Stance Markers in Modern and Contemporary Drama: A Corpus Analysis of Dramatic Dialogue

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Abstract

Stance markers have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years. To date, however, there has been little agreement on the potential associations between gender and the use of stance markers in conversation. Moreover, less studied is the role played by gender in the use of stance markers in dramatic conversation. This study adopts a corpus linguistic approach to explore the characteristics between male and female characters using stance markers in dramatic dialogues. Using a modified framework, we explore male and female characters' epistemic, attitudinal, and the stance markers of style of speaking in a corpus nearly 570,000 words of 33 modern and contemporary English plays. The results show a significant difference between women and men in the use of stance markers in dramatic dialogues. Female characters use significantly more stance markers to convey uncertainty, personal attitudes, or feelings in the dramatic dialogues than their male counterparts. The findings in this study provide a new understanding of how different or similar females and males are in using stance markers in dramatic conversation.

Keywords

Stance Markers; Dramatic Conversation; Gender; Corpus Linguistics.

1. Introduction

All Stance markers have long been a question of great interest in a wide range of fields. They can be broadly defined as expressions used to convey the speaker's or writer's feelings, attitudes, value judgments, or assessments [2]. These markers can be categorized into three major semantic categories: epistemic, attitudinal, and style of speaking. Most studies of stance markers have been carried out in the field of knowledge communication in academic writing [2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]. One of the most significant discussions in stance markers is the use of hedging devices by males and females. However, recently, literature has emerged that offers contradictory findings of the likely cause, i.e., gender, for the differences between the use of hedges by men and women. According to some studies, women were more likely to use hedges than men [8, 9, 10]. Other researchers, however, have found men used more hedges than women in problem-solving interaction [11, 12]; or that there were no differences in frequency of hedges used by men and women [13, 14]. Besides the inconsistency in the previous studies, there is little research exploring stance markers deployed by males and females in conversation.

This study set out to shine new light on these debates by examining stance markers in dramatic dialogue by male and female characters in modern and contemporary English drama. In this paper, the Corpus of Modern and Contemporary English Plays was used to address the following research questions:

(1) What are the differences and similarities between male and female characters in the use of stance markers in dramatic dialogue?

(2) What is the possible explanation for the differences and similarities?

This study adopts both a contrastive and a corpus-based approach to tackle this issue.

2. Literature Review

2.1.   Stance Markers in Academic Writing

For many years, there has been a growing number of publications focusing on stance makers in academic writing. Biber *et al.* [2] investigated register (conversation, fiction, news, academic prose) differences in the marking of stance and found that prepositional phrases as stance markers were most common in academic prose; that extraposed *to*-clause was especially common in academic prose; that stance *noun* + prepositional phrase (e.g. *the possibility of...*) constructions were moderately common only in academic prose. Hyland [5] established a framework based on stance and engagement for exploring the means whereby academic interaction between writers and readers was achieved by analyzing 240 published research articles from eight disciplines and insider informant interviews. Aull *et al.* [3] compared epistemic stance in essay writing of first-year college students with those in advanced student writing and published academic writing and found that first-year college students used more generalization markers (e.g., every, anyone, nothing, all) in their essay writing compared with advanced students and experienced academics. Crosthwaite *et al.* [4] found that student writers were more likely to use a wider range of stance markers (e.g., attitude markers, boosters, self-mention, hedges) when compared with professional writers in dentistry research reports.

2.2.   Stance Markers in Spoken Discourse

In contrast to the studies of stance markers in written academic prose, there is much less information about the characteristics of stance markers in spoken discourse. One of the most influential studies of stance markers in oral communication comes from Biber *et al.* [2]. Biber *et al.* [2] analyzed the data from the Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus and concluded that stance markers were considerably more common in conversation than in the written registers (fiction, news, academic prose); and that modals and semi-modals as stance markers and adverbial stance markers were most common in conversation. Biber [1] examined the use of stance expressions between spoken and written university registers and found that two spoken university registers (classroom teaching, classroom management) placed much reliance upon stance devices to convey epistemic and attitudinal meanings. Gablasova *et al.* [15] investigated three types of stance expressions: adverbial, adjectival, and verbal expressions in advanced L2 speakers' spoken English production. The epistemic stance expressions have been found to be related to the task type and speaker's personal styles [15]. Hyland & Zou [6] explored junior academics' use of stance markers in the Three Minute Thesis presentation (3MT) from the hard and soft sciences, and found that this academic presentation was a stance-filled genre and speakers from the hard and social sciences use different stance expressions. Qiu & Jiang [7] analyzed the stance and engagement in a 3MT corpus of 80 presentations from six disciplines and found that stance markers (e.g., self mentions, attitude markers, hedges, boosters) were more often used than listener engagement markers (e.g., listener mentions, questions, directives, appeals to knowledge).

2.3.   Stance Markers and Gender

Around the early 1970s, small-scale research and case studies began to emerge linking the relationship between stance markers and gender. Two well-known studies that are often cited in research on this connection are that of Lakoff [8], who suggested that socially acceptable women's speech was laden with tentative language (e.g., tag questions, hedges) to express uncertainty. Leaper and Robnett [9] found that women were more likely than men to use tentative linguistic devices and argued that women's tendency to use tentative language has something to do with interpersonal sensitivity rather than a lack of assertiveness.

Namaziandost and Shafiee [10] examined the use of lexical hedges by male and female EFL students in their academic spoken language and found that more lexical hedges were used by female students instead of male counterparts.

