

LANGUAGE USE IN COACHING COLLEGIATE BASKETBALL: A SPEECH ACT
ANALYSIS OF COLLEGIATE BASKETBALL COACHES DURING GAMEPLAY

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ABSTRACT**RESEARCH PAPER:** Language Use in Coaching Collegiate Basketball**STUDENT:** Jonathan Wegener**DEGREE:** Master of Arts**COLLEGE:** College of Sciences and Humanities**DATE:** May 2018**PAGES:** 24

This study has examined the sentence structures and speech acts of collegiate basketball coaches to see if there are any gender-linked language differences among coaches. The results provide insights into what the sentence structures and speech acts collegiate basketball coaches use during gameplay; how the sentence structures and speech acts are paired; how the leadership style of the managerial position of a coach exhibits itself in the overall selection of sentence structures and speech acts; and, searches to discover if the sex of the coach or addressee bears a difference in the patterns coaches use to speak to their players. The research is based on the model used by Mihalicek & Wilson (2011) and research by Searle and Vanderveken (1985), Mulac, Giles, Bradac, and Palomares (2013) among others. Modifications were made for the purposes of this study. The results show that there are regular patterns of speaking which coaches use when talking to their players regardless of leadership style and sex (of the player or the coach). There are little variations between the percentages of sentence structures and speech acts used by the coaches as well as how they are paired together. This study is the first of its kind with the intent of encouraging further research using these data sample types (Mic'd-up videos) along with contributing to the current research on gender-linked language effects and gender-linked language differences.

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Language Use in Coaching Collegiate Basketball:

A Speech Act Analysis of Collegiate Basketball Coaches during Gameplay

One of the most influential people in the history of football is Ed Sabol. In 1962, Mr. Sabol founded Blair Motion Pictures and was contracted to film the first ever NFL Championship game (later becoming NFL Films). This revolutionized the sport of football, making it possible for viewers to watch NFL games on television. Another revolutionary concept that Mr. Sabol saw become reality was the “mic’d-up” technology. This technology allowed coaches and athletes to wear microphones during games for the television audience to hear. Mic’d-up technology also provided an extra layer of entertainment because the fans are able to hear exactly what coaches are saying to the players and how they are saying it. Kaplan (2015, p. 1) claimed that “this new technology gives more intimacy to the audience,” despite there being some speculation whether these are “authentic” utterances because the coaches and players are aware that they are mic’d-up. The mic’d-up technology eventually spread to many other sports, including collegiate basketball.

When studying sports and the communication between coaches and players, it is important to consider the coach’s role in sports – to tell the players what to do. A coach’s role translates well to the teacher’s role in the classroom. Becker, Madsen, Arnold, and Thomas (1967, p. 139) observed that “the variety of distinct, individual personalities which is found in any group of people can all be systematically trained to control their own behavior in ways which will directly guide the behavior of their students.” This observation could apply to coaches because they are trying to find the most effective ways to teach their players. While all coaches have different personalities and coaching “styles,” they are all trying to do the same thing – motivate their players to perform at their best. (Lyle, 2002) Motivation and execution of skills in

athletics is a key aspect in performance quality. It is the responsibility of coaches to motivate their players to perform at the peak execution of their skills during competition (Killion, Cindy, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012). Coaches communicate with the players through their use of sentence structures and speech acts. People intentionally or unintentionally perform speech acts and sentence structures with politeness strategies (Culpeper, 2008). Urgency of the messages also play a role in the frequency of politeness strategies used by the coach due to the pressure of live gameplay (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

Speech Acts. Humans communicate using minimal units called speech acts. These speech acts are a type of illocutionary acts (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). Locutions are the actual grammatical meanings of the sentences produced by the speaker. The illocution is the effect which the speaker wishes to accomplish by uttering the locution (Finegan, 2015). Example 1 provides a situation where the imperative order can have the same meaning as an interrogative request. This interrogative request would not be considered a prototypical structure-speech act pairing because the sentence structure (locution) is interrogative, and the speech act is an order/request (illocution).

