

Language and Gender Representation in Kate Chopin's the Story of An Hour

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Abstract

The urgency of this research lies in examining language and gender representation in The Story of an Hour to uncover how Kate Chopin challenges patriarchal ideology and constructs female autonomy through narrative discourse. This study examines how linguistic features construct gender representation in Kate Chopin's The Story of an Hour. While previous studies have largely focused on feminist themes and ideological interpretations, limited attention has been paid to the linguistic mechanisms through which gender ideology is articulated. Addressing this gap, this study applies feminist linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis to explore how language reflects women's emotional experience and social position within a nineteenth-century patriarchal context. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through documentation of the short story text and analyzed through close reading. Linguistic features such as lexical choices, figurative language, imagery, narrative voice, and discourse structure were examined. The findings reveal that female experience is represented through indirect and emotive language, with freedom portrayed as an internal and temporary realization. Narrative voice confines women's expression to private consciousness, while authoritative discourse reinforces patriarchal interpretations. Nevertheless, narrative irony enables subtle resistance. Overall, this study concludes that gender ideology in The Story of an Hour is not simply conveyed through thematic content but is fundamentally constructed through linguistic choices, narrative voice, and discourse structures. By foregrounding language as a site of power and resistance, the study highlights the crucial role of linguistic analysis in uncovering how gendered meanings are produced, sustained, and subtly challenged in literary texts.

Keywords: *Language and Gender, Feminist Stylistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender Representation, Short Story*

Introduction

Language plays a central role in shaping and reflecting social realities, including gender relations and power structures. In linguistic and literary studies, language is understood not merely as a medium of communication but as a social practice through which ideologies, norms, and identities are constructed and sustained. Gender, in particular, is often embedded in linguistic choices such as diction, imagery, narrative voice, and discourse structure, which subtly reveal societal expectations toward men and women (Alfia, 2026).

In literary texts, authors frequently employ language to represent women's experiences within patriarchal societies (González, 2022). This tendency is especially evident in works produced during historical periods when women's voices were socially restricted (Benítez, 2023). Through narrative techniques and stylistic choices, literary language becomes a space where suppressed emotions, resistance, and self-awareness can be expressed indirectly.

Consequently, literary texts provide rich data for examining how gender ideology operates through language (Alam & Zaidi, 2024; Surahim & Ramli, 2023)

The story is set within the social situation of the late nineteenth century, a period characterized by rigid gender roles and patriarchal marital structures (Chirig, 2025). Women were largely confined to domestic spaces and were expected to demonstrate obedience, emotional restraint, and dependence on male authority. This socio-historical situation significantly shaped how women expressed themselves, both socially and linguistically. Female experiences were often communicated indirectly through emotional nuance, silence, and symbolic language rather than through open or authoritative discourse. Understanding this social situation is therefore essential for analyzing how gender representation operates linguistically in *The Story of an Hour* (Dewi et al., 2023; Baso, 2021).

Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* (1894) presents a compelling depiction of a woman's emotional transformation following the reported death of her husband. The short story explores themes of marriage, freedom, repression, and individuality within a nineteenth-century patriarchal context. Through Mrs. Mallard's inner thoughts, descriptive imagery, and symbolic language, Chopin portrays a female character whose sense of liberation is articulated primarily through linguistic expression rather than direct action or dialogue (Alajlan & ALjohani, 2019). This characteristic makes the text particularly suitable for analysis from a language and gender perspective (Regmi, 2022).

Previous studies on *The Story of an Hour* have predominantly focused on feminist themes, psychological interpretation, and ideological critiques of patriarchy (Han, 2023; Rehman, 2023). Many scholars analyze the story as a representation of women's oppression and temporary freedom using feminist frameworks such as liberal feminism or radical feminism (Monisha & Padey, 2024). While these studies provide valuable insights into the thematic dimensions of the text, they tend to emphasize what the story represents rather than how language itself constructs gendered meaning (Rosita & Purwati, 2022; Hasan, 2021).

