

Course Topic: Language, Society and Culture**Course Instructor**

Dianne Tyers has held numerous English language teaching, training and management positions over the past 22 years in six different countries. She owns Advance Consulting for Education, INC, an English language teacher training and curriculum development company. Dianne is currently a PhD candidate at OISE, University of Toronto and has a Masters of Applied Linguistics (University of Queensland) and an MBA (University of Western Ontario). She has presented at local, national and international conferences on teaching and management techniques, culture, and language learning.

Course Synopsis

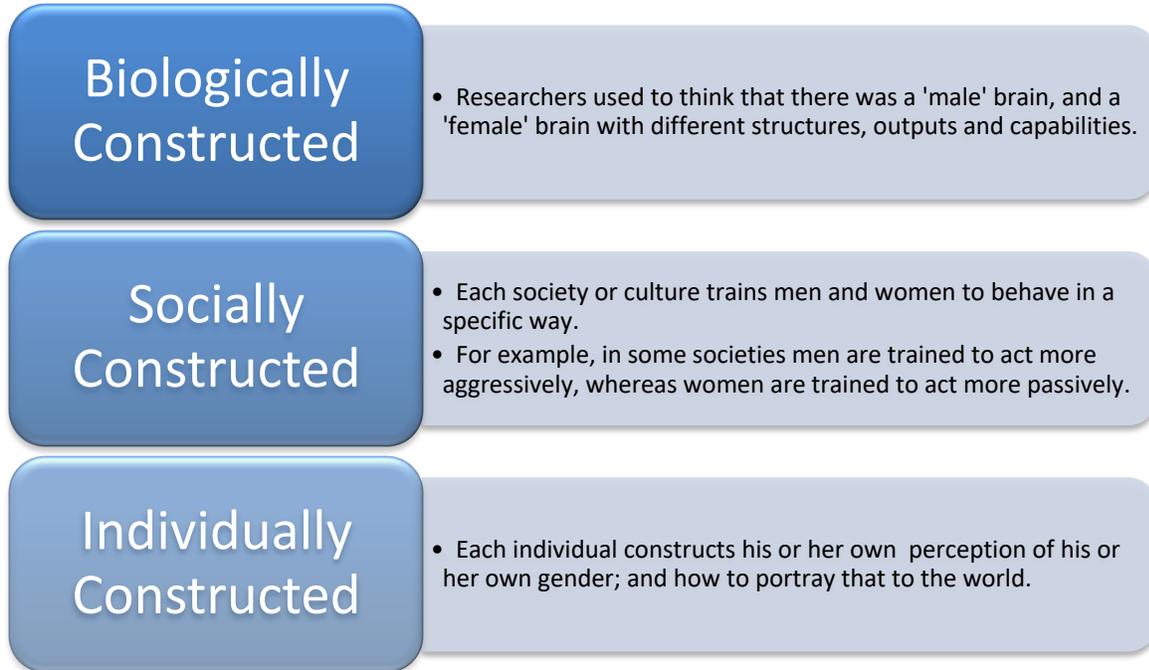
A really interesting area of language use is language use and gender. It generates a lot of captivating debate, is the source of a great deal of comedy and can even create some tension if you get too involved in the topic. As language teachers, it is a valuable area of language use for us to explore with our advanced level students so that they can refine both their understanding of the language and their use of the language.

Course Agenda

1. Definitions of Gender
2. What is the Relationship between Gender and Language Use?
3. Language Used to Talk About Men and Women
4. How Men and Women Use Language

1. Definitions of Gender

Gender studies can be divided into three main areas:



The following video discusses the mythology that exists regarding 'male' and 'female' brains and some of the scientific research that has disproven this myth.

