Identity Construction and Speech Acts in Ernaux's *The Years*: A Corpus-based Feminist Stylistic Analysis

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Abstract: The present study explores the construction of the female identity in *The Years*, in comparison with the original French text *Les Années*, which is one of the novels written by the French author; Annie Ernaux, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2022. The study also investigates the relationship between identity construction in the selected novel and the occurrences and frequencies of the different types of speech acts used by the protagonist. As a result, it highlights how the structure of the utterances said by the female protagonist and the types of speech acts with an illocutionary force contributes to the comprehensive portrayal of the female character.The qualitative and quantitative textual analysis employs a triangulation of a number of analytical tools and theoretical frameworks, such as feminist stylistics, pragmatics, and social psychology, with a corpus-based approach. The underlying theories used in the present study are the Speech Act Theory (1962,1979), the Positioning Theory (1990) integrating with Mills' (1995) framework of feminist stylistics. Findings demonstrate that two types of speech acts are frequently used and distributed in the selected novel; that is, expressive and directive in order to highlight the fact that the narrator intends to express her directions, compliments, and complaints about events and actions. Different positions are assigned to both the narrator and the protagonist in order to manifest the different identities constructed.
Keywords: Annie Ernaux, corpus, feminist stylistics, identity construction, speech acts.

Karve (1966) defined language as "a socio-cultural phenomenon" which helps interactants who share their thoughts, values, beliefs, and ideas by means of the different language forms in their interaction with each other. Analyzing how language is used in a particular community necessitates understanding the different social and cultural functions underlying the language forms in different contexts. Not only does language function as a means of communication, but it also plays multiple roles ranging from the projection of culture, gender, identity, and politics to the distortion of reality. Accordingly, language in literary texts is also used in the social context of the characters as it is actually used in society.

According to Karve (1966), determining how language is used in a particular community requires understanding the social and cultural functions that its users associate with its different forms. Accordingly, the Speech Act theory has been comprehensively established as an independent field of language that is mainly concerned with the study of language use in the various social contexts. As one of the various functional language aspects, a speech act is used to promise, ask, command, demand, deny, complain and announce in communication. According to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), speech acts are not only fundamental components in

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communication, but also social functions of language, which help interactants use everything with words to convey their messages to others.

The present study aims not only to stylistically analyze one of Ernaux' s masterpieces, that is, *The Years* (2017b) in comparison with the original French text *Les Années* (2017a), but also to examine how the different types of speech acts are realized and manifested in order to highlight the meaning of the literary text, and to investigate the types of positions which are taken by the female protagonist in the selected texts. It aims to linguistically investigate the way in which the texts convey, create, and construct interpersonal relationships. The purpose of the present study is to also examine the importance of obtaining a better understanding of both positioning and speech acts in determining the micro-structure of the selected novel in order to construct the character's identity. In other words, it is concerned with the linguistic analysis of the discourse in the selected texts in order to situate who the female character is, and whether their messages are relevant to the overall understanding of their communication. Moreover, the study provides a feminist dimension to the author's linguistic choices in the selected texts. It aims to investigate not only how the main female character is represented in the novel, but also how different attitudes toward feminist issues are reflected.

The present study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the different types of speech acts of the female protagonist in the translated English text?
2. What are the different types of positions which are taken by the female protagonist in both English and French texts?
3. How is the female protagonist represented in the selected novel from the feminist perspective?

Annie Ernaux is regarded as one of the most important and well-read authors and memoirists. Selecting one of the novels written by the Nobel Prize-winning author, Annie Ernaux, contributes to the provision of a more comprehensive and enlightening investigation of the author's style. The selected French novel, *Les Années* and its translated version, *The Years,* is considered a personal narrative of each year of Ernaux's life between 1940 and 2006, in which the cultural and social history of a whole generation and nation is narrated through the lens of the protagonist's memories, experiences, and perspectives. The scarcity of research on linguistic and stylistic analyses of Ernaux's novels, particularly *Les Années* and its English version *The Years*, poses a challenge for the present study to provide a stylistic analysis of the selected novel, which can be an essential foundation for those who are concerned with literary and linguistic studies.

On the one hand, since the author of the selected novel is a contemporary French writer, the present study might be significant for those who have an interest in the study of pragmatics and stylistics, particularly French pragmatics, known as 'étude pragmatique et étude systématique du style', because it could inspire them to embark on pragmatic and stylistic analyses of various French literary works. On the other hand, the selected novel is Ernaux's only novel translated into English by Alison Strayer. The language choices which are used in the selected texts and manifested in the present study would help in highlighting that Strayer keeps Ernaux's authentic style and nostalgic tone. Moreover, the present study aims to make a comparison between the original French text of the selected novel and its English version in order to investigate the similarities and differences between the feminist stylistic features of the author of the French novel and those used by the female translator.

