153. Gender and Language/Geschlecht und Sprache

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1. Introduction

The question of whether, to what degree and in which respect, gender determines use of language and is manifested in the structural properties of languages has attracted until now public as well as scientific interest, causing an explosion of scientific publications and controversial debates on this topic since the seventies (well documented in the annotated bibliography by Thorne/Kramarae/Henley 1983 and the reader edited by Jennifer Coates 1998; cf. Klann-Delius 2005). The basic assumptions of all these studies are genuine sociolinguistic ones, claiming that a) with respect to its structural properties and rule-governed uses, language has to be conceived of as a product of cooperation between (historically specific) socialized subjects as members of (historically specific) societies, which in turn influences the way people think about themselves and the world; b) membership of society as well as socialization differs for men and women because of the differences in the organization of labor and the different interpretations societies have developed for the biological difference of the sexes. Thus the conclusion was drawn that language use differs for women and men and, that gender-specific ways of using language might have become incorporated in language structure in the course of its historical development. Empirical studies and theoretical arguments which try to give evidence for or against these assumptions will be reported in this article and the attempt will be made to evaluate the reported findings with respect to their empirical basis and theoretical framework.

Throughout this article the term "gender" is used to indicate that men's and women's different behavior is to be seen as "socially acquired rather than biologically innate" (Bing/Bergvall 1998, 496). The use of this term does not imply that socially acquired, gender related bahaviors are seen as totally independent from its roots in sex differences as Butler (1993) for instance claims, since all constructions of gender refer to mortality and natality as quality of the human body and its sex (Landweer 1994).

2. Gender and language structure

Up until now no natural language has been reported on, which is totally neutral with respect to reflexions of biological sex differences in its system, the type and degree of this reflexion however differs widely. In some cultures specific morphological forms, syntactic devices for construction of gender-appropriate address formulas, specific words (taboo-words) or even whole languages such as for instance the Sanskrit are provided for the exclusive use of one sex only thus indicating that gender may be connected with the use of structurally differing features of language (Jespersen 1922; Sapir 1951; Ide 1980; De Stefano 1979). It should be stressed however that the reported structural differences of women's vs. men's language never go as far as to rule out the sharing of a common language (Prakrit) or result in their languages being totally different – otherwise no Japanese man could understand the honor of his wife's address devices (McConnell-Ginet 1980; Shibamoto 1987). Besides these more obvious reflections of gender in language structure there are other, at first glance less visible ones which have been investigated primarily for the languages of western culture. Among these the system of gender-marking (2.1.), the linguistic means of personal reference (2.2.), and properties of the lexical system (2.3.) have been primarily investigated.

2.1. Grammatical gender

The various natural languages make different use of grammatical gender, which primarily fulfils the syntactic function of indicating congruence. There are languages such as Finnish or Hungarian that do not have grammatical gender and others such as German which differentiate a female, male, and neutral gender (Beit-Hallahmi/Catford/Cooley et al. 1974). Despite the fact that the relation between grammatical and natural gender of the reference object is clearly arbitrary when synchronically seen (as reveal-

ed by different gender ascriptions to identical reference objects in different natural languages: *la lune vs. der Mond),* it has been questioned whether diachronically seen there are imprints of social evaluation of natural gender on the grammatical one (why, for instance, is *der Rechner* 'computer' masculine?); it has also been asked whether despite formal arbitrariness the speaker's interpretation of gender does not rely heavily on ascriptions of natural gender *(god, der Gott is* thought of as masculine because he is male, see Pusch 1984, 20ff). The functioning of grammatical gender in organizing congruence relations is obviously not always arbitrary with respect to natural gender, as those cases show where grammatical and natural gender or number and gender are in conflict; these conflicts are typically resolved in favor of the masculine form, e. g. "Neunundneunzig Lehrerinnen und ein Lehrer, das sind in 'unserer' Sprache genau einhundert 'Lehrer'. Im Französischen sind diese einhundert Personen nicht 'elles', sondern 'ils'" (Pusch 1984, 106).

2.2. Personal reference

The vast majority of studies on gender and language structure have investigated the linguistic means of personal reference (Braun 1993; Braun/Gottburgsen/Sczesny/Stahlberg 1998). It has been shown that the means of nominal *(chairman, der Student von heute)* and pronominal reference, the use of masculine forms as generics *(Frauen und Männer sind gleichberechtigt. Davon kann sich jeder überzeugen)* as well as the system of address-forms (*Mrs.* vs. *Miss*, *Frau* vs. *Fräulein*) and the distribution of occupation descriptions with feminine endings reflect social status differences for women and men (Pusch 1984; Braun 1993; 1996). The generic *he* is not neutral but reflects male dominance at least in the perception of language producers (Martyna 1980; Silveira 1980; Stahlberg/Sczesny 2001).

2.3. Lexicon

Analyses of lexical structure have revealed marked asymmetries *(cleaning lady vs. garbage man),* lexical gaps *(mothering* rather than *fathering)* and specific differentiations of meanings *(he is a professional* means something quite different from *she is a professional)* (McConnell-Ginet 1980, 6). Research has also been started to investigate the composition of words and word-fields under the question whether the masculine form always stands as archilexem when serious matters are concerned *(der Pilot, die Pilotin),* whereas in the more trivial cases feminine archilexemes are conceded *(die Ente, der Enterich* but not *der Piloterich,* see Pusch 1984, 43ff).

