<u>Language Investigation</u>
How gender affect linguistics in programmes.

For this investigation I aim to produce a theory on the language of gender orientation in programming. I think it will be interesting to observe how the role of male and female in our society can affect the programmes that are broadcasted and the linguistics that feature when a programme adheres to a particular gender roles. I will take into account the contextual factors to fully assess whether it is gender, or other factors such as age, class or culture, that affects the language of a programme.
The type of programming I am going to study are children's television programmes because they are commonly reflective of society's stereotypical views of gender. It is important to assess the influence of heavily male or female based language on children, and whether it forms a gender identity within them and affects how they linguistically interact with those around them.

My hypothesis is that language will be heavily male orientated, following from the stereotypical role males have to assert dominance in society.

I have chosen to study the children's cartoon X-Men because it has an interesting reflection of gender portrayed through language.

I am going to begin by analysing the title of the programme I am going to study - 'X-Men'. This title introduces the influence of male superiority through the language it uses, instantaneously using the word 'men' to portray the themes of the programme.   Instead of the programme only containing men as the title suggests, there is actually an equal number of men as there is women in the 'X-Men', so we can conclude that they play a dominant role in the programming, and the influence of stereotypical gender views have responsibility for this. It should also be considered that the women in this programme are represented through male characteristics, and by conforming to this and seen as part of the 'X-Men', they are not inferior, but instead seen as equal through another gender. The title clearly suggests that the programme is male orientated, and degrades the influence of the female gender in association with the themes of power and battle.

Looking into the idea that the female characters in the 'X-Men' are represented with male traits, I am going to study the language of the names used for each character. Without knowing the gender beforehand, it is difficult to associate any of the names with an influence of the female gender. Nearly every name is associates with male traits. For instance when looking at the name 'Wolverine' we can clearly determine that the wolf is a origin for power, teamwork and male dominance, which is appropriate to the male character. In comparison to 'Rogue', a name which has no female influence, and disassociates the gender from the character, giving her a power orientated name, but suggests that the male represents power.

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M1: Got another one.
M2: If it isn't Toady Tolanski picking up a little spare change.

M1: Hi Duncan, look I can explain.
M2: Shut up frog face.
M3: Let's crush him Dunc.
M4: Let's not Dunc, just chill. The wallets are still there, how about we have him
give back the cash no harm done.

M1: Yeah, yeah, here's the money.
M2: What do you care about this scuzzo Summers?
M4: Not much, but I'm not crazy about three against one either so how about we
settle this peacefully.
M2: I think me and my buds are gonna squash this slimeball, so you and your stupid
sunglasses at night can just bail.

M4: I said knock it off!
M3: He's getting away!
M2: Big mistake summers.
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This transcript is of a mostly male conversation, and reveals how the programme orientates towards this gender through it's language. The use of M1-4 represents the 4 different male characters in this scene, and F1 represents the only female character. M2/3 are very aggressive, using phrases such as 'Let's crush him' and 'I think me and my buds are gonna squash this slimeball'. This associates the male figure as one of violence. This is disconcerting that this view could influence young children, because they will associate power and dominance with aggression, which could have all sorts of implications of their behaviour. Other male characteristics in the language of this scene are using last names for refer to each other, and imperatives to dominate the conversation and assert their authority. This fits in with George Keith and Jon Shuttleworth's theory, found in Living Language, that men are competitive in conversation, as opposed to women, who are more supportive.

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M1: Jean, oh wow..
F1: Shh I know, look you'de better spilt.
M2: Take it easy son, try not to move.
M3: What happened here?
M4: Uum, my head, can't remember..
M2: concussion, he's been hit hard
M3: Looks to me like... uhh of course, must have been a leak in that propane tank.
F1: Duncan are you alright?
M2: Hey jean, yeah you know me, skull like concrete.
F1: Oh, you poor baby!
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The role of the female in this transcript is very brief, but she clearly supports the other character of Scott, rather than tries to compete with him.
This transcript show how female characters are represented as weaker than male. It is interesting to consider that F1 is a dominating powerful character, with many male traits, when the programme deals with the super heros and battle scenes. In comparison, in this scene, she is represented as the supporting character, and inferior to the males. This suggests that the programme still has connotations of the weakness of the female gender. For instance when F1 says - "Oh, you poor baby!" her language suggests she is being supportive. The use of the word "baby" has maternal connotations, which is representative of stereotypical domestic and mothering views of females.

The language associated with this programme portrays how the male gender dominates the linguistics of 'X-Men' which gives an insight into the general view of gender orientation of the programme. These two examples are more substantial in that they are repeated with every episode that a young child watches. It is important to analyse how a heavily male orientated programme effects children. We should consider that a child's perception of the reality of a television programme is somewhat unclear, and it's influence could change their gender associated behaviour and understandings. When watching 'X-Men' a young child receives language that has strong connotations of male dominance and power, which leads young children to gender roles themselves, which society have been trying to break for some time now.

X-Men clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmhvxsOwhqk