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Discourse Analysis of Gender in "Back In Action Movie"

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Abstract

This study examines how gender is represented through discourse in Back in Action (2025), directed by Seth Gordon, by analysing the discourse features in the utterances of male and female characters and interpreting them in context. It employs a descriptive qualitative approach that combines Brown and Yule's (1983) five discourse features (reference, presupposition, implicature, inference, and co-text) with Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation (field, tenor, and mode). The data are 40 utterances selected purposively after the whole film was watched and the dialogue was checked against a supporting transcript. An utterance was selected when it contained an identifiable discourse feature and had enough surrounding context to be interpreted. Each utterance was assigned to one primary feature and recorded in a data sheet with its speaker, scene, and context. The findings show that implicature is the most frequent feature (20 data, 50.0%), followed by presupposition (8 data, 20.0%), inference (5 data, 12.5%), reference (4 data, 10.0%), and co-text (3 data, 7.5%). Male speakers produced 21 data and female speakers 19 data, and implicature was the most frequent feature for both groups. Female speakers produced more presupposition and inference, and co-text appeared only in male speakers' utterances, but these differences involve very few data. The contextual analysis indicates that meaning and politeness depended on the characters' roles, relationships, urgency, and communicative purpose, rather than on gender alone. These results are interpretations of a small purposive sample of scripted dialogue and are not generalisations about real-life male and female speech. The study contributes an analysis that links pragmatic discourse features with situational context to show how gendered communication in film is shaped by role and relationship.

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis examines how language is used to construct and interpret meaning in particular communicative situations. Harris (1952) introduced discourse analysis as an approach to studying language beyond isolated linguistic units. Fairclough (2010) explains that language use can be examined in relation to the social conditions in which communication occurs. Gee (2017) also emphasizes the role of language in constructing identities, relationships, and social practices. These perspectives show that understanding discourse requires attention to both linguistic forms and the situations in which they are used. The relationship between language and context is particularly relevant to gendered discourse. Halliday (2014) explains that language can be understood through the context in which communication takes place, including field, tenor, and mode.

Gender is also socially and culturally constructed through social practices and communication. Lazar (2005) discusses how discourse contributes to the construction and reproduction of gender relations. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) explain that gender is shaped through social practices rather than determined solely by biological differences. Coates (2016) further examines the relationship between language, gender, and social expectations. However, linguistic differences should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of fixed masculine or feminine characteristics. The meaning of an expression depends on the speaker's choices, the relationship between participants, and the communicative situation. Therefore, gendered discourse needs to be examined in context rather than explained through assumptions that men and women always communicate in fundamentally different ways.

Brown and Yule (1983) provide a framework for examining how meaning is constructed through five discourse features: reference, presupposition, implicature, inference, and co-text. Reference concerns how expressions identify people, objects, or entities. Presupposition involves information treated as already understood or accepted. Implicature concerns meaning conveyed indirectly, while inference involves the interpretation made by a listener based on available information. Co-text refers to the surrounding linguistic material that helps clarify an utterance.

These features are relevant to the study of gendered discourse because they allow the researcher to examine how male and female characters refer to people and events, rely on shared assumptions, communicate implied meanings, interpret utterances, and use surrounding expressions to construct meaning. Nevertheless, these features are not inherently masculine or feminine. Their relevance to gendered discourse emerges from examining how they function in the characters' interactions and how their meanings relate to interpersonal and situational contexts. To complement the textual analysis, Halliday and Hasan (1976) provide a framework for examining context of situation through field, tenor, and mode. Field concerns the activity or subject matter of an interaction, tenor concerns the relationships between its participants, and mode concerns the role and channel of communication.

These variables help explain why an expression may be interpreted differently across situations. For example, a direct utterance may function as an instruction during an urgent event but have a different interpersonal effect in a casual conversation. By combining Brown and Yule's discourse features with Halliday and Hasan's context of situation, this study examines both the linguistic resources through which meaning is constructed and the contextual conditions that shape its interpretation.

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This approach supports an analysis of gendered discourse without treating individual linguistic forms as direct evidence of gender stereotypes. Movie dialogue offers a useful source of data because it presents interactions through which characters' relationships, identities, and social roles are represented. Chaume (2012) discusses the linguistic characteristics of audiovisual translation and film dialogue, providing a basis for considering language in cinematic contexts. Although movie dialogue is scripted, it can represent different communicative situations, including everyday conversations, interpersonal conflict, and urgent events. These situations provide opportunities to investigate how linguistic choices function within relationships and changing circumstances.

