
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Metadiscursive Markers Across Three Feminist Waves: A Sociolinguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

To investigate the variance in the use of metadiscursive markers by female authors through the different stages of the feminist movement, this study cross-examined the use of metadiscursive hedges and boosters as defined by Hyland's metadiscourse model in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, and Luce Irigaray's *The Sex Which Is No One*, respectively corresponding the three feminist waves. All samples of the said markers were collected among which those used to metadiscursive effects were identified by two raters. The proportions and frequency of the use of both markers were determined and analyzed within samples and between samples. The results of a Chi-Square test showed a significant difference in the use of both hedges and boosters within each work and between them. The data indicated that all three authors used metadiscursive hedges significantly more frequently than metadiscursive boosters. The results also revealed that there was a significant increase in the frequency of hedges moving from the first wave to the second but a slight decrease in moving from the second to the third wave, which shows that the increase was maintained. The data also showed a consistent significant increase in the frequency of boosters from the first wave to the second and from the second to the third. The findings suggest that in the course of the feminist movement, female authors have increasingly made bolder and firmer statements and claims in their works while simultaneously using a more cautious style to mitigate the boldness of their claims and more efficiently influence their readers.

KEYWORDS

Feminist waves, boosters, hedges, metadiscourse model, sociolinguistics, feminism.

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1. Introduction

Literature, and in general written discourse, can be influenced by social, political and intellectual movements. This is especially true if the authors are themselves participants in such a movement and take sides, not to mention those who merely observe the movements and simply comment on them. To determine how a movement impacts the discourse of those involved in it, one needs to conduct a hair-splitting meticulous investigation of the influential works produced within and as a result of them for the linguistic features that represent the influence of the mentality and stance of a writer towards the changes that are brought about by the movement are very subtle. One of the said features that can represent of ideology in a text is metadiscourse. Metadiscursive elements can indicate an author's view towards the content of their writings and a social or political issue in general. In this study, by examining certain metadiscursive elements, we will explore the influence of the Feminist movement on the discourse of three influential female authors over the span of almost two centuries, accommodating the three waves of feminism.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feminism

The term "feminism" is used to describe a cultural, political, and economic movement aimed at equality of rights for women and men. Even though this definition clearly outlines the ultimate goals of feminism, the term and its definition have been

revolutionized in some respects compared to their original. Although the term has become extremely common in the modern era, 'feminism' and 'feminist' were not widely used until the 1970s when the United Nations General Assembly used them in their meetings (Halirova, 2016). To begin with, the root of the term is 'Femina', meaning 'woman', and it refers to supporting women's rights, status, and power against men with regard to gender equality. In other words, the followers of this school believe that women should be equal to men in terms of cultural, social, economic, and political rights (Ghai et al., 2016). In general, feminism can be considered a movement mostly recognized by women. As a movement, it has been shaped by women in different and very specific forms within different fields (Jardine, 1986). Consequently, there have been numerous approaches to feminism. While some approaches maintain that women and men must be equal, others attribute to women a sense of superiority over men and assert that they should be treated with more care. In the modern era, feminism has been embraced by people from different walks of life and ideologically driven groups and political parties. At times, this issue has led to vague, and occasionally mistaken, views on what feminism is. It is in light of such views and depicting how important it could be for people to accept feminism that studies of the sort of this research gain significance.

To attain the same rights as men, women have had to tackle various issues and obstacles that were put in place by the male gender in general. Quite unlike men, who controlled everything until only a few decades ago and were unwilling to delegate a portion of their power to women. In the past, women were underprivileged and had limited access to what men had. In other words, they were isolated, suppressed, mistreated, and abused by the patriarchal society. Upon the emergence of the feminist movement, the image and status of women completely changed from a puppet to a queen, a president, a writer, an artist, a teacher, and so on (Ghorfati & Medini, 2015). However, all this did not happen overnight. One interesting point to add is Virginia Woolf's view on the matter. She claimed that if Shakespeare had a sister who had the very same skills and talents as her brother, she would have been ignored because of being a woman (Woolf, 1929). This is of paramount importance owing to the fact that the human race has ignored women for thousands of years and thus, much has been lost.

Right after the emergence of a challenge or problem in a given society, literature, along with other elements of the society, reflects it. The difficulties women face in society are also considered as problems facing society. As mentioned above, literature at the global level has also responded to problems. As such, by creating literary works using diverse literary techniques, women have been able to promote themselves as capable writers in many ways. Through literature, they have rendered their roles in a patriarchal society impressive and respectable. Therefore, as one of the central elements in promoting women in society, it is literature that we should focus on in discourse analytic attempts at explaining the discursive trends in women's writings.

