

Does 'Women's Language' Really Exist?: A Critical Assessment of Sex Difference Research in Sociolinguistics

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1. Introduction

It is often claimed that in many societies there are negative stereotypes relating to women and language. Here are two examples of proverbs which are evidence of this.

A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail. (English proverb)

Onna sannin yoreba kashimashii. (Japanese proverb)

(= If three women gather together, it becomes clamorous.)

These proverbs imply that many people stereotypically think women are more talkative than men, or moreover that women talk too much. Yet there has not been one study which supports this stereotype: Studies in laboratories, classrooms, meetings and television chat shows indicate that women in fact talk less than men do in mixed-sex conversations.¹ This suggests that the false stereotype of talkative women is not a reflection of reality but just a reflection of the social expectation--'women should be silent'--because silence has usually been considered as synonymous with obedience in many societies.

There are other popular folklinguistic assertions of 'women's language'. For example, stereotypes such as 'women talk more politely' and 'women use more questions' have been firmly believed by the public. We cannot override these stereotypes, since unlike the former case, these stereotypes have actually been supported through extensive linguistic research.²

According to such research, 'women's language' has the following

features: First, female speakers interrupt less than males in mixed-sex conversations.³ Second, female speakers use more indirect speech than males.⁴ Third, female speakers use more conversational support such as 'minimal responses' than males.⁵ Fourth, female speakers use features which indicate tentativeness, such as 'tag questions', 'hedges' and other expressions that make them sound hesitant or uncertain.⁶ These findings have given rise to the idea that women speak in a cooperative way or a polite way, whereas men speak in a competitive way.⁷ Yet do all women stereotypically speak this way? Does distinct 'women's language' really exist? It seems odd that few researchers have doubted the existence of 'women's language'. As we shall reveal later, one of the biggest problems in language research of sex differences is the confusion between how women actually speak and how people think women should speak.

Since the 1970's, as feminism developed, linguists have conducted thorough research on differences between the sexes and they have tried to determine the features that 'women's language' contains. In sociolinguistics, a speaker's sex has been treated as an independent variable. Moreover, linguistic research into sex differences, conducted under the name of 'science', has regarded men as the norm and women as a deviation in the natural premise. In other words, most of the linguistic research into sex differences has emphasised, empirically or not, how different women's language use is from men's language which is considered to be the norm. It will be presumed that this female/male division in research has resulted in reinforcing the female/male dichotomy in society. In this paper, we would like to prove that alleged women's language is not a product of proper research but is a product of the 'androcentric' ideology which works to suppress women. Our aim is not to state that women speak exactly the same way as men but it is to show how stereotypes of women's speech in sociolinguistics are more unfairly exaggerated in reality.

It is important to think about why researchers have chosen to study sex differences rather than similarities, and why they have interpreted their

research findings in sexist ways. We need research on research. We shall discuss how studies on sex differences in language use are affected by the androcentric ideology and how 'women's language' is orchestrated or even fabricated through such research. The danger of this androcentric ideology is that it has affected even feminist researchers. In fact, some of what feminist linguists have done can be seen as just reinterpreting the stereotypes. Such descriptions of women's language articulated by linguists, who are 'scientific' authorities supposedly, have a risk of becoming prescriptions of female speech. These prescriptions, or static stereotypes of women's language, appear to be a structure which enhances the polarisation between the sexes. It is therefore plausible that in future language and sex difference studies the central concern should be to go beyond the simple female/male dichotomy.

2. Can pure 'objectivity' be possible?

Linguistics is usually defined as the 'scientific' study of language. The procedures of sociolinguistic research as a science generally have these four phases. First is the formulation of a hypothesis. Second is data sampling. Third is the interpretation of that data, and the last phase is an explanation of those results. If research is proven scientifically, then it must be 'objective' in all of these phases.

At this time, it is necessary to point out that there is, "a danger of seeing what you want to see (Swann, 1992, P.198)" in any research. It is reported that even people who see the same thing from the same vantage point interpret what they see differently (Chalmers, 1978). This implies that the interpretation depends on the observer's situation and expectations, therefore it can be said that the result of research is virtually determined by the way hypotheses are formed. If this is the case, then it is accurate to speculate that if researchers wish to verify stereotypes in women's speech, they could interpret empirical data in whatever way meets their expectations. Any research findings would unconsciously reflect the researcher's own ideologies. In this respect, 'objectivity' in linguistic

research may no longer make sense. We must take into account that any 'truth' constructed through research is a social product that cannot be divorced from the biases a researcher starts with. The stereotypes of 'women's language' may seem truthless once we subvert the taken-for-granted perspective.

