Gender Differences in Congressional Speeches

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Subject matter

Language is one of the most important means of humans' expression of thoughts. Guided by thoughts, choices people make in the forms of expression can be paralleled to their perception of things from the real world and consequently the way they express themselves about those things. Two people may be speaking about the same thing with their descriptions being utterly unrelated. To put it differently, linguistic choices may be a diagnostic of people's both overt and covert feelings about things from the real world. By studying people's linguistic choices, we may learn a lot about their desires, feelings, perceptions and thoughts. There is a consensus among scientists that personality and language used in a variety of contexts – everyday speech (Mehl et al., 2006), interviews (Fast & Funder, 2008), broadcast news speech (Alam & Riccardi, 2013), guided written assignments (Pennebaker & King, 1999; Hirsh & Peterson, 2009), e-mails (Oberlander & Gill, 2004) – are intertwined. We may categorize people according to their linguistic choices or speech styles. To exemplify, the American linguist William Labov (1966) studied the speech of employees from three department stores in New York: *S. Klein* (a discount working-class store), Macy's (a moderately priced middle-class store) and *Saks Fifth Avenue* (an expensive upper-middle class store). Asking questions, which should elicit the answer *fourth flour*, Labov aimed to study the pronunciation of /r/. The results pointed to a social stratification, i.e., the pronunciation of /r/ depended on the employees' social-class.

Another category based on people's linguistic choices is gender. Men and women have been alleged to differ in every area of psychological functioning at one point or another, so language use is not an exception. Believing for the seat of the intellect to be situated in the brain, differences in verbal ability were tried to be explained by the differences between the brains of men and women (Halpern, 1994). Despite the fact that the phrenologists provided considerable evidence as to the differences in the physical features of men's and

women's brains (different frontal lobe and brain tissue) (Walker, 1850 cited in Caplan et al., 1997), the question on gender differences in linguistic choices was not successfully answered.

Gender differences mirrored in language have been extensively investigated by sociolinguists since the 1960s. Robin Lakoff's pioneering work *Language and Women's Place* from 1975 has initiated numerous sociolinguistic research and explanations regarding the origins of gender differences in language use. Aiming at studying the origins of inequalities, researchers examined the earliest speech patterns of boys and girls. The research results indicated that even kindergarten children use different gender-related linguistic expressions (Tannen, 1990). Furthermore, researchers discovered that different social roles are attributed to children based on their gender. If trying to violate pre-attributed social roles or employ other gender's means of linguistic expression, children are warned and instructed to use the gender proper means. The instructions are especially given to girls in order for them to be unquestionably accepted as a part of society (Tannen, 1997). As children grow into adulthood, the instructions on all language levels as well as the ones with respect to nonverbal behavior are continued. One may draw a conclusion that different social roles result in different means of linguistic expression employed by men and women.

Maturity and a higher level of education, among other variables, may trigger one's independence and consequently cause changes and the disturbance of the prearranged social and linguistic hierarchy. Speakers may start to use gender-free linguistic expressions despite risking possible disapproval. The organizational order in both private and public sphere has gradually been violated with men and women taking the roles freely. On the one hand, by receiving an aspired level of education, women are no longer limited to solely perform the housewives' and mothers' role. The number of men performing it tends to moderately increase. On the other hand, being educated, women can do the same jobs as men reducing the aforementioned differences to a minimal level. That being said, the process of a social hierarchy becoming gender-free comes naturally.

Gender-based discrimination has not been eradicated yet, so much so that even in the 21st century, there are job sectors primarily taken by men and ones reserved for women. Even if employed in the other gender's field, jobs positions are not equally distributed. High-ranking decision-making job positions are usually occupied by men compared to low-ranking positions commonly occupied by women. Gender-based jobs are grounded in personality traits possessed by men and women, so job fields requiring caring, nurturing, collaboration, active listening, patience, etc. are generally occupied by women in comparison to jobs occupied by men, which require competition, leadership skills and imposing one's ideas.

Potential problems to personality traits occur when one decides to do the other gender's jobs. In order to be successful, one needs to develop and display preferred personality traits for that job, even if they clash with personality characteristics usually associated with men or women. Costa et al. (2001: 328) studied differences in self-rated personality traits across different cultures. Their results show that women score high on neuroticism (depression, anxiety), agreeableness (altruism, tender-mindedness, confidence) and openness to feelings. In comparison, men score high on assertiveness and openness to new ideas. These personality differences are consistent with gender stereotypes portraying women as more caring and emotional than men and men as more rational and assertive than women (Best & Williams, 1982). Such differences can drive differences in attitudes towards education, poverty, use of force and money management (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005, Eagly et al., 2004), which might influence a job choice.

