

Different Voices, Different Views: An Introduction to Current Research in Language and Gender

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1 Introduction

The purpose of *The Handbook of Language and Gender* is to provide an authoritative, comprehensive, and original collection of articles representing the richness and diversity of contemporary research in the area. Currently, language and gender is a particularly vibrant area of research and theory development within the larger study of language and society, and the contributions in this volume focus especially on more recent trends and developments. The volume comprises specially commissioned articles in five distinguishable but closely related areas, identified because of their importance in current language and gender research, and encompassing the breadth of interdisciplinary interests of researchers and students in this dynamic area.

This collection of articles will prove a valuable resource to students of linguistics, and especially to those interested in sociolinguistics and discourse studies from undergraduate level upwards. A quick glance at the contents will indicate, however, that the collection should also have much wider appeal; it is truly interdisciplinary, drawing on work from many different academic areas. There are articles which will be of interest to anthropologists and those interested in cultural studies, to sociologists and social psychologists, and to those concerned with organizational communication. There are articles which have obvious relevance to feminists, and to those working in gender studies, as well as to professional women, and those engaged in business and management. Moreover, because of the more practical orientation of some of the articles, especially in the final two sections, the collection will also be of interest to

applied linguists, to those working in education and language policy, to professionals engaged in the areas of Human Relations and Human Resources, and, we predict, to the educated reader.

Many collections of readings on language and gender are compilations of papers already written and published. Some consist of articles which are best described as “classic” (e.g. Tannen 1993; Cameron 1998; Coates 1998; Cheshire and Trudgill 1998). Many are constructed around a specific theme, such as power (Hall, Bucholtz, and Moonwomon 1992), gender identity (e.g. Hall and Bucholtz 1995; Bucholtz, Liang, and Sutton 1999), masculinity (Johnson and Meinhof 1997), communication (Wertheim, Bailey, and Corston-Oliver 1998), belief systems (Warner et al. 1996), bilingualism (e.g. Burton, Dyson, and Ardener 1994), second language education (Sunderland 1994), or sexist language (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001). Others focus more on a specific theoretical approach, such as social constructionism (e.g. Bergvall, Bing, and Freed 1996; Bucholtz, Liang, Sutton, and Hines 1994), communities of practice (e.g. Holmes 1999), or interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Tannen 1994). Still others take a predominantly descriptive approach, covering a wide range of contrasting languages and cultures (e.g. Kotthoff and Wodak 1997; Hellinger and Bussmann 2001).

By contrast, and as a useful complement to these varied emphases, the papers in this Handbook provide an indication of the range of issues currently under debate in the area, and outline the topical concerns of those working at the forefront of research in language and gender. The main themes are indicated by the five broad section headings, and a diversity of methodologies is represented (discussed further below). A wide range of languages are invoked in the different papers, in some cases as a core component of particular case studies, in others as brief but specific examples to illustrate a more general point. So, while most papers use English for exemplification, readers will also find references to languages as varied as Tongan, Tagalog, French, Bislama, Guyanese Creole, Gaelic, Dutch, German, Afrikaans, and Lakota. Most authors provide an indication of where their own areas of research strength and interest fit into the wider field, and they also indicate how their own positions can be distinguished from those of others. Hence, readers are typically provided both with an authoritative overview of a theme or issue, and a thought-provoking specific illustration of current research in a particular area.

2 Overview of the Contents of the Handbook

The Handbook has five sections: Part I is made up of chapters that review aspects of the history of the study of language and gender, and provide theoretical background to this study. The chapters in Part II deal to some extent with negotiations of relations and the role gender and language play in such negotiations. In Part III, the chapters are concerned with issues of authenticity

(e.g. who gets to define what it means to be a “real” woman or a “real” man or a “real” Lakhota), and the task individuals face of finding a “place” for themselves in the complex social worlds they populate. A strong theme here is the processes by which identities emerge, or are effaced and disappear. In Part IV, the chapters deal with the importance, functionality, and invidiousness of stereotypes and norms. Finally, Part V reviews issues relating to language and gender in institutional discourse. Hence, the Handbook has an overall progression leading from highly theoretical chapters, to those which discuss very practical applications of language and gender research in various specific locales.

