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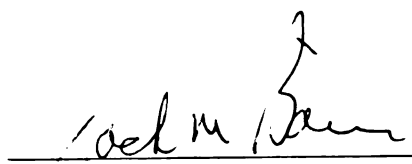
Women and language: From deviants to  
strategists  
Views from the crossroads

presented by

Claudia Salazar

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WOMEN AND LANGUAGE: FROM DEVIANTS TO STRATEGISTS  
VIEWS FROM THE CROSSROADS

By

Claudia Salazar

A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

### WOMEN AND LANGUAGE: FROM DEVIANTS TO STRATEGISTS VIEWS FROM THE CROSSROADS

By

Claudia Salazar

Three theoretical perspectives on language and gender (the deficit position, the feminist difference position, and the strategies position) are identified, reconstructed, and tied to larger intellectual currents in the social sciences, including feminist theory. An assessment of the inconsistent research findings that have riddled the field of language/gender studies since its inception period is provided and an analysis of how some of these inconsistencies have been resolved by the different theoretical perspectives identified above is offered. The main thread running throughout this discussion is the thesis that shifting conceptualizations of gender in the research tradition have influenced different interpretations and conceptualizations of the ways women and men speak. Recommendations for communication research on language and gender that aims at transcending both gender labels and gender dichotomies are given, followed by a discussion of the implications that this might have for a transcendence of disciplinary boundaries in epistemology as well.

To Lilia and Alvaro

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I am profoundly indebted to Leonardo, who has always been there when I needed him.

Finally, to Juan Pablo, who has shown me that he can be a feminist too.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

When I first approached the field of language, gender, and communication, by means of research conducted within the positivist tradition, my readings centered around the (problematic) concept of "women's language." The studies I reviewed at the time all attempted to find consistent empirical evidence (or lack thereof) for the hypothesis that women and men use language in different ways. Inconsistent and contradictory results have characterized most of their findings.

Attempting to understand the problems bound up with the construct "women's language," I eventually encountered innumerable studies, mostly by feminist scholars from varying fields, which provided me with fresh insights into more encompassing and dynamic understandings of the interconnections among language, gender, communication, and society. These same interconnections had been largely obscured for quite some time by a reified idea of a "woman's language."

The purpose that motivates this study is not, therefore, so much an inquiry into whether there is such thing as "women's language." That there is not has been

well established in this field by now. My interest here is more to inquiry into the reasons why belief in a separate women's (and men's) language has persisted for so long.

In order to achieve the above objective, I will review the literature on this area around three positions on language and gender (which I identify as the deficit position, the difference position, and the strategies position). I will point out the inconsistencies of each position, discuss some ways of resolving these contradictions, and show some of the merits of each position. The purpose in carrying out this analysis, and the central thesis of this study, however, is to show how different conceptualizations of gender in the research literature have influenced different ways of interpreting and conceptualizing the speech of women and men. I will conclude by giving some suggestions for communication research on language and gender that aims at transcending both gender labels and gender dichotomies.

### Overview of the Research on Language and Gender

Since the rise of the women's movement in the later 1960s and earlier 1970s, women have been facing the central issue of how to gain access to resources, economic exchanges, and political control in a patriarchal society (see Footnote 1). Some of the reasons given for women's

inferior status in contemporary society included their use of language. According to some authors of "how-to" manuals (e.g., Baer, 1976; Phelps & Austin, 1975), women's subordinate position is partly due to a lack of assertiveness in both their nonverbal and verbal behaviors. These authors suggest that women, as opposed to men, use a linguistic style characterized by powerlessness and hesitancy. They contend that women, by adopting a more commanding and direct personal style, will greatly enhance their chances of occupying positions of power and authority.

Before this renewed interest in the linguistic performance of women and men, accounts of separate "men's and women's languages" came from early 20th-century anthropologists' analyses of reports of missionaries working in other cultures (Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley, 1983). McConnell-Ginet (1980) tells us that claims of gender-based differences in language predate European explorations of the New World, appearing in Ancient sources.

Otto Jespersen (1922) was the first linguist to develop a full-fledged discussion of the deficiencies of a Western "female language." According to him, women leave sentences unfinished, while men do not; women use many adverbs, avoid "course and gross expressions," and are linguistically "quicker" than men. Concluding his chapter

on The Woman, Jespersen writes

The superior readiness of speech of women is a concomitant of the fact that their vocabulary is smaller and more central than that of men. But this again is connected with another indubitable fact, that women do not reach the same extreme points as men, but are nearer the average in most respects (p. 253).

For linguists like Jespersen, women's speech was assumed to be "abnormal" or inferior, a view that reinforced the idea of men's linguistic style as superior. Jespersen went further to say that, if allowed by men, women could have a debilitating effect upon language, since "women's expressions" could make language become languid and insipid.

Men will certainly with great justice object that there is a danger of language becoming languid and insipid if we are always to content ourselves with women's expressions, and that vigor and vividness count for something (p. 247).

These authoritative pronouncements on the ways women speak were based, in most cases, on speculations and unconvincing evidence. As Kramer (1974) notes, many of the writings on women's language since then have been shaped more by popular beliefs about what constitutes women's speech rather than by sophisticated analyses of empirical evidence, and by the assumption that language is the particular preserve of men. According to Kramer, there seems to be a conflict not only about what women's speech is really like, but also about what people think women's

speech is like and what they think it ought to be like.

In 1973, Robin Lakoff published a provocative essay on women and language in which she claimed that women are discriminated against both in the language they are taught to use and in the general way language use treats them. Based on her analysis of her own speech and that of her friends, Lakoff (1973) claimed (in a way that reminds us of Jespersen nearly 50 years ago) that women have a distinctive style of speech which avoids strong statements, has connotations of uncertainty and triviality, and projects a subordinate position. She labeled this configuration of speech patterns "women's language." Lakoff concluded that women can alter the image of subordination that their language projects by altering the language they use.

Lakoff's claims that speech style influences how people are perceived (i.e., that how a person says it is as important as what she or he says) have been confirmed by a wide body of research (Giles & St. Clair, 1979; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Mulac & Lundell, 1980).

Both Lakoff's work and the concerns of the women's movement with women's inferior status in society spawned a flurry of research attempting to study the ways in which gender and language interact in defining, maintaining, or changing patterns of social and political inequality between men and women. As Henley (1975) observes, language

represents a micro-political structure that helps maintain the social structure and power relationships in a society; as a social indicator of social structure and cultural values, language both reflects and reinforces social order through the "trivia of everyday life:" such as using sir or first name, interrupting, or apologizing. (Henley, 1975, p. 184). However, as we will be seeing in the discussion on the strategies position, language as a micro-structure can also challenge more macro inequalities.

### Aims of the Study

From a historical perspective we can notice that inquiries into language and gender have moved from highly particularized and decontextualized studies of sex-based language differences to more situated and contextualized research. As McConnell-Ginet (1980) summarizes this development,

The shift is from a focus on the individual speaker/hearer, who possesses a particular (socio)linguistic identity, to her social relationships and interactions with others as those are realized in language use. From an investigation of static linguistic structures... to investigation of dynamic processes of discourse (p. 17).

(However, since the term development or progress may suggest to some a linear evolution towards higher stages, a word of caution is in need. It is important to stress that these stages in language/sex research do not represent a linear, progressive development towards more

contextualized analyses of language use. We still encounter today some studies on language and communication [e.g., Warfel, 1984] which implicitly or explicitly take the existence of a women's language as an unproblematic given and go on to test the effects of such speech style on people's perceptions and attributions of speakers.)

Corresponding to these domains of inquiry, we can identify three basic attitudes or positions with respect to women's (and men's) ways of speaking:

- (1) the deficit position;
- (2) the feminist difference position;
- (3) the strategies position.

In the chapter that follows I will discuss each of these positions.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL POSITIONS ON LANGUAGE AND GENDER

#### The Deficit Position

##### Women as Deviants

Influenced by Lakoff's work, most of the earlier researchers studying gender-based language differences regarded women's language as deficient. According to Lakoff, men and women differ in their linguistic styles in ways that both result from gender stereotypes and reinforce those same stereotypes. One of the primary ways in which the speech of men and women is expected to differ is in the strength and confidence of the style employed. For Lakoff, women's linguistic style is viewed as weak and uncertain, characterized by the use of hedges (e.g., words or phrases such as "you know," "kinda," "I guess," "maybe," which blunt the force of an assertion); use of compound requests (e.g., "won't you close the door?") rather than simple requests (e.g., "close the door"); use of tag questions at the end of declarative sentences ("It's really cold here, isn't it?"), which are said to indicate lack of confidence; empty adjectives ("cute," "so nice"); hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation; lack of a sense of humor; and questioning intonation in declarative contexts (assumed to



convey hesitancy). In summary, women's speech is perceived as high pitched, gossipy, gentle, emotional, concerned for the listener, using good grammar, and being polite; men's speech is perceived as boastful, straight to the point, authoritarian, forceful, blunt, and using a sense of humor (Kramer, 1974). For Lakoff, then, these sex differences in speech style contribute to images of women as deficient or deviant, and to images of men as assertive and self-confident.

Although the linguistic forms believed to constitute the speech of women can be also found in the speech of men, certain language features or constructions are claimed to be present with higher frequency in the language of women.

The overall effect of women's language -- meaning both language restricted in use to women and language descriptive of women alone -- is this: It submerges a woman's personal identity by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and in encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it; and, when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object -- sexual or otherwise -- but never a serious person with individual views (Lakoff, 1975).

