

Gender and Discourse



Edited by Ruth Wodak

GENDER AND DISCOURSE

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Ruth Wodak



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INTRODUCTION: SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES IN THE RESEARCH OF GENDER AND DISCOURSE

Ruth Wodak

Aims and goals

Research on gender and sex in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis started in the early 1970s. Investigators examined two domains of language behaviour in particular: speech behaviour of men and women on the phonological level, and interactions (conversational styles) between women and men in discourse. In this introduction, I will first discuss some concepts of 'gender/sex' and 'discourse' and suggest possible working definitions. In addition, I would like to trace briefly the theoretical development of gender studies in feminist linguistics, thereby providing a general introductory framework for this volume (see Wodak and Benke, 1996; Holmes, 1996).

Studies of gender-specific language behaviour are often contradictory and depend on the author's implicit assumptions about sex and gender, methodology, samples used, etc. As a result, as stated by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 'women's language has been said to reflect their conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control' (1992: 90).

Owing to the many contradictory approaches, assumptions and results, it is necessary to develop a critical approach to this vast literature. All the claims made about women and men at different times, in different circumstances and with totally different samples, on the basis of different implicit ideologies about gender, must be analysed carefully and viewed in relation to the development of gender studies in the social sciences.

In my view, many empirical studies have neglected the context of language behaviour and have often analysed gender by merely looking at the speakers' biological sex (see the arguments in Nichols, 1983; Eckert,

1989; Cameron and Coates, 1990; Henley and Kramerae, 1991; Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Crawford, 1995; Kotthoff and Wodak, 1997). Some of the research has isolated the variable of sex/gender from other sociological or situational factors and has made hasty generalizations about genderlects. Instead, I would like to propose that a context-sensitive approach which regards gender as a social construct would lead to more fruitful results (see Harres, 1996; Wetschanow, 1995). Moreover, I would like to suggest a look at gender in connection with the socio-cultural and ethnic background of the interlocutors, and in connection with their age, their level of education, their socio-economic status, their emotions and the specific power-dynamics of the discourse investigated.

Gender and sex

Basic assumptions

The point of departure for gender studies is (or was) the critique of the assumption of binary sexuality, the presupposition that the differentiation between the two 'sexes' is a natural fact, 'evidently' represented in the body. The feminist movement criticized not this assumed biological, binary concept of sex but the frequently accepted biological determination of culturally conditioned traits as 'gender-typical qualities'. Here, above all, feminists criticized those traits employed in justifying the unequal and unjust treatment of women. On the one hand, they dismantled myths of femininity which, from an evolutionary viewpoint, were derived from traditional stereotypes such as the myth that all women are 'caring' from birth in a biologically determined way. On the other hand, they criticized that, through its constant reiteration, the traditional division of labour between the sexes contributes towards the reinforcement and perpetuation of these myths about biologically conditioned gender traits (Wetschanow, 1995: 12).

By contrast, here the sociologically reasoned view is advocated that the gender roles allotted by society are based on the anatomical difference between the sexes, but that their manifestations evince such enormous differences over different historical eras and in different cultures that the attempt to legitimize them by recourse to 'nature' seems untenable and – wherever it is nevertheless undertaken – ideologically highly suspicious. . . . Painstaking investigations, including intercultural comparisons, have not to date produced any evidence of the biological determination of those 'typically' male and female traits and forms of behaviour which constitute the sexual characters in the common understanding. . . . To name just one example, this applies to Freud's idea that 'activity' is male and 'passivity' female. (Rohde-Dachser, 1991: 25ff)

To avoid such a naturalization of characteristics and attributes, researchers differentiated between 'sex' and 'gender'. This sex/gender concept results from the assumption that a cultural sex – a gender – takes on a

culturally specific form against the background of biological sex. Such an understanding implies that the sex/gender concept operates on the principle that, while the binarity of the sexes is an immutable fact, the traits assigned to a sex by a culture are cultural constructions, that they are socially determined and therefore alterable.

Recently, critics of gender studies have aimed their attacks at the 'construction of a basic binary structure' as such. The category of gender has itself become the centre of analysis and the deconstruction of difference has become a subject (see Cameron, Chapter 1; Simpson, Chapter 8 in this volume; and see the section on 'The constructedness of the sexes' in this chapter, 11–12).