Previous studies have examined gender representation in films through different theoretical and analytical approaches. Behera (2015) investigated gender roles in the Sex and the City films and identified the persistence of patriarchal patterns in character representation. Alsaraireh, Singh, and Hajimia (2021) examined gender representation in Frozen through verbal and nonverbal features, including politeness, power, independence, and talkativeness. Salman, Ahmad, and Arshad (2023) investigated linguistic variation in North Country, focusing on features such as hedging, tag questions, and intensifiers. Wardani, Ningtara, and Gorda (2025) explored gender resistance in Enola Holmes through critical discourse analysis. Ummah and Waeno (2024) examined gender inequality in selected video-on-demand films. Together, these studies demonstrate that film dialogue can be used to investigate gender representation, linguistic variation, social roles, and gender inequality. However, their different theoretical approaches also show that gender in film can be examined from several analytical perspectives.

More specifically, Fajarwati, Rahmatunisa, and Agustiana (2023) compared linguistic features used by male and female characters in The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes through a sociolinguistic framework associated with Coates. Their analysis focused on features such as hedges, questions, commands, and compliments. Dewi, Putri, and Juniartha (2022) examined gender identity in the novel Between Perfect and Real through characterization and psychological perspectives. These studies illustrate that gender can be investigated through linguistic, narrative, and representational dimensions. However, the studies reviewed here do not establish how Brown and Yule's (1983) five discourse features operate together in conversations between male and female characters in Back in Action (2025), with their interpretation examined through field, tenor, and mode. This is the specific analytical gap addressed by the present study.

Back in Action (2025), directed by Seth Gordon, provides a relevant setting for addressing this gap because its action-comedy narrative places the main male and female characters in varied communicative situations. The characters interact in family life and interpersonal exchanges as well as in situations involving professional responsibilities, conflict, and urgency. These changing circumstances allow the researcher to examine how discourse features function across different activities and relationships rather than assuming that their use follows fixed gender patterns. The film is therefore selected because it offers an opportunity to investigate the relationship between textual discourse features, situational context, and gendered interaction within a contemporary action-comedy narrative.

Based on this research gap, the present study applies Brown and Yule's (1983) discourse analysis framework to identify and interpret reference, presupposition, implicature, inference, and co-text in the utterances of the main male and female characters in Back in Action (2025). Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework of field, tenor, and mode is used to examine the situational context of these utterances. The study addresses two research questions:What discourse features proposed by Brown and Yule (1983) occur in the utterances of the main male and female characters in Back in Action (2025)? How do field, tenor, and mode contribute to the interpretation of these discourse features in the characters' interactions? By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a context-sensitive account of gendered discourse in film dialogue and to explain how textual features and situational circumstances work together in the construction of meaning.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine gendered discourse in Back in Action (2025), directed by Seth Gordon. A descriptive qualitative approach was appropriate because the study aimed to identify, describe, and interpret discourse features in the characters' utterances within their conversational contexts. As explained by Moleong (2005), qualitative research seeks to understand and describe phenomena through words and their natural contexts. Discourse analysis was used as the main analytical approach, drawing on Brown and Yule's (1983) framework to examine reference, presupposition, implicature, inference, and co-text. The contextual analysis was supported by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) concepts of field, tenor, and mode. These frameworks enabled the researcher to examine how the characters' utterances conveyed meaning and how their interpretations were shaped by the situations in which they occurred.

The primary data source was the audiovisual version of Back in Action (2025), a Netflix action-comedy film featuring Matt and Emily, a married couple who previously worked as spies before returning to their former lives. The film was selected because it presents interactions between male and female characters in different situations, including family conversations, interpersonal conflicts, and dangerous or urgent circumstances. These varied contexts provided opportunities to examine how discourse features functioned in different communicative situations. The film's dialogue was treated as the primary source of data because the spoken utterances and their surrounding scenes were necessary for interpreting meaning. A script or transcript was used as a supporting reference to check the wording of the dialogue. The audiovisual version remained the primary basis for verification whenever differences occurred. The script or transcript used in this study should be identified and cited according to its actual source.

