

REDEFINING GENDER THROUGH LANGUAGE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores and compares the overall concept of gender representation in modern society by analyzing popular songs that topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 2019. The data was collected from the internet and critically examined through a stylistic lexical analysis. The aim of the research is to evaluate and assess how gender is currently portrayed in today's progressive society, focusing on how celebrated artists describe both genders in their lyrics. The findings indicate that the language used to depict women has evolved compared to the past; women are no longer merely portrayed as objects of attraction but as strong, independent individuals with a significant presence in society. In some instances, women are even depicted as being more powerful and assertive than men in their interactions with the world, which represents a considerable shift in their societal portrayal. Historically, women have been objectified by popular culture, including mainstream music, television, films, and media at large.

INTRODUCTION

Female characters in lyrics and music videos are often portrayed as sexual objects. The language used in pop song lyrics and the way gender is represented through word choice attract large audiences. According to linguist Robin T. Lakoff, the language found in pop songs, commercials, and TV shows either reflects societal attitudes or influences them to conform to those representations (Flynn et al., 2016). Similarly, the lyrics of pop music play a role in shaping society's understanding of gender. Previous studies have shown that misogynistic or aggressive lyrics can encourage listeners to adopt similar attitudes, while neutral or respectful lyrics can promote gender equality and tolerance (Wu, 2015). Given the strong influence of pop culture on Generation Y, many pop singers are becoming trendsetters and icons in shaping gender norms within society (Ali & Batool, 2015).

With technological advancements and digitalization, global cultural dynamics have shifted; traditional forms like poetry are no longer

as widely consumed by the masses. Instead, pop songs and lyrics now play a significant role in shaping the minds of younger generations (Kreyer, 2015). This research offers a perspective that examines how linguistic choices in song lyrics contribute to shaping public perceptions (Squires, 2018). It emphasizes the role of language in society today, showing how word manipulation can influence opinions and distort realities. This study seeks to explore and compare contemporary views on gender representation through the lens of pop music (Ross, 2017). The purpose of this paper is to investigate and analyze manifestations of gender inequality or equality in song lyrics. It will also examine how female singers portray themselves and the opposite gender, and how men represent both women and other men (Sanna, 2012). This research aims to bridge the gap between linguistic analysis and gender representation within pop culture.

The research questions related to this paper are as follows.

- How has language developed with the trends of pop culture?
- Are there any gender differences in the language of songs?
- How does one gender depict their opposite gender in the lexis of pop songs?

The research objectives of this paper are as follows.

- To analyze the language development through the course of pop culture
- To analyze the gender representation in the pop songs
- To investigate the representation of gender by the opposite gender in the pop songs
- To understand the power of lexis in the pop culture

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stylistic lexical analysis is a qualitative approach used for the investigation of the lexical meaning of the language used in the content. This analysis is helpful because it helps in identifying both the meaning of the word use and gender representation through the language. It points out the differences between male biases and sexism (Squires, 2018). It also explains the metaphors, tone, personification, and grammatical analysis of the content. This study facilitated in understanding the usage of frequencies of the word by men and women which helps in understanding the androcentric and sexism (Vaitonytė & Korostenskienė, 2015). This is done by analyzing each word used in the content are refers to them according to their grammatical family-like noun, verb, adjective, pronoun, adverb, etc. The stylistic lexical analysis is also helpful in identifying the gender, age, and sexual preferences of the singer. This is because each age set has specific words, similarly their use according to the situation and fits them into a sentence, gives the meaning which reflects the gender (Wu, 2015). For example, in the song sang by Ariana Grande Thank U, Next, in the opening paragraph, she used boy's names, and linked them through her life experience, which indicated her gender preferences and the performance gender herself. Although many types of research indicate that these forecasting can be circumstantial as sometimes words and formation depend on the circumstances in which it is recorded.

Similarly, the songs written by female writers show domestic, common words because they are familiar with domestic situations and the audience, they are

targeting is also familiar with circumstances. On the other hand, the language used by the men writers is balanced and sharp which indicated that they are recording for their audience who understand balanced speech. The stylistic lexical analysis is used to examine the arrangement of words, formation of sentences, and the vocabulary used for the content. For example, a paragraph is taken, and each word is segregated according to its grammatical analysis, it provides a long list of grammatical tables (Lee, 2015). This helps in identifying the meanings behind the words and which adjective or adverb are used for what mad discussed earlier women tend to use more adjectives and men language is clear and precise. This breakdown helps in identifying the tone of speech.

