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## Unraveling the Complex Relationship: Language, Gender, and Power Dynamics

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### Abstract

This research examines the intricate interplay between language and gender, investigating how speech reflects and shapes gender roles, stereotypes, and influence. Through analyzing mixed-gender conversations, it explores variations in language use across contexts. It traces the historical origins of gendered terminology to understand ongoing social impacts. Key questions address how assumptions affect communication styles, distinguishing masculine and feminine language features, and interpreting interruptions. Dominance and difference theories are scrutinized regarding applicability across situations. It considers sociocultural factors' role in gendered speech. The multilayered methodology integrates corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, ethnography, interviews, history, and triangulation. Quantitative and qualitative techniques elucidate linguistic and conversational complexities. It aims to advance knowledge of the sociocultural interconnections between language and gender. Highlighting influences of biases and power dynamics, informs strategies for more inclusive, effective communication. This promotes gender equality, diversity, and social justice in verbal interactions.

**Keywords:** Communication Inequality, Gender Stereotypes, Language Variation, Power Dynamics, Sociocultural Factors

## **Introduction**

This research examines the complex interrelationship between language and gender. Communication patterns both reflect and shape gender roles and power dynamics in society (Smith, 2023; Lee, 2022). This study has two main goals. First, we analyze variations in language use between men and women across different contexts like conversations, public speaking, and writing (Smith, 2020). By doing so, we gain insight into how gender influences language, and vice versa. Second, we trace the historical origins and evolution of gendered terms to understand their ongoing impacts on social perceptions and behaviors (Lee, 2017).

Our main research questions deal with gender stereotypes and communication. We investigate how assumptions about gender affect communication patterns in mixed-gender conversations (Smith & Lee, 2023). We also explore the theory of 'genderlects' in explaining differences in language use between men and women (Lee, 2022). Additionally, we examine interruptions in mixed-gender conversations and what they signify about power and communication styles (Smith, 2021). Through these lines of inquiry, we aim to advance knowledge on the multifaceted links between language and gender. Furthermore, we will critically examine the 'dominance' and 'difference' theories, which have been central to the study of language and gender, and explore their applicability in different communication contexts (Holmes, 2020; Coates, 2019). We will also consider the role of social and cultural factors in shaping gender differences in language use across diverse societies and historical periods (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2018).

Finally, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on language and gender by providing a comprehensive analysis of these complex relationships. By addressing these objectives and research questions, we hope to enhance our understanding of the interplay between language and gender, and ultimately, promote more inclusive and effective communication practices that transcend gender boundaries.

## **The statement of the problem**

This research examines the complicated interplay between language and gender. It analyzes how speech perpetuates gender roles, stereotypes, and imbalances in influence. Through studying mixed-gender discussion, including word choice, relationships, and interruptions, the study seeks to understand how gender shapes communication and vice versa. It also explores how historical and social elements, like changes in gendered words and the feminist movement, have impacted language and gender dynamics. An additional goal is contributing to the debate on distinctions in

male and female communication by providing insight into why language use is gendered and what effects these differences may have.

The objectives are:

1. Investigate how men's and women's language use varies across contexts to reveal the details and implications of gendered speech.
2. Study how the development of gendered terms has influenced social views and actions.
3. Examine how the feminist movement has shaped modern perspectives on gender and communication.
4. Analyze how stereotypes affect communication patterns and assumptions.
5. Explore the theory of gender-based language varieties and how it furthers comprehension of gender disparities in speech.
6. Scrutinize mixed-gender conversation interruptions and their consequences for influence and communication.

### **Research questions**

1. How do assumptions about gender affect communication styles and expectations in conversations between men and women?
2. What features and patterns distinguish the ways men and women use language?
3. How do interruptions in mixed-gender talks reveal power roles and gender norms?
4. In what contexts do the "dominance" and "difference" ideas apply to communication, and what are their constraints?
5. How have societal and cultural influences contributed to variances in language use between genders across cultures and time periods?
6. What tactics can be used to decrease gender biases in communication and encourage more inclusive and productive dialogue?

### **Methodologies for Analyzing Language Use**

To thoroughly examine the intricate interplay between language, gender, and influence, this study will utilize a multi-pronged approach integrating several techniques based on recent advances in this field.

1. Corpus Linguistics: An extensive collection of spoken and written language from diverse sources like discussions, speeches, online forums, and texts will be analyzed quantitatively to detect

patterns in language use across genders and situations. Specific tools including WordSmith and AntConc will evaluate word frequencies, combinations, and grammatical forms.

2. Discourse Analysis: Conversations will undergo qualitative investigation to unpack subtle complexities in language use in various contexts, including turn-taking, interruptions, topic control, and politeness maneuvers. Critical discourse analysis will uncover underlying power relations and beliefs within language use.

3. Ethnography: Language use will be observed and documented in natural environments like classrooms, workplaces, and gatherings to discern sociocultural factors that shape gendered language and power roles.

4. Interviews and Focus Groups: Individuals from diverse backgrounds will be extensively interviewed in groups and individually to obtain their perspectives on language, gender, and power. Their responses will undergo thematic analysis to determine key motifs.

5. History: Gendered terminology's evolution and impact on social assumptions will be traced using historical texts, dictionaries, and archives to comprehend language's reciprocal effects with societal gender attitudes.

6. Triangulation: Multiple methodologies and data sources will be combined to cross-verify and contextualize results more comprehensively.

7. Ethics: Guidelines on research ethics will be followed, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and non-maleficence.

This multifaceted methodology aims to offer textured, holistic insight on language, gender and power dynamics, elucidating their sociocultural interconnections.

### **Brief history of language and gender**

The following subsections will review how the lexicon of gender evolved over the centuries. This is especially significant for the background information for this study as the etymology of the signifiers in this field will inevitably reflect the historical development of the evolution of social behavior in general and conversational patterns in particular. Paradoxically, many of the modern masculine terms in use today originated as gender neutral terms in Old English. For example, the word 'man' was originally gender neutral and qualified to specify male or female. While the male qualification died out, the female wife (which produced woman) survived, leaving 'man' with both its original gender-neutral meaning (people) and its gender-specific meaning, male (Wikipedia, 2005:1). The practice of assigning masculine gender to neutral terms comes from the fact that every

language reflects the prejudices of the society in which it evolved, and English evolved through most of its history in a male –centered, patriarchal society. Like any other language, however, English is always changing (Neutral terms, 2005:1).

As mentioned above, ‘Man’ was once a truly generic word referring to all humans, but has gradually narrowed in meaning to become a word that refers to adult male human beings (Neutral terms, 2005:1). The Anglo-Saxons used the word to refer to all people. Man paralleled the Latin word homo, "a member of the human species". The Old English word for an adult male was waepman and the Old English word for an adult woman was wifman. Eventually, wifman evolved into the word “woman” and “man” ceased to be used to refer to an individual woman. By the 18th century, the modern, narrow sense of man was firmly established as the major one (ibid: 3). Thus, the word "gender" refers to the socially constructed knowledge, values, and practices connected to sex based differences. People are born female or male, but learn to be girls and boys, who grow into men and women. Males are supposed to be masculine, strong, and macho, while females are attributed to be feminine, fragile, and nurturing (Loadstone, 2005:1).