All these studies have led to the development of guidelines for avoiding sexist language use (for English: Miller/Swift 1980; for German: Trömel-Plötz/Guentherodt/Hellinger et al. 1982). These guidelines have been put into practice thus altering verbal culture in some spheres of public life and raising the language user's consciousness, a fact which should not be underestimated however pessimistic or optimistic one may be about the possibilities of gaining women's rights through linguistic changes.

3. Gender and language use

3.1. Phonology

As far as phonology (cf. also art. 63) is concerned gender differences of language use are widely reported (empirical investigations of American and British English being the most popular ones). They seem to be "... the best documented of all the linguistic differences between the sexes" (Thorne/Henley 1975, 17).

Differences were found on the segmental (3.1.1.) and on the suprasegmental level of phonology (3.1.2.).

3.1.1. Gender differences on the segmental level

Women were found to be more careful in pronunciation, to realize consonant clusters like */sks/* or */sts/* (Shuy 1969), or the postvocalic r (Levine/Crockett 1966) more frequently, to use correct speech forms like *ing* instead of *in* more often (Riley 1967; Labov 1972; Fasold 1968). The phenomena of phonetic variation observed so far are seen as convincingly testifying greater carefulness or correctness in women's speech. However, as phonetic variation is heavily dependent not only on gender but also on social, regional and situational parameters and the interrelations between these parameters are not yet fully understood theoretically nor thoroughly enough accounted for empirically (see section 5.) interpretations of female correctness on the phonological level are far from convincing: Whether female correctness should be evaluated as a prefer-

ence for generally more prestigious speech-forms (the equation of correctness with prestige being shown in the evaluation test by Elyan/Smith/Giles et al. 1978) or whether correctness should be interpreted as women's endeavor to compensate their lack of social power by using prestigious speech-forms (as Trudgill 1972 assumes) or whether these forms are more prestigious and therefore preferred by women because of their stereotyped association with masculinity (as Giles/Marsh 1978 have shown empirically) is dependent on the type of theory of sex, gender, culture and society which is presupposed: "Skilled use of language may be a basis for power, merely a sign of power, or proof of powerlessness" (Borker 1980, 40). In view of this inconclusive picture of men's and women's use of standard or prestige variants Eckert and McConnell-Ginet recommend to "… abandon several assumptions common in gender and language studies: that gender works independently of other aspects of social identity and relations, that it 'means' the same across communities, and that the linguistic manifestations of that meaning are also the same across communities" (Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1998, 486).

3.1.2. Gender differences on the suprasegmental level

It is widely agreed that women and men differ markedly in intonation. Two types of differences have been investigated empirically, a) variations of the same intonation pattern, b) different selections of different types of intonation patterns (McConnell-Ginet 1980, 72).

a) One overall gender-specific variation feature is pitch, which is somewhat lower for men than for women. This pitch difference is not only due to the average physiological differences of the female/male vocal tract. The range of pitch difference was also found to be dependent on social expectations and culture specific norms about female/male voices. Hollien and his co-workers (Hollien/Shipp 1972; Hollien/Jackson 1973; Majewski/Hollien/Zalewski 1972) have observed that the pitch differences of men and women in Europe are less marked than in the USA. Several studies (Lieberman 1967; Mattingly 1966; Sachs/Lieberman/Erickson 1973) have shown that pitch is not totally determined by anatomical differences but shaped by learned behavior too, showing a tendency for females not to exploit their physiologically possible potential but restricting their capacities to high-pitched voices. Besides pitch-range which – contrary to stereotype – does not seem to be the only and crucial factor for gender-appropriate intonation (Sachs 1975; Terango 1966), monotonicity for men, and pitch-shifting, dynamism of intonation for women are reported as consistent features of intonational variation (Bennet/Weinberg 1979; McConnell-Ginet 1983). Speech intensity also seems to be dependent on the sex of the addressee (Markel/Prebor/Brandt 1972). The variability and vivaciousness of female intonation has been subjected to heavily sex-stereotyped and derogatory interpretations, taking these features as an indicator of women's greater emotionality and equating emotionality with instability (McConnell-Ginet 1983, 78). Here as well as in other cases the same phenomenon could be and has been interpreted in quite the opposite direction: emotionality is not an indicator of instability but of greater inter-personal sensitivity and flexibility. Whether this interpretation is more than just the opposite side of the same stereotype requests empirical investigations of a different format, i.e. studies which do not rely on isolated linguistic items (or unclear item-clusters) but try to embed the interesting phenomena in a thoroughly controlled set of possible co-determining factors (see section 5).

b) Gender differences in selection of different intonation patterns have been anecdotically reported especially for the female preference of patterns with final rise vs. final fall (Brend 1975; Lakoff 1975). These peculiarities have been interpreted as indicating the politeness and submission of women. The reported observations however have been criticized as linguistically unconvincing and too undifferentiated to justify the interpretation given (McConnell-Ginet 1975; 1983; Edelsky 1979). Also Ruth Brend's claim that women not only have preferences for specific intonation patterns but actually use patterns which are absent in men's speech has been refuted (McConnell-Ginet 1983, 81).