Example 1

Imperative	Dribble by them.
Interrogative	Why don't you just dribble by them?

This example shows how an interrogative sentence structure has a locution of asking a simple question, but also may be used to imply indirectly the imperative desire for the addressee to dribble by the opponent. It is up to the discretion and socio-pragmatic understanding of the addressee to interpret the meaning behind the speaker's utterances.

Sentence Structures. Traditionally, the definitions of sentence structures (declarative – makes statements; interrogative – asks questions; imperative – issue directives) are over-generalized (Finegan, 2015). However, when these sentence structures are used, it is necessary to consider the speech acts implied by the speaker (locution and illocution) to fully understand the meaning of the utterance. The following are examples of different types of sentences:

Example 2

<i>Sentence Structure (Type)</i>	<i>Traditional Definition</i>
<p><u>Declarative</u> :</p> <p>- Look how well he passes the ball.</p>	Makes a statement
<p><u>Interrogative</u> :</p> <p>- Why don't you try passing the ball? - Will you pass the ball?</p>	Asks a question
<p><u>Imperative</u> :</p> <p>- Pass the ball.</p>	Issues a directive

For each speech act, there is a prototypical sentence structure pairing that accompanies it. Declarative sentences are prototypically paired with assertions (positive, neutral, or negative); Interrogative sentences are prototypically paired with questions; and Imperative sentences are prototypically paired with orders/requests. Occasionally, these pairings of sentence structures and speech acts will not match. Mihalicek & Wilson (2011) observed, “[T]here are many different ways to perform the same speech act because there are very many different sentences that will accomplish the same goal.” When the prototypical locution and illocution do not match, it is a type of mismatch that is left to the discretion of the addressee to interpret. There are several factors which can influence the use of prototypical structure – speech act pairings. Politeness, urgency, or giving criticism can influence the choice of illocution the speaker uses in his/her utterances.

When considering politeness, we must also bear in mind the effect of how the words are spoken by the speaker – that is, does the speaker mean exactly what (s)he is saying (locution or illocution)? If not, then we must consider the presence of indirect speech acts. (Searle, 1975). Indirect speech acts occur when the speaker uses insinuations, metaphors, implications to imply his/her meaning. This can also be seen when the speaker does not use prototypical structure-speech act pairings (see Example 1 above).

Urgency of the message due to pressure created by a time limitation can limit or eliminate the use of politeness strategies used by the speaker. When this occurs (during the time restrictions of gameplay), it can modify the regularly used speech patterns into more direct utterances. These modifications can have a profound effect on the frequency of politeness strategies performed by the coaches.

A criticism has been defined as a negative evaluation of some aspect of an individual communicated by others (Deutsch, 1961; Deisel, 1996). Mulac, Seibold, & Farris (2000) found criticisms may vary depending on the relationship of the recipient and the criticizer (Graziano, Brothen, & Berscheid, 1980; Tracey & Eisenberg, 1990/1991), the context (Deutsch, 1961), the nature of the problem (Nomura & Barnlund, 1983), the topic of the criticism (Deisel, 1996), and the gender of the criticizer (Tracy & McLaurin, 1991).

Gender – Linked Language Differences. Gender-linked language differences have been the subject of many studies tracing back to Lakoff claiming the existence of “women’s language” in western societies in his 1975 essay, *Language and Women’s Place*. This claim prompted rapid growth of experimentation for linguists, psychologists, and cultural anthropologists in gender-linked language differences. Gender-linked language difference studies are a subsection of a broader study on gender-linked language effects. Communication and culture studies have been