Additionally, it investigated various patterns of the language by analyzing the formation of the sentence structure. The use of phrases, pairs of gender words, adverbs, adjectives, rhymes provide useful data to researchers to analyze the gender representation in the lexis (Hyatt et al., 2016). For instance, bachelor and its opposite pair spinster are not opposite in connotations. Bachelor is a neutral word whereas spinster rather to fussy nature and more. By doing stylistic lexical analysis, these connotations can easily be studied and provide a better understanding of their usage within the context (Barongan & Hall, 1995). Keeping the above-mentioned example into consideration, the bachelor is used positively in pop culture whereas the spinster has a negative sense which is related to loneliness or elderly nature (Feliciano, 2013)

There are many types of research available in the past which provide linguistic connection to gender representation in pop culture (Dent, 2012). These studies are focused on linguistic disparities in pop culture because music and songs play a significant role in today's culture. The study was done by Kaylin Walker to invest in the career spans of the singers, their hits, and most popular songs (Freudiger & Almquist, 1978). The songs are observed by using statistical lexical analysis, which is by breaking the formation of the sentence, identifying the number of songs, the new word used, and the response of people on the songs. She also identified the most famous word used and which word became famous after the song. She identified the words "From Boogie to Bitch" (Putri & Rugaiyah, 2021). The gender disparities are not

observed and solely focused on the language used, which makes it quantitative only. With the passage of time many more types of research have been done, in 1979 Malmquist and Freudiger analyzed 151 lyrics of the songs related to the soul, easy, and country genres.

They identified the stereotypical traits related to both genders which are supportive, submissive, beautiful, inconsistent, and hesitant for the women and active, aggressive, demanding, independent, and consistent for men (Sanna, 2012). They proved that men are more conformed to have stereotypical characteristics rather than women. In 2015 Rolf Kreyers performed lexical analysis on the lyrics of pop music. The albums he chose were from 2003-2011. All are successful and commercial albums (Vaitonytė & Korostenskienė, 2015). He segregated his analysis into two segments, one, in which a gender represents itself means men or women represents themselves in the lyrics, the second was about the representation of opposite gender which is in which men or female singers represent opposite gender. This is temporal research which is done

with limited data and till that no study was done on gender representation and language used in the pop songs from a temporal point of view (Kreyer, 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Qualitative data can be collected using four main methods: documentation, observation, interviews, and questionnaires. This study analyzes people's reactions or comments on the lexical meaning of words. The sample size is limited to songs on the Billboard Chart of 2019 to ensure focused and consistent data. The song lyrics will be gathered from Google and reliable websites, with several steps taken to ensure their accuracy and currency:

- Repeatedly listening to the songs.
- Matching the lyrics with the singing in the audio.
- Manually transcribing the lyrics of each song and comparing them to the available online versions.

After verifying the accuracy of the lyrics, they will be broken down into grammatical components to examine language use and vocabulary. The frequency of words and rhymes in each song will be analyzed, and each song will then be categorized according to its vocabulary.

Data analysis will follow, involving the collection, segmentation, and linking of data to address the research problem, which is the primary aim of qualitative research methodology (Kreyer & Mukherjee, 2007). Given that the study focuses on song lyrics, the analysis will center around words and their lexical meanings. The data will be analyzed using three approaches within stylistic lexical analysis: data condensation, data display, and data verification.

Stylistic Lexical Analysis: This analysis will be conducted in four parts. The first part involves a lexis-driven analysis, where words are divided into different categories such as nouns, adverbs, and adjectives. This phase will examine the similarities and differences in wording used by male and female singers. Adjectives, adverbs, and nouns will be separated, leaving the prepositions aside. The study primarily aims to identify gender representation in pop songs, focusing specifically on songs within the same genre to understand the context and thought process behind sentence construction. This step will help to understand the common language usage in pop songs and its evolution over time. Words will be sorted by frequency, and those with high repetition will be highlighted. Each keyword's frequency will be compared to a reference corpus to determine whether it stands out; this process will be repeated for each song.

Adjectives will be marked with asterisks to clarify the song's context. As noted, adjectives are often more prevalent in women's language and tend to be softer, such as "lonely," "smile," "baby," "charming," "lovely," "sweet," and "divine," typically used for admiration and praise. Sorting adjectives by gender will provide insights into differences in speech. At the next level, personal pronouns will be sorted to identify first-person usage, such as "my," and other pronouns.