Despite the growing scholarly interest in Chopin's work, relatively little attention has been given to the linguistic mechanisms that shape gender representation in the story. In particular, few studies closely examine lexical choices, figurative language, imagery, and narrative voice as tools for constructing women's emotional experiences and social position. This gap indicates the need for a study that integrates linguistic analysis with feminist interpretation. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining how linguistic features in *The Story of an Hour* represent gender roles and women's position within a patriarchal society. By applying theories of language and gender, feminist stylistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis, this research seeks to demonstrate that gender ideology in the text is not only conveyed through thematic content but is fundamentally embedded in language itself.

The relationship between language and gender has been widely examined in linguistic studies, particularly in relation to how language reflects and reinforces social inequality. One of the most influential works in this field is Robin Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), which argues that women's language often reflects their subordinate social position. Lakoff identifies several linguistic features commonly associated with women's speech, such as hedges, politeness strategies, indirect expressions, and emotional emphasis. According to Lakoff, these features are not inherent but socially conditioned, shaped by patriarchal expectations that discourage women from speaking assertively. Lakoff's framework is relevant to literary analysis because fictional female characters often mirror socially constructed speech patterns. In *The Story of an Hour*, Mrs. Mallard's emotional state is conveyed through indirect

and introspective language rather than direct verbal expression. Her internalized emotions align with Lakoff's observation that women are often represented as emotionally expressive yet socially restrained.

Perspective by emphasizing gender differences in communication styles rather than dominance alone. She suggests that women tend to use language to build connection and intimacy, while men often use language to assert status and authority. These differences are culturally produced rather than biologically determined. Tannen's theory helps explain the contrast between Mrs. Mallard's inner emotional language and the authoritative discourse of male figures in the story, highlighting how gendered communication patterns reflect broader social hierarchies.

Kate Chopin is frequently regarded as a writer whose works reflect early feminist consciousness through subtle narrative strategies rather than overt political statements. Literary critics argue that Chopin's realism allows female characters to express psychological depth and emotional conflict within socially constrained environments. Instead of presenting direct resistance, Chopin often employs symbolic language, internal monologue, and emotional shifts to reveal women's dissatisfaction with restrictive gender roles. This narrative approach aligns with feminist literary criticism that views women's writing as a space where resistance is encoded through language rather than explicitly declared. In *The Story of an Hour*, Chopin's stylistic restraint and focus on internal consciousness position language as the primary medium through which female autonomy and repression are simultaneously revealed.

From a linguistic perspective, the analysis of literary texts offers valuable insight into how social ideologies are embedded in language use. Studies in stylistics and discourse analysis emphasize that literary language operates under the same ideological pressures as everyday discourse. Discourse both reflects and shapes social reality, including gender relations. Applying linguistic frameworks such as feminist stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis to literary texts enables researchers to examine how power, silence, and authority are constructed at the micro-linguistic level. This approach bridges linguistics and literary studies by demonstrating that stylistic choices such as narrative voice, lexical selection, and figurative expression—function as mechanisms through which gender ideology is reproduced or challenged within literary narratives.

Language is not a neutral medium but a social practice shaped by power and ideology. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes that linguistic choices are closely tied to social structures and institutional authority. CDA examines how dominance and inequality are produced, maintained, and challenged through discourse. From this perspective, literary texts can be understood as sites where social power relations are both represented and contested. In *The Story of an Hour*, discourse functions as a mechanism of control as well as resistance. Mrs. Mallard's emotional awakening is expressed through private thought rather than public speech, reflecting her limited access to authoritative discourse. The medical explanation at the end of the story exemplifies how institutional language overrides female subjectivity, reinforcing patriarchal ideology.

CDA thus provides an effective framework for analyzing how language constructs and regulates women's experiences within a male-dominated social order. Feminist stylistics focuses on how linguistic form contributes to the representation of gender in texts. Gender ideology is embedded not only in content but also in stylistic choices such as narrative voice, imagery, and lexical patterns. Feminist stylistics enables close analysis of how seemingly neutral language reproduces gendered meanings. From a broader literary perspective, feminist critics

such as highlight how nineteenth-century women writers encoded resistance through symbolism, emotional depth, and psychological complexity. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, that female characters often express rebellion indirectly through imagery and metaphor. Similarly, Showalter emphasizes that women's writing frequently reflects emotional repression shaped by social constraints. These perspectives support the interpretation of Chopin's language as a subtle critique of patriarchal norms, conveyed through symbolic and emotional expression rather than overt defiance.

