combinations of twelve different musical tones . . . or does it?

There is overlap in the neural networks that process and produce both music and speech, signifying a close relationship between speech and music functions in the brain (Jäncke, 2012). Music is language in that it combines smaller building blocks (notes or letters) into meaningful larger components (phrases or words), it operates on a rule-based vocabulary of symbols, it has different genres and dialects, and it is culturally conditioned (McCulloch, 2015). To take this variability further, the very definition of what constitutes music and what constitutes *good* music varies greatly around the world. Though it seems fundamental to music theory, even the concept that there are twelve musical tones is culturally determined and is specifically a feature of Western musical tradition.

However, music remains distinct from language on the basis of complexity: it has a smaller set of building blocks and simpler grammatical rules for combining them, it cannot be used to communicate propositional meaning, and there is greater variability in individual acquisition and production of music (McCulloch, 2015). Thus, cultural and individual variability create both similarities and differences between music and language.

Clearly, we can refer to music as *analogous* to language rather than a language in and of itself. But what happens when we add lyrics? The voice is a unique instrument because it is the only way to use music as a means of expressing linguistically coded ideas. It allows us to use two symbolic systems simultaneously, namely, a given language and the “language” of music.

In the interplay between music and language in a choral setting, musical gestures may play a greater role in the construction of individual and group identity than we realize. Choral music consists of directly using music as a medium for language. Written music can be verbalized directly by the singer or mediated by a conductor whose ultimate goal is to shape the verbalization of the written music in a specific way.

Choral music is especially interesting from a linguistic perspective because it involves these three different modalities of language—written, vocal, and gestural. Singers simultaneously read the written “language” of musical notes and markings along with written lyrics in a particular language, reproduce these languages vocally, and respond to the gestural commands of a conductor to produce a certain quality of sound. In Western musical tradition, the role of the conductor is to perform gestures that convey to the choir a particular interpretation of the text and ensure technical excellence in singing. Choral music is therefore a trimodal variety of language in which the conductor primarily uses gesture to elicit his or her desired interpretation of a piece of literature by a choir. The choir then responds to the conductor by producing, shaping, and modifying sound according to the conductor’s gestures.

The three modalities of conducting, singing, and reading printed music all use different symbolic systems to represent the same idea. The conductor is a focal point for the synthesis of the three modalities in an entire body of choral singers. While linguists have traditionally regarded gestures as belonging to a separate process from words as mere paralinguistic accompaniments to speech, I will argue that the choral conductor’s embodiment of music through conducting gestures constructs meaning and identity from musical texts and regulates the behaviors of the choir.

A Review of the Literature

Gesture constitutes a type of language use; it is not merely an accompaniment to language (Ashley, 2000). Exploration of the close relationship between gesture and language indicates that they are part of the same psychological process and perform similar semantic and pragmatic functions (McNeill, 1985). In a choir, the conductor produces gesture simultaneously with verbal instructions and the ensemble’s singing.

Due to the similarities between music, language, and linguistic elements inherent in lyrics and conducting gestures, the production of choral music can be analyzed through the lens of linguistics. In R. Ashley’s (2000) study on the pragmatics of conducting, conducting gestures indicate “how musicians use bodily expression and sound to communicate with one another to produce effective

frameworks for mutual musical expression.” Ashley interprets conducting gestures in terms of conversational implicature: singers make sense of implied meanings in conductor gestures because there are conventions for how members of a choir should respond to these gestures. Grice’s cooperative principles of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner allow for successful inference. The conductor must know the score (quality and truthfulness), every gesture must be meaningful (quantity), every movement must concentrate on the demands of the music (relevance), and the entire communicative act must be able to evoke specific responses from the choir (manner).

Ashley (2000) also makes use of Kendon’s continuum from the work of David McNeill to propose that many expressive conducting gestures lie in the realm of gesticulation and require context, but others are emblems and have become relatively fixed and lexicalized. Movements closer to the gesticulatory end of the continuum have little meaning outside their immediate environmental and temporal context, while movements that at the lexicalized end form part of the vocabulary of the viewer and are meaningful on their own. Speech is optional when an emblematic, or lexicalized, gesture is used because conversational participants have a shared understanding of the meaning of the gesture, though this meaning may not be evident from the form of the gesture itself (Garnett, 2017). In terms of choral conducting, there are some nearly universal gestures, like beat patterns, but many conducting gestures rely on individual idiosyncrasies.

The conductor’s use of these types of gestures constructs meaning for both the ensemble during rehearsal and the audience during a performance. The conductor embodies the music through temporal gestures, which keep time with beats, and delineative gestures, which amplify specific aspects of the musical text (Kumar & Morrison, 2016). Because in many cases there is a congruence between a gesture and the music it represents, the conductor’s gestures present cues for interpreting the music (Kumar & Morrison, 2016).

Wis (1993) describes gesture as literal “pictures of sound” used to represent aspects of human experience that cannot be expressed in words. Drawing on this definition, Litman (2006) argues that emblematic gestures can replace verbal instructions in choral conducting. Additionally, conductors may use metaphorical gestures

to communicate intended vocal behavior to the choir. Wis further writes that conductors often use verbal metaphors to teach singing techniques, but metaphors can be made more concrete and lead to specific actions when the conductor uses physical gestures (1999). Both the medium (music) and instrument (voice) of this type of discourse are abstract, and since metaphors relate abstract concepts to physical experience, conductors use physical, gestural metaphors to develop vocal skills and musicality with great success (Wis, 1999). Singers also gesture during rehearsal—they map their own experiences with physical movement onto the music (Wis, 1999). For example, consider the simple gestures used to represent solfège tones—a closed fist for *do*, an inclined hand for *re*, a flat hand for *mi*, and so on. These gestures help singers concretize the abstract concept of musical tones as they learn a piece of music.

Finally, a truism among choral directors is that “the director should look like he or she wants the choir to sound” (Garnett, 2017). The gestural “language” of choral conducting is thus integral to the way both conductors and singers produce the music and understand their own identity as musicians.

Methodology

This pilot study is geared toward exploring the intersection between language, gesture, and musical texts. As such, it will not be a comprehensive analysis of choral conducting.

I observed three different choral conductors (hereafter referred to as Applonie, Hall, and Crane) during choir rehearsals at Brigham Young University and then analyzed the functions of conducting gestures from a linguistic standpoint.

I have included descriptions and interpretations of salient gestures that result in a specific effect in the sound produced by the choir and that best illustrate principles of linguistics.

Analysis

I observed four major types of gestures used by choral conductors: beat gestures, emblematic gestures, iconic gestures, and physical metaphors. These are not mutually exclusive categories. Some gestures may fall into more than one category, while others may pertain to one not listed.

Beat Gestures

Beat gestures form the basis of the gestures of ensemble conductors. Conductors use these movements to keep time and establish a tempo for the choir to follow. It was clear from my observations, however, that beat gestures can also serve expressive functions, which confirms Garnett's (2017) claim that the two categories cannot be definitively separated. Applonie used smooth, swelling, sweeping gestures to delineate beats in "Away in a Manger"; Hall used sharp, disconnected strokes to keep time in "Ding Dong Merrily on High"; and Crane used elliptical motions to regulate the pace of "Ave Maria."

The type of beat gesture used is highly dependent on the song. Applonie's beat gestures emphasized the gentle, loving character of the lullaby "Away in a Manger"; Hall's gestures emphasized the bold, joyous celebration of Christmas in "Ding Dong Merrily on High"; and Crane's gestures regulated and reinforced the forward-moving structure of "Ave Maria." In no case did I find the sterile 4/4 beat pattern seen among those leading congregational hymns in most church services.

Iconic Gestures

The form and manner of execution of iconic gestures visually resemble the concepts that these gestures represent (McNeill, 1985, p. 354). For example, vowel shaping gestures might consist of physically shaping the mouth with one's hand into a narrower position (Applonie), drawing a circle in the air in front of the mouth (Hall), or holding the hand in a circle or a vertical plane in front of the mouth (Crane). These types of gestures represent a particular position of the mouth and lips that will produce the conductor's desired tone quality. The gesture itself is an instruction for the members of the choir to position their instrument in the manner shown.

Vowel-shaping gestures are sometimes accompanied by verbal instructions during rehearsal, especially in earlier stages of learning a song, but they tend to disappear in favor of using the gesture by itself in preparation for a performance. Applonie, for example, reminds her choir during rehearsal to practice using "round vowels" to produce a more mature tone when singing the word *gloria*. "Narrow" vowels produce a brighter tone and are therefore less desirable for a large choir. The terms "round" and "narrow" directly describe

the shape of the mouth when producing a certain tone, so they are well suited for translation into wide- or narrow-looking gestures with the hand.

Emblematic Gestures

In contrast to iconic gestures, emblematic gestures represent a concept through conventionalized meanings assigned to them in a particular pragmatic situation and culture (Ashley, 2000; McNeill, 1985). Various gestures have a relatively fixed meaning in the world of choral ensembles, such as solfège gestures used in sight reading (*do* is closing the hand into a fist, *re* is making an inclined plane with the hand, *mi* is holding the hand horizontally, and so on) and cutoff gestures (the hand travels in a small loop, the fingers close together, and the hand is drawn slightly to the side), though there tends to be some variation in the way individual conductors perform these gestures. Additionally, there are gestures that are nonspecific to musical contexts, including the stop sign (hand held out with palm facing forward [Hall]) to communicate to the choir to stop singing and entrance cues (often accomplished by the deictic gesture of pointing to a particular section with the index finger [Applonie]) to communicate to the choir to start singing.

The crescendo gesture, for example, often consists of an open palm with either the fingers or the entire hand lifting upward to suggest an increase in sound. Choral directors hardly need to explain this gesture to new members of a choir, as most singers (and even non-singers) will have acquired an understanding of this motion in their gestural lexicon.

There are, however, other ways of expressing the command to sing louder. Applonie established a set of conventionalized meanings for numeric gestures that are only shared within her choir. Instead of speaking the words for dynamic levels (*piano*, *mezzo piano*, *forte*, etc.) every time a shift in volume is needed, Applonie describes the relative dynamic levels in a piece of music using the numbers one through seven, with one being roughly equal to *pianissimo* and seven being roughly equal to *fortissimo*. In rehearsal, she will sometimes hold up the number of fingers that corresponds to a particular dynamic level, thus drawing upon the conventionalized

meanings the choir has established for these numbers and, therefore, for the gestures that represent them.

Applonie also uses a swelling gesture, holding her arms out to their widest extent as if they held something that was growing, to solicit a growing, expanding sound. This could be considered an emblematic gesture, but it may be better described as a physical metaphor for the intensity of the sound.

Physical Metaphors

Perhaps the richest source of linguistic analysis in choral conducting comes from the use of physical metaphor. Metaphor is a way of mapping abstract concepts into the terms of everyday experience, and in the context of choir rehearsal, it is a way of mapping the concept of sound onto physical body parts and objects (Garnett, 2017, p. 48; Wis, 1999). Physical metaphor is a powerful gestural tool in the hands of a choir conductor.

For example, Applonie and many other choral conductors use the flat-hand gesture to rectify a flat pitch and keep the choir in tune. While the choir holds a note, the hands are positioned next to each other in a horizontal plane. One hand remains stable, representing the desired pitch. The other hand bends or drops below the level of the stable hand to represent the actual pitch of the choir, which has fallen below the desired pitch. The second hand remains below the level of the first until the choir has sufficiently raised the pitch of a particular note. The abstract concept of pitch is thus represented by a physical gesture so the choir can visually experience the rise and fall of their own vocalizations.

Another function of physical metaphor during rehearsal relies on the members of the choir performing gestures themselves to reinforce vocal technique and musical expression. When the choir must sing a high note in head voice, Applonie often speaks of the pitch as coming out of the forehead. She demonstrates two gestures to help the choir visualize this (placing the hand on the forehead to feel the resonance of the sound; “drawing” the sound up out of the chest and over of the top of the head with the hand) and instructs them to practice this gesture while singing. The subsequent performance of the music, even without the use of the gesture, incorporates the concept signaled by the physical metaphor.

Aside from helping singers employ certain vocal techniques, physical metaphor is also used to develop expressive aspects of vocal performance. This is where the text becomes paramount: a sacred Latin text will yield the expression of different emotions and meanings—and, therefore, the performance of very different gestures—than a Hebrew folk song or an African American spiritual. In the case of the latter, Applonie explained the song “Give Me Jesus” as a work song with a rhythm suited to accompany the hefty swinging motions of hard labor. With verbal instructions to perform a gesture as if swinging a pickax over the shoulder, the members of the choir began to internalize the rhythm of the song and emphasize the weighty swing of the piece.

Discussion

The purposes of conductor gestures during choir rehearsal are many, but in the realms of linguistics and anthropology there are three that stand out in my observations: to regulate the behavior of the choir, to construct and convey the meaning of the text, and to build singers’ identities as musicians.

The first and most obvious purpose is to regulate the behavior of the choir. The conductor maximizes musical results when coordinating verbal instructions with gestures. He or she may need to interpret the meaning of gestures for the choir when they are first introduced or when otherwise needed for emphasis or clarification. The relationship between the conductor and the ensemble is thus both responsive and cooperative (Ashley, 2000), because both parties monitor one another closely during the simultaneous output of song and conducting gestures to shape the musical technique and expression of a piece of choral literature. Through gesture, with or without accompanying verbal instructions, the conductor can signify changes in speed, pitch, dynamics, or tone.

