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Linguistic Strategies and Social Dynamics in Liane Moriarty’s Fiction: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

Abstract

**Lamis Hassan
Elbana Mohamed
Ibrahim**
Assistant Lecturer in
Linguistics -
Department of
English - Faculty of
Languages - Luxor
University

The study explores the sociolinguistic aspects of gossip in Liane Moriarty's (2014) novel, *Big Little Lies*, focusing on its narrative significance and wider social implications within modern Australian views. The study investigates various forms and functions of gossip by referencing insights from scholars such as Dell Hymes (1972), Robin Lakoff (1975), Deborah Jones (1980), and Eric K. Foster (2004). It demonstrates how gossip influences character development and fosters unity within social circles in both personal and social contexts, making it a crucial element in the progression of the story. Gossip is described as one of the most important mechanisms for establishing relationships and forming social hierarchies; it underscores the function of gossip, addressing both selective friendship and commonality in social interactions. Characters use gossip as a mechanism informing others but also one that nourishes common bonds and helps in the navigation of social life. Such contextualization of gossip redefined the power dynamics and psychological workings of gossip that sometimes becomes a uniting or dividing force among the characters in the narrative. The study argues that gossip is not only silly or bad but, rather, a powerful linguistic weapon that shapes relationships and leads the progress of the plot. Gossip plays a myriad of functions, rendering it a significant structure to approach the complexities of social interactions and character relationships evident in *Big Little Lies*. Such a study contributes to a perspective whereby one may acknowledge language and communication as instrumental in influencing both community standards and private affairs.

Keywords: Literary Linguistics, Character Development, Language and Power, Social Hierarchies



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الاستراتيجيات اللغوية والديناميكيات الاجتماعية في أدب ليان موريارتي: منظور اجتماعي لغوي

المستخلص باللغة العربية

لَميس حسن البنا محمد
إبراهيم
قسم اللغة الانجليزية
كلية الألسن
جامعة الأقصر

ستكشف هذه الدراسة الجوانب الاجتماعية اللغوية للنميمة في رواية/أكاذيب صغيرة كبيرة (2014) للكاتبة ليان موريارتي، مع التركيز على أهميتها السردية وأثارها الاجتماعية الأوسع ضمن وجهات النظر الأسترالية الحديثة. تبحث الدراسة في الأشكال والوظائف المختلفة للنميمة من خلال الاستفادة من رؤى باحثين مثل ديل هايمز (1972)، وروبن لاكوف (1975)، وديبورا جونز (1980)، وإريك ك. فوستر (2004). وتوضح كيف تؤثر النميمة على تطور الشخصيات وتعزز الوحدة داخل الدوائر الاجتماعية، سواء في السياقات الشخصية أو الاجتماعية، مما يجعلها عنصرًا أساسيًا في تطور الحكمة. تُوصف النميمة بأنها واحدة من أهم الآليات لإنشاء العلاقات وتشكيل التراتبية الاجتماعية، حيث تبرز دورها في تعزيز الصداقات الانتقائية وإيجاد القواسم المشتركة في التفاعلات الاجتماعية. يستخدم الشخصيات النميمة كآلية للإخبار عن الآخرين، لكنها أيضًا تعمل على تقوية الروابط المشتركة وتساعد في التكيف مع الحياة الاجتماعية. إن هذا التأطير للنميمة يعيد تعريف ديناميكيات السلطة والجوانب النفسية المرتبطة بها، حيث تصبح أحيانًا قوة موحدة أو مفرقة بين الشخصيات في السرد. وتجادل الدراسة بأن النميمة ليست مجرد أمر تافه أو سلبي، بل هي أداة لغوية قوية تشكل العلاقات وتقود تطور الحكمة. تلعب النميمة أدوارًا متعددة، مما يجعلها بنية أساسية لفهم تعقيدات التفاعلات الاجتماعية وعلاقات الشخصيات التي تظهر في أكاذيب صغيرة كبيرة. تساهم هذه الدراسة في تقديم منظور يمكن من خلاله إدراك اللغة والتواصل كأدوات مؤثرة في تشكيل المعايير المجتمعية والشؤون الخاصة.

الكلمات الرئيسية: اللغويات الأدبية، تطور الشخصيات، اللغة والسلطة، التراتبية الاجتماعية.

Linguistic Strategies and Social Dynamics in Liane Moriarty's Fiction: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

1- Introduction

Gossip, often dismissed as simple idle chat, is an important factor in the dynamics of human relationships as well as the structure around which narrative exists within literature. In Liane Moriarty's (2014) *Big Little Lies*, gossip is portrayed in a strong light as a sociolinguistic weapon that plays a central role in character relationships and the unfolding of the novel's plot development. Set against the backdrop of the Australian modern-day societal landscape, the novel shows how gossip becomes an item of interest for social binding and a tool for cultural reflection. Gossips are seldom regarded as a very serious subject and the least important of all aspects within the contemporary day. The study examines gossip in its multifaceted paradigms, employing frames of reference dictated by Deborah Jones (1980) and Robin Lakoff (1975). Through the study of the linguistic properties and functions of gossip within the narrative, one uncovers how this mechanism actually lends itself toward characterizations or other social hierarchies. The gossip links the characters, creates norms for the social standing, and engages power relationships; thus, setting the very core around which the narrative evolves. Gossip is used throughout the novel to relate the plot and develop character relations.