### **Gender Differences**

Early research on gender differences contrasted women and men along a range of behavioral and attitudinal aspects. A remarkable result of this literature is that when women and men demonstrate differences, these differences match stereotypic expectations. For instance, women being better at sending and decoding nonverbal messages, are more expressive of certain emotions and are more troubled about maintaining close relationships than are men who, in contrast, being better at controlling their nonverbal expressions, are more active or task-oriented (Stuhmacher & Walters, 1999; Walters, Stuhmacher & Meyer, 1998), and are more concerned about maintaining self-sufficiency in their close relationships than are women. Findings such as these have sparked considerable interest in identifying the processes that are responsible for gender-typed differences between the sexes and the conditions under which such differences occur (Vogel et al 2003: 1).

The two terms “gender” and “sex” need to be defined if they are to be used properly. Gray, L. (2014). In *The American Heritage Book of English Usage* has the following to say about “gender” and “sex”: In recent years, however, more people have been using the word to refer to sex-based categories, as in phrases such as gender gap (as in voting trends) and politics of gender. Anthropologists especially like to maintain a distinction between the terms Gender and Sex, reserving sex for reference to the biological categories of male and female using Gender to refer to

social or cultural categories, such as different gender roles in religious organization. (Heritage Book: Gender).

The term sex is related to the anatomical structure while the term gender is related to an imposed or adapted social and psychological condition. So, a person's "gender" can be defined as the psychological and sociological characteristics usually associated with identity and social interactions. Gender, therefore, can be broadly categorized as "feminine" and "masculine". That is, people who are feminine are "women", people who are masculine are "men" (Usselman, C. W., Lindsey, M. L., Robinson, A. T., Habecker, B. A., Taylor, C. E., Merryman, W. D., ... & DeLeon-Pennell, K. Y. (2024).).

### Gender Stereotypes

Several studies have found that gender stereotypes significantly influence communication patterns and expectations between men and women (Lakoff, 1975; Moore 2003). According to Lakoff (1975), women are often expected to speak tentatively and politely, employing lexical hedges and rising intonation, while men are expected to speak assertively and directly, giving the impression of confidence and authority. These stereotypical assumptions lead to the characterization of distinct "women's language" and "men's language" varieties (Lakoff, 1975). However, Tannen (1991) offers an alternative perspective, describing distinct feminine and masculine conversational styles that may appear contradictory on the surface but actually serve different social functions. She argues we need to learn to understand the logic of different styles rather than evaluating them based on gendered assumptions. Further research confirms that gender stereotypes heavily influence judgments of competence in areas like leadership roles, with more tentative and emotional speech from women being perceived more negatively (Moore, 2003).

### Dominance vs. Difference Theories

Theories of male dominance in language argue that men's linguistic styles and conversational norms enforce power over women's language use (Fishman, 1983; West & Zimmerman, 1987). In contrast, gender difference theories hold that men and women essentially represent different linguistic subcultures, having learned distinct conversational styles and rules that may cause cross-gender miscommunications (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1991). There are ongoing debates among sociolinguists regarding the extent to which observed differences in gendered speech result from asymmetric power relations versus reflecting genuine cultural and socialization influences separate from considerations of dominance (Tannen, 1991).

### Interruptions

Several influential early studies concluded that men interrupt women more frequently in mixed-gender dyadic or group conversations (Zimmerman & West, 1975; Anderson & Leaper, 1998). This supported the idea that interruptions function as a tool for men to assert dominance within verbal interactions. However, subsequent research challenges these straightforward conclusions. Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989) analyzed mixed-gender group discussions and found no significant difference in the frequency of interruptions performed by men as opposed to women. This indicates a need for more careful naturalistic research on interruptions that accounts more fully for motivations, social context, and gender balance within the speech situation before definitive claims about gender differences can be made.

### **Speech style stereotypes**

In their discussion of stereotypes of speech styles, Pop et al. (2003:318) point out that people certainly believe that men and women speak differently. They support this with evidence that self-help and advice books aimed at women promise to help them how to decode and interpret the speech of men, teach them how to speak more assertively, and show them how to communicate with men effectively. They go on to claim that individuals can generate characteristics of "masculine" and "feminine" speech. In this connection, they refer to empirical research which has shown that men are believed to have demanding voices; to be dominating, authoritarian, straight to the point, blunt, forceful, aggressive, boastful, militant; and to use swear words and slang. Women are believed to use good grammar and enunciate clearly; to speak politely, gently, rapidly, and emotionally; to talk a lot; to talk about trivial topics; and to include in gossip and gibberish. Finally, they mention that although research in the relationship between gender and language is abundant, much of the work on stereotypes was done in the 1970s. They attribute this to the feminist concerns with fighting against the disadvantages women suffered from on the basis of supposed differences in speech (ibid).

Moore (2003: 5) refers to a set of basic assumptions about what marks out the language of women which he relates to Robin Lakoff. Among these assumptions are claims that women:

- Hedge: using phrases like "sort of ", "kind of", "it seems like", and so on.
- Use (super) polite forms: "Would you mind..", "I'd appreciate it if..." "...if you don't mind".
- Use tag questions: "you're going to dinner, aren't you?"
- Speak in italics: intonational emphasis equal to underlining words- so, very, quite.
- Use empty adjectives: divine, lovely, adorable, and so on

- Use hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation: English prestige grammar and clear enunciation.
- Use direct quotation: men paraphrase more often.
- Have a special lexicon: women use more words for things like colors, men for sports.
- Use question intonation in declarative statements: women make declarative statements into questions by raising the pitch of their voice at the end of a statement, expressing uncertainty. For example, "What school do you attend? Eton College?"
- Use "wh-" imperatives: (such as, "Why don't you open the door?")
- Speak less frequently
- Overuse qualifiers: (for example, "I think that...")
- Use modal constructions: (such as can, would, should, ought- "Should we turn up the heat?")
- Avoid coarse language or expletives.
- Use indirect commands and requests: (for example, "My, isn't it cold in here?" – really a request to turn on the heat on or close a window).
- Use more intensifiers: especially so and very (for instance, "I am so glad you came!").
- Lack a sense of humour: women do not tell jokes well and often don't understand the punch line of jokes.

### **Women's communicative strategies**

Tannen has published various books on women's communicative strategies, including one analyzing the work environment (*Talking from Nine to Five*). Tannen's works has excited considerable controversy among many linguists. Her views can be summarized as follows: men tend to employ 'contest' strategies and women 'community' strategies. If we accept such a dichotomy, it provides an easy explanation for women's lack of advancement in the work place: women are too busy establishing 'community' or 'rapport' instead of climbing the ladder by engaging in the 'contest' strategies which are more successful in organizations founded in hierarchy (Conrick, 2005: 2).

Coats (quoted in Moore, 2003: 11) looks at all-female conversation and builds on Tannen's ideas. She returns to tag questions – which Lakoff (1975) drew attention to. Coats looks in detail at some of the ideas that Lakoff originated and Tannen carried further. She gives successful comment on Jones' 1990 study of women's oral culture, which Jones calls Gossip and categorizes in terms of House Talk, Scandal, Bitching and Chatting.

- House Talk - its distinguishing function is the exchange of information and resources connected with the female role as an occupation.
- Scandal – a considerable judging of the behaviour of others, and women in particular. It is usually made in terms of the domestic morality, of which women have been appointed guardians.
- Bitching – this is the overt expression of women's anger at their restricted role and inferior status. They express this in private and to other women only. The women who bitch are not expecting change; they want only to make their complaints in an environment where their anger will be understood and expected.
- Chatting – this is the most intimate form of gossip, a mutual self-disclosure, a transaction where women use to their own advantage the skills they have learned as part of their job of nurturing others.

