

The connection between language use and gender

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



It is clear that men and women have a variety of factors that make them distinctly different. They are different by their physical appearance, their beliefs and on an interesting note, their speech patterns. Between men and women, there are identifiable linguistic features that support the claim that men and women speak differently. There has been a controversial conclusion drawn as a result of differences in speech between the two genders which will later count for some associated costs. Nevertheless, the connection between language use and gender has motivated researchers to investigate how language, a power tool for human connection, can reflect certain standards in society. As I mentioned previously, the way to identify a distinct difference in the language use between men and women are the linguistic features. As reported by Robin Lakoff, some of the features in women's language include rising intonations in statements (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). Lakoff explains how women make statements in the intonation of a question, for example like " My outfit is cute, right?" or " It's so cold, isn't?". It has also been observed that women tend to be more indirect and more likely to use euphemisms in their speech.

Another linguistic feature found in women's speech are the use of fillers. Examples of filler words are " like and so." I know through my own experience that I've caught myself using those kinds of linguistic features whenever I converse with either a friend or colleague. Although, there are identifiable linguistic features in women's speech, it is imperative to know that not all women share the same linguistic practices (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). According to Lakoff, she proposes that not all women should sound alike and use women's language (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford,

2004). This brings me to the point that language can perpetuate sexism and gender discrimination and result in some consequences. It has been suggested by scholars and through feminist work that language subtly reproduces or participates in sexism. There is this gender ideology that either a male or female are to be subject to certain language constraints (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). For example, there is a fixated societal standard that women should talk in a way that expresses their innermost feminine side. However, one can argue that people are free to linguistically express themselves whichever they desire. Consequently, there are still associated costs with language choice and when societal norms come into conflict, then that's when conversational cultures start to collide with one another. Deborah Tannen, a professor of linguistics, suggests that gender differences in language can be the source of miscommunication between men and women (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). The question is "Why do men and women have different conversational styles?" This question can be answered by applying both the dominance and difference models.

The dominance model is the idea that these gender differences found in conversations reflect how men and women have different access of power (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). In addition, the dominance model is associated with the idea that throughout history, women are oppressed by men in society. On the other hand, the difference model is the idea that gender differences in language is the result of different gender cultures (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). The difference model is associated with Tannen's views. According to Deborah Tannen, she suggests that the differences in gender culture is originated from the sex-segregated social

interactions people had during their childhoods (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). For men, their conversations may consist of conveying information and getting straight to the point. For women, they demonstrate a conversational style that focuses on expressing feelings and building relationships. Tannen calls these conversational styles rapport and report. Although these two perspectives support the idea that gender differences in language reflect different conversational styles but I wonder if it applies to different speech communities. Speech communities are groups of people that share a distinct language or dialect.

Researchers suggest that people from a variety of cultures take pride in their language as a key component that marks their identity (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). I am proud of the cultural background that I come from, and I enjoy speaking Spanish. However, I feel the need to adapt to certain conversational settings so I don't get looked at a certain way or be judge. For example, I grew up in Spanish-speaking block in Fresno, and whenever I hang out with my friends around the neighborhood and we would naturally speak in our native tongue in casual manner. However, whenever I am in a more formal setting where there are people of a more prestigious background, I would change my conversational style so that it will seem appropriate. As suggested in the text, women tend to code-switch back in forth during conversation depending on the social context or conversational setting (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004). It's been suggested that a person can find uncertainty in a way the other person talks if that other person comes from a different speech community than them (Del Torto, Finegan & Rickford, 2004) This could lead to issues like misinterpretations.

It's also good to keep in mind sometimes stereotypes can be formed due to these kinds of social interactions. Certain language styles can be attached to stereotypes. An example of stereotypes in language forms can be found in the gay and lesbian communities. Researchers who study language and sexuality pay most of their attention to the speech patterns of members from gay and lesbian communities.

Researchers were observing if there is a distinct accent or style of speaking. I have a close friend who is openly gay and I notice that whenever he talks, he would over exaggerate the use of the filler word "like." For example, a statement he would say is "Did you see what Brandom did? Like he totally blocked me on Instagram, and I am like very pissed at him." He would also unconsciously show distinct mannerisms while we have conversations. Those individuals who are quick to judge may say that this is how all gay men talk. However, it is suggested that neither lesbians or gays share a similar linguistic system, and all individuals share distinct language features (Finegan and Rickford, 2004). More research has to be conducted to see whether there is a close relationship between sexual identity and language. In all, language makes us unique and stand out from the crowd. However, when it comes to gender, there are societal standards that influence the two genders to speak a different way from each other. In addition, gender is not the only factor that accounts for differences in language use. Socio Cultural backgrounds and other differences amongst individuals can also make an impact. Nonetheless, language continues to be an important aspect of human culture and language allows humans to connect and unite with one another.