

# Topic Development in Talks Among Women

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## Abstract

It has been found that language use differs according to age, gender, socioeconomic class, background, region, and ethnicity. Linguists should look at this reality further and more thoroughly. In the context of mainstream, English-speaking, white settings in the US, UK, and Australia, their studies have examined how language usage varies by gender. This qualitative research is conducted to discover the topics and how they develop in the talks among single, middle-class, white women in their 30s, working, and living in New York City, United States of America (USA). The data are taken from 16 conversations considered talks among these women as the main characters in the 12 episodes of the first season of the USA TV series, *Sex and the City*. The data are then analyzed by referring to the research conducted by Jennifer Coates (Coates and Cameron, 1988). Based on the analysis, it is found that these talks are about women's opinions, feelings, and experiences and that there are six patterns of topic development in these all-female conversations. These conversations consist of exposition, development, and coda but only differ in how the participants introduce the topics, lead them into the discussion, and end the conversations.

*Keywords: topic development, talk, women's language*

## INTRODUCTION

Researchers in anthropology and sociology have discovered that language use varies depending on geographic location, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, background, age, and gender. It is up to linguists to investigate this truth further. Their studies have looked at how language is used differently depending on gender in the mainstream, white, English-speaking settings in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

With some attention to syntactic constructions, such as multiple negation, social dialect research focuses on differences between women's and men's speech in the areas of pronunciation, such as [in] vs. [ɪŋ], and morphology, such as past tense forms (Holmes 1998). Syntax, semantics, and style are now the primary areas of study for gender disparities, according to Robin Lakoff (2004). She suggests that language used by and about women reflects their inferior social standing in American society and the way they use language. She points out several linguistic traits that are more frequently used by women than by men to convey uncertainty and lack of confidence.

According to Holmes (1998), the following linguistic characteristics are present in women's speaking:

1. Lexical hedges or fillers, for example **you know, sort of, well, you see.**
2. Tag questions, for example, **she's very nice, isn't she?**
3. Rising intonation on declaratives, for example, **it's really good?**
4. 'Empty' adjectives, for example **divine, charming, cute.**
5. Precise color terms, for example, **magenta** and **aquamarine.**
6. Intensifiers such as just and so, for example, **I like him so much.**
7. 'Hypercorrect' grammar, for example, consistent use of standard verb forms.
8. 'Superpolite' forms, for example, indirect requests and euphemisms.
9. Avoidance of strong swear words, for example, **fudge** and **my goodness.**
10. Emphatic stress, for example, **it was a BRILLIANT performance.**

Deborah Jones discusses female gossip in her 1980 article entitled *Gossip: Notes on Women's Oral Culture*. She bases her argument both on her own experience and the writings of other women who have written about female gossip. The article's subject matter is typical of white, English-speaking women. The essay goes over the meaning, components, and purposes of gossip. According to her, gossip is a particular form of female conversation that emphasizes the values,

morals, and friendship of women as a social group. The grocery store, hair salon, and house are all places where gossip happens. Topics address the socially prescribed positions of women, such as those of wife, girlfriend, and mother. According to Jones, gossip serves the following four purposes: house talk, scandal, bitching, and chatting (Harlow & Jensen 1997).

Jones provides an explanation of how setting, participants, topic, form, and function relate to language use among women. The paper by Jones has the advantage of emphasizing the importance of women communicating with other women. Its flaw is the scarcity of actual evidence. Since the release of this paper, some linguists have, however, advanced the theory that, as opposed to dominant-subordinate relationships, the linguistic differences between men and women may be the result of sub-cultural differences (Coates & Cameron 1988).

In her 1980 paper, *Gossip: Notes on Women's Oral Culture*, Deborah Jones addresses gossip among women based on her observations and other women's writings on gossip between women, (Harlow and Jensen 1997). The definition, components, and purposes of gossip are discussed in the essay logically and understandably. The article's subject matter is typical of white, English-speaking women.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines gossip as "casual conversation about other people's affairs, usually accompanied by rumor and critical remarks." According to Jones' paper, gossip is a particular type of female conversation that is significant for the morals, ethics, and cohesiveness of women as a social group. She characterizes all-female conversations as gossip. Tag questions are frequently used in gossip when discussing someone else's acts or behavior. When a woman shares information about a situation or a person, she is more likely to start thinking or asking questions and forming opinions. Domestic locations like the grocery store, hair salon, and house are where gossip takes place. The subjects of gossip are a reflection of the social roles that women are expected to maintain, such as mother, wife, and girlfriend. The focus is on domestic duties, child-rearing, appearance, and the wife's position as a source of psychological knowledge.

The four distinct purposes of gossip, according to Jones, are bitching, chatting, house talk, and scandal. There are discussion subjects for each type. House talk refers to the sharing of information on specific

tasks and relationships, such as recipes, household tips, dress codes, successfully parenting a child, and locating and maintaining a spouse. A scandal is about evaluating other people's conduct. Bitching is the act of attacking men and focuses on individualized grievances about the devalued standing and constrained role of women. The last and most private function, chatting, is talking to someone about their emotions, way of life, and beliefs.