Whatever one does, he/she will be criticized. On the one hand, by displaying job preferred personality traits, one will be professionally successful, yet criticized for gender treason. On the other hand, if preserving personality traits for specific gender, one may disqualify himself/herself from professional advancement. The same attitude is applied to the use of language. If a man uses "women's language", he is labeled as effeminate or womanly making him a linguistic anomaly and an outcast (Hall, 2003: 355). Emasculation is also

articulated in Regina Flannery's (1946: 133) article *Men's and Women's Speech in Gros Ventre* where she claims that "the expressions used by women are more modest and that if a woman used men's words she would be considered mannish, and likewise a man who used women's words would be considered effeminate."

Identified as the struggle for power and imposing one's ideas, politics is the field naturally occupied by men whose personality traits (strength, knowledgeability, assertiveness, directness) are a prototype for it (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Kahn 1996). The fact that the number of men in politics still prevails comes as no surprise. In other words, even in the modern era, women are still under-represented in politics. When running for office, women tend to hold lesser value offices that include education, environment, social and health care services. Women get to hold offices not that rigorously associated with masculinity traits. Voters associate female candidates with solidarity issues (education, children, the elderly, social affairs, healthcare and the environment), while male candidates are associated with business, economy, military and agriculture (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Leeper, 1991). Furthermore, when women run for office in one of men's sectors, they will be prejudiced against and receive fewer votes (Dolan, 2008). If voters reject stereotypes and trust women to hold offices in men's sectors, women will be depoliticized, womanized and maternalized by media (Bengoechea, 2011). Therefore, entering the world of politics – the world that has always been claimed by men - causes certain changes for women. They need to acquire some of men's personality traits, which might initiate other changes including the linguistic ones.

The means of linguistic expressions used by men have been considered as a norm by researchers of deficit (Lakoff, 1975; Holmes, 2006), dominance (Zimmerman & West, 1975), difference (Tannen, 1990) and communities of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003) approach, i.e., despite different approaches to gender differences, they study women's speech in comparison to men's. This particularly applies to the linguistic expressions in the field often labeled as the

men's field - the field of politics. Hence, if wanting their views and actions to be taken into serious consideration, women in politics might expect to adjust their linguistic styles. That being said, one may expect that politicians, regardless of their gender, use linguistic expressions employed exclusively by men. Linguistic expressions used by women are not to be used in the field where fundamental concepts are commonly metaphorically mapped from the domain of war and best summarized into three words – struggle for power.

This book, which is an adapted doctoral thesis, is going to deal with gender differences in congressional speeches and elaborate on underlying reasons for them. The issue is relevant to three principal intertwined areas in language and gender research. Firstly, many researchers (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Coates, 1993; Holmes, 1995; Weatherall, 2002) have claimed that men are more likely to use a competitive style of speech and women a cooperative style of speech. Even though these claims can be criticized for overgeneralization, it is indeed a perception among politicians themselves that men adopt an aggressive style and women a more consensual style in the political setting. Secondly, this book builds on a growing body of research into gender differences in language, especially gender differences in language used by men and women in public speaking settings (Mulac et al., 1986; West 1990; Holmes, 1992; Baxter 1999a; 1999b; McElhinny, 1998; Burns et al., 2006; Griswold, 2007; Wodak, 2008; Yu, 2013) where the men's speaking style is considered as a norm to be conformed to. Thirdly, the book will contribute to debates about women bringing changes into language or assimilating to dominant men's styles, i.e., whether they work towards changing preset practices monopolized by men, accept it or balance between these two positions (Lovenduski, 1996; Childs, 2000; Walsh, 2001). Finally, the conducted research combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods on the entire population of politicians serving in a two-year US Congress, thus contributing to its merit.

1.2. Book structure

The **introductory chapter** presents the subject matter of the research
– gender differences in language. It provides a brief overview of the
most influential theories and scholars dealing with the issue. The
second chapter provides a theoretical overview. Since the concepts
of sex and gender are frequently interchangeably used, the chapter
begins with the definitions and comparisons of the concepts resulting
in an educated decision on future terminology usage. The chapter
further provides a historical overview of the most important gender
linguistic theories; lists and presents their representatives' main ideas
and criticisms. The **third chapter** presents the methodological matters
of the research. It provides detailed socioeconomic characteristics of
the participants from the 113th United States Congress, procedures
and reasons for the corpus design. Also, the chapter presents and
exemplifies the working principles of the text analysis software used
in the research. The **fourth chapter** consists of the analysis of the
research findings. The research includes both the quantitative and
the qualitative analysis. First, each of 70 variables is analyzed with
the software for the statistical analysis SPSS and the quantitative
analysis results are presented in their respective subsections. Then,
in the same subsections, the results are interpreted by providing the
underlying reasons for the linguistic choices and gender differences.
The **concluding chapter** elaborates on the most important research
findings and gives an overall conclusion on gender differences in
congressional speeches.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter presents a survey of the fields this book is drawn from. The chapter begins with a definition of the concept of gender. Upon defining the concept of sex, the two concepts are contrasted resulting in an educated decision on the further usage. The chapter further provides a brief historical overview of the most important 20th century linguistic theories with an earlier theory causing reactions and influencing a later one. Naturally, the focus of attention is placed on the gender theories within the field of sociolinguistics beginning with the Lakoff's hypothesis and the deficit approach. Simultaneously, Zimmerman and West developed the dominance approach whose drawbacks led to establishing the difference approach. The following phase in gender research addresses the limitations caused by essentialist interpretations of gender thus putting an emphasis on discourse. Moreover, it is discourse and social context that determine which community of practice an individual will belong to. Finally, the theoretical overview is concluded with the critical discourse analysis approach suggesting a new variable to correlate with language – that of power.