Contrary to these published studies, Martin and Craig [13] examined the qualifying words (e.g., maybe, sort of) in four-minute segments of twenty conversations between previously unacquainted college students and found that there was no clear evidence that females were more tentative or deferent. Interestingly, their results indicated that males and females differed in their communication behavior in initial interaction reliant upon to whom they are talking. Bradac *et al*. [11] investigated intensifiers and hedges used by men and women in the interaction in same- and mixed-sex dyads and found that women use more intensifiers, while men use more hedges; and that there was no positive or negative correlation between the use of hedges and use of intensifiers by men and women. Dixon and Foster [12] analyzed two hedging devices, sort of and you know, in same-sex and mixed-sex conversations in a South African context and found that there was little convincing evidence of a link between the overall rate of the use of hedges and sex differences, that is to say, hedges were not gender-differentiated in their study. Precht [14] explored 900,000 words of informal conversation in social and work contexts and found that hedges had no significant differences between males and females.

In summary, although some research has been carried out on the relationship between the use of stance markers and gender, there have been few empirical investigations into the use of stance markers by male and female characters in dramatic discourse. Also, what remains unclear is whether speakers' gender influences the use of stance markers. The present study seeks to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the use of the stance expressions used by men and women in the dramatic genre. It is hoped that this research will provide new insights into advancing our knowledge of how men and women deploy linguistic resources to convey their personal feelings, attitudes, and assessments.

3.   A Framework for the Analysis of Stance Markers

Stance can be expressed by linguistic devices which can either present the stance or present a proposition framed by that stance [2]. These linguistic resources can be dealt with both grammatically and semantically. Grammatically, stance can be conveyed by stance adverbials, stance complement clauses, modals and semi-modals, stance noun + preposition phrase, and premodifying stance adverb [2]. Semantically, it is possible to group stance markers into three major semantic categories: epistemic, attitudinal, and style of speaking [2]. Each of them can be achieved by distinct grammatical devices.

Although stance expressions have been investigated from many perspectives for many years, few studies have established a framework for analyzing stance markers in different genres. One of the most influential models used for the analysis comes from Hyland [5], who proposed the model containing four stance features, i.e., hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention expressions. This model "provides a comprehensive and integrated way of examining the means by which interaction is achieved in academic argument" [5]. It means that Hyland's model is primarily aiming to analyze academic discourse. This paper attempts to examine the colloquial conversation in dramatic discourse, so Hyland's model may not be the optimal solution to our questions. Fortunately, Biber [1] has offered a framework for the exploration of spoken and written genres. The framework focuses on three major structural categories: modal verbs (and semi-modals), stance adverbs, and stance complement clauses. This study attempts to develop a framework to address the two questions based on Biber's framework and the semantic classification of stance markers [2]. The major grammatical and semantic features in

the framework are listed as following (the detailed stance markers checked manually in this study see Appendix B):

1.Epistemic Stance

1.1 Adverbials:

1.1.1 Likelihood: e.g. *perhaps, possibly, very likely*

1.1.2 Certainty: e.g., *certainly, undoubtedly, definitely*

1.1.3 Actuality: e.g., in fact, for a fact, actually

1.1.4 Source of Knowledge: e.g., *evidently, apparently, reportedly*

1.1.5 Limitation: e.g., *in most cases, mainly, typically*

1.1.6 Viewpoint: e.g., *in one's view, in one's opinion*

1.1.7 Imprecision: *be like, sort of, kind of*

1.2 Complement Clauses:

1.2.1 Verb + (that):

1.2.1.1 Likelihood: e.g., *I doubt, I believe, I think*

1.2.1.2 Certainty: e.g., *I know, I conclude, I determine*

1.2.2 Verb+ to clause: *Likelihood: e.g., appear to, seem to, tend to*

1.2.3 Adjective + (that):

1.2.3.1 Likelihood: e.g., *I am not sure, I am likely*

1.2.3.2 Certainty: e.g., *I am sure, I feel quite sure, I am certain*

1.2.4 Adjective + to clause:

1.2.4.1 Likelihood: e.g., *I am likely to*

1.2.4.2 Certainty: e.g., *I am certain to, I am sure to*

1.2.5 Verb/Adjective +extraposed (that):

1.2.5.1 Likelihood: e.g., *it is possible, it seems, it is unlikely*

1.2.5.2 Certainty: e.g., *it is sure, it is true, it is certain*

1.2.6 Noun that:

1.2.6.1 Likelihood: e.g., *a suggestion that, an assumption that, a claim that*

1.2.6.2 Certainty: e.g., *the fact that, the conclusion that, the observation that*

1.3 Noun Phrase: Likelihood: e.g., *possibility of*

1.4 Modal Verb: Likelihood: e.g., *could be, may be, might be*

2. Attitudinal Stance

2.1 Adverbial: e.g., *amazingly, anxiously, awfully*

2.2. Verb + (that): e.g., *I wish, I expect, I hope*

2.3 Adjective + (that): e.g., *I am angry, I am amazed, I am afraid*

2.4 Adjective+ to clause: e.g., *I am sorry to, I am glad to, I am happy to*

2.5 Verb/Adjective +extraposed (that): e.g., *it is horrible that, it seems rather silly that*

2.6 Noun that: e.g., *an expectation that, our expectation that*

3. Style of Speaking Stance

3.1 Adverbial: e.g., *properly speaking, to speak frankly, to tell you the truth*

3.2 Verb + (that): e.g., *I swear, I argue*

In this paper, the analyses of stance expressions contained all-controlling words which demonstrated these features, based on the previous investigations [1, 2].