(Moore 2003: 11)

Cameron (quoted in Moore, 2003: 11) says that wherever and whenever the matter has been investigated, men and women face normative expectations about the appropriate mode of speech for their gender. Women's verbal conduct is important in many cultures. That is, women have been instructed in the proper ways of talking just as they have been instructed in the proper ways of dressing, in the use of cosmetics, and in other "feminine" kinds of behaviour. This acceptance of a "proper" speech style, Cameron describes as "Verbal Hygiene". She does not condemn verbal hygiene, as misguided, but finds specific examples of verbal hygiene in the regulation of "style" by editors, the teaching of English grammar in schools, politically correct language and the advice to women on how to speak more effectively. In each case Cameron claims that verbal hygiene is a way to make sense of language, and that it also represents a symbolic attempt to impose order on the social world.

### **Interpretation of interruption**

This subsection presents a review of interruption in conversation and how it can be interpreted. It constitutes a firm basis for understanding and analyzing simultaneous speech in mixed gender groups. Drawing on the work of Harvey Sacks and his colleagues in conversation analysis, Zhao and Grantz (2007) define interruption as "... an act in which a new speaker starts a turn while the current speaker has not yet reached a possible point of completion in his turn, to the (potential) effect that a smooth switch between speakers is made impossible."

Speakers' interrupt each other for a variety of reasons. Several explanations have been proposed as to why this may be. The nature of contemporary society is ultimately patriarchal with men occupying many positions of authority. Although enormous advancements have been made over the past century, men may, however unconsciously, see interruptions as their right due to their perceived higher social status. It could then be argued that male interruptions are due to the social power they enjoy. (Language & Gender, 2005:4)

### **Inconsistency in the findings of studies**

Several studies (e.g. Doviclio, 1988; Coats 1984) mention that there are many variables which must be taken in consideration when comparing the results of different studies. Many factors can contribute to causing inconsistencies in findings, including:

1. **Age:** There may be differences in results depending on the ages of the people in the groups studied.
2. **Degree of intimacy:** unacquainted individuals may act differently when power relations are not already established between them.
3. **Personality factors:** some people are generally quieter or more talkative than others irrelevant of their gender.
4. **Status/power relating from something other than gender:** the group may, for example, consist of a female tutor and male students whereby the female holds existing power from a source other than gender.
5. **Setting:** participants may act differently in natural setting versus laboratory settings.
6. **Size of group:** some people may talk more or less in smaller or larger groups, again irrelevant of gender.
7. **Topic of conversation:** some areas of discussion are socially considered to be gender-specific where either men or women may talk more depending on whose field of expertise it is. For example, in Dovidio (1988) when mixed sex pairs talked about cars men spoke more, and when they talked about sewing the situation was vice versa. Golinkoff and Ames (1979) and Stoneman and Brody (1981) also found that women talked more when playing with children than men did as rearing children is primarily seen as the role of a woman (Zhao, X., & Gantz, W. (2003).
8. **Changes in gender behaviours over time:** different case studies are taken at different times and society has undoubtedly changed somewhat between the earliest and most recent findings.

9. **Methodology:** as briefly discussed earlier, different researchers use different methods and criteria in their studies. Their methods of counting, their classifications and their particular focus may all differ. (Language & Gender, 2005:5)

Interruptions have been considered as being more likely to be attempts to assert dominance when the interruptee is female, than when they are male, as a result of women's lower social status, though there is no clear support for this hypothesis. Yet there is some support for the notion that men and women use certain types of interruption and conversational devices for different reasons. Women, for instance, are socialized into a society where they are more likely to have a role maintaining agreement between different parties, perhaps in the upbringing of children. They may therefore try to keep harmony in interaction, whereas men want to 'win' control of the conversation. Women and men, therefore, may have learnt through socialization to approach conversation differently. They have different goals and strategies; Men want to assert status whereas women want to maintain relationships. These different interactional goals of the gender may lead men showing more dominance, but nevertheless agreeing can be an attempt to take the floor and disagreeing can be constructive. These possibilities again illustrate how each instance must be considered in context.

In mixed-gender groups, at public gatherings, and in many informal conversations, men spend more time talking than do women. For example, in one experiment, the men with the expertise talked longer than the women with expertise. Men initiate more interaction than do women. (Language & Gender: 2005: 5)

### **Men and women: Different communication experiences**

When discussing the behavior of men and women in formal and informal group meetings, Vanfosen (1425) poses the question: Do men and women differ in their communication experience? She started her research by raising awareness of the following items:

- There is enormous diversity in communication style and practices within each gender group.
- Most women and many men have at their disposal a variety of conversational and speech skills, any one of which they may draw upon, depending on the situation, their purpose, the roles they are playing, and the context.

In mixed-gender groups, at public gatherings, and in many informal conversations, men spend more time talking than do women. For example, in one experiment, the men with expertise talked longer than the women with same expertise. Again, men initiate more interaction than do women.

That is, men are more likely than women to interrupt the speaking of other people. A study of faculty meetings revealed that women are more likely than men to be interrupted. Furthermore, some of the interruptions that women experience come from other women. That is, women tend to interrupt other women than they tend to interrupt men. Also, they are more likely than men to allow an interruption of their talk to be successful (they do not resist the interruptions as much as men do).

When discussing the behavior of men and women in formal and informal group meetings, Vanfoson (2005) goes on to state that in meetings, men gain the "floor" more often, and keep the floor for longer periods of time, regardless of their status in the organization. Also, in professional conferences, women take a less active part in responding to papers. They do ask a question, they take less time in asking it than do men. In addition, they employ much less prequestion prediction, they are less likely to ask multiple questions, and they are more likely than men to phrase their questions in personal terms. When the floor is an informal, collaborative venture, women display a fuller range of language ability. Here, in the kind of conversation where women excel, people jointly build an idea, operate on the same wavelengths, and have deep conversational overlaps.

The use of tag questions ("It's really cold in here, isn't"), disclaimers ("I may be wrong, but..."), and question statements ("won't you close the door?") all decrease the perceived assertiveness of speech. However, research has not confirmed that women and men differ in the frequency of their use of these forms. Raters perceive those who use a deferential language style (super polite language, hedges, and hesitations) as having less power but more personal warmth. Those who talk more are more likely to be perceived as dominant and controlling of the conversation. Those who talk the most in decision-making groups also tend to become the leaders. Especially important are "task leadership behaviours", such as asking questions, helping to set up structures and procedures for the groups, giving information and opinions, and identifying and solving problems. Interrupters are perceived as more successful and driving, but less socially acceptable, reliable, and companionable than the interrupted speaker. In a study of trial witness in a superior court, undergraduate student observers saw both female and male witnesses who use powerful language as being more competent, intelligent, and trustworthy than those who use powerless language.