2.1. Gender versus sex

To begin with, we need to make a distinction between the two types of gender. On the one hand, grammatical gender is a property of nouns, which affects grammatical agreement between a noun and an accompanying adjective, article, number and other basic sentence parts (Cruse, 2006: 77). Natural gender, on the other hand, is determined by features of a referent. There is only a partial correlation between these two concepts. Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) believed that a linguistic sign is composed of two parts – signified and a signifier. Given the arbitrary nature of signs, there is no natural relationship between the signified and the signifier; consequently, their relationship is based on a convention. This notion can be applied to the relationship

between grammatical and natural gender – grammatical gender is attributed arbitrarily and conventionally, whereas natural gender may or may not be based on biological traits. Given the nature of this dissertation, I will only deal with natural gender.

Feminist theorists believe that a distinction between the concepts of *sex*, *sexuality* and *gender* needs to be made. The terms *sex* and *gender* are often used interchangeably but incorrectly. According to Medilexicon medical dictionary, *sex* or *biological gender* is "the biologic character or quality that distinguishes male and female from one another as expressed by analysis of the person's gonadal, morphologic (internal and external), chromosomal, and hormonal characteristics." To paraphrase, based on biological characteristics, sex is assigned to an individual at birth; therefore, there is *male sex* and *female sex* (Holmes, 2001; Trudgill, 2000). Gender, on the other hand, is a more complicated concept. The term *gender* implies a socio-cultural construct. It is used when referring to "social, cultural and psychological constructs that are imposed upon these biological differences" (Shapiro, 1981 cited in Yanagisako & Collier 1990: 139). Similarly, Lipman-Blumen (1984: 3) states that gender addresses "all those cultural expectations associated with masculinity and femininity that go beyond biological sex differences". Biological sex is attributed to an individual at birth. While growing up, an individual is raised to adopt the set of gender-labeled social rules, which are built upon sex. To paraphrase, sex refers to biology and physiology, sexuality points to sexual preferences, orientation and practices, while gender deals with social roles and status (Dovi, 2008: 154). Shapiro's model has been criticized because of the polarity gender is based on (Cameron, 1997), overstating similarities within the categories and understating similarities across the categories (Nicholson, 1994).

Social constructivists offer a radical critique of biological determinism. They believe that instead of viewing sex as primary and biological while gender as secondary and social, the order is reversed. A constructionist view is that social and cultural beliefs are primary and cannot be separated from biological *knowledge* (Weatherall,

2002: 81). To support this theory, social constructivism uses Martin's (1991) study of the fertilization process. Furthermore, according to a social constructionist approach, gender is not a stable set of traits; rather, it is a social process created and renegotiated in interpersonal relationships and maintained through social activities. Applying this to speech styles, we may talk about *feminine* or *masculine speech styles* thus referring to cultural associations with being a woman or a man and not to innate characteristics of being a female or a male. The social constructionists' thesis is supported by Hall's (1995) study of telephone-sex work and speech styles. Hall investigated the language used mainly by women in pre-recorded telephone-sex messages. Since the industry demanded a sexy feminine persona, feminine speech styles that were reminiscent of Lakoff's (1975) women's language were used. In addition, Hall interviewed telephone-sex workers who reported that customers were more satisfied when they used feminine speech styles. Nota bene, not all telephone-sex workers were women; however, both female and male workers used feminine speech styles without customers noticing any difference. Therefore, the workers' speech style was not a reflection of their gender identity; rather, their speech style created their gender identity.

Studying Hillary and Bill Clinton, Muir and Taylor (2009) re-conceptualized gender by taking a number of facets into consideration. They (2009: 4) believed that "genders are constructions of social and cultural groups. They are institutions, consisting as all such entities do of boundaries, rules (prescriptions, proscriptions, built-in penalties and rewards) barriers and channeled interactions." They thought that gender is created in interaction; consequently, gender depends on relationships rather than one's characteristics. That being said, a speaker and his audience co-create the speaker's gender while communicating. Moreover, created gender may not be attributed to a single speaker. The analysis of Hillary and Bill Clinton results in Muir and Taylor (2009) suggested a joint gender relationship. In spite of individual acknowledged political careers, the Clintons have created a far more successful political brand reflecting a gendered political team that, as the name suggests, needs to be studied as a unit.

