Unit 11 Language and Gender

Overview

From this unit on, we are turning our eyes to the interface between language and culture. To start with, we will deal with the topic of language and gender in this unit.

Text A discusses whether men and women talk differently. Instead of attempting an answer to the question, Napoli challenges six common claims with more questions, arguing that all six claims are more about sociological factors than linguistic ones. Then she highlights the importance to distinguish between gender and sex and suggests the wide range of sociological factors that have to be included in systematic sociolinguistic studies to have a chance of getting reliable results.

Text Bfocuses on how men and women are treated differently in the society and in our language. During a small working conference, Tannen noticed the styled hair and the carefully chosenmakeup, clothes and shoes of the other women participants and the "unmarked" look of the men participants. It occurred to her that the women did not have the option of being unmarked in their appearance as the men had. Similarly, women are always marked in language as indicated in the titles and surnames. This is strange because biologically it is the male that is marked. Yet even writing about women and men may mark Tannen as a feminist rather than a writer.

This unitmay serve as a starting point for further studies in language and gender.Following the example of the texts, students are invited to reexamine the beliefs and phenomena that are usually taken for granted. In this process, they may not only want to break down some stereotypes but also practice the systematic way to do so.

Teaching Objectives

Reading Skills
- Identify the structure of the text
- Relate new information to old information
- Interpret what the author means in context

Communicative Competence
- Use gender-neutral language to avoid gender inequality
- Distinguish standard vs. non-standard forms
- Be aware of different types of tag questions and use them appropriately

Critical Thinking
- Challenge popular claims on gender differences in language use
- Control variables in sociolinguistic studies
- Compare the ways in which men and women use languageand are depicted in language

Intercultural Competence
- Understand the meaning of feminism in the Western context
- Interpret gender differences from a cultural perspective
- Understand gender issues across cultures

Teaching Suggestions

Text A is taken from Part II of *Language Matters* which deals with language in the context of society. Students, after studying Unit 4 which comes from Part I of the same book, may still remember the aim of Napoli is to show "how to look at language issues" rather than provide undisputable answers to the question in the title of each chapter. After studying this unit, they are going to understand that research findings are relevant only when research design is sound.

It is suggested to reserve some time for Text B in class as it supplements Text A in terms of perspective and way of writing. More importantly, Text B may help extend the discussion on language and culture by integrating both social behavior and language behavior into the discussion.

Further readings:

For a seminal work that is often credited with establishing langauge and gender as an object of study in linguistics, refer to
Lakoff, Robin (1973). Language and woman's place.*Language in Society, 2(1), 45-80.*
http://web.stanford.edu/class/linguist156/Lakoff_1973.pdf

Or,

Lakoff, Robin (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper Colophon Books.

To read more about language and gender, refer to

Tannen, Deborah (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. William and Morrow Company.

Preparatory Work

Classroom tactics:

The first two tasks invite students to collect examples from their experience and summarize some features of men's and women's talk. Students may be encouraged to support and challenge each other's findings. In this process, they are expected to provide more examples and explain the reasoning behind their arguments.

In the other exercises in this section, the students are expected to find out the exact meaning of the terms and scan relevant works by themselves.

1. The examples for neutral and women-only adjectives given by Lakoff in Language and Woman's Place are:
neutral: great, terrific, cool, neat
women only: adorable, charming, sweet, lovely, divine

Men's words may include swear words like damn.