3.2. Syntax

There are not many studies which investigate a possible relationship between gender and use of syntactic features (cf. also art. 67). The existing studies concern the following three aspects: Gender related preferences for specific syntactic devices such as tag-questions, expletives, intensifiers (3.2.1.), syntac-

tic hypercorrection in females (3.2.2.), verbal fluency, verbosity of women's speech (3.2.3.).

3.2.1. Syntactic devices

Robin Lakoff (1973; 1975) put forward the claim that the general female tendency towards politeness and submission shows up in specific syntactic choices, mainly in a stronger tendency to use tag-questions, expletives and intensifiers. Neither the postulated quantitative differences in women's and men's speech with respect to these forms nor their interpretation have been confirmed (Klann-Delius 2005). The use of tag-questions was empirically shown to be used more often by men participating in a mixed-sex academic conference, thus indicating that this variable depends not exclusively on gender but also on situational obligations (Dubois/Crouch 1975; Lapadat/Seesahai 1978). The use of expletives and intensifiers has been shown to be dependent on linguistic context (Baumann 1976; De Stefano 1975, 69f) as well as on the type of situational context (Crosby/Nyquist 1977) and age of speaker (Bailey/Timm 1976).

3.2.2. Syntactic correctness

According to Labov (1966; 2001) and Levine/Crockett (1966) women more often use hypercorrect syntactic forms such as the nominative case pronoun in the object case (you *gave it to Mary and I)* and according to Shuy (1969) and Wolfram (1969) "… women are less likely to use socially stigmatized (class marked) forms such as multiple-negative or subject-verb agreements like 'I done it'" (De Stefano 1975, 70). The reported gender differences are obviously strongly interrelated with social class membership, the predictive power of this variable not being sufficiently taken into account by many studies. It also should be kept in mind that any interpretation of correctness of women's speech should be treated cautiously because the theoretical foundations of such interpretations are usually unclear (see section 3.1.1. and 5.).

3.2.3. Verbal fluency

Verbal fluency, mixing up amount of speech and flexibility in use of syntactic patterns as well as preference of simple vs. complex syntactic devices, seems to be a highly stereotyped and imprecise measure of language use. It has nevertheless been used in many empirical studies. Results obtained with this measure are contradictory, showing greater verbal fluency nearly as often for men as for women, if any difference was observed at all (see the references in Thorne/Kramarae/Henley 1983, 239–246; Maccoby/Jacklin 1974; James/Drakich 1993; Klann-Delius, 2005). A closer inspection of the type of empirical studies done on verbal fluency once more reveals the basic problems of most empirical studies on gender and language use: Gender cannot naively be taken as the only independent variable, because there "… is considerable evidence that variables such as race, social class, culture, discourse function, and setting are as important as gender and not additive or easily separated" (Bing/Bergvall 1998, 498).

In general, the studies on gender and syntax show that you cannot safely postulate any relevant gender-specific variant in the use of syntactic rules or syntactic patterns; they show moreover, which is probably more important, that there is no evidence of a difference in syntactic competence (knowledge of the syntactic rule-system) for women and men.

3.3. Semantics

The following three aspects of semantics have been investigated for gender differences: content and construction principles of the lexicon (3.3.1.), uses of means for personal reference (3.3.2.), usage of speech-act-types.

3.3.1. Lexicon

As to the content of the lexicon (cf. art. 66), marked differences have been reported for women and men in western societies. Gleser/Gottschalk/Watkins (1959) observed that women, talking about a personal experience used more words implying feeling, emotion, motivation and referred more often to themselves, while men more often used words referring to destructive action (see also Borker 1980, 32f). Women have also been reported to realize specific lexical differentiations with respect to color terms and qualifiers such as *adorable* (Lakoff 1975; Steckler/Cooper 1980), as well as with respect to words referring to female activities and topics such as sewing, cooking, child care, relatives (Conklin 1978; Klein 1971; Nelsen/Rosenbaum 1972). Men on the other hand seem to have specialized on differentiating their lexicon with respect to swear words (Kramer 1975 a), hostile verbs (Gilley/Summers 1970) and

words for sex-typed activities and interests. Apart from these findings "… we know very little about the extent to which sex-differentiated vocabularies exist and what their implications are for cross-sex communication" (McConnell-Ginet 1980, 16) and for self-perception and ego-identity for women and men.