Previous studies on *The Story of an Hour* have largely focused on feminist ideology, psychological interpretation, and symbolic meaning, examines the short story through the lens of liberal feminism, emphasizing women's rights, freedom, and equality as reflected in Mrs. Mallard's experience. Similarly, analyze the text using radical feminism to highlight women's oppression and the dominance of patriarchal control within marriage (Malik et al., 2025). Other studies have explored gender and language in literary texts more broadly. Investigates gendered language in Virginia Woolf's novels using feminist stylistics and Lakoff's language and gender theory, demonstrating how women's marginalization and resistance are linguistically constructed (Lekaj, 2020). Adopts a corpus-based stylistic approach to examine gender differences in *Pride and Prejudice*, showing that even small linguistic units reflect power relations (Corbière, 2016). Meanwhile, discuss how narrative and gender mutually shape meaning-making processes, arguing that storytelling itself is a gendered practice (Fivush & Gysman, 2022).

Although these studies provide valuable insights into feminism, narrative, and gendered language, few have focused specifically on how linguistic features operate in *The Story of an Hour*. Most analyses emphasize thematic interpretation rather than detailed examination of lexical choices, imagery, narrative voice, and discourse structure. Therefore, a gap remains in the integration of feminist linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate how gender representation in Chopin's short story is constructed through language. This study seeks to address this gap by offering a linguistic-based feminist analysis of *The Story of an Hour*.

This study offers a novel contribution by examining Language and Gender Representation in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* through a micro-linguistic lens that integrates feminist stylistics and critical discourse analysis. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on thematic feminism or female emancipation, this research highlights how specific lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and narrative voice subtly construct and negotiate gendered power relations within the text. By foregrounding the role of language as an active agent in shaping Mrs. Mallard's psychological transformation, the study reveals how Chopin's stylistic strategies challenge 19th-century patriarchal norms not only at the level of plot but also within the very structure of the discourse, offering a deeper understanding of how gender ideology is embedded and contested through language itself.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design because it aims to interpret and explain how language functions in constructing gender representations, rather than to statistically measure linguistic features or patterns. A qualitative approach is well-suited to literary analysis, as it allows for in-depth exploration of the meaning-making processes embedded in lexical choices, syntactic structures, narrative perspectives, and discourse strategies within the text. The research sample is a single text, the short story "The Story of an Hour" (1894) by Kate Chopin.

This text was chosen because it thematically and ideologically represents issues of gender, women's liberation, and power relations in a 19th-century social context. While thematic interpretation is recognized as an important aspect of literary studies, this study places greater emphasis on linguistic analysis to demonstrate how themes of gender, power, and liberation are not simply expressed but actively produced through language. By closely examining how specific linguistic elements shape characterization and ideological positions, this study reveals how gender meanings emerge from the interaction between language and narrative discourse, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of gender representations in the text.

Although this study uses a qualitative approach, quantitative indicators are used in a limited way to support the sharpness of the analysis, namely by calculating the frequency of occurrence of certain linguistic units in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*, such as lexical choices that represent freedom or repression, mental process verbs, and metaphorical expressions related to power relations and emotional transformations of characters; this calculation is not intended for inferential statistical analysis, but rather to show the tendency of language use patterns that strengthen the interpretation of the construction of gender representation and patriarchal ideology in the text.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation, with the short story text serving as the source of the documented data. Primary data were obtained from the written text of Kate Chopin's short story, "The Story of an Hour" (1894). The text was examined through close reading to identify linguistic expressions related to gender representation, emotional transformation, freedom, repression, and power relations. The data consisted of linguistic units extracted from the text, including words, phrases, clauses, metaphors, and narrative passages that reflect emotional expression, power relations, and gender discourse.

