

# **Gender and Communication: Theoretical and Empirical Directions**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Master  
of Arts Degree (Psychology), in the Faculty of Social  
Science and Humanities, University of Cape Town,

1992

by

**John Andrew Dixon**

**Supervisor: Professor Don Foster**

The University of Cape Town has been given  
the right to reproduce this thesis in whole  
or in part. Copyright is held by the author.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank several people who contributed, spiritually, materially or intellectually, to my life under the rule of 'the thesis':

Thanks to the Human Science Research Council for their financial assistance.

Thanks to Don Foster, my supervisor, not only for his academic insight, which has been considerable, but also, as important, for retaining his boyish delight in social psychology.

Thanks also to Colin Tredoux: a canny methodologist, a man who knows his word processor intimately, a therapeutic squash partner, a good mate.

I am grateful to several other members of the Department of Psychology at UCT, notably Heather Steyn, Lindy Wilbraham, and Frank Bokhurst.

Finally, to Mandy, who had the misfortune to marry me before the project was finished: thank you for your support and sorry for my preoccupation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	(ii)
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1: Gender and the Patterning of Talk</b> .....	10
<b>Chapter 2: Explaining Gender Differences in Communication: An Overview and Some Social Psychological Reflections</b> .....	36
<b>Chapter 3: Mark of the Listener: Subject Gender, Audience Gender and Communicative Strategies</b> .....	69
<b>Chapter 4: Rationale and Method</b> .....	98
<b>Chapter 5: Results and Discussion</b> .....	119
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion</b> .....	140
<b>References</b> .....	155

## ABSTRACT

This research project addresses a deceptively simple question: what might form the central struts, the foundations, of a useful theory of gender and communication? Two lines of evidence are submitted - a theoretical argument, derived from an analysis of research in the area, and a set of original data, derived from an experiment conducted in a South African context.

### THEORETICAL ARGUMENT<sup>(1)</sup>

The dissertation begins with an appraisal of current theoretical models. These can be divided into two broad categories: the 'dominance' perspective holds that gender differences in communication reflect wider status inequalities between men and women; the 'difference' perspective holds that such differences are the product of an intricate socialization process, whereby the sexes learn gender specific rules of speech. Neither position, it is contended, provides an adequate account of gender and language use.

Rather than a detailed and systematic *theory*, dominance theorists offer us a broad political vision. They reduce men and women to political symbols, the oppressors and the oppressed, which they then hold up as an explanation of gender differences in communication; in reality, these symbols are merely signposts of an explanation still to be mapped. However well-intended, however valid in a general sense, they do not faithfully model real conversation, which is fraught with counter-examples and complexities. In fact, the dominance thesis - at least in its current forms - is tenable only if we ignore contradictory evidence, if we strip female communicators of agency and resistance, if we accept monolithic interpretations of the meaning of linguistic forms, if we disregard the subtleties of contextual variation.

The difference approach suffers from related weaknesses. Difference theorists would have us believe that in cross-sex conversations men and women meet as citizens of different linguistic cultures, misunderstanding and misunderstood. If only the 'lines of communication' (Tannen, 1990) could be opened, the argument runs, the sexes might discover some utopian middle ground where miscommunication no longer threatens male-female solidarity. But the 'different worlds, different words' hypothesis is both politically and empirically misguided. Politically, it perpetuates a 'separate but equal' vision of women's language that bolsters rather than challenges male domination. Empirically, it underestimates the social and psychological diversity of male/female speakers, a diversity mirrored in a research literature brimming with inconsistencies. It also underestimates the linguistic versatility of the sexes who, far from mindlessly adhering to gender specific language norms, can slip quite happily into gender atypical styles when circumstances are conducive, or when it suits their conversational purposes. The question that arises, then, is: why, and in what circumstances, do men and women make particular stylistic choices?

The forgoing weaknesses of current perspectives stem from a central problem: a failure to clarify the link between verbal behaviour, broader sociological forces, micro-contexts, and the psychology of the individual. It is precisely in grappling with - or more accurately *failing* to grapple with - this 'stream' of determinants that theorists have erred. This insight ushers in a simple metatheoretical ideal: in future, more responsive theoretical models of gender and language use must be crafted, that is, models which 'articulate' (Doise, 1986) the causal role of variables from different levels of analysis. It is argued here that two recent approaches to interpersonal communication, speech accommodation theory (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), provide a fertile starting point for this enterprise.

---

(1) As the dissertation contains a fairly substantial theoretical component, I felt that it might be valuable to provide a synopsis here. Unfortunately, the abstract is rather lengthy as a result.

## EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE

The experiment represented an attempt to make concrete the ideal of a multi-causal approach. Far from decontextualizing language use, the study placed male\female speakers in a delicate situational matrix, its methodology taking the form of a 2 (subject gender: male\female) x 2 (audience gender: male\female) x 2 (condition: competitive\non-competitive) factorial design. In this way, the (potentially) interactive influence of gender and social context on speech could be explored. In addition, the study investigated not only the objective verbal behaviour of men and women, but also their subjective interpretations of this behaviour. Such an approach, which prizes individuals' 'cognitive representations' (Forgas, 1983), is one means of penetrating the psychological worlds of speakers and thereby facilitating the process of theory-building.

Aside from these theoretical issues, several descriptive and methodological issues were also addressed by the experiment. Most importantly, it examined usage of two speech forms that have received extensive attention in the international literature yet none in the South African literature, hedges and backchannels. Research in North America and Europe has generally shown that these forms predominate in women's speech, a finding that has often been interpreted as evidence of women's tentativeness. Much of this work, however, has been marred by a methodological weakness: the simplification of the 'form and function' relation (cf. Holmes, 1984a). Attempting to overcome this problem, the present research drew upon the work of Janet Holmes, a New Zealand linguist who has produced a more discriminating analysis of male\female hedging (cf. Holmes, 1984a&b, 1985, 1986, 1988a, 1990).

The study yielded a fragmented set of results from which three trends are worth mentioning: (1) although subjects believed that they had spoken gender stereotypically, actual gender differences in communication did not emerge; (2) on several hedge subtypes there was evidence of audience effects; both male and female speakers seemed willing to accommodate their speech style to the conversational needs of their opposite sex interlocutors; (3) finally, main effects for condition were pervasive - subjects both felt and acted more 'masculinely' during the competitive exchanges. That men's and women's behaviour was comparable in this respect hardly supports the notion that women are somehow feeble or helpless communicators; nor does it support the idea that they adhere rigidly to affiliative speech norms. Indeed, if the evidence examined within, and provided by, this dissertation attests to anything, it is to the linguistic versatility of the sexes.

These findings are discussed in terms of the theoretical models touted earlier, and, in conclusion, some of the future directions promised in the dissertation's title are traced.

## INTRODUCTION

In its September 1982 edition, *New Scientist* published an article dealing with the topic of male domination within mixed-sex conversations. Written by Geoffrey Beattie, an eminent British psychologist, the article specifically examined the claim that men use interruptions more frequently than women in cross-gender exchanges. In former years, based on investigations of everyday discourse, scholars had argued that men's high interruption rates serve a sinister purpose: "...to deny equal status to women with respect to rights to the full utilization of their turns and support for the development of topics." (Zimmerman & West, 1975, p. 125). But disenchanted with the standard of this research, Beattie concluded:

*"Women may indeed be oppressed, and linguistic science may come up with evidence that women are oppressed in conversation. The evidence so far, however, is weak." (1982, p. 860).*

For good measure he then ended his report with a quip: "*Si femme il y a, silence il n'y a?*" - *peut-être, peut-être*<sup>(1)</sup>." Apparently, from his personal experiences, Beattie had found little reason to abandon this old adage about women's talkativeness.

His misogyny did not go unnoticed; in fact, it so incensed one reader of *New Scientist* that she wrote in reply:

*"I found the article by Geoffrey Beattie very offensive...why perpetuate the myth of the chattering, nagging women unless Dr. Beattie believes 'the traditional wisdom, that women talk the most'..."*

*If this is the case, then he cannot have been objective in either his own studies of exchanges between men and women, or in his consideration of Zimmerman and West's observations" (Zarins, 1982, p.57).*

This small controversy, flaring in the pages of a popular journal, encapsulates many of the issues with which I shall be concerned in this dissertation. The linguistic oppression of women, the relation between gender stereotypes and reality, empirical disputes, and political passions - all are themes central to the field of 'language and gender'. They shall also be central to my dissertation, which is a theoretical and empirical treatise on the language use of South African men and women.

My goals in this introductory chapter are twofold: (1) to adumbrate some of the theoretical and methodological issues underlying the project as a whole; (2) to provide

---

(1) Loosely translated: "If woman is there, silence is not there?" Perhaps, Perhaps.

some basic details about the study that is presented in chapters 4 and 5, including an outline of its rationale and design.

---

## CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

Few areas of research on gender have inspired the interest of a greater array of disciplines than research on language. Linguistics, Literary Studies, Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Women's Studies, and History are just a few of the many disciplines that have contributed to our knowledge about the language use of the sexes (cf. Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983a). The area, as a result, has become characterized by pluralism at all levels of the research process: scholars from disparate academic traditions have been piqued by different problems, have relied upon different conceptual schemes to make sense of findings, and have even used different criteria for the identification of language forms.

Such diversity is a hallmark of the language and gender paradigm, its challenge and its charm. One of my goals in this dissertation will be to capture something of the splendid variety of work in the area.

Yet despite its pluralistic nature, historically research on language and gender has been unified by an ideal: to highlight and challenge the linguistic oppression of women. 'The feminist critique of language' (Cameron, 1990) has taken various forms but can be divided into two major strands. We have, firstly, work exposing sexism in the *representation* of men and women within language. Examples include the infamous pronoun debate (cf. Martyna, 1983), research on semantic derogation (cf. Schulz, 1975), and more broadly, studies examining the portrayal of women within literature or the media (cf. Hardy, 1990). A second strand has concentrated on actual *speech*, exploring the ways in which patriarchy is expressed\constituted within the language behaviour of men and women, or within our evaluation of such behaviour. This avenue of research is the focus of the current project<sup>(2)</sup>.

Now, although theorists agree that women are exploited within daily talk, they differ as to the nature of this exploitation. One school of thought - following the definitive work of writers such as Robyn Lakoff (1975) and Mary Key (1975) - has proposed that women's language itself, in a host of ways, expresses their subordinate place in the wider

---

(2) My bipartite division of the field would not please those writers who have argued that linguistic use and linguistic representation are inextricably bound. However, I have quite valid pragmatic reasons for maintaining the division (cf. chap. 2, p.40).

social scheme; in other words it is the language of the meek and the disadvantaged. In opposition, though, several writers have claimed that women's communication is neither deferential nor deficient, but that it reflects the admirable norms of the feminine subculture - supportiveness, caring and concern for the feelings of others (cf. Johnson & Aries, 1983; Triechler & Krameræe, 1983; Jones, 1980; Boe, 1987; Tannen, 1990). The real root of women's exploitation, they have suggested, is a sexist ideology that demeans women's talk, portraying it (among other things) as gabby, trivial, gossipy, catty, nagging, and effusive.

These value systems have shaped theoretical terrain in the field of language and gender, giving rise to two broad approaches (cf. Coates, 1986; Coates, 1988a). On the one hand, *dominance* theorists have viewed gender differences in speech as a reflection of wider power differences between men and women in our society. On the other, *difference* theorists have preferred to see the language use of the sexes as a reflection of gender-specific norms of speech, acquired through a intricate socialization process.

During the course of this dissertation I shall assess both approaches, eventually showing that neither - at least in their present forms - provides a compelling theory of gender and speech (see especially chap. 2). Moreover, I shall argue that the political agendas underlying the dominance and difference accounts, while noble in their formulation, have in some respects retarded the process of theory building. For one thing, in their desire to formulate politically expedient accounts, communication scholars have accepted simplistic models of gender and language use - models that portray women as either the fatuous victims of mixed-sex interaction, or conversely as the conduits of a wondrous feminine vernacular. Neither image does justice to the complexities of real life conversation. Political idealism has also yielded some rather partisan orderings of the evidence on gender and communication, a problem that led Priesler (1986) to remark:

*"In regard to sex differences in language use we find, on the one hand, the uncritical embracing of positive findings, even unsubstantiated hypotheses, as evidence of sexual inequality...The other extreme is the equally uncritical acceptance of inconsistencies in results as proof of the absence of linguistic sex differences, because this is congenial to the view that women are not linguistically inferior." (p.12).*

What Priesler misses, it should be added, is that for many theorists challenging patriarchy is as legitimate an epistemological ideal as elucidating reality. Like most areas of feminist research (cf. Wittig, 1985), the tension between 'scholarship and advocacy' has racked the domain of language and gender. Researchers have had as one goal the desire to produce knowledge that subverts women's oppression (advocacy), and as another the desire to produce knowledge that approximates truth (scholarship).

While both are legitimate (though not always compatible) aims, within the current project I aspired primarily to that of scholarship. Not that I avoided political analysis altogether

- at a number of points I met it head on (eg. chap. 2, p.59-61); but the thesis explored the issue of scholarly theory building much more extensively and systematically. The central question impelling the entire project was straightforward: "What might form the central struts, the foundations, of a useful theory of gender and speech?" Everything - my reading, theoretical commentary, and experimental research - was oriented towards this deceptively simple puzzle.

Naturally, when addressing this issue, I was guided by the concerns of my own discipline, social psychology. For example, one of my major preoccupations was with what some writers believe to be the 'master problem' of social psychology - the levels of analysis issue (cf. Turner & Oakes, 1986; Foster, 1991). Hardly a novel theme, it is nevertheless a neglected one in the area of language and gender, where the link between the individual and the social world has too seldom been seen as problematic by researchers. As such, we have been saddled with rather crude, incondite theories lacking in finesse and explanatory power (cf. chap 2). More careful attention to the individual-society relationship would seem a prerequisite of future theory construction; certainly, it is no accident that the most promising recent models of interpersonal communication have wrestled with its complexities (models examined in chap. 3).

My own position regarding the levels of analysis theme took shape around my reading in European social psychology over the last five years or so. Perhaps the most erudite champion of the European philosophy is the French theorist, Willem Doise, who has cut through casuistry about the individual-society relation by presenting us with a simple metatheoretical ideal: social theory must, as a *sine qua non*, trace the links between causal variables at different levels of analysis: the intrapsychic level, the situational or interpersonal level, the positional level, and the ideological level (cf. Doise, 1986).

Doise's rule of thumb had a number of implications for the design of the experiment outlined in chapters 4 and 5, and quite appropriately so, because Doise believes that social psychological research should be crafted in a way that probes the interplay of the social and the individual. The extent to which I have achieved this goal shall become clear only by the end of the dissertation. At this stage, I wish merely to cite two concrete examples of how I attempted to explore the *interactive* effects of variables from different analytic planes.

In the first place, I was concerned not with the verbal behaviour of men and women in isolation, but with how it was shaped by two aspects of social context - the sex of a speaker's audience and the relative competitiveness of a speech situation. In this way I hoped to examine the (potential) interaction between gender and situation in determining language strategies. In the second place, I was interested not only in the *objective* language use of men and women, but in their *subjective* construals of their own

behaviour (and of its *meaning*). By appealing to the perceptions of the human actor, I followed a tradition of language research that has been openly concerned with the levels of analysis problem (cf. Smith, Giles, & Hewstone, 1979; Giles & Hewstone, 1982; Giles & Coupland, 1991). Within this tradition, scholars have long emphasized the need to understand the phenomenology of the individual speaker, to explore her intuitions and ways of knowing. That such an approach abets theory development has been clearly demonstrated (eg. Thakerar, Giles, & Chesire, 1982).

Further brief description of my research design is provided below.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND RATIONALE

### Design

Though cluttered with theoretical pretensions, the project is basically concerned with the effects of two contextual variables on the language behaviour of men and women. The first is addressee sex. Does the gender of a person's audience influence the way he or she speaks? Intuition as well as empirical research suggests that it does. The second is the relative competitiveness of an interaction context. Do men and women speak differently in competitive as opposed to less competitive environments? Once again, both common sense and scientific inquiry indicate that this is decidedly the case.

The effects of these variables were explored using a 2 (subject gender: male\female) x 2 (audience gender: male\female) x 2 (condition: competitive\non-competitive) experimental design. Such a methodology would scarcely be endorsed by linguists who, echoing Labov's sentiments, might feel that the proper object of language research is "...how people talk when they are not being observed" (1972, p.113). But I am unrepentant in my methodological choice. Critics of experimental work on communication typically exaggerate its disadvantages while ignoring its advantages. Regarding the former, I shall say nothing: superior defences of experimentation have been rendered by others (see Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Kruglanski, 1976; Berkowitz & Donnerstein, 1982)<sup>(3)</sup>. Regarding the latter, I am of the belief that experimental design, with its emphasis on control and manipulation, offers unique benefits to the field of language and gender. Most notably, its ability to *isolate* the effects of important

---

(3) And anyone who believes that the experimentation need be a sterile and asocial exercise should read Doise (1986, chap.5).

variables make experimentation a valuable tool to promote theory development. To use Doise's gnomic words:

*"...the best way of understanding the phenomenon of lightning may well be to produce a weak electrical discharge in a weather proof laboratory; it is not necessary to produce dark clouds." (1986, p. 118).*

In lieu of lightning bolts, the present research was concerned with two contextual dimensions that we encounter in our day to day living, and that undoubtedly have a powerful influence on the language we use (addressee gender and inter-speaker competitiveness). It is interesting *per se* to examine how these contextual aspects, both in isolation and interactively, mediate the way men and women talk. On this level my thesis forms part of the vast descriptive literature on gender differences and similarities in language use (for recent reviews see Aries, 1987; Thorne et al., 1983a; Smith, 1985; Graddol & Swann, 1989; chap. 1 of this thesis). Yet the study of male/female speech across varied environments can also inform a more ambitious project: the explanation of the link between gender and language. Thus, at a deeper level I wished to make a modest contribution to the process of theory development. Both Giles's theory of speech accommodation (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness proved useful *vis à vis* this leap into the realm of explanation. It is worth noting, though, that neither perspective was directly *tested*; they were used more tentatively, merely to provide some conceptual substance.

## Rationale

The rationale for the project outlined above is threefold:

1. Firstly, in spite of their theoretical significance, audience effects have seldom been investigated by gender and language researchers (cf. chap. 3). Consequently, our knowledge regarding their influence on the speech of men and women is fragmented.
2. To compound this problem, the scant research conducted to date is riddled with methodological problems including: insensitivity to the role of contextual variation, and simplification of the link between linguistic form and function. The present study attempted to redress these weaknesses of prior research.
3. Finally, given the dearth of previous work, *any* research on gender and speech in a South African context is welcome. Aside from a few pockets of interest from linguists (eg. de Klerk, 1988), and literary critics (eg. Driver, 1990), South African work on gender and language has been almost non-

existent. Psychological research has followed this pitiful trend (though see Kottler, 1990). For example, since it first went to press in the mid-seventies, not a single paper on the topic of gender and speech has been published in the *South African Journal of Psychology*. This state of affairs would not surprise Joha Louw-Potgeiter (1991), who recently described psychology's overall contribution to language research in this country as 'depressingly meagre' (p.317).

On a purely descriptive level, then, we would want to know if the findings reported in the international literature are valid within our distinct milieu.

---

## CONCLUSION

The area of language and gender is, as I have pointed out, characterized by fragmentation; rather than a unitary approach, it comprises a dense tangle of interdisciplinary concerns. Regrettably, fragmentation has extended also into the area of empirical findings, where research on specific dimensions of speech has often yielded inconclusive results. A good example is work on gender and interruption rates: to this day theorists remain unclear about whether or not men interrupt women more frequently than vice versa (cf. chap. 1, p. 16-19). Dr. Beattie's style may have been insensitive, but his assessment of the field was accurate, even prophetic. It remains, above all, a domain where generalizations are constantly under siege from new findings, and where the *ex cathedra* truths of one writer are the patent nonsense of another.

The fragmentation of the language and gender enterprise - in terms of both theoretical approaches and empirical findings - poses several problems for its disciples. To begin with, they must grapple with a vast body of contradictory evidence and try, somehow, to extract coherences (all the while working against the zeitgeist of the field which tends toward divisiveness). Also, they are forced to cover some unnervingly disparate intellectual territory. My reading for this dissertation, for example, followed a winding route as I moved from linguistic analyses of intonation to sociological accounts of power, from texts on the representation of women in 19th century novels to discussions of word etymology, and from psychological theories of gender identity to anthropological models of gender as subculture. Such a journey is exciting but also daunting; along the way one encounters the arcane methodologies and conceptual frameworks of other disciplines. These must be grappled with (mastered?) if progress is to be made. Finally, the diversity of the language and gender paradigm does not make for concise, lucid argumentation.

Necessarily, therefore, my dissertation in parts follows a discursive logic which embraces complexity at the expense of clarity. Taken as a whole, however, it does provide some sense of orderly movement, funnelling from general considerations to those directly relevant to the study reported in chapters 4 and 5.

In brief the division of labour is as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Gender and the Patterning of Communication**

#### Aims:

- To provide a general review of evidence *apropos* several purported gender differences in speech.
- To introduce a number of methodological problems, some of which are later addressed within the empirical section of the dissertation.

### **Chapter 2: Explaining Gender Differences in Communication: A Critical Overview and Some Social Psychological Reflections**

#### Aim:

- To explore current theoretical models of gender and language use, teasing out their individual and shared weaknesses. This critique looks towards chapter 3 where two perspectives, speech accommodation theory and politeness theory, are presented as overcoming some of the theoretical problems of the language and gender paradigm.

### **Chapter 3: Mark of the listener: Subject Gender, Audience Gender, and Communication Strategies**

#### Aims:

- To summarize recent evidence on the role played by addressees in shaping the language strategies of the sexes. This evidence is of direct relevance to the research component of the dissertation.
- To outline two theoretical perspectives - speech accommodation theory (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) - which both clarify our understanding of addressee influences and also overcome some of the meta-theoretical weaknesses of models of gender and speech (as detailed in chap.2).

## **Chapters 4 and 5: Research Design, Analysis of Results and Discussion**

### Aims:

- To describe a research project that addresses a gap in the S.A literature and attempts to surmount the methodological shortcomings of previous research.
- To present my results and discuss them in terms of the theoretical frameworks delineated in chapter 3.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**


### Aim:

- To sketch the design of a new study which would extend and improve upon the old and thereby look towards a richer theory of language and gender.

---

Having stressed earlier my intention to provide a panoramic sweep of the field of language and gender, I must end with a concession: any treatment of the area is inevitably a simplification, a single path into a dense thicket of ideas, frameworks and values.

This is my path.



# CHAPTER 1

## GENDER AND THE PATTERNING OF TALK

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary mythology contains many ideas about the way men and women talk. Male speech is viewed as rational, aggressive, low-pitched, loud and assertive; whereas female speech is viewed as nagging, high-pitched, gentle, emotional and gossipy. Men are believed to talk about sport, politics and their work but to shy away from more intimate topics - their insecurities, their fears and their needs. Women, by contrast, are thought to revel in discussions of personal and emotional issues, being able to articulate freely the feelings men bottle up.

These are just a few of the many stereotypes concerning gender and communication (cf. Kramer, 1974; Kramarae, 1982). Such beliefs are perpetuated in unobtrusive ways in everyday life, quietly insinuating themselves upon popular consciousness. They are perpetuated by the entertainment industry each time a ramboesque male movie star delivers his lines ('Hey man fuck you'; 'Go on make my day'). They are perpetuated by the media each time a newspaper cartoon shows men being nagged by their wives, or alarmed by their daughters' marathon phone calls. They are perpetuated by the advertisement industry each time a 'sexy' female voice-over or an 'authoritative' male voice-over try to sell us a product. In short, they are perpetuated by a wide range of social practices and form part of the gender ideology of our culture.

But we might well ask: how accurate are beliefs about male and female speech? Are they mere superstitions or are they factually based? And if men and women do speak differently, *why*? During the last 20 years or so, these questions have preoccupied scholars working in the area of gender and communication, and they are questions which shall be addressed in the first two chapters of this dissertation (and beyond). In chapter 1, I shall review empirical research on gender differences in communication; in chapter 2, I shall examine the theoretical frameworks purporting to explain the language use of the sexes.

Discussion in chapter 1 will cater to the restricted ambit of my dissertation in various ways. To begin with, research investigating the sexist structure of our language system *qua* system will not be covered; I shall concentrate on the actual speech of men and women. In addition, only work that has employed adult English speaking populations

will be reviewed (for an introduction to research conducted in other cultures see Philips, 1980). Finally, I shall focus on the global aspects of interpersonal communication rather than the minutiae of phonetics or grammar<sup>(1)</sup>. And even within these self-imposed limits, I cannot provide an exhaustive survey of research in the area. Confronted with a literature comprising hundreds of studies, a reviewer must rely upon a final and more dubious selection criteria - personal taste. To some extent, therefore, chapter 1 shall reflect my own opinions about which research is important or interesting.

Naturally, in this opening chapter, the review of empirical work will lead to discussion of the conceptual and methodological problems that have engaged researchers. These include: (1) a failure to establish reliable criteria for identifying language variables; (2) an oversimplification of the form and function link; (3) an insensitivity to the impact of social context on speech; (4) an adherence to sexist analytic frameworks. As we shall see in later chapters, such issues are not merely of general interest but are also pertinent to the research component of the dissertation (cf. particularly chaps. 4 & 5).



---

(1) In this regard, Coates and Cameron (1988) have distinguished two traditions of research on gender differences in speech. The first forms part of the 'quantitative' paradigm of sociolinguistics and primarily comprises studies which examine the relationship between speaker sex and microscopic language variations within given speech communities (eg. Trudgill, 1972). The second, which represents the subject matter of this chapter, takes a more holistic approach to language use. It deals with broader facets of conversation such as turn management, politeness sequences, forms of topic support and self-disclosure.

## Some Preliminary Considerations

In many areas of research on gender, male\female differences have been emphasized at the expense of important similarities between the sexes - a metatheoretical strategy recently termed 'alpha bias' (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Although scholarship on gender and communication has followed this unfortunate trend, the pursuit of linguistic 'difference' is becoming less obsessional. Theorists have increasingly realized that such a tendentious approach to research can distort our knowledge (Thorne, Kramarae & Henley, 1983a). Their awareness has been sharpened by two sobering discoveries: gender differences in language use appear to be (1) few in number, especially when compared with popular stereotypes, and (2) extremely flexible across different speakers and contexts of use.

The idea that gender differences in speech are few in number might seem surprising. After all, as I have already observed, beliefs about gender specific 'styles' of communication abound in our society: men spout forth with logic, but women speak 'from the heart'; men are concise, but women ramble on; men discuss important issues, but women lean towards the trivial - the list is seemingly endless. However, actual research has provided only limited validation of these and many other verbal stereotypes (see Aries, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1985; Haas, 1979; Rosenblum, 1986; Philips, 1980; Smith, 1985; Thorne & Henley, 1975; Thorne, Kramarae & Henley, 1983a).

The disjunction between 'folklinguistic' wisdom and reality has alerted theorists to the "...risk of confounding what is empirically confirmed with what we only suspect to be the case by virtue of, or in reaction to, the stereotypes" (Rosenblum, 1986, p. 159). Early researchers often ignored this risk. Writing in 1922, Danish linguist Otto Jepsen commended women's "...instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions" but lamented that our language might "...become insipid if we are always to content ourselves with women's expressions..." (1990, p. 210 & p.212). Jepsen's commentary - for all its unabashed sexism - has served a useful purpose, reminding us of the dangers of confusing fact and opinion. When science is seduced by popular misconceptions, it may reproduce such misconceptions, thereby lending them legitimacy. Wary of this problem, modern scholars have adopted a healthy skepticism concerning stereotypes about gender and talk; even those sex differences masquerading as biological facts have been challenged (Henton's (1989) recent attack on the assumption that women possess a 'shrill', 'over-emotional', and 'swoopy' pitch is a superb illustration.)

Still, we must not take our wariness too far: gender stereotypes are an important area of research in their own right. By exploring people's *assumptions* about male\female differences, we can better comprehend the relationship between gender and

communication. Within everyday conversation the role of gender stereotypes is likely to be complex and substantial. To begin with, they may have influence at the level of speech perception, a point Condry and Condry (1976) illustrated in their classic experiment on adults' interpretations of infant behaviour. They uncovered a suggestive pattern of results: adult subjects who believed that a child was male interpreted its cries as wails of anger; but they construed similar sounds as whimpers of fear when they believed that the child was female. Gender stereotypes may also affect the evaluation of speech. Stereotypically 'feminine' language elicits harsher judgements on ratings of competence (Siegler & Siegler, 1976) and authority (Berryman & Wilcox, 1980), though it is often upgraded on emotional traits such as caring, empathy, warmth and gentleness (Scott, 1980; Kramer, 1978; Quina, Wingard & Bates, 1987). Theorists suspect that these value-laden beliefs distort the opinions we form of others, colouring our impressions of speakers, our attributions concerning their abilities, even how much we like them (cf. Aronovitch, 1976; Kramer, 1982; Henton, 1989; Bradley, 1981; Mulac et al., 1985; Lawrence, Stucky & Hopper, 1990)<sup>(2)</sup>.

Turning to the broader social functions of gender stereotypes about communication, we are faced with several possibilities. Firstly, there is ample evidence suggesting that these beliefs serve to justify discriminatory practices (see Cameron, 1985; Huici, 1984). Women have been excluded from high profile media positions because of how they speak (Kramer, 1988; Key, 1975), and they have been deemed unsuitable for public speaking roles (Kramer, 1982). What is more, the study of their language has been scorned by academic institutions because "...cultural stereotypes define women as poor communicators" (Spitzack & Carter, 1987, p.403; see also Kramer, 1980a).

Linguistic stereotypes may also fulfill what Tajfel (1981a) has termed an 'intergroup differentiation function'. Because the desire to differentiate from other categories is a universal feature of group life (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and because language is often a dimension on which such 'valued distinctiveness' is founded (cf. Sachdev & Bourhis, 1990), the male group may affirm its distinction from the female group by lauding certain aspects of verbal style (eg. toughness, logicity, bluntness). Equally, despite its historical disparagement, there are signs that women's language too can further the cause of ingroup distinctiveness; the feminine vernacular, as we shall presently see, has emerged as a powerful symbol of womanhood for modern feminists.

The foregoing comments suggest that we have much to learn from gender stereotypes about talk; but researchers, with some notable exceptions, have not given the topic the

---

(2) I should add that the role played by stereotypes in the evaluation of male and female speech requires clarification. It is a role that is likely to vary considerably across different contexts (cf. Lawrence, Stucky, & Hopper (1990) for a useful discussion).

attention it deserves. Instead they have concentrated on the reality of *actual* gender differences, a reality that has proved to be frustratingly tenuous. Those seeking bold demarcations have been disappointed: existing differences are subtle and subject to marked intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation. Certainly the homogeneity implied by early labels of male/female speech - the term 'genderlects' comes to mind - has been rejected by current researchers (Thorne, Krameræ & Henley, 1983a<sup>(3)</sup>). For a variety of reasons such conceptions have a fragile base.

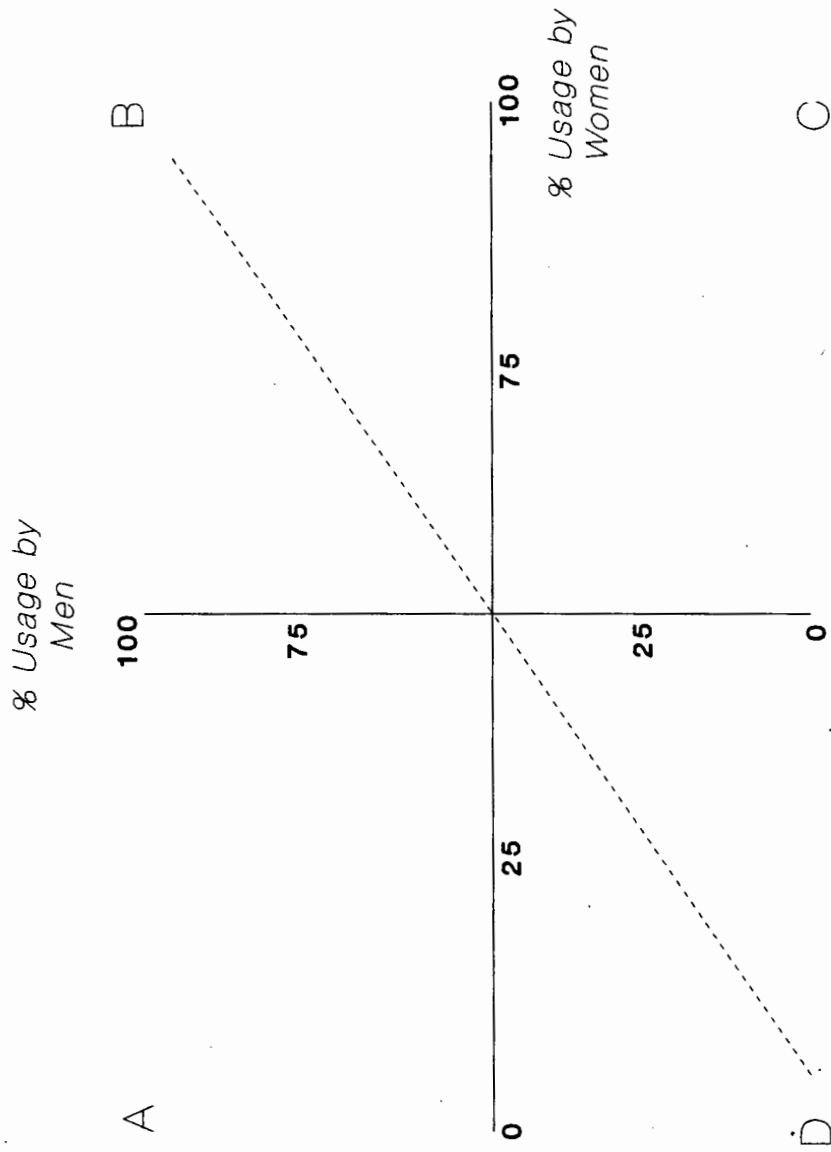
For one thing, to think in terms of differences between 'men' and 'women' is misleading: even within the same culture these are schismatic social categories. Class, race, status, religion, age and political orientation are just a few of the divisions that transect masculine and feminine experience, and unquestionably each, in important ways, mediates speech production as well as speech perception and evaluation (see, for example, Giles, Smith, Ford, Condor & Thakerar, 1980; Khosroshahi, 1989; Gallois, Callan & Johnstone, 1984; and most compellingly, Günthner, 1992). But there is another reason why striking and uniform gender differences in language have not been discovered. Men and women do not (at least in western cultures) draw upon distinct language systems; rather, they employ elements of a *shared* code to a different *degree*. To use Bodine's (1975) terminology, speech differences are merely 'sex preferential' as opposed to 'sex exclusive' in character. In a sense this distinction embodies the tenuous nature of sex-differentiated speech; it leaves open the possibility that features of so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' styles may be employed by *either* sex.

The latter point can be clarified and extended with an example. In western culture there exists an association between swearing and masculinity - the phrase 'fuck you', for instance, smacks of machismo. Perhaps unsurprising, given this link, several researchers have contended that men use profanities more readily in real life conversations (eg. Bailey & Timm, 1976; Lakoff, 1975; de Klerk, 1988)<sup>(4)</sup>. And yet we must realize that this *preferential* patterning of speech at the intergroup level may permit considerable freedom at the level of conversation. We need look no further than everyday speech to find instances of this latitude: women can and do say 'fuck you'; some women say it a great deal more often than the majority of men. Remember, too, that some men *never* use expletives, an observation that begs a general truth - use of a language form may be sex-differentiated but not 'saturated' (Smith, 1979) throughout the population of the gender category it characterizes.

---

(3) During this review I shall, however, refer to male and female 'styles' of speech for want of a better term. One should be aware that the connotations of homogeneity and consistency which this term carries are inappropriate.

(4) For my purpose here, the accuracy of this claim is irrelevant. What is crucial to realize is just how little *global* assertions of gender differences tell us about on the ground linguistic realities.



**Figure 1** An idealized scheme for representing the relative use of a speech feature\strategy, and the proportion of members of each sex who use it (taken from Smith, 1985, p.10)

These niceties can be represented in figure 1, a graph allowing us to model between-gender and within-gender variation in the deployment of a given language variable\strategy (taken from Smith, 1985, p.10; the discussion below is also indebted to Smith). Points A and C on the graph depict a case of sex-exclusive and completely saturated usage, ie. speech features located on either point would be used by one sex only, and also by all members of that sex. But as I have already suggested, there are probably no examples of this within English-speaking cultures. Here we are dealing with gender *preferential* trends. In graphic terms, these refer to any language strategy that falls neither on points A or C nor on the line BD (the latter portraying a case of equal usage by men and women).

Overall, then, our scheme demonstrates that simple assertions of gender difference are meaningless; they must be qualified by information about the *extent* and *saturation* of sex-differentiated language use. Too often language scholars have ignored this point when making claims about gender differences in communication. We should also remember that the placement of a language feature on figure 1 is influenced by the dynamics of social context (eg. topic, gender of addressee, formality etc.). To re-invoke our earlier example: men may indeed swear more often but only when they are with other men; in mixed-sex exchanges this gender difference may vanish. Similarly, women speaking in all-female groups may show an irreverence which they disguise during mixed-sex interaction (for some suggestive evidence see Risch, 1987).

Faced with such subtleties, we begin to comprehend why researchers have had difficulty forming generalizations about the relation between gender and communication. The one thing we can say with confidence is that this relation is multifaceted and complex. It is also capricious. Even widely accepted language differences between men and women have an evanescent quality; they appear and disappear according to the demands of social context or the dispositions of individual speakers. This may, in part, explain why research on specific dimensions of speech is so replete with contradictory results.

Let us now examine this research.

## A QUESTION OF CONTROL?

Conversational domination, like any form of domination, is a topic spiced with political implications; it is therefore an appropriate place to begin our exploration of gender and language use. The study of gender and communication has rarely been a detached or 'value neutral' undertaking; on the contrary, since its inception it has reflected critically upon the political oppression of women (cf. Cameron, 1990). Fired by this spirit of

critique, several writers have alleged that male domination at a societal level is mirrored in the 'micro-politics' of conversation where men control proceedings (see Lakoff, 1975; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Fishman, 1978; Henley, 1977; Thorne & Henley, 1975). More than this, they have claimed that the patterning of daily talk not merely reflects but also constitutes gender inequalities. Thus: Rakow (1986) talks of 'doing power' through speech, a phrase nicely capturing the dynamic, constructive element at stake here.

Yet if male-female power relations are (re)constructed in daily interaction, how is this accomplished linguistically?

### **Conversational 'Put Downs': the case of interruptions**

A much researched expression of control is the act of interrupting. Interruptions have usually been characterized as *intrusions* into another person's speaking turn and consequently as attempts to dominate conversation. Most researchers have maintained that men interrupt their speaking partners more frequently than women, especially in mixed-sex contexts. Male interruptions have been described as an insidious chorus of 'put downs' (Key, 1975) to which women are subjected in everyday talk.

Zimmerman and West (1975) provided some of earliest and most influential evidence of sex-differentiated interruption rates. Adopting a naturalistic methodology, they recorded excerpts from 31 dyadic conversations (10 female-female, 10 male-male, and 11 male-female) in a variety of contexts<sup>(5)</sup>, and discovered a startling preponderance of male interruptions in the mixed-sex exchanges (men contributing 96% of the total). Subsequent research has amply supported this finding (eg. West & Zimmerman, 1983; Willis, 1976; Natale, Entin & Jaffe, 1979; McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, & Gale, 1977; Eakins & Eakins, 1978). Even in contexts where female speakers enjoy higher status than their male interlocutors - for instance where they are bosses in an industrial setting (Woods, 1988) or doctors in a medical setting (West, 1984) - higher male interruption rates have been documented.

Given such evidence, the claim that men interrupt women more frequently than vice versa would seem well-substantiated; however, it may be more controversial than is

---

(5) This study incorporated the view of turn-taking developed by Harvey Sacks and his colleagues (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). These scholars have demonstrated that the distribution of speaking turns in a conversation, though ostensibly spontaneous and random, is actually a precise and rule bound phenomenon; indeed, the transition between turns at speech is governed by set of universally accepted prescriptions. Zimmerman and West have (1975) claimed that interruptions *are violations* of these tacit rules.

commonly assumed. Geoffrey Beattie (1982), who mounted a splenetic attack on Zimmerman and West's (1975) methodology<sup>(6)</sup>, believes the data are inconclusive:

*"Women may indeed be oppressed, and linguistic science may come up with evidence that women are oppressed in conversation. The evidence so far, however, is weak." (p.860 - my emphasis).*

Is it possible that political passion has led to inaccurate conclusions about interruptions as Beattie implies? This question is difficult to answer, but clearly the evidence is more fragmented than is generally acknowledged. Certainly, not all studies have confirmed Zimmerman and West's findings. Consider Beattie's (1981) own research on university tutorial groups, which revealed no significant sex differences in interruption rates. Moreover, several recent experiments have verified his results, though these have yet to make an impact upon the dominant thinking (Dindia, 1987; Wiemann et al. cited in Mulac, 1989; Kennedy & Camden, 1983; Bilous & Krauss, 1988; Roger & Nesshoever, 1987).

The rather equivocal findings on gender and interruption rates are difficult to interpret. Perhaps, as Dindia (1987) has argued, inconsistencies may reflect the widespread misapplication of statistical tests<sup>(7)</sup>; or perhaps traditional sex roles are changing and the modern woman, becoming more assertive, is simply using more assertive verbal strategies (Aries, 1982). McCarrick, Manderscheid and Silbergeld's (1981) descriptions of communication in a marriage counselling setting support the latter view. They noted that husbands' interruptions did not go unchallenged by their wives who tended to 'back interrupt' in riposte, perhaps indicating that "...male dominance was not acceptable" (p.164).

While ideological shifts undoubtedly have a profound effect on interpersonal communication, other factors may underlie the mixed findings on interruptions. One is the lack of comparability between studies, a problem stemming not only from the disparate methods, speech contexts and subject populations used by researchers, but from the lack of consensus about what constitutes an example of interruptive speech. Disputes

- 
- (6) Among other things, Beattie criticized the 'small and unrepresentative' sample used in Zimmerman and West's study. The biasing effects of this become apparent when we recognise that a single male speaker contributed a huge proportion (25%) of the total male interruptions in the mixed-sex exchanges.
- (7) Dindia has claimed that studies on gender differences in interruption rates have generally employed statistical methods based on the assumption that the data is comprised of independent observations. However, the speech behaviour of participants in a conversation is often correlated. In this event, the judicious researcher cannot simply apply the usual inferential tests because a distorted impression may result (cf. Kenny & Judd, 1986). A number of alternative strategies are available (detailed by Dindia, (1987, p.351-352)). It is also worth noting that many researchers have not used statistical analysis at all, often basing their conclusions on miniscule samples (eg. Woods, 1988; West & Zimmerman, 1983).

over identification have plagued research on virtually every speech variable that language and gender scholars have investigated (Graddol & Swann, 1989). We should not be surprised. Language, infinitely rich and protean, eludes even the most rigorous classification principles. Research on interruptions supplies a clear illustration, because although *prima facie* the identification of this form seems straightforward, nothing could be further from the truth.

### Problems in the Identification of Interruptions

When deciding whether or not an interruption has occurred several theorists, following Zimmerman and West's (1975) recommendations, have concentrated on violations of the rules of turn taking which specify apt places ('transition relevant places' or TRPs) for speaker switches. As turn-taking has been shown to be an accurate business (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), Zimmerman and West contend that violations cannot be regarded as mere mistakes - they are interruptions. More formally, they define interruptions as intrusions into another's turn at speech which occur *before the last word preceding transition relevant places* (for a slight elaboration see West & Zimmerman, 1983; for a timely critique Wiemann, 1985).

Other theorists have followed quite different rules of identification. A few have used complexly determined notions of 'completeness' to decide if a person has been interrupted (cf. Beattie, 1981; Stephens & Beattie, 1986). Several, avoiding either/or decisions, have identified a variety of types of interruptions. Roger, Bull and Smith (1988), for example, have developed an elaborate and promising coding system which permits the classification of 17 sub-varieties of simultaneous speech. Their system represents both a consolidation and elaboration of previous typologies. Like Ferguson (1977) and others, they recognize that interruptions may be *successful* or *unsuccessful* (ie. they may or may not result in a speaker switch); yet they recognize also that interruptions may be *simple* (ie. a single disruption of another's utterance) or *complex* (ie. two or more connected attempts at disruption).

The development of such taxonomies represents a significant advance for linguistic research; they bring us closer to general principles of identification for language forms. Such principles that are vital if we want to compare the findings of studies on gender and communication. In the case of interruptions, the historical diversity of identification criteria has rendered inter-study comparison difficult. Roger et al.'s typology may help to redress this problem. The evolution of more rigorous frameworks may also lead to more thoughtful analyses of the functions of interruptions. At present the leading interpretation, à la West and Zimmerman (1983), portrays them as acts of linguistic

violence which reflect speakers' desire to seize control of a conversation. This is certainly a generalization (see chapter 2, p. 46 & 47 for further discussion).

### Turns at talk: Are Men 'Floor Hogs'?

The image of the endlessly chattering woman is one easily recognized, probably because stereotypes about women's speech typically emphasize its garrulous character. Indeed a number of international proverbs deal specifically with the 'problem' of female loquacity. Pearls of wisdom such as the following have slipped into international folklore: 'nothing is so unnatural as a talkative man or a quiet woman'; 'si femme il y a, silence il n'y a'; 'where there is women and geese there is noise'; and 'a woman's tongue is the last thing about her that dies'. In literature, too, the stereotype of the talkative female is firmly established; the narrative landscapes of some of our most esteemed writers are well populated with gabby women (see, for example, Hardy, 1990).

Observation of actual conversation, however, has revealed a very different picture. Contrary to lay belief, most research has shown that it is men who talk more in cross-sex interaction, an anomaly that led Cheri Kramer (1975) to coin a proverb of her own:

*"Girls are not supposed to talk as much as men. Perhaps a "talkative" woman is one who does talk as much as a man" (p. 47 - stress in the original).*

Feminist writers have likened women's 'silence' in mixed-sex conversations to their silence in broader cultural, artistic and intellectual spheres. They have asked some disturbing questions. Why have women been denied a voice in many of our great oral traditions: public speaking, the media, literature, religion and academia? Why are many more women illiterate than men? Why must women struggle to communicate their experience in a 'man-made' language system that renders it ineffable? (For discussion of these issues see Houston & Kramer, 1991; Spender, 1980; Kramer, 1988; Donovan, 1990; Cameron, 1985; Cameron, 1990.) Regrettably, an exploration of these broader silences lies outside the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, they should ferment at the edge of our imagination as we consider male 'floor-hogging' within everyday conversation<sup>(9)</sup>.

As with interruptions, work on male\female floor holding behaviour is bedeviled by definitional inconsistencies. Even the widely used and apparently clear-cut concept 'amount of speech' has been operationalized in diverse ways, eg. number of speech acts initiated, total time spent talking, total number of words spoken, and average length of each turn at speech. Notwithstanding this difficulty, it is a general - but not undisputed (cf. Markel, Long, & Saine, 1976; Bilous & Krauss, 1988) - finding that men are more

(9) The thread linking the sundry ways in which women are 'muted' may, of course, be patriarchy.

talkative than women during mixed-sex interaction (Strodtbeck & Mann, 1956; Duncan & Fiske, 1977; Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Swacker, 1975; Woods, 1988; Mulac, 1989). Writers have usually perceived male 'floor-hogging' to be a strategy for maintaining control and for securing status (cf. Holmes, 1992). By cramming interactive space with talk, men dominate female speakers in a very palpable way: restricting their opportunities to speak, denying them full voice<sup>(10)</sup>.

Yet although this blunt claim probably has some general validity, as with most blunt claims in the area of language and gender, it awaits qualification. Carole Edelsky (1981) has obliged. In an imaginative research project, Edelsky examined floor holding behaviour within the meetings of a American university committee comprising members of both sexes. An interesting facet of her project was her innovative data analysis. Within many studies, the 'floor' is simply equated with a turn at speech (ie. when a person is taking a turn she is occupying the floor). Edelsky, however, refined this concept, identifying two distinct floors: one corresponding to the traditional 'one at a time' turn taking model (F1), and another referring to a more collaboratively structured domain (F2). The latter floor comprised periods of talk during which no single person was actually taking a turn, conversation developing instead through the *overlapping* contributions of several speakers. Using this novel framework, Edelsky unearthed a thought provoking series of results: on F1 male speakers tended to speak more often and for longer, but on F2 female speakers contributed equally.

Edelsky's work complicates a simplistic vision of male dominance, moving us from the question 'who speaks more?' to one asking 'who speaks more in which *social* and *linguistic* contexts?'

### Contextual Variation and Floor Holding

Research on floor holding behaviour illustrates a further methodological and conceptual dilemma in the area of gender and language, ie. the need to account for contextual variation when forming axioms about male/female speech. The neglect of contextual variation is not endemic to scholarship on gender and communication; it is a common problem in research on gender (cf. Deaux, 1985; Wallstone, 1981; Unger, 1981; Deaux & Major, 1987) . What we need to understand is how gender and situation *interactively* affect behaviour. Research on floor-holding behaviour exemplifies the complexities that can emerge when such an interaction is examined.

---

(10) Such 'floor hogging' may be facilitated by the high number of male interruptions documented by some of the research cited previously.

In a recent study of talk in the classroom, Swann (1988) demonstrated that male students' talkativeness was attributable to a menage of contextual forces rather than a simple lust for control. She established, for example, that teachers actually invited male domination by looking encouragingly at male students during key moments of classroom interaction. Another determining factor was the 'passivity' of the female students, which may have solicited the verbal domination of the boys. Still another was the organization of classroom talk. During more rigidly structured classroom activities, spontaneous expressions of male dominance were limited; here the little boys had to rely on less direct tactics to achieve control, eg. rapidly shooting up their hands in answer to a question.

Clearly Swann's study underscores the need to *contextualize* the language use of the sexes. A similar theme is illustrated by Leet-Pellegrini's (1980) research, which examined the combined effects of knowledge and gender on dyadic communication (knowledge was manipulated by letting one dyad member read over some literature relevant to an experimental discussion topic). Interestingly, expertise rather than gender emerged as the crucial determining variable in this study. In fact, when both male and female subjects were uninformed, between-sex variation in speech behaviour was slight. The most striking patterns emerged when male and female 'experts' were compared. Male experts tended to dominate conversation, speaking more than their dyad partners; but their female counterparts seemed to play down their expert position, assuming a more supportive role. Perhaps we should not read too much into this finding, however. Recent research has indicated that topic knowledge often does allow women to behave more assertively<sup>(11)</sup> (cf. Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson, & Keating, 1988; Brown, Dovidio & Ellyson, 1990) and that, besides, the effect of social role on male\female communication is itself governed by broader cultural factors (cf. Gunthner, 1992).

An overarching issue is at stake here: only through minute contextual analysis can we achieve a clear picture of male-female communication, its meanings, its contradictions, and its underlying causes. As Pederson (1980) has emphasized:

*"A study of language\communication has to be a study of the relationship between characteristic features of verbal communication and sex as one important variable in*

---

(11) I was privy to a powerful demonstration of this during the pilot study for this dissertation. One of the several mixed-sex debates (two males versus two females) I organized was concerned with the moral implications of surrogate motherhood. However, unbeknown to me, the two female group members were nurses with extensive medical knowledge of the issue. To come to the point, from this position of knowledge the women gave the men the most awful verbal lambasting (the men confessed to feeling quite weak afterwards), which vividly impressed upon me the importance of knowledge as a source of variance, and made me think more carefully about the issue of topic selection.

*the social context. Authors seldom see social context as problematic and do not take into sufficient consideration that a communication situation is a social situation... Only through analyses of actual situations is it possible to determine whether or not sex represents an important variable in any particular situation and whether sex covaries with other factors." (p. 106 - stress in the original).*

The message is clear. When seeking to understand gender differences in speech, we must first pinpoint the circumstances in which they are supposed to manifest. General statements about male domination require refinement - men dominate *whom*, when talking about *which* topics, in *what* social circumstances.

