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Constructing Binary Identities: A Qualitative Analysis of Characters Complexity in *The School for Good and Evil*

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ABSTRACT

Language is an important tool to negotiate identity in any given context. One important area is of fantasy genre. This study examines the linguistic mannerisms of characters in *The School for Good and Evil* (2022) and how they facilitate the makeup, the reframe, and the undoing of good and evil identities. The research uses a qualitative discourse analysis approach and a triangulated theoretical framework to examine lexical choices, sentence structures, and discourse strategies used by characters, which in turn provide insights into how language reflects their changing moral identities. Linguistic markers of good are positive, compassionate and heroic, while linguistic markers for evil are assertive, cunning, and self-serving, the study finds. As the characters transition from the right to wrong side of the moral spectrum, their language undergoes a change to reaffirm that they indeed shifted along with their morals. Thus, with this analysis, this paper contributes to a field of sociolinguistics in which one can illustrate how fantasy narratives not only reinforce an individual's identity throughout the narrative, but also coincide with a parallel process in identity formation in the real world. The results set a new line of inquiry into the link between language and morality as well as language and fictional identity construction.

Introduction

Language can be a very complex phenomenon to understand. Kieu (2024) argues that, in the area of the education of languages, studying different definitions of languages is very significant. That is because it teaches us the way we look and understand the word. In his webarticle Kieu (2024) gives us a few different definitions of what language means. This concludes to how language can be perceived as a systematic way of communication and of cognitively. Keeping in mind all the aspects of language, a major point of discussion arises when we talk about language with identity representation.

Fearon (1999) considers that the notion of identity has been completely redesigned ever since Erik Erikson's pioneering work emerged in the 1950s. The term came to be widely adopted by the 1970s within diverse social science areas, mostly under postmodernism and multiculturalism. In the modern discourse, identity is usually defined as a social category with particular criteria of membership and or distinctive traits that one proudly identifies and regards as part of one's social reality. According to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), identity is an essential component of selfhood and that identity has importance and is conserved over time. For that reason, identity often surrounds discussions of race, nativity, and culture. The term is applied in these contexts all together in practical as well as analytical terms. Pitts (2020) claims that the quality of communication do not depend on perfect grammar and good vocabulary. Rather, it serves the purpose of living an experience and provoking a response. Among other things, she mentions the view of renowned actress Olesya Rulin, who claims that everything related to language in storytelling, can affect one emotionally and drive the story forward. And one of the main functions of language is to create and form identities of the characters in a story. Abott (1907) agrees with an individual's character being displayed through his or her clothes, actions, approach, and speech. Many of these qualities are used by writers who write fiction because they can put these features into their work to offers the quality of individuals they have crafted.

This study investigates the linguistic features in the move *The School for Good and Evil* (2022) directed by Paul Feig. The researchers work on this movie as a basis for the study of how characters employ language to express their identity in the moral duality of identities. It also attempts to examine how choices among the language structure affect the creation of the good and evil identities, which would thereby assist in the interpretation of identity formation in the field of the fantasy genre. This movie is a live action adaptation of a fantasy novel by Soman Chainani in which two best friends Sophie and Agatha are dropped to a school separated as Good and Evil by a large flying creature. The novel was first published in the United States in 2013 by HarperCollins with subsequent renditions in the United Kingdom in December 2013, wherein it has so far sold five sequels and a live action adaptation from Netflix. As the plot progresses we learn that one of the pretty characters, Sophie, dreams of beauty and heroism. However, she gets sent to the School of Evil. On the contrary, Agatha's more distrustful and lonesome, she gets sent to the School of Good. The placement of this unexpected twist of a story suggests a great opportunity to evaluate how the characters can challenge and articulate their identities in the light of their allotted parts. Out of all the characters, the journey of identity portrayal and linguistic behaviors presented by the characters, Sophie and Agatha are the most noticeable ones. Sophie transitions into her true nature of villainy as the plot progresses and it is well portrayed by her use of language and social behavior. In the opening of the plot we learn that her linguistic choice is more associated with beauty and virtue, but her lexical choices differ and shift to a darker tone as the movie progresses. Corresponding to this behavior, we see a development in the character of Agatha inclining more towards positivity.