The basic structure of the present study comprises an introduction, literature review, methods and procedures, results, discussion, and conclusions and implications.

Literature Review

This section presents an account of the three areas of interest in the present study, which formulate an essential foundation for the investigation of the types of speech acts, positions and identities constructed in the selected texts from a feminist perspective.

Speech Acts

The Speech Act theory was first introduced by Austin (1962) and was later developed by his student (Searle, 1969). Austin highlights the importance of two essential criteria that should be met by speech acts, regardless of their forms. First, the speaker and the hearer in communication have to understand a speech act, such as a request, a promise, or a warning, etc. Second, there lies the importance of the context of speech acts, which are referred to as performatives rather than constatives. Research shows that Jucker (2018) defines the Speech Act theory is "one of the most important pillars of pragmatic research to conceptualize how utterances employed in interactions perform a particular action, and thus reveal users' various pragmatic intents" (Pascual, 2021, p.7). According to Austin (1962), there are three aspects of the speech acts; that is, the locutionary act, which refers to "the phonetic, syntactic, and semantic nature of the utterance"; the illocutionary act which is "the act intended in saying something (e.g. command, bet, invitation)."; and the perlocutionary act which is "the effect produced by saying something". (p.94).

Miller (2019) states that Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) introduced the theory of Speech Acts in which utterances can be performatives rather than constatives. According to Mey (2001), the unit of linguistic communication "is not the symbol, word, or sentence,...but rather the production of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act" (p.93). One study found that Searle (1969) defines speech acts as "actions speakers perform when they produce sentences in a given context including promising, betting, greetings, blessing, swearing, etc" (Koutchade, 2017, p.16). Similarly, Richards and Platt (1992) define a speech act as "an utterance as a functional unit in communication" (Bahing & Rafili), 2018, p.342). Austin (1962) divides speech acts into five types which are reduced to four according to Searle (1979) taxonomy; that is, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives:

> Directives (e.g. *I order, I advice*) are the speaker attempting to get the hearer to perform an action; commissives (e.g. *I promise*) are the speaker committing to some future course of action; expressives (e.g. *I apologize*) are the act of expressing the speaker's psychological state; declaratives (e.g. *I pronounce*) are the act of changing the state of the immediate world. (p.12)

An essential concept in performing an appropriate speech act is politeness which is regarded by Brown and Levinson (1987) as "a prior need for adequate communicative/socio-pragmatic competence which plays this explanatory role in pragmatics" (p.49). Brown and Levinson (1987) also state that politeness which is "oriented toward the face" is defined as "the self-image that every member of a society claims for himself" (p.70). In communication interactants are supposed to cooperate to maintain face.

Positioning Theory

Language is closely associated with the perception of the self and, particularly, identity, the construction of which is done in a social context where two members of the society interact with each other. The positioning theory, which was introduced by Davies and Harré (1990), is concerned with "assigning certain positions to self and others during a discourse" (Hassan & Mushtaq, 2020, p.43). The theory is related to "the construction of identity because it talks about the words and phrases and also the psychological factors behind the use of the language for the purpose of making the speaker look different and unique among others" (p.46). Deppermann (2013) states that the positioning theory uses "the aspect of identity through narrative building and discourse development" (Hassan & Mushtaq, 2020, p.1)

According to the positioning theory, identity is defined by Turner (1987) as "Who am I, which involves classification and identification of the I concept" (Lu, 2020, p. 24). It is also defined by Mead (2015) as "the interactive process between subjective selection and social relation, in which one can realize and construct his identity only when he integrates into the group and interacts with others" (p.27). Accordingly, communication is conducted by two participants or members in order to justify and assign one's position over the other. There are two types of positions; that is, first order status and second order status, which the participants in communication take by means of the language choices and phrases. One study found that Burke (2014) argues that "the negativeness and positiveness of the women's image depends on how well they play their roles" (Atoke, 2021, p.526). Mills (1995) states that phrases or sentences might convey "sexist meaning and degrade women by presenting them in a negative way" (p.106).

Feminist Stylistics

Not only is language considered a means of communication, it can also be a repository of societal constructs. As a reflection of society and projection of ideology, it determines social changes. Accordingly, the positive or negative representation of men and women depends on the roles they play in society. Whereas women struggle to perceive their identity in society, men are associated with authority, power, and dominance. Whereas Clement et al. (2019) define feminism as "the belief that women should be allowed to the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state" (p.1); Bucholtz (2014) defines it as "a diverse and sometimes conflicting set of theoretical, methodological, and political perspectives that have in common a commitment to understanding and challenging social inequalities related to gender and sexuality" (p.23).