To target the core of the issue, we must pause and ask: is the answer to what makes literature anything but language? As an essential and universal means for exchanging ideas, women must take language most seriously. In that sense, language has been accepted as a tool for human communication and a kind of objective representation of the world (Chilton, 2004). As human beings started using language to communicate, they felt an urgent need to use symbols to preserve what they have for the future. Written language is a regular system of written symbols that helps preserve, reflect, and transmit spoken language. It preserves and transmits human cultural heritage and makes a connection between the present generation with itself, the past, and the future. For instance, no document is valid unless it is written, and it is by means of being documented that the said connections come to be. (Brown & Yule, 1983).

The main purpose of discourse is to provide a deeper understanding and inference of texts and how meaningful they are to their audience (Chimombo & Roseberry, 1998). A text is not meaningful outside the context of a medium of communication between two minds at any given time, the author's and that of a specific member of the audience – see Mohammadpanah et al. (2018) for a detailed account of how the minds of writer and their reader interact in the context of literature. Observations of an author's stance to their audience are not only a significant factor in a discursive analysis but a much more significant one in a metadiscursive analysis. Studying text through discourse can help us get a clear distinction between different manners in written literary works. Studying it through metadiscourse can help us discover some of the elements regarding the author and the audience which play an important role in the shaping of any successful work, including feminist ones (Hyland, 1998a). This gains considerable importance in such cases since they are gender-sensitive and their success and status rely on gender as well as personality-related issues.

The importance of the personality of the author as a speaker has been explored in depth in literary texts through the lens of different linguistic disciplines. One particular viewpoint which is especially close to discursive and metadiscursive perspectives is the pragmatic view towards the personality of entities involved in a text. In a deep dive into this discipline, Mohammadpanah et al., (2018) and Mohammadpanah and Hamzehei (2020) illustrated the relation of the use of implicatures in literary works to the personality of speakers and highlighted the importance of analysing said implicata to discover the personality traits of the author. Such explorations of various pragmatic apparatuses within literary contexts contribute specifically to pragmatic stylistics as an interdisciplinary field of study [see also Mohammadpanah, 2018; Hamzehei, 2019]. Layegh et al. (2020) investigated the use of

metaphors in feminist and non-feminist literary works to show what they often bring to the table in terms of how metaphors are employed to reach a particular conclusion or to convey a particular feeling or emotion. They argued that the use of metaphors in literature has served various purposes, and that research on the topic is usually conducted with different goals in mind. In particular, serving as a bridge between literature and linguistics, metaphors can help us understand the scientific aspects of literature better, offering beneficial outcomes for the realms of linguistics and pragmatics simultaneously.

As can be seen, literature has always proved a worthy corpus for discursive, pragmatic and linguistic analyses. It would only be natural if metadiscursive analyses do not prove to be exceptions. As a metadiscursive analysis, this research aims to investigate certain markers the use or avoidance of which in writings can have a significant impact on how the audience reacts while reading a literary work, and as a result, can present the author to the society or isolate them completely. Essentially, we look to answer two specific questions: (1) how did feminist writers use hedges and boosters in their works in the three waves of feminism, and (2) what do such differences imply about the cultural norms and attitudes of each age/wave? To get there, we will first delve into the theoretical foundations of feminism, the three waves, and metadiscourse. Following that will be a brief discussion of the metadiscourse model adopted in the methodology of this research, namely that of Hyland (2005a).

Feminism is one of the more recent movements which is, above all, an ideology originated from newly organized social doctrines. It is an epistemology, a tendency towards emphasizing the role of gender in understanding the organization of society. More specifically, it provides an analytical tool to determine how expectations of men's and women's behavior lead to unjust situations; Feminism seeks justice by addressing gender-discriminatory awareness, political issues, and intellectualism; it rejects discriminatory behaviors, and actively seeks to end discrimination and create equal opportunities for women to participate in public life (Cooke, 2001). The continuation of the feminist movements around the world and its peak in the 1960s led the United Nations to consider 1975-1985 as the beginning of the women's era. The response to the Network of Local and International Women's Activities marked a new perspective on women and a change in their roles, responsibilities, and position in the world. In this decade, the main concern was the many forms of injustice that women were subjected to (ibid).