At this point it is appropriate to recall the two contextual factors relevant to this dissertation: audience gender and the competitiveness of a speech context. How do these situational variables affect men's and women's verbal performance? In chapters 2 and 3, I shall pursue this question in light of previous research; in chapters 4 and 5, I shall describe my own research, which explored it directly.

---

## CONVERSATIONAL DEFERENCE OR SUPPORT?

Power need not be seized in conversation: it can be relinquished by one of the speakers. Many scholars believe that women habitually defer to male interlocutors, thereby participating in their own subordination. Others, in contrast, have rejected the notion that female speech is 'powerless', claiming instead that it is merely *different*, possessing its own strengths and virtues. They have contended that women's language is weak or deficient only when placed within an androcentric value system.

These opposing views of female speech divide the research that is examined in the next section.

### Mechanisms of Deference

#### **Linguistic Uncertainty - 'I think that perhaps what we want to be is strong women'**

This statement, uttered by a key-note speaker at a recent seminar on women and power, introduces with wicked irony Robin Lakoff's perspective on 'women's language'. (cf. Kuykendall, 1980). Lakoff (1975, 1977), an American linguist, has proposed that the women's language typically lacks authority, an idea instantiated by the phrase 'I think

that perhaps what we want to be is strong women'. The unassertiveness of this sentence stems from the double qualification of the main proposition by 'think' and 'perhaps'. Lakoff has claimed that such statements are typical of female speakers, who are sadly compromised in everyday conversation: to appear feminine they must adopt a deferential style of communication, but in so doing they undercut the credibility of their statements. She has therefore branded women's language 'deficient', a description that has been challenged vehemently by several modern writers (see below).

What is interesting about Lakoff's perspective on female speech - originally based upon her intuitions - is that it merges evidence on a variety of linguistic dimensions into a single functional theme: the expression of uncertainty. According to Lakoff, women's uncertainty is betrayed by their more frequent<sup>(12)</sup> use of the forms listed in table 1, which collectively represent what she termed 'women's language'. In her view each of these forms serves to soften the force of an utterance, to denude it of authority.

Lakoff's thesis has traditionally been divided into two related claims: (1) female speakers employ the features of 'women's language' more frequently than male speakers; (2) such features undermine the authority of their speech (I'll postpone discussion of how and why this state of affairs might come into existence until chapter 2). Refreshingly bold and highly testable, these hypotheses have generated much subsequent research.

Regarding the first claim, the evidence is fragmented and difficult to assess owing to the (perennial) lack of comparability between studies. Researchers, it is true, have confirmed that women are *believed* to use unassertive forms more frequently than men (Siegler & Seigler, 1976; Edelsky, 1976) and may actually *do* so in their everyday speech (McMillan et al., 1977; Crosby & Nyquist, 1977; Priesler, 1986); but contradictory or inconclusive findings have also been reported (Schultz, Briere & Sandler, 1984; Dubois & Crouch, 1976; Baumann, 1976). And once again interpretation is complicated by contextual variation. In formal public settings particularly - for example the ticket booth of a train station (Brouwer, Gerritson & Dehaan, 1979) - sex-differential use of unassertive forms seems to disappear (cf. Smith, 1985; Aries, 1987). Commentators have also speculated that the root of women's language is not gender at all, but social status. If so, we would expect speakers' use of such speech to vary as a function of their power in a specific situation. Confirming this, O'Barr and Atkins (1980) have located a greater proportion of Lakoffian features in the language of

---

(12) Actually, it is unclear whether Lakoff believed that women used these speech features more frequently than men, or whether it was women's *illegitimate* usages that irked her (see this chap., p. 25-27; and also chap. 4). At times she seems to vacillate between both possibilities. However, most researchers have assumed that she was referring to an asymmetrical distribution of 'women's language' variables in the speech of men and women.

particularly powerless witnesses in a courtroom setting - *regardless of their gender* (see also Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz, 1985).

**Table 1 Description of Some Linguistic Variables Used by Lakoff to Characterize 'Women's Language'**

---



---

(1)	<i>Hedging devices</i> (eg. sort of, kinda, more or less, possibly, maybe, I guess, I think etc.)
(2)	<i>Tag questions</i> - declarative statements with questions 'tagged' on (eg. "It's a nice day <i>isn't it?</i> ")
(3)	Using <i>questioning intonation</i> when making a making a declarative statement
(4)	<i>Compound requests</i> (eg. "Will you please close the door?")
(6)	<i>Hesitations</i> (eg. "Well ahm ...that eh ...may be true")
(7)	<i>Overly polite speech</i>
(8)	<i>Intensive adverbs</i> (eg. "really wonderful", "awfully cold")
(9)	<i>Empty adjectives</i> (eg. "divine", "lovely", "delightful")

---



---

With respect to Lakoff's second claim, most evidence has come from speaker evaluation studies, in which transcribed or audiotaped messages are assessed on sundry evaluative dimensions by raters. Experiments in this tradition of research have confirmed that the use of women's language features results in lower ratings of assertiveness (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979), intelligence (Siegler & Siegler, 1976), credibility\competence (Erickson, 1978; Bradac, Hemphill & Tardy, 1981; Quina, Wingard & Bates, 1987), and socio-intellectual status (Bradac & Mulac, 1984a). All the same, the assumption that women's language invariably evokes impressions of powerlessness is suspect on a number of grounds.

In the first place, speech features similar to those identified by Lakoff are associated with maturity and empathy (Wetzel, 1988) or even authority (Smith-Hefner, 1988) within some non-western cultures. Even within our own society strategically 'hedged' or polite speech may sometimes *boost* a speaker's social influence (see Brooke & Ng, 1986). In the second place, although Lakoff's language forms (see table 1) are often lumped together as 'women's language', there is little reason to suppose that they detract equivalently from a speaker's utterances. Using a 'molecular' approach, Bradac and

Mulac (1984b) identified a *hierarchy* of effects with hedges, tags and hesitations detracting from speaker power, but polite language and intensifiers actually contributing to it. Finally and most crucially, research has shown that some fortunate souls can employ unassertive language without ill-effect. Bradley (1981), in a revealing demonstration, reported that experimental confederates who spoke unauthoritatively were only rated harshly if they were women! She concluded shrewdly:

*"...it cannot be argued that tag questions and disclaimers are inherently "weaker" or credibility deflating since males were able to use them with virtual impunity. Apparently the same linguistic device is viewed differently, depending on its source." (p. 90).*

Speculation about the meaning of Lakoffian speech features bring us to a central polemic in language and gender research. Entitled the 'form and function' problem by New Zealand linguist Janet Holmes (1984a), the polemic merits closer scrutiny.

### **The Form and Function Polemic: an Illustration Using Tag Questions**

Do men or women use more of language variable x? Arguably this has been the central question impelling research on gender and communication. It is essentially a descriptive question. Few writers, however, have been able to resist moving past description into the realm of interpretation: what does it *mean* if men or women use more of language variable x? In this case we are asked to explore the relation between linguistic forms and their social/linguistic functions. From our discussion so far, it should be evident that several language variables can serve a common function (eg. conversational control or submission); however, of equal importance is the notion that a single form can, depending on context, fulfill a variety of functions. Polyandry is further tangled by polygamy!

We can explore the form and function problem by using the example of tag questions. 'Tags' make an interesting case study in language and gender research; in a sense they have attained a metaphoric significance in the field, coming to symbolize women's linguistic oppression. Lakoff (1975), for one, was quite clear about their meaning. She argued that a tagged statement (eg. 'The way prices are rising is shocking *isn't it?*') is less forceful than a bald statement (eg. 'The way prices are rising is shocking'), because tags soften the declarative force of utterances "...[providing] a means whereby a speaker can avoid committing himself (sic), and thereby avoid coming into conflict with the addressee." (1975, p.16-17).

Now, Lakoff understood that tags can serve quite legitimate functions: they may indicate bona fide uncertainty on the part of a speaker, or her desire to muffle an impolite speech act. Her concern was with another, more spurious usage - the tendency to camouflage

normal declarative utterances with tentativeness. This, for Lakoff, was women's forte, and an index of their subordinate place in wider society (cf. Holmes, 1984b, 1990).

Although a few early theorists (eg. Dubois & Crouch, 1976) were suspicious of this interpretation, only recently has more compelling research materialized. The best example is the work of Janet Holmes (1984b).

Holmes has divided tags into two broad functional subtypes<sup>(13)</sup>: (1) *modal* tags, which are used to request or confirm certain information (eg. 'The exam is being held in lecture theatre four, *isn't it?*'); and (2) *affective* tags, which are used to bring another person into a conversation or to express solidarity (eg. 'It's cold in here, *isn't it?*'). Of course, deciding whether a tag is genuinely modal or affective requires a careful survey of the linguistic and microsociological context in which it occurs; but this difficulty aside, the distinction has yielded some fascinating patterns.

Applying it to a 43 000 word corpus (recorded in a variety of contexts), Holmes found that although no *overall* sex differences in the use of tag questions emerged, female speakers made much greater use of affective forms. She viewed these results as proof of women's more 'other-directed', supportive ethos within conversation, an interpretation which contrasts sharply with Lakoff's denigration of female speech<sup>(14)</sup>. Taking this argument further, some theorists have contended that affective tags may even reflect a speaker's domination in particular contexts. After all, might not the act of drawing someone into an exchange afford the (tag) questioner a form of control (cf. Cameron, McAlinden & O'Leary, 1988; Johnson, 1981)?

The moral is simple. The tag question, like any language form, fulfills a *variety* of functions; therefore the common practice of basing interpretive conclusions on indiscriminate frequency counts is misguided. In fact, a simplification of the form and function relationship is a shortcoming of some early and influential work on Lakoff's claims (eg. O'Barr & Atkins, 1980). Viewed retrospectively, this work seems too ready to lump occurrences of speech variables together under a unitary functional theme - a common problem in language research (Orletti, 1984). We must instead respect the functional diversity of speech forms and pursue a micro-contextually informed account of

---

(13) Holmes further divides affective tags into facilitative and softening forms. This distinction echoes Brown and Levinson's (1978) major politeness strategies, which are directed at the *positive* and *negative* 'face' needs of addressees (see Holmes, 1984a, p.153-154). For the sake of economy, her argument is simplified here.

(14) More recently, Holmes has subjected Lakoff's claims about hedges such as 'I *think*', '*sort of*' and '*you know*' to a similar reanalysis - once again showing how the multifunctionality of speech erodes the simplistic claims about the meaning of 'women's language' (Holmes, 1985, 1988a, 1986, 1990; see also, chap. 4).

their meaning. Such is the approach adopted within the current research project (cf. Chap. 4).

### **Power Reconsidered: 'Interactional Shitwork'**

Another writer who has theorized female speech in micro-political terms is Pamela Fishman. Fishman has portrayed effective talk as an *accomplishment*, something that requires a degree of *effort* on the part of participants. Using this idea as a backdrop, she has asserted that when men and women speak together there is a 'sexual division of labour'. But the 'work' is not distributed equitably: men, being more powerful, tend offer less in terms of verbal support.

One strand of Fishman's (1978, 1983) argument has centred on the issue of topic development. A topic, once introduced into the stream of everyday talk, can lead a noble life, inspiring interest in others, or an ignoble one, dying quickly through lack of interest. Fishman has maintained that in mixed-sex interaction male topics usually live out their time productively in the former fashion, whereas those initiated by women tend to follow the latter, more ignominious route. The reason is simple - men do not encourage the interactions initiated by women; they do not provide adequate topic *support*. As a result, women must work harder to have their topics acknowledged. Fishman has catalogued a number of feminine stratagems that work towards this end: women are more likely than men to preface topic introductions with sweetening clauses designed to capture listener attention (eg. 'This is interesting...' or 'Listen to this...') and to sprinkle other attention getting devices into their sentences (eg. '*you know*'). They also ask more questions than men, a tactic increasing the likelihood of receiving an audience response.

And women's 'work' does not end there. Not only must they make their own utterances seem important, they must do likewise for those of men. They accomplish this through an array of support tactics (cf. Fishman, 1978). For instance, women utilize backchannel responses (hmmm, yeah, uh huh, oh) quite differently from men. Men use them as 'minimal responses', grunted rejoinders to the end of a women's turn at speech; but women employ them in a supportive manner, interspersing them *throughout* another's speech turn to indicate careful listenership. In this, as in other ways, they are expected to give non-reciprocal support to men, to carry out the 'shitwork' of daily talk (Fishman, 1983, p.99; see also Defrancisco, 1991).

Fishman's ideas have been taken up in various ways by subsequent researchers, a good example being West and Garcia's (1988) account of topic shifting within mixed-sex interaction. Starting (like Fishman) with metaphor of conversation as 'work', West and

Garcia have ventured that most topic changes are *cooperatively achieved* by participants in a conversation. Speakers, in other words, collaborate to extinguish one topic and to fan another into life. Yet some topic changes are of a unilateral nature: they do not follow the delicate dance of step and counter-step typical of shifts, but are initiated in a singular fashion by one speaker in a conversation. Men, argue West and Garcia, are usually the initiators of these one-sided topic changes. They do so to shirk other conversational duties, ie. to avoid emotional work (eg. speaking supportively of women's problems).

As a finale we might educe a more abstract theme from Fishman's work, a theme distinguishing it from research in the Lakoffian tradition, namely a shift in perspective regarding the stature of female speakers. Admittedly, to a degree, hers and Lakoff's views overlap on this matter: both theorists stress the subordinate status of women within Western society and both see this status reflected in the micro-politics of conversation. All the same, in contrast to Lakoff's portrayal of 'women's language' as deficient and maladapted, Fishman depicts it as rational and essentially adaptive. She therefore presents a more favourable vision of women as communicators.

Others have taken this positive evaluation much further.

### **Mechanisms of Support: Beyond the 'Male as Norm' Approach**

The majority of gender and language research has involved between-sex comparisons, which have often exposed some *inadequacy* of female speech. Lakoff's work is the best example of this research tradition, recently termed the 'deficit' paradigm (Johnson, 1983; Henley & Kramer, 1991). Within the deficit framework, women's style has been variously deemed weak, powerless, passive, deferential, over-polite, and self-effacing. Some theorists, however, have suggested that the deficit position rests on the sexist assumption that masculine communication is ideal or 'normal' communication (Jenkins & Kramer, 1987; Spitzack & Carter, 1987; Cameron & Coates, 1985). They have claimed that this bias has had an sinister legacy in communication research. Female speech has come to be regarded as something trivial and 'deviant', and women have struggled to achieve recognition as a valuable sociolinguistic group, even within academia (Kramer, 1980a).

Partly in response to such problems, a growing number of researchers have taken as their goal the apotheosis of women's talk. Passionately challenging the assumption that men's communicative style is superior, they have implemented a research program that

examines women's talk not in unflattering contrast with men's, but in their *own* speech communities. This metatheoretical shift has unveiled the hidden strengths of female talk.

Language attitude studies have furnished some clues as to the nature of these strengths. Take, for example, the programmatic research of Anthony Mulac and his colleagues regarding the 'gender linked language effect'. Using transcriptions of authentic speech as stimuli, they have established that while male speakers are consistently rated more favourably on *Dynamism* (a rough analogue of powerfulness), female speakers score higher on *Aesthetic Quality* and *Socio-Intellectual Status* (Mulac & Lundell, 1982; Mulac & Lundell, 1980; Mulac, Incontro & James 1985). Far from a one-sided disparagement of women's language, such results indicate that female speakers are upgraded on a number of positive characteristics including sensitivity, caring, and attractiveness (cf. Zahn, 1989; Scott, 1980; Kramer, 1978).

Is this positive (re)appraisal of female speech warranted? Empirical research appears to suggest that it is. A rich store of evidence shows that female speakers, giving higher priority to the cooperative aspects of talk, are indeed more attuned to the emotional needs of their interlocutors. This data comes from diverse sources: small group laboratory research, field studies in all-female contexts, as well as work on verbal genres such as gossip and self-disclosure. Taken together, such work suggests that men and women hold fundamentally different orientations to interaction. As a general description we might take our bearings on Bakan's (1966) classic distinction between agentic and communal behaviour. Admittedly, it is a grotesque simplification to portray male speakers as self-assertive and task-centered (agentic), and female speakers as nurturant and affiliative (communal); even so, the distinction is a useful starting point for an analysis that will gradually become more subtly hued (see chap. 2, p. 61 & 62 for example).

### **Global Interactive Themes: Agency and Communion**

Bales's Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) has provided one line of evidence supporting the agentic-communal split within the language of men and women (cf. Bales, 1950). Bales's 'instrumental' and 'expressive' modes are analogous to Bakan's distinction, and have the advantage of being embedded in a measurement system that permits the reliable coding of speech events. The linguistic sophistication of IPA research is, it must be conceded, below that of other frameworks within the language and gender edifice (eg. sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, or conversation analysis). This research enterprise has nevertheless proved useful for tapping broad interactive themes in the talk of the sexes.

other hand, little girls typically avoid or soften confrontational speech, favouring more supportive strategies. This may mirror the more cooperative structure of all-female playgroups. A word of caution is apt here though: while researchers generally concur that boys and girls use language in distinctive ways (cf. Sachs, 1987; McCabe & Lipscomb, 1988; Levin & Hunter, 1982; Cook, Fritz, McCormack, & Visperas, 1985), as usual we do not know whether these findings reflect gender per se, or merely a second order gender\context interaction (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; Goodwin, 1988; see chapter 2, p.62 & 63 for further discussion).

Speech behaviour in children's playgroups foreshadows sex-differentiation in later life, when the agentic\communal division is manifest in the talk of same-sex friends. The literature on adult friendships also shows that the awe surrounding masculine 'bonding' is misplaced. Put bluntly: the emotional depth often imputed to male friendships may not be mystical but mythical in nature, at least if we use linguistic criteria as a yardstick. True, some commentators have written in grandiloquent terms about male to male relations; but most research has indicated that verbal support, intimacy and caring are more prominent within *female* friendships (cf. Williams, 1985; Johnson & Aries, 1983; Coates, 1988b; Wright, 1982; Aukett, Ritchie & Mill, 1988; Barth & Kinder, 1988; Davidson & Duberman, 1982). At a deeper level, 'talk' itself may play a much more central role in the development and maintenance of women's friendships, an idea captured in the aphorism: "men do things side by side, women do them face to face". For men camaraderie is often achieved through *shared* experience; for women the *sharing* of experience may be equally important. Johnson and Aries have elegantly affirmed just this:

*"...talk - either as the raison d'être for being together or as an outcome of other activities - creates for female friends an on-going mosaic of noncritical listening, mutual support, enhancement of self-worth, relationship exclusiveness and personal growth and self-discovery. Through extensive talk about the most routine of daily activities to the most private of personal problems and crises, women friends establish connections with one another that function significantly in their lives" (1983, p. 358).*

Topic choice is a final and intuitively obvious dimension on which the speech of men and women parts along the agentic\communal fissure. It is a surprisingly under-researched subject. What evidence we have at once confirms and disconfirms popular stereotypes: men and women do speak about predictably different things, yet there is little credibility to the superstition that women's topics are more trivial or silly.

The most valuable data on topic choice have come when researchers have eavesdropped on real conversations. (Given the spontaneous, context-dependent nature of topic selection, a naturalistic methodology is clearly appropriate.) Seminal studies conducted in the 1920's on the streets of New York, Columbus and London revealed some

unsurprising trends (see Moore; Landis & Burt; Landis all cited in Haas, 1979): men seemed to talk more than women about politics, work, money, and sport, less about personal issues (eg. other people and clothes). These findings have shown some diachronic consistency. Recently Kipers (1987), too, confirmed that female conversationalists gravitate towards personal topics such as the home and family life, whereas men more frequently discuss their work and recreational activities. Moreover, such conclusions are also consistent with the research findings on the conversational content of male and female friendships (discussed above).

It is worth emphasizing, however, that topic choice is not rigidly gender differentiated. In Kipers's study, for instance, women often moved between discourse on personal issues and that on work related topics; and in mixed-sex exchanges a good deal of topic convergence occurred, perhaps representing "... a sharing of common interests and concerns between the two gender groups" (p.550). Therefore, our fixation with gender differences should not obscure the flexibility of topic choice, which is probably governed by factors such as social role, occupation, conversation location, and addressee characteristics as much as gender itself (cf. Stoke & West, 1931).

Another interesting theme in Kipers's (1987) study was that feminine topics, as rated by the male and female participants *themselves*, were not devalued. This is an encouraging finding because women's discourse is often viewed as trivial within lay (Kramer, 1974) and academic (Lakoff, 1975) belief alike. Several researchers have extended this positive (re)appraisal of female talk. For example gossip, so long criticized as a superficial and destructive activity, is now being touted as a form of 'emotional sustenance', an essential component of the feminine subculture (cf. Jones, 1980; Coates, 1988b). Feminist scholars have even discerned a subversive element in gossip, an edge of sedition wittily captured by Erica Jong in her novel, *Fear of Flying*:

*"Men have always detested women's gossip because they suspect the truth: their measures are being taken and compared. In most paranoid societies (Arab, Orthodox Jewish) the women are kept completely under wraps (or under wigs) and separated from the world as much as possible. They gossip anyway: the original form of consciousness raising. Men can mock it, but they can't prevent it. Gossip is the opiate of the oppressed."*  
(1988, p.97)

In our newfound respect for its role in female liberation, however, we should not forget that the gossip of men and women probably contains more similarities than differences (cf. Levin & Arluke, 1985).

Women have also been praised for their ability to talk about the most intimate topic of all - themselves. Seminally, though esoterically, defined as "...the process of making the self known to others" (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958, p. 91), self-disclosure makes an interesting case study with which to conclude this chapter. In many ways it engenders

---

project Hacker (1981) found that men who did self-disclose tended to reveal only strengths, whereas female disclosers more readily revealed their weaknesses.

The competing explanations of self-disclosure mentioned above represent the two major theoretical perspectives on gender and communication. Both are relevant to our understanding of the agentic\communal split. Are we to locate this split in the different personalities of men and women, presumably the product of sex role socialization, or

should we locate it in power relations between the sexes? We shall examine precisely this question in chapter 2.



## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reviewed research on gender differences in the global patterning of interpersonal communication. The literature reveals that the speech of men and women differs in several respects including: general interaction style, amount of speech, interruption rates, topic choice, intimacy of self-disclosure, production of uncertainty markers and forms of speaker support. There are, it should be added, grounds for caution when interpreting these findings. Empirical evidence is far from hermetic and suffers from a number of methodological and conceptual problems, some of which have been detailed here. Rash generalizations should also be qualified by the knowledge that personality and contextual factors may predict verbal behaviour more effectively than gender *per se*. Ultimately the differences discussed are no more than 'statistical tendencies' (Graddol & Swann, 1989) and, as such, are subject to radical inter-individual as well as intra-individual variation.

Despite these cautionary notes, the literature covered in chapter 1 does provide some broad indicators about the *communicative styles* of men and women (while recognizing the dangers of the term *style* - see footnote 3). Specifically, the polarities 'agentic-communal' and 'instrumental-expressive' seem to capture the basic character gender differences in communication. Men appear to devote greater energy to agentic, self-enhancing goals, whereas women's speech is more tinctured with affiliative concerns. There are obvious parallels between these verbal modes and sex role stereotypes. The passive, supportive, sensitive position women adopt in conversation echoes the feminine stereotypes pervasive in western societies (as discussed by Broverman et al., 1972); likewise, the image of men emerging from language studies - an image in which male speakers tend to 'proact' rather than 'react' (Strodbeck & Mann, 1956) - echoes social beliefs about masculinity.

Of course none of these reflections explain *why* men and women speak as they do. Sadly, the process of theory building is still very much at an embryonic stage. Many researchers have seemed reticent to move beyond surface level descriptions of male-female speech differences into the realm of explanation. Whether such differences reflect asymmetrical male-female status arrangements at a societal level, divergent sets of interpersonal goals, habits formed from different patterns of social learning, or expressions of masculine-feminine identities (to mention a few possibilities) remains unclear. I shall explore the issue of explanation more thoroughly in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 2

### EXPLAINING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION: AN OVERVIEW AND SOME SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 conveyed some of the richness that now characterizes the field of gender and communication; since its humble beginnings in the early seventies, the area has emerged as a burgeoning and truly interdisciplinary research enterprise. But the sheer volume and diversity of empirical work, though encouraging, has been counterbalanced by a lack of *theoretical* sophistication. Indeed with one or two exceptions (eg. Maltz & Borker, 1982) nothing as systematic as a 'theory' has been developed. What have evolved are some loose systems of ideas - perhaps better thought of as broad heuristics - which have been used to order and interpret an alarming accumulation of data about the way men and women talk. Following Coates (1986, 1988a), we might divide these frameworks into two types: *dominance* positions, which indicate that asymmetrical power relations play a central role in language use of the sexes; and *difference* positions, which highlight the fact that men and women belong to separate linguistic cultures. To what extent do these explanations deepen our understanding of gender differences in speech? In this chapter we shall find out<sup>(1)</sup>.

The chapter has an additional goal: to prepare a path for the models of speech behaviour lying at the heart of this dissertation - speech accommodation theory (Giles, Mulac, Bradac & Johnson, 1987a) and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The merit of these social psychological accounts lies in their ability to 'articulate' different levels of analysis (cf. Doise, 1986), that is, to weave together sociological and psychological concerns when explaining verbal behaviour. They make their most useful contributions when clarifying how broader social forces are played out in the minds of individuals, shaping the linguistic strategies they employ. Current models of gender and language use, though valuable in many respects, have tended to simplify the link between the

(1) As in chapter 1, discussion will focus on work which has examined the global patterning of conversation. This means that some interesting perspectives in area of *quantitative* sociolinguistics will not be covered. This does not imply that these frameworks are irrelevant; on the contrary, contributions such as Milroy's (1980) analysis of social networks and Trudgill's (1972) discussion of covert prestige certainly help explain gender patterns in communication. However, a narrower focus permits the development of a more directed argument which is in closer alignment with the aims of this thesis.

individual and the social world, depicting men and women as cultural dupes who respond, in bovine fashion, to the dictates of wider social forces. They have portrayed human beings as, to borrow Giles's (1977) phrase, 'sociolinguistic automatons': psychological vacuums who merely mirror the exigencies of their social status or socialization histories.

In the conclusion of this chapter, and throughout the rest of the dissertation, I shall champion a more flexible conception, one that recognizes how cognitive and motivational processes *actively mediate* the language use of men and women. I shall also affirm the importance of incorporating contextual variables into explanations of male\female talk. In short, I shall suggest that an adequate theory of gender and communication must encompass situational and psychological determinants, while still appreciating the influence of deeper elements such as gender ideology and intergroup relations.



## DOMINANCE PERSPECTIVES

### Overview

*"Women are to be talked to as below men and above children" (Lord Chesterfield cited in Key, 1975, p.102).*

For dominance theorists gender differences in language use reflect wider inequalities between the sexes (cf. West & Zimmerman, 1983; Thorne & Henley, 1975; Henley, 1977; Parlee, 1979; Lakoff, 1975; Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977). Their argument is basically simple. As men dominate women economically, politically and socially, *ipso facto* they dominate them linguistically; men's speech embodies their sovereign position in society. Needless to say the opposite also applies. Women, lacking economic, political and social authority, therefore lack verbal authority; women express their disadvantaged position by speaking the language of the powerless. For both men and women, then, speech stands as a metaphor of social rank.

But there is more than this. Many dominance theorists believe that language is not merely a symptom of the disease, but the disease itself (cf. Thorne & Henley, 1975; Rakow, 1986; Todd & Fisher, 1988; Fishman, 1978; West & Zimmerman, 1987). They have drawn attention to the dynamic, constitutive side of talk, to its ability to reinforce, even construct, power asymmetries. They have contended that every time a man dominates a woman in conversation, every time she submits, patriarchy is reborn in miniature. Such a notion highlights the ideological dimension of interaction - in the sense that ideology constitutes a system of ongoing *social practices* and does not simply exist 'out there' in the world of ideas (Therborn, 1980) - showing how relations between the sexes, and their accompanying gender subjectivities, are enacted, inculcated, created *through talk*:

*"...[men's verbal] gestures of power - minor in import when viewed one by one - are an integral part of women's placement in the social scheme of things. These daily gestures are constant "reminders" which help constitute women's subordinate status." (West and Zimmerman, 1983; p. 110; second emphasis mine).*

These are intriguing ideas; so intriguing they have inspired over two decades of research, debate, and discussion. But are they credible?

Arriving at an accurate assessment of the dominance perspective is a complicated business. To understand its prominence and longevity we must look beyond research findings to examine the social context in which it developed. We must realize that it enjoyed historical precedence over other explanations, a factor that has certainly contributed to its popularity. For during the seventies, the writers who first generated

interest in the field of language and gender - notably Key (1975), Henley (1977) and Lakoff (1975) - were chiefly concerned with the (linguistic) subordination of women. The influence of these pioneers on subsequent research is inestimable: they indelibly shaped the discipline by mapping out its theoretical, methodological, and ethical imperatives. Later researchers have clung stubbornly to these imperatives, perhaps vindicating Kuhn's (1970) ideas concerning the importance of the formative years of a research paradigm. For example, although Lakoff's vision of 'women's language' has been criticized down the years, her work has retained a massive influence: modern researchers wrinkle up their noses at things she found offensive, the problems she found interesting are at the forefront of current scholarship, and her claims about the linguistic oppression of women are, in various forms, alive and thriving today.

Other extra-scientific factors have heightened the attraction of dominance accounts. We can look firstly to their compatibility with feminist ideology and metatheory. Since most language and gender research has been conducted under the banner of the women's movement, it is hardly accidental that theories highlighting the oppression of women have thrived. Dominance accounts are also appealing on an intuitive level. As unequal power relations between the sexes *have* been well documented in spheres such as industry, education and the family (cf. Lipman-Blumen, 1984), it seems reasonable to presume the trend might extend to communication. Yet we must judge the dominance thesis neither on its common-sense allure, nor on its alignment with feminist ethics, but on its empirical foundations. Happily the evidence in its favour is impressive.

Male ascendancy may have corrupted the very structures of our language code. Men have been the 'proprietors of language' (Kramerae, 1980b), to a large extent controlling the development of our communication system. This has consequently become permeated with various forms of sexism. To use a topical example: female agents are often represented by generic pronouns such as 'he' and 'man', a practice that is certainly to their detriment, despite loud protests to the contrary (cf. Blaubergs, 1980; Martyna, 1983). Furthermore, although the words portraying women seldom suggest prestige or high status (Nilsen, 1977 in Smith, 1985), all too often they acquire 'derogatory' connotations over the course of history (eg. fishwife, mistress, spinster, tart; cf. Schulz, 1975; Mills, 1991). And the abasement of femininity may be still more deeply entrenched. Several theorists, most famously Dale Spender (1980), believe that our language is so impregnated with sexist values female experience cannot be faithfully articulated (see Cameron, 1985, chapter 6, for an excellent discussion). Perhaps this is the worst derogation of all: a language system that alienates women from their own realities.

These are just a few of the ways in which male domination may have sedimented in our language code. It is a species of domination made more diabolical by its inconspicuousness: as the very medium through which we communicate is sexist, we may *habitually* - that is, repetitively and without thinking - demean women in our everyday chit chat. Ng (1990) has labelled this insidious process the 'routinization of control'.

In view of all this, it is not surprising feminist writers have called for a sweeping linguistic transformation, for a reconstruction of the language system that has been 'stolen' from women (Jenkins & Kramer, 1987).

Closer to our purpose is how men dominate women in conversation, and I shall concentrate on this form of control for the rest of the section. But before leaving the issue of sexist language I must make a final point. There is a growing recognition among researchers that the separation of code and use (which follows the linguist's separation of *langue* and *parole*) may be unproductive. The recent trend is to examine the interpenetration of the two domains, with an emphasis on how this accomplishes the 'double' abuse of women (cf. Thorne et al., 1983a; West & Zimmerman, 1985). In what follows I shall not emulate this trend. For two reasons. First, a proper discussion of sexist language would inordinately stretch the length of the chapter (to be of any value whatever it would need to explore the horribly convoluted language\thought debate, for example). Second, the research component of this dissertation concentrates on actual speech; thus, by omitting coverage of sexist language, I shall impoverish rather than invalidate later arguments. This being said, the notion of sexist language is certainly relevant to the ensuing discussion. It should not stray far from our thoughts.

Evidence of male domination in everyday conversation has already been presented in chapter 1. At the level of interaction style, several theorists believe that men are able to engage more freely in task-oriented behaviour (eg. giving opinions, making statements etc.) because they possess higher status (Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977; Berger, Rosenholtz & Zelditch, 1980). Additionally, men may control mixed-sex conversations by deploying a variety of strategies: avoiding intimate self-disclosures (Cline, 1989; Sattel, 1983), withholding support (Fishman, 1983), interrupting (West & Zimmerman, 1983; Woods, 1988), and simply hogging the floor (Swacker, 1975; Eakins & Eakins, 1978). And male dominance may also be mirrored in the language used by women, which may be powerless (O'Barr & Atkins, 1980), deferential (Lakoff, 1975), and overly supportive (Fishman, 1983). Overall, this work seems to supply compelling proof that men establish dominance in face to face interaction, while women play out a more

submissive role<sup>(2)</sup>. I shall presently suggest, however, that such a view is not entirely unproblematic.

Before examining the weaknesses of the dominance position, it might be worthwhile to describe the different forms it can take. I shall sketch two broad conceptualizations of the link between gender, language and power. Though hardly exhaustive, these are useful as working hypotheses:

1. The 'simple status' hypothesis suggests that men dominate mixed-sex conversation only to the extent that they occupy positions of power within a speech context. Therefore, although sex and status are often confounded in everyday life, so that women tend to hold subordinate positions, when social asymmetries are reversed verbal asymmetries follow suit. The simple status position, in other words, implies that women can switch from powerless to powerful speech styles quite easily as a function of their social rank in a particular situation. Direct tests of this hypothesis, in which the influence of status and gender are separated, are surprisingly rare in the literature; however, O'Barr and Atkins (1980), Lamb (1981) and Kollock et al., (1985) have all provided confirmatory evidence. In each project, status not gender predicted the display of linguistic dominance\submission.
2. Another version of the dominance position, which I will term the 'gendered power' hypothesis, indicates that increased social power does not necessarily produce increased verbal power for female speakers. Why not? Put simply: gender is such a potent marker of status it often overrides other indicators. Confirming this idea, Woods (1988) discovered that women managers in an industrial setting remained trapped in tentative modes of talk during exchanges with male subordinates (see also West 1984; Leet-Pellegrini, 1980)<sup>(3)</sup>. Such anomalies run counter to the simple status argument, which holds that "...all speakers control all (speech) forms and can switch easily and flexibly as a function of a particular status situation." (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979, p. 1302). The gendered power position has problems of its own, though. From some of the forgoing research (eg. O'Barr & Atkins, 1980), it becomes evident that status and not speaker sex is often the best

---

(2) Further evidence can be found in the literature on non-verbal behaviour, which suggests that male dominance is conveyed through patterns of touching, posture and gaze, to mention a few dimensions (Henley, 1977).

(3) Some writers have speculated that women may suppress dominant speech in the presence of men and that this may be a part of a more general reaction: the depression of performance standards in situations of mixed-sex competition (Weisfeld, 1986).

predictor of language use. Therefore a dilemma remains: when and for what reasons does gender veto other 'statusful' dimensions?

Our two versions of the dominance thesis are not mutually exclusive. Despite different emphases, they are coterminous in so far as they share a core assumption: *gender differences in communication are a product of power imbalances between men and women in our society*. A further assumption of both explanations is that the link between gender and speech is *indirect*. For dominance theorists, language use does not reflect gender *per se*, but the extent to which gender and status are imbricated. They recognize that even if a speech form is used more frequently by members of a particular gender category, we cannot assume, *a fortiori*, that it is 'gender deitic', ie. *directly* linked to gender in a way that:

*"... expresses or means something about the gendered properties of the circumstances of language production, the gendered perspective from which an utterance is produced."*  
(McConnell-Ginet, 1988, p. 80).

Direct links between language and gender are difficult to establish, perhaps rare. Arguably the connection is often more oblique, being filtered through other determinants. Dominance theorists would of course hold that the most important of these is social status; but such a view is not without shortcomings.

### **Language, Gender and Dominance: Some Quandaries**

In this part of the chapter, I shall contend that the widespread acceptance of the dominance thesis is not entirely justified. Problems with power-based explanations of gender differences in speech stem from a number of theoretical lacunae. Firstly, there is a continuing ignorance about the impact of contextual factors on dominant speech. Dominance theorists, for example, cannot explain why social status is such an unreliable predictor of women's verbal behaviour. Nor can they account for the puzzling discovery that many gender differences in speech are *reduced* in mixed-sex as opposed to single-sex settings - puzzling because a dominance analysis predicts exactly the opposite!

Dominance explanations are further undermined by a lack of clarity regarding the link between power and language. Writers have often simplified this link and have consequently offered simplistic interpretations of male\female communication. This tendency has been exacerbated by a somewhat rigid conception of power. By allowing the oppression of women to become an *idée fixe*, dominance theorists have presented a helpless, moribund image of female communicators, an image at odds with the reality of actual conversation where women are not quite so vulnerable or unresisting. A more

flexible account might view women as rational, active agents, who use speech creatively to achieve strategic ends in a world that denies them more direct influence.

Let us now elaborate these points.

## Language, Dominance and Context

### Dominance, Status and Expectations

Our critique of the dominance perspective shall begin with an explanatory gap: why in some circumstances does status alone predict verbal dominance (eg. O'Barr & Atkins, 1980; Lamb, 1981), and in others does gender supersede more obvious markers of status (eg. Woods, 1988; West, 1984)? More specifically, why is status such a fickle predictor of women's speech?

Although the communication literature has been rather silent on this matter, some advances have come from a sociological perspective - Status Characteristics and Expectation States Theory (SET - Ridgeway & Berger, 1986; Berger, Rosenholz & Zelditch, 1980). Unfortunately, SET has had limited application to the domain of language and gender (though see Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977; Lockheed & Hall, 1976); but it does contain some enticing propositions concerning when and why gender acts as a 'superordinate' marker of status.

Briefly stated, these run as follows:

- (a) During mixed-sex interaction, unless contrary information comes to light, sex acts as a 'diffuse status characteristic', establishing expectations about individuals' abilities and competences.
- (b) And, as men are *expected* to make the more influential contributions, they often oblige by doing so. For women, powerful communications may be seen by others as illegitimate, unless during the course of interaction their competence regarding a particular task is somehow demonstrated (the so-called 'burden of proof' assumption).
- (c) This can occur if it is broadcast that a woman has a skill\talent ('specific status characteristic') of relevance to a particular exchange. In this case the usual performance expectations, along with their behavioural consequences, can become reversed (though if cues are ambiguous, 'diffuse' status expectations can have a lingering influence).

These perfunctory comments do the theory injustice. Even so, they permit us to formulate some admirably precise hypotheses about the use of 'powerful' speech by men

and women. First, since sex operates as a diffuse status characteristic instigating performance expectations that favour men, we can predict that it will generate self-reinforcing *linguistic* behaviour. In support of this claim, we can adduce the research confirming men's domination of mixed sex interaction *en masse*. Second, we can predict that when situational cues confirm the specific task competence of female speakers, they might shed their submissive role in conversation. Encouragingly, there is also evidence to indicate that this indeed occurs, both at the level of interaction style (Wood & Karten, 1986) and on other dimensions of verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Dovido et al., 1988; Brown et al., 1990; though see Leet-Pellegrini, 1980). Lastly, we can predict that the lingering potency of sex (a 'diffuse' status characteristic) may sometimes override other status indicators, especially if they are ambiguous. This may explain why men who appear to occupy a low status position in a particular exchange can nevertheless control proceedings.

Aside from these suggestive themes, SET also contains an important metatheoretical lesson for gender researchers: it demonstrates the value of bridging macro and micro levels of analysis when explaining gender behaviour. Figure 2 represents the causal sequence proposed by the theory. Notice that status produces behavioural inequalities by cueing the *expectations* of the human individual who "...functions as an information processing mechanism combining *all* units of status information to form *aggregated expectation states* for self and other." (Berger, et al., 1980, p. 488 - emphasis in the original). It is *not* merely a case of status causing behaviour (for conclusive proof, see the recent meta-analytic review by Driskell & Mullen, 1990).



**Figure 2:** SET - Causal Links

---

By acknowledging the role of expectations, SET brings a much-needed social psychological dimension to the study of gender, power and language use (see also Eagly, 1983). The gains in terms of theoretical scope and flexibility are impressive. Expectations are more transient than the ideological and social forces that produce status differentials, more malleable to micro-contextual demands, and more easily altered during interaction itself by the behaviour of participants themselves. Therefore, by

recourse to this intermediary variable, we can better understand why the status-behaviour link does not hold in some circumstances. I will return to the levels of analysis theme in the conclusion of the chapter.

For now, a few caveats must be added. SET has been whetted mostly on research undertaken in small task groups, so the external validity of its central claims may be limited. Smith (1985), for one, has cautioned against generalizing the results of work conducted in settings that are "... impregnated with control related rather than affiliative concerns" (p.155). If our evidence comes from research undertaken in artificial contexts, or from research involving task-related speech (eg. discussing a predetermined problem), our claims about men's dominance cannot be extended beyond these situations. Besides this, linguistic evidence on the role of status expectations is still flimsy. In the years to come, one would like to see a more extensive range of speech forms investigated, as well as more refined analyses of such forms.

To sum up: though SET is promising, we should not be tempted into bold new generalizations about male\female communication just yet. (In the meantime, the theory's tentacles are extending into exciting research areas of importance to language and gender scholarship (cf. Ridgeway & Johnson, 1990)).

### **Dominance and Sex of Listener**

Another contextual variable of relevance to the dominance perspective is the gender composition of a setting. The implications of *addressee* gender have not been explored thoroughly enough in communication research, a gap that provides part of the rationale for this dissertation. What evidence we have reveals that 'gender of audience' effects are fairly complex (see chapter 3). Here I shall merely introduce a trend that has a direct bearing on the dominance perspective.

If gender differences in speech reflect power differences, we might expect them to be most marked in *mixed-sex* as opposed to *single-sex* contexts. The reasoning is simple: because, *ceteris paribus*, power asymmetries are greater in male\female exchanges, we can infer that dominance\submission language patterns should be most marked here. However, this does not appear to be the case on a great many language dimensions. In fact, researchers have found that women at times may produce a greater amount of instrumental talk when speaking with men (see Piliavin & Martin, 1978; Hogg, 1985; and most powerfully Carli, 1989). Correspondingly, there is evidence that men may sometimes employ a more feminine style when they interact with women (see Ruble & Higgins, 1976; Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann & Gibson, 1988). These studies indicate that gender-typed language may actually be *attenuated* in cross-gender exchanges, a finding that contradicts power-based accounts of male\female speech. Let me reiterate,

though, sex of addressee effects are not clear-cut, and these few comments require qualification (cf. chap. 3).

To conclude, the role of context has remained a murky one for dominance theorists: neither the 'simple status' nor the 'gendered power' version of the dominance thesis adequately explains the fluctuating language behaviour of men and women. Everyday talk is full of inconsistencies. Sometimes high status women use powerful speech; then again sometimes they do not. Sometimes when one expects dominant language from men it is forthcoming; yet sometimes (low status) women give their most feisty performances when speaking with (high status) men. Whatever the answer to these riddles, we can wager it will not be simple. A uni-causal theory of the form 'status determines speech style' is certainly untenable; we can anticipate a more intricate formulation.

### **Linking Language and power**

It is not only with respect to contextual variation that the dominance perspective leaves us with unanswered questions: we can dispute the assumptions lying at its very heart. As a *sine qua non*, dominance theorists must be able to evince the relationship between power and speech. For when one asserts that men control women in conversation, one must have answered a broader question: how is control achieved through language? In recent years, whether or not researchers have accomplished this has become a moot issue. Doubts have been fuelled by discussions of the 'form and function' problem (eg. Holmes, 1984a), an issue that we encountered briefly in chapter one. The case of interruptions gives me an opportunity to reintroduce it.

Men's penchant for interrupting their female interlocutors has long been held to illustrate their imperious display of power. Indeed the link between interruptions and social control seems obvious: by truncating the speech turns of women - literally chopping them off in mid-sentence - men affirm linguistic dominance. Henley (1977) has gone as far as expressing the idea formulaically:

*"I believe a hierarchy of power in a group could be plotted by ordering people according to the number of successful interruptions they achieve (and maybe subtracting the number of times they're successfully interrupted)." (p. 69).*

Yet before we get busy plotting our graphs, we should realize that some analyses of interruptions have revealed a more complicated picture. Alequire (cited in Thorne et al., 1983b, the annotated bibliography), who asked students to interpret their own conversations, discovered that only a small proportion (7%) of interruptions were

deemed aggressive or intrusive. He found that the form was *multifunctional*, being used to clarify, finish off, question, or agree with another speaker's comments, and not necessarily to seize the floor.

The following dialogue between a male and a female university student, taken from the pilot version of my research project, captures some of these concerns:

F: I'd like to study overseas eh afterwards ahm you know?

M: Hmmm, what do you want to do?

F: Ah I don't know something to do with writing or maybe (#) for a magazine or something [but I am

M: that's really lekker] I have a brother who's a journalist

F: Really who does he work for?

\*Interruption is in parenthesis

Does the male student's interruption here reflect his desire to control the exchange, his desire to show involvement in proceedings, his desire to make a good impression ..... or something else? The moral: a dominance interpretation is not inevitable. Indeed, as a number of writers now recognize, interrupters are often attentive and ebullient listeners (Vrugt & Kerkstra, 1984; Shaw & Sadler, 1965; Beattie, 1982). Paradoxically, this viewpoint directly opposes the idea that interruptions are merely 'small insults' (West & Zimmerman, 1983).

Research on interruptions exemplifies a key problem facing dominance explanations: communicative acts that *prima facie* seem linked to power are frequently more difficult to interpret. Theorists are becoming increasingly respectful of this point. For example, the idea that women's language is somehow 'powerless'<sup>(4)</sup>, though widely accepted for some time, is now meeting with staunch resistance (see Rosenblum, 1986; Holmes, 1984a, 1984b, 1985, 1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1990; Cameron et al., 1988; Boe, 1987). Similar controversy surrounds accounts of gender differences in the sphere of nonverbal communication, where writers are no longer taking for granted that patterns of touch,

(4) The very phrase 'powerless speech', which has achieved the *éclat* of a *keyword* in the literature, is a misnomer. This term carries a number of illegitimate assumptions about the link between language and power. First, it is as inaccurate to speak of *powerless* language as it is to speak of *powerless* speakers; there can be no *absolute* criteria for power which is always a complexly relative phenomenon. Second and more damning, speech forms in the abstract are not *intrinsically* more or less powerful - they are only so in relation to the social, cultural and linguistic contexts of their usage. The phrase 'powerless speech' imbues certain forms with an unwarranted *consistency* of social meaning, betraying an ongoing problem for the dominance perspective (and communication researchers in general).

posture and smiling reflect power-status relations (Hall & Veccia, 1990; Hall, 1987; Vrugt & Kerkstra, 1984; Vrugt, 1987).

We might ask then: why, in the face of such mounting dissent, do simplistic interpretations of male\female communication endure?

For one thing, communication theorists, in their haste to document the *exploitation* of women, have propagated a reductionistic model of gender, language and power. Quite correctly they have shown that when men and women interact their speech reflects power imbalances at a socio-structural level. Quite correctly they have shown how language forms "...part of the micropolitical structure that helps maintain the larger political-economical structure" (Thorne & Henley, 1975, p.15). But in making these valid points, they have often failed to appreciate that power, since it is never the exclusive property of any particular group, is seldom exercised in the absence of resistance (cf. Fairclough, 1989).

A failure to theorize women's resistance has led to one-sided accounts of men's conversational mastery. Simplistic interpretations of gender differentiated speech have flourished. They have operated according to a bizarrely circular logic, confirming our assumptions about who has power in the real world and who has not. We need not look far to find evidence of this circularity; it is classically represented in discussions of 'powerless' speech (eg. O'Barr & Atkins, 1980), as well as in Lakoff's (1975) unflattering descriptions of 'women's language'. In each instance, tautological reasoning has promoted a negative and (at least partially) distorted image of female speech.

A rigid view of male domination, which has ignored feminine resistance, has also entrenched a rather helpless, passive image of female speakers. Implicit in the dominance perspective is a psychologically impoverished female communicator, a cardboard cut-out figure who accepts, even participates in, her own subordination. Blinded of agency, women can do little else but bleat out the language of the oppressed. But if we, following Rosenblum's (1986) lead, view them as linguistic strategists rather than linguistic victims, we have the beginnings of a more positive approach. As *rational, dynamic* speakers, women might pursue a variety of communicative goals, albeit within the constraints of a disadvantaged social position. By framing our research problems in this way, we might avoid the tendency to interpret female language as being merely reactive to patriarchal culture, and focus attention on its creative, 'purposive' aspects.

We might also craft a more *psychologically* compelling theory of the relation between power, gender, and communication. Though overly 'psychologized' accounts of this relation would certainly be dubious, we must recognize that real world power relations

are not simply mirrored in daily interaction: they are *actively mediated* by the cognitive apparatuses of speakers, being distorted and sometimes reversed as they pursue their ends. At present we know little about the intrapsychic processes underlying the speech of men and women. Questions abound. We might ask, as Bradac (1982, p. 105) does, "Is power most usefully conceptualized as an objectively determinable role attribute? Or might researchers more fruitfully approach power as a situationally bound self-perception?" Also, what is the relationship between the verbal appearance of power and the subjective perception of power? And if men really dominate mixed-sex conversations, do they do so consciously and intentionally?

We can only speculate about why such issues have been neglected by dominance theorists<sup>(5)</sup>. Perhaps the most important reason is the widespread mistrust regarding the politics of a psychologically-rooted analysis. When we focus on processes 'inside the head', we risk supplanting demands for macro-level change with demands for psychological change. Some foreboding signs of this are already with us. Take, for example, the multitude of 'assertiveness training' courses, books and articles that have arisen to help women *overcome* their submissiveness. Women must learn to 'talk tall', advises columnist Louisa Rogers (1990), who has some 'winning advice' on how they might achieve this ideal. Wives must learn to communicate with their husbands 'man to man', pontificates another magazine expert, who further instructs the women of South Africa: 'open your mouth but don't whine!' Demonstrated here are the dangers of *psychologizing* power: we may end up by trying to eradicate women's 'deficiencies' instead of the social practices from which they derive (cf. Johnson, 1983; and see Kitzinger, 1991 for a discussion of how the construct of power has been abused by psychologists of gender).

Having acknowledged this, I cannot imagine a useful explanation of gender differences in speech that does not employ *social-psychological* analysis. What of men and women's identity needs, beliefs, self-presentational goals, desires, and fears? Surely the verbal strategies deployed by the sexes cannot be understood apart from an analysis of these and related constructs?

Such strategies, it is true, are not implemented in a social vacuum: they are governed not only by internal forces, but by the ideologically sanctioned domination enjoyed by men. In our society female speakers are expected to be submissive; as such, openly assertive speech entails costs for a woman, *speaking as a woman*, that do not apply for men - it goes against idealized femininity (Lakoff, 1975, 1977). Therefore, as research on

---

(5) A possible exception is Lakoff's work (1975), which privileges women's 'uncertainty' as an explanatory mechanism, without, it should be added, any real conceptual sophistication or empirical evidence.

gender and power bears out, even women predisposed to dominance typically play down assertive behaviour when they interact with men (see Megaree, 1969; Nyquist & Spence, 1986; Fleischer & Chertkoff, 1986; Weisfeld, 1986). Relatedly, women may favour less open power gambits, preferring to influence others by indirect or surreptitious tactics (see Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1986; Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Belk, Snell, Garcia-Falconi, Hernandez-Sanchez, Hargrove & Holtzman, 1988; Gruber & White, 1986; Offermann & Kearney, 1988; Johnson, 1976).

Not that I wish to convey the mistaken impression that *only* women use indirect forms of social influence. We must remember that historically male dominance has been accomplished under the veneer of chivalry. Moreover, in an era where overt discrimination has become increasingly taboo, paternalism has been forced to find ever more subtle *modus operandi*. Linguistically, it has emerged as a disarming brew of coercion and kindness; victims find it hard to resist paternalistic influence because it is dressed up in the language of benevolence (cf. Davis, 1988). Yet despite these comments, female speakers, lacking power established in concrete resources (Johnson, 1976; Lipman-Blumen, 1984), seem more likely to rely upon less blatant forms of social influence. If this is so, communication research is well suited to explore their use of power. Language is the ideal medium for clandestine revolt: it can be used aggressively to forestall any opposition, but also delicately to inveigle another into granting us what we want, or even wanting what we want.