4. Research Methodology

4.1. The Corpus

Corpus approaches to discourse analysis require a corpus to examine. A corpus is a collection of linguistic texts or audio-visual materials aiming to represent a language or some part of language [16]. There is no available corpus in this study, so the corpus addressing our research questions has to be compiled. Generally, the corpus compilation includes three stages: corpus design, text collection, and text encoding [17]. So we will consider the corpus design first.

4.1.1. Corpus Design

It is undoubtedly an important step to design a corpus. Corpus design is connected with the planning of compiling a corpus that is heavily dependent upon research objectives. Careful planning is conducive to the reliability of research results. Actually, the compiler's primary focus of corpus design is to be clearly aware of what kinds of analyses are likely to be undertaken [17]. Therefore, careful consideration to the corpus's purpose, type, structure, and size need to be taken in the paper.

This study aims to investigate the use of stance markers by men and women in dramatic discourse, so the corpus has a strong contrastive purpose. That is to say, the corpus is determined to be composed of modern and contemporary English plays, which can be further divided into two sub-corpora: one consisting of female dialogues, and the other consisting of male dialogues. Regarding the corpus type, the corpus is monolingual and diachronic, compiled for the specialized contrastive purpose.

The corpus is a diachronic collection of thirty-three dramatic texts of modern and contemporary English playwrights, named the Corpus of Modern and Contemporary English Plays (henceforth shortened as CMCEP). CMCEP is divided into three sub-corpora: the main corpus, the corpus of female dialogues (henceforth shortened as C-F), and the reference corpus, the corpus of male dialogues (henceforth shortened as C-M), as well as the corpus of stage directions and setting information (henceforth shortened as C-SDS). The division of CMCEP makes possible the contrastive analysis of stance markers by male and female characters.

4.1.2. Text Collection

Text collection requires compilers to pay attention to the availability of electronic texts, representativeness, and balance of data. In this section, the criterion of dramatic text selection for the corpus will be discussed. The criteria for compiling CMCEP are listed as following: 1) plays must be complete; 2) plays must belong to modern and contemporary plays written in English; 3) plays should include representative works as far as possible; 4) the works by both male and female playwrights should be included. Given the criteria, CMCEP is composed of thirty-three modern and contemporary plays written by thirty-three different American, English, and Irish playwrights. There are eight prize-winning plays, which account for 24% in total.

All plays in the corpus will mainly be gotten from websites for free downloading electronic texts, such as the Oxford Text Archive, Project Gutenberg, and BookZZ, etc. Then, all texts are stored in the code form of Unicode and UTF-8 for the convenience of the procedure of extraction and tagging. The general information of CMCEP is given in Appendix A.

Furthermore, dramatic texts can be divided into two parts: dialogues and stage directions. Stage directions are generally italic print and constantly put into brackets or parentheses. Because of this feature, it is relatively convenient to extract stage directions from the dramatic texts through manual and automatic ways. Concerning the automatic way, the software, EmEditor, is used because it supports the use of regular expressions, and in this study, the regular expression—Regex I, "[\(([][\s\S]*[\))]]", is used to extract the stage directions from dramatic

texts automatically . Then, dialogues are manually divided into two categories: female and male dialogues.

4.2. Research Procedures

This research used WordSmith Tools version 7 [18] to produce the corpus statistics and search for the stance markers mentioned above based on its default setting. The basic statistics of the corpora are presented in Table 1. After the concordancing search, we manually checked the concordance lines containing every occurrence of these items to ensure that they functioned as stance markers and excluded extraneous examples. This process allowed us to avoid double coding if an expression could have more than one function in context. Then the results were normalized to 1000 words to allow comparison across the two corpora, and to determine statistical significances, the log-likelihood (LL) test was run by Chi-square and Log-Likelihood Calculator[19].

Table 1. Basic corpus information

Corpus	Tokens	Types	TTR	STTR	MWL
CMCEP	783,060	23,796	3.04	38.68	4.16
C-F	218,899	11,612	5.30	38.11	3.96
C-M	353,054	15,889	4.50	38.44	3.99
C-SDS	166,985	10,896	6.53	37.89	4.52

Note: CMCEP, C-F, C-M, and C-SDS refer to the Corpus of Modern and Contemporary English Plays, the corpus of female dialogues, the corpus of male dialogues and the corpus of stage directions and setting information, respectively. Also, TTR, STTR and MWL refer to type/token ratio, standardized type/token ratio (per 1000 words) and mean word length (in characters), respectively.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1. The Overall Distribution of Stance Markers in Two Corpora

Stance markers are semantically subdivided into three categories: epistemic, attitudinal and style of speaking stance. In Table 2, it is clear that there is a significant difference between the use of stance markers by men and women in dramatic dialogues (log-likelihood=31.73, p <0.001). This finding indicates that the stance expressions in women's dialogues are much common than those in men's dialogues. This is to say, female characters in modern and contemporary English dramas are more likely to use linguistic resources to convey their judgment and attitudes. However, it is noteworthy that we identified 2,605 epistemic adverbials, 457 attitudinal adverbials and 23 style adverbials. This suggests that style adverbials are much less common than epistemic and attitudinal adverbials in dramatic conversation. This finding is not consistent with that of [2], who found that attitudinal adverbials had the lowest frequency of conversation rather than style adverbials. This difference may have much to do with the local characteristics of the distribution of stance adverbials in the spoken register.

Stance markers are grammatically sub-grouped into nine categories in Table 3. What can be clearly seen in the table is that three subcategories demonstrate statistically significant differences between men and women in the use of grammatical stance devices. This indicates that woman characters have the inclination to use adverbials, VERB + (THAT) and VERB /ADJECTIVE + EXTRAPOSED + (THAT) in the dramatic conversation, especially adverbials.