The character relations of the main characters-Madeline, Celeste, and Jane-are shaped by the gossip that surrounds them. Gossip illustrates how connections are both made and strained when a little information is passed around. The role of gossip in the formation of social strata throughout the novel is strongly noticeable. The air of competition among the ten mothers reveals how gossip has the power to put one on a pedestal or leave one out in the cold. These

theories agree with others that define it as a mechanism through which one maintains order in social relations and group identity (Jones, 1980; p. 112).

Consequently, the medium of gossip nurtures social commentary amongst women through self-revelations of the common experience of motherhood and exposes its other high-brow characters to the realities of life. This is further backed up by some of the research carried out by sociolinguists focusing on explaining gossip as a social commentary of sorts (Lakoff, 1975; p. 78). However, perhaps the ultimate difference in the literary significance of gossip in *Big Little Lies* is not necessarily a story-telling vehicle: it is a way in which to highlight the conflicting and transgressions in contemporary Australian social life (Foster, 2004; p. 201).

1.1. Context of the Study

The study positions gossip as a powerful linguistic mechanism that not only affects character development but also shapes the social interactions and hierarchy within the narrative. It engages with sociolinguistic theories from scholars like Dell Hymes (1972), Robin Lakoff (1975), Deborah Jones (1980), and Eric K. Foster (2004) to examine how gossip functions in both personal and broader social contexts, emphasizing its role in the construction of relationships and the progression of the plot.

The novel by Moriarty has redefined the meaning of gossip from some trivial social activity to a central tool to maintain social bonds and navigate power dynamics. The study identifies the narrative function gossip plays not just as a turning of the plot but also as a commentary on the Australian social environment today, based on motherhood, competition, and social status: the work is undertaken into the socio-cultural and linguistic approaches to gossip elucidate it in the formation of social norms and hierarchies. Through close reading and practical theory analysis, it strives to show how gossip overshoots mere chat and becomes a tool to the creation of individual and collective identities within the social landscape of the novel. Through these

frameworks, the study thus constructs an intricate view of the ways in which language and social dynamics connect to define interpersonal relations and social structures as they relate to modern Australian life.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The study deals with the theme of gossip in the narrative and analyzes its contributions toward the ways in which the characters interact with each other and build up relations among themselves. Commonly perceived as malicious, gossip nevertheless serves a valuable function in building social connections, altering power dynamics, and providing membership in groups. By looking at this particular act in relation to the wider web around the plot, this study tries to show what such behavior reveals about society and human interaction. Gossip comes across not merely as a negative entity but rather an important tool, using which human beings meant to sociolinguistic create and maintain social bonds and relationships of power, thus opening up chances for more in-depth study of human behavior and group affiliation.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The study explores the sociolinguistic role of gossip in *Big Little Lies* by investigating its types, linguistic features, and functions throughout the narrative. Specifically, the study will:

Identify the different types of gossip in the novel.

Examine gossip in terms of its tone, style and, register.

Analyze gossip and how it contributes to achieve the goal of the text.

Achieving these aims will greatly enrich our understanding of the nature and utility of gossip and how it operates in literary discourse.

1.4. Questions of the Study

What are the various types of gossip used in the novel?

How does gossip function in terms of its tone, style, and register?

How does gossip contribute to achieving the goal of the text?

1.5. Scope of the Study

The study, as applied to *Big Little Lies*, elaborates how gossip affects social interaction and communication. It analyzes the role of gossip in building a character, advancing a plot, and social interaction through literary analysis. The study further discusses the connection between gossip and related concepts such as rumor and scandal-mongering. The analysis will be confined to the novel itself without extending to other literary works or cultural contexts.

The study specifically aims to investigate how *Big Little Lies* portrays various types, functions, and linguistic features of gossip and how these elements shape communication within the narrative. The scope will be limited to the main characters, who play a central role in shaping the social and linguistic interactions depicted in the novel.

