
THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE ON GENDER AND POWER

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ABSTRACT

The social roles of men and women who speak a language are closely related to the language's structures, vocabulary, and usage patterns. the reason why there are different types for men and women. Does language use differ between men and women? Why do these variations exist? Is it as a result of the language's structures? Or it could be because of social conventions that dictate how language should be used by both men and women.

Is it possible to label a certain language as "sexist"? is the first query that leads to the second. The second query raises a further query: "Is it feasible to describe the users of that language and the norms governing language use as "sexist"?" These questions are actually the ones that are discussed when it comes to gender and language. Another topic of discussion is how to prevent sexism in language. In light of the biological and social construction theories of gender, we look at how language is used differently by men and women.

Keywords: Gender, Power, Language, Linguistic Disparities, Social Status

INTRODUCTION

Women and men use language differently due to styles, registers, and ways of speaking as well as differences in interaction, thought, culture, and linguistic attitudes related to gender, politeness, and stereotypes. Women's speech is undoubtedly different from men's speech. In actuality, gender and language have a number of interrelated interactions. To put it another way, men and women use language in very different ways. It is due to the way the language is structured, societal norms, or the people who use the language in that society. Gender (male and female) is also socially constructed. We observe variations or differences between men and women as a result of the social institution or taboo. In addition, there are significant differences between how men and women speak that are founded in the hierarchy of power. I will provide some justifications for my remarks in the passages that follow.

Studies of language and gender:

The 1975 book *Language and Woman's Place* by Robin Lakoff, as well as other of Lakoff's earlier research, are frequently cited as the foundation for the sociolinguistic study of gender and language. Since the 1970s, the study of language and gender has advanced significantly. Leading academics include Penelope Eckert, Janet Holmes, Deborah Tannen, Deborah Cameron, and others.

Pronunciation

In terms of pronunciation and morphology, social dialect research mostly examines the differences between men's and women's speech, with some concentration on syntactic structures (such as multiple negations). Men and women have different intonation patterns, according to Brend (1975). Syntax, semantics, and style are now the primary areas of study for gender differences, according to Robin Lakoff. She contends that language spoken about women in American society reflects their inferior socioeconomic rank. She lists certain linguistic elements that, in her opinion, are more frequently utilised by women than by males and that convey hesitation and lack of confidence. Robin Lakoff contends that women's use of hedging and boosting techniques reveals a lack of confidence.

Interruptions

Women and men converse differently for a variety of reasons in terms of interpersonal dynamics. Women are more likely than men to listen attentively during conversations, interrupt less frequently, and be concerned that others have an opportunity to contribute (Holmes 1995). Despite the popular belief that women are the talkative sex and the proverbs that depict women as chatty. The majority of the scientific evidence indicates out the opposite; women's tongues are like lambs' tails; they never stay still. Men predominate when speaking in a variety of settings, especially public ones like conference talks, staff meetings, and television interviews where talking can boost your prestige. Interruptions between speakers of the same gender tend to be spread rather evenly. Male to male conflict is more common among same-sex couples, while female to female drama is more prevalent.

According to a number of studies, males interrupt women during cross-sex interactions far more frequently than women interrupt men. In cross-sex discussion, women use more you and we and less resistance than males when someone interrupts them. They also ask more questions, encourage others to talk, and use more signs like "mm hmm" to encourage people to continue speaking. Men tend to try to dominate the conversation by interrupting more, challenging more, disputing more, ignoring more, and making generalisations. In other words, men and women appear to reflect the power dynamic that prevails through society, where males are dominant and women are subservient, in cross-sex interactional patterns in discussion. Without a question, men continue to interrupt most frequently.

Men interrupt others more frequently than women do in other situations; it has been discovered. The pattern is present, for example, in contacts between doctors and patients and departmental meetings. Whether they are doctors or patients, women are more likely than males to be interrupted. The majority of interruptions in conversations between patients and children are made by fathers, and females are most frequently interrupted by both their moms and fathers. However, compared to most women, most men speak more frequently and for a longer period of time. More often than not, men interrupt than women. Although both men and women are guilty of interrupting, there are a few key distinctions:

-)] In general, men interrupt more frequently than women.
-)] Women are more likely than males to interrupt one another.
-)] When it comes to taking and keeping the floor, men are more successful.
-)] Women typically interrupt by asking questions or making encouraging remarks (yeah, right, I see, is

that so, etc.).