To summarize, women's or men's language is symbolic rather than a descriptive category. It is based on a complex interrelationship between one's sex and gender identity, i.e., one's sense of self. People can develop their gender identity to match their biological sex. Females can adopt a set of social roles, behaviors and activities that are universally labeled as feminine gender roles likewise males can adopt masculine gender roles. Or, they may negotiate and recreate their gender identity with respect to numerous factors such as audience, topic, communication aim, situation, etc. Identity can be created and expressed in different ways. Language is one of them, but very powerful and productive. I will focus on studying the relationship of language and gender.

2.2. Language and gender theories

In order to situate this thesis within a theoretical framework, this chapter will provide a general overview of the main phases in the study of language and gender. Firstly, the deficit model introduced by Robin Lakoff in 1975, identifying women's language as powerless in comparison to men's, will be explained. Secondly, I will elaborate on Zimmerman and West's (1975) dominance approach built on the women's subordinate position in society. As a reaction to the dominance approach, gender differences in language were explained with the cultural difference approach (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1990) viewing men and women as two subcultures that developed different communication styles. Finally, critical rethinking has resulted in an array of anti-essentialist approaches viewing speakers as negotiators of their identities.

2.2.1. Deficit approach

Since the 1920s, linguists have shown a notable interest in the relationship of language and gender. One of the first who studied the issue was Otto Jespersen. He collected the information on how men and women spoke in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary and

syntax and published the findings in his book entitled *Language; Its Nature, Development and Origin* (1922). He recorded gender differences on the case study of people of Caribbean descent. Socializing with immigrants, men were more successful in acquiring new vocabulary; hence, men's vocabulary was more extensive than women's. Jespersen believed the underlying reason for this difference was that women were receiving a less technical education than men. Secondly, he believed that women were more conservative and used traditional language. While men preferred coarse language between themselves, women used euphemistic expressions and even restrained themselves from using certain expressions, which contain body parts. Also, men used alliterations, whereas women did not pay attention to acoustic properties. Women used half-finished sentences, which was explained by them speaking before thinking it through, hence, men were described to be more intelligent than women. To sum up, Jespersen characterized women's language as inferior compared to men's standard or normal language. His study was criticized by feminists for having a male-centered, sexist and patronizing viewpoint.

Similar ideas were put forward in 1975 by Robin Lakoff. Her pioneering work *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) was extensively criticized because it lacked the empirical basis, i.e., her findings were based on her intuition and peer anecdotal observations. Also, introspection was done on the corpus of white middle-class American women, which was inadequate for generalizations. The features she categorized as typical of women's language continued to appear in numerous later research. During her unsystematic observations, Lakoff recorded a number of phonological, lexical and grammatical features characteristic of women's language. Women used rising intonations in utterances where men used falling ones. Such sentences typically took the form of answers to questions but had the rising intonation typical of yes/no questions (e.g., *A: When will you be ready? B: Hmm…around 5 o'clock…?*). Lakoff believed that such intonations required approval and confirmation from others. Secondly, when making lexical choices (especially colors and adjectives), men tended to use categories at the basic or generic

level, while women used categories at the subordinate level. For example, women discriminated between the shades of *beige*, *lavender*, *aquamarine* which were absent from men's vocabulary. Women would use a different set of adjectives (*charming*, *divine*, *adorable*) than men (*cool*, *great*, *terrific*) to express their opinion on a subject. Further, women used hedges (*kind of*, *sort of*), polite forms (*would you mind, I would appreciate if you*) and wh-questions for imperative structures (*why don't you open the door?*) all of which was evidence for women's hesitancy. Also, women overused qualifiers (*I think, I mean*) and intensifiers (*so*, *very*). In terms of grammatical differences, women were said to use more question tags, which were associated with tentativeness and insecurity.

The last hypothesis was challenged by several researchers (Dubois & Crouch, 1975; Cameron et al., 1989; Holmes, 1992). In Dubois and Crouch's dataset (1975), men used more question tags than women; however, it was not suggested that they were less confident speakers because of that. Moreover, Cameron et al. (1989) found that in some contexts, the usage of question tags was a marker of powerful rather than tentative speech. Holmes (1992) believed that question tags can serve as devices to maintain discussion or be polite. Furthermore, in their courtroom cases and witnesses' speeches study, O'Barr and Atkins (1980) studied the majority of Lakoff's hypotheses in a specific institutional context. They suggested that the differences proposed by Lakoff were not necessarily a result of gender but of power. In order to prove their hypothesis, they used three men and women. The first man, an ambulance driver, and a 68-year-old housewife extensively used the features of women's language. The third pair, a female doctor and a policeman (expert witnesses), scored low on the mentioned features showing more power in their professional and private lives. Based on the results of their study, O'Barr and Atkins concluded that the features of women's language were neither features of all women nor limited solely to women. Rather, the cluster of those features was related to powerless people. Very frequently, a woman equaled a powerless person. However, since that might not always be the case, O'Barr and Atkins suggested the concept of women's language to be changed into powerless language.