conducted to examine the differences of cultural communication styles within the female and male groups (Foss et. al, 2012; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Mulac et al., 2001; Tannen, 1990). Gender-linked language effect studies have found that females are generally rated higher than males in *Socio-Intellectual Status* (high social status; literature) and *Aesthetic Quality* (personable, pleasing, sweet); whereas males are rated higher in *Dynamism* (controlling, aggressive, strong) (Mulac et al., 2006). Studies in status and power roles of males over females and females' influence on males have found that females generally have an interpersonally-oriented style of leadership and males generally have a task-oriented style of leadership (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Linguistic studies of females' and males' stereotypical uses of language have increased and shown that female speech is generally more hesitant and indirect; whereas, male speech is generally more dominant and direct (Mulac, Giles, Bradac, & Palomares, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Some studies claim that gender- stereotypical leadership styles do not appear to be present between females and males in managerial and professional positions (Bartol & Martin, 1986; Bass, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Gender-stereotypical leadership styles have been thoroughly researched and have found that these gender-stereotypical leadership styles include four main components: psychological traits, role behaviors, occupations, and physical characteristics (Ashman & Tumia, 1980; Boca & Ashmore, 1980; Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Williams & Bennet, 1975). Performing a meta-analysis of existing studies, Eagly & Johnson (1990) tested to see if there were any gender leadership style differences between females and males who occupied the same leadership positions in organizations and to see if those styles were the same in a laboratory setting. Their study examined hundreds of other leadership styles studies in three contexts:

organizational studies using management-level personnel, laboratory studies involving university students who were not identified as leaders, and assessment studies of individuals not selected for leadership, who responded to questions assessing their leadership styles. They concluded that the belief that females lead in an interpersonally-oriented style and that males lead in a task-oriented style in the laboratory setting had no support (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Mulac, Seibold, & Farris, 2000).

A study performed by Nelson & Holloway (1990) found that formal and informal relationships, may be described by two primary dimensions: power and involvement. Their study focused on the influence of gender in relation to a supervisor's relationship with a trainee. Power differences may be expected to occur within the supervisory relationship as well as between genders. However, the results of Nelson & Holloway's (1990) study indicated that there was no significant difference between gender in the roles of supervisor and trainee. West & Zimmerman (1983) observed that 75% of all interruptions are made by men. This reinforced the notion that males are more direct and controlling in conversation. Fishman (1978) observed that women tend to use twice as many questions and attention-getting statements as their husbands. These studies show that males tend to be more direct in the conversation; whereas women tend to be more indirect and facilitative to the conversation.

Certain gender-linked language difference studies were found in giving criticism. For example, females seemed to be more sensitive to the feelings of the recipient of the criticism (Baxter, 1984; Andrews, 1987). Males were found to place more value on task-oriented goals than the face goals of the criticizer and the recipient (Tracy & Eisenberg, 1990/1991). A comprehensive summary of the gender-linked language effects of male and female language can be found in Mulac et al. (1998).

Research Questions. We have seen that in spoken language, there are many factors which contribute to the translation of meaning of spoken language – from locution (sentence structure), to illocution (speech act), to politeness strategies, to urgency, to giving criticism, to differences in gender communication styles. There are very few studies which have examined all of these factors in sports communication, specifically from coach to player. In collegiate basketball, all of these factors are present and demonstrated daily. For these reasons, the current study seeks to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What are the frequencies of speech acts used by coaches during gameplay?

Research Question 2: What are the frequencies of sentence structures (types) used by coaches during gameplay?

Research Question 3: How often are the prototypical structure-speech act pairings and non-prototypical structure-speech act pairings used?

Research Question 4: Are there observable gender-linked language differences based on the sentence structure – speech act pairings used by coaches during gameplay?

Methodology

The current study is a descriptive analysis of speech samples of male and female collegiate basketball coaches to male and female players. It also seeks to discover if there are any gender-linked language differences between the coaches speaking to players during gameplay. The current study reports the frequencies of sentence structures, speech acts, prototypical structure – speech act pairings, non-prototypical structure – speech act pairings, and comparisons of the frequencies for each category.