3. Early works on women's language

Jespersen's work, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (1922) has attracted our attention as one of the rare works which looked at women's language in earlier times. In the chapter entitled 'The Woman', Jespersen confidently asserts that, for example: Women speak more politely than men, and have smaller and less varied vocabularies. Women differ from men in their use of certain adjectives such as 'pretty' and 'nice', and adverbs such as 'vastly' and 'so'. His claim could be interpreted as meaning that women use a different language than men. Note that his work is a typical example which treats one group (men) as the norm and the other group (women) as deviant.

Feminists have criticised his work as stereotypical and sexist. While dogmatizing on women's characteristics of speech, Jespersen did not collect his own data from actual conversations of women: he instead refers to women's dialogues in novels written by men. Feminists have argued that because of Jespersen's overt prejudice against women and the insufficiency of his method, alleged women's language in his work should be considered as a product of the androcentric ideology. However, the problem is not only that Jespersen's work is stereotypical, but that these stereotypes have been swallowed, and perhaps are still believed by the public. Generally the problem of stereotyping is that stereotypes, which may or may not be close to reality, tend to be justified by the fact that many people believe them, and consequently the social prejudices hidden behind them also tend to be justified.

Ironically, even feminist linguists have not always probed into folklinguistic stereotypes, whilst criticising Jespersen's work. It is

generally said that Lakoff's work, *Language and Women's Place* (1975) marked the beginning of the twentieth-century linguistic interest in sex differences. Her claim about female speech is known as the 'Lakoff hypothesis': For example, Lakoff asserts that women are more likely to use empty adjectives such as 'divine', 'charming' and 'lovely'. Intensifiers such as 'so', 'really' and 'very', and qualifiers such as 'not exactly' and 'a bit', are more frequently spoken by women than men. Women use more tag questions, more hedges, more rising intonations and more polite forms than men use. Lakoff explains that these characteristics of 'women's language' are a result of linguistic subordination: A woman must learn to speak 'women's language' to avoid being criticised as unfeminine by society. As a result, women appear to lack authority, seriousness, conviction and confidence in their conversation.

It is important to point out that there are some parallels between Lakoff's work as a feminist and Jespersen's work as a traditional linguist. Both of them develop exactly the same argument, for instance, on the use of certain adverbs and adjectives in women's speech. Lakoff's work has also been attacked by feminists as stereotypical and androcentric in two points: First, she tends to use the 'men as the norm and women as a deviation' framework as if it were taken for granted. She seems to assume the existence of women's language which is inferior to and different from men's language. In short, she is biased against women's language from the start. Second, there is a problem with her method. She examines her own intuitions rather than a collective corpus of data. Using this method may direct the researcher to merely describe her own biases. Thus Lakoff's work should also be regarded as a product of the androcentric ideology.

Both Jespersen and Lakoff claim to describe how women converse. However what they actually do is merely itemise folklinguistic stereotypes which unconsciously reflect the general public's idea about how women should speak. Lakoff herself, unknowingly conveys to us the realisation

that sexist stereotypes are deeply-rooted even in feminists' minds.

Nevertheless, we should not abandon Lakoff's work as just stereotypical. While considering her work as a product of the androcentric ideology, Lakoff's study is significant in two ways: (1) She is the very first feminist researcher to deal with women's language; (2) Later studies on sex differences in English language have developed through arguments based on Lakoff's work. In other words, later works have attempted to verify or falsify the 'Lakoff hypothesis'.

4. Works after Lakoff

4.1. The dominance approach and the difference approach

After Lakoff, many researchers have attempted to verify stereotypes of women's language. Their explanations of linguistic sex differences can be divided into two conflicting currents; "the dominance approach" and "the difference approach". The dominance approach sees women as an oppressed and marginalised group, and interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech as a reflection of men's dominance and women's subordination. Lakoff's study, which asserts that women's language is trivial, is categorised as a radical version of this approach. Other typical examples of this approach are the study by Fishman (1980) which supports the 'Lakoff hypothesis', and that by Zimmerman & West (1975). After transcribing three married couples' taped conversations, Fishman (1980) reports that the women ask questions of any kind two and a half times more than the men. She also finds that the women in these conversations use hedgings five times more frequently than the men. She explains that women use questions and hedges to facilitate conversations, because after all, men have the upper hand in any conversation. The conversational strategies by these women are seen as a reflection of their inferior social position. Zimmerman & West (1975) empirically prove that women use less interruptions than men in mixed-sex conversations. They argue that women are more likely to allow interruptions indicating a submission to men. Researchers of this

approach explain their findings in terms of sexual inequalities and a woman's inferiority.