In her study *Gossip Revisited: Language in All-Female Groups* (Coates & Cameron 1988), Jennifer Coates examines a corpus of 135 minutes of talk between female friends. Her method of research is qualitative. Her work seeks to determine what formal characteristics are typical of all-women discourse, examine the idea of cooperativeness, and determine whether the evidence supports general claims made by Deborah Jones in her paper, *Gossip: Notes on Women's Oral Culture*.

In her study, Coates takes account of a group of female friends over nine months in the years 1983 and 1984. These women have a long-standing group of friends and gather for conversation once every two weeks at each other's homes. Coates documents a group of white, middle-class women who are in their late 30s and early 40s. The purpose of the 1975-founded group has steadily changed over time: at first, it served as a support system for mothers of young children; later, it encouraged these women in their struggle to start careers in their middle years. Coates has been a part of this group since it first started meeting in 1975, and she keeps a record of her friends' visits to her home whenever it is her turn to host the group during that time. She records the talks in the living room of her house in Birkenhead, Merseyside. Around the gas fire, her friends enjoy a beer while sitting on the couches or the floor. Meetings begin around 9.00 p.m. and last for three hours or longer. The conversations Coates documents cover a broad range of subjects, including discussions of television shows, mother's funerals, and child abuse. She claims that discussing individuals and emotions seems to be a trait shared by all women's groups.

According to earlier studies, women tend to build on one another's ideas, favoring continuity over discontinuity, and subject shifts should happen gradually. As a result, a discussion on a particular subject may go on for a while. Based on her research, Coates concludes that the sharing of anecdotes is a typical method for introducing a new

subject in conversations; sometimes one anecdote is sufficient, and other times more than one happens. These introductory sections are monologues, which distinguishes them from the main development segment and offers the speaker unusual speaking rights when telling a story. Discussion sections are multiparty and are where speakers assess the topic. Several speakers will frequently talk at once, and speaker turns are frequently short. Discussion areas can be difficult. Individual presenters address their own emotions regarding the subject at hand on some level. In essence, the speakers are pleading with the listeners for support. Even though their positions somewhat conflict with one another, they must express their emotions to cope with them. On a different level, the discussion shifts to more broad issues. The broad and the specific are intertwined; critically, speakers collaborate to sort out their emotions. The debate is lengthy. Topic changes are gradual rather than sudden. In any case, Coates' data imply that topics are created collaboratively, women do build gradually on one another's contributions, and topic shifts are gradual rather than abrupt.

Following this research, the author takes an interest in examining talks among women to determine what the topics are and how these topics develop in their talks. In this research on the language used in female gossip in the USA TV series *Sex and the City*, the author draws on the study by Jennifer Coates mentioned above. The characters in this well-liked TV show are four white women in their 30s, who reside and work in New York City. These women are close friends who communicate frequently and share every detail of their lives.

## METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Data are derived from conversations between female friends in the *Sex and the City* television shows in the USA. By using Jennifer Coates' research (Coates & Cameron 1988), the data are examined to determine the topics of these female talks and their development. To perform this study, data were gathered from conversations between a group of women made up of at least three female characters from the television series. These data were gathered from two digital video discs (DVD) that comprise 12 episodes of this well-known TV show's debut season.

In this study on conversations between women, several steps were taken. The first was to view recorded TV shows. The second was to write down the female characters' conversations in this TV show. Coding them comes in third. The topics and topic development were then determined by analyzing these conversations between only women. Drawing conclusions to address the main question presented in the previous section was the last step.

This research is restricted to conversations between middle-class, white women in their 30s, who are employed and living in New York City, as portrayed in the USA TV series *Sex and the City*. The language used in these women's gossip sessions is the primary focus of the research, which aims to identify the topics and their development in these conversations.

## FINDINGS

The conversations in this USA TV series cover a wide range of topics, from the ones about being single women, falling in love, dating, getting married, and having babies to the ones about sex, according to the analysis done on 16 conversations from this popular TV series which are considered gossip. Additionally, six patterns of topic development have been found. All these talks have exposition, development, and coda. However, they vary in the way the participants begin and conclude the conversations.

In the **first** pattern of the conversations, one participant presents the topic by asking a question, other participants develop the topic into a discussion, and later another participant finishes the conversation by giving a statement. In the **second** pattern of the conversations, a participant initiates the conversation and introduces a topic by stating her opinion, other participants then reply to it and develop the topic into a discussion, and another participant later concludes the conversation. In the **third** pattern of the conversations which are considered gossip in this TV series, one of the participants starts the talks by making comments about something, the other participants respond to the comments by presenting their comments or opinions and then develop the topic into a discussion, and then one of the participants finishes the conversations by offering their statements related to the topic. In the **fourth** pattern of these talks among women, one of the participants

begins the conversation by telling her experience and thus announces the topic, the other participants then state their comments or utter their opinions about it and develop the topic into a discussion, and one of the participants later concludes the conversation by making her statement about the topic. In the **fifth** pattern of the talks taken from the popular TV series, one of the participants starts the talk by expressing her feelings and thus presents the topic of the talk, the other participants then pose questions or present their comments about their feelings and thus resume the talks, and another participant later makes her statement about the topic and finishes the talk. In the **sixth** pattern of conversations found in the *Sex and the City* TV shows, one of the participants announces the topic of conversation by asking a question, the other participants then pose further questions and make comments about it and thus develop the topic of conversation into a discussion, another participant then asks the last question which concludes the conversation.