Lakoff concluded that women can alter the image of subordination that their language projects by altering the language they use. The clear implication is that women must learn to use stronger language forms; that is, they need to appropriate men's (or "normal") language forms for themselves if they want to be perceived as assertive and confident.

Recent assertiveness training manuals that teach women to "speak up" share the assumptions of this position on women's speech (e.g., Baer, 1976; Phelps & Austin, 1975). Men's ways of speaking are taken as the norm and women's speech is measured against it. "One outcome of this procedure," Spender (1980) writes, "is to classify any difference on the part of women as 'deviation'" (p. 8). Moreover, instead of focusing on the political and institutional structures that oppress women and on the need to change these structures, these popular writings on "women's language" emphasize instead individual change as a key to success.

Notwithstanding Lakoff's claims in her 1973 and 1975 works, many empirical studies on the hypothesized distinctions between men's and women's speech have yielded inconsistent findings. As Thorne et al. (1983) write,

No consistent sex differences have been found in amount of vocabulary or choice of adjectives or adverbs, although in different social groups the sexes may use somewhat different lexicons(...) Finally, no consistent sex differences have been found in the use of various syntactic forms, such as patterns of question asking. (...) A review of the literature shows that very few expected differences between the sexes have been firmly substantiated by empirical studies of isolated variables. Some popular beliefs about differences between the sexes appear to have little basis in fact, and in a few cases research findings actually invert the stereotypes (p. 13).

In short, after some failed attempts to substantiate empirically and consistently Lakoff's claims of sex

differences in language some researchers, following the lead of sociolinguists, attempted a reconceptualization of language "not in terms of isolated variables, nor as an abstracted code, but within contexts of actual use" (Thorne et al., p. 14). In what follows we turn to some of these attempts and to an assessment of their results.

### From Women's Language to Powerless Language

The work of O'Barr and Atkins (1980) represented a serious challenge to Lakoff's equation between women's language and the language of powerlessness (Borker, 1980). In studying language variation in a specific institutional context - the American courtroom - O'Barr and Atkins found that the stylistic features of women's language are not by any means restricted to women, but are associated with persons (men and women) of low social status and, consequently, low social power. These authors contend that, since women do occupy the majority of subordinate, lower status positions in society, features of the speech style associated with them have been labeled "powerless." That is, linguistic behavior differences linked to status would coincide largely, but not exclusively, with gender differences (Kramarae, 1982). O'Barr and Atkins suggested that Lakoff's concept of "women's language" be renamed "powerless language."

Other sociolinguistic works support the idea that status differences are more influential in determining the speech style than gender alone (Dubois & Crouch, 1975; Erickson, Lind, Johnson, & O'Barr, 1978; Bradac, Hemphill, & Tardy, 1981; Key, 1972; Ervin-Tripp, 1979). In one way or another, these authors contend that gender functions as a status characteristic in this society, with women usually possessing lower status than men. As Bradley (1981) puts it, "linguistic forms used by women are devalued, not because they are inherently weak or inappropriate, but because of the lower status of its source" (p. 73).

Along the same lines Henley (1977) and Zimmerman and West (1975) observe that differences in language associated with gender usually interact with those associated with socioeconomic status and power. For example, Eakins and Eakins (1979), studying verbal turn-taking in faculty meetings, found that (1) men interrupted women more frequently; and (2) high-status faculty members (men and women) often interrupted those of lower status. One of the conclusions of the above is that the norms for interruptions in this specific context are sensitive both to rank and gender.

On the other hand, Crosby and Nyquist (1977), examining male and female communication behavior in three different settings (laboratory, information booth and

police station), found that women used the "female register" (empty adjectives, tag questions, and hedges) more extensively than did men only in the first and third settings. In the police station context they found that even more important than gender differences were differences due to role: clients used the female register more often than did police personnel. Moreover, Crosby and Nyquist conjectured that failure to find gender differences in the second study may be explained by the characteristics of the setting: information booth encounters are more ritualized, and settings which elicit ritualized behavior tend to be associated with the diminishing of gender differences. Nonetheless, it should be observed that contexts can be ritualized and still can elicit gender-specific behaviors. An example is ballroom dancing, which is highly ritualized along gender dimensions and in which gender differences are not attenuated but exaggerated.

In addition to looking at power, status, or role, there are some studies that found gender of addressee to be a better predictor of the use of certain forms supposedly characteristic of women's language than, for instance, status characteristics (Brouwer, Gerritsen, & DeHaan, 1979; Edelsky, 1979). Following Giles (1973), Brouwer et al. call for a more detailed investigation into what particular qualities of the addressee (e.g., sex, social class, attitude, race, and age) cause what particular reaction on

the part of the speaker. The degree to which the gender of the researcher can potentially affect the speech style of male and female study participants becomes an important issue with significant methodological consequences for the study of speech (see Footnote 2).

Finally, Petrie (cited in Moi, 1985) found in her research topic to be more important than gender in producing differences in speech.

So far in this review of the literature on "women's language" it becomes clear that in the discussion of gender and language further clarification is necessary to determine whether the choice of speech style is a dimension of speaker's gender, role, social status, power, or of all these factors combined. Future research on this area should pursue and explore more systematically the interactions of gender with other social categories and bases of stratification (forms of inequality), which yield a much more complex picture of the dynamics of gender and language. As Ervin-Tripp (1979) suggests, "we need to examine the variables that are related to degree of likeness or difference (in the way men and women speak) and to trace those same variables in other comparisons than those across sex" (p. 8). In addition, we should also be cautious in assuming that the connections between macro and micro levels of social life are direct and unproblematic

(Maltz & Borker, 1982).

As we will be seeing shortly, more recent studies on language and gender employing ethnographic methods (Brown, 1980; Goodwin, 1980; Nichols, 1983) have tried to bridge this gap in the literature by providing more systematic accounts "of how gender is spoken." The value of using ethnography in the study of language should be emphasized. As shown by Nichols (1980),

Sociolinguistic respect for and interest in variation in linguistic structures as they are used by different segments of a social group must be combined with an ethnographic concern with language as it is used in specific contexts within the speech community. Ethnography is "any rigorous attempt to account for people's behavior in terms of their relations with those around them in differing situations." An ethnographic approach to language use sees it as behavior occurring within social and cultural contexts that are systematically linked to one another. It grounds the analysis of language use in the realities of the lives of individuals within particular social-cultural systems and requires that language use be understood in terms of speakers' positions within those systems (p. 141).

However, when adopting ethnography as a research method one should also be aware that speech communities are rarely characterized by relations of symmetry among participants as the concept of a speech community itself suggests. Sociolinguists and communication researchers should attempt to uncover the power relations that traverse any community if they want to understand individuals' linguistic choices.

In this sense, some researchers (Dittmar, 1983; Milroy, 1980) have replaced the concept of speech community by concepts of social and institutional networks. An analysis of networks, then, would

take into account contacts that occur as a result of social class and of economic activity, while letting us also consider how some contacts may have greater influence on language use than others (Nichols, 1984, p. 41).

To summarize, the studies reviewed here have not been able to substantiate in any consistent and systematic way Lakoff's claims of a "women's language." Many of the hypothesized gender differences in language were found to be more indicative of differences in social power than of differences due to gender of the speaker alone.

In the next section we turn to another area of inquiry in language and gender: studies on the effects of women's and men's speech style on listeners and its influence on speaker evaluation.

### Perceptual Studies of Language and Gender

As stated previously, because virtually none of Lakoff's assertions about male-female speech differences has been supported empirically, a need for a shift in focus from an analysis of language production per se to the study of language attitudes and stereotypes is in order (see Footnote 3). As Kramarae (1982) argues, "women's and men's speech cannot be defined apart from discussion of



attitudes" (p. 85). Since differing expectations for women and men have an effect upon the communicative behavior of speakers (Hilpert, Kramer, & Clark, 1975), and because sex-roles standards exert some pressures upon individuals to behave in prescribed ways (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972), the study of gender stereotypes in language acquires significant importance.

Studies of folklinguistics (popular beliefs about what constitutes women's and men's ways of speaking) have shown that:

1. The same linguistic markers (i.e., tag questions and disclaimers) may be perceived as indicators of uncertainty when used by women but as tools of politeness when employed by men (Bradley, 1981).
2. Certain syntactical, grammatical, and lexical components of communication may be stereotypically attributed to men and women (e.g., tag questions and incomplete assertions tend to be attributed to women, while strong assertions and slang are attributed to men) (Siegler & Siegler, 1976; Berryman & Wilcox; 1980).
3. Gender-associated speech is a more important determinant of how a speaker is evaluated than is the gender of the speaker in the courtroom context (Erickson, Lind, Johnson & O'Barr, 1977). This finding indicates that perhaps the relationship between gender and speech is not a one-way

process. As observed by Smith (1979), "beliefs about sex-associated speech may act as guides to where we seek confirming and disconfirming evidence for other sex-differences" (p.129).

4. Gender-stereotypes affect people's abilities to judge frequency differences in linguistic features in the speech of men and women (i.e., the stereotype of women as non-assertive contributes to perceptions that their speech is characterized, relative to men's, by a higher frequency of linguistic forms connoting uncertainty, such as tag questions and qualifying phrases) (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979).

As the above suggests, many of the hypothesized gender differences in language may be more a result of beliefs about differences than of actual differences. According to Kramarae (1982), these stereotypes mediate language behavior, guiding us in what we say and how we interpret speech.