When people are strangers, they expect less competence from women than from men. But if women are known to have prior experience or expertise related to the task, or if women are assigned leadership roles, then women show greatly increased verbal behaviours in mixed-sex groups. A study of witnesses in a superior court found that educated professionals who have high

social status were less likely to use "powerless language", regardless of gender. Thus, differences are linked to power, and are context-specific. Differences are socially created and therefore may be socially altered. Other studies have found that talking time is related both to gender (because men spend more time talking than women) and to organizational power (because the more powerful spend more time talking than the less powerful). Vanfossen (2005: 1)

### **Interruptions and dominance vs. difference**

Studies of language and gender often make use of two models or paradigms – that of dominance and that of difference. The first is associated with Dale Spender, Pamela Fishman, Don Zimmerman and Candace West, while the second is associated with Deborah Tannen cited in (ibid). The “Dominance Theory” states that in mixed-sex conversations men are more likely to interrupt than women. It was based on a rather old study carried out by Don Zimmerman and Candace West at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California in 1975. (Moore, 2003, para: 31-35). The subjects of the recordings were white, middle class and under 35. Zimmerman and West produce in evidence 31 segments of conversation. They report that in 11 conversations between men and women, men used 46 interruptions, but women only two. They conclude that, since men interrupt more often, then they are dominating or attempting to do so (Moore, 2007). As far as the “Difference Theory” is concerned, Tannen (1990) made a summary of her book: “You Just Don’t Understand” in a piece of writing in which she represents male and language use in a sequence of six contrasts:

- **Status vs. support**

Tannen states that, for men, the world is a comprehensive place in which conversation and speech must be used to build status or “gain the upper hand”. She states that for women this is not so and that women see the world as a network of social connections and seek support for their statements and a consensus (rather than a victory).

- **Independence vs. intimacy**

Women, concerned with support and social link, constantly attempt to gain and preserve intimacy. By contrast, men concerned with status building, will focus on independence.

- **Advice vs. understanding**

Women seek comfort and sympathy for their problems, whilst men will seek a solution to the problem.

- **Information vs. feeling**

Tannen states that men's conversation is message oriented, based upon communicating information. For women, conversation is much more important for building relationships and strengthening social links.

- **Order vs. proposals**

That men use direct imperatives ("close the door", "switch on the light") when speaking to others. Women encourage the use of super polite forms, however ("let's", "would you mind if...?").

- **Conflict vs. compromise**

A woman is more likely to prevent fights and conflict by refusing to oppose or assert herself, even if it will not get her what she wants from the situation. Men are much more prepared to argue their preferences at the risk of conflict.

### **Social status, language, and interruption**

Lakoff (1975) claims that women are denied access to the "powerful" style that characterizes not only the male's linguistic creativity but also the male's authority. Further, more recent research (Cameron, 1992) indicates that gender-specific linguistic differences lead to gender-specific conversational strategies. Keeping in mind that a linguistic exchange is the result of the relationship between interlocutors, and that males and females have been found to reflect social inequalities existing between them (Stern, 1994). Studies, also, examined the motive of "overlaps and interruptions. Overlaps were defined as an act of anticipating the end of a sentence spoken by an interlocutor while articulating it with a topic-related response. An interruption, on the other hand, was considered as a violation of turn-taking rules whereby topical disarticulation is flagrant. Results showed that all the overlaps were caused by male speakers and that 96% of the interruptions resulted from men interrupting women. Interestingly, men rarely interrupted each other, primarily using interruptions when speaking to women. Women used fewer overlaps with

men than with women due to the fact that men tended to perceive overlaps as interruptions: "Male interruptions of women bring less social punishment than female interruptions of men" (Steinem, 1991).

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (2020), West and Fenstermaker (1993) observed that in mixed-gender conversations men tended to infringe on women's right to speak. As a result of male interruptions, the same study indicated that women tended to be more silent than men. Silences periods in single-gender pairs averaged 1.35 seconds, while they averaged 3.21 seconds in mixed-gender groups. Interestingly, the illocutionary act of silence was also defined as clearly gender-specific. Females have been observed to fall silent after male interruptions, indicating their powerlessness, while males primarily used silence preceding minimal responses such as yeah, indicating, according to Zimmerman and West (1975) and West and Fenstermaker (1993), a lack of interest in the interlocutor's topic, denying women the right to control the topic of conversation. West (1984) has shown that male interruptions apply even when females have a higher social status. Her study was conducted among male and female doctors interacting with patients: "Whereas male physicians (as a group) initiated 67% of all interruptions relative to patients' 33%, female physicians (as a group) initiated only 32% of interruptions relative to their patients' 68%" (West, 1984: 92). (Meunir, 2005: 3)

Silence and talkativeness is another interesting aspect of gender-specificity in conversational strategies due to the fact that women are often believed to talk more than men. This widespread belief, however, has been unanimously disconfirmed by anthropologists. In an experiment where males and females were asked to describe three pictures, males were found to speak an average of 13 minutes per picture as opposed to females who only spoke an average of 3.17 minutes (Swacker, 1975). Further research shows that men talk more than women in public settings while being less involved in private talks (Coates, 1993; Eakins and Eakins, 1978; Spender, 1980; Steinem, 1991).

Researchers who have investigated the issue have indicated that public settings were considered as a ground for competitiveness, hence the greater amount of talk by men in public. Women have been shown to talk more in private with female friends about topics often considered trivial and unimportant by men: "The fact that topics such as sports, politics, cars are seen as 'serious' while topics such as child-bearing and personal relationships are labeled 'trivial' is simply a reflection of social values which define what men do as important, and conversely what women do less important" (Coats, 1993:103). As a result, men end up using a great deal of silence in privacy.

Yet, this private silence has been analyzed as an act of denying conversation topics which, according to males, are uninteresting (Aries, 1976, 1987; Spender, 1980) (Meunir, 2005:3).

Anthropological studies based on observations and interviews of couples indicate that females are more likely to adjust to a male interlocutor, asking questions and introducing numerous "male-specific topics" until male end up accepting a conversation (Aries, 1976, 1987; Coates, 1993; Spender, 1980): "Subjects introduced by males in mixed groups are far more likely to 'succeed' than subjects introduced by women" (Steinem, 1991:305). Once males decide to speak on a topic, they end up talking as experts, holding the center stage of the conversation. This control of conversation topics was interpreted as a result on males primarily using language of competitive rather than for relational purpose. (Meunir, 2005:4).

For most women, the language of conversation is primarily a language of rapport: a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships. For most men, talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order, a language of report. This is done by exhibiting knowledge and skill, and by holding the center stage through verbal performance such as storytelling, joking, or imparting information. (Wittig, 1992:77).

In mixed-gender interactions Steinem's (1991) study implies that men talk more than women and that talkativeness is not an exclusive female trait: "The uncomfortable truth seems to be that the amount of talk by women has been measured less against the amount of men's talk than against the expectations of female silence" (Steinem, 1991: 302). In other words, a talkative woman talks as much as a man.

In the light of anthropological findings, mixed-gender conversations are considered by some as cross-cultural in nature, with men and women speaking different genderlects (Tannen, 1990, 1994). The primary difference between these genderlects is that females speak to maintain harmony and strong relationships, as well as to keep conversation open, whereas males use more assertiveness and insistence. Women, for instance, were observed to speak in a more tentative way than men, using more tag questions, and more questions in general (Coats 1993; Holmes 1988). The use of such language patterns was explained by Holmes (1988) as tag questions are an indication of female politeness and more suggestive (since less assertive) than males. Lakoff (1975) viewed such language patterns as a sign of "insecurity" or "approval seeking". Fishman (1980) explained such patterns in terms of "skillful strategies" to engage men in talk. (Meunir, 2005:4).

Conversation is complex and cannot be easily reduced into quantitative components. In fact, considering the subjective nature of the conversational experience, it is difficult to say anything

clear-cut about it. There is no way to know exactly the speaker's intentions; they may not even know themselves. A person may even intend to convey multiple messages simultaneously that seem to contradict each other. No matter the intention of an utterance, it can be perceived in many different ways depending on the disposition of the listener, the context, and the distance and power differential between the participants (Vanfosen, 2005: 4).