Within each section, too, the chapters are ordered in a manner that we hope will aid readers’ appreciation of the themes of that section and allow them to select the chapters we think may be of most direct use to them, depending on their personal goals and interests. The first and last chapters bracket each section: in general, the first chapter is one that provides a particularly accessible lead-in to the issues, and the last is generally one which to a greater or lesser extent rounds off the section, and often provides a link to the next section. In other words, there is at least one chapter in each section (the lead-in) which we feel is a particularly approachable communication of the theme(s) of that section, and it is intended that this will provide a useful balance to chapters that are more demanding.

There are implications of this organization for the use of the Handbook. For example, readers using the Handbook as a text or supplement to texts in the classroom should find the most accessible papers can be read even by those without a lot of background in the field of language and gender research, while also providing a helpful basis for regrounding more advanced readers. In addition, readers who come from outside the academy with, for example, practical and applied interests in language and gender should find that the initial chapter in each section will provide them with a good overview of significant themes in research on language and gender, and give some idea of ways to communicate the relevance of these themes to a general audience.

As is traditional in introducing such a collection, we next provide a brief synopsis of each chapter. We hope that these will help readers of the Handbook locate the chapters that are most likely to fulfill their immediate goals, and also to plan further explorations to satisfy their future goals.

Bonnie McElhinny’s chapter opens the volume with a survey of the study of language and gender within the traditions and methods of linguistic anthropology. Her analysis of the way the concept of “gender” is treated in different approaches introduces an issue which recurs throughout the collection, and she highlights, in particular, the problematic consequences of assuming that gender is adequately analyzed as a simple dichotomy. Mary Bucholtz provides a different historical and theoretical perspective, looking at how gender has been a part of the analysis of discourse over time. Bucholtz traces the emergence of feminist theories of gender in discourse analysis and directs our attention to more recent moves to incorporate historicity into analyses of interaction and social identities. Sally McConnell-Ginet reviews practice-based methods for

analyzing gender identities, which have been particularly influential models in recent research on language and gender. Because such practice-based models are adopted by many of the contributors in subsequent sections, this article may be of particular interest to readers wishing to gain some familiarity with major issues in the field. Suzanne Romaine discusses work that has been undertaken within the variationist, or quantitative, sociolinguistic paradigms, and which makes reference to the significance of gender at the macro-level of analysis. She reviews the descriptive generalizations (which have sometimes been treated as predictive) ensuing from this research, and critiques its methods and the assumptions underlying such analyses. Don Kulick provides a psychoanalytic perspective on the study of language and gender. Assuming that gender identities are at least partly the consequence of psychological drives to express desire and social constraints on the expression of desire, he asks whether we can identify linguistic routines or patterns that reveal underlying (and paradoxically, often unspoken) motivations and constraints. Finally in this section, Anna Livia presents a thought-provoking discussion of the way gender may be relevant to the analysis of texts, reviewing evidence that conventions of masculine and feminine style exist, and examining the ways in which the conventions of the linguistic system facilitate the creation of alternative, oppositional, or conventional identities. She also examines the role of the translator and the metaphors used for the process of translation, along with their implications in analyzing gender in texts.

In Part II ("Negotiating Relations"), Robin Lakoff explores the complex relationship between women and power through a discourse analysis of written texts taken from three major American institutions: academia (Schegloff's arguments about the appropriate way of treating gender in Conversation Analysis), the arts (including the distribution of talk in the controversial Mamet play *Oleanna*), and politics proper (the way the print media sexualize, objectify, and ridicule women in politics). She exposes the disruption of conventional discourse patterns which is being caused by women's entrance into domains traditionally regarded as exclusively male. Deborah Tannen's chapter presents data from intra-family communication which suggests that participants are attending to strategies which will build solidarity between them as well as strategies that bolster, or undermine, a power differential between the interactants. She locates her analysis of interactions in the tradition of foundational work by Elinor Ochs on family communication and Brown and Gilman on politeness. Susan Herring reviews issues relating to gender in mediated communication, especially on the Internet. She shows that (despite utopian hopes for equality in this medium) issues of power relations resurface, reproducing the gender norms of society at large. At the same time she also shows how women have made places for themselves in the virtual world, and she concludes by considering directions in which the medium and women's participation in it might go in the future. Marjorie Goodwin's chapter provides a valuable review of current debates in language and gender research which focus on children's negotiation. She examines ethnographic studies of the interactive practices

used by children of different social class, age, and ethnic groups to construct gendered social relationships in and across girls' and boys' play groups. She focuses especially on the sequencing strategies employed in children's disputes, and on the strategies of exclusion used by girls in particular. Closing Part II, Susan Philips presents a very approachable exploration of the relationship between gender ideologies and power in anthropology. Combining a helpful historical overview of how anthropologists have understood gender ideologies with an examination of the most salient gender roles in Tonga, she gives the reader a clear model both of how gender ideologies can be studied and also how their routinized nature can be analyzed in terms of dominant and subordinate ideologies.

