


Gendered Communication in Red Dead Redemption 2

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ABSTRACT

The role of language in shaping social identity is prominent, especially in the representation of gender in digital narratives. This study investigates language choices in Red Dead Redemption 2 through Deborah Tannen's genderlect theory, which focuses on rapport talk (female language style characterized by relationality and expressivity), and report talk (male language style that emphasizes status, information, and dominance). Using descriptive qualitative methods, this study shows that female characters mostly display rapport talk and report talk is mostly displayed by male characters. However, some characters portray a combination of both, adding to the complexity of gender presentation in digital media. The results show how video games can reinforce or reaffirm linguistic representations of gender stereotypes.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a fundamental aspect of shaping social and cultural identity. Through language, individuals express their thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, constructing a sense of self that aligns with their personal and societal roles (Alejandro, 2024). Choice of words, politeness strategies, accents, and tone of voice can inform a person's identity and show who they are and what they have been through. Language is used to mark group affiliations as well as cultural norms. Linguistic choices can reveal where in the societal hierarchy the speaker falls, such as concerning the level of education, profession, and class (Alisoy, 2024). There are dialects, accents, and speech patterns that are associated with prestige and authority, and those that are associated with the informal or marginalized group (Yan & Ruan, 2024). This linguistic stratification not only has social impacts within interpersonal defences but also serves to create social divisions based on social mobility, as those who are capable of dominant language varieties may have more opportunities for social mobility.

Gender is one of the many aspects of identity conceptualized by language that has very carefully been studied (Abdalgane, 2021). Men and women are quite different in personality or communication (Edwards & Hamilton, 2004). This happens because long-standing social norms and cultural expectations deliver the linguistic patterns between men and women. As far as these differences are concerned, they are not just incidental, but they are deeply entrenched in the social structures such that each gender is seen as expected to communicate in a certain way. Boys and girls are socialized differently from the start to have different speech behaviors, boys may be encouraged to speak assertively and competitively, and girls may be taught to use language more cooperatively and relationally (Eadie, 2009).

This leads to gendered language use as a mirror of larger gender roles in society. The speech patterns of men in many cultures, especially those mandated according to the

leadership and dominance of the society, usually involve more direct, authoritative, and goal-oriented features. On the contrary, women's speech is typically assumed to be polite, emotional, and sensitive to social harmony which further makes women appear as caregivers and nurturers. At the same time, these linguistic differences are more than a reflection of already existing gender norms but rather an active reinforcement of the gendered social structures through the means of language.

These gendered linguistic patterns are not confined to real-world interactions but also extend into digital media, including video games, where they become embedded in character dialogues and narratives. As a form of digital media, video games are one of the most influential and represent society itself, including the representation of gender. The characters and narratives in video games are often replete with gender stereotypes seen in society such that male characters are typically related to power, dominance, and leadership, while female characters are typically portrayed as emotive, supporting, or depending on male characters. It is a pattern that reinforces social perception of gender roles and may shape players' understanding, as well as the reproduction of gender norms in real life.

Tannen (1990) introduced the concept of genderlect, a framework that explains the distinct communication styles of men and women. Tannen (1990) asserts that these differences result from early socialization in which boys and girls are socialized to adopt opposing styles of conversation. Boys are socialized from childhood to compete, assert dominance, and play in hierarchical ways, while girls are taught to place relationships and cooperation over assertiveness and emotions. So, these early experiences become foundational experiences and shape how men and women will continue to behave linguistically well into the future, into adult life in a social context. Tannen (1990) states that men use a communication style focused on conveying information, asserting status, and solving problems. This type of speech is typically direct, concise, and goal-oriented, reflecting men's preference for structured and transactional communication.

Similarly, Khaldi & Boukhentach (2020) say that men tend to use language as a report or task-oriented talk, such as giving information, producing solutions, and achieving higher status and power. In conversations, men may seek to dominate discussions by taking longer speaking turns, interrupting more frequently, or steering the dialogue toward subjects that reinforce their expertise or authority (Kennedy & Camden, 1983). This pattern aligns with the idea that male speech often functions as a means of maintaining control within social hierarchies, rather than fostering personal connections.