3.3.2. Use of personal reference devices

The fact that means of personal reference, available in natural languages, in most cases reflect the history of gender-specific referencing in their system, gave rise to the question of whether and to what extent this aspect of linguistic systems influences actual use of language. It has been observed that with respect to the ways in which women refer linguistically to persons, women generally use the respectful address terms more often *(sir, Herr,* Kramer 1975b) and the generic *he* less often (Martyna 1978; 1983). Men on the contrary have been observed to use *lady, girl* in a derogatory way, not to address women with their full name or professional title but to address them by their first name, or worse still, to "dear" them, irrespective of their occupational status (Rubin 1981; Wolfson/Manes 1980). Addressing a man by a woman's name is a heavy insult (McConnell-Ginet 1978), whereas addressing women with a male address-formula *(Herr Dr. Gisela Klann-Delius)* or referring to women in job advertisements in masculine form *(Gesucht ist ein Linguist)* has been common usage, the insulting effect not being realized or even negated. Not only forms of address but also rights of address seem to be asymmetric (Gardner 1981). Thus, personal reference usage is obviously one area of language behavior that reflects women's place at the lower end of the social prestige scale. At least in western cultures the use of personal reference devices has started to change probably due to the consciousness-raising effect of the guidelines for avoiding sexist language use and due to corresponding government recommendations for administrative and public language use (Samel 2000, 143ff.).

3.3.3. Use of speech-act-types

With respect to possible gender differences in preferences for speech-act-types (cf. art. 69) it has been claimed (Lakoff 1975; Swacker 1976) that women typically tend to use the more indirect, polite, masqued speech-act-variants such as for instance questions instead of direct imperatives or questions instead of answers. This claim has been only partially corroborated by studies which show that primarily purpose, intent of conversation and, if at all, only secondarily gender determines the choice of direct vs. indirect speech-act-types (Ervin-Tripp 1977; Johnson 1980). Moreover, studies of politeness or indirectness in different and non-western cultures show that indirectness and politeness is no universal feature of women's language use (Keenan 1991) and does not always signal inferiority of social status (Brown 1991). From this Sherzer concludes: "To view women's situations as universally inferior, especially in terms of simple dichotomies such as nature/culture, domestic/public, or polite/direct, is to impose our own society's view, in a weird kind of ethnocentrism, on the world at large" (Sherzer 1987, 116). Apart from these findings, no further differences in speech-act choice have been reported. This dimension of gender and language research however has not been worked out very deeply because of a shift in orientation of research towards conversation, its rules and patterns.

Summing up the given review of empirical studies investigating gender differences in the domain of phonology, syntax and semantics one can state that there are only very few gender-related differences in language use, but there is no evidence at all for a difference in linguistic competence which would justify the often cited notion of a woman's vs. a man's language. Even the imprints of sexism in language structure cannot support a conception of basically different languages of the sexes. This seems to be generally accepted in most of the feminist contributions to this topic, published since the eighties.

3.4. Conversation

The vast majority of recently reported studies on gender and language use investigate possible differences in an interactional, conversational framework with different types of modeling the relation of gender, language, and society (see section 5.). This shift in methodological orientation reflects the experience that not the study of isolated linguistic items but the study of complex conversational patterns should clarify the linguistic correlates of women's and men's different place in society. Four aspects of conversational behavior of women and men have been investigated: uses of the turn-taking

mechanism (3.4.1.), topic initiation and elaboration (3.4.2.), basic communicative orientations (3.4.3.), discourse structures (3.4.4.).

3.4.1. Turn-taking

With respect to the uses of the turn-taking-mechanism (Sacks/Schegloff/Jefferson 1974) many empirical studies of the seventies and early eighties have shown, that men more often take turns at talk, that they speak longer per turn even when confronted with identical verbal tasks (Swacker 1975) and that they are talked to more often by both men and women (Höweler/Vrolijk 1970). Furthermore, it has been found that men more often than women disregard the obligations implied in the turn-taking-rule-system producing generally much more and specifically more severe interruptions of women's turns, but at the same time do not accept being interrupted by women (Kramer 1975a; De Stefano 1975). This holds true regardless of stated attitudes of individuals towards sexual equality (Octigan/Niederman 1979) and is independent of possible hidden signs of women's conversational submissiveness or rather tolerance of verbal intrusions (West 1979; West/Zimmermann 1983) or their social status (Brooks 1982; Eakins/Eakins 1976). The observed tendency in men to hold the conversational floor, empirically shown as sign of dominance (Courtright/Millar/Rogers-Millar 1979) was mainly found in mixed-sex groupings (Zimmerman/West 1975; Octigan/Niederman 1979; Klann 1978; Hoffmann/Ahrens 1991). Women, in all-female groups, on the contrary were found to show a less hierarchy-oriented behavior and more equal distribution of frequency, duration, and interruption of turns (West 1984). These first studies on the use of the turn-taking system, especially on interruptions were criticized fundamentally because of their methodological and theoretical shortcomings: Edelsky (1981), Coates (1989) and Tannen (1993) demonstrated in their empirical work that the principle "one speaker at a time", underlying the turn-taking-system of Sacks/Schegloff/Jefferson (1974), is not always relevant; in informal situations or all-female groups as well as in different cultures, conversations are also organizid by a principle of collaboration which allows for simultaneous speech. Moreover, it was argued that interruptions cannot be always taken as violations of a speakers' right to complete a turn, because interruptions can also serve supportive, affiliative functions, i.e. the function to help a hesitant speaker to complete his/her turn (Makri-Tsilipakou 1994), to signal interest in the topic under discussion, to clarify an unclear utterance by inserting a question or to continue a topic the current speaker has lengthily elaborated on (Murray 1985). In addition, it was argued that the operationalizations for simultaneous speech and especially for interruptions, used in the studies, differ widely and were not well defined. Malam (1996) has shown empirically that results on interruptions are heavily dependent on the operationalizations used. James and Clark who scrutinized a total of 21 studies on interruptions and simultaneous speech in mixed sex groupings report that only 6 of the 21 studies found men to interrupt more often than women, two studies stated the reverse and 13 studies did not find any significant differences (James/Clark 1993, 234). Also for same-sex groupings the vast majority of studies did not find significant differences for interruptions produced by men or women (James/Clark 1993, 236). This inconsistency of empirical results is, according to James/Clark, due to the fact "… that there exist no simple, objective ways of determining the function of an interruption. Only an analysis which takes into account the larger context in which the interruption takes place, including the semantic content of the interruption, the general trend and content of the conversation up to that point, and the relationship between the participants – and which also considers the conversational style employed by the interruptor, given that individual's cultural background – is likely to ascertain adequately the role which an interruption was intended to perform" (James/Clark 1993, 247).