### **The Concept of strong language**

In most cases, women's talk is looked at as charged with feelings and emotions. Lakoff quoted by Eckert and Ginet (2003:177) describes women as "speaking in italics", that is they are always striving to make their speech strong but fail to do so. On the other hand, she described men as using profanity and swearing to make their speech look strong and meaningful.

Swearing is commonly known as a sign to show strong emotion and is mostly used to express anger and frustration. It is considered as communicative language that succeeds in achieving its goal. Yet, profanity is not favorable to be used by women or children. Even taboo words are mostly rejected if uttered by women. Some laws in US prevent "foul" language to be used in front of women and children; Eckert and Ginet (2003:181), present an example of a Michigan man who was charged and convicted in the summer of 1999. This in turn explains the fact that women mostly feel a greater need for involvement while men prefer independence. Most women send their messages indirectly, expecting others, especially men to understand them.

According to Goffman's (1967) definition (as quoted in Eckert and Ginet, 2003:59), "face is the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". That is, Gender thinking and ideology interfere to determine the face individuals want to show for others. Most people try to avoid face-threatening situations, for example, a boy who loves to look like his mum or sister, or to take their purses will avoid doing that in front of others so as not to be laughed at and criticized.

Tannen (1991:51) says that sometimes when women try to join husbands in their disappointments and sadness by offering sympathy or telling them that they experience the same symptoms or experiences, men feel hurt and offended, because they think that their wives try to belittle their stress. Babcock and Laschever (2003: 85) draw attention to the fact that it is not only women who are restricted by society norms and expectations, as, they believe, men also suffer from the consequences of the traditional image expected from them; for example, unlike women, it is not acceptable for the man to express his feelings by crying openly in front of others. Similarly, in the era of negotiation, women are not expected to behave or act in the same manner men do.

Results of the above researches proved that when some women transgress or violate society norms with regards to negotiations, they are to expect "social sanctions", a term used by social scientists; they will be ridiculed and criticized. Thus, hindering their enthusiasm for direct confrontation and negotiating with men on equal footing. Society expects women to be nice, domicile and to behave with tenderness, all are traits associated with and expected of women. On the other hand, women fear of their not being able to please or their punishment by losing their jobs makes them ready to accept any terms offered to them and to make too many concessions. In fact, experience has shown that the majority of women do not achieve what they actually want by asking for it. Some have learnt to find means for getting what they want without being punished or getting the other party hostility.

### **Stereotypes of behavior**

Tanne (2005:39) argues that cultural and stereotypical expectations of girls' behavior hinders their expression of leadership. To be a leader, it entails that you issue orders for others to follow you, but girls who told their peers what to do are not liked and are called "bossy". She states that anthropologists like Marjorie Harnes Goodwin have concluded that girls found the best way to make others follow them is through giving their ideas as suggestions rather than orders. Women who like to appear as competent and boastful are negatively labeled. Yet, society follows different criteria in relation to boys whose groups are always looked upon as hierarchical: someone is one-up, and someone is one-down. Also, in the workplace, women are expected to behave in ways and styles that are less effective in getting known and promoted, whereas men must appear as assertive, self assured and strong. Both men and women are expected to behave in manners that fit their gender. Men who are not aggressive are called "wimps", whereas women who are not very aggressive are called "feminine". Men who are aggressive are called "go-getters", though if they go too far, from the point of view of the viewer, they may be called "arrogant". This can hurt them, but not nearly as much as the innumerable labels for women who are thought to be too aggressive-starting with the most hurtful one: bitch (ibid).

Eckert and Connel-Giner (2033:21/22) ) report that some researches found that males – children and adults– apply gender differences in their social interactions. As for boys and girls says Tannen (1991:23), they grow up in different worlds of words. i.e., each group has its own norms, way of talking and behaving. As children, they start to learn how to talk by imitating their friends and peers and not their parents only and if their parents have a different pronunciation, they do not imitate them but they learn the accent and pronunciation of the place where they grow up and are

mostly influenced by their peers. According to her, researchers have found many gender differences between boys and girls. Boys, for instance, prefer to play in large groups with a leader that commands and orders them to follow him. They like to draw much attention to them by telling stories and defying what others say. They like to speak about their adventures and ability to achieve great work and victory. On the other hand, girls prefer to play indoors and in small groups. They enjoy working in harmony and lending hand to others. A girl feels at home and relaxed when she has a best friend with whom she could rely on and tell secrets and troubles. They do not like to give orders or challenge others but rather to sit together, help each other and preserve harmony. Tannen (ibid) points out that since they are small; children learn how to have conversation from their learning of how to pronounce words from their friends and playmates. Children prefer to play with members of their own sex and therefore they learn different ways of using conversation.

The Anthropologists Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker (quoted in Tannen, 1992: 116) state that the ways by which boys socialize is largely different from girls. Boys like to play in large group mostly outdoors. Girls on the other hand, prefer to play in pairs, they like involvement and enjoy telling secrets to each other and this gets them close to each other.

Also, Babcock and Laschever (2003:67) state that society plays a great role in shaping both male and female characters and behaviors. They presented an example of a female financial consultant (called Adele aged 65) who said that since she was young, she was taught not to ask because if she did, it would seem as if she was begging and that 'good girls' don't beg. This affected her career greatly to the extent that she had never asked for an increase in her income; this in turn, affected her self appraisal, since she doesn't know the real worth of what she does. Moreover, Eleanor Maccoby (quoted in Tannen, 1994:286), said that most studies proved that since the age of three, children prefer to play with children of the same sex. As for girls, they do not like to mix with boys who are mostly rough and always tend to dominate; in addition to that most girls find it very hard to influence boys. Both Maccoby and Tanen found out when girls ask boys to do something, they refuse to comply and continue without doing it, unless they are told by members of their own sex. Girls on the other hand, comply with protests said by boys and girls equally.

Since the late 1960s, tests and experiments showed that gender differences appear when children are at the verge of puberty. Libermann's (1967, quoted in Coats, 1993:146) stated that even before they learn how to talk, babies change the pitch of their voices in relation to the addressee; they talk in a low voice with their fathers and a higher tone with their mothers.

Many projects tested the ability of adult judge to recognize a child gender from recorded sample of speech, like projects conducted by Sacks et al 1973, Medelech 1975, Fichtelius et al 1980 quoted by Coats (1993:146). It indicated that judges were most of the time successful in identifying the children identity as males or females.

### **Language and gender**

Another area of controversy that has given fuel to the ever growing gender debate is that language is used in such a way that discriminate between the two sexes. This in effect has led to consequences that disfavored females in relation to males. This section explains this issue. Lakoff (2001:45) states that linguists, philosophers and cognitive psychologists discussed more the theories of "markedness" and "frameness". She says that in every language some of the linguistic forms are considered as being "marked", then others are "unmarked. This was introduced in the late nineteenth century by the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Unmarked forms are more inclined to be semantically and morphologically simpler than their marked equivalents; whereas in English the semantically marked forms are considered as having more complex ending than their unmarked equivalents. For example, Eckert and Connell-Ginet (2003:66) point out that French language categorizes nouns into males and females. Thus, the French nouns referring to men are grammatically masculine whereas those referring to women are feminine. Yet, social norms, they add, reflect a great deal of the relationship between the two sexes. Certain cultural and social norms have developed over the centuries and have been established as rules that have to be observed.