Receivers may, hearing one trait stereotypically associated with women's speech, assume that other traits are present, or (...) if not hearing the expected characteristics, explain their absence in terms of the situational constraints (Kramarae, 1982, p. 97).

Thus, we may say with some confidence that language style does not affect our evaluations of speakers in autonomous ways. Among other variables mediating perceptions are the norms, expectations, ideologies, group

alliances, identities, social status, and goals of speakers, as well as the constraints of the particular situation (Giles & Ryan, 1982).

Subsequent empirical studies of language attitudes have found that different dimensions of perception are influenced by different linguistic features. For instance, investigating the contribution of hedges and intensifiers to impression-formation, Wright and Hosman (1983) found that:

1. Speakers' usage of hedges is inversely related to impression of their attractiveness. Speakers using a low number of hedges were perceived as highly credible. However, women using a high number of hedges were perceived as less credible than men in the same category.

2. Men and women using a few intensifiers did not differ significantly in attractiveness ratings. However, female speakers using a large number of intensifiers (thus increasing the force of a statement) were perceived as more attractive than male speakers using a large number of intensifiers.

This study implies that intensifiers and hedges affected differently perceptions of speaker. Hedges contributed to perceptions of credibility, while intensifiers contributed to perceptions of attractiveness. Moreover, it was found that hedges and intensifiers did not influence perceptions of speaker regardless of speaker's gender. In fact this study demonstrates that gender and features of speech do interact in complex ways.

Similar findings of an interaction effect between speaker's gender and features of speech emerged from

Warfel's (1984) investigation of speech style and perception of speakers. According to this author, there is some kind of trade off involved with the use of certain linguistic features. Warfel found that although hedges contributed to perceptions of lack of dominance, they also produced perceptions of competence.

These findings illuminate the strains women holding positions of authority may experience as a consequence of their higher status and power. In the specific case of women in academic settings, Richardson, Cook, and Statham (1983) have shown a chain of double binds. In their role of professors, these women had first to establish their legitimacy as an authority. In order to be viewed as legitimate, they had to adopt a masculine gender-typed style of interaction. However, because this style led to resentment by students, the women teachers felt pressed to increase their feminine gender-typed behavior, thus reducing their appearance as an authority. In so doing, they were judged as less competent.

Finally, in a critique of Lakoff's claims about "women's language," Kuykendall (1980) writes that there is no evidence that the relationship between gender and assertive power is part of the structure of language apart from both listeners' interpretations of the speaker's utterances and the social circumstances and social

relationships of speakers.

Characteristics of sentences that appear to identify the speaker as deferent cancel what manifests the speaker's intent as dominant. If at times women utter the tag question rather than its corresponding declarative sentence knowing that they may be taken as nonassertive, nonserious, and even powerless by doing so, they regain their assertive power by exploiting the ambiguity such sentences convey (Kuykendall, 1980, p. 90).

Under this new prism, tag questions and indirectness are not taken as symptoms of powerlessness, but rather as strategies of control women use in doing things with words (I will be exploring this point later in this chapter). Moreover, in the specific case of tag questions, it has been argued elsewhere (McConnell-Ginet, 1983; Kramarae, 1986) that these linguistic forms do not always make statements more tentative. With a falling intonation a tag question may in fact be taken as a statement.

The picture that emerges from the perceptual studies mentioned above is a much more complex one than Lakoff's observations initially suggested. It becomes increasingly clear that one cannot simplistically label a speech style assertive or unassertive given the structure of a language and the use of that language by the sexes who speak it. There are other important variables, aside from language attitudes, that mediate the relationship between gender and language.

For example, Brown and Fraser (1979) have remarked that gender-stereotyped speech may be less a reflection of

sex than the fact that speech is associated with activities that tend to be segregated by sex (e.g., occupational domains of action). Similarly, Smith (1979) argues that by discovering the social divisions and contexts that determine the distribution of a speech marker of sex, we may be able to better understand sources of gender stereotypes as well as relations between speech markers and gender-stereotypes.

The accumulated data indicate that there are probably more similarities in the speech of women and men than previously hypothesized. That we are dealing with a phenomenon that overlaps the boundaries of male/female dichotomies becomes evident. However, we cannot adequately assess such phenomena without providing a discussion on some of the methodological concerns facing most experimental (quantitative) research on gender differences in language.

#### Deficiencies of Earlier Gender/Language Research

It can be pointed out that one of the major shortcomings of many empirical studies reporting sex differences in language use has been the neglect to take into account both the social context (situation) in which language occurs (including the social networks and social relationships of men and women), and the different

communicative functions certain linguistic forms may play from context to context. As O'Barr and Atkins (1980) have indicated, syntactic tag forms occur more often in some contexts than in others. For example, in the courtroom context, witnesses' speech does not use tag forms due to its inappropriateness. However, the opposite holds for lawyers' speech.

Concerning the communicative function of these linguistic forms, some authors (McConnell-Ginet, 1980; Baumann, 1979) have argued that tag questions have multiple uses, depending on its intonation. As previously observed, it is not always the case that tag forms convey hesitancy: "It may constitute an invitation for the hearer to engage actively in conversation" (McConnellGinet, p.18), hence functioning as a politeness device to maintain the flow of conversation.

Other equally serious shortcomings of the research on sex differences in language, we find that:

1. Many studies involved judgements of a small sample of written sentences or recorded speech segments with attention implicitly or explicitly drawn to the dimensions of interest (e.g., Berryman & Wilcox, 1980; Siegler & Siegler, 1976; and Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979).
2. Most studies, with few exceptions, were conducted by employing a single variable design wherein language is

sampled in some highly constrained context (usually a laboratory), with speaker sex serving as the sole determinant of the speech style being investigated. As Rubin and Nelson (1983) point out, this practice precludes insights into the simultaneous effects of other social variables on speech, such as power, status, role, class, age, and race. As McConnell-Ginet (1985) puts it, "rigor in linguistics has been achieved at the price of rigor mortis: The radical operation required to 'isolate' the language system has killed it" (p. 161).

3. The focus of many of these earlier studies has been on correlations between small details of speech (e.g., frequency of hedges and tag questions) and either (a) perceptions of such details (as in the case of the perceptual studies discussed above); or (b) speaker's sex, without consideration for the social context of speech. As Kramer, Thorne, and Henley (1978) observe, "breaking speech into such small and abstracted units of study may lead to neglect of larger patterns relevant to gender," such as the uses of silence, intonation patterns, and the relationship of nonverbal and verbal behaviors (p. 642). Moreover, as alerted by Smith (1979), we can only claim a direct relationship between speech and sex if the correlation is perfect. Otherwise the association between the two "may be the result of a coincidental correlation of sex with



another social division (e.g., occupation) which has stronger implications for speech than does sex" (p. 115).

4. Most studies have generalized language findings about sex differences of a white, middle-class and upper middle-class, student population into an overall characterization of the ways men and women speak (Kramer, Thorne, and Henley, 1978). Claims were then made about some general sex differences by piecing together findings from different studies which used different groups of speakers in different contexts.

5. During this initial phase of research on gender and language, studies have been characterized by an emphasis on sex differences to the neglect of analyses of sex similarities (Thorne et al., 1983).

6. An important, but rarely considered, shortcoming of most of the earlier research on language-based sex differences is its tacit assumption of men's standpoint. Since men in this field created the frameworks of analysis (e.g., Jespersen, Grice) which influenced the works of linguists such as Lakoff and others, it is not surprising to find out that (a) there were more reports of differences than similarities between men's and women's speech; and that (b) women's speech was usually treated as a deviation from men's speech which, in turn, was taken to be the norm for

speakers of both sexes. It has also been pointed out that the sex of the researcher (when in the role of the addressee) may influence the linguistic behavior of study participants (Brouwer et al., 1979; Edelsky, 1979).

7. In perceptual studies, as pointed out by Giles and Ryan (1982), speakers are usually presented to listeners-judges as anonymous entities (i.e., with no clarification of socio-economic backgrounds, interests, occupations, values, or beliefs). The consequence of this practice is that findings from such studies are of little value to the understanding of how language works in interactions. For example, Ryan and Sebastian's study (1980) has demonstrated that the negative consequences of nonstandard speech diminished when the speaker was known to come from a middle-class background.

8. Finally, most of the past research on sex-based linguistic distinctions has used dichotomous models to analyze the verbal interactions of men and women. Categories such as male/female, instrumental/expressive, and powerful/powerless, became basic to the understanding of interactions between people. However, these categories or imposed divisions are not the most descriptive nor the most illuminating of the ways people actually speak for three reasons:

First, the construct "powerful language," operationalized by O'Barr and Atkins (1980) as a language devoid of powerless cues, fails to take into account the fact that power is a dynamic concept; it is developed and exercised by individuals through a multiplicity of shifting relations of force and resistance (Foucault, 1980). Viewed as such, powerful language would best be conceptualized as the aggregate of linguistic strategies that a speaker uses in an attempt to control conversational content, evaluation of that content, and organization of the exchange (Owsley & Scotton, 1984). Since these attempts at control by one speaker are met by the other participant's resistance, the strategies employed change from moment to moment, including the use of what O'Barr and Atkins would consider "powerless language."