As a branch of language, feminist stylistics has its roots in the theories and practices of feminist criticism. It is defined by Ufot (2012) to be "dealing with the challenges faced by women who are contended with their roles as wives and mothers for exploring and exposing the realities of social injustice against women in the society and in works of art" (Atoke, 2021, p.2460). Moreover, Montoro (2014) defines feminist stylistics as "the sub-branch of stylistics which aims to account for the way in which gender concerns are linguistically encoded in texts and it attempts to do so by employing some of the frameworks and models used in the stylistics toolkit" (p.346).

Mills (1995) presents a toolkit in feminist stylistics, in which she argues that there is a major difference between the way in which men and women are treated in their society as a whole and the way in which women view themselves. She states that women's oppression is related to their sexuality. Accordingly, she adds that stylistics "uses linguistic analysis to provide a particular window on the devices which characterizes a particular work" (p.221).

According to Mills (1995), her approach to feminist stylistics "seeks to formulate an authentic counter-image of women through their writings…and explore the ways in which literature expresses a decidedly female consciousness" (p.3).

Mills (1995) argues that characters in a literary text are made up of words which "the reader has learnt how to construct into a set of ideological messages drawing on her knowledge of the way that texts have been written and the views which are circulated within society about how women and men are" (p.123). Mills also states that feminist stylistics deals with "how women and men are constructed at a representational and at an actual level" (p.3). She also adds that her model or framework of feminist stylistics "is not only text oriented, but also invites contextual elements of texts and the polyvalence of language items" (p.156).

Methods and Procedures

The present study follows the triangulation technique of adopting three analytical frameworks; that is, Searle (1969) theory of Speech Acts, Davies and Harré (1990) Positioning theory, and Mills' (1995) framework of feminist stylistics. Depending on the Speech Act theory for the linguistic analysis of a literary text; that is, the selected French novel and its English version, contributes in the adoption of a linguistic study to literature. The present study emphasizes the illocutionary force of the literary text, rather than on the text as an independent locution or form. The linguistic analysis of *Les Années* and its English version *The Years* provides an investigation of the language choices and types of speech acts used by the female protagonist in the world of the story, which helps in providing a more comprehensive analysis of the language of the original French novel in comparison with its English version.

For the purpose of constructing the female protagonist's identity in the selected texts, the positioning theory would be significant in determining a particular order status in relation to the other characters. Besides, using Mills' (1995) framework of feminist stylistics contributes to the provision of the feminist standpoint of the present study. As a result, combining the three theoretical framework would lead to a more comprehensive linguistic analysis of the selected French text in comparison with its English translated version.

The present study provides a three-layered analysis, in which the first part is based on the identification of the four types of speech acts; namely, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. The second part of the linguistic analysis is based on the lexical choices used by the female protagonist in order to identify the positions taken to construct different identities in the story. In the third part of the analysis, the study provides a feminist dimension which would demonstrate that the representation of the female image in a literary text and the construction of meanings have a remarkable impact on the way readers perceive reality. According to the feminist stylistic approach to meaning construction and communication, there are three levels of meaning analysis; that is, at the word level, the sentence/phrase level, and the discourse level. A number of frequently used words by the female protagonist falls into two categories; namely, reference words and feminist-specific words.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the selected French novel, namely, *Les Années* in comparison with its English version *The Years*. The novel is written by the contemporary French author, Ernaux (2017). In order to achieve the goal of analyzing the speech acts used by the protagonist as well as the identity constructed for the female protagonist, the present study attempts to analyze the original French text which is made up of 108 pages and 59.844

words in comparison with its English version which is totally made up of 114 pages and 61,681 words.

Procedures

Using a free concordance software programme which is called AntConc, the corpus; that is, both the original French text and its English version, is uploaded as a text document in order to search for the linguistic elements under study. Employing a software programme; namely, Laurence Anthony (2018), which is a corpus tool for concordancing and text analysis, helps in the investigation of the occurrences and frequencies of all linguistic elements under study. This free concordance software programme is used for two reasons. First, by means of its main feature 'Keywords', it provides a list of all the key words that are proved to be frequent in the file or corpus under study. Accordingly, it helps build up a linguistic profile of the most frequently used words in the corpus which reveal the key semantic associations. Besides, doing a computer-aided analysis helps focus the attention on the interpretation of the linguistic data. The list indicates the frequency and ranking of the linguistic items in the file under study.

Results

The present study comprises of three layers of analysis in order to conduct a feminist stylistic analysis of the original French novel and its English translated version.