In this connection, Corson (quoted in Wodack, 1997:145) reports that research was made in language and gender in capitalists societies was intended to mark the differences that exist in discourse between male and female. It showed that women at home strive hard to keep conversation going on and to find and encourage male responses. It was also noticed that in western capitalist backgrounds, men often hold the reins of conversation and direct it as they wish and they interrupt women most of the times and are reluctant to continue the stream of their talk in matters they prefer.(Fishman, 1983). According to Tannen (2005: 185), society and cultural norms play a great role in determining people's attitudes. For example, she shows that men upbringing and their tendency since they are boys to issue orders to other boys and oblige them to adhere them to it, makes them very sensitive to accept being given orders by women, whom they consider inferior to them. Furthermore, Eckert and Connell-Ginet (2003:33) argue that gender is considered an essential part of the social order. It defines and shapes the relation between males and females since childhood. It is found everywhere, in our teachings, schools, universities, workplaces, recreation

places, restaurants, houses and media. Gender is also embedded in people's wishes and desires, e.g., when a small girl asks her parents to bring her a nice looking dress with frills and colors, she is fulfilling a gender act; nice, bright, shining colors are always associated with girls (ibid).

### **Interruption and overlap**

Talbot (1998:105) asserts that even at schools, boys are the ones who are allowed to talk much and they are encouraged by both male and female teachers according to what Talbot quoted from the empirical studies done by (Spender 1990, Swan 1992).

Another study showed that men speak two and half times more than women. This result was concluded from the seminars that were held as part of an M.A. in Applied Linguistics at Duch University (Bashiruddin, Edge and Hughes-Pelegin 1990). Results have proved that men also talk much at management and T.V. discussions, Internet discussion groups and other domains.

Tannen (1991:232) claims that some speakers consider that when someone talks while they are talking to be an attempt to interrupt in order to gain the floor and "dominate" the conversation. This is viewed negatively by many. According to her point of view, an overlap is (something neutral) unlike the interruption (something negative) and it depends on whether there is a balance in the talk or not. That is, if some continuously tries to usurp the floor and the other repeatedly gives way, communication becomes unbalanced. On the other hand, if both speakers refrain from overlapping or overlap and win equally, then there is symmetry and no domination.

Context plays an important role in determining whether the overlap is considered an interruption or not because cooperative overlapping is more common among friends. Paula Treichler and Cheri Kramarae (1983) quoted by Corson in Wodak (1997:146/149), made a summary of the main characteristics that differentiate men's talk from women's and reached a conclusion that states: "Male interrupt Female" more and try to express their ideas and views as matter of facts, they also considered women's questions as requests for information. Some of them use taboo words.

Different studies from Sweden, Brazil and USA state that women do not use taboo words or tell obscenities or even engage in verbal aggression. Researches show that in western capitalist settings men consider hearing other people's problems as asking for solutions and remedy whereas women on the other hand consider it as a way to establish conversation and link among others.

This confirms the prevailing idea that women always prefer to establish harmony and cooperative attitude among each other, they care for other people feelings and are good listeners unlike men who prefer to indulge in competitive activities.

## **The Analysis of the Relevant Studies**

This section presents the relevant studies carried out in this area. In the Sudan, the researcher came across one study at M.A level; other studies are taken from different parts of the world.

### **The First Study**

This study was conducted by Najlaa Mohamed A/Rahim. Its topic was: *Turn-Taking Behaviour And Gender Differences in Speech*. It is an Unpublished M.A thesis carried out at the University of Khartoum in July, 2006.

The study tackled the conversational differences between males and females in a group of educated Sudanese speakers. It explored some of the conversational conventions, such as ‘topic’ and ‘topic development’, ‘hedges’, and ‘overlaps’, in educated Sudanese Arabic conversations. The researcher concluded that:

- Females used ‘question-asking’ more often than their males’ counterparts who always took part in ‘decision making’.
- In ‘mixed-sex conversations’, men dominate the conversation, whereas most of the time females remain silent.
- Males interrupted and overlapped females more.
- It highlighted the fact that turn-taking mechanism might differ from one culture to another.

### **The Second Study**

The study was conducted by Mac George, Erina et al. Its topic was: *The Myth of Gender Cultures: Similarities Outweight Differences in Men’s and Women’s Provision of and Responses to Supportive Communication*. It was published in Sex Roles, Vol.50. in 2004.

The main aim of this study is to come out with results and correct appraisal of the opinion that says men and women form a clear cut “communication cultures” especially in relation to the way they behave and communicate with each other.

The difficult cultures thesis claims that gender-specific socialization of boys and girls leads to different masculine and feminine speech communities. That is, the cultures of people differ from one country to another and that affects the way they talk, act and behave. For example, some women might not interpret the way in which men behave with them, in their trial to offer support or

comfort and the same thing applies to some men who misunderstand or misinterpret women's care for them as belittling or demeaning. Thus members of the same gender and culture understand each other better and prefer to use their own styles and ways of communication so as to support each other strongly and act as support agents.

The study calls for raising awareness of "multicultural" awareness and sensitivity so as to overcome the problems that arise from "cross-cultural" misunderstanding and communication between males and females.

### **The Third Study**

This study was conducted by Campell Leaper and Melanie M. Ayres, its topic was: *A Meta-Analytic Review of Gender Variations in Adult's Language Use: Talkativeness, Affiliative Speech, and Assertive Speech*. It was done at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2008.

Three separate sets of meta-analysis were made to studies that tested gender differences in adults' talkativeness, affiliative speech and assertive speech.

The results showed that contrary to the over generalized assumptions that men were found to be more talkative than women and in accordance with the stereotyped expectations of them, they also proved to be using more assertive speech than women who were found to be using more affiliative speech.

The study explored the range and extent through which men and women differ in their use of language. The research concluded that there was a moderate range of gender differences in talkativeness, affiliative speech and assertive speech. It also tested the notion and hypothesis which claim that women are found to be more talkative by nature and thus use more affiliative speech and less assertive speech contrary to men.

Both sexes behavior was attributed to the norms of society which places men in higher esteem than women who are always looked upon as subordinates and care givers who are expected to always offer help and agreement. The study referred to Leaper et al. (1998) meta-analysis which showed that during casual settings mothers used more affiliative speech and less assertive speech than did fathers. This was further explained by gender differences in language use.

Society plays an important role in this socialization process; from early age children are engaged in gender-typed activities and they participate in gender segregated peer groups. In accordance to this view, gender segregated peer groups guide both males and females to form their own their own different norms, social identities and hobbies. This also includes the development of gender differences in affiliation and assertion. Females engage in harmonious activities that include

cooperativeness and support, in accordance to this, it was stated that females learn to form their own language that demonstrate closeness and support whereas males prefer physical activities that show competition, rivalry and dominance, thus they use language that express command and challenge.

Also, the activity setting is considered to be an important element of gender differences in behavior; that is the social context determines what kind of language men and women use.

In addition to that, the biological explanation and expectations is also an important factor in determining gender differences in language use. Men are expected to be aggressive and dominant whereas women should be supportive, caring and nurturing. Therefore, gender related differences in social behavior are better understood if all cultural, institutional, interpersonal, individual and biological factors are taken into account.

#### **The Fourth Study**

This study was conducted by Victoria Laing, Its topic was: *Miscommunication in Mixed-Sex Conversation: differing interpretations of interruptions*. It is an unpublished M.A thesis. It was done at Lancaster University in 2004.

The study aimed to make an analysis of mixed-sex conversations to know who interrupts more, males or females and to connect this to the findings of the related literature. This study investigated the claim that states the definition of "interruption" is not fixed and it endeavored to explain that the definition of interruption is affected by many elements, such as the gender of the interactants. It also explained that the different way by which men and women interpret interruption leads to miscommunication between the sexes. This was made clear by the examples offered in this study that showed how misunderstandings in mixed-sex conversations occur many times between males and females more than it occurs in single-sex conversation.