Data Collection. The current study analyzed NCAA and NAIA universities mic'd-up videos made available to the public through university websites, Google and YouTube. The researcher selected only mic'd-up videos that were recorded during live gameplay and analyzed five data sample videos for each gender category ($n = 15$): male coach – female players videos, male coach – male players videos, and female coach – female players videos. No female coach – male player videos are available due to the rarity of this gender scenario in collegiate basketball. The selection requirements for data samples were that the sample must be at least 3-5 minutes in length and contain a female or male collegiate basketball coach coaching her/his female or male players during a live game. The length of each video analysis for this study range from 3-5 minutes to prevent skewed data due to variation of video lengths. The total number of videos transcribed and analyzed is fifteen data sample videos.

Data Coding. The coaches' speech samples were divided into turns during the transcribing of the videos. The turns were then divided into utterances ($n = 1,535$). Each utterance was coded for sentence structure and speech act. Some of the coaches' utterances ($n = 199$) were not directed toward the players and were excluded from this analysis, which was 12.9% of the data. After the total number of utterances ($n = 1,336$) had been coded for sentence structure and speech act, the researcher then began to calculate distribution of prototypical structure – speech act pairings and tallying the number of non-prototypical structure – speech act pairings.

The coding for the categorization of the sentence types and speech acts is modeled from Table 1 provided in Mihalicek & Wilson (2011). The color coding is added to show what sentence structures *typically* match which speech acts (i.e. declarative sentence structure is *typically* an assertion speech act), however these patterns do not always hold true. For instance, a

declarative sentence may be uttered, but there is a response implied. For this situation, the sentence type would be declarative and the speech act would be a question. Typically, these sentence structures and speech acts do not go together; therefore, it is considered a non-prototypical structure – speech act pairing (“mismatch”) by the researcher. When a declarative sentence *does* provide an assertion or an interrogative sentence *does* ask a question or an imperative sentence *does* contain an order/request – these are considered prototypical structure – speech act pairings of sentence structures and speech acts. The yellow-, red-, and blue-colored boxes in Table 1 represent prototypical structure – speech act pairings.

Table 1: Sentence Structure and Speech Act Pairings

<u>SENTENCE TYPE</u>	<u>SPEECH ACTS</u>		
	<u>ASSERTION</u>	<u>QUESTION</u>	<u>ORDER/REQUEST</u>
DECLARATIVE	Positive: “Here we go.” Negative: “...shoulda played better defense.” Neutral: “We need you.”	“We got you next dead ball, huh?”	“We gotta get more physical now.”
INTERROGATIVE	“Let’s go now, huh?”	“What are we doing?”	“Why don’t you just grab it with 2 hands?”
IMPERATIVE	“You can always help your teammate.”	“You can’t be tired 32?!”	“Move your feet. Move your feet.”
*EXCLAMATION			

*Exclamations are noted, but not categorized by speech acts. They are defined as *words or phrases used to gain the attention of another person.*

Percentages were then calculated by dividing the number of each sentence structure respectively into the total number of utterances. Likewise, the speech act percentages were calculated. The number of non-prototypical structure – speech act pairings was tallied and subtracted from the total number of utterances to discover the number of prototypical structure – speech act pairings. After calculating this number, the researcher was able to obtain the

percentages of the prototypical structure – speech act pairings and the non-prototypical structure – speech act pairings.

Based on the frequencies, percentages, and prototypical structure – speech act pairings, the researcher could then compare the data samples between genders (sex of the coach and sex of the players). By comparing these samples, the researcher was able to determine if there was any significant difference between the speech patterns of each coach.