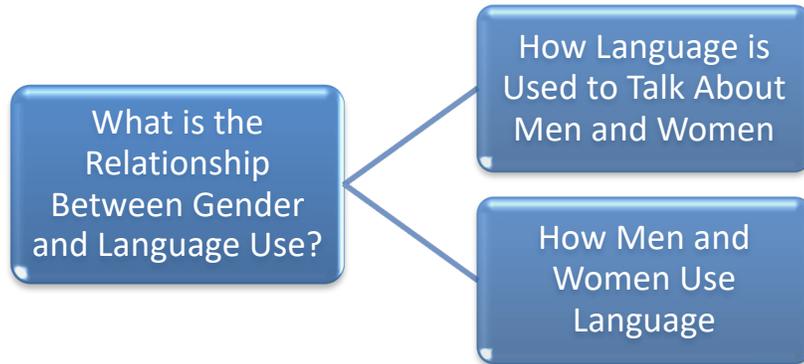


TEDxJaffa - Daphna Joel - Are Brains Male or Female?

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYpDU040yzc

* If the above link does not work, go to www.youtube.com and search for the title of the video clip.

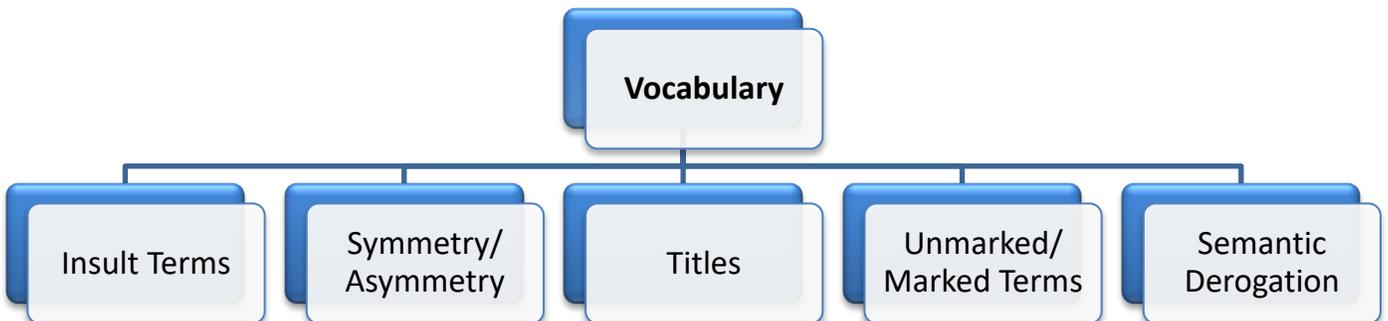
2. What is the Relationship between Gender and Language Use?



3. Language Used to Talk About Men and Women



VOCABULARY



Insult Terms

Activity #1: Use the chart below to brainstorm insult terms that are used for men only, for women only and for both men and women.

Insult Terms Used for Men	Insult Terms Used for Women	Insult Terms Used for Both Men and Women

While completing this activity, you may have noticed that insults targeted at men tend to attack their intellectual capability, physical strength or masculinity; insults for women often attack their sexuality; and insults for both men and women are rather generic.

Symmetry and Asymmetry

Symmetry: The terms used to represent men and the terms used to represent women both have equal usage and scope of use.

Asymmetry: The terms used to represent men and the terms used to represent women DO NOT have equal usage and scope of use.

To illustrate these concepts, let’s look at some examples. In the chart below, you will see a list of terms used to describe horses on the left and a list of terms used to describe humans on the right. The horse terms demonstrate symmetry because they all have equal scope of use. However, when we look at the terms used to describe humans, we can see some asymmetry of use between the terms **man** and **woman**. While the term **woman**, is used only to describe an adult human female, the term **man** has two uses – to describe an adult human male and also to generically describe human beings as a whole.

Symmetry	Asymmetry
Horse (adult generic)	Human (adult generic)
Stallion (adult male)	Man (adult male, human generic)
Mare (adult female)	Woman (adult female)
Foal (young generic)	Child (young generic)
Colt (young male)	Boy (young male)
Filly (young female)	Girl (young female)

Titles

When we look at titles in English, we can see some differentiation between the titles used for men and the titles used for women. As shown in the chart below, men receive the title of **Mr.** regardless of marital status, whereas women are given different titles depending upon whether they are married or

single – **Miss** is used for single women, **Mrs.** is used for married women, and **Ms.** is used as a generic title for women. There are also a number of generic titles that are the same regardless of gender.