Table 2. The semantic distribution of stance markers across the two corpora

Semantic Category	Freq. in C-F	Freq. in C-M	LL	Sig. (*P*)	
Epistemic Stance	**1,756**	**2,408**	**26.48**	**0.000**	***
Attitudinal Stance	**393**	**547**	**4.92**	**0.027**	*
Style of Speaking Stance	14	18	0.40	0.527	
Total	**2,163**	**2,973**	**31.73**	**0.000**	***

Table 3. The grammatical distribution of stance markers across the two corpora

Grammatical Devices	Freq. in C-F	Freq. in C-M	LL	Sig. (*P*)	
Adverbial	**1,315**	**1,770**	**24.43**	**0.000**	***
Modal verb	77	158	-3.08	0.079	
Noun + of	1	5	-1.34	0.247	
Adjective + to	22	26	1.14	0.286	
Verb + to	19	28	0.09	0.762	
Verb. + (that)	**590**	**781**	**12.98**	**0.000**	***
Adjective + (that)	107	163	0.21	0.647	
Verb /Adjective + extraposed + (that)	**24**	**21**	**4.18**	**0.041**	*
Noun + that	8	21	-1.47	0.226	
TOTAL	2,163	2,973	31.73	0.000	***

5.2. Epistemic Stance Markers

5.2.1. Adverbials as Epistemic Stance Markers

As Table 4 shows, there is a significant difference between the use of epistemic stance adverbials by female and male characters in dramatic conversation (log-likelihood=19.77, p <0.001). More interestingly, the results reveal variations of the use of epistemic stance adverbials to convey different semantic meanings by men and women, with 1,108 cases in the corpus of female dialogues and 1,497 cases in the corpus of male dialogues, with the differences in likelihood being statistically significant (log-likelihood=20.58, p<0.001) and in actuality being statistically significant (log-likelihood=15.93, p<0.001). This indicates that women are more likely to demonstrate uncertainty (1), (2) and give comment on the status of the proposition as real-life fact (3), (4) than men in dramatic conversation. For example:

(1) MARY: Well, it's very unusual; but *perhaps* I might get you a little something.

(If)

(2) MAMA: Well, now, I guess if you think we so ignorant 'round here *maybe* you shouldn't bring your friends here—

(A Raisin in the Sun)

(3) PAULA: *Actually*, a fortnight and three days ago; I haven't calculated the minutes.

(The Second Mrs. Tanqueray)

(4) MRS. CULLINGHAM: I *really* think he's going to be superior to it!

(The Girl with the Green Eyes)

Table 4. The distribution of epistemic stance adverbials across the two corpora

Semantic Categories	Freq. in C-F	Freq. in C-M	Norm. Freq. in C-F	Norm. Freq. in C-M	LL	Sig. (*P*)	
Likelihood	**315**	**357**	**1.44**	**1.01**	**20.58**	**0.000**	***
Certainty	353	502	1.61	1.42	3.26	0.071	
Actuality and Reality	**284**	**331**	**1.30**	**0.94**	**15.93**	**0.000**	***
Source of Knowledge	17	33	0.08	0.09	-0.39	0.531	
Limitation	9	20	0.04	0.06	-0.66	0.416	
Viewpoint or Perspective	2	3	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.937	
Imprecision	**128**	**251**	**0.59**	**0.71**	**-3.30**	**0.069**	
TOTAL	**1,108**	**1,497**	**5.06**	**4.24**	**19.77**	**0.000**	***

Surprisingly, there is no significant difference between the use of stance adverbials to express **imprecision** by female and male characters in dramatic conversation. In fact, the stance markers of imprecision can be considered **hedges** [2]. This finding is consistent with those studies [11, 12, 13, 14]. This suggests that speakers' gender may not be a major factor which are thought to contribute to the difference between the use of hedges by men and women in the conversation.

5.2.2. Complement Clauses as Epistemic Stance Markers

Table 5. The distribution of complement clauses as epistemic stance markers across the two corpora

Grammatical Devices	Semantic Categories	Freq. in C-F	Freq. in C-M	Norm. Freq. in C-F	Norm. Freq. in C-M	LL	Sig. (P)	
V. + (that)	**Likelihood**	**341**	**452**	**1.56**	**1.28**	**7.40**	**0.007**	**
	Certainty	127	193	0.58	0.55	0.27	0.603	
V. + to	Likelihood	19	28	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.762	
	Certainty	0	0	NULL	NULL	NULL	NULL	
Adj. + (that)	Likelihood	7	9	0.03	0.03	0.20	0.655	
	Certainty	**54**	**30**	**0.25**	**0.09**	**23.18**	**0.000**	***
Adj. + to	Likelihood	0	0	NULL	NULL	NULL	NULL	
	Certainty	0	0	NULL	NULL	NULL	NULL	
V./Adj. +extraposed + (that)	Likelihood	6	5	0.03	0.01	1.19	0.275	
	Certainty	8	10	0.04	0.03	0.29	0.593	
N. + that	Likelihood	0	0	NULL	NULL	NULL	NULL	
	Certainty	8	21	0.04	0.06	-1.47	0.226	
Complement Clauses	**Likelihood**	**373**	**494**	**1.70**	**1.4**	**8.16**	**0.004**	**
	Certainty	**197**	**254**	**0.9**	**0.7**	**5.50**	**0.019**	*
TOTAL		**570**	**748**	**2.60**	**2.12**	**13.61**	**0.000**	***