Secondly, as previously discussed, a (reified) notion of, or belief in, a "women's language" necessarily assumes a co-occurrence of gender markers in women's speech that lacks empirical base. As argued by Mulac, Lundell, and Bradac (1986), there is a fuzziness of boundaries between men's and women's language use: These authors found that language differentiating men from women communicators in one study does not distinguish them in another. Furthermore, research findings have shown that most of the differences hypothesized to distinguish the speech style of women and men are more a result of linguistic stereotypes

than of actual differences.

Thirdly, use of these gender labels tends to obscure rather than illuminate the enormous variations in speech by ethnicity, age, social class, and other social categories that may intersect with gender.

To summarize the discussion in this section, one needs only to recall Edwards' (1982) cautionary words in criticizing the use of laboratory situations in the study of language:

It could be argued that, of all aspects of human behavior, speech is the most rapid to change when attention is focused upon it. Thus the problem of relating empirical findings to natural behavior (...) should be of some particular concern (p. 31).

### Concluding Remarks

After having spent considerable time discussing what was not found in the literature, I would like, however, to stress that consistent gender differences in language have been empirically documented in the following two areas (cf. West & Zimmerman, 1985):

1. Phonetics: Women's speech is more likely than men's speech to be characterized by correctness, especially in terms of pronunciation of the /ing/ verb ending (Shuy, Wolfram, & Riley, 1967; Labov, 1966, 1972; Trudgill, 1975).
2. Nonsegmental: Women show a wider range of pitches and more variable intonation in their speech than do men

(McConnell-Ginet, 1983; Sachs, 1975; Takefuta, Jancosek, & Brunt, 1972).

The dual language style framework Lakoff and some others have been working with, as the notion of "women's language/men's language" tend to suggest, implies that women and men use different codes or styles when communicating. However, as we have seen, the boundaries between women's language/men's language are not neatly dichotomous, but tend rather to overlap to such an extent that it would be better to drop the whole construct of a women's language at once. The literature reviewed here shows us that gender differentiation of language (when encountered) is a result of a combination of complex frequencies in the occurrence of certain linguistic signals.

A similar criticism applies to the idea of a gender style (or of separate "genderlects"). The term genderlect "conveys the notion that language behavior is as constant as dress or hairstyle in the expression of gender" (Philips, 1980). It also connotes, as observed by Thorne et al. (1983), more same-sex similarity and cross-sex difference than is actually the case. That we are dealing with a phenomenon that is context-sensitive --as well as sensitive to the social elaboration of gender, the sexual division of labor, and the structure of male dominance in

society (Thorne & Henley, 1975)-- went largely ignored by many complacent and uncritical sociolinguists and communication scholars. As Fowler (1985) cautions us, language must be studied in relation to power, repression, and inequality:

Seeing language as a practice that contributes to inequality, forces linguists to be more critical and gives social purpose to their own investigations (p. 162).

Future research in sociolinguistics as well as in speech communication should shift emphasis from quantitative analysis of variables to the articulation of a theoretical framework to explain the relation between verbal interaction and macrosocietal factors such as the modes and relations of production of a system, together with its gender arrangements (Sanchez, 1983). Only then will we be able to explain why and how specific linguistic interaction patterns relate to specific socio-structural formations.

### The Feminist Difference Position

#### Reinterpreting the Findings of Gender/Language Research

The feminist difference position emerged as an alternative to the deficit position on "women's language." Advocates of the difference position do not reject the alleged reality of a "woman's language" or of a system of

co-occurring sex-linked linguistic signals. They do reject, however, negative assessments of this speech style (Johnson, 1983). The difference feminists argue that, contrary to being weak, trivial, and uncertain, women's way of speaking has many strengths. Among other things, it is more sensitive, more emotionally expressive than the speech style of men, and more consonant with women's experiences and values; it is a reflection of women's world of nurturance, cooperation, participation, and sensitivity (Gilligan, 1982; Ruddick, 1982; Chodorow, 1974). Also implicit in the reevaluation of "women's language" is the belief that it can be used to transform "men's speech" as a basis for social change.

Such radical theoretical approach to gender and language emerged with feminist critiques of objectivism and patriarchy, and an emphasis on women's construction of cultures ("cultural feminism").

In this section I will, first, briefly point out some of the arguments feminists have used against objectivism and, secondly, show how cultural feminism, by invoking a counter-culture of female principles, represents a new way of looking at the ways women and men speak. I will by discussing some of the serious problem that the difference position (as espoused by cultural feminists) unfortunately faces.

### Feminist Critiques of Objectivism

Most of the feminist critiques of epistemology have been, in a way or another, critiques of positivism. According to feminist theorists, positivism, with its ideology of objectivism, masks interests in its claim to neutrality, devalues people's (more specifically, women's) realities, and invites (male) domination.

The epistemological assumption of a neutral, active, detached, knowing subject, and a static, passive, knowable object on which positivism rests legitimizes a division of the life-world in polarities

whose operating principle is difference (...). This invitation to domination extended by this denial of mutual recognition of subjects stresses division and boundaries, overlooks similarities, and obscures fluidity (Gregg, 1987, p. 11).

That there is no "immaculate perception," since "we all harbor hidden gardens and plantings" was continuously acknowledged by critical theorists. However, with Marx we have also recognized that power (capital) usually determines "how those gardens will be sown" (Jansen, 1983).

A feminist critique of positivism seeks to expose the connections between relations of power and the construction of knowledge (especially gender inequalities). They have claimed that "an objectivist epistemology is sexist in its methodological tendency to equate a male perspective with a human perspective" (Gregg, 1987, p. 9). In so doing, the experiences of women either have been



viewed as variants of a male norm or have been totally excluded from scientific descriptions of reality (see Footnote 4). As Dubois (1983) puts it, "the androcentric perspective in social science has rendered women not only unknown, but virtually unknowable" (p. 107).

A feminist epistemology, then, denounces all linear and hierarchichal conceptions of reality and dualistic models of human nature and intercourse as serving the interests of the dominant group. Likewise, a feminist methodology seeks to grasp experience and reality as part of a matrix of complex relationships, including the relationship between the knower and the known. It is in feminists' and other critical theorists' claims that there is not a "a single, constituted and discoverable reality" (Gregg, 1987, p. 9), but many realities that can be unveiled through a multiplicity of methods, that lies the subversive and liberating potential of their insights. In what follows it will be shown how one of such insights has been applied to a reinterpretation of language and gender research findings.

#### Cultural Feminism and the Discourse on Difference

As previously mentioned, cultural feminism emerged as an attempt to infuse "reality" with a feminist perspective. That is, cultural feminists emphasize women's experiences as caretakers, nurturers, and peacemakers as

legitimate sources of knowledge and as the basis for the establishment of a distinct set of cultural and aesthetic values (Echols, 1983).

This counter-culture, based on a so-called (and conceptually problematic) "female principle," would not only be different from patriarchal culture and values, but even superior. Difference, then, became a code word to mean that women have a different voice, a different psychology, a different experience of love, and so forth (Gordon, 1986). According to Gilligan (1982), women's world of nurturance, cooperation, participation, and sensitivity to the needs of others leads them "to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgments other points of view" (p. 16). Concerns such as the above may influence women's speech style by assuming it more personal, relational, and context bound than men's language. The fact that women's talk has been characterized as powerless, ineffective, and uncertain only reveals the ways by which the dominant groups (men) have distorted and silenced women's expressions of an alternative (and superior) model of the world.

The most compelling argument for seeing women's talk as a sociolinguistic subculture distinct from men's is put forth by Maltz and Borker (1982). According to these authors, men and women come from different sociolinguistic

subcultures --based on extensive separation in the networks of girls and boys in childhood-- in which they have learned different rules for interaction, different modes of talk (despite access to the same general language system), and different speaking and listening rights and duties; whenever they attempt to carry on conversations with one another (even in equal terms), cultural miscommunication may result.

For Maltz and Borker, girls learn to do basically three things with words:

1. to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality;
2. to criticize others in acceptable ways;
3. to interpret accurately the speech of other girls (p.205)

In other words, what girls are learning to do with words is to cope with the contradictions created by an ideology of equality and cooperation and a social reality that includes difference and conflict. On the other hand, boys learn to use speech:

1. to assert one's position of dominance;
2. to attract and maintain an audience [e.g., in storytelling];
3. to assert oneself when other speakers have the floor (Maltz & Borker, 1982, p. 205)

As Treichler and Kramarae (1983) put it, boys' and girls' ways of talking are not just different. Built into that difference is an asymmetry of power: "males in our culture learn that they can take charge of situations; girls learn that males are allowed to control" (p. 120). In

addition, these different modes of talk are not only a symptom of different social organizations (in the case of girls, non-hierarchical and collaborative; in the case of boys, hierarchical and competitive), but are rather constitutive of them (Goodwin, 1980) (see Footnote 5).

That the structure and strategies for friendly talk among women are in many ways very similar to, and continuous with, the findings about the talk of girls was demonstrated by Kalcik (1975). Further evidence of a relational, participatory, and collaborative interactional orientation in women's culture is provided by Edelsky's (1981) ground-breaking work. This author, analyzing the nature of "the floor" in a mixed-sex faculty committee interaction context in terms of the familiar turn-taking model (one speaker at a time holds the floor), actually discovered two kinds of floors: In the first one (F1), men dominated the construction of the floor (e.g., they took more and longer turns and did more of the joking, arguing, directing, and soliciting responses). Edelsky identified a second floor (F2) was identified where women participated more actively than they did in F1 and more often than did men. In this "second" floor, women joked, argued, directed, and solicited responses more and men less. As Edelsky explains, this floor was collaboratively constructed by participants operating " on the same

wavelength" (i.e., women and men interacted more as equals on many dimensions), and provided

both a cover of 'anonymity' for assertive language use and a comfortable backdrop against which women can display a fuller range of language ability (p. 416).