Armed with these ideas, we might question, more probingly, what women might be *doing* with their language during everyday conversation. Beyond the knee-jerk response that they are merely expressing their powerlessness, more imaginative alternatives lurk. Rather than linguistic submission, social restraints may provoke linguistic creativity from female speakers. Women may, for example, seek to enhance the effectiveness of their utterances by (covertly) violating Gricean maxims of conversation, a process Gillian Michell (1984) has labelled 'telling it slant'. For Michell, the motivation for 'telling it slant' lies in the subordinate status of female speakers in western society. In a culture where women's opinions are deemed less important than men's, and where their world view is eclipsed by a 'male monodimensional reality', distortions of the truth become an essential part of conversation ..... women must exaggerate, understate, be obscure or ambiguous, and tell half-truths in order to achieve the illocutionary impact they desire.

Female language may serve other strategic agendas. One possibility - a nicely paradoxical one - is that by playing out a passive, supportive role in conversation, women are able to maintain a subtle form of control. Upon closer inspection: those little encouragements, those agreements and smiles, those times when men are invited to ramble on, subvert domination even as they solicit it. The issue of topic support clearly

illustrates this curious, 'double edged' (Rosenblum, 1986) quality of support work. Because although the high survival rate of topics introduced by men indeed reflects their power (Fishman, 1983), it is a power founded on the reassuring chorus of backchannels (uh huh, hmmm, yeh, oh yes) provided by women. We might even say that men's topic development is contingent upon an ongoing feminine supportiveness, a dependency that lends women authority of their own as "...continuing to focus on someone else's topic may give them power, but it may also be seen to reflect the power of the attention-giver" (Tannen, 1987, p.8).

The deconstructive twist that reveals the hidden power of topic support can do likewise for other dimensions of female communication. The gossamer ways of women are not so sensational as men's trademarks (the bludgeoning interruption, the whiplash disagreement), but their supportive nature permits more delicate forms of influence. The tag question, though undramatic, can nevertheless shape a conversation by drawing others into a discourse, by encouraging one response, discouraging another etc. (cf. Cameron et al., 1988; Holmes, 1990). Even overtly tentative forms, such as disclaimed statements ("I may be wrong but..."), may be functional for female speakers. Supporting this idea, Carli's (1990) recent experiment showed that women who speak in a hesitant manner are perceived by male addressees to be more influential than those who are assertive. Apparently, in a society that discourages bluntness in women, female influence is most potent when cloaked in language of uncertainty.

From our discussion one thing becomes clear: we must formulate a less rigid theory of the language, gender and power relation. We need an account that does not bury female agency under the rhetoric of 'victimization'; we need an account alive to feminine resistance and to its linguistic character; above all, we need an account that highlights the dynamic interplay between the social (eg. ideology, power relations) and the psychological (eg. speakers' goals and needs) realms. For although 'formal status inequality' (Eagly, 1983<sup>(6)</sup>) between the sexes unquestionably affects communication, women do not languish in a state of verbal torpor, nor are men omnipotent. The link between hegemony in society and hegemony in conversation is more complex - much more complex.



---

(6) Defined by Eagly (1983) as: "a product of a hierarchy of roles that is legitimized by social norms and embedded in the formal structure of groups and institutions." (p. 972).

## DIFFERENCE PERSPECTIVES

### Overview

*"This stupid, military, evil-smelling world marches on alone towards its destruction. Man's voice is a fabric full of holes, torn, frayed; a burned out voice.*

*However wide we open our eyes, however far we stretch our ears, from now on, the summits from where laws are made, male summits with all their sacred values, are lost in the thick fog of indifference and boredom. Which is when women open their mouths and begin to speak. From now on no man's voice will come to cover up the multiple and vigorous voices of women.*

*But still we aren't there. In fact we won't get there unless women manages to weave a fabric, whole and new, made of a voice springing from within herself." (Leclerc, 1990, p. 75).*

Difference positions offer an alternative perspective on gender and language use. Whereas dominance accounts emphasize how social inequalities determine the language of the sexes, difference accounts highlight the process of sex-role socialization through which men and women acquire different norms of communication. Table 2 conveys the emphases of these theoretical approaches regarding several aspects of women's speech.

Table 2 also conveys a major advantage of the difference perspective. We have previously noted that dominance explanations readily lead to a negative appraisal of women's language; yet if we view female speech as an expression of subcultural norms, rather than a symptom of oppression, we have the seeds of a more favorable vision. As we observed in chapter 1, research performed on women speaking in their *own* linguistic communities has unearthed a new and exciting world of meaning. Within this realm the agentic metaphors underpinning so much commentary on language - words as having 'costs' and 'benefits', words as 'weapons' to get people to do what we want - become inappropriate. They do not adequately model the ethic of caring that marks female communication. In fact, some writers feel that this ethic might be better captured by gardening analogies such as tending, growing and nurturing (Carter cited in Spitzack & Carter, 1987). However one describes it, women's talk is certainly patterned differently to that of men - *differently*, but not *less desirably*, as the following description by Coates conveys:

*"In all-women groups, women often discuss one topic for half an hour or more; they share a great deal of information about themselves and talk about their feelings and their relationships. Men on the other hand jump about from one topic to another, vying to tell anecdotes which centre around themes of superiority and aggression. They rarely talk about themselves, but compete to prove themselves better informed about current affairs, travel, sport etc. The management of conversation also differs significantly between women's and men's groups. Women are careful to respect each others turns and tend to apologize for talking too much. Members of all-women groups are concerned that everyone should participate and dislike any one person dominating*

**Table 2: Alternative Perspectives on Women's Language (adapted from Boe, 1987, p. 278 & 279)**

<b>Linguistic Variations</b>	<b>Dominance Explanation</b>	<b>Difference Explanation</b>
<b>Genesis of Language Variation</b>	Disadvantaged social position, sexism. Male-generated linguistic norms.	Female-generated affiliative norms. Ethos of connectedness and caring.
<b>Language Form</b>  <b>1. Tag Questions</b>  <b>2. Hedging</b>  <b>3. Euphemisms</b>  <b>4. Interruptions</b>  <b>5. Turn taking</b>  <b>6. Backchannels</b>  <b>7. Self-disclosure</b>	<p>Deference, leaves choice to addressee. Indecisive, hesitant, non-responsible style.</p> <p>Uncertainty, inconclusiveness, leaves addressee option of how serious to take a statement. Yielding a judgement, mitigating a criticism.</p> <p>Skirting an issue instead of stating it directly. Nonconfrontative; certain subjects are considered off-limits to direct treatment.</p> <p>Men deny rights of women as equal conversation partners.</p> <p>Men control topics.</p> <p>Women are forced to support male speakers.</p> <p>Men reveal less of themselves in order to maintain control.</p>	<p>Negotiatory, non-imposing mutual empowerment, mutuality.</p> <p>Non-judgemental, softening criticism.</p> <p>Respectful, tactful, non-offensive. Highly responsible to the feeling state of others Emphatic relator.</p> <p>Learned listening.</p> <p>Women support interaction.</p> <p>Female support work reflects an ethos of other-directness.</p> <p>Women disclosure more because they are more personally oriented. Greater capacity for sharing and emotionality.</p>

*conversation. Men in all-men groups, by contrast, compete for dominance and over time establish a reasonably stable hierarchy, with some men dominating conversation and others talking very little." (1986, p. 151-152).*

That linguistic theory is benefitting from the study of women's orientation to talk is unquestionable. In research on social interaction, novel ways of organizing communication within task groups are emerging (see Aries, 1976; Hahn, 1984; Triechler & Krameræe, 1983). In research on gender and friendship, fresh insights into the linguistic rites of relationships are evolving (see Aries & Johnson, 1983; Coates, 1988b; Jones, 1980). Perhaps most important, when we acknowledge the existence of a female verbal culture, we begin to question the values underlying current models of communication, values so often "...based on the implicit assumption that the communicative experience of white middle class males is prototypical." (Jenkins & Krameræe, 1987, p.16).

When questioning this assumption, difference theorists might adopt one of two value perspectives: (1) they might assert that both women's and men's language contain strengths and weakness, and ideally speakers should aim for a fertile mingling of each; or (2) they might assert that women's language is sufficient in itself and need not be augmented by masculine ways of talking (cf. Johnson, 1983). Whichever version we choose, it is evident that the difference position allows us to break clear of the circular logic that leads dominance theorists to debase female speech.

Difference approaches have advantages other than a more positive estimation of women's language. They also solve a puzzle that flummoxes power-centred explanations, namely the finding that gender differences in communication are sometimes greatest in single-sex conversations. For difference theorists, gender-typical speech is inevitably more pronounced during same-sex exchanges, for it is here that same-sex linguistic norms are most strongly operative. When one moves to the realm of mixed-sex interaction, a clash of speech norms occurs. At best this results in an exciting tension, at worst in total 'miscommunication' between the sexes (cf. Maltz & Borker, 1982). In mixed-sex settings, therefore, there may be a moderation of sex-typed speech as men and women attempt to accommodate to opposite-sex norms. I shall make more of this point in chapter 3.

As a final advantage, difference perspectives often adopt a diachronic (rather than synchronic) approach to gender and language use. Whereas adherents of the dominance approach typically begin with the truism that society oppresses women, and with the recognition that this execrable state of affairs is reflected in everyday talk, difference theorists attempt to understand the *developmental process* through which men and women learn and internalize speech norms.

There have been several perspectives on this process.

Early writers relied upon somewhat nebulous accounts of gender socialization (eg. Bales, 1950; Strodbeck & Mann, 1956). They rooted male\female speech differences in personality differences between the sexes which, in turn, they rooted in sex role differentiation in society. Probably due to their connection with Parsonian functionalism, an anathema for many feminists (cf. Johnson, 1989), such explanations have received little support from language and gender scholars.

In recent years, alternative analyses have been submitted. For Kathryn Boe (1987), the mother\child relationship is particularly important for the genesis of gender differences in communication. She believes that in order to establish their masculine identity young boys must separate from their mothers, and that this split colours masculinity itself, which becomes characterized by detachment and 'individuation'. Young girls, by contrast, establish their feminine identity through a close, uninterrupted bond with the mother. As such, their gender identity is organized around themes of connectedness and caring which gradually, via a complex process of modeling and reinforcement, become consolidated as the core of femininity. And according to Boe, the dominant themes of feminine selfhood are reflected in the language used by women, which is not so much submissive as *caring* (see table 1). If this is so, she argues, the female tongue is something admirable, something 'worth preserving'.

Boe's theory is not altogether convincing, though. Her outline of the forces governing female development is restrictive, and the links she draws between self-concept and language are loosely formulated and in need of corroboration (To be fair, she presents her account as a tentative hypothesis.) All the same her perspective, and others following the developmental tradition founded by Carol Gilligan, hold promise for the future (cf. Kramer, 1990).

A more compelling theory, at present, is Maltz and Borker's (1982) 'cultural' approach to male\female (mis)communication. These authors claim that gender differences in speech originate in a crucial developmental period between the ages of 5 and 15 years old, when, during a phase marked by excessive same-sex peer interaction, boys and girls learn quite different ways of communicating. They motivate that this learning experience carries over into adult life, being reflected in the language use of men and women, in "...their conceptions of friendly conversation, their rules for engaging in it, and probably most important, their rules for interpreting it." (Maltz & Borker, 1982, p. 200). To understand these gender specific rule systems we must examine communication within childhood playgroups.

During childhood, interaction within all-male and all-female groups differs in a number of respects. As a general description, we might say that boys' interaction is managed along *competitive* principles, whereas that of girls is managed along *cooperative* principles. The central themes of the male verbal culture are friendly aggression and a struggle for power. Hence, in all-male groups we find loud heated argument, dramatic storytelling, pointed joking, taunts, boasts, lordly commands, and threats are of high currency. Boys revel in the punch and counter-punch of verbal aggression which, it should be added, is perceived by other group members to be a normal part of conversation, and not a sign of malice. In all-female groups, though, such truculence is unacceptable. The central themes of the female verbal culture are support and reciprocity: young girls prefer to disguise or soften linguistic aggression (cf. Sachs, 1987; McCabe & Lipscomb, 1988). They do not use conversation as an opportunity for verbal sparring, but learn to support other speakers by providing signs of interest and encouragement, and by building on what has been said before rather than wrenching interest away from another speaker's topic. In other words they work to preserve the harmony of the group.

Such is the nature of talk in the playgroups of boys and girls, and if one accepts Maltz and Borker's argument, the influence of these gender subcultures is carried over into adulthood. Its legacy is 'miscommunication': a peculiar lack of understanding between the sexes (see Tannen (1990) for many illustrations). Examples are illuminating, perhaps a little tragic, and they clarify just why men and women struggle to connect with one another<sup>(7)</sup>. Consider the case of problem telling. Men, being less alive to reciprocity, often assume that problems simply require solutions; they unwittingly offer *advice* to women who turn to them for *shared experience* and *support*. Consider, too, the case of verbal aggression. Women, failing to appreciate its normative, ritualistic nature, often misconstrue men's caustic style as being personally abusive; they take offence where none is intended. Likewise, utterances intended to be purely informational by men are frequently imbued with interpersonal meaning by women, as in:

*Man: Ooh that lump of porridge is sitting in my stomach*  
*Woman: Sorry I won't give you so much tomorrow" (cited in Holmes, 1985, p.29).*

By now it should be clear that Maltz and Borker's theory contributes much to our understanding of gender and language use. Drawing on a rich anthropological heritage,

(7) They also help us understand the problems faced by female speakers in a world exalting male speech norms. Triechler and Kramarae (1983) have described some of these problems in the context of communication in universities, which is generally rigidly structured and competitive. Arguing that this is oppressive to female students, they look forward to the day when a more collaborative *feminine* ethos will achieve recognition.

it provides a wealth of insight into the 'cultural' origins of male and female styles of communication. It is also factually compelling. Evidence supporting the developmental importance of same-sex playgroups is impressive, much of it coming from research in the field of developmental psychology (see Maccoby, 1988, 1990 for recent reviews). In addition, more than any other perspective Maltz and Borker's can account for the accentuation of gender-typed speech in single-sex settings. Is it not here that men and women can truly slip into the idiom of their respective subcultures?

The subcultural model has nevertheless been criticized on several grounds. Graddol and Swann (1989) have questioned the all-consuming focus on the 5 to 15 age span, claiming that our language socialization cannot be slotted so neatly into this passage of time. This is quite true. Gender roles are indeed, to borrow Archer's (1984) term, 'developmental pathways' which change markedly in content and structure from childhood to adulthood, and in a sense the subcultural model emphasizes a single stage of a lengthy developmental process. We should add in mitigation, however, that no one theory can unravel all the twists of gender socialization, a process as multifaceted as it is enigmatic. For all that, Maltz and Borker's model takes us further than most; its focus on same-sex playgroups is especially apposite, coming at time when developmental theorists are also stressing the importance of this socialization agency (Maccoby, 1990).

But there are other flaws in Maltz and Borker's argument. One cannot shake the feeling that power relations play a more important role in structuring male/female speech than they acknowledge. Perhaps, too, their model underestimates the *versatility* of speakers. Research has shown that, far from living out the legacy of their subcultures, men and women can at times slip easily into gender atypical styles. Finally, the categories 'male' and 'female' may be less homogeneous than the subcultural model implies, a factor that has important consequences for our understanding of gender and language use.

But here a host of problems are crowding in, problems that have a much wider relevance than Maltz and Borker's model; in fact, problems linked to a particular way of thinking about gender - gender as difference.

### **Language, Gender and Difference: Some Quandaries**

*"Difference: (n & v.i.) being different; dissimilarity; a point in which things differ"*  
(adapted from the Concise Oxford Dictionary).

Although its dictionary definition conveys a comforting neutrality, the concept of 'difference' is rarely separable from notions of value. The jump from being merely *dissimilar* to being *better* or *worse* is small, and, when we are speaking of social groups, it is a jump we accomplish with ease. Certainly the ideology of gender differences has

rarely been 'value-neutral': it has been thoroughly permeated by a bias towards the masculine. The notorious dichotomies lying at its centre (eg. rational\emotional) have formed oppositions in which the 'male' term has invariably dominated (cf. Derrida, 1981).

Not surprisingly, then, much research and theory on gender has been impelled and contoured by a metatheory of minimalism (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Recognizing that patriarchy thrives upon and therefore exaggerates disparities between men and women, many writers have sought to prove that these are not so substantial as we commonly assume. 'Difference' has been attacked on many fronts. On the one hand, it has been challenged by theorists of androgyny who, moving towards a more fluid, depolarized conception of gender, have shown that men and women may be more alike than they are dissimilar (eg. Bem, 1974; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975). It has been further undermined by a meticulous program of empirical research which has put to rest many fictions about gender. This research tradition, perhaps best represented by Maccoby and Jacklin's (1974) blockbuster, *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, has discovered little evidence of gender differences on a great many dimensions, eg. timidity, achievement motivation, self-esteem, analytic thinking and suggestibility (see also Deaux, 1985 for a pithy review).

But minimalism is just one approach to the study of gender. Recently many feminist writers have begun to accept the reality of gender differences; indeed they have embraced it. They have urged that the central problem of gender research is not the over-emphasis of differences, but the undervaluation of femininity. Consequently, a powerful wave of research has taken as its guiding principle the valorization of womanhood. On the crest of the wave has been Carol Gilligan (1977), whose writings about the 'different voice' of female morality - the voice of caring and relatedness rather than abstract justice - has sparked interest in many other aspects of 'women's ways of knowing' (Goldberger, Clinchy, Belenky & Tarule, 1987).

We might contextualize much of the recent work on women's language as part of this growing tradition. 'Difference' theorists of communication have demanded a "...critical questioning of feminine experience within androcentric value systems, and ... a revaluing of women's experience *in its own terms*." (Spitzack & Carter, 1987, p.410 - stress in original). They have also begun a reevaluation of women's talk in its myriad forms: gossip, self-disclosure, the talk of women friends, the interaction of all-female groups, female speech in academic life, the communication of women managers within industry and so forth. Underlying this impulse, has been an ethos of 'maximalism'. Researchers have brought women's verbal difference out into the open; they have revelled in it; they have sought to improve its image within language studies.

Yet perspectives founded on such noble ideals have been prone to several conceptual biases. Many of these have stemmed from a particular understanding of 'difference' within gender studies, an understanding that tends to: (1) dehistoricize femininity, by portraying it as a transcendent, idealized state; (2) depoliticize femininity, by masking the way social oppression shapes the experience, thoughts, feelings, and behaviour of women; (3) homogenize femininity, by ignoring the diversity of women's experience and by (implicitly) accepting a dualistic model of gender; and (4) decontextualize femininity, by trying to understand it divorced from the situations in which it is invoked, enacted, transfigured.

While these issues have been underplayed by communication scholars, they are critical to a proper assessment of the difference approach. Let us now see why.

### The Politics of Difference

For those who have defended women's language, for those who have admired its communal spirit and tenderness, 'difference' has always been a political issue. They have fought for a world where women's speech might be seen as something of value. Yet both as a vehicle of social change, and as a set of principles to guide theory development in the area of language and gender, the 'politics of difference' are of questionable utility.

Politically, difference accounts suffer the major drawback of all maximalist positions: although venerated with a leftist rhetoric, they are fundamentally conservative at their quick. Even if their goal is women's upliftment, by feeding into stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, such accounts tend to bolster rather than challenge the status quo. It is all very well to call for a positive reevaluation of womanhood, but will this ever transform a patriarchal world that thrives upon difference? Mednick (1989) would think not:

*"...arguments for women's intrinsic difference, whether innate or deeply socialized, support conservative policies that, in fact, could do little else but maintain the status quo." (p. 1122).*

This is a crucial point. It is upon the insistence of women's 'otherness' that patriarchy stands; therefore any theory that affirms sexual difference, however well-intended, simply reinforces male domination. Even ostensibly favourable stereotypes about women help to sustain sexist practices. Some of the most powerful justifications, in fact, stem from a (token) recognition of feminine virtue - they gain seductiveness from their common-sense appeal (*Of course women are more emotional, sensitive communicators, which is precisely why their mode of speaking is unsuitable for the hard-nosed world of*

*the boardroom, for presidential addresses, or for reporting the grim realities of the Gulf war).*

The political perils of 'difference' can be elaborated. In the first place, the concept frequently goes hand in hand with a romanticization of womanhood, a view that extolls a timeless and divine feminine principle (Barrett, 1987). Writing on language and gender is often infused with this romantic vision. Jones (1980), for example, describes gossip as "...the language of women's secrets...one of women's strengths..." (p. 195); Johnson and Aries (1983) portray the talk of women friends as a "...mosaic of noncritical listening, mutual support, enhancement of self-worth....and self-discovery..." (p. 358); and Jenkins and Kramarae (1987) assert that to "...study woman to woman communication is to open up language and communication research to the full range of communicative experiences of which people are capable." (p.17).

By idealizing their language in this manner, difference perspectives detract attention from the social inequalities that restrict female speakers (the message seems to be: women should be rejoicing in their own femininity). We might also note, with caution, how quickly a romantic view of femininity slips into an *essentialist* view positing womanhood as a transcendent and timeless quality (my thoughts on this matter have been enriched by Eisenstein (1984), among others). Once more we need to ask: is there space for trenchant social analysis or criticism within this vision? I feel not. Rather than undermine patriarchy, the romanticization of women's language seems likely to shore it up. By operating within the frame of reference that patriarchy finds most acceptable - traditional, essentialist femininity - difference perspectives pose no serious challenge to the social order:

*"Feminist theorizing that posits essential, fixed qualities for women and men (even if women's qualities are positively valued) can end up supporting the status quo. Subversion requires a challenge to, rather than an uncritical preservation of the practices, and forms of subjectivity...required by social institutions." (Gavey, 1989, p.462).*

Even the subcultural model, which is explicitly based upon social analysis, is redolent of essentialism. Maltz and Borker appear to endow male and female cultures with an independent reality, scarcely mentioning in their classic 1982 chapter how the gender norms they describe came into existence. But this is hugely important. *Why* is the verbal play of little boys and girls structured so differently? *Why* do women learn norms of cooperation, men the more competitive rules of talk? Such questions are left largely unanswered by the subcultural model.

Here I am not advancing the *ad hominem* argument that Maltz and Borker are unaware of the role of structural inequalities<sup>(8)</sup>. Rather, I am claiming that the subcultural theory, because it is underpinned by a maximalist vision of gender difference, tends to sanitize the link between power and male/female communication. By focussing on how men and women learn (transcendent) gender norms of speech - without putting such norms in their proper socio-political context - the theory masks the way power relations shape their language use. Maltz and Borker (1982) may provide an interesting account of how sex-typed communication skills are acquired, yet their model is also somewhat misleading: it implies a 'separate but equal' conception that hides the real politics of difference behind an innocuous description of the 'rules of friendly interaction' (cf. Henley & Kramerae, 1991).

In this section we have witnessed some of the treacheries of the politics of difference. Communication scholars should be mindful of these. By romanticizing and essentializing women's experience, 'difference' accounts may prop up the gender system they are designed to critique. By celebrating femininity, they may obscure its function as a disguise for powerlessness. Just at the point when they think they are running the rapier through patriarchy, difference theorists may look down to find their own blood on the sword.

### **Difference Between Versus Difference Within: the Homogenization of Masculinity and Femininity**

There are other dangers inherent to a maximalist understanding of male/female communication. Once more they are prefigured by a particular understanding of 'difference' within gender research - an understanding that privileges comparisons *between* groups over comparisons *within* groups. This has had unfortunate consequences. Among other things, the remorseless quest for *intergroup* differences has fostered the false impression that variation within gender categories is limited. It has, quite spuriously, flattened gender experience, endowing masculinity and femininity with an unwarranted uniformity (cf. Scott, 1988). Within the field of gender and communication, difference approaches especially (though not exclusively) have tended to blur *intra*-group diversity in this manner. The resulting homogenization of masculine and feminine behaviour has taken root at social, psychological and situational levels.

In underestimating social diversity, theorists have failed to appreciate that gender itself is cross-cut by further cleavages such as race, class, age and religion. Often these sub-classifications are more vital determinants of speech style than gender in isolation. A full

---

(8) Indeed, Borker (1980) has herself written a provocative essay on the topic.

catalogue of social influences would also include less obvious factors - for example, the relative cohesiveness or 'density' of a local social network (Milroy, 1980) - which can influence how men and women speak. Not surprisingly, then, influential thinkers are becoming insistent that we put gender and language issues in a broader social framework (eg. Kramer, 1990; Günthner, 1992; Cameron, 1985; Thorne et al., 1983a).

In underestimating psychological diversity, difference scholars have (implicitly) accepted a bipolar model of gender long rejected within psychology itself (cf. Constantinople, 1973; Bem, 1974). The dualistic man\woman scheme, so often present in writing on gender and communication, has obscured more psychologically interesting issues. For example, the role of self-assessed masculinity\femininity has not received the attention it deserves, even though the scant research conducted thus far has thrown up some fascinating trends. Several writers have found self-perceived masculinity\femininity or associated dimensions (eg. communality\agentism) to be a fair predictor of verbal behaviour. Their work has explored topics as diverse as interaction style (Leaper, 1987; Jose & McCarthy, 1988), interruption rates (Drass, 1986), the talk of friends (Williams, 1985), the expression of anger (Kopper & Epperson, 1991), self-disclosure (Lombardo & Lavine, 1981; Lavine & Lombardo, 1984), and dyadic compatibility (Ickes & Barnes, 1978; Ickes, Schermer & Steeno, 1979).

Philip Smith's (1980, 1985) research, in particular, has helped clarify the link between 'psychological' gender and language use. Smith examined the relationship between speakers' self-perceived gender, the language they used, and the ascriptions of masculinity and femininity given to them by others. To do so, he selected eight subjects (4 men, 4 women) who together represented a complete spectrum of possibilities on a M-F scale, ie. extremely masculine, androgynous, undifferentiated and extremely feminine. The voice of each subject was tape-recorded and then rated by a group of students on scales designed to assess masculinity and femininity. Intriguingly, Smith detected a high correspondence between the speakers' own gender ascriptions and those given to them by the raters. He concluded:

*"...vocal cues alone elicit reliable stereotypes of speakers' gender identities which correspond loosely to speakers' actual gender identities. That is, these stereotypes are not determined simply by the sex of the speaker, but are sensitive to variations among people of the same sex who differ in the degree to which they share a social identity seen as typical of other members of their sex." (Smith, 1980, p. 125, my emphasis).*

The key word in this quotation is 'variations'. Smith is emphasizing the psychological and linguistic diversity of the sexes - a vital point. Having said this, we must concede that the linguistic effects of psychological gender are to date unclear; some studies have thrown up mixed or non-significant results (eg. Jose, Crosby & Wong-McCarthy,

1980)<sup>(9)</sup>. Canny readers might also object that optimism about the value of the concept of psychological gender is premature (or even naive). They might justifiably ask: how can it be of utility for language theorists, when its value within psychology itself is so fiercely contested? I will deal more thoroughly with this objection at a later stage (cf. chapter 3). For now I simply wish to conclude that, in spite of its problems, this type of research brings some much needed psychological finesse to the language and gender paradigm.

Finally, in underestimating situational diversity, difference theorists have presented inflexible picture of the way men and women talk, a picture that disregards the plasticity of language use. For even if we view gender talk as an expression of masculine and feminine identities, we must realize that gender itself varies in importance across different situations (see Skevington & Baker, 1989; Cota & Dion, 1986; Abrams, Sparkes & Hogg, 1985; Abrams, Thomas & Hogg, 1990), and that its influence on speech is probably less immutable than is commonly held. It is therefore vital that we investigate how and why the language of men and women changes across different contexts. When we do so, we discover that the separate 'cultures' idea overlooks the versatility of men and women, who share more linguistic skills than the subcultural model acknowledges.

There is ample evidence to indicate that men and women do not rigidly follow sub-cultural norms of speech, but can quite happily slip into gender 'atypical' speech when circumstances permit. Ironically Goodwin, upon whose research Maltz and Borker relied when formulating their model (cf. Goodwin, 1980), has subsequently highlighted the *situationally specific* management of verbal resources. In a recent study of childhood playgroups, Goodwin (1988; see also Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987) has modified her claim that little girls are less likely than boys to employ an openly aggressive style, arguing instead that this depends upon the context of speech. She has established that girls can use language every bit as competitive as boys within certain situations, language that "... expresses disagreement in an aggravated fashion" (Goodwin, 1988, p. 89). Similar findings have been reported elsewhere. The literature on gender and status, for example, reveals that women can adopt 'masculine' speech features if they enjoy social prestige in a particular setting (eg. O'Barr & Atkins, 1980; Lamb, 1981), or if they possess an edge in task knowledge (eg. Brown et al., 1990).

---

(9) This may reflect limitations in the scales used to measure masculinity and femininity as much as anything else. Smith's (1985) critique of widely used measures, such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, is too lengthy to be reviewed here. It is worth noting, however, that virtually all of the M-F scales currently in use have been scathingly criticized, although this has not prevented their widespread employment (cf. Gill et al. (1987)).

Ultimately, then, the sheer diversity of men and women speaking - a diversity documented in a research literature replete with inconsistencies (see chap. 1) - thwarts the tendency of difference approaches to homogenize masculine and feminine experience and behaviour. We are forced to deal with all the faces of variation (social, situational and psychological) if we wish to forge a useful theory of gender and language use.



## CONCLUSION

In chapter 2 we have examined, in their various shades, the dominance and difference explanations of gender and communication. As these are the leading explanations<sup>(10)</sup> in the field of language and gender, it is important to arrive at a final assessment of their worth. Yet an either/or formulation seems too simplistic. It is reasonable to suppose that the insights of *both* models might be profitably used.

Let us pattern our attempted synthesis around a metaphor - that of a 'causal stream'. Judith Hall has recently used this analogy to signify the multiply determined nature of gender behaviour, contending that:

*"...what one identifies as "the" cause depends on where in the stream one looks and on how many mediating variables one is willing to take into consideration." (1987, p. 185).*

If one thinks in terms of a 'stream' of causes, each implicated at a different point in the explanatory process, the combination of dominance and difference models becomes a little easier. For example, while conceding that social oppression influences women's communication, we might sometimes afford it only a distant place in the causal stream. An exchange between two female friends may primarily reflect verbal habits ingrained by social learning; in this case, 'women's language' may express caring rather than powerlessness. Even so, broader political currents might retain an oblique influence, ie. perhaps *what* participants learned at an early age was conditioned by wider power relations. In a different interaction social asymmetries may affect the language use of the sexes more directly. When a man interrupts his wife or barks orders at his secretary, the causal role of power relations may become more prominent. Again, though, a little further down the causal stream, these micro-aggressions may have meaning other than a desire for domination - they may be learned idiosyncrasies or expressions of a masculine identity.

Clearly, then, a rapprochement of dominance and difference positions might begin with the recognition that gender differences in speech are *overdetermined*, ie. caused by a multifarious stream of factors. The task for the eclectic theorist would be to highlight those points in the causal stream that are most important within a given interaction, though always keeping a respectful eye on alternatives. Of course, the 'multi-functional' nature of linguistic forms (cf. Holmes, 1984a) adds subtlety to such considerations. For

---

(10) Conspicuous by their absence have been biologically rooted theories. These have not been popular as accounts of the broader patterning of communication (though see a recent edited volume by Steele, Philips & Tanz, 1987), though they have been used to explain gender differences on dimensions such as pitch and intonation (cf. Smith, 1979; Graddol & Swann, 1989; McConnell-Ginet, 1983 for additional discussion).

if we accept that a form can mean different things at different times, we can also accept that it can (depending on the situation) support either dominance or difference interpretations.

In the final analysis, however, optimistic speculations about integrating dominance and difference perspectives should not obscure their *shared* weaknesses. These will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter, where I shall also prepare a path for the models of language behaviour relevant to my own dissertation (see chap. 3). Many of the arguments introduced here will be enriched in later chapters.

### Some Social Psychological Reflections

The idea of a causal stream leads naturally to the problems common to both dominance and difference accounts. These problems derive from a theoretical malaise: the inadequate specification of the link between language behaviour, sociological forces, the contexts of speech, and the social-psychology of the individual. It is precisely in grappling with - or more accurately failing to grapple with - this 'stream' of determinants that communication theorists have erred. True, they have not all erred to the same extent (we might think in terms of degrees of heinousness); but for reasons of space the ensuing critique is indiscriminate, highlighting general trends rather than apportioning innocence or guilt.

My point of departure is a taxonomy of factors which may separately or in interaction influence the language use of the sexes (see figure 3). This taxonomy was first employed by Richard Bourhis (1979) *apropos* of interethnic communication, but it is also useful in the area of gender. It depicts three broad classes of variables which influence the verbal behaviour of speakers (encoders): macro-sociolinguistic factors, social-psychological factors and micro-sociolinguistic factors. These are easily instantiated.

With *macro-sociolinguistic* factors we are referring to the broad structural elements (eg. social class, status hierarchies and subcultural gender norms) that govern the language use of men and women. When we outline the impact of economic disadvantage on the speech used by women, we are interpolating a macro-level variable. With *social-psychological* factors we are dealing with intra-psychic processes such as motivations, thought processes, social identifications and needs. If we explain the language of the sexes by recourse to speaker goals or personality traits, we are employing social-psychological variables. Lastly, with *micro-sociological* factors we are gauging the effect of local contexts on verbal behaviour. The term context is used here in fairly

---

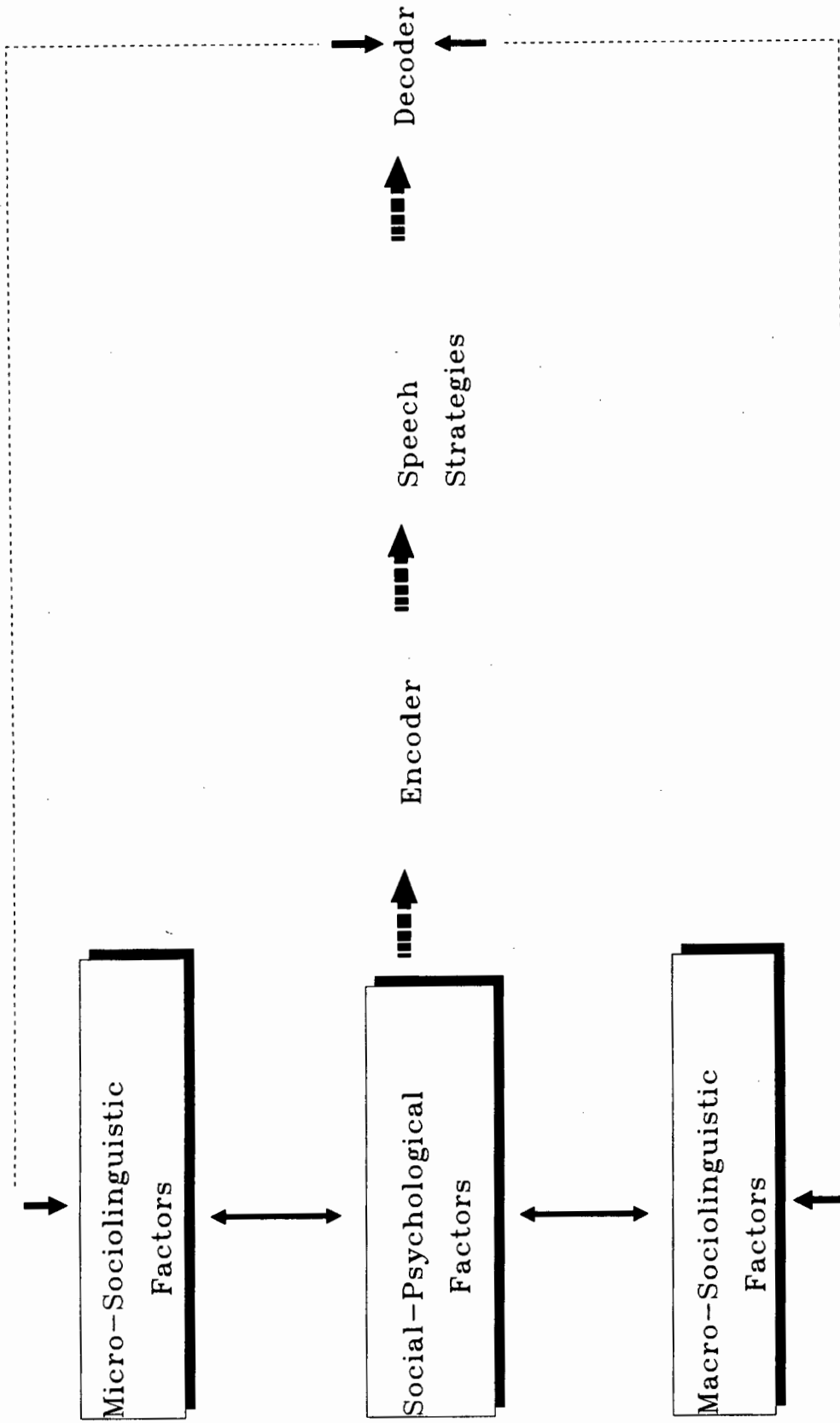


Figure 3 A taxonomy of factors affecting language behaviour  
 (taken from Bourhis, 1979, p. 118)

broad sense, and includes elements such as the topic of speech and the gender of addressee as well as descriptive dimensions such as formality and competitiveness. Some micro-contexts have clearly etched socio-linguistic norms (eg. a job interview or a university seminar); others may be more loosely circumscribed (eg. friendship circles).

According to Bourhis, language behaviour is affected by determinants located at each these levels of analysis. If so, is it not reasonable to expect a theory of gender and communication to incorporate all three when explaining male\female speech? More than this, is it not reasonable to expect such a theory to elucidate the complex linkages between different kinds of variables (linkages denoted by the double arrows in Bourhis's model - see figure 3)? Fruitful questions might include: How do (macro-level) power relations between the sexes affect speech within an romantic setting as opposed to a formal debate? Do women who rate themselves as being dominant speak differently to men than to other women? What is the relationship between psychological gender and communicative style in an industrial setting? In each case, we are asked to explore the *interactive* effects of causal variables from different explanatory levels.

Willem Doise (1986), a social psychologist, has formalized thinking along these lines in terms of a metatheoretical ideal: theorists seeking to explain social behaviour should try to 'articulate' different levels of analysis. Note that Doise does not employ the term 'articulate' in its normal English sense, but draws upon its meaning in French: "the organization of separate elements which contribute to the functioning of a whole", or "the interlinking of two processes" (p. xi). He asserts that it is only through the fertile blending of different analytic planes that social theories attain explanatory power.

Ironically, social psychology itself has often fallen short of Doise's criterion for 'good' theory. Indeed, as a number of observers have noted, mainstream social psychology has been dominated by a rampant individualism (Jaspars, 1983; Jahoda, 1989; Gecas, 1987; Turner & Oakes, 1986; Oakes & Turner, 1990; Pepitone, 1981). Within this dominant school, the *sui generis* existence of broader social factors has been ignored or even denied; it has been assumed that social reality is little more than the combined realities of individuals. Social psychologists have thus *reduced* complex social phenomena to 'natural' processes of biology and cognition, leaving unexplored the determining role of deeper elements such as intergroup relations and cross-cultural variation (Jahoda, 1986; Pepitone, 1976).

There has, however, been a counter-literature, mostly informed by European writers, which has tried to incorporate the 'social dimension' (Tajfel, 1984) into social-psychological research and theory (Jaspars, 1986; Foster, 1991). Eschewing the individualism of the traditional paradigm, these theorists have argued in favour of a

metatheory of *interactionism*. An exploration of how this metatheory has influenced the European school of social psychology is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but two illustrative quotations may capture its intellectual spirit:

*"The raison d' être of social psychology is to solve scientifically a paradox. The paradox is to integrate two very different orders of phenomena: the psychological - to do with the mental properties of the individual - and the social - processes, properties and products deriving from interrelations between individuals" (Turner & Oakes, 1986, p. 237, emphasis in the original).*

*"...social psychology can and must include in its theoretical and research preoccupations a direct concern with the relationship between human psychological functioning and the large-scale processes that shape this functioning and are shaped by it." (Tajfel, 1981b, p.7, emphasis in the original).*

Both statements stress the necessity of theorizing the individual and society relation. Like Doise (1986) and Bourhis (1979), both commentators recognize that social theory must interlink psychological and socio-structural levels of analysis.


How do explanations in the area of language and gender satisfy Doise's criterion of articulation? To answer this question, we might begin by ordering dominance and difference accounts in terms of Bourhis's taxonomy. Clearly, both of these theoretical systems are rooted at the macro-sociological level of this framework. Dominance theorists explain gender differences in speech in terms of global status asymmetries; difference theorists explain them in terms of the broad socialization process through which speakers learn the linguistic rules of their gender subcultures. And there is much of value in this macro-level focus. Models that place speech in a wider socio-political context are a welcome change from the descriptive orientation of much sociolinguistic research (cf. Lavandera, 1988). Macro-level accounts are also congruent with the critical politics that have historically formed the lifeblood of language and gender research, and, indeed, must continue to vitalize the area.

Yet a hiatus exists in both the dominance and the difference accounts. Ironically it is exactly the opposite to that characterizing traditional social psychology: if social psychologists have neglected the role of cultural factors in explaining human behaviour, gender and language theorists have underplayed micro-sociological and social-psychological influences. At best they have regarded these factors as epiphenomena, not as valid levels of explanation in their own right.

The consequences of this problem have been evidenced throughout chapter 2. Due to their narrow focus on global asymmetries, dominance accounts have fallen into a crude sociological determinism. They have failed: (1) to theorize feminine agency, playing down women's capacity for psychological and linguistic resistance; (2) to outline the ways in which gender differences in speech fluctuate according to situational demands. Correspondingly, difference perspectives, by concentrating on the acquisition of

culturally-grounded norms of communication, have failed to appreciate that: (1) on many occasions speakers may flout these norms when pursuing strategic ends within particular micro-linguistic contexts; (2) men and women vary in their subjective identification with such norms; and (3) gender identity itself varies in salience across different contexts.

In sum, current explanations of gender and communication have fallen short of Doise's benchmark of 'articulation'; they have failed to coalesce sociological, situational and psychological determinants within a single framework. They have therefore lacked predictive power. Given the vast range of psychological and contextual variables that may mediate macro-level influences (eg. personality factors, the topic of conversation, speaker goals, the sex of addressee, and the situational salience of gender) this is quite predictable. Closer attention to these intermediary variables is an urgent requirement of future theory building in the area. We must elucidate the role of 'proximal' as well as 'distal' factors (Deaux & Major, 1987), recognizing that gender differences in behaviour are not simply determined by macro-sociolinguistic forces, but vary according to the vicissitudes of immediate context and the rational goals of speakers. In chapter 3 we will encounter two linguistic models that move language and gender theory in this direction.



**CHAPTER 3**

**MARK OF THE LISTENER: SUBJECT GENDER, AUDIENCE  
GENDER, AND COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES**

**INTRODUCTION**

*"...focus on gender as just involving properties of individual agents can obscure important insights into how gender affects language production...there might be no connection at all between agents' sex or gender and patterns of language produced but significant interactions between forms produced and sex or gender of the audience."  
(McConnell-Ginet, 1988, p.79).*

In chapter 3 I shall echo McConnell-Ginet's call for a more expansive conception of gender within communication studies. Two questions shall steer discussion. Do men and women modify their language in response to the gender of their audience? And if so, why?

Our answers will be far from conclusive, for although audience gender is a theoretically sonorous variable, it has been sorely neglected by researchers. In fact, the poverty of existing knowledge supplies a ready made rationale for the current project. That the meagre research conducted to date is fraught with methodological problems provides further justification for new and more sophisticated work. Not unexpectedly, the weaknesses undermining work on gender and communication in general (cf. chap. 1) undermine research on 'gender of audience' effects in particular. Inconsistent identification criteria, the neglect of contextual variation, sexism, the dilemma of form and function - all these problems tarnish investigations of addressee influences. Such methodological shortcomings are not easily overcome, but in chapter 4 I shall describe my own efforts in this regard. The rest of the thesis shall testify (positively or otherwise) to my success.

But aside from the value of my own work, addressee sex remains a significant variable for language and gender scholars. My primary goal in chapter 3 shall be to clarify this significance. In doing so, I shall draw upon two influential models of language behaviour, both of which accord the 'addressee' a central explanatory role - speech accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1987a) and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Neither perspective has garnered extensive interest from gender researchers; both, I believe, shall be important in the future. Their merit lies not only in their sensitivity to the 'other-relatedness' of language use but also in their ability to amend the meta-theoretical ails of the language and gender paradigm. By detailing the link between

the individual and the social world, they transcend the simplicities of dominance versus difference (cf. chap. 2), offering us more elegant tools with which to penetrate the mysteries of gender and communication. To be sure, the constructs of power and subculture remain prominent in both perspectives; however, they are placed within frameworks that do not bury human agency under weighty sociological abstractions such as status, norm, and role. Put slightly differently, they are placed within frameworks sensitive to the *dialectical* link between the speaker and her social context and, consequently, to the necessity of 'articulating' (Doise, 1986) these distinct analytic spheres.

After such a lofty fanfare, I should immediately add that my treatment of both perspectives shall be rather superficial. My intention is to employ them in a suggestive rather than incisive manner. At any rate, a tentative application is warranted on purely empirical grounds: extant research on gender does not permit strong conclusions about the utility of either framework.



## FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Language and gender theorists' limited attention to audience effects is for a variety of reasons somewhat surprising<sup>(1)</sup>. Within other areas of language research the role of the listener has been well documented. Addressees held a prominent position in the early sociolinguistic taxonomies (eg. Hymes, 1967; Ervin-Tripp, 1964) and have continued to do so until the present day<sup>(2)</sup> (eg. Brown & Fraser, 1979; Bell, 1984). Intrepid writers have gone so far as describing how the 'researcher as audience' can confound the results of language studies (Wilson, 1987; Labov, 1972), an issue worth remembering when undertaking research on gender (cf. Brouwer, 1982; Etaugh, Houtler, & Ptasnik, 1988). Perhaps most importantly, addressees have played an increasingly central role in models of speech shift, which attempt to explain why people alter their verbal behaviour across different contexts. Two such models - Giles's speech accommodation theory (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory - are particularly relevant here. We shall use them to (re)interpret evidence concerning the effect of audience gender on men's and women's verbal strategies.

There is a final reason to rue our poor understanding of addressee influences: they are supremely relevant to the dominance versus difference debate. As much was hinted in chapter 2. On page 45, for example, I suggested that power-centred interpretations are weakened by the finding that gender differences in speech are often reduced in mixed-sex as opposed to single-sex conversations. My comments here were overstated however. In truth, *any* confident conclusions about addressee influences can be drawn only by overlooking the contradictory findings of prior research (see below), as well as its methodological flaws (see chaps. 1 & 4).

Roughly speaking, we can divide research findings on addressee influences into three strands: evidence that sex differences are accentuated in mixed-sex contexts; evidence that sex differences are reduced in mixed-sex contexts; and evidence that addressee gender has little effect on the language use of the sexes (or has a mixed effect). Each strand has spawned its own interpretations, most of which rehash the themes of dominance and difference. I shall examine the separate lines of evidence below, using accommodation theory and politeness theory to provide an enriched perspective on empirical outcomes.

- 
- (1) Then again, the neglect of contextual variation is perhaps an inevitable byproduct of researchers' obsession with individual differences (McConnell-Ginet, 1988).
- (2) A recent double issue (1988, 7(3-4)) of the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* was entirely devoted to 'other-relatedness' in verbal behaviour.

## Empirical Findings (1)

One line of evidence has revealed that gender differences in communication are most marked within mixed as opposed to same-sex exchanges. An early and influential study indicated that women used more modal constructions, imperative constructions in question form, and tag questions (possibly feminine forms) when speaking with male partners; whereas men used more interruptions (possibly a masculine form) when speaking with female partners (McMillan et al., 1977). Carli (1990), relatedly, found that women debating a controversial issue phrased their arguments more tentatively when their opponents were members of the opposite sex. Along similar lines, Willis and Williams (1976) reported that women were more likely to display agreement when listening to male speakers, but that both men and women were more likely to volunteer disagreement when female speakers held the floor. And it seems that speech amplitude, too, becomes more gender-stereotypical in cross-sex exchanges: women speak softer in the presence of men and are rated by observers as behaving less assertively (Kimble, Yoshikawa & Zehr, 1981).

At first glance such findings simply buttress the dominance thesis. If we believe that gender differences in speech reflect power differences between men and women, then their accentuation in mixed-sex domains is wholly predictable - as status differences are most dramatic here, so are their linguistic accompaniments. But this pristine argument is knotted by a number of factors. First, as we shall see presently, numerous studies have refuted the notion that gender differences increase in mixed-sex settings. Second, it is uncertain that the language forms in question actually betoken domination\submission, an uncertainty deepened by researchers' linguistic ineptitude (cf. chap.1, p.25-27; chap.4, p.109). Thirdly, a forthright dominance interpretation is clouded by Carli's (1990) discovery that women who spoke tentatively during a mixed-sex debate were rated by men as being *more* influential than women who spoke assertively. This returns us to the question - does women's apparent deference afford them a subtle form of control (cf. chap. 2)? If so, their accentuation of sex-typed speech within mixed-gender exchanges cannot be viewed as a mere reflection of their powerlessness.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model allows us to clarify some of these concerns. I shall begin by sketching the rudiments of the theory, before applying it to the gender and language arena, particularly to the phenomenon of audience effects.

## Facework, Gender and Language Use

At the heart of Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory is 'face'. The concept of face originates in the East, where it has been part of Chinese culture for centuries (Tracy, 1990); nevertheless, our everyday Western understanding of the term (as revealed in phrases such as 'losing face') captures much of its meaning within politeness theory. Brown and Levinson (1978) do offer some conceptual refinement by identifying two kinds of face: *positive* face, which refers to an individual's desire for social approval from significant others; and *negative* face, which refers to an individual's desire to live her life unimpeded. The hub of their argument is that such face 'wants' are universal, pervading all cultures, and that they are satisfied through universal strategies of linguistic politeness, pervading all languages<sup>(3)</sup>. The apparent ubiquity of face wants and politeness phenomena gives their model a remarkable scope.

The scope of politeness theory extends also into the area of addressee effects, for if we would have others respect our face, we in turn must respect theirs. The two forms of respect are, in fact, indissolubly linked as:

*"...normally everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others' faces, it is in general in every participant's best interests to maintain each other's face..." (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.61).*

This link between self and other face maintenance is worth remembering, though in the discussion below, in line with my focus on audience effects, I shall concentrate on the latter.

Day to day face protection is a tricky business: so many of our actions and utterances are intrinsically threatening to others. We may offend a hearer's positive face by offering a criticism, rebuke or misplaced joke; or alternatively, by *withholding* sympathy, warmth, enthusiasm and so forth. Similarly, we may offend a person's negative face through any one of a panoply of impositions - requests, demands, threats, and advice being a few. And face threatening acts (or FTAs) can be more subtle. When we bombard our boss with compliments, for example, we are not merely being unctuous, we may be threatening her negative face: compliments require responses ("no really, my ideas at the meeting were not that brilliant") and may therefore constitute impediments.

FTAs are a part of life, unavoidable as speech itself; but because we have at our disposal a range of superstrategies for performing them, the threat they pose can be modulated (see figure 4). Elements within the superstrategy range can be ranked from most to least

---

(3) Whether or not the principles of facework are truly universal is a moot issue and, unsurprisingly, a focus of ongoing research (eg. Holtgraves & Yang, 1990).