For a quick review, consider the following generalized definitions of the terms mentioned above. An utterance is any audible noise, word, phrase, or sentence produced by the speaker. The definition of a turn was modeled after Stephens & Beattie's (1986) study; and for this study, each numbered line of the data samples indicates a separate *turn*. Each turn may contain several different utterances and address more than one person; however, the turns indicate different points in time during the game. A recipient refers to whomever the speaker is addressing at the time [s]he is speaking. The sentence structures are divided up into declarative (statement of a complete thought or idea), interrogative (utterances which ask a question or imply an answer be given), imperative (utterances which directly command the recipient to perform an action), or exclamation (any utterance which is meant to gain attention or put emphasis on what is being said). Speech acts are divided into 3 categories: assertions (positive – utterances which convey a positive meaning; negative – utterances which convey a negative meaning; neutral – utterances which convey neither positive nor negative meanings), questions (utterances which imply a response be given), and order/requests (utterances which command or request action be taken by the recipient).

The data indicates when the coach is addressing a player (Coach – Player), assistant coach (Coach – Assistant), multiple players (Coach – Team), himself (Coach – Himself), or the

referee (Coach – Referee). For the purposes of the current study, only the speech samples of Coach – Player and Coach – Team are analyzed. The transcriptions were analyzed by examining Coach – Team and Coach – Player turns. The data collected from this analysis allowed us to see some patterns in leadership styles due to the managerial positions that coaches have over players.

Results

Overall, there are 1,336 utterances made by coaches in these 15 data samples. The first research question explored the speech act frequencies used by coaches during gameplay. From the data collected, coaches used 518 assertions (65 negative, 275 neutral, 178 positive), 127 questions, and 634 order/requests.

The second research question explored the sentence structure frequencies used by coaches during gameplay. There were 666 declarative structures, 134 interrogative structures, 485 imperative structures, and 51 unpaired exclamatory structures used throughout all 15 data samples.

The third research question explored how often the prototypical structure-speech act pairings and non-prototypical structure-speech act pairings were used. The coaches used the prototypical structure-speech act pairing in 1,207 utterances (90% of total utterances). The remaining 129 utterances (10% of total utterances) are non-prototypical structure-speech act pairings (mismatches).

Of all the non-prototypical structure – speech act pairings possible, only four were observed in the current study: declarative structures were mismatched with order/request speech acts, interrogative sentence structures mismatched with order/request speech acts, declarative sentence structures mismatched with question speech acts, and interrogative sentence structures mismatched with neutral assertion speech acts. The most frequently observed mismatch used by

coaches was declarative sentence structures with order/request speech acts. These mismatches include utterances such as:

- 1) Coach 1: “[...] even though it feels like we don’t foul, I don’t ever want to see this one.”
- 2) Coach 2: “Taylor, I want you to have 32, not 5 ever...not 5 ever.”

Interrogative sentence structures mismatched with order/requests is the only other non-prototypical structure – speech act pairing used by both male and female coaches. Examples of interrogative sentence structures mismatched with order/requests speech acts are:

- 3) Coach 4: “Why don’t you just dribble around them?”
- 4) Coach 5: “Why don’t you just grab it with two hands?”

An example of declarative sentence structure mismatched with a question speech act is:

- 5) Coach 9: “You guys see how hard 22’s runnin’ back now...”

Lastly, interrogative sentence structures were mismatched with neutral assertion speech acts. An example of this type of mismatch is:

- 6) Coach 6: “You know what I mean?”

The fourth research question asked if there was evidence of gender – linked language differences among coaches based on their pairings of sentence structures and speech acts.

Female Coaches – Female Players Sentence Structures. Out of 522 total utterances made by female coaches, there were 238 declarative (45%), 57 interrogative (11%), 202 imperative (39%), and 25 exclamatory sentence structures (5%) used.

Male Coaches – Female Players Sentence Structures. There were 390 total utterances produced by the male coaches throughout the five data samples when talking to female players. Declarative sentence structures were used 205 times (53%), interrogative sentence structures

were used 32 times (8%), imperative sentence structures were used 141 times (36%), and exclamatory sentence structures were used 12 times (3%).