1.6. Significance of the study

The study explores gossip in *Big Little Lies* and analyzes its role in constructing the narrative. It examines some types and functions of gossip found in the text in order to show that despite its common nature, gossip is nonetheless a socially potent force within the novel. Gossip feeds into conflict and drama, but it is also a tool for character development, plot advancement, and setting up social interactions between characters. The study will broaden the overall understanding of the significance of gossip in contemporary literature; when viewed through a sociolinguistic lens, it becomes more interesting. Applying various kinds of sociolinguistic theory to the text allows the study to reveal how gossip is not mere conversation, but rather has an effect on power dynamics, social identities, and relationships within the fictional community.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

Gossip is a natural way of social interaction and has been an important part of shaping society; it is the form that makes all communication happen between different parties. It serves to evaluate and relay information about an absent third party, positively or otherwise (Leaper

& Holliday, 1995; Levin & Arluke, 1985). Historically, the meaning of gossip comes from the Old English *godsibb*, close companion, coming a long way to mean today's idle talks and rumors (Hawker, 2006). The term *gossip* is accusative in most sections; of course, it is a bonding agent through which the identified community norm and power structures are reinforced (Jones, 1980). It could be either informative or evaluative, considering the context within which it is used, but most often, it bridges the hierarchies of social status and group identity. Gossip, in *Big Little Lies*, not only knits social relations but also occupies an important part in competitive dynamics within characters, particularly mothers at school, using it to either maintain or change their social status. This study adopts a multidisciplinary framework integrating sociolinguistics, narrative theory, and cultural studies to analyze the function of gossip in Liane Moriarty's *Big Little Lies*.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, gossip is viewed as a form of evaluative communication that strengthens social bonds and reflects social norms (Jones, 1980). It plays a central role in forming relationships and establishing group identity, particularly among the mothers at the school in the novel. Gossip is not just a bonding tool but also a means of navigating power dynamics, especially in terms of gender and social status, as demonstrated in the competitive environment within the story (Lakoff, 1975).

Indeed, gossip, from the perspective of different narrative theories, serves as an important mechanism for driving the plot forward and shaping characters' relationships with one another. Using Hymes' (1972) Discourse Context Factors, the study explores how gossip is shaped by social contexts, including the characters' positions and relationships.

Finally, gossip converses sociocultural with motherhood, class, and gender roles as defined in present-day Australian society. Bringing all of these together, it gives a more dimensioned way of understanding the various roles gossip plays in *Big Little Lies*, imparting a social, narrative, and cultural significance.

1.8. Case Study: *Big Little Lies* by Liane Moriarty (2014)

Liane Moriarty is an Australian author writing contemporary fiction, suspense, and dark humor. Born in 1966 in Sydney, she had a communications background and was a publicity writer for the leading Australian publishers, which undoubtedly influenced her storytelling techniques. Moriarty (2014) shots to worldwide fame with her best-selling novel *Big Little Lies* (2014), a sensation that turned into a popular book and a hit TV show from HBO. Set in a coastal Australian town, *Big Little Lies* follows the lives of three women, Madeline, Jane, and Celeste, whose perfect worlds go awry when a school trivia night turns ugly. The novel tackles motherhood, friendship, and hidden secrets, all intermingled with drama and humor. She has gained credibility as one of the leading figures in contemporary literature due to her ability to create realistic characters and develop sharp, engaging dialogues.

The novel opens with the unveiling of its first mystery. Detectives at Pirriwee Public School are receiving statements from many parents regarding an incident that happened during a trivia night fundraiser at the school; nobody seems to know who killed the person or how it happened, despite their having many wild theories about who could have done it. Next, we go back in time to meet Jane, a young, well-mannered single mother who moves to the quaint little village of Pirriwee on the Australian coast with her son Ziggy six months before the trivia night. Madeline and Celeste, two other kindergarten mothers, become her friends at Pirriwee Public, where she enrolls him during orientation day. It is alleged that Ziggy tried to choke Amabella, a young student in his class. Ziggy vigorously refutes the charge, creating another mystery: if Ziggy is not the actual perpetrator of Amabella's bullying, then who is?

Jane confides in Madeline during a vulnerable moment that she conceived her son during a violent, intoxicated encounter years ago. Initially, the man was charming and introduced himself as Saxon. However, upon reaching the hotel room, he started using terrible language while they were inmate, and the situation quickly escalated into something much more abusive.

Jane later confesses that she relocated to Pirriwee because he mentioned he might be moving here the night they met. She had wished to confront him for what he had done. Still, unfortunately, she was unable to locate a man named Saxon Banks living there.

In the meantime, Celeste, a former attorney and now a stay-at-home mom, is married to the successful businessman Perry. They appear to have a perfect life, are incredibly attractive and wealthy, and are the parents of energetic twin boys Max and Josh (who attend the same school as Ziggy). Despite being the object of envy in Pirriwee, Celeste harbors a terrible secret: Perry physically abuses her, but he always avoids hitting her in the face so that she can conceal the bruises. During the trivia fundraiser night, Josh informs his mother that Max, instead of Ziggy, has been bullying Amabella and another girl named Skye at school because he learned it from his father. Overwhelmed with guilt, Celeste promises to inform Jane about this as soon as she and Perry reach the fundraiser. Just before entering the school, Perry realizes that Celeste intends to leave him and take the twins with her, making him angry. At the trivia night, the parents are all intoxicated due to the event's missing food, leading to conflicts.