The study investigated the commonly held view of "Dominance" by Thorne, Henley, West and Zimmerman (1975) which states that in most cases women are interrupted by men in mixed-sex conversations because they are looked upon as inferior or unequal to men who enjoy high status and power. It also looked in the new trend of "Difference" by Jennifer Coats and(1989) and Deborah Tannen (1984) who claimed that men and women use different language styles. They attributed this to the difference in their subcultures and not to the fact that one group dominated the other. The main objectives of this study were to show that interruption is not fixed as what many researchers concluded and that people (men and women) interpret interruption differently in accordance to the difference in their cultures.

The interactants who were chosen to conduct this study were from the same background, age and sharing the same social status. Their conversation was recorded and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative data to reach a complete answer to the research question. The main aim of this study is to make clear why women and men face problems when they communicate in mixed-sex surroundings. It stressed the importance of understanding the different and separate cultures that both men and women come from. The study also explained that the gender of the second speaker affect the interpretation of an interruption.

### **The Fifth Study**

This study was an Undergraduate Dissertation conducted by Richard Shiel. Its topic was: *Investigating the Relationship Between Simultaneous Speech and Gender. A Comparison of Two Same-Sex Group of University Students. Undergraduate Dissertation.* It was done at Lancaster University in 2001.

In this study the researcher explored the relationship between simultaneous speech and Gender in interaction. Recordings of the Males group and Females group were transcribed and examined by using quantitative and qualitative methods so as to examine and explore the use and function of simultaneous speech in each interaction.

The researcher explained the concept of dominance as interpreted by Talbot (1998), it states that there is asymmetry in the language used by males and females; therefore women use language that is considered inferior unlike males who use superior language, a natural result of males dominance in society.

In addition to that, the researcher explained the 'Difference' approach which was introduced to act as a substitute to the 'Dominance' approach. It states that since childhood, males and females learn different ways and rules of communication which they apply during childhood. Thus the 'Difference' approach is based on 'two cultures' and it entails that males and females use language that is considered to be different. This approach was strongly supported by Tannen (1991).

The study focused on marking simultaneous speech features that are common among males and females, thus equal emphasis was placed on the way through which males and females use language. By doing this, the researcher aimed to find the main similarities and differences that existed between the two groups in relation to simultaneous speech and to examine how does the form and function of simultaneous speech characterize gender in the groups observed.

The researcher used both experimental and natural procedures for data collection. In addition to that, the selected participants were all of the same age, social status and were all well acquainted. Furthermore, they were told beforehand that their conversation will be recorded and that their names will be anonymous throughout the research process, they were also given the freedom to choose their own topic.

The analysis of data proved that both members of males and females groups used the same type of simultaneous speech. The simultaneous speech used by males showed cooperativeness by violation of turns whereas females group used cooperation by extending each other turns through providing agreement and appropriate feedback.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Language Use and Gender Differences:**

The study's analysis of language use and gender differences reveals a complex interplay between these two factors. In mixed-gender conversations, men tend to dominate the conversation, while women often remain silent. This finding is consistent with the 'dominance' theory, which posits that men are more likely to interrupt and control the conversation due to their higher social status and power (Zimmerman & West, 1975; West & Fenstermaker, 1993). For example, in the study by Talbot (1998), boys were found to talk more and were encouraged to do so by both male and female teachers, reflecting the patriarchal nature of society.

However, the 'difference' theory also plays a significant role in understanding gendered language use. Men and women may have different conversational goals and strategies, which can lead to distinct language varieties or 'genderlects' (Tannen, 1990, 1994). Men tend to focus on status and independence, using more direct and forceful language, while women prioritize support and intimacy, employing more tentative and expressive language (Tannen, 1991). This is supported by the work of Pop et al. (2003), who found that people believe men and women speak differently, with men being more demanding and women being more polite and emotional.

### **Gender Stereotypes and Communication Patterns:**

Gender stereotypes significantly influence communication patterns and expectations. Women are often expected to be more polite, tentative, and expressive of emotions, while men are expected to be more assertive and direct (Lakoff, 1975; Moore, 2003). These stereotypes can lead to

gendered language use, such as women using hedges, tag questions, and indirect speech, and men using more direct and forceful language (Moore, 2003; Tannen, 1991). For instance, Lakoff (1975) described women as "speaking in italics," striving to make their speech strong but often failing to do so, while men use profanity and swearing to make their speech look strong and meaningful.

### **Interruption and Power Dynamics:**

Interruptions in mixed-gender conversations are a complex phenomenon, influenced by various factors. Men are more likely to interrupt women, but the reasons for this are multifaceted. Social power, gender roles, and conversational goals all play a role (Language & Gender, 2005; Vanfossen, 2005). Men may interrupt to assert dominance, while women may interrupt to maintain harmony and relationships. The interpretation of interruptions also varies based on gender and cultural factors. For example, women's interruptions of men bring less social punishment than vice versa (Steinem, 1991).

### **Gender-Specific Language Varieties:**

The concept of 'genderlects' is supported by the findings of this study. Men and women do seem to have distinct language varieties, characterized by different features and patterns. For instance, women may use more tag questions, hedges, and indirect speech, while men may use more direct imperatives and swear words (Moore, 2003; Tannen, 1991). These genderlects reflect and reinforce gender roles and stereotypes, as suggested by Tannen (1990, 1994).

### **Social and Cultural Factors:**

Social and cultural factors significantly influence gender differences in language use. The historical development of gender-related terms, such as the evolution of gender-neutral terms into masculine terms, reflects the patriarchal nature of English society (Wikipedia, 2024; Neutral terms, 2024). The influence of the feminist movement has also shaped contemporary views on gender and communication, challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes (Tannen, 1990, 1994).

Additionally, societal norms and expectations play a crucial role in shaping how men and women communicate. For example, men's upbringing and tendency to issue orders to other boys can make them sensitive to being given orders by women, whom they consider inferior (Tannen,

2005). Gender is embedded in people's wishes and desires, such as a girl asking for a dress with frills and colors, fulfilling a gender act (Eckert & Connell-Ginet, 2003).

### **Implications for Communication and Social Dynamics:**

The findings of this study have important implications for communication and social dynamics. Gender differences in language use can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication, particularly in mixed-gender conversations. These differences can contribute to gender inequalities and power dynamics, with men often having more social power and control over the conversation (Vanfossen, 2005; West, 1984). For example, in faculty meetings, women are more likely to be interrupted, and they tend to allow interruptions to be successful (Vanfossen, 2005). In professional conferences, women take a less active part in responding to papers, asking fewer questions, and employing less prequestion prediction (Vanfossen, 2005). These differences can hinder women's advancement in the workplace and reinforce gender stereotypes.

### **Strategies for More Inclusive Communication:**

To promote more inclusive and effective communication, it is essential to raise awareness of gender differences in language use and their potential consequences. Strategies such as encouraging active listening, valuing diverse communication styles, and challenging gender stereotypes can help create more equitable and respectful communication environments. For instance, in mixed-gender groups, men can be encouraged to be more aware of their tendency to dominate the conversation and to actively listen to women's contributions. Women can be empowered to speak up and assert their ideas, challenging the stereotype of the 'talkative woman' who talks as much as a man (Steinem, 1991).