Results Related to the Frequency of Speech Acts

In answer to the first research question and in the first part of the linguistic analysis, which is based on Searle's (1969) categorization of speech acts, all categories of speech acts are counted and tabulated in Table 1. Results indicate that the first frequently used type of speech acts is the expressive one which represents approximately 38.23% of all used speech acts, whereas the second frequently used type of speech acts is the directive one which represents approximately 34.19% of all used speech acts.

The below table indicates the identification of illocutionary acts in the speech in the English text which shows that there are 38.23% of expressive acts, 34.19% of directive acts, 26.92% of declarative acts, and 0.64% of commissive acts. It also indicates a slight difference between the English text and the original French text in which there are 50.38% of expressive acts, 40.23% of directive acts, 9.16% of declarative acts, and 0.20% of commissive acts. The predominance of the expressive acts reflects the psychological state of the female protagonist about the ideas, viewpoints, and actions of the physical world. Expressive speech acts in the English text include compliment which represents approximately 67.56% of all types of expressive acts. This foregrounds the importance of establishing and maintaining her social bonds with others in the community. They are also considered face-saving speech acts. They are performed in the story in order to highlight the approval of events, actions, and ideas. It is a positive politeness strategy which is used by the narrator in order to conduct communication in the story. This is also part of the positive image which the protagonist owns and manifests to others. In the French text, compliment ranks first, which represents 89.16% of all expressive acts. Moreover, there are also complaint and thanking acts, representing totally 28.73% in the English text and 10.82% in the French text, which highlight the indirect utterances used by the female protagonist.

Table 1

Types of Speech Acts in The Years and Les Années

Types of Speech Acts		Frequency in the English text	%	Frequency in the French text	%	Examples
Directives		532	34.19%	575	40.23%	
	Requestives	345	64.84%	86	14.95%	- She belongs to the jeune fille categoryand can be followed in the street.
						- The body of the one who was and would always be her little girl.
	Requirements	146	27.4%4	32	5.56%	- She seems overwhelmed by the need to take everything on board.
						- Women can choose to have children if they want, when they want, outside marriage.
						- One must not die stupid.
	Prohibitives	33	6.20%	457	79.47%	- Life would never be the same again.
						- They wondered what to prohibit and what to allow (the pill, wild parties, cigarettes, mopeds).
	Permissives	5	0.93%	0	0.00%	- There was a need of war.
						- We continued to need to be together.
						- All suggest a well-off city woman.
	Suggestions	3	0.56%	0	0.00%	- An opportunity to think and suggest that the Arabs were not like other immigrants.
Expressives		595	38.23%	720	50.38%	
	Greeting	6	1.00%	13	1.80%	- Good evening Madame Georgina Dufoix.
						- As we said hello, yes, and words not intended for the ears.
	Thanking	64	10.75%	18	2.50%	- Thank you, men, for loving women.
	Apology	16	2.68%	0	0.00%	- We ceased to be afraid and to check under seats.
						- Don't be afraid, put up Resistance.
						- She is afraid that as she ages her memory will become aging.
	Compliment	402	67.56%	642	89.16%	- She was the same lovely doll.
						- Girls did better at school than boys.
	Refusal	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
	Complaint	107	17.98%	47	6.52%	- They still exhibited as much fear as ever, or at best indifference.
						- The fear of AIDS was the most powerful fear on record.
Commissives		10	0.64%	3	0.20%	
	Promise	6	8.82%	2	66.66%	- An outward sign of morality and the promise of a destiny.
	Offer	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
	Intention	4	5.88%	1	33.33%	- One to distinguish between the good homeless, willing to work, and the others, sprawled and sleeping.
Declaratives		419	26.92%	131	9.16%	
	Expressing opinion	361	86.15%	129	98.47%	- How this will happen, she prefers not to think about. Ths is me.
						- To think of oneself in collective terms brought a certain loneliness.
	Capability	58	13.84%	2	1.52%	- What kind of memory can be ascribed to this girl?
						- Kind of intimacy that only the sex act can provide.
Total		1,556	100%	1,429	100%	

As for the directive speech acts in the English text, requestives rank first representing 64.84% of all types; whereas prohibitives rank first in the French text, representing 79.47%.This indicates that the narrator wants the female protagonist to do something, as if she is not familiar with her. The use of the requirements type of the directive speech act, representing 27.44% in the English text and 5.56% in the French text, highlights that the narrator sometimes has an intimate relationship with the protagonist. Declarative speech acts rank third, representing approximately 26.92% in the English text and 9.16% in the French text. As for commissives, they are rarely existent, representing 0.64 in the English text and 0.20% in the French text, showing that the female protagonist is not committed to perform any future actions. All examples of the various frequently used speech acts include a number of performative verbs which facilitate the categorization of each speech act produced by the female protagonist. Accordingly, the use of the various speech acts in the selected novel highlights the illocutionary force of the different utterances produced by the female protagonist.The linguistic analysis of the various speech acts in both the original text and its translated version reflects the way the female protagonist is portrayed through the use of various speech acts. It also highlights that although there are some differences in the frequencies of the types of speech acts in both texts, their rank to each other is similar in both texts, foregrounding not only the importance which Ernaux poses in the expressive speech act, but also the comformity of the female translator to Ernaux's writing style and strategies.