Accompanied by her husband Ed, Jane, Renata, Bonnie, and Nathan (Madeline's former spouse, with Bonnie being his current wife), step outside to the school's balcony to take a break. Celeste and Perry later join them. Jane, seeing Celeste's husband for the first time, realizes that he is Saxon Banks (the name Perry used during the night he assaulted her. Celeste yells at him after she approaches him, and Perry brushes her off. Much to their horror, he smacks Celeste hard across the fence in front of everyone. Bonnie, who grew up with a highly abusive father, starts screaming that Perry is the reason Max has been bullying Amabella and Skye (her daughter), and pushes him backward out of anger. Because of the slippery floor on the balcony and the railing height behind him, Perry tumbles backward and falls to his death. The balcony descends into chaos as a dispute between several fathers spills out from the adjacent room, knocking over Jane and Madeline and causing them to sustain severe fractures.

Celeste's cries prompt a call to the police who arrive at Pirriwee Public School. Initially, Madeline, Jane, Renata, Celeste, and Nathan agree to protect Bonnie, claiming they did not witness her pushing Perry and looking the other way. However, Bonnie eventually confesses to the authorities and is sentenced to several hundred hours of community service. After the incident, Celeste relocates from Pirriwee with her sons, but she establishes a generous trust fund for Ziggy using Perry's money.

2. Literature review

In Liane Moriarty's *Big Little Lies*, the gossip is analyzed from sociolinguistic, narrative, and cultural aspects. Understanding this, gossip makes the chief idle talk that remains underappreciated—an idle chatter that one just cannot put down. This idle talk has within itself the ability to shape the social dynamics and character growth, hence transforming the story itself. Researchers in sociolinguistics and cultural studies have underscored how gossip fosters social bonds, negotiates power structures, and reinforces or challenges social hierarchies. Jones (1980) views gossip as "social glue" that binds individuals together, promoting group identity and reinforcing social norms. Gossip is a gendered domain, according to Lakoff (1975); women use it to assert power, build alliances, and challenge established hierarchies. In *Big Little Lies*, gossip serves as both a medium of social exchange and as a narrative vehicle that brings to the surface hidden motivations, tensions, and secrets within the community.

Furthermore, gossip in this novel is representative of current issues of motherhood, gender, and class, exposing the stresses upon women and expectations upon their shoulders. Theoretical approaches have been forwarded by Hymes (1972) that make it evident that gossip exists in a particular social and narrative context: the context can determine how the communicative act is organized and what is to be communicated. In addition, scholars such as Schmidt (2004) and Gillman (2020) emphasize the broader cultural and societal implications of gossip, showing how it functions as both a social mechanism and a cultural critique.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative methodology in exploring the sociolinguistic and literary purposes of gossip in Liane Moriarty's *Big Little Lies* (2014). The main objective is to analyze how gossip influences character development, social dynamics, and power structures throughout the narrative. The purpose of the study is to perform a thematic analysis of the linguistic features, narrative functions, and cultural meanings of gossip in the text. The data collection process entails intensive reading of the novel in order to collect instances that present gossip in relation to character interactions, socialization, and plot development. Additionally, secondary sources such as peer-reviewed articles, sociolinguistic studies, and literary criticism are integrated to provide a broader theoretical framework. The study draws on the sociolinguistic theories of Deborah Jones (1980), Robin Lakoff (1975), Eric K. Foster (2004), and Dell Hymes (1972) to contextualize the types and functions of gossip, examining how it fosters social bonding, reinforces or challenges power dynamics, and shapes relationships within the novel. The study aims to present a comprehensive understanding of gossip's role as both a social mechanism and a key narrative device in contemporary literature.

4. Analyzing Gossip in *Big Little Lies*: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

Liane Moriarty's (2014) *Big Little Lies* explores the imperfect human bonds that provide us with outlets for social interaction when gossip flourishes. The novel is set in a peaceful suburb and follows the lives of three women: Madeline, Celeste, and Jane. "The novel follows the growing individual struggles, buried pasts, and societal expectations. Gossip exposes truths and social relationships.

Situation 1: Madeline and Jane's Initial Conversation about Bonnie

Madeline: "You'll definitely be one of the younger kindergarten mums..." **Bonnie even kisses me hello. She's into yoga and chakras and all that shit. (Moriarty, 2014, p.32).**

In this scene, Madeline and Jane have a relaxed but important chat as they get to know each

other. They share details about their lives and discuss Bonnie, Madeline's ex-husband's new wife. Using Deborah Jones' categories of gossip (1980), their conversation mainly involves house talk and bitching. Madeline's first remark, "You'll definitely be one of the younger kindergarten mums," is an example of house talk, which includes neutral discussions about everyday life and routines. This kind of talk helps start a connection and makes Jane feel included in the group of kindergarten parents. However, this quickly shifts to complaining when Madeline says terrible things about Bonnie, mentioning, "Bonnie even kisses me hello. She's into yoga, chakras, and all that kind of thing." This move from neutral to negative comments really shows Madeline's irritation and disapproval of Bonnie's lifestyle.