Women tend to use a type of communication focused on creating a relationship, expressing emotions, and maintaining social harmony (Nawaz et al., 2024). Women use such linguistic features as tag questions, hedging, and expressive intonation to create a feeling of togetherness with their conversation partners (Pamikat, 2020). In these strategies, women have created an atmosphere of empathy and they become facilitators of group cohesion.

The communication styles above add to the gendered dynamics of authority in conversations. Given that men tend to give more value to the informational exchange and the status assertion, they are generally perceived as more dominant in conversations (Bareket & Shnabel, 2020). They may also interrupt, challenge, and redirect conversations to fit the bill, making them look dominant in societal interactions. Conversely, the cooperative communication style of women may have been perceived as less authoritative, and even as a means of avoiding being aggressive, though their use of it is equally important in assuring social equilibrium. As a result, some of these differences can sometimes result in misunderstandings between how men and women conversationally discuss relationships, with men, for example, tending to become frustrated with what they might perceive to be inappropriate or somehow unnecessary attributions on women's part and women, for example, tending to feel ignored by men's 'factual' talk as if their relationships are not ever a matter of fact at all.

Previous studies have revealed many differences in the language used by men and women in different settings. There is evidence from past research that gender affects speech

patterns, conversational behavior, and linguistic choices. Societal norms and cultural expectations leave these differences shaped so that men communicate differently than women. One such study was conducted by Li, (2014), who examined the differences in language use between men and women in conversations. The study found that men tend to talk more than women, both in terms of the total number of words spoken and the duration of their speaking turns. Additionally, men are more likely to dominate conversations by holding the floor longer, which suggests a tendency toward verbal dominance in social interactions. In another context, Sudewi & Sedeng (2018) analyzed female speech patterns in the romance movie. This research found that women often use language to build relationships and express emotions, their linguistic choices are also influenced by situational factors, such as social roles and interaction dynamics. Another significant study by Santi (2013) explored gendered language use in media and found that female characters do not always adhere strictly to traditionally feminine speech patterns. Instead, they sometimes adopt male linguistic traits, and vice versa. This finding challenges the idea that gendered language use is entirely fixed, suggesting that media portrayals of speech can be fluid and context-dependent. Characters in films and video games, for example, may switch between masculine and feminine language styles based on narrative demands, social hierarchy, or personal characteristics.

Based on this background, this study focuses on two main research questions: 1) What are the language choices used by male and female characters in *Red Dead Redemption 2*? 2) What are the purposes of using different language choices between male and female characters in this game?. It shows the gendered communication in *Red Dead Redemption 2*.

METHOD

Research Design

The methodology used is a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the language used by male and female characters in *Red Dead Redemption 2* (RDR2). Qualitative approaches based on the philosophy of postpositivism are used to research natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out in triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2019). This research is appropriate for a qualitative approach because such an approach permits an investigation into patterns of linguistic behavior and their social relevance.

Interactive media, particularly video games, also exhibit linguistic patterns influenced by social and cultural contexts. In *Red Dead Redemption 2*, an action-adventure game set in late 19th-century America and developed by Rockstar Games (2018), dialogues are not only a means of character communication but also play a crucial role in world-building and story development (Gidion et al., 2023). The game presents a richly detailed environment where interactions among characters reflect historical and societal norms of the time, including gendered language use.

This study employs a descriptive research method, as described by Creswell & Creswell (2018), to collect information about these existing linguistic conditions. Instead of quantifying data, this approach allows for the identification and explanation of linguistic features and their functions within the game's dialogues. Specifically, the study examines how gender differences in language are represented in conversations and how these differences shape character interactions.

In *Red Dead Redemption 2*, male characters, particularly Arthur Morgan the game's protagonist are often portrayed as strong, dominant, and authoritative, characteristics that are reflected in their speech. In contrast, female characters, though fewer in number and playing relatively smaller roles, tend to use a more cooperative and persuasive communicative style. Tannen's genderlect theory provides a useful framework for understanding these differences. According to Tannen, men typically use *report talk* to establish authority and assert dominance, while women use *rapport talk* to foster social connections and maintain harmony. This study,

therefore, explores how these linguistic strategies manifest in the game's dialogues and what they reveal about gender representation in interactive media.