Results Related to the Frequency of Lexical Items Related to the Different Positions

In an answer to the second research question and in the second part of the linguistic analysis, based on the output results of AntConc (version3.5,2018), which is the corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing employed in the present study, there is a number of frequently used lexical items which fall into two categories; that is, reference words and personal pronouns. Table 2 displays the distribution of all lexical items used for male and female references in both the original French text *Les Années* and its English version *The Years.*

The belowe table demonstrates the predominance of the letter *S* which stands for the personal pronoun *she,* representing 40.70% of all reference words in the original French text, whereas representing 36.89% in the English translated version. The narrator, who is the author, feels immersed in the events and actions of the story which revolve around the female protagonist, without explicitly naming her. S is the protagonist's name of the novel and she learns from her experiences and gets information from her relationships with the other characters in the novel. The narrator never mentions the actual names of the main characters. She calls herself *the girl of S*. The narrator expresses her opinions, thoughts, and judgments when she remembers her past memories.Moreover, the generic word *On* in French and *One* in English also highlights the author's intention of not mentioning the name of the female protagonist in order to portray not only her personal experience, but also that of every single woman in the society. Both *On* and *One* are used with similar frequencies and percentages, representing approximately 32.68% in the French text and 35.84% in the English one. As for the male reference words, the most frequently used words in the French text are *père* and *enfant* which comprise a total of 50.22% of all reference male words. This is different from the most frequently used words in the English translated text because *boy* and *man* represent approximately 77.71% of all used words. Table 3 shows the similarities and differences in the percentages of all reference male and female words in both the French text and its English version.

Table 2

Lexical Items for Male and Female References in Les Années and The Years

	Lexical items in original French text	Frequency	Percentage	Lexical items in English version	Frequency	Percentage
Feminine / Female	S	1092	40.70%	S	318	36.89%
	Fille	93	3.46%	Girl	43	4.985%
	Femme	120	4.47%	Woman	136	15.77%
	Mère	0	0.00%	Mother	49	5.68%
	Parent	75	2.79%			
	La petite	30	1.11%	Daughter	7	0.81%
	On	877	32.68%	One	309	35.84%
Total		2,683	100%		862	100%
Masculine / Male	H	50	11.57%	H	6	3.42%
	Garçon	47	10.87%	Boy	59	33.71%
	Homme	68	15.74%	Man	77	44.00%
	Fils	12	2.77%	Son	18	10.28%
	Père	105	24.30%	Father	15	8.57%
	Enfant	112	25.92%			
	Le petit	38	8.79%			
Total		432	100%		175	100%

Table 3

Percentage of Lexical Items for Male and Female References in Les Années and The Years

	Frequency In original French text	Percentage	Frequency in English version	Percentage
Feminine / Female	2,683	86,13%	862	83,12%
Masculine / Male	432	13,86%	175	16,87%
Total	3,115	100%	1,037	100%

The above table demonstrates a degree of similarity between the percentages of either male or female reference words in both texts. The French reference words are predominantly used and distributed in both texts, highlighting the author's as well as the narrator's foregrounding of the female protagonist's ideas, thoughts, and viewpoints. In the French text the reference words represent nearly 86.13% whereas they represent 83.12% of all used words. As for the male reference words, they comprise approximately 13.86% in the French text, whereas they constitute 16.87%.

The second category of the lexical items which are frequently used and distributed in both texts under study is the personal pronouns. It is essential to study the personal pronouns in the selected texts in order to position and locate the narrator as well as the female

protagonist in the physical environment and space of the texts. These personal pronouns are also referred to as deictic expressions which play a significant role in the construction of relationships between the narrator and other characters in the texts. Such deictic expressions are realized in subject, object, possessive, and reflexive pronouns. Table 4 displays deictic person expressions used in the French text *Les Années,* including subject, object, possessive, and reflexive.