The second part of the analysis will focus on male singers' songs, specifically how women are portrayed through third-person pronouns. Keywords like "lady," "girl," "girls," "ladies," and "women" will be isolated and analyzed in context to uncover any submissive, stereotypical representations of women in a male-dominated society.

The third part will center on female singers' lyrics, with a focus on sentence construction and how

women represent themselves, contrasting with men's portrayal. Since pop culture has shifted away from male dominance, the study will examine how women might be objectified publicly through the use of specific pronouns and adjectives.

In the final part of the analysis, the use of explicit language will be studied. This is crucial because, as language evolves, certain words that were previously censored are now normalized, such as "bitch," "fuck," and "sex." These words are used by both genders, but often in gender-specific ways (e.g., "bitch" for women and "fuck" for men). This analysis will provide a clearer picture of gender representation in pop songs.

RESULTS
DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN WORDS

To investigate the keywords used by male and female singers, sorting has been done. A total of twenty words for each gender key words have been identified that are frequently used by them. The reference table is given below with words. These words are sorted by focusing on words that are repeated at least four times. The non-lexical words and onomatopoeic words are excluded from the list.

Gender	Words	
Male	1. Shit	11. Boogie
	2. Rack	12. Jump
	3. Up	13. Girl
	4. Fucking	14. Women
	5. Niggas	15. She
	6. Bitch	16. Mine
	7. Like	17. Pretty
	8. Fuck	18. Club
	9. Yeah	19. Wit
	10. Nigga	20. Night
Female	1. Lights	11. Baby
	2. Boom	12. Love
	3. Diamond	13. Cry
	4. Hate	14. Him
	5. Less	15. Control
	6. Burn	16. Heart
	7. Gonna	17. Promise
	8. bass	18. Handle
	9. Sorry	19. Breath

Apparently looking at it is evident that there is certain stereotypical word which are present in both lexes like nigga, boogie, women mine, club in the

men segment whereas love, baby, sweet, diamond, lights, cry and hate in the women segment. Although if the data is expanded and analyzed through the common observation and past listening experiences, it is analyzed that stereotypical words are common in women lyrics rather than men lyrics. The words which are common in male are mostly slang.

Gender	Pronouns	
Male	1.	Woman
	2.	Girl
	3.	Lady
	4.	She's
	5.	Her
Female	1.	Him
	2.	He
	3.	Jimmy
	4.	Johnny
	5.	Sean
	6.	Ricky

This tables includes the sorting of pronouns used by both male and female genders and as expected male lyrics contain feminism pronouns like lady, girl, her, woman whereas female lyrics has masculine pronouns like him, or he but, they have also proper noun like Sean, Ricky, Jimmy and Johnny which indicted more specific approach rather than going discrete.

Gender	Noun			
Male	1.	Time	11.	Love
	2.	Girl	12.	Girl
	3.	Heart	13.	Life
	4.	Love	14.	Way
	5.	Life	15.	Time
	6.	Night	16.	Heart
	7.	Money	17.	Night
	8.	World	18.	Eyes
	9.	Man	19.	Man
	10.	Day	20.	World
Female	1.	World	11.	Name
	2.	Day	12.	Baby
	3.	Baby	13.	Love
	4.	Night	14.	Eyes
	5.	Love	15.	Heart
	6.	Life	16.	Thing
	7.	Name	17.	Life
	8.	Time	18.	Man

9. Way	19. Way
10. Girl	20. Baby

This tables indicate the nouns which are frequently used in the hundred songs of 2019 Billboard Chart. The interesting fact is other than money, which is present in male part, all the other words are same in both male and female segment. With addition to similarity, they are most frequently used words by both gender male and female in their pop song lyrics.

Gender	Adjectives
Male	1. Crazy
	2. Good
	3. New
	4. Sweet
	5. Bad
	6. Little
	7. Only
	8. Real
	9. Long
	10. Right
	11. True
Female	1. Right
	2. True
	3. Little
	4. Sweet
	5. Old
	6. Bad
	7. New
	8. Real
	9. Good
	10. Long
	11. Big

This table indicates the adjectives which are frequently used by both gender male and female. According to the list, some are same, some are different, but they keep static throughout the year without much difference. The stereotypical truant is also not shown as sweet, long, true, real, little, and old, all those adjectives linked to women only are also used in male lyrics.

The next table is about the use of the personal pronoun 'my' and the noun used with it. According to the list, it also remains statistic and majority the same in both male and female lyrics.