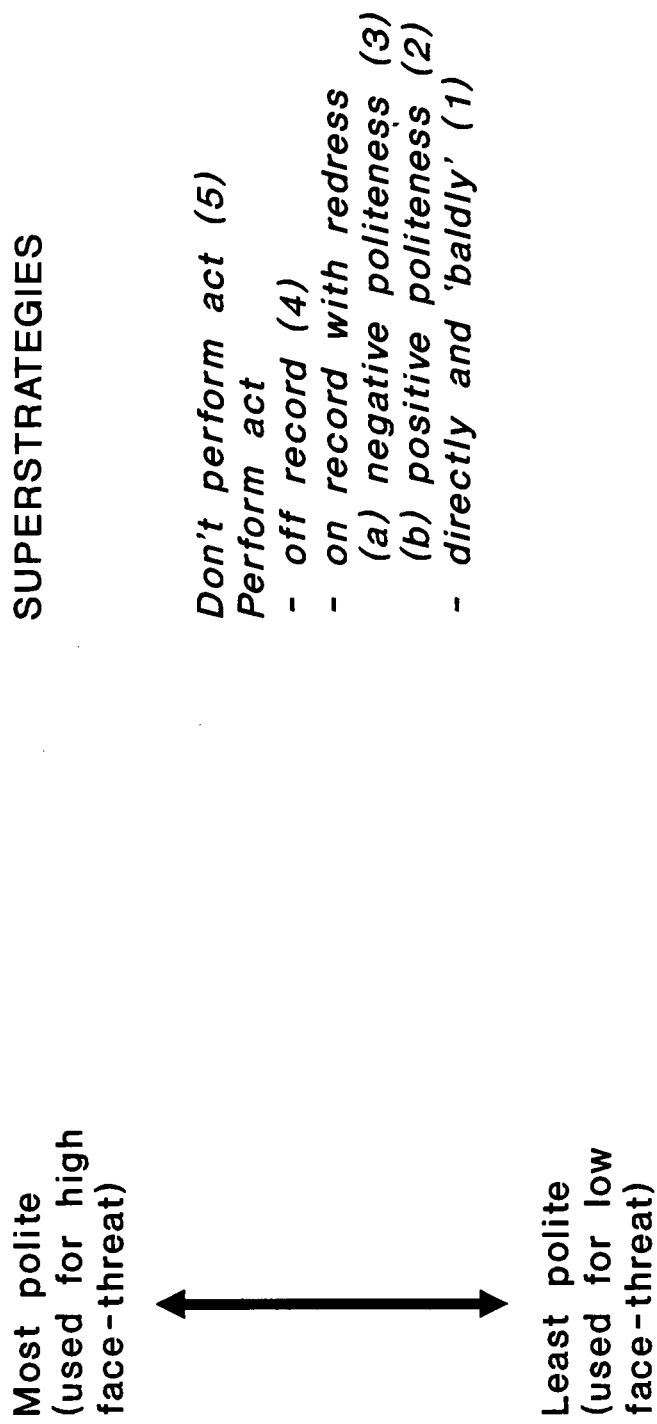


Figure 4 Relationship of expected amount of face-threat of speech act to superstrategy used (adapted from Tracy, 1990, p.212)

polite. At one extreme, a speaker may simply choose to abandon the FTA altogether (strategy 5), an extraordinarily polite if somewhat uninteresting tactic<sup>(4)</sup>. At the other extreme, a FTA may be encoded *baldly* (strategy 1), ie. without any redressive action whatever ('Close the door'; 'What a hideous dress'). For the most part, though, since the brusque efficiency of a bald FTA usually wounds a recipient's face, speakers will typically choose to soften its impact. The three remaining tactics specified by politeness theory accomplish this. A speaker may decide to sugar a criticism (strategy 2: *positive politeness*), thus attending to an addressee's need to feel approved of or cherished (positive face). Or when making a request, a speaker may give the victim an 'out' (strategy 3: *negative politeness*), thereby satisfying her desire to be unimpeded (negative face). Finally, an FTA may be performed so indirectly that its status as threat becomes hazy (strategy 4: *off record*).

Keeping Brown and Levinson's decision tree in mind, we can now examine the three situational variables that, according to politeness theory, determine superstrategy selection. First is the degree of intrinsic face-threat (termed the ranked imposition or R) posed by a specific act. As a rule: the more intrinsically threatening the act, the greater the redressive action required. Hence we would probably soften a request to borrow someone's car ('I know that this is quite a cheek and I'll understand if you say no but could I...') more than a request to borrow their pencil ('Could you lend me a pencil please'). We might even decide to go off-record ('I don't know how I'm going to get to work today'), ipso facto permitting a listener to ignore the plea if she chooses, while leaving ourselves an escape route should things turn ugly ('no look I wasn't hinting...'). Either way face wants - other and self respectively - are admirably safeguarded.

A second - and with regard to gender research more interesting - contextual factor governing the performance of FTAs is the relative power (termed P) of interactants in a given setting. Basically, politeness theory holds that high status speakers will use less but receive more politeness than low status speakers. This is because the risk entailed by an FTA increases when one is addressing a superior, and, faced with increased risk, speakers tend to select a higher numbered strategy (see figure 4). We are particularly likely to use negative politeness or off-record strategies when addressing those with power, as positive politeness often presupposes an intimacy ill fitting a subordinate (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Subordinate to superior politeness is therefore typically a broad-based, non-intimate deference, bearing similarity to the Western notion of 'good manners'.

The relevance of the P factor for gender and language research should be instantly apparent. We can surmise that: (1) women, being of lower social status, will generally

(4) Of little linguistic intrigue, this strategy is largely ignored by Brown and Levinson (1987).

use higher levels of politeness than men; and (2) this will be particularly apparent when they speak to male addressees.

Evidence pertaining to these hypotheses is fragmented but provocative. In her research on the Tenejapa culture, Brown (1980, 1990) has confirmed that women more readily employ politeness tactics than men (who more readily perform FTAs baldly). Likewise, in her work on the Javanese culture, Smith-Hefner (1988) has averred that women are generally expected to defer to men in the domestic sphere - though, in an intriguing reversal, she has observed that it is Javanese men who are masters of humility in the public sphere, where polite language is viewed as a mark of sophistication and prestige! With respect to English-speaking cultures, we can interpret work in the Lakoffian tradition as proof of women's greater politeness, although to do so we must have confidence that the features of 'women's language' actually soften threats to face, which may not always be the case (cf. chap. 1). Finally, concerning the notion that women are more polite to men than to other women, we can cite the studies mentioned earlier (eg. Carli, 1990; McMillan et al., 1977). We can also cite Brouwer et al.'s (1976) research, which revealed that passengers of both sexes spoke more respectfully to male than to female ticket sellers in a Dutch railway terminus (see also Brouwer, 1982).

In sum, there is some support for the tenets of politeness theory, even if (for reasons I shall outline presently) existing language and gender research hardly poses a draconian test of the theory.

There is a further implication of the P variable for gender research. If women's language is in reality polite language, then we can explain gender-differentiated speech in terms of general principles of facework and not in terms of principles bound *sui generis* to gender. Remember, politeness theory states that the processes underlying the expression of politeness are universal, spanning different cultures, social groups, and languages. By implication, there may be nothing uniquely *feminine* about women's language; it may simply mirror their low power (P) in our society. On this level, politeness theory resembles the 'simple status' version of the dominance thesis (cf. chap. 2).

Unlike the simple status position, however, politeness theory does not posit P as an isolated determinant of speech but explores its interaction with two further contextual factors. We have examined one already, the severity of threat posed by a specific act (or R). Another is the degree of intimacy, or social distance (termed D) between speakers in an conversation. Briefly put: when intimacy is low, the likelihood that higher order politeness strategies will be employed increases - FTAs are all the more threatening in formal exchanges.

R, P and D ratings, then, influence the degree of face-threat posed by a particular FTA: a personal insult is more threatening than a mild criticism (R); insulting a superior more threatening than insulting a subordinate (P); and insulting a stranger more threatening than insulting an intimate (D). The weighting of these three variables within a particular context yields an *overall* FTA risk factor (termed weightiness or W), which in turn determines the politeness strategy used - the greater the cumulative risk, the greater the chance that a speaker will opt for a higher numbered strategy (see figure 4). Thus, a speaker requesting a minor favour from a lower status intimate may prefer the efficiency of a bald demand, not so an underling requesting a salary increase from her forbidding boss.

Even from this skimpy exegesis<sup>(5)</sup>, it is transparent that a proper test of politeness theory requires an aliveness to the interplay of its various components. Within the area of gender such a test has not materialized:

*"...despite the volume of work on sex differences in language, the various possible contributory variables (P, R, D, sex of speaker versus hearer etc.) have not been carefully enough controlled to test our hypotheses in the way that we might have hoped" (Brown & Levinson 1987, p.32).*

The problem, of course, is that the variables in question (difficult to control at the best of times) may be linked in unforeseen ways to gender. Attempts to fix social distance (D), for example, may be confounded by the fact that same-sex interactions are typically less formal than mixed-sex. Analogously, the so-called intrinsic imposition (R) of an FTA may fluctuate across gender subcultures, so that a serious face-threat for men (a 'personal' question) might be a trifling offence for women<sup>(6)</sup>. Such issues must be the object of future research (cf. the conclusion of this dissertation).

Despite these uncertainties, politeness theory illuminates the relation between language use, sex of speaker and sex of hearer in a number of ways.

The model moves beyond the individual to theorize the speaker-hearer relationship, showing how "...politeness strategies are a complicated but highly sensitive index in speech of kinds of social relationships" (Brown, 1980, p. 117). In addition, far from taking social status to be the only variable determining language use, the politeness model highlights the interplay of various contextual elements (P, R, and D). Even more impressively, it systematically links these variables to principles of facework and ultimately to linguistic strategies. It thereby moves us beyond the primitive conjectures

(5) I have omitted several of the theory's riders and derivative hypotheses for the sake of economy. Moreover, its bold cross-cultural sweep, which is only apparent from an examination of the full range of research conducted by Brown, Levinson and cohorts, has been lost.

(6) In this vein too, we might reinterpret our drama of the breakfast table in chapter 2 (p.55) as demonstrating men's ignorance of women's facework principles - of what constitutes threat and what politeness.

of dominance theorists. Finally, because it frames language use within a model of *rational* facework, politeness theory allows us to avoid the negative evaluation of women's language that has historically dogged language and gender research. It casts women as linguistic strategists rather than the supine victims popularized by the dominance position (cf. chap. 2).

In conclusion, for a variety of reasons politeness theory is of interest to language and gender researchers. The lambency, the breath-taking scope, the responsiveness to contextual mediation, the aliveness to human agency - these are qualities on which a theory of language and gender can and should be founded. For all that, we should not be naively uncritical of Brown and Levinson's model: it has been extensively criticized during the decade since its introduction and may require substantive revisions (cf. Penman, 1990; Coupland, Grainger, & Coupland, 1988b; Tracy, 1990; Holtgraves & Yang, 1992; see chap. 6 for further discussion). Moreover, with regard to gender, a number of studies seem to go against the grain of a politeness interpretation. Several researchers have proposed that gender differences are actually reduced in mixed-sex settings, such that men speak more affiliatively and women more agentically when talking to opposite-sex partners. This *convergence* of male and female styles of speech may be related to processes other than those specified by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

### Empirical Findings (2)

Piliavin and Martin (1978) have called it the 'cross-sex modelling effect', an apt label for the convergence of men's and women's speech styles in mixed-sex conversations. The phenomenon has been documented fairly extensively. Research has shown that men may adopt a more stereotypically feminine speech style in the presence of women, using more hedging devices (Holmes, 1986, 1988a, 1990), backchannel responses (Bilous & Krauss, 1988), and expressive behaviours (Piliavin & Martin, 1978; Mabry, 1985; Mulac et al., 1988). Correspondingly, women may adopt a more stereotypically masculine speech style in the presence of men, speaking louder (Markel, Prebor, & Brandt, 1972), interrupting with greater frequency (Bilous & Krauss, 1988), and generally using a greater proportion of assertive, task-directed language (Hogg, 1985; Carli, 1989; Mulac et al., 1988; Hall & Braunwald, 1981).

In weighing the implications of this research, we should not overlook its methodological limitations (see chap. 4). Nor should we forget that cross-sex speech convergence is probably influenced, in ways as yet unknown, by situational factors (Mabry, 1985), which may explain why it has not been uncovered within several projects (eg. Priesler,

1986; Dindia, 1987; Aries, 1982; Brouwer, 1982; Crosby & Nyquist, 1977). But excepting these reservations, there are several reasons to endorse a 'cross-sex modelling' hypothesis. For one thing, its ambit stretches into the arena of non-verbal communication, where between-sex convergence on dimensions such as smiling and gazing have been well-established (cf. Vrugt & Kerkstra, 1984; Mulac, Studley, Wiemann, & Bradac, 1987). For another, language convergence is not restricted to male-female interaction but is a pervasive phenomenon, occurring, *inter alia*, between mothers and children (Cappella, 1981), the old and the young (Coupland et al., 1988a), lawyers and their clients (Aronsson, Jönsson, & Linell, 1987), doctors and their patients (cf. Street, 1991), and members of different ethnic groups (Giles & Powesland, 1975; Bell, 1984; Milroy, 1987, chap.8). The sheer ubiquity of the process suggests that researchers who believe convergence occurs within cross-gender exchanges may be on sure ground.

Yet even if we accept the existence of between-sex speech 'modelling', we would still wish to know *why* it occurs. As usual, gender scholars have not fared well in the realm of theory building; but two speculative hypotheses have been advanced - hypotheses that, predictably, rehash the themes of dominance and difference. On the one hand, female to male convergence has been said to serve a compensatory function: women may talk more assertively in the presence of men simply because people in general "... speak to men relatively dominantly in order to avoid feeling at a power disadvantage" (Hall & Braunwald, 1981, p. 108; cf. Markel et al., 1972; Steckler & Rosenthal, 1985). Alternatively, the diminishment of sex-differences within mixed-sex domains may mirror the diminished influence of gender-typed speech norms. Carli (1990, p. 943) has speculated along these lines:

*"Because the norms governing their behavior may be less clear than in same-sex interactions, individuals may, as a result, exhibit behavior that is more similar to that which they expect from the opposite-sex".*

Although each of these perspectives may capture part of the truth, speech accommodation theory (hereafter SAT; Giles et al., 1991) would contend that a more complex set of social and psychological forces underlies male-female speech convergence.

At its most basic, SAT comprises two disarmingly simple propositions: (1) social psychological mechanisms (eg. motivations, intentions, identity dynamics) underlie the speech adjustments of communicators; (2) communicators react - both evaluatively and verbally - to each other in response to such adjustments. While these postulates remain as its deep structure, since its birth in the early seventies SAT has become an increasingly baroque account of language behaviour. One mark of its prolific growth has been its extension into a range of applied domains including: the political realm (Levin &

Lin, 1988), second language learning (Giles & Byrne, 1982; Beebe & Giles, 1984), interethnic group conflict (Bourhis, 1984; Genesee & Bourhis, 1988), language and social class (Giles & Powesland, 1975), medical discourse (Street, 1991), legal discourse (Aronsson et al., 1987), therapeutic discourse (Ferrara, 1991), and inter-sex communication (Kramerae, 1981; Hogg, 1985; Bilous & Krauss, 1988). Another index of expansion has been the theory's evolving propositional structure. Over the past few decades, SAT has been repeatedly altered to account for novel findings and even now is in a process of revision and extension (Giles, pers. comm.). As a final illustration of its fertility, we might note accommodation theory's ability to spark related perspectives: ethnolinguistic identity theory (Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987), and the intergroup theory of second language acquisition (Giles & Bryne, 1982) are examples of 'satellite' models that have developed from its fecund base.

Such is the diversity of the research paradigm spearheaded by Giles and his colleagues, I cannot cover all of the relevant empirical and theoretical contributions here (cf. Street & Giles, 1982; Giles et al., 1987a; Giles & Coupland, 1991, chap. 3; Giles et al., 1991 for more comprehensive discussions of SAT). My aims are more modest. I shall begin by outlining the essential features of SAT; then I shall consider its value in the area of gender and communication; and in conclusion I shall make some more general comments about what a useful theory of gender and communication might look like.

### **Speech Accommodation and Gender**

SAT is a model centred on the dynamic (re)adjustment of a speaker's verbal behaviour in response to that of an interlocutor; in other words it is a model that gives priority to the *other-relatedness* of language use. The paradigmatic case for SAT is the speaker-listener couplet. It is to this analytic unit, not to the individual, that the theory is oriented. This point is vital to remember, for it quickly becomes obscured when we delve into the *intrapsychic* forces that motivate accommodation strategies, or when we break SAT into subcomponents for analytic purposes (eg. when we separate language production and reception). Figure 5 captures the speaker-listener relation posited by SAT, as well as the complex causal paths assumed by the perspective. We should keep this complete dynamic system in mind when considering the more fragmented static picture presented below.

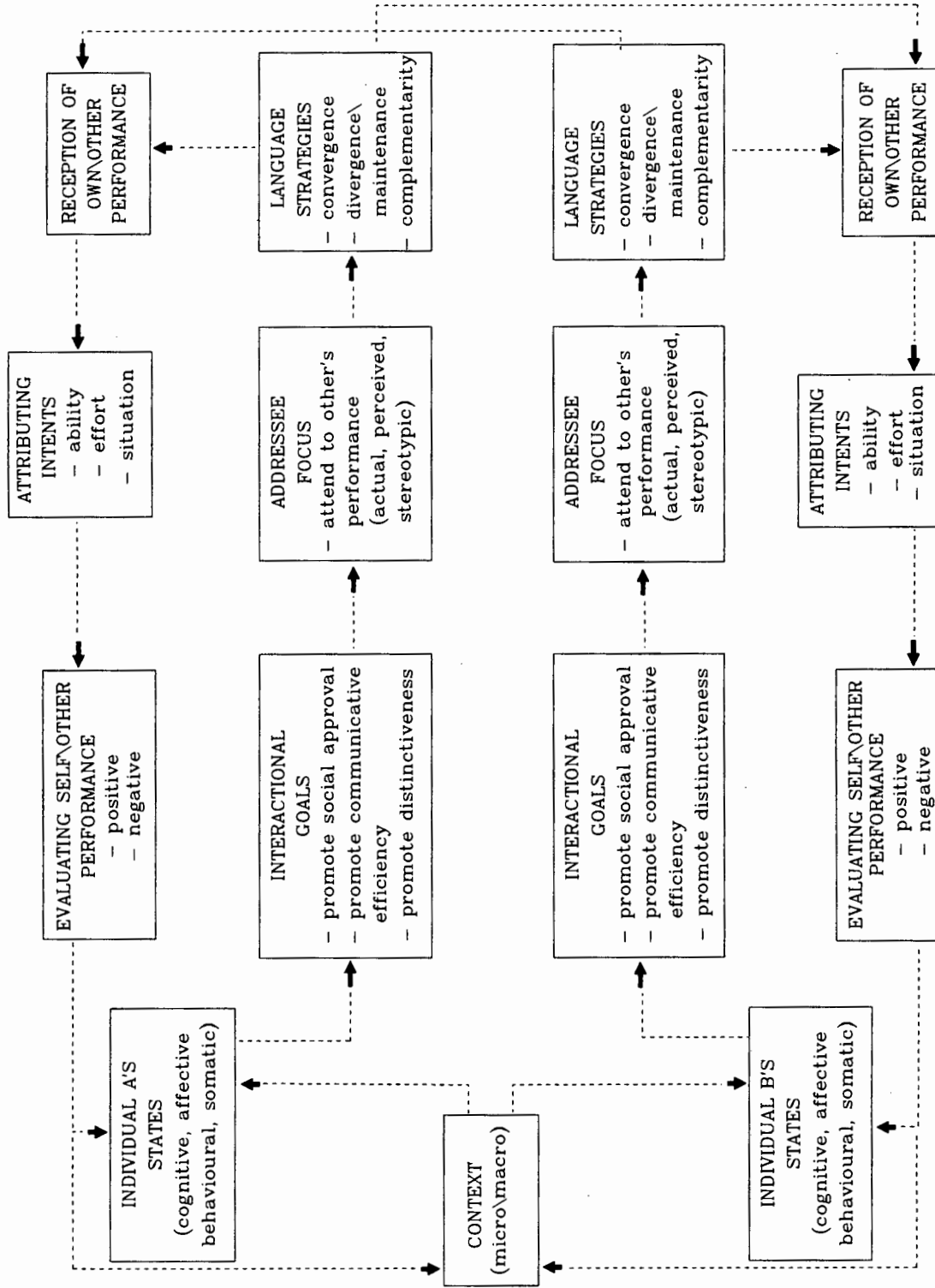


Figure 5 A model of SAT processes (adapted from Coupland & Giles, 1988b, p.177)

## Convergent and Divergent Orientations

In its earliest expressions, SAT concentrated almost exclusively on just two linguistic strategies - convergence and divergence. Currently, as a result of its meteoric growth, the theory specifies a broader range of tactics (cf. Giles et al., 1991; Coupland et al., 1988a). None the less, its basic concepts are best exemplified through an analysis of convergent and divergent speech.

### Convergence

Convergence is the process whereby a speaker alters her verbal style to become more similar to that of an interlocutor. Linguistically it can take diverse forms, ranging from actual language switch (eg. English to Afrikaans) to more subtle alterations (eg. variations in pitch, speech rate, response latency, or loudness). Convergence can also occur in an *upwards* direction towards a prestigious language variant (eg. Received Pronunciation English) or in a *downwards* direction towards a lower status vernacular (eg. 'Cape Coloured' Afrikaans); and, within a particular dyadic exchange, it may be *asymmetrical* (one speaker shifts) or *symmetrical* (both speakers shift). But despite these and other (cf. Giles et al., 1991) descriptive niceties, the convergent act is generally an *integrative* strategy which prompts favourable listener evaluations on qualities such as social attractiveness, confidence, and competence (cf. Street, 1982; Putman & Street, 1984; Bradac, Mulac, & House, 1988; Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973).

Given its salutary effect on others, accommodation theorists have assumed, quite reasonably, that the desire to elicit approval is an important motivation for speech convergence. Several experiments have lent this notion further credence. Researchers have reported, for example, that convergence is more likely when we are addressing those whom we admire (Purcell, 1984) or those whom we would have admire us (Putman & Street, 1984). Akin to this, Natale (1975a&b) has shown that individuals who crave approval - the socially vulnerable - manifest particularly high levels of the strategy. To some extent, moreover, the positive impression of convergent speech (particularly language switch) is common knowledge, a knowledge put to rather mercenary effect by telesales companies, shopkeepers, bank tellers and so on (cf. Van Den Berg, 1986; Van Den Berg, 1985 in Giles et al., 1987a).

The promotion of approval, then, is a key reason for language convergence. Yet in a sense this mechanism seems too crude to be of real analytic value: we would wish to know precisely *how* convergence achieves its positive effect. Accommodation theorists have submitted various possibilities.

For a start, by reducing linguistic dissimilarities, convergence may activate the dynamics described by Byrne (1969) in his model of similarity attraction. At its most facile this theory - which has become a core element of SAT - proposes that a person can prompt favourable evaluations from another if she reduces dissimilarities between them. Newcomb (1966) captured this idea most colourfully when he quipped:

*"You may remember the old story whose punch line is "vive la difference" - Thank God for the little difference. If are inclined to take a favourable view of positive interpersonal attraction, perhaps we should also be grateful for similarities: Vive la similarité!" (p. 178).*

SAT states that language is one dimension of behaviour through which 'la similarité' can be *accomplished* by individuals within a given exchange, and therefore through which they can secure the good opinion of others. A slight thematic variation is the idea that convergence may serve to underline speaker-listener solidarity in terms of social identity. This was splendidly illustrated by Nikolas Coupland (1985) in his investigation of a Welsh disk jockey's behaviour during a radio chat show. Coupland found that at key moments of the show the DJ lapsed into the local Cardiff idiom, thereby affirming his own status as a member of the tribe. Finally, convergence may arouse positive listener sentiments by enhancing a speaker's intelligibility. Although this function of convergence was underestimated in the inchoate stages of SAT - a problem for which the model was criticized at that time (cf. Bell, 1984) - it has become more prominent as the theory has developed. Everyday examples of the intelligibility dynamic include: lawyers who simplify legal jargon when addressing their clients (eg. Aronsson et al., 1987); high status speakers who slow their speech rate when addressing low status partners (eg. Thakerar et al., 1982); and ethnic minorities who exhibit 'long term' convergence to the language norms of an ethnic majority (eg. Shockey, 1984).

In view of its multifaceted positive impact on listeners, we might expect convergence to be a pervasive strategy in conversation. It is. But we should realize that its nature and extent is circumscribed by two factors. On a very practical level, speakers can exhibit convergence only insofar as they possess the linguistic repertoire to do so. Thus, our overwhelming desire to accommodate to a Russian holiday maker may be thwarted by our lack of verbal prowess. Convergence is also unlikely to occur unless the benefits that it offers a speaker (eg. securing social approval) outweigh the costs (eg. effort, loss of identity). At the very heart of SAT is the idea that conversation, like many other areas of social life, is managed along principles of social exchange, with speakers behaving in ways that maximize overall 'profits' (cf. Larsen, Martin & Giles, 1977). This point is worth bearing in mind as we delve deeper into the labyrinth of forces that govern accommodation tactics.

Up to this point I have presented a fairly straightforward picture of speech convergence, depicting it as a congenial strategy which is spurred by a desire for approval. But such a vision is simplistic. In real life conversation accommodation processes are exceedingly complicated phenomena - complexly accomplished, complexly received, complexly motivated. I can merely hint at such complexity in this brief note.

Since the early work on accommodation processes in the seventies, theorists have considerably enriched their understanding of speech convergence; nowadays, the concept has a much sharper psychological and linguistic edge.

With respect to the process of *reception*, SAT now posits a more elaborate causal path (see figure 5). After Giles and Smith (1979), for instance, theorists no longer take for granted that a simple one to one relationship obtains between convergence and positive evaluation; instead, they recognize that there may be 'optimal' levels beyond which the favourable impact of convergent speech dwindles. More than this, researchers have shown that by 'overaccommodating' we may even produce *negative* feelings in listeners. A prime example is speech convergence to the aged, which is often perceived as condescending and insulting, rather than affable, by elderly people (Coupland et al., 1988a; Atkinson & Coupland, 1988).

Accommodation theorists have also become increasingly aware that the evaluation of a convergent act largely depends upon the attributions of speaker intent formed by its recipient (cf. Simard, Taylor & Giles, 1976). If, for example, an Afrikaans-speaking South African converges towards my English tongue, my gratitude may be limited should I believe that she has a instrumental reason for doing so, eg. she wants to sell me a car (cf. Bourhis & Genesee, 1980). By the same token, my disapproval of a speaker who *fails* to converge to English may be moderated should I assume that this is the result of situational pressure or a lack of linguistic competence. The overriding point is that listeners, by drawing upon available contextual information (eg. speaker abilities), form causal attributions about speaker motivations; these then mediate their response to tactics such as convergence (see figure 5).

Over the years, accommodation theorists have also become more sensitive to the ways in which contextual norms affect the reception of convergence. Oft cited in this respect are Ball, Giles, Byrne, and Berechee (1984), who examined reactions to speakers in a job interview situation and reported that accommodative processes were of little evaluative importance in this particular context, at least when compared to normative beliefs about the 'appropriate' speech behaviour. Working on a broader canvas, Fred Genesee and Richard Bourhis explored the 'articulated' (Doise, 1986) influence of socio-structural, normative, and social-psychological forces on the reception (and production) of language shifts in Canada (cf. Bourhis, 1984, 1985; Genesee & Bourhis, 1982; Genesee &

Bourhis, 1988). While their findings are too complicated to summarize here, it is enough to recognize the most important implication of their research: "...the social psychological significance of language switching in cross-cultural encounters is *multiply determined and dynamic*" (Genesee & Bourhis, 1988, p. 244; my emphasis).

With regard to the production of convergence, too, accommodation theorists have constructed a more and more detailed picture (see figure 5). Whereas in the formative years of SAT they focussed on speakers' attempts to approximate the language behaviour of their interlocutors, nowadays convergence is believed to be less a process of 'matching' and more a complex social-psychological act. Moving away from the *apsychological* taxonomies of sociolinguists (cf. Giles, 1977; Smith et al., 1980), accommodation theorists have shown how code-switching strategies are shaped by the perceptions of the human actor. In a beautifully clear illustration, Thakerar et al. (1982) demonstrated that speakers may converge not to the *objective* language behaviour of their partners, but to their *subjective* perceptions of this behaviour (perceptions that are often quite inaccurate).

Currently, SAT is also demonstrating greater linguistic sophistication. In its early formulations, the model focussed on speakers' style changes in response to the *speech* of their addressees (so-called *approximation* strategies); but more recently it has expanded to theorize shifts that are oriented to the competences of addressees (eg. linguistic abilities), their discourse management requirements (eg. topic development), or their social roles (eg. old\young, powerful\powerless). The new, improved, 'sociolinguistically elaborated' SAT has embraced a much more extensive range of verbal and non-verbal tactics<sup>(7)</sup>. Scholars have moved past the notion of linguistic matching, pointing out that convergence is just one of several strategies whereby a speaker can show her desire to 'attune' to another's conversational needs (cf. Coupland et al., 1988a). For instance, we might sometimes signal our desire to integrate with another person by encouraging the smooth flow of a conversation rather than by exhibiting convergence *per se*.

Within this broader vision of convergence as 'attuning', we can see the first glimmerings of a rapprochement between SAT and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework (cf. Giles et al., 1991). What is convergence in a *psychological* sense if not a sensitivity to the face wants of others? This is just one of several similarities between the two models; we shall explore some others in the conclusion of this chapter. For now, I wish to examine a phenomenon on which Brown and Levinson have failed to

---

(7) The perspective has broadened to the extent that Giles et al. (1987a) have suggested it be renamed *communication accommodation theory*.

throw light (cf. Tracy, 1990) but that accommodation theorists have incorporated as an integral component of their model: the darker side of face-work - face attack.

### Divergence

Divergence, the second strategy proposed by SAT, is the process whereby a speaker alters her verbal style to become less like that of another. For the most part it is a tactic that stirs hostility in recipients.

The first meeting of Connie and Mellors - protagonists in Lawrence's novel, *Lady Chatterly's Lover* - provides an interesting introduction to the dynamics of divergence:

*"Connie this is the new gamekeeper Mellors. You haven't spoken to her ladyship yet, Mellors?"*

*"No Sir!" came the ready neutral words.*

*The man lifted his hat as he stood, showing his thick, almost fair hair. He stared straight into Connie's eyes, with a perfect, fearless, impersonal look, as if he wanted to see what she was like. He made her feel shy.*

*"But you've been here some time, haven't you?" Connie said to him.*

*"Eight months, Madam...your Ladyship" he corrected himself calmly.*

*"And do you like it?"*

*She looked him in the eyes. His eyes narrowed a little, with irony, perhaps with impudence.*

*"Why yes, thank you your ladyship! I was reared here..." He gave another slight bow, turned, put his hat on, and strode to take hold of the chair. His voice on the last words had fallen into the heavy broad drag of the dialect...perhaps also in mockery, because there had been no trace of dialect before." (Lawrence, 1982, p.48 my emphasis)*

Mellors lapse here into a working class vernacular comes at an interesting moment of tension between himself and Lady Chatterly, a moment at which his ethnic identity has been affronted by her insensitive questioning ("And how do you like it?"). Such dialect shift is repeated by Mellors within various passages of the novel, undoubtedly serving a variety of narrative functions; but even at this early stage, we have some intimation of its fundamentally *dissociative* impact ("...perhaps also in mockery"). The effect is more powerfully evinced in a later scene, when we become privy in a much fuller sense to the hostile response it provokes in Lady Chatterly. The scene is the famous struggle for the key to the Gamekeepers hut. It is worth quoting in full.

*"He looked at her. She looked cold.*

*'Sir Clifford adn't got no other key then?' he asked.*

*'No, but it doesn't matter. I can sit perfectly dry under this porch. Good afternoon!'*

*She hated the excess of vernacular in his speech.*

*He watched her closely, as she was moving away. Then he hitched up his jacket, and put his hand in his breeches pocket, taking out the key of the hut.*

*'Appen yer'd better 'ave this key an' min fend for t'bods some other road.'*

*She looked at him.*

*'What do you mean?' she asked.*

*'I mean as 'appen Ah can find anuther pleece as'll du for rearin' th' pheasants. If you want ter be 'ere, yo'll non want me messin' abaht a' th' time.'*

*She looked at him, getting his meaning through the fog of the dialect.*

*'Why don't you speak ordinary English' she asked. (Lawrence, 1982, p. 97-98 my emphasis).*

Why indeed. It cannot be because Mellors is incapable of a more 'refined' usage, for at various points in the novel he produces precisely that. Yet at this moment of confrontation he slides into a deep Midlands brogue, and to some extent we, the reader, share Connie's frustration, as we too attempt to look beyond the 'fog of the dialect' to grasp his meaning.

It is obvious from this passage that Lawrence was aware of the hostile nature of divergent shifts. Indeed in *Lady Chatterly's Lover* he seems to have used them, among other things, as a narrative technique to emphasize the psychological and social chasm between his characters. In so doing, the novelist, with a characteristic flash of psychological insight, anticipated the findings of Howard Giles and his colleagues almost half a century later.

Evidence from real life conversation supports the notion that divergence is an invidious and hostile strategy (cf. Street, 1982; Giles & Smith, 1979; Simard, Taylor, & Giles, 1976). It is worth noting also that even speech maintenance (ie. no shift) may be deemed offensive by listeners; it is by no means a neutral or innocuous act, often being read as *non-convergence* (cf. Bourhis, 1979). Of course we should realize that (as with convergence) the evaluation of divergence and maintenance is modulated by listener attributions and contextual norms; nonetheless, on the whole such strategies arouse recipients' antipathy.

This brings us to an important question: what motivates speakers to adopt these dissociative tactics?

Back in 1977, Richard Bourhis and Howard Giles provided a partial answer to this puzzle. They took as their research setting a Welsh language revival course, and as their subjects a group of Welsh adults, eager to recapture the wonders of their ancient Celtic tongue<sup>(8)</sup>. Into this ethnically charged context they planted a tape-recorded message from the most provocative of ambassadors - an Englishman (and a snooty one at that). Ostensibly the experiment's aim was to survey opinions about second language learning programs. As such, subjects were required to respond, verbally, to a series of pre-recorded questions. But the researchers actually wanted to test several hypotheses regarding speech divergence, the most important of which concerned its relationship to ethnic threat. Therefore, at a crucial point in proceedings (the 'nationally-salient' condition), the taped-recorded Englishman asked subjects rather peevisly:

---

(8) For half the subjects this eagerness stemmed from ethnic pride; for the others it stemmed from a desire for career advancement (cf. Bourhis & Giles, 1977 for further details).

"...even in the boardrooms of some of your own education departments it is being said that "Welsh is dying, why can't you leave alone? It is spoken by such a tiny proportion of the people that it has one foot in the grave...it is on the slippery slope of extinction...Now as I have already said, I believe, to be realistic that the future of Welsh appears pretty dismal... So could I have your opinion concerning the survival and status of the Welsh language in Wales?" (Bourhis & Giles, 1977, p.124-125).

Bourhis and Giles reported that subjects' response to this diatribe was a sharp linguistic divergence away from the stimulus speaker: disagreements were voiced, Welsh accents were thickened, and, in some instances, actual Welsh vocabulary was used.

From the two examples I have presented thus far, the link between speech divergence and social identity should have become clear. In the case of Bourhis and Giles's (1977) experiment, divergence was used to stress a distinctive ethnic identity (Welsh versus English); in the case of Mellors and Lady Chatterly, it was used to mark a contrast in social class membership (lower versus upper). The identity-stressing functions of language have been noted by many other writers (see Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987; Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1990; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1990). Just as we often use linguistic cues to categorize others as members of particular social groups, correspondingly, it is frequently through speech that we 'mark', cognitively and emotionally, our own group memberships.

In specifying, more cogently, the social psychological forces underlying divergence, accommodation theorists have drawn upon the theory of social identity developed by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Giles, 1981). Using the insights of this model, they have proposed the following causal sequence *apropos* of the production of divergence:

1. In seeking to achieve a positive social identity, members of a particular group often engage in a process of social comparison with significant outgroups.
2. Ideally, the outcome of such comparisons is positive distinctiveness, in which the ingroup is favourably differentiated from the outgroup on some important dimension (eg. status, intelligence, attractiveness).
3. Because language is frequently a central dimension of social identity, often it is also one that groups use to achieve positive distinctiveness.
4. Therefore - and especially in contexts where intergroup relations are paramount - group members may use speech divergence to enhance their identities and to distance themselves from significant out-groups. In other words, using divergence speakers may try to emphasize their *psycholinguistic distinctiveness* (Giles et al., 1977)(9).

---

(9) Although I have concentrated on its link with group identity, divergence may sometimes reflect the desire to dissociate *personally* from another speaker. A spectacular illustration emerged during a recent court case, in which a Boston obstetrician was charged with performing an illegal abortion (cf. Danet, 1980). At key moments of the trial, the prosecuting and defending attorneys advanced quite divergent descriptions of the dead child (eg. "baby", "child", and "the deceased" versus

Social identity theory describes not merely the dynamics of comparison and distinctiveness (as above), but also the situations in which such strategies are likely to ensue. Drawing upon this theoretical base, Giles and Johnson (1981) have formulated a taxonomy of conditions under which speech divergence becomes a common tactic. They have suggested, firstly, that it is likely to occur when contextual factors bring intergroup dynamics into prominence. For example, in situations where group identities are explicitly cued or threatened, divergent acts may abound (cf. Giles & Johnson, 1986; Dube-Simard, 1983; Bourhis & Giles, 1977; Bourhis, Giles, Leyens, & Tajfel, 1979; Bourhis, Giles, & Lambert, 1975). Divergence also becomes more probable when speakers: (1) identify strongly with an ingroup; (2) perceive language to be an important aspect of that group's identity; (3) feel that exit from or entry to the group is difficult because its boundaries are sharply defined and impermeable; and (4) believe that their group is high in 'vitality', ie. it is a 'statusful' group which is bolstered by socio-structural resources and demographic factors (cf. Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987).

Even from the patchy overview presented above<sup>(10)</sup>, we can see that SAT's account of divergence represents a genuine attempt to interlink the effects of causal variables from different levels of analysis. On a social psychological level, the theory highlights basic processes of cognition and affect (eg. the need for a positive social identity); on a situational level, it attends to the contextual factors that make social identity dynamics salient (eg. ethnic threat or categorization cues); and on a macro-sociological level, it explores the effect of socio-structural resources (eg. institutional support) and ideological belief systems (eg. the permeability of group boundaries).

To complicate matters even further, we should remember that divergence and maintenance are governed by same network of variables that control convergence. Thus factors such as linguistic repertoires, the cost-benefit ratio, causal attribution principles, and situational norms very much shape their production and reception. To avoid repetition I shall not provide commentary around these issues.

Two further points deserve further brief mention however.

First, speech divergence is not always negatively evaluated by participants in a particular conversation; there are circumstances in which it is the desired linguistic strategy.

---

"fetus", "embryo" and "products of conception"), in an attempt to impose their conflicting interpretations of reality upon the jury. Here, divergence served an instrumental purpose (ie. to sway jurors). But it can sometimes serve other, perhaps less calculated, individual level functions. It may, for instance, be used to guide another person's speech to a more tolerable level. To give a personal example: my father's ponderously slow joke-telling is often greeted by ever quickening responses from the rest of the family, which are intended to speed up the delivery of punchline!

(10) Owing to space limitations, I have ignored several additional factors that govern the likelihood of speech divergence occurring within a particular exchange (cf. Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987 for a more detailed discussion).

Within many role-couplets (eg. doctor\patient, interviewer\interviewee) participants are expected to produce different but *complementary* speech behaviour. And, as we shall see in a moment, male-female exchanges may sometimes represent instances of such 'speech complementarity'.

Second, accommodation theorists now recognize that divergence may be merely one linguistic realization of a more general desire to dissociate with another speaker (cf. Coupland et al., 1988a). Thought of as a broad subjective orientation, divergence becomes more than a simple matter of unmatching language (eg. accent, speech rate); it becomes protean, capable of taking quite disparate forms. For example, by providing inadequate support for the topics introduced by a partner, a speaker may commit a virulently face-threatening act. Such 'contra-attuning' at the level of *discourse management*, though not strictly an example of divergent speech, may nevertheless be shaped by psychological and contextual forces similar to those that govern divergence (eg. desire for dissociation, the cost\reward ratio and so on). Therefore these tactics might well be illuminated by the accommodation model.

More pertinent to this thesis, by broadening its scope to incorporate such strategies, SAT has made itself more ripe for an application to gender relations.

### **Applying the Model**

To gauge the value of SAT in the domain of gender and speech I shall examine the perspective on two levels. First, at the level of metatheory, I shall argue that it provides the blue-print for a really effective explanation. The reason is simple - SAT constitutes an elaborate and praiseworthy attempt to wrestle with the levels of analysis problem. I have already raised this point in the foregoing discussion, and I shall touch upon it again in the conclusion of the chapter. Second, at a theoretical level SAT offers some telling insights into the forces at play within single-sex and mixed-sex conversations, clarifying why men and women adopt quite different verbal strategies across these situations. Admittedly the theory's application to gender relations is far from unproblematic. It is an application that requires more extensive empirical investigation. It is also one which, by the by, takes us into some poorly charted conceptual territory out on the frontiers of the accommodation model. Nevertheless, SAT offers a more compelling analysis of constructs such as 'power' and 'identity' than that presented by the dominance and difference frameworks (cf. chap. 2), and for this reason it remains of value for language and gender theorists.

The application of SAT to gender relations can proceed on a number of fronts. Most obviously, it offers a scheme for interpreting the mutual speech convergence exhibited by

men and women in cross-gender exchanges (see above). Moving beyond crass speculations about speech 'modelling', accommodation theory posits that convergence is a complex psycho-linguistic act, which is motivated by a desire to integrate with another and delimited by various contextual (eg. situational norms) and intrapsychic (eg. need for approval) forces. We might add that while approval-seeking is the most common-sense reason for male-female convergence, the intelligibility factor should not be underestimated. Scenarios in which men and women might 'attune' their language to cater for the 'interpretive competences' (real or imagined) of the opposite-sex are easy to imagine. For example, a man chatting to a woman about a sex preferential topic (eg. rugby) may choose to simplify his diction, or even furnish chivalrous explanations should he feel that they are necessary.

As a derivative hypothesis, SAT also predicts that those with an intense need for social approval are likely to exhibit higher degrees of convergence (cf. Natale, 1975a&b). Owing to their low status in our society, we might anticipate that women have a greater desire for approval than men, and that accordingly they might rely more heavily upon convergent strategies (cf. Kramer, 1981). Supporting this idea, several studies have shown that 'upwards' convergence on the part of women is much greater than the corresponding shift by men (cf. Hogg, 1985; Valdes-Fallis, 1977; Mulac et al., 1988; Mulac et al., 1987; Welkowitz, Bond & Feldstein, 1984). Valdes-Fallis (1977) located a particularly clear illustration within the code-switching behaviour of Mexican-American men and women. She found that female speakers more readily followed male switches into Spanish than vice versa, a discovery that led her to conclude:

*"...Mexican-American women do reflect their traditional social conditioning and their view of themselves as having lesser status than males in general." (p.72)*

If we interpolate the idea of 'discourse attuning', we can extend our argument concerning women's propensity for accommodative language. We can view their use of topic support strategies - eg. verbal backchannels (Fishman, 1978, 1980) and head nods (Duncan & Fiske, 1977) - as attempts to gain the sanction of their male addressees. Conversely, men's failure to accommodate to women in these ways may reflect their lower level of social desirability. In fact, given the strong status position of the male group, we might expect identity-stressing divergence and a general tendency to dissociate from their female partners to be a typical response of this group. Again we can find corroboratory data in the literature. In chapters 1 and 2 we examined many instances of men's poorly attuned style, a style that women generally experience as nonreciprocal and unsupportive (cf. Holmes, 1985; Fishman, 1978; Defrancisco, 1991; Maltz & Borker, 1982). Moreover, research has shown that speech divergence *per se* is also more typical of male speakers, who use it as a means of accenting their gender identity in cross-sex

conversations (see especially Hogg, 1985). At its most unsavoury, masculine selfhood may be expressed as verbal 'terrorism' (Kissling, 1991) against women (wolf-whistles, lewd shouts etc.). Accommodation theorists would view such language use as *intergroup*<sup>(11)</sup> behaviour, both driven and bounded by group identity processes.

To summarize our argument up to this point: SAT suggests that bilateral male-female convergence will characterize many cross-sex conversations, just as it characterizes exchanges between members of other social groups. However, it also stipulates that women, being of lower social status, are more likely to rely on integrative verbal strategies than men, but less likely to rely on dissociative ones. In social exchange terms: hostile tactics (eg. divergence, maintenance, or any 'contra-accommodative' move) may be more 'costly' for women due to their vulnerable social position. Therefore, although one might like to imagine that a norm of reciprocity governs language shifts - so that convergence is always greeted with convergence, divergence with divergence, and ultimately conversationalists attain equivalent 'profits' - in the real world this vision is a chimera. Some addressees more than others receive face-enhancing convergent shifts; some more than others bear the brunt of face-offending divergent shifts. Such is the legacy of power<sup>(12)</sup>.

Accommodation theorists would hasten to remind us, however, that power does not determine language style unilaterally, but is emeshed with other influences (situational norms, social desirability, verbal competence etc.). For instance, within a particular interaction it is possible that instrumental goals (eg. winning a debate) may be so vital that affective (eg. need for approval) or cognitive goals (eg. communicative efficiency) pale in comparison. Under such conditions, women may willingly use rancorous communication to achieve their objectives - regardless of the gender of their audience. Surprisingly, language and gender research has barely touched upon such matters (though see chaps. 4 & 5).

In concluding this section, we must examine a few further issues which, unfortunately, darken and complicate our analysis.

- 
- (11) In other words, it would not be viewed as an instance of individual aggression from men with chauvanistic *personalities*. Rather it would be interpreted as the voice of masculine identity - an expression of mens' 'psycholinguistic distinctiveness' in a context where intergroup relations (male\female) are cued.
- (12) It is worth observing that at least two other models of interpersonal communication have arrived at this crossroads, albeit by slightly different routes. Politeness theory states that, as a function of P, female to male FTAs are more frequently swathed in politeness than male to female FTAs. Similarly, status expectations states theory indicates that women are less likely to employ hostile (eg. disagreements) or even status stressing (eg. make suggestions) tactics in mixed sex groups, because such behaviours oppose the inertia of diffuse status expectations (see particularly Ridgeway & Johnson, 1990).

The first raises a question concerning the addressee-focus of SAT, which Scotton (1988) believes to be too all-absorbing. In her own work she has emphasized the self-presentational aspects of code-switching strategies, contending that these are often used to negotiate *individual* rights and advantages (Scotton, 1983, 1985, 1988). From this vantage, we might understand women's 'upwards' convergence towards an masculine style as gambit for power, impelled more by a desire for social mobility than a concern for men's conversational needs. Informative here is research on other 'subordinate' groups. This suggests that low status speakers must typically cross 'soft' linguistic boundaries before the 'hard' boundaries of social status can be surmounted (cf. Banks, 1987; San Antonio, 1987). Of course this is by no means a novel idea. It was the central theme of Shaw's *Pygmalion*: who can forget Higgins's gratuitous linguistic advice to Eliza Dolittle?

*"Yes, you squashed cabbage leaf...you incarnate insult to the English language: I could pass you off as the Queen of Sheba." (1953, p. 27).*

Shaw recognized the intimate relation between upwards convergence and social advancement. Similarly, we might understand women's upwards shifts into a more agentic style as a self-enhancing tactic, designed to cast off the disadvantages of a less prestigious 'feminine' style.

A qualification is in order here. When we speak of women's language as being less 'prestigious', it does not mean, *a fortiori*, that it is intrinsically deficient. On the contrary, like so many low status idioms (Giles, Hewstone, Ryan, & Johnson, 1987b), its deficiency is merely a social construct<sup>(13)</sup>. But when trying to fathom present conversational realities, we cannot ignore the fact that some language variants possess greater prestige than others; after all, the prestige of a language variety may determine accommodation tactics (cf. Bradac, 1990). For women at university, for example, convergence to a masculine style may be essential to their academic success (see Triechler & Krameræe, 1983). Within this context the unemotional, detached, top-down, decidedly masculine style reigns supreme - it is the institutionally prescribed style, the authoritative style of science and scholarship. To use the terminology of Giles and his colleagues, it is the style of high 'vitality' (Giles et al., 1977). This is because it is associated with a 'vital' linguistic group which enjoys strong institutional support and

---

(13) Those tempted to extoll the 'natural' superiority of the men's rational, forthright style should examine the cross-cultural work on language and gender. In the Malagasy society, for instance, a flowery, indirect, embellished style of communication is esteemed; it is also the style stereotypically attributed to the Malagasy men! (cf. Keenan, 1974 in Borker, 1980). This gives substance to the view that "...evaluations of language varieties do not reflect either linguistic or aesthetic qualities so much as the social conventions within speech communities concerning the status and prestige associated with speakers of the varieties" (Giles et al., 1987b, p. 585).

high status - men. These macro-level foundations inevitably structure micro-level language use (cf. Bourhis, 1985; Van Den Berg, 1988 for some interesting examples).

It seems, therefore, that even if we view women's upward shifts as attempts to claim power, paradoxically they are shifts that merely *underscore* male domination. They represent simply another expression of men's control: power as having ones speech norms prized (cf. Bilous & Krauss, 1988). Still, the distinction between convergence as an *individually-oriented* strategy geared towards negotiating power and convergence as an *addressee-oriented* strategy geared towards interpersonal concord is worth preserving.

A second problem clouding the application of SAT to gender relations derives from the *complementary* nature of masculine and feminine roles. Expressed crudely: at times when men and women speak together gender 'difference' may be *normative*, ie. socially expected and desired. This poses some interpretative problems for the accommodation framework, because when complementary speech norms are salient, the usual social consequences of divergence and convergence may not apply. Giles and Powesland were aware of this problem as early as 1975:

*"A further example might be that of a tough, masculine, rugby-football playing young man seeking the favour of an exceptionally coy young lady. One might suppose that he would not advance his courtship by modelling his manner on hers but would be wiser to maintain or even exaggerate his own virile and masterful style of speech and behaviour". (p.167).*

In short, within some circumstances speech maintenance\divergence might actually *increase* men's attractiveness to women; likewise, on occasion, women might better secure the approval of male listeners by emphasizing their own femininity rather than shifting towards a masculine style (cf. Montepare & Vega, 1988<sup>(14)</sup>).

From the foregoing discussion, we can see that the predictive edge of SAT is somewhat blunted in the area of gender. (Indeed it is not falsifiable in a strictly Popperian sense.) Interpretative ambiguities linger. Are we to understand a particular instance of female to male speech convergence as a integrative shift, an attempt to barter for power, or a hostile contravention of a 'complementary' role set? Should we view a particular instance of male speech divergence as an antagonistic strategy of psycholinguistic

---

(14) In this example, the unhappy political nuances of male-female speech complementarity are prominent. Certainly, the idea that women use language to make themselves more attractive to men (socially or sexually) does not rest easily with feminist epistemology, and this may explain why intersex attraction is seldom mentioned by language and gender theorists. In a field where researchers are committed to challenging stereotypes about women, the image of the female coquette - in any of her myriad forms, from the harmless flirt to *la belle dame sans merci* - is an especially disagreeable one. Nonetheless when trying to explain the language use of the sexes, we cannot dismiss the role of conventional gender norms, pervasive and seductive as they are; to do so would be to commit theoretical suicide. In any case, though a politically 'dangerous' topic, the relation between language use and romantic attraction provides fertile opportunities for incisive and truly feminist analysis.

distinctiveness or as a positive enactment of a conventional gender script? Even more confusingly, is it not possible that within a single conversation men and women might manifest *both* convergence and divergence, each with the aim of soliciting approval<sup>(15)</sup>?

The answers to such questions are not clearly articulated within SAT and must be the object of future research. Yet we can be confident that the theory, with its in built sensitivity to context and complexity, is admirably equipped to resolve them in the future.



---

(15) For example, during a boardroom meeting, a female executive might converge to the aggressive speech of her male colleagues on some speech dimensions (in order to increase perceived competence) but, simultaneously, diverge on others (in order to fulfill gender role expectations). Giles et al. (1991, p. 11-17) might label this phenomenon multi-modal, 'mixed' accommodation (cf. Bilous & Krauss, 1988).