Some definitions

The British sociologist Anthony Giddens defines 'sex' as 'biological or anatomical differences between men and women', whereas 'gender' 'concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females' (1989: 158). On the basis of these characterizations, it seems relatively easy to distinguish between the two categories. However, the definitions miss the level of perception and attribution, the way gender stereotypes often influence the interaction of self- and other assessment. Giddens does mention some syndromes of 'abnormal' development, such as the testicular feminization syndrome and the androgenital syndrome, that is where infants designated as 'female' at birth, even if chromosomally male, tend to develop female gender identity, and vice versa (see Cameron's discussion in Chapter 1 in this volume; Wodak and Benke, 1996: 128ff).

In a social construction perspective not only gender, but even sex is seen as a socially developed status (Lorber and Farrell, 1991a). In this context sex is understood more as a continuum constructed of chromosomal sex, gonadal sex, and hormonal sex – all of which 'work in the presence and under the influence of a set of environments' (Fausto-Sterling, 1985: 71). It makes no sense therefore to assume that there is merely one set of traits that generally characterizes men and thus defines masculinity; or likewise, that there is one set of traits for women which defines femininity. Such an unitary model of sexual character is a familiar part of sexual ideology and serves to reify inequality between men and women in our society. It also makes possible numerous socio-biological explanations relating neurological facts with linguistic behaviour (Chambers, 1992).

In contrast to such biological ideologies, Connell (1993: 170ff) proposes a non-unitary model of gender. Both femininity and masculinity vary and understanding their context-dependent variety is regarded as central to the psychology of gender. He argues also that, since masculinity and femininity coexist in the same person, they should be seen not as polar natural opposites but as separate dimensions. 'Femininity

and masculinity are not essences: they are ways of living certain relationships. It follows that static typologies of sexual character have to be replaced by histories, analyses of the joint production of sets of psychological forms' (Connell, 1993: 179).¹

In addition to such a perspective Lewontin stresses the relevance of the socialization process: the development of a person's gender identity 'depends on what label was attached to him or her as a child. . . . Thus biological differences became a signal for, rather than a cause of, differentiation in social roles' (1982: 142). This definition connects the impact of societal norms and evaluations, power structures and the role of socialization remarkably well (see also Sheldon, Chapter 9 in this volume; Wodak, 1986; Wodak and Schulz, 1986; Wodak and Vetter, forthcoming; and the 'Social-psychological Theory of Text Planning', proposed in the latter studies, which will not be elaborated upon here).

In the context of this perspective, it is more coherent to talk of gender as the understanding of how what it means to be a woman or to be a man changes from one generation to the next and how this perception varies between different racialized, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as for members of different social classes (see Gal, 1989: 178; Stolcke, 1993: 20; Lorber and Farrell, 1991a: 1ff). Gender categories thus are seen as social constructs. They institutionalize cultural and social statuses and they serve to make male dominance over women appear natural: 'gender inequality in class society results from a historically specific tendency to ideologically "naturalize" prevailing socio-economic inequalities' (Stolcke, 1993: 19).

Discourse

The term 'discourse' integrates a range of occasionally contradictory or exclusionary meanings in its daily and philosophical uses (Vass, 1992: 1; Maas, 1988). Fairclough (1992: 3) points to several ways in which the concept appears, stressing how they arise in modern discourse analysis: 'samples of spoken dialogue, in contrast with written texts', 'spoken and written language'; 'situational context of language use'; 'interaction between reader/writer and text'; and 'notion of genre' (newspaper discourse, for example). In 'discursive psychology' (Harré and Stearns, 1995: 2ff), moreover, 'discourse' refers to the totality of signs that carry meaning: the mind is seen as the product of the signs encountered, including non-verbal signs.

These various meanings of 'discourse' are usually employed in an unreflecting way. It is frequently unclear as to whether a short text sequence is meant or a whole variety of text, or if a very abstract phenomenon is to be understood under this heading.² Consequently, I shall try to clearly distinguish between the concepts of discourse, text and discourse analysis.