Male	Female	Generic
Mr.	Miss	Dr.
	Mrs.	Judge
	Ms.	President

Unmarked and Marked Terms

Unmarked Terms: Terms *without* specific endings indicating that the words are only used to talk about males or only used to talk about females.

Marked Terms: Terms *with* specific endings indicating that the words are only used to talk about males or only used to talk about females.

Male	Female
Prince	Princess
Count	Countess
Duke	Duchess
Waiter (unmarked)	Waitress (marked)
Actor (unmarked)	Actress (marked)
Host (unmarked)	Hostess (marked)
Comedian (unmarked)	Comedienne (marked)
Usher (unmarked)	Usherette (marked)

The concepts of symmetry and asymmetry differ slightly from marked and unmarked terms. In symmetry and asymmetry, the words used to indicate gender are different words entirely, whereas with marked and unmarked terms, the base words remain the same and are marked either male or female by the word endings.

In recent years, we have seen the marked versions of words used less and less as more women are choosing to be referred to by unmarked terms.

Semantic Derogation

Semantic derogation is when a normally positive word takes on a negative connotation in specific situations and therefore loses its value.

Superior	Inferior
Gentleman	Lady (<i>lady of the night, cleaning lady</i>)
Boy	Girl (in reference to full grown women)
Bachelor	Spinster Bachelorette (less negative than spinster)

GRAMMAR

English grammar presents us with an interesting challenge when it comes to the language that we use to talk about men and women. In English, there are two different third person singular pronouns that we use to talk about people – ‘**he**’ is used to talk about men, and ‘**she**’ is used to talk about women. This presents us with a problem when we want to talk about human beings generally.

Look at the following examples that illustrate this challenge:

1. *A teacher should create a lesson plan for **his** lessons. If **he** does, **he** will be prepared and organized.*
2. *A teacher should create a lesson plan for **his/her** lessons. If **he/she** does, **he/she** will be prepared and organized.*
3. *Teachers should create a lesson plan for **their** lessons. If **they** do, **they** will be prepared and organized.*

In the past, many texts used the male form ‘*he*’ in these types of situations to talk about people generally. However, in recent years, as women have gained more socioeconomic power, it has become unacceptable to use the pronoun ‘*he*’ in reference to situations or professions that women are heavily present in.

While using the ‘*he/she*’ option is probably the most accurate, it can sound awkward and disrupt the flow of a dialogue or text. For this reason, many people choose not to use this option.

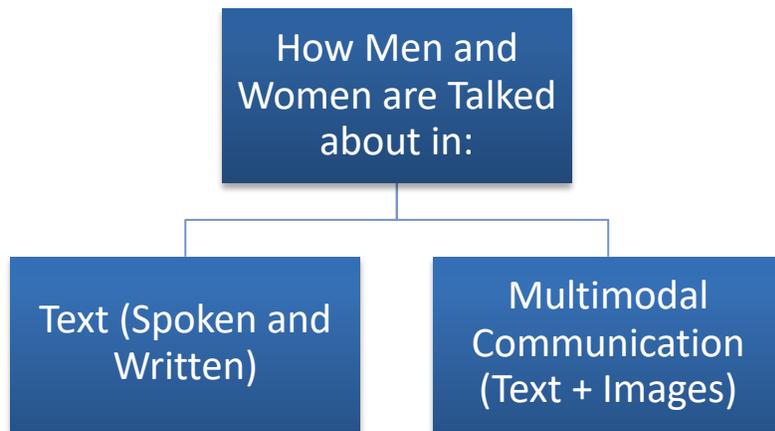
You will notice in the last example that we made the situation plural and used the pronoun, ‘*they*’, which does not indicate male or female. By doing this, we can avoid having to choose between ‘*he*’ or ‘*she*’. This option is the most grammatically and politically correct.

There is a final option to use in this situation and that is to replace the singular pronouns, ‘*he*’ or ‘*she*’ with the plural pronoun, ‘*their*’. For example:

*A teacher has to put a lot of work into planning **their** lesson plans.*

This option is not grammatically correct; however, it eliminates the need to use the gender-specific pronouns, ‘*he*’ or ‘*she*’. It is, therefore, politically correct and is quite commonly used.