The feminist perspective in the West dates back to the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when writers of the enlightenment era analyzed human nature in the context of "bourgeois speculative wisdom". They also based their analysis on the concept of "individual" and analyzed it within gender, race, or ideology in terms of individualism (humanism) (Benhabib, 1995). They proposed a somewhat counterintuitive theory about the equal breeding of men and women and the same social roles for both sexes, which could be viewed as incompatible with human nature (Alice, 1989).

Feminist tendencies are largely in opposition to reform through accepting predetermined roles for men and women in the family and society. They try to instill the belief that in marital relationships, the most important male and female roles are not family formation and child-rearing; rather, it is the happiness and satisfaction of every individual that matters. Feminism insists on rejecting the role of women as mothers and wives as a duty, and in general, does not place much value on the concepts of home and family unless the basis is women. Proponents of this trend believe that all benefits in marriage are for men and all the backwardness is for women. Feminism grants women the freedom to live any type of life in any type of family structure. It believes in mobilizing to fight inequalities to use the existing political and legal possibilities to change the status quo, provide equal economic opportunities, bring about change in family and school, public media messages, and so on (Giddens, 1991). These ideas have come to influence many contemporary writers.

2.1.1 The First Wave

The first wave of feminism started in 1792 with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in Great Britain, which stood as a political argument for women's rights. Later in the early twentieth century, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) were influential books to highlight the notion of women's voice and writings as well as the role of society and culture in shaping women. The founding principles of feminist criticism can be derived from the work of these two authors. As we are reminded by Todd (1988), feminist criticism supposedly begins "when the first woman became aware of her relationship to language and conscious of herself as writer, speaker, reader or auditor. But it probably gets under way in our time with [these two titles]" (Todd, 1988, p. 18).

During the first wave, institutions organized by women around the world talked about their rights to vote and express their thoughts on all fronts. During World War I and II, women were not allowed to do anything without men's permission, especially in public places. Men's domination of women was predominant in all fields without exception. These conditions represented a stereotypical and passive image of women in which they were nothing more than housewives, mothers, and spouses (Faludi, 1991).

2.1.2 The Second Wave

The years 1920-1960 witnessed a recession in feminist activities. Nevertheless, currents such as the growth of women's presence in the public arena, discrimination, cultural policy of consumerism, and the actions of some organizations led to the rise of a second wave from the ashes of the first wave. In this period, we face several feminist tendencies that have taken two main policies: 1) a serious encounter with men's domination over affairs and minimizing relationships with men, and 2) the formation of women's spiritual creativity centers. In the 1980s, this wave began to transition to feminist epistemology and critique of philosophy and knowledge production. In general, it can be said that during this period, all cognitive, philosophical, social, and artistic behaviors were seriously criticized.

The second wave of feminism appeared after the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was a period that feminism entered academia and with the explosion of scholarly research, books, and teachings on women's issues, feminist literary criticism moved toward theorization and authenticity. Second-wave feminism is not a single coherent straight line, but many. Women's writing and writing about women were the main focus of feminist literary criticism. As active participants in academia, women wrote many works on women's issues. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was the forerunner, to be followed by the likes of Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women* (1968), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1971), Patricia Meyer Spacks' *The Female Imagination* (1976), and Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1976) as some of the most important pioneers of second-wave feminism.

2.1.3 The Third Wave

The third wave of feminism, which started in the 1990s, has been influenced by perspectives such as postmodernism and capitalist developments and can be considered an extreme version of the second wave. A distinguishing feature of this period is the emphasis on "differences", i.e., the difference between women's and men's issues in different regions and cultures, as well as the decrease in differences and conflicts between men and women, both of which were only theoretical in the second wave. The followers of this wave consider themselves to be the most powerful proponents of feminism. They believe that the good cause for this wave is to counteract pornography, sex work, and prostitution (Schneiders, 2000). Interestingly, the term 'feminism' was, in fact, first used in 1995 in *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* by Rebecca Walker. What differentiates the third wave from the second is that third-wave feminists feel at ease with contradiction, multiplicity, and difference. The other factor which influenced the third wave distinctively was the global access to technology. The Internet helped spread third-wave feminism exponentially more rapidly and more widely than ever before.