Data Sources

This research uses the data that are conversations between male and female characters from YouTube channels and includes rdr.outlaw, filthiness, ReadsDeadBaby, Red Dead Entertainment, and TheJapaneseDeskFlipper. As these channels are public and with gameplay videos, they can easily be found. This transparency is important to assure the validity of the research results itself, as well as to strengthen the persuasiveness of an analysis of the research questions. The video clips chosen followed Deborah Tannen's idea that spoken language has distinctive gender ratios in certain communication styles between men and women. The examined conversations will then help to show how language in the video game setting is used to express a person's gender identity.

Since *Red Dead Redemption 2* is an MMORPG with a vast number of characters and dialogues, this study does not analyze every character or conversation. Instead, it focuses on 7 selected characters (three male and four female) and 17 dialogues that best represent the research focus: the differences in language use between male and female characters. By selecting key examples, this research ensures a more in-depth linguistic analysis while maintaining the relevance of findings with gendered communication patterns.

Data Collection

According to Sugiyono (2019), data collection can be conducted in various settings, from various sources, and using different methods. In this research, the data collection process involved several steps: first, observing conversations from gameplay clips on YouTube; second, transcribing the dialogues from the videos into written form; third, identifying language choices from the transcribed data and categorizing them based on gender; and finally, analyzing how male and female characters express their gender identity through language.

Data analysis

According to Moleong (2018), data analysis is the process of examining research instruments such as documents, records, and recordings in a study. In this research, the data analysis followed several steps: first, extracting relevant dialogue samples from *Red Dead Redemption 2* that feature interactions between male and female characters, particularly those that align with Tannen's theory on gender-based communication styles; second, comparing Tannen's genderlect theory with the observed language choices in the dialogues, focusing on linguistic patterns that reinforce gender stereotypes; and finally, identifying linguistic features such as vocabulary selection, tone, speech patterns, and communicative intent. The analysis then examines how these language choices contribute to the depiction of gender stereotypes and identities within the game's narrative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings reveal that in the dialog in *Red Dead Redemption 2*, men use report talk and women use rapport talk more often, which correlates with Deborah Tannen's (1990) genderlect theory. Usually, the male characters in this game speak in a direct, functional way, the way one would either give the commands or deliver the crucial information. On the other hand, despite their differences, female characters are drawn to use language that is more expressive, more emotional, and maintains social relations. In *Red Dead Redemption 2*, males tend to use problem-solving-oriented communication, direct command, and fact statements when communicating. The example is given in the table below:

Table 1. Examples of Male Character Language Patterns in RDR2

Character	Dialogue Example	Linguistic Feature	Genderlect Type
Dutch van der Linde	"Arthur! Any luck?"	Direct question, commanding tone	Report talk
Arthur Morgan	"I found a place where we can get some shelter."	Information-sharing, problem-solving	Report talk
Hosea Matthews	"If we don't stop soon, we'll all be dying."	Expressing concern, factual statement	Report talk
Arthur Morgan	"An old mining town, abandoned - it ain't far."	Concise, direct information-sharing	Report talk
Dutch van der Linde	"Listen... Listen to me all of you for a moment, now we've had... well, a bad couple of days..."	Leadership speech, rallying group	Report talk

In the excerpt above, it can be seen that male characters use language to provide important information in critical situations "I found a place where we can get some shelter." - Arthur. Lead and direct the group "Listen... Listen to me all of you for a moment..." - Dutch. Stating facts in a direct and firm tone "If we don't stop soon, we'll all be dying." - Hosea.