The distribution in Table 5 shows that there is a significant difference between the use of complement clauses as epistemic stance by female and male characters in dramatic conversation, with the differences in likelihood being statistically significant (log-likelihood=8.16, p<0.01) and with the differences in certainty being statistically significant (log-likelihood=5.50, p<0.05) as well as with the differences in overall use of complement clauses as epistemic stance being statistically significant (log-likelihood=13.61, p<0.001). Table 5 indicates that it is more common for women characters to articulate uncertainty and slight more common for them to articulate certainty in their speech and that women generally use more complement clauses to convey epistemic stance than men. Interestingly, female characters prefer to use ADJ. + (THAT) structure (e.g. I am sure that, I am certain that) to show their certainty towards a proposition. For example:

(5) RUTH: Well—... I *guess* I might as well go on to bed ... (*More or less to herself*) I don't know where we lost it ... but we have ... (*Then, to him*) I—I'm sorry about this new baby, Walter. I *guess* maybe I better go on and do what I started ... I *guess* I just didn't realize how bad things was with us ... I *guess* I just didn't really realize...

(A Raisin *in the Sun)*

(6) CECILY: I don't think you should be so proud of that, though ***I am sure*** it must have been very pleasant.

(The Importance *of Being Earnest)*

5.2.3. Noun Phrases and Modal Verbs as Epistemic Stance Markers

As we saw in Table 6, there is no significant difference between noun phrases and modal verbs as epistemic stance across the two corpora. Table 6 also shows that NOUN + PREPOSITIONAL PHRASEs are extremely little used in dramatic conversation. This is consistent with the findings [2] in which NOUN + PREPOSITIONAL PHRASEs are the characteristics of academic prose rather than conversation. However, modal verbs are rarely used in dramatic conversation, which contrasts with their distribution in the studies [2], wherein modal verbs are the most common stance markers in conversation. This indicates that there might be local variation in the use of modals to express characters' epistemic stance.

Table 6. The distribution of noun phrases and modal verbs as epistemic stance markers across the two corpora

Grammatical Devices	Semantic Categories	Freq. in C-F	Freq. in C-M	Norm. Freq. in C-F	Norm. Freq. in C-M	LL	Sig. (*P*)
N. + Prep. Phrase	Likelihood	1	5	0.01	0.01	-1.34	0.247
	Certainty	0	0	NULL	NULL	NULL	NULL
Modal Verb	Likelihood	77	158	0.35	0.45	-3.08	0.079
	Certainty	0	0	NULL	NULL	NULL	NULL
TOTAL		78	163	0.36	0.46	-3.64	0.056

5.3. Attitudinal Stance Markers

Table 7 shows that female speakers in the dramatic dialogues employed significantly more attitudinal stance markers, with the differences being statistically significant (log-likelihood=4.93, p<0.05). Once again, this contrasts with their distribution in the research [14], in which the stance category of general affect (general expressions of opinion, attitude or emotions) showed no significant differences between men and women in the informal American conversation. In our study, female characters tend to use more adverbials (7) and

VERB + THAT (8), to use less ADJ. + THAT (9) to present their attitude toward the proposition, typically conveying an evaluation, value judgment, or assessment of expectations.

(7) MARY: **Unfortunately**, Mr. Cater has not yet returned, or perhaps he might...

(If)

(8) THE WOMAN: (*enters holding a box of stockings*): **I just hope** there's nobody in the hall. That's all I hope. (*To Biff.*) Are you football or baseball?

(Death of a Salesman)

(9) HALIE'S VOICE: Good. **I'm amazed** they still have that kind of legislation.

(*Buried Child*)

Table 7. The distribution of adverbials and complement clauses as attitudinal stance markers across the two corpora

Grammatical Devices	Freq. in C-F	Freq. in C-M	Norm. Freq. in C-F	Norm. Freq. in C-M	LL	Sig. (*P*)	
Adv.	197	260	0.90	0.73	4.46	0.035	*
V. + (that)	118	131	0.54	0.37	8.56	0.003	**
Adj. + (that)	46	124	0.21	0.35	-9.50	0.002	**
Adj. + to	22	26	0.10	0.07	1.14	0.286	
V./Adj. + extraposed + (that)	10	6	0.05	0.02	3.83	0.050	
N. + that	0	0	NULL	NULL	NULL	NULL	
TOTAL	393	547	1.80	1.55	4.92	0.027	*

Note: C-F and C-M refer to the corpus of female dialogues and male dialogues, respectively. LL refers to the value calculated in log-likelihood. The normalization basis is per 1000 words. The asterisks (*) indicate significance level: (*), statistically significant at the 0.05 level; (**), statistically significant at the 0.01 level; (***), statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

5.4. Stance Markers of Style of Speaking

The stance markers of style of speaking are a common feature of oral communication and present speakers' comments on the communication itself. As we see in Table 8, there is no significant difference between men and women using style markers in dramatic conversation. Also, it is noteworthy that adverbials are more frequent in dramatic conversation. This result is consistent with that of Biber *et al.* [2], who found adverbials were the primary grammatical device functioning as the stance markers of style of speaking in conversation.

(10) LADY BRACKNELL: **To speak frankly**, I am not in favour of long engagements.

(*The Importance of Being Earnest*)

(11) PLAYER: ... **Generally speaking**, things have gone about as far as they can possibly go when things have got about as bad as they reasonably get.

(*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*)

(12) ROBERT: ...[*As ANDREW hesitates-violently.*] **I swear** I'll get out of bed every time you put me there. You'll have to sit on my chest, and that wouldn't help my health any...