Part III ("Authenticity and Place") examines gender identity in the widest range of linguistic situations. Niko Besnier's chapter discusses aspects of how Tongan *fakaleitī* (i.e., roughly, a transgendered individual in Tonga) employ linguistic and non-linguistic strategies to establish a social place for themselves within the larger Tongan ideological system of who or what defines the constitutive properties of "real" women and "real" Tongans. Besnier shows how *fakaleitīs*' code-switching between Tongan and English (which has significance as a global language) functions to contest normative Tongan ideals about such categories. Miriam Meyerhoff's discussion of gender and language in Vanuatu similarly finds close and very overt associations between having a claim to a specific place and authority to speak or to control the flow of information. She argues that some linguistic strategies often employed by women are a means of responding to, working with, and challenging their exclusion from authority by the general ideology that men, and only men, really have a claim to "place." She also looks at continuities between historical patterns of gendered interaction and the synchronic patterns of gendered speech discussed earlier. Jack Sidnell examines what is required in the way of linguistic and other social performance for a rumshop in Guyana to be constituted as a "male-only" environment. He examines contextualization cues serving to include men, exclude women, and to weave "male" histories into the rumshop domain. Kira Hall considers the way gender identities have been problematized in research on language and gender. She argues that we can only fully understand the significance of recent theoretical shifts in the study of language and gender if we also understand the non-peripheral nature of gender identities traditionally treated as exceptional or deviant. Penelope Eckert's chapter builds on her research on the interplay of gender and more locally defined identities among adolescents and pre-adolescents. She makes the case that adolescence is a particularly significant period (especially in the USA) for the creation and contestation of social categories, and this is reflected in the enormous stylistic creativity of adolescents. The kinds of linguistic styling they undertake, she argues, reverberates through the speech community far beyond adolescent communities of practice.

William Leap's chapter tackles the question of what gender identities are in the global world of late modernity. He discusses a lonely hearts ad, a poem,

and a narrative to illustrate how very local meanings of language choice and specific lexical items serve to place their users in the matrix of a more global homosexual community. He argues that such possibilities are derived from the social flux and movement associated with late modernity. The section concludes with Sara Trechter's chapter which, like others in this section, explores the discursive dimension of the emergence and negotiation of social identities. Trechter, however, articulates a more fundamental problem. She argues that language and gender research should begin to engage with the processes by which identities are effaced or disappear (rather than emerge) through both local and meta-discursive (e.g. academic) practices.

Part IV ("Stereotypes and Norms") begins with a chapter by Deborah Cameron which explores the issue of the ideological work done by representations of language, and especially the role that language plays in maintaining gender distinctions and naturalizing gender hierarchies. To illustrate, she traces recent changes in communication ideologies, with which representations of gendered language are strongly linked. Mary Talbot's chapter also examines how gender stereotypes support gender ideologies. She characterizes stereotypes, including stereotypes of "women's language," as powerful hegemonic constructs or ideological prescriptions for behavior, noting that traditional sexist stereotypes are so resilient that they may be repeatedly contested without undermining their commonsensical status. She provides further evidence to support Cameron's observation that men's communication deficits have recently become a focus of concern, and notes that gender stereotypes are increasingly being contested in some contexts. Ann Weatherall and Cindy Gallois contrast social cognitive approaches (and especially communication accommodation theory) to the study of language and gender with the methods of discursive psychology. Starting from stereotypes, the social cognitive approach in social psychology proceeds to analyze gender on the assumption that the differentiation of categories is conceptually prior to language. By contrast, discursive psychology treats social categories as salient in interaction only when and as they are activated in talk. Scott Kiesling makes the point in his chapter that it is possible to relate individual stances, such as competence and electability in a fraternity meeting, to underlying, widely held norms. He also discusses the relevance of prestige norms to the analysis of language and gender. He dissects the oft-made distinction between overt and covert prestige, raising some questions about the validity of the latter in particular. Approaching language and gender research from a communications framework, Caja Thimm, Sabine Koch, and Sabine Schey examine the influence of interpersonal relations and communication styles at work on women's professional development. Their research analyzes responses to interview questions as evidence of gender stereotypes and gendered expectations in workplace interaction, as well as differences in the kinds of communicative strategies used by women and men in workplace role-plays. Anne Pauwels' chapter continues her extensive work documenting sexist language usages and attempts at language reform. She explores the specifically feminist concerns which may motivate some of the strategies employed in response to sexist usages, as well as responses to such strategies.