Arthur and Dutch are examples of characters who are dominant in conversation, using language to give instructions and make quick decisions, which corresponds to the report talk style. In contrast, the female characters in this game show a tendency to use rapport talk, which is characterized by language that is more expressive, emotional, and concerned with social relationships. This can be seen in the table below:

Table 2: Examples of Female Language Patterns in RDR2

Character	Dialogue Example	Linguistic Feature	Genderlect Type
Sadie Adler	"Do it my way honey, it's for the best."	Endearment term (<i>honey</i>), persuasion	Rapport talk
Mary-Beth	"Oh Arthur, it's good to see you."	Emotional connection, storytelling	Rapport talk
Abigail Roberts	"Davey's dead. There was nothing more you could've done."	Emotional expression, reassurance	Rapport talk
Ms. Grimshaw	"Miss Gaskill... get that fire lit quick. Miss Jones, bring in whatever blankets we have."	Persuasive, group coordination	Rapport talk
Abigail Roberts	"What are we going to do? We need supplies."	Seeking group input, relational speech	Rapport talk

From this table, some key characteristics of female language in the game are more emotionally expressive "Davey's dead. There was nothing more you could've done." - Abigail. Showing concern for social relationships and group welfare "What are we going to do? We need supplies." - Abigail. Uses instructions in a more persuasive and less authoritative form than male characters "Miss Gaskill... get that fire lit quick." - Ms. Grimshaw.

Table 3. Direct Comparison between Report Talk and Rapport Talk

Aspect	Male Speech (<i>Report Talk</i>)	Female Speech (<i>Rapport Talk</i>)
Function	Problem-solving, giving orders, decision-making	Building relationships, expressing emotions
Example	"Arthur! Any luck?" (Dutch)	"Davey's dead. There was nothing more you could've done." (Abigail)
Tone	Direct, commanding, sometimes minimalistic	Emotional, persuasive, expressive
Length	Short and to the point	More elaborate and detailed

Discussion

Language Choices of Male and Female Characters in Red Dead Redemption 2

Red Dead Redemption 2 (RDR2) has features of Deborah Tannen's genderlect theory revealed through the dialogues of the male and female characters. It is argued that men and women communicate differently according to socialization processes that have shaped men to prefer report talk and women to communicate with rapport talk as proposed by Tannen (1990).

It is found that male and female characters in Red Dead Redemption 2 (RDR2) behave in distinctly linguistic ways, in accordance with Deborah Tannen's (1990) genderlect theory. Report talk is characterized by direct, informative and status-oriented speech for the male characters and rapport talk those stresses emotional expression, relationship-building and social harmony for the female characters.

Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the dialogues reveals that these structures are not simply a representation of traditional gender roles, but rather are helping to make narrative and gameplay sense of the situation. Report talk is used by male characters such as Arthur Morgan and Dutch van der Linde to assert their authority, to make decision and to dictate the story line. The game's setting being a rough and tumble Wild West based survival type setting means direct communication is a must, hence their speech is often brief, commanding and problem solving.

The collected dialogues named female characters as relying on relational language and feelings in the use of expressivist and grammatists based on emotions and interpersonal communications. This is in line with rapport talk which is communication used to create relationships and keep social harmony. For instance:

Sadie Adler: "Do it my way honey, it's for the best."

The use of "*honey*" in Sadie Adler's dialogue is an endearment term that is happy, warm, and relational, which are all qualities of rapport talk. The use of this linguistic choice expresses the notion of familiarity and sentimental connection, which corresponds to the overt tendency of women to use language to strengthen interpersonal relationships. Sadie softens the blow of her statement by injecting some affectionate terms, thereby making her statement sound more like an order, but less like one. As is often the case, the directive comes in female speech, pedantically in avoidant terms and engineered with sensitivity for social harmony.

Also, "*it's for the best*" expresses guidance and persuasion, rather than direction. As opposed to demanding dominance directly, Sadie deciphers her command as best for the listener, while suggesting compliance without hostile force. Using this indirect method to influence is consistent with Tannen's proposition that women tend to communicate not to get control, but rather to create consensus, discredit, and enhance relationships (Edwards & Hamilton, 2004). Sadie's speech is quite different from that of male characters who may give commands more directly, and they convey how female characters approach power dynamics in Red Dead Redemption 2.

Although Sadie Adler is fairly faithful to traditional expectations of female speech, by her character uses of rapport talk she frequently subverts those norms. Sadie's dialogue is a mix of rapport talk and report talk and is unlike the dialogue of most other female characters in the game who focus on emotionally expressive, nurturing conversation. This alternation between warmth and directness on her part indicates that she uses the language strategically to change depending on the social situation. This supports Santi (2013) findings that gendered language in media is not always strictly divided women can adopt masculine speech traits when necessary, just as men can incorporate relational elements into their communication.