The data consisted of 40 utterances selected purposively from conversations involving the two main characters, Matt and Emily. The selection focused on utterances that contained at least one identifiable discourse feature in Brown and Yule's (1983) framework and provided sufficient linguistic or situational information for interpretation. The selection criteria included the presence of a relevant textual feature, the availability of surrounding conversational context, and the relevance of the utterance to examining communication between the male and female characters. Particular attention was given to interactions involving urgent decisions, immediate danger, unexpected crises, or intense interpersonal conflict.

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These situations were considered high-pressure contexts because they could influence how speakers expressed and interpreted meaning. However, the presence of strong emotions or direct language alone was not sufficient to classify an interaction as high-pressure. The researcher selected 40 utterances that met the established criteria rather than treating all dialogue in the film as research data. The number of 40 represented the selected qualitative data for detailed analysis, not the total number of utterances in the film.

Data were collected through textual analysis and structured observation. First, the researcher watched the entire film to understand its storyline, identify the main characters, and become familiar with the overall conversational contexts. Second, the researcher identified candidate utterances spoken by Matt and Emily and noted the scenes in which they occurred. Third, the candidate utterances were reviewed against the selection criteria to determine whether they contained an identifiable discourse feature and sufficient contextual information for analysis. Fourth, the wording of the selected utterances was checked against the script or transcript used as a supporting reference, while the film remained the primary source.

Finally, the selected data were recorded in a data sheet for systematic classification and interpretation. The data sheet included the data number, the utterance, the speaker, the scene or timestamp where available, the conversational situation, the identified discourse feature, and relevant contextual information. Other characters' utterances were considered only when necessary to understand the surrounding conversation; they were not counted as primary data unless they met the study's stated inclusion criteria.

The selected utterances were classified according to five textual features proposed in Brown and Yule's (1983) discourse analysis framework. Reference was identified when an expression referred to a person, object, or entity whose identity could be established through the linguistic or situational context. Presupposition was identified when an utterance contained information that the speaker treated as already accepted or assumed. Implicature was identified when the intended meaning went beyond the literal meaning of the utterance and could be interpreted through contextual clues.

Inference referred to the process by which a listener or researcher derived an interpretation from the utterance and the available contextual information. Co-text referred to the surrounding linguistic material that helped clarify the meaning of a word or utterance. These operational definitions were used consistently when examining the selected data. When an utterance appeared to contain more than one discourse feature, the researcher examined the linguistic evidence and the conversational context before assigning its primary classification. For the purpose of the frequency distribution, each of the 40 data entries was assigned to one primary category based on the feature most directly supported by the analysis. Other relevant features could be discussed in the qualitative interpretation when necessary, but they were not counted as additional primary categories in the frequency table. This procedure was applied to ensure that the total number of classified data remained consistent with the sample of 40 utterances.

After classification, the researcher interpreted each utterance by considering its linguistic features and context of situation. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) variables of field, tenor, and mode were used to describe the context surrounding each interaction. Field concerned the activity, topic, and communicative purpose of the interaction. Tenor concerned the participants, their relationship, and their respective roles in the

conversation. Mode concerned the channel of communication and the role played by language in the interaction.

These variables helped explain how the same discourse feature could convey different meanings depending on the circumstances. The researcher then compared the discourse features used by Matt and Emily, considering both the similarities and differences in their utterances. The comparison took into account the speakers' roles, interpersonal relationships, and communicative situations rather than assuming that every difference was caused by gender alone.

The findings were analyzed descriptively and presented through frequency counts, percentages, and qualitative explanations. The frequency of each primary discourse feature was calculated by counting the data entries assigned to that category. Its percentage was calculated by dividing the category frequency by the total number of selected data, 40, and multiplying the result by 100. These figures were used to describe the distribution of the five features within the selected sample, not to make statistical generalizations about all male and female speakers. The qualitative discussion explained how each feature functioned in its conversational context, supported by the relevant utterances and an interpretation of field, tenor, and mode. The analysis therefore combined a descriptive account of the distribution of discourse features with a contextual interpretation of how the characters constructed and communicated meaning.

To support the trustworthiness of the analysis, the researcher reviewed the selected utterances against the film and checked their interpretations against the surrounding dialogue and scenes. The classification was also reviewed using the operational definitions established for the five discourse features and the contextual variables. The analysis was based on the researcher's interpretation of the data, therefore, the possibility of interpretive bias was acknowledged as a limitation if independent coding or intercoder checking was not conducted.