Moreover, the features of gossip identified by Lakoff (1975) are well fulfilled by Madeline through linguistic devices that emphasize emotional and persuasive features of her narrative. For example, Madeline employs tag questions and intensifiers. Although the words by Madeline were not worded as questions, the underlying tone is an invitation for Jane to share her opinions or agree with sentiments held by Madeline. It becomes obvious through the use of such intensifiers by Madeline: "all that shit", depicting how much she despises that Bonnie is interested in yoga and chakras. Later, she refers to Perry as "wonderful" and "patient", building a good image of him in shallow words because of the emptiness of these adjectives. The use of adjectives in this instance opposes her previous detest for Bonnie. These words evoke emotion in Madeline and work to build the reader's perception of Bonnie with exaggerated emotive language.

Moreover, according to Foster's (2004) ideas about gossip, the conversation has several roles: it provides information through personal thoughts and opinions about Bonnie, helping Jane understand the social situation and possible problems in their kindergarten group; at the same time, it helps to consolidate Madeline and Jane because they get connected due to common feelings and understanding. Through sharing frustrations and criticisms, Madeline

tries to create a better friendship with Jane by placing herself in the position of trusted friend and confidante in order to handle the social environment of the kindergarten. This conversation also serves to frame for Jane her perceptions of Bonnie, discouraging her from being friends with Bonnie due to some of her perceived weaknesses and differences. The SPEAKING model by Dell Hymes (1972) provides a rather simple way to break down the different parts of this conversation. The setting is a casual talk between moms whose kids are in kindergarten, so the atmosphere is relaxed and friendly to let Madeline and Jane speak openly.

Madeline and Jane have a casual and friendly chat. Madeline does most of the talking, sharing her ideas and views, while Jane listens and replies, trying to figure out how to handle this new friendship. Their main aims in the conversation are to get closer, talk about Bonnie, and find things they both agree on by discussing their worries. During the conversation, Madeline talks about Bonnie's behavior, criticizes her lifestyle choices, and tries to get Jane involved to reach a mutual understanding. The tone of the conversation moves between friendly and critical, showing the complexity of their interaction. The social norms in this scene reflect the expectation that mothers should support each other and share their experience, which allow them to connect and relate to one another. Finally, the genre of the conversation is casual, mixing gossip with personal stories that build a feeling of closeness and friendship. Because of this, Moriarty (2014) skillfully uses these concepts to show how gossip can help friends share updates and strengthen their friendships. By mixing casual chat with complaints and using emotional words, the conversation between Madeline and Jane highlights how gossip plays a key role in building relationships, expressing feelings, and managing social interactions within a group.

Situation 2: Perry, Celeste, Max, and Josh's Car Ride Conversation

Perry: "Nope. Remember I told you? I have to fly really low to avoid radar detection."

... "Find out just how I developed these superpowers, then they'd want to recruit me for

the Air Force. I'd have to go on secret missions.” (Moriarty, 2014, p. 60).

In this situation, Liane Moriarty skillfully blends humor, family bonds, and quiet power struggles in the talk between Perry, Celeste, and their twin boys, Max and Josh, as they head back to Sydney from Vancouver. Based on Deborah Jones' (1980) ideas about gossip, the discussion mainly includes house talk and light-hearted chatting. Perry's creative story about flying low to avoid radar detection is an excellent example of family talk because it is an imaginative, family-focused tale that strengthens their bond and creates a sense of shared secrets. At the same time, the playful teasing and entertaining storytelling make the conversation an example of chatting, keeping the atmosphere fun for both the parents and the kids.

Moreover, Lakoff's (1975) features of gossip are evident in Perry's use of linguistic tools that enhance the emotional and persuasive aspects of his narrative. For example, tag questions like “It's obvious isn't it, Max?” invite the children's participation and agreement, reinforcing Perry's role as the storyteller and creating a shared understanding. Additionally, intensifiers such as “super-secret” amplify the excitement and intrigue of the story, making the conversation more captivating for the children. These linguistic choices convey Perry's enthusiasm and shape the children's perception of the narrative as adventurous and exciting, enhancing their engagement.

Moreover, applying Foster's (2004) notion about gossiping enables identifying the two primary functions of this type of conversation in the framework of family relationships. According to Foster, gossiping serves the purpose of providing information and is a socially endearing technique. In this case, Perry narrates funny stories about his “superpowers” that entertain the children and motivate their imagination. That's when the storytelling and sharing create this connection of joy within families. Let it be the “superpowers” which make them burst with laughter and dream, or just some simple happenings, these stories bring people

closer. They show the imagination; relationships grow stronger, and all feel that they belong.