Units of analysis in this study included lexical choices, figurative language, imagery, mental process verbs, narrative voice, and broader discourse structures that contribute to the construction of gender representations in the text. These linguistic elements were examined to reveal how meanings related to femininity, masculinity, power, and autonomy are encoded and negotiated through language. This analysis is theoretically grounded in feminist linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), both of which conceptualize language as a socially constructed practice that reflects and reproduces ideologies and power relations. Feminist linguistics provides tools for uncovering gender bias and asymmetrical representation embedded in language use, while CDA enables a critical examination of how discourse maintains or challenges dominant patriarchal norms. Together, these frameworks guide the systematic identification of salient linguistic features and support an interpretive analysis of how gender discourse operates within the narrative.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative textual analysis through close reading. Feminist stylistics was used to examine micro-linguistic features such as lexical choice, figurative language, imagery, and narrative voice, while Critical Discourse Analysis was used to interpret how these linguistic features reflect and negotiate patriarchal ideology and power relations within the story's socio-historical context. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: (1) identifying linguistic units relevant to gender representation, (2) categorizing the data based on feminist stylistics and the CDA framework, and (3) interpreting the findings in relation to patriarchal ideology and the socio-historical context of the nineteenth century.

To ensure analytical credibility and validity, this study employed theoretical triangulation by integrating perspectives from feminist linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, allowing interpretations to be examined through complementary yet distinct analytical lenses.

Furthermore, interpretive validation was employed by basing each analytical claim on careful textual analysis and supporting it with direct linguistic evidence from the short story. This process helped minimize subjective bias and ensure that interpretations remained consistent with the theoretical framework and textual data. By adopting this methodological approach, this study allowed for an in-depth exploration of how gender ideology is embedded in linguistic forms rather than treating texts solely as thematic artifacts. However, the analysis was limited to a single literary text, and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to all literary works or socio-cultural contexts. Despite these limitations, the qualitative and text-focused nature of this study provides rich insights into the. The following is a theoretical and analytical triangulation table based on the journal *Language and Gender Representation in The Story of an Hour* by Kate Chopin.

Table 1. Data Triangulation

Focus of Analysis	Textual Data / Findings	Feminist Stylistics Perspective	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Perspective	Interpretative Result
Representation of female experience	Mental process verbs: <i>she felt, she knew, she recognized</i>	Constructs female subjectivity as internal and reflective	Limits women's agency to the private sphere rather than the public domain	Female self-awareness emerges but lacks social legitimacy
Emotional expression	Emotive lexicon: <i>wept, wild abandonment, monstrous joy</i>	Emotional language reflects cultural constructions of femininity	Female emotion is framed as excessive or irrational	Emotion becomes both a space of resistance and a mechanism of delegitimization
Symbolism and imagery	Metaphor: <i>patches of blue sky</i>	Symbolizes implicit freedom and possibility	Freedom appears as personal experience, not structural change	Freedom is internal and temporary
Narrative voice	Third-person limited narration; internal focalization	Female consciousness is mediated through narration	Public discourse denies women authoritative voice	Access to private consciousness exists but remains socially constrained
Institutional discourse	Doctors' statement: <i>"joy that kills"</i>	Erases the authenticity of female experience	Institutional authority defines reality and suppresses alternative interpretations	Patriarchal ideology is reproduced through official discourse
Narrative irony	Contrast between internal experience and medical explanation	Stylistic strategy for implicit critique	Creates discursive resistance to dominant ideology	Language becomes a site of power negotiation

The triangulation table demonstrates how this study examines gender representation in *The Story of an Hour* by Kate Chopin through a combination of micro-linguistic and macro-discursive perspectives. Feminist Stylistics is applied to analyze linguistic features such as mental process verbs, emotive lexical choices, metaphorical imagery, and narrative voice to reveal how female subjectivity and emotional experience are constructed, while Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how these linguistic patterns reflect, reinforce, or challenge patriarchal ideology and institutional power. By integrating theoretical, data, and analytical triangulation, the study ensures that interpretations are grounded in textual evidence from the short story, while also critically situated within the socio-historical context of nineteenth-century patriarchal norms. This triangulated approach highlights that gender ideology in the text is not merely thematic but is actively produced, sustained, and subtly contested through language and discourse structure.