## CONCLUSION

Sex of audience effects, as we have discovered during chapter 3, are a phenomenon poorly understood by language theorists, who have been hindered by a data corpus that is incomplete, contradictory, and based upon methodologically suspect research (cf. chap.4). And yet, splintered and complicated though the evidence may be, most commentators have remained convinced that addressee sex is an important variable for language and gender scholarship. In this chapter, I have used two recent approaches to interpersonal communication, speech accommodation theory and politeness theory, to highlight and account for its importance.

But the value of these approaches extends far beyond this: they offer fecund, and surprisingly similar, guidelines for future theory building in the area of language and gender. A few of these guidelines are summarized below (see also chap. 6).

Let me begin by restating the central problem of contemporary thinking about gender and communication, which is: the propagation of simplistic causal models. The heritage of this problem is all too evident in current explanations of gender differences in communication (cf. chap. 2 for extensive commentary).

Rather than a detailed and systematic *theory*, the so-called 'dominance' perspective offers us a broad political vision. It reduces men and women to the level of political symbols, the oppressors and the oppressed, which are then posited as an explanation of gender differences in communication. In reality, these symbols are merely the signposts of an explanation still to be mapped. However well-intended, however valid in a general sense, they do not faithfully model real conversation, which is fraught with counter-examples and complexities. In fact, the dominance thesis - at least in its current forms - is tenable only if we ignore contradictory evidence, if we strip female communicators of agency and resistance, if we disregard the subtleties of contextual variation. The so-called 'difference' perspective suffers from related weaknesses. Difference theorists would have us believe that in cross-sex conversations men and women meet as citizens of separate linguistic cultures, misunderstanding and misunderstood. If only the 'lines of communication' (Tannen, 1990) could be opened, the argument runs, the sexes might discover some utopian middle ground where miscommunication no longer threatens

male-female solidarity. But the 'different worlds different words' hypothesis is misguided. Aside from its political naivete (cf. chap. 2), it also underestimates the linguistic versatility of the sexes, who, far from mindlessly adhering to gender specific rules of talk, can slip into gender atypical styles if circumstances are felicitous, or if it suits their conversational purposes.

Such, then, are the shortcomings of language and gender theorizing. How might the approaches endorsed in this chapter help to resolve them?

### From Stasis to Flux

Both accommodation theory and politeness theory are models of flux rather than stasis; *intraspeaker* variation rather than *intergroup* difference is their primary object (cf. Bilous & Krauss, 1988). They direct us to the question: How and why do men and women *adjust* their language use to fit the circumstances in which they find themselves? Addressee-oriented speech shifts are particularly important to both approaches (especially SAT), because these are rich in information about the nature of the relationship between speakers in society (eg. men and women). But on a more general level: when we move from the study of invariant gender differences to the study of contextually-tailored stylistic choices, we begin to see gender itself not as a homogeneous or unidimensional factor, but as a copious set of meanings - meanings that are linguistically 'indexed' in variable and subtle ways (cf. Brown, 1990, for instance).

### Primacy of Agency

Hand in hand with the notion of style shifting, is the notion of choice. For if we accept that men and women are linguistically versatile (and the research evidence demands it), we must accept also that in any particular exchange they can *select* from a range of verbal strategies (eg. convergence, divergence, complementarity). In other words, we must accept that their language use is *strategic*. Of course, notions such as 'strategy', 'goal' and 'intention' are not unproblematic (cf. Craig, 1990), and therefore this point requires qualification. To claim that male/female style shifts are strategic does *not* imply that men and women are always conscious of their verbal accommodations; indeed, research indicates that awareness varies across different speech dimensions and contexts of use (cf. Giles et al., 1991). Nor does it imply that all linguistic choices are equally accessible to both sexes. This is not the case: for example, when a woman uses dominant speech she may be called into 'account' for failing to 'do' gender appropriately (cf. West

& Zimmerman, 1987). Even so, that male/female speech is, to some extent at least, goal-directed seems to be incontrovertible. (How else might we make sense of the data summarized in this chapter?) Thus, no longer can we accept view of men and women depicted by the dominance and difference models, ie. linguistic dullards playing out roles scripted in advance for them by broader social forces (status related, subculture related). We must instead begin take seriously the cognitive worlds of speakers: their positive and negative face-wants, desire for communicative efficiency, identity needs, attributional processes, and so on<sup>(16)</sup>.

In this chapter, we have observed how accommodation theory and politeness theory provide us with some insight into this inner terrain. Both perspectives are bristling with psychological acumen; both are moored in basic processes of motivation and cognition; both depict human communication as fundamentally 'purposive'.

### A Multi-causal Approach

The final and most vital lesson to be taken from our guiding theories concerns the value of a 'multi-causal' approach (see chap. 6 for a more cogent discussion of the issue). Historically, accommodation theorists in particular have recognized the importance of such an approach; they have devised a model that truly satisfies Doises's (1986) criterion of 'articulation' (cf. Chap. 2). As a result, SAT is a highly responsive theory of interpersonal communication, which can shed light upon a wide range of phenomena, anomalous as well as typical<sup>(17)</sup>. Giles and his cohorts are not unaware of such advantages, as the following introduction to their most recent review of the theory indicates:

*"[Our overview] presents accommodation theory as a robust paradigm in the particular sense that it is, perhaps uniquely, able to attend to (1) social consequences (attitudinal, attributional, behavioral, communicative), (2) ideological and macro-societal factors, (3) intergroup variables and processes, (4) discursive practices in naturalistic settings, and (5) individual life span and group-language shifts." (Giles et al., 1991, p.4)*

---

(16) Such a position may lead us to novel interpretations of women's language (see, for example, Rosenblum, 1986). It may also help us to abandon the (politically questionable) view that women are deficient communicators; rather than linguistic victims, we might come to see women as linguistic strategists (cf. chap.2).

(17) Some might argue that this responsiveness has come at the sacrifice of parsimony. They might justifiably ask: hasn't SAT, with its increasing list of riders, caveats, and qualifications, with its ever more complex accompanying diagrams and charts, lost its predictive edge? (Then again, one wonders if parsimony is a realistic ideal in an area such as interpersonal communication.)

Politeness theory, too, provides a more elaborate and substantive account than traditional approaches to gender and language use, and I shall pick up on this point in chapter 6.

At this stage, however, I wish to turn to the empirical component of this dissertation. A multi-causal approach, after all, must be nurtured by appropriately designed research.



## CHAPTER 4

### RATIONALE AND METHOD

#### INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3 we examined evidence concerning the effect of audience gender on the verbal behaviour of men and women. Two contemporary models of interpersonal communication, politeness theory and speech accommodation theory, formed the theoretical backdrop to our discussion; and we noted that, as well as clarifying the role of listener, these models avoided several metatheoretical weaknesses of language and gender scholarship.

In this chapter, building heavily upon prior commentary, we shall progress to the empirical contribution of the dissertation (cf. the Introduction, p.5-7 for a summary of my rationale and design). I shall begin by delineating its rationale under three headings: theoretical motivations, empirical motivations, and methodological motivations; then I shall describe the research design that took shape around these considerations.

The findings generated by my study will be summarized and critically assessed in chapter 5.



## RATIONALE

### Theoretical Motivations

Previously I have attested to the theoretical importance of audience gender for language and gender research (cf. chap.3); it was because of this that I chose to vary the sex composition of speech dyads in my project. Would women speak to men more tentatively than to other women? Would men talk more assertively when addressing female as opposed to male interlocutors? These were a few of the questions probed by the study.

Audience effects, however, do not transpire in a social vacuum (cf. Krauss & Fussell, 1988): they themselves are shaped by other contextual factors. One such factor is the relative competitiveness of a conversation (about which I shall say more presently). Therefore - and in accord with my earlier calls for a contextually sensitive approach to gender and speech (cf. chaps. 1, 2 & 3) - I also examined the language use of men and women across both competitive and non-competitive conditions.

The present study, then, placed male\female speakers within a delicate situational matrix, its methodology taking the form of a 2 (subject gender: male\female) x 2 (audience gender: male\female) x 2 (condition: competitive\non-competitive) factorial design. This is represented in figure 6 on p.105.

Of course, a concern with situational variation is just one facet of the broader agenda of this dissertation: to cultivate a multi-causal approach to gender and speech. It is a facet centred on what Bourhis (1979) would term the 'micro-sociolinguistic' level of analysis (cf. chap. 2). Within my study, I also explored variation at the 'social-psychological' level, primarily by complementing 'objective' analyses of verbal behaviour with speakers' 'subjective' ratings of their own behaviour. Such an approach, which prizes the 'cognitive representations' (Forgas, 1983) of individuals, is characteristic of social psychological research on language, especially that undertaken in Europe<sup>(1)</sup>. It is also congruent with the unfolding argument of this dissertation. For if we are to develop a 'purposive' (Rosenblum, 1986) explanation of men's and women's speech (cf. chap. 2, p.48-52; chap. 3), an explanation that penetrates the netherworld of cognition and affect lurking 'under the skull', we must surely treat speakers' interpretations of their own

---

(1) Indeed, an important *raison d'être* of this research tradition was to remedy the psychological naivete of sociolinguistic work, work that often disregarded the inner life of speakers, ignoring their goals and attributions, depicting their language strategies as passive reflections of contextual forces rather than the dynamic product of both contextual and psychological forces (cf. Forgas, 1983; Giles, 1977; Smith et al., 1980; Giles & Hewstone, 1982).

behaviour seriously? That is, a theory that illuminates agency must surely be nourished by research that illuminates agency?

But within language and gender inquiry, researchers have seldom used speakers' own opinions to complement formal linguistic analyses (exceptions are Mulac, 1989; Bradley, 1981; Carli, 1990). Even when subjective ratings have been assessed, they have usually been assessed from the perspective of the observer (the person *external* to the communicative situation), seldom from the perspective of the participant (the person *internal* to it). Yet as Street (1985), among others (eg. Ryan, Giles & Hewstone, 1988), has reminded us, the observer's role differs markedly from that of the participant, a disjunction that may well affect her interpretation of language strategies.

During present research, therefore, wishing to shed light upon phenomenology as well as language use, I examined both the verbal behaviour of speakers and their assessments of this behaviour in terms of dimensions associated with masculinity and femininity (eg. aggression, dominance, sensitivity, the expression of emotion etc.). In so doing, I did not presume that subjects' self-ratings were either accurate or truthful - for research has shown that they are often biased by stereotypes, self-presentational goals, cognitive limitations etc. (cf. Thakerar et al., 1982; Giles & Coupland, 1991) - I did presume that they were of theoretical interest<sup>(2)</sup>.

Exact hypotheses were difficult to come by. However, past research on language and gender identification suggested that subjects would construe their speech to be typical of their gender (cf. Smith, 1985, 1980; also chap. 3, p.84-90). Intragroup variation aside, men and women are often invested in the belief that they speak masculinely and femininely respectively; it is an integral part of their selfhood (cf. Smith, 1985). Thus we have arrived at our first hypothesis:

<b>Hypothesis 1:</b>	<b>Women will generally rate themselves as speaking more femininely but less masculinely than men.</b>
----------------------	--

How would the sex composition of dyads influence subjects' assessments of their linguistic masculinity/femininity?

Given the dearth of previous research, the answer to this question was not readily available. But I took some direction from recent social psychological work on gender identity, which has revealed that people who are placed in mixed-sex contexts generally

---

(2) Further vindication for this assumption can be found in recent work on goal-setting, which to an increasing extent is examining speaker's perceptions of conversation (cf. Tracy & Coupland, 1990, and the special issue on 'multiple goals in face to face interaction' in the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 1990, Vol. 9 (1-2)).

adopt more gender stereotypic attitudes and behaviours than those placed in same-sex (eg. Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg & Turner, 1987; Abrams et al., 1985). Much of this research has been grounded in social identity theory, an approach that offers the following explanation (see also chap. 3, p.85-88): (1) during mixed-sex interaction, because it is often the category that best 'fits' this situation (cf. Oakes & Turner, 1987); gender may be cued as a salient aspect of social identity; (2) in such circumstances, men and women may initiate a process of social comparison with their gender outgroups: they become fired by the desire to attain 'positive ingroup distinctiveness'; (3) consequently, they may engage in 'self-categorization', taking upon themselves the (proto)typical characteristics of the group, and therefore acting, feeling, thinking in a more gender stereotypical fashion (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982).

Two problems cast doubt on this explanation, however. Social identity theory has had a limited application to the area of gender, and where it has been applied, it has been soundly criticized (cf. Skevington & Baker, 1989; Skevington, 1989). Also, people sometimes behave less, not more gender stereotypically in mixed-sex exchanges (see chap. 3), a factor that confounds or at least complicates a social identity analysis. The problem may arise from the fact that 'femininity' and 'masculinity' (by implication 'typically male' and 'typically female' behaviour) have quite different meanings for different gender subgroups (cf. Ruble & Higgins, 1976).

Having pondered these uncertainties, I opted for the safety of a research question:

**Research Question 1:**      **Would men and women rate themselves as speaking *more or less* gender stereotypically within mixed as opposed to same-sex dyads?**

### **Empirical Motivations**

Along with these theoretical motivations, the project was driven by several empirical ones.

First, it investigated usage of two language forms that have received extensive attention in the international literature, but to my knowledge have received none in the South African literature: hedges and backchannels. Research in North America and Europe has generally shown that these forms predominate in female speech (eg. Lakoff, 1975; Carli, 1990; McMillan et al., 1977; Priesler, 1986; Duncan & Fiske, 1977; Fishman, 1978; Hirschman, 1973; Roger & Nesshoever, 1987; though see Holmes, 1986, 1988a, 1990 and my discussion below). And while writers have varied in their assessment of what

this finding means<sup>(3)</sup>, few would disagree that South African research on these language variables is urgently required. Indeed, a few pioneering efforts notwithstanding - de Klerk's (1988) work on expletives and Kottler's (1990) on conversation analysis spring to mind - there has been little language and gender research of *any* kind in this country. The current study helped to fill this gap.

A further empirical motivation stemmed from our poor understanding of addressee influences. Commentators have usually agreed that audience sex is a variable of considerable relevance to language and gender research; unfortunately, they have also agreed that it is a variable about which we know little. For as we observed in chapter 3, the data on audience effects is paltry and incomplete. It is also conflicting. Several writers have claimed that gender differences in speech are more marked in mixed-sex as opposed to same-sex settings (eg. McMillan et al., 1977), others that they are less marked (eg. Piliavin & Martin, 1978), still others that they remain relatively unchanged across the two domains (eg. Dindia, 1987). In short, the evidence is hopelessly equivocal.

As a further complication: it is unlikely that the influence of audience gender remains stable across different situations; it may well vary as a function of other contextual elements (eg. formality, intimacy, conversation topic). I was particularly concerned with the role of situational competitiveness: how would this factor affect the subject gender, gender of audience, speech relation? Although few researchers have directly investigated the issue, Fisher (1983), for one, has shown that the competitive\cooperative dimension can powerfully influence the speech of men and women - regardless of subject gender or addressee gender effects (see also McLachlan, 1991). Similarly, both Mabry (1985) and Putnam and McCallister (1984) have reported that task structure can shape the verbal performance of the sexes. In their studies, unstructured 'feminine' tasks invoked more positive emotional behaviours (eg. head-nods while listening), but fewer control-related behaviours (eg. disagreements) than structured 'masculine' tasks. From these results we can deduce our second hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** Despite subject gender or gender of addressee influences, a competitive setting will evoke fewer positive socio-emotional speech forms (eg. backchannels, supportive hedging) than an uncompetitive setting.

---

(3) Many have interpreted it as a symptom of women's low social status (cf. Fishman, 1980; Lakoff, 1975; Priesler, 1986; Henley, 1977), some as an expression of their supportive ethic (cf. Boe, 1987; Coates, 1988b).

And to the extent that people often have insight into hostile verbal performances (cf. Street, 1982) we can speculate that:

**Hypothesis 3:** Subjects in the competitive exchanges will generally rate their behaviour as being more 'masculine' (eg. dominant, aggressive and so on) than subjects in the non-competitive exchanges.

### Methodological Motivations

To these theoretical and empirical motivations, we can add a further set, this time relating to methodology.

To begin with, past research has often failed to control for differences in the amount of speech produced by men and women (Holmes, 1990). This is a critical error, and one that may have distorted the interpretation of linguistic data, eg. the finding that women employ twice as many hedges as men is not exactly compelling evidence of a gender difference if they also speak twice as much. Therefore, in my experiment each subject's use of hedges was expressed as rate per 100 words they produced.

Furthermore, I did not fall into the trap of simplifying the form and function relation (cf. chap. 1, p.25-27; chap 2, p. 47-52). This has been another enduring weakness of past research, afflicting even otherwise superior work (eg. Carli, 1990). Research on hedges supplies a classic example, for often theorists have wrongly assumed that these forms are simply markers of tentativeness. They have followed a seductive but flawed train of thought: hedges convey tentativeness: hedges are the province of the meek: women use hedges more frequently than men: women are meek.

In my research, wishing to escape this misguided logic, I drew heavily upon the work of Janet Holmes, a New Zealand linguist who has produced a more discriminating analysis of male\female hedging (cf. Holmes (1984a&b, 1985, 1986, 1988a, 1990). Holmes's work, including her analytic framework, is described comprehensively below. For the moment, it is enough to list some of her research findings concerning gender and hedging.

Holmes has rejected the view that hedges merely indicate speaker uncertainty, contending that this is just one of their several meanings. For instance, in a radical reversal, she has claimed that *you know*, thought by many to exemplify women's 'conversational insecurity' (Fishman, 1980), can sometimes signify a speaker's *confidence* about what she is saying. More radical still, she has reported that women employ this function of *you know* more frequently than men (Holmes, 1986)! A finding compatible with the idea

that women are unassertive conversationalists? Hardly. Similarly, in a reanalysis of men's and women's use of another hedge, *sort of*, Holmes (1988a) has shown that the form does not solely imply tentativeness, often implying affective meaning, and that in any case men, rather than women, have a penchant for using its tentative meanings! Once more, such results contradict the image of the powerless female communicator.

We are now in a position to set forth our remaining hypotheses and research questions.

With respect to gender and hedging: as Holmes's provocative new data contradict the findings of much past research, my conjectures were put in question form:

<b>Research Question 2:</b>	<b>Would gender differences in hedging emerge within the study? If so, what form would they take?</b>
-----------------------------	---

Likewise, because the findings on addressee influences have been inconsistent (cf. chap. 3), here too I relied upon a research question:

<b>Research Question 3:</b>	<b>How might the sex composition of dyads affect the hedging and backchannel behaviour of men and women?</b>
-----------------------------	--

Lastly, in line with the fairly consistent results of the prior research (cf. Duncan & Fiske, 1977; Hirschman, 1973, Coates, 1986; Roger & Nesshoever, 1987; Priesler, 1986), I predicted that:

<b>Hypothesis 4:</b>	<b>Despite situational competitiveness or gender of audience, women would use backchannel responses more frequently than men.</b>
----------------------	---



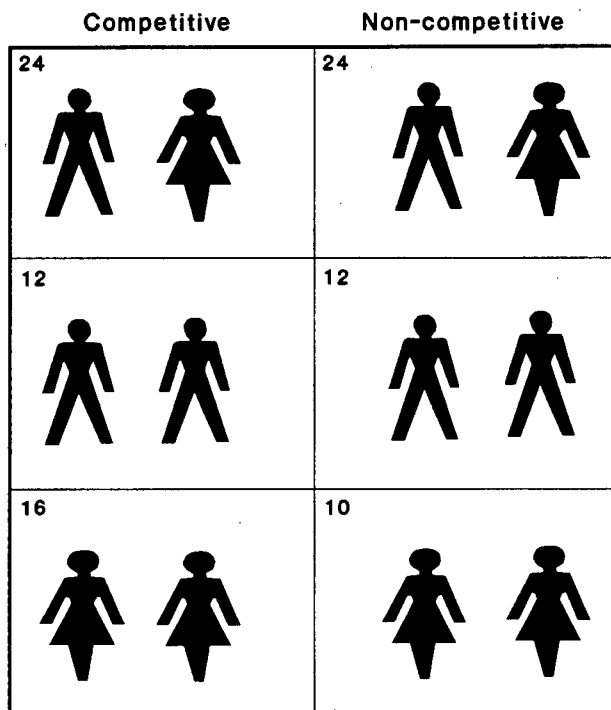
## METHOD

### Subjects

104 undergraduate psychology students (50 men, 54 women) took part in the study. They were all volunteers and were recruited using an advertisement pinned to noticeboards in the department of psychology at the University of Cape Town. Only white students who spoke English as their home language were selected for participation in the experiment. Their ages ranged between 18 and 32 yrs., with a mean of 19.9 yrs. for the men and 18.9 yrs. for the women.

### Research Design

As mentioned previously, the study consisted of a 2 (subject gender = male\female) x 2 (audience gender = male\female) x 2 (condition = competitive\non-competitive) experimental design. Figure 6 gives a pictorial view of this design.



**Figure 6** Representation of the Experiment's Design

\* The figures in the top left hand corner of each box denote the number of subjects in each cell. Note that from the original 52 dyads, three had to be excluded from the analysis (two because of equipment failure; one because its members turned out to be friends).

## Procedure

Each subject was randomly designated either a male or female partner - with the proviso that the partner should not be a close friend - and was also randomly placed in either the competitive or non-competitive condition. Pairs of subjects (same-sex or mixed-sex) were then contacted by phone in order to negotiate a suitable meeting time and place. At the agreed time, they arrived at a venue in the psychology building at the University of Cape Town, and having been introduced to one another, they were led by an experimenter (balanced for gender) into a small room which was bare except for two chairs and a round coffee table. Once seated, they were given the set of written instructions appropriate to their assigned speech condition (see appendix A).

### Non-Competitive Condition

In the non-competitive condition, participants were told that the purpose of the exercise was merely to examine how people talk to one another, and that they

*"...should not think of it as a 'test' of any kind; it is really just an informal chat".*

Although this condition was designed to foster a relaxed, open environment, a pilot study suggested that some structure helped subjects overcome their early awkwardness. Accordingly they were given a topic to ease communication: "What are some good and bad things about university life?"; but strict adherence to this topic was not required. Finally, subjects were asked for their consent to being both audiotaped and videotaped, which nobody withheld.

### Competitive Condition

Here, subjects were told that they would be participating in a brief debate with their partners. In order to select a topic on which they disagreed, they were asked to complete a questionnaire which assessed their opinions *apropos* of six controversial statements. The topic about which each pair of subjects differed most was chosen for their debate. In the very few instances where dyad partners concurred upon all six issues, they were randomly designated topic positions to defend. Even in these cases, it was relatively easy to foster a competitive atmosphere; subjects appeared to slip readily into verbal warfare<sup>(4)</sup>.

To further strengthen the manipulation, the experimental instructions urged subjects:

*"Do not allow yourself to be 'won over' to your partner's point of view easily, as you will be given "points" for your performance in the debate and at the end of*

(4) Further, the success of the manipulation was entirely confirmed by subjects' ratings of situational competitiveness, which revealed a potent effect for condition (see Chap.5).

*your eight minute session the person who is judged to have spoken most effectively will receive a R10 reward!"*

The cash reward set up a situation of negative goal interdependence, for some commentators the essence of competition. (Though for ethical reasons the money was always divided equally between subjects at the end of the experiment.) Before beginning, subjects were given a few minutes to jot down some arguments supporting their position. Again they were told that their conversations would be audiotaped and videotaped; again nobody withheld consent.

### **Development of the Topic Questionnaire**

Previous research has established that gender-biased topics can affect the speech of men and women (Dovido et al., 1988; Brown et al., 1990); therefore only topics about which the sexes possessed equivalent knowledge were employed in the competitive condition of the experiment. They were selected using a preexperimental questionnaire, which was administered to a sample of students (20 male, 20 female) taken at random from the same population that supplied the experiment. The questionnaire required that students respond, on seven point likert scales, to a position statement (eg. 'Smoking in restaurants should not be allowed as it is unpleasant and inconvenient for a large number of people') indicating: (1) their agreement\disagreement with the statement, (2) their knowledgeableability about the statement. Only topics on which the sexes scored roughly equal on both these dimensions were used in the study (see appendix B). From an original list of 12, six were finally chosen (death penalty for drug pushers; euthanasia; legitimacy of animal experiments; smoking in restaurants; conservative politicians speaking on campus; health fanaticism).

### **Dependent Measures**

Dependent variables were of two kinds - subjective measures and objective measures.

#### **Subjective Measures**

Subjective measures were derived from subjects' assessments of their own verbal behaviour, and were therefore linguistically imprecise, though of psychological interest. Rating was carried out immediately after each dyadic conversation ended. It took the form of a self-report questionnaire, designed to tap eight gender stereotypic dimensions - four masculine (aggressive speech, masculine speech, dominant speech and arrogant speech) and four feminine (sensitive speech, nagging speech, feminine speech and emotional speech). These items were selected from a pool used by Smith (1985), who

found them useful for tracing the link between gender identity and language style<sup>(5)</sup>. They were presented, in random order, in the form of seven point Likert scales, anchored at one end by "very much" and at the other by "not at all". For example, question 1 asked respondents:

Would you say that you spoke aggressively?

Very much      7      6      5      4      3      2      1      Not at all

Two further questions examined subjects' situational construals, investigating their opinions about the competitiveness of their conversations. These were essentially manipulation checks (see appendix C for a copy of my rating scales).

## Objective Measures

Objective measures were derived from a functional analysis of language forms occurring within the actual speech of participants. Two classes of variables were examined:

- The hedges *sort of* and *you know*
- Backchannels, both verbal (eg. hmhmm, ya) and non-verbal (eg. head nods)

A detailed description of the analytic criteria that were used is provided below. Though time-consuming, such a step by step outline is entirely necessary, for previous research has often been marred by linguistic imprecision. Recent methodological advances by Holmes (1990) and others (eg. Priesler, 1986) have demonstrated that the messy complexity of language warrants messy, complex interpretive schemes. It is in this direction that modern research, including the present study, must head.

### The Hedges *Sort of* and *You know*

The generic term 'hedge' refers to a class of particles that purportedly soften the force of utterances by signalling imprecision, tentativeness, and non-commitment. Two examples are *sort of* and *you know*; others include the particles *about*, *really*, and *or something (like that)*.

---

(5) Neither the reliability nor the validity of this self-report questionnaire is certain. A psychometrically sound measure was not selected because within the field of language and gender none exist. The nearest contender was the Speech Evaluation Instrument, a recently developed 'omnibus' measure of adequate reliability and validity (Zahn & Hopper, 1985). But this scale, which was designed for *general* use in the area of speech evaluation, does not provide an overt link between masculinity/femininity and speech; this was precisely what I wished to investigate. I recognize that distinctly South African data must be gathered in order to construct valid, reliable measures that suit our particular milieu. Though outside the ambit of this dissertation, this is a task to which I hope to return in the future.

Since the definitive work of Lakoff (1975), hedges have featured prominently in work on gender and speech. Based upon data about their distribution in the language of men and women, researchers have made bold theoretical claims - most commonly that women's language is tentative and deferential. Much of the extant research, however, has relied on a dubious methodological strategy: indiscriminate frequency counts which presuppose that language forms have a unitary 'meaning' (cf. Chap. 1, p.25-27).

Yet even within Lakoff's (1975) scheme hedges were depicted as having three quite separate functions. To start with, Lakoff felt that they might indicate a speaker's bona fide uncertainty about a proposition ("Dances With Wolves is still showing somewhere in town *I th<sup>l</sup>ink*"). She further recognized that they might be used to redress an offensive or face-threatening utterance ("maybe you're *sort of* a bit too drunk to drive"). It was the third use of hedges that Lakoff found objectionable - a general softening of statements that are neither genuinely uncertain nor likely to offend. This final function, with its unwarranted stripping away of declarative impact, was, for Lakoff, a quintessential example of women's style.

However, Holmes (1990) has recently submitted that Lakoff's third usage is spurious; it is a usage, in fact, that has little linguistic validity and may reflect a sexist outlook. Hedges impart a variety of social meanings, Holmes has argued, but they are never an expression of mindless female deference. And so, in a research program that has gained momentum over the past decade, she has reanalyzed several aspects of so-called 'women's language', with some piquant results (see Holmes, 1984a, 1984b, 1985, 1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1990). Here we will concentrate on her treatment of the hedges *sort of* and *you know*.

### *Sort Of*

After Lakoff, most researchers have taken for granted that *sort of* is a marker of tentativeness and imprecision. With little concern for functional variation, they have often simply tallied occurrences of the form within the speech of men and women, and have then used this data to berate women's style. But Holmes's recent work has signalled that the era of the crude frequency count is at an end. From a rigorous examination of men's and women's use of *sort of* in New Zealand English, she has shown that the form conveys at least two distinct meanings (cf. Holmes, 1988a):

- Epistemic Modal meaning - signals various types of speaker imprecision
- Affective Meaning - signals speakers' desire to stifle potentially face-threatening utterances

Within each of these categories are several subcategories, each realizing subtly different functions; but for reasons of space I shall concentrate here on those that occurred most frequently in my own data (a more comprehensive treatment is provided elsewhere; cf. Holmes, 1988a). All of the examples cited below are taken from my own research. (Appendix E supplies a list of my transcription conventions).

### Epistemic Modal Meaning

Example [1] evinces one of the most common functions of *sort of*: marking linguistic imprecision. In this guise the form signals a speaker's unintentional vagueness, often the result of her confusion about the appropriate lexical choice.

[1] Context: A debate between two male subjects on the topic of animal experiments

S1: Ahm (1.0) whereas if you can take an animal (1.0) and (0.5) get get (1.0) a *sort of* (1.5) lets say an insulin or something what do you call those things like ahm:: (1.0) an inoculation

This extract contains many interpretative cues. The pauses and hesitations, the stammers, the mid-clause placement of the hedge - these signs demonstrate that *sort of* is being used to mark imprecision. The accuracy of our interpretation is put beyond doubt by the speaker's obliging gloss "what do you call those things", which clearly betrays his struggle for exactitude.

Examples [2] and [3] provide further instances of *sort of* being used to express imprecision.

[2] Context: A speaker asking her partner about his experiences in America

S1: ...do they have a very *sort of* different (1.0) eh way of life or::

[3] Context: A debate between two male subjects on the topic of animal experiments

S1: That's just there's something not right there we mu- we must find a *sort of* (0.5) a a moral eh *sort of* view where (2.5) you've there's there's a universal a *sort of* universal morality a universal protection because animals have basically no rights

In these instances, especially in [3], the imprecision is of a subtly different nature to that of our previous example; it is more semantic than lexical, almost as though the speaker is trying to convey a meaning (or meanings) for which there exists no precise linguistic referent. Holmes (1988a) alleges that such *semantic imprecision* is often deliberate, a speaker using hedges intentionally to impart a metaphorical, open-ended quality to a proposition.

We should be aware that in [3] *sort of* may also be fulfilling an affective function, ie. muffling a potentially face-threatening disagreement. The affective and epistemic meanings of hedges are often delicately balanced in this manner, sometimes making interpretation difficult; but usually one function is more prominent (cf. Holmes 1984a).

In [3] the epistemic purpose of *sort of* outweighs its affective purpose. This is not always the case.

### Affective Meaning

Because *sort of* imbues utterances with a nebulous, woolly quality, it is well suited to the art of face protection (both self and other). By hedging a proposition, a speaker leaves room for subsequent clarification, for disclaiming responsibility, even for outright denial. The affective role of *sort of* usually becomes salient in contexts where speakers are discussing emotive, embarrassing or confrontational topics. For example, within the present study hedges were often used to attenuate disagreements as in:

[4] Context: A speaker's counter-argument during a debate about smoking in restaurants

S1: Okay (1.0) well in *sort of* argu- you<sup>know</sup> arguing back with you I'd like to say that first of all  
...

[5] Context: A discussion about the redistribution of wealth in South Africa

S1: ...you<sup>know</sup> sort of why sort- *sort of* why do you have views that that you want all the wealth to be redistributed? (laughs)

These examples illustrate two linguistic attributes of *sort of* in its affective mode (at least as it occurred in my data corpus): first, it often modifies a verb\verb phrase rather than a noun\noun phrase; second, it is typically accompanied by other hedges (*about, you know*), so that propositions are softened in a multi-layered, cumulative fashion.

[5] also illustrates the diagnostic importance of: (a) contextualizing single utterances within an unfolding discourse, and (b) possessing background knowledge about participants. When we recognize that the speaker here is a business science student with a love of the free market, that his addressee is a social science student with opposing economic views, and that this information has been broadcast during their conversation, interpretation becomes elementary. Given this information, we can appreciate that [5] is not an innocent request for clarification: it is a disagreement, though one that is phrased indirectly in question form and adroitly diminished by hedging devices.

In both [4] and [5] *sort of* is employed to protect another's face wants; but it can also protect self face wants, as in [6], where it is used to downtone the fact that the speaker has presented a specious, inconsistent argument. Here the hedge is almost an appeal for sympathy, for understanding. This is a common function of *sort of*, particularly when it is used to mitigate emotionally-charged or confessional material (cf. Holmes, 1988a).

[6] Context: Debate on whether or not drug pushers should receive the death penalty

S1: But still: I mean that's a very simplistic way of looking at it you<sup>know</sup> I I *sort of* contradict myself all the time cause...

From the above discussion we can see that *sort of* carries a variety of effects; those who restrict its meaning to the expression of uncertainty are at once simplifying and distorting reality.

### *You Know*

Like other hedges, *you know* has prompted wanton frequency counts and hasty generalizations about women's subordination in conversation. For Lakoff, and a host of researchers following her lead, the form provided just one more avenue for the expression of women's verbal deference. In a more elegant but related formulation, Fishman (1980) portrayed it as an attention-grabbing device used, primarily by women, to secure a few crumbs of attention from listeners.

Yet Holmes (1986) has argued that both interpretations are monolithic. She believes *you know* has diverse meanings, a point borne out by her own research, which has revealed that the form fulfills a rich array of functions: indicating linguistic imprecision, appealing for reassurance, marking a false start, softening face-threats, implying shared knowledge, expressing speaker confidence..... As with *sort of*, however, Holmes subsumes these copious meanings under a pair of overarching categories:

- Tentative *you know* - signals speaker tentativeness and lack of confidence
- Confident *you know* - signals speaker confidence regarding a listener's background and experience

Dramatically, then, in her classification system Holmes tenders two diametrically opposing functions of *you know*. In one, the particle divests a speaker's utterance of authority; in the other, it actually underlines a speaker's confidence regarding the validity of an utterance.

How do we distinguish between these contradictory meanings within everyday discourse?

While acknowledging that interpretation can be vexed, we should let several contextual, intonational and syntactic clues inform our decision. These are described extensively elsewhere (Holmes, 1986), so only a short outline is presented here.

### Tentative *You know*

Several types of tentativeness are expressed by *you know*. Firstly, and especially when speakers are dealing with sensitive content or performing face-threatening actions, it can serve as an appeal for support. When it does so, *you know* is often positioned at the end of a turn unit and pronounced with a rising (or questioning) intonation (cf. Holmes,

1986)<sup>(6)</sup>. A classic example is provided by [7]; here the student, somewhat defensively, appeals for the reassurance of her partner (who, incidentally, had watched the play).

[7] Context: A drama student describing her feelings about the audience's reaction to a play in which she performed

S1: ...it was such fun though I do[n't really care

S2: It looked like it]

S1: If anybody enjoyed it or not (0.5) *you know* (laughs)

A closely aligned function of *you know* is as a softener, ie. a device employed to attenuate hostile utterances. While Holmes has devoted limited attention to this usage, within my own research it occurred quite frequently, particularly in the debate condition of the experiment, where speakers used it to drain hostile energy from disagreements. [8] provides an illustration. Notice the mid-clause, interruptive position of the hedge (see also [4] and [5] above); in my data this was fairly characteristic of softening *you know*.

[8] Context: Debate on animal rights

S1: In furs *you know you know* I'm just (1.0) stating my point here as well...

Occasionally the softening form of *you know* is used to redress social blunders, as is depicted in [9], where the speaker hastily excuses his faux pas.

[9] Context: Two students discussing university life

S1: Do you find that you actually take a (#) quite a (0.5) active role in some things or do you distance yourself from (#) most of these organizations and movements and (#) meetings and (2.5)

S2: We::ll

S1: I suppose that *you know* its really personal anyway

S2: No (laughs) ya I {mean I

S1: No::: I] mean some people do and some people don't and that's not necessarily a good thing or a bad thing

Another common function of tentative *you know* is the articulation of linguistic imprecision. Holmes (1986) identifies several varieties; but, broadly, in this guise *you know* is employed by speakers who are struggling to express a proposition accurately, or who wish to qualify a previous statement. When signifying imprecision, the form gives off an almost apologetic air of self-correction.

[10] Context: A debate over the right to commit suicide; the speaker is discussing a hypothetical case

S1: ...say say he's financially wha- ahm *you know* he's in the red..."

[11] Context: Student bemoaning his lecturer's slow marking of exam scripts

S1: And ahm (#) well that was quite quite ba- bad *you know* back- ba:d and and...

---

(6) I have symbolized intonation using the superscripted slash (eg. rising intonation = /; falling intonation = \; a level contour -, fall-rise = \ / and so on. For a complete list of my transcription conventions see appendix E.

**[12] Context: A discussion about the punishment of drug pushers**

S1: ...I mean there's a great drive anti-drug program that started recently *you know* a couple of years ago and I think its doing a lot of good

**[13] A student describing the official SADF classification given to a friend**

S1: ...And well I had a friend in Cape Town he he got classified G4K4 and he just that's like eh (1.0) *you know* mentally unsound and physically unsound so he

**[14] Context: A student describing a university newspaper reporter's investigative phone call to a police spy network on campus**

S1: This guy said well I'm from special services and so he [the reporter] said "well ah (1.5) do you still have spies on campus"

S2: Yeh

S1: And obviously the chap thought he was one (1.0) *you know* one of them: (#) [so:

S2: Hmmm]

S1: He said "oh ya:::: of course we've got them (laughs)

As a marker of imprecision, *you know* has a number of features, some of which are instantiated by [10], [11], [12], [13], and [14]. When it displays lexical imprecision, it often has pauses and stammers as companions; moreover, a speaker will sometimes abet our interpretation by recasting the phrase or word in question more accurately, eg. [10] and [11]. When it acts as a qualifier, it usually heads an anaphoric qualifying phrase, eg. [12] and [14]<sup>(7)</sup>. In either instance, *you know* may coincide with impatient gestures or facial expressions, provided by speakers as they hunt, mentally, for the right formulation<sup>(8)</sup>.

**Confident *You know***

In sharp contrast to its tentative meanings, *you know* may proclaim a speaker's confidence regarding the validity of a statement. So-called 'confident' *you know* can even betoken absolute certainty, especially if it refers to a proposition that is common knowledge between speaker and addressee (and is presumed by the speaker to be so). In such a case, the hedge typically stands at the front of a clause, as a bold introduction, and is pronounced with a falling intonation:

**[15] Student prefacing a description of her drama classes to her dyad partner**

S1: ...*you know* you do practical sessions and...<sup>(9)</sup>

(7) Example [13] seems to both qualify and express lexical imprecision *simultaneously*. Tentative *you know* often straddles two functions in this way.

(8) Visual information (eg. gestures, eye-contact, facial expressions), though not used by Holmes, may be of considerable value in future analyses of hedges. The current study used a combination of auditory and visual data.

(9) When *you know* heads a clause in this manner, it must be carefully differentiated from the construction "Do you know (that)..." (cf. Holmes, 1986)

A related form is 'attributive' *you know*, which, though not indicating specific knowledge of proposition, indicates a more general "...confidence that the addressee knows, as a result of past experience, the kind of thing being referred to..." (Holmes, 1986, p.9). Again, attributive *you know* is characterized by a falling intonation, although in this case the form is usually appended to the end of an utterance and is sometimes preceded by a brief pause. [16] and [17] are exemplary.

[16] Context: A student compares the academic freedom of university to the regimented world of school

S1: Cos I mean you remember at school the teacher says

S2: Ya

S1: Where's your homework *you* <sup>1</sup>/*know*

S2: Ya] ya

S1: Go see the principal (#) and now if you don't do it

(1.5)

S2: It falls on your head...

[17] Two students share their experiences of the intervarsity rugby game (particularly the pre- and post-game festivities)

S1: Yeah just a party its its (#) any excuse for a pissup *you* <sup>1</sup>/*know*

S2: Yeah that's a nice thing about varsity you have the ra::g okay float building and you just go there you buy you beer tickets *you* <sup>1</sup>/*know* and you just get fucked and that's it

The latter example also shows how *you know* can be deployed 'emphatically' to invigorate a claim, to spruce up an anecdote, to underscore the validity of an experience. [18] too illustrates this function.

[18] Context: A student extolling the virtues of living at home to a fellow home-dweller

S1: Ahm ya I haven't thought about moving out

S2: Not (#) don't really at home you've got it all::: *you* <sup>1</sup>/*know*...

To conclude: confident *you know* expresses a speaker's certainty that what she is saying is valid and true and that her listener shares this knowledge. Unsurprisingly, in my word corpus many examples of this usage focused on aspects of university life such as exams, lectures, post-school challenges etc. The fact that dyad partners shared a frame of reference was a valuable aid to interpretation.

### Backchannels

Backchannels are responses used by listeners to communicate, among other things, that they are paying attention to a speaker. They can take the form of non-clause utterances (eg. yea, ya, yes, no), auditory non-utterances (eg. hmmhm, hmmm), or nonverbal behaviours (eg. head nods). During the present experiment all three categories were analyzed, but the former two were collapsed under the single rubric 'verbal' backchannels.

Although future research may well uncover a more subtle range of functions<sup>(10)</sup>, at present backchannels are generally thought to be gestures of support and conscientious listenership (though see Bennett & Jarvis, 1991). They are also thought, with some empirical justification, to be more characteristic of female than male speakers (cf. Hirschman, 1973; Priesler, 1986; Roger & Nesshoever, 1987; Duncan & Fiske, 1977; Coates, 1986). We must take care, though, to distinguish between *short* and *long* backchannels, for the latter form often constitutes a bid for the floor rather than a genuine support signal (cf. Putman & McCallister, 1984). Because I was more interested in the affiliative function(s) of listener responses, I omitted long backchannels from my analysis.

Put more formally, my identification criteria were as follows:

- Verbal Backchannels - single-word reinforcers interspersed throughout another person's turn at speech.
- Head-nods - up and down head movements occurring in a single uninterrupted movement. Only nods that ensued during another person's turn at speech were coded. A chain of rapid continuous nods were coded as *one* listener response.

---

(10) In my research, for example, backchannels were occasionally used militantly, to usher in disagreements. At such times they usually formed a staccato burst of rapid-fire agreements followed by dissension (eg. "ya, ya, ya, ya...but!").

## CONCLUSION


**Table 3** Linguistic Coding Categories

<b>Linguistic Variables</b>
<i>Sort of:</i> (a) Epistemic <i>sort of</i> (b) Affective <i>sort of</i> (c) Ambiguous <i>sort of</i> (d) Total <i>sort of</i>
<i>You Know</i> (a) Tentative <i>you know</i> (b) Confident <i>you know</i> (c) Ambiguous <i>you know</i> (d) Total <i>you know</i>
<i>Backchannels</i> (a) Verbal (b) Nonverbal

I would like to finish with a caution. For all their linguistic prowess, writers such as Janet Holmes cannot entirely resolve our interpretative problems. The identification and analysis of hedges (and even backchannels) is rarely clear-cut; there are inevitably cases that frustrate even the most trenchant framework. Then there is the problem of personal bias. Seldom can we completely put aside our own values/preconceptions, and, as Holmes (1984b, p. 52) herself has warned, "one woman's feeble hedging may well be perceived as another man's perspicacious qualification".

A means of combating these problems is the use of 'ambiguous' coding categories (eg. Holmes, 1986). In other words, if, for example, we are unsure about whether a particular instance of *sort of* conveys primarily epistemic meaning or affective meaning, we could score it as an 'ambiguous' occurrence. Within the present study, the 'ambiguous' classification was employed for the hedging forms only (backchannels and head nods posed fewer interpretative difficulties). To facilitate comparison with past work, the *total* occurrences of each language class were also calculated. This left a final total of 10 linguistic coding categories (presented in table 3).

As a last analytic safeguard, the entire data corpus (approximately 50,000 words) is presented in appendix D for future scrutiny, criticism, perhaps even reanalysis<sup>(11)</sup>.



---

(11) In any case, the data corpus is worth preserving for historical reasons, as a fragment of discourse of our time (This insight was provided by my supervisor, Don Foster).

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## RESULTS

### Data Preparation

To facilitate the coding and analysis of the objective speech variables, a number of procedures were implemented.

First of all, as prior research has suggested that the first two minutes of a conversation are those most likely to be videotape 'affected' (Wiemann, 1981), this time period was excluded from the analysis. The remaining six minutes of each dyadic conversation were transcribed in full (see appendix D). Although secondary to the complete audio-tape and video-tape records, transcriptions were an invaluable aid for the coding of language forms.

---

**Table 4** Reliability Coefficients for Several of the Objective Variables

Speech Dimension	Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients
Verbal Backchannels	$r = 0.95; r^2 = 0.90$
Nonverbal Backchannels	$r = 0.95; r^2 = 0.90$
<i>Sort of 'total'</i>	$r = 0.76; r^2 = 0.58$
<i>You know 'total'</i>	$r = 0.99; r^2 = 0.98$
Number of words	$r = 0.96; r^2 = 0.92$

---

I completed coding personally, using the interpretative guidelines described in chapter 4. But for reliability purposes, a random selection of 40% of the dyads was re-coded by a trained confederate who was unaware of the aims of the project. As table 4 reveals, Pearson product moment correlation coefficients ranged between 0.98 for *you know*

'total' and 0.76 for *sort of*<sup>(1)</sup> 'total' forms, indicating that the coding procedure was reasonably reliable. Note, however, that the various *sub-categories* of *sort of* and *you know* were not subjected to reliability checks. For practical reasons (ie. time and expense), it proved to be impossible to educate a confederate in the use of Holmes's framework. We shall return to this problem later.

Finally, prior to statistical analysis, each participant's scores for the sub-categories of *sort of* and *you know* were expressed as a ratio per 100 words they produced. Should one not control for the amount of speech produced by men and women, misleading impressions can result (see chap. 4). Related to this, because speakers' opportunity to provide listener responses is governed by the amount of time their partners hold the floor (cf. Duncan & Fiske, 1977), subjects' backchannel scores were expressed as a ratio per 100 words their *partners* produced.

Appendix F contains a complete record of the raw data generated by the study.

### Manipulation Checks

The first two questions on the experimental rating scale investigated subjects' situational perceptions, assessing their construals of: (a) the competitiveness, and (b) the friendliness of their conversation. These items were devised to check the success of the 'competitive' versus 'non-competitive' manipulation. This was entirely confirmed. There was a highly significant main effect for condition in terms of competitiveness ( $F(1,90) = 65.06$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 1.72$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), with speakers generally rating the competitive condition ( $M = 4.46$ ) higher than the non-competitive ( $M = 2.31$ ) on this dimension<sup>(2)</sup>. With respect to situational friendliness, again there was a significant main effect for condition ( $F(1,90) = 9.64$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 1.03$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Quite predictably, subjects in the competitive condition registered lower scores ( $M = 5.29$ ) on this item than those in the non-competitive condition ( $M = 5.94$ ). There were no significant subject gender or addressee gender main effects for either of these questions, nor were there significant interactions of any kind.

From these results, we can infer that speakers' own impressions verified the success of the experimental manipulation. A glance at the relevant magnitude of effect estimates puts the issue beyond doubt. The Omega Squared coefficient for situational competitiveness ratings was particularly high; the condition manipulation accounted for a

- 
- (1) The lower reliability for *sort of* was the result of an error on the part of the confederate rater: he failed to include instances of *kind of* - a synonym of *sort of* (Holmes, 1988a) - to his tallies.
  - (2) Confusion about the meaning of scores can be removed by a glance at appendix C, which provides a copy of the rating scales used in this study.

40% of the variance in subjects' scores on this dimension (ie.  $\hat{\omega}^2 = 0.40$ ). (The Omega Squared estimate for the effect of condition on subjects' friendliness ratings was considerably lower at  $\hat{\omega}^2 = 0.09$ ).

### Subjective Speech Measures

You will recall that subjects rated their own verbal performances on eight dimensions - four 'masculine' (aggressive speech, arrogant speech, masculine speech, dominant speech) and four 'feminine' (emotional speech, feminine speech, nagging speech, sensitive speech). In addition, two composite measures, masculine 'total' and feminine 'total', were formed by calculating the mean of each subject's scores for the masculine and feminine items respectively. This yielded scores for a sum of 10 subjective speech measures, which were analyzed using three-way (subject gender x addressee gender x condition) analysis of variance<sup>(3)</sup>. As no significant three-way interactions were detected, in the summary below I shall concentrate on main effects and two-way interactions, particularly those relevant to my research hypotheses and questions.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that women, despite other contextual influences, would rate themselves as speaking more femininely but less masculinely than men. It was in part confirmed. A significant main effect for subject gender emerged on four of the ten subjective measures: men scored higher than women on the masculine ( $F(1,90) = 86.59$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 1.56$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and masculine 'total' ( $F(1,90) = 22.34$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 0.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) items, whereas women scored higher than men on the feminine ( $F(1,90) = 80.94$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 1.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and feminine 'total' ( $F(1,90) = 15.09$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 0.66$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) items. There were no further significant main effects for subject gender.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the competitive setting would generally invoke higher ratings on masculine items. Once more this hypothesis was partially confirmed. There were three significant main effects for condition, all of which occurred on masculine rating dimensions. Subjects in the competitive setting felt that they spoke more aggressively ( $F(1,90) = 21.92$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 2.11$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and more arrogantly ( $F(1,90) = 4.51$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 2.33$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) than those in the non-competitive setting; their masculine 'total' scores were also significantly higher ( $F(1,90) = 8.02$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 0.92$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). As noted above, there were no significant main effects for condition on any of the

---

(3) I decided not to employ the MANOVA technique as an initial safeguard against inflated type I error rates because I believe, along with Huberty and Morris (1989, p.306), that: "Even though it is a fairly popular analysis route to take in the behavioral sciences, conducting a MANOVA as a preliminary step to multiple ANOVAs is not only unnecessary but irrelevant as well." (cf. also Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1989, p.1281-1282).

feminine speech items. It is worth mentioning, though, that subjects' self-assessments in terms of 'nagging' approached significance ( $F(1,90) = 2.91$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 1.99$ ,  $p < 0.09$ ). Interestingly, their scores were generally higher in the competitive context.

Table 5 presents the  $F$  statistics, as well as the relevant cell means, that arose from the two-way subject gender  $\times$  condition ANOVA conducted on the ten speech measures. Observe that there was only one significant subject gender  $\times$  condition interaction; this was for aggression ( $F(1,90) = 4.59$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 2.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Newman-Keuls multiple comparison procedures revealed, among other things, an intriguing simple effect ( $p < 0.05$ ): men rated themselves as talking more aggressively than women, but only in the non-competitive setting (Take heed, in fact, that women in the competitive condition had the highest mean of all for aggression - 4.21!).

Lastly, contrary to our earlier speculations (see research question 1), there were no significant subject gender  $\times$  addressee gender interactions; nor indeed were there any significant main effects or other interactions for addressee gender, which appeared to have a remarkably negligible influence on subjects' speech ratings (A complete record of  $F$ -statistics, error terms, and cell means for the subject gender by addressee gender interaction is presented in appendix G (1)).

To investigate the possibility that this finding was simply a statistical artefact, arising from the fact that partners' scores were dependent (cf. Kraemer & Jacklin, 1979; Kenny & Judd, 1986), I calculated Pearson product moment coefficients for partners' scores on all subjective speech measures (see appendix H (1)). However, my results indicated that on seven of the ten measures partners' ratings were actually positively correlated, a relationship that if anything should have *increased* the likelihood of making a type 1 error (cf. Kraemer & Jacklin, 1979; Dindia, 1987).

Of the remaining three measures, two displayed slight, non-significant negative relationships between partners' scores, ie. 'nagging speech' ( $r = -0.11$ ,  $r^2 = 0.01$ ) and 'arrogant speech' ( $r = -0.20$ ,  $r^2 = 0.04$ ). It is improbable that these correlations meaningfully biased the  $F$  statistic. But on the third measure, 'dominant speech', partners' scores evidenced a fairly strong negative relationship. ( $r = -0.51$ ,  $r^2 = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Heeding Kraemer and Jacklin's (1979) warnings, we should consider the standard  $F$  test to be a conservative measure of significance for this dependent measure.