Beyond just storytelling, gossip in families plays a unique role; it keeps conversations lively and fun while reinforcing relationships. Whether it is sharing a funny post, updating a status, or just chatting about the day, these moments open the door to deeper emotional connections. In the end, it is not just about words; it is about feeling seen, heard, and understood.

Further, Dell Hymes' (1972) SPEAKING model provides a detailed approach to analyze the aspects of the inspected conversation. The setting focuses on a private car, a secure, enclosed surrounding that allows the family to unfold their stories. The role of the participants is as follows: Perry is the main protagonist who is telling a story to the children, while Celeste, Max, and Josh are the children who are actively listening to the story while being a part of the events as the main characters. The Ends of the conversation are multifaceted: Perry's goal is to engage the children, bring the family closer, and symbolically state his author-like and fun position in the family. The Acts include Perry telling the children a story, a joyous reaction from the children, and Celeste laughing and encouraging the children.

The conversation's key or tone is as though the story's characters are joking and laughing with each other, shifting between fooling around. The origins of instrumentality are apparent in the informal language and tone or what might be described as 'rough.' The norms implemented in this family setting are permissive and characterized by supportive communication, promoting storytelling, and imaginative play as relational. Finally, the function of this speech event Genre is social and emotional because gossip, play, and storytelling in a casual environment help to make the conversation interesting and enjoyable for all participants. Thus, Moriarty (2014) uses these theories affirmatively to show how gossip works as a strong relational fold within the family, enriching the informational and emotional components of the family relationships.

Situation 3: Madeline Driving Chloe to Kindergarten Orientation

Madeline: “Silly little idiots.” ... “The girl driving the car in front of me is an idiot because she’s driving her car and using her phone at the same time.” (Moriarty, 2014, p. 18).

In this scene, Madeline takes her daughter Chloe to her kindergarten orientation while fuming over a fellow driver. For that reason, using the typology of gossip described by Deborah Jones in 1980, the conversation is mainly of the house talk and bitching type. House talk does well in illustrating itself, and one example is the first comment Madeline makes while watching the street, 'Silly little idiots.' "However, when she labels the driver an 'idiot,' her tone shifts to the type of bitching, as she exposes her frustration and criticizes someone outside her immediate family."

There are still two of Lakoff's (1975) gossip features: tag questions and intensifiers, which Madeline uses. Nevertheless, notice that the tag question is not stated even though it is implied within the context of her highly critical statement; she anticipates Chloe's nod of recognition and validation of her anger. Adverbs intensifying the noun 'little' such as 'silly' add negative connotations to the tone with which the driver is met and increase perceived risk-taking by the driver. Moreover, observing Foster's functions of gossiping, the conversation performs several functions. It provides information because it enlightens Chloe on the risks associated with distracted driving, thereby passing her knowledge on safety and accountability. At the same time, it enhances friendship because when Madeline confides in Chloe, they understand the situation since they are colleagues. It is here that the shared experience assists in building up the mother-daughter relationship while fostering positive protective elements in relations between family figures.

Besides, according to Dell Hymes's (1972) SPEAKING model, the conversation setting occurs in the limited sphere of the car, so the interlocutors can freely express themselves. The Participants, Madeline and Chloe engage in a dynamic where Madeline takes the lead in

expressing her concerns while Chloe listens and responds. The ends of the conversation include a discussion about safety, frustration, and support. The acts involve Madeline critiquing the driver and explaining herself, while Chloe reacts to and possibly learns from the interaction. The key, judgmental yet playful, sets the tone, balancing serious concerns with a light-hearted conversational style. Furthermore, instrumentality is seen here in the formal and informal yet impassioned language, which encourages uninhibited and passionate communication. The Norms preserve the informal language equivalent of a chat, in which one is allowed to express oneself, although in a polite manner. Last but not least, it is a critical and informal discussion with elements of education to discuss safety and obligations. Thus, Moriarty (2014) demonstrates quite explicitly how ordinary gossip can at least explain something while reuniting family through story-sharing of emotions and opinions. This part illustrates that gossip can accomplish many things, from strengthening family members' relationships to passing important information within the compound.

Situation 4: Madeline and Jane's Café Conversation about Celeste

Madeline: "My friend Celeste will be here soon ... "You might have seen her dropping off her boys at the school. Two little blond ruffians. She's tall, blond, beautiful, and flustered" ... Honestly, I have no idea why I stay friends with her." She looked at her watch. "Oh, she's hopeless. Always late!" (Moriarty, 2014, p.27).

In this situation, Madeline and Jane meet in a café to discuss matters after taking their children to kindergarten for an orientation. First, describing the show by Deborah Jones' types of gossip (1980), it would be stated that it comprises house talk, scandal, and bitching." Discussions like the ones Madeline has had with Celeste about the latter's figure and personal life follow the type of house talk."