The second purpose is to construct the meaning of a text and convey that meaning to the choir, who then practice in rehearsal to convey the intended meaning to a future audience. Conductors accomplish this feat by embodying both the emotions of the music and the techniques needed to perform the music effectively through gesture (Kumar & Morrison, 2016). They are faced with the questions, “If this song were a person, what would it look like? How

would it move, how would it feel, how would it *sing*?” The emotional, expressive, artistic gestures of choral conductors are a physical reproduction of the meaning of the music with the ultimate goal of evoking an emotional response in a future audience. Conductors use body movements to draw attention to specific aspects of the music and the lyrics that best delineate their interpretation first for the sake of the choir and ultimately for the choir to reproduce for the audience.

The flat-hand gesture, described previously, exemplifies the embodiment of music for technical purposes rather than expressive purposes. The abstract concept of a musical pitch is represented by a physical part of the conductor’s body. The visual representation of the musical language written on a page of sheet music helps singers embody the music in turn as they make adjustments to produce the desired pitch.

The third purpose is to construct identity (Garnett, 2017). The specialized use of many different types of gesture to accompany verbal and musical utterances marks choral conducting as its own register within the domain of a given language. The ability to produce these types of gestures establishes one’s identity as a choral conductor, and the ability to interpret and apply the ideas conveyed by these gestures establishes one’s identity as a choral singer.

The ensemble learns the “language” of the conductor’s gestural register, allowing its individual members to interpret choral music together as a group. They identify themselves not just as individual singers but as “a choir” (BYU Women’s Chorus, a particular choir with its own idiosyncratic style) and as “choir people” (people who have acquired the ability to sing well together with members of their own choir or of other choirs, under the same conductor or a different conductor). Understanding of such a symbolic system confers in-group status upon members and conductors of an ensemble.

Conclusion

Choral conducting as interpreted in the eyes of a linguist yield many insights into the construction of meaning and identity through gesture. The close relationships between music, language, and gesture underlie the regulatory, semantic, and ideological functions of choral conducting behavior.

Future research might include a quantitative study of the types of gestures used during rehearsal to understand which types of gestures are most effective in producing the desired effect on the choir. Another possibility would be to investigate to what extent emblematic gestures are conventionalized cross-culturally—in other words, how do the words and motions of choral conductors vary across different cultures?

Notwithstanding, in Western music culture, both the constancy and idiosyncrasy of gestures in a choir rehearsal contain a wealth of information about the types and purposes of gestures that accompany choral singing. The variety of beat gestures, iconic gestures, emblematic gestures, and physical metaphors show that the gestural language of choral conducting is complex. Those who understand conductor gestures possess an in-group status, which differentiates performers and audience, vocalists and non-vocalists, those who speak the language and those who do not. And while music may not be a universal language, it is a linguistically and culturally significant source of meaning and identity for people at any level of fluency and comprehension.

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Identifying a Book: Content Words and Their Power

Elliotte Thurtle

This research looks at people's ability to recognize a book solely based off of its most common content words. This research used readily available texts from Gutenberg online and then stripped the texts down to word lists through the program Voyant. The fifteen most common content words were then combined into a single line of text that was used in a survey. The results showed that people are able to correctly identify books when given the top fifteen words. This information will likely impact the future of summarization.

The struggle of finding a book when you don't know the title but do know a few key details about the book is a very real and time-consuming problem for the average lover of books. Most often the best way to find the book is to type the key details you know about the book into an internet search engine and hope for the best. Or if you are lucky enough to live near a good library, go and talk to a librarian and hope they have read or heard of the book you want to find (once again using the key details and words you remember from the book). Fortunately, with the wonders of technology, online search engines will find the book, or a librarian will find it via those same search engines. However, the ability of book identification based off key words is not just for computers, machines, and tech savvy librarians: all people can do this. Something about those specific words defines and identifies the book for people. Often, they are words that commonly appear throughout the book: location names, character names, plot points, or defining characteristics. The key words that people think of are generally not a word that was used once, but many times over and over in the book. That is why I propose that an individual who has read any given book will be able to identify said book by its fifteen most common content words.

The theory of content words used as a form of identification is not a new theory by any means; it is one that has been studied for some time. Craig (1992) found that a person could identify an author based off of his or her common content words. In fact, he set out to decide if previously written works with no identifiable author could have been written by some of the most famous authors of the time. As a result, Craig accurately identified many authors based on their word usage, showing that author identification can occur based off of common content words. If we can identify authors in this manner, then why not books? Johnson (1996) did a similar study. He worked to define the differences between authors in their word choices. He was more interested in looking for defining characteristics of certain authors instead of trying to figure out who wrote what; his study was nonetheless effective at identifying key words for authors even among their contemporaries. García (2007) studied the long-standing question of who wrote what regarding the Bible, specifically the Gospels in the New Testament. While it didn't definitively prove who wrote what in the Bible, it showed that groups of passages

could be attributed to a single author and identified noticeable differences when one author stopped writing and another began.

This is where my study begins to differ. While defining an author by their key words has been studied and worked with, there is surprisingly little done with defining a book by its key words. It holds to reason that if an author is identifiable by key words, then surely a book is identifiable as well. There is little information on this particular area of study, so little in fact, that after more than twenty hours of searching, the closest information I could find on similar studies pertained to authors and key words. I was unable to find anything on books and key words.

This lends a new challenge to my study: instead of building on previous studies, learning from mistakes and clarifications, and avoiding obvious pitfalls, my study will determine whether this is a worthwhile phenomenon to study, and if there are issues to be avoided, what those issues are and how best to bypass them.

Method

The organization for this research was a multistep process. The first thing that had to be done was decide on which books to analyze. They had to be commonly known and have online access so that the text could be analyzed in a timely manner. Then, once analyzed, because of their previous exposure to the book, people would be able to say whether or not key words were defined well. The free-to-use online book resource Gutenberg.org allows access to thousands of public domain books for free. For my study, I was able to download as many books as I needed. Gutenberg.org also has multiple options when downloading these books, which means they worked in multiple text analysis programs. This is why all the books used in the study were found on there. Gutenberg.org is also helpful because it has a list of the one hundred most commonly downloaded books, making it easy to find books that are widely known and that many people would recognize having read or heard about at some point in their lives. With that list, it was also easy to find many books with varying genres, lengths, time periods, and authors to use in the study.

Next came the decision process of which books to use for the study. I decided on ten books: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Romeo and*

Juliet, *Hamlet*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Treasure Island*, *Peter Pan*, *Little Women*, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Each book was either a required reading for high school students across the United States, and thus commonly known, or considered a classic and it would be strange for a person not to have read them, or at least know their basic plot. The one exception was *The Brothers Karamazov*. I chose one book that might be known by name but not commonly read to test if people could identify a book that they did not know well. The data from this outlier book was compared against the more commonly known books to ensure that my other data was valuable. *The Brothers Karamazov* was the perfect choice for a purposeful outlier because it appeared on the Top 100 list on Gutenberg.org, but further down. So, while it is commonly recognized as a classic or need-to-read book, it's also a large book (at over 700 pages) and difficult to read, meaning that many people don't finish it. It is a book that people would probably know by title but wouldn't really be sure about its content.

The next step, once all the books were downloaded and ready to test, was to put them through the program Voyant. I chose to use Voyant because it has the advantage of having a premade list of function words which it would dismiss when retrieving word counts. The list was long, but by no means perfect, and I still had to manually go through it and discount a few function words that had slipped through. However, thanks to the premade lists of Voyant, I was able to save a great deal of time and omit words that might have slipped through if I had personally just been creating the list. Function words were disregarded in this study to avoid having the top fifteen most common words be identical for all the books. Function words make up the large majority of any given text; words like *the*, *and*, *to*, and *of* are so common that they take up the top slots of common words for all books. I focused on keeping content or key words in order to have lists that were different and would actually be usable in identifying a book. With the use of Voyant, assembling the content word lists for each book (available in the Appendix) took a matter of minutes. I was then able to quickly document and prepare them for public survey.

Finally came the survey—asking people what they thought about the content word lists. This was accomplished through an anonymous

online survey using Google Forms. Each list of words was listed as a question, and the answer was given in a multiple choice format. Each word list had ten book titles listed as a possible answers, along with the option, “can’t decide,” allowing people to say they did not know the answer, instead of causing them to make a random guess and potentially alter the data. I administered the survey on my social media platforms, both Facebook and Instagram, and collected data for a week. I was able to get seventy-five responses, however, two of the responses were ignored because the participants were not native English speakers. I incorporated a question about native language that would stop those whose native language was not English from taking the survey since my social media platforms include many people from different countries. I wanted to avoid having someone take the survey who was not fluent in English and who might not fully understanding the questions or the list of words thus altering the statistics. In total, seventy-three people went through the entire survey and tried to identify the books based off of the word lists that had been provided.

Data Visualization and Analysis

The following chart gives the data collected from the seventy-three responses.

Book	Correct Identification	Can't Identify	Other Guess
Pride and Prejudice	71 (97.3%)	1 (1.4%)	1 (1.4%)
Romeo and Juliet	73 (100%)	0	0
Hamlet	73 (100%)	0	0
Little Women	70 (95.9%)	3 (4.1%)	0
The Brothers Karamazov	31 (42.5%)	34 (46.6%)	8 (11%)
Alice in Wonderland	73 (100%)	0	0
The Hound of Baskerville	62 (84.9%)	11 (15.1%)	0
A Christmas Carol	73 (100%)	0	0
Treasure Island	68 (93.2%)	3 (4.1%)	2 (2.7%)
Peter Pan	73 (100%)	0	0

After gathering the data, a very obvious trend emerged: a person was likely to correctly identify a book based off of its word list. In fact, with five of the ten books, 100 percent of survey respondents correctly identified it. There was only one case where the response “can’t decide” outnumbered responses that correctly identified a book, and it was for *The Brothers Karamazov*. I expected that the results would be low, so it was not a surprise when it came back with those results. Results from *The Brothers Karamazov* question show that previous knowledge is important when identifying a book.

Generally speaking, the percentage of people who correctly identified a book was much higher than the percentage of people who could not identify the book or who identified it as a different book. Besides the five books that were correctly identified 100 percent of the time, four of the other books were correctly identified a high percentage of the time: 97.3, 95.9, 93.2, and 84.9. (The lowest percentage, 42.5 percent, belonged to *The Brothers Karamazov*.) From my analysis of the data, the mean, the median, and the mode of the percentages particularly stood out to me. The mean score was 91.4 percent when including the outlier of 42.5 percent. When I discounted the outlier, the mean went up to 96.8 percent. Both with the outlier and without the outlier the means were very high. This shows that, on average, there is a high likelihood that a person will correctly identify a book based off content words. The median score is 98.65 percent. Since there are ten data points, the median isn’t an actual number but the mean of the middle two most numbers. Once again it is an incredibly high percentage. The mode score was equally impressive. With five books correctly identified with 100 percent accuracy, the mode was 100 percent. This means that when identifying common books, it is far more common to identify books with one hundred percent accuracy than any other percentage. This data shows an important fact: the ability of a person to correctly identify a book based off of content words is not only viable, but incredibly likely.

In future studies some changes will be made to get a better picture of the data that is collected. Namely, after each question there will be a section that asks participants to explain their reasons for choosing their answer to see if guessing has anything to do with it.

Conclusion

As expected, identification of a book by its top fifteen most common words is not only possible but extremely likely. This is due in part to the ability of the mind of a reader to remember important details like places, names, and characteristics that tend to be found in the top fifteen most common words. These findings would be most useful in programming search engines and other online resources to help find books or other similar written works faster and more accurately. This study would also be especially useful to librarians who work with the general public and help people find a book they can only describe. Identifying a book doesn't have to be a struggle if the fifteen most common content words are known.

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Appendix

Word Lists for the 10 Books

Pride and Prejudice: Mr., Elizabeth, Darcy, Mrs., Bennet, Miss, Jane, Bingley,
Think, Time, Good, Little, Lady, Sister, Make

Romeo and Juliet: Nurse, Romeo, Love, Friar, Good, Night, Man, Death, Lady,
Juliet, Sir, Tybalt, Dead, Day, Work

Little Women: Jo, Little, Meg, Amy, Laurie, Good, Beth, Old, Mother, Time, Mr.,
March, Young, Home, Girls

Hamlet: Hamlet, Lord, King, Horatio, Polonius, Queen, Shall, Good, Come,
Laertes, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Know, Sir, Love

The Brothers Karamazov: Alyosha, Man, Know, Mitya, Don't, Father, Ivan, Time,
Suddenly, Old, Day, Cried, Little, Love Away

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: Alice, Little, Know, Thought, Time, Queen,
King, Began, Way, Turtle, Mock, Gryphon, Hatter, Work, Head, Rabbit

The Hound of the Baskervilles: Sir, Man, Holmes, Moor, Henry, Know, Watson,
Baskerville, Dr., Think, Mortimer, Time, Stapleton, Face, Hound

A Christmas Carol: Scrooge, Ghost, Christmas, Spirit, Old, Man, Time, Good,
Little, Know, Work, Cried, Bob, Scrooge's, Came

Treasure Island: Man, Captain, Silver, Doctor, Time, Good, Old, Hand, Long, Sea,
Little, Cried, Sir, Jim, Squire

Peter Pan: Peter, Wendy, Hook, Cried, John, Time, Darling, Little, Michael, Boys,
Children, Mother, Night, Mrs., Course

Stealing from Spanish: At What Point Is a Spanish Loanword Considered English?

Emily Schaumann

At what point is a Spanish loanword considered English? This research analyzes three classes of words used by English speakers with origins in Spanish: nouns such as guerrilla and canyon, names for food of Hispanic origin, and colloquialisms such as amigo and pronto. The study uses dictionaries, corpora, and a survey of native English speakers to propose criteria for determining whether a word can be considered English. Because the types of words that English speakers borrow from Spanish vary widely, the criteria also vary between classes of words.