Overall, though, it is evident that the complete absence of addressee effects cannot be attributed to statistical artefact.

**Table 5 F Statistics and Cell Means from Two Way (Gender x Condition) Anova on 10 Self-Rating Speech Dimensions<sup>#</sup>**

Speech Dimension	Cell Means (n = 24)						F Statistics (df = 1, 90)		
	Male Non-Comp.	Male Comp.	Female Non-Comp.	Female Comp.	MSerror	Gender	Cond.	Gender x Cond.	
Aggression	3.17	3.92	2.19	4.21	2.11	1.34	21.92 <sup>§</sup>	4.59 <sup>*</sup>	
Arrogance	2.96	3.54	2.32	3.05	2.33	3.32 <sup>ns</sup>	4.51 <sup>*</sup>	0.06	
Masculine	4.71	4.75	2.40	2.33	1.56	86.59 <sup>§</sup>	0.00	0.05	
Dominance	4.37	4.29	3.69	4.13	2.09	2.03	0.37	0.80	
Masculine (T)	3.80	4.12	2.65	3.43	0.92	22.34 <sup>§</sup>	8.02	1.38	
Emotional	4.58	4.50	5.14	4.70	2.14	1.61	0.78	0.37	
Feminine	2.54	2.50	5.26	4.55	1.70	80.94 <sup>§</sup>	1.99	1.57	
Nagging	2.17	2.71	1.92	2.35	1.99	1.11	2.91	0.03	
Sensitive	4.83	4.83	5.21	4.68	1.93	0.15	0.88	0.88	
Feminine (T)	3.53	3.63	4.38	4.07	0.66	15.09 <sup>§</sup>	0.39	1.57	

Note: Cell means can range between 1 and 7

\* = p < 0.05; \*\* = p < 0.01; § = p < 0.001; ns = non-significant trend

# The F - statistics and error estimates reported here were derived from the full three-way (gender x addressee gender x condition) ANOVA

## Objective Speech Measures

Owing to their scarcity, 'ambiguous' occurrences (see chap. 4) of *you know* and *sort of* were not subjected to inferential testing. The remaining eight speech variables were analyzed using 3-way (subject gender x addressee gender x condition) ANOVA. They comprised: verbal backchannels, nonverbal backchannels, confident *you know*, unconfident *you know*, *you know* total, epistemic *sort of*, affective *sort of*, and *sort of* total (see chap.4 for a full description of these variables). As with the subjective measures, no significant three-way interactions were uncovered during the analysis of objective variables. Yet several significant main effects and two-way interactions emerged. Once more I shall tailor my synopsis of these findings to my research questions and hypotheses (see chap. 4).

Firstly and most astoundingly, there were no significant main effects for subject gender on any of the objective language dimensions (see table 6 for a detailed representation of the relevant F statistics and cell means). In fact, only the epistemic subcategory of *sort of* even bordered on significance ( $F(1,90) = 2.59$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.12$ ) - men ( $M = 0.30$ ) tending to make greater use of this form than women ( $M = 0.16$ ). *Apropos* research question 2 we can thus conclude: hedging was not gender-differentiated in this study. Research hypothesis 4 was also refuted. Men and women - at least as a function of their gender alone - did not significantly differ in terms of their verbal ( $F(1,90) = 1.10$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 1.49$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) or nonverbal ( $F(1,90) = 0.62$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 2.27$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) backchannelling.

In contrast to the lack of gender effects, significant main effects for condition were rife, as table 6 portrays. Congruent with research hypothesis 2, supportive forms were less common in the competitive condition. Specifically, in this context subjects employed fewer epistemic ( $F(1,90) = 4.26$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), affective ( $F(1,90) = 5.18$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and 'total' ( $F(1,90) = 7.63$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) *sort of* forms, as well as fewer verbal ( $F(1,90) = 23.14$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 1.49$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and nonverbal ( $F(1,90) = 5.0$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 2.27$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) backchannels. There were, it must be added, no significant main effects for condition on any of the *you know* categories. But even here a non-significant trend emerged: subjects tended to use the 'confident' form less frequently during the competitive ( $M = 0.19$ ) as opposed to the non-competitive ( $M = 0.28$ ) exchanges ( $F(1, 90) = 2.08$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.15$ ). Taken collectively, these results suggest that condition (competitive versus non-competitive) had a fairly pervasive effect on the speech of men and women.

**Table 6** F Statistics and Cell Means from Two Way (Subject Gender x Condition) Anova on Eight Objective Speech Dimensions<sup>#</sup>

Speech Dimension	Cell Means (n = 24)						F Statistics (df = 1, 90)		
	Male Non-Comp.	Male Comp.	Female Non-Comp.	Female Comp.	MSerror	Gender	Cond.	Gender x Cond.	
Verbal Backchannels	2.56	1.43	2.37	1.10	1.49	1.10	23.14 <sup>§</sup>	0.08	
Nonverbal Backchannels	1.80	1.52	2.45	1.36	2.27	0.62	5.00 <sup>*</sup>	1.72	
Confident	0.32	0.17	0.24	0.21	0.09	0.07	2.08 <sup>ns</sup>	0.79	
<i>You Know</i>	0.55	0.30	0.32	0.44	0.29	0.17	0.31	2.74	
Unconfident	0.93	0.54	0.63	0.71	0.65	0.15	0.83	2.05	
<i>You Know</i> 'Total'	0.43	0.17	0.21	0.09	0.19	2.59 <sup>ns</sup>	4.26 <sup>*</sup>	0.62	
Epistemic	0.21	0.04	0.12	0.11	0.04	0.04	5.18 <sup>*</sup>	3.61 <sup>ns</sup>	
<i>Sort Of</i>	0.67	0.22	0.38	0.23	0.28	1.69	7.63 <sup>**</sup>	1.94	

Note: *You know* 'total' and *sort of* 'total' scores include the 'ambiguous' occurrences of these forms  
<sup>\*</sup> = p < 0.05; <sup>\*\*</sup> = p < 0.01; <sup>§</sup> = p < 0.001; ns = non-significant trend

<sup>#</sup> The F - statistics and error estimates reported here were derived from the full three-way (subject gender x addressee gender x condition) ANOVA

We now come to our final variable of interest, addressee gender. Within the present experiment, the interaction between this variable and speaker gender was of particular intrigue (see research question 3).

As a prelude to analysis, I tested the degree of dependency between partners' scores because this factor has been found to bias the F statistic during tests of the subject gender x addressee gender interaction (cf. Kraemer & Jacklin, 1979). The resulting Pearson product moment correlation coefficients indicated that the relationships between partners' speech behaviours were mostly negligible (see appendix H (2)). They ranged from a high of  $r = 0.24$  ( $r^2 = 0.06$ ) for 'unconfident' *you know* to a low of  $r = 0.07$  ( $r^2 = 0.00$ ) for 'confident' *you know*. These indices suggested that standard F test was an acceptable tool with which to explore the subject gender x addressee gender relationship (see also Mulac et al., 1988). For the sake of brevity, I shall concentrate on significant or interesting results here (a more detailed ANOVA table for addressee effects is provided in appendix G (2)).

Turning first to *sort of* usage: there was a significant main effect for audience gender regarding the production of the epistemic variant ( $F(1,90) = 4.45$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Members of both sexes used this form more readily when they were addressing men ( $M = 0.32$ ) rather than women ( $M = 0.13$ ). For the affective ( $F(1,90) = 0.56$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.04$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and 'total' ( $F(1,90) = 2.40$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 0.28$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) classes of *sort of* no significant main effects were detected. Further, there were no significant subject gender by addressee gender interactions for any of the categories of this hedge (see appendix G (2)).

In the case of backchannelling, the most striking results were those for the verbal responses, which contained a significant subject gender by addressee gender interaction ( $F(1,90) = 4.02$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 1.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Post-hoc Newman-Keuls procedures unearthed a simple effect for subject gender ( $p < 0.05$ ): when both sexes were responding to a female speaker, men ( $M = 2.29$ ) used greater numbers of verbal backchannels than women ( $M = 1.53$ ). Closer examination of the relevant cell means indicated that this finding was probably the joint product of women's *lower* rate of verbal backchannelling to same-sex partners, and of men's *higher* rate to opposite-sex partners..

Regarding nonverbal backchannelling, no such subject gender x addressee gender interaction materialized ( $F(1,90) = 0.81$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 2.27$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Addressee gender *per se* did appear to exert some influence over subjects' use of head nods, however. Both men and women employed more nods while listening to male ( $M = 2.05$ ) rather than female ( $M = 1.52$ ) interlocutors ( $F(1,90) = 3.00$ ,  $MS_{\text{Error}} = 2.27$ ,  $p$

< 0.09); but since the trend did not reach significance, a prudent researcher would not reject the null hypothesis in this instance.

Finally, we come to the results for *you know*. In terms of main effects, addressee gender had a trifling influence on subjects' employment of this form: significant results did not materialize for either the confident ( $F(1,90) = 0.00$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 0.09$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), unconfident ( $F(1,90) = 0.81$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 0.30$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) or 'total' ( $F(1,90) = 0.61$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 0.65$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) variants. With respect to the subject gender  $\times$  addressee gender interaction, one significant finding did emerge and this was for 'confident' *you know* ( $F(1,90) = 4.07$ ,  $MS_{\text{error}} = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Follow up Newman-Keuls procedures failed to detect any significant differences between the relevant cell means. But multiple t-tests (adjusted for unequal sample sizes) revealed that men's mean usage was significantly higher than that of women, although once again this transpired only when subjects of both sexes were addressing a *female* partner ( $t(48 \text{ df}) = 2.047$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Since the t-test approach to multiple comparisons does not control for 'family-wise' type I error rate, this result should be interpreted with caution<sup>(4)</sup>.



---

(4) The interpretation of this result would depend upon whether a researcher is most concerned about making a type I error, or whether it is making a type II error that most disturbs her. Keppel (1982, p.159-165) provides erudite coverage of the problem.

## DISCUSSION

### Introduction

We are now in a position to discuss the results of the experiment. My approach shall be to consider the findings for the subjective and objective variables in juxtaposition. Three sets of comparisons in particular will be foregrounded, their implications explored:

- the comparison between the influence of gender on subjects' self-ratings and its influence on their actual language behaviour
- the comparison between the influence of addressee gender on subjects' self-ratings and its influence on their actual language behaviour
- the comparison between the influence of condition (ie. competitive\non-competitive) on subjects' self-ratings and its influence on their actual language behaviour

By exploring this sequence of contrasts we shall arrive at some broader coherences, though naturally, as the discussion unfolds, we shall have cause to acknowledge the limitations of the experiment, notably those concerning its external validity. I shall not make recommendations for prospective research at this stage. This task is reserved for the final chapter of the dissertation, where, with an eye on the future, I shall sketch the rudiments of a new study rising out of the ashes of the old.

### Gender Influences

Hypothesis 1 posited that men and women, in spite of other contextual influences, would rate their speech as gender stereotypic. It was to a degree confirmed. Female subjects scored lower than male subjects on the masculine and masculine 'total' items, but higher on the feminine and feminine 'total' items of the self-rating questionnaire. Furthermore, men's 'aggressiveness' ratings were greater than women's, though only in the non-competitive condition.

These results should not surprise us. Past research has shown that subjects commonly assume that men and women speak in a manner typical of their gender. The current study merely confirmed that this trend extends to their ratings of their *own* behaviour within *actual conversation*. Although this seems an unremarkable finding, it is important that future researchers continue to distinguish between the perceptions of conversational *participants* and those of conversational *observers*. Too many have based their

understanding of attitudes towards gender and language use upon the perceptions of observers alone<sup>(5)</sup>. What an unsound strategy this is. Observers hold a quite different perspective to those 'inside' an interaction (cf. Street, 1985): they are not encumbered by tasks other than 'decoding' (eg. monitoring self-behaviour, accomplishing other conversational objectives); and usually they do not have access to the range of information available to participants (eg. non-verbal nuances, feelings provoked by the interaction itself etc.).

In contrast to our results for the subjective measures, no gender differences materialized for the objective speech measures. I shall discuss each language class in turn, relating the relevant findings to our research hypotheses and questions.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that women would make greater use of verbal and non-verbal backchannels than men. It was rebutted; backchannelling was not gender-differentiated in this study. In the case of verbal backchannelling this is a particularly surprising result as previous work has consistently found this stratagem to be a cornerstone of women's supportive style (eg. Hirschman, 1973, Fishman, 1980, Roger & Nesshoever, 1987). The evidence regarding nonverbal backchannelling has been less consistent - some researchers reporting that women use more supportive head nods than men (eg. Duncan & Fiske, 1977), others reporting the converse (eg. Rosenfeld, 1966) - but in our study the sexes differed little in their use of this tactic.

Because my research employed a novel and relatively untested framework for the analysis of hedges (cf. Holmes, 1990), and because past data on gender and hedging have been capricious, my conjectures about men's and women's use of *you know* and *sort of* were put in question form. Research question 2 inquired: "Would men and women differ in their deployment of hedging devices?" The simple answer was - no. Unlike Holmes (1986), I did not find that women made greater use of the confident variant of *you know* than men; nor did I find that men made greater use of the unconfident variant than women. Further, in the present study, contrary to Holmes's (1988a) earlier work, men did not employ more epistemic *sort of* particles than women. (Their mean rate of epistemic hedging was, it is true, higher than that of women; but as this finding failed to reach statistical significance, we must conclude that it may have occurred by chance.) Finally, in opposition to much previous research (eg. Fishman, 1980; Lakoff, 1975), no gender differences in the production of *you know* 'total' or *sort of* 'total' forms were located.

(5) The usual methodology has been to present the (transcribed or audiotaped; authentic or contrived) language of male/female stimulus speakers to a group of experimental 'observers', who have then assessed it on a variety of evaluative dimensions.

Viewed as a whole, then, our results for the subjective and objective speech measures represent a striking disjunction. On the subjective indices we find several main effects for gender; on the objective indices we find none. When attempting to interpret this disjunction, we might look firstly at the relation between gender identity and speech. We might suppose that, since language is an important aspect of gender identity, male and female subjects' self-ratings may have reflected their attachment to the idea that they talk masculinely and femininely respectively. That is, subjects may have strived to promote a gender-typed view of their speech even if, objectively, it differed little from that of the opposite sex. Such a reading is supported by recent psychological accounts of self-stereotyping and gender identification (cf. Hogg & Turner, 1987; Huici, 1984; Hogg, 1985; Smith, 1985). (We shall return to these theoretical systems below, when we consider the relation between audience gender and subjects' self-ascriptions.)

An equally plausible interpretation of our results would be that the specific forms investigated were unrelated to subjects' gender identity. If so, then the mismatch between objective and subjective indices may have merely reflected my selection of dependent measures, ie. perhaps on other unexamined linguistic dimensions (eg. interruption rate) gender differences were abundant. The problem is commonplace. Attempts to document the verbal expression(s) of gender identity inevitably encounter the obstruction: where should the search begin and where should it end? *Any* selection of language forms, however exhaustive, seems inadequate.

Then again, to the extent that it opposes most past research, our failure to find gender differences requires explanation. Several rival hypotheses merit consideration.

In the first place, our results may reflect the characteristics of the population from which the experimental sample was drawn. Students, especially students from a liberal university such as the University of Cape Town, are often less gender-typed in their attitudes and behaviour than individuals from other social strata. In so far as this applies to their speech, our experiment may be deemed a conservative test of gender differences in the wider South African population (cf. Mulac & Lundell, 1980).

A second interpretation of our results might centre on the characteristics of the experimental context. Might not the formality of this setting have reduced the occurrence of supportive speech forms (eg. backchannels), thereby masking gender differences that may have materialized in a more relaxed environment (an intimate dinner, a party etc.)? In support of this argument, there is indeed evidence that gender differences in speech are reduced in formal, public settings (cf. Aries, 1987 for commentary). But it is tenuous evidence, for in truth, as Hogg (1985) has reminded us, we know comparatively little about how social context structures male/female talk.

Perhaps caution is our safest route. At the very least, we must concede that our results may have restricted ecological validity - that they transpired in an artificial environment and may not hold true in other settings.

A third and more obvious interpretation of our results might highlight the role of cross-cultural variation. Could it be that South African men and women, unlike their international counterparts, simply do not differ in their use of hedges and backchannels? Unfortunately our search for a decisive answer to this question is hindered by a number of factors. For convenience I shall list them:

- The international literature - especially that on hedging - leaves one unsure about whether gender-differential usage of these forms even occurs in other countries
- The methodological designs and analyses used by other researchers have been so spectacularly diverse as to render inter-study comparison difficult
- There is little relevant South African data with which to inform a response

Despite these problems, a retreat into complete hesitancy is unnecessary; from our results we can advance one conclusion with reasonable confidence: within our particular sample population and experimental milieu neither hedging nor backchannelling was gender differentiated. What we cannot say is whether this finding will generalize across different settings and populations. This is a matter future research must resolve; the current project, after all, is merely one contribution to a data corpus about how South African men and women talk.

To end this section, I would like to make a recommendation: future South African research must be organized more systematically than its international counterpart. Without wishing to malign overseas scholars - for some of them have produced exceptional work - it seems to me they have adopted a rather haphazard approach to replication. This may explain why at present we have a descriptive literature comprising many hundreds of studies, an *embarrass de riches*, but a body of knowledge comprising few sound axioms about gender and communication. In the future a more programmatic approach to research must be adopted, perhaps one in which a single research team conducts a series of studies, each building on its predecessor(s), and each subtly extending the generalizability of a set of results. (Hendrick's (1991) recent description of *systematic* replication would provide some sturdy scaffolding in this respect). Such an approach seems vital if we are to collect useful data about extent and 'saturation' (Smith, 1979) of gender differences in speech, much less about what they mean. Hopefully, the

current project will contribute towards such a program in South Africa (cf. also Kottler, 1990; deKlerk, 1988).

Having voiced this plea, I shall now turn to the second major theme of this discussion.

### Addressee Influences

We can summarize our findings regarding addressee gender by noting that this variable had a limited but suggestive impact on our dependent measures - limited, because it had little influence upon subjects' assessments of their own language, or upon their use of several of the objective variables; suggestive, because it had an appreciable influence upon their production of verbal backchannel, epistemic *sort of*, and confident *you know* forms.

Let us scrutinize these patterns more closely.

Regarding subjects' self-ratings our findings oppose past evidence. Within other research, participants have often felt, thought and acted more gender-stereotypically while in the presence of the opposite-sex (eg. Abrams et al., 1990); within mine, audience sex had little impact on participants' self-ascriptions. Thus, vis à vis research question 1, we must conclude that dyad sex composition was unrelated to subjects' assessments of the masculinity/femininity of their own speech. This result does not support the social identity analysis sketched earlier (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see chap. 4, p.100-101). Drawing upon 'SIT, we predicted that gender would be 'switched on' as an important aspect of social identity during the mixed-sex exchanges, and that in this context male and female subjects would therefore accentuate their gender stereotypicality, ie. the degree to which they approximated, or *believed* they approximated, the characteristics of 'prototypical' members of their gender category. This outcome failed to ensue. We should keep in mind, however, that the present research was not designed to assay the social identity perspective, and that it falls short of a proper 'test' in various ways. Perhaps most important: social identity theorists would insist that the meaning of 'prototypicality' for a particular gender subgroup (eg. UCT students) be derived *empirically*: by actually investigating members' belief systems and values. Our experiment did not fulfill this criterion, so it must be considered a weak test of the theory. Still, the flimsy relationship between dyad gender composition and subjects' self-ratings remains a perplexing finding.

For the objective language measures a somewhat different pattern of results emerged. To be sure, gender of audience effects did not manifest for several variables: nonverbal

backchannels, affective *sort of*, *sort of* 'total', unconfident *you know*, and *you know* 'total'. But there were noteworthy exceptions to this trend.

To start with, there was a significant main effect for addressee gender concerning the use of epistemic *sort of* particles: speakers of both sexes employed these forms more readily when talking with a male partner. This result is reminiscent of Dédé Brouwer's observations in a Dutch railway station (cf. Brouwer, 1982; Brouwer et al., 1979), which revealed that passengers, regardless of their gender, adopted a more polite style while addressing male ticket vendors. Reflecting upon her findings, Brouwer remarked:

*"As far as respect is concerned I would like to underline the fact that both male and female speakers show more respect for men and less for women. This result reflects the sex-linked hierarchy in society and one should realize that women themselves contribute to the higher valuation of men."* (1982, p. 708).

We can use the theoretical models reviewed earlier, speech accommodation theory and politeness theory (cf. chap. 3), to lend this interpretation conceptual elegance. Brown and Levinson (1987) would contend that, *ceteris paribus*, high power addressees will receive a higher proportion of face-sensitive communications than low power addressees, because the risk entailed by 'FTA's' is greater when one is talking to those with high status. Similarly, Giles and his colleagues (Giles et al., 1991) would contend that, *ceteris paribus*, speakers will 'attune' their talk more carefully when conversing with powerful interlocutors, because: (1) their need for social approval, (2) the psychological 'costs' attached to hostile speech acts are usually greater in such circumstances<sup>(6)</sup>. Both frameworks, it seems, render our findings concerning modal *sort of* particles quite explicable.

At this stage two additional points are pertinent.

First, we must re-emphasize that controversy has long burdened the interpretation of hedges: the wavering title of McMillan et al.' (1977) early paper anticipated a history of angst - "*Women's language: Uncertainty or interpersonal sensitivity and emotionality?*" This very dilemma has haunted a great many studies of gender and communication, threatening the validity of their conclusions and undermining our confidence in their scientific value. But since the present research exploited the analytic advances of Holmes (1988a, 1990), we can be more confident than past scholars that our 'epistemic' version of *sort of* truly expressed hesitancy rather than supportiveness, uncertainty rather than caring.

---

(6) Actually, the link between addressee status and speaker behaviour is not so clearly expressed within accommodation theory as it is within politeness theory. Even so, I believe that a close reading of the major recent tomes on SAT would vindicate my interpretation of its predictions in this respect (cf. Giles & Coupland, 1991, chap. 2; Giles et al., 1991; Giles et al., 1987a).

Second, we must recognize that the term 'women's language' is inappropriate if it is intended to denote subjects' use of epistemic *sort of* within our experiment. For although members of both sexes employed this hedge more often when speaking with men than with women, usage was not *gender* differentiated in the narrower sense of the term. Indeed, as I remarked earlier, men's overall usage rate was actually higher than that of women.....

The accommodative pattern for subjects' use of *sort of* was somewhat reversed for their use of verbal backchannels. In this instance, an unexpected subject gender by audience gender interaction emerged: men actually produced more listener responses than women, but only when both sexes were responding to female partners. A graphic depiction of the relevant cell means provides some insight into the processes at play here - the result appears to be the joint consequence of women's *decreased* and men's *increased* backchannel rate toward female interlocutors (see figure 7). A similar configuration has been reported elsewhere (cf. Bilous & Krauss, 1988). It is a pattern that compels us to qualify our foregoing analysis: men may have received more linguistic deference than women; nevertheless, their verbal backchannel behaviour conveyed some willingness to 'attune' to the conversational needs of their female partners.

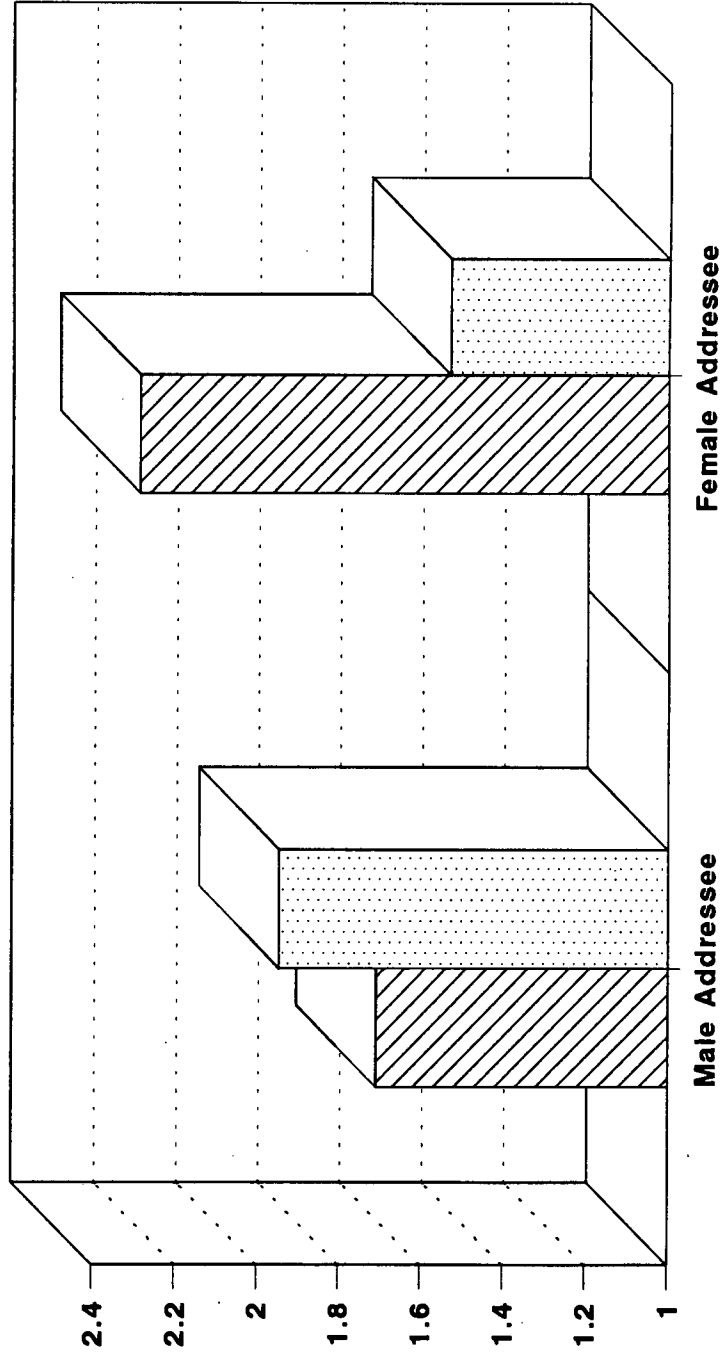
Our findings for subjects' use of confident *you know* ratify such an interpretation. Once again, when both sexes were talking to female interlocutors, it was men who tended to employ this hedge more frequently<sup>(7)</sup>, as figure 8 portrays. We would be incorrect to interpret this result as an expression of male to female deference, because confident *you know*, by definition, signifies speakers' *assurance* that what they are saying is valid and true (see chap. 4). We might interpret it instead as a reflection of men's desire to win the approval of their female partners, to claim common ground, and to make "...overt appeals to [the] social *like*-ness between participants" (James cited in Holmes, 1990, p.192).

As this phrase implies, hedges such as *you know* are often supremely other-directed; that is, they are forms laden with inter-personal meaning. The same can be said of backchannels. And by comparing figures 7 and 8, we can observe some remarkable parities regarding the production of both forms in our experiment. These graphs reveal how male subjects' adjusted their use of backchannels and confident *you know* particles according to the sex of their audience. More accurately: their use of these forms seemed to mark a shift into a more affiliative style, a convergence towards a 'feminine' vernacular (see also Carli, 1989; Bilous & Krauss, 1988; Piliavin & Martin, 1978; Mabry, 1985; Mulac et al., 1988).

---

(7) Although we should interpret this result circumspectly for the reasons mentioned earlier (see p.125).

Mean Rate of Verbal Backchannelling

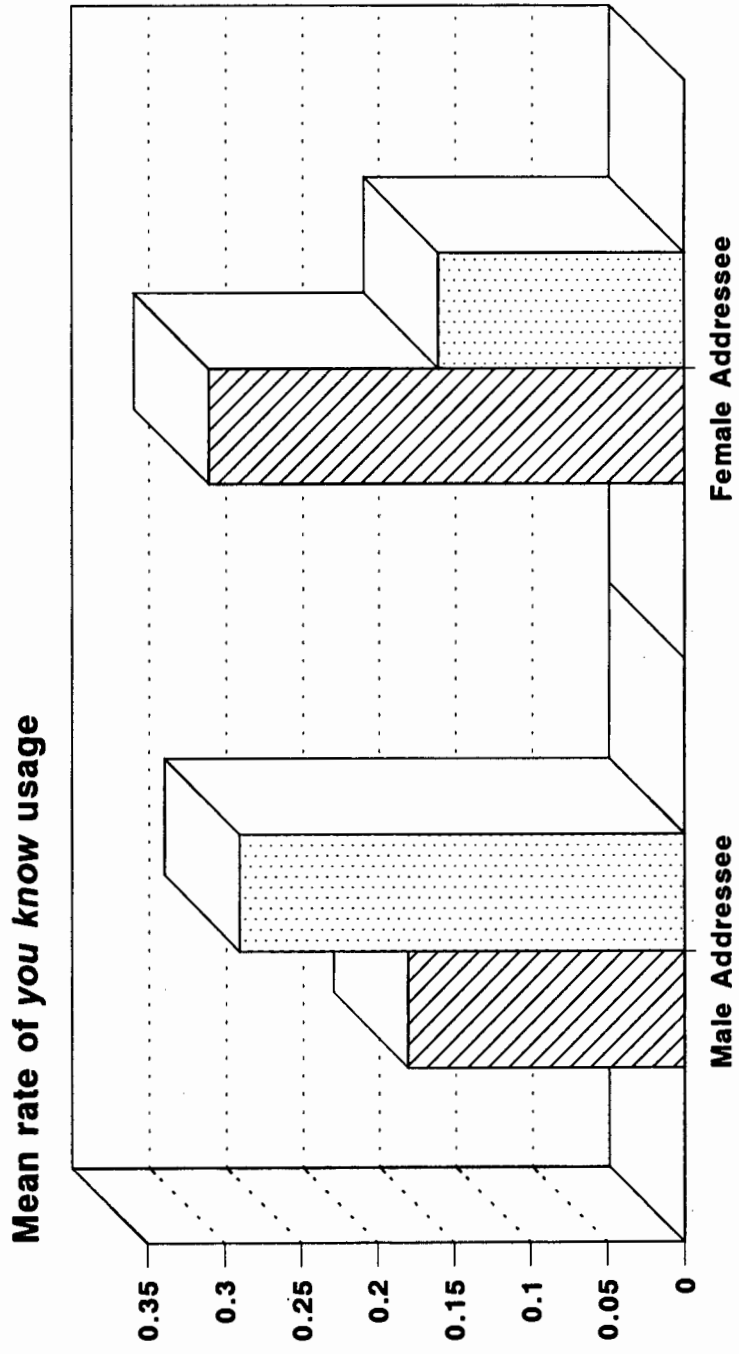


Speaker Gender  
Male Female

Gender of Addressee

Figure 7 The effect of addressee gender subjects' backchannel behaviour

**Speaker Gender**  
 Male  Female 



**Figure 8** The effect of addressee gender on subjects' use of confident *you know*

To conclude, in this section we have discussed the determining role of the addressee within our experiment, and have found it to be modest. For the majority of our dependent measures, gender of audience effects were not detected. However, for verbal backchannelling and a few of the hedging particles a suggestive sequence of results were discovered. Commensurate with a 'dominance' analysis, male addressees prompted higher epistemic modal *sort of* rates from subjects than female addressees. As a counterpoint to this, it emerged that men employed backchannels and confident *you know* forms more frequently than women, at least when both sexes were addressing female partners. A result that supports a male to female speech convergence thesis? Possibly; but we must not overstate the case: on several other 'supportive' dimensions (eg. affective *sort of* particles, nonverbal backchannels, uncertain *you know* particles) no such pattern emerged.

On a more abstract level, the results discussed in this section cast doubt on recent methodological shifts in the domain of language and gender. Here, inspired by a desire to celebrate women's experience and to illuminate the sacred rituals of 'woman to woman' conversation, some researchers have begun to make talk in all-female contexts their sole focus. To be more exact, what has been evolving is a 'dual-strand' linguistics (Coates, 1986). Within one strand, women's communication has for the most part been examined within mixed-sex interaction, where the evidence has usually indicated that it reflects their subordination. Within the other, women's communication has primarily been examined in single-sex interaction. Here, sheltered from unflattering between-sex comparisons, theorists have found it easier to tout women's language as supportive rather than powerless. This latter strategy, for me, is particularly risky: it conveniently hides the nest of linguistic restrictions and handicaps that hamper women day to day (cf. Hollway, 1991 for further discussion of the problems of 'splitting off' women's experience in this manner). A similar point was laboured earlier when we explored the 'politics of difference' (cf. chap. 2, p.59).

The present study indicates that scholars would be better advised to choose research designs that compare *both* single- and mixed-sex interaction as their standard model. In other words, they should choose designs that treat audience gender as a variable of theoretical and descriptive salience. Only then, with the 'mark of the listener' under the microscope, can the full implications of the language and gender relation become apparent.

### Condition Influences

Our final independent variable, speech condition (competitive\non-competitive), exerted the most pervasive influence on subjects' behaviour within the experiment. In this case, for the first time, there was some parity between their scores on the subjective and objective dependent measures - both indices depicted a waning in interpersonal sensitivity.

Confirming research hypothesis 2, speakers generally provided less verbal support for their dyad partners in the competitive as opposed to the non-competitive condition. To be precise: their rate of verbal and non-verbal backchannelling diminished, perhaps signifying less attentive listenership; likewise, their use of all three categories of *sort of* was curtailed, perhaps signifying a switch to a more brusque style. Equally important, subjects also *perceived* that they had spoken more antagonistically during the competitive conversations - their scores for aggression, arrogance, and masculine 'total' were all higher in this experimental condition. Their self-ratings for the 'feminine' speech dimensions were, it should be added, comparatively unaffected by speech condition. Overall, though, our findings for condition influences - in agreement with those of prior research (cf. Mabry, 1985; Fisher, 1983; Putnam & McCallister, 1984; Holmes, 1990) - demonstrated how speech context can shape both the verbal behaviour of men and women and their impressions of this behaviour.

The results for *you know* constituted a surprising exception to this trend; subjects' use of this form, in any of its guises, did not alter across our two conditions. This finding is at variance with Janet Holmes's (1986, 1990) work, which has indicated that *you know* occurs most prolifically during informal, affiliative exchanges. She has ventured that the form is characteristic of casual talk, of cooperative rather than task-centred communication. How then might we account for the findings of the present research? One possibility is that the stilted atmosphere of the experimental setting inhibited subjects' production of *you know globally* (ie. across *both* speech conditions), thereby rendering contextual variation difficult to detect. Even in the non-competitive setting, dyad partners were strangers in an strange situation - hardly an environment conducive to the relaxed, anecdotal chatter within which *you know* usually occurs (cf. Holmes, 1986). In this way, the restrictive norms of the laboratory may have concealed contextual nuances that may have emerged if, say, we compared talk in the competitive condition with talk in a condition of true intimacy (a conversation between close friends, an exchange between lovers etc.).

The data for *you know* excepting, of all the independent variables, speech condition had the most powerful impact upon language use in this experiment. Not only did it affect

the greatest number of linguistic measures, in terms of effect sizes, too, it yielded the most emphatic estimates. Table 7 compares the magnitude of effect coefficients for condition with those for subject gender, addressee gender and the subject gender x addressee gender interaction. The comparison is limited by the paucity of significant results for the latter three factors; moreover, few of the Omega Squared ( $\hat{\omega}^2$ ) coefficients reported in table 7 point to strong effects<sup>(8)</sup>. Even so, the more substantial influence of condition, especially for the verbal backchannelling and *sort of* total measures, is immediately apparent.

Taken in unison, our findings for condition have several general implications for our understanding of gender and communication. They firstly highlight the 'plasticity' of male/female speech, confirming the importance of seeing talk as a resource that is managed in a situationally specific manner. This is a point often lost amidst the clamour to locate and expose gender differences (cf. Thorne & Henley, 1975; Swann, 1988; Pederson, 1980); it is also a point that has been emphasized throughout this dissertation. Our findings for condition also refute a predominant caricature of female communicators within language and gender research: far from being passive 'victims', pliant and essentially helpless, in our experiment women readily displayed linguistic aggression where required. Like their male colleagues, they used fewer backchannel support signals and *sort of* forms during the competitive condition. Moreover, their self-ratings for masculine total, aggression and arrogance revealed they had some insight into this contextually-tailored performance (as hypothesis 3 anticipated they would). Such evidence conflicts with a recurrent theme of research on gender and power, ie. that women downtone assertiveness in competitive situations, preferring to adopt more furtive tactics of social influence (cf. Johnson, 1976 for example). In fact, the condition manipulation influenced the language ratings and behaviours of the sexes comparably in our experiment (a point attested to by the scarcity of significant gender x condition interactions).

Finally, subjects appeared to be more aware of their style shifts as a result of condition than of addressee-oriented shifts. Various factors may account for this. Perhaps the clearly defined goal-structure of the competitive exchanges, where aggressive speech was expected, sharpened subjects' memory of their own behaviour. Recent research on communicative goal-setting has suggested that when speakers are in situations containing well-established, 'a priori' norms (a formal debate?), they are often more alert to their own verbal tactics (cf. Tracy & Coupland, 1990 (eds.)). Besides, speakers are typically

---

(8) Cohen (1977) offers the following guidelines for interpreting Omega Squared coefficients: 0.01 represents a small effect, 0.06 a medium effect, and 0.15 a large effect.

**Table 7** Magnitude of Effect Estimates (Omega-squared) for Condition, Subject Gender, Addressee Gender, and the Gender x Addressee Gender Interaction for the Objective Language Variables\*

Speech Measure	Condition	Subject Gender	Addressee Gender	Subject Gender x Addressee Gender
Verbal Backchannels	0.182	-	-	0.024
Nonverbal Backchannels	0.038	-	-	-
Confident <i>You know</i>	-	-	-	0.031
Unconfident <i>You know</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>'total'</i>	-	-	-	-
Epistemic <i>Sort of Affective</i>	0.032	-	0.034	-
<i>Sort of</i>	0.039	-	-	-
<i>'total'</i>	0.062	-	-	-

\* Magnitude of effect estimates were computed for significant results ( $p < 0.05$ ) only

more cognizant of hostile than of affable style shifts (cf. Street, 1982), a factor that would explain subjects' heightened awareness of their behaviour in the competitive context.

Naturally, because accessing cognition is a problematic business, the foregoing interpretations must be viewed as provisional. Men and women have distorted and partial recollections of their own behaviour; they are invested in particular images of themselves as speakers; they conceal their true intentions, both from self and others; they try to present a favourable front; in short, they are a combination of inefficiency, desire, naivety, and cunning. All, of course, are qualities worthy of investigation; at the same time they are qualities inherently difficult to investigate (cf. Craig, 1990).



## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have summarized and discussed the results of the experiment outlined in chapter 4. Viewed altogether, these results neither unambiguously confirm or contradict those of past research (see especially Holmes, 1986, 1988a, 1990), nor provide clear support for any one theoretical system, though I have used speech accommodation theory and politeness theory to clarify some of the emergent patterns.

Three empirical trends are worth restating:

1. Although male and female subjects believed that they had spoken gender stereotypically, actual gender differences in communication did not emerge in this study. The disparity between our results for the subjective and objective measures may stem from fact that men\women treasure a gender stereotypic vision of themselves and, consequently, tend to exaggerate the masculinity\femininity of their own speech.
2. Addressee sex had surprisingly little influence on subjects' assessments of their own speech; but on three of the objective variables there was some evidence of audience effects. Speakers, regardless of their sex, used more epistemic modal *sort of* forms while in the presence of male addressees. This result may embody the greater politeness afforded to men in our society. At the same time, however, there were signs that male speakers were prepared to 'attune' their speech style to the conversational requirements of their female interlocutors; indeed, when (and only when) members of both sexes were addressing female partners, men's rate of confident *you know* and verbal backchannel usage actually surpassed that of women. This finding might be interpreted as an example of male to female speech accommodation.
3. Lastly, main effects for condition were pervasive - subjects both felt and acted more 'masculinely' during the competitive exchanges. That men's and women's behaviour was comparable in this respect seems to contradict the image of the feeble or helpless female communicator. In addition, the verbal flexibility shown by both male and female speakers across the various conditions of the experiment hardly supports the view that the sexes have distinctive communicative rules and skills (cf. chap. 2). Certainly, the notion of separate gender 'subcultures' (cf. Maltz & Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1990) seems too inflexible to capture speakers' fluctuating behaviour in our experiment.

The above points should be interpreted with the limitations of the experiment borne in mind, the most obvious of which relate to its external validity. A delimited sample, a restricted range of dependent measures, an artificial setting: these factors must set the boundaries of our interpretative ambition. A further limitation of the study, one not mentioned so far, is its small sample size and consequent loss of power. Power restrictions may be especially damaging within research on gender and communication, because, as many commentators have noted, this area may be characterized by delicate linguistic effects (cf. Smith, 1979; Bodine, 1975 etc.). I shall return to the issue of statistical power in the next chapter. A final limitation was that our experiment was only tenuously grounded in theory, which meant that theoretically incisive conclusions were difficult to formulate. Its exploratory nature<sup>(9)</sup> perhaps justifies this descriptive orientation. Even so, given the *atheoretical* tendencies of language and gender scholarship, it is important that conceptually sophisticated research is undertaken. It is to this end that I shall devote the final chapter.

It seems appropriate to conclude this chapter with a few remarks about Holmes's coding system. What are its strengths and weaknesses? Will it prove useful to future researchers?

The major advantage of Holmes's approach is that it avoids simplifying the form and function relation, and therefore also avoids vacuous generalizations about the meaning of hedging. With Holmes as our guide we do not fall so readily into crude homilies about language and power, about the inadequacies of women's style, or about the meaning of gender differences in language use. In fact with Holmes as our guide we recognize the folly of searching for *the meaning* of any language form; instead, we become concerned with discriminating between the subtle and *variable meanings* of a given form.

Ironically, the strengths of Holmes's approach - its rigour and interpretive flexibility - are also its weaknesses. On a pragmatic level, her analytic scheme is time-consuming and exhausting in its application. For this reason, it may not excite language researchers with academic backgrounds other than linguistics. Psychologists, for example, might prefer a less cumbersome, more direct approach to interpreting hedging<sup>(10)</sup>. A related and more serious problem with Holmes's approach is that it makes reliability checks difficult to accomplish. When linguistic analyses become more than a simple matter of frequency counting, when they become based on a complex set of interpretive criteria, we can no longer rely upon naive confederates to confirm our results. We must require

---

(9) The present study is one of the first to employ a South African sample.

(10) Fraser and Scherer (1982, p.3) have speculated that it is precisely the messy, elusive quality of language ("its intricacies and scope") that has for so long deterred psychologists from taking an interest in matters linguistic.

reliability coders to become fully steeped in the workings of the coding system. This is often a time-consuming and tedious process.

Ultimately, then, our praise for Holmes's analytical scheme must be tempered by our reservations concerning its practical limitations. The arcane nature of her approach may deter future researchers. I certainly hope not; I have found her work inspirational.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation my aims have been twofold: (1) to present a critical appraisal of research and theory in the area of gender and language use, and (2) to summarize my own work, which grew out of my assessment of the field, of its strengths, its weaknesses, and its lacunae. In this, the concluding chapter, I can offer no spectacular denouement, no finally unravelling of plot and character. Based upon the results of a single experiment, this is neither possible nor desirable. Instead, I shall dabble (sic) with the design of a hypothetical experiment. Working from the assumption that my understanding of the language and gender relationship has deepened over the past few years, and from the knowledge that had I the opportunity to repeat my research I would manage things differently, I shall formulate the blueprint for a new study - a study improving upon and extending the old. In so doing, I shall forgo the usual function of a conclusion, which is to summarize and integrate previous discussion.

The chapter will be divided into two parts. In the first, I shall set out some of the theoretical assumptions that would underpin the proposed study, suggesting ways in which these might crystallize at the level of research design. In the second, borrowing heavily from the linguistic acumen of others, and lightly from a qualitative (re)analysis of my own data, I shall describe a framework for interpreting one class of speech act - disagreements. This framework, I shall claim, would be ideal to probe the dynamics of gender, power and facework.



## THEORY BUILDING AND SOME NOTES ON RESEARCH DESIGN

In terms of theoretical development the field of language and gender is primitive; this much has become clear from our discourse so far. Although scholarship in the area has coalesced around the metaphorical systems of 'dominance' and 'difference', these are better defined as loose heuristics than bona fide explanations. These heuristics have coloured the process of research, guiding hypothesis formulation, research design, and the interpretation of results; but they have been conceived too crudely to deserve the label, 'theory'. Central terms such as power, dominance, identity, and subculture have remained ill-defined. Furthermore, as we have come to realize over the course of this dissertation, both perspectives have been critically marred by missing links, by gaps between their explanandum (men's and women's communication) and their explananda (the factors explaining it). In chapter two we noted several of these gaps including: the inadequate specification of the link between language use and power, between language use and interaction context, and between language use and gender identification ..... Of the vast 'stream' of causes determining male\female speech, the dominance and difference models have acknowledged but a few: they have reduced the stream to a trickle: they have lacked explanatory power.

In the proposed study, seeking to avoid the atheoretical orientation of past research, I would work from a sound conceptual base - primarily that of politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), though also, to a lesser extent, that of the speech accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991) and expectation states theory (Berger et al., 1980). All three models offer firm guidelines about how we might begin to comprehend the linguistic behaviour of the sexes, and about how this behaviour might in turn illumine social relationships between men and women in society.

The relationship dimension on which our study would concentrate would be that of dominance\submission. Of the several factors motivating this focus, Priesler (1986, p.7) has captured the most stirring:

*"...if language is both the symbol and instrument of existing, and changing social relationships - if communicative behavior both conveys and constructs social relationships in terms of variables such as power, status, formality etc. - (and the field of sociolinguistics is based upon those assumptions), then it is inconceivable that language use should not reflect such fundamental and all-pervasive social differences such as those described by feminists regarding the sexes."*

By concentrating on power asymmetries, the study would be aligned with a dominance perspective on gender and speech. This is intentional. Ultimately, in my opinion, the difference approach is both politically and theoretically misleading. The idea that men's and women's speech is merely 'different', the language of 'separate but equal'

subcultures is difficult to accept; the patterning of gender differences (men unsupportive, silencing and domineering; women supportive, silent and appeasing) is just too portentous to justify such an 'innocent' (Henley & Kramerae, 1991) interpretation<sup>(1)</sup>. Nor, finally, is the 'two culture' idea itself convincing. One has trouble swallowing the notion that two social groups who share so much by way of social learning and experience are left so ignorant of one another's language codes. Far from misunderstanding women, men probably understand them only too well. They have learned that they can get away with foisting indignity upon their female interlocutors: it is the sacred order of things.

At the same time, my advocacy of the dominance position must be a cautious and qualified one. It is difficult to believe that the cowering women portrayed by dominance theorists, women so drained of agency and resistance, populate mixed-sex conversations in real life. Implausible, too, is the simplistic model of causality which dominance theorists espouse. Neither past (cf. chaps. 1, 2 & 3) nor present (cf. chaps. 4 & 5) evidence suggests that the link between gender, power and communication is quite so straightforward. Almost certainly the causal path is more complicated, winding its way through a clutter of other mediating variables. Should, therefore, we wish to isolate the impact of power asymmetries, we must start with the idea that they form just one strand of a causal web. That is, we must start with a multi-causal imagination.

### **A Multi-Causal Imagination**

Our study would begin with the assumption that power alone does not determine male/female speech style, but that its effect is interwoven with other determining factors. Thus: to distinguish the contribution of power, we would have to control for the influence of these factors. Initially, of course, we would have to identify them, and in this respect we can take advantage of our guiding theories.

Using politeness theory, we can appreciate that both the social distance between interlocutors and the intrinsic face-threat posed by a particular act, and not simply speaker-listener power relations, determine the 'face work' strategies selected by individuals. If we do not hold the effect of these extraneous variables constant, the sharp note of power may be lost in the background noise they create. For instance, two speakers discussing a sensitive topic may produce such a high proportion of face-appeasing language that the impact of other factors (eg. power differences) becomes

---

(1) Troemel-Ploetz (1991) has made the same point - though with more passion and panache - in a recent review of Deborah Tannen's (1990) best-seller, 'You Just Don't Understand' (Tannen (1992) has provided an equally passionate rebuttal.) For a more detailed analysis of the political shortcomings of the difference perspective see chap. 2.

tricky to distinguish. Consider the following scenario. A man and a woman are debating the issue of euthanasia. By the by, the woman discloses that a member of her family is terminally ill. Suddenly: the man may be so concerned with reacting tenderly that the linguistic manifestations of his power advantage become masked. (see Holtgraves & Yang (1992), who have shown that if an FTA is particularly heinous it may override the effects of other interpersonal variables, ie. status and social distance.)

A related complication is that the sexes may have quite disparate opinions about what constitutes face-threat. As I remarked previously (chap. 3), what is embarrassing for men (eg. revelations about a personal relationship) may be less so for women, and vice versa. Therefore, as a prelude to research, the wily investigator would assess the degree of face-threat attached to a particular acts (a request for a loan) or classes of acts (eg. requests in general) by her male and female sub-populations. This, an interesting research topic in its own right, would be my strategy within the proposed study.

Using expectation states theory, we can appreciate that sex is not the only status dimension affecting behaviour in mixed-sex interaction. Women, by dint of personal competences, skills or attributes, may sometimes reverse familiar status expectations and, as a result, reverse their stranglehold on behaviour. Linguistic research tells us that topic knowledge is especially important in this regard (eg. Dovidio et al., 1988; Brown et al., 1990). When conversation concerns a topic about which women are expert, or presumed expert, the usual status - expectation - behaviour chain is often broken. This insight distills to a simple methodological principle: researchers should perforce look carefully at the topics discussed by their subjects because topic variation, like social distance and FTA severity, may obscure the influence of 'diffuse' status characteristics such as sex. In our hypothetical study, therefore, I would treat topic selection as a matter for empirical investigation (as, indeed, a few prudent researchers have already, eg. Carli (1990)).

Finally, using speech accommodation theory, we can appreciate that language strategies are often modulated by situational norms (cf. Ball et al., 1984). Here the term 'norms' refers not only to the objective features of situations, as described by the taxonomies of sociolinguists (eg. Hymes, 1967), but to the contextual perceptions and attributions of speakers themselves. Similarly, it refers not only to fixed situational features, which can be defined *a priori*, but to more dynamic elements, which can emerge during the process of interaction itself as speakers negotiate, dispute and construct meaning (cf. Giles & Hewstone, 1982; Giles & Coupland, 1991).

Let us make these ideas concrete using an example pertinent to our hypothetical experiment. We know (from politeness theory) that the social distance between two

speakers in a conversation can have a marked effect on their facework behaviour. As a rule: people are less polite to those with whom they share intimacy, more polite to those with whom they lack intimacy. Necessarily, then, when designing a study to pinpoint the effect of status on facework, we must control for variations in social distance between research subjects. This is not so easy as it first sounds. Even if we attempt to hold distance constant (eg. by ensuring that subjects are strangers to one another) we have no guarantee of success. Intimacy often fluctuates during interaction itself, as subjects come to know each other, as they find common ground or differences. To add to this problem, distance is often confounded with other theoretically salient variables. Take, for example, the case of audience gender. Participants in same-sex exchanges may be more relaxed in one another's company than those in mixed-sex exchanges. If we are not careful, this may lure us into false inferences, as Brown and Levinson warn:

*"...if a male A addresses a female B from a higher-status group, another female C, of the same status group as male A, might be expected to be more polite than A to B because she would be of relatively lower status due to the contribution of gender; but on the other hand B and C sharing gender may perceive less social distance, with the net result that C and A do not use perceptibly different levels of politeness to B." (1987, adapted<sup>(2)</sup> from footnote 21 on p.54).*

One approach to this type of dilemma - granted an imperfect one - may be to tap subjects' perceptions of constructs such as social distance for a given conversation (Any of several measurement techniques would suffice, ranging from simple post-hoc interviews and rating scales to more elaborate tools such as multi-dimensional scaling; cf. Forgas, 1983.) While this does not remove the problem, at least it provides an indication of its severity. You will recognize the more general theme at stake here: by treating the cognitions of men and women seriously, that is by treating them as data, we can better comprehend the diversity of forces impinging upon their language use. In the future, language and gender researchers must pay more attention to speakers' own interpretations of conversation<sup>(3)</sup> (cf. Holtgraves (1991) for an exemplary study); a multi-causal approach must examine determination from within as well as from without.