(*Beyond the Horizon*)

Table 8. The distribution of adverbials and complement clauses as style stance markers across the two corpora

Grammatical Devices	Freq. in C-F	Freq. in C-M	Norm. Freq. in C-F	Norm. Freq. in C-M	LL	Sig. (*P*)
Adv.	10	13	0.05	0.04	0.26	0.610
V. + (that)	4	5	0.02	0.01	0.14	0.706
TOTAL	14	18	0.06	0.05	0.40	0.527

6. Conclusions and Discussion

Our research questions investigated the use of stance expressions by female and male characters in dramatic conversation and the findings indicate that there is a significant difference between women and men in the use of stance markers in their dialogues. Female characters use significantly more stance markers, especially epistemic markers demonstrating uncertainty and attitudinal stance expressions, in the dramatic dialogues compared with their male counterparts. Our findings support the association between language and gender in the use of specific epistemic and attitudinal stance markers.

This result may be partially explained by Lakoff's hypothesis that "in appropriate women's speech, strong expression of feeling is avoided, expression of uncertainty is favored". This means that the expression of uncertainty in women's language may be one of the typical features of this register. Another possible explanation for the finding is that "women's speech is often seen as excitable, emotionally engaged but in a trivializing way". This suggests that women generally use more attitudinal and emotional linguistic resources in their interpersonal interaction with others. Furthermore, stance markers contribute to the characterization of female and male characters in the dramatic world. These markers provide readers with helpful information to help them comprehend the fictional world created by playwrights. In other words, if the characteristics of characters' oral communication in the dramatic world are more similar to those in the real world, readers may easily understand the dramatic world. This is the third alternative possible explanation of the finding.

Another important finding is that the proportion of stance markers fulfilling three semantic functions varies dramatically. Specifically, epistemic stance expressions presenting characters' comments on the status of information in a proposition make up the largest proportion of the three. These differences can be explained in part by that epistemic stance is generally associated with many aspects of life in a textual world, so characters are more likely to exploit epistemic linguistic resources to show how they understand the world in a subjective way. Besides, the stance expressions of style of speaking account for the smallest proportion among the three. This finding seems to contradict the assertion by Biber *et al*., who found that the stance markers of style of speaking were used more frequently in conversation than attitudinal markers. The reason for the most minor proportion of the stance expressions of style of speaking is not clear, but it may have something to do with the local variation of registers. Similarly, disciplinary variations might be a factor that contributes to the difference between the use of stance markers in the hard and soft sciences. Thus, the possible local variation in conversation register might lead to the discrepancy between our findings and other researchers' findings. It indicates that playwrights shall take into consideration the characteristics of dramatic conversation and allow their characters to converse with each other based on both the knowledge of interpersonal communication and the understanding of the typical features of register-specific interaction.

It is somewhat surprising that only three grammatical subcategories of stance markers are more commonly used in women's dialogues than men's. This finding is likely related to the association between semantic stance and grammatical devices used for expressing the semantic

meaning. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, women were more likely to demonstrate uncertainty and attitudes expressed by a large proportion of grammatical devices, especially adverbials and VERB + THAT constructions in dramatic dialogues.

The findings in this study are subject to at least three limitations. First, while we attempt to shed new light on the relationship between language and gender, we just analyzed the use of grammatical stance markers by male and female characters in the dramatic register. In fact, besides grammatical devices, paralinguistic (e.g., loudness, pitch, and duration) and non-linguistic devices (e.g., body positions and gestures) can also be used to convey stance meaning . This leaves two questions open. To what extent do registers influence how male and female speakers use stance markers? Are there differences between the use of paralinguistic and non-linguistic devices by male and female characters in the dramatic register? The investigation of relationship between the use of the stance expressions by different genders and different registers and the extension of the framework to cover the paralinguistic and non-linguistic devices would possibly broaden our understanding of how gender differences affect language use. Second, we only examined the dialogues from modern and contemporary English drama and our data analysis relied upon small sample sizes. It is recommended that it be worthwhile to extend the scope of data covering more periods and playwrights' works in future research. Third, the study is limited by the lack of prior research studies directly based on the analytical framework used in this study and directly relative to the register chosen in this study, i.e., dramatic register. This means that it is not possible to consider the effect size of our results. Further studies, which take effect size into account, will need to be undertaken.

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Appendix A

Table 9. Metadata of the Corpus of Modern and Contemporary English Plays

1	Arthur Wing Pinero	*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1893)*
2	Oscar Wilde	*The Importance of Being Earnest (1898)*
3	James Matthew Barrie	*The Admirable Crichton (1902)*
4	Clyde Fitch	*The Girl with the Green Eyes (1905)*
5	Harley Granville-Barker	*Waste (1907)*
6	Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson	*The Man from Home (1908)*
7	Lady Gregory and William Butler Yeats	*The Unicorn from the Stars (1908)*
8	Israel Zangwill	*The Melting Pot (1909)*
9	Jerome Klapka Jerome	*Fanny and the Servant Problem (1909)*
10	John Millington Synge	*Deirdre of the Sorrows (1910)*
11	William Somerset Maugham	*Landed Gentry (1910)*
12	William Butler Yeats	*The Countess Cathleen (1912)*
13	Gilbert Keith Chesterton	*Magic (1913)*
14	Arnold Bennett	*The Honeymoon (1914)*
15	Brighouse Harold	*Hobson's Choice (1916)*
16	Edna St Vincent	*The Lamp and the Bell Millay (1917)*
17	Alan Alexander Milne	*Mr. Pim Passes By (1919)*
18	David Herbert Richards Lawrence	*Touch and Go (1920)*
19	Eugene O'Neill	*Beyond the Horizon* (1920)
20	Noël Coward	*I'LL Leave it to You (1920)*
21	Lord Dunsany	*If (1921)*

22	Bayard Veiller	*The Thirteenth Chair (1922)*
23	George Bernard Shaw	*Saint Joan (1923), AWARDED*
24	Thornton Niven Wilder	*Our Town (1938), AWARDED*
25	Tennessee Williams	*The Glass Menagerie (1944), AWARDED*
26	Arthur Miller	*Death of a Salesman (1949), AWARDED*
27	Samuel Barclay Beckett	*Waiting for Godot (1953), AWARDED*
28	Tom Stoppard	*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1966)*
29	Harold Pinter	*The Birthday Party (1957)*
30	Lorraine Hansberry	*A Raisin in the Sun (1959)*
31	Sam Shepard	*Buried Child (1978), AWARDED*
32	David Mamet	*Glengarry Glen Ross (1984), AWARDED*
33	Tony Kushner	*Angels in America (1993), AWARDED*

Appendix B

Table 10. Adverbials as Epistemic Stance Markers

Adverbials as Epistemic Stance	The Corpus of Female Dialogue	The Corpus of Male Dialogue
Likelihood	perhaps (107); possibly (16); very likely (4); maybe (138); probably (40); arguably (0); supposedly (0); apparently (7); basically (1); presumably (2); seemingly (0)	perhaps (145); possibly (16); very likely (8); maybe (109); probably (64); arguably (0); supposedly (0); apparently (11); basically (1); presumably (1); seemingly (2)
Certainty	certainly (55); undoubtedly (1); no doubt (12); definitely (3); of course (226); incontestably (0); incontrovertibly (0); decidedly (0); doubtless (3); admittedly (0); assuredly (0); evidently (5); surely (48); unquestionably (0)	certainly (81); undoubtedly (11); no doubt (25); definitely (7); of course (302); incontestably (0); incontrovertibly (0); decidedly (3); doubtless (2); admittedly (1); assuredly (2); evidently (7); surely (60); unquestionably (1)
Actuality and Reality	in fact (22); for a fact (0); in actual fact (0); really (229); actually (21); truly (12)	in fact (37); for a fact (0); in actual fact (0); really (244); actually (38); truly (12)
Source of Knowledge	evidently (5); apparently (7); reportedly (0); reputedly (0); according to (5); as … notes (0)	evidently (7); apparently (11); reportedly (0); reputedly (0); according to (15); as … notes (0)
Limitation	in most cases (1); mainly (0); typically (0); generally (6); largely (1); in general (1)	in most cases (1); mainly (1); typically (0); generally (14); largely (2); in general (2)
Viewpoint or Perspective	in one's view (0); from one's perspective (0); in one's opinion (2)	in one's view (0); from one's perspective (0); in one's opinion (3)
Imprecision	is like (8); am like (0); are like (3); be like (7); sort of (38); kind of (27); about (15); roughly (0); so to speak (1); approximately (0); nearly (27); maybe +number (2)	is like (11); am like (1); are like (6); be like (16); sort of (70); kind of (65); about (25); roughly (8); so to speak (6); approximately (3); nearly (39); maybe +number (1)

Note: The numbers in the brackets refer to the frequency of items in the corpus.

Table 11. Complement Clauses as Epistemic Stance Markers

Complement Clauses as Epistemic Stance	Semantic category	The Corpus of Female Dialogue	The Corpus of Male Dialogue
V. + (that)	Likelihood	I doubt (0); I believe (31); I think (203); I guess (24); I suppose (78); I reckon (5)	I doubt (2); I believe (35); I think (251); I guess (40); I suppose (106); I reckon (18)
	Certainty	I know (127); I conclude (0); I determine (0)	I know (193); I conclude (0); I determine (0)
V. + to	Likelihood	appear to (3); seem to be (10); seems to be (6); tend to (0)	appear to (3); seem to be (9); seems to be (15); tend to (1)
	Certainty	NULL	NULL
Adj. + (that)	Likelihood	I am not sure (7); I am likely (0)	I am not sure (9); I am likely (0)
	Certainty	I am sure (45); I'm quite sure (3); I feel quite sure (1); I am certain (3); I feel (quite) certain (2)	I am sure (27); I'm quite sure (1); I feel quite sure (0); I am certain (1); I feel (quite) certain (1)
Adj. + to	Likelihood	I am likely to (0)	I am likely to (0)
	Certainty	I am certain to (0); I am sure to (0)	I am certain to (0); I am sure to (0)
V./Adj. +extraposed + (that)	Likelihood	it is possible (0); it seems (5); it is unlikely (1)	it is possible (2); it seems (3); it is unlikely (0)
	Certainty	it is sure (0); it's true (4); it is certain (0); it is obvious (2); it is clear (0); it is evident (1); it is probable (1)	it is sure (0); it's true (5); it is certain (3); it is obvious (0); it is clear (0); it is evident (1); it is probable (1)
N. + that	Likelihood	a suggestion that (0); assumption that (0); claim that (0); hypothesis that (0)	a suggestion that (0); assumption that (0); claim that (0); hypothesis that (0)
	Certainty	the fact that (8); conclusion that (0); observation that (0)	the fact that (17); conclusion that (4); observation that (0)

Note: The numbers in the brackets refer to the frequency of items in the corpus.