3.4.2. Topic initiation and elaboration

Empirical studies of the mechanisms by which conversations and their topics are initiated and maintained have investigated number and function of minimal responses and of topic initiation, topic shift and responsivity to ongoing topic. With respect to minimal responses, for which the function of conversational support was stated empirically (Rosenfeld 1966), some studies report that women produce minimal responses more often than men (Rutter/Stephenson 1977; Edelsky/Adams 1990). Since these studies

rely on quite different and not always clearly formulated operationalizations of "minimal response" and in general do not take nonverbal behavior with comparable functions into account, the results have to be taken with caution. The study of Degauquier/Pillon (1993), using a clear definition of minimal response, did not find any significant difference. There are also some studies which investigated the relation between the use of minimal responses and the personal characteristics of dominance; these studies found that dominant as well as non-dominant women use minimal responses more often than men (Roger/Nesshoever 1987); this could be seen as confirmation of a female preference for minimal responses which demonstrates their conversational supportiveness. Other studies, on the contrary, showed that the use of minimal responses does not only depend on gender but also on the gender-constellation of conversation (Kollock/Blumstein/Schwartz 1985) and on number of partners in conversation (Schmidt 1988); other, possibly influential factors such as age, race, ethnicity have not been studied. With respect to conversational work on topic the vast majority of empirical studies found women to be more active in initiating and maintaining a conversational topic, whereas it is men who control their development (dropping, changing or maintaining of topic) by their minimally responsive behavior (Zimmerman/West 1975). Fishman (1978; 1980; 1983), Schmidt (1988), Degauquier/Pillon (1993) and West/Garcia (1988) report that the male subjects of their studies more often produced turns leading to a topic shift than the female subjects. West/Garcia (1988, 571) conclude: "… it is when unilateral topic changes did occur, they were initiated by men, and they were initiated in ways that curtailed the development of women's activities and tellables. The exercise of control over topics in progress *is* the demonstration of manhood in these conversational contexts." Regarding the limited number of studies, who use a concise operationalization of topical talk (West/Garcia 1988, 552), and regarding the limited number and the mostly white, middle-class and American background of subjects, one should take this generalizing conclusion with caution.

3.4.3. Basic communicative orientations

Greater verbal cooperativity in females has been investigated as a manifestation of a principally different communicative orientation, i. e. greater emotionality and sensitivity to people for women and more task-, competition-, and hierarchy-orientation for men (Baird 1976; Aries 1976; 1977; Lewis 1978; Werner 1983). This difference cannot be reduced to submission of women to male dominance in cross-sex conversation because it seems to show up more clearly in all-female conversations (Klann 1978). It thus seems to indicate a positive communicative potential in women which however can have devastating effects in cross-sex conversations (McConnell-Ginet 1980, 18f). These findings have been generalized by the work of Deborah Tannen (1990), who put forward the radical hypothesis that women and men follow basically different communicative principles they have acquired as members of segregated all-female respectively all-male peer groups according to Maltz/Borker (1982). Maltz/Boker (1982, 205) claim: "Basically girls learn to do three things with words: (1) to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality, (2) to criticize others in acceptable ways, and (3) to interpret accurately the speech of other girls". For boys Maltz/Borker (1982, 207) state: "The social world of boys is one of posturing and counterposturing. In this world, speech is used in three major ways: (1) to assert one's position of dominance, (2) to attract and maintain an audience, and (3) to assert oneself, when other speakers have the floor". From this Tannen concludes that men and women simply cannot understand and that their communicative exchanges show the characteristics of intercultural communication. This conception has been criticized with the argument, that its basis, the assumption of sex-segregated communicative socialization in peer groups, is not only empirically unproven but also unrealistic, since boys and girls enter peer groups after a quite long phase of socialization in the family, where a strict segregation of boys and girls cannot be observed (Günthner 1992). Moreover, Tannen's assumption of a generally greater female cooperativity is far from being convincing, because the important question, raised by female linguists, of whether the alleged greater female verbal cooperativity should be unequivocally interpreted as solidarity or camaraderie (Lakoff 1979; Trömel-Plötz 1996) or of whether it could not serve other, less positive functions as well, for instance as a strategy for binding conversa-

tional partners to a specific conversational attitude, thus for instance oppressing outbursts of aggression or disharmony or even disagreement, has not yet been sufficiently investigated. Cameron (1995) therefore evaluates Tannens work as a confirmation of well known stereotypes.