Results

The findings of this study reveal that gender representation in *The Story of an Hour* is linguistically constructed through a complex interaction of emotional expression, narrative voice, and authoritative discourse. Female experience is primarily articulated through indirect and internalized language, reflecting the limited discursive space available to women within a patriarchal society. Narrative voice and silence play a crucial role in shaping female subjectivity by allowing access to private consciousness while restricting public expression. Furthermore, patriarchal ideology is reinforced through institutional discourse that redefines women's experiences and suppresses their voices. Together, these findings demonstrate that gender ideology in the text operates not only at the thematic level but is fundamentally embedded in linguistic form and discourse structure.

Linguistic Construction of Gendered Experience

The linguistic construction of gendered experience in *The Story of an Hour* is primarily realized through indirect emotional expression and internalized consciousness. Rather than presenting female experience through direct speech or social interaction, Chopin constructs Mrs. Mallard's subjectivity through introspective language that emphasizes feeling, perception, and thought. This narrative strategy reflects the limited discursive space available to women within a patriarchal society, where personal experiences are often confined to the private sphere.

At the beginning of the story, Mrs. Mallard's reaction to the news of her husband's death is described as follows: "She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms." The lexical items "wept," "sudden," and "wild abandonment" foreground emotional intensity, reinforcing the association between femininity and emotional expressiveness. Women are frequently represented through language that highlights emotion rather than authority (Lakoff, 1975). However, this emotional portrayal should not be interpreted as weakness; instead, it functions as the initial stage of Mrs. Mallard's psychological transformation.

As the narrative progresses, Mrs. Mallard's experience is constructed through sensory and metaphorical language that signals an internal shift in perception. The description "There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds" operates as a metaphor for emotional awakening. Rather than explicitly stating her sense of relief or desire, Chopin relies on natural imagery to communicate a change in consciousness. This indirect linguistic strategy suggests that women's experiences are often mediated through symbolism rather than articulated directly, reflecting social constraints on female expression.

Furthermore, Chopin's use of mental process verbs such as "she felt," "she knew," and "she was beginning to recognize" emphasizes cognition over action. These linguistic choices construct gendered experience as inward and reflective rather than externally enacted. From a feminist stylistic perspective, such patterns reveal how female subjectivity is linguistically shaped as internal awareness rather than social agency. Mrs. Mallard's realization that "she would live for herself" marks a crucial moment of self-recognition, yet this realization remains confined to her inner world. The phrase "a monstrous joy" further illustrates the tension embedded in the linguistic construction of female experience. The adjective "monstrous" carries negative connotations, suggesting that a woman's joy derived from independence is socially perceived as excessive or unnatural. This lexical contradiction reflects patriarchal ideology that frames female autonomy as deviant. Through such language, Chopin exposes how women's emotional experiences are simultaneously awakened and delegitimized within dominant discourse.

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Overall, the linguistic construction of gendered experience in *The Story of an Hour* reveals that women's emotions, desires, and self-awareness are articulated through indirect, symbolic, and internalized language. Chopin's stylistic choices demonstrate that gender ideology operates at the level of linguistic form, shaping how female experience is represented, understood, and constrained within a patriarchal social structure.

Narrative Voice, Silence, and Female Subjectivity

Narrative voice plays a central role in shaping female subjectivity in *The Story of an Hour*. Chopin employs a third-person limited point of view that closely aligns with Mrs. Mallard's inner consciousness while simultaneously restricting her voice within the narrative. This narrative strategy allows readers access to Mrs. Mallard's private thoughts but denies her the opportunity to articulate these thoughts publicly, reinforcing the silencing of women within patriarchal discourse.

Throughout the story, Mrs. Mallard speaks very little, and when she does, her speech is limited to brief and emotionally charged utterances. Her most significant realization “Free! Body and soul free!” occurs entirely within her internal monologue. The exclamatory structure conveys emotional intensity, yet the expression remains confined to silence. This linguistic containment reflects what feminist critics identify as the separation between female consciousness and social expression, where women’s self-awareness exists internally but lacks discursive legitimacy.