To conclude: in this section, possessed by a multi-causal imagination, we have sketched some of the contextual and psychological variables that may interact with status

- 
- (2) While typing this quotation, I noticed that Brown and Levinson appear to have muddled their ABCs! I have given what I believe to be the correct version of their example.
- (3) Of special interest here is the idea that women, wishing to appear 'feminine', strategically tone down their assertiveness in conversation. A point sometimes missed by dominance theorists is that female speakers, even those in positions of power, derive advantages as well as drawbacks from verbal deference. The tentative woman, while sacrificing her credibility, is often the socially attractive woman, whereas the self-assertive woman typically claims her authority at cost: a decline in social appeal. By assessing speakers' own impressions of interaction, researchers could explore such tensions and paradoxes further.

hierarchies to determine the language use of men and women. In the next we shall describe another, addressee gender, which deserves separate coverage.

### Other-Relatedness and Speech Accommodation

In his 1966 text, *Interpersonal Accommodation*, Abrahamson cites the mating ritual of the three-spined stickle back - a ritual beginning with the zigzag dance of the male, furthered by the courting of the female, and culminating in the fertilization of spawn - as a classic example of 'accommodation'. Obviously, as Abrahamson himself concedes, the amorous moves of the stickleback (probably determined entirely by genetics) bear little similarity to the complexities of human behaviour. Yet in its sense of *mutual adjustment* and *synchronized action*, the sticklebacks' dance of love indeed captures the essence of the accommodation process. It is a process that has long intrigued social scientists (as Abrahamson's (1966) pithy overview of early research indicates).

More germane to our purpose, it is also one that has intrigued communication scholars: our linguistic adjustments to others have inspired several models of communication (some are discussed by Street & Giles, 1982). During this thesis, I have reviewed two of the most compelling of these: speech accommodation theory and politeness theory. Both models move us away from the study of static gender differences in communication, towards the study of how men and women modify their style to fit their immediate circumstances. In chapter three we saw that the listener is accorded particular importance within these perspectives. And for good reason. By examining how people tailor their language to suit different addressees, we can better comprehend the dynamics of control and affiliation in wider society (cf. chap. 3 for more detailed commentary).

Consequently, the 'mark of the listener' becomes of central import to our hypothetical experiment. Like its forerunner (cf. chaps. 4 & 5), it would be an experiment incorporating both sex of speaker and sex of listener into its fabric; unlike its forerunner, however, it would employ a repeated-measures methodology, with each male and female subject conversing with *both* male and female addressees. This research design, though seldom used by gender and language researchers<sup>(4)</sup>, holds several advantages over its between-subjects counterpart(s):

- It permits more rigorous control over linguistic variation due to subject factors<sup>(5)</sup>. This is important because traits such as self-rated

---

(4) Exceptions are Mulac (1989), Mulac et al. (1987) and Bilous and Krauss (1988).

(5) Unless one is working with exceptionally large samples, randomization may not distribute these traits equally across the treatment cells of an experiment. Matching, too, is problematic: it begs the question that we know what to match for!

communalism\agentism (eg. Leaper, 1988), dominance (eg. Roger & Nesshoever, 1987), and sex-role identification (eg. Smith, 1985) may influence speech style more potently than gender itself.

- Within-subject designs are also harmonious with the theoretical models advocated in this dissertation. Accommodation theory and politeness theory both emphasize intra-speaker shifts; they explore how and why speakers *adapt* their language to audience and context. As such, there is a certain logical charm to a method that tracks the behaviour of the same individuals across different environments.
- Within-subjects designs offer a final advantage - they increase the statistical power of an experiment. In a field where small effects are common<sup>(6)</sup>, this may be of considerable benefit.

Clearly, we would have to guard against the classic weaknesses of the repeated-measures approach (cf. Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1985, chap. 6 provide an intelligent synopsis): for instance, counterbalancing the order in which subjects spoke to male and female addressees would be essential, and the biasing effect of demand characteristics would also require careful monitoring. Yet such drawbacks would be outweighed by the design's advantages within our experiment.

As I complete these brief notes on design, I can see our study taking shape. Like many of its predecessors, it would be a study exploring the relation between gender, power and language use. But it would throw this relation into sharper relief - firstly by controlling for the influence of several confounding variables (eg. FTA severity, social distance, and task competence), secondly by manipulating addressee gender, and thirdly by exploiting the theoretical and statistical benefits of a within-subjects methodology.

Next we must select appropriate dependent measures.

## OPERATIONALIZING FACEWORK

Our priority would be the selection of measures that accurately and reliably signify power differences between men and women; the problems facing us would be manifold. To be of value our analytic framework would have to fulfill several criteria. It would have to:

---

(6) Actually, although commentators have often presumed that gender differences in speech are small in magnitude, they have rarely put their presumptions to the test. I have sympathy with this: magnitude of effect estimates are not easily gleaned from the literature. Some of the best research has not used inferential statistics, and even when descriptive techniques have been used, estimates of variance have often been missing. Still, the erratic nature research findings in the area appear to reflect a domain plagued by small, fickle effects.

- (1) comprise a coherent 'cluster' of linguistic indices which together or separately function to express deference or authority (cf. Priesler, 1986)
- (2) avoid trite simplifications of the form and function relation (Holmes, 1984a)
- (3) be able to express threats to another's face as well as mitigating moves (cf. Penman, 1990)
- (4) contain reliable principles of identification and quantification (cf. Holmes, 1990)

My attempt to devise an interpretive scheme to meet these criteria was only moderately successful. And I should preface what follows with two further concessions. First, the discussion below is not intended to be comprehensive: it should be viewed as 'work in progress' and evaluated with suitable compassion. Second, far from being original, my coding scheme borrows outrageously from the ideas of others, notably those of Priesler (1986), Holmes (1990, 1984a), Goodwin and Goodwin (1987), Penman (1990), O'Keefe and Shepherd (1987), Giles and Coupland (1988a), Ridgeway and Johnson (1990), and, of course, the ubiquitous Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

### Performing Disagreements

Our framework would focus on a speech form that has well-established links - both empirical and theoretical - with status differentials, namely, disagreements. The act of disagreeing has long interested theorists of power. Sociological research on behaviour in task groups, for example, has consistently indicated that high status individuals voice disagreements more readily than low status individuals; dissension, it seems, is the luxury of those who enjoy favourable social expectations about their competences and abilities (cf. Berger et al., 1980; Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1977). Ridgeway and Johnson (1990) have recently extended this line of thinking to encompass the reception of disagreements also. They have averred, among other things, that: (1) low status group members tend to attribute the disagreements they receive to their own incompetence, whereas high status members tend to blame the incompetence of others; (2) low status members tend to experience shame and depression upon receiving disagreements, whereas high status members tend to experience irritation; and (3) low status members tend to quell negative emotional reactions when someone contradicts them, whereas high status members tend to vent their annoyance.

As we can see, modern sociologists are well aware that the performance and reception of disagreements is bound up with the status hierarchy of a group. For politeness theorists, too, dissension is a significant act. Brown and Levinson (1987) portray disagreements as inherently face-threatening behaviours, as verbal jabs that must be handled skillfully if we are to avoid offending another's 'positive face'. For when we contradict someone, we affront their need to have their opinions revered, and, more generally, to be thought

well of. Evidently, the seriousness of a particular affront depends upon its context and performance. A disagreement fired during formal debate usually has less sting than one fired during casual conversation, for when one attributes dissension to situational factors rather than personal arrogance, the severity of its threat to face wanes. In the same way, to be challenged about something frivolous is usually less wounding than to be challenged about something one holds dear.

Yet while it is true that the offensiveness of disagreements varies across different situations, by and large they must be viewed as threats to face. Therefore the rules governing their performance are likely to be similar to those governing the performance of other FTAs. Most importantly: when social distance and FTA severity are held constant, we can infer that this performance will be sensitive to power imbalances between speakers. Specifically, we can predict that: (1) high status speakers (eg. men) will receive fewer disagreements than low status speakers (eg. women) and (2) the disagreements they do receive will be couched more flexibly and respectfully.

Having established the link between status asymmetries and the performance of disagreements (eg. one aspect of criterion 1 above), I am now in a position to describe my coding framework. Basically, it is similar to Brown and Levinson's superstrategy scheme (see chap. 4), but contains a few modifications. For one, it attempts to deal with face attack as well as face-redress (criteria 3 above). After such luminaries as Giles and Coupland (1991), Tracy (1990), and Penman (1990), I feel that Brown and Levinson overstate the role of politeness strategies in conversation, to the neglect of the more vicious aspects of face-work. That is, they do not theorize face-work done at others' expense: those instances when we maintain our own face by insulting, reviling, and undermining the face of others. This neglect is in a sense rather strange because Erving Goffman (1955), whose work stands as an antecedent to politeness theory, was well aware of these darker ploys:

*"Every face-saving practice which is allowed to neutralize a particular threat opens up the possibility that the threat will be willfully introduced for what can be safely gained from it. If a person knows that his modesty will be answered by others' praise of him, he can fish for compliments. If his own appraisal of self will be checked against incidental events, then he can arrange for favorable incidental events to appear. If others are prepared to overlook an affront to them and act forbearantly, or to accept apologies, then he can rely on this as a basis for safely offending them. He can attempt by sudden withdrawal to force the others into a ritually unsatisfactory state, leaving them to flounder in an interchange that cannot be readily completed. Finally, at some expense to himself, he can arrange for others to hurt his feelings, thus forcing them to feel guilt, remorse, and sustained ritual disequilibrium" (p. 331).*

Here Goffman draws our attention to the more nefarious weapons in the facework arsenal. But why, we might ask, would one wish to deploy these weapons? What ends might they further? Goffman gives us part of the answer: they might be used to satisfy our face own wants at another's cost. Regarding the act of disagreement: we might seek to enhance our own sense of self-worth (positive face) by showing up another's ignorance, by proving ourselves more knowledgeable about a topic at hand, or by promoting our own vision of reality. Relatedly, disagreements may represent one instance of a broader class of 'contra-accommodative' (cf. Coupland et al., 1988a) devices deployed, *inter alia*, to serve identity-enhancing functions. For example, by contradicting their female interlocutors, men may avow their own masculinity as well as a masculine view of the world. (I recently caught myself doing this to my wife, when defending - with little success - my television-hogging during the world cup cricket series). In this sense, dissension may be similar in function to the tactic of speech divergence (cf. chap. 3). Finally, disagreements may bring us closer to achieving a particular task goal, eg. winning a debate, solving a problem, or making a decision.

Keeping the above comments in mind, we can now examine table 8, which depicts four broad superstrategies for effecting disagreement. The framework is based upon Brown and Levinson's (1987) with three adaptations: it contains a face 'antagonistic' superstrategy; it contains a somewhat altered set of micro-linguistic realizations<sup>(7)</sup> under each superstrategy; and, heeding Brown and Gilman's (1989) recommendations, it collapses positive and negative politeness strategies into a single 'with-redress' superstrategy. Above all, table 8 illustrates the remarkable diversity of ways in which disagreements can be executed.

This point is perhaps best illustrated by examples from real conversation (taken from the speech corpus recorded in appendix D). Compare the indirectness of [1] (see chap.4, p.111 for a fuller discussion of this example), where the speaker struggles to deliver the *coup de grace* and ends up expressing himself in a sidling fashion, to the stark brutality of [2] and [3], where dissension is actually underlined by the interruptive form of the utterances, and by the aggressive use of emphasis and intensifiers (eg. 'Absolutely not...'<sup>(8)</sup>). These instances represent the poles of our interpretive framework. On the one hand, we have dissension encoded so indirectly that its very status as dissension becomes blurred, ie. it is performed implicitly, or 'off record'. On the other, we have

---

(7) They constitute examples rather than a complete list.

(8) This example demonstrates the need to interpret speech forms in context. Since Lakoff's (1975) pioneering work, theorists have presumed that intensifiers are part of 'women's language'; however, when employed in the context of a disagreement, they seem to reflect assertiveness rather than febleness. Holmes (1990, p.191) makes much the same point regarding the 'booster' *of course*, when she writes: "...boosting an offensive comment will never be perceived as in any way polite."

---

---

**Table 8 Strategies for Executing Disagreements: Arranged on a Continuum of Least (Antagonistic) to Most (Disagreement Avoided) Polite**

---

**ANTAGONISTIC**

**(Face Threat Explicit with Aggravating Features)**

Disagreements phrased so as to highlight the incompetence of the recipient (the use of sarcasm, insults, accusations of inferior knowledge, irrationality etc.; cf. Penman, 1990)

Disagreement is preceded by militant, emphatically intoned 'opposition prefaces' (eg. 'What...'), which draw attention to the dissension (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987)

Disagreement boosted with intensifiers (eg. *really, of course*; cf. Holmes, 1988b, 1990)

Disagreement takes the form of an interruption (cf. Willis & Williams, 1976)

Disagreement expressed as an imperative (cf. Priesler, 1986)

Disagreement accompanied by a hostile shift (eg. the use of 'lexical colouring') into a 'marked' style (cf. Scotton, 1985, 1988)

---

**BALD**

**(Face Threat Explicit without Mitigating or Aggravating Features)**

Disagreement expressed as blunt, unmitigated declarative or, nonverbally, as a head shake

---

**WITH REDRESS**

**(Face Threat Explicit with Mitigating Features)**

Disagreement prefaced by or followed by 'token' agreement (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Disagreement softened by hedging particles such as *you know, sort of, I think*, etc. (cf. Holmes, 1990, 1986, 1988a)

Disagreement accompanied by joking, smiling, laughter or other devices which show that its status as a threat to face is not to be taken seriously (cf. Goffman, 1955)

Disagreement phrased so as reveal that it is the result of situational pressure and not personal spleen

Disagreement accompanied by a disclaimer (eg. *I'm no expert but...*), or some other slight to own face which serves to mitigate the slight to another's face (cf. Goffman, 1955)

Disagreement takes the form of a 'dispreferred-action turn' (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin 1987), ie. its ferocity is diminished by delays, stammers, hesitations and the like

Disagreement couched so as to minimize its status as an imposition (eg. *"But if I could just add one thing here..."*)

Disagreement immediately followed by some form of 'repair' ('self' or 'other-initiated'; cf. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987)

---

**OFF RECORD**

**(Face Threat Implicit)**

Disagreement is performed as an interrogative (eg. its meaning vacillates between opposition and a request for clarification/information; cf. Priesler, 1986)

Disagreement is executed implicitly through nonverbal communication such as posture (cf. Bull, 1987 for discussion)

Disagreement is implicated by a watery or understated agreement, ie. an agreement that flouts Grice's maxim of quantity (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Brown, 1990)

Disagreement is implicated by excessive vagueness, ellipsis, irony or metaphor (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Brown, 1990)

---

**DISAGREEMENT Avoided**

**(Face Threat Eschewed)**

---

---

dissension encoded so brusquely that attention is drawn to its vitriolic nature, ie. it is performed 'antagonistically'. Between these extremities we have the situations instantiated by [4], [5], and [6]. In [4] and [5], the disagreement is performed 'on record' but with redress (eg. token agreement as a preface, hedging features). In [6] dissension is performed 'baldly', that is 'on record' but without either face-antagonistic or face-redressive features.

[1] Context: A discussion between a male and female student about the redistribution of wealth in South Africa

S1: ...You know *sort of* why sort- *sort of* why do you have views that that you want all the wealth to be redistributed? (laughs)

[2] Context: Two students debating the legitimacy of scientific experiments on animals

S2: ...But that's not that's a different topic to bein- the animals (#) we'[re talking

S1: No it isn't]

[3] Context: Two students discussing whether or not drug pushers should receive the death penalty

S1: Wouldn't the death penalty be far too s-severe for such a small crime

S2: Absolutely not such a sma::ll crime

S1: Yes as far [as

S2: A] sma::ll crime...

[4] Context: Two students discussing whether or not drug pushers should receive the death penalty

S1: ...So: what I mean people are being killed you<sup>v</sup>know murdered like with say a mass murderer (2.0) there is in a sense (#) a definite mur::der going on do you know what I'm saying

S2: Wou- is it is it them that are actually doing it (1.0) you know noones *sort of* forc[ing you

S1: Yes]

S2: Forcing your to go try all these things...

[5] Context: Discussion of Euthanasia

S2: ...I mean but its also like a its like a totally (3.5) its like you're so wrapped up in yourself (1.0)

S1: You do:: you do:: but but a person who is totally depressed all the ti::me the-there's nothing you can do to make them come out of it...

[6] Context: Discussion of euthanasia

S2: ...so: so say they're leading miserable lives okay let's look at another aspect its not their life you don't own yourself

S1: Yes you do

Several methodological problems have still to be addressed. They include: the selection of an appropriate unit of analysis, the problem of quantification (criterion 4 above), and the perennial dilemma of form and function (criterion 2 above).

The unit of analysis issue is an especially vexed one. It is best exemplified by an examination of its two extremes. At one pole, we have work driven by a micro-linguistic principle, which takes the communicative act (cf. Priesler, 1986) as its building block. At the other, we have work driven by a macro-linguistic principle, which takes some larger chunk of discourse such as speech 'exchanges' (eg. O'keefe & Shepherd, 1987), 'interchanges' (eg. Goffman, 1955) or even complete interactions as its analytic unit. Both perspectives offer benefits to the aspirant researcher. Micro-level analyses

are less cumbersome, and more amenable to reliable identification and quantification than macro-level analyses. Equally, because meaning is often deeply embedded within a lengthy sequence of turns at talk, macro-level analyses may yield more refined interpretations - interpretations sensitive to the broader cadences of interaction and to the overarching or multiple goals of conversationalists (cf. O'keefe & Shepherd, 1987 for an illustration of work in this vein).

For the purposes of our hypothetical study, my solution to the unit of analysis problem would be practical rather than absolute. I would choose the communicative act as my base unit, not because it is methodologically superior, but because lends itself to consistent identification and quantification.

That disagreements can be reliably coded as communicative acts has been well established in studies using Bales's scoring system (cf. Bales, 1970; Priesler, 1986). Central to this system is the 'minimal message unit', a concept leading us to define a communicative act as any behaviour "...sufficiently complete to permit another person to interpret it, and so react in relation to its content and to the speaker" (p.68). By extension: in Balesian terms, a disagreement would be defined as any behaviour that is 'sufficiently complete' to convey opposition. It might therefore take the form of a simple sentence ('That's not correct'); but, equally, it might take form of a single word negation ('no'), nonverbal act (eg. head shake), or mere interjection ('but', 'well').

While this identification process would represent the endpoint of a Balesian analysis of disagreements, it would represent the beginning of our work. Having isolated a particular disagreement, we would wish to arrive at a finer-grained assessment regarding the politeness of its execution. This would require an examination of its immediate micro-linguistic context. Is the disagreement preceded or succeeded by a 'token' agreement? Does it form the 'dispreferred second' of a turn sequence? Is it accompanied by laughter, hedging, or disclaimers, intended to siphon away hostile energy? Is it couched in a way that minimizes its status as an 'imposition'? Is it performed with face-antagonistic elements such as sarcasm, intensifiers, 'opposition prefaces', or accusations of irrationality\ineptitude? By examining such questions, we might construct a more subtle and penetrative analysis of male\female dissension.

At this point, however, our coding scheme runs into some serious obstructions. They arise because (im)politeness markers often co-occur. What if a disagreement contains many redressive features: are we to consider it only as polite as a disagreement containing just one such feature? Worse than this, what if a disagreement contains both face-redressive and face-antagonistic features - how might we evaluate the *overall*

politeness of its performance? Some means of computing a total politeness index would appear to be necessary.

Brown and Gilman (1989) have made some headway in this respect. They have recommended that each face-redressive feature used during an FTA's performance be given a score of +1, and that especially conciliatory features be given a score of +2. Then, by summing scores, a 'total politeness' index for each FTA might be computed. Although Brown and Gilman's scheme is primarily concerned with *face-redress*, its extension to *face-attack* is elementary. Each face-antagonistic feature of an FTA might be given a score of -1, with particularly virulent features receiving -2. And once more, by summing positive and negative scores we might arrive at a 'total' (im)politeness index<sup>(9)</sup>.

Applying Brown and Gilman's scoring system to example [5] above, we can see that in this case the disagreement is prefaced by a token agreement ('You do:: you do::...'), and would therefore receive a politeness score of +1. In example [2], on the other hand, the disagreement is intensified by its interruptive form and would thus receive a politeness score of -1. [7] and [8] below are slightly more complicated. In [7], the FTA is doubly softened by a disclaimer (+1) and hedging (+1) and as such would acquire a overall score of +2. In [8], the FTA is simultaneously mitigated (by token agreement: +1; by hedging: +1) and boosted (by the interruptive form: -1). This example would be given a total politeness score of +1.

[7] Context: Discussion of euthanasia

S1: ...Well may its a selfish point but

S2: Ya

S1: You<sup>V</sup>know when you're that desperate you don't think of anybody else...

[8] Context: Debate about whether or not drug pushers should receive the death penalty

S1: Well that's not a foregone conclusi[on its (inaudible)

S2: Okay its not an foregone] conclusion but its its pretty:: ahm...

What such quantitative measures fail to capture, of course, is that effective facework is often more than the sum of its atoms. True diplomacy is defined by qualities such as virtuosity, timing and skill; it eludes quantification of the kind being described here. A disagreement may appear well-mitigated, yet devastate its recipient because it is ill-timed in the context of an unfolding conversation. Correspondingly, what seems to be a severe blow may prove relatively harmless when interpreted in context.

---

(9) At this stage, it is difficult to specify which redressive features of disagreements might warrant a politeness score of +2 or which antagonistic features might warrant one of -2. This is a matter for empirical investigation. For instance, one might ask native speakers to assess the relative deference\animosity of various forms of dissension).

Despite such interpretive hurdles, the calculation of an 'total politeness' index for disagreement acts seems a worthwhile endeavour. It is one that might, in turn, allow us to calculate the 'average' politeness levels employed by men and women across a number of disagreements. Quantification of this kind remains a key concern for language and gender research because, quite simply, the extent to which particular linguistic strategies are gender-differentiated remains a key concern. We must grant, to be sure, that theorists have traditionally exaggerated gender differences in communication (cf. Thorne et al., 1983a). Even so, the question of whether or not specific verbal tactics are used 'gender-preferentially' continues to animate the area. Indeed, it forms the crux of most theoretical and political debate.

Perhaps the best solution to the problem of quantification is the one advocated by Brown and Levinson (1987) themselves - that we supplement quantitative analysis with detailed analysis of a qualitative nature. We might then avoid the rash frequency counts that have characterized quantitative analyses of male/female talk and have almost invariably led to simplification of the form and function relation (cf. Holmes, 1984a). Further, we should not forget that an adequate quantitative index must control for differences in the amount of speech produced by men and women (cf. Holmes, 1990; chaps. 4 & 5).

Both of the above methodological principles would be enshrined within our hypothetical study.

## Summary

In this chapter, forgoing the usual summarizing functions of a conclusion, I have outlined some new research directions. My goal has been extension instead of synopsis or integration. Nevertheless, many of the themes introduced during previous chapters have been reworked here, notably:

- the emphasis on a multi-causal approach to the study of gender, language and power
- the emphasis on audience effects and on the conceptual systems that have attempted to clarify them
- the attempt to theorize women's communication in a way that neither drains them of agency nor credulously 'depoliticizes' their speech
- the attempt to devise an interpretive framework that deals trenchantly with the social and political nuances of language, yet appreciates its endless variety and play of meanings

These themes I have explored in the course of describing a hypothetical experiment. Yet much of what I have said has been nebulous rather than clear; tantalizing rather than convincing.

Several questions persist. Precisely how do the male\female facework goals relate to other conversational objectives (task goals, gender identity goals, efficiency goals etc.)? How might the interpretative framework detailed above be extended to cover self-directed as well as other-directed facework tactics? At what point, if ever, might our list of micro-linguistic realizations of disagreements be deemed reasonably complete? Do men and women follow different rules of politeness, and if so, how might these be uncovered? What is the relationship between the facework principles described by politeness theory and the accommodation principles described by speech accommodation theory? How can we best further the ideal of developing a multi-causal approach to gender and speech? Within which *South African* contexts and subject populations might the relation between gender, language, and power be most fruitfully investigated?

Such complex, politically-charged questions are in keeping with the intellectual spirit of the language and gender enterprise. It is an enterprise to which I have contributed in this dissertation, and to which I hope to contribute more substantially and definitively in the future.



## References

- Abrahamson, M. (1966). *Interpersonal Accommodation*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Abrams, D., Sparkes, K., & Hogg, M.A. (1985). Gender salience and social identity: The impact of sex of siblings on educational and occupational aspirations. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 55, 224-232.
- Abrams, D., Thomas, J., & Hogg, M.A. (1990). Numerical distinctiveness, social identity and gender identity. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 29, 87-92.
- Archer, J. (1984). Gender roles as developmental pathways. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 23, 139-148.
- Aries, E.J. (1976). Interactional patterns and themes of male, female and mixed-sex groups. *Small Group Behaviour*, 7, 7-18.
- Aries, E.J. (1982). Verbal and non-verbal behavior in single-sex and mixed-sex groups: Are traditional sex roles changing? *Psychological Reports*, 51, 127-134.
- Aries, E.J. (1987). Gender and communication. In *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 7. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Aries, E.J., Gold, C., & Weigel, R.H. (1983). Dispositional and situational influences on dominance behaviour in small groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, 779-786.
- Aronovitch, C.D. (1976). The voice of personality: Stereotyped judgements and their relation to voice quality and sex of speaker. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 99, 207-220.
- Aronsson, L., Jönsson, L., & Linell, P. (1987). The courtroom hearing as a middle ground: Speech accommodation by lawyers and defendants. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 6, 99-116.
- Atkinson, K., & Coupland, N. (1988). Accommodation as ideology. *Language and Communication*, 8, 321-327.
- Aukett, R., Ritchie, J., & Mill, K. (1988). Gender differences in friendship patterns. *Sex Roles*, 19, 57-66.
- Bailey, L.A., & Timm, L.A. (1976). More on women's and men's expletives. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 18, 438-449.
- Baird, J.E. (1976). Sex differences in group communication: A review of relevant research. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 62, 179-192.
- Baird, J.E., & Bradley, P.H. (1979). Styles of management and communication. *Communication Monographs*, 46, 101-111.
- Bakan, D. (1966). *The Duality of Human Existence*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Bales, R.F. (1950). *Interaction Process Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bales, R.F. (1970). *Personality and Interpersonal Behavior*. New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston.
- Ball, P., Giles, H., & Hewstone, M. (1985). Interpersonal accommodation and situational construals: An integrative formalisation. In H. Giles & R.N. St. Clair (eds.), *Recent Advances in Language, Communication and Social Psychology*.
- Ball, P., Giles, H., Byrne, J. L. & Becheree, P. (1984). Situational constraints on the evaluative significance of speech accommodation: Some Australian data. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 46, 115-129.
- Balswick, J., & Peek, C. (1971). The inexpressive male: A tragedy of American society. *The Family Coordinator*, 20, 363-368.
- Banks, S.P. (1987). Achieving 'unmarkedness' in organizational discourse: A praxis perspective on ethnolinguistic identity. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 6, 171-189.
- Barrett, M. (1987). The concept of difference. *Feminist Review*, 26, 29-41.
- Barth, R.J., & Kinder, B.N. (1988). A theoretical analysis of sex differences in same-sex friendships. *Sex Roles*, 19, 349-363.
- Baumann, M. (1976). Two features of women's speech? In B.L. Dubois & I. Crouch (eds.), *The Sociology of the Languages of American Women*. Texas: Trinity University.
- Beattie, G. (1981). Interruption in conversational interaction, and its relation to the sex and status of interactants. *Linguistics*, 19, 15-35.
- Beattie, G. (1982). Look just don't interrupt! *New Scientist*, 23 October, 859-860.

- Beebe, L.M., & Giles, H. (1984). Speech Accommodation Theories: A discussion in terms of second language acquisition. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 46, 5-32.
- Belk, S.S., Snell, W.E., Garcia-Falconi, R., Hernandez-Sanchez, J. E., Hargrove, L., & Holtzman, W.H. Jr. (1988). Power strategy use in the intimate relationships of women and men from the United States and Mexico. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 14, 439-447.
- Bell, A. (1984). Language style as audience design. *Language in Society*, 13, 145-204.
- Bem, S. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 155-162.
- Bennett, M., & Jarvis, J. (1991). The communicative function of minimal responses in everyday conversation. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 131, 519-523.
- Berger, J., Rosenholtz, S.J., & Zelditch, M. Jr. (1980). Status organizing processes. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 6, 479-508.
- Berkowitz, L., & Donnerstein, E. (1982). External validity is more than skin deep: Some answers to criticisms of laboratory experiments. *American Psychologist*, 37, 245-257.
- Berryman, C.L., & Wilcox, J.R. (1980). Attitudes towards male and female speech: Experiments on the effects of sex-typed language. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 44, 50-59.
- Bilous, K.R., & Krauss, R.M. (1988). Dominance and accommodation in the conversational behaviours of same- and mixed-sex dyads. *Language and Communication*, 8, 183-194.
- Blaubergs, M.S. (1980). An analysis of classic arguments against changing sexist language. *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 3, 135-147.
- Bodine, A. (1975). Sex differentiation in language. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (eds.), *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Boe, S.K. (1987). Language as an expression of caring in women. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 29, 271-285.
- Borker, R. (1980). Anthropology: Social and cultural perspectives. In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker, & N. Furman (eds.), *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- Borker, R. (1980). Anthropology: Social and cultural perspectives. In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker, & N. Furman (eds.), *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- Bourhis, R.Y. (1979). Language in ethnic interaction. A social psychological approach. In H. Giles & B. Saint-Jacques (eds.), *Language and Ethnic Relations*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Bourhis, R.Y. (1984). Cross-cultural communication in Montreal: Two field studies since Bill 101. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 46, 33-47.
- Bourhis, R.Y. (1985). The sequential nature of language choice. In R. Street & J. Capella (eds.), *Sequence and Pattern in Communicative Behaviour*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Bourhis, R.Y., & Genesee, F. (1980). Evaluative reactions to code switching strategies in Montreal. In H. Giles, P.W. Robinson & P.M. Smith (eds.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon
- Bourhis, R.Y., & Giles, H. (1977). The language of intergroup distinctiveness. In H. Giles (ed.), *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*. Academic Press: London.
- Bourhis, R.Y., Giles, H. & Lambert, W.E. (1975). Social consequences of accommodating one's speech style: A cross-national investigation. *International Journal of the sociology of Language*, 6, 53-71.
- Bourhis, R.Y., Giles, H., Leyens, J.P. & Tajfel, H. (1979). Psycholinguistic distinctiveness: Language divergence in Belgium. In H. Giles and R. St Clair (eds.), *Language and Social Psychology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bradac, J.J. (1982). A rose by another name: Attitudinal consequences of lexical variation. In E.B. Bouchard Ryan & H. Giles (eds.), *Attitudes Towards Language Variation: Social and Applied Contexts*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Bradac, J.J. (1990). Language attitudes and impression formation. In H. Giles & P. Robinson (eds.), *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*. New York: John Wiley and sons.
- Bradac, J.J., & Mulac, A. (1984a). Attributional consequences of powerful and powerless speech styles in a crisis-intervention context. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 3, 1-19.
- Bradac, J.J., & Mulac, A. (1984b). A molecular view of powerful and powerless speech styles: Attributional consequences of specific language features and communicator intentions. *Communication Monographs*, 51, 307-319.

- Bradac, J.J., Hemphill, M.R., & Tardy, C.H. (1981). Language style on trial. The effects of "powerful" and "powerless" speech upon judgments of victims and villains. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 45, 327-341.
- Bradac, J.J., Mulac, A. & House, A. (1988). Lexical diversity and magnitude of convergent versus divergent style shifting: Perceptual and evaluative consequences. *Language and Communication*, 8, 213-228.
- Bradley, P. (1981) The folk-linguistics of women's speech: An empirical examination. *Communication Monographs*, 48, 73-90.
- Brooke, M.E., & Ng, S.H. (1986). Language and social influence in small conversational groups. *Journal of language and social psychology*, 5, 201-210.
- Brouwer, D. (1982). The influence of addressee's sex on politeness in language use. *Linguistics*, 20, 697-711.
- Brouwer, D., Gerritson, M., & de Haan, D. (1979). Speech differences between women and men: On the wrong track? *Language in Society*, 8, 33-50.
- Broverman, I.K., Vogel, S.R., Broverman, D.M., Clarkson, F.E., & Rosenkrantz, P.S. (1972). Sex role stereotypes: A current appraisal. *Journal of social issues*, 28, 59-78.
- Brown, C.E., Dovidio, J.F., & Ellyson, S.L. (1990). Reducing sex differences in visual displays of dominance: Knowledge is power. *Personality Social Psychology Bulletin*, 16, 358-368.
- Brown, P. & Fraser, C. (1979). Speech as a marker of situation. In K.R. Scherer and H. Giles (eds.), *Social Markers in Speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P. (1980). How and why women are more polite: Some evidence from a Mayan community. In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker & N. Furman (eds.), *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- Brown, P. (1990). Gender, politeness, and confrontation in Tenejapa. *Discourse Processes*, 13, 123-141.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in language use: Politeness phenomena. In E.N. Goody (ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Universals in Language Use: Politeness Phenomena*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, R. & Gilman, A. (1989). Politeness theory and Shakespeare's four major tragedies. *Language in Society*, 18, 159-212.
- Bryne, D. (1969). Attitudes and attraction. In L. Berkowitz (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. New York: Academic Press.
- Bull, P.E. *Posture and Gesture*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Cameron, D. (1985). *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*. London: MacMillan.
- Cameron, D. (1990). Introduction: Why is language a feminist issue? In D. Cameron (ed.), *The Feminist Critique of Language*. London: Routledge
- Cameron, D., & Coates, J. (1985). Some problems in the sociolinguistic explanation of sex differences. *Language and Communication*, 5, 143-151.
- Cameron, D., McAlinden, F., & O'Leary, K. (1988). Lakoff in context: The social and linguistic function of tag questions. In J. Coates & D. Cameron (eds.), *Women in Their Speech Communities*. London: Longman Group.
- Campbell, D.T., & Stanley, J.C. (1963). *Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Cappella, J.N. (1981). Mutual influence in expressive behavior: Adult-adult and infant-adult dyadic interaction. *Psychological Bulletin*, 89, 1101-132.
- Carli, L.L. (1989). Gender differences in interaction style and influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 565-576.
- Carli, L.L. (1990). Gender, language and influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 941-951.
- Cline, R.J. (1986). The effects of biological sex and psychological gender on reported and behavioral intimacy and control of self-disclosure. *Communication Quarterly*, 34, 41-54.

- Cline, R.J. (1989). The politics of intimacy: Costs and benefits determining disclosure intimacy in male-female dyads. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6, 5-20.
- Coates, J. (1986). *Women, Men and Language*. Longman Group.
- Coates, J. (1988a). Introduction. In J. Coates & D. Cameron (eds.), *Women in Their Speech Communities*. New York: Longman Group Lmt.
- Coates, J. (1988b). Gossip revisited: Language in all-female groups. In J. Coates & D. Cameron (eds.), *Women in Their Speech Communities*. New York: Longman Group Lmt.
- Coates, J., & Cameron, D. (1988). *Women in Their Speech Communities*. New York: Longman Group.
- Cody, M.J., McLaughlin, M.L., & Jordan, W.J. (1980). A multidimensional scaling of three sets of compliance gaining strategies. *Communication Quarterly*, 28, 34-46.
- Cohen, J. (1977). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*. New York: Academic Press.
- Condry, J., & Condry, S. (1976). Sex differences: A study in the eye of the beholder. *Child Development*, 47, 812-819.
- Constantinople, A. (1973). Masculinity-femininity: An exception to the famous dictum? *Psychological Bulletin*, 80, 389-407.
- Cook, A.S., Fritz, J.J., McCormack, B.L., & Visperas, C. (1985). Early gender differences in the functional use of language. *Sex Roles*, 12, 909-915.
- Cota, A.C., & Dion, K. (1986). Salience of sex and sex composition of ad hoc groups: An experimental test of distinctiveness theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 770-776.
- Coupland, N. (1985). 'Hark, hark the lark': Social motivations for phonological style-shifting. *Language and Communication*, 5, 153-171.
- Coupland, N., & Giles, H. (1988). Introduction: The communicative contexts of accommodation. *Language and Communication*, 8, 175-182.
- Coupland, N., Coupland, J., Giles, H. & Henwood, K. (1988a). Accommodating the elderly: Invoking and extending a theory. *Language in Society*, 17, 1-41.
- Coupland, N., Grainger, K., & Coupland, J. (1988b). Politeness in context: Intergenerational issues. *Language in Society*, 17, 253-262.
- Cozby, P.C. (1973). Self-disclosure: A literature review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 79, 73-91.
- Craig, R.T. (1990). Multiple goals in discourse: An epilogue. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 9, 163-170.
- Crosby, F., & Nyquist, L. (1977). The female register: An empirical study of Lakoff's hypotheses. *Language in Society*, 6, 313-322.
- Danet, B. (1980). 'Baby or fetus?': Language and the construction of reality in a manslaughter trial. *Semiotica*, 32, 187-219.
- Davidson, L. R., & Duberman, L. (1982). Friendship: Communication interactional patterns in same-sex dyads. *Sex Roles*, 8, 809-822.
- Davis, K. (1988). Paternalism under the microscope. In A.D. Todd & S. Fisher (eds.), *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*. New Jersey: Ablex.
- de Klerk, V. (1988). An investigation into the use of expletives by males and females in Grahamstown. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 6, 1-18.
- Deaux, K. (1984). From individual differences to social categories. *American Psychologist*, 39, 105-116.
- Deaux, K. (1985). Sex and Gender. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 36, 49-81.
- Deaux, K., & Major, B. (1987). Putting gender into context: An interactive model of gender-related behaviour. *Psychological Review*, 94, 369-389.
- Defrancisco, V.L. (1991). The sounds of silence: How men silence women in marital relations. *Discourse and Society*, 2, 413-423.
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Positions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dindia, K. (1987). The effects of sex of subject and sex of partner on interruptions. *Human Communication Research*, 13, 345-371.
- Doise, W. (1986). *Levels of Explanation in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Donovan, J. (1990). The silence is broken. In D. Cameron (ed.), *The Feminist Critique of Language*. London: Routledge.

- Dovido, J.F., Brown, C.E., Heltman, K., Ellyson, S.L., & Keating, C.F. (1988). Power displays between men and women in discussions of gender-linked tasks: A multichannel study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *55*, 580-587.
- Drass, K.A. (1986). The effect of gender identity on conversation. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *49*, 294-301.
- Driskell, J. E., & Mullen, B. (1990). Status, expectations, and behavior: A meta-analytic review and test of the theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *16*, 541-553.
- Driver, D. (1990). M'a ngoana o tsoare thipa ka bohaleng - The child's mother grasps the sharp end of the knife: Women as mothers, women as writers. In M. Trump (ed.), *Rendering Things Visible: Essays on South African Literary Culture*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Dube-Simard, L. (1983). Genesis of social categorization, threat to identity, and perceptions of social injustice: Their role in intergroup communication breakdown. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *2*, 183-206.
- Dubois, B.L., & Crouch, I. (1976). The question of tag questions in women's speech: They don't really use more of them do they? *Language in Society*, *4*, 289-294.
- Duncan, S., & Fiske, D. (1977). *Face to Face Interaction*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Eagly, A. H. (1983). Gender and social influence: A social-psychological analysis. *American Psychologist*, *38*, 971-981.
- Eagly, A.H., & Johnson, B.T. (1990). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *108*, 233-256.
- Eakins, B.W., & Eakins, R.G. (1978). *Sex Differences in Human Communication*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Edelsky, C. (1976). Subjective reactions to sex-linked language. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *99*, 97-104.
- Edelsky, C. (1981). Who's got the floor? *Language in Society*, *10*, 383-421.
- Eisenstein, H. (1984). *Contemporary Feminist Thought*. London: Unwin.
- Erickson, B., Lind, E.A., Hohnson, B.C., & O'Barr, W. (1978). Speech style impression formation in a court setting: The effects of "powerful" and "powerless" speech. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *14*, 266-279.
- Ervin-Tripp, S.M. (1964). An analysis of the interaction of language, topic and listener. *American Anthropologist*, *66*, 86-102.
- Eskilson, A., & Wiley, M.G. (1976). Sex composition and leadership in small groups. *Sociometry*, *39*, 183-194.
- Etaugh, C., Houtler, B.D., & Ptasnik, P. (1988). Evaluating competence of women and men: Effects of experimenter gender and group gender composition. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *12*, 191-200.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Falbo, T. (1977). Multidimensional scaling of power strategies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *35*, 537-547.
- Falbo, T., & Peplau, L.A. (1980). Power strategies in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *38*, 618-628.
- Ferguson, N. (1977). Simultaneous speech, interruptions and dominance. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *16*, 295-302.
- Ferrara, K. (1991). Accommodation in therapy. In H. Giles, N. Coupland, & J. Coupland (eds.), *Contexts of Accommodation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fisher, B.A. (1983). Differential effects of sexual composition and interactional context on interaction patterns in dyads. *Human Communication Research*, *9*, 225-238.
- Fishman, P.M. (1978). Interaction: The work women do. *Social Problems*, *25*, 397-406.
- Fishman, P.M. (1980). Conversational insecurity. In H. Giles, W.P. Robinson, & P.M. Smith (eds.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Fishman, P.M. (1983). Interaction: The work women do. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae & N. Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Fleischer, R.A., & Chertkoff, J.M. (1986). Effects of dominance and sex on leader selection in dyadic work groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *50*, 94-99.

- Forgas, J.P. (1983). Language, goals and situations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 2, 267-293.
- Foster, D. (1991). Introduction. In D. Foster & J. Louw-Potgieter (eds.), *Social Psychology in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Lexicon.
- Fraser, C., & Scherer, K. R. (1982). Introduction: Social psychological contributions to the study of language. In C. Fraser & K.R. Scherer (eds.), *Advances in the Social Psychology of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gallois, C., Callan, V.J., & Johnstone, M. (1984). Personality judgements of Australian aborigine and white speakers: Ethnicity, sex and context. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 3, 39-57.
- Gavey, N. (1989). Feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis. *Psychology of Women's Quarterly*, 13, 459-475.
- Gecas, V. (1989). Rekindling the sociological imagination in social psychology. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 19, 97-115.
- Genesee, F., & Bourhis, R.Y. (1982). The social psychological significance of code-switching cross-cultural communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 1, 1-28.
- Genesee, F., & Bourhis, R.Y. (1988). Evaluative reactions to language choice strategies: The role of sociostructural norms. *Language and Communication*, 8, 229-250.
- Giles, H. (1977). Social psychology and applied linguistics: Towards an integrative approach. *ITL:Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 27-42.
- Giles, H. (1979). Ethnicity markers in speech. In K.R. Scherer & H. Giles (eds.), *Social Markers in Speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giles, H. & Bryne, J.L. (1982). An intergroup approach to second language acquisition. *Journal of Multicultural and Multilingual Development*, 3, 17-40.
- Giles, H. & Coupland, N. (1991). *Language: Contexts and Consequences*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Giles, H. & Hewstone, M. (1982). Cognitive structures, speech and social situations: Two integrative models. *Language Sciences*, 4, 188-219.
- Giles, H. & Johnson, P. (1981). The role of language in ethnic group relations, In J.C. Turner & H. Giles (eds.), *Intergroup Behaviour*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Giles, H. & Johnson, P. (1986). Perceived threat, ethnic commitment and inter-ethnic language behaviour. In Y. Kim (ed.) *Interethnic Communication: Recent research*, 10th Intercultural Communication Annual. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Giles, H. & Johnson, P. (1987). Ethnolinguistic identity theory: A social psychological approach to language maintenance. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 68, 69-99.
- Giles, H. & Powesland, P.F. (1975). *Speech Style and Social Evaluation*. London: Academic Press.
- Giles, H. & Smith, P.M. (1979). Accommodation Theory: Optimal levels of convergence. In H. Giles & R.N. St. Clair (eds.) *Language and Social Psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Giles, H., Bourhis, R.Y. & Taylor, D.M. (1977). Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations. In H. Giles (ed.), *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*. London and New York: Academic Press.
- Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991). Accommodation theory: Communication, context, and consequence. In H. Giles, J. Coupland, & N. Coupland (eds.), *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giles, H., Hewstone, M., Ryan, E.B., & Johnson, P. (1987b). Research on language attitudes. In H.U.A. Ammon, N. Dittmar, & K.J. Mattheier (eds.), *Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society*. New York: de Gruyter.
- Giles, H., Mulac, A., Bradac, J.J., & Johnson, P. (1987a). Speech accommodation theory: The first decade and beyond. In M.L. McLaughlin (ed.), *Communication Yearbook 10*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Giles, H., Smith, P., Ford, B., Condor, S., & Thakerar, J. (1980). Speech style and the fluctuating saliency of sex. *Language Sciences*, 2, 260-282.
- Giles, H., Taylor, D.M. & Bourhis, R.Y. (1973). Towards a theory of interpersonal accommodation through language: some Canadian data. *Language in Society*, 2, 177-192.
- Gill, S., Stockard, J., Johnson, M., & Williams, S. (1987). Measuring gender differences: The expressive dimension and critique of androgyny scales. *Sex Roles*, 17, 375-399.

- Gilligan, C. (1977). In a different voice. *Harvard Educational Review*, 47, 481-518.
- Goffman, E. (1955). On facework: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. Reprinted in J. Laver & S. Hutcheson (eds.) (1972), *Communication in Face to Face Interaction*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Goldberger, N.R., Clinchy, B., Belenky, M.F., & Tarule, J. M. (1987). Women's ways of knowing. In *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 7. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Goodwin, M.H. (1980). Directive-response speech sequences in girls' and boys' task activities. In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker, & N. Furman (eds.), *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- Goodwin, M.H. (1988). Cooperation and competition across girls' play activities. In A.D. Todd, & S. Fisher (eds.), *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*. New Jersey: Ablex.
- Goodwin, M.H., & Goodwin, C. (1987). Children's arguing. In S. Philips, S. Steele & C. Tanz (eds.), *Language, Gender and Sex in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graddol, D., & Swann, J. (1989). *Gender Voices*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gruber, K.J., & White, J.W. (1986). Gender differences in perceptions of self's and others' use of power strategies. *Sex Roles*, 15, 109-118.
- Gudykunst, W.B., & Schmidt, K.L. (1987). Language and ethnic identity: An overview and prologue. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 6, 157-170.
- Gudykunst, W.B., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1990). Ethnic identity, language and communication breakdowns. In H. Giles & P. Robinson (eds.), *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*. New York: John Wiley and sons.
- Günthner, S. (1992). The construction of gendered discourse in Chinese-German interactions. *Discourse and Society*, 3, 167-191.
- Haas, A. (1979). Male and female spoken language differences: Stereotypes and evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, 616-626.
- Hacker, H.M. (1981). Blabbermouths and clams: Sex differences in self-disclosure in same-sex and cross-sex friendship dyads. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 5, 385-401.
- Hall, J. A. (1987). On explaining gender differences: The case of nonverbal communication. In *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 7. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Hall, J.A., & Braunwald, K.G. (1981). Gender cues in conversation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40, 99-110.
- Hall, J.A., & Veccia, E.M. (1990). More "touching" observations: New insights on men, women and interpersonal touch. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 1155-1162.
- Hardy, B. (1990). The talkative woman in Shakespeare, Dickens and George Eliot. In S. Minogue (ed.), *Problems for Feminist Criticism*. London: Routledge.
- Hare-Mustin, R.T., & Marecek, J. (1988). The meaning of difference. Gender theory, postmodernism and psychology. *American Psychologist*, 43, 455-464.
- Heiss, J.S. (1962) Degree of intimacy and male-female interaction. *Sociometry*, 25, 197-208.
- Hendrick, C. (1991). Replications, strict replications, and conceptual replications: Are they important? In J.W. Neuliep (ed.), *Replication Research in the Social Sciences*. Sage.
- Henley, N. (1977). *Body Politics: Power, Sex and Nonverbal Behaviour*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Henley, N.M., & Kramer, C. (1991). Gender, power, and miscommunication. In N. Coupland, H. Giles, & J.M. Wiemann (eds.), *"Miscommunication" and Problematic Talk*. London: Sage.
- Henton, C.G. (1989). Fact and fiction in the description of female and male pitch. *Language and Communication*, 9, 299- 299-311.
- Hirschman, L. (1973). Analysis of supportive and assertive behaviour in conversation. Paper presented at the Linguistic Association of America summer meeting, Amherst. Cited in B. Thorne & N. Henley (eds.), *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Hogg, M. A. (1985). Masculine and feminine speech in dyads and in groups: A study of speech style and gender salience. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 4, 99-112.
- Hogg, M.A., & Turner, J.C. (1987). Intergroup behaviour, self-stereotyping and the salience of social categories. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 26, 325-340.

- Hollway, W. (1991). The psychologization of feminism or the feminization of psychology. *Feminism and Psychology, 1*, 29-37.
- Holmes, J. (1984a). Women's language: A functional approach. *General Linguistics, 24*, 149-178.
- Holmes, J. (1984b). Hedging your bets and sitting on the fence: Some evidence for hedges as support structures. *Te Reo, 27*, 47-62.
- Holmes, J. (1985). Sex differences and miscommunication: Some data from New Zealand. In J.B. Price (ed.), *Cross-cultural Encounters: Communication and Miscommunication*. Melbourne: River Seine.
- Holmes, J. (1986). Functions of *you know* in women's and men's speech. *Language in Society, 15*, 1-22.
- Holmes, J. (1988a). *Sort of* in New Zealand women's and men's speech. *Studia Linguistica, 42*, 85-121.
- Holmes, J. (1988b). *Of course*: A pragmatic particle in New Zealand women's and men's speech. *Australian Journal of Linguistics, 8*, 47-74.
- Holmes, J. (1990). Hedges and boosters in women's and men's speech. *Language and Communication, 10*, 185-205.
- Holmes, J. (1992). Women's talk in public contexts. *Discourse and Society, 3*, 131-150.
- Holtgraves, T. (1991). Interpreting questions and replies: Effects of face-threat, question form, and gender. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 54*, 15-24.
- Holtgraves, T., & Yang, J. (1990). Politeness as universal: Cross-cultural perceptions of request strategies and inferences based on their use. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*, 719-729.
- Holtgraves, T., & Yang, J. (1992). Interpersonal underpinnings of request strategies: General Principles and differences due to culture and gender. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*, 246-256.
- Houston, M., & Kramer, C. (1991). Speaking from silence: Methods of silencing and of resistance. *Discourse and Society, 2*, 387-399.
- Howard, J.A., Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, P. (1986). Sex, power and influence tactics in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 102-109.
- Huberty, C.J., & Morris, J.D. (1989). Multivariate analysis versus multiple univariate analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 105*, 302-308.
- Huici, C. (1984). The individual and social functions of sex-role stereotypes. In H. Tajfel (ed.), *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hymes, D. (1967). Models of the interaction of language and social setting. *Journal of Social Issues, 23*, 8-28.
- Ickes, W., & Barnes, R.D. (1978). Boys and girls together and alienated: On enacting stereotyped sex roles in mixed-sex dyads. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36*, 669-683.
- Ickes, W., Schermer, B., & Steeno, J. (1979). Sex and sex-role influences in same-sex dyads. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 42*, 373-385.
- Jahoda, G. (1986). Nature, culture and social psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 16*, 17-30.
- Jahoda, M. (1989). Why a non-reductionist social psychology is almost too difficult to be tackled but too fascinating to left alone. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 28*, 71-78.
- Jaspars, J.M.F. (1983). The task of social psychology: Some historical reflections. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 22*, 277-288.
- Jaspars, J.M.F. (1986). Forum and focus: A personal view of European social psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 16*, 3-15.
- Jenkins, M.M., & Kramer, C. (1987). A thief in the house: Women and language. In D. Spender (ed.), *Men's Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines*. Pergamon Press.
- Jepersen, O. (1990). The Woman. In D. Cameron (ed.), *The Feminist Critique of Language*. London: Routledge.
- Johnson, F., & Aries, E. (1983). The talk of women friends. *Women's Studies International Forum, 6*, 353-361.
- Johnson, F.L. (1983). Political and pedagogical implications of attitudes to women's language. *Communication Quarterly, 31*, 67-84.
- Johnson, J.L. (1980). Question and role responsibility in four professional meetings. *Anthropological Linguistics, 22*, 66-76.

