

Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature

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Women and Multi-Tasking

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Abstract

It is not a myth – ‘Women really are better than men at multi-tasking, at least in certain cases’ Says a study. Since the 1960s, Psychologists have conducted experiments on the nature and limits of human multi-tasking. Psychiatrist Edward M. Hallowell describes multi-tasking as a mythical activity in which people believe they can perform two or more tasks at the same time as effectively as possible. The word ‘Multi Task’ was first coined or published in an IBM paper explaining the possibilities of the IBM system 360 in 1965. When the women folk are compelled at two places like at home and at work place, they try their multitasking as per their need. If the findings of U.K Psychologists that men were slower and less organized than women when switching, rapidly between tasks in test is true, then it is to be studied, analysed and should be proved. The recent study on New Brain Connectivity to show that there are remarkable differences in men and women’s neural wiring, which made the researcher conclude that sex plays a vital role in multitasking skills. As primary source the multitasking ability of Ruth and Naomi from the Old Testament is explained. It can be assumed that women do multitasking.

Keywords: Brain connectivity, IBM Paper, Multitasking, Old Testament and Psychologists.

Introduction

It is not a myth, women really are better than men at multitasking, at least in certain cases. It is the Statement given by a study done, A mother who is very busy at the kitchen, answering the calls of her son who is getting ready to go to school and at the same time attending her husband’s coffee need is a women so to say engaged in multi-tasking. From time

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immemorial, animals and humans engage themselves in multitasking. Then what is multitasking? Multitasking is a clearly shown skill that makes one to do more than one job or an activity or a task at a given short span of time.

A driver driving his vehicle and at the same time answering his phone call, A mother washing clothes but help her child in studies, an office Manager,conducting a meeting, at the same time, sending an email, students listening to music but doing his homework are all multitasking.

The word ‘multitask’ was first coined or published in an IBM paper explaining the possibilities of the (IBM system/360, 1 in 1965), Here it meant the ability of a computer to do many jobs, or number of tasks. Automatically the term is used and applied to human jobs too.

In our day today life itself it is noticed that women are able to manage many jobs at the same time. They seem to calculate mentally and be prepared to take up many works at the given time period. Especially working women who need to complete and satisfy the homely needs and prepare to go to the work place are compelled to practise their multitasking. When we look at the working condition of men and women, we mostly find women multitask whereas men when pressed for more tasks at the same time get irritated, shrink their faces and find faults with the family members. If the findings of U.K. psychologists that men were slower and less organised than women when switching rapidly between tasks in tests is true, then it is to be studied, analysed and should be proved.

Ruth from the Old Testament

As a primary source for my chosen topic ‘women and multitasking’, I would like to quote, The Book of Ruth from the Old Testament. Ruth happened to be the second daughter-in-law of Naomi, Naomi her husband and her two sons left Bethlehem and went to the country of Moabites. When there was a great famine in Bethlehem, she settled there and got her sons married to Moabite girls Orpah and Ruth. Unfortunately, her husband and her two sons died, and

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the three ladies left there helpless. Naomi asked her daughters-in-law to go to their parent's place. In the beginning both of them refused to go but after considerable counseling, Orpah left her mother-in-law but not Ruth. (Book of Ruth- Bible, King James Version, Chapter I, II) Decided to take with her, Naomi, left the country of Moah and came to Bethlehem as bankrupts.

In Bethlehem both the ladies were multitasking, Ruth told her mother-in-law that she would go to the fields of harvest to collect the grains which were being shed, while she was doing that, she was also caring her mother –in-law in providing for her. She was storing food grains for the future too. She was careful in carrying out the plans of her mother-in-law to get a husband for herself to settle down. She was successful in doing these multitasks and turned out to be a woman of success to bring out the dynasty of King David. In the same way, Naomi too was a multitasker to calculate mentally the possibilities in getting her daughter-in-law settled, emerge an offspring to inherit the names of her bereaved husband and sons and to take care of their lives, and all necessities. Both the women were successful in their endeavours with their multitasking capabilities.

Some Recent Studies

Keith Laws, a Psychologist made a study and the facts, that was found out were reported and they have provided a first evidence to prove that the female multitasking has a superior altitude. Another analyst has confined that the females performed better than males in coordinating primary and secondary tests by which it is proved that women are better in multitasking.