## DISCUSSION

Women are said to develop topics gradually, build on one another's ideas, and favor continuity to discontinuity. The topic shift is also said to happen gradually. Coates' study looks at how topics are developed in all female talks. She uses musical terms to describe the topic development pattern. The topic development in the texts Coates has transcribed generally follows the pattern as follows: **exposition** in which a participant of the talk presents the topic by telling an anecdote, another participant trails by telling another anecdote on the same theme, and another participant tells another anecdote about the same theme, which leads into, **development** in which the general discussion happens, **recapitulation** in which a participant summarizes the talk, and **coda** in which a participant takes the last word in the talk (Coates & Cameron 1988).

There are six patterns found in this research conducted on 16 conversations which are taken from the *Sex and the City* TV Series and which are considered talks. All of these conversations have exposition, development, and coda. However, they are different in the way the participants introduce the topics and end the conversations.

In the first pattern of the conversations, one participant introduces the topic by asking a question, other participants develop the topic into a discussion, and later another participant ends the conversation by giving a statement. The following conversation, conversation 1 of episode 1 of season 1 of the *Sex and the City* TV Series is an example of conversations belonging to this pattern. This conversation takes place in a restaurant. There are four participants in this conversation: Carrie Bradshaw (Carrie), Charlotte York (Charlotte), Miranda Hobbes (Miranda), and Samantha Jones (Samantha). The conversation is about the difference in sexual behavior between women and men.

MIRANDA: you were saying?  
SAMANTHA: look/you're a successful saleswoman in this city/ you have two choices/ you can bang your head against the wall and try/ and find a relationship/ or you can say SCREW EM/ and just go out and have sex like a man/  
CARRIE: you mean with dildos?  
SAMANTHA: noooo/I mean without feeling/  
SAMANTHA: remember that guy I was going out with? oh god/ what was his name? Drew?

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CARRIE: Drew/  
CHARLOTTE: Drew/  
MIRANDA: Drew/

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CARRIE: Drew/ the sex god/  
SAMANTHA: right/ well/ afterwards/ I didn't feel a thing/ it was like/ hey babe/ gotta go/ catch ya later/ and I completely forgot about him after that/  
CARRIE: but are you sure/ that isn't just because he didn't call you?  
SAMANTHA: sweetheart/ this is the first time/ in the history of Manhattan/ that women have had as much money and power as men/ plus the equal luxury of treating men like sex objects/  
MIRANDA: yeah/ except men in this city fail on both counts/ I mean/ they don't wanna be in a relationship with you/ but as soon as you only want them for sex/ they don't



like it/ all of a sudden/ they can't perform the way  
they're supposed to/

SAMANTHA: that's when you dump them/

Miranda questions Samantha's comments during this opening exchange of the discussion. Then Samantha responds and gives her viewpoint. Samantha presents the idea that successful women have two options: to try hard to find a relationship or just to go out and have sex like men by responding to Miranda's questions. Samantha responds to Carrie's question by elaborating on what she means when she says that she has sex like males. To confirm that Samantha meant what she just said, Carrie asks another question. After Samantha has answered Carrie's second question, Miranda shares her point of view regarding the topic. All of the conversation's participants have agreed to accept the topic and start a discussion about it by asking and answering questions and offering their opinions.

CARRIE: come on ladies/ are we really that cynical? what about  
romance?

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SAMANTHA: ehhhh who needs it?

CHARLOTTE: yeah/

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MIRANDA: it's like that guy Jeremiah/ the poet/ I mean/ the sex was  
incredible/ but then he wanted to read me his poetry/  
and go out to dinner/ and the whole chat bit/ and I'm  
like let's not even go there/

CHARLOTTE: what are you saying? are you saying that/ you're just  
going to give up on love?