DISCOURSE



Take a look at the following advertisements that go back in time quite a bit and consider what ideas they communicate about men and women.



GET THE POWER

THE POWER TO CLEAN ANYTHING.

STAINS • ODORS • GREASE • DIRT • GRIME

THEY MAY LOOK LIKE TIDE... OR TALK LIKE TIDE...

BUT IN YOUR WASHING MACHINE... THEY JUST AREN'T THE SAME AS TIDE!

NOTHING LIKE TIDE!

TIDE WASHES CLOTHES MIRACLE CLEAN

WITHOUT RINSING!

Just wash—wring out—hang up!
Cuts washday work in half!

No other washing product is made the way Tide is made. Just try Tide without rinsing! Take your wash out of the suds—wring it out—hang it up! Tide keeps the dirt *suspended* in the sudsy water. When you wring out the clothes, the dirt runs out with the washwater... and clothes come bright, white, and *clean*! And they iron so easily! What's more, this method saves wear and tear! Saves time, work, hot water! Get Procter & Gamble's Tide today—and remember! Other products may look like Tide... and talk like Tide... but they just aren't the same as Tide!

WHICHEVER WASHING METHOD YOU USE...
with - or - without - rinsing
TIDE DOES A BETTER WASHING JOB THAN ANY SOAP ON EARTH!

ClickAmericana.com



He's one of the busiest men in town. While his *doze* may say *Office Hours 2 to 4*, he's actually on call 24 hours a day.

The doctor is a scientist, a diplomat, and a friendly sympathetic human being all in one, no matter how long and hard his schedule.

According to a recent Nationwide survey:

MORE DOCTORS SMOKE CAMELS THAN ANY OTHER CIGARETTE

DOCTORS in every branch of medicine—113,597 in all—were queried in this nationwide study of cigarette preference. Three leading research organizations made the survey. The gist of the query was—What cigarette do you smoke, Doctor?

The brand named must use Camel!

The rich, full flavor and cool mildness of Camel's superb blend of costlier tobaccos seem to have the same appeal to the smoking tastes of doctors as to millions of other smokers. If you see a Camel smoker, this preference among doctors will hardly surprise you. If you're not—well, try Camels now.

Your "T-Zone" Will Tell You...

T for Taste...
T for Throat...
that's your proving ground for any cigarette. See if Camels don't suit your "T-Zone" to a "T."

CAMELS Costlier Tobaccos



The Chef does everything but cook—that's what wives are for!

I'm giving my wife a

Kenwood Chef

4. How Men and Women Use Language

If we look at television shows and films, we can see a fairly clear difference in the language that is used by men and women, particularly with comedy. Take a look at the following videos and pay close attention to what ideas are being conveyed by how women use language and how men use language.