Lakoff was one of the first researchers to claim that the social role of women was to *talk like ladies*, which included hypercorrectness, euphemisms, no joke telling, confirmation by nodding, etc. She claimed that girls were raised to learn special linguistic uses, i.e., a gendered way of communication. Women were not rewarded with acceptance in society, rather, this special speech style was later on used to keep them in a demeaning position (Lakoff, 1975: 5). If women tried to adopt linguistic features of the stronger group (men), they would be rejected by both men and women, which is a double-bind. Therefore, Lakoff labelled women's speech style as a deficient and inferior to neutral men's style, hence the name of the approach.

Lakoff examined the representation of women in language. Women were more frequently referred to as *girls*, regardless of their age, than men as *boys*. While *master* had positive connotations, *mistress* usually invoked sexual (negative) connotations. The same applied to *bachelor*, which had desirable, and *spinster*, which had undesirable connotations. Men were always addressed as *Mr.*, whereas women were defined in relation to their marital status *Miss./Mrs.* In terms or professional addressing, women were more likely to be addressed by their first name or by their first and last name, while men were usually referred by their last name or the title and the last name. These pieces of evidence inspired Lakoff to conclude that men were defined in terms of what they did in the world and women with whom they were associated (1975: 64).

Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* is considered as the cornerstone of feminist linguistics despite the criticism of Lakoff's theory and politics. Lakoff adopted an androcentric viewpoint seeing women's behavior as a deficient variant compared to neutral men's behavior. So, it was implied that something was wrong with women's behavior and required remedies in order for women to be treated more equally in society. Indeed, many researchers who affiliated to the deficit approach (Crawford, 1995; Cameron, 1995a) worked on *language remediation* and tried to reinforce Jespersen's folklinguistic stereotypes. In spite of the methodological criticisms, it should be noted that Lakoff's work arose at a time the field had yet to establish

itself and that, as Lakoff herself stated, it was not a definite account of gender differences in language but rather a road to further research.

2.2.2. Dominance approach

While Lakoff was developing the deficit model, other researchers tried to explain gender differences in language in a different way the most famous of which was Zimmerman and West's interruptions study (1975). In 1975, Zimmerman and West recorded mixed-sex conversations at the University of California. The subjects were middle-class Caucasian young people. In 11 mixed-sex conversations, they recorded 46 interruptions by men and only 2 by women. Even though the research was done on a small and possibly unrepresentative sample, the authors concluded that more interruptions done by men pointed to men's dominance in conversation thus supporting the idea of men's more powerful position in society.

Inspired by Zimmerman and West's research, Beattie (1981) conducted his own study by recording 10 hours of tutorial discussions. He found 557 interruptions compared to 48 Zimmerman and West's. Beattie found that men interrupted more than women; however, the difference was not statistically significant. Criticizing Zimmerman and West's research for an unrepresentative sample and possible skewness of the results (e.g., if one speaker disproportionally interrupted others), Beattie believed that interruptions were caused by status rather than gender.

Similarly, in a study of preschool children, Greif (1980) discovered that fathers were more likely than mothers to interrupt children and/or speak simultaneously with them. Also, both mothers and fathers more frequently interrupted daughters than sons. The research indicated that gender and power relationship from mixed-sex conversations could be replicated in spousal communication and parent-child interaction. Also, the girls' speech hindrance led to girls adopting stereotypical feminine passive communication roles.

The interruptions study was the most prototypical for the dominance approach; yet not the only representative of it. Pamela Fishman (1977; 1978; 1980) studied some of Lakoff's hypotheses, namely question tags, and came to different conclusions. She asked Caucasian married American couples to record their home conversations and did her question tags analysis on 52 hours of recordings. Like Lakoff, Fishman noted that question tags were more commonly used by women (precisely, four times more); however, she offered a different interpretation. Fishman argued that in order to initiate or keep a conversation with their husbands, women had to do the *interactional shiftwork* – ask questions and use question tags to gain conversational power. Hence, question tags were not a sign of women's tentativeness. The same results were reported in the follow-up study by DeFrancisco (1989; 1991) who additionally interviewed the couples who had been taped and showed that her interpretations were in line with the couples' observations.