Any consultation with a supervisor or another researcher should be reported only if it was actually carried out. Regarding ethical considerations, the study used the film and its dialogue for academic analysis, reproduced only the portions of dialogue needed to support the discussion, and acknowledged the relevant sources. The film and the script or transcript consulted were to be identified appropriately in the references.

3. Result

This study identified five discourse features in 40 selected data from *Back in Action* (2025), based on Brown and Yule's (1983) framework: reference, presupposition, implicature, inference, and co-text. The findings are presented in three parts: the overall distribution of discourse features, a comparison of the male and female characters' discourse, and the contextual interpretation of selected utterances using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) variables of field, tenor, and mode.

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Table 1. Types of Textual Distribution of the Main Characters Based on Brown and Yule's (1983) Discourse Analysis

Gender	Reference	Presupposition	Implicature	Inference	Co-text	Total
Male	2 (9.5%)	3(14.3%)	12(57.1%)	1(4.8%)	3(14.3%)	21 (100%)
Female	2 (10.5%)	5(26.3%)	8(42.1%)	4(21.1%)	0(0%)	19(100%)
Total	4	8	20	5	3	40

Table 1 presents the distribution of the features by the gender of the speaker. Male speakers produced 21 data and female speakers 19 data, so the two groups are almost equally represented. Implicature is the most frequent feature for both groups, accounting for 12 of the 21 male data and 8 of the 19 female data. Reference is used at a similar rate by male and female speakers. Female speakers produced more presupposition (5 data) than male speakers (3 data) and more inference (4 data) than male speakers (1 data). Co-text appears only in male speakers' utterances 3 data, and does not appear in the female data. These differences concern one to three data in each category, so they describe the selected dataset and do not by themselves show that male and female speakers differ in their use of discourse features.

One example of implicature occurs in the nightclub scene, in which Matt asks, "Can't we have just a little fun?" Emily responds, "Yeah, but we're not out. Our daughter is." Matt's question can be interpreted as an attempt to encourage them to enjoy the evening, while Emily's response redirects attention to their daughter's situation. The interpretation depends on the circumstances surrounding the conversation rather than on the literal meaning of the question alone. This example illustrates how implicature contributes to the interpretation of conversational meaning. Nevertheless, the example should not be treated as evidence that indirect communication is inherently characteristic of either male or female speakers.

4. Discussion

This section discusess the study's findings by examining the discourse features found in the selected conversations. The analysis draws on Brown and Yule's (1983) discourse analysis framework, with particular attention to reference, presupposition, implicature, inference, and co-text. To develop a deeper understanding of the findings, the analysis also considers Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation, focusing on field, tenor, and mode.

1.Reference

Brown and Yule (1983) explain that reference is a communicative act in which speakers use expressions to identify people, objects, or ideas within a particular context. The interpretation of a referring expression therefore depends not only on its linguistic form but also on the purpose of the speaker and the situation in which it is used.

Data 1

Emily : "**Alice Amelia Reynolds**, let's go, Now."
Alice : "But I wasn't even-"
Emily : "Not one word"

Back In Action, Time: 1:29:58

In Data 1, Emily addresses her daughter using the full name "Alice Amelia Reynolds" rather than the shorter name "Alice" Although the full name identifies the addressee, its use in this situation also signals that Emily is taking the interaction seriously. The following command, "let's go, now," reinforces this interpretation, while "Not one word" prevents Alice from continuing her explanation. These utterances show how reference operates as part of a broader interaction in which the speaker seeks to establish control over the conversation. Thus, the full-name reference does more than identify Alice, in this context, it helps signal the transition from an ordinary family interaction to a moment of parental discipline.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation provides a further explanation of this interaction. The field concerns Emily's attempt to discipline Alice after finding her at the nightclub. The tenor is the relationship between a mother and her daughter, in which Emily assumes parental responsibility and authority. The mode is spoken face-to-face interaction characterized by direct commands and a brief interruption. These contextual factors help explain why Emily uses Alice's full name and follows it with firm instructions. Her language is closely connected to her immediate communicative purpose and her position as a parent.