On the other hand, the difference approach, emerging later than the dominance approach, emphasises the idea that women and men belong to separate subcultures to which no pejorative value should be attached. The sex differences in language use are interpreted as a reflection of these distinct subcultures. Research by Maltz & Borker (1982), Jones (1980) and Coates (1989) is categorised in this approach. Maltz & Borker (1982) argue that the features in women's speech reflect not so much the point of a power imbalance between women and men but that the sexes have different norms for conversational interaction. Boys are likely to play in large hierarchical groups in which they learn a competitive style of speech, whereas girls tend to play in small 'best friends' groups in which they learn a supportive speech style. Likewise Jones (1980) claims, in her observation of women's gossip, that cooperative speech strategies arise from valuable female subcultures. Coates' (1989) study on women's gossip also highlights the strengths of cooperative conversation. Researchers of this approach explain their findings in terms of subcultural differences between the sexes by objectively putting the same value on either sex.

4.2. Some problems in both approaches

While we could admit value of both approaches, we could also see androcentric traps for feminists in both options. If one takes the 'dominance' approach, there is a risk of degrading women as passive victims whose cultural forms have no positive attributes. This approach suggests that if a woman wants to gain social power, she should speak more like a man. This implies 'biologism' - women are inferior because of their sex. The problem with this approach is that it seems to accept women's subordinate position.

By contrast, if one opts for the 'difference' approach, she seems to ignore the political questions of actual male dominance in societies whilst

posturing objectivity. This approach basically asserts that women and men are JUST different and that is all; This could after all result in the justification of existing sexual inequalities. This approach is more likely to be trapped in 'essentialism'. This option may direct researchers to set up oppressive norms of 'authentic' femininity. In the end, feminists are in a dilemma that neither approach is politically advantageous for women.

Yet the important fact we must recognise is that women and men do not speak separate languages. Most of the works following Lakoff are empirical studies, which generally implies that the findings are 'scientific'. However the problem in both approaches, first of all, lies in their assumption: these works have been based on the 'Lakoff hypothesis' which is itself unjust against women. That is to say, the majority of researchers of both the dominance and difference approaches automatically hypothesise the same thing -- 'there is 'women's language' which is different from men's language, and all women talk in the same way'.

Moreover, another problem is the lack of a clear theoretical and practical framework. Empirical works conducted so far among various researchers are somewhat confused in terms of data amounts, research methodology and interpretation of data. As a result, they explain their findings of sex differences in language, however small or vague they are, as either a reflection of male dominance and female subordination, or as sub-cultural differences between the sexes. It is no wonder that these researchers have verified the existence of distinct women's language rather than the nonexistence of it, because their findings are almost fixed by the way they formulate their hypothesis based on Lakoff's. It seems that the elaboration of a more refined framework is a matter of urgency.

Should we accept without reserve the existence of alleged 'women's language' which these researchers have found through their stereotypical hypothesis and inconsistent methods? Or, are there other ways of interpreting data rather than correlating them with sex differences? As we will discuss, potential sociolinguistic markers of sex might be markers

of other social and interactional variables at the same time, and may be more directly related to the latter.

Sex-typed linguistic features in English have been said to be of relative nature -- there are no sex-exclusive differences.⁸ Therefore sociolinguists have aimed to quantify differences in usage of certain linguistic features between the sexes. In so doing, researchers have simply counted the frequency of, for example, tag questions and interruptions in their empirical research without taking into account the speakers' social status, the age of the participants, or the context of the conversation. By 'context' here, we mean not only the time and place but the structure and function of a communicative event and the relationships between its members. Note that the method of sociolinguistics is to compare one 'norm' category with another category. The 'norm' category has been that of white middle-class males. So the frequency or non-frequency of a certain linguistic behaviour in female speech has been taken to signify negativeness.