2.2 Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse is a widely used concept in discourse analysis, pragmatics, and applied linguistics. Coined by Zellig Harris in 1959 and later used by Meyer (1975), Williams (1981), Kopple (1985), Beauvais (1989), Intaraprawat & Steffensen (1995), metadiscourse was then developed into a fully-fledged form by Hyland (2005a). The study of metadiscourse has expanded over the past 40 years to serve two purposes: 1) to understand the relationship between language and the context in which it is used, and 2) to use information in the service of language and literacy (Hyland, 2017). As a new field of research, it helps produce influential and principled texts based on people's norms and expectations. It is founded on the idea that writing and speaking involve something more than conveying ideas and determining the meaning of thought (Pooresfahani et al., 2012). More broadly, metadiscourse links the three corners of the triangle of communication, i.e., the text, the author/speaker, and the reader/speaker (Hyland and Tse, 2004) as a tool that helps the reader organize the understanding and evaluation of their attitudes (Kopple, 1997).

Metadiscourse can also be defined as a linguistic resource used to organize a context and express the author's views on the content of the text and its readership (Hyland, 2000). Metadiscourse is the expression of the idea that linguistic communication goes beyond the mere exchange of information and propositions, and in fact, includes the identities, attitudes, and assumptions of the parties to the communication (Hyland, 2005a). Metadiscursive elements are social elements by which writers, readers, speakers, and listeners interact with each other to influence how different ideas are understood and presented (Hyland, 2004; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005a).

It may be useful at this point to consider the role of metadiscourse in writing. Writing consists of two levels: the level of discourse and the level of metadiscourse. At the first level, the reader is guided by the propositional content and at the second level through the text. The second level, i.e. metadiscourse, refers to the practical use of language to express an opinion on discourse itself (Kopple, 1985; Crismore, 1989). Metadiscourse is a kind of "internal link" that the writer creates with his/her own text. In other words, metadiscourse provides a framework for discourse by which the context orients communications and gives them particular meaning (Fairclough, 1992). Any research article, book, student essay, proposal, language class, or conference presentation can be considerably more successful if the speakers/writers use metadiscourse markers appropriately to communicate with their audience; such is the importance of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005a).

Metadiscourse is not an independent style that the writer (speaker) can use if they so wish. It is limited to the contexts in which the discourse takes place and depends precisely on the norms and expectations of a particular culture and professional community. Writers should present their arguments and observations socially, and in accordance with the patterns and knowledge that are valuable to their community. They simultaneously pursue constructive relationships with their readers and frame their arguments and how they relate to the reader's expectations (Hyland, 1998a). Thus, it can be claimed that one of the main features of discourse is the ability to refer to itself providing discourse with a dimension called metadiscourse. In a broader sense, Hyland (2005a) argued that metadiscourse encompasses not only the written dimension but also an interpersonal and practical dimension, so it describes not only the ideas we organize in our minds but also how we communicate with the reader (Laguna & Alcon, 2015). Thus, metadiscourse can be used as a discourse that acts not only to spread reference material but also to assist in making contact between author and reader for organizing, interpreting, and evaluating the exchanged data (Kopple, 1997). The concept of meta-talk also helps understand the concept of metadiscourse as it allows the writer to fit into a particular context and to consider the organizational and value aspects of the text in order to clarify the information it carries. (Schiffrin, 1980).

2.2.1 Hyland's Model

As previously noted, metadiscourse can be considered an additional language that we use to frame our message; it is a language that accompanies the main information. Let us consider an example. In the absence of metadiscourse and without considering the addressee's stance or attempting to influence their judgment, I can describe a sandwich as in: "This sandwich is made of a hamburger, cheese, tomato, and toast." Adding metadiscursive consideration into the mix, I could instead say: "The sandwich is made of absolutely top-notch cheese and such tender hamburger I think you'll love." The metadiscursive content in the latter added emotion, perspective and personality to the message while keeping the essence unchanged.

Metadiscourse is a crucial factor in creating effective communication because writers can express their opinions and ideas when they consider the needs as well as the possible reactions of their readers to the presented text. They need to know who their audience is and for whom they write. Hyland (2004) notes that teaching metadiscourse markers and familiarity with their role is very important in strengthening reading and writing because the coherence and cohesion of sentence structure in a text can play a special role in understanding the content and making effective communication. Metadiscourse is described as "discourse about discourse" or "talk about talk," which can be seen as a "linguistic expression of the writer in the text" (Hyland, 1999). We can use metadiscourse as an "umbrella term" that contains a heterogeneous arrangement of coherent and interpersonal features related to the text and its context. Accordingly, it consists of interactive and interactional markers. Interactive markers, which take on the task of guiding the reader through the text, include five subtypes: transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses. Interactional markers engage the reader in the text and are further divided into hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers (Hyland, 2005a). Boosters and hedges are a reaction to the permeability of claims and a sign of the author's affirmation and attention to norms and standards. Their goal is to strike a balance between "objective information, subjective evaluation and interpersonal negotiation, and this can be a powerful factor in gaining acceptance for claims" (Hyland, 2005b, p.180).