Silence in the narrative functions not as absence but as a meaningful linguistic strategy. Mrs. Mallard’s withdrawal into her room symbolizes a retreat from social interaction into a private space where subjectivity can momentarily exist. The description “she would have no one follow her” emphasizes isolation as a precondition for self-recognition. This reinforces the idea that female subjectivity can only emerge in spaces removed from male authority and social surveillance. The narrative voice also mediates Mrs. Mallard’s subjectivity through evaluative language rather than direct self-definition. For example, the narrator describes her realization as “a clear and exalted perception,” attributing clarity to her thoughts while still filtering them through an external narrative perspective. This suggests that female subjectivity, although acknowledged, remains dependent on narrative mediation rather than autonomous self articulation.

From a discourse perspective, the limited narrative voice highlights the imbalance between internal experience and external authority. While readers are granted intimate access to Mrs. Mallard’s consciousness, the story’s social world remains inaccessible to her voice. This division underscores how patriarchal discourse allows women to feel but not to speak authoritatively. As a result, silence becomes a defining feature of female subjectivity, revealing both constraint and resistance within the narrative structure. In this way, Chopin constructs female subjectivity through a combination of narrative intimacy and enforced silence. The linguistic restriction placed on Mrs. Mallard’s voice reflects broader social conditions in which women’s experiences are acknowledged privately but invalidated publicly. Narrative voice thus functions as a powerful tool in exposing the gendered limitations imposed on women’s self expression.

Discourse, Power, and Patriarchal Ideology

Discourse functions as a central mechanism through which power and patriarchal ideology are constructed and maintained in *The Story of an Hour*. While Mrs. Mallard’s emotional awakening is expressed through private and symbolic language, the final interpretation of her experience is controlled by authoritative discourse. This shift highlights the unequal distribution of discursive power between female subjectivity and institutional authority. The concluding statement of the story “When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease of joy that kills” exemplifies how patriarchal discourse overrides women’s lived experiences. The phrase “they said” foregrounds external authority while erasing the female subject entirely from the act of meaning making. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, such institutional voices possess the power to define reality, rendering alternative interpretations invisible or illegitimate.

Medical discourse in the story operates as a form of patriarchal rationality that reframes Mrs. Mallard’s death in a manner consistent with dominant gender ideology. By attributing her death to “joy,” the discourse reinforces the assumption that a woman’s ultimate fulfillment is derived from marital devotion rather than personal freedom. This interpretation directly contradicts the reader’s access to Mrs. Mallard’s internal realization, exposing the ideological gap between female experience and male-dominated explanation.

Furthermore, the authoritative tone of the medical explanation contrasts sharply with the emotional and metaphorical language used earlier in the narrative. While Mrs. Mallard's inner world is described through imagery and affective expression, the final discourse relies on factual, declarative language. This discursive shift legitimizes patriarchal authority by presenting male interpretation as objective and scientific, while reducing female subjectivity to emotional excess or misinterpretation. Despite this silencing, Chopin employs narrative irony to subtly challenge patriarchal ideology. Readers, having witnessed Mrs. Mallard's moment of self recognition, are able to recognize the inadequacy of the medical explanation. Through this irony, Chopin exposes how dominant discourse misrepresents women's experiences, allowing resistance to emerge indirectly within the narrative structure. Power, therefore, is not only exercised through discourse but also contested through linguistic contradiction.

This research differs significantly from previous studies that analyzed Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* primarily through the perspective of liberal feminism and ideological critique (Han, 2023; Rehman, 2023). Both studies focused on thematic issues such as women's liberation, oppression, and feminist consciousness at the level of the story's meaning and message. In contrast, this study goes beyond ideological representation and specifically examines how gender representation is constructed through lexical choices, metaphors, mental process verbs, narrative voice, and discourse structure, integrating feminist linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Furthermore, unlike previous studies that used a radical feminist approach to emphasize patriarchal dominance within the institution of marriage, this study positions language as the primary locus of ideological production (Malik et al., 2025).