However, when Madeline criticizes Celeste's lateness with the line, "Oh, she is hopeless." "Always late!" the focus is then turned to the scandal and bitchy, in which she does complain

and disapprove of how Celeste is being.

In addition, it is important to note that all the features discussed by Lakoff (1975) in gossip are well illustrated by sample extracts from Madeline's language use, such as tag questions, intensifiers, and empty adjectives. The tag question, "You might have seen her at the school, dropping off her boys," invites Jane to engage and validate Madeline's narrative, enhancing the interactive nature of the gossip. Intensifiers such as "two little blond ruffians" enhance humor and exaggeration to the conversation bearing from Celeste. Also, English adjectives such as beautiful and rich are meaningless instead of insulting when describing Celeste's perceived flaws in contrast to her beautiful appearance.

In addition, adopting Foster's (2004) function of gossip, the conversation pursued serves multiple purposes. First, it provides information about Celeste's personal life, such as her relations and actions with Jane. At the same time, the exchange enhances friendship; Madeline and Jane affirm one's position, creating a connection between good friends. When the two partners share criticism regarding Celeste, they have a common opinion, making them support each other and close friends.

Also, Dell Hymes's (1972) SPEAKING model is used to point out the structural dimensions of the conversation. The setting or the background is easygoing, that is, a café, making the conversation between Madeline and Jane informal and casual. It is a conversation between two characters, the Participants, Madeline and Jane, and right after the scene with the Victim, Celeste; it should be noted that the conversation is rather personal. As shown above, The Ends of the conversation include sharing observations, voicing complaints or frustrations, and judging together. The Acts entail making a narrative of Celeste, how the other Party members criticized it, and how they discussed Celeste's content on their own. The key is mainly filled with friendly tones but also consists of critical tones, for this show is both entertaining and critical at the same time. Here, the instrumental component is expressed in the various

assessment and descriptor language, which ensembles the interesting and emotionally driven conversation. The Norms capture an interpersonal communication model based on the giving and receiving opinions without a formal register. Finally, the genre is informal gossip, on top of which there are elements of personal critique, where the interpersonal functions involved are social and emotional gratification, which make interaction enjoyable and the content lingering over the potentially uncomfortable subject.

Thus, according to the described theories, Moriarty (2014) demonstrates how gossip can be informational and endogenous to friendships while revealing latent social dynamics. This scene shows so much to discuss, yet to do so coolly and easily besmirch other people's reputations and ruin social relationships.

Situation 5: Madeline and Celeste's Phone Conversation about Renata and Ziggy

Madeline: "I think you and the boys should come too. In case we run out of things to say"... **Celeste:** "Well, I don't know, you can sort of understand, from her point of view. I mean, if that happened to Chloe, I mean, I guess . . ." (Moriarty, 2014, pp.78-79).

In this phone call to Madeline, the woman can invite Celeste and the twins to play while handling arguments for Renata concerning Ziggy. Firstly based on Deborah Jones'(1980), analysis of types of gossip, the interaction includes house talk, scandal, and bitching. This section is where Madeline invited her friend for a playdate and a house talk concerning family and social activities in their community. Though, the shift to negativity happens here as Celeste reveals Renata's discussion about Ziggy bringing the bitching conflict of judging, as perceived by the main character Madeline, who is ready to defend Ziggy.

Furthermore, most of Lakoff's (1975) gossip features are observable in the conversation using tag questions, intensifiers, and lexical hedges. Madeline's tag question, "In case we run out of things to say," involves Celeste in the conversation and seeks her participation, reinforcing a sense of shared understanding. Intensifiers like "exactly" and "really" strengthen

the emotional weight of their arguments, emphasizing the seriousness of their concerns. Additionally, lexical hedges such as "I think" and "I guess" in Celeste's responses reflect her uncertainty and reluctance to fully endorse Renata's viewpoint, softening the tone of her statements and maintaining a balance between inquiry and respect.

In addition, considering Foster's gossiping functions, the conversation has several functions. It provides information by relaying important information about Renata's nasty things about Ziggy to Celeste and potential social difficulty. At the same time, it enhances friendship; as such, Madeline and Celeste find common ground in having problems and issues with Ziggy, and they can form a bond and feel mutual support. Additionally, the conversation aims to influence Celeste's perception of Renata, positioning themselves against Renata's judgments and seeking mutual support in addressing the situation and using parts where characters make jokes, for example, when Madeline refers to Ziggy as the little strangler makes the serious issue less confrontational and more entertaining.