Some may also believe whether you tend to say "um" or "uh" depend on whether you're male or female. For a report on this, read
http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/08/men-say-uh-and-women-say-um/375729/

2. According to Lakoff (1975),the following set of basic assumptions about what marks the language of women.
1) Hedges: Phrases like "sort of", "kind of", "it seems like"
2) Empty adjectives: divine", "adorable", "gorgeous"
3) Super-polite forms: "Would you mind..." "...if it's not too much to ask" "Is it o.k if...?"
4) Apologize more: "I'm sorry, but I think that..."
5) Speak less frequently
6) Avoid coarse language or expletives
7) Tag questions: "You don't mind eating this, do you?".
8) Hyper-correct grammar and pronunciation: Use of prestige grammar and clear articulation
9) Indirect requests: "Wow, I'm so thirsty." – really asking for a drink
10) Speak in italics: Use tone to emphasis certain words, e.g., "so", "very", "quite"

Note: Subsequent research has cast doubt on some of the propositions.

3. Claim:
a statement that something is true, even though you have no definiteproof.

Hypothesis:
a specific, testable prediction. It describes in concrete terms what you expect will happen in a certain circumstance. A hypothesis should always:
● Explain what you expect to happen
● Be clear and understandable
● Be testable
● Be measurable
● And contain an independent and dependent variable

Research question:
A research question is an answerable inquiry into a specific concern or issue. It is the initial step in a research project. The "initial step" means after you have an idea of what you want to study, the research question is the first active step in the research project.

Theory:
In modern science, the term "theory" refers to scientific theories, a well-confirmed type of explanation of nature, made in a way consistent with scientific method, and fulfilling the criteria required by modern science.

4. Sociolinguistics is the descriptive study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used, and the effects of language use on society.

Main topics include: language dialects, pidgins and creoles, codes, bilingualism, speech communities, variation, words and culture, ethnographies, gender etc..

For an influential introduction to sociolinguistics, refer to
Wardhaugh,Ronald (2006). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Critical Reading

I.   Understanding the text

1. Outlining

Part I (Paras. 1-2): What is the topic of the text? <u>How to collect data in a scientific</u>

way to test specific hypotheses about the male and female use of language?

Part II (Paras. 3-17): Why are the six claims about men's and women's talk not necessarily linguistic?
Para.<u>3</u> What are the six claims? <u>See Para.3</u>
Para.<u>4</u> Why these six? <u>Students are often familiar with four of them and the rest are important topics for linguists.</u>
Paras.<u>5-12</u> What's wrong with the first three?<u>The same characteristics of conversational behavior according to the first three claims about mixed-sex conversations can also be found in single-sex conversations, if one person has more power than the other person.</u>
Paras.<u>13-16</u> What's wrong with the last three?<u>Social relationships and who people are with may affect the likelihood of cursing. Even though Claims 4 and 5 are well documented, the difference between men and women may be sociological and culture-bound rather than physiological. Claim 6 is wrong because women accept some language change more readily than men.</u>
Para.<u>17 All six claims are more about sociological factors than linguistic ones.</u>

Part III(Paras.<u>18-23</u>): What are the other factors to be considered in the study of language and gender?
Para.<u>18 Gender roles are not the same as one's sex.</u>
Paras.<u>19-20 Results may vary from country to country.</u>
Paras.<u>21-23 To study whether a particular language phenomenon is related to sex, gender or power,as many of the potentially relevant factors as you can should be controlled for.</u>

Part IV (Para.24):<u>Sociological studies are of a large sampling of people and present significant statistical data on a wide range of sociological factors as they report language data.</u>

2. Comprehension check

(1) The first three involve interactive behavior in a conversation, whereas the last three involve individuals' speech patterns.

Other similar claims may include: Women apologize more or they speak less frequently.

Note: Refer to the second task in Preparatory Work for similar claims.

(2) Example a. Girls may be taught to speak tenderly while boys may be taught to avoid talking in the girls' tone or crying in public as much as possible.

Example b. Apart from explicit education, some people believe children imitate same-gendered models more than different-gendered models, which may result in the different ways of handling and expressing emotions of boys and girls.

(3) The two single-sex examples show that differences in conversational behavior may follow from other possible differences in conversation partners rather than the sex differences that the first three claims suggest. Language interaction is complex, involving various factors at play.