Part V (“Institutional Discourse”) opens with Janet Holmes and Maria Stubbe’s chapter, which explores the notion of the gendered workplace. They first describe a number of broad patterns identified in three different aspects of workplace interaction, namely the distribution of talk and humor in meetings, and of small talk at work more generally. They then adopt a community of practice framework to examine in more detail the discursive practices of two women managers in a stereotypically “feminine” and a stereotypically “masculine” workplace respectively, demonstrating the value of combining different theoretical and methodological approaches for illuminating the complexity of gendered discourse. Shari Kendall’s chapter in this section provides a detailed case-study of the way one particular woman, pseudonymed “Elaine,” gives directives, comparing the strategies Elaine uses in the linguistic creation of authority first as a parent with her ten-year-old daughter at home, and then as a manager with her two female subordinates at work. The analysis indicates that while Elaine uses face-saving strategies in both domains, the frequency and form of these strategies differ in significant ways in different contexts, reflecting the fact that she constructs different authoritative demeanors when speaking as a mother and as a manager. In another institutional domain, Joan Swann examines three shifts in research orientation that are relevant to research in education, and considers their implications for educational policy and practice. The first is well documented in this collection – the shift from essentialist and dichotomous conceptions of gender to a differentiated, contextualized, and performative model which questions generalized claims about gender, and about educational inequality. The second is a shift from responsive attitudes to feminist educational research in the 1980s to a much “colder” current climate in which feminist interests have been marginalized. The third shift involves contexts of communication, and especially the differential impact of computer-mediated communication on the educational opportunities of boys and girls, with its potential to return researchers to traditional polarized notions of gender difference and disadvantage.

Susan Ehrlich’s chapter is also concerned with the linguistic representation and (re)production of gender ideologies in institutional discourse. She demonstrates how dominant ideologies of sexual violence against women are reproduced, sustained, and (potentially) contested through coercive interactional devices in sexual assault adjudication processes. These strategies result in what she calls “coerced identities”; they render invisible or efface the complainants’ attempts to represent themselves as conscious agents, and rather “produce” them as subjects who had not acted strategically. Ruth Wodak’s chapter is concerned with the fragmented and multiple identities of elite women, specifically female members of the European Union (EU) Parliament, a complex public domain which she characterizes as determined by intercultural, ideological, ethnic, national, and gender conflicts. She provides statistical data as background, and then draws on excerpts from interviews with female EU parliamentarians to demonstrate how women establish themselves in this complex setting, and what strategies they employ to present and promote themselves, and to guarantee that they are taken seriously.

Finally, the volume concludes with an Epilogue by Alice Freed. Freed asks why stereotypes about language and gender remain relatively unchanged after several decades of empirical research on language and gender. Why has it been so difficult for language and gender researchers to show the public that there is a lot more to language than the usual stereotypes? Rather than summarize the contents of the other chapters in the Handbook (as this Introduction does), Freed's Epilogue positions them in relation to directions of the field of research, thus tying the contributions of Parts I–III more closely to the discussions of stereotypes and applied language and gender research in Parts IV and V.

3 Themes and Issues in the Handbook

As is often the case, there are a number of possible ways in which the contents of the Handbook might have been arranged. The five sections just outlined reflect one way in which the articles can be grouped, but there are other axes which cross-cut the divisions of the five major sections.

One issue which serves to unify and draw together most, if not all, of the contributors is a fundamental concern with the question of how best to represent and even talk about gender and language. The field has moved well beyond descriptions of (perceived or actual) differences between men's and women's speech, or finger-pointing that maps power hierarchies with gender hierarchies.¹ The writers in this Handbook (like those writing for many of the other texts mentioned at the beginning of this Introduction) are trying to understand and represent the interaction between language and gender in much more subtle and nuanced ways. The very notion of gender as a category is a topic which is problematized at the outset, and many of the chapters in the Handbook explicitly distance themselves from essentialist analyses of gender which treat it as a deterministic quality. These researchers try to avoid assuming that there is a natural basis for separating the social world into two and only two sexes or genders, that is, they resist assuming that this difference is part of the essence of every human being. Furthermore, they try to avoid the assumption that categorizing any given individual as "female" or "male" necessarily determines or predicts characteristics of their speech and verbal interactions. This concern has been central to the discussion of gender since the late 1980s and early 1990s. (The concern has also been articulated with respect to other social categories widely used in social dialectology, such as social class, age, and ethnicity.)