2.2.1.1 Boosters

In addition to discussing the truth or falsehood of a proposition, boosters direct and isolate information, and thus, block the way to any suspicion (Hyland, 1996; 1998a). Phrases such as "of course", "definitely", "clearly", "certainly", "always" and "in fact" are markers that express a speaker's confidence in their opinions. Boosters allow writers to express their conviction and their solidarity with the audience, with an emphasis on direct communication, group affiliation, and information exchange (Hyland, 1998a; Myers, 1989; Mirzapour and Mahand, 2012; Itakura, 2013). They play a central role in creating a strong image of persons in interactions (He, 1993).

2.2.1.2 Hedges

Hedges, on the other hand, are used to convey to the reader the possibility of doubt and uncertainty about the content of the produced discourse. Studying them can help us understand the authors' stance and views towards the conveyed proposition. Discussions of hedges can become lengthy and laborious as they constitute a pivotal part of pragmatics and conversation analysis. To serve the purposes of the study at hand, we should note that they include items such as "maybe", "probable", and "possible" that an author uses to present information as opinion rather than fact (Hyland, 1994; 1998a). In other words, these markers are used to indicate the extent to which an author believes in the accuracy of their statements (Crompton, 1998), and can be used to show skepticism, author's humility, or their respect for the opinions of others (Myers, 1989; Hyland, 1996, 1998a, 1998b).

The motivations behind the use of hedges can be divided into restrictive and social or interpersonal ones (Koutsantoni, 2002). Restrictive motives are associated with the use of hedges as tools to express whether a writer/speaker is confident or uncertain about the accuracy of a statement of theirs (Salager-Meyer, 1994; Holmes, 1988; Hyland, 2004) and are deployed to avoid taking

full responsibility for the accuracy of the content (Hyland, 1998a; Lewin, 2005). Social and interpersonal motives behind the use of hedges involve changing the degree of emphasis on the emotional action of phrases (Holmes, 1988) to allow the listener/reader to know the accuracy of the statements made, which, in turn, have the sender and receiver of the message interact (Lewin, 2005). Thus, many studies have considered the use of hedges to be, in a way, a token of respect for the norms of society and the viewpoints of others (Meyers, 1989; Hyland, 1998a), which sometimes leads to acceptance of people in a group and the reduction of the level of formality in interactions (Holmes, 1995). It can also be a sign of weakness in the face of huge pressure from a majority group. It means that the writer/speaker has to use soft language in order to be accepted by the majority group, which can, in turn, lead to rejection by the minority group. The social/interpersonal motivation for using hedges emphasizes the appropriateness of speech in the context of social interactions, given the relationship between the sender and receiver of the message (Hyland, 1998a; 2000).

2.3 Research on Metadiscursive Markers

In a recent study, Saraswati and Pasaribu (2019) analyzed metadiscourse markers in humanity and science journal articles. They observed hedges were the most common interactional markers whereas boosters were the least frequently used. They also noted that there is no significant relationship between gender and the use of metadiscursive markers as they found similar patterns in the use of such markers between male and female authors. In another gender-related discourse study, Schlyter (2015) investigated how men and women talk differently in a corpus of four job interviews. Focusing on boosters, hedges, pauses, and fillers, she found no significant differences with respect to most of the studied features. The results did not match previous research on verbal sexual behaviors, however. Schlyter suggested that the reason behind this is that female interviewees may show less sexuality in their verbal behaviors and that younger generations are less affected by gender than older generations.

Several years earlier, a large-scale analysis of 14,000 text samples written by men and women was conducted where several gender-related linguistic differences were found. Using two computer programs in their study, Newman et al. (2008) showed that women have a higher tendency to combine the subjective pronoun 'I' with verbs such as 'guess' and 'reckon' than men. In the case of other hedges, such as 'maybe' and 'perhaps', no meaningful difference was observed. These differences are a manifestation of the social disparity between men and women. Though many of us have a generic conception that men and women communicate in different ways, we must note that identifying and describing how language is used differently by different genders is no easy task (Adelswärd, 1996). Lakoff (1973) argued that the language of women is considered to be different from the standard and normative one. She suggested that modifiers, amplifiers, and short (tag) questions are typical features of the language of women. Though her concluding claims have been criticized as non-practical, her work is of great importance because it has inspired many linguists to conduct more and more extensive research on language and gender (Holmes, 1990; Coates, 1993).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data