Gender	Nouns with MY
Male	1. Baby
	2. Name
	3. Heart
	4. Eyes
	5. Life
	6. Hand
	7. Love
	8. Head
	9. Way
	10. Life
Female	1. Hands
	2. Love
	3. Name
	4. Baby
	5. Life
	6. Eyes
	7. Heart
	8. Mind
	9. Way
	10. Name

As described above, the noun used with the personal pronoun 'my' is also static and does not change in the year. Additionally, they are the same in both male and female lyrics and their frequency is also almost the same in both segments.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN BY MEN

In order to understand the women's representation in the male lyrics, key adjectives are sorted only from the male songs which are linked with woman, lady, girl, ladies, girls, or women. The table of identified key adjectives are as follows.

Categories	Adjectives with woman, lady, girl, ladies, girls, or women.
Girl and Girls	1. Young 2. Baby 3. My 4. Your

	5. Good 6. Every 7. Another 8. Same 9. Lonely
Lady and Ladies	1. Young 2. Sexy 3. Old 4. My 5. Sentimental 6. Little 7. Disco 8. Divine 9. Blue 10. Lovely
Woman and Women	1. Devil 2. Kinda 3. Frustrated 4. Evil 5. Black 6. Many 7. Silly 8. Bad 9. My 10. Beautiful

This table clearly indicates that negative adjectives like silly, frustrated, evil, bad are only used with the women, whereas with lady, adjectives like little, disco, blue, and lonely are used, and with girl, good, baby, young and lovely adjectives are used. The adjectives used with lady and girls both reflected immunity, sweetness, and innocence. This concludes that women cannot be replaced with lady or girls, that women refer to independent, bold and strong female population.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN BY WOMEN

This table represents the adjectives used by women for the women with the first- person pronoun which are Imma, I'm, I am and Im. In these categories, only I am category will be discussed because it is most frequent use personal pronoun by the women.

Categories	Adjectives with woman, lady, girl, ladies, girls, or women.	
I am	1. Genie 2. Alone 3. Okay 4. Fool 5. Girl 6. Lonely 7. His 8. Crazy 9. Yours 10. Lost	11. Liar 12. Happy 13. Satisfied 14. Beautiful 15. Sick 16. Somebody 17. Worth it 18. Only one 19. Lucky 20. Blue

The analysis of the table shows that women represent themselves differently with passage of time. From the beginning till the end of the year, the trend changes from weaker characteristics like happy, satisfied, and glad to angrier and strong traits like crazy, liar, worth it and somebody. These expressions indicated the moving on from the relationship, some represent break up in a relationship or self-changing behavior with me.

Categories	Adjectives with woman, lady, girl, ladies, girls, or women.	
Girl and Girls	1. Your 2. Most 3. My	
	4. Every 5. Good 6. Crazy 7. Naughty 8. Bad 9. Happiest 10. Golden	

Lady and Ladies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Independent 2. Single 3. Dear 4. Special 5. Young 6. Crazy 7. My 8. Dark 9. Another
Woman and Women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lonely 2. All 3. Real 4. Dangerous 5. Lovin 6. His 7. Black 8. Independent 9. Satisfied 10. Prettiest

These tables indicated the representation of women by women according to the three categories. In these categories, no negative adjectives have been used like male segment, whereas with women, independent, strong, and dangerous adjectives are used which showcase the inner self rather than outer appearances. On the other their happy and calm inner self.

USE OF EXPLICIT LANGUAGE

After the removal of censor board by the order of supreme court and advancement in digitalization with results in emergency of many digital platforms, the use of explicit language in the pop song has been increased by 833% times. The objectification of gender, sexual interpretation is not strange in pop music. Although it seems like these languages are linked with male society only but now it is as common in the female segment as males. For example, bitch was used by both male and female gender equally with any gender disparities. However, if they are used by women, it means powerful and gives a positive sense, but if it is used by men, it is depicted in a negative sense. For example

- Been through some bad shit, I should be a sad bitch by Ariana Grande.
 - Bought matching diamonds for six of my bitches by Ariana Grande.
 - I'm a free bitch, baby by Lady Gaga.
- Bitch is the noun, used most frequently with bad, like opposite to good girl which is bad bitch. It deflects the submissive nature of women to be independent and strong who can go through any hardship. In other ways we can say, women use bitch for themselves in positive meaning.