While Malik et al.'s study emphasized patriarchal social structures as a central theme, this study demonstrates how this dominance operates at a micro-level through institutional discourse (e.g., the medical explanation at the end of the story) and how narrative irony functions as a form of discursive resistance. Furthermore, compared to other studies that analyze gender language in Virginia Woolf's novels using feminist stylistics, corpus-based stylistic approaches in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, this study focuses more on one short text with an in-depth qualitative approach (close reading) and a systematic integration between feminist stylistics and CDA (Lekaj, 2020, Corbière, 2016). Thus, the main contribution of this study lies in combining micro-linguistic and macro-discursive analysis in a single work to show that gender ideology is not only reflected in the text, but is actively produced through language structure and discourse organization. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that patriarchal ideology in *The Story of an Hour* is sustained through authoritative discourse that suppresses female voice and redefines women's experiences. By contrasting private consciousness with public interpretation, Chopin reveals how discourse functions as a tool of power, shaping gendered meaning while simultaneously exposing its own limitations

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study by situating them within established theories of language and gender and engaging with relevant previous research. Instead of merely restating textual evidence, the discussion emphasizes the interpretation of the findings and examines their broader implications for understanding how language constructs gendered meanings in literary discourse. By critically relating the results to feminist linguistics and discourse-based approaches, this section highlights how the study extends existing scholarship and contributes to linguistic and feminist literary research, particularly in demonstrating the role of linguistic form in shaping representations of gender, power, and subjectivity.

The findings demonstrate that female experience in *The Story of an Hour* is linguistically constructed through indirect emotional expression and a strong emphasis on internalized consciousness. Mrs. Mallard's thoughts and feelings are predominantly conveyed through mental process verbs, imagery, and subtle lexical choices rather than overt verbal articulation, reflecting a constrained mode of self expression. This pattern supports argument that women's language is frequently characterized by emotional emphasis and indirectness, shaped by social expectations and power asymmetries within patriarchal systems (Lakoff, 1975). In Chopin's narrative, such linguistic strategies not only mirror the social limitations imposed on women but also function as a subtle form of resistance, allowing female subjectivity to emerge within the boundaries of socially acceptable discourse.

However, the findings of this study extend Lakoff's framework by demonstrating that emotional language in literary representation does not merely signal weakness or passivity, but can operate as a strategic mode of self-recognition and resistance. In *The Story of an Hour*, Mrs. Mallard's emotional expressions facilitate a momentary awakening of self-awareness and autonomy, allowing her to articulate an inner freedom that is otherwise denied in the external social sphere. This suggests that emotional language, rather than reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes, can function as a powerful discursive space through which female subjectivity and empowerment are negotiated, even within the constraints imposed by dominant gender ideologies.

The role of narrative voice and silence further reinforces the gendered construction of subjectivity in the text. As demonstrated in the findings, Mrs. Mallard's most significant realizations take place internally and are not articulated through public or authoritative forms of speech. Instead, her consciousness is mediated by the third-person narrative voice, which both reveals and constrains her inner life. This pattern aligns with feminist stylistic perspectives, which argue that women's subjectivity in literary texts is frequently constructed through narrative structures rather than direct or overt self-expression. Within this framework, silence does not signify absence or passivity; rather, it functions as a meaningful discursive strategy shaped by social limitation, reflecting how women's voices are negotiated and controlled within patriarchal contexts.

The findings resonate that narrative structures actively shape gendered meaning-making processes by determining whose experiences are foregrounded, how they are articulated, and within what discursive spaces they are permitted to exist (Fivush & Grysman, 2022). In *The Story of an Hour*, Mrs. Mallard's experiences are constructed primarily through internal narration, positioning her emotional awakening as personally legitimate yet socially unspeakable. This narrative configuration reinforces the separation between private consciousness and public discourse, a division that reflects broader patriarchal norms governing women's expression. As a result, female subjectivity is represented as deeply reflective and self-aware, but constrained from entering authoritative or communal speech. By embedding women's experiences within interior narrative spaces, the text illustrates how gendered meanings are produced not only through what is said, but also through the structural limits placed on expression, thereby underscoring the role of narrative form in sustaining and questioning gendered power relations.