We would like to raise two questions here. One is whether the sex of the speaker should be categorical or not. A speaker's sex has been perceived as an important social category that affects how we speak, thereby researchers have tried to demonstrate clear-cut sex differences in language use. However, the sex of the speaker is only one of a number of social groupings supposedly related to language use. The way someone speaks on any one occasion in fact depends on several factors other than sex. A woman may speak differently when talking to her mother about clothes than when discussing a problem with classmates in a university seminar. Moreover, women and men are not homogenised groups as there are variations within the sexes such as the middle class, working class, aged, young, white, coloured etc. As Poynton (1985) argues, the statistical techniques generally employed in linguistic research so far have focused on the data of groups as wholes and allowed researchers to ignore the range of variation within groups, which commonly informs us that females and males are more alike than they are

different.

The other question is whether there is a static one-to-one relationship between certain linguistic strategies (e.g. tag questions) and specific communicative functions (e.g. tentativeness). Many researchers have used mechanical definitions to identify particular linguistic marks. However, specific linguistic strategies actually have extremely diverse meanings. We must realise that defining some linguistic features is itself an interpretative act for researchers and that the interpretation might be different depending on the researchers' judgements. Language and sex difference research should not be approached as an automatic search for specific linguistic characters. Taking these aspects into consideration, we will start examining the validity of some popular research findings in women's language.

5. A critical assessment of some sex difference research

5.1. Interruption

Women are believed to interrupt less than men do, because men are thought to dominate the conversation whereas women are considered as cooperative speakers. This stereotype has been supported by such researchers as Zimmerman & West (1975). They investigate casual mixed-sex conversations on a campus and report that 96 percent of the interruptions are produced by men. They regard interruption as a device for exercising power and control in conversation, and a violation of a speaker's turn to talk. If a second speaker starts speaking at what is considered a transition-relevance place, they define it as an 'overlap' which is neutral. If a second speaker starts speaking at a point which is not considered a transition-relevance place, they define it as an 'interruption' which is negative.

However, there is an ambiguity in the definition of an interruption. We could criticise that researchers who report 'men interrupt more than women' use mechanical definitions to identify interruptions. There is in fact no absolute framework for recognising an occurrence of interruption,

since a speaker's 'completion rights' depend on several factors such as length and frequency of speech, which are always negotiated among the interactants in each context. In short, to claim that one has 'observed' an interruption is making a subjective judgement. The following example which West & Zimmerman (1983) interpret as an interruption by the male speaker may be in fact interpreted as an overlap:

Female: So uh you really can't bitch when you've got all those
on the same day (4.2) but I uh asked my physics professor
if I couldn't chan[ge that]

Male: [Don't] touch that
(1.2)

Female: What?
(#)

Male: I've got everything jus'how I want in that notebook (#)
You'll screw it up leafin' through it like that.

(West & Zimmerman, 1983, p.105)⁹

In this case, we could argue that if the male feels the female's handling of his notebook is destroying his organisation of it, he surely has a right to ask her to stop immediately, without waiting for a transition-relevance place (Tannen, 1994). Furthermore, whether an overlapping in conversation is 'overlap' or 'interruption' cannot be determined merely by a researchers' judgement. Murray (1985) shows that the following example is judged as an interruption by half of the women he investigated, but not by the other half:

H: I think [that

W: [Do you want some more salad?

What we should recognise here is by using a 'simple counting' method of linguistic features, it could direct researchers to a one-sided interpretation. Instead researchers must take account of the context of the conversation which even includes the participants' intention.¹⁰ The interpretation should depend on the situation, setting and the relationship between the speaker and listener, since the same linguistic strategy

actually has a different interactional purpose and function in different contexts.

Suppose one, as a teacher, wears a T-shirt and jeans. If she dresses like that among students, it would signify solidarity with the students. On the other hand, the same T-shirt and jeans worn in a formal faculty meeting would connote disrespect for her colleagues. This example symbolises that the same symbols -- a T-shirt and jeans -- can signal various meanings depending on the context.