Therefore, Sadie's speech serves as an example of how the female characters in Red Dead Redemption 2 Her use of honey and the way she sets up persuasive framing are standard utilizing stereotypical female linguistic features; however, her overall speech seems to show agentive and assertive characteristic which absolves her from conventional gender roles while maintaining to use gender frames for her edge.

Another example can be seen in this dialogue:

Mary-Beth: "Oh Arthur, it's good to see you."

Arthur: "You okay, Marie-Beth?"

Marie Beth: "Just great but I nearly got killed back in town. They caught me robbing from a store and I ran for my life."

Arthur: "You weren't followed here?"

It's a cue reply of *"it's good to see you"* that highlights an emotional connection and relational bonding that is an important characteristic of female speech patterns as defined in Tannen's framework. Mary-Beth communicates by expressing her feelings upon her first encounter with Arthur and her preference for communicating by showing more warmth and human relationships. She then continues with *"I nearly got killed back in town. They caught me robbing from a store and I ran for my life,"* which is her personal experience and feeling rather than just saying things. It further reinforces the process of this storytelling and impresses upon the listener emotional expression through personal details rather than on information alone (Nicoli et al., 2022).

One difference that is perhaps most pronounced concerning the usage of gendered language in the game is between wordy female speech and male characters' tendency towards often mute or minimalistic speech. Often, female characters Mary-Beth and Abigail have more elaborate speech patterns, corresponding to their inclination to use rapport talk. In their dialogues, emotional expressions, personal storytelling, and social engagement are commonplace. For example, Mary-Beth's detailed recounting of her near-death experience *"Just great, but I nearly got killed back in town. They caught me robbing from a store and I ran for my life."* illustrates a storytelling approach where emotions and relational context take center stage.

But male characters such as Arthur Morgan are quite frequently mute, favoring brevity and being direct in conversation. Arthur's response to Mary-Beth's story *"You weren't followed here?"* is a clear form of report talk where speech fulfills a functional purpose and not an emotional one. Instead of interacting with Mary-Beth's feelings, Arthur immediately changes the topic to, what Arthur sees as, a safe condition. This kind of minimal verbal response is what Tannen had observed of men's use of language in helping them solve problems not in forming social relationships.

Within Red Dead Redemption 2, this difference in speech patterns is used for both narrative and character reasons. Arthur's consistent problem-solving and minimum responses bearing down on him give the sense of his character as a hardened outlaw whose survival relies on quick thinking and efficiency rather than emotion. His aloofness plays second fiddle to the common masculine characteristics in Western literature, which stipulate men be action-driven rather than expressive with words. In contrast, Mary Beth's conversational behavior has more in common with the traditionally feminine characteristics of communicating emotionally, socially, and deeply. Using these linguistic contrasts, the game uses them to make interactions seem authentic to the historical setting as to the character archetypes. At the same time though, it also slightly promotes gender norms by depicting male characters as rational decision-makers, and female characters as emotional narrators. With such use of rapport talk and report talk, the game uses communication styles to help develop character identity and storytelling.

Another example in language choice can be seen below:

Abigail Roberts: "Good to see you putting your back into it."

Arthur: "....."

Abigail: "Any closer and people'll start talking, Arthur."

Though appearing to be a casual remark, Abigail Robert's line, "*Good to see you putting your back into it.*" has an implicit expectation attached to it. She does not express overt praise or encouragement but a kind of playful sarcasm or indirect criticism. This is because women also synthesize language to make their social cohesion and to gently guide behavior. Abigail refrains from giving a direct command or noticing a fact and instead phrases her observation as a social engagement of Arthur, a type of rapport talk. Another theory, Deborah Tannen's genderlect theory states that women use indirect socially aware language, and that aligns with Abigail's conversational method.