On the other hand, Holmes (1992) discovered that female doctors were interrupted more frequently than male doctors during patient-doctor talks. Men tended to dominate interactions in professional settings, but not women. In her investigation on the interactions between doctors and patients, West (1998) reached comparable conclusions.

Competitive vs. Cooperative

It has been discovered that men are more competitive conventionalists and women are more supportive and cooperative conversationalists. According to a study of the Malagasy society, women speak more bluntly than males do. Women are the ones that handle the essential haggling in the marketplace as well as handling conflicts and debates within the home. Men in this society speak in a circumlocutory and oblique manner. Women are often cooperative conversationalists, according to research on conversational interaction, whereas men are more likely to be competitive and less tolerant of others.

Discussion topics between men and women

Men speak more than women when both sexes are present in a conversation. The dialogues also cover a range of subjects. Men-men: rivalry and teasing, athleticism, aggression, commerce, politics, legal issues, and taxes. Women are concerned with their sense of self, relationships with others, families and friends, reading, eating and drinking, problems in life, and lifestyle. More often than males, women use adjectives like adorable, charming, magnificent, lovely, and sweet. They frequently add tag inquiries as a result of the same feelings of uncertainty and uneasiness.

Many people think that women talk more than males. Men have been found to talk more than women in a variety of contexts, including staff meetings, television panel discussions, and husband-and-wife pairs engaging in casual chat (Eakins and Eakins 1978; Bernard 1972). (Soskin and John 1963). According to evidence, men and women typically discuss different topics (Aries and Johnson 1983; Seidler 1989). Men, for instance, frequently discuss sports, politics, and cars, whereas women typically discuss parenting and interpersonal connections.

Questions in Conversations

In interactions, inquiries are used differently by men and women. For men, a question is usually a genuine request for information whereas with women it can often be a rhetorical means of engaging the other's conversational contribution or of acquiring attention from others conversationally involved, techniques associated with a collaborative approach to language use. Therefore, women use questions more frequently. In writing, however, both genders use rhetorical questions as literary devices. For example, Mark Twain used them in "A War Prayer" to provoke the reader to question his actions and beliefs. Tag questions are frequently used to verify or confirm information; though in women's language they may also be used to avoid making strong statements.

Changing the topic of conversation

In his research on the interactions of same-sex friends, Bruce Dorval found that men tend to switch topics more frequently than women. The idea that women chatter and talk excessively may have its roots in this distinction. Goodwin (1990) notes that rather than offering fresh subjects, girls and women relate their statements to those of earlier speakers and develop one another's topics. However, a study of young American couples and their interactions reveals that while women raise twice as many topics as men, it is the men's topics that are usually taken up and subsequently elaborated in the conversation.

Listening and Attentiveness

Given the value that hearing in conversation carries for the listener as the speaker's confidant, it appears that women place more weight on listening than do males. Women typically interrupt conversations less frequently than men do, which suggests that listening is important to them. They also utilise minimal responses more frequently than men do, which suggests that women place greater importance on listening. However, as Victoria DeFrancisco's work reveals, men interrupt significantly more frequently with unrelated issues, especially in mixed-sex settings, and are more likely to respond silently to a female speaker's conversational focus than they are to minimise their own comments.

Women listen and concur when guys speak. However, despite the fact that this agreement was meant to be a sign of connection, males frequently interpret it as a sign of status and authority. A woman's listening and attempts at recognition may lead a man to believe that she is unsure or insecure. When in fact, a woman's motivations for acting in this way are a direct outcome of her views toward her relationships rather than her attitudes toward her knowledge. Giving information elevates the speaker in the listener's eyes while lowering them in the speaker's eyes. But when women listen to men, they often consider connection and support rather than necessarily position.

Reasons of Gender Differences in Language Use

Language use by men and women differs for a variety of reasons. On this, three claims can be made: First, that there are significant biological differences between men and women that have an impact on how they speak. Psychologically, women are more likely to be romantically attached, supportive of one another, and non-competitive. Men have an intrinsic tendency toward independence and power over solidarity.

Second, social structures are constructed via a series of hierarchical power relations. In such a system, men typically hold the power while women typically do not. Language usage is a reflection of men's social dominance. They make an effort to take charge, introduce ideas, interrupt, and so forth. They act in this way toward women as well as toward one another. Women who feel helpless should be allowed to get away with it. Third, both men and women are social creatures who have mastered certain behaviours. The majority of language behaviour is taught activity.