To analyse the metadiscursive variance in the three feminist waves, a case study of three well-known works by three prominent feminist authors was conducted, with each work representing one of the waves. From among the studied works, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) represented the first wave, *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf (1927) represented the second wave, and *The Sex Which is No One* by Luce Irigaray (1985) represented the third. The first title stands as the very first book that defended women's rights in society and brought forth the novel idea of defending women's rights in a manner never seen before. However, it goes without saying that while some of its ideas might seem a bit underdeveloped, it must be taken into account that these ideas were formed in the incipient stages of feminism and are of high value as they triggered an important series of actions. The second title successfully depicted the different aspects of women's lives. For thousands of years, women's roles have been overlooked and undermined with little attention ever paid to women. It is comparably recently that women have made their way into literature and paintings. This work has successfully depicted different aspects of what it means to be a woman. The last title introduced a new face of women as independent creatures. Biblically speaking, women had always been viewed as being some sort of property for men. Until a few hundred years ago, they would not have even inherited a house from their husbands unless they had a male heirloom. This work of art painted a new picture of women in society. In this book, women are no longer depicted as powerless and submissive as they had been before. As noted in our discussion of the rationales behind each choice, all three titles were selected through a very meticulous search while taking social, contextual, and linguistic parameters into consideration.

To determine the previously outlined metadiscursive aspects of the authors' writings, a total of 11 boosters and 11 hedges were analysed as the scope of this study while preventing the dispersion of data values. The list of the target boosters consisted of certainly, indeed, always, in fact, clearly, actually, obviously, know, prove, must, have to. The list of the studied hedges consisted of may, might, probably, think, sometimes, often, usually, can, could, would, and should. This research aimed to focus on specific pragmatic elements while still being inclusive and comprehensive with regard to the entire range covered by the selected items. The rationale behind our choice of these specific elements instead of others was twofold; the first reason was the fact that these

particular hedges were understudied compared to others. The second reason was that they play an important role in various kinds of discourses and cover a range of frequencies in discourse.

3.2 Procedure

As the first step of the analysis, and to create the dataset, the three titles were thoroughly searched to identify all the instances of the target boosters and hedges in each title. The identified markers were then examined to determine whether they played a metadiscursive role in their context of use. Once the metadiscursive markers were identified by two coders, a quantitative analysis of them was conducted on the dataset for more optimal and tangible results. Once the number and frequency of the metadiscursive markers were in hand, the expected number of the target metadiscursive markers for each book was calculated given the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in the frequency of metadiscursive markers between the three works. A Chi-Square test for independence was used to determine the significance of the existing differences in the frequency of the markers between the three works. The results will be detailed as well as discussed from a discourse analytic point of view in terms of what the variance of metadiscursive tools means at a higher level when it comes to writing style and the process of conveying messages. Using Cohen’s kappa, the intra-coder and inter-coder reliability for the research were respectively calculated at 0.92 and 0.89, which depicts a high level of reliability for the collected and analyzed data.

4. Results

The conducted search in each title yielded the number of metadiscursively used hedges and boosters in each, which also showed their frequency of use. Table 1 below shows the data regarding the total number of metadiscursive hedges and the word count in each work. Figure 1 illustrates a frequency chart for the hedges used per 1000 words in each work in comparison to one another. The titles appear on the bottom line in chronological order. According to the data, metadiscursive hedges were used most frequently in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) with 14.11 hedges per 1000 words, followed by *The Sex Which Is No One* (1985) with 13.87 hedges per 1000 words. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) held the lowest frequency of metadiscursive hedges with 11.84 hedges per 1000 words. We can observe an increase in the use of metadiscursive hedges in transitioning from the first wave to the second but a slight decrease in moving from the second wave to the third. Overall, we can see that the use of such hedges were higher in the second and third wave in comparison to the first.