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CARRIE: noooo/

MIRANDA: noooo/

SAMANTHA: noooo/

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CHARLOTTE: that's just sick/

CARRIE: you believe me/ the right guy comes along/ and you  
two right here/ the whole thing/ right out the window/

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CHARLOTTE: that's right/

MIRANDA: I don't think so/

SAMANTHA: listen to me/

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SAMANTHA: the right guy is an illusion/ you don't understand that/  
you can't start living your life/

All participants join in the conversation at this point to debate and assess the topic. Multiple parties participate in the conversation. Both sides of the argument are present among the participants. When one participant has asked a question or expressed an opinion, the other participants will sometimes respond at the same time and express both their agreement and disagreement. This is demonstrated when Carrie queries them regarding their level of cynicism toward males and whether they still require romance in their relationships. Charlotte and Samantha simultaneously respond to Carrie's query. Charlotte responds succinctly to Samantha's subsequent query, which implies that romance is unnecessary in relationships and that Samantha does not need it in hers. Charlotte's query about whether the others are simply going to give up on love serves as another example. The others respond simultaneously with "No." It is also evident when Carrie predicts that Samantha and Miranda will change their minds about their claim that they only need men for sex when they encounter the right men. After Carrie has finished speaking, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha all respond at the same time. Samantha calls for the others' attention and continues to argue that the right man is an illusion, while Charlotte and Miranda both disagree with Carrie's assessment. Samantha responds to Carrie's query about whether women are capable of experiencing sex in the same way as men by citing a motion picture.

CARRIE: so you think/ it's really possible to pull off this whole/  
women having sex like men thing?

SAMANTHA: you're forgetting *The Last Seduction*/  
CARRIE: you're obsessed with that movie/  
MIRANDA: okay/ Linda Fiorentino fucking that guy up/ against the  
chain link fence/  
SAMANTHA: and never having one of those/ oh my god/ what have I  
done epiphanies/  
CHARLOTTE: I hated that movie/

The conversation now turns to a movie that Samantha believes depicts a woman having sex like a male and not feeling guilty about it. After Samantha's response, the other participants agree to explore this topic further. Miranda describes what the actress does in the film, and Carrie claims that Samantha is fascinated with it. The conversation on this topic is brief. When Charlotte expresses her opinion of the film—that she despises it—the discussion comes to a close. The conversation comes to a close with Charlotte's comment.

In the second pattern of the conversations, a participant begins the conversation and introduces a topic by stating her opinion, other participants then respond to it and develop the topic into a discussion, and another participant later ends the conversation. The next conversation, conversation 2 of episode 2 entitled *Models and Mortals*, is an example of the conversations having this pattern. The conversation occurs when all of the characters of this famous TV series: Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha meet for dinner at Carrie's apartment. They talk about beauty and models while cooking and having their dinner.

MIRANDA: they're stupid/ and lazy/ and should be shot on sight/  
SAMANTHA: I've been out with a lot of guys/ and they say I am just as  
beautiful as a model/ but I work for a living/I mean/ I'm  
like/ well/ I'm like a model/ who's taken the high road/  
MIRANDA: the advantages given to models/ and to beautiful  
women in general/ are so unfair/ it makes me puke/  
SAMANTHA: sweetheart/ you are so cute/  
MIRANDA: cute doesn't cut it in this town/ what's cute compared to  
supermodel?  
CHARLOTTE: they have this/ distant sexy look/

In this opening exchange, Miranda begins with the topic by expressing her view on models. She believes that models are stupid and useless and that they ought to be put to death. Samantha replies to the woman's opinion and shares her experience dating many men who compliment her appearance. The majority of this conversation's opening exchange between Miranda and Samantha is an opinion exchange about models. When Charlotte expresses her opinion, the conversation's participants will have made it obvious what topic is being discussed.

MIRANDA: that's not sexy/ that's starvation/

SAMANTHA: that's starvation in the best restaurants/

MIRANDA: yeah/ what I wanna know is/ when did all the men get together and decide/ that they would only get it up/ for giraffes with big breasts?

(Samantha laughs)

CHARLOTTE: in some cultures/ heavy women with mustaches/ are considered beautiful/

SAMANTHA: and you're looking at me/ while you're saying that?

MIRANDA: we should just admit/ that we live in a culture that promotes impossible standards of beauty/

CHARLOTTE: yeah/ except/ men think they're possible/

MIRANDA: yeah/

In the section of the conversation mentioned above, Miranda and Charlotte alternately share their thoughts on models and their attractiveness, whereas Samantha only offers commentary on her friends' viewpoints. Miranda believes that models starve themselves to achieve their desired physiques and wonders why men are so enamored with models who have long thighs and large breasts. According to Miranda, the society in which they live upholds unattainable standards of beauty. Although she acknowledges that their society promotes impossibly high standards of beauty, Charlotte contends that men in their culture believe these standards to be achievable. She believes that different cultures have various perspectives on what constitutes beauty. The conversation's topic then shifts in the following section.

CHARLOTTE: you know/ no matter how good I feel about myself/ if I see Christy Turlington/ I just wanna give up/

MIRANDA: I just wanna force feed her lard/ but that's the difference between you and me/

(All laugh)

CARRIE: what are you talking about? look at you two/ you're beautiful/

CHARLOTTE: ooooh/ I hate my thighs/

MIRANDA: oh/ come on/

CHARLOTTE: I can't even open a magazine without thinking/ thighs thighs, thighs/

MIRANDA: well/ I'll take your thighs and raise you a chin/

CARRIE: I'll take you a chin/ and raise you a/ <pointing at her nose>

(All look at Samantha expectantly)

SAMANTHA: what?

CARRIE: come on/

SAMANTHA: I happen to love the way I look/

MIRANDA: you should/ you paid enough for it/

(Miranda, Carrie, and Charlotte all laugh)

SAMANTHA: hey/ I resent that/ I do not believe in plastic surgery/ well/ not yet/

CARRIE: I find it fascinating/ that four beautiful flesh and blood women could be intimidated by some unreal fantasy/ I mean/ look/ look at this/ <pulling out a magazine> is this really intimidating to any of you?

The topic of discussion shifts to the participants' appearances during this section of the conversation. Charlotte starts by saying that Christy Turlington, a beauty model, feels better than she does. Miranda wishes to put on weight because she believes Christy Turlington is much thinner than she is. Then, Charlotte declares that she despises her legs. Carrie declares Miranda and Charlotte to be stunning. The three of them then start exchanging compliments on their attractive features. Later, when asking her peers if they are intimidated by the model on a magazine's cover, Carrie expresses her fascination with the idea that all of them might be. Carrie's query is answered by each of her friends.

CHARLOTTE: I hate my thighs/ <looking at them>  
MIRANDA: pass the chicken/  
SAMANTHA: you know/ I have that dress/ <pointing at the magazine>

In the final section of the talk, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha subtly responded to Carrie's inquiry about whether they are intimidated by a magazine cover model. This demonstrates that they are truly scared off by the model but lack the courage to admit it and say something else. Charlotte despises her legs. Miranda requests the chicken. Samantha owns the dress that the magazine cover model is donning.

In the third pattern of the conversations considered gossip in this TV show, one of the participants begins the conversation by making comments about something, the other participants react to the comments by presenting their comments or opinions and then develop the topic into a discussion, and then one of the participants ends the conversations by offering their statements related to the topic. One of the conversations having this pattern is conversation 8 of episode 5 of season 1 of *Sex and the City* TV series. This conversation occurs in the room of a hotel after Carrie goes on a date with a French architect and is given \$1,000 at the end of their date. Carrie, Miranda, and Samantha discuss the money given by this French man while enjoying their breakfast.

MIRANDA: thanks for the beautiful day/ must have been a hell of a beautiful day/  
CARRIE: well/ it was/ we had such a fantastic connection/ then he leaves me money/ I don't understand/ what exactly about me screams whore?  
MIRANDA: besides the \$ 1,000 on the end table?  
SAMANTHA: I just can't believe/ that you had dinner at Balzac/ wait a minute/ I thought I ordered two eggs benedict/ and one spinach omelet/  
MIRANDA: it's all right/ I'll take the omelet/  
CARRIE: this isn't right/ we're gonna pay for all this ourselves/ all right?  
SAMANTHA: he said order anything/  
MIRANDA: the room service is one thing/ but the money/ uh-uh/

SAMANTHA: what are you getting so uptight about? I mean/ money is power/ sex is power/ therefore getting money for sex/ is simply an exchange of power/

In this opening exchange, Miranda remarks that Carrie must have had a great night. Carrie then says she agrees with Miranda's remark but is uncomfortable because her partner gave her money. Samantha then adds her opinion to the discussion by mentioning the restaurant where Carrie and her date had dinner. Miranda and Samantha offer their defenses after Carrie says that getting the money is wrong and that they must pay for everything they purchased for breakfast. Miranda believes they should put off dealing with their financial situation so that they can pay for the room service they have already received. According to Samantha, receiving payment for sexual services is simply an exchange of authority and shouldn't cause concern. The topic has been accepted and the discussion has started at this stage in the conversation. The conversation then proceeds.

MIRANDA: don't listen to the dime store Camille Paglia/  
CARRIE: I don't know whether to take it as an incredible compliment/ or as an incredible insult/  
SAMANTHA: just take it/ period/  
CARRIE: I wouldn't know how to return it anyway/ because one thing he didn't leave me was/ his phone number/  
MIRANDA: he paid in full/ what more is there to talk about? who is this Amalita Amalfi character anyway? I'm concerned that you've been drafted into/ a ring of high-class hookers/  
CARRIE: she isn't a hooker/ she's- she's like an international party girl/  
MIRANDA: she's a hooker with a passport/ do you ever have any conversations about money?  
CARRIE: no/ I mean/ I did allude to the fact that I was a bit cash poor these days/  
MIRANDA: so/ maybe it's supposed to be a loan?  
CARRIE: I don't remember filling out an application/  
SAMANTHA: sweetheart/ men give/ women receive/ it's biological destiny/

MIRANDA: do you really want to say that? that's the argument men have been using since the dawn of time to exploit women/

In this conversation, Miranda cautions Carrie not to believe Samantha when she says that trading money for sex is just a power exchange. Carrie is unsure whether to take Samantha's remark positively. Later, Carrie says that because she does not have her date's phone number, she is unsure of how to return the money. Miranda begs Carrie to stop talking about it and expresses her worry that Amalita Amalfi, a friend of hers who introduced Carrie to this French architect, has recruited Carrie into a group of affluent prostitutes. She thinks Carrie's acquaintance is a prostitute and wants to know if she has discussed money with Amalita Amalfi. Despite admitting that she told Amalita Amalfi that she had lately been broke, Carrie disputes Miranda's suspicions. Samantha and Miranda resume their conversation by giving their perspectives on it. The funds are viewed as a debt by Miranda. According to Samantha, it is customary for men to gift women money. The discussion ends at that point.