Arthur only adds to this idea, by his silence in response, that men, especially in Red Dead Redemption 2, talk less about relational small talk. His report talk style mirrors his lack of verbal engagement: the speech is used primarily for communicating information needed rather than for maintaining social relationships. Tannen (1990) argues that men often avoid conversational rituals that do not serve a direct purpose, and Arthur's silence exemplifies this pattern. Arthur's not like Abigail, he speaks but doesn't engage in social interaction while he prefers to act rather than to talk. This highlights the *wordy vs. mute* contrast in gendered speech patterns, where female characters tend to be more expressive while male characters often remain reserved.

Then she adds a social note to her interaction, "*Any closer and people'll start talking, Arthur,*" adding a social dimension to their interaction. This statement underscores awareness of society's perception – that women are highly concerned about social harmony. While Arthur is unresponsive, Abigail keeps on talking, showing that her language is not only used interpersonally but also for social monitoring of responses. As observed in Tannen's framework, women's speech is often concerned with relationships and group feel. Whereas Arthur's silence is the male propensity to only speak when necessary in a social context, and not at all as a social bond maintainer.

The interaction between Abigail and Arthur shows how the main gendered communication patterns still exist in Red Dead Redemption 2. Whereas Arthur responds by being reserved and action-based, Abigail is playful and socially aware, and her indirect speech is the antithesis of Arthur's timid verbalizing. These linguistic differences align with Jie Li's (2014) findings, which suggest that while men may dominate conversations in terms of total words spoken, they are less likely to engage in relational discourse. Instead, they focus on speech that serves a practical function. Arthur's reserved nature exemplifies this trend, as his speech is primarily used to convey essential information rather than build rapport. The *wordy vs. mute* dynamic in the game further emphasizes how gendered language use reflects broader societal norms, with women prioritizing relational engagement and men favoring efficiency in communication.

The Purpose of Language Choices in Red Dead Redemption 2

In Red Dead Redemption 2, male and female characters make different choices over language, which plays out to do a variety of communicative work and represents gender roles and stereotyping in the historical setting of the game. For example, the language of female characters is mainly rapport talk and they dialogically utilize language as a device to promote relationship building, express emotions, and keep social harmony. It is their speech patterns that are aligned with traditional expectations associated with women as nurturers and mediators; they emphasize interpersonal connection. By employing a linguistic habit that both perpetuates historical and cultural norms of the late 19th-century game's setting, the period in which the game takes place, and with practices of women's experiences throughout the world, this linguistic tendency illustrates and compliments the tendency of women to participate in all other forms of supportive, emotive roles of the society.

Sadie Adler is a character who distinguishes herself by countering usual gender norms but keeps utilizing relational language in her dialogues, which is clear evidence of rapport talk. Sadie's line "*Do it my way, honey, it's for the best*", is a good example of a combination of directive and relational language that at the same time demonstrates a combination of

traditionally masculine and feminine speech features. It is a direct assertion that reminds me of the report talk male speech style – transmission of information, problem-solving, and command-like structures. Yet instead, Sadie opts to soften the directive with the use of an endearment “honey”.

“Honey” is another way of bringing warmth as well as building relational bonding, which is in line with rapport talk since it sounds like an attempt to keep social cohesion as long as control of the situation remains with him. Sadie is self-reliant, strong-willed, and action-oriented, like many of the male characters in the game, along the lines of her dual approach to this, Sadie’s speaking strategies reflect that she is an action-oriented girl, which is commonly ascribed to boys, but used linguistic strategies that are usually used by girls.

Additionally, her statement “*It’s for the best*” sounds much more persuasive than authoritarian. She avoids giving an outright command by cloaking her instruction in a perceived obligation to the person on the receiving end. This mirrors the findings from previous sociolinguistic studies that found women are likely to express their statements in ways that invite willing agreement and cooperation rather than confrontation. The use of a justification rather than an imperative allows Sadie to demonstrate authority and maintain a relational connection through her speech, showing how gendered communication styles overlap in her speech.

Sadie’s speech style diverges from the expected speech style of female characters in the game, as they don’t only rely on the emotional connection and although they have more aggressive tone towards the opponent than the usual, Sadie also adopted a more dominant linguistic approach. This concurs with the findings of Ni Wayan Ayu Santi (2013) that female characters using media sometimes perform speech patterns that show behaviors typically solely to men to exercise power in different ways.