Recently I took an impromptu, informal survey in my semantics classroom. I wrote the words *peccadillo* and *bueno*, two words of Spanish origin, on the whiteboard and asked the class of about twenty-five if they knew what these words meant. The only student who knew the definition of the word *peccadillo* spoke Spanish and did not know that *peccadillo* is an English word in most modern English dictionaries (*Peccadillo*, Cambridge). Conversely, practically the entire class knew the word *bueno*. Despite this, one can find *peccadillo* in any English dictionary—the word has been considered English since the 16th century—and *bueno* doesn't appear in any English dictionary that I could find. Why is *peccadillo* considered English but not *bueno*? What makes a word an English word? Are some words more English than others?

I started with a multitude of similar questions and narrowed them down to one question, which became the focus of my article: at what point is a Spanish loanword considered English? I focused exclusively on Spanish loanwords because there are a relatively small number of them, and I speak Spanish fluently. After carrying out my research, it became apparent that there is no easy checklist that a Spanish loanword must fulfill before it becomes English. I concluded that different classes of Spanish loanwords have their own respective criteria to determine at what point they are considered English.

Literature Review

Muysken, a Dutch linguist who studies creoles and borrowing between languages, introduces the “hierarchy of borrowability,” which is as follows in the order of decreasing borrowability: nouns, adjectives, verbs, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, quantifiers, determiners, free pronouns, clitic pronouns, subordinating conjunctions (Muysken, 1981).

Winford (2003), who wrote the influential book *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics*, explains why nouns and adjectives are easier to loan or borrow: “they form less tightly knit subsystems of the grammar than functional morphemes” and “they can be isolated and extracted as loans” (p. 51).

Collection of Spanish Loanwords in English

My first step was to gather a list of all the English words I could find with Spanish origin. I could not find an exhaustive list, so I drew from some non-academic sources: spanish.about.com, Wikipedia, and my own knowledge of English and Spanish. The final list was as follows:

amigo, adios, hombre, nada, pronto, bueno, mañana, fiesta, siesta, sombrero, rodeo, lasso, corral, canyon, bronco, mosquito, cafeteria, vigilante, armada, guerrilla, renegade, conquistador, aficionado, desesperado, hacienda, matador, peccadillo, patio, tornado, hurricane, savvy, crimson, chocolate, taco, salsa, cilantro, guacamole, enchilada, oregano, and burrito.

My second step was to divide the above list of vocabulary into three types or classes of words: names for food of Hispanic origin, non-food nouns, and colloquialisms. I considered colloquialisms to be Spanish loanwords that most English speakers are familiar with but are not generally considered to be English words.

Initial Survey and Evaluation

I prepared a survey intended to reveal which words from the above list English speakers considered to be English and which words they didn't. This survey was unequivocally a disaster. I had tried to include some French words in order to hide the fact that I was specifically looking at Spanish, hoping that this would be a control variable. Instead, adding French words led to an overabundance of words to analyze, causing many questionnaire takers to skim over the word chart instead of considering each word individually. I also made the mistake of including participants who were fluent in Spanish. This led to anomalous results, such as when one Spanish speaker read the word "cafeteria," thought of the Spanish word *cafetería*, and did not mark it as English. Additionally, some participants did not recognize more obscure English words such as "guerrilla" or "peccadillo," so they did not mark them as English.

The failures of this survey helped me realize that a survey might not be the most effective way to collect data with this topic because each person has an arbitrary selection of words that they considered

to be English. Although I decided not to collect quantitative data from the results of my study, I did interview some participants as to why they chose the words they did, which gave me some qualitative data regarding the food names and colloquialisms word classes.

In the following sections I will present my analysis of each class of words, namely, nouns, names for food of Hispanic origin, and colloquialisms.

Names for Food of Hispanic Origin

The first class of words consists of food items of Hispanic origin: *taco*, *salsa*, *cilantro*, *chocolate*, *guacamole*, *enchilada*, *oregano*, and *burrito*. Every one of these food items has an entry in the Cambridge and Webster's 2016 dictionaries, but *salsa* and *cilantro* had no entry in the Webster's 1993 entry. Almost all responders classified *burrito*, *chocolate*, *taco*, and *guacamole* as English words, but results were mixed on *enchilada*, *oregano*, *cilantro*, and *salsa*. When I asked participants why they classified some as English and some as Spanish, comparing pairs of words such as *taco* versus *enchilada* and *guacamole* versus *salsa*, they answered that the food items identified as English were globally common enough that any English speaker would know what they meant. I was surprised by this response, as I thought any English speaker would know what enchiladas are and what cilantro is, but after speaking with some non-American survey takers, I realized that I was mistaken. The disparity between Webster's 1993 and 2016 entries also would suggest that as *salsa* and *cilantro* have become more commonly used, they have accordingly been added to the dictionary. Thus, I conclude that for the name of a Hispanic food item to be considered truly English, it must be widespread and familiar across the English-speaking world.

Non-food Nouns

The list of non-food nouns is as follows: *mosquito*, *cafeteria*, *vigilante*, *armada*, *guerrilla*, *renegade*, *conquistador*, *aficionado*, *desperado*, *hacienda*, *matador*, *peccadillo*, *patio*, *tornado*, and *hurricane*. To find out approximately when each non-food noun entered the English language, I searched dictionaries. I looked up each of the above words in Webster's dictionary 1848 edition, the

Webster 1996 edition, the Webster 2016 edition, and the Cambridge 2016 edition. For each word, I recorded whether there was an entry in each dictionary. If there was an entry, then I recorded what the definition of that word was. If the English definition differed from the Spanish definition of the same word, I searched the Spanish definition of the word in the Real Academia Española database and recorded the Spanish definition. Of course this method is not a perfect litmus test for whether a word is English or not because the criteria for whether or not a word is considered English may change between different dictionaries and even different editions of the same dictionary. However, I found some useful and sometimes surprising information on definitions of borrowed words. Table 1 shows some of the results I found.

My dictionary research showed that a borrowed word from Spanish may not have the exact same sense in English as it did in Spanish. For instance, the word *conquistador* in Spanish means “conqueror,” or one who conquers. However, in English the word “conquistador” was defined in Webster’s and Cambridge dictionary as a conqueror of South America from Spain. The word *matador* in Spanish means “killer” or “one who kills,” but in English, according to the aforementioned dictionaries, “matador” means a bullfighter. The word *sombrero* in Spanish means “hat,” but in English “sombrero” is specifically a stereotypical Mexican hat with a wide brim, a hyponym of the original extension of *sombrero*. In each instance, as the word has been adopted by English speakers it has also undergone semantic shift, specifically narrowing or specialization.

This semantic shift follows the same pattern of specialization in every word: in the original Spanish they are general nouns, but in

Dictionary	Webster 1828	Webster 1993	Webster 2016	Cambridge 2016	Real Academia Española
conquistador	no entry	entry: “spanish conquest of America”	entry: “specifically Spanish conquest”	entry: “a soldier during the 16th and 17th centuries who defeated people in the Americas and took their land for Spain	entry: “que conquista”

Table 1. Definition of *conquistador*.

English they are terms specific to Spain or to a Spanish-speaking country. The sense of the word *hacienda* narrows from “plantation” to “a large estate especially in a Spanish-speaking country.” The words *fiesta* and *siesta* are often used by English speakers to refer to parties or naps in general (the same way the words are used in Spanish), but are defined in Webster’s dictionary as respectively “festivals in Spanish-speaking countries” and “the common afternoon nap in some Latin-American countries.” In each case, the sense of the word narrowed from general to something specific to Spanish-speaking countries. There are many borrowed words, such as *vanilla*, *rodeo*, and *patio*, that mean exactly the same thing in English as they do in Spanish.

Why does this semantic shift happen, and how can we predict when the definition of a borrowed Spanish word will narrow? For each borrowed word that has changed in sense, there is an English equivalent to the original Spanish sense, and for each borrowed word that retained the exact same sense, there are no synonyms. For instance, in the early 1600s, when the word *vanilla* was still exclusively a Spanish word, there was no English word for the orchid with fragrant flowers and long, brown pod-like fruit. The lexical gap was filled by borrowing the Spanish word. However, the Spanish word *conquistador*, one who conquers, translates exactly to the word “conqueror.” There is no lexical gap in English to fill and therefore the Spanish word is repurposed to mean a Spanish conqueror. The Spanish word *patio* has no synonym in English, so it has been borrowed as is to fill the lexical gap, while the Spanish word *fiesta* does have a synonym, and so it has become specialized to mean a Hispanic celebration.

Within the list of words I studied while writing this article, there are groups of words related to cowboys and the American wild west, such as *canyon*, *lasso*, and *bronco*, and animals found in North and South America. The Americas were settled by the Spanish before the English arrived, so the Spanish language had words for these new animals and words related to settling Western America. English had large lexical gaps to fill, so the language borrowed a chunk of Spanish vocabulary without changing the meaning. Based on all of this evidence, we can conclusively say that Spanish nouns become English words when they either are used to fill a lexical gap or when

they shift in sense to represent a Spanish-related subset of the original extension of the word.

Colloquial Utterances

A third class of words that assimilate entirely differently into English are colloquial utterances, such as *amigo*, *adios*, *hombre*, *nada*, *pronto*, *bueno*, and *mañana*. For this class of words, applying the criteria we used for nouns is futile, as none of these words either fill a lexical gap or shift in meaning. We could potentially apply the second set of criteria, namely that the words must be widespread and familiar across the English-speaking world. However, I would argue that if one of these words, for example *adios*, was widespread and common but used in a Spanish-speaking context, it should not be considered an English word, because an English speaker using *adios* in a Spanish context would likely consider themselves to be speaking Spanish in that moment. A possible third criterion to define colloquialisms as English is that they must be commonly used outside of a Spanish-speaking context.

To find out how widespread the use of these Spanish colloquialisms are in English, I utilized the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). I searched the COCA, found the word frequency, or how many times the word appeared, and then analyzed each word in twenty randomly selected contexts, pinpointing whether the word appeared in a context relating to Spanish culture and to Spanish speakers or in a purely English context. Some of the words commonly appeared with other words or within a phrase, and I also recorded this where I noticed it. I then calculated the percentage frequency that the word appeared outside of the context of Spanish. I also noted common phrases in which the words appeared,

	English translation	frequency in COCA	frequency outside Spanish context	phrases
amigo	friend	259	45%	“mi amigo”
adios	goodbye	212	70%	
hombre	man	415	30%	
nada	nothing	677	70%	nothing, nada.
pronto	soon	347	90%	Pronto, pronto!
bueno	good	257	30%	
mañana	tomorrow/morning	no entry	no entry	

Table 2. Frequency of Spanish colloquialisms.

if applicable. Table 2 shows the frequency of these colloquialisms within Spanish-speaking contexts. Using the third criterion (to define colloquialisms as English, they must be commonly used outside of a Spanish-speaking context) we can immediately eliminate *mañana* as a potential English word, because it did not appear in the corpus. For the rest of the words, however, the line between English and not English is not so clear. *Pronto* is used mostly in purely English context, while *hombre* and *bueno* are used mostly in a Spanish context. Besides, the frequency of colloquialisms depends heavily on individual speakers. I use *vámonos* for “let’s go” very frequently, but I am guessing most English speakers would not.

Thus, I propose that as a general rule, whether a colloquialism is considered English or not depends on the individual speaker. For the individual speaker, a colloquialism is English if they use the word frequently outside of a Spanish-speaking context. For instance, if hypothetical speaker A frequently uses *amigo* to refer to any of their friends, regardless of the friend’s Hispanic ethnicity or lack thereof, then *amigo* is an English word to speaker A. However, if speaker B would only use *amigo* with their Spanish-speaking friends, then *amigo* remains Spanish to speaker B. In my experience, the majority of people are comfortable using the word *pronto* outside of a Spanish context, while a minority would use *bueno* in a similar way. For instance, the following utterance sounds natural to most English speakers: “Come on, let’s go, we need to be there pronto!” Conversely, it’s difficult to find an English sentence in which *bueno* naturally fits. “This food tastes bueno,” “I had a bueno day,” and “That’s bueno” all sound very strange.

This disparity is reflected in the data I gathered from COCA and from dictionaries; *pronto* appears in both the Webster’s and Cambridge 2016 dictionaries while *bueno* appears in neither. Although the Englishness of a colloquialism depends on the speaker, if we must diagnose a colloquialism as English or not English, we should look at what percentage of speakers use it habitually outside of a Spanish-speaking context.

Discussion and Conclusion

The types of words we have discussed are nouns, colloquialisms, and food items. These classes leave out an enormous amount of Spanish

words that have been borrowed into English and that could potentially be classified as an English word, such as animal and plant names like *iguana* and *puma* and place names such as Amarillo, Nevada, and Los Angeles.

Interestingly, among all the Spanish loanwords used in English that I analyzed, I only found words that fall into the categories of nouns—including place names and food items—and colloquialisms. There are no borrowed verbs, no adjectives other than those colloquially used, such as *bueno* and *pronto*, no adverbs, and no function words. Two exceptions are the words *crimson*, which functions both as an adjective and a noun, and the adjective *savvy*, which originated as a colloquialism of the Spanish *sabe*, which means “he knows” or “do you know?” A possible explanation for why nouns are borrowed more easily between languages, proposed by Winford (2003), is that nouns fit easily into the grammar systems of the borrowing language and require very little morphological modification.