CARRIE: I'm just gonna write the whole thing off/ as a bad date with a cash bonus/

MIRANDA: you know/ that salmon is really good/ I think we should order another one/

Carrie expresses her opinion and then sums up the discussion in this concluding section of the talk. She views her experience as a bad date with a cash bonus. The conversation then ended with Miranda giving her view on the breakfast they were having.

In the fourth pattern of these talks among female friends in *Sex and the City* TV series, one of the participants starts the conversation by telling her experience and thus introduces the topic, the other participants then make comments or utter their opinions about it and develop the topic into a discussion, and one of the participants later ends the conversation by making her statement about the topic. The conversation below, conversation 14 of episode 8 of season 1 of this TV series, is an example. The conversation happens in the restaurant, and all of the characters in the TV show are present. All of them talk about a threesome sex.



CHARLOTTE: Jack wants us to do a threesome/  
MIRANDA: of course he does/ every guy does/  
SAMANTHA: threesomes are huge right now/ they're the blow job of  
the '90s/  
CHARLOTTE: what was the blow job of the '80s?  
SAMANTHA: anal sex/  
CARRIE: any sex/ period/  
MIRANDA: don't let him pressure you into it/ it's just this guy's  
cheap ploy to watch you be a lesbian for a night/

Charlotte introduces the topic of discussion by sharing her encounter with her boyfriend Jack, who wants them to have threesome sex. Then, in response to her remark, the other participants speak. Miranda expresses the view that every man desires it. In her own words, Samantha asserts that threesomes were common in the 1990s. Later, Miranda begs Charlotte to resist her boyfriend's pressure because she believes that he plans to observe her perform a homosexual act for one night. All participants in the conversation have agreed on the topic at this time. The discussion of this topic then proceeds.

SAMANTHA: don't knock it till you've tried it/  
MIRANDA: I had a threesome once I think/ in college/ I was drunk/  
I woke up in someone else's bra/  
SAMANTHA: the only way to do a threesome/ is to be the guest star/  
CHARLOTTE: guest star?  
SAMANTHA: yeah/ the girl the couple gets to come in/ screw/ and  
leave/  
CARRIE: the pinch hitter/  
SAMANTHA: exactly/ perfect/ great sex/ without wondering what it  
will do to your relationship/  
CHARLOTTE: but you don't have relationships/  
SAMANTHA: which is why I have great sex/  
CARRIE: I've never done a threesome/  
MIRANDA: because you have relationships/  
CHARLOTTE: well/ I've never done a threesome/  
SAMANTHA: oh come on/ of course you haven't/ you in a threesome?  
you won't even wear a thong/  
CHARLOTTE: Jack thinks I'm sexy/

MIRANDA: he's buttering you up/ first you start thinking you're hot/ then he brings up the threesome thing/ boom/ suddenly you're kissing another woman while he beats off/  
CHARLOTTE: please/  
SAMANTHA: just make sure the other woman isn't a friend/ use somebody random/ you know/ somebody you meet in a bar or something/  
MIRANDA: that's romantic/

All of the participants share their experiences, sentiments, and viewpoints on threesome sex during this section of the conversation. Miranda talks about her threesome intercourse experiences while she was in college. When a couple invites a girl to have sex with them, Samantha believes that the only way to have threesome sex is for the girl to be the guest star. She later claims that this type of sex is great because the guest star girl does not have to worry about the impact of having threesome sex on her relationship. Carrie says she's never engaged in threesome intercourse. According to Miranda, Carrie has partnerships, which is why she has never engaged in threesome sex. Charlotte adds her voice to the conversation by claiming that she has also never engaged in threesome intercourse. Samantha responds to Charlotte's claim and states with surety that Charlotte has never engaged in threesome sex because she won't even change out of her usual underwear, such as a thong. Later, Samantha suggests that if Charlotte wants to engage in threesome intercourse, she should use a stranger. The topic of having threesome sex then continues in the discussion.

CHARLOTTE: no/ I think I'd feel safer with a friend/ with someone I could trust/ like Carrie/  
CARRIE: oh gee/ I'm flattered/ but I'd go with someone who has a little more experience like Sam/  
SAMANTHA: well/ thanks/ but/ hmm there is something sexy about a first-timer like Charlotte/  
CHARLOTTE: really?