From the perspective of gendered discourse, this example suggests that direct language should not automatically be interpreted as a characteristic of male or female speakers. Emily is a female character who uses direct and authoritative expressions, but her language in this scene is better understood in relation to her parental role and the seriousness of the situation. This finding highlights the importance of considering gender alongside interpersonal relationships and situational context when examining discourse. However, because the data come from a scripted film, the example illustrates how female authority is represented in this particular narrative rather than establishing a general pattern of women's language use.

2.Presuposition

Presupposition refers to information that a speaker assumes the listener can recognize or accept as part of the background knowledge of an utterance. Brown and Yule (1983) explain that understanding an utterance involves considering the assumptions that speakers make about what their listeners already know. These assumptions influence how an utterance is interpreted within a particular context.

Data 2

Matt : **"Kushay zavtrak"**
Leo : "Huh?"
Alice : "What does that mean?"
Matt & Emily : "Eat your breakfast"

Back In Action, Time: 1:37:23

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In Data 2, Matt uses the Russian expression "Kushay zavtrak," which means "Eat your breakfast." However, Leo and Alice do not immediately understand the expression. Leo responds with "Huh?" while Alice asks, "What does that mean?" Both responses indicate that the children cannot interpret Matt's utterance based on their existing linguistic knowledge. Matt and Emily then provide the English translation, allowing the children to understand the intended message. Although the exchange primarily illustrates a process of clarification, it also highlights the role of shared background knowledge in communication. Matt initially speaks as though the children may understand the expression, but their responses reveal that this knowledge is not shared. Therefore, the interaction demonstrates that successful interpretation depends on the relationship between a speaker's assumptions and the listener's actual knowledge.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation further explains this exchange. The field is an everyday family activity in which the parents tell their children to eat breakfast. The tenor involves parents and children interacting within a familiar family relationship. The mode is spoken conversation in which the meaning of an unfamiliar expression is clarified through verbal responses. These contextual factors show that the misunderstanding occurs within an ordinary domestic interaction rather than a conflict between the speakers.

Matt and Emily contribute to clarifying the message together. Their joint response suggests that the communicative task is shared rather than assigned exclusively to either the male or female character. However, this single exchange does not establish a general pattern of communication based on gender. Instead, it illustrates how the characters' language use is shaped by the immediate need to establish shared understanding. The scene therefore supports a contextual interpretation of gendered discourse, in which interactional purpose and family relationships are considered alongside the gender of the speakers.

Data 3

Leo : "So, should we hug or something?"

Granny: **"No, No. I'm British, we don't hug"**

Back In Action, Time:57:12

Data 3, Leo asks, "So, should we hug or something?" His question presents hugging as a possible way to greet Granny and suggests that he considers physical affection an option in this encounter. Granny responds, "No, no. I'm British, we don't hug," rejecting the proposed greeting and providing a cultural explanation for her response. The expression "we don't hug" presents a general assumption about the greeting practices of the group with which Granny identifies. Her response therefore reveals how assumptions about social behavior can influence an interaction. However, her statement should be interpreted as Granny's representation of British social norms rather than evidence that all British people avoid hugging.

In terms of the context of situation, the field concerns the negotiation of an appropriate greeting during a family encounter. The tenor involves Leo and Granny, whose interaction reflects their different expectations about physical affection and social familiarity. The mode is informal spoken conversation in which Leo proposes a greeting and Granny responds with a direct refusal and explanation. These contextual elements

help explain why the exchange focuses on social expectations rather than simply on whether the characters want to hug.

From a gendered discourse perspective, Granny's response is significant because she is a female character who expresses her preference directly and confidently. Her directness should not be interpreted as evidence that she departs from a fixed feminine communication style. Instead, it reflects her individual preference, her identification with a cultural group, and her position within the interaction. This example also demonstrates that gender alone cannot explain a character's communicative choices. Cultural identity, personal boundaries, and the relationship between participants are relevant to understanding how Granny expresses herself. Nevertheless, because the dialogue is scripted, it represents one character's response within a fictional situation and cannot establish a general communication pattern among women or British people.

3.Implicature

Brown and Yule (1983) explain that implicature concerns meaning that is communicated indirectly rather than explicitly expressed through the literal meaning of an utterance. Understanding implicature requires listeners to consider the conversational context, the relationship between speakers, and the assumptions that help them interpret the speaker's intended message.