I return to my dilemma in the introduction about *peccadillo* and *bueno*. *Peccadillo* is a non-food noun, so the criteria I created for a noun are as follows: we can conclusively say that Spanish nouns become English words when they either are used to fill a lexical gap or shift in sense to represent a Spanish-related subset of the original extension of the word. *Peccadillo* filled a lexical gap in English, as we have no other word for “a small sin,” so it is considered English. *Bueno*, on the other hand, is a colloquialism, and whether a colloquialism is considered English depends on the individual speaker. I personally would not use *bueno* outside of a Spanish-speaking context, and with my experience, neither would most English speakers, as its frequency in COCA outside a Spanish context was only 30 percent. So *peccadillo* is English while *bueno* is not, despite the disparity in English speakers who know the definition of *peccadillo* versus *bueno*. My question is answered and my mind is at peace.

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What's in a Name: Semantic Connotations of Proper Names

Isaac Ricks

The traditional view of names holds that they act as arbitrary pointers to individual people, but that names communicate no additional meaning about those people. That concept, though historically dominant, does not accurately consider all possible uses of names, such as “the next Hitler” or “pull a Greg.” This paper presents several examples and survey data to demonstrate that semantic connotations can and do attach to personal names. These semantic connotations impact how individuals are imagined when nothing else is known about them besides their name.

Nearly every person, living or dead, has a means of identification, a label that distinguishes them from the myriad of people that surround them. This label—a name—allows individuals to easily and fluidly refer to specific people without requiring lengthy descriptions to refer to that person in conversation (such as *my sister's blonde roommate* replacing *Hannah*). Some people have unique names, which make them the only possible referent of a given name. Others possess more common names that are shared with many other people. Traditionally, linguists and language professionals have asserted that proper names are nothing beyond arbitrary referential expressions, or verbal signs pointing to a single individual (Linsky, 1977, p. 216–217). Common nouns such as *dog* communicate a variety of features about the referent, such as four legs, a tail, and fur, and can apply to millions of such creatures. Some linguists argue that proper names do not convey any information about their referent and are much more limited in scope than common nouns.

John Stuart Mill first proposed this traditional theory on names in his famous work *A System of Logic* where he introduced several conditions that have structured theories on names for over one hundred years. Mill argued that names can be connotative or non-connotative; in other words, some nouns convey specific information about their referent through name alone, while others do not. He expressed the idea that all nouns refer to objects, but only some nouns communicate any real information about the attributes of the object by the name alone. For example, *John*, *London*, and *America* are mere labels to signify objects, from which we learn nothing of the actual traits of each object, while *man* can be applied to all objects within a class that share certain traits (such as male, humanoid, adult, etc.). Mill perhaps best expressed this idea with the following analogy:

If, like the robber in the Arabian Nights, we make a mark with chalk on a house to enable us to know it again, the mark has a purpose, but it has not properly any meaning. The chalk does not declare anything about the house; it does not mean, This is such a person's house, or This is a house which contains booty. The object of making the mark is merely distinction. . . . When we impose a proper name, we perform an operation in some

degree analogous to what the robber intended in chalking the house. We put a mark, not indeed upon the object itself, but, so to speak, upon the idea of the object. A proper name is but an unmeaning mark which we connect in our minds with the idea of the object, in order that whenever the mark meets our eyes or occurs to our thoughts, we may think of that individual object. (Mill, 1882, pp. 43–44)

In other words, giving a name to an object is nothing more than making a link between sounds and the objects being represented. This traditional idea of proper nouns has persisted with very little change since Mill first published his works. Even very modern language theorists have voiced very similar opinions about the role of names: “As is easy to see, a naming convention is a relation between a phonological string and an entity that bears that phonological string as its proper name due to this naming convention. Can more be said about the formal nature of this relation? . . . I believe that the answer is negative” (Matushansky, 2008, p. 593). Simply put, in the traditional way of considering names, they are little more than arbitrary labels to allow for easy conversation about named things (Kripke, 1980).

At first glance, this proposition may seem natural and sensible, but it fails under further scrutiny; many studies have been done to observe effects that names have in areas that should remain unchanged by differences in names. Surveys and studies have demonstrated that potential employers view non-traditional or unusual names less favorably, independent of qualifications and experience (Bertrand, 2003). If proper names truly were arbitrary with no semantic connotation, there would be no difference in perceptions and connotations of names and thus no observable phenomenon, unlike these results. Can it be true that there are no connotations associated with proper names regardless of referent? Even if such connotations exist, do all names connote equivalent amounts of information, or are there certain marked names with uniquely strong associated meaning? If so, which names, and why?

While the primary function of proper names certainly is that of referential expression, the purpose of this article is to display the ways names convey meaning independent of their referent by means

of semantic connotation, as well as to map a few of these connotations. Very few linguists have questioned Mill's early assumptions, and little research has been done into what semantic information, if any, truly is transmitted by proper names. However, what has been investigated will be presented here.

Semantic examples quite clearly illustrate the principle of semantic connotations and their attachment to proper names. These examples are corroborated by survey data collected by various groups on various subjects; although, no research has been done on more specific connotations attached to names, such as occupation, gender, or ethnicity. This article aims to fill some measure of that research gap.

Semantic Connotation of Names

As a PhD candidate at Purdue University, Paul Baltes wrote an article capturing and explaining certain key examples of proper names used in non-referential yet meaningful ways. His first and perhaps most marked example is as follows:

Several years ago, evangelist Oral Roberts proclaimed that if he did not receive eight million dollars by a certain date, God would "call him home." Stand-up comedian Robin Williams responded, "Is God some man named Vinnie, saying "give me my money?" To fully understand this joke, it is necessary to correctly interpret information being communicated through the name, "Vinnie," which predicates semantic features allowing us to understand the sense of "God" as a gangster or a mafioso. (Baltes, 1991, p. 75)

Baltes continues his assertion: "This use of personal names forces us to reexamine some of the roles of names in natural language, especially in light of the overwhelming amount of scholarship which claims that personal names have no meaning other than to signify their bearers" (Baltes, 1991, p. 75). Essentially, *Vinnie* is predicating features such as [Italian], [Mafioso], and [menacing] onto *man* which is then applied to *God* in the concluding interpreted form—"Is God a Mafioso demanding payment as part of an extortion racket?" This example clearly explains how names can extend beyond referential capabilities alone; there is no specific intended referent of the

name *Vinnie* as used by Robin Williams, yet certainly its use and connotations are what convey the message of the joke.

Syntax of certain constructions can also be used to demonstrate attribution of features to names (Matushansky, 2008). There are many cases, as in A, B, and E below, where a comparison is made alluding to someone mutually understood between speaker and audience.

- A. She is a Benedict Arnold.
- B. Take it from me, that man is a Judas.
- C. He pulled another Lester.
- D. He's wearing a Ralph Lauren.
- E. What are you, some kind of Einstein?
- F. That's (not) the Jane I married.

In sentence A, “She is a Benedict Arnold,” the speaker is not referring literally to Benedict Arnold who lived during the American Revolution, but to the features or actions which are associated with him. He is known as a traitor, and his name can be substituted with that feature to provide the meaning of the sentence. The same applies to the use of *Judas* in sentence B, “Take it from me, that man is a Judas,” since the biblical figure is most famous for his betrayal of Christ. The particle *a* marks these names as indefinite, yet according to the traditional view on names, they are always purely referential and thus inherently definite. Clearly, there is more going on inside these proper names than pure reference (Leys, 1985, p. 212).

Some would respond that these invocations of the names of famous individuals are still referential and that by using a name, we think of the individual who is being mentioned rather than his or her traits alone. The following examples provide adequate evidence to refute that claim.

Example C, “He pulled another Lester,” presents a proper name, *Lester*, with an indefinite article, using the name to communicate an action typical of some Lester known to the speaker and audience. The use of the name does not refer to the person whose name is used, but rather to an action that has come to be associated with that person and, by extension, their name. This demonstrates again

the non-referential associative semantic values that names can hold. *Ralph Lauren* in sentence D, “He’s wearing a Ralph Lauren,” is a similar example, where an article of clothing is referred to by the name of its maker; it is inconceivable for most people to imagine the speaker literally draping a person named Ralph Lauren over their shoulders, yet this indefinite use of the name provides no semantic or syntactic trouble in rendering proper understanding. Example E, “What are you, some kind of Einstein?” is an interesting case because the speaker uses *what* instead of *who* when asking about a person. There is no reason that the pronoun *who* could not be used in this instance, considering that the speaker is asking about a person, yet most speakers prefer to use *what*. This shouldn’t be possible according to traditional theories on proper names, since the question would be answered with a *who*, yet because that is not the preferred interrogative pronoun, we could reasonably infer that the reference to an individual is secondary to the attributes (the *what*) connoted by the name in this case (Baltes, 1991, pp. 78–80).

Example F demonstrates the ability of names to express a set of characteristics perhaps more clearly than any other sentence. *Jane* could be replaced with *woman*, *wife*, *girl*, or *person* with no significant change in meaning; in the utterance, “the speaker is referring to some aspect or aspects he associates with Jane-ness which, according to the speaker, Jane does not seem to be complying with, but which she did when she and the speaker were first married” (Baltes, 1991).

All of these examples from Paul Baltes provide clear evidence of the potential for names to communicate attributes beyond those of reference alone. Now that names are shown to have non-referential communicative properties, how can the scope and degree of these connotations be studied? How can these theoretical models of semantic connotation be measured in practice?

Studies on Specific Connotations

Psychologists from the University of Missouri at Kansas City surveyed perceptual differences of “unusual” names compared to more common ones. Judges were asked to rate names based on dimensions of success, morality, health, warmth, cheerfulness, and masculinity-femininity. They found that differences in perceptions

of “unusual” names were markedly different from those of “normal” names. They specifically measured connotations of desirable traits in the names they selected for their study, finding that “unusual” names were rated much lower in desirability than their common counterparts. These perceptions remained the same for judges of different income classes and other demographic boundaries, indicating that the phenomenon of name connotation is not a product of social stratification but that it operates on a larger scale (Levine et al., 1994, p. 566). This evidence corroborates the examples provided by Baltes.

Albert Mehrabian, currently Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, also conducted a study of several surveys to measure how individuals are perceived based solely on their names. He measured four primary areas of perception—Ethical Caring, Popular Fun, Masculine/Feminine, and Successful. Each of these were divided into several more specific terms (such as humorous, popular, cheerful, outgoing, and so on for Popular Fun) to measure more precisely the connotations that each studied name carries. The seven surveys he conducted were built to measure Factors of Attractiveness (a) in the general population, (b) for male versus female names, (c) in nicknames versus given names, (d) for androgynous versus gendered names, (e) for names with orthodox versus unorthodox spelling, and (f) based on name length. These surveys each demonstrated general connotations associated with names, showing how these categories compare. For example, Mehrabian demonstrated that men’s names are judged as connoting more masculinity, less ethical care, and more successful characteristics than women’s names (Mehrabian, 2001, p. 59). Mehrabian’s surveys have filled the data gap to an extent in measuring connotations of proper names, but the data is limited to specific personality traits, leaving significant avenues of research untouched—for example, named-based connotations related to profession.

New Research

Considering that no research has been done on connotations of proper names beyond those relating to personality traits, I conducted a survey of my own in an attempt to map the semantic

connotations of several names as understood by ordinary speakers of American English. Much of the methodology was adapted from Mehrabian's studies. Sixty-eight participants took a survey which asked questions about eight different names: *Monique*, *Vinny*, *Ethel*, *Tyrel*, *Jamie*, *Taylor*, *Tiffany*, and *Linus*. Three names were considered female (*Monique*, *Ethel*, *Tiffany*), three names were considered male (*Vinny*, *Tyrel*, *Linus*), and two names were considered gender-neutral (*Jamie*, *Taylor*). Four of the names (*Vinny*, *Ethel*, *Tiffany*, and *Linus*) were "marked" semantically, meaning I expected there to be a specific mental image that participants would have. Participants were instructed to imagine they were about to meet an individual with the given name and that they should answer questions about this person. The questions were about some of the same personality traits as Mehrabian (Popular, Fun, Masculine/Feminine, Ethical, Caring, Moral, Successful) as well as more specific traits (Intelligence, Size, Age, Ethnicity). There were also prompts for the occupation and hobbies of an individual with the given name. One question per name was used to determine the strength of the participant's image of that name, or the strength of the connotations attached to it.

Results

The results indicate that gender is generally heavily connoted by name. *Monique* and *Tiffany* were marked as Female by 100 percent of participants, with the other gendered names chosen as one gender over another greater than 93 percent of the time. *Jamie* and *Taylor*, the androgynous names, showed split responses, with 59 percent and 51 percent respectively choosing Female as the gender.

Ethnicity also seems to be connoted fairly well with proper names; at least 75 percent of participants agreed on the ethnicity of six of these names. The two outliers were *Vinny* and *Monique*. *Vinny* was chosen as White by 64 percent of participants, and as specifically Italian by 15 percent. *Monique* was the most varied, with 46 percent choosing Black or African American, 26 percent choosing White, and 15 percent choosing Hispanic.

The occupation and hobbies portion of the survey was write-in, yet participants generally provided similar answers for each name. Nearly all of the participants mentioned fashion, dance, art, or

design as the kind of occupation connoted by *Monique*. Nearly all of the responses for *Vinny* referred to gang or mafia activity, if not both. *Ethel* was noted as a grandmotherly, home-making figure. The occupational category was varied for *Taylor*, but nearly all of the responses for hobbies included sports, and those who indicated that *Taylor* was female also made it clear that she was active and sporty. Participants said that *Tiffany* was trendy and feminine, with hobbies like cheerleading, doing nails, and ice skating. Common activities assigned to *Tyrel* were sports (especially football and basketball) and teaching or mentoring. *Linus* was especially marked as being a computer programmer, a mathematician, or, unexpectedly, a fisher. No significant trends surfaced for *Jamie*.