Another linguist advocated a radical view of language as structures that sustained men's power. Dale Spender (1980) was highly critical of the deficit approach. On one hand, language was studied as an abstract system and on the other hand, it was studied within a given context. This separate analysis of, as she had put it, sexism in language as a system and sex differences in language, i.e., the separation of the form from its function, was inefficient. Spender decided to put these two notions together and provide a systematic analysis believing that an analysis needed a patriarchal order. For the sake of attributing meaning and its interpretation, rules were mandatory. Spender believed that rules were man-made, and language was used to limit our world and construct the reality. Therefore, due to men being in the position of power and control to monopolize language, the myth of male superiority was created. The most vivid example of the encoded sexism was *he/man* language. Even though the generic *he* and *man* applied to both men and women, Spender believed that people automatically thought of a male person thus making women invisible. She also analyzed the semantic aspect of the way men and women were addressed and provided evidence for masculine determiners seen as positive and

feminine as negative or marked. For example, while *Sir* kept its associations with high society, *Madam* lost its dignity. The expression *She is a professional* had different (negative) connotations compared to *He is a professional*. Furthermore, Spender was critical of research that presented women as talkative. She believed that the desired state for women was silence. Hence, it was not that women were talkative in comparison to men; they were talkative in comparison to the desired state. Spender concluded that language needed to be liberated from men's control, which could be done with consciousness raising and women generating new meanings on the basis of multidimensional reality. However, this men-bullying-oppressed-women view was criticized for its monolithic view of male power and ignoring other variables such as race and class, which, in certain contexts, could give women more power (Talbot, 1998; Black & Coward, 1998; Goddard & Patterson, 2000).

One of the main criticisms of the dominance approach was that it portrayed women as powerless victims fighting against aggressive and powerful men when in fact those characteristics could be seen as successful communicative strategies (Coates, 1994:73). Consequently, researchers started reassessing women's language searching for its strengths. Secondly, the dominance approach provided evidence and interpretation of gender differences in mixed-sex conversation; yet, the concepts of dominance and coercion were not as applicable in same-sex interaction. Based on the criticism of the dominance approach and the need for reevaluation of women's language, the difference approach arose.

2.2.3. Difference approach

The difference or subcultural approach arose as a reaction to the dominance approach. The first ideas were put forward by linguistic anthropologist John Gumperz (1981; 1982a; 1982b) who proposed a framework for studying issues in interethnic and intercultural communication. This approach assumed that individuals participated in communicative activities as cooperative agents, who

were mutually interested in the accomplishment of the interaction. Hence, any miscommunication was explained in terms of differences in shared understandings. However, this approach was criticized for its overly simplistic view (Kandiah, 1991).

Stemming from Gumperz's framework, Maltz and Borker (1982) explained six differences in conversational styles underlying miscommunication. One of the examples that best illustrated the basic idea of the gender differences in conversations was the different interpretation of positive minimal responses. Positive minimal responses included comments like *yes*, *yeah*, *aha*, *mm-hmm* or nodding. The responses were used by both men and women, though differently. Consequently, the differences might lead to miscommunications. For women, minimal positive responses meant *I am listening to you*, while for men, they had the meaning of *I agree with you*, or *I follow your argument so far*. Hence, women used minimal responses more often than men. Misunderstandings may occur in mixed-sex conversations. Infrequent minimal responses by a male listener, a woman could interpret as a sign of him not listening to her, whereas to him, it only meant that he did not agree with her on everything. On the other hand, by giving frequent responses, a woman indicated listening, while a man would interpret that as agreeing with him. So, if later on a woman changed her mind, a man would see that as her frequent change of an opinion. This example explained one of the most common problems in mixed-sex communication – men could not conclude what women thought and women got upset with men who rarely listened to them. The second example was related to the meaning of questions. While men raised questions to request for information, women used them as conversation maintenance devices. Thirdly, men frequently ignored the demand to link their utterance to the previous one thus underrecognizing another person's contribution. Men often ignored conversational flows and made abrupt topic shifts, which could be interpreted as a prerogative of power. Men perceived mentioning a problem as an opportunity to act as experts and offer advice, whereas women sympathized and shared their problems. To summarize, Maltz and Borker characterized women's speech as friendly and men's as uncooperative.

In addition to finding gender differences, Maltz and Borker explained the reasons which caused them. They believed that men and women formed sub-cultures with different sets of interactional rules. However, these sub-cultures were not formed in adulthood but in childhood, i.e., between the ages of 5 and 15, boys and girls socially interacted with members of their own sex. Girls played in small groups creating and maintaining relationships of equality, intimacy and cooperation. Boys, on the other hand, played in larger, hierarchically organized groups asserting their position of dominance with a clear emphasis on verbal posturing. They also paid attention to the audience because the success of their performance was proportional to the size of their audience. Hence, the communicational patterns adopted in childhood were carried over into adulthood. Women's speech was of the collaborative and men's of the competitive nature because their conversational aims differed.