This approach has typically also been marked by a methodological shift. Analyses of gender and language that are influenced by the move away from essentialized notions of gender tend to start with people's participation in their immediate and most salient social groups. To the extent that they then work outwards in the social sphere, they attempt to relate generalizations about larger trends in society to specific evidence of how gender is understood, contested,

and absorbed as a category for social membership in the very “local” domains from which the analysis started. Most of the chapters in this Handbook do try to make such connections between the local and the supra-local; many of the contributors see their research and their field of interest as being inescapably involved in social action and social change. But one criticism of the move toward highly context-dependent analyses of gender is that it may focus too heavily on the descriptive particulars of any given example. It is sometimes claimed that this is at the expense of advancing more general understandings of the relationships between social categories and language behavior (Philips provides a clear discussion of the advantages to be gained from highlighting both the variability and the similarity of gender ideologies cross-culturally). A loss of generalization need not necessarily be the case, as Eckert (2000) shows in her textured analysis of linguistic and social variation during the transition years of adolescence in a Detroit high school. It is worth bearing in mind, though, that the work of Eckert (2000), Holmes (1997), and Herring (this volume) indicates that there are costs associated with attempting to blend quantitative and qualitative research; the most successful and informative examples of this integration are the result of many years of data collection and/or analysis.

Many of the researchers represented in this volume argue, then, that eschewing essentialized notions of gender provides a way for more voices to be heard; a gendered dimension to interactions *emerges* rather than being assumed at the outset. This, they suggest, provides a more comprehensive theoretical representation of gender in society, and it may even be a more accurate description of how gender and language interact. However, another theme that emerges from the chapters in the Handbook is the sense that this approach may ignore facts about gender and language which have been repeatedly pointed out in the language and gender literature over the decades, and which, as socially responsible academics, we cannot and do not want to ignore. No matter what we say about the inadequacy or invidiousness of essentialized, dichotomous conceptions of gender, and no matter how justifiable such comments may be, in everyday life it really is often the case that gender is “essential.” We can argue about whether people ought to see male and female as a natural and essential distinction, and we can point to evidence showing that all social categories leak. However, that has not changed the fact that gender as a social category *matters*. There is extensive evidence to suggest that gender is a crucial component of people’s social world; many people really do find it vital to be able to pigeonhole others into the normative, binary set of female–male, and they find linguistic or social behaviors which threaten the apparent stability of this “essential” distinction extremely disturbing. Thus, they censure women (overtly or indirectly) for behavior that is typically associated with males, they beat up transvestites, they pathologize or murder homosexuals.

Two issues arise from this: the relevance of our research outside the small circle of academics and theoreticians, and the use that people outside our in-group may make of the research conducted within these frameworks. Deborah

Cameron has been a consistent and articulate voice on both these issues (e.g. Cameron et al. 1992; Cameron 1995, 2000). She has long been concerned with making sure that linguistic research is responsive and directed by the needs and interests of the communities of speakers studied and does not simply feed academic appetites. She has also explored the appropriation of linguistic research, examining the way sometimes complex findings in the literature end up being stripped down in the mainstream press to fit societal preconceptions and stereotypes about issues such as gender. Alice Freed (among others) has also pointed out that there is a sense in which anyone engaged in research on language and gender must take responsibility for feeding the popular obsession with identifying and reifying sex-based differences in language, or any other form of behavior (a theme she expands on in this volume; see also Stokoe and Smitherson 2001). So there is a real tension here which all researchers in language and gender have to deal with. If we truly believed a radical version of the anti-essentialism that has recently become an axiom of the field, then we would put away our pens, our tape-recorders, and our notebooks, and the field of language and gender research would disappear. There would be no meaning to a handbook of language and gender because gender would have become such an idiosyncratic quality that it would be non-existent as a category across individuals.

This tension makes itself felt in this Handbook in a number of ways. One is the debate over the “proper” use of gender as a category in the analysis of discourse. Several contributors to the volume (Bucholtz, Lakoff, Sidnell, Weatherall and Gallois) bring up a recent debate over how overtly speakers must mark their orientation to, and the conversational salience of, gender in order for it to be analyzed as a social category being attended to in talk. In some ways, Schegloff’s argument that analysts have to find something very “local” in the conversation before invoking gender as a salient category is an extremely pure application of the anti-essentialist posture adopted by many of the researchers who have rejected his argument as being too limited. We see this Handbook as being an excellent site for bringing such ironies and paradoxes within the field of study into fresh perspective, and providing the wherewithal for cordial and constructive continued discussion of how we are to resolve, or simply live with, them.