One weakness of this study was that the participants were not controlled for age, geographical location, or ethnicity, which could have influenced the responses; one might expect that “older” names would be less likely to be seen as such by an older population taking the survey, for example. There is further research that could be done on how name connotations change among different geographic locations, age groups, ethnicities, cultures, and so on. I certainly would expect differences in semantic connotation to accompany those demographics.

Another phenomenon available for further study is when an individual’s name differs from the attributes that are normally connoted with it; for example, it is not uncommon to hear, “You look like a Josh,” or, “He seems more like a Mike,” when meeting someone whose name does not align with the speaker’s perceived semantic connotations for the actual name. It is important to note that connotations are not always reflected in the characteristics of the referent for a particular name, but this is not unlike the prototypical examples for common nouns as well; for example, dogs are typically four-legged, tailed animals with fur, but there are plenty of dogs with only three legs, no fur, or no tail. Despite the fact that not all referents with the same name act the same, connotations remain.

Conclusion

There is statistical significance to the reliability with which participants in this survey identified connotations of the names given. Clearly, there is a real, measurable phenomenon of semantic

attachments to proper names, which warrants further investigation. The traditional view on proper names and their function must be reevaluated to reflect the true communicative capacity of names. The famous works of Mill and Kripke, though groundbreaking and incredibly influential, must not limit the future of linguistic thought.

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Linguistics Applied to Fantastical Worldbuilding

Jeremiah Madsen

Linguists frequently analyze the language and dialogue that writers use in their works. Less frequently, writers turn to the tools of linguistics to enrich their prose. In this article, aspiring novelist and linguistics student Jeremiah Madsen summarizes the various linguistic principles—including phonetics, sound symbolism, loan translation, and syntax—that he has applied to his own writing to enrich his languages, dialogue, and proper nouns. The examples in this article come from Madsen’s work on Rendhart, a fantasy novel that he plans to publish within the next five years.

Language is often used by authors to enhance the authenticity of the worlds they create for their readers. Most famously, J.R.R. Tolkien, himself a philologist, invented multiple Elvish languages and later created his stories “rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 219). Creators of other fantastical worlds, such as *Star Trek* and *Game of Thrones*, have also created new languages. I am currently writing a fantasy novel set in a world of my own devising named Zenitha. By applying linguistic principles, I have been able to enrich my worldbuilding. Specifically, I have used patterns of language change to create a family of related languages, sound symbolism to develop the meaning of words, sequential constraints to differentiate accents, loan translation to regulate classes of names, and aspects of discourse to construct distinctive speech patterns for specific characters.

As I began to build Zenitha’s languages, I discovered that I would need to simultaneously create Zenitha’s history, because language change is determined by historical events such as migration, conquest, and trade. I decided that my book takes place three thousand years into Zenitha’s history. When Zenitha is first created, most of its inhabitants are geographically centralized and speak a common tongue, but as they spread out, the mother language diversifies into broad language families. So before I could build descendant languages, I needed to construct the ancestral language and then decide which phonological processes would apply to each descendant language. I decided that after three thousand years, the original language is still preserved in magical spells and is known as the “Old Tongue.” In it, gender for nouns and adjectives is determined by voicing: voiced consonants equate to female, voiceless to male. Basic levels of meaning within the Old Tongue are derived from sound symbolism. For example, /a/ is associated with positive concepts, as reflected in the two most important words in the Old Tongue, *avara* (light) and *adara* (life), which both contain the positive sound symbol three times. In contrast, /u/ is associated with negative concepts. The Old Tongue changes the voicing of consonants (and swaps the liquids /r/ and /l/) to denote opposites, so *ufulu* (darkness) and *utulu* (death) are not only semantically opposite but also phonetically opposite from the words *avara* and *adara*. Similarly, I assigned basic qualities to the other vowel sounds. For example, /æ/ connotes big (the Old Tongue word for “mountain” is

kaedael), and /i/ connotes small (as it does in the English “eenzy” and the Spanish “-ito”).

After constructing the Old Tongue, I began creating three descendant language families: Terranese, Elvish, and Goblsh. The first, Terranese, is the day-to-day language used in my society, so it is rendered as English in the text and thus needed no linguistic development. For the other two languages, I decided that Elvish loses all voiceless stops while Goblsh loses all voiced stops. Sequential constraints also change: Goblsh abounds in consonant clusters, such as /kn/, /ktr/, and /lkr/, while in Elvish, consonant clusters are rare. These distinctions connect each language’s sound with the characteristics of its species. Thus the cultured elves have soft-sounding names such as Cymer, Gilead, and Idun, while the warlike goblins have harsh-sounding names such as Knorash, Uktram, and Kilkrepack. I then used these phonetic restraints to create peculiar accents. For example, if a goblin grows up speaking only Goblsh but in adulthood learns Terranese (which is rendered as English), the goblin will have difficulty pronouncing voiced stops and will pronounce them as voiceless stops. Thus, “I don’t want any butter on my bread” becomes “I ton’t want any putter on my preat.” I also decided that due to historical events later in Zenitha’s history, Goblsh would in turn split into two branches, one losing the lateral liquid /l/ and the other losing the retroflex liquid /r/. For example, by the fifth millennium, the third-millennium name Volthorn becomes Vurkthorn in one branch of Goblsh and Volthonlin in the other.

After crafting basic rules for Goblsh and Elvish, I turned to other languages not descended from the Old Tongue. Zenitha contains seven different sentient species possessing linguistic capabilities. While all seven can articulate the phonemes used in the Old Tongue and its descendant languages, I also wanted languages distinct to some of the species. For a feline species called swifterns, I created a language known as “Swiftspeech,” characterized by howls, growls, and hisses. Swifterns communicate with each other in Swiftspeech but switch to “common” languages when communicating with other species. Since swifterns’ birth names are in Swiftspeech and can only be articulated by other swifterns, when talking to other species they apply the formation process of loan translation to render their names, creating compounds such as “SilverClaw” to represent the concepts contained in the hisses and mews of the original

Swiftspeech name. By establishing this rule, I know that every swifter name I create in my book will need to be rendered as one, two, or three common English words strung together, distinguishing them from the names of other species. I created similar sets of guidelines for my other species, giving each one a unique feel.

Linguistic strategies can be used not just to construct languages, but to devise peculiar patterns of speech for individual characters. Nothing reflects a person's personality quite like his or her manner of speech. However, guides to writing fiction rarely mention the importance of creating distinctive patterns of speech for characters. Some individuals in literature, such as Yoda or Gollum, have *very* distinctive styles, but with finesse an author can create a style for each individual character, just as Jane Austen portrays the social status and relative intelligence of her characters by the ratio of Germanic-based words to Romance-based words in their speech (DeForest & Johnson, 2001). One of my book's antagonists is a highly sophisticated aristocrat named Lord Salidar. To reflect his manipulative and secretive nature, I fill his speech with as many indirect speech acts and presuppositions as possible. While a more typical villain might say, "Tell me where the princess is!" (direct speech act, a directive), Lord Salidar would say, "I'm glad I found a guard who will tell me where the princess is" (indirect speech act, a directive veiled as a representative that also includes a presupposition). In another case, one of my protagonists, an elf named Adara, grows from a timid princess to a confident ruler. I reflect this process with a subtle shift in her speech from passive voice ("your proposal is being considered") to active voice ("I have considered your proposal") over the course of the book.

By knowing and applying linguistic principles to my creative process, I have been able to create a rich and consistent world for my story. A knowledge of language change and phonological processes has helped me create a family of languages, an understanding of sequential restraints has helped me devise names of places and people consistent with their culture and species, and an application of semantic and syntactic features has helped me construct distinctive patterns of speech for individual characters. The result is a stable linguistic foundation upon which I can erect the other elements of a good story.

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Appendix

Excerpts from Drafts of *Rendhart* That Illustrate Applied Linguistics

In this passage, notice Lord Salidar’s use of indirect speech acts in his diplomatic showdown with the female captain of a band of airborne pirates. In Salidar’s nation of Calamar, looking a superior directly in the eye is a grave affront.

At last the captain appeared. “Lord of Calamar,” she said, deliberately staring Salidar in the eyes before bowing ridiculously low. “We are honored at your presence.” She spoke Terranese fluently, but with an accent indicative of the southern plains. How had she come to lead such a motley crew from the far north?

“I see you have forgotten your native customs of respect,” Salidar said.

The pirate straightened. Once again she stared straight into Salidar’s face, as if enjoying her insolence. “I am sorry, my lord, but all are equal in the sky.”

“An interesting sentiment,” Salidar said, removing his signet ring and rolling it between his fingers as he studied its depths. “I have often thought the same, but of the grave.”

The pirate opened her mouth, some retort on her lips, but something about Salidar’s tone of voice, or maybe the fact that his signet ring identified him as the second most powerful man in the empire, shut her up. Salidar smirked inwardly. He loved winning games.

In this passage, Queen Adara uses her knowledge of the Old Tongue (translated in italics) to communicate with a messenger without her advisor, Whilfillow, understanding her. By this point in the story, Adara speaks in active voice.

“Roland, of the Fourth Cohort of the Armies of Calamar,” Adara said, rising to her feet. “We have considered the offer you have brought from your majesty the Emperor, and we consider the inherent risks for our royal person too great to sanely consider.”

“Very wisely said,” Whilfillow murmured behind her. In front of her, the soldier didn’t react. He continued kneeling, face staring stoically at the floor.

“We only have a few more questions for you before you go,” Adara continued. “Et jire aina do,” she said, slipping into the Old Tongue. *Look at me.*

The soldier started, looking around as if seeing if she were addressing another person. Then he obediently looked up at her.

“Ti ene ko Avara?” she asked. *You are for the Light?*

“To ene ko Alavam” he replied. “Abeum.” *I am for the Eldest. Forever.*

She could hear Whilfillow shifting restlessly behind her. “Your majesty?” he stuttered. She couldn’t help but smile. A hundred years of experience and he had never learned a sentence in the Old Tongue. *And all that mathematics,* she thought.

In this passage, two bitter enemies, a goblin general named Volthorn and a human pyromancer named Durrin, confront each other. Notice their use of foreign languages to intimidate each other; also notice the difference between Goblisch and the Old Tongue and Volthorn’s slight accent, though not as pronounced as some goblins’.

“Enough!” Volthorn shouted, his chair clattering against the floor as he leapt up. “Yer very presence in this kingdom is a threat.” He stepped up into Durrin’s face. “Ye’r a spy and a murderer!”

Durrin reached up and wiped the goblin’s spittle from his chin with outward calm. Inside, he was a volcano about to erupt. He leaned into the goblin’s face. “HashoLEK ahaERez eRak shalKA,” he hissed in Goblisch. *I can burn this palace to the ground.*

Volthorn didn’t blink. “Nudisa semir colem tol,” he replied in the Old Tongue. *Justice always claimeth its own.*

For a moment they stood there: the goblin, stoic and defiant, his armor shining and garish, his neck strained upward to stare his taller opponent in the eyes; Durrin, hidden in the shadows of his robe, his hands clenched, his eyes narrow slits of fire.

Five seconds passed. Ten.

Then slowly, slowly, Volthorn stepped away. “I’ll spare your life. Leave quickly.”

Reading Like We Talk: Teaching Children to Use Suprasegmental Features in Reading

Laura Bushman

Suprasegmental features are an important part of understanding the English language. Many of these suprasegmental features, such as stress, pitch, and pauses, are easily picked up and applied by children as they learn the language. However, children often struggle to apply these same features to words on the page as they learn to read. Teachers and parents must help children apply suprasegmental features in their reading to aid them in their ability to comprehend text and become better communicators.

Children pick up on many of the unwritten features of their native language without anyone ever teaching them. However, when they start to learn how to read, many children struggle to apply the features of language that they already know to the words that are on the page in front of them. It is the responsibility of parents and teachers to help children apply the features that they use unconsciously in their speech to the writing on the page. Some of these features are suprasegmental features, such as stress, pitch, and pauses, and make a major difference in the way that meaning is interpreted.

Stress

The stress on individual syllables of a word can completely change the meaning of the word. We see this in the difference between blackboard (noun) and black board (adjective, noun). In *blackboard* (noun), *black* is stressed, and *board* is unstressed. In *black board* (adjective, noun), both *black* and *board* are stressed. When speaking to children, they will often understand that if we ask them to go to the **blackboard**, they should go over to the chalkboard, but if we ask them to go to the **black board**, they should go to the board that is black, not the red, green, or purple board. However, children do not easily apply this knowledge when they read. Teachers and parents must help them to understand the difference, so that if they were to read aloud, “The student went to the *blackboard*,” other people listening would understand that the student went to the *blackboard* (noun).

Another example of the importance of stress is *contract*. If pronounced stressed/unstressed, **contract** is understood as a noun. If pronounced unstressed/stressed, **contract** is understood as a verb. When parents or teachers are teaching a child to read, they need to correct them if they put the stress on the wrong syllable, in order to help them understand. For example, if they read, “The man signed the contract to play baseball,” but they pronounce **contract** as a verb, the sentence will not make sense to them. (“The man signed the ‘to make smaller’ to play baseball.”) And they will also not understand “The metal will contract when it cools,” if they pronounce **contract** as a noun. (“The metal will ‘binding legal document’ when it cools.”) Teachers and parents must teach children the difference

that stress can make and correct them when they read words with an incorrect stress pattern, in order to help them understand what they read; without the correct use of stress patterns, much of what they read will not make sense.