The cultural difference approach was popularized by Deborah Tannen's books *That's not what I meant* (1986) and *You just don't understand* (1990), which contained everyday examples to explain the hypothesis of miscommunication between men and women. I will use some of them for the illustration purposes. Similarly to Maltz and Borker's (1982) positive minimal response examples, miscommunication between men and women happened because of different underlying meaning of utterances. For example, if a wife during a car ride asked her husband if he would like to stop for a coffee and his answer was no, they would not stop. The wife, who had wanted to stop, would be annoyed believing her suggestion had not been taken into consideration. Simultaneously, the husband would be angry with his wife because she did not say that she wanted to stop. The reason for miscommunication was a different interpretation of the same interchange. The wife asked the question to initiate a negotiation process and not to get an instant decision, while the husband expressed his preference not making the final decision.

Based on these everyday examples, Tannen (1986; 1990) set up an essentialist approach, which viewed gender as fundamental part of an individual. This identity-oriented approach was anti-assimilationist,

i.e., it did not assume that women wanted to be like men. Believing that the gender differences started in childhood, Tannen (1986; 1990) came up with six major gender differences, which I will elaborate on and exemplify in the following lines.

One of the dichotomies suggested by Tannen was *status versus support*. She used her own example for illustration. Tannen and her husband worked in different cities and people often expressed their sympathy believing that that kind of life was difficult. While Tannen peacefully accepted people's sympathies, her husband was irritated and deemphasized the inconvenience giving a number of reasons, which they benefitted from. He perceived people's sympathies as if they were looking down on them. So, in a world of a hierarchical social order, a man needed to acquire and maintain status since life was a struggle for independence. Tannen, on the other hand, perceived the world as a network of connections where people sought confirmation and support aiming at preserving intimacy.

Another dichotomy intertwined with the previous one was *independence versus intimacy*, which was reflected in men and women having different views of the same situation. Tannen described a case of a married couple Linda and Josh. An old high-school friend informed Josh that he would be in town the next month and Josh invited him for the weekend. When Josh informed Linda about it, she was upset because he had made plans without discussing it with her. To Josh, discussing the plans would mean seeking permission, which would imply that he was not independent, whereas to Linda, it would mean that her life was intertwined with someone else's. Both of them were upset – Linda for the lack of Josh's courtesy and a sense of a failure in their relationship and Josh for Linda limiting his freedom and controlling him. This happened because of men and women seeking different things – while women looked for closeness and support (intimacy), men were more concerned with status thus focusing on independence.

The third dichotomy was *advice versus understanding* exemplified on Eve's and Mark's story. Eve had a breast surgery and removed

a lump from her breast. She believed that the stitches changed the looks of her breast. She found cutting into her body upsetting and shared her thoughts with her sister and a female friend. Both of them sympathized with Eve not offering any solution to her problem. However, when Eve shared her concerns with her husband Mark, he did not sympathize like her sister and the friend, but advised having plastic surgery, which made Eve upset. She felt as if he was repelled by her looks and asked her to undergo another surgery, whereas he wanted to offer a solution to the problem. Furthermore, while Eve only wanted reassurance that it was normal to feel that way, Mark's suggestion implied that she did not have the right to feel that way but had to fix the problem. The problem was in the different purpose of the conversation – while women talked their problems through seeking for confirmation and support of ideas, men played the role of a problem solver offering pieces of advice. Men perceived problems as challenges, whereas women saw them as a means of empathy.

The fourth dichotomy was *public versus private speaking* also known as *information versus feelings*. Public speaking was usually associated with men and private with women. To exemplify the idea, Tannen used a letter from an anonymous woman to a psychologist. The woman could not understand her husband's behavior of coming home from work and being extremely quiet. She explained that her husband was not a silent person especially when they had guests around when the husband was the life of the party. Moreover, during parties, the husband would tell jokes and retell work stories the wife wanted to hear and be asked about. The psychologist explained that men rarely talked after coming home from work, while women, despite being equally tired, felt the need to share their thoughts, feelings and events that had happened at work. Tannen believed that men felt more comfortable speaking in public compared to women who enjoyed the private speaking. The underlying reason for this gender difference was in the purpose of their talks. For most women, a conversation's purpose was to establish rapport, i.e., to establish connections and negotiate relationships by sharing experiences. In comparison, men perceived talk as a means for preserving independence and maintaining status in a hierarchy. This

was done by storytelling, joking and showing different skills, i.e., by reporting. To paraphrase, women shared feelings and thoughts and men reported relevant information. Both women's and men's verbal behavior started in childhood – while girls criticized peers who wanted to stand out, boys learned how to get and keep attention in larger groups. To summarize, the crucial element was the perception of home. For men, home meant freedom from (verbally) proving themselves so they frequently remained silent. On the other hand, women perceived home as a means of sharing with their loved ones without worrying about being judged. So, women could not understand men who avoided this unjudged sharing, while men could not understand talking just to talk and not to share relevant information.