Data 4

Matt : "No Champagne?"
Emily : "No"
Matt : "Really? Usually, we toast after we do our thing"
Emily : **"I'm just not, you know, feeling champagne right now, y'know?"**
Matt : "Okay. Now I know something's up"
Emily : "I'm pregnant. And you're the Dad"
Matt : **"That's a royal flush of.. pregnancy test"**
Emily : "Look, I don't know what you're thinking, but, you know. I know we haven't together that long, so..."

Back In Action, Time: 1:47:02

Accoding on Data 4, the conversation initially appears to concern an ordinary moment between Matt and Emily. However, Matt's question, "No Champagne?", indicates that he notices Emily's refusal. When he adds, "Really? Usually, we toast after we do our thing," he refers to their usual routine to highlight a difference in her behavior. This statement indirectly suggests that Matt expects an explanation for her refusal because it differs from their previous experiences. Emily responds, "I'm just not, you know, feeling champagne right now, y'know?" Her response provides an immediate reason but does not reveal the underlying situation.

In this context, the hesitant wording and limited explanation allow Matt to suspect that something else is happening. His statement, "Okay. Now I know something's up," confirms that he interprets Emily's behavior as a sign of an undisclosed concern. The implicature therefore emerges through the contrast between their usual routine and Emily's unusual response.

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The conversation changes when Emily states, "I'm pregnant. And you're the Dad." This direct announcement makes the previously undisclosed information explicit. Matt then responds, "That's a royal flush of… pregnancy test." His comparison to a "royal flush" uses a familiar expression associated with an exceptional combination in poker to convey his reaction to the unexpected news through humor. Rather than directly explaining his feelings, he responds with a figurative expression whose meaning depends on the situation. Emily subsequently says, "Look, I don't know what you're thinking, but, you know. I know we haven't been together that long, so…" The unfinished sentence leaves her concern unstated. In context, she appears to anticipate that Matt may be concerned about the timing of the pregnancy because their relationship has not lasted very long. The implied meaning must be inferred from the circumstances and the incomplete statement rather than from an explicit explanation.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation helps explain how these implicatures develop. The field shifts from a familiar moment involving champagne to a conversation about an unexpected pregnancy. The tenor is the relationship between two romantic partners who must respond to significant personal news. The mode is spoken interaction in which questions, hesitation, humor, and an unfinished sentence contribute to the interpretation of meaning. These contextual elements explain why the participants communicate some of their thoughts indirectly before and after the pregnancy announcement.

The interaction illustrates that both characters use direct and indirect expressions for different communicative purposes. Emily initially delays revealing the pregnancy, while Matt uses questions and references to their usual routine to interpret her behavior. After the announcement, Matt also relies on humor rather than directly stating his immediate reaction, and Emily leaves her concern about their relationship unfinished. These examples challenge the assumption that indirect communication belongs primarily to women or that men consistently communicate in a direct, fact-oriented manner. Instead, the characters adjust their language as the conversation develops and as they respond to sensitive information. Since this is a scripted film, the exchange demonstrates how gendered communication is represented in this particular relationship rather than establishing universal differences between men's and women's speech.

Data 5

Matt : "Babe, I got something to tell you"

Emily : "What!?"

Matt : **"Promise not to be mad?"**

Back In Action, Time: 1:21:01

In Data 5, Matt begins with "Babe, I got something to tell you" Although this utterance announces that he has information to share, it also creates an expectation that the information may be important. Emily responds, "What?", inviting him to continue. However, Matt does not immediately disclose the information. Instead, he asks, "Promise not to be mad?" This question carries an implicature because it suggests that the information he intends to share may upset Emily.

Rather than explicitly admitting that he has done something wrong or that the news may cause a problem, Matt encourages Emily to anticipate a potentially negative reaction. The implied meaning arises from the relationship between his request for a promise and

the information that remains undisclosed. The context of situation provides further insight into this exchange. The field concerns Matt's attempt to introduce information that he expects may cause a negative reaction. The tenor is an intimate relationship in which Matt anticipates Emily's response and seeks reassurance before continuing. The mode is spoken conversation in which the disclosure is delayed through a question. By asking for a promise before revealing the information, Matt creates anticipation and signals that the upcoming message may be sensitive. The meaning of his question therefore extends beyond a literal request for a promise; it functions as a warning that Emily may have a reason to become upset.