---

SAMANTHA: yeah/  
CARRIE: yeah/

---

MIRANDA: oh great/ no/ forget about me/

---

CARRIE: ohhh/

SAMANTHA: ohhh/

CHARLOTTE: ohhh/

---

SAMANTHA: come on/

MIRANDA: I'd do it with you guys/ it's like- it's like picking teams  
for dodge ball all over again/

All of the participants in the conversation debate potential partners for threesome sex during this segment of the conversation. Charlotte believes that having it with someone she can trust, like Carrie, makes her feel secure. Carrie, on the other hand, believes that she would engage in threesome sex with someone like Samantha who has a little more expertise. Samantha, on the other hand, finds it alluring to engage in sexual activity with a novice like Charlotte. Charlotte expresses her shock and requests proof after Samantha has concluded speaking. By responding "Yeah," Samantha and Carrie concur at the same moment. Miranda feels excluded because none of her peers bring up having threesome sex with her. She says, "Forget about me," to express her dismay. Her friends immediately respond with "Ohhh" to show their sympathy and comfort her after she has done speaking. The next thing Samantha says is, "Come on," seemingly asking Miranda to stop thinking that way. The discussion comes to an end when Miranda says that she would engage in threesome sex with any of her friends.

In the fifth pattern of the conversations taken from the *Sex and the City* TV series, one of the participants begins the conversation by uttering her feelings and thus introduces the topic of the conversation, the other participants then ask questions or make comments about her feelings and thus continue the conversation, and another participant later makes her statement about the topic and ends the conversation. An example of a conversation belonging to this pattern is conversation 25 of episode 12 of season 1 of the TV series. The conversation occurs in a bar where all of the main characters of this TV series gather to spend the night.

SAMANTHA: hey/ I'm sorry I'm late/  
CARRIE: well/ it's about time/  
SAMANTHA: I just had a five-hour lunch with James/  
CARRIE: five-hour lunches/ I remember those/  
SAMANTHA: ladies/ I have an announcement/ please don't laugh/  
MIRANDA: what?  
SAMANTHA: I'm in love/

In this opening exchange, Samantha apologizes for being late and explains why: she had just finished a five-hour lunch with James, her new beau. She then conveys how in love she feels.

MIRANDA: what?  
SAMANTHA: I mean/ I'd totally given up on the idea that you could actually talk to men/  
CARRIE: okay/ but don't spread that around/  
SAMANTHA: before James/ all my conversations consisted of two sentences/ give it to me/ and go home/ and I owe it all to Charlotte/  
CHARLOTTE: me? what did I do?  
SAMANTHA: all that bullshit you spout about not sleeping with men right away/ actually paid off/ I mean/ if I'd fucked James already/ who knows where we'd be/  
MIRANDA: wait/ you haven't had sex yet?  
SAMANTHA: soon/ you know/ I think he's someone I could actually marry/  
CHARLOTTE: Samantha/ that's great/

The other participants in the discussion continue to probe Samantha's claim that she is in love while also making comments. In this way, they have agreed to discuss Samantha's emotions and have accepted the topic. Samantha shares more about her feelings and keeps the discussion going as a result of the comments and inquiries from her friends. When Miranda learns that Samantha is in love, she responds with the word "What" to show her shock. As a result, Samantha explains that before meeting James, she had abandoned the notion that she could converse with men. She goes on to say that Charlotte is to blame for her ability to fall in love and converse with males. Carrie comments that

she shouldn't share Samantha's claim that she has given up on talking to men during her explanation. Then, Charlotte inquires as to her line of work. The discussion continues as Samantha continues her justification. She claims that she abides by Charlotte's advice to avoid sleeping with men immediately after meeting them. She might not be in love and a partnership if she disregards Charlotte's advice. Miranda then joins in on the discussion and inquires as to whether Samantha hasn't had any intercourse with her boyfriend as of yet. As a result, Samantha declares that she believes James is someone she could legitimately wed. Charlotte says that what occurs to Samantha is fantastic as she puts the discussion to rest.

In the sixth pattern of conversations found in *Sex and the City* TV series, one of the participants introduces the topic of conversation by asking a question, the other participants then ask further questions and make comments about it and thus develop the topic of conversation into a discussion, another participant later asks the last question which ends the conversation. The later conversation is one example. It is taken from conversation 26 of episode 12 of this TV show. It happens in the ladies' room. All of the main characters of the TV series are present as participants in the conversation. They talk about the size of the sexual organ of Samantha's new boyfriend.

CHARLOTTE: here you are/ we've been looking for you everywhere/

CARRIE: so/ how is everything?

MIRANDA: she means/ have you and James done it yet?

SAMANTHA: uh hum/

CARRIE: and/

SAMANTHA: it's nice/

CHARLOTTE: I'm so happy for you/

(Samantha is crying)

CARRIE: sweetie? what? what is it?

SAMANTHA: nothing/

(Samantha is still crying and going into a closet)

CARRIE: what's going on? why are you crying?