Table 4

Deictic Person Expressions Used in Les Années

Type	Example	Subject	Object	Possessive	Reflexive	Total Freq.	Percentage
1er personne singulier	Je	51					
	Me		43				
	Mon/Ma/Mes			66			
	Moi				12		
						172	4.07%
2eme personne singulier	Tu	32					
	Te		26				
	Ton/Ta/Tes			13			
	Toi				9		
						54	1.27%
3éme personne singulier (masculin)	Il	327					
	Lui		99				
	Son/Sa/Ses			484			
	Se				487		
						1,397	33.06%
3éme personne singulier (féminin)	Elle	534					
	Lui		99				
	Son/Sa/Ses			484			
	Se				487		
						1,604	37.96%
1er personne pluriel	Nous	305					
	Notre/Nos			79			
						384	9.08%
2éme personne pluriel	Vous	16					
	Votre/Vos			3			
						19	0.44%
3éme personne pluriel (masculin)	Ils	268					
	Eux		45				
	Leur			197			
						510	12.07%
3éme personne pluriel (féminin)	Elles	85				85	2.01%
Total						4,225	100.00%

Table 4 shows that the most frequently used deictic expression in *Les Années* is the third-person-singular pronoun *she* which occurs 1,604 times with approximately 37.96% of all pronouns' occurrences. In French the female pronoun is different from the male one which occurs 1,397 times with 33.06% of all used pronouns. This highlights that the main narrator gives an account of the female protagonist's ideas, thoughts, and attitudes, in relation with the male pronoun. The female protagonist takes the first order status position whereas the male

reference takes the second order status. Table 5 displays deictic person expressions used in *The Years,* including subject, object, possessive, and reflexive.

Table 5
Deictic Person Expressions Used in The Years

	Example	Subject	Object	Possessive	Reflexive	Total Freq.	Percentage
First- person singular pronouns	I	75					
	Me		17				
	My			22			
	Myself				2		
						116	2.72%
Second- person singular/plural pronouns	You	76					
	Your			18			
	Yourself				3		
						97	2.28%
Third-person singular pronouns (masculine)	He	60					
	Him		30				
	His			79			
	Himself				3		
						172	4.04%
Third-person singular pronouns (feminine)	She	533					
	Her		481				
	Herself				50		
						1064	25.02%
Third-person singular pronouns (neutral)	It	435					
	Its			67			
	Itself				12		
						514	12.09%
First-person plural pronouns	We	859					
	Us		188				
	Our			238			
	Ourselves				51		
						1336	31.42%
Third-person plural pronouns	They	435					
	Them		196				
	Their			299			
	Themselves				22		
						952	22.39%
Total						4251	100.00%

Table 5 shows that the most frequently used deictic person expression in *The Years* is the first-person plural pronouns *we* which occurs 1336 times with 31.42% of all pronoun occurrences.This highlights that the main narrator gives an account of the protagonist's ideas, thoughts, and attitudes, by replacing *I* with *we* because she wants to express her idea that a collective life is inextricably interconnected with the individual woman's personal life. Accordingly, she expresses the memories of a whole nation or generation through the perspective of a single woman's private life. The second frequently used deictic person expression is the third-person plural pronoun *they* which occurs 952 times with 22.39% of all pronoun occurrences. This indicates that although the selected novel is a first-person

narrative, it has an impersonal tone. The pronoun *I* is not frequently used like the other pronouns. The first-person singular pronoun occurs approximately 2.72% of all the used pronouns. This also explains the effect that Ernaux makes in the novel in order to provide much knowledge by the narrator's voice as an observer of the events and actions of the story. It also implies that Ernaux wants to express her absence from the events and memories of the story, as if they belong to a stranger. As a result, Ernaux could successfully transform her own individual life into a collective one and her own memories into the memory of a whole generation in history.

Based on the linguistic analysis of the deictic expressions used in the selected texts, it is assumed that Ernaux highlights the positions taken by the narrator and protagonist in order to construct their different identities. Even though the selected novel is a first-person narrative, the main female character takes the first order status whereas the narrator takes the second order status in order to demonstrate that the latter acts as an unusual stranger or an external observer. Accordingly, Ernaux assigns different positions to the narrator as well as the main female character; that is, the protagonist. As a result, although the most frequently deictic pronouns in the French text are different from those in the English version, the female protagonist in the original text takes the same order status as in the English version.

Results Related to the Frequency of Feminist-Based Elements

The third part of the analysis, based on Mills' (1995) framework of feminist stylistics, reflects the feminist perspective of the present study. The linguistic analysis is divided into three levels; that is, the word level, the phrase/sentence level, and the discourse level. As for the word level, there is a number of lexical items, which are frequently used according to the results obtained from the software programme AntConc, which is the main corpus toolkit for concordancing. Such lexical items used by Ernaux by means of her female character in both French original text and its English version highlight the foregrounding of the female body as a manifestation of fragmentation. The female body is considered the prominent theme in the selected texts, highlighting its significance to the whole generation at that time. This is reflected by a number of lexical items which fall into two categories; namely, parts of the body and sex-based words. Table 6 displays the frequency and percentage of all feminist-based words used in *Les Années* and *The Years*.