Women learn how to be women, while men learn how to be men. The majority of studies suggest that distinct gender-specific activities and various socialisation and acculturation patterns may be to blame for the disparities between men and women's modes of interaction. To categorise men's and women's styles as "competitive" and "cooperative," respectively, would be stereotyped. The majority of

the data points to a difference between men and women's language use as a result of their various social roles. The discrepancies will be bigger the more distinct the roles. The reflection can also be seen in language in countries where gender roles are less clearly delineated and social stratification is less rigid. Alterations in society also reflect alterations in language.

Dominance versus subjection, Status and Power

Most studies show that men are typically more domineering than women in mixed-gender conversations. Variability based on power serves as the main argument in favour of the dominance strategy. On the other hand, social, economic, and sociohistorical status are the sources of power. Using the example of male experts speaking more verbosely than their female counterparts, Helena Leet-Pellegrini proposes a dichotomy between a male desire for conversational dominance and a female aspiration for group conversational participation. Males are given more attention in the classroom, and this can result in them receiving more attention in the scientific and technical fields. This can then result in their success in those fields, which can then result in their having greater power in a technocratic society, claims Jennifer Coates.

Power plays a significant role in the male/female interaction in a variety of contexts, not just conversation. From the topic of the communication to the methods used to convey it, power is evident in every facet of communication. Men are more focused on their position than women are, who are often more concerned with building and keeping relationships. The goal of a woman's communication is often to establish and preserve connections. On the other hand, men will prioritise power more, and their communication patterns will reflect their desire to uphold their position in the partnership.

Tannen's research indicates that men frequently use storytelling as a means of upholding their social status. Men tend to make jokes or tell stories that are primarily about themselves. Women, on the other hand, are less preoccupied with their own power, and as a result, the focus of their storytelling is on others rather than on themselves. Women strive to minimise their role in their own tales by equating themselves with those around them, which deepens their bonds with those people.

Construction of Gender

Sex is biologically determined. Sex differences are the differences based on biological/physical organs. Gender is a social construct that encompasses all of the psychological, social, and cultural distinctions that exist between men and women. There are well-known differences between the sexes: Compared to men, women have more fat, less muscle, are weaker, and weigh less. They are mature more rapidly and live longer. They have different voice quality and different vocal skill. But the majority of the variations, such as longevity and voice quality, can be the product of various socialisation processes. Phonological differences between men and women in almost all languages of the world, for example, Hindi language-differences in word choice in various languages. Japanese women show they are women when they speak, with the use of the morphological inflections *ne* or *wa*. According to Sapir (1929), the Yana language of California contains special forms for use in speech either by or to women.

Some other sex-based distinctions such as actor-actress, waiter-waitress, and master-mistress are found in language. Some of these distinctions are reinforced by entrenched patterns of usage and semantic

development. Master-mistress have quite different ranges of use and meaning Another pair of differentiation: boy-girl, man- woman, gentleman- lady, bachelor-spinster, widower-widow. Widower-widow has different use and meaning from the others. Lakoff cites that there are 'equivalent' words referring to men and women do have quite different associations in English language. "He's a professional" and "She's a professional".

Gender as a Social Construct

A variety of social institutions contributed to the development of the gender construct. Some of these include family, educational institutions, judiciary, religion, etc In recent years, gender-related thoughts and notions have been increasingly prevalent in the media. Gender, unlike sex, which is based on biological division and is specific in character, is more amorphous in nature and is subject to change with reference to context and time.

Sexist Language

Who is 'sexist'? Which comes first, the speakers or the language itself? According to Lakoff, the English language is sexist. Because of this, women seem to employ language more submissively toward men. For example, women are also often named, titled, and addressed differently from men. Women are more likely than men to be addressed by their first names when everything else is equal, or, if not by first names, by such terms as lady, miss, or dear and even baby, or babe. Males are considered to be more accustomed to using different address phrases to refer to women than to other men, and vice versa. Languages vary in terms of whether or not they assign gender to words referring to things without biological sex (Vigliocco 2005).

Any sexist statement or speech can be turned sex-neutral in language by making the appropriate changes, such as changing chairman to chairperson, salesperson to salary clerk, actor to actress, etc. The extreme power structure of dominance in the structure and use of language can also be avoided by initiating some changes in language. So language itself is not sexist. It is the people who use languages may be sexist or not. Feminist movement demands the elimination of all kinds of discriminations – social, economic, linguistic, and so on done against women. There are many suggestions for avoiding sexist language.

