

A Study of Gender Differences in Expressing Pain

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Abstract : The first part of the present paper studies the role of language in expressing pain. Pain is usually described as a personal and mental experience, so language has an important role in describing, expressing and measuring pain and sometimes it is believed that language is the only device for accessing this personal experience. The second part of this paper studies gender differences in expressing pain. Considering the biological, psychological and social differences between men and women, we raise this question whether men and women express their pain in the same way or differently. To answer this question, we asked 44 Farsi speaking participants to write about the most painful experience they had in the past. Qualitative analysis of the data shows that women, have expressed their pain more severely, have expressed their feelings about pain instead of describing the pain itself, have made their pain more personal and have given more details about the circumstances in which they experienced pain, while men have given a more neutral description of their pain and have given a description of their pain by distancing themselves from the painful event. Knowing these gender differences in expressing pain can help medical practitioners in assessing the pain level.

Keywords : discourse analysis, expressing pain, measuring pain, gender

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