Early feminist or mainstream writer? An analysis of George Moore’s use of *verba dicendi* in three novels.

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Two research questions

• 1. How does Moore use verbs to create the sociolinguistic profile of his characters?

• 2. Does his characterization of men and women confirm the view that he is a feminist?
The Corpus: Three Novels


- This corpus comprises 375,677 words
Method and data

• Instances of *oratio recta* (Coulmas 1986) or direct speech reporting verbs in *dictum* (Coulmas 1986)

• Example: John *said*, “He’s my best friend”

• Use of WordSmith Tools 6 Concordancer.

Method and data 1:
List of reporting verbs found in corpus

- Add (51), Address (16), Admit (16), Advise (13), Agree (22), Announce (12); Answer (154), Appeal (5), Argue (20), Ask (301), Assent (2) Assure (10), Bawl (1), Blurt (1), Chatter (1), Comment (3), Complain (4), Cry (132), Declare (68), Exclaim (77), Explain (50), Express (20), Groan (1), Growl (1), Grumble (3), Interject (3), Interpose (3), Interrupt (6), Mention (17), Moan (5), Mumble (4), Murmur (42), Mutter (14), Prattle (1), Remark (12), Repeat (23), Reply (132), Roar (4), Say (1871), Scold (1), Scream (15), Shout (9), Shriek (2), Snarl (1), Speak (201), Tell (349), Utter (13), Whine (1), Whisper (11), Yell (2)

- **50 verbs and 3724 tokens**

- **Neutral verbs of saying** (say, tell, speak, utter, ask, or answer) make up to **71.84% of tokens** (2675)
Method and data 2

• This list of verbs further refined
• Only verbs of manner of speaking chosen
• Most verbs left out
• Including neutral quotative say and other saying verbs (tell, ask, repeat, reply, answer, etc., Caldas 1994) + glossing prepositional phrase or adverb: “I know,” he said in a whisper/bluntly.
Method and data 3

- About verbs of manner of speaking:
  - 1. The metonymy of SOUND for SPEECH.
  - 2. Three types of sounds: human, animal and inanimate things
  - 3. Mark manner and attitude of speaker
Method and data 4

• **Men:**
  - Bawl (1), blurt (1), cry (23), exclaim (14), growl (1), murmur (12), mutter (4), roar (1), scream (2), shout (7), snarl (1), whisper (4).

• **Women:**
  - Cry (77), exclaim (55), moan (2), murmur (20), mutter (8), prattle (1), scold (1), scream (8), shout (1), shriek (2), whine (1), whisper (6), yell (1)
Discussion 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERBS</th>
<th>TOKEN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>WOMEN</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tbody>
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- 25 verbs: 50% of the whole list (50)
- Low number of tokens (Caldas 1993, 1994)
- Practically same number of verbs. More tokens for women but mainly because of *cry* and *exclaim*
Discussion 2

- **Prosodic verbs:**
  - cry 23/77, scream 2/8, and shout 7/1

- **Paralinguistic verbs. Voice qualifiers:**
  - 1) exclaim 14/55, murmur 12/20, mutter 4/8
  - 2) *growl, roar, snarl* vs *moan, shriek, whine*

- **Social perception:**
  - *Bawl* vs *yell* and *blurt* vs *prattle*
  - *Scold* and women at home (Caldas 1993, 1994)
Discussion 3

• 1. Men (assertive, domineering, public sphere) (Parkins 2012)

• 2. Women (emotional, submissive, private domain) (Parkins 2012)

• 3. Subjective presence of authors in texts and the question of “affect” (Martin and White 2005)
Discussion 4

• Some critics support view that Moore was a committed feminist (Jaime de Pablos 2006)

• Others are more cautious and think of Moore as aware of feminist issues only (Stubbs 1979, Hoyas 2014)
Conclusions

• Moore’s use of reporting verbs in the three novels does not display a marked bias in favour of women. Sympathetic at most.

• The study of the linguistic choices made by this author does not, then, lend support to the view that George Moore was an artist committed to the feminist cause.
Further research

1. Study to be extended to the rest of Moore’s novels

2. Comparison with other contemporary writers such as George Gissing, Walter Bessant, Mark Rutheford, Arthur Morrison, Somerset Maugham or Thomas Hardy

3. Study of novels of contemporary female writers (Maria Corelli)

4. Exploring Henry Sweet’s influence on these writers known for having a keen interest in incorporating how people spoke
References


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