Pitch

The pitch, or intonation, of the voice is another part of language that comes naturally in speech but must be taught in reading. Children naturally know to raise or lower the pitch of their voices when they speak, but they struggle to apply that knowledge when they read. For example, the sentence “We’re going to the park” could end with a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark, and each would require a different pitch for the sentence. If the sentence is a declarative statement, the pitch will remain level throughout the sentence. If the sentence is a question about whether or not we’re going to go to the park, the pitch will rise at the end of the sentence, especially on the word *park*. And if the sentence is an exclamation, the pitch will continuously rise throughout the entire sentence. If a child hasn’t learned how to include pitch when they are reading, they could read, “The man said we’re going to the park?” as a declarative statement or even an exclamation of joy, and misinterpret the real meaning of the sentence as a question. As teachers and parents teach children how to read, and read with them, they can exaggerate their own pitch as they read. Children will notice the way their parents and teachers change their pitch when they read, helping them to better understand the differences in pitch between different types of sentences.

Pauses

When we speak, we have natural pauses in our communication. In writing, these pauses are sometimes marked by punctuation. Other times, however, these pauses are something that we simply learn to insert at certain places in a sentence. When reading, children must learn to insert pauses in the correct locations, and they must understand that some pauses will be longer or shorter than other pauses. For example, “The distance between the house and the barn is ten feet,” might be read with a very small pause after house, or after barn, but there is no punctuation to direct the child to take a small pause. This can best be taught by example—parents and teachers

can read with a child and exaggerate pauses more than they otherwise would to help them recognize where to pause. Of course, many of the pauses in writing are signaled by punctuation, especially commas, periods, question marks, and exclamation points. Whether it's a parent reading with a child or a teacher with a child, they can point out these punctuation marks and explain that they signal a pause. They can also help them to understand the varying length of a pause. For example, readers should include a longer pause after a period than after a comma, and there should be a longer pause after a speaker concludes speaking than when he or she finishes one sentence and continues into another sentence. Children might understand these pauses in real conversations, but teachers need to help them transfer those skills into their reading in order to make the reading more like a conversation.

Much of the instruction to help children learn and apply suprasegmental features in reading is implicit. Children listening to others read out loud, whether it is done by teachers or parents, is one of the first instances where children notice that there are things that we do to change meaning in written words without changing the actual words. Parents and teachers must make out-loud reading a priority for their children. As teachers and parents read to children, children will begin to recognize these features and try to apply them in their own reading. And as teachers and parents correct children in a more explicit manner, children will continue to recognize these features and strive to apply them.

Suprasegmental features are an important part of language and the ability to correctly interpret meaning. Although children gain the skills to understand many of the suprasegmental features in spoken communication, they often need help to understand these features in writing and reading. As parents and teachers, we must help children develop the ability to use stress, pitch, and pauses when reading; this will help them better understand the text. Children will become better communicators and better readers as they learn and apply the unwritten features of the English language.

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Gender and Navigating a Genderless Audience

Michael Oaks

This study focuses on the pragmatic differences between men and women in giving navigational directions. It analyzes such conversational features as landmarks, cardinal directions, and directives in a survey illustrating both genders' approaches to navigating a stranger from Brigham Young University to the Provo City Center Temple. While most gender language studies focus on cross-gender discourse, this study assesses gender variation in a survey with a genderless audience, removing the extraneous variable of cross-gender interaction. The results contribute, however meagerly, to the nascent debate about the extent to which gender language variation exists.

The feminist movement of the 1970s did not just usher in greater equality between the sexes regarding educational, vocational, and political advancement; it invited suspicion about societally entrenched gender stereotypes. Among them is gender language variation—the real or perceived linguistic differences in men’s and women’s language—which, prior to the second-wave feminist movement, linguists largely considered incontrovertible. That is, they considered those linguistic differences so ubiquitously recognized as to not warrant worthwhile debate. Today, by contrast, linguists’ and speech communication experts’ views toward gender language variation are much more nuanced. Indeed, their sociolinguistic findings about gender variation range from differences between men and women that are few and minimal (Grob, 2010) to various and significant (Haas, 1979). One reason for the scientific incongruity is that these studies analyzed variation in cross-gender discourse, which is doubtless affected by how different men and women choose to ignore, embrace, or even accentuate linguistic features which are commonly associated with their own gender when speaking to listeners of the opposite sex.

This study removes the extra variable of cross-gender interaction, assessing gender variation in a survey with a genderless audience. In particular, the study focuses on the pragmatic differences between men and women in giving navigational directions. Although two major studies have been conducted on this subject, neither of them included in their analysis the difference between men and women in duration and number of directives, but rather, assessed primarily the differences in the genders’ use of landmarks and cardinal directions (Lawton, 2001; Ewald, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to not only verify the accuracy of the two surveys but also analyze the two additional features of duration and number of directives. The results of this study will contribute, however meagerly, to the nascent debate about the extent to which gender language variation exists.

Literature Review

Some linguists attempt to demonstrate that gender variation is empirically conspicuous, especially in conversational settings.

Adelaide Haas, professor at the University of New York in the Department of Speech Communication, notes:

Men may be more loquacious and directive; they use more non-standard forms, talk more about sports, money, and business, and more frequently refer to time, space, quantity, destructive action, perceptual attributes, physical movements, and objects. Women are often more supportive, polite, and expressive, talk more about home and family, and use more words implying feeling, evaluation, interpretation, and psychological state. A comprehensive theory of “genderlect” must include information about linguistic features under a multiplicity of conditions. (Haas, 1979)

Two of the gender differences that Haas emphasizes connect to this study: quantity and politeness. Depending on its results, this article will either buttress or weaken Haas’ claim by comparing men’s use of directives (which are often seen as impolite) and cardinal directions (which relate to quantity) to those of women. Certain studies have afforded insightful observations about a potential “genderlect,” and thus help confirm Haas’s statement. For instance, Labov (2001) states, “For stable sociolinguistic variables, men use a higher frequency of nonstandard forms than women. [In] change from above, women favor the incoming prestige forms more than men . . .” Many linguists concur with Labov’s findings. His conclusions suggest that compared to men, women employ more of the language that prescriptive grammarians and academicians consider “correct” or “refined” English.

Still, some researchers raise considerable doubts about the very existence of gender variation. Lindsay M. Grob (1997) notes, “Canary and Hause (1993) reviewed and summarized fifteen representative meta-analyses of sex differences which included over 1,200 studies on sex differences. They concluded that there are few, if any, differences in the manner in which men and women communicate” (p. 287). Grob’s assent to this notion of a near homogeneity in male and female communication is perhaps attributable to his seemingly telescopic perspective, analyzing communicational phenomena at the cosmic level, not necessarily at the microscopic level, the kind of

highly specific linguistic territory of, say, this article. It's unsurprising, then, that Grob cites Canary and Hause, who continue: "[Hundreds] of studies represented in the meta-analyses indicate that sex differences in social interaction are small and inconsistent; that is, about 1% of the variance is accounted for and these effects are moderated by other variables." One may duly question these findings in light of recent surveys that exhibit substantial differences between the genders.

One such survey, that of Carol A. Lawton, focuses on gender differences in providing navigational directions. Her findings are informative. She concluded, among other things, that "women referred more often than men to buildings as landmarks, whereas men referred more often than women to cardinal directions" (Lawton, 2001). Her survey, an online questionnaire, involved 290 nationwide participants and was available for four months. It requested that participants specify how to navigate from their home to their chosen destination five to ten miles away. Although her survey is largely credible, its provision that participants choose their destinations for navigation is empirically questionable, precluding complete verification of the respondents' navigational answers. That is, hundreds of random US destinations, some presumably obscure rural locations, obviously hamper verification of the participants answers, some of which may be, wittingly or unwittingly, inaccurate. Even if all the answers were verifiably accurate, the participants' flexibility to choose a destination between five and ten miles away almost certainly generated a fluctuation in their numbers of linguistic features relative to other respondents who chose closer or farther destinations.

One similar survey avoids this procedural shortcoming. Requesting directions to a fixed location, Jennifer D. Ewald's (2010) researcher surveyed sixty participants at a busy gas station. She found a high degree of similarity in men's and women's use of directional indicators, landmarks, stoplight and time estimates, road names, and highway numbers. She acknowledges, however, that "males included significantly more mileage estimates than females, but their estimates contained more errors" (p. 2549). Like Lawton's study, this study has some flaws. Not least is its selection of a destination that, based on the article's description, seems elusive, and elusive destinations obviously elicit responses involving more

landmarks in both genders, leading to a potentially artificial equalization of responses between men and women. Indeed, this survey's destination was so elusive that it required the navigator to mention a "bypass highway that [one] had to avoid because it did not offer the exit necessary to arrive at [the destination]" (Ewald, 2010, p. 2558).

The potential flaws and contradictions in Ewald's and Lawton's studies demonstrate the need for further research. Such research would not just confirm or refute these two studies' findings but also enhance them with two additional features: duration and number of directives. Once a general consensus is reached concerning men's and women's navigational predilections, those differences may shed light on other gender variation. In addition, those differences may also contribute, even if inadvertently, to areas of research that are not merely academic such as how to create navigational devices that better accommodate men's and women's navigational preferences.

I expected women's survey responses to include fewer cardinal directions and directives and more landmarks. I further anticipated women to spend more time giving directions due to more landmarks that I conjectured they would provide.

Methods

This survey was done at Brigham Young University (BYU) on December 16, 2014. I surveyed twenty individuals on BYU campus at the Wilkinson Student Center and the Harold B. Lee Library, two areas dense with students from diverse backgrounds. Each of the students was selected based on their apparent level of availability. For example, if a student was not earnestly engaged in a certain activity, I felt more inclined to approach and survey them. Factors that contributed to my perception of a person's availability were absence of headphones in ears (many had these), lack of interaction with others (I wasn't about to interrupt, for instance, a couple's date nor a study group's productivity), and unconcerned faces towards studying at that moment (since it was finals week, I avoided those faces that seemed overly worried or highly focused).

Although each of the participants was a student at BYU and a current resident of Provo, Utah—with the exception of one man who lived in Orem—most of them were not from Utah. Ages of the participants ranged from eighteen to twenty-seven, the oldest a graduate

student; the youngest, a freshman. Of the ten men, only two of them were from Utah: the cities Lehi and Kaysville. Of the ten women, four were from Utah: the cities American Fork, West Jordan, Huntsville, and Salt Lake City. The academic backgrounds between the men and women were relatively homogenous. That is, both men and women were well represented in business, science, and humanities, mitigating a potential variable related to how individuals from different academic disciplines may adopt certain linguistic forms of communication more than others.

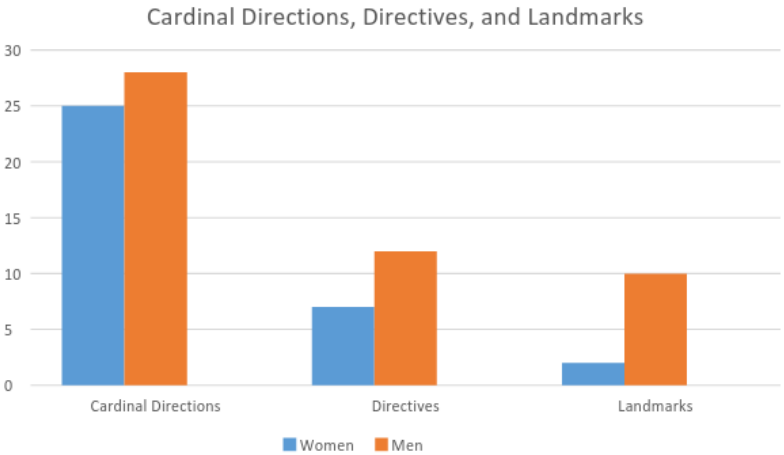
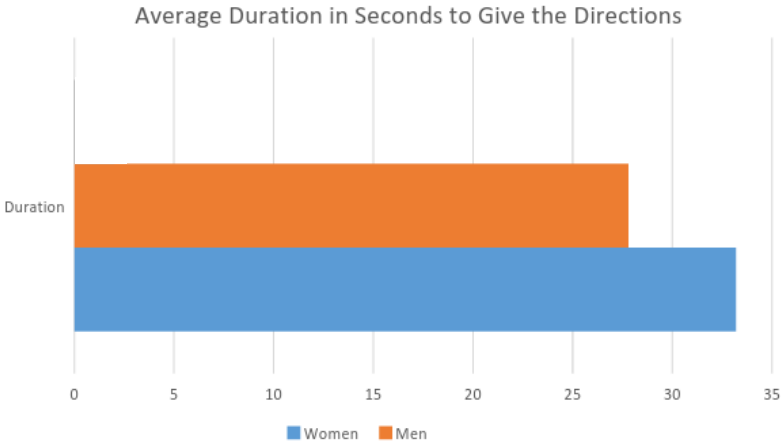
The survey was based on one question, which I asked each participant: “If you were to give directions to someone from BYU campus to the Provo City Center Temple, which is under construction, what would you say?” Significantly, this question’s inherently genderless audience removes the extraneous variable of cross-gender discourse, distinguishing the survey from those of other gender language studies in which a man or woman asks, “Could you direct *me* to . . . ?” Prior to the question, I requested each participant’s permission to record their response and attested to the anonymity of the recording. Once they consented, I replied, “I’ll begin recording when you’re ready.” Several participants wanted a few seconds to organize their thoughts or to simply recall where the Provo City Center Temple is located. Before they were recorded, the only information I provided to the participants about the purpose of the survey was that it was for my Varieties of English class. Additionally, two female participants indicated that they had no idea where the new temple was, and I chose to exclude their responses for accuracy purposes.