Another dimension of this study is to contribute to the area of sociolinguistics focused on the connection between language and identity as expressed in the movie *The School for Good and Evil* (2022). Thus, the study, through analysis of the linguistic choices of the characters in the movie, attempts to go in depths of how identities are constructed and deconstructed in the movie associating it with the real world. This research will bring forth the significance of language and identity shaping with the help of dialogues of the characters, focusing on its role in storytelling as a matter of identity formulation.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to observe and analyze the linguistic behavior of different character from the movie called *The School for Good and Evil* (2022). This research progresses under the observation of shifting dichotomous identities throughout the movie. The research gap is attempted to be filled with a qualitative investigation of the dialogues from this particular fantasy movie. The movie is studied under the triangulated framework of CDA, Binary opposition theory and Social Identity Theory. By doing so this movie is also studied for the portrayal of the relationship of language and identity. The study contributes to the field of sociolinguistics by observing the formation and shifting of identity through language which will be helpful in understanding real life construction of identities through the use of language and defines how the use of language to present dichotomous identities such as good and evil.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant as it explores the formation of good and bad identities as observed through the use of linguistic items. This paper highlights the use of different linguistic choices in the field of fantasy genre. This study highlights the ways in which the use of language is significant in the construction of good and bad personas. The researcher attempts to contribute in the area of fantasy genre studies along with the area of sociolinguistics through the breakdown of shifting dichotomous identities. It should be noted that the topic of language and identity are explored quite a number of times, but the area of sociolinguistics in the given context of fantasy genre is less explored. Moreover, it helps authors aspire to write a story in fantasy genre with a better understanding of language use to create distinguished identities.

Objectives

1. To examine how characters of the fantasy movie *The School for Good and Evil* (2022) use their linguistic behavior to create and shift their identities.
2. To study the linguistic choices of characters to look in to their transformation to a different identity.

Research Questions

1. What are the different linguistic choices made by the characters to negotiate their binary opposite identity?
2. How do different characters like Sophie and Agatha, transform and shift their identities with the help of their language?

Literature Review

“Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols” (Sapir, 1921).

Sapir (1921) in his book says that language is a tool that humans use to communicate with the help of symbols and sounds. They are placed in a manner that carries meaning in the patterns they are arranged in. And then these meanings become a means to portray and articulate not only emotions but also past experiences. Cultural, social and individuals experiences shape language.

Edward Sapir states in *An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (1921) that technology – in this case, language – is a device developed by humans to pass information to other humans. This

communication is in the form of arbitrary symbols and sounds. These symbols and sounds have meaning and that meaning is necessary to articulate one's experience of the world. These symbols are used by language on different levels, individual, cultural and social.

Also, when we name the language as symbols, it is important to notice that Ferdinand de Saussure coined the term 'sign' in 1916. Human communicate their thoughts in the form of symbols also called "signs" as said by Saussure (2004). They are only linguistic symbols that are used by humans to talk either literarily or electronically. The text is then perceived by a listener or a reader, and it is communicated. It explains how language goes in only one way which is from the sender to the receiver. The transmission of this social interaction of transmission is shaped and assumes the role of the speaker as well as the receiver.

Finally, and most importantly, Robins and Crystal (2024) define language as "a system of conventional spoken, signed or written symbols by means of which human beings as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves." Language has several functions that include emotion release and communication. But the most important thing is that it expresses identity and plays with the imaginative expression of ideas. From there, we move our next step which is, to understand how language is associated with identity.

As quoted in Clark (2008), Erving Goffman says "By personal identity, I mean ... positive marks or identity pegs and the unique combination of life history items that come to be attached to the individual with the help of these pegs for his identity" (Goffman, 1968: p. 74). Clark (2008) supports his argument by saying that for Goffman personal identity was a collection of signs and marks that make each person unique. This type of identity is built on the base of "past experiences, social interactions and personal attributes, such as fingerprints". In addition, he further states that Goffman specifically focuses on the persistence of these identifiers in how a human being is not only seen but perceived in social context.

Additionally, Alshehri (2023) in their article conclude that language is a very important tool to express our identity and to tell others about one's culture. However, this identity, though, is very influenced by gender and many other factors. Gender and age are aspects of being a human being that we cannot ignore because they help us to know who we are. We can see that we are different in our language or vice versa our language can refer to the level of difference between others.

Identity Construction in Fantasy Literature

In their article, Kirby (2020) investigate the role of dialect in creating identities in fantasy literature. They discovered that at times a standard dialect is used, but using a nonstandard dialect or even a foreign dialect in a fantasy movie through a character gives their culture a meaning. These nonstandard dialects are a representation of a stylized identity associated with groups, context and sometimes historical timeline. Using a dialect in fantasy fiction helps to create a whole new identity.