Table 6 indicates that the most frequently used words which are related to the parts of the body in the French text are *corps* which is approximately 17.25% and *visage* which is nearly 12.86%. As for the English text, the word *face* which is nearly 15.03%, *body* which is nearly 14.57% are frequently used. This demonstrates a similarity in the frequency of the most frequently used lexical items which denote parts of the body in both texts. It also highlights the translator's conformity with the author who focuses on the female protagonist in her novel. As for the second category of the feminist-based words, that is, sex-based words, the most frequently used words in the French text is *lit*, representing 22.52% of all sex-based words; whereas in the English text the most frequently used words are *play* which is nearly 23.78%, *sleep* which is nearly 13%, *dress* which is nearly 13.41%, and *bed* which is nearly 11.58%. All these words are related to sex in general and the love scenes in particular in both texts. Table 7 shows the percentage of the two categories of the feminist-based words in both French and English texts.

Table 6

Feminist-Based Words in Les Années and The Years

Type					
Parts of the Body In the French text	Freq.	Perc.	Parts of the Body In the English text	Freq.	Perc.
Bras	21	6.14%	Arm	25	5.69%
Sein	9	2.63%	Breast	9	2.05%
Joue	4	1.16%	Cheek	4	0.91%
Oeil	38	11.11%	Eye	42	9.56%
Doigt	3	0.87%	Finger	1	0.22%
Cheveux	34	9.94%	Hair	37	8.42%
Genoux	13	3.80%	Knee	8	1.82%
Tête	15	4.38%	Head	25	5.69%
Nez	6	1.75%	Nose	5	1.13%
Corps	59	17.25%	Body	64	14.57%
Visage	44	12.86%	Face	66	15.03%
Pied	18	5.26%	Foot	9	2.05%
Génital	0	0.00%	Genitals	3	0.68%
Main	35	10.23%	Hand	42	9.56%
Bouche	18	5.26%	Face	66	15.03%
Dent	13	3.80%	Mouth	15	3.41%
Cuisse	8	2.33%	Tooth	6	1.36%
Taille	4	1.16%	Thigh	9	2.05%
Total	342	100%	Total	439	100%
Type					
Sex-based Words In the French text	Freq.	Perc.	Sex-based Words In the English text	Freq.	Perc.
Lit	25	22.52%	Bed	19	11.58%
Merde	4	3.60%	Fuck	3	1.82%
Pantalon	8	7.20%	Pants	2	1.21%
Enceinte	3	2.70%	Pregnant	3	1.82%
Dormir	8	7.20%	Sleep	22	13.41%
Toucher	8	7.20%	Touch	12	7.31%
Sang	17	15.31%	Blood	17	10.36%
Robe	19	17.11%	Dress	21	12.80%
Baiser	3	2.70%	Kiss	7	4.26%
Nue	4	3.60%	Naked	7	4.26%
Jouer	8	7.20%	Play	39	23.78%
Râpé	0	0.00%	Rape	1	0.60%
Sucer	1	0.90%	Suck	2	1.21%
Sous-vêtements	2	1.80%	Underwear	5	3.04%
Slip	1	0.90%	Underpants	4	2.43%
Total	111	100%	Total	164	100%

The below table demonstrates that the words which are related to the parts of the body in the French text approximately comprise 75.49% of all other feminist-based words. The narrator highlights the way in which the female character, that is, the protagonist, is a passive agent whose body is admired by men. The English text shows a degree of similarity, representing nearly 72.80%, in the percentage of the parts of the body to the original French text. The fragmentation of the female body is a stereotyping feature in most literary texts. The second category of the feminist-based words, that is, sex-based words, approximately comprise approximately 24.50% of all the used words in the French text in comparison with the English text in which the second category represents 27.19%.

Table 7
Percentage of Feminist-Based Words in Les Années and The Years

	Frequency In the French text	Percentage	Frequency In the English text	Percentage
Parts of the body	342	75.49%	439	72.80%
Sex-based words	111	24.50%	164	27.19%
Total	453	100%	603	100%

As for the discourse level, based on Mills' (1995) framework of feminist stylistic analysis, and based on the frequency rate of a number of lexical items, whether related to female reference or feminist-based words, it has been observed that Ernaux would give a negative representation and portrayal of the female protagonist. In other words, the linguistic choices used by either the narrator or the female character demonstrate Ernaux's foregrounding of some stereotypical ideas that need to be avoided in the society. This is realized by the high frequency rate of the words which denote the parts of the body, representing 75.49% of all feminist-based words in the French text and 72.80% in its English version.