This example may be analogous to the ambiguity of linguistic behaviour. Researchers should abandon the assumption that there is a fixed one-to-one relationship between a particular linguistic strategy and its function. Tannen (1994) demonstrates that some overlappings in fact have supportive or cooperative effects rather than obstructive effects. Coates (1989) shows that overlappings are used as signals of active listenership in some contexts. Thus everything that occurs in a conversation results from the interaction of all participants. The meaning of any linguistic behaviour is negotiated and renewed in each conversational context. We can then speculate that if Zimmerman & West had closely looked at the context, they might not have found a 'males interrupt females more' paradigm. Women might not be as cooperative or powerless as they claim they are. In fact, Beattie (1981) reveals that female students interrupt more than male students in his study of university tutorials by examining the conversational contexts. Therefore so far as the stereotype 'women use less interruptions because of their inferior position' is concerned, it can be challenged as above. This stereotype should be considered not as a scientific truth but as an androcentric product which tries to confine women to a subordinate position in conversation.

5.2. Tag questions

From Lakoff onwards, tag questions are assumed to be an important character of 'women's language' which seems to indicate that women lack

assertiveness:

- (a) The economic crisis in Japan is terrible.
- (b) The economic crisis in Japan is terrible, isn't it?

Siegler & Siegler (1976) asked college students to guess whether women or men produce the above sorts of sentences. Their result supports the stereotype: a sentence like (b) is more often attributed to women, whereas a sentence like (a) is more often attributed to men. This research reflects what people's perceptions and expectations are. It does not, however, reveal that women in reality use more tags than men.

In fact, the stereotype 'women use more tag questions' has been empirically proven to be true by researchers such as Fishman (1980) and Preisler (1986). However, the problem is that many researchers who study the use of tag questions¹¹ have assumed that tag questions have only one function, namely tentativeness which manifests a women's inferior social position. On the contrary, as we will see, tag questions actually represent multifunctionality and a diversity of meaning.

Holmes (1984) argues that tags can express either 'modal' or 'affective' meanings depending on the situation. According to her classification, the role of 'modal' tags is to confirm information of which a speaker is uncertain; e.g. "You were missing yesterday, weren't you?" 'Affective' tags have two roles: One is a 'softening' tag which is used to indicate concern for the addressee to mitigate a face-threatening act; e.g. "Shut the window, could you?" The other is a 'facilitative' tag which is used to offer the addressee a chance to go into the conversation; e.g. "This is a nice car, isn't it?" Note that Lakoff (1975) only refers to the 'facilitative' tags. After counting the distribution of tags in a corpus by using the above classification, Holmes (1984) reports that women and men do not notably differ in the total usage of tags, although men are more likely to use modal tags whereas women use more facilitative tags. More importantly, she finds that conversational facilitators are more likely to use tag questions. By facilitator, she means those who are responsible

for creating a smooth interaction such as leaders, teachers and hosts. Then it can be said that the use of tags does not always depend on the speaker's sex as has been posited, but the speaker's role in the conversation.

Furthermore, Cameron et al. (1989) find that powerless participants in unequal encounters never use affective tags irrespective of their sex. They suggest that in an interaction, tags overall are more frequently used by powerful participants in terms of social class, age and occupation. Their findings contradict Lakoff's hypothesis. These studies show how misleading the 'women use more tag questions because of their lack of confidence and of their weakness' stereotype is.

6. Some remarks on Japanese sociolinguistics

Japanese sociolinguistic research into sex differences seems to have the same problems as English sociolinguistics: Researchers have tended to reveal cultural stereotypes by confusion between the socially expected speech of women and the actual speech of women.

The 'women speak more politely' stereotype is one of the most popular research findings as we have referred to earlier. For example, Hori (1986) empirically proves that women use more honorifics than men. She explains that women cannot safely use forms which lack politeness because nobody except children are clearly ranked below the housewife in social status. However, we could criticise this because it is an inevitable result brought forth by her research methodology. First, she uses the 'questionnaire' method. She asks her informants questions such as: "Write a variant of 'iku' you usually use when asking 'When do you go?' (itsu-iku-ka?) to the different people you meet". The use of this method may lead a researcher to obtain stereotypical results because informants are likely to give socially expected answers rather than the actual ones. A second problem is her choice of informants. They are 256 men ranging from 42 to 70 years old, and 271 women ranging from 40 to 62. Most of the men are white-collar workers and most of the women are

housewives. There is a clear disparity between the sexes in terms of their occupations: Working women, whose social status is supposed to be more equal to male workers, should have been included more in the survey. A more important problem lies in the age of the informants: They are all middle-aged or older. Recently young people are often accused of vulgar speech and of not knowing how to use honorifics. This suggests that younger women may be less likely to speak the polite 'women's language' than older women.¹² So the research findings cannot be definitely persuasive if the researcher overlooks the young women's use of language. We cannot explore this any further in this paper, but we would like to discuss the problems of Japanese sex difference research some other time.