Additionally, the SPEAKING model by Dell Hymes (1972) is also used in the explanation to provide a structural approach to the conversation. The private phone call setting creates an intimate space where there is an open and candid dialogue between Madeline and Celeste. Participants, Madeline and Celeste - The two participants are engaging in a supportive conversation wherein Madeline takes the lead to defend Ziggy and address concerns. The Ends are to arrange social interactions, resolve conflicts, and look for mutual support against negative judgment. The Acts are inviting, informing, defending, and persuading as Madeline and Celeste work out the details in the convolutions of their social life. The key is casual, serious, and defensive-the many-sided nature of the discussion. Instrumentality is witnessed in the recourse to conversational and persuading language to the emotional appeal inherent in the compelling nature of the dialogue. Norms are reflective of openness regarding sharing on the premise of the supportive friendship and freedom to air concerns and passing judgment.

Finally, the genre is informal and gossipy with some sections of conflict resolution and mutual support serving social, emotional functions tending to deal with serious matters.

In short, Moriarty (2014) provides a detailed look at how gossip can contribute to different social conflicts, how it helps strengthen friendships, and how it shapes views within a community. This discussion shows the value of gossip and how people use it to solve problems, keep relationships strong, and provide support in a complex way.

5.Results and Discussion

The study has analyzed the complex function of gossip in *Big Little Lies* and has exhibited its value in sociolinguistics, character development, plot advancement, and social life. Through the theoretical frameworks of scholars such as Deborah Jones (1980), Robin Lakoff (1975), Eric K. Foster (2004), and Dell Hymes (1972), it was established that gossip functions not only as a means of communication but also as a driving force that shapes the social landscape of the narrative.

More specifically, the research found that a variety of gossip encounters occur in the novel: house talk, scandal, and bitching. House talk encompasses discussions about the mundane and the trivial. It serves to create early acquaintance and social bonds between two characters, in this case between Madeline and Jane, gossiping about Bonnie. On the contrary, scandals and just plain bitching generate tension among the people involved and bring attention to personal issues-the scathing criticism of Madeline as to Celeste's way of life and Renata's opinions with regard to Ziggy. Gossip, in fact, serves many different purposes in the book-at least one of which is providing a medium through which information can be exchanged; letting characters pass along vital bits of information and secrets that would influence the way in which they view the world and therefore their choices or actions; gossiping about Celeste's abusive marriage, for instance, or Ziggy's alleged bullying influencing the characters' decisions and relationships to the degree that it gets the action going. Besides that, it also forges group identity

by channeling many frustrations into one perspective. Among mothers, the gossip system imparts a compass of social hierarchy that is integral to the community dynamics.

Linguistically, gossip in the novel employs tools like intensifiers, tag questions, and empty adjectives. Intensifiers like "amazing" or the likes of "so calm" magnify or rather give phrases even more emphasis based chiefly on loved or tapped most importantly in Madeline's imagery of Celeste's life and Perry's characterization. An example of tag questions used would be: "You might have seen her at the school, dropping off her boys?" These will solicit respondent validation from tellers almost as good as the data is entertained in gossip. These empty adjectives are simply nice words used to disguise dark realities and inflate ideas about the person in question while at the same time serving to sustain a facade and present the person in the social light.

In addition, gossip is ultimately about the characters' behaviors and interaction with other characters. For example, Madeline's gossip about Bonnie has an effect on Jane's idea about Bonnie, forming the basis for their friendship. Likewise, the gossip as to what Perry is into makes Celeste handle her marriage in a careful way between keeping up appearances and confronting reality. Last but not least, rivalries intensify from gossip such as the one between Madeline and Renata, which escalates into an all-out brawl at trivia night for the schools.

Understanding gossip and its function transcends literary analysis into the imposition of social regulation. Gossip among the characters in *Big Little Lies* has been seen, therefore, as an instrument for social control, giving significance to public opinion and countering invidious behavior. This gives the characters the possibility to resort to gossip to defend either themselves or others by influencing social perception or preventing negative action from gaining widespread acceptance. At the same time, gossip can seriously mar someone when it is dreadful. That can result in horrible misunderstandings that generate distrust and cause far more conflict.

6. Findings and Conclusion

The study highlights the dual nature of gossip, functioning as both a tool for social cohesion and a means to challenge societal norms. Gossip binds people with shared experience and common values and tears apart from the social order by casting doubt on power statuses. In themselves, whispering-to-gossiping agents such as Celeste confront their abusive issues through winks and nods broadcast by others. Now, this shows how gossip could be a social change-catalyst as it gets people to start questioning already accepted narratives. This study accords with the notion that gossip is a narrative in *Big Little Lies*-a significant loaded engine propelling action, character behavior, and sociostructure. Types, characteristics, and functions of gossip will show another dimension on contemporary literary studies, not to mention sociolinguistic research. This investigation shows that gossip ultimately shapes human interactions but also reflects elaborate networks of culture: value systems, societal norms, and power relations, as the study enables scholars to understand better how gossip favors public opinion against bad behavior and facilitates good social relations, thus making it both an integral part of the literary and sociolinguistic perspective.

7. References

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