

S. Dorda, Sumy

Men's and Women's Use of Intensifiers and Hedges in Apology Formulas

Connections between gender and social behaviour have been examined increasingly during the last years. A particular form of gender-related social behaviour that has received much attention recently is language - that is, the lexical and syntactic choices made by men and women in interpersonal contexts.

In the present study we examine the extent to which intensifiers and hedges covary in apology formulas of male and female speakers, and the extent to which the use of intensifiers is affected by particular situational factors.

Intensifiers are defined as adverbs that heighten or amplify the semantic meaning of the predicate or that express the speaker's strong commitment to the validity of that predicate.

Our results indicate that *so/ very, really* are heavily used intensifiers in apology formulas, and often are used as equivalents compared to *awfully, terribly, bitterly, extremely, frightfully, deeply, horribly*. These adverbial qualifications are points on an intensity scale, which may be high or low.

Our results indicate also that the use of intensifiers is to some extent bound to speaker gender. Both men and women use intensifiers, but they differ with regard to the specific forms chosen. Women use more intensifiers with a high frequency of occurrence, men use more of the low - frequency intensifiers.

Hedges are defined as adverbs that decrease the force or strength of the predicate or that express the speaker's reluctance to commit to the validity of that predicate.

The most frequently used hedges in apology formulas are maybe, perhaps, probably and they can be treated as equivalent intensifiers.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the results provide no indication that hedges and intensifiers covary as unitary elements of a female register or code of powerlessness. Women do not exhibit higher diversity for intensifiers and actually show low diversity for hedges. Male hedges and intensifiers produce negative judgments of partners' quality and status, whereas female intensifiers produce positive judgments.