In relation to gendered discourse, Matt's utterance shows that a male character can communicate indirectly when managing a potentially difficult conversation. His use of "Promise not to be mad?" allows him to introduce the possibility of conflict without immediately explaining the cause. This example is important because it complicates a simple distinction between male directness and female indirectness. Matt's language is shaped by the communicative purpose of preparing Emily for the disclosure and by the intimate nature of their relationship. Nevertheless, the short exchange alone does not establish a broader gender pattern. It demonstrates how indirect meaning can be used by a male character in a particular interpersonal situation, supporting the study's emphasis on context when interpreting gendered discourse.

4.Inference

Inference is the process through which a hearer interprets a speaker's intended meaning by combining linguistic information, contextual clues, and background knowledge. Brown and Yule (1983) explain that hearers cannot directly access a speaker's thoughts therefore, they draw conclusions based on what is said and the circumstances surrounding the utterance.

Data 6

Matt : "Hey, Babe. We got the call. You ready?"
Emily : "Yeah. Be right there"
Matt : **"That's what you said five minutes ago"**
Emily : "I just need a minute"
Matt : **"Girl, I know you. That's how you say it when it's 20 minutes"**

Back In Action, Time 1:53:18

In Data 6, Matt and Emily discuss getting ready after receiving a call. When Matt asks, "You ready?", Emily replies, "Yeah. Be right there," indicating that she expects to join him shortly. However, Matt responds, "That's what you said five minutes ago." His statement shows that he interprets Emily's current response in relation to her earlier promise. Rather than accepting her words as a precise indication of when she will be ready, he compares them with their recent interaction.

This interpretation becomes clearer when Emily says, "I just need a minute," and Matt replies, "Girl, I know you. That's how you say it when it's 20 minutes." Matt draws a conclusion from his familiarity with Emily's behavior, interpreting her reference to "a minute" as an indication that she may take considerably longer. His inference is therefore based on shared experience rather than the literal meaning of her words alone.

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Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation helps explain this exchange. The field concerns the characters preparing to leave after receiving an important call. The tenor reflects the intimate relationship between Matt and Emily, whose familiarity allows Matt to refer to Emily's previous behavior. The mode is informal spoken conversation in which the speakers respond to one another through brief statements and comments based on their shared experiences. These contextual factors explain why Matt interprets Emily's words in light of their history rather than treating them as isolated statements.

From the perspective of gendered discourse, both characters contribute to the interaction in different ways. Emily indicates that she will be ready shortly, while Matt evaluates her statement against his knowledge of her previous behavior. Although their utterances differ in communicative function, the exchange does not establish that women generally soften their statements or that men rely more heavily on factual evidence. Matt's interpretation is possible because of his familiarity with Emily, while Emily's responses reflect the immediate situation in which she is not yet ready to leave. This example therefore illustrates how inference is shaped by shared experience, interpersonal familiarity, and situational demands rather than by gender alone.

Data 7

Matt : "Here is the thing, Ginny. Uh, I. I hide it here"

Granny : "**I assume others are looking for it"**

Matt : "Yeah"

Granny : "**So, after all this time you've dragged your problems to my doorstep"**

Back In Action, Time 51:05

In Data 7, Matt begins his explanation with "Here is the thing, Ginny. Uh, I… I hide it here." His hesitation suggests that he is approaching a potentially sensitive disclosure. Although he does not initially explain the full circumstances surrounding the hidden object, Granny responds, "I assume others are looking for it." Her statement shows that she draws a conclusion from the information Matt provides, connecting the act of hiding something with the possibility that others are searching for it. Matt's response, "Yeah," confirms her interpretation. Granny then says, "So, after all this time you've dragged your problems to my doorstep."

This statement extends her interpretation beyond the immediate disclosure. The phrase "after all this time" suggests that she associates Matt's current situation with previous experiences, while "dragged your problems to my doorstep" expresses her view that his difficulties have once again become her concern. Granny therefore interprets Matt's actions through both the immediate context and her understanding of their shared history.

The context of situation further clarifies this interaction. The field concerns Matt's disclosure about a hidden object and the problems associated with it. The tenor reflects a family relationship in which Granny appears familiar with Matt's past difficulties and feels able to judge his actions directly. The mode is spoken face-to-face conversation in which hesitation, confirmation, and evaluative statements contribute to the development of meaning. These contextual factors help explain why Granny moves quickly from interpreting Matt's disclosure to expressing frustration about the consequences of his actions.