Table 1. Proportion of Metadiscursive Hedges to Total Word Count

Book Title	Meta Hedges	Word Count
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)	1019	86000
To the Lighthouse (1927)	960	68000
The Sex Which Is No One (1985)	870	62000
Total	2849	216000

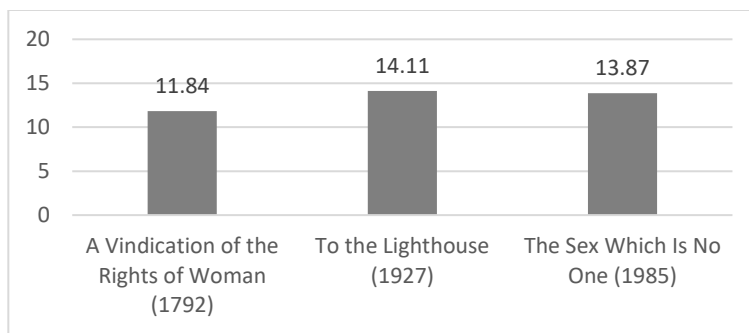


Figure 1. Frequency of Metadiscursive Hedges Per 1000 Words

Table 2. Contingency Table for Metadiscursive Hedges

Book Title	Observed Meta Hedges	Expected Meta Hedges
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)	1019	1135.65
To the Lighthouse (1927)	960	896.76
The Sex Which Is No One (1985)	870	816.59

Table 2 is the contingency table showing the observed and expected number of metadiscursive hedges considering the total word count of each work. The conducted Chi-Square test ($df = 2, \alpha < .05$) yielded a critical value of 19.93 ($\chi^2 > 5.99$) and a p-value of .000047 ($p < .05$), indicating a significant difference in the frequency of metadiscursive hedges between the three works. This suggests that the time the books were written and the feminist wave they arose from played a significant role in the frequency of metadiscursive hedges used by the author. In the case of boosters, there were certain similarities and differences. The data on the total number of metadiscursive boosters and the word count in each title are given in Table 3. Figure 2 demonstrates the frequency of the use of metadiscursive boosters per 1000 words in each, with the titles appearing chronologically on the y-axis. As per the data, *The Sex Which Is No One* (1985) had the highest frequency of metadiscursive boosters with 6.45 boosters per 1000 words. Positioned in the middle, *To the Lighthouse* (1927) had a frequency of 5.70 boosters per 1000 words. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) had the lowest frequency of metadiscursive boosters with 4.51 boosters per 1000 words. We notice a pattern of continuous increase in the use of metadiscursive boosters as we move from the first wave to the second and from the second to the third.

Table 3. Proportion of Metadiscursive Hedges to Total Word Count

Book Title	Meta Boosters	Word Count
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)	388	86000
To the Lighthouse (1927)	388	68000
The Sex Which Is No One (1985)	400	62000
Total	1176	216000

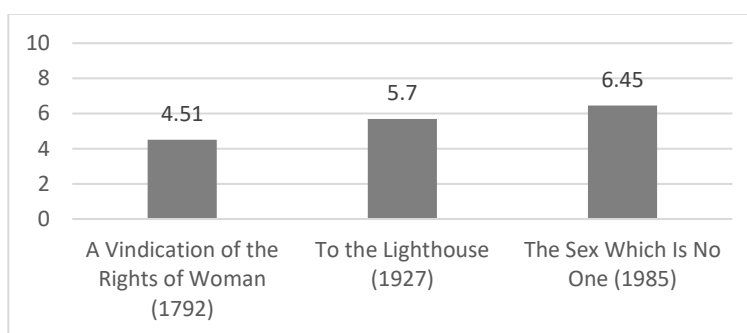


Figure 2. Frequency of Metadiscursive Boosters Per 1000 Words

Table 4. Contingency Table for Metadiscursive Boosters

Book Title	Observed Meta Boosters	Expected Meta Boosters
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)	388	468.44
To the Lighthouse (1927)	388	369.78
The Sex Which Is No One (1985)	400	337.78

Table 4 is the contingency table that demonstrates the observed and expected number of metadiscursive boosters considering the total word count of each title. The conducted Chi-Square test ($df = 2, \alpha = .05$) yielded a critical value of 26.17 ($\chi^2 > 5.99$) and a p-value of .000002 ($p < .05$), which shows a significant difference in the frequency of metadiscursive boosters between the three titles. Similar to the case of hedges, this depicts that when the books were written and the feminist wave they belong to played a significant role in the frequency of metadiscursive boosters used by the author. Table 5 shows the total number of observed hedges and boosters along with the overall proportion of them. Figure 3 illustrates the comparative frequency of metadiscursive hedges and boosters for each work side by side. Generally, we notice that the frequency of metadiscursive boosters is considerably lower than that of metadiscursive hedges.