4 Theory and Methodologies

Finally, it is useful to draw attention to the range of theoretical frameworks and the many different methodologies included in this collection. A number of chapters examine the relationship between an individual’s gender and specific features of their language: that is, the focus in these chapters is on characteristics of speech and writing which correlate with membership of gender as one particular social category. Analysts who adopt this approach treat gender as

an identifiable social variable for the purposes of their analyses, a position justified by the fact that most people intuitively agree on what gender categories mean, and share a common conception of gender. Thus, the focus of such researchers is on the insights to be gained by identifying patterns in speech and writing which, to a greater or lesser extent, correlate with gender-based social categories. Much (though not all) variationist research adopts this approach, as Romaine's overview of the social dialect literature in the area of language and gender clearly indicates. Thimm, Koch, and Schey also use this approach in their examination of the influence of a speaker's gender on their choice of particular pragmatic particles and technical terms in interviews and role-plays, as does Herring's analysis of linguistic evidence of gender identity in computer-based on-line communication. A social cognitive perspective, described in Weatherall and Gallois' article, similarly involves "an assumption that gender identity develops as a relatively stable, pre-discursive trait, which resides in individuals and which is more or less salient, depending on its relevance to a particular social context. . . . cognition is conceptually prior to its expression in language and communication" (p. 488).

On the other hand, many of the analyses in the collection are conceptualized within a broadly social constructionist framework. As indicated in the previous section, analysts adopting this approach tend to question the notion of gender as a social category, and they often treat the social as well as the linguistic dimensions of their analyses as equally deserving of attention. So, these researchers conceive of social identity, and more particularly gender identity, as a social construct rather than a "given" social category to which people are assigned. Gender is treated as the accomplishment and product of social interaction. The focus is on the way individuals "do" or "perform" their gender identity in interaction with others, and there is an emphasis on dynamic aspects of interaction. Gender emerges over time in interaction with others. Language is a resource which can be drawn on creatively to perform different aspects of one's social identity at different points in an interaction. Speakers sensitively respond to the ongoing process of interaction, including changes of attitude and mood, and their linguistic choices may emphasize different aspects of their social identity and indicate a different orientation to their audience from moment to moment. So, not only do people speak differently in different social contexts, as sociolinguistic analyses of different styles have demonstrated (e.g. see Romaine's chapter), but, more radically, talk itself actively creates different styles and constructs different social contexts and social identities as it proceeds. The community of practice model which is outlined in McConnell-Ginet's chapter, and further invoked in Eckert's analysis of adolescent interaction, is firmly grounded within a social constructionist framework. Similarly, the discursive psychology perspective outlined by Weatherall and Gallois considers gender to be the accomplishment and product of social interaction. These chapters indicate the potential of this approach for illuminating the more dynamic aspects of interaction, and for identifying sites of potential social change. They also draw attention to the strategies

by which social change is typically resisted or facilitated, demonstrating “people’s active engagement in the reproduction of or resistance to gender arrangements in their communities” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 466). Moreover, as McElhinny points out, this approach more comfortably accommodates the analysis of communities, cultures, and linguistic behaviors that do not fit the standard gender dichotomy, and facilitates research which challenges the “dominant ideologies [which] help to perpetuate inequities in Western contexts” (p. 36).

Within this broad conceptual framework, however, there is room for a range of contrasting emphases and methodologies. One of the more popular methodologies in this collection is the ethnographically grounded and postmodern analyses illustrated in the detailed case-studies of talk in interaction provided by Leap and Kulick, for example, and illustrated in relation to written discourse by Livia. These post-structural analyses are very clearly at home under a social constructionist umbrella. Besnier, Meyerhoff, and Philips equally exemplify their arguments by drawing on their detailed ethnographic research in specific, and non-Western, speech communities.