SAMANTHA: James has a small dick/

Carrie begins the discussion by asking Samantha how everything is going during this opening section. Miranda then clarifies Carrie's actual query with a different query. According to Miranda, Carrie is referring to whether Samantha and James have already had sexual contact. With her brief answer of "Uh hum," Samantha suggests that she and James have. In response, Carrie says, "And....," which is an inquiry for more information. Samantha's response is limited to the word "lovely." Charlotte then adds that she is pleased for Samantha. However, when Carrie notices Samantha crying, she presses for more information, which prompts Samantha to reveal the real cause of her reluctance to discuss her relationship with her partner and her sadness: Her new beau James has a tiny penis. The conversation then starts.

CARRIE: oh/ well/ it's not the end of the world/  
SAMANTHA: it's really small/  
MIRANDA: how small?  
SAMANTHA: too small/  
CARRIE: well/ size isn't everything/  
SAMANTHA: three inches?  
CARRIE: well/  
SAMANTHA: hard/  
CARRIE: uh/  
CHARLOTTE: is he a good kisser?  
SAMANTHA: oh/ who the fuck cares? his dick is like a gherkin/ I feel so terrible/ listen to me/ I'm a bad person/  
MIRANDA: don't beat yourself up/ you had certain expectation/ and you're disappointed/  
SAMANTHA: why? why? why does he have to have a small dick? I really like him/  
MIRANDA: I thought you loved him/  
SAMANTHA: well/  
CARRIE: oh look/ we've all been there/  
MIRANDA: that's for sure/ I was once with a guy with the size of one of those little miniature golf pencils/ couldn't tell if he was trying to fuck me/ or erase me/  
  
(Carrie is laughing, while Samantha is still crying)  
CARRIE: I'm sorry/ I'm sorry/ it's just- it's just funny/  
MIRANDA: let's not lose perspective/ there are ways to work around this/

SAMANTHA: I don't want to work around this/ I love a big dick/ I love it inside of me/ I love looking at it/ I love everything about it/ when I blow him/ it's like nothing/ nothing/  
MIRANDA: can you talk to him about it?  
SAMANTHA: no/ it's the only thing we can't talk about/ what am I gonna do?

In this section of the conversation, every participant accepts the subject of discussion and discusses the size of Samantha's new boyfriend's sexual organ. To learn more about Samantha's issue, reduce her anxiety, and provide her with solutions, the participants ask questions, make remarks, and make recommendations. The participants learn that Samantha's boyfriend has a very tiny sexual organ through queries and answers. Then, each participant takes a turn calming Samantha down with a remark. Carrie quips that appearances are not really everything and later confesses that they've all been in Samantha's shoes. Charlotte implies that Samantha should think about the positive aspect of her boyfriend being a decent kisser by posing the question. Samantha is urged by Miranda to be gentle with herself and acknowledge that it is normal to feel let down because she has high hopes for her new partner. Later, Miranda describes her encounter with a guy who has a tiny penis. In the conclusion, Miranda says that Samantha's issue can be resolved and suggests that she discuss it with her boyfriend. Samantha loves a big penis, so she refuses to listen to her friends' advice or comply with their requests to help her solve her problem. She does not want to discuss it with her boyfriend either because it is the only topic they are unable to discuss. The final query is then posed by Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: how is he with his tongue?

Charlotte closes the discussion with this query. The introduction and discussion portions of the conversations in this last pattern are the same as those in the conversations of the first pattern. The topic of conversation is introduced by one person with a question, after which the other participants develop the topic into a discussion. Contrarily, in the first pattern of conversations, another participant concludes the conversation by making a statement about the topic under discussion, while in the last pattern, another participant asks a question about the topic under discussion.

## CONCLUSION

This research is crucial for describing how language is used by people of the same sex in groups, particularly women. The findings of this research provide us with important information about how women use language. A qualitative approach was used to perform and analyze data in the study. Data were gathered from female talks that are deemed to be talks in *Sex and the City* television series. The information gathered from 12 episodes of the first season of this famous TV show includes 16 conversations considered female talks. The data were examined in terms of topics and their development by using Coates' study (Coates & Cameron 1988). Their talks cover a variety of topics, including sex as well as being single women, falling in love, dating, getting married, and having children. It was evident that these women can express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences while also preserving their friendship through the talks. Because the participants in these conversations build on one another's ideas and collaboratively create shared meanings, it has been observed that the topics evolve slowly and gradually in these gossip sessions.

This research is restricted to interactions between single, middle-class, white women in their 30's who are employed and residing in New York City, as portrayed in the USA television series *Sex and the City*. They are Samantha Jones, a public relations professional, Charlotte York, an art dealer, Miranda Hobbes, a corporate lawyer, and Carrie Bradshaw, a columnist for a New York daily. Since they were in college, they have been close companions.

By referring to the result of this research, it is interesting to find out whether the same topics and their patterns of development can also be discovered in the talks among single, middle-class Indonesian women in their 30's, working and living in a big city, Indonesia, as depicted in an Indonesian TV series, whether there are differences or not, and if there are any, what kind of differences can be discovered. It is even more interesting if the same research can be conducted on the same group of women in real life.



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