The three layers of the linguistic analysis described and examined reflect the integration of three theoretical frameworks and approaches, which aim to reach a comprehensive understanding of Ernaux's novel, which is the original French text in comparison with its English translated one.

Discussion

The three-layered linguistic analysis of the original French text and its English version shows a well-correlated relationship between the use of speech acts and the construction of the female protagonist's identity in the novel. The first part of the analysis shows not only the way in which different types of speech acts are used, but also the way in which various illocutionary acts are identified. Expressive acts are meant to display the female protagonist's intentions and priorities by expressing her experiences. This is demonstrated in the high frequency of expressive acts in both texts, in comparison to the other types of speech acts. While previous research has focused on the frequency of directive acts in literary works, the results of the study show the author's intention in expressing the protagonist's feelings and compliments towards the surrounding world by means of expressive acts.

This study also analyzed the types of positions taken by both the female protagonist and the narrator to foreground their identities throughout their experiences. The first order status taken by the female protagonist in contrast to the second order status taken by the narrator is represented and realized by a number of reference words and deictic pronouns. The possibility of finding changes in frequencies between reference words and deictic pronouns in

both texts cannot be excluded. However, the percentages of these linguistic choices in the original French text show a degree of similarity in the English version. While this limitation has not impacted the primary outcome of the study, future research could seek to consider additional controls.

The feminist dimension of the present study foregrounds the way in which women are treated as weak and helpless people who cannot protect themselves from assault in the society. The negative portrayal of the female character and the detailed account of her personal life in the selected texts is based on the fragmentation of the female body and the focus of women's main roles as wives, mothers, housewives or whores. *Les Années* and *The Years* show an account of the intimate details of the personal life of a French woman, experiencing marriage, maternity, divorce, and cancer. This highlights the way in which Ernaux would challenge the stereotypes and beliefs regarding the female image and identity in society.

Conclusions and Implications

The investigation of the original French novel and its English translated version which represent the corpus of the present study leads to a rich account of speech acts as a linguistic feature of language. The frequency rate of the different types of speech acts which are used and distributed in the story reflects the author's presence. It also indicates that Ernaux uses the linguistic choices not only to give information on events and characters, but also to express her opinions, attitudes, and judgements in her novel. The findings of the study demonstrate the preponderant use of the first-person plural pronouns as well as the third person plural pronouns which reflects the distance Ernaux intends to make between the narrator and the female protagonist. This indicates the author's assumed intention of foregrounding the narrator's observation to the protagonist's thoughts, attitudes, and judgments of the events and characters in order to transform the story from a mere personal narrative into a collective account of universal issues. The study also shows that there is a feminist dimension or standpoint in the selected novel in a way that some linguistic choices are interpreted with reference to some feminist issues.

The findings obtained from the linguistic analysis of speech acts in the English translated version of the French novel and the analysis of positions in both texts complement each other and lead to a significant finding that the female protagonist in the selected texts express her ideas and thoughts by means of the types of speech acts and positions employed in discourse. The linguistic analysis of the present study might suggest that approaching a literary work is best carried out by means of the different linguistic choices made by the author, narrator, and character. It also has implications for the role of speech acts in expressing meaning among interactants who convey their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. The results of the present study also suggest that language and identity may work together not only to express the author's main theme, but also to aid readers' comprehension of the literary work.

The results of this study also suggest that there is a growing interest in the use of computer-based concordance programmes in order to analyse large corpora in literature. This highlights the essential motivation of using concordance data in corpus-based studies in modern corpus linguistics. The results of the linguistic analysis, based on the comparison which has been drawn between the original French text and its English translated version, suggest that there is no effect of the translator's identity on the adequacy of translating the novel and that the translator has been loyal to the author's style and writing strategies. This is demonstrated in the degree of similarity between the frequency of the lexical items in the original text and the translated one.

Recommendations

There are some suggestions for future research. First, Ernaux's other novels can be studied from the linguistic perspective rather than the literary one. Second, from a pedagogical point of view, the linguistic analysis of prose fiction, particularly novels, can be linked to vocabulary learning and the teaching of English as a foreign language. Third, it is hoped that the present study would be a foundation to more translation studies in which translation strategies can be examined. Moreover, it can be recommended that the present study would contribute to a future computer-based project which aims to provide a word list of the lexical choices in the area of feminist-based issues that would be of value in the field of feminist stylistics.

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