It is not possible in this chapter to provide an extensive overview of all developments in discourse analysis or all the different notions of 'discourse' established in divergent paradigms (see van Dijk, 1985: 4; 1990; Schiffrin, 1993: 21; Renkeema, 1993; Vass, 1992: 9; Titscher et al., 1997). Instead, I would like to focus only on definitions that are important for the contributions presented in this book. I will begin by differentiating between 'text' and 'discourse'. I shall then offer my own approach to the concept of 'discourse' which has developed and changed over many years of studying gender, institutions and political discourse from a discourse sociolinguistic point of view (Wodak, 1996; Wodak et al., 1997a) and which shares elements, but is not identical, with the approaches of Teun van Dijk (1990: 163ff; 1993) and Norman Fairclough (1992: 62ff; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

Discourse and text

Gisela Brünner and Gabriele Graefen (1993: 7–8) characterize the main differences between 'text' and 'discourse' in the following way:

By *discourse* are to be understood units and forms of speech, of interaction, which can be part of everyday linguistic behaviour, but which can equally appear in an institutional sphere. Orality, admittedly, is not a feature which holds true for *all* forms of discursive behaviour . . . but is very much the typical case. Regarded systematically, discourse requires the co-presence of speaker and listener ('face-to-face interaction'); this can, however, be reduced to a temporal co-presence (on the telephone).

Brünner and Graefen also define discourse as the totality of interactions in a certain domain (medical discourse, for example) which appears similar to the definition offered by Foucault (see Wodak, 1996: 24). 'Text', however, has different roots, in both philology and literature:

In the context of a theory of linguistic behaviour, it is an essential determination of the text that the linguistic behaviour, which is made material in the text, is detached from the overall common speech situation just as is the receptive behaviour of the reader – the common ground being understood in a systematic, not a historical sense. In a text, speech behaviour assumes the quality of knowledge, which is in the service of transmission and is stored for later use . . . the written form, which is constitutive for the everyday use of the term, and today is frequently regarded as almost synonymous with 'text', is therefore not a necessary feature of a text.

Text does not have to be written, according to Brünner and Graefen (1993) who rely on the theory of 'functional pragmatics', founded by Konrad Ehlich. There Ehlich also speaks of the 'extended speech situation' (1983) (*zerdehnte Sprechsituation*) which, in his opinion, is characteristic for 'texts', in contrast to 'discourse'. Discourse must not be oral. The main difference lies in the function of 'handing down' (*Überlieferung*) and in the simultaneous existence (or absence) of a

situational context. Thus, discourse may be defined as 'text in context' (van Dijk, 1990: 164) on the one hand, and as a 'set of texts' on the other (Dressler and Merlini-Barbaresi, 1994: 6).³

Van Dijk also points to a decisive aspect, which is that discourse should also be understood as action: 'I understand "discourse" . . . both as a specific form of language use, and as a specific form of social interaction, interpreted as a complete communicative event in a social situation' (1990: 164; see also Eggins and Iedema, Chapter 7 in this volume). The behavioural aspect is very important and relates to Ludwig Wittgenstein's concepts of 'language game' and 'form of life' as well as to Jürgen Habermas's concept of 'ordinary language' (Leodolter, 1975: 27; Wodak, 1996: 12). Both are also of crucial significance to the development of speech act theory of D.A. Austin and John Searle (see Schifffrin, 1993: 49; Wodak, 1986: 229). These approaches emphasize the integration of non-verbal and verbal language behaviour, as well as the definition of discourse to be seen as action (*Sprachhandlung*). Discourse is thus inseparable from other forms of social practice.

Discourse as social practice

In most studies, the self-contained communicative act is the centre of interest. This points to a fundamentally more difficult and complex question – the extent to which a unit of discourse may be defined as self-contained at all. We shall return to that question again (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5 in this volume). At this point, it only needs to be noted that, in terms of the range of the concept of discourse, there is no objective beginning and no clearly defined end. *In principle* – because of intertextuality – every discourse is related to many others and can only be understood on the basis of others. The limitation of the research area and on a specific discourse therefore depends on a subjective decision by the researcher, on the formulation of the questions guiding the research (Kress, 1993).

Taking all these considerations into account, I would like, above all, to emphasize the behavioural aspect and therefore suggest the following definition of discourse (see Fairclough, 1992: 62; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997):

Critical Discourse Analysis sees discourse – the use of language in speech and writing – as a form of 'social practice'. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation, institution and social structure that frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constituted, as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. (Wodak, 1996: 17)

This provides a direct link to our discussion of organizations and institutions (see Chapters 2, 5 and 6 in this volume) in which the reality constituting element of discourse is emphasized.⁴ In addition, it becomes evident that questions of power and ideology⁵ are connected with discourse, every interaction is thus influenced by power relationships resulting in the speech-situation and the overall context.