After the twentieth student was surveyed, I proceeded to compile the data based on averages of certain features of the two genders. The first and easiest feature to compile was each gender’s average response duration. I simply computed the aggregate duration of both genders and divided each by ten. Thereafter, I listened to each recording and tallied the men’s and women’s collective number of cardinal directions referenced, landmarks, and directives (I drew the idea of tallying the features from Ewald’s survey). I made a tally mark every time either a man or a woman referred to cardinal directions or to streets that contain a cardinal name such as 9th East or Center Street. Prior to tallying the directives, I had decided that I would mark a tally for any form of a directive: use of the subjunctive

(e.g., “I would ask that he turn right”), saying “I’d tell her to,” or simply giving the most common directive (e.g., “Go north”). Any time that the person opted for a non-directive form such as “I’d go to University Avenue” or “The best way to get there is to go to University Avenue,” I did not mark any directive tallies.

Results

As mentioned previously, I expected that the women’s responses to the survey would include fewer cardinal directions and directives and more landmarks. I also expected women to spend more time giving directions due to the greater number of landmarks that I hypothesized that they would provide.



The average duration to give the directions was 33.2 seconds for the women and 27.8 seconds for the men, which confirms the accuracy of the part of the hypothesis relative to duration differences in men and women.

Men averaged 2.8 references to cardinal directions whereas women averaged 2.5. Men averaged 1.2 directives whereas women averaged 0.7. Most surprising, men averaged 1 reference of a landmark whereas women averaged only 0.2. All of the findings confirm the accuracy of this hypothesis except for the feature of landmarks, which was the opposite of what I had expected.

This survey falls between, contradicts, and supplements Lawton's and Ewald's surveys. First, although the men in this survey used more cardinal directions than the women, the difference was slight. Second, and unexpected, men in this study referred more to landmarks than women, contradicting both Lawton and Ewald. Third, this study enhances the other two studies since it adds the features of duration and directives. As predicted, men spent less time than women giving the directions, and men used more directives.

Though these findings show pragmatic differences in the ways men and women communicate, the differences in this survey appear to be minimal, with the exception of landmarks. However, the greater use of landmarks by men could be attributed to the fact that two of the men mentioned that they don't know street names and therefore opted for more landmarks in their directions. Given that women provided virtually the same amount of information as men, their introductions, which more men seemed to omit, could partially explain their greater amount of time to give directions. For instance, some women started by saying, "Giving directions from BYU to the Tabernacle Temple, you start by going to University . . ." Such an introduction is lengthier than the kind of directive some men began their instructions with: "Go to University." Men's greater use of directives allowed for fewer words—hence less time.

Limitations and Further Research

Admittedly, this study is limited in various ways, not least by its meager participant pool. Ten men and ten women is statistically inadequate. Another limitation is individuals' awareness of the recording. Indeed, one female respondent submitted, "If this weren't a survey,

I'd use way more landmarks in my directions." Perhaps if this survey were candid, the respondents' dialogue would be more organic and genuine. An additional limitation, which I noticed by Ewald's identification of it in her survey, is that the gender of the surveyor can influence the participants. It is possible, for instance, that some of the females would opt for more landmarks in their directions if the surveyor were a female.

In light of contradictions between Lawton's, Ewald's, and my survey, there is room for further research on this matter. Furthermore, since the finding in my survey that men use more landmarks than women in their directions is particularly dubious, further studies on BYU students could refute that result. Even more interesting than these studies, however, would be ones that analyze entirely different features from those that Lawton, Ewald, and I analyzed. One could analyze, for example, the number of pauses men and women have when giving directions, which could presumably reflect one indicator, among others, of relative confidence in giving directions. Since the gender variation on this subject is not well studied, there is a vast array of new studies which may be conducted to illustrate the differences between men and women in giving directions.

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My Dear Sisters: What General Conference Language Can Tell Us about Latter- day Saint Women

Petra Evans

Many Latter-day Saint women are conflicted about both their temporal and eternal identities. They claim that the predominant language used by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints marginalizes the female sex, creating feelings of inferiority. This paper argues that descriptive terms used for women by their Church leaders communicate ideas of extremely high value for women. Results reflected a positive and respectful attitude about women with lingering associations of delicateness. Descriptive terms were collected through corpus research and analyzed for semantic prosody, sound symbolism, metaphor, and positive politeness. The project shows that there is valuable linguistic data available and invites others to do further research.

Former Relief Society General President Belle S. Spafford (1974) said, “At the time the Relief Society was founded, a woman’s world was her home, her family, and perhaps a little community service. Today a woman’s world is as broad as the universe. There’s scarcely an area of human endeavor that a woman cannot enter if she has the will and preparation to do so.” To many women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this statement contains two conflicting ideas about the identity of women and the nature of their temporal and eternal roles. These women feel torn between two identities—one they see as a Church-sanctioned identity (home, family, and a little community service), and the other they see as a worldly identity (“scarcely an area of human endeavor that a woman cannot enter”). This conflict arises because of the teachings and sentiments reflected in statements from other Church leaders—“creating a tension between what they are taught at church or how they’re being engaged at church, and what they feel is a true evaluation of their potential and worth” (McBaine, 2014, p. xvii). President Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth prophet and president of the Church, said, “The seeds of divorce are often sown and the problems of children begin when mother works outside the home. You mothers should carefully count the cost before you decide to share breadwinning responsibilities with your husbands” (Benson, 1981). These sisters don’t believe that the Church truly feels that “a woman’s world is as broad as the universe” and contend that the kind of language used by Spafford is the exception and not the rule because the language in the Church regarding women is dominated by references to motherhood, creating an identity defined by relationships to children or husbands. They believe that different aspects of the predominant language used by the Church’s leaders and its practices provide ample evidence supporting their claim.

To validate their claim, these women might point to the numerous talks about motherhood coming from Church leaders (see the most recent general women’s session of General Conference [October 2018]) and the glaring omittance of any real encouragement of women working or taking on leadership roles outside the home within their community or workplace. They may also point to the names used to reference women and their roles within the Church: auxiliary (to refer to the Relief Society, Young Women’s, and Primary organizations of the Church); mission president’s wife

(even though she is set apart and has her own unique responsibilities); *temple matron*, *Beehives*, *Mia Maids*, and *Laurels* (terms they see as outdated); omitted references to Heavenly Mother; the Young Womanhood Award versus the Duty to God award (respectively, the highest achievement for the Young Women and Young Men); bishop's wife (does not reflect the sacrifices she makes or the duties she performs); and sister training leader (as opposed to terms used for the elders: *zone leader*, *district leader*, and *assistant to the president*). They would also point to the descriptive terms used by senior Church leaders to refer to women, claiming that they perpetuate the idea that women are delicate, in need of protection by men, seen as children, and always the sidekick—never the leader.

Is there something to their claim? Does the general language used by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to talk about women send a conflicting message? Words can strengthen, express admiration, and build confidence; they can also weaken, confuse, and belittle. Even when words are not intended to be negative, they can have unexpected effects. Words can subtly reveal biases, subtexts, and our true selves (McBaine, 2004, p. 141). In this article, I will argue that descriptive terms used for women by General Authority speakers in General Conference exhibit semantic prosody, metaphor, sound symbolism, and positive politeness—all of which communicate ideas of extremely high value for women and all that they can accomplish.

Literature Review

Robin Lakoff (1973) examines the language used to discuss women, stating that we should single out and honestly examine the linguistic uses that, by implication and innuendo, demean or even cause damage to self-worth. Furthermore, she points out that the real difficulty is deciding which forms are most damaging to ego (p. 73). Neylan McBaine (2014) applies similar ideas to Latter-day Saint women, arguing that some confusion about Latter-day Saint women's roles comes from the language we use when talking about the doctrinal and cultural aspects of women's identities (pp. 140–145). She further explains that some Latter-day Saint women do not know how to reconcile the two very different images of women that they feel like they should embody: the capable, intelligent, thoughtful, and

ambitious woman and the soft spoken, behind-the-scenes woman who is content with no direct sphere of influence beyond her family and close friends (p. 142). One way to look at language and how it affects our judgements and biases is through semantic prosody: the way in which certain seemingly neutral words are perceived because of the words that they frequently co-occur with. David Hauser and Norbert Schwarz (2016) claim that the co-occurrence of certain words causes the meaning of some descriptive words to influence the core-meaning of the word they are coupled with to the point that they affect our perceptions of the meaning and connotations of those words, even when they do not appear together (p. 882). Dan Jurafsky (2014) argues that the sound of a word can tell us something about the word meaning (p. 159). He asserts that in many languages, the vowels and consonants that make up a word affect that word's meaning, giving it either a lighter feeling or a heavier feeling (p. 162). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003) state that our conceptual system, the way we both think and act, plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. Furthermore, they maintain that our conceptual system is metaphorical in nature (p. 4).

Methodology

In order to examine semantic prosody, metaphor, sound symbolism, and positive politeness, the general research methodology of this project is corpus-based. The corpora provide insights into the way that language has been used and is currently being used in a variety of texts. Corpora also produce very large amounts of data, which give an accurate picture of language use. Furthermore, the search feature allowed me to customize the parameters of what the corpus sought, allowing me to examine particular instances of word usage and the context surrounding those instances.

For my research, I utilized the LDS General Conference Corpus (LGCC), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA). My search was limited to the years 1980–present. I chose this time frame because it includes the decades of my lifetime. I used the LGCC to search for collocates that surrounded specific terms or phrases that Latter-day Saint leaders employ when talking to, or about, women. These terms were checked for sound symbolism, metaphor, positive

politeness, and semantic prosody. In order to examine what, if any, semantic prosody was present, I did an additional search using the COCA and COHA corpora to find additional collocates for the LGCC results. Here, I searched for collocates one word before or after the search term, which was now tagged as an adjective; however, I searched for all parts of speech rather than just adjectives, with a particular focus on the other nouns that the adjectives were generally used to describe. I widened the parameter of acceptable search results in order to get a more well-rounded picture of what semantic prosody might be present.

The search strings used for the LGCC were *woman/women (young woman/young women)*, *sister/sisters*, *daughter/daughters*, and *daughter/daughters (woman/women) of God*. I specified that the corpus find adjective collocates one word directly before and after each search string. After the search was complete, I went through the top hundred results and removed any non-applicable data, such as *Samaritan*, *single*, *older*, and *little*. These words were removed because when combined with my primary search terms, they form common phrases used to denote specific groups of membership or specific historical figures and were therefore less pertinent to the types of data that I was trying to collect. The remaining words, such as *dear*, *beloved*, *stalwart*, and *compassionate*, were compiled into a master list of descriptive terms (see the appendix for a full list of terms and their frequencies).

I analyzed the words from that master list in four different ways: (1) Terms were entered into both the COCA and COHA corpora to search for additional collocates in order to discover the semantic prosody that each word may carry; (2) The sound symbolism of each term was examined by noting its vowel location (front or back) and the type of consonants that were present (voiceless obstruents and dental, alveolar, palatal, and front velar consonants); (3) Definitions for terms were found in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and evaluated for their metaphorical properties; and (4) Descriptive terms were evaluated for their level of positivity or negativity and the ways they were utilized by Church leaders.

Because the data for this project is mostly qualitative, no complex statistical tests were performed in connection with any aspects of this project. However, when analyzing the sound symbolism and

positive politeness of the terms during this project, percentages were calculated for making simple comparisons.

Analysis

Semantic Prosody

According to Hauser and Schwarz (2016), “The typical context in which a given word appears allows readers to infer attributes of the word that go beyond its lexical definition” (p. 882). Similarly, they claim that “a concept’s co-occurrence with valenced contexts may provide new conceptual associations” (p. 883). For this article I sampled a small aspect of semantic prosody by examining four of the descriptive terms from the LGCC search results: *precious*, *inquiring*, *valiant*, and *elect*. I then searched COCA and COHA for collocates surrounding the four words to evaluate what effects the semantic prosody of these terms may or may not have on the sense of the word *woman*.

Collocates for *precious* expressed senses of high-value and rarity (see Table 1.1), which carry a positive semantic coloring. This indicates that in the Latter-day Saint universe of discourse the term *woman* entails a sense of high-value and rarity. Additionally, the instances in which the word *precious* was used to reference humans, it was connected to the terms *daughter*, *baby*, and *little* implying a childlike or innocent sense. This co-occurrence can be interpreted two different ways, depending on the context in which it is employed. Applying *precious* to adult women may carry a negative semantic

Table 1.1

Collocates for Precious

<u>Childlike</u>	<u>High-Value</u>	<u>Rare</u>
Baby	Cargo	Few
Daughter	Gifts	Little ^a
Little	Metals	Moments
	Stones	Save
	Time	Seconds
	Water	

Note. Terms are listed in alphabetical order.

^a“precious little time”

Table 1.2

Collocates for Inquiring

<u>General</u>	<u>Mind/Student</u>
Accepting	Bright
Curiosity	Engaging
Deeply	Keen
Listening	Nimble
Merely	Quick
Searching	

Note. Terms are listed in alphabetical order.

coloring, as many women do not necessarily want to feel as if they are being referred to as a child by other adults (especially male) that share no personal relationship and are in a similar social standing. In this context *precious* can be interpreted as demeaning; however, when *precious* is used alongside the phrase *daughter/daughters of God* the negative semantic prosody disappears. Here, *precious* is appropriate and empowering because it is used in the context of a father/daughter relationship to deity, reflecting the true identity of a woman and her potential to become like her Heavenly Parents—a goddess. Her identity is sacred, special, and of great worth to both her Heavenly Parents and herself.