In Para. 8, the dialogue takes place at T's house, which may explain why T interrupted N and ignored N's topic of humor at first. Yet N also ignoresT's topic of descriptiveness, which indicates both boys are eager to put forth thier own ideas and ready to acknowledge the other when forced.

While this example is about the same-age middle school boys, Para.10 is about two sisters with a six-year gap. The younger one interrupts and ignores the older one's unfinished question and behaves like the more powerful of the two, to our surprise. At the same time, the older sister seems solicitous of the younger one, indicating the factor of the age is also relevant in conversational behavior.

(4) The fourth claim that men use more curse words than women is complicated by taking power relationship into account. The man may not be the one cursing for two reasons. First, to curse is certainly not the appropriate way to show respect to the boss. Second, as Para.14 suggests, men may be less likely to curse with women than with other men.

(5) It is impossible to learn whether sex or sociological role is the distinctive characteristic for a certain linguisitc usage in societies that do not tolerate overt gender role crossing because in such societies, it is impossible to tease apart the influence of physiological effect from gender roles.

It is also impossible to do so in societies where the power of men over women is stable regardless of situation because in these societies, it is impossible to seperate power relationship and sex role.

(6) According to Napoli, reliable results can be duplicated or confirmed in other studies. Apart from language data, sociological studies also have to control for sociological factors which are many and varied. Without crucial evidence that would distinguish between competing hypotheses, a single set of data may produce varying or even contradictory conclusions.

II.   Evaluation and exploration
1. Evaluating the text

(1) Napoli does not provide a definite answer to the question in the text. By debunking the common misconceptions about gender and language, she stresses that sociolinguistic studies have to use impeccable methodology.

According to Napoli,in some studies, data collection is not designed to test specific hypotheses and data is collected anecdotally. These studies cannot have a chance of getting reliable results and convince other researchers.

*According to the Preface of *Language Matters*, Napoli explains that she uses questions "that do not have misconceptions built into them so that readers will not have these false ideas chiseled into their memories".

(2) Dialogue recording:

As a type of observation, dialogue recording is a common way to collect the primary information. A voice recorder or video camera may be used for the recording purpose.

Advantages of recording:

a)   Very direct method for collecting data or information.

b)   Data collected is accurate in nature and also reliable.

c)   Helps in understanding the verbal response more efficiently.

d)   By using good and modern gadgets – recording can be made continuously and also for a larger duration of time period.

e)   One can identify a problem by making an in-depth analysis of the problems.

Disadvantages of recording:

a)   Having no other option one has to depend on the documents available.

b)   One cannot study opinions and attitudes by this means.

c)   One has to wait for an event to happen to study that particular event.

d)   Complete answer to any problem or any issue cannot be obtained by recording alone.

e)   Problems of the past cannot be studied.

Depending on the purposes of study, transcription can be more complex than is commonly understood. Transcription is practiced in multiple ways, often using naturalism, in which every utterance is captured in as much detail as possible, and/or denaturalism, in which grammar is corrected, interview noise (e.g., stutters, pauses, etc.) is removed and nonstandard accents (i.e., non-majority) are standardized.

Though transcription is thougt to be reliable, some crucial communication factors tend to be overlooked in the process such as intonation, gestures and facial expressions.

Other ways to collect data:

The basic data has a direct affect on the answers to the various questions and hence the source of the data is very much important as it provides the necessary information. The various sources of the data can be summarized as follows.

Primary sources refer to the first hand sources or the original sources at the hands of a researcher, which is not collected in the past.Collection of the primary data can be done with the help of the principle sources of the observation, experimentation, surveys, interviews and questionaires.

Seconday data provides information for the current study yet the data is not produced for the purpose of the current research project. Personal sources for secondary data may include diaries, autobiographies, letters and so on. Public sources for secondary data may be books, journals, newspaers, movies or even unpublished works.

(3) The neccessity and feasibility of research design depends onthe purpose of study, the data collection strategy, the type of variables, the accuracy required and other factors such as the budget of the project.