The distortion of discourse (in Habermas's sense: see Wodak, 1996: 28) leads to 'disorders of discourse' in everyday interaction. Understanding seems to be an exception; misunderstanding and conflict are frequently to be detected. Critical discourse analysis in my view, is an instrument whose purpose is precisely to expose power structures and 'disorders of discourse'.

Feminist linguistics

Analogous to the term 'racism', the word 'sexism' was invented in the 1960s. It refers to discrimination within a social system on the basis of sexual membership. In Western culture, as in most other social systems, this means, in concrete terms, that there are exactly two sexes in binary opposition to each other: female and male. The relationship between these two categories is not an equal or egalitarian one but a hierarchical one, where the category 'man' or 'male' is the norm and the category 'woman' or 'female' represents the 'other' and the 'abnormal', that is the 'marked version' – logically following the normativeness of the male (Wetschanow, 1995: 18ff; Crawford, 1995; Coates, 1993; Chapters 1 and 2 in this volume). With the concept of 'sexism', women defined themselves for the first time as a social group and as a suppressed minority. As such, they sought to reveal the mechanisms of suppression, making others aware of and fighting these devices. Social groups often define themselves by means of their common language which plays an important role in identity creation and, for subcultures, serves as a means of differentiating themselves from the outside world. This specific identity manifests itself in certain conversational styles, manifestations of emotions etc. (see Coates, Chapter 10 in this volume).

Research conducted by feminist-oriented women should by no means be equated with either research conducted by women or research on women. Feminist scholarship in every discipline is characterized by its criticism of science and its criticism of the androcentric view within 'traditional science'. Feminist linguistics (FL) developed within linguistics. Many proposals and basic assumptions of FL relate to and overlap with principles of critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996: 17ff) as well as with the qualitative paradigm in the social sciences (Cicourel, 1992). It would be beneficial to investigate these parallel developments from the standpoints of the theory of knowledge, history and sociology to find

reciprocal influences (which, unfortunately, cannot be accomplished in the course of this introduction). Throughout this volume, however, some intersections and influences of critical discourse analysis and FL with and on each other are mentioned (see especially Chapters 2 and 5).

According to Marlis Hellinger, FL is distinguished from all other disciplines by the following three aspects, which similarly analyse the relationship between language and gender:

1. FL places female and male linguistic behavior and the linguistic phenomena connected with the designations of women and men at the centre of its considerations.
2. FL interprets persons-related asymmetries in the field of language systems and language use as expressions of the linguistic discrimination of women (sexism) and links these directly to the plane of social discrimination. Traditional studies usually make do with descriptive results
3. FL does not accept phenomena as given, but seeks alternatives in keeping with the principle of the linguistic equal treatment of women and men. It pursues explicitly political goals by criticizing ruling linguistic norms and understanding the linguistic change it advocates as part of an overall change in society. (Hellinger, 1990: 12)

For FL researchers, both the system-oriented and the behaviour-related approaches to language are of interest as the following two questions must be answered:

1. How are women represented in the existing language system?
2. How does the linguistic behaviour of the group of women differ from that of men?

'Language has never been seen by feminists as a detached system and speaking never as a detached technique' (Günther and Kotthoff, 1991: 17). Representatives of FL do not have a 'purely scientific' interest in investigating the connection between language and sex, that is in describing this connection, but they are concerned with assessing this relationship. FL is an explicitly partisan form of linguistics. It goes beyond analysis. It produces concrete proposals for change and makes socio-political claims (Wodak et al., 1997b; Postl, 1991: 27).

Sociolinguistic studies of sex/gender

In the 1970s, 'sex' was established within sociolinguistic research as a social variable next to the already-existing variables of social stratum, age, nationality, ethnic affiliation, religion, class and region. In correlative-quantitative sociolinguistic investigations on the prestige and stigma variants of languages (see Kotthoff, 1992) the sex variable became a factor which significantly affected the use of language. The best-known representatives of this quantitative-correlative approach in

sociolinguistics, with its focus on urban groups of persons, are William Labov, Peter Trudgill and Lesley Milroy.⁶ The working methods within this sociolinguistic approach diverge considerably from one another in certain aspects (unlike Trudgill and Labov, Milroy works with network analyses) but in one respect they are identical: their methodology. All of them operate quantitatively, that is linguistic variables are defined that are realized in different forms and in different varieties (Kotthoff, 1992). Then, the different variants are correlated with sociological parameters.