It is also worth noting, as Bucholtz points out, that many researchers fruitfully combine aspects of different methodologies to answer the questions that arise in the course of their research. Meyerhoff, for example, demonstrates, in her discussion of *sore* in Bislama, that variationist approaches are not inconsistent with detailed ethnographic sociolinguistic description, and a social constructionist focus on the emergent nature of gender. Sidnell’s detailed analysis of male talk in a Guyanese rumshop illustrates how a classic conversation analysis (CA) approach to the text is illuminated by ethnographic detail about the community in which it is located. CA is based fundamentally on a model of communication as joint activity (Sacks 1984), and Sidnell illustrates this while specifically exploring how gender is oriented to in the sample of talk-in-interaction which he examines. Drawing on her extensive ethnographic research, Goodwin also uses CA to examine turn types, and the function of features of sequential organization in the management of children’s disputes. Weatherall and Gallois indicate the value of CA-based analyses in discursive psychology, while Holmes and Stubbe’s chapter also illustrates the value of combining different methodologies. They explore the relationship between the quantitative patterns identified using a predominantly variationist approach, and the insights revealed by more detailed qualitative discourse analysis of interactions involving particular women in their workplaces, conceptualized as contrasting communities of practice.

Sociolinguists and discourse analysts who work within a social constructionist framework typically engage in qualitative analysis of discourse, paying careful attention to the context of interaction, as illustrated by many of the chapters in this collection: for example Leap, Ehrlich, Kendall, and Tannen. Following Goffman (1974), Tannen and Kendall, for example, use a “framing” approach, relating the linguistic forms and meanings of utterances to the speaker’s frame of the activity, for example as a socialization exercise, or as a

learning experience. In the context of language and gender research, a framing approach conceptualizes the creation of gendered identities as one component of the creation of social identities more generally. As Kendall (p. 604) notes, following Ochs (1992):

Women and men do not generally choose linguistic options for the purpose of creating masculine or feminine identities; instead, they draw upon gendered linguistic strategies to perform pragmatic and interactional functions of language and, thus, constitute roles in a gendered way. It is the manner in which people constitute their identities when acting within a social role that is linked with gender – that is, being a “good mother,” being a “good manager.”

Detailed discourse analysis of relevant social interactions clearly provides the crucial basis for frame analysis, as for other kinds of qualitative analysis. However, the analyses which underpin at least some of the research described by Kiesling, Meyerhoff, Eckert, Wodak, Pauwels, and Holmes and Stubbe make it clear that there is also a place for quantitatively oriented studies, at least as a background for understanding the social significance of particular linguistic choices at specific points in an interaction.

Another very distinctive theoretical approach, perhaps best exemplified by Wodak’s analysis of the language of women politicians in the European Parliament, is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA aims to reveal connections between language, power, and ideology, describing the way power and dominance are produced and reproduced in social practice through discourse structures in interaction. As with social constructionism, CDA accommodates a variety of methodologies. Some researchers, such as Wodak, Cameron, and Talbot, focus mainly on macro-level discourse strategies, examining distinctive rhetorical patterns, for instance, while others adopt a detailed CA or an interactionally oriented approach. Still others, such as Ehrlich, take a more grammatical approach, exploring relevant details of syntactic and semantic organization, while Pauwels’ analysis of sexist usages examines the grammatical and lexical components of several different linguistic systems as a whole.

Another approach to the analysis of gender in discourse is a more cognitive approach, typically exemplified in the work of social psychologists such as Weatherall and Gallois, but in this collection, also evident in many discussions of the relevance of stereotypes in the analysis of gendered interaction: e.g. Thimm et al., Talbot, Pauwels, and Livia (Philips too attends to the routine and repeated as well as the fluid and creative). As Livia comments, stereotypes and norms have an important backgrounding function in that “the traditional gender norms are often used as a foil against which more experimental positions are understood” (p. 149). Finally, Weatherall and Gallois also provide a useful overview of recent gender-oriented research within Communication Accommodation Theory, a framework which emphasizes the centrality of social identity and the relevance of the addressee in accounting for language variation in intergroup interactions.

This collection illustrates, then, that a wide range of theoretical approaches and methodologies are currently in use by researchers in the area of language and gender. Moreover, it is evident that it is often impossible to categorize individual chapters as exemplars of one rather than another approach. Many researchers clearly find it productive to combine different approaches and integrate various methodologies in their attempts to throw light on the questions which intrigue them.

5 Conclusion

Putting together this collection has been a stimulating and challenging experience. In concluding, we draw attention to two important issues which have crystallized in the process of editing the volume. The first relates to potential applications of language and gender research, the second to productive future directions for theoretical paradigms in the area.