It is important to note that the eight pairs suggested by Napoli is an example to highlight the importance of controlling for variables rather than a concrete research plan. For one thing, the definitions of terms need to be further clarified such as "masculine", "feminine" or "traditionally", which could be a challenge itself. For another, observation on individuals, just like anecdotes, may "reveal important truths, but to be convinced of that, we need wide-ranging data that have been collected with the most scrupulously scientific methodology."(Para.2) To find more examples for each pair may help consolidate the findings and complicate the study at the same time.

In many fields of science, it is very difficult to ensure complete control, as there is a lot of scope for small variations.The key is to use established operationalization techniques, such as randomization and double blind experiments. These techniques will control and isolate these variables, as much as possible. If this proves difficult, a control group is used, which will give a baseline measurement for the unknown variables.

Sound statistical analysis will also eliminate these fluctuations from the results. Most statistical tests have a certain error margin built in, and repetition and large sample groups will eradicate the unknown variables.

2. Exploring beyond the text
(1) Challenging the claims

The six claims may be discussed individually or in groups.

First, claims a and c inolve interactive behanvior in a conversation.

Second, claims b and d mainly concerns individuals' speech patterns.

Third, claims e and f are about the societal roles of men and women.

Following the example set by the text, the claims may be challenged by bringing relevant sociological factors other than gender into consideration such as power relationships, location of the conversation, age, familiarity, types of reduplication, types of reports and so on.

(2) Students may come up various answers supporting or criticizing Tannen's point of view. It is important to encourage them to argue with evidence from both first-hand and second-hand sources.

For example, a researcher from the University of California has help conducted an experiment to reveal how boys and girls react differently to lemonade with salt in it and explained the findings quoting Tannen's words. Read a report on this, visit

http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=123726&page=1

Students are encouraged to read at least part of Tannen's book before commenting on her points of view.

(3)

● Examples from literature:

龙应台：《啊，上海男人！》

"在十年前开始阅读大陆文学的时候，印象最深刻的不是民族苦难、十年浩劫什么的，而是：咦，怎么小说里下厨烧饭洗碗的以男人居多？瞄一眼我的书架，随便抽出一本翻翻：你看，夫妻俩要请客了，'13日一早，周敏起了床就在厨房忙活。'这周敏可是个男人。'因为临时居住，灶具不全，特意去近处旅馆租借了三个碗、十个盘子、五个小碟、一副蒸笼、一口砂锅。'周敏紧接着开始剖鱼，他的女人就试穿上一套又一套的漂亮衣服，化妆打扮。这样的情节在台湾的小说里可难找到，台湾作者要编都编不出来。"

*Note: Zhou Min is a character in D*eserted City* (《废都》) by Jia Pingwa.

● Examples from the media:

Newspaper：

女汉子与娘娘腔，香港《成报》

http://www.singpao.com/cbzt/nannvpingdeng/

TV series：

《嘿，老头》岳云鹏vs.潘虹

春晚小品《女神和女汉子》

http://my.tv.sohu.com/us/82025695/78504196.shtml

- What makes feminine men feminine?
- ✓ Wear makeup
- ✓ Wear yoga pants
- ✓ Act in a girly way

- What makes masculine women masculine?

✓ If unable to unscrew a tight cap off of a soda bottle, she'd keep trying, instead of asking for help.

✓ She'd chase a leaving bus even with high heels on.

✓ She's perfectly fine with ordering big portions of food even with the presence of men.

For the twenty habits of a nü han zi, refer to

http://news.ifeng.com/a/20140426/40055112_0.shtml

● What does the phenomenon reveal?

About girly men:

Youth culture. As China has become much more accepting than in the past. Unlike their conservative parents, young Chinese give quite a warm response to Wei-Niang. Actually, young Chinese love to see people with an attitude, they applaud norm breakers.