Several other studies have taken very different approaches and have used methodologies other than the approaches mentioned above. In particular, a lot of criticism related to the implicit chauvinistic ideologies in these first studies and also to the undifferentiated analysis of the two sexes which totally neglected the range of variation in each of the genders under observation. In my own study of the language of mothers and daughters in Vienna, for example (Wodak, 1983; 1984; 1985), I showed that, apart from these sociological parameters, other variables, such as psychological ones, are also responsible for the variation concerning each gender. Based on this research, I proposed the 'Theory of the Socio-Psychological Variation' (see also Wodak, 1984; Wodak and Schulz, 1986). This study stressed in particular the variation that was found *among* the women and girls investigated, one which relativized the factor of 'sex'.

Thus, the empirical study of variation showed that the linguistic differences in the speech behaviour between mother and daughter were greater than those between mother and son, even in stable and friendly relationships. Moreover, upwardly mobile daughters spoke hypercorrectly, in specific demarcation from their mothers and their social class. One of the most significant results was the determination that some upper middle class daughters spoke the most dialectical style as a result of the bad relationship with the mother and not because of the class factor.

Another approach of considerable importance in recent sociolinguistics is the concept of 'communities of practice' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 92ff). 'Communities of practice are defined as an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short, practice - emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavour' (1992: 95).

Gender is produced and reproduced in differential membership in such communities of practice. Women define themselves in respect to other women, men to men. Women and men differ in the paths they take to obtain greater social status. Women are under constant pressure to display their persona (Eckert, 1989: 247ff). Both Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue very convincingly and provide many examples to support their view that survey studies are too general and their level

of abstractness too great. As a result, many subtle and important intervening variables have been neglected, including the context, that is the communities of practice.

Sexism and the language system

Feminists conceive language as 'a symbolical reflection of androcentric structures' (Günther and Kotthoff, 1991: 7), as one of the means of patriarchal society to discriminate, disregard and incapacitate women.⁷ In their view, the language system already reflects the patriarchal structure of Western societies.

The language system was analyzed as regards the treatment of women, and language was exposed as a means of legitimizing male structures with the intention, above all, of extracting women from being subsumed under general and male categories. Together with the language system, linguistic behaviour was made into the object for analysis of the new research discipline and the issue of gender-specific differences was investigated in styles of communication. (1991: 32)

The assumption that an individual language system has lexical elements and morphological and grammatical rules that are already sexist is based on the premise that 'due to their long history as public decision-makers, men not only determine the economic, political and social orientation of social life, but also influence the functioning and the semantic contents of each individual language' (Postl, 1991: 89).

Once the language system has become the object of investigation for feminist linguists, it is interesting to note how the linguistic structure of an individual language is connected to the structure of society, how the structure of the language is conditioned by the structure of society and vice versa. Unlike studies investigating the divergent gender linguistic behaviour, studies on the sexist use of language focus on the possibilities of reference to both genders or their practice that exist in an individual language. According to Pusch, the objects of 'feminist system linguistics' are 'patriarchalisms in diverse language systems':

As a feminist linguist I reject part of these 'latent laws' (i.e. clotted sexism) and when speaking and writing employ my 'ungrammatical' inventions and deliberate violations of the rules intentionally and as often as possible, with the aim of establishing them as grammatical and gradually making the old misogynist laws alter their status to 'deviations'. (1990: 13)

A solution, an opportunity to create awareness, is seen by feminist linguists as a break with tradition, a deliberate violation of the traditional and conventional linguistic rules which enables reflection on these rules, assumed to be given or 'extraconscious'. This, so their argument continues, creates the potential for change (see Pusch, 1990: 16; Frank, 1992: 121). In the 'Guidelines to Prevent the Use of Sexist

Language' (Guentherodt et al., 1982: 2) this desire for individual action is very clearly expressed. The authors of the article word their objective as follows:

The aim of these guidelines for the non-sexist use of language is to identify sexist language and to offer alternative uses that are neither hostile to women nor discriminating.

The analysis of conversation and discourse

Unlike the above-mentioned research field, FL – which examines the use of language – concerns itself with gender differences in conversation and discourse (oral as well as written). Differences are investigated in the following fields of language use: voice, pronunciation, intonation, choice of words, argumentation, lexicon, syntax, interactional and conversational behaviour, as well as visual features and modes and non-verbal communication. The gender-induced differences in the use of language were and are not treated simply as divergent variants standing side by side. By virtue of a patriarchally organized society, the interpretation of the differences ascertained is of major significance.