Furthermore, the analysis of discourse and power reveals how patriarchal ideology is sustained through the authority of institutional voices. The medical explanation of Mrs. Mallard's death exemplifies what identifies as the dominance of institutional discourse in defining and legitimizing social reality. By attributing her death to "joy," the medical narrative overrides Mrs. Mallard's internal experience and imposes a socially acceptable interpretation that aligns with

patriarchal expectations of female emotion and marital devotion. This discursive reframing effectively silences the subversive implications of her momentary autonomy, transforming a narrative of resistance into one of conformity. Consequently, institutional discourse functions not merely as an explanatory mechanism, but as a powerful ideological tool that reinterprets and suppresses female experience, thereby reinforcing traditional gender norms and sustaining existing power relations.

This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight male dominance and women's oppression in *The Story of an Hour* (Malik et al., 2025). However, this study departs from earlier research by demonstrating how patriarchal ideology operates not only at the thematic or symbolic level but more specifically through linguistic choices and discursive structures. By focusing on narrative voice, lexical patterns, silence, and institutional discourse, the analysis reveals how gendered power relations are subtly embedded in language itself. This linguistic and discourse-oriented perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of how oppression is constructed, normalized, and sustained within the text, thereby extending existing scholarship beyond thematic interpretation to the level of textual and ideological form. In comparison with earlier feminist analyses, which primarily emphasize liberal feminist ideology and women's rights at the thematic level, the present study contributes a distinct linguistic perspective by demonstrating how gender representation is embedded in stylistic patterns and discursive choices.

Rather than focusing solely on ideological messages, this research reveals how meaning is constructed through language itself, including narrative voice, lexical selection, and silence. Similarly, while studies explore gendered language in different literary texts, this study offers a more focused and systematic examination of a single short story by integrating feminist stylistics with Critical Discourse Analysis (Lekaj, 2020; Corbière, 2016). Through this combined framework, the study illustrates how micro-linguistic features and macro-discursive structures interact to produce gendered meanings. In doing so, it bridges the gap between literary criticism and linguistic analysis, highlighting the value of interdisciplinary approaches in feminist literary studies. The discussion underscores that gender representation in *The Story of an Hour* is not merely a matter of thematic interpretation but is fundamentally constructed through linguistic choices, narrative voice, and discursive organization.

By integrating feminist linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, this study demonstrates how power relations are embedded in patterns of expression, how silence operates as a meaningful and socially conditioned strategy, and how moments of resistance emerge within constrained discursive spaces. The analysis shows that language does not simply reflect gender ideology; it actively produces, sustains, and, at times, subtly challenges patriarchal norms. Consequently, literary language emerges as a crucial site for examining the complex interplay between gender, power, and subjectivity, offering deeper insight into how ideological struggles are enacted at the level of discourse rather than solely through overt thematic content.

Conclusion

This study examined how linguistic features construct gender representation in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* by applying feminist linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings demonstrate that gender ideology in the text is not only conveyed through thematic content but is fundamentally embedded in linguistic form, including lexical choices, figurative language, imagery, narrative voice, and discourse structure. The analysis shows that Mrs. Mallard's emotional experience is represented through indirect and emotive language rather than explicit

or authoritative speech. Lexical choices and symbolic imagery portray freedom as an internal and momentary realization, reflecting the limited expressive space available to women within a nineteenth-century patriarchal society. Narrative voice further reinforces this condition by restricting female expression to private consciousness while denying access to public or socially validated discourse.

Moreover, the study reveals that patriarchal ideology operates through authoritative discourse that silences women's experiences, particularly through the medical explanation that overrides Mrs. Mallard's subjectivity. At the same time, Chopin subtly challenges this ideology through narrative irony and internal focalization, allowing resistance to emerge within constrained linguistic spaces. These findings imply that feminist linguistic and discourse-based approaches are crucial for revealing how gender ideology is embedded, sustained, and negotiated through language, and they highlight the value of literary texts as sites of ideological critique and resistance. By integrating linguistic analysis with feminist interpretation, this research contributes to the study of language and gender in literary texts by highlighting how power and ideology are negotiated at the level of discourse. Although this study focuses on a single short story, it suggests that further research could apply similar linguistic frameworks to other literary works to explore how gender representation is constructed across different socio-historical contexts.

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