3.4.4. Discourse structure

Along the lines of increasing efforts to study a specific female verbal culture, several studies have been started to investigate possibly gender-related ways of organizing and performing specific discourse types (cf. art 71) such as story-telling, joke-telling, and discussing. Jenkins (1984), who investigated the narrations in a women's weekly circle, reports the observation that the women easily admitted another the right to take the floor for telling a story, that the structure of the narratives did not exclusively follow the prototypical high-point-schema, described by Labov/Waletzky (1967), that story-telling was supported by collaborative acts performed by the listening women, that the story, when finished, was ratified, and that conversation thereafter was taken up by the group with ease. The narratives told by the women generally followed an orientation towards group solidarity and did not serve the function of self-enlargement as the stories told by men, a finding that was confirmed by Johnstone (1993). According to Baldwin (1985) the structure of stories, told by women, more often show a patch-work pattern, whereas men follow a high-point-structure; men tell stories with "… a stated beginning and end, and the listener is obliged to hear them through, see the action, laugh at humour, and get the point. Stories with a point are not organized with the expecation of interruption" (Baldwin 1985, 155). A further difference in story structure can be seen in the ways how men and women detail place, time, space and objects of the narrative. "People in the women's stories have names, and they sit around and talk; people in the men's stories are more often nameless, and their environment is more silent (Johnstone 1993, 73). According to Günthner (1997) it is women who show a more lively and colorful style of story-telling. With respect to joke-telling empirical studies have shown that men tell jokes more often (Coser 1988; Edelsky 1981), that they tell more jokes with aggressive content (Mitchell 1985), that for men, telling jokes, serves the function of disparaging women and increasing their own sex (Stocking/Zillman 1988, 216). It was also reported that men are oriented to competition and women to cooperation when telling jokes (Jenkins 1988, 37), but this is not always the case. Streeck (1988) observed in his study older women to tell obscene jokes and even to compete in obscenity of content. For the discourse type TV-discussion, Kotthoff (1997) and other studies (see Samel 2000) state a more collaborative, egalitarian style of discussion for women and a more competitive, authoritarian style for men. Gräßl (1991) found expert status and not gender to be the most decisive factor for style differences in TV-discussion. Wodak (1997) and Felderer (1997) could demonstrate that women can be highly competitive and self-confident in public discussions, a finding that again sheds doubt on the general assumption of a greater female cooperativity and male competitiveness, underlying most older studies on gender differences in discourse behavior.

4. Gender and language acquisition

It is a common stereotype that girls are advanced in acquiring their first language. Different readings of this hypothesized gender difference have been provided ranging from a statement of merely quantitative differences (girls just talk more) to postulations of qualitative differences (girls talk more because they do not have comparably difficult cognitive concepts to verbalize). Examining the empirical evidence available to support or reject the stereotype and its implications, the following profile of differences and similarities of acquisition rate and acquired structures can be drawn (for a more detailed discussion and references see Klann-Delius 1981; 2005): Neither with respect to onset of language acquisition (including amount of preverbal vocalizations, onset of the first word) nor with respect to rapidity and quality of syntactic development (onset of syntactic devices, command over complex syntactic rules) has any significant difference been reported consistently. With respect to the lexicon Nelson (1973) reports a faster rate of acquisition for girls; some studies find a greater vocabulary for girls, others for boys (McCarthy 1954; Stabenow 1993). As to content of the lexicon even studies performed in the nineties find the girls' and the boys' lexicon to be more elab-