A recent study on New Brain connectivity taken up by Penn Medicine funded partly by National Academy of Science showed a marvellous result that there are remarkable difference in men and women neural wiring which made the researchers conclude that Sex plays a vital role in multitasking skills. It is arrived at a point to prove that men are better at learning and performing a single task at a time like riding cycle, navigating directions and so on. But women proved to have greater memory power and cognition skill about society that make them more equipped for

multitasking and finding solutions while working as a team, Szalai, et al. have done a study where they have computed anatomical connectomes of 96 subjects of the data that was funded by NIH.

The structural connectome of women are significantly better connected than that of male, because the connectome of women are provided with more edges, higher minimum bipartition width larger Eigen gap greater minimum vertex cover than that of men. The minimum bipartition width is a measure of quality of computer multiple stage interconnection networks. The greater Eigen gap exhibits the quality of woman connectome as better one than the male connectome. The better expanding quality the higher minimum bipartition width and the greater minimum vertex cover propose much advantage in network connectivity in female brain graph. Silverman and Eals raised a theory from the hypothesis of Hunter-Gatherer and they come to say that natural selection helped hunting related skills that bring difference in job performance for genders. Men focused on one task of hunting whereas women took care of children at home. So over a period of time, women were selected for multitasking. The Natural selection in the primitive society of earlier times might have laid way for the modern women to be superior multitaskers.

Some Kinds of Multi-tasking

According to the author Steven Berlin Johnson, the kind of multitasking is skimming the surface of the data provided, picking up the relevant information and then proceed further. This involves a partial multitasking. This kind of multitasking was named as continuous partial attention where an in-depth study was not done.

Dr. Stoet's and Other Experiments

A Chinese experiment proved that women out performed their male counterparts but a Sweden research says that men may actually be better than women where spatial tasks are concerned, regarding this Dr. Stoet, and his counterpart compared men and women in a certain type of multitasking. It was proved that men and women were equal when task were equal when task were done one at a time but when jobs are mixed up, there was an apparent difference

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between them. Both slowed down and committed mistakes when the switching over was quick. Even then, men were clearly slower by 77% longer to answer, against women took 69% longer, According to DrStoet, he says that it might look a smaller difference but calculating the same for a working day or week, it would be amounted great.

Once, a group of men and women is allotted a series of tasks to be completed within eight minutes.

The tasks were locating restaurants on a map, solving simple mathematical problems, attending and answering the calls over the phone, taking decision to search for the key in field and so on. It was not possible to finish all the above tasks within eight minutes hence those men and women had to analyse and organize their time, arrange the tasks in priority and keep themselves calm under such pressurized conditions. In those cases too, women showed an organized pattern of performance when it was compared to their male counterparts and it was proved by Professor Keith Laws of University of Hertfordshire. Even in the search of lost keys in the field, the women followed a search pattern like going round the field in a concentric rectangle which was highly productive and methodical strategy. But some of the men did not even search the whole field using a pattern of search.

Research taken up in child development by Monica Luciana, Associate Professor of Psychology proved that the human brain can be trained to multitask. The individuals multitask poorly in the beginning and with a training ,were able to perform the tasks simultaneously.

A French MRI study published in 2010 gave a slight hope for the hypothesis that the brain can pursue at the most two task simultaneously one for each frontal lobe because they have the goal oriented area. In the present day, there is visible change over to new equipment such as computers, the Internet and videogame. 16% of time was spent on media among the youth in the past, now it is upto 82% between the years 1999-2005 especially among the American youth.

Conclusion

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A person or a women who is multitasking is an exciting fact, yet, how well and how good the multitasking is to the self and to the society is a question. People using phone while driving are liable to face accidents. Even experienced drivers during number of tasks, were late in applying brake lights and stop signs because of multitasking. A house wife having three tasks at a time liable to fail in all task . As the age proceeds, a person become more tensed, more irritated and his/her health may be a question too. A small percent of the population appeared to be much better at multitasking than others and they are named as *supertaskers*. In the present scenario almost everyone multitasks, especially women multitask and they must take care not to lose their mental health. It is a solace that scientific researches try to prove that they are capable of multitasking.

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