Table 12. Noun Phrases and Modal Verbs as Epistemic Stance Markers

Epistemic Stance	Semantic category	The Corpus of Female Dialogue	The Corpus of Male Dialogue
Noun. + Prep. Phrase	Likelihood	possibility of (1)	possibility of (5)
	Certainty	NULL	NULL
Modal Verb	Likelihood	could be (17); may be (42); might be (18)	could be (26); may be (94); might be (38)
	Certainty	NULL	NULL

Note: The numbers in the brackets refer to the frequency of items in the corpus.

Table 13. Attitudinal Stance Markers

Attitudinal Stance	The Corpus of Female Dialogue	The Corpus of Male Dialogue
Adverbial	affrightfully (2);amazingly (1); anxiously (1); appropriately (0); badly (9); bitterly (4); brutally (1); charitably (1); comfortably (2); dangerously (1); dearly (3); desperately (2); devotedly (1); disgracefully (1); eagerly (1); fearfully (1); foolishly (1); fortunately (3); frightfully (4) furiously (1); gaily (1); gently (6); gladly (3); happily (5); horribly (10); humbly (1); inexorably (1); kindly (13); luckily (2); luridly (1); madly (1); marvellously (1); miraculously (1); miserably (1); odiously (3); outrageously (1); painfully (4); perfectly (40); pitilessly (1); reasonably (2); rightly (1); sadly (2); safely (6); seriously (22); shockingly (2); sickly (1); successfully (1); surprisingly (0); sweetly (1); thoroughly (5); thoughtfully (1); timidly (1); unfortunately (7); unhappily (1); wildly (2); wonderfully (4); wretchedly (1); to my surprise (0); to my surprise (0); as you might guess (0); as might be expected (0); even worse (1)	abominably (1); acutely (1); admirably (5); amazingly (1); appropriately (0); ardently (1); astonishingly (0); atrociously (1); badly (19); bewilderingly (1); bitterly (1); blasphemously (1); bravely (1); charmingly (1); cheerfully (1); comfortably (2); comically (1); compassionately (1); coolly (2); damnably (1); dearly (1); desperately (3); devotedly (1); disgracefully (1); disgustingly (2); dishonourably (1); dispiritedly (1); disturbingly (0); enthusiastically (1); favorably (4); ferociously (1); frightfully (4); fortunately (3); gaily (1); gently (1); gladly (4) gracefully (2); gravely (1); grievously (1); grimly (1); happily (4); helplessly (1); horribly (1); interestingly (0); jealously (1); joyfully (1); kindly (14); lovingly (2); marvellously (1); mercifully (2); miserably (1); monstrously (1); neatly (1); odiously (11); perfectly (69); pitifully (1); poorly (2); prettily (1); queerly (1); reasonably (3); respectfully (2); ridiculously (1); rightly (5); ruthlessly (1); sadly (0); safely (4); satisfactorily (3); seriously (20); sorely (1); soundly (1); successfully (1); surprisingly (2); tenderly (1); uncomfortably (1); unhappily (1); violently (1); warmly (1); wildly (1); wonderfully (7); worthily (1); wretchedly (1); to my surprise (0); unfortunately (9); as you might guess (0); as might be expected (0); even worse (1)
V. + (that)	I wish (52); I expect (13); I hope (53); I worry (0)	I wish (62); I expect (24); I hope (45); I worry (0)
Adj. + (that)	I am angry (0); I am amazed (1); I am shocked (0); I am surprised (0); I am afraid (30); I am glad (10); I am sorry (2); I am anxious (1); I am happy (2)	I am angry (0); I am amazed (0); I am shocked (0); I am surprised (0); I am afraid (84); I am glad (21); I am sorry (19); I am anxious (0); I am happy (0); I am right (0); I am unhappy (0); I feel bad (0); I am nervous (0); I am ok (0)
Adj. + to	I am sorry to (6); I am glad to (11); I am happy to (3); I am content to (1); I am proud to (1)	I have been anxious to (1); I am anxious to (1); I am sorry to (6); I am glad to (16); I am proud to (1); I am happy to (1)
V./Adj. + extraposed + (that)	it's right that (1); it seems rather silly that (1); it really is very lucky that (1); it's very funny (1); it's horrible that (1); it's right (1); it's lonesome (1); it's too bad (1); it's lucky (1); it's sweet (1)	it's ok that (1); it's so foolish that (1); it's right that (1); it is so good that (1); it is queer (1); it's damnable (1)
N. + that	an expectation that (0); our expectation that (0)	an expectation that (0); our expectation that (0)

Note: The numbers in the brackets refer to the frequency of items in the corpus.

<div align="center">**Table 14.** The Stance Markers of Style of Speaking</div>

Attitudinal Stance	The Corpus of Female Dialogue	The Corpus of Male Dialogue
Adverbial	candidly (0); confidentially (2); figuratively speaking (0); generally (1); generally speaking (0); honestly (0); precisely (2); properly speaking (2); simply (0); sincerely (0); strictly (0); strictly speaking (0); to be candid (0); to be honest (0); to be precise (0); to put it bluntly (0); to speak frankly (1); to tell you the truth (1); truthfully (1); with all due respect (0)	candidly (1); confidentially (0); figuratively speaking (0); frankly (4); generally (1); generally speaking (1); honestly (2); precisely (0); properly speaking (0); simply (0); sincerely (1); strictly (0); strictly speaking (2); to be candid (1); to be honest (0); to be precise (0); to put it bluntly (0); to tell you the truth (0); truthfully (0); with all due respect (0)
V. + (that)	I swear (4); I argue (0)	I swear (5); I argue (0)

Note: The numbers in the brackets refer to the frequency of items in the corpus.