According to van Leeuwen (2021), adolescence is the most important stage of one's life. It is characterized by great testing out of one's own personality and one's identity. This is observed in fantasy fiction. Writing a fantasy fiction is a creation of a whole new world where characters create and explore their own identities that may or may not be related to one's own identity. Generally, literature is a very important part of an individual's identity. Additionally, the identity in a young adult fantasy fiction is often constructed in reference to a relationship that binds the characters in the bonds of familial and romantic bonds, and so on, all in all, studying fantasy fiction especially meant for young adults can be a wide ground to understand the relationship between narrative and

identity formation. Scott (2001) explains that in simpler words, a fantasy can be used to create one's identity in such a way that allows authors to create a world outside of all the societal constraints. In such a way, fantasy is a medium of identity formation, in the sense that through telling a story, people can explain a historical event in such a way that it is given a very evident beginning and end. But it can be understood that the idea of identity is not fixed, but it can change over time. After all, they say, 'Retrospective identifications are imagined repetitions and repetitions of imagined resemblances.' The echo is a fantasy and the fantasy an echo, the two are inseparable."

The gap in the field of sociolinguistics that this study fills is in the study of transition in the identity of the characters in the movie *The School for Good and Evil* (2022). In terms of construction and transformation of identity, it deeply analyzes the linguistic features of the dialogues.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded on the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Structuralism to analyze dichotomous identity construction and transformation in the character dialogues. In order to investigate how language represents and preserves in *The School for Good and Evil* (2022) it seeks to merge these theories. This study addresses the research questions by paying attention to the concepts of language, construction of identity and dichotomous identities.

Language: language is considered and seen as a structured system of symbols which is known to be a tool for communication. However, it also performs the function of constructing and negotiate identities within discourse. Power relations are mediated by language and language shapes the society (Fairclough, 1989, 1995, 2001).

Identity Construction: it is a concept that changes with time. it is shaped with the help of our society and culture within it. Discourse practices that contribute to identity construction relate to and reinforce group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986).

Dichotomous Identities: dualistic identities means binaries such as good and evil, moral and immoral and a hero and villain. These identities are formed with the help of dialogues.

This research explores these concepts in order to examine how language is used in the selected text to construct dichotomous identities and how these identities correspond to broader sociocultural ideologies.

(CDA)

CDA is a very powerful framework that studies how language, power, and ideology connect with each other. Fairclough (1989, 1995) argues that discourse is socially constituted and, in the process, socially constitutive, creating and recreating power structures. *The School for Good and Evil's* (2022) character dialogues are truly a dichotomy and their dual nature is central to understanding how language and identity go together. This study follows Fairclough's (three dimensional model of CDA: text analysis; discursive practice; social practice) in implementing a study of linguistic features (e.g., vocabulary; grammar) and their sociocultural implications. By using dialogues of this movie, this research looks at the narratives and social context. CDA helps in identifying the ways in which language can be used to portray two opposite identities.

(SIT)

It is argued by SIT, as proposed by Tajfel and Turner, that the concept self-derives a large part of the self-concept from people's beliefs about their membership in a social groups. These groups are largely constituted through intergroup comparisons. Often, these comparisons are dichotomous, / such as good versus evil, and correspond to the binary themes in *The School for Good and Evil* (2022). According to SIT, process of categorization, identification, and comparison offer a lens to look into the ways to which characters identify and put themselves into certain social groups, and the ways those alignments structure the characters' dialogues. For instance, dialogues may highlight the characteristics of "good" or "evil," in order to support the maintenance and the consolidation of a boundary between different groups and provide justification to group dynamics.

Binary Opposition Theory

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963, 1978) gives us the basis to explain binary opposition in cultural narrative from the structuralism. As presented by Strauss myth often depend on the concept of dichotomies such as good and evil, a hero and a villain etc. to convey their complete meaning. These different binaries can also reflect our cultural ideologies. This study applies Structuralist principles in that it creates dichotomous relationships between characters in dialogues in *The School for Good and Evil* and explores if those binaries are interrogated to explore themes of morality, agency, and expectations as a society. The focus upon the universality of binary structures in structuralism contributes to an explanation of why the text is evocative of more general cultural patterns. In this study a triangulated theoretical framework is adopted which is composed of CDA, SIT and Structuralism. The merging of these different theories gives the researcher a chance to analyze different identities which stand as opposite to each other. The use of triangulation method bridges the gap that these three theories leave individually.