Male Coaches – Male Players Sentence Structures. In these data samples, there were a total of 424 utterances. Of those 424 utterances, there were 223 declarative (53%), 45 interrogative (11%), 142 imperative (33%), and 14 exclamatory sentence structures (3%) used by the male coaches when speaking to male players.

Female Coaches – Female Players Speech Acts. The respective data samples were also coded for speech act frequencies. Female coaches used 73 positive assertions (15%), 100 neutral assertions (20%), 16 negative assertions (3%) when speaking to female players. Questions were used 56 times (11%) and order/requests were used 253 times (51%).

Male Coaches – Female Players Speech Acts. Male coaches used 58 positive assertions (16%), 85 neutral assertions (23%), and 24 negative assertions (6%) when speaking to female players. Male coaches also used 28 questions (8%) and 176 order/requests (47%) when speaking to female players.

Male Coaches – Male Players Speech Acts. When speaking to male players, male coaches used 47 positive assertions (11%), 89 neutral assertions (22%), and 25 negative assertions (6%). Male coaches used 43 questions (11%), and 206 order/requests (50%) when speaking to male players. Table 1 provides a summary of both sentence structure and speech act frequencies.

Table 1: Sentence Structure & Speech Act Frequencies

	SENTENCE STRUCTURE FREQUENCIES				SPEECH ACT FREQUENCIES				
	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative	Exclamation	Assertions			Questions	Order/Requests
					Pos.	Neu.	Neg.		
Female Coaches – Female Players	238 (45%)	57 (11%)	202 (39%)	25 (5%)	73 (15%)	100 (20%)	16 (3%)	56 (11%)	253 (51%)
Male Coaches – Female Players	205 (53%)	32 (8%)	141 (36%)	12 (3%)	58 (16%)	85 (23%)	24 (6%)	28 (8%)	176 (47%)
Male Coaches – Male Players	223 (53%)	45 (11%)	142 (33%)	14 (3%)	47 (11%)	89 (22%)	25 (6%)	43 (11%)	206 (50%)
TOTAL	666	134	485	51	517			127	635

Table 2: Non-Prototypical Structure – Speech Act Pairing Frequencies

	Declarative – Order/Request	Interrogative – Order/Request	Declarative – Question	Interrogative – Neutral Assertion
Female Coaches – Female Players	47	1	0	0
Male Coaches – Female Players	31	3	0	0
Male Coaches – Male Players	41	2	2	2
TOTAL	119	6	2	2

Table 2 provides a summary of the frequencies and types of the four non-prototypical structure – speech act pairings observed in the current study.

Female Coaches – Female Players Mismatches. Female coaches used mismatches with 9% of their utterances when speaking to female players. The remaining 91% of utterances were prototypical structure – speech act pairings.

Male Coaches – Female Players Mismatches. When speaking to female players, 11% of male coaches' utterances were mismatches. The remaining 89% of utterances were prototypical structure – speech act pairings.

Male Coaches – Male Players Mismatches. Similar to female coaches speaking to female players, when male coaches spoke to male players, 9% of their utterances were mismatches. The remaining 91% of utterances were prototypical structure – speech act pairings.

Of all the utterances produced, 39% are female coaches speaking to female players (522 utterances), 32% are male coaches speaking to female players (424 utterances), and 29% are male coaches speaking to male players (390 utterances). The coaches used the prototypical structure-speech act pairing 90% of the time. The remaining 10% (129 utterances) are mismatched from the prototypical structure-speech act pairings. Of those 129 utterances, 37% occurred when female coach addressed female players, 26% occurred when male coaches addressed female players, and 36% occurred when male coaches addressed male players.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to analyze sentence structures, speech acts, and how they were paired when speaking to collegiate basketball players.

All three coaching situations used non-prototypical structure – speech act pairings (mismatches) about 10% of the time (9% female coach – female player, 11% male coach –

female player, 9% male coach – male player). The prototypical structure – speech act pairings were observed in 91% of the utterances of female coaches speaking to female players, 89% of utterances of male coaches speaking to female players, and 91% of utterances of male coaches speaking to male players. The current study focused on sentence structure and speech act frequencies and examines if there are any differences in their pairing frequencies between female and male coaches.