- Johnson, M.M. (1989). Feminism and the theories of Talcott Parsons. In R. Wallace (ed.), *Feminism and Sociological Theory*. USA: Sage.
- Johnson, P. (1976). Women and power: Toward a theory of effectiveness. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32, 99-110.
- Jones, D. (1980). Gossip: Notes on women's oral culture. *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 3, 193-198.
- Jong, E. (1988). *Fear of Flying*. London: Grafton.
- Jose, P.E., & McCarthy, W.J. (1988). Perceived agentic and communal behavior in mixed-sex group interaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 14, 57-67.
- Jose, P.E., Crosby, F., & McCarthy, W.J. (1980). Androgyny, dyadic compatibility and conversational behaviour. In H. Giles, W.P. Robinson & P.M. Smith (eds.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Jourard, S.M., & Lasakow, P. (1958). Some factors in self-disclosure. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 56, 91-98.
- Kahn, L.S. (1984). Group processes and sex differences. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 8, 261-281.
- Kennedy, C.W., & Camden, C.T. (1983). A new look at interruptions. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 47, 45-48.
- Kenny, D.A., & Judd, C.M. (1986). Consequences of violating the independence assumption in analysis of variance. *Psychological Bulletin*, 99, 422-431.
- Keppel, G. (1982). *Design and Analysis*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Key, M.R. (1975). *Male\Female Language*. NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Khosroshahi, F. (1989). Penguins don't care, but women do: A social identity analysis of a Whorfian problem. *Language in Society*, 18, 505-525.
- Kimble, C.E., Yoshikawa, J.C., & Zehr, H.D. (1981). Vocal and verbal assertiveness in same-sex and mixed-sex groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40, 1047-1054.
- Kipers, P.S. (1987). Gender and topic. *Language in Society*, 16, 543-557.
- Kissling, E.A. (1991). Street harassment: The language of sexual terrorism. *Discourse and Society*, 2, 451-460.
- Kitzinger, C. (1991). Feminism, psychology and the paradox of power. *Feminism and Psychology*, 1, 111-129.
- Kollock, P., Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, P. (1985). Sex and power in interaction: Conversational privileges and duties. *American Sociological Review*, 50, 34-46.
- Kopper, B.A., & Epperson, D.L. (1991). Women and anger: Sex and sex-role comparisons in the expression of anger. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15, 7-14.
- Kottler, A.E. (1990). Contradictory discourses: An analysis of a male\female conversation. In J. Mouton & D. Joubert (eds.), *Knowledge and Method in the Human Sciences*. Pretoria: Human Science Research Council.
- Kraemer, H.C., & Jacklin, C.N. (1979). Statistical analysis of dyadic behavior. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, 217-224.
- Kramarae, C. (1980a). Perceptions and politics in language and sex research. In H. Giles, W.P. Robinson, & P.M. Smith (eds.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Kramarae, C. (1980b). Proprietors of language. In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker & N. Furman (eds.), *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- Kramarae, C. (1981). *Women and Men Speaking: Frameworks for Analysis*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Kramarae, C. (1982). Gender: How she speaks. In E.B. Ryan & H. Giles (eds.), *Attitudes Towards Language Variation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Kramarae, C. (1988). Censorship of women's voices on radio. In A.D. Todd & S. Fisher (eds.), *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*. New Jersey: Ablex.
- Kramarae, C. (1990). Changing the complexion of gender in language research. In H. Giles & W. P. Robinson (eds.), *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*. New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Kramer, C. (1974). Folklinguistics. *Psychology Today*, 8, 82-85.

- Kramer, C. (1975). Women's speech: Separate but unequal. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (eds.), *Language and Gender: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Kramer, C. (1977). Perceptions of female and male speech. *Language and Speech*, 20, 151-161.
- Kramer, C. (1978). Women's ratings of their own and ideal speech. *Communication Quarterly*, 26, 2-11.
- Krauss, R.M., & Fussell, S.R. (1988). Other-relatedness in language processing: Discussion and comments. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 7, 263-279.
- Kruglanski, A.W. (1976). On the paradigmatic objections to experimental psychology. *American Psychologist*, 31, 655-663.
- Kuhn, T. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago.
- Kuykendall, E. (1980). Breaking the double binds. *Language and Style*, 13, 81-93.
- Labov, W. (1972). Some principles of linguistic methodology. *Language in Society*, 1, 97-120.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lakoff, R. (1977). Women's language. *Language and Style*, 10, 222-247.
- Lamb, T.A. (1981). Nonverbal and paraverbal control in dyads and triads: Sex or power differences? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 44, 49-53.
- Larsen, K., Martin, H. & Giles, H (1977). Anticipated social cost and interpersonal accommodation. *Human Communication Research*, 3, 303-308.
- Lavandera, B.R. (1988). The study of language in its socio-cultural context. In F.J. Newmeyer (ed.), *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey Vol 4. Language: The Socio-cultural Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lavine, L.O., & Lombardo, J.P. (1984). Self-disclosure: Intimate and nonintimate disclosures as a function of Bem Sex-role category. *Sex Roles*, 11, 735-744.
- Lawrence, D.H. (1982). *Lady Chatterly's Lover*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Lawrence, S.G., Stucky, N.P., & Hopper, R. (1990). The effects of sex dialects and sex stereotypes on speech evaluations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 9, 209-224.
- Leaper, C. (1987). Agency, communion, and gender as predictors of communication style and being liked in adult male-female dyads. *Sex Roles*, 16, 137-149.
- Leclerc, A. (1990). Woman's word. In D. Cameron (ed.), *The Feminist Critique of Language*. London: Routledge.
- Leet-Pellegrini, H.M. (1980). Conversational dominance as a function of gender and expertise. In H. Giles, W.P. Robinson, & P.M. Smith (eds.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Levin, H., & Hunter, W.A. (1982). Children's use of a social speech register: Age and sex differences. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 1, 63-72.
- Levin, H., & Lin, T. (1988). An accommodating witness. *Language and Communication*, 8, 195-197.
- Levin, J., & Arluke, A. (1985). An exploratory analysis of sex-differences in gossip. *Sex Roles*, 12, 281-286.
- Lewis, R.A. (1978). Emotional Intimacy among men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 14, 108-121.
- Lipman-Blumen, J. (1984). *Gender Roles and Power*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Lockheed, M.E., & Hall, K.P. (1976). Conceptualizing sex as a status characteristic: Applications to leadership training strategies. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32, 111-124.
- Lombardo, J.P., & Lavine, L.O. (1981). Sex-role stereotyping and patterns of self-disclosure. *Sex Roles*, 7, 403-411.
- Louw-Potgieter, J. (1991). Language and identity. In D. Foster & J. Louw-Potgieter (eds.), *Social Psychology in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Lexicon.
- Mabry, E. (1985). The effects of gender composition and task structure on small group interaction. *Small Group Behaviour*, 16, 75-96.
- Maccoby, E.E. (1988). Gender as a social category. *Developmental Psychology*, 24, 755-765.
- Maccoby, E.E. (1990). Gender and Relationships. *American Psychologist*, 45, 513-520.
- Maccoby, E.E., & Jacklin, C.N. (1974). *The Psychology of Sex Differences*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- MacKay, D.G. (1983). Prescriptive grammar and the pronoun problem. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae, & N. Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Maltz, D., & Borker, R. (1982). A cultural approach to male-female miscommunication. In J.J. Gumperz (ed.), *Language and Social Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Markel, N.N., Long, J.J., & Saine, T.J. (1976). Sex effects in conversation interaction: Another look at male dominance. *Human Communication research*, 2, 356-364.
- Markel, N.N., Prebor, L.D., & Brandt, J.F. (1972). Biosocial factors in dyadic communication: Sex and speaking intensity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 23, 11-13.
- Martyna, W. (1983). Beyond the he\man approach: The case for nonsexist language. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae & N. Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- McCabe, A., & Lipscomb, T.J. (1988). Sex differences in children's verbal aggression. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 34, 389-401.
- McCarrick, A.K., Manderscheid, R.W., & Silbergeld, S. (1981). Gender differences in competition and dominance during married-couples group therapy. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 44, 164-177.
- McConnell-Ginet, S. (1983). Intonation in a man's world. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae, & N. Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- McConnell-Ginet, S. (1988). Language and gender. In F.J. Newmeyer (ed.), *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey Vol 4. Language: The Socio-cultural Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McConnell-Ginet, S., Furman, N., & Borker, R. (1980). *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- McLachlan, A. (1991). The effects of agreement, disagreement, gender and familiarity on patterns of dyadic interaction. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 10, 205-212.
- McMillan, J.R., Clifton, A.K. McGrath, D., & Gale, W. (1977). Women's language: Uncertainty or interpersonal sensitivity and emotionality? *Sex roles*, 3, 545-559.
- Mednick, M.T. (1989). On the politics of psychological constructs: Stop the bandwagon I want to get off. *American Psychologist*, 44, 1118-1123.
- Meeker, B.F., & Weitzel-O'Neill, P.A. (1977). Sex roles and interpersonal behaviour in task-oriented groups. *American Sociological Review*, 42, 91-105.
- Megaree, E.I. (1969). Influence of Sex Roles on the manifestation of leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 53, 377-382.
- Michell, G. (1984). Women and lying: A pragmatic and semantic analysis of 'telling it slant'. *Women Studies International Forum*, 7, 375-383.
- Mills, J. (1991). *Womanwords*. London: Virago.
- Milroy, L. (1980). *Language and Social Networks*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Milroy, L. (1987). *Observing and Analysing Natural Language*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Montepare, J.M., & Vega, C. (1988). Women's vocal reactions to intimate and casual male friends. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 14, 103-113.
- Mulac, A. (1989). Men's and women's talk in same-gender and mixed-gender dyads: Power or polemic? *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 8, 249-270.
- Mulac, A., & Lundell, T.L. (1980). Differences in perceptions created by syntactic-semantic productions of male and female speakers. *Communication Monographs*, 47, 111-118.
- Mulac, A., Incontro, C.R., & James, M.R. (1985). Comparison of the gender-linked language effect and sex-role stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49, 1098-1109.
- Mulac, A., Studley, L.B., Wiemann, J.M., & Bradac, J.J. (1987). Male/female gaze in same-sex and mixed-sex dyads: A test of gender-linked differences and mutual influence. *Human Communication research*, 13, 323-343.
- Mulac, A., Wiemann, J.M., Widenmann, S.J., & Gibson, T.W. (1988). Male/female language differences and effects in same-sex and mixed-sex dyads: The gender-linked language effect. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 315-335.
- Natale, M. (1975a). Convergence of mean vocal intensity in dyadic communication as a function of social desirability. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, 790-804.
- Natale, M. (1975b). Social Desirability as related to convergence of temporal speech patterns. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 40, 827-830.

- Natale, M., Entin, E., & Jaffe, J. (1979). Vocal interruptions in dyadic communication as a function of speech and social anxiety. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 865-878.
- Newcomb, T.M. (1966). The prediction of interpersonal attraction. In C.W. Backman & P.F. Secord (eds.), *Problems in Social Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Newcombe, N., & Arnkoff, D. (1979). Effects of speech style and sex of speaker on person perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1293-1303.
- Ng, S.K. (1990). Language and control. In H. Giles & W. P. Robinson (eds.), *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*. New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Nyquist, L.V., & Spence, J.T. (1986). Effects of dispositional dominance and sex role expectations on leadership behaviors. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 87-93.
- O'Barr, W.M., & Atkins, B.K. (1980). "Women's language" or "powerless language"? In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker, & N. Furman (eds.), *Women and Language in Literature and Society*. New York: Praeger.
- O'Keefe, B.J., & Shepherd, G.J. (1987). The pursuit of multiple objectives in face-to-face persuasive interactions: Effects of construct differentiation on message construction. *Communication Monographs*, 54, 396-419.
- Oakes, P.J., & Turner, J.C. (1987). Distinctiveness and the salience of categories: Is there an automatic perceptual bias towards novelty? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 16, 325-344.
- Oakes, P.J., & Turner, J.C. (1990). Is limited information processing the cause of social stereotyping? *European Review of Social Psychology*, 1, 111-135.
- Offermann, L.R., & Kearney, C.T. (1988). Supervisor sex and influence strategies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 14, 360-367.
- Orletti, F. (1984). Some methodological problems in data gathering for discourse analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 8, 559-567.
- Parlee, M.P. (1979). Conversational politics. *Psychology Today*, 12, 48-56.
- Pederson, T.B. (1980). Sex and communication: A brief presentation of an experimental approach. In H. Giles, W.P. Robinson & P.M. Smith (eds.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Penman, R. (1990). Facework and politeness: Multiple goals in courtroom discourse. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 9, 15-38.
- Pepitone, A. (1976). Towards a normative and comparative biocultural social psychology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34, 641-653.
- Pepitone, A. (1981). Lessons from the history of social psychology. *American Psychologist*, 36, 972-985.
- Philips, S. (1980). Sex differences and language. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 9, 523-544.
- Philips, S.U., Steele, S., & Tanz, C. (1987) (eds.). *Language, Gender and Sex in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Piliavin, J.A., & Martin, R.R. (1978). The effects of the sex composition of groups on style of social interaction. *Sex Roles*, 4, 281-296.
- Priesler, B. (1986). *Linguistic Sex Roles in Conversation: Social Variation in the Expression of Tentativeness in English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Purcell, A.K. (1984). Code shifting in Hawaiian style: Children's accommodation along a decreolizing continuum. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 46, 71-86.
- Putman, L.L., & McCallister, L. (1984). Situational effects of task and gender on nonverbal display. In *Communication Yearbook*, Vol. 4. New Jersey: International Communication Association.
- Putman, W.B. & Street, R.L. (1984). The conception and perception of noncontent speech performance: Implications for Speech-accommodation theory. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 46, 97-114.
- Quina, K., Wingard, J.A., & Bates, H.G. (1987). Language style and gender stereotypes in person perception. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 11, 111-122.
- Rakow, L.F. (1986). Rethinking gender research in communication. *Journal of Communication*, 36, 11-26.
- Ridgeway, C.L., & Berger, J. (1986). Expectations, legitimation, and dominance behavior in task groups. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 603-617.

- Ridgeway, C.L., & Johnson, C. (1990). What is the relationship between socioemotional behavior and status in task groups? *American Journal of Sociology*, 95, 1189-1212.
- Risch, B. (1987). Women's derogatory words for men: That's right, "dirty" words. *Language in Society*, 16, 353-358.
- Roger, D., & Nesshoever, W. (1987). Individual differences in dyadic conversation strategies: A further study. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 26, 247-255.
- Roger, D., Bull, P., & Smith, S. (1988). The development of a comprehensive system for classifying interruptions. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 7, 27-34.
- Rogers, L. (1990). Talk tall. In the *Fair Lady*, August edition.
- Rosenblum, K.E. (1986). Revelatory or purposive? Making sense of a 'female register' *Semiotica*, 59, 157-170.
- Rosenfeld, H.M. (1966). Approval-seeking and approval-inducing functions of verbal and non-verbal responses in dyads. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 4, 597-605.
- Rosenfeld, L.B. (1979). Self-disclosure avoidance: Why am I afraid to tell you who I am? *Communication Monographs*, 46, 63-74.
- Rosnow, R.L., & Rosenthal, R. (1989). Statistical procedures and the justification of knowledge in psychological science. *American Psychologist*, 44, 1276-1284.
- Ruble, D.N., & Higgins, E.T. (1976). Effects of group sex and composition on self-presentation and sextyping. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32, 125-132.
- Ryan, E.B., Giles, H., & Hewstone, M. (1988). The measurement of language attitudes. In H.U.A. Ammon, N. Dittmar, & K.J. Mattheier (eds.), *Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society*. New York: de Gruyter.
- Sachdev, I., & Bourhis, R.Y. (1990). Language and social identification. In D. Abrams & M.A. Hogg (eds.), *Social Identity Theory: Constructive and Critical Advances*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Sachs, J. (1987). Preschool boys' and girls' language use in pretend play. In S.U. Philips, S. Steele & C. Tanz (Eds.), *Language, Gender and Sex in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50, 696-735.
- San Antonio, P.M. (1987). Social mobility and language use in an American company in Japan. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 6, 191-200.
- Sattel, J.W. (1983). Men, inexpressiveness, and power. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae, & N. Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Schultz, K., Briere, J., & Sandler, L. (1984). The use and development of sex-typed language. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 8, 327-336.
- Schulz, M. (1975). The semantic derogation of women. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (eds.), *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Scott, J. (1988). Deconstructing equality versus difference: On the uses of post-structuralist theory. *Feminist Studies*, 14, 33-50.
- Scott, K.P. (1980). Perceptions of communicative competence: What's good for the goose is not good for the gander. *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 3, 199-208.
- Scotton, C.M. (1983). The negotiation of identities in conversation: A theory of markedness and code choice. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 44, 115-136.
- Scotton, C.M. (1985). 'What the heck, sir?' Style shifting and lexical colouring as features of powerful language. In R.L. Street & Cappella, J.N. (eds.), *Sequence and Pattern in Communicative Behaviour*. London: Arnold.
- Scotton, C.M. (1988). Self-enhancing code-switching as interactional power. *Language and Communication*, 8, 199-211.
- Seigler, D.M., & Seigler, R.S. (1976). Stereotypes of males' and females' speech. *Psychological Reports*, 39, 167-170.
- Shaughnessy, J.J., & Zechmeister, E.B. (1985). *Research Methods in Psychology*. New York: Knopf.
- Shaw, B. (1953). *Pygmalion*. Edinburgh: Penguin.

- Shaw, M.E., & Sadler, O. (1965). Interaction patterns in heterosexual dyads varying in degree of intimacy. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 66, 345-351.
- Shockey, L. (1984). All in a flap: Long-term accommodation in phonology. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 46, 87-95.
- Simard, L., Taylor, D.M., & Giles, H. (1976). Attribution processes and interpersonal accommodation in a bilingual setting. *Language and Speech*, 19, 374-387.
- Skevington, S. (1989). A place for emotion in social identity theory. In S. Skevington & D. Baker (eds.), *The Social Identity of Women*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Skevington, S., & Baker, D. (1989). *The Social Identity of Women*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Smith, P.M. (1979). Sex markers in speech. In K. Scherer & H. Giles (eds.), *Social Markers in Speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, P.M. (1980). Judging masculine and feminine identities from content-controlled speech. In H. Giles, W.P. Robinson & P.M. Smith (eds.), *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Smith, P.M. (1985). *Language, the Sexes and Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Smith, P.M., Giles, H., & Hewstone, M. (1980). Sociolinguistics: A social psychological perspective. In R. St Clair & H. Giles (eds.), *The Social and Psychological Contexts of Language*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Smith-Hefner, N. (1988). Women and politeness: The Javanese example. *Language in Society*, 17, 535-554.
- Spence, J.T., Helmreich, R.L., & Stapp, J. (1975). Ratings of self and peers on sex role attributes and their relation to self-esteem and conceptions of masculinity and femininity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, 29-39.
- Spender, D. (1980). *Man Made Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Spitzack, C., & Carter, K. (1987). Women in communication studies: A typology for revision. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73, 401-423.
- Steckler, N.A., & Rosenthal, R. (1985). Sex differences in nonverbal and verbal communication with bosses, peers, and subordinates. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 70, 157-163.
- Stephens, J., & Beattie, G. (1986). On judging the ends of speaker turns in conversation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 5, 119-134.
- Stoke, S.M., & West, E.D. (1931). Sex differences in conversational interests. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 120-126.
- Street, R.L. (1982). Evaluation of noncontent speech accommodation. *Language and Communication*, 2, 13-31.
- Street, R.L. (1985). Participant-observer differences in speech evaluation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 4, 125-130.
- Street, R.L. (1991). Accommodation in medical consultations. In H. Giles, J. Coupland, & N. Coupland (eds.), *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Street, R.L. and Giles, H. (1982). Speech Accommodation Theory. In M. Roloff & C. Berger (eds.), *Social Cognition and Communication*. Beverly Hills CA: Sage.
- Strodtbeck, F.L., & Mann, R.D. (1956). Sex role differentiation in jury deliberations. *Sociometry*, 19, 3-11.
- Swacker, M. (1975). The sex of speaker as a sociolinguistic variable. In B. Thorne, & N. Henley (eds.), *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Swann, J. (1988). Talk Control: An illustration from the classroom of problems in analyzing male dominance of conversation. In J. Coates & D. Cameron (eds.), *Women in Their Speech Communities*. London: Longman Group.
- Tajfel, H. (1981a). Social stereotypes and social groups. In J.C. Turner & H. Giles (eds.), *Intergroup Behaviour*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Tajfel, H. (1981b). *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Tajfel, H. (1984). *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J.C. (1979). An integrative theory of group conflict. In W.G. Austin & S. Worchel (eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup relations*. Monterey, California: Brooks Cole.
- Tannen, D. (1987). Remarks on discourse and power. In L. Kedar (ed.), *Power Through Discourse*. Ablex.
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand*. New York: Ballantine.
- Tannen, D. (1992). Response to Senta Troemel-Ploetz's 'Selling the apolitical'. *Discourse and Society*, 3, 249-254.
- Taylor, D.M., Bassili, J. & Aboud, F.E. (1973). Dimensions of ethnic identity: An example from Quebec. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 89, 185-192.
- Thakerar, J.N., Giles, H. & Chesire, J. (1982) Psychological and linguistic parameters of speech accommodation theory. In C. Fraser & K. Scherer (eds.) *Advances in the Social Psychology of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- Therborn, G. (1980). *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*. London: Verso.
- Thorne, B., & Henley, N. (1975). Difference and dominance: An overview of language, gender and society. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (eds.), *Language and Gender: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Thorne, B., Kramarae, C., & Henley, N. (1983a). Language, gender and society: Opening a second decade of research. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae & N. Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Thorne, B., Kramarae, C., & Henley, N. (1983b). *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Todd, A.D., & Fisher, S. (1988). *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*. New Jersey: Ablex.
- Tracy, K. (1990). The many faces of facework. In H. Giles and P. Robinson (eds.), *Handbook of Language and Social Psychology*. New York: Wiley and sons.
- Tracy, K., & Coupland, N. (1990). An overview of issues. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 9, 1-13.
- Triehler, P.A., & Kramarae, C. (1983). Women's talk in the ivory tower. *Communication Quarterly*, 31, 118-132.
- Troemel-Ploetz, S. (1991). Review essay: Selling the apolitical. *Discourse and Society*, 2, 489-502.
- Trudgill, P. (1972). Sex, covert prestige and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich. *Language in Society*, 1, 179-195.
- Turner, J.C. (1982). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In H. Tajfel (ed), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, J.C., & Giles, H. (eds.) (1981). *Intergroup Behaviour*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Turner, J.C., & Oakes, P.J. (1986). The significance of the social identity concept with reference to individualism, interactionism and social influence. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 25, 237-252.
- Unger, R.K. (1981). Sex as a social reality: Field and laboratory research. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 5, 597-617.
- Valdés-Fallis, G. (1977). Code-switching among bilingual Mexican-American women: Towards an understanding of sex-related language alternation. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 17, 65-72.
- Van Den Berg, M.E. (1986). Language planning and language use in Taiwan: Social identity, language accommodation, and language choice behaviour. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 59, 97-115.
- Van Den Berg, M.E. (1988). Long term accommodation of (ethno)linguistic groups toward a societal norm. *Language and Communication*, 8, 251-269.
- Vrugt, A. (1987). The meaning of nonverbal sex differences. *Semiotica*, 64, 371-380.
- Vrugt, A., & Kerkstra, A. (1984). Sex differences in nonverbal communication. *Semiotica*, 50, 1-41.
- Wallstone, B.S. (1981). What are the questions in psychology of women? A feminist approach to research. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 5, 597-617.

- Weisfeld, C.C. (1986). Female Behavior in mixed-sex competition: A review of the literature. *Developmental Review*, 6, 278-299.
- Welkowitz, J., Bond, R.N., & Feldstein, S. (1984). Conversational time patterns of Japanese-American adults and children in same and mixed-gender dyads. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 3, 127-138.
- West, C. (1984). When the doctor is a lady. *Symbolic Interaction*, 7, 87-106.
- West, C. (1990). Not just 'doctors' orders': Directive-response sequences in patients' visits to women and men physicians. *Discourse and Society*, 1, 85-112.
- West, C., & Garcia, A. (1988). Conversational shift-work: A study of topical transitions between men and women. *Social Problems*, 35, 551-575.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. (1983). Small insults: A study of interruptions in cross-sex conversations between unacquainted persons. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae & N. Henley (eds.), *Language, Gender and Society*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D.H. (1985). Gender, language and discourse. In T.A. van Dijk (ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Vol.4: Discourse Analysis in Society*. London: Academic Press.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D.H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1, 125-151.
- Wetzel, P.J. (1988). Are "powerless" communication strategies the Japanese norm? *Language in Society*, 17, 555-564.
- Wiemann, J.M. (1981). Effects of laboratory videotaping procedures on selected conversational behaviors. *Human Communication Research*, 7, 302-311.
- Wiemann, J.M. (1985). Interpersonal control and regulation in conversation. In R.L. Street and J.N. Cappella (eds.), *Sequence and Pattern in Communicative Behaviour*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Williams, D.G. (1985). Gender, masculinity-femininity, and emotional intimacy in same-sex friendships. *Sex Roles*, 12, 587-600.
- Willis, F.N., & Williams, S.T. (1976). Simultaneous talking in conversation and sex of speakers. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 43, 1067-1070.
- Wilson, J. (1987). The sociolinguistic paradox: Data as a methodological product. *Language and Communication*, 7, 167-177.
- Wittig, M.A. (1985). Metatheoretical dilemmas in the psychology of gender. *American Psychologist*, 40, 800-811.
- Wood, W. (1987). Meta-analytic review of sex differences in group performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, 102, 53-71.
- Wood, W., & Karten, S.J. (1986). Sex differences in interaction style as a product of perceived sex differences in competence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 341-347.
- Woods, N. (1988). Talking shop: Sex and status as determinants of floor apportionment in a work setting. In J. Coates & D. Cameron (eds.), *Women in Their Speech Communities*. New York: Longman Group.
- Wright, P.H. (1982). Men's friendships, women's friendships and the alleged inferiority of the latter. *Sex Roles*, 8, 1-20.
- Zahn, C. J. (1989). The bases for differing evaluations of male and female speech: Evidence from the ratings of transcribed conversations. *Communication Monographs*, 56, 59-74.
- Zahn, C.J., & Hopper, R. (1985). Measuring language attitudes: The Speech Evaluation Instrument. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 4, 113-124.
- Zarins, E.N. (1982). Unwarranted interruption. *New Scientist*, 7 October.
- Zimmerman, D., & West, C. (1975). Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. In B. Thorne & N. Henley (eds.), *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.

## **List of Appendices**

- Appendix A: Experimental Instructions**
- Appendix B: Experimental Topics Questionnaire**
- Appendix C: Experimental Rating Scales**
- Appendix D: Transcribed Speech Corpus (see separate folio)**
- Appendix E: Transcription Conventions**
- Appendix F: Raw Data**
- Appendix G: Anova Tables for the Gender x Addressee Gender Interaction**
- Appendix H: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients for Partners' Scores on the Subjective and Objective Speech Measures**

**INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STUDY**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

**UCT 1990**

## Non-Competitive Condition: Instructions<sup>(1)</sup>

Read the instructions below *carefully* before proceeding. If anything is unclear or confusing feel free to ask the researcher to explain.

This project is concerned with interpersonal communication. Therefore you have been randomly assigned a discussion partner from a group of students who volunteered for the experiment.

For the next 8 minutes or so you and your partner will share opinions on the topic:

*"Good and bad things about university life"*

You should not think of this exercise as a "test" of any kind. It is really just an informal chat.

Naturally anything that you say will be kept strictly confidential.



---

(1) This was simply labelled "Instructions" in the actual experiment.

## Competitive Condition: Instructions<sup>(2)</sup>

Read the instructions below *carefully* before proceeding. If anything is unclear or confusing feel free to ask the researcher to explain.

This project is concerned with interpersonal communication. Therefore you have been randomly assigned a discussion partner from a group of students who volunteered for the experiment.

For the next 8 minutes or so you will engage in a brief debate with your partner. To make things easier you will be given a topic on which you hold opposing views (this will be based upon your scores on the questionnaire which you completed a few minutes ago). You will also be given a few minutes to gather your thoughts before beginning the debate. We would prefer that you *not* speak to your opponent during this time.

Do not allow yourself to be won over to your partner's point of view easily, as you will be given "points" for your performance in the debate and at the end of your 10 minute session the person judged to have spoken most effectively will receive a R10 reward!

Naturally, anything that you say will be kept strictly confidential.



---

(2) This was simply labelled "Instructions" in the actual experiment.

## Appendix B

### TOPICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Presented below are a number of statements. Please indicate (with a tick) your opinion concerning these statements on the rating scales provided (a score of seven represents strong agreement with the statement and a score of one represents strong disagreement).

1. "Smoking in restaurants should not be allowed as it is both unpleasant and inconvenient for a large number of people"

I agree                       $\bar{7}$      $\bar{6}$      $\bar{5}$      $\bar{4}$      $\bar{3}$      $\bar{2}$      $\bar{1}$                       I disagree

How strongly do you feel about this issue?

High    \    Medium    \    Low

2. "People should have the right to take their own lives if they feel the circumstances warrant this action"

I disagree                       $\bar{1}$      $\bar{2}$      $\bar{3}$      $\bar{4}$      $\bar{5}$      $\bar{6}$      $\bar{7}$                       I agree

How strongly do you feel about this issue?

High    \    Medium    \    Low

3. "Drug pushers should receive the death penalty"

I agree                       $\bar{7}$      $\bar{6}$      $\bar{5}$      $\bar{4}$      $\bar{3}$      $\bar{2}$      $\bar{1}$                       I disagree

How strongly do you feel about this issue?

High    \    Medium    \    Low

4. "It is legitimate to perform experiments on animals if they will further the aims of science"

I disagree                       $\bar{1}$      $\bar{2}$      $\bar{3}$      $\bar{4}$      $\bar{5}$      $\bar{6}$      $\bar{7}$                       I agree

How strongly do you feel about this issue?

High    \    Medium    \    Low

5. "Conservative politicians should be allowed to speak on campus because the student population has a right to be exposed to the full spectrum of political views in South Africa"

I agree                      7      6      5      4      3      2      1                      I disagree

How strongly do you feel about this issue?

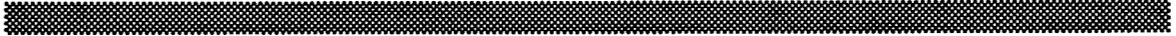
High   \   Medium   \   Low

6. "People are just becoming far too fanatical about their health nowadays"

I disagree                      1      2      3      4      5      6      7                      I agree

How strongly do you feel about this issue?

High   \   Medium   \   Low



**INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STUDY**

**RATING SCALES**

**UCT 1990**

## Instructions

In the pages that follow you will be asked to rate both yourself and your partner on a number of dimensions. There are no right or wrong answers; you should simply respond as honestly as possible. If you have any problems understanding what is meant by any of the questions, do not hesitate to ask the researcher for assistance.

### Section 1

The questions presented below refer to the conversation in which you have just participated. Please answer with a tick.

Qu1 How competitive was the conversation?

Not at all     $\bar{1}$      $\bar{2}$      $\bar{3}$      $\bar{4}$      $\bar{5}$      $\bar{6}$      $\bar{7}$     Very much

Qu2 How friendly was the conversation?

Very much     $\bar{7}$      $\bar{6}$      $\bar{5}$      $\bar{4}$      $\bar{3}$      $\bar{2}$      $\bar{1}$     Not at all

## Section 2

In the following section you are asked to rate your own speech behaviour during the conversation.

Qu1 Would you say that you spoke aggressively?

Very much  $\bar{7}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{1}$  Not at all

Qu2 Would you say that you expressed your emotions easily?

Very much  $\bar{7}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{1}$  Not at all

Qu3 Would you say that you spoke femininely?

Very much  $\bar{7}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{1}$  Not at all

Qu4 Would you say that you spoke arrogantly?

Not at all  $\bar{1}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{7}$  Very much

Qu5 Would you say that you were nagging?

Not at all  $\bar{1}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{7}$  Very much

Qu6 Would you say that you spoke masculinely?

Very much  $\bar{7}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{1}$  Not at all

Qu7 Would you say that you dominated the conversation?

Not at all  $\bar{1}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{7}$  Very much

Qu8 Would you say that you spoke sensitively?

Very much  $\bar{7}$   $\bar{6}$   $\bar{5}$   $\bar{4}$   $\bar{3}$   $\bar{2}$   $\bar{1}$  Not at all

Fill in the following brief biographical details.

Age:
------

Sex:
------

## TRANSCRIPTION OF DATA CORPUS

The transcription conventions used in this study were loosely based upon those developed by Gail Jefferson, although I have adapted and added symbols where necessary (see West, 1984). In the analysis of linguistic data, the transcribed material was used to complement rather than replace audiotaped and videotaped records.

### Transcription Conventions

(2.5)	Numbers placed in parentheses indicate the time lapse (in seconds and tenths of seconds) between speakers turns.
(#)	The score sign represents an untimed pause of approximately 1 second.
<u>Underlining</u>	Underlining indicates the speaker puts heavier emphasis on the marked word(s).
(laughs) (coughs)	Words in parentheses mark paralinguistic actions.
(inaudible)	This indicates a segment of discourse that was difficult or impossible to transcribe.
S1: That was rea::lly interesting	Colons indicate that prior syllable is elongated.
S1: I thin- well	Hyphens represent foreshortened words.
S1: Its [true S2: no no] way	Square brackets mean that the enclosed speech is simultaneous. The left-hand bracket marks the onset of simultaneity, the right hand bracket its conclusion.
S1: that's true I th <sup>/</sup> ink	The superscripted slash represents rising /, falling \, fall-rise \/, rise-fall /\, and level - intonational contours

## Appendix F

### Raw Data

#### Key Code

##### Independent Variables

G = Subject Gender

A = Addressee Gender

C = Condition (competitive\non-competitive)

##### Subjective Speech Dimensions

Ag = Aggression

Ar = Arrogance

Ma = Masculine

Do = Dominance

MT = Masculine Total

Em = Emotion

Fe = Feminine

Na = Nagging

Se = Sensitive

FT = Feminine Total

##### Objective Speech Dimensions

VBC = Verbal backchannels

NBC = Nonverbal backchannels

CYK = Confident *you know*

UYK = Unconfident *you know*

AYK = Ambiguous *you know*

YKT = *You know* total

ESO = Epistemic *sort of*

AFS = Affective *sort of*

ASO = Ambiguous *sort of*

SOT = *Sort of* total

NOW = Number of words

Appendix F

SUBJECTIVE MEASURES - SELF SPEECH RATINGS

I.V.s			Self Speech Ratings									
G	A	C	Ag	Ar	Ma	Do	MT	Em	Fe	Na	Se	FT
1	0	0	5	1	5	3	3.50	4	2	3	4	3.25
1	0	0	5	4	6	7	5.50	6	1	4	5	4.00
1	0	0	2	3	3	3	2.75	6	5	1	6	4.50
1	0	0	3	2	5	4	3.50	6	3	2	5	4.00
1	0	0	1	3	4	6	3.50	5	1	1	6	3.25
1	0	0	5	6	5	7	5.75	6	2	4	5	4.25
1	0	0	2	3	5	2	3.00	5	1	2	2	2.50
1	0	0	1	2	5	6	3.50	3	1	1	4	2.25
1	0	0	3	5	3	5	4.00	3	4	1	4	3.00
1	0	0	6	5	5	5	5.25	5	3	5	2	3.75
1	0	0	5	5	5	3	4.50	4	4	3	6	4.25
1	0	0	4	2	4	5	3.75	4	1	1	5	2.75
0	1	0	3	5	4	4	4.00	5	5	4	4	4.50
0	1	0	5	4	1	2	3.00	6	6	1	5	4.50
0	1	0	3	2	2	4	2.75	6	6	2	6	5.00
0	1	0	2	3	1	3	2.25	7	6	4	7	6.00
0	1	0	2	2	2	2	2.00	5	5	2	6	4.50
0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1.00	5	6	1	4	4.00
0	1	0	4	5	2	6	4.25	5	4	5	4	4.50
0	1	0	2	1	5	4	3.00	2	3	1	6	3.00
0	1	0	1	1	1	3	1.50	2	3	2	5	3.00
0	1	0	5	4	5	5	4.75	6	5	3	6	5.00
0	1	0	1	2	1	3	1.75	6	6	1	3	4.00
0	1	0	2	4	5	6	4.25	6	4	2	3	3.75
1	0	1	6	5	5	6	5.50	6	4	2	5	4.25
1	0	1	3	3	5	4	3.75	5	4	2	6	4.25
1	0	1	6	6	4	6	5.50	6	2	6	3	4.25
1	0	1	5	2	6	4	4.25	1	1	1	1	1.00
1	0	1	2	2	4	4	3.00	1	3	3	7	3.50
1	0	1	5	2	4	6	4.25	7	4	6	6	5.75
1	0	1	5	5	5	6	5.25	5	1	1	5	3.00
1	0	1	1	3	4	3	2.75	4	2	1	5	3.00
1	0	1	2	2	5	1	2.50	4	1	1	5	2.75
1	0	1	2	2	4	3	2.75	2	2	2	5	2.75
1	0	1	5	4	6	6	5.25	6	5	5	6	5.50
1	0	1	4	3	5	3	3.75	3	2	4	5	3.50
0	1	1	5	3	3	4	3.75	6	3	1	5	3.75
0	1	1	5	2	3	4	3.50	5	4	3	2	3.50
0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	6	7	1	6	5.00
0	1	1	6	5	4	5	5.00	6	2	6	4	4.50
0	1	1	5	3	1	3	3.00	5	5	3	6	4.75
0	1	1	6	6	2	5	4.75	5	6	2	3	4.00
0	1	1	3	5	3	6	4.25	4	6	2	5	4.25
0	1	1	6	3	1	5	3.75	5	6	4	5	5.00
0	1	1	2	1	1	6	2.50	7	6	1	6	5.00
0	1	1	5	5	5	5	5.00	6	3	2	5	4.00
0	1	1	4	2	4	4	3.50	5	4	1	4	3.50
0	1	1	5	2	1	4	3.00	4	4	2	5	3.75
1	1	0	5	3	3	6	4.25	2	3	2	5	3.00

1	1	0	3	2	6	4	3.75	6	2	2	6	4.00
1	1	0	2	1	5	4	3.00	5	1	1	6	3.25
1	1	0	5	2	6	3	4.00	6	3	5	6	5.00
1	1	0	5	5	4	5	4.75	5	4	3	5	4.25
1	1	0	2	2	5	4	3.25	5	2	1	5	3.25
1	1	0	1	4	3	3	2.75	2	3	3	4	3.00
1	1	0	3	2	4	5	3.50	5	4	1	5	3.75
1	1	0	2	1	6	4	3.25	4	3	1	4	3.00
1	1	0	3	5	4	3	3.75	3	4	3	4	3.50
1	1	0	1	1	6	4	3.00	4	2	1	6	3.25
1	1	0	2	2	6	4	3.50	6	2	1	6	3.75
0	0	0	1	1	1	4	1.75	6	6	1	4	4.25
0	0	0	2	1	2	4	2.25	7	6	1	6	5.00
0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1.25	5	7	1	6	4.75
0	0	0	1	1	2	7	2.75	6	6	2	5	4.75
0	0	0	2	3	5	6	4.00	5	5	2	6	4.50
0	0	0	2	2	4	2	2.50	3	6	2	6	4.25
0	0	0	2	3	3	2	2.50	6	4	1	5	4.00
0	0	0	3	2	2	4	2.75	4	5	1	6	4.00
0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1.25	4	7	1	6	4.50
0	0	0	3	3	1	6	3.25	6	4	3	5	4.50
1	1	1	5	1	4	3	3.25	6	2	1	6	3.75
1	1	1	2	2	7	6	4.25	4	1	1	7	3.25
1	1	1	2	3	4	5	3.50	6	4	2	6	4.50
1	1	1	5	7	7	5	6.00	6	1	3	7	4.25
1	1	1	3	6	4	3	4.00	5	2	3	2	3.00
1	1	1	4	3	4	5	4.00	6	4	2	5	4.25
1	1	1	5	5	5	4	4.75	5	3	4	3	3.75
1	1	1	6	1	5	5	4.25	6	2	2	7	4.25
1	1	1	4	4	4	2	3.50	3	2	3	2	2.50
1	1	1	2	4	5	4	3.75	2	2	1	5	2.50
1	1	1	5	5	4	4	4.50	4	2	5	4	3.75
1	1	1	5	5	4	5	4.75	5	4	4	3	4.00
0	0	1	5	3	2	4	3.50	4	6	4	3	4.25
0	0	1	4	3	1	4	3.00	3	5	3	4	3.75
0	0	1	5	4	2	6	4.25	4	6	2	4	4.00
0	0	1	4	5	3	3	3.75	6	5	5	5	5.25
0	0	1	5	3	4	4	4.00	4	2	2	3	2.75
0	0	1	2	3	4	2	2.75	2	4	2	5	3.25
0	0	1	5	5	2	5	4.25	5	5	5	7	5.50
0	0	1	5	5	1	5	4.00	5	7	2	6	5.00
0	0	1	4	2	1	5	3.00	5	5	2	6	4.50
0	0	1	3	4	3	3	3.25	6	5	1	6	4.50
0	0	1	5	4	4	5	4.50	6	3	3	6	4.50
0	0	1	4	1	4	4	3.25	6	4	1	1	3.00
0	0	1	2	1	1	4	2.00	2	2	1	5	2.50
0	0	1	2	1	1	2	1.50	1	6	1	5	3.25
0	0	1	5	2	2	3	3.00	4	3	3	3	3.25
0	0	1	4	1	1	4	2.50	2	3	1	6	3.00

---



1	1	0	1.40	2.10	3.50	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.12	0.36	0.00	0.48	830
1	1	0	1.32	3.61	4.93	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70	0.00	0.00	0.70	285
1	1	0	5.13	0.48	5.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	649
1	1	0	0.92	6.00	6.93	0.24	0.73	0.24	1.22	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.24	409
1	1	0	0.48	0.97	1.45	0.94	0.23	0.00	1.17	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.23	426
1	1	0	3.05	1.40	4.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.94	0.48	0.00	2.42	206
1	1	0	3.22	3.22	6.45	0.40	2.04	0.00	2.46	1.02	0.00	0.00	1.02	488
1	1	0	2.25	0.20	2.45	0.50	1.01	0.00	1.52	0.68	0.00	0.17	0.85	589
1	1	0	1.86	0.00	1.86	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	595
1	1	0	2.69	1.00	3.69	0.00	0.46	0.00	0.46	1.55	0.31	0.00	1.86	644
0	0	0	3.26	2.50	5.77	0.46	0.23	0.00	0.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	435
0	0	0	3.00	4.13	7.12	0.25	0.12	0.00	0.38	0.12	0.00	0.12	0.25	797
0	0	0	0.90	1.80	2.80	0.00	0.00	0.48	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	210
0	0	0	0.95	0.48	1.42	0.48	0.48	0.00	0.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	886
0	0	0	0.84	1.26	2.10	0.19	0.19	0.00	0.37	0.00	0.19	0.00	0.19	534
0	0	0	1.12	1.87	3.00	0.00	0.42	0.00	0.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	238
0	0	0	0.80	0.60	1.39	0.32	0.16	0.00	0.49	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.32	617
0	0	0	3.56	1.30	5.19	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.20	502
0	0	0	2.14	1.34	3.48	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	796
0	0	0	3.39	2.51	6.15	0.00	1.07	0.27	1.34	0.00	0.54	0.27	0.80	373
1	1	1	0.16	1.15	1.32	0.00	1.04	0.17	1.21	0.17	0.35	0.00	0.52	577
1	1	1	1.38	2.08	3.47	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	606
1	1	1	1.67	2.09	3.76	0.00	0.24	0.24	0.48	1.21	0.00	0.00	1.21	413
1	1	1	3.40	3.40	6.76	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.00	0.42	478
1	1	1	0.22	0.44	0.67	0.55	0.00	0.27	0.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	365
1	1	1	0.82	0.00	0.82	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.22	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.22	449
1	1	1	0.47	0.47	0.93	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.68	0.00	0.00	0.68	439
1	1	1	1.82	1.59	3.42	0.35	0.23	0.00	0.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	857
1	1	1	2.25	5.72	7.97	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.17	0.17	0.00	0.17	0.33	597
1	1	1	1.34	0.50	1.84	0.35	0.52	0.17	1.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	577
1	1	1	1.78	0.89	2.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	360
1	1	1	0.28	0.28	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.15	673
0	0	1	1.02	0.00	1.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	306
0	0	1	0.65	0.33	0.98	0.00	0.14	0.14	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	686
0	0	1	0.94	0.47	1.41	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	496
0	0	1	0.20	2.21	2.41	0.00	0.47	0.00	0.47	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.31	636
0	0	1	0.90	2.10	3.01	0.00	0.93	0.00	0.93	0.23	0.23	0.00	0.46	428
0	0	1	1.40	1.40	2.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.30	332
0	0	1	1.05	2.73	3.79	0.30	0.61	0.00	0.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	327
0	0	1	0.30	0.30	0.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.21	475
0	0	1	1.16	1.39	2.55	0.27	0.00	0.13	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	738
0	0	1	2.43	1.21	3.65	0.70	1.16	0.46	2.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	431
0	0	1	0.19	0.37	0.56	0.24	0.12	0.00	0.36	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.12	833
0	0	1	0.24	0.24	0.48	0.00	0.37	0.00	0.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	532
0	0	1	4.80	4.10	8.90	0.23	0.69	0.00	0.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	433
0	0	1	0.92	2.07	3.00	0.86	2.05	0.34	3.25	0.34	1.03	0.00	1.37	584
0	0	1	0.75	0.60	1.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	461
0	0	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	666

---

Appendix F

SUBJECTIVE MEASURES - SITUATIONAL RATINGS

I.V.s			Situational Ratings	
G	A	C	Q1	Q2
1	0	0	2	7
1	0	0	3	6
1	0	0	3	6
1	0	0	2	6
1	0	0	1	7
1	0	0	3	5
1	0	0	2	6
1	0	0	2	5
1	0	0	2	5
1	0	0	4	5
1	0	0	2	7
1	0	0	3	5
0	1	0	4	5
0	1	0	1	6
0	1	0	4	6
0	1	0	6	6
0	1	0	2	4
0	1	0	1	7
0	1	0	3	3
0	1	0	1	6
0	1	0	2	6
0	1	0	3	6
0	1	0	3	7
0	1	0	1	6
1	0	1	3	6
1	0	1	6	5
1	0	1	4	4
1	0	1	5	4
1	0	1	4	6
1	0	1	7	6
1	0	1	3	7
1	0	1	6	6
1	0	1	4	6
1	0	1	4	5
1	0	1	4	6
1	0	1	5	6
0	1	1	3	6
0	1	1	6	5
0	1	1	5	5
0	1	1	5	5
0	1	1	5	6
0	1	1	3	6
0	1	1	4	6
0	1	1	6	6
0	1	1	2	6
0	1	1	5	5
0	1	1	3	5
0	1	1	4	6
1	1	0	5	5
1	1	0	1	7



**Appendix G (1) F Statistics and Cell Means from Two Way (Subject Gender x Addressee Gender) ANOVA on 10 Self-Rating Speech Dimensions.#**

Speech Dimension	Cell Means (n = 24)						F Statistics (df = 1, 90)		
	Male-Male	Male-Female	Female-Female	Female-Male	MSerror	Subj. Gender	Addres. Gender	Subj. x Addres. Gender	
Aggression	3.42	3.67	2.90	3.50	2.11	1.34	0.35	2.07	
Arrogance	3.18	3.33	2.37	3.00	2.33	3.32 <sup>ns</sup>	0.56	1.65	
Masculine	4.79	4.67	2.27	2.46	1.56	86.59 <sup>§</sup>	0.37	0.01	
Dominance	4.17	4.50	3.87	3.96	2.09	2.03	0.17	0.52	
Masculine (T)	3.88	4.04	2.85	3.23	0.92	22.34 <sup>§</sup>	0.32	1.86	
Emotional	4.62	4.46	4.63	5.21	2.14	1.61	1.56	0.48	
Feminine	2.58	2.46	5.02	4.79	1.70	80.94 <sup>§</sup>	0.04	0.44	
Nagging	2.29	2.58	1.94	2.33	1.99	1.11	0.03	1.44	
Sensitive	4.96	4.71	5.09	4.79	1.93	0.15	0.01	0.96	
Feminine (T)	3.61	3.55	4.17	4.28	0.66	15.09 <sup>§</sup>	0.27	0.02	

Note: Cell means can vary between 1 and 7

\* = p < 0.05; \*\* = p < 0.01; § = p < 0.001; ns = non-significant trend

# The F - statistics and error estimates reported here were derived from the full three-way (subject gender x addressee gender x condition) ANOVA

Appendix G (2) F Statistics and Cell Means from Two Way (Subject Gender x Addressee Gender) Anova on Eight Objective Speech Dimensions<sup>#</sup>

Speech Dimension	Cell Means (n = 24)						F Statistics (df = 1, 90)		
	Male-Male	Male-Female	Female-Female	Female-Male	MSerror	Subj. Gender	Addres. Gender	Subj. x Addres. Gender	
Verbal Backchannels	1.71	2.29	1.53	1.95	1.49	1.10	0.10	4.02*	
Nonverbal Backchannels	1.79	1.53	1.50	2.31	2.27	0.62	3.00 <sup>ns</sup>	0.81	
Confident <i>You Know</i>	0.18	0.31	0.17	0.29	0.09	0.07	0.00	4.07*	
Unconfident <i>You Know</i>	0.31	0.54	0.36	0.40	0.30	0.17	0.81	1.49	
<i>You Know</i> 'Total'	0.54	0.93	0.60	0.74	0.65	0.15	0.61	2.69	
Epistemic <i>Sort Of</i>	0.39	0.21	0.05	0.26	0.19	2.59	4.45*	0.01	
Affective <i>Sort Of</i>	0.08	0.17	0.1	0.13	0.04	0.04	0.56	2.49	
<i>Sort Of</i> 'Total'	0.48	0.40	0.17	0.43	0.28	1.69	2.40	0.68	

Note: *You know* 'total' and *sort of* 'total' scores include the 'ambiguous' occurrences of these forms  
 \* = p < 0.05; \*\* = p < 0.01; § = p < 0.001; ns = non-significant trend  
 # The F - statistics and error estimates reported here were derived from the full three-way (subject gender x addressee gender x condition) ANOVA

## Appendix H

### Pearson Product Moment Correlations between Partners' Scores on the Dependent Measures

#### (1) Subjective Measures

Speech Dimension	R, R <sup>2</sup>
Aggressive Speech	0.18, 0.03
Arrogant Speech	-0.20, 0.04
Masculine Speech	0.29*, 0.08
Dominant Speech	-0.51**, 0.26
Masculine Total	0.06, 0.00
Emotional Speech	0.30*, 0.09
Feminine Speech	0.19, 0.03
Nagging Speech	-0.11, 0.01
Sensitive Speech	0.03, 0.00
Feminine Total	0.19, 0.03

\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$

#### (2) Objective Measures

Speech Dimension	R, R <sup>2</sup>
Verbal Backchannels	0.11, 0.01
Nonverbal Backchannels	0.15, 0.02
Confident <i>You Know</i>	0.07, 0.00
Unconfident <i>You Know</i>	0.24, 0.06
<i>You Know</i> Total	0.21, 0.04
Epistemic <i>Sort Of</i>	0.08, 0.00
Affective <i>Sort Of</i>	0.10, 0.01
<i>Sort of</i> Total	0.19, 0.03

\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$