Another example of the dialogue in the game:

Abigail Roberts: "Good to see you putting your back into it."

Arthur: "....."

Abigail: "Any closer and people'll start talking, Arthur."

Gendered language use in Red Dead Redemption 2 can also be found in the talk between Abigail Roberts and Arthur Morgan. The remark is Abigail’s opening line: “*Good to see you putting your back into it.*” This statement seems to be a casual reference to the physical effort that Arthur has made, but there is an underlying expectation or critique to it. Abigail’s remark is more of a playful sarcasm or indirect commentary on Arthur’s work ethic rather than direct praise or encouragement. This is indicative of how women so often resort to language to keep social cohesion without much in the way of overt influence on behavior which is characteristic of rapport talk.

Arthur's either lack or his response further contrasts the speech between the sexes. This aligns with the principles of report talk proposed by Tannen (1990) as he doesn’t seem to have any reluctance to join a relational small talk. Men do prefer speech that solves with a definite functional purpose, e.g., to convey information or to solve a problem. Many times, such exchanges are without verbal engagement, particularly when they do not meet. First, the purposes described above, or second, have implicit social expectations or emotional undercurrents. Thus Arthur’s silence ends up being characteristic of speech by men in the game, and men in general, who use language differently from women.

With a social dimension added, Abigail then follows up with, “*Any closer and people will start talking, Arthur.*” This remark appears to contradict regard or awareness of social perceptions because it signals that women are usually more alert to social interactions and losses of reputation. Abigail’s statement indicates that public opinion affects social behaviour and by saying that, she recognizes that people’s behaviour is shaped by external judgment. Uncharacteristically, Abigail is actively involved in social communication and goes out of her

way to show attentiveness to group cohesion and reputation management, unlike Arthur who does not respond.

This is a prime example of how men and women in Red Dead Redemption 2 interact differently while using language. Abigail's speech shows typical features of rapport talk such as indirectness, awareness of social matrix, and subtle influence. On the other hand, Arthur's silence and unwillingness to use conversation patterns suggest a report talk style where speech is used sparingly and generally corresponds to pragmatic functions. In addition to marking the linguistic separation between male and female characters, this exchange also fits within an understanding of gender expectations in the game's historical and narrative frameworks.

Another example is Mary-Beth's opening line:

Mary-Beth: "Oh Arthur, it's good to see you."

Arthur: "You okay, Mary-Beth?"

Mary-Beth: "Just great, but I nearly got killed back in town. They caught me robbing from a store and I ran for my life."

Arthur: "You weren't followed here?"

Gendered language use in Red Dead Redemption 2 can be observed in another character's conversation, in this case Mary-Beth with Arthur Morgan. Mary-Beth's opening is this: *"Oh Arthur, good to see you,"* and there's enthusiasm in that. The first line of this is a great example of rapport talk: it establishes an emotional connection rather than delivering information. Mary-Beth responds to Arthur by addressing him warmly and enthusiastically, getting to it with various relational bonding tools, of women's usage of language as a means to building interpersonal relationships. This conforms to Tannen (1990) who argues that women tend to use language for connecting and for maintaining social harmony.

Arthur's immediate response, *"You okay, Mary-Beth?"*, contrasts sharply with her expressive greeting. His words show concern, but they are not the emotion that Mary-Beth delivered. His response is short, practical, and goal-oriented, simply to find out if she's physically unharmed; he's not trying to do anything deeper, emotional. This is how really men talk and their report talk is mostly used to transmit efficiently information and to solve problems, not to build intimate relationships. Arthur's behavior shows us a male character that values function over feeling in the interactions in the game.

Mary-Beth then continues the conversation with an extended narrative: *"Just great, but I nearly got killed back in town. They caught me robbing from a store and I ran for my life."* Her response is highly expressive and detailed, contrasting with Arthur's brevity. She does not merely state the facts; instead, she shares a vivid personal experience, conveying both the danger she faced and her emotions surrounding the event. Storytelling aligns with the rapport talk of storytelling that serves to inform, but also engage the listener on an emotional level (Daniell, 2021). Tannen agrees with the fact that women's language often creates shared experiences to make conversations more dynamic, and relational.