orated in the domains corresponding to traditional gender roles (Jessner 1992; Stabenow 1993). In addition, some studies report a greater vocabulary for emotions in younger girls (Staley 1982; Dunn/Bretherton/Munn 1987; Cervantes/Callanan 1998) and a more developed emotional knowledge (Garner/Carlson/Jones/Gaddy/Rennie 1997). In the domain of phonology it was observed that girls acquire the phonological rules of their languages more quickly than boys (Irwin/Chen 1946; Irwin 1957), that they are better in articulation (Templin 1957; Garai/Scheinfeld 1968; Eisenberg/Berlin/Dille/Frank 1968), and that there is less amount of speech pathology in girls (Ingram 1975; Fairweather 1976). Both sexes develop gender-specific voice qualities quite early, which are not entirely dependent on anatomical differences, and gender-specific intonation patterns (Sachs/Lieberman/Erickson 1973; Sachs 1975). As far as verbal cooperativity is concerned, the question of whether boys and girls differ with regard to the ability to take the perspective of the other and to use appropriate verbal means in contexts of problem solving situations has been studied. Under this operationalization of verbal cooperativity no gender differences have been found (Hoeman 1972; Heider 1971; Cohen/Klein 1968; Baldwin/Mc Farlane/Garvey 1971; Mueller 1972; Karabenick/Miller 1977). Those studies of verbal cooperativity however which measure cooperativity as equality of conversational rights, have found boys from the age of 3 years onwards to be more dominant than girls, i. e. that they interrupt girls (Esposito 1979; Goodwin 1980) as well as adults (Craig/Evans 1991) and teachers (Enders-Dragässer 1989) more often than girls; McCloskey/Coleman (1992), on the contrary, found girls to interrupt more often. For younger children no differences were observed for production of simultaneous utterances and interruptions in conversations with their mothers (Klann-Delius/Hédérvari/Hofmeister 1996). The findings for topical responsivity and initiativity are controversial: Austin/Salehi/Leffler (1987) report girls to be more responsive and boys to be more initiative in topical talk, McCloskey/Coleman (1992) found girls to change topic more often, but only when talking with girls, Sheldon (1993) observed boys to change topic more often than girls. Many studies state a more polite and indirect speech style for girls and a more assertive style for boys (McCloskey/Coleman 1992; Nohara 1996; Sachs 1987; Klecan-Aker 1986), that girls use less dominant and more cooperative speech acts more often than boys, especially in disputes (Black 1992; Goodwin 1990; Leaper 1991). These differences in conversational behavior correlate with the findings of parents' and – more markedly – of teachers' communicative behavior towards boys and girls, being more reactive and supportive towards boys' verbal contributions than to those of girls (Berko Gleason/Blank Greif 1983; Brophy/Good 1974; Cherry 1975; Jackson/La Haderne 1976). No differences were found for mothers' and fathers' adjustment of speech addressed to their young child (Kavanough/Jirkovsky 1982; Lipscomb/Coon 1983; Rondal 1980), but it was observed that fathers use directives or requests for clarification in conversations with their older children more often than mothers, thus showing a more demanding style of communication with their children (Austin/Braeger 1990; Bellinger/Gleason 1982; Kornhaber/Marcos 2000; Leaper/Anderson/Sanders 1998; Tomasello/Conti-Ramsden/Ewert 1990). In general, the findings of gender differences in language acquisition show once more, that there are no differences with respect to basic linguistic capacities but that there are some differences with respect to the uses of language in social interaction. But again it has to be stressed that these findings have to be taken with caution, because in these studies possible influences of other factors, interacting with gender, such as race, age, situation, type of conversation have not been taken into account. Therefore any generalization of these findings is premature.

5. Evaluation

A close inspection of the methodological and theoretical qualities of empirical studies on gender and language reveals so many serious shortcomings and such a diversity of theoretical assumptions and corresponding empirical operationalizations that any general conclusion, summing up the present findings in terms of *the* language/style/register of *the* woman vs. *the* man cannot stand on safe grounds.

As to the empirical basis of assumed gender-specific differences in language the following problems at least have to be and have been stated (Thorne/Henley 1975; McCon-

nell-Ginet 1980; Borker 1980; Klann-Delius 1981):

– many studies do not take into account the obvious interrelation of gender as an independent variable with other independent variables such as social class, ethnicity, race, age, education, type of situation;
– many studies do not control a possible gender-bias in the type of stimulus-material chosen, they do not control the effects of the gender of the experimenter and scientist as well as the different influence of a laboratory vs. a naturalistic setting on the verbal productions of the subjects or their evaluations;
– effects of same-gender vs. mixed-gender groupings have not been controlled systematically;
– too many studies have been conducted in a "theoretical vacuum" (Kramarae 1981, 91).

Theoretical assumptions (if any) underlying the empirical studies differ widely with respect to their interpretation of the relation of gender, language and society. At present seven versions of modeling this relation can be distinguished (Kramarae 1981):

1) The *correlational model* (underlying most of the early studies on gender and language, see Lakoff 1975; Kramer 1975a), also known as deficit model, assumes that gender, conceived of as an isolated, independent variable, should predict a set of gender-specific linguistic features and should allow for unequivocal interpretations. Neither the empirical assumption of a "genderlect" (Kramer 1975a), postulating different languages for women and men, nor the prediction of unequivocal interpretations (see the divergent interpretations of correctness- and politeness-phenomena, documented in Thorne/Kramarae/Henley 1983), nor the assumption that gender as such influences language behavior, turned out to be true (Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1998).

2) The *muted group model* (Ardener 1975, implicitly underlying many studies on sexism in language) says that women, lacking any social power and being exposed to overwhelming male dominance in every sphere of public as well as private life, show marked deficits in their language behavior, because they missed the opportunity to develop their own language. This model, directly inferring men's social dominance to language, not only states differences in the sense of linguistic variation but hypothesizes basic differences in the linguistic competence of the sexes, stating that women only have access to a male language, to a kind of foreign language. Suggestive as this compact model might be, it nevertheless seems highly unrealistic: Neither the assumption of the sexes constituting a homogeneous group nor the postulation of difference in linguistic competence seems reasonable; the political consequences of this model, denying the development of women's voice and power in spite of male oppression, lead to discouragement precisely of those in behalf of whose interests this theory claims to find arguments.