Furthermore, the next dichotomy, *orders versus proposals*, referred to the gender differences in the usage of the illocutionary speech act directives (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Tannen noticed that women frequently started their sentences with *Let's* thus suggesting their husbands to do something. However, husbands did not interpret those as suggestions but rather as orders, which jeopardized their status in a family. This again could be related to a habitual conversational style of boys and girls. Researchers (Sachs et al., 1984; Andersen, 1984) studying preschool children during role-play of a doctor and a patient found gender patterns. While girls who played doctors gave their patients suggestions (*Let's sit down and use the medicine*), boy doctors gave orders (*Lie down. Give me your arm.*). Similarly, in Smith's (1993; cited in Tannen, 1990: 75) sermons study at a Baptist seminary, men often gave orders to the audience (*Listen carefully as I read Luke, chapter seventeen*), whereas women used suggestions (*Let's go back to verses fifteen and sixteen*) inviting the audience to participate. Gleason's (1975) study showed that parents talked to their children in a different way. Precisely, fathers issued more commands than mothers and they issued them more to sons than daughters, i.e., boys were raised to be given more commands. The act followed by carrying out an action, men perceived as an order. Since men gained status by telling others what to do and resisting being told what to do, they felt that their status and dominant

position were threatened. Trying to avoid conflicts, women used requests or suggestions, which men perceived as manipulation or a hidden directive, so conflict was inevitable.

Finally, the last dichotomy was *conflict versus compromise* exemplified on Dora and Hank's car situation. Dora had to commute to work using cars that Hank had chosen and bought. She never complained even though she did not like some of the cars. After Dora almost died in a car accident, they were looking for a new second-hand car. Dora did not like Hank's choice and tried to persuade him to buy another car. Prior to the accident, she agreed on compromises but now was determined to get her way. Despite Dora's expectations, Hank did not say a word, which made Dora realize that occasional conflict and argumentative discussion were necessary. Trying to avoid conflict and agreeing to compromise, women gave men the right to think they were always right. Not being challenged and opposed to, men continued with their habitual style evoking feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction in women all of which could be resolved by flexibility of both men and women.

Tannen's hypotheses were confirmed in later research. Pilkington (1992) studied same-sex conversations in a bakery during a nine-month period. She found that women frequently agreed thus building on and completing each other's utterances, while men often disagreed challenging each other. Also, focusing on feelings and relationships, women talked to maintain relationships and affirm solidarity as opposed to men who engaged in verbal sparring. In comparison, Kupier's (1991) study on male solidarity proved that men indeed showed solidarity; however, they used insults to express it. Furthermore, Christine Howe's (1997) review confirmed the previous findings of boys' verbal predominance. She believed that gender differences began at socialization (ages 3 and 4). She confirmed Maltz and Borker's (1992) minimal responses theory of women being more engaged listeners, which was realized by their responses, such as *uh huh* and *oh, dear*, i.e., back-channeling. Also, her research showed that girls requested help more often than boys, who were more likely to express their disagreeing views. Weatherall

(2002) concluded that women's talk could be characterized as cooperative and men's as competitive. She confirmed some of Lakoff's hypotheses, namely that women used hedges, question tags and were less likely to interrupt a speaker.

The cultural difference approach was criticized for viewing miscommunication as misunderstanding, which was nobody's fault, and for failing to acknowledge power relations (Troemel-Ploetz, 1991; Uchida, 1992; Freed, 1992). Secondly, it failed to recognize gender similarities. In her construction of *genderlect*, Tannen (1990) worked on the populist genre and individual examples, which was criticized for overgeneralization and simplification. Further, Henley and Kramarae (1991) believed that the cultural difference approach could not explain all language differences and miscommunications. Rather, the approach was a powerful tool to maintain the male supremacy structure. Believing that the concepts of gender, language and power were intertwined, Uchida (1992) suggested the combination of the dominance and the deficit approach in constructing gender.

2.2.4. Anti-essentialist approaches

The fourth stage of gender and language research stemmed from the criticism of the essentialist approaches, hence the name. There were two sets of reasons for the anti-essentialist approaches. Firstly, instead of using one approach to interpret gender differences in language, a combination of poststructuralist approaches was applied. Secondly, researchers rethought the nature of gender and dismissed the polarization of gender.

The anti-essentialist approaches were built upon the criticism of the previous approaches that viewed gender as an integral part of an individual and separated it from interaction and social contexts of one's life (Bohan, 1993). One of the most influential anti-essentialist approaches was social constructionism, which viewed gender as a central factor in building social identities (Fairclough, 1989; Davies & Harre, 1990; Ochs, 1993; Swan, 1993; Crawford, 1995; Freeman &