The picture that emerges from both Edelsky's and Kalcik's work is one in which women tend to orient towards conversation as a cooperative enterprise, as a mutually constructed product for common interest (McConnell-Ginet, 1982).

The idea of distinct male and female subcultures is also evidenced by the works of Harding (1975), Yerkovich (1977), and Jones (1980) on gossip as a verbal skill women develop for challenging men's power and for transmitting women's values and concerns; Bruner and Kelso (1980) on women's and men's graffiti as separate universes of discourse; and Jenkins and Kramer (1978) on women's consciousness-raising process as a unique form of small group interaction which embodies the ideas and ideals of the women's movement.

As we will see, despite its obvious appeals to feminists (including the promise of a solution to women's powerlessness through the reassertion of a female identity and culture), the feminist difference position is fraught with problems at the levels of both theory and practice.

Some of these problems will be explored in the following section.

### Some Problems with the Discourse on Difference

Although there are very real and concrete economic, political, historical, and ideological factors that contribute to keep women as a separate linguistic subculture (such as women's unequal access to resources; occupational and social separation of women and men; the segregation of women and their language by institutions such as the state and the mass media; the existence of widespread negative stereotypes concerning women's speech), the discourse on difference, or on "separate worlds," puts too much emphasis on difference to the neglect of important similarities among human beings. The view of women's language as different (not inferior) implies, first, that women form a homogeneous coherent social group; secondly, that women and men are sharply different ; and, thirdly, that the linguistic alternatives are somehow fixed by the sex of the speaker.

As discussed previously, the body of research reviewed here indicates that the differences between men and women in relation to language are rather few and superficial. Moreover, the genderlect model cannot account for differences in speech that do not correlate with sex of speaker. Likewise, we cannot assume that there is only one

homogeneous "female voice." Since gender in our culture usually intersects with other bases of stratification (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, age) as well as with dimensions that are within the field of gender relations (e.g., homosexuals, heterosexuals [Connell, 1985]), we can only speak of a multiplicity and diversity of "female voices." On the same hand, if such diversity represents a strength and richness, it also reflects inequality among women (some voices [white, middle-class] will be louder than others [black, lower class]) (Gordon, 1986). In this respect, Thorne (1987) observes that the "separate worlds" approach

compresses an enormous complexity into a series of contrasts...[and] exaggerates the coherence of same-gender interactions, glossing extensive variation among boys and among girls (pp. 5-6).

A second problem with the difference position is that it idealizes women's world to the point of romanticizing oppression. Although the celebration of femaleness may bring some positive results (e.g., raise women's consciousness), one should realize, with Gordon, that "the very notion of difference can function to obscure domination, to imply a neutral asymmetry" (p. 26). Between women and men there is not just the problem of cultural miscommunication, but the problem of domination.

Interaction takes place not just between two individuals but within a network of perceptions, expectations, and "rights," and always within the

larger context of institutional structures that themselves exert a powerful influence on patterns of interaction (Treichler and Kramarae, 1983, p. 120).

Thus, the celebration of difference, by reinforcing dualities and contrasts (instrumental/expressive; competitive/cooperative) fails to challenge and transform those institutional practices that have constructed gender as ranked difference (gender for women being experienced as oppression, inequality, and internalized inferiority [Barret, 1980]). Furman (1985) contends that thinking in terms of binary oppositions always implies the subordination of the second element to the first. To reverse the order of the terms "only repeats the system which was at work in the initial opposition" (p. 75).

Politically, the discourse on difference is always dangerous for feminists. For one thing, it may function as an ideological cover-up to certain institutional practices that attempt to keep women "in their proper place." As Toril Moi (1985) observes, given men's greater power difference could (and would) be used to prove that certain unpleasant activities are natural for women and alien to men.

Notwithstanding the fact that commonalities between women and men exceed differences (cf. Wallston & Grady, 1985; Deaux, 1984; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) one could argue here that the discourse on difference has important strategic uses. As shown by the French feminists with



"l'écriture féminine" (e.g., Hélène Cixous, 1976, 1975/1986; Monique Wittig, 1980, 1973/1975) multiple, heterogeneous differences may be used to undermine any binary scheme of thought and linear logic embedded in the patriarchal value system in order to create an open-ended textuality. Similarly, Adrienne Rich (1979) observes that to assume no difference at all is a political mistake since it ends up by reifying the category "human" as equivalent to "male," thus erasing women once again.

The discourse on difference still finds its supporters and opponents. However, an alternative position would be to abandon the either/or framework on which it has been inscribed and to develop an understanding of both difference and continuity (as well as contradictions and complexities) in human experience. As Keller (1985) puts it, "the recognition of difference may represent an opportunity for a deeper and more articulated kinship" (p. 117).

Whatever turn it takes, I believe the political import of this controversy lies in the fact that it forces feminists and others to debate the conceptions of domination and resistance. This, in turn, can only result in a strengthening of both feminist theory and praxis.

### The Strategies Position

The strategies position on language and gender emerged mainly as a reaction against the reductionist trend of previous sociolinguistic studies to treat speakers as "truncated homunculi sociologici who do what they do because of the social slot in which they find themselves" (Brown, 1980, p.113).

For Brown, what is missing from narratives of the ways women and men speak are accounts of the choices speakers make and the reasons for such choices. Basically, the strategies approach to language posits that men and women are "rational actors oriented toward goals and employing communicative strategies to achieve these goals" (Brown, 1976, p. 247). However, because men and women have unequal access to valued resources, power, and political authority, the specific strategies they use in pursuing their goals reflect the socio-structural constraints emanating from their social positions.

The strategies model, then, recognizes that the syntactic-semantic variation in the speech of men and women "is most usefully studied within the context of the social formation of the classes men and women" (Kramarae, 1981, p.119). That is, studying how gender is built into social structure, we are able to explain speakers' choice of verbal repertoires as well as the significance of such

choices. In the following section we will further pursue this point.

### The Division of Labor by Gender and Patterns of Language Use

An analysis of communicative strategies holds that the linguistic repertoire associated with women is largely a result of the influence of sex-segregated social and occupational groupings, and of sex-typed activities (McConnell-Ginet, 1980). Thus, an adequate account of women's and men's speech will necessarily require a similar account of women's and men's positions in society.

As Thorne and Henley (1975) argue, "every society uses sex, to one degree or another, in allocating tasks, activities, rights, and responsibilities" (p. 20). However, it is with the development of capitalism and the industrial revolution that our present sexual division of labor takes shape. As the factory replaced the home as the locus of production, it also effected a sharp separation between men's and women's activities as well as between the sphere of wage labor and domestic labor: Women became responsible for (unpaid) domestic work and reproduction (being thus confined to the invisibility of the household), and men for wage work outside the home (production). Although such neat distinctions between production/reproduction, public/private spheres seem not to fit social reality

(first, few families have depended exclusively upon the male wage; secondly, women have been shown to participate as actively as men --in some cases, even more-- in production worldwide), the ideological conception of two social-sexual spheres largely contributes to the social definition of women as housewives financially dependent upon her wage-earning husbands. It also contributes to women's further entrenchment in domestic and familial responsibilities, thus detaching and disadvantaging them even more in the sphere of wage labor (Barret, 1986).

The belief that women are uniquely suited for domestic service and nurturing supports sex segregation of occupations and the confinement of women to jobs that resemble their wife-and-mother roles: clerical and service work, nursing, teaching and care of the young, production and selling of food and clothing (Thorne & Yalom, 1982, p. 4).

As argued by Thorne and Henley (1975), the linguistic consequences of the division of labor by gender can be found in many areas of communication, such as in the conversational topics of men and women, in their lexicon, and in the verbal strategies they have devised to manage their everyday interactions. It is in relation to this last point that the strategies model is of utmost value.

According to Brown (1980), a strategies approach to language draws a set of connections between linguistic facts and the socio-political system in which they occur. That is, this model, unlike the previous ones examined

here, allows us to relate individuals' linguistic choices to their communicative strategies which, in turn, are a result of their social motivations (i.e., the goals and desires that motivate their actions) given their social networks (i.e., the kinds of people with whom one interacts regularly).

As Brown argues, this framework of analysis emphasizes the importance of speakers' ability to employ different verbal strategies depending on the requirements of the situation. It also recognizes that all speech devices are multi-functional. Speakers can creatively manipulate them to invert or subvert their usual meaning, depending on the speakers' goal. For instance, interruptions in many cases can function as display of cooperation rather than as a display of power and dominance (Murray, 1985). Similarly, questions can be used to control the order of speakers and the topics of conversation (as in classroom interaction) or to simply keep the conversation going (as in Fishman's [1983] study, where the "interaction work" was women's responsibility in the conversational division of labor).

In conclusion, we may say that the strategies model recognizes that language use is judged appropriate or inappropriate, good or bad, powerful or powerless only according to certain situational criteria (Eakins & Eakins, 1978) and to the communicative strategies speakers choose

to use based on their goals (Brown, 1980).

Some examples of how the strategies framework can shed light into the relationship between speakers' motivations, language structure, and social structure are given in the section that follows.