Arthur's report style is further reinforced in his final response. Typically, he doesn't respond to the emotional nature of Mary-Beth's expression or provide any reassurance, instead, he immediately changes the topic to a practical concern of safety. Yet his speech is as direct and purposeful as men so often are in avoiding excess wordage in proscribed problems or high stakes situations. Arthur responds to the emotional undertone of Mary-Beth's story by dismissing it and redirecting the conversation towards something concrete rather than the emotional aspect, which typically happens to male persons.

This exchange also underscores the difference between the language of the game's male and female characters. With this in mind, Mary-Beth's speech is reflective of cooperative, expressive, and rapport talk which related conversations serve as a way to build relationships and share experiences. Contrariwise Arthur exemplifies the manner of reserved and solution-focused report talk in which language is used primarily to collect, as it were, and transmit such information. This is not only an affirmation of Tannen's descriptions of gendered

communication styles but also evidences how these cultural dynamics are shown throughout the narrative and character interaction within the game.

None of the linguistic patterns that Red Dead Redemption 2 observes are arbitrary; they carry further meanings in constructing a narrative arc and developing characters. Report talks props up the male characters' roles as leaders, strategists, and enforcers of order, which are reinforced by their preference for report roles. Their speech patterns contribute to how they are perceived as authority and competence which are key elements to moving around the world of the game. For example, often Dutch van der Linde would deliver one of his speeches that would rally his gang *"Listen... Listen to me all of you for a moment, now we've had..."* His speech demonstrates the use of language as a tool of leadership and persuasion in masculine-coded spaces (Bareket & Shnabel, 2020).

In contrast, female characters furnish their roles as caretakers, mediators and emotional anchors by appealing to rapport talk faced toward the group. This is consistent with long held gender norms that link women with socially defined roles in nurture and relationships such as to family (Edwards & Hamilton, 2004). Although they act as an easy, convenient way to reinforce stereotypes, the game chooses the use of these speech patterns to extends the characters of the game. Consider, for example, Abigail Roberts; she is not just a passive nurturer; her emotionally charged speech, more often than not, teeters on urgency and assertiveness.

Additionally, the player's perception of authority and emotional depth in the game is related to the contrast between male and female speech patterns. For instance, Arthur Morgan's reserved and minimalistic speech style exemplifies the rugged Western outlaw archetype by making him seem boorish. Meanwhile, the game balances the action by having expressive dialogues by female characters that add moments of emotional resonance, while also giving the narrative substance.

This study's findings demonstrate how video games act as digital narrativize inundate and sometimes transgress traditional gender boundaries based on linguistic representation. Report talks among male characters and rapport talk among female characters indicate that both broad societies of the day have had gendered patterns of communication. Yet, there are characters like Sadie Adler that amalgamate the two speech styles, which marks a departure away from lip service to gendered video game character development and towards a more complex representation of gender in video games.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the gendered language used in Red Dead Redemption 2 through Deborah Tannen's theory, particularly focusing on rapport talk and report talk. Female characters like Sadie Adler, Mary-Beth, and Abigail frequently use relational and emotionally expressive language to create social connections and maintain group harmony. Their speech often includes affectionate terms, storytelling for details, and indirect persuasion, aligning with rapport talk as a means of forming social bonds. In contrast, Arthur Morgan exemplifies report talk, characterized by direct, reserved, and functional speech patterns. His minimal words and responses suggest a preference for concise communication, reflecting traditional male speech patterns. Additionally, Arthur's tendency to remain silent in social interactions highlights the contrast between the wordiness of female dialogue and the brevity of male speech. However, the game also challenges traditional gender norms, as seen in Sadie Adler's fluid use of both rapport and report talk. The language choices in Red Dead Redemption 2 serve as a narrative device that reinforces character identities while reflecting real-world gendered communication patterns. By embedding these linguistic traits within the game's historical and social context, the developers contribute to the broader discussion of gender representation in interactive media. Since video games influence cultural perceptions of gender roles, developers should be mindful of how language choices shape character identities. Introducing more diverse linguistic portrayals, such as emotional speech in male

characters or assertive speech in female characters, can enhance storytelling depth and promote more nuanced gender representations in digital narratives.

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