3) The *speech-style model* (Giles/Bourhis/Taylor 1977; Williams/Giles 1978) assumes, when applied to gender and language, that men and women constitute two different groups whose linguistic behavior or speech-style serves the function of symbolizing group-membership, the vitality and consistency of the group being dependent on status factors, demographic factors and institutional support factors (Kramarae 1981, 93f). While this model recognizes the mediating effects of social variables other than gender, it seems to rely primarily on gender as a group constituting factor, being only additionally modified by others. Thus this model gives only a superficial account of the impact of gender on language as a mean of social interaction.

4) The *strategy model* (Brown/Levinson 1978 underlying most of the early conversational analyses) attempts to explicate the relations between the social structure of societies, gender of its members and its reflection on sociopsychological perspectives of subjects and their communicative behavior, assuming that the latter is regulated by communicative strategies which are determined by characteristics of culturally bound social relations. This concept provides an account of differentiating effects of social situation, social class, ethnicity, etc., because it does not state a fixed relation of gender and features of linguistic behavior but stresses that it is not the overt linguistic form but the procedure of communicative choice, the communicative strategy that is shaped by gender. This model does not presuppose a direct interpretability of linguistic features with

respect to gender but assumes interactional rules to be the salient concept. Thus this model can handle more adequately the fact that the phenomenon of verbal politeness for instance is not the necessary outcome of female submission and lack of economic power as cross-cultural studies have demonstrated (Keenan 1974) and that a particular feature of speech must not necessarily be related to a single communicative function: The same phenomenon such as, for instance, politeness of men or women may serve different interactive functions and can be related to different communicative strategies (Brown/Levinson 1978).

5) The *two cultures model* (Tannen 1990; Maltz/Borker 1982) assumes that men and women follow basically different communicative principles they have acquired during socialization in same-sex peer groups; therefore their communicative exchanges resemble those between members of different cultures. Although this model has attracted much public interest, it has turned out to be inadequate. The following objections against this model were put forward: men and women are not exclusively socialized in segregated same-sex peer groups, members of same-sex peer groups have communicative contact across the boarders of their peer groups, (Oswald/Krappmann/Chodkuri/v. Salisch 1986), therefore the notion of culture with respect to peer groups is misleading (Günthner 1992). Moreover, this model predicts basic differences in language use of women and men, which could not be demonstrated. Like most other models, this one too does not take into account other factors, which influence language use.

6) The *doing gender model* (West/Zimmerman 1987; West/Fenstermaker 1995), which can be seen as a strict application of the hypotheses put forward by conversation analysis, comprises gender not as a given prior to conversation but as a result of concrete social interactions, in which conversational partners construct gender as a relevant factor of conversation. In this model gender is seen "… as a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment. We contend that the "doing" of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production. Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine "nature"(Zimmerman/West 1987). West/Fenstermaker (1995) extended this model by adding the hypothesis that gender is as much a social construct as race or social class. (West/Fenstermaker 1995, 9). Butler (1990, 3) argues that even the body and its biological characteristics have to be conceived as social constructs. Gender is according to Butler "… the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce appearance of substance, of a "natural" kind of being" (Butler 1990, 33). According to this view "… your way of speaking is not determined by your gender identity; rather your way of of speaking is one of the things that constitutes your gender identity" (Cameron 1995). One main problem of this model is a methodological one, the difficulty to scientifically investigate gender in interaction without being inspired by the assumption of possible differences (Hagemann-White 1995); in addition this conception poses the serious problem of not being provable outside its limits, because this theory denies any objective reference point of theorizing (Reiche 1997).

7) The *model of multiple social practices* (Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1998). In accordance with the doing gender approach this model abandons the assumption, underlying previous research on gender and language, that there are "dichotomies separated by clear boundaries" (Bing/Bergvall 1998, 506). The search for gender differences in language use is seen as a perspective, which reinforces the male-female dichotomy, thus unwillingly preserving the traditional notion of gender as a binary concept and thereby confirming the well known stereotypes about women and men (Bing/Bergval 1998, 499; Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1998). Therefore the concept of multiple practices was put forward, which claims that gender is only one among many other factors. The model proposes the hypothesis, that gender is produced in "… differential membership in communities of practice", with community of practice being defined as "… an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor" (Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1998, 490). Speaking is seen in this model as "… a complex articulation of the indivual's forms of partici-

pation in that community with participation in other communities that are salient at the time (Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1998, 492). This model shares the basic assumption with the doing gender concept that gender and language are social, locally produced constructs of interaction; it differs from this concept in that it stresses the notion of social community and its practices. This model, not yet sufficiently corroborated in empirical studies, does no yet formulate precisely the methodology of how to grasp the ways in which people articulate their participation in communities.

Summing up one can state that the developmental line of theory construction in this field has lead to an abandonment of gender as a binary and pervasively influential factor of language use. Whether the constructivist conceptions of gender and their methodological problems will decrease the interest and scientific efforts in this field of sociolinguistic research or whether they will promote new models and research strategies is an open question at present.

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