Table 5. Total Count and Percentage of Metadiscursive Boosters and Hedges

Target Markers	Total Count	Overall Percentage
Metadiscursive Hedges	2849	70.7 per cent
Metadiscursive Boosters	1176	29.3 per cent

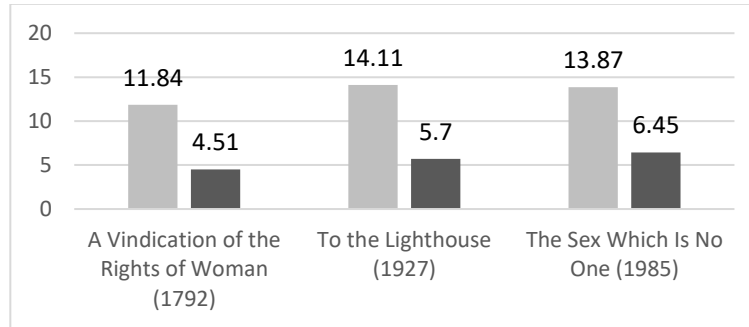


Figure 3. Overview of Frequency of Metadiscursive Hedges and Boosters

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In view of the data presented in the previous section, certain observations can be made, and certain conclusions can be drawn. Affected by the sensitive element of feminism and the predominance of masculinism in society as parts of the situational and social context of their works, all three writers were led to make considerable use of metadiscursive hedges and boosters to influence their readers against the one-sided gender-based take of society on the roles played by men and women. One of the expectations of this study was a decrease in the frequency of metadiscursive hedges moving from the first wave of feminism to the second and from the second to third, which would reflect female writers moving away from talking cautiously about gender-sensitive topics with the passage of time and moving slowly towards gender equality. The significant increase in the use of hedges between the first wave and the second and third, however, shows that they appear to not only keep but even noticeably increase the level of cautiousness in addressing such topics. The small difference in the frequency of hedges between the second and third waves depicts that the increased cautiousness has been maintained through the transition.

The significant increase in the frequency of metadiscursive boosters from the first to the second book and from the second to the third suggests a consistent increase in the decisiveness and boldness of female authors in addressing gender-sensitive subjects and in their discourse in general, moving from the first wave to the second and from the second to the third. This can be attributed to their aversion to the social commitments placed upon women's shoulders and in that sense an indirect attempt to refuse to accept what the patriarchal society imposed on them as responsibility, rights, relations, etc., leaving them little to no room for commenting, seeking their rights, and expressing themselves in society.

Two general trends should be noted here. First, all three authors used significantly more hedges than boosters. Second, the increase in the frequency of hedges was always in tandem with the increase in the frequency of boosters, meaning that whenever the use of hedges was increased, the use of boosters was increased accordingly. This opens up the way to the possibility that the increase of hedges was intentional and serves the purpose of mitigating the increased use of boosters and diverting the reader's attention from them. This can be ascribed to the authors' potential awareness of the ultimate goal being to convey their ideology without making too many ripples in the water. This is in line with the previously discussed fact that during all three waves, society was not as welcoming to feministic views as it is today, leading female authors to make bolder statements and even claims without letting their guard down, even raising it in tandem with the increasing boldness. That female authors have continued to use considerably more hedges than boosters over almost two centuries suggests that they still cannot instill enough power and contention into their writings because society is perhaps not yet prepared to accept equal rights for women and men, and most probably those who belong to non-binary genders. Because society encouraged them to take to banal expressions and statements that lead to uncertainty. This point is also evident in the reviewed works; That is, uncertainty in the writings besides speeches (Lakoff, 1973). The same uncertainty and cautiousness can be observed in scientific articles as well (Yeganeh & Ghoreishi, 2014).

All said and done, it should be noted that although we are more than two centuries past the emergence of feminism, it is still considered a young tree that needs more attention to gain relevance among all societies. All over the world, women are still undermined and victims of misogynistic laws and customs regarding marriage, divorce, rape, and so on. As a result of misinterpretations, some think that feminism has failed to deliver on its promises, but the truth is that the feminist movement still has such a long way to go in order to achieve its objectives including but not limited to equal rights for women.

6. Study Limitations and Future Research

Among the limitations faced by this study was the lack of funds available for the research as well as the limited access to the set of the selected three authors' works of the designated eras, which led to the selection of specific representative titles. The prospect of conducting a comparative thorough search of the entire set of their works of the era can be considered for future research.

Additionally, works of other female authors of these eras can potentially be analyzed in terms of metadiscursive markers as well as other discursive and stylistic elements. The task of compiling a corpus of the metadiscursive data of works by feminist authors can also be taken up in future research.

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