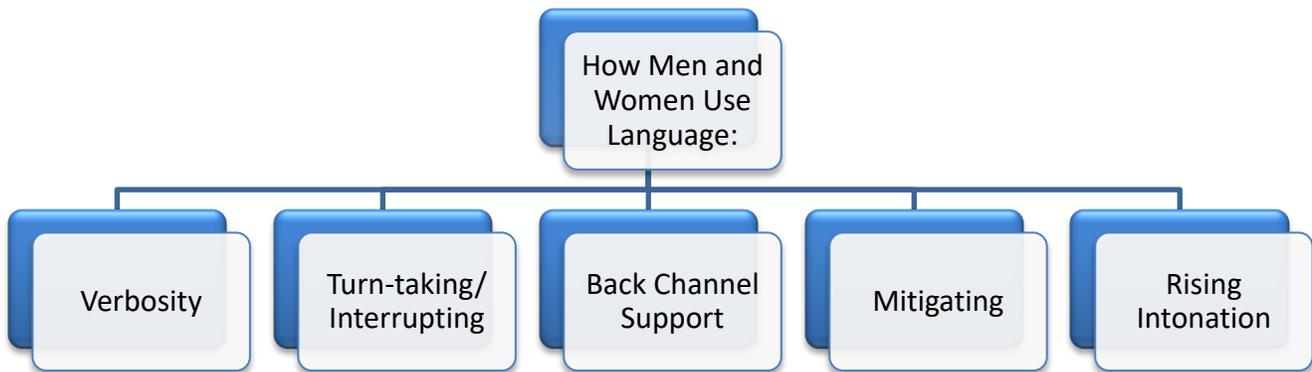


Clueless Movie Trailer
<https://youtu.be/Mgijwq1ZzdPQ>



Seinfeld: Kramer on Marriage
<https://youtu.be/8usZpqEtDv0>

*If either of the above links does not work, go to www.youtube.com and search for the title of the video clip.



Verbosity

Do men speak more than women or do women speak more than men? Studies are inconclusive. Within certain contexts, women are more verbose, and in other contexts, men are more verbose. In general, the person with more power in a situation will usually speak more than the person with less power.

Turn-taking and Interrupting

Who takes more turns in a conversation and who interrupts more? Studies are inconclusive and suggest, again, that it is highly situation specific. Within certain contexts, women take turns and interrupt more frequently, and in other contexts, men take turns and interrupt more frequently. Personality also plays a key role; some people are simply more talkative than others, regardless of gender.

Back Channel Support

Does the listener encourage the speaker to continue talking through active listening strategies, eye contact, posture and facial expression? For example, a listener may say things like: “Really?”, “Wow, that’s interesting!”, “I didn’t know that.” They may also ask open-ended questions or use nonverbal communication such as displaying an interested facial expression or leaning forward. Research shows that women tend to use slightly more back channel support than men, however the difference is minimal.

Mitigating

Mitigating is the use of strategies and words in order to decrease the power of a message. **Hedging** is one form of mitigation that involves the use of hesitation to lessen the intensity of a message. Using terms like ‘sort of’, ‘kind of’ or ‘um’ are examples of hedging. Another form of mitigation is the use of **epistemic modals** – words such as ‘should’, ‘could’, ‘might’ or ‘may’ that reduce the forcefulness of a message. Other words like ‘possibly’ or ‘probably’ can also be used to mitigate. Research is, again, inconclusive in terms of which gender uses mitigating more. Studies did find that the use of mitigation tends to be related to situations involving a power differential. People with less power in a situation tend to mitigate more, while people with more power in a situation, mitigate less.

Rising Intonation

Rising intonation adds a questioning tone or degree of uncertainty to a statement. For example, “I’m going out tonight.” implies that the speaker is certain about this statement. Using rising intonation in this scenario, “I’m going out tonight?”, implies that the speaker is questioning or uncertain. Research conclusively shows that rising intonation is used much more frequently by females, particularly female teenagers.

Language Use Research

In the Newman, et al. study, researchers took texts generated by men and texts generated by women, and analyzed them at the word level for differences in number of words used, types of words used and topics discussed. The research shows that women talk more about people, emotions, internal processes and thought processes; whereas men talk more about external events and topics typically associated with men, such as sports. There were several areas that revealed no difference in the language used by men versus the language used by women.

There are several limitations on research attempting to pinpoint differences between how men use language and how women use language, such as:

- Small sample sizes
- Differences in age, region and profession of participants
- Influence of context
- Challenges with data analysis

Gender Differences in Other Languages

Some languages have very specific gender differences. In Japanese, for example, there are certain structures that only men use and certain structures that only women use. These are most evident in:

- Sentence endings
- Questions
- The pronouns “you” and “I”

There are many other languages that have clear grammatical, vocabulary or pronunciation patterns that are assigned to male language use and female language use. If you know any other languages, take some time to explore these differences in language use.

Finally, consider the fact that for the purposes of this session, we have simplified the concept of gender to merely ‘male’ or ‘female’. Remember that gender identity is a highly complex topic. Depending on where people fall on the gender classification continuum, they may or may not make different language

use choices. Examining language use from this perspective can be extremely interesting and is certainly worth exploring.

Thanks for Participating!

www.aceducation.ca