The interpretation of the diverse linguistic indicators (like turn-taking, indirectness, interruptions and overlaps) varies according to the specific gender theory and ideology which underlie the studies. Probably the two best-known theories about the gender-induced use of language are those of 'difference' and 'dominance'. I will not elaborate upon them here as they have been treated extensively elsewhere in this book (see Chapters 1, 2 and 4; see also Henley and Kramerae, 1991; Wodak and Benke, 1996; Kotthoff and Wodak, 1997; Harres, 1996).

Whereas investigations following the 'dominance model' have interpreted the use of such indicators as manifestations of 'powerless language of women', research in the paradigm of the 'difference model' views the linguistic behaviour of men and women as originating in opposed modes of socialization and equal in their meaning and impact. Hedging, tag questions or indirectness can be viewed 'negatively' or 'positively', either as signs of female insecurity or as supporting conversational work, depending on the context of the discourse and the theoretical approach adopted.

Recent theoretical approaches in the feminist study of discourse

The constructedness of the sexes Judith Butler expresses the significance of the 'sex' category in its most varied dimensions in the following way:

as 'identity' is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of 'the person' is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined. (1990: 17)

In her arguments against the tenability of the categories of 'women' and 'sex', Judith Butler (1990) has referred more explicitly to postmodernist theories. In the manner of Foucault she ascribes normative power to the idea of gender identity and the attempt to describe it. By the mere act of defining a gender identity many bodies, practices and discourses are excluded or devalued, whereas the constructed and hence upright character of this gender identity is simultaneously concealed (Young, 1994: 226).

Although I agree with some of the proposals made in these approaches, one also has to take into account that in our societies biological sex is still used as a powerful categorization device: for example, in many occupations women are still paid less than men for the same achievements and positions. In these contexts, biological sex as a 'natural factor' is still salient and certainly not only a variable social construct. Therefore, it has to be repeated that all these assumptions and analyses are context dependent: they are valid for some aspects of social and institutional life, but not for all. However, in these recent feminist theories (Butler, 1990) the idea of two sexes is criticized as being a construction, a prediscursive factor taking the place of reality. Following this interpretation, 'sex' cannot be separated into a biologically inherent aspect and a socially acquired one. The category of 'sex' itself is a purely cultural product of discourse. It is denied that it is a 'universal, suprahistorical and extrasocial entity'; it is understood to be an 'integral component of every form of life'. More recently, some authors have differentiated Butler's dogmatic position: it is a question of revealing 'the reproduction mechanisms, networks and institutional compulsions that ensure that constructions become persistent and resistant and appear timeless, immovable and identical with themselves' (Hirschauer, 1992: 333). It is a matter of exposing the arbitrary construction of this binary opposition and hence also its mutability, and not of criticizing the binarily organized perception as unreal. For:

Even if there is no such thing as natural biological sexual bodies and the anatomical definition is contingent on the state of knowledge in biology, the constructions of 'male' and 'female' bodies are effective. They become part of physical perception and gain reality through 'physical practices'. (Lorey, 1993: 20)

Doing gender Unlike a research approach that accepts sexual differences as an aggregation of qualities and deals with the qualitative behavioural tendencies of women and men, ethnomethodologically

oriented studies produced a new focus of research: 'doing gender'. A conception of gender as an aggregation of attributes is concerned with investigating and displaying the peculiarities of women and interpreting them as 'gender-specific or gender-typical attributes' so as to reveal the asymmetry of the difference between the sexes, to criticize it and to make it politically visible. Such a paradigm of characteristics complicates or renders impossible an interactional approach since attributes are 'entities' and not processes. A further problem raised by the concept of gender as a concept of attributes is the possibility of individualization; that is the individual who has been seen to possess or not to possess certain attributes becomes the centre of attention, and the level of the social system is neglected.

Unlike this non-interactive approach, 'doing gender' regards membership of a gender not as a pool of attributes 'possessed' by a person, but as something a person 'does'. In this sense, membership of a gender constitutes a performative act and not a fact. Gender is continually realized in interactional form. Gender is created not only in the everyday activities which characterize 'doing gender', but also in the asymmetry of the relationship between the sexes, the dominance of the 'male' and its normativeness. Patriarchal inequality is produced and reproduced in every interaction (Wetschanow, 1995: 15; Harres, 1996: 18ff; West and Zimmermann, 1991). This concept of 'doing gender' stresses the creative potential and the embedding of gender-typical behaviour in a social context. Thus, according to Hagemann-White, for the practice of feminist research this would mean that attributes stated to be gender-typical must be reinterpreted as 'means of producing, perpetuating and personally performing the polarity of the sexes' (1993: 20).