On average, the sentence structures produced by the coaches were prototypical structure – speech act pairs about 90% of the time which indicated that the urgency of the coach's message seemed to override politeness strategies. This revealed that the coaches analyzed in this study typically did not use indirectness as a communication strategy when coaching. Rather, they used indirect speech strategies (mismatches) about 10% of the time. This statistic holds true across all categories of coaches regardless of gender.

The current study also implied there is little difference in communication styles due to gender or managerial nature of a coaching position. This finding may add support for the claim that stereotypical leadership styles of females and males are not observed in managerial and professional positions (Bartol & Martin, 1986; Bass, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Both female and male coaches utilized the task-oriented style of leadership which, according to Eagly and Johnson (1990), is most commonly observed among male leaders. These data indicate that there were few differences observed in the language use of female coaches and male coaches.

In a professional environment, the current study did not find gender-linked language differences between female and male coaches speaking to female players or male players (Mulac, Giles, Bradac, & Palomares, 2013) because the frequencies of the prototypical structure – speech

acts pairings did not differ depending on the sex of the coach or the player. The coach has the same role as a manager of a business. (S)he analyzes both the individual and group performance and makes strategic decisions to make necessary adjustments for optimal results. (S)he then communicates with his/her players to execute certain actions which will produce the desired results.

The current study found that genders of the supervisor and the trainee caused no significant difference in their communication, echoing Nelson and Holloway, 1990. The current study showed there was little observable difference in language use among female and male coaches regardless of the sex of the coaches. Task-oriented style of leadership was consistently observed in the language use of female and male coaches throughout all 15 data samples.

Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to provide evidence of gender-linked language effects in coaching collegiate basketball. A secondary goal is to add to the current research on sentence structure and speech acts used by male and female coaches during gameplay. While the current study used original methods in testing for gender-linked language effects or gender-linked language differences, the results can be helpful for those interested in these respective fields.

The approach to the current study was very direct – obtain samples using the mic'd-up videos of live gameplay, code for observable speech acts, count the frequencies of sentence structures and speech acts, accumulate frequencies and percentages of prototypical structure – speech act pairings, and compare if there are any significant differences in the speech patterns between female and male coaches.

The methodology examined frequency and pairings of the sentence structures and speech acts produced by both male and female players when speaking to either female and/or male athletes during gameplay. The main findings showed that there were few observable differences

in the frequencies of sentence structures or speech acts and the frequencies of their prototypical structure – speech act pairings between coaches. The findings supported Mulac, Giles, Bradac, & Palomares' (2013) theory that the language use of the speaker does not change based on the gender of the recipient. According to the results of the current study, there was no evidence of a gender-linked language effect nor a gender-linked language difference in the language uses of female and male coaches when speaking to female and/or male collegiate basketball players during gameplay.

The current study was the first of its kind using a methodology which examined sentence structure, speech acts, and their prototypical pairings. There were a few limitations to the current study which can be improved upon in the future. First, the data samples could be improved by examining word count rather than time (3-5 minutes). Word count is generally a more accurate calculation because it eliminates the need to account for rate of speech for the speakers. Further research could be conducted to examine in greater depth the illocutionary forces and effects of the speech acts such as intended meaning of an utterance by the speaker and perceived meaning received by the addressee. A more detailed study in this area would be helpful in establishing if there are truly no significant differences in language use between male and female coaches. Unfortunately, the unavailability of the data samples of female coaches speaking to male players is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future; however, this category of data could have an impact on the findings. Finally, further research could be conducted on whether there is any gender – stereotypical leadership style differences between the coaching styles of female and male coaches in collegiate sports. The current study used original methods to contribute to the gender-linked language differences field of study and observed data compelling further studies.

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