



REFRAMING FEMININITY: EVALUATIVE LANGUAGE IN FRENCH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE DISCOURSE

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Abstract: Lexical choice plays a significant role in shaping linguo-pragmatic intentions in the discourse of French women's magazines. This article explores the evaluative dimensions of lexical units commonly found in such texts.

Keywords: evaluative language, emotional connotation, lexical units, women's magazine discourse, connotation.

Аннотация: Лексический выбор играет важную роль в формировании лингвопрагматических намерений в дискурсе французских женских журналов. В данной статье исследуются оценочные измерения лексических единиц, обычно встречающихся в таких текстах.

Ключевые слова: оценочный язык, эмоциональная коннотация, лексические единицы, дискурс женских журналов, коннотация.

French women's magazines hold a powerful position in shaping and reinforcing gender norms and stereotypes. Linguistic analysis provides insight into how these narratives influence societal perceptions, individual identities, and consumer behavior. These magazines are not merely sources of entertainment or information; they also act as cultural tools and marketing platforms, subtly steering values, behaviors, and self-image.

As media tools, women's magazines often serve to construct personal and collective female identity, reinforcing ideas of beauty, success, and desirability. Understanding their discourse is key to decoding their influence on advertising strategies and consumer preferences. A linguistic approach thus becomes essential in uncovering the nuanced relationship between language and culture within this genre.

French women's magazines are widely recognized for their polished style and thematic diversity. They cover topics such as fashion, beauty, lifestyle, and culture. Some of the most influential publications include:

- Elle – a staple in fashion journalism offering trend forecasts, beauty tips, and celebrity interviews.
- Vogue Paris – a luxury fashion icon focusing on haute couture, art, and elite cultural commentary.
- Marie Claire – a blend of fashion, beauty, and current social issues.
- Grazia – a more accessible, lifestyle-oriented magazine known for its interviews and features on women's influence in society.
- Le Figaro Madame – geared toward a more mature audience, with emphasis on style, beauty, and culture.
- L'Officiel – celebrated for its modern take on high fashion and frequent coverage of designer collections and trends.

Evaluative Language in Women's Magazine Discourse

From a linguistic standpoint, the discourse of women's magazines is heavily shaped by emotionally charged vocabulary, particularly with positive connotations. This serves two main functions: creating an uplifting tone and subtly promoting consumerism.

The language used in these magazines tends to enhance aesthetic appeal, idealize femininity, and associate products with beauty and success. Positive evaluative terms are often used to describe hair care routines and cosmetic products, emphasizing customization and self-care. Examples include:

Un brossage doux de cheveux
Si les cheveux sont épais
Si les cheveux sont frisés
Si les cheveux sont lisses
Si les cheveux sont bouclés (Femme Actuelle)

Negative attributes, by contrast, are tactfully softened through euphemisms or positive framing. This is a deliberate strategy to preserve the magazine's aspirational tone and avoid alienating readers. For example:

Lorsqu'une lèvre tombante vous gêne (Femme Actuelle)
Si votre front est petit (Femme Actuelle)
Lorsqu'il votre front est grand (Elle France)

Such phrasing disguises imperfections in a way that maintains positivity and encourages product engagement.

Similarly, skincare product descriptions are crafted to comfort and appeal to emotionally sensitive consumers by highlighting care, repair, and nourishment:

La crème relipidante anti-relâchement au beurre de karité nourrissant pour les peaux à tendance sèche (Elle France)

La crème réparation pour les peaux sèches et fragiles (Version Femina)

Le duo anti-rides au service des peaux sensibles (Version Femina)

These lexical units—typically adjectives and emotionally resonant phrases—are designed to evoke associations with luxury, beauty, youth, and empowerment.

Analyzing these examples - envoutante (enchanting), lumineuse (shining), intrigante (intriguing), magnifique (beautiful), inspirante (inspiring) - we can note that these epithets are endowed with the most positive coloring, and are thus intended to personify positive emotions. These epithets indicate that a modern woman is the embodiment of everything bright and at the same time fascinating, shining, intriguing, she can carry the most beautiful within herself and inspire everyone around her.

Lexical units conveyed through adjectives, as well as epithets and expressions that convey emotional and evaluative coloring are associated mainly with beauty, success, sophistication, luxury.

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