### Some Examples from the Literature

The works of Harding (1975) and Brown (1980) stand perhaps as the finest examples of how women and men have developed different linguistic strategies, given their different experiences of gender, power, and communication.

Susan Harding, in her brilliant essay on women and words in a Spanish village, explains how the division of labor between men and women also structures their use of language and assigns to them distinct verbal skills and speech genres. She discusses in detail women's side of this division by focusing on gossip as a verbal skill women have developed to challenge the male hierarchy by influencing the information, images, and interpretations of village men and women. However, and interestingly, at the same time that gossip confers on women some measure of informal power, it can also be used to undermine their power. If gossip functions to influence the opinions and behaviors of others, it also provides others with the means to control women's opinions and behaviors. Because gossip creates

among women a sense that there is no privacy, that everyone is under constant surveillance, it restricts the behavior of women and helps keep them "in their place." As Harding argues,

the nondeliberate, but collective, power that village women exert in the form of gossip operates as much, if not more, to control their own behavior as that of men (p. 308).

Thus, although the powers of these village women are very real, the last word, nonetheless, still belongs to the men "who run the structures that determine the conditions of everyday life" (p. 307).

Finally, it should be observed that the cultural campaign against women's gossip (e.g., "a woman's strength is in her tongue") does suggest a differential distribution of power between women and men. As Harding demonstrates,

The point is not that women are unique in their use of verbal skills for political ends, but that these skills must be uniquely developed by them in their exercise of power, given the absence of explicit, formal institutions to lobby for their desires and needs, their subordinate economic and political position in both the household and village spheres, and their lack of formal access to the decision-making processes in the society. Whatever recognition the desires and needs of Oroel women get derives from their verbal skills, from their ability to have their voices heard, remembered, and responded to by other women and men on an informal basis. Thus, not only gossip, but women's words in general earn a reputation for politicking, and the reputation is a bad one because politics is not women's prerogative.

Thus, because of their subordinate position in society, women's attempts to gain some power are usually

regarded as socially illegitimate. On the other hand, as Kramarae (1981) shows, the existence of so many proverbs about women and their destructive influence on men testifies to the fact that, after all, women are not as passive, supportive, and powerless as many studies have portrayed them. The value of a communicative analysis of women's strategies lies in that it enables us to understand how women use words in interaction to both subvert or maintain the social structures of any society.

Penelope Brown (1980), studying politeness strategies in Tenejapa, Mexico, also shows through ethnographic methods how use of specific linguistic features are systematically linked to aspects of women's social position. She argues that women's higher level of politeness in their speech as compared with men's can be explained by the fact that, in Tenejapan society, women are very vulnerable (they are usually beaten by their husbands; also, residence is patrilocal, so the social distance between the women is greater than between the men of the household what, in turn, explains women's use of negative politeness within their own group). However, because women's economic contribution to the household is considerable, and because there is a cultural ideology of complementarity in Tenejapan society that downplays differences in status and power, men and women show relative courtesy toward one another in their interactions.



Thus,

The analysis of communicative strategies provides an intervening variable allowing us to relate language and society in a direct and motivated way, rather than simply to correlate them. The ethos of women, in this view, is tied to culture and social structure via strategies for behavior. By linking behavior to social structure we are thereby enabled to ask the question why do women talk the way they do in this society and what social-structural pressures and constraints are molding their behavior? (Brown, 1980, p. 133)

Among other similar studies following a strategies model of analysis, we have: Warren and Bourque (1985) on how the politics of communication in two rural Andean communities contributes to the cultural construction of gender; Goodwin (1980) on how the different social experiences of boys and girls influence their speech patterns and on how they use speech to construct social organizations; Gal (1978) on how Hungarian peasant women's choice of German instead of Hungarian reflects their active rejection of peasant status (which is associated with Hungarian) in favor of worker status (associated with German); and, finally, Nichols (1983) on how the language of women in an all-Black community reflects the options available to them within their particular speech communities. Finally, it should be stressed that all the above studies attempt to provide systematic connections between individuals' choices, language use, and the social structures within which speakers are embedded.

### Concluding Remarks

The strategies framework, as we have seen in the previous examples, allows us to study the dynamics of speech within the larger social institutions and in view of the complex variety of gender arrangements that are embedded in such institutions.

Another important feature of this model is that it looks at speakers' communicative strategies through the point of view of the speakers themselves. Rather than simply correlating linguistic behavior with social structure in a deterministic fashion, this approach grants agency to women and men. One way of doing so is by showing, in a way that reminds us of Foucault, how speakers use varied strategies of resistance to counteract and to assert power.

Notwithstanding its innumerable merits, the strategies framework has also encountered its critics. Some have accused it of being inherently tautological. As Kramarae (1981) argues,

if we say that all women's and men's speech is rational and strategic, we are more likely to hear only rationalities and strategies in interactions (p. 154).

Or, as she later writes,

Colleagues and I have noticed that if we begin an examination of tapes of adult conversation by assuming that speakers' intentions are guiding their speech and thus that it is important that we try to decipher intentions, we are very capable of

assigning motives to the speakers. The more time we spend discussing a tape, the more elaborate the motivations of the speakers seem to become (p. 154).

While upholding the validity and legitimacy of this criticism, it should be remarked that "strategy," as Brown and Levinson define it (1978), does not always imply conscious manipulative action. Strategies also imply those routines (previously constructed plans) "whose original rational origin is still preserved in their construction, despite their present automatic application as ready-made programmes" (cited in Kramarae, 1981, p. 120). On the other hand, the strategies model does tend to see only strategies in interaction to the neglect of that which is due to culture, tradition, and/or even emotion. Moreover, this model ignores the important distinction --made by Habermas (1976/1979)-- between strategic action and communicative action and their corresponding forms of rationality. Strategic action, as Habermas classifies it, is a type of action oriented toward success and guided by a rationality of means and decisions (purposive rationality). Communicative action, on the other hand, is a type of social interaction that is oriented toward reaching understanding and is guided by a dialogical model of rationality that stresses practical-moral communal concerns and responsibilities. It is this latter, more encompassing type of interaction (and rationality) that the strategies model fails to incorporate into its framework.

Finally, and addressing Kramarae's latter criticism, it is not the task of the researcher to assign intentions and motivations to speakers. On the contrary, the strategies framework requires a dialogical encounter between researcher and speakers. (How else could one work from the interactants' point of view if not by validating one's perceptions against those of the interactants?)

To conclude, we can say that although the strategies framework does show certain theoretical lacunae (e.g., a heavy reliance on a strategic notion of rationality, its advocacy of a theoretical and practical transcendence of the dichotomy between knower and known, on the other hand, constitutes its most appealing point and one consonant with the tenets of a feminist, critical, theory.

## CHAPTER 3

### GENDER AND LANGUAGE: CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH

So far I have traced the shifting perspectives on the literature on the ways men and women speak. In doing so, I have pointed out some of the unresolved inconsistencies and/or problems facing each perspective, as well as its merits, whenever the case, for feminist and communication theories. in general. I have also shown how each "new" position on language and gender has its roots on different schools of thought and follows different methods of inquiry. I have argued why the strategies position on language and gender represents a step forward toward a more encompassing and more contextualized understanding of the place of language in interaction and in society (concerning this last point I have suggested, following Moi [1985] that the power relationship between men and women is also part of the context of language).

However, in none of my assessments of the approaches to language and gender have I particularly focused on how investigators have conceptualized gender in their respective studies. In this chapter I will review various conceptualizations of gender in the literature (from gender as a binary variable to gender as relational and

contextual) in order to show how different assumptions about gender have influenced in different and significant ways interpretations of the speech of women and men. As Rakow (1986) argues, "unexamined assumptions about gender can produce research that is trivial, insupportable, politically naive, or damaging to women (pp. 19-20).

### Gender as a Binary Variable

In its inception period, most of the studies of sex differences in language use (e.g., the majority of those studies cited under the "deficit" position on "women's language") treated gender of speaker as an unproblematic binary variable (male/female) lodged within the individual. Given this theoretical outlook on gender, and within the positivist research tradition of the field, researchers often searched for statistical correlations between gender of the speaker (in many instances understood either as his or her biological sex or as dichotomous gender categories) and certain linguistic features in order to single out those speech traits that differentiate the language of men and women. Failure to find the hypothesized sex differences forced investigators to simply shift the argument to another ground (Unger, 1979), the assumption of sex differences itself remaining unchanged.

Deaux (1984), in analyzing the research tradition on sex differences, points out that very few statistically

significant sex differences were found in social and cognitive behaviors of men and women.

sex-of-subject differences are less pervasive than many have thought. Main effects of sex are frequently qualified by situational interactions. (...) Furthermore, the amount of variance accounted for by sex, even when main effects are reliable, is typically quite small. Thus, when any particular behavior is considered, differences between male and females may be of relative little consequence (p. 108).

As we recall, many studies cited in the previous chapter (under the deficit position) found context, status, power, role, topic, and stereotypes, among other factors and categories of social identity, to be more important than gender of speaker in producing differences in speech (power, role, and stereotypes may also be part of "gender" in the loose sense). This later evidence tells us that, from the beginning, the pursuit of sex differences in language (as well as in other areas of behavior) has been both a theoretical dead-end and a political mistake.