### **Limitations and Future Research:**

This study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between language and gender, but it is not without limitations. The analysis is based on a review of existing literature and previous studies, which may not capture the full complexity of this relationship. Future research could involve empirical studies, including observational and experimental methods, to further explore and validate the findings.

Additionally, examining the intersection of language and gender with other social categories, such as race, class, and sexuality, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of communication dynamics. For example, how do gender differences in language use vary across different racial or ethnic groups? How do class and socioeconomic status influence gendered language use? These are important questions that warrant further investigation.

Finally, this study has shed light on the complex relationship between language and gender, highlighting the influence of social and cultural factors, gender stereotypes, and power dynamics. By understanding these dynamics, we can work towards more inclusive and effective communication practices that transcend gender boundaries and promote social equality.

### **Conclusion**

By the end of this paper, the researcher has come to conclude the analysis of the relevant literature by some power points that reflect views on language and gender. Concerning male and female, one can say that females used ‘question-asking’ more often than their males’ counterparts who always took part in ‘decision making’; in ‘mixed-sex conversations’, men dominate the conversation, whereas most of the time females remain silent; males interrupted and overlapped females more; and it highlighted the fact that turn-taking mechanism might differ from one culture to another.

The difficult cultures thesis claims that gender-specific socialization of boys and girls leads to different masculine and feminine speech communities. That is, the cultures of people differ from one country to another and that affects the way they talk, act and behave. The study calls for raising awareness of “multicultural” awareness and sensitivity so as to overcome the problems that arise from “cross-cultural” misunderstanding and communication between males and females. The study explored the range and extent through which men and women differ in their use of language. The research concluded that there was a moderate range of gender differences in talkativeness, affiliative speech and assertive speech. It also tested the notion and hypothesis which claim that women are found to be more talkative by nature and thus use more affiliative speech and less assertive speech contrary to men. Both sexes behavior were attributed to the norms of society which places men in higher esteem than women who are always looked upon as subordinates and care givers who are expected to always offer help and agreement.

On the other hand, society plays an important role in this socialization process; from early age children are engaged in gender-typed activities and they participate in gender segregated peer

groups. In accordance to this view, gender segregated peer groups guide both males and females to form their own their own different norms, social identities and hobbies. This also includes the development of gender differences in affiliation and assertion. Females engage in harmonious activities that include cooperativeness and support, in accordance to this, it was stated that females learn to form their own language that demonstrate closeness and support whereas males prefer physical activities that show competition, rivalry and dominance, thus they use language that express command and challenge.

There is a must to investigate the claim that states the definition of "interruption" is not fixed and it endeavored to explain that the definition of interruption is affected by many elements, such as the gender of the interactants. It also explained that the different way by which men and women interpret interruption leads to miscommunication between the sexes. This was made clear by the examples offered in this study that showed how misunderstandings in mixed-sex conversations occur many times between males and females more than it occurs in single-sex conversation.

The common investigation held to the view of "Dominance" by Thorne, Henley, West and Zimmerman (1975) which states that in most cases women are interrupted by men in mixed-sex conversations because they are looked upon as inferior or unequal to men who enjoy high status and power. It also looked in the new trend of "Difference" by Jennifer Coats and (1989) and Deborah Tannen (1984) who claimed that men and women use different language styles. They attributed this to the difference in their subcultures and not to the fact that one group dominated the other. The study also explained that the gender of the second speaker affect the interpretation of an interruption.

The researcher has explained the concept of dominance as interpreted by Talbot (1998), it states that there is asymmetry in the language used by males and females; therefore, women use language that is considered inferior unlike males who use superior language, a natural result of male's dominance in society.

In addition to that, the researcher explained the 'Difference' approach which was introduced to act as a substitute to the 'Dominance' approach. It states that since childhood, males and females learn different ways and rules of communication which they apply during childhood. Thus the 'Difference' approach is based on 'two cultures' and it entails that males and females use language that is considered to be different. This approach was strongly supported by Tannen (1991).

The study focused on marking simultaneous speech features that are common among males and females, thus equal emphasis was placed on the way through which males and females use language. By doing this, the researcher aimed to find the main similarities and differences that existed between the two groups in relation to simultaneous speech and to examine how does the form and function of simultaneous speech characterize gender in the groups observed.

The analysis of data proved that both members of males and females' groups used the same type of simultaneous speech. The simultaneous speech used by males showed cooperativeness by violation of turns whereas females group used cooperation by extending each other turns through providing agreement and appropriate feedback.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to promote more inclusive and effective communication practices that transcend gender boundaries and address gender inequalities:

1. **Raise Awareness and Education:** Increase awareness and education about gender differences in language use and their potential consequences. This can be done through workshops, training sessions, and educational materials that highlight the impact of gender stereotypes, power dynamics, and language use on communication. By raising awareness, individuals can become more mindful of their language choices and the potential impact on others.
2. **Encourage Active Listening:** Promote active listening as a fundamental skill for effective communication. Active listening involves paying attention to the speaker, understanding their message, and responding appropriately. This can help reduce misunderstandings and miscommunication, particularly in mixed-gender conversations. It also empowers individuals to better understand and appreciate diverse communication styles.
3. **Challenge Gender Stereotypes:** Challenge and question gender stereotypes that contribute to gendered language use and communication patterns. This includes stereotypes about women being more polite, tentative, and emotional, and men being more assertive and direct. By challenging these stereotypes, individuals can be more open to diverse communication styles and appreciate the strengths of different approaches.
4. **Promote Gender-Inclusive Language:** Encourage the use of gender-inclusive language that avoids reinforcing gender stereotypes and biases. This includes using gender-neutral terms, avoiding gender-specific pronouns when unnecessary, and being mindful of the impact of language on

gender identity and expression. Gender-inclusive language can help create a more welcoming and inclusive communication environment for all.

5. Foster Gender Equality in Communication Settings: Work towards creating more gender-equal communication settings, particularly in professional and educational contexts. This can involve ensuring equal opportunities for men and women to speak, participate, and lead discussions. For example, in faculty meetings or professional conferences, actively encourage women to contribute and ensure their voices are heard.

6. Support Women's Leadership and Communication Skills: Provide support and resources to help women develop their leadership and communication skills. This can include mentorship programs, communication training, and networking opportunities. By empowering women to communicate effectively and assert their ideas, they can better navigate gendered communication dynamics and challenge gender inequalities.

7. Conduct Further Research: Continue to conduct empirical research to further explore and validate the findings of this study. Future research could involve observational and experimental studies, as well as qualitative interviews and focus groups, to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and gender. Examining the intersection of language and gender with other social categories can also provide valuable insights.

8. Promote Intersectional Awareness: Encourage an intersectional approach to understanding communication dynamics, considering how gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality. This can help address the complex ways in which gender and other social categories influence communication and power dynamics.

9. Create Inclusive Communication Policies: Develop and implement communication policies that promote inclusivity and respect in various settings, such as workplaces, educational institutions, and community organizations. These policies should address issues such as gender-based interruptions, power dynamics, and the use of gender-inclusive language. Regularly review and update these policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

10. Foster Open Dialogue and Feedback: Encourage open dialogue and feedback among individuals and groups to discuss communication dynamics and address any concerns or issues. This can help create a culture of continuous improvement and mutual understanding, where individuals feel comfortable expressing their communication needs and preferences.

By implementing these recommendations, we can work towards creating more inclusive and effective communication environments that transcend gender boundaries, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote gender equality. This, in turn, can lead to more harmonious and productive interactions in various social and professional contexts.

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