DISCUSSION

The most interesting conclusion drive after the assortment of the keywords is the use of adjectives by the female singer. At the beginning of the years, love was the keyword, but till the end of 2019, love is replaced by hate, similarly, yes changes into no, should change into gonna. Similarly, in the first-person adjectives, women singers go from the journey of going till fed up, littles till bad, golden till bitch. These indicated a rebellious caterer that has appeared in the pop song lyrics and gives a sense of independence and straightforwardness to the women. Similarly going further, in female caregivers, my pronoun is only used with ladies and girls, not with women, which represents an independent personality who can survive on its own. Rather than providing a sense of possession and dependency on the male society, female singers are giving a clear message of solidarity. For example,

My smile is beamin', my skin is gleamin'
 The way it shine, I know you've seen it (you've seen it) I bought a crib just for the closet
 Both his and hers, I want it, I got it, yeah by Ariane Grande
 Oh, she's sweet but a psycho
 A little bit psycho
 At night she screamin'
 "I'm-ma-ma-ma out my mind" Oh, she's hot but a psycho
 So left but she's right though At night she screamin'
 "I'm-ma-ma-ma out my mind" by Ava Max
 and they are becoming less controversial with time.
 She taught me love (love)
 She taught me patience (patience) She handles pain (pain)
 That amazing (yeah, she's amazing) I've loved and I've lost (yeah, yeah) But that's not what I see (yeah, yeah)

'Cause look what I've found (yeah, yeah) Ain't no need for searching.

And for that, I say by Ariana Grande in Thank U, Next

Furthermore, the common practice of feeling apologize is by saying sorry which is commonly present in the lyrics of early nineties but with time the politeness in apologizing has been changed and it is replaced by words which has dual meaning, for example song by Jonas Brothers which is Sucker.

I'm a sucker for you

You say the word and I'll go anywhere blindly I'm a sucker for you, yeah

Any road you take, you know that you'll find me I'm a sucker for all the subliminal things

No one knows about you (about you) about you (about you) And you're making the typical me break my typical rules It's true, I'm a sucker for you, yeah

and boys, also shows different frequencies. For instance, the boy is four times less used than the girls, whereas she is twice as much as him and he is three times less than hers. This indicates that male sentiments are shown to be static and normal in pop culture, but female love shows variations. In the normal societal culture, women tend to be sincerer and compassionate in love, but pop song lyrics depict a different scenario. From the analysis, we can say that this trait of sincerity and patience is changing in women and they are no longer vulnerable to men's love and expression. They have defined their path and they are working independently on it.

In the summary, we can say that with the time female singers are becoming independent and fearless, their lyrics show stronger gender representation than men. The lyrics of male singers do not show much variation, they are similar with the trend whereas women lyrics show high variations and greater gender representation in their pop songs.

CONCLUSION

From the above-mentioned discussion, we can conclude that all the results and analysis provided from the lexical analysis of the top hundred pop songs of Billboard Chart 2019 are solely on the writer's observation, investigation, and knowledge. The writer concluded that answering the research question, songs sung by female singers are more inclined towards gender representation and pop

songs reflect stereotypical gender pair languages and vocabulary. Based on the frequency of words from both male and female songs, there are some differences as well similarities in the words used by both male and female gender, which indicates the limitation of the analysis according to the general observation.

Similarly, the words like love, baby, heart, and life are the most frequently used words in pop songs, due to which we can say that they are the foundation of the lexis of pop music. It does not seem to be changing in the near future. However, the representation of men by the women also did not change with time, and the same adjective as the guy, boy, nigga, etc. are used for them. Although there are slight diversions in some songs by analyzing their context, it does not seem to be permanent. On the other hand, female representation by men is also not changing, they are still young and pretty but the adjectives specific to the women are problematic as they give negative meaning.

The most evident change was in the representation of women by the women. In the past, women like to represent themselves as victims and submissive, but with the passage of time, this image of women has been changed as strong, resilient, and independent. In 2019 pop song lyrics, women are also objectified as sexual objects by themselves just for commercial success. On the one side, pop song culture is quite progressive and influential by providing a voice to women, but it also has dark sides, such as destroying the image of women, which are controversial in society by women. The female singers are reflecting themselves as message givers, voices for young women, and shows the struggle of a woman's journey through their words. They also depict empowerment and freedom of choice. Additionally, the study highlights that this study does not particularly explain the gender disparities according to the genre because, in the hundred Billboard Chart songs, it is not easy to identify each genre, separate them and assort the words and again standardize them according to others.

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