For example, Toril Moi (1985), following a deconstructive, Derridean, analysis of "difference" writes that in searching for difference as the gap between the two parts of a binary opposition, one begins by positing masculinity/femininity, male/female as "stable, unchanging essences, as meaningful presences between which the elusive difference is supposed to be located" (p. 154). In construing the field of inquiry in terms of rigid

dichotomies, rather than complexities and/or contradictions, researchers have blurred the rich tapestry of meanings that gender conveys and acquires in the day-to-day of interactions. Moreover, the context-stripping environment of most laboratory studies reduces gender as a tool of analysis to two immutable categories. Such methodological practice --or habit of thought-- is what Connell (1985) refers to as "categoricalism."

In much of this theorising the categories "women" and "men" are taken as being in no need of further examination or finer differentiation. Theory operates with the categories as given: it does not concern itself with how they come to be what they are (Connell, 1985, p. 264).

Instances of categoricalism can be found in much sociolinguistic work where, as Kramarae (1986) wittily puts it, gender, considered a pre-linguistic variable and possessed of body, "walk[s] into a sociolinguistic study and later walk[s] out to go, unchanged, into someone else's sociolinguistic study in another setting" (p. 9).

To summarize, researchers' rather obsessive focus on sex differences, added by a theoretical reliance on a static and dualistic conceptualization of gender (which, in turn, is deeply embedded in a mixture of biological and cultural assumptions about sex categories), blinded them from seeing those very social and structural mechanisms that both impose and undermine divisions and boundaries between men and women. Failure to find consistent empirical



evidence for sex differences in the speech of men and women, coupled with larger developments in feminist theory, prompted some investigators into a conceptual shift.

### Gender as Dichotomized Roles

Some theorists, instead of viewing male and female as dichotomized opposites or as individual attributes, chose to emphasize the social character of gender, thus conceptualizing it as "roles" individuals enact in society.

According to Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985), the roles framework has been used to analyze the difference between the social positions of women and men and to explain how they are shaped for those positions.

This framework contends that through socialization, men and women learn and internalize specific identities by performing certain roles. Hence, masculine and feminine are learned by performing the male or female roles just in the same way an actor learns his or her lines by reading a script. Further, society rewards those who conform to their assigned roles and punish those who deviate from the role norms which, in turn, are deduced from the structural requirements of the social order.

Although this approach to gender represents an improvement over the sex-difference framework --since it analyzes gender in relationship to specific social and

institutional roles and not as a trait within individuals --it nevertheless contains questionable assumptions and serious flaws.

The first weakness of this approach, as pointed out by Thorne (1980), concerns the fact that the terminology of roles is not very helpful in understanding gender. Being a woman or a man is not equivalent to being a teacher or a secretary.

The terminology of sex-roles obscures questions about the effect of gender on more specific roles - on norms, evaluations and actual behavior. For example, women teachers often receive less credibility, prestige, and pay than male teachers. Gender cuts through perceptions of, and rewards accorded to people in the same role. This phenomenon is best studied directly in terms of the connection of gender to differential power and status, and not via convoluted use of the metaphor and language of roles to conceptualize gender (pp. 8-9).

Moreover, as also pointed out by Thorne, it is often unclear what the "male role" or the "female role" refer to. In some cases it is used to refer to a normative ideal of behavior; in other cases it refers to stereotypes of women's and men's roles.

A second criticism points to the fact that role theory does not provide an adequate account of social change (Connell, 1985). Role theorists regard change as something that happens to gender roles (e.g., a technological innovation may demand a change in gender-role standards); not as something that arises within gender relations as the result of the dialectic interplay between

social practice and social structure.

Finally, the roles framework does not address questions of power and inequality (Thorne, 1980). The ideology of male and female roles obscures the oppressive social and material practices that sustain rigid distinctions between men and women. By emphasizing dualisms, role theory deflects attention from the complexity of social relationships. Gender is better understood in political and social terms and with reference to local and specific forms of social relationships and social inequalities. What the roles framework ultimately provides is "an abstract view of differences between the sexes and their situations, not a concrete one of relations between them" (Carrigan et al, 1985, p. 580).

Despite these criticisms, there are some occasions, that a roles analysis can be theoretically useful. For instance, Ferguson (1984) has shown how bureaucracies, by assigning specific positions and roles to men and women, also structures the ways they talk. A roles analysis in this case could provide a detailed account of the relationship between institutional role and language use (Ferguson does not, however, conceptualize gender per se in terms of roles). For those interactions that occur outside bureaucratic structures, however, the roles model is of little help.

### Gender as a Psychological Variable

Not quite satisfied with accounts of gender and language based on either individual traits or learned roles, other theorists have chosen to conceptualized gender as a personality force or orientation (Bem, 1977, 1981; see Warfel [1984] and Jose, Crosby, & Wong-McCarthy [1980] for an example of this approach in language and gender research).

In searching for a conceptualization of gender that would be on a continuum rather than dichotomous, investigators (mostly from psychology) developed an instrument where differences between masculinity and femininity would be more a matter of degree than of opposition. In this instrument, high masculinity-high femininity are located at either end of a scale, with androgyny representing a combination of high scores in both masculinity and femininity. Thus, an androgynous person would show both masculine and feminine traits. According to Deaux (1984),

not only was androgyny to be a particular conceptual focus, it was also proclaimed as a value. Thus it was good and wise and liberal to be androgynous, and mental health was proposed to be synonymous with androgynous scores. Androgyny soon became a code word for an egalitarian, gender-free society, and disciplines have advocated androgynous therapy, androgynous curricula for school children, and androgynous criteria for professional position (p. 109).

As Daly (1978) defines it, androgynous came to convey something like "John Travolta and Farrah Fawcett-Majors taped together."

Despite the popularity of androgyny, careful examination of the construct-validity of the scale could not determine what it exactly measured nor what it meant (Deaux, 1984). Some investigators (Spence & Helmreich, 1979) have argued that the masculinity dimension of the scale measures instrumentality and the femininity measures expressiveness.

Since then an increasing number of authors have analyzed the conceptual and theoretical validity of androgyny and have offered innumerable criticisms (for a brief sampling of these, see Lott, 1981). Feminists like Mary Daly, for example, have denounced the concept of androgyny as "expressing pseudowholeness in its combination of distorted gender descriptions" (Daly, 1978, p. 387). Others, in a more serious note, have argued that the androgyny scale genderizes (self-reported) behavior according to a rigid dualistic model of masculinity - femininity which, in turn, is largely rooted in stereotyped expectations of men and women (Lott, 1981). As Lott puts it, despite the fact that boys and girls, men and women are taught different sets of behaviors, to label one set as masculine and the other as feminine "is to obscure the essential humanness of the behaviors and to dull our

appreciation of their fundamental teachability and modifiability" (p. 172). Thus, instead of categorizing persons by labels and perpetuating false assumptions, Lott proposes to identify behavior in relation to learned antecedents as well as situational determinants.

As we can see, gender defined as a psychological force or orientation still relies on traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. The androgyny scale ends up by reifying even more the distinction it proposes to blur (Deaux, 1984).

Finally, as Rosaldo (1980) alerts us, theorizing sexual hierarchies in functional or psychological terms, or even as a reflection of biological constraints, minimizes sociological considerations that seek to explain how gender differences are created and sustained by gender relations.

### Gender as Relational

This forth framework for analyzing gender is undoubtedly the most fruitful one for the study of language and gender. Its point of departure is not the individual nor his or her roles, but the system of social relationships within which speakers are situated. Gender is conceptualized not as a natural fact or a pre-linguistic variable or a role, but as a social construct that acquires meaning through cultural conventions, material practices,

and social interactions, and which is historically specific (Kramarae, 1986).

A practice-based approach to gender (an analytic strategy Connell [1985] suggests for the study of gender that examines how labor, power, and sexual practices structure gender relations) allows us to accomplish three things:

1. First, to develop a dynamic conception of masculinity and femininity as structures of social relations shaped and given meaning by a society's sex/gender system. A sex/gender system, in turn, refers to

a set of arrangements [which includes the social creation of two genders, the sexual division of labor, and the social regulation of sexuality] by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied (Rubin, 1975, p. 159).

As Rakow (1986) points out, this type of analysis avoids universal explanations of gender to focus on (a) individuals' relationship to the means of production and reproduction; (b) on their particular experiences of gender in specific historical periods; and (c) on the ideological representations of gender in public discourse.

2. Secondly, by focusing on the dynamics of social contexts and on the particular configurations of gender arrangements, it permits us to see gender in terms of a plurality of masculinities and femininities as opposed to a view of men and women as two homogeneous, undifferentiated

blocs (Carrigan et al., 1985). As Furman (1985) writes, such vision of plurality informs much of feminist scholarship and agenda. The seductiveness of the (im)possibility of a multiplicity of masculinities and femininities is also vividly expressed by Derrida (cited in Furman) in the following passage from an interview:

What if we were to reach, what if we were to approach here (...) the area of a relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating? The relationship would not be a-sexual, far from it, but would be sexual otherwise: beyond the binary difference that governs the decorum of all codes, beyond the opposition feminine/masculine, beyond bisexuality as well, beyond homosexuality and heterosexuality which come to the same thing. As I dream of saving the chance that this question offers I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices.(...) But where would the 'dream' of the innumerable come from, if it is indeed a dream? Does the dream itself not prove that what is dreamt of must be there in order for it to provide the dream?

3. Thirdly, and finally, approaching gender from the perspective of individuals' everyday social experiences and material practices, as well as through an analysis of the dialectics between the individual, the group, and the larger society, allows us both to understand how gender identities emerge and to deconstruct the meaning of gender as simply oppositional difference. As argued by Thorne (1987), in analyzing social relations we are also able to better understand how gender differences are constructed or undermined.