Methods and Materials

This research aims to adopt a qualitative research methodology specifically with qualitative linguistic analysis, to explain how dialogues by the characters in the movie end up creating and consolidating dichotomous identities. The procedure is followed in the research is extensive script analysis of the movie, which majorly dwelled on the language features and discourse strategies around which characters negotiate and express their identities in a binary moral landscape. The study relies only on the dialogue and linguistic choice provided by characters under analysis from the script of the movie. Controlled variables in this study are the context of the movie, its genre and plot, which are kept constant to isolate the effect of language in constructing identity. This implies that the limitations of this research are the use of script of a movie and a qualitative analysis on it. Data from the movie script is pondered over by accumulating the data and discussion presented in a qualitative discursive analysis. The research contributes to the field of sociolinguistics, literary analysis, and moral identity research; it also provides some details about the power of language in the formation of identity and moral alignment. This study employs a qualitative discourse analysis approach to analyze randomly chosen 25 dialogues between characters in the movie. The dialogues were chosen because they were relevant to dichotomous identity construction and they represented different characters and relationships. The analysis deals with lexical choices, sentence structure, pragmatic markers, discourse strategy, namely, positioning, framing, and politeness.

Linguistic Features

Lexical Choices

In *The School for Good and Evil* (2022), characters on the good side and the evil side have lexical choices that are indicative of their moral alignments. Characters who are on the good team, for example, tend to use more positive language and those aligned with evil use more negative language to represent the content of their character with their words.

A positive language by good characters includes:

1. Sophie: "We have to help them, Tedros! We can't just leave them behind!"

Sophie's character is a representation of empathy and kindness. It is reflected and emphasized by the Lexical Choices such as "help them" and "Can't just leave them behind." She is a 'good' character because of this.

2. Tedros: "You're incredibly brave, Sophie. I don't know what I'd do without you."

Courage and loyalty are one of the attributes that is assigned with the 'good'. For example, in this case, the character of Sophie is courageous and so the lexical items like "brave" are used. The next sentence is "I don't know what I'd do without you". It is not only an acknowledgement of Sophie's bravery, but also a sign of her loyalty, that she has done something brave for someone. Additionally, this dialogue also displays the 'good' character of Tedros for using acknowledging behavior.

3. Professor Dovey: "Remember, students, kindness and compassion are the greatest powers of all."

In this case, prof. Dovey is spreading a 'good' message of encouragement and benevolence. These lexical items associate these attributes to a good character and hence he is a 'good' character.

In *The School for Good and Evil* (2022), characters on the good side and the evil side have lexical choices that are indicative of their moral alignments. Characters with a good alignment tend to use more positive words while characters with a moral deficiency will tend to dwell more on negative words.

However, the characters who are evil use more negative language, such as:

1. Hester: "You're so weak, Sophie. You'll never make it in this world." (taunting and belittling)
Hester taunts Sophie with words and tone that belittle her. The way the Lexical items "weak" and "you'll never make it" are thrown at her are not only degrading but also discouraging. Hester is thus an 'evil' character.

2. Rafal: "Foolish mortals. They think they can defeat me?"

This is an exceptional example of an 'evil' character. Rafal's lexical choice is a representation of his arrogant personality. He uses words like 'foolish' and displays contempt.

3. Lady Lesso: "You'll learn to obey, Agatha. Or suffer the consequences." (asserting dominance and cruelty)

In this, the character of Lady Lesso is dominant, but cruelly. Using the words like “obey” and “suffer”, she asserts her dominance. These words make her dominant, but in an ‘evil’ way. The lexical choices further reinforce the characters’ moral identities and the relationships between them. Good characters speak positively to encourage and support each other, while evil characters speak negatively to manipulate and control. This dichotomy shows the difference between the two moral spheres and indicates the characters’ values and beliefs. These examples illustrate how lexical choices are used to construct dichotomous identities in the movie by separating good and evil characters through their language use.