A number of chapters in the Handbook point to very pragmatic lessons which can be learnt from language and gender research, and provide an opening for our academic work to participate in and contribute to social activism. For instance, what we can draw from Cameron's, Talbot's, and Holmes and Stubbe's work is a clearer sense of the way findings in social science research are often manipulated to match existing preconceptions about the natural relationship between gender and power in the workforce, in advertising, and in employment and education policies. There seems little point to our academic interests if they do not at some stage articulate with real-world concerns and enable us or our readers to identify, for example, certain employment practices as unfair and ill-informed, based more on stereotypes and prejudice than they are on people's actual behavior in the real world. At some point, our research has to be able to travel out of the academy in order to draw attention to and challenge unquestioned practices that reify certain behaviors as being morally, or aesthetically, better than others. Most, if not all, the contributors to this volume would share an appreciation of being able to highlight and resist practices that (1) reserve the expression of authority for a subset of speakers in possession of certain (arbitrary) properties, and (2) withhold the allocation of authority from others. Philips' contribution to this volume makes a particularly strong argument for the political and social relevance of research on gender ideologies. As responsible researchers in the area of language and gender, then, we should never cease to engage actively with and challenge assumptions about gender norms, and loudly draw attention to the way power, privilege, and social authority interact with and are naturalized as properties of independent social categories.

However, as Herring points out, such stances of committed engagement may themselves distance us from younger women, or from more widespread contemporary attitudes which valorize diversity and individual expression.

Yet, somehow researchers on language and gender have to deal with these sorts of applied paradoxes too, since our work is increasingly evaluated on its relevance to and connection with issues that are topical in the community that funds us either directly (assigning tax dollars to higher education) or indirectly (through funding agencies).

This leads to our second point, namely, our awareness of the tensions, the contradictions, and the sites of potential paradigm conflict among the diverse materials and analyses collected together in this Handbook. Our own strongly held position amid these different perspectives and potential conflicts is one which welcomes the fruitful interaction generated by the expression of different points of view, and encourages the exploration of areas of difference and disagreement. We believe that valuable progress can result when researchers hold different theoretical positions or adopt different methodologies, provided they are willing to engage in discussion and debate.

Reflecting on the progress indicated by the research represented in this collection, it seems that language and gender research is at a stage when it can accommodate, and even begin to integrate, a range of different approaches to understanding how and to what extent gender is relevant (or not) in negotiating interaction and constructing complex sociocultural identities. While social constructionist approaches predominate, it is clear that the contribution and important influence of gender stereotypes, gender-based cognitive categories, and sociocultural conceptions of differently gendered roles must be factored into our research. The crucial point, in our view, is to avoid adopting narrow paradigms which are potentially damaging to the spirit of enquiry, and to resist pressures toward the development of a restrictive and limiting orthodoxy in the kinds of theoretical frameworks and research methodologies which are judged acceptable.

Like other contributors to this collection, we have consistently argued for, and indeed, adopted approaches which attempt to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, using the patterns identified by the quantitative analysis as essential background to assist in the detailed qualitative interpretation of the discourse. Macro-level quantitative research identifies the gendered norms on which speakers are drawing, the ground against which individual choices must be interpreted. Research is inevitably an additive and an iterative process.

It may be useful if those working in language and gender research resolved to avoid using terms such as “essentialist” to dismiss research which focuses on the big picture, research which attempts to identify regularities and make generalizations about global patterns observable in the relationship between language and gender – that is, research which aims to uncover some of the patterns regulating “the gender order” (as it is referred to in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, forthcoming). All research is an attempt to get a best fit between intuitive conceptions and insights about the specific details of an interaction, and a satisfactory and illuminating theoretical account of the interaction. Yet we are all aware of the fact that research is unavoidably messy and

fuzzy-edged. We will make greater progress if we seek to accommodate insights from a variety of sources, rather than dismissing, in a blinkered and unreflecting manner, results from currently unfashionable paradigms.

In conclusion, we consider that this collection provides an inspiring kaleidoscope of theoretical models and concepts, methodological approaches and strategic pathways for feminist social action for researchers in the field of language and gender. It certainly provides a wide range of addressees for people to engage with in furthering their own research, a great variety of people to talk to about the research issues that are besetting them, and a remarkably varied set of starting points for those just beginning research in this area.

NOTE

- 1 Though sadly that does not mean that such simplistic representations of the field and of the findings of language and gender research do not continue to work their way into texts, from introductions to sociolinguistics and advanced surveys of the field through to popular texts written for non-academic audiences.

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