The conceptualization of gender as contextual, relational, has opened fresh avenues to the study of language. Similarly, because of its focus on social relationships and social networks, the strategies approach to language embodies an understanding of gender as outlined above. This framework's emphasis on the linguistic choices speakers make in interactions is consonant with the view of gender as also shaped by "the choices of individuals, molded by situational constraints, and understandable only in the context of social interaction" (Deaux, 1984). In fact, this approach provides an integrated view of language and gender, wherein both cease to be conceived as a monolithic systems to be grasped as complex, heterogeneous, multiple processes.

Thus, differences and similarities in the speech of men and women are not conceived in terms of either/or, but rather in terms of frequencies, overlapping boundaries, and contradictions, and understandable only in relation to the linguistic strategies speakers use. Finally, because gender usually intersects with other social identities, a relational view of gender also provides a central and organizing focus for the study of the relationship between language use and social structures (Kramarae, 1986).

### Implication for Communication Theory and Research

The importance of communication for the study of language and gender acquires relevance when we recognize, with Rakow (1986), that it is in communication that gender systems are accomplished. Gender is structured and given meaning through interaction and social practice, which are basically communication processes.

However, analyses of communicative interactions can provide insights into general processes of social interaction, as well as grounds for a more comprehensive theory about the interplay between language, gender, and communication only to the extent that, first, we conceptualize gender not in terms of an oppositional dualism, but as contextual and with multiple and even contradictory meanings; and, secondly, if we cease to look for differences in the behavior of men and women in order to focus instead on those instances where their behavior cuts across gender boundaries.

To follow a more interpretive and contextualized analysis of the relationship between language use, gender, and communication, we start by looking at how linguistic choices and communicative practices locate speakers in particular positions in the fabric of social relations, and how these structures of social relations, in turn, constraint or mold their linguistic choices and communicative practices. It is important to examine here

what Warren and Bourque (1985) refer to as the "politics of communication:" an analysis of the interplay of speaker, message, and action as they are influenced by power structures, and which stresses process, context, and social structures. In pursuing this line of analysis, we are able to unravel the ways gender structures are formed and transformed in communicative acts.

Rakow (1986) provides an excellent example of such an interactive approach to the study of communication, language, and gender: In her ethnographic research on women's relationship to the telephone, she articulates the ways telephone talk is both "gendered work" and "gender work." That is,

(...) it is work that women do to hold together the fabric of the community, build and maintain relationships, and accomplish important care-giving and -receiving functions, while at the same time their use of telephone seems to confirm community definitions of women's natural affinity for care-giving roles in the family and community (p. 24).

Other feminists (Warren & Bourque, 1985; Nichols, 1983, 1984; Harding, 1975, to cite but a few) provide similar examples of how bringing communication, language, and gender back to the socio-political context from which they have been unrooted can cast fresh light on the ways "communication creates genders who create communication" (Rakow, 1986, p. 23).

Among other implications of a more political nature from the preceding discussion for epistemology, we have: (1) the acknowledgment by the researcher that the context of research is not separated from the conditions of its production; (2) the need for a clear articulation of the investigator's value orientations; and (3) the need to make knowledge into a tool of emancipation (Gregg, 1987).

With respect to this last and important point, feminist and other critical theorists recognize that knowledge is invariably linked to human interests, and that feminist scholarship in communication as well as in other areas of the academia should be guided by an emancipatory intent. That is, research must become an integral part of the social struggle to abolish domination and inequality. The aim of research is not to explain the world to change it, but to change the explanations and to change the world (Scheman, cited in Gregg, 1987).

Finally, it should be mentioned that just as we are advocating for an overcoming of gender boundaries in the study of language, gender, and communication, we are also embracing a transcendence of disciplinary boundaries in epistemology. When studying human action we cannot do so from separate frames of reference. As Giddens (1982) argues, human behavior "concerns not only sociology, but anthropology, economics, politics, human geography, psychology -- the whole range of the social sciences"

(p. 5). Feminist scholarship, by bringing sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and linguistics among others, to the communication field strengthens it in the same way communication informs these other disciplines (Rakow, 1986). We need a vision of the whole (a "whole full of holes," as Deleuze once said) to capture the multiplicity of forces operating in any social formation and which sustain relations of inequalities among individuals.

The promotion of research programmes applying a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of social phenomena constitutes a first step toward this new vision. Blurring the contexts of discussion through the convergence of theoretical approaches to the study of human behavior will allow us to develop a body of theory that will account for the structural constraints on human action while recognizing subjects as reasoning, acting beings.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

In this study I have attempted to reconstruct the changing theoretical perspectives on language and gender up to the present moment. For each perspective identified here I have provided an assessment of the often inconsistent findings that have riddled this field since its inception. Suggestions were made both at the theoretical and methodological levels concerning how some of these inconsistencies might be resolved. However, in discussing the shifting perspectives on language and gender, it should be stressed that we do not have a linear, progressive model with one school of thought revising and correcting problems with the one that anteceded it. As the title of this thesis suggests, the field of language/gender studies is actually located at the intersection of many roads or larger intellectual currents coming from different traditions. For instance, "sex roles" conceptualizations emerged alongside, and sometimes intersecting with, the enormous body of research on sex differences. Strategist theorists came out of different places, with stronger roots in ethnography (especially anthropology) and sociolinguistics. The "feminist" difference position is tied to work on women's

culture and the issue of revaluing women, which in turn have been influenced by Gilligan's work in psychology (although Gilligan's focus is not mainly on language, those working on language have drawn from her work). In communication, the focus has been until recently on sex-differences research and on analyses of the effects of women's images in the media. Developments in language/gender studies in particular, and in feminist theory in general, have influenced some researchers in the field of communication to move away from conceptualizations of gender as an individual attribute to a view of gender as relational and situated. Hence, the picture we have is one of many different disciplines intersecting with one another, passing in the night, and influencing one another (see Footnote 6).

The methods used by the different schools of thought have also shaped different interpretations of the ways women and men speak. In the first decade of language/gender studies, use of statistical and quantitative correlations by the deficit school have contributed to views of women's and men's speech as essentially different. On the other hand, more interpretive and meaning-focused approaches by the strategies school have allowed us to study the dynamics of speech within the larger social institutions and in view of the complex variety of gender arrangements that are embedded in such institutions.

The main thread running throughout this discussion has been the thesis that shifting conceptualizations of gender in the research tradition have influenced different conceptualizations of the ways women and men speak.

In its inception period researchers, influenced by cultural assumptions about gender, often conceptualized gender as a unproblematic dichotomous variable. The assumption (or incorrigible proposition) that there are two genders --and that these are located within the individual --led them to search for the expression of this dichotomy in the behavior of individuals. The development of sex-differences research (as reviewed in chapter 2, under the deficit position on language) testifies to such assumption.

However, the lack of consistent and reliable evidence for the hypothesized differences in the speech of women and men, coupled with the emergence of the women's movement, prompted some feminist social scientists to move away from static, dichotomous conceptualizations of gender to "complex descriptions of relationships among speakers - sensitive to gender in the context of setting, roles, and other social identities such as age, class, or ethnicity" (Thorne et al., 1983, p. 16). Following this conceptual shift with respect to gender we also have a shift in positions on "women's language."



For instance, I have shown that the feminist difference position, despite its celebration of women's experiences, values, and language, still relies heavily on a view of male/female as two separate and distinct groups of speakers with two equally distinct and separate subcultures. As we have argued, this approach assumes more homogeneity among men and women and heterogeneity between them than is actually the case.

The strategies position on language, on the other hand, represents an approach that is most consonant with a view of gender that is not couched in terms of oppositional dualisms or differences, but sees it as dynamic and situated. In this respect, I have argued, with other thinkers, that in conceiving language and gender through the strategies spectacles, we cast fresh light into the structures of gender relations and power relations of any society, at the same time we grant speakers some measure of agency. That is, studying how gender is built into social structure (and how it is traversed by other social identities, such as age, race, class) we are also able to better explain speakers' choices of verbal repertoires, as well as the significance of such choices. In my view this position on language represents by far the most fruitful framework for studying language in communication and in society.

## Footnotes

1. I am using Kaplan's (1976) concept of patriarchy: a social arrangement characterized by male dominance and the means --symbolic and actual-- of perpetuating that dominance. Patriarchy is a system of gender hierarchy in which men possess superior power and privilege.

2. See Kramer (1979) for further discussion of research procedures and their effects on the study of communicative patterns of women and men.

3. O'Barr and Atkins (1980), in their dualistic claims about powerful/powerless speech, also fall into the same problems facing Lakoff. Rather than doing a content analysis of linguistic features and correlating those with social status, we should attempt to understand speakers' verbal choices in light of both the strategies they are using in doing things with words and the constraints of the speech context. The use of dualistic frameworks in the study of language tends to obscure the multiplicity of functions any speech feature may have depending on the speakers' goals and the requirements of the speech setting. The problem with the use of categories such as "women's language," "powerless language" are further discussed on chapter 2.

4. Carol Gilligan (1982) has shown how an emphasis on girls'/women's experiences radically questions the adequacy of theories based exclusively on data gathered from male subjects.

5. Goodwin (1986), and Goodwin & Goodwin (in press) have also documented instances of competition and hierarchical organization in girls' interactions.

6. I am greatly indebted to Barry Thorne for bringing up this important point.

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