Sentence Structure and Pragmatic Markers

More complex sentence structures indicate higher cognitive abilities of the good characters, such as:

1. Tedros: "If we don't find a way to stop Rafal, he'll destroy the entire fairy-tale world, and we'll be responsible for the consequences." (using conditional and causal clauses)
2. Sophie: "Although I know it's risky, I think we should try to reason with Hester and convince her to switch sides." (employing concession and suggestion)

On the contrary, evil characters often use simpler sentence structures, such as:

1. Hester: "Give me the wand, Sophie. Now." (using short and direct commands)
2. Rafal: "You're no match for me, Tedros. Surrender now and I might spare your life." (using simple and forceful declarations)

Regarding pragmatic markers, good characters use rather more modal verbs (e.g., "should," "must") and intensifiers (e.g., "very," "extremely"), such as:

1. Professor Dovey: "You must be very careful, students. The path to goodness is fraught with danger." (using modal verbs and intensifiers to emphasize caution)
2. Agatha: "We should try to help the students in the School for Evil. They're not beyond redemption." (using modal verbs to suggest a course of action)

On the other hand, evil characters employ more imperatives and addressing terms, such as:

1. Lady Lesso: "Silence, Agatha! You will obey me, or suffer the consequences." (using imperatives and address terms to assert dominance)
2. Hester: "Get out of my way, Sophie. I won't be stopped by a naive little girl like you." (using imperatives and address terms to assert control)

The obvious difference in the structure and pragmatic marker add to the better understanding of dichotomous identities in the story, highlighting the stark differences in the characters’ use of language and character building

Discourse Strategies

Some examples of the dialogues from the movie are given below which show the discourse strategies through positioning, framing, and politeness.

Positioning

1. Tedros: "We're the heroes, Sophie. We have to save the day." (Positioning himself and Sophie as good). Tedros's language is used to establish Tedros and Sophie as heroes, reinforcing their good identities and their responsibility to save the day.
2. Hester: "You're just a weak little girl, Sophie. You'll never be a true villain." (positioning Sophie as weak and herself as evil) Through language, Hester positions Sophie as weak and herself as a true villain, confirming their opposing identities and contrasting values.

Framing

1. Sophie: "I'm only trying to help, Hester. I want to make things right." (framing her actions as good and helpful)
2. Rafal: "I'm doing this for the greater good, Tedros. You're just too blind to see it." (framing his actions as necessary and good, despite being evil)

Sophie justifies her actions as good and helpful, and reinforces her good identity. On the other hand Rafal explains that his actions are for the greater good, trying to make himself out to be a visionary while, in reality, he is evil.

Politeness

1. Professor Dovey: "Please, students, remember to always be kind and considerate." (using polite language)
2. Lady Lesso: "Silence, Agatha! You'll do as I say, or suffer the consequences." (using impolite language)

Professor Dovey is polite, using language that is kind and considerate, and reinforcing the values of the School for Good. But Lady Lesso speaks in impolite language, commanding obedience and threatening consequences, which upholds her evil identity and her power over others.

The School for Good and Evil, for example, offers examples of how characters use language to establish their identities and others, to frame their actions and intents, and through politeness or politeness to bolster their dichotomous ones and values.

Power Dynamics

Some examples of dialogues from the movie that show power dynamics are as follows:

1. Lady Lesso: "Silence, Agatha! You'll do as I say, or suffer the consequences." (using direct and imperative language to assert power)
2. Tedros: "We need to work together, Sophie. We can't defeat Rafal alone." (using collaborative language to empower Sophie). Lady Lesso's use of direct and imperative language to assert her authority over Agatha is an example of direct and imperative language that is used to reinforce their power relationship. However, Tedros is a powerful and good character who uses collaborative language to empower Sophie and to reinforce their equal power relationship.

Social Norms

1. Professor Dovey: "Remember, students, kindness and compassion are the greatest powers of all." (reinforcing social norms of good)

2. Hester: "You're so weak, Sophie. You'll never make it in this world." (subverting social norms of good by using insults and belittling language)

Professor Dovey, a good character, is a good example of a good character who reinforces social norms of good by stressing the importance of kindness and compassion and encouraging students to follow these norms. In contrast, Hester is an evil character who uses insults and belittling language to subvert social norms of good and to challenge Sophie's confidence and reinforce her own power. The characters' linguistic choices and discourse strategies in each dialogue echo and reenact the power relations and social norms they have. Characters physical power level makes a difference in the form of language they use. Usually, more powerful characters use direct and imperative language, whereas less powerful characters use polite or submissive language. Plus good characters go on reinforcing the social norms of good and the evil characters subvert them, simply to practice their power and challenge the status quo.

Dichotomous Identity Construction

Some dialogues from the movie that show dichotomous identity construction are as follows:

Binary Oppositions

1. Tedros: "We're the heroes, Sophie. We have to stop the villains." (reinforcing binary opposition between good and evil)
2. Hester: "You're either with us, or against us. There's no in between." (reinforcing binary opposition between good and evil)

This is because Tedros speaks in terms of an opposition between good guys and bad guys, which polarize the heroes and villains. The use of language in Hester's words reinforces the binary opposition between good and evil, and places those who are with them as good and those who are against them as evil.