Collocates for *inquiring* expressed senses of curiosity, studiousness, and intelligence (see Table 1.2), which carry a positive semantic coloring. Again, we can contend that in the Latter-day Saint universe of discourse the term *woman* entails senses of curiosity, studiousness, and intelligence. This positive semantic coloring is seen more acutely when compared to the synonymous term *questioning* (see Table 1.3), which was not used in reference to women and carries a negative semantic coloring. Moreover, since the 1980s, General Conference speakers have used the terms *questioned* and *questioning* 70 times, while using the terms *inquires*, *inquired*, and *inquiring* 155 times (double the amount or 2.2 times more). This clearly indicates that Church leaders are aware, if not consciously, of the negative semantic coloring that *questioning* carries and the positive semantic coloring that *inquiring* carries.

The term *valiant* had collocates that expressed ideas of military, royalty, battle, and fighters (see Table 1.4). While the term *valiant*

Table 1.3

Collocates for Questioning

Aggressive	Legitimacy
Attack	Opponents
Confusion	Police ^a
Critical	Scrutiny
Intense	Subjected

Note. Terms are listed in alphabetical order.

^aAs in the phrase “brought in for further questioning”

is positive in and of itself, this martial subtext adds an additional crucial meaning of which many Latter-day Saint women may be unaware. In effect, the term *valiant* acknowledges that women are a part of the army of God. It implies that they are not merely bystanders but are active participants in the battle over the souls of the children of men. They are soldiers, warriors, knights, and generals. They act, rescue, resist, and defend. *Valiant* adds another layer of positive semantic coloring to the sense of women and indicates that women have important roles in their Heavenly Father’s plan.

For the descriptive term *elect*, I had to limit my search to noun collocates in COCA and COHA to get applicable results. Any broader search resulted in collocates that referenced the election process and were therefore not useful. Noun collocates that surrounded *elect* were nonetheless political in nature but expressed positions of leadership (see Table 1.5). The implication is that Latter-day Saint

Table 1.4

Collocates for Valiant

<u>Military</u>	<u>Titles</u>
Battle	Champion
Defense/Defend	Fighter
Fight	Knights
Operation	Prince
Rescue	Soldiers
Resistance	Warrior(s)

Note. Terms are listed in alphabetical order.

Table 1.5

Collocates for Elect

<u>Positions</u>	<u>Descriptors</u>
Congressmen	Leaders
Lawmakers	Manager
Officials	Supervisors
Officers	
President(s)	
Representatives	

Note. Terms are listed in alphabetical order.

women are not only seen as chosen children of God but are encouraged and expected to be leaders as well. Again, Church leaders used a descriptive term that adds another layer of positive semantic coloring to the sense of *women* in the Latter-day Saint universe of discourse.

Sound Symbolism

Jurafsky (2014) claims that the sounds that make up a word add an additional meaning to the sense of a given word. This phenomenon is called *sound symbolism* and most studies are concerned with the effects that front and back vowels have on words; however, voiceless obstruents (i.e., /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /th/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/) and dental, alveolar, and palatal consonants also contribute to the lighter, smaller, and thinner feeling a word has. While there are exceptions to the rule, front vowels (i.e., /i/ and /ɪ/) “tend to be used in words that refer to small, thin, light things” whereas back vowels (i.e., /o/ and /ɔ/) are used “in words that refer to big, fat, and heavy things” (Jurafsky, 2014, p. 162). It may be possible to further claim that front vowels carry a feminine tone, whereas back vowels carry a more masculine tone.

For Church leaders, the descriptive terms they used to describe women included both front and back vowels. However, fifty-nine of the eighty terms (74%) used a front vowel as their main vowel. Of those fifty-nine terms, twenty-one included voiceless obstruents; thirteen had a prominent dental, alveolar, or palatal consonant; and five used both voiceless obstruents and a prominent dental, alveolar, or palatal consonant. This preference for using words with front

vowels to describe women contributes to the overall impression that women are smaller (size), softer, and lighter—an impression that may be perceived by some Latter-day Saint women as demeaning and, yet, for others seen as descriptive of our feminine nature as compared to men.

Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) claim that “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” (p. 3) They further state that metaphors “play a central role in defining our everyday realities”—structuring “what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to the other people” (p. 3). To describe women, Church leaders employed several metaphorical words in order to express attributes of strength, holiness, and importance, and to convey the idea that women are vessels that can be filled with these divine attributes (see Table 1.6).

For example, *Christlike*, *sainted*, and *angelic* create comparisons to holy personages, bestowing their characteristics on women and persuading them to act in a similar manner. In one word, *Christlike*, Church leaders are able to communicate that women are, can, and should be like Christ. Through the word *sainted*, they lift women to the level of saints and cause images and descriptions of what the saints did and by virtue what we as women should do. Also, this simple word, *sainted*, contains the many various attributes that defined those designated as saints by the Catholic Church, and is therefore

Table 1.6

Metaphorical Terms

Angelic	Immoviable
<i>Beautiful</i>	Mighty
Choice	<i>Powerful</i>
Christlike	Sainted
<i>Faithful</i>	Strong
Finest	Sweet
<i>Grateful</i>	<i>Wonderful</i>

Note. Terms are listed in alphabetical order. Terms in italics are included in the container metaphor.

overflowing with metaphorical meaning. *Angelic* relates to angels, but also exemplifies beauty, innocence, and kindness. Certainly, these metaphorical words instill a bit of holiness inside women and cause them to perceive themselves differently.

Metaphorical words like *finest* and *choice* emphasize importance. *Finest* means highest quality and is usually associated with metals, especially gold or silver. It also indicates a separation from dross or other extraneous materials. *Choice* is a word usually connected with foods, especially meats. It is associated with good, excellent, and superior quality. We can take this metaphor a step further and relate it to Christ, who himself was associated with the best animals (which would provide the best meats). Terms such as *finest* and *choice* can cause Latter-day Saint women to see themselves as something better, something separated from the ordinary of the world and cause them to change their behavior and how they see themselves.

When words such as *strong*, *mighty*, and *immovable* are used to describe women, they are not meant to compliment women on their physical appearance. Rather, these terms are meant to be applied to a woman's mental, emotional, and spiritual capacity. *Strength* reminds women that they are characters of self-determination, self-control, and good judgement; that they can withstand great mental or spiritual force. *Mighty* reminds women that they can do hard things and *immovable* evokes images of boulders that are unable to be moved, thus signifying that Latter-day Saint women have the ability to be unyielding in the face of argument and pressure. Surely, Church leaders think very highly of the women in the Church and are aware of their strength and all that it can accomplish.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) introduced the idea of the container metaphor, saying that "each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation" (p. 30). Latter-day Saint Church leaders use the container metaphor when they use terms like *faithful*, *wonderful*, *powerful*, *grateful*, and *beautiful*. These terms imply that Latter-day Saint women are vessels that can be and are full of faith, goodness, power, graciousness, and beauty. These aren't external features, but rather they are internal defining characteristics that shape identities. In this metaphor, people are seen as vessels with the ability to be filled with certain attributes or, conversely, to be found lacking those attributes. Through use of the container metaphor, Church leaders seek to persuade their members

that they can either acquire attractive attributes or rid themselves of unattractive attributes by simply “pouring in” the desirable ones or “pouring out” the undesirable ones.

Positive Politeness

I was certain that Church leaders would be very complimentary of their female membership. A common saying in the Church is that men go to meetings and are told how much they need to do better, while women go to meetings and are told how wonderful they are. Of the eighty terms I gathered, 93 percent were positive. Six could be considered negative: *critical*, *silly*, *miserable*, *ordinary*, *strong-willed*, and *imperfect*. However, *ordinary*, *strong-willed* and *imperfect*, though not necessarily always seen as complimentary, were used in a way to help leaders encourage and connect with the sisters. “Though they, like us, were *imperfect* women, their witness [of Christ] is inspiring” (Burton, 2017). In effect, this Church leader is saying, “Yes, we’re *imperfect*, but just as this sister was able to experience an amazing witness of Christ, so can we!” In other words, our imperfections don’t preclude us from marvelous experiences. *Ordinary* was used by leaders to do away with the idea that they were elevated above the general membership of the Church, instead reminding listeners that they were *ordinary* too.

Critical, *silly*, and *miserable* were used in overtly negative ways. *Miserable* was used to make comparisons to Satan and sinning, implying that sinning doesn’t bring happiness. *Silly* was associated with terms like sin, lust, strange gods, and risk—all things that the faithful would be wise to avoid. *Critical* was paired with *uninterested* and both were generally pointed to as traits to be avoided: a woman could be transformed from being filled with these unappealing characteristics by developing more attractive ones.

Over the course of this study, I also found that in many instances, Church leaders would often avoid using negative terms and instead focus on their more positive opposites. For example, instead of speaking about women who are selfish, they would speak about unselfish women. Thus, they acknowledged the negative trait, yet focused on developing the more becoming trait of unselfishness. They also favored the use of terms with positive semantic prosody over those with more negative connotations—as in the example

mentioned earlier where *inquiring* was used far more often than the nearly equivalent (by definition, if not by prosody) *questioning*. Church leaders clearly wanted to avoid putting anyone on the defensive whenever possible.

Discussion

Overall, the study was a success and accomplished the goals I set out to achieve. However, more importantly, the study showed that there is relevant data to be found, gathered, and analyzed for meaning regarding how women are addressed by Church leaders. I can claim that there is room to discuss what roles semantic prosody, sound symbolism, metaphor, and positive politeness play in adding to the core-meaning of the word *women*. Additionally, I can claim that Latter-day Saint leaders look favorably upon the women of the Church and assign great value to their potential.

I did not find that I needed to make any large-scale modifications to my study; however, I do believe that it is important to not only look at the word lists that a corpus displays but also to study the context in which the word is being used. The context provides valuable additional information that in turn informs the true semantic prosody of each term.

While this project has produced data that is informative, two major factors limited its ability to give a clear generalization of the research question: First, the corpus cannot give productive searchable data about the descriptive terms that collocate around the pronouns (i.e., *your*, *you're*, and *her*) used to refer to women. A non-corpus-based search of descriptive terms around pronouns would require a thorough search of each General Conference talk that is addressed to, or that references, women. To account for this deficiency, I have acknowledged the limiting scope of this project by focusing on a narrow aspect that is searchable through the corpora. Second, this project does not take into account the language of other materials that are officially published and sanctioned by the Church—magazines, the scriptures, teaching manuals, titles for women in leadership positions, names of women organizations, and the language surrounding women used in ordinances and rituals—that may have similar or greater influence on the perceived identity of women in the Church. Each of these areas would also need to be

thoroughly researched and compared in order to gain a full understanding of the subject; an undertaking clearly beyond the possible scope of this project. To account for this shortcoming, I have limited my search to General Conference talks.

Conclusion

The words we use to describe women help shape their identities and their feelings of worth; they also influence the judgements and the inferences that others make about women (Hauser and Schwarz, 2016, p. 893). Linguistic principles such as semantic prosody, metaphor, sound symbolism, and positive politeness all play a role in shaping the ideas Church members have about the identity, nature, and roles of women. McBaine (2014) claims that we either empower or disregard women through our language (p. 140). There is currently a division among the women of the Latter-day Saint faith with regard to the Church's language and practices concerning women. On one extreme, we find a group that feels no discontent with the Church. They find joy and meaning in its teachings and look with a wary eye on the other groups. On the other extreme, we find a group of women who are unhappy with the language and practices of the Church in regard to women. They feel ignored, frustrated, and marginalized. They place at least some of the blame for this on the first group of women, who they perceive as being part of the problem.

Finally, there is a third group of women who find great value in the Church but concede there are areas that could be improved. While their moderate approach allows them to empathize with both of the other groups, they often lack the ability to communicate effectively about the issues that ignite such passion in the other groups. They lack the ability to communicate effectively because as LDS Charities CEO Sharon Eubanks (2014) laments, Latter-day Saint members don't have the vocabulary to express fully the concepts that pertain to the roles and responsibilities of women. She tells us that we need to develop a new language. In hopes of aiding this conversation, this article has sought to shed light on what the language of Latter-day Saint Church leaders is really doing in conjunction with the topic of women, what we can understand by it, and how we can use it to become who we are meant to be.

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Appendix

TABLE 1

**Descriptive Terms Used by Latter-day Saint
General Conference Speakers. Frequencies included.**

Able (4)	Disheartened (1)	Individual (20)	Righteous (81)
Angelic (1)	Divine (3)	Inquiring (1)	Royal (8)
Beautiful (40)	Elect (10)	Inspired (3)	Sainted (1)
Beloved (83)	Eternal (3)	Intelligent (8)	Sensitive (1)
Better (29)	Exemplary (4)	Lovely (59)	Silly (9)
Blessed (83)	Extraordinary (2)	Loving (6)	Special (11)
Capable (8)	Faithful (116)	Magnanimous (1)	Spiritual (5)
Caring (1)	Finest (2)	Magnificent (3)	Splendid (8)
Chaste (2)	God-Fearing (3)	Mature (7)	Stalwart (4)
Choice (5)	Good (310)	Mighty (6)	Strong (10)
Christlike (2)	Gracious (4)	Miserable (2)	Strong-Willed (1)
Compassionate (1)	Grateful (6)	Modest (1)	Sweet (15)
Courageous (4)	Great (43)	Noble (38)	Talented (4)
Covenant-Keeping (12)	Happy (10)	Ordinary (6)	True (8)
Critical (1)	Holy (25)	Patient (2)	Unselfish (2)
Dear (214)	Honest (18)	Perfect (11)	Valiant (9)
Dearest (1)	Humble (10)	Powerful (1)	Virtuous (35)
Dedicated (7)	Immovable (1)	Precious (33)	Wise (9)
Devoted (18)	Imperfect (1)	Purposeful (2)	Wonderful (60)
Discouraged (1)	Important (3)	Remarkable (14)	Worthy (15)

Note. Terms are listed in alphabetical order.