7. Conclusion

We have brought forward some of the methodological problems in much of the sex difference research. Most of the research has been based on the questionable assumption that there is a simple one-to-one relationship between particular linguistic strategies and their communicative functions. In so doing, researchers have correlated the frequency of these strategies by the sex of the speakers. By using 'men as the norm and women as a deviation' criteria, they have explained their results in order to prove how women's language use is inferior to or different from men's: "a lot of sex difference research was done specifically in order to provide a scientific account of an already-assumed female inferiority . . . research results have been used to justify particular aspects of women's subordination . . . (Cameron, 1992, p.36)." If so, we should become critically aware that alleged 'women's language' may not be a scientific truth. 'Silent', 'non-assertive', 'indirect', 'polite' and 'supportive' women in an interaction can be seen as merely an ideal prescribed by the androcentric ideology. It is now recognised that perceptions of female speech and prescriptions about how women ought to speak are the head and tail of the same coin.

In their study of courtroom language, O'Barr & Atkins (1989) confirm

that 'women's language' is not characteristic of all women. We must therefore abandon the 'either women or men' notion about certain linguistic features in future language and sex difference research. A speaker's sex should not be regarded as an unproblematic independent variable but should be considered as only one of the several complex variables.

As we have seen, even feminists have been affected by the androcentric ideology, and as a result they have conspired to reinforce stereotypes of 'women's language' against their initial intention. Many feminist linguists have conducted their research under the name of 'objective' science, and in the end they have continued to inferiorise women. In this sense, 'objectivity' in linguistics could be seen as one particular form of the androcentric ideology. If researchers' standpoints cannot possibly be objective, then there is no longer any sense in trying to feign objectivity. Such being the case, feminist linguists would not have to hide their aim of raising women's social position in future research. Feminists should not stress the significance of disparity in sex difference research, rather they should study how women and men are similar, and how women differ among themselves. The ideal situation for feminists is that female/male differences become politically and socially inconsequential, in the same way that some human variations such as blood types are. To reach that goal, future researchers need to go beyond the simple female/male dichotomy in linguistic research. We now must conclude that it is impossible and senseless to try to abstract the distinctive female/male linguistic characteristics like a binary opposition on the grounds that; (1) each woman and man talks differently depending on the situation; and that (2) the meaning of a specific linguistic behaviour is not perpetually fixed but is negotiated within the participating group in each interaction.

Notes

- 1 See for example, Swacker, 1975, Bernard, 1972.

- 2 As for the 'women talk more politely' stereotype, see for example, Lakoff, 1975, Ogino et al., 1985. Regarding the 'women use more questions' stereotype, see for example, Fishman, 1980.
- 3 See for example, Zimmerman & West, 1975, West & Zimmerman, 1983.
- 4 See for example, Lakoff, 1975, Conley, O'Barr & Lind, 1979.
- 5 See for example, Fishman, 1980.
- 6 See for example, Lakoff, 1975, Fishman, 1980, Preisler, 1986.
- 7 See for example, Coates, 1993.
- 8 See for example, Zimmerman & West, 1975, Fishman, 1980, O'Barr & Atkins, 1980, Holmes, 1984.
- 9 In this quotation, [] indicates that the portions of utterances so encased are simultaneous. Numbers in parentheses such as (4.2) indicate the seconds and tenths of seconds ensuing between speaker turns. (#) indicates a pause of about a second.
- 10 Tannen (1994) argues as a scientific method, a researcher should play the recording back to participants in order to solicit their spontaneous interpretations and reactions, and also should solicit their responses to the researcher's interpretations. Jenkins & Kramarae (1981) also point out that without knowing the speaker's interpretations of speech construction, a researcher knows very little about sociological aspects of speaking.
- 11 See for example, Fishman, 1980, Preisler, 1986, Dubois & Crouch, 1975, to name just three. However, while Fishman and Preisler support the 'Lakoff hypothesis' based on their own data sampling, Dubois & Crouch find that all tag questions in their transcript are produced by men.
- 12 For example, Reynolds (1990) reports that the use of 'boku', a male first person pronoun, by junior high school girls is quite common in Tokyo.

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