Moral Hierarchies

1. Professor Dovey: "Good always triumphs over evil, my dear students." (positioning good as superior)
2. Lady Lesso: "You're nothing but a weak little girl, Sophie. You'll never be a true villain." (positioning evil as superior)

Professor Dovey's language constructs a moral hierarchy, good as superior and evil as inferior. But In Lady Lesso's language, evil is superior and good is inferior.

Essentialization

1. Tedros: "I was born to be a hero, Sophie. It's who I am." (essentializing good identity)
2. Hester: "You're a natural-born villain, Sophie. You just need to embrace it." (essentializing evil identity)

Tedros essentializes his good identity, using language to explain it as fixed and inherent. Hester uses language that essentializes Sophie's evil identity as a fixed and inherent characteristic.

In the first of these examples, the language use of characters reinforces binary opposition, constructs moral hierarchies, and essentialises good and evil identities, in order to construct

dichotomous identities. The dichotomous identity construction here further brings into view the notion that good and evil are irreconcilable opposites and that good characters are superior to evil characters.

Findings

In *The School for Good and Evil* (2022), linguistic features and discourse strategies provide a strong influence to the construction of dichotomous identities, as it reiterates binary opposition, moral hierarchy and essentializes good and evil identities. These choices of the lexical, sentence structures and the pragmatic markers contribute this construction in reinforcing binary oppositions the good vs. the evil, while discourse strategies of positioning, framing and politeness consolidate these opposition and hierarchies, and essentialize the good and the evil identities. In addition, the forms in which power dynamics are used in creating dichotomous identities impacts the construction of identities, as more powerful characters demand how others learn to obey (their authority), and highlight their own identities as very real (perpetuating the binary oppositions, moral hierarchies). Through these linguistic and discourse strategies, the characters in the story bring forth and make sense of their identities, and reinforce the very dichotomy between good and evil, and finally the moral hierarchies and social norms that enable the narrative.

The verbs and other words used by characters in movie that present the binary opposition between good and evil produce deliberate lexical choices and sentence structures that reinforce the clear distinction between good and evil. Also, these positioning and framing strategies reinforce moral hierarchies as good is presented as superior to evil, and thus, as a power dynamic in which ones are superior and others are inferior, with good being more powerful than evil. In addition, through establishing frame strategies, these identities become essentialized as good and evil in which they are fixed and inherent as opposed to fluid or contextual. Such essentialization further propaganda of good and evil being inherently and unchangeably so, and a binary dividing the two. The characters in the story use these linguistic strategies to further redefine and strengthen the moral hierarchies and binary oppositions present in the narrative. In the movie's plot, binary oppositions and moral hierarchies are produced, and power and social norms dynamics are important for reinforcing these hierarchies. But stronger characters use that power to assert territory and elicit the ways that they define themselves (- through reinscription of the dominant binary oppositions and moral hierarchies). Social norms also support these oppositions and hierarchies by supporting reinforcement of these norms through the characters modelling and challenging these norms with their usage of language. Such linguistic strategies of positioning, framing and politeness are either perpetuating or undermining the existing binary oppositions and moral hierarchies and thus provide this reinforcement and challenge. Therefore, power relations and the social norms cross and reconfirm each other and hence support the dominant moral order and binary oppositions; but allow possibilities for challenges, subversion.

Conclusion

The last section concludes that the vocabulary of character dialogues in *The School for Good and Evil* (2022) represent a complex web of use of linguistic techniques, use of discourse strategies, use of power dynamic and use of social norms to construct and perpetuate dichotomous identities. Finally, characters use lexical choices, sentence structure, positioning, framing and politeness, binary oppositions of good and evil, moral hierarchies, and essentialization of identities. Binary oppositions and moral hierarchies pertain to these power relations and social norms, that the more powerful characters invest with authority and maintain their identity, while others resist and challenge social norms by linguistic usage. This reinforcement and challenge are both the dominant binary oppositions and moral hierarchies. And they are either perpetuated or subverted.

The described results point out the importance of language for construction and preservation of social identities and have importance for our understanding of power relations and social norms. The findings show that language use can maintain as well as destabilize dominant power and social norm systems, perpetuating or disrupting oppositions. The study ultimately unveils the complexity and the vitality of language, self and other constructions. It highlights the significance of getting a complete knowledge of how language molds our visions of self and others in fantasy genre.

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