Presentation of the volume

What connects the diverse, ideologically and theoretically distinct approaches in this volume is the clear basic assumption that the context of the respective discourse has to be included and integrated into the study of gender and discourse.

The first three chapters are dedicated to general and basic interdisciplinary issues surrounding the topic of gender and discourse. Deborah Cameron investigates the debates about the concepts of sex/gender and its relationship to language and language use, and the implications of that relationship. She positions herself as a feminist linguist, defined as having a critical view of the arrangement between the sexes. In an extensive and critical study, she reviews the development of the studies of gender and discourse and the diverse theoretical and ideological approaches and assumptions underlying this research, finally presenting her own position relating to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992) concept of 'communities of practice' (see earlier). Victoria

DeFrancisco investigates the many intersections between discourse, gender and power, integrating several important sociological concepts (such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt and Steven Lukes). She focuses on the importance of resistance to power and societal norms, and believes that feminist linguists should find social and discursive practices which enable women in different cultures to resist dominance and power.

Using data from Germany, university students' discussions about Turks, men and women, and their images and perception among the German population, Nora Räthzel addresses another central dimension in this field: the relationship of racism, gender and discourse. The 'foreigner problem' has grown to enormous proportions in Central and Western Europe, owing to the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' in 1989–90. This chapter offers many political and practical implications for everyday dealing with 'the other' and with practices of everyday racism.

The next six chapters deal with our societies' different institutions and organizations, analysing conversations between women and men, or observing interactions of the genders. Shari Kendall and Deborah Tannen summarize the research on gender, discourse and the workplace while presenting their own framework for understanding the relationship between power, gender and workplace communication. The framing approach that Deborah Tannen proposes draws on Erving Goffman to point out that the relationship between gender and language is 'sex-class linked': ways of speaking are associated with women or men as a class in a given society. This concept is related then to the sociolinguistic theory of power and solidarity.

Bonnie McElhinny analyses extensively some sequences of public and private language, illustrating that the traditional distinctions between the public and the private have become obsolete. She includes a very elaborated and extensive critique on conversational analysis and the understanding of context. The data are drawn from several of her own empirical studies conducted in police and welfare institutions. David Corson focuses on the institution of school and the relationships of boys and girls in classrooms. Based on his discussion of 'options' and 'ligatures' as the two consequences which people draw from education, he suggests that the access to options and ligatures is linked to power and gendered discursive practices and norms which are produced and reproduced through the institution of education.

Suzanne Eggs and Rick Iedema present the only contribution dealing with written discourse with their examination of women's magazines. They compare two Australian magazines in all their dimensions, visual and verbal, applying the Hallidayan framework of functional systemics linguistics. This chapter provides insight into the social perceptions and images of women, as well as their impact on the potential readership. The authors apply Bernstein's control theory in explaining the different semiotic modes of the two magazines and the impact of an elaborated or

restricted coding orientation on the readership and their choice of meanings. Two contributions then deal with children's discursive practices, but from very different theoretical positions and underlying assumptions. Alyson Simpson analyses tape recordings from family interactions and explores issues of power and subjectivity while members of the family play games. She applies a post structuralist framework to highlight the position of power which exists in this family and the relationship of power to gender and generation. She is also specifically concerned with the role of the 'mother' in this interaction. Through her data from peer group interactions, Amy Sheldon illustrates that both boys and girls have conflicts and strategies for conflict solving, but that these are different for the two genders. These results contradict many stereotypes about girls and women (such as that they do not act out their aggressions). Through this 'double-voicing' framework, she shows that girls utilize very specific discursive styles when arguing with each other.

The final two chapters concern different gendered discursive practices in everyday situations in diverse cultures. They are more ethnographically oriented than the other contributions. Jennifer Coates analyses conversations between women friends. She places emphasis on the discursive practices which are used in 'doing friendship' which she claims differ between men and women. The primary goal of talk between women friends, she suggests, is the construction and maintenance of close and equal social relationships. She draws on a huge corpus of conversation and interviews with women.