In terms of gendered discourse, Granny's response is significant because she is a female character who interprets the situation confidently and expresses her judgment directly. Meanwhile, Matt hesitates before disclosing the information, and his brief confirmation allows Granny to continue her interpretation. These contrasting communicative choices challenge the assumption that women are necessarily indirect or that men are always more direct and decisive. Granny's authoritative language is better understood in relation to her familiarity with Matt, her apparent knowledge of his past, and her position in the interaction. The example thus supports a contextual understanding of gendered discourse in which interpersonal history and situational roles are considered alongside gender. However, the dialogue represents the characterization of Granny and Matt in a scripted film and should not be generalized to all women or men.

5.Co-text

Co-text refers to the linguistic context surrounding a word or utterance, including the expressions that occur before and after it. Brown and Yule (1983) explain that co-text helps listeners interpret meaning by providing linguistic information from the surrounding discourse. This context is particularly important when speakers use shortened expressions because their intended meanings can be understood through previous utterances.

Data 8

Matt : "Don't let go"
Emily : **"You don't let go"**
Matt : "**Alright, I won't"**

Back In Action, Time 1:42:04

In Data 8, Matt begins with the imperative "Don't let go," expressing the need to maintain their grip during a dangerous situation. Emily responds, "You don't let go," repeating the expression while shifting the responsibility toward Matt. The final utterance, "Alright, I won't," contains the auxiliary verb "won't," which substitutes for the fuller expression "I won't let go." Although the main verb phrase is omitted, its meaning remains clear because it can be recovered from the preceding utterances.

This exchange illustrates Brown and Yule's (1983) concept of co-text, as the surrounding dialogue enables the speakers' brief expressions to be interpreted without repeating the complete phrase. Based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation, the field concerns the characters' efforts to maintain their grip and support each other during a dangerous situation. The tenor involves Matt and Emily as romantic partners whose interaction reflects familiarity and mutual dependence. The mode is spoken dialogue in which short, direct utterances allow the characters to communicate quickly.

In terms of gendered discourse, both characters contribute to expressing concern and accepting responsibility for one another. Matt initiates the exchange with "Don't let go," while Emily mirrors his statement by saying, "You don't let go." Rather than presenting Matt as the only protector, the dialogue portrays Emily as an active participant who also emphasizes Matt's responsibility. Matt's response, "Alright, I won't," confirms his commitment through an expression whose meaning depends on the preceding dialogue.

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This interaction suggests that responsibility within their relationship is represented as reciprocal rather than exclusively associated with the male character. However, this interpretation is limited to the particular scene and should not be generalized to all male–female communication, since the dialogue is scripted and shaped by the film's dramatic situation.

5. Conclusion

This study analysed 40 utterances from Back in Action (2025) using Brown and Yule's (1983) five discourse features and Halliday and Hasan's (1976) context of situation. As shown in Table 1. The comparison by speaker gender shows that male speakers produced 21 data and female speakers 19 data. Implicature was the most frequent feature for both groups (57.1% of the male data and 42.1% of the female data), and reference was used at a similar rate (9.5% and 10.5%). Female speakers produced more presupposition and inference than male speakers, whereas co-text appeared only in male speakers' utterances. However, these differences involve only one to three data in each category, so they describe the selected dataset and do not establish a difference between male and female speakers.

The contextual analysis using field, tenor, and mode shows that the interpretation of the utterances depended on the activity being performed, the relationships between the speakers, and the spoken nature of the interaction. Both male and female characters used direct and indirect expressions, and their directness and politeness varied with role and authority, familiarity, urgency, and the purpose of the interaction. Authority was associated with the characters' positions in the family, such as Emily as a mother and Granny as the senior family member, rather than with gender. These findings suggest that the discourse of the characters is shaped by situational demands and interpersonal relationships more than by gender alone.

This study has several limitations. The data are a purposive sample of 40 utterances from one scripted film, so the findings describe how gender is represented in Back in Action and cannot be generalised to real-life male and female communication. The coding was interpretive, and the politeness appraisals are contextual judgements that other analysts might make differently. Future research could use a larger sample or several films, involve independent coders, and compare male and female speakers within similar situations. The study contributes an analysis that connects pragmatic discourse features with situational context, showing how meaning in gendered film dialogue is constructed through the interaction between textual features and context.

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