Gender and Sex

Sex is a biological phrase that describes the anatomical differences between a male and female, whereas gender is a social construct. The binary split of male and female forms the basis of the political perspective on sex known as gender. This binary division seems to be a natural process. However, the issue with this separation arises when one object is ranked below another that is thought to be superior. According to Chanter (2006), "that is, biologically or chronologically, biology, anatomy, physiology, nature, DNA structure, genetics, materiality, or "the body," comes first. Social structures, gendered roles, historically held stereotypes and expectations about gender, cultural mores, sexual norms and taboos, etc. Chanter (2006), p. Therefore, we can say that a biologically given sex—namely, boy, girl, man, and woman—serves as the foundation for creating a social category known as gender (attributes of masculinity and femininity).

The language of conversation between women is first and foremost a language of rapport, claims Tannen (1991). (Tannen 1991). Its objective is to forge connections and negotiate alliances. Women often exhibit commonalities and shared experiences, and when they disagree in meetings, they frequently use examples from their own lives as support.

On the other hand, language serves as a means of negotiating and maintaining rank in the hierarchy for the majority of men. Men accomplish this, in Tannen's opinion (1991), by demonstrating their knowledge and expertise. Men also accomplish this by "holding centre stage," as in the case of delivering jokes, telling stories, or providing information. Men, for instance, often dispute in meetings by stating categorically what is right and wrong.

Women, power and taboo language

Gender identity is a set of attitudes, habits, and standards that pervade all aspects of daily life. Each culture aims to make new borns into adult males and females. Gender identity is a set of cultural norms and expectations that outline how gay men and lesbian women, as well as transgender people, should behave. Another term for gender identity is a person's individual perception of and subjective experience with their own gender. This is typically referred to as one's internal sense of who they are in terms of being a man or a woman, primarily consisting of their acceptance of falling into one of two gender categories. Every society has a set of gender categories that can be used to form social identities in relation to other society members.

Male and female gender features are assigned differently in the majority of societies. However, not everyone identifies with all (or even some) of the aspects of gender that are in every nation assigned to a person's biological sex. Historically, the traits most closely associated with masculinity have been aggressive behaviour and obscenity. The language we use to discuss sexuality is limited by our cultural contexts. Words that suggest sexual activity are avoided in the United States because discussing sexuality is frowned upon. Sexual activity is forbidden, not because it isn't, but because it is. In America, women have long been encouraged to suppress their sexual desires while men have enjoyed greater sexual freedom.

Research on gender and cursing reveals three recurrent findings, men curse more than women; men use a larger vocabulary of curse words than women; and men use more offensive curse words than women (Jay, 1992, 2000, cited in Jule 2005).

Gender-Culture-Power

An array of institutional and cultural activities preserve gender power relations. It has historically been the case that men dominate women. Whilst in recent decades, the feminist movement has sought to equalise the gender bias, there are still factors, both institutional and cultural, that serve to maintain this long-standing imbalance. Cultural practises breed institutional barriers and vice-versa. Sex and gender must be distinguished from one another.

Feminism, according to Dahlerup (1986), is a set of philosophies, practises, and laws that aim to end gender inequality and the dominance of men in society. It has issues since those who fall within this description of feminism, both women and men, actively reject the title. This might be the case since

feminism has been successfully satirised in the media as an extreme type of men-hatred practised by unlovable, unattractive, and humourless women. It's vital to note this media-related topic. As stated in the title, it raises concerns about cultural traditions.

To preserve female power relations, cultural practises are crucial. These habits frequently start when kids are still very small. This can be found in a variety of contexts, including language, toys, and general preconceptions. Before they can express it verbally, children acquire preverbal cues about their gender identification. Children learn to distinguish between things from an early age thanks to differences in hair, clothing, and aroma. These variations prepare kids to mature into their particular gender.

CONCLUSION

Language and gender are closely related in a number of ways. To put it another way, men and women use language in very different ways. It is due to the way the language is structured, societal norms, or the people who use the language in that society. Gender (male and female) is also socially constructed. We observe variations or differences between men and women as a result of the social institution or taboo. In addition, there are significant differences between how men and women speak that are founded in the hierarchy of power.

The individual's personality and the vitality of the group are also factors in the explanation of language use variability. The social roles of men and women who speak a language are therefore closely related to the language's structures, vocabularies, and ways of use.

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