Janet Holmes presents a wide range of data from interviews with women and men, focusing on the narratives and the distinct differences between these narratives in New Zealand – a very traditional culture where gender roles are concerned. She provides a model for analysing narratives, content and form, and extrapolates the everyday practices used in relating experiences to each other. She succeeds in finding very typical narrative genres and discursive gender practices.

This volume addresses a wide audience of scholars and non-specialists. The very different approaches, methodologies and authentic data present the openness and wide variety of this field. In addition, very central questions and issues surrounding gender identity and gender politics are discussed which serve to raise awareness about gender, power, ideologies, institutions, everyday practices, culture and discourse.

Notes

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1. Discursive psychologists (like Rom Harré) talk about 'positioning' – a unique intersection of discursive relationships for all of us (see Corson, 1995).

2. We cannot deal, in this context, with the convergence of developments within text linguistics and discourse analysis. See Vass (1992: 10), Beaugrande and Dressler (1981).

3. See also Fairclough: 'my attempt at drawing together language analysis and social theory centres upon a combination of this more social-theoretical sense of discourse [in Foucault's sense: author] with the "text-interaction" sense in linguistically-oriented discourse analysis' (1992: 4). Fairclough continues in defining three dimensions of 'discourse': any discursive event is seen as an instance of discursive and social practice. 'Text' relates to the linguistic analysis, 'discourse' to the interaction, to processes of text production and interpretation. The 'social practice' dimension relates to the institutional context of the discursive event. Any transcript of discourse, according to Fairclough, however, would be labelled 'text'. Fairclough himself is very influenced by Foucault and Pêcheux, but mostly also by Hallidayan linguistics (Fairclough, 1992: 55ff).

4. An example of the reality constituting characteristics of discourse would be the various guidelines for non-sexist use of language (Wodak et al., 1987). By the use of both male and female forms, it is hoped that ultimately the consciousness of users will be changed and not just language use. Making women visible in discourse would, therefore, also result in a different evaluation of women.

5. The whole notion of 'ideology' and its relationship to discourse is far too complex to discuss extensively in this introduction (see Chapters 3 and 5 in this volume). I would just like to propose a definition which could serve as a basis for what follows: 'ideologies are particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation. Ideologies are often (though not necessarily) false or ungrounded constructions of society' (Wodak, 1996: 18). See also Wodak et al. (1989), Corson (1993), and van Dijk (1997) for other conflicting definitions and diverse approaches to the concept of ideology.

6. See Labov (1966), Trudgill (1972; 1974) and Milroy and Milroy (1978). See also Cameron (1990), Coates and Cameron (1990), Coates (1993), Kotthoff (1992), and Wodak and Benke (1996) for critical discussions of sociolinguistic gender studies.

7. See Wetschanow (1995: 20ff), Mills (1995), Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1995), Samel (1995), Schissler (1993) and Gräszel (1991) for overviews in these domains of FL.

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THEORETICAL DEBATES IN FEMINIST LINGUISTICS: QUESTIONS OF SEX AND GENDER

Deborah Cameron

The theoretical debates which I will examine are debates about sex/gender, its relationship to language and language use, and the implications of that relationship. All these are matters on which feminist scholars disagree – an important point to make, because outsiders often see feminist scholarship as a homogeneous category, defined by assumptions which all feminists must share. In fact, feminist scholarship encompasses diverse views, and not infrequently conflicting ones.

For the purposes of this discussion, 'feminist linguistics' will be taken to mean something different from the study of language and gender *per se*. In practice the two overlap significantly – most contemporary language and gender research is also feminist in orientation – but in principle the subject-matter can be treated without reference to feminism, either as a political movement or as a body of theory. Indeed, it can be treated from an overtly *anti-feminist* perspective. What distinguishes a feminist approach is not merely concern with the behaviour of women and men (or of women alone): it is distinguished, rather, by having a critical view of the arrangement between the sexes. It should also be said here that this 'arrangement between the sexes' cannot be reduced to 'the differences between women and men'. From a feminist standpoint, male-female differences are of interest only as part of a larger picture, and they need to be theorized rather than simply catalogued.

This chapter deals with *theoretical* debates, and will not therefore have much to say about debates on methodology. 'Feminist linguistics' has never in fact been confined to departments of linguistics, but is a multidisciplinary enterprise to which anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, cultural/semiotic theorists and philosophers have all contributed along with linguists (mainly sociolinguists and discourse analysts). Not surprisingly, there has been debate on the differing methodologies associated with these different (sub)disciplines: experimental work as practised in psychology versus the naturalistic approach of conversation