28 Discourse and Gender

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0 Introduction

The study of discourse and gender is an interdisciplinary endeavor shared by scholars in linguistics, anthropology, speech communication, social psychology, education, literature, and other disciplines. Many researchers have been concerned primarily with documenting gender-related patterns of language use, but the field has also included many for whom the study of language is a lens through which to view social and political aspects of gender relations. Tensions between these two perspectives arose in early research and continue today, as witness, for example, the interchange between Preisler (1998) and Cameron (1999). Regardless of the vantage point from which research emanates, the study of gender and discourse not only provides a descriptive account of male/female discourse but also reveals how language functions as a symbolic resource to create and manage personal, social, and cultural meanings and identities.

1 The Field Emerges

The year 1975 was key in launching the field of language and gender. That year saw the publication of three books that proved pivotal: Robin Lakoff's Language and Women's Place (the first part appeared in Language and Society in 1975), Mary Ritchie Key's Male/Female Language, and Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley's edited volume Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance. These pioneering works emerged during the feminist movement of the 1970s, as scholars began to question both the identification of male norms as human norms, and the biological determination of women's and men's behavior. A conceptual split was posited between biological "sex" and sociocultural constructs of "gender." Early language and gender research tended to focus on (1) documenting empirical differences between women's and men's speech, especially in cross-sex interaction; (2) describing women's speech in particular; and, for many,
(3) identifying the role of language in creating and maintaining social inequality between women and men.

1.1 Lakoff's Language and Woman's Place

The third goal is evident in the field's foundational text, *Language and Woman's Place*. Lakoff describes her book as "an attempt to provide diagnostic evidence from language use for one type of inequity that has been claimed to exist in our society: that between the roles of men and women" (1975: 4). She posits a cycle that begins with the unequal role of women and men in society, resulting in differential gender socialization by which girls learn to use a "nonforceful style" because unassertiveness is a social norm of womanhood, given men's role in establishing norms. The use of "women's language," in turn, denies women access to power, and reinforces social inequality.

Lakoff identified the linguistic forms by which "women's language" weakens or mitigates the force of an utterance: "weaker" expletives (*oh*, *dear* versus *damn*); "trivializing" adjectives (*nice* versus *great*); tag questions used to express speakers' opinions (*The way prices are rising is horrendous isn't it?*); rising intonation in declaratives (as seen in the second part of the sequence, "What's for dinner?" "Roast beef?"); and mitigated requests (*Would you please close the door?* versus *Close the door*) (1975: 10-18).

Lakoff's observations provided a starting point from which to explore the complexity of the relationship between gender and discourse. In one frequently cited followup study, O'Barr and Atkins (1980) examined features of "women's language" in courtroom discourse and found that the features Lakoff identified were related to the status (social class, occupation, and experience as a witness) rather than the sex of the speaker. They suggested that women use this style more than men in everyday interaction because they are more likely to be in lower-status positions. Later studies, however, showed that this is not necessarily the case. Cameron et al. (1989), finding that speakers who took up the role of conversational facilitator tended to use more tag questions, posited that women were more likely to do so because they were more likely to assume this role. Similarly, Preisler (1986) examined problem-solving situations in an industrial community, and found that managers who contributed most actively to the accomplishment of a task also used more linguistic "tentativeness features," and these managers were usually women. Tannen (1994a) also found women managers using strategies, including indirectness, to save face for subordinates when making requests and delivering criticism. Neither conversational facilitator nor manager is a low-status position.

1.2 The personal as political

In another influential early study, Zimmerman and West (1975) found that men interrupted women more than the reverse in thirty-one dyadic conversations tape-recorded in private residences as well as in "coffee shops, drug stores and other public places in a university community." The authors concluded that "just as male dominance is exhibited through male control of macro-institutions in society, it is also
2 Cultural Influences on Gender Language

The varying context of cultural and language differences in relation to gender language can be complex and multifaceted. In many cultures, gender roles and expectations are heavily influenced by language patterns and norms. This section explores how language use and gender identity are interconnected and how these dynamics can shape communication in different cultural contexts.

2.1 Gender Differences and Communication Strategies

Understanding the role of gender in communication involves recognizing how cultural norms and language patterns may differ between men and women. This section examines the impact of gender on communication strategies, including nonverbal cues, speaking style, and the overall social dynamics that occur in interactions.

2.2 Women and Gender Differences in Communication

Women often face unique challenges in communication due to cultural and societal expectations. This part of the chapter discusses how women navigate these barriers and exemplifies strategies that can help empower them in their interactions.

2.3 Men and Gender Differences in Communication

Similarly, men also face distinct communication challenges. This section highlights the strategies and approaches that male communicators can adopt to overcome these hurdles and contribute to more effective and equitable conversation.

The author also references several important works that delve deeper into the topic of gender and language, providing a comprehensive overview of the research and insights available in this area.
3.3. The field decays

Some of the interactions of the field's potential can be shown for a specific field, like the electromagnetic field. The field is a function of space and time, and its behavior can be described by Maxwell's equations. These equations are a set of partial differential equations that describe how the electric and magnetic fields interact with each other.

The field decays according to the laws of physics, and the decay rate is determined by the properties of the medium through which the field is propagating. The exponential decay of the field is a fundamental aspect of many physical phenomena, including the propagation of light in optical fibers and the attenuation of radio waves in the atmosphere.

Exponential decay can be described by the equation:

$$ E(t) = E_0 e^{-t/\tau} $$

where $E(t)$ is the field strength at time $t$, $E_0$ is the initial field strength, and $\tau$ is the decay time constant.

The decay time constant is a measure of how quickly the field decays, and it is determined by the properties of the medium. For example, in free space, the decay time constant is infinite, and the field does not decay at all. However, in a medium with absorption or scattering, the decay time constant is finite, and the field decays exponentially over time.

The exponential decay of the field is an important concept in many areas of physics, including quantum mechanics and radiation transport.
The Field Explores

3) The difference and "dominance" theories

When they mean it
The social construction of gender

5. Analyzing Gender and Discourse

The impact of gender on communication is multifaceted and deeply ingrained. In this section, we explore the ways in which gender interacts with social, cultural, and linguistic factors to shape communication practices. We examine how gender norms and expectations influence the ways in which people communicate, both verbally and non-verbally. This includes the ways in which gender roles are constructed through language use and the implications for interaction and social identity. By understanding the social construction of gender, we can better appreciate the complexity of communication and the power dynamics at play.
The chapter on communication under the section on popular media and entertainment was also expanded with more details. The importance of understanding media and entertainment in society was emphasized, highlighting the role of media in shaping public opinion and cultural norms. The chapter discussed the impact of media on people's lives, including the influence of television, film, and the internet. The section on advertising and the role of media in shaping consumer behavior was also expanded, with more discussion on the ethics of advertising and the need for regulation. The chapter concluded with an overview of the future of media and entertainment, with a focus on the rapid changes in technology and the need for adaptation in the industry.