Gender expectation. Another reason why Wei-Niang is warmly received by the young Chinese is that Asina girls prefer feminine looking asian men probably based on the rationale that men who have softer features get associated with the caring characteristics.

https://taffyye.wordpress.com/2011/10/06/124/

About tough girls:

For a socio-economic interpretation of the phenomenon, refer to

http://cul.qq.com/a/20150820/043704.htm

Note: Students may also come up with examples from other cultures.

(4) a. Do girls develop language earlier than boys?

b. Do dads talk less than moms at the dinner table in China?

c. How do Wechat messages reveal our gender?

d. How do men's talk and women's talk differ in literature?

Langauge Enhancement

I. Words and Phrases
1. Word formation

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(1) ecology
     theology
     neurology
     pathology
     cosmology

(2) academics
     acrobatics
     ceramics
     hydraulics
     optics

2．Nonstandard language
(1) I've got to go!
(2) Come on! You can make it!
(3) Give me my bag!
(4) That's a good question but I don't know either.
(5) It takes a lot of guts to speak in public.
(6) I love you all.
(7) There isn't nothing like a song.
    (ATTENTION: This expression, used informally, means *There is nothing like a song*. For more information about "double negative" in English, visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_negative)
(8) I want to be free.
(9) It's getting kind of crowded.
(10) Tell him to bring it because it's cool.

3．Articles and prepositions
(1) to, in, through
(2) versus/and, on
(3) an, towards, in, for
(4) on
(5) at
(6) on, on
(7) as, as
(8) across, beyond
(9) of
(10) into

II.   Sentence and Discourse
1. Telling the difference
(1) be interested in: wanting to know about or take part in something
    care about: to be interested in something and feel strongly that it is important

(2) consider: to think about something carefully before making a decision or developing an opinion
control for: to study with special attention to (the confounding factors)

(3) express: to tell someone about a feeling, opinion, or aim by speaking or writing about it
put forth: to state or offer an idea, opinion, plan etc.

(4) overlook: to fail to notice or do something
disregard: the attitude of someone who does not respect something or consider it important

(5) evidential: based on evidence
well-documented: based on or supported with a lot of written evidence

2. Paraphrasing
(1) It is safe to say gender difference in language use is an important topic in gender studies. Moreover, it is actually the most important one because language is essential to who we are.

(2) Data collection has to be designed to test specific hypotheses which distinguish one study from another. Without specified hypotheses, the most valuable evidence will not be discovered and the same data may lead to varying conclusions, which will render the study meaningless.

(3) Theoretically, if men and women were different linguistically, some of these grammatical hypotheses would be verified. But studies among English speakers have not found evidence for any of them.

(4) Not all societies are viable for these studies. For example, in conservative societies in which people have to follow fixed gender roles, and in male-dominated societies, there is no way to tell apart the physiological and sociological factors because these factors always function at the same time.

(5) Therefore, most sociolinguistic studies have to collect data from a great number of people and present not only language data but also large-scale sociological data.

3. Translation
(1) 小故事的确可以揭示一些道理，但要想确信无疑，就必须一丝不苟地采用科学方法，在大量事实的基础上才能得出答案。
(2) S 似乎很关心 J，年长六岁的姐姐通常如此。
(3) 甚至对话环境一类的平常因素也应当考虑在内，看是否大家都感到自在，还是更倾向于某一方。

(4) Comparing conversational goals, men tend to use a "report style", aiming to communicate factual information, whereas women more often use a "rapport style", which is more concerned with building and maintaining relationships.

(5) The increasing prevalence of obesity in the UK is a major public concern of all.

(6) According to the latest weather forecast, the coming three days have a chance of rain showers and thundershower, with the minimum at 22 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 32 degrees Celsius.

4. Tag question

(1) a. isn't he
   b. isn't it
   c. could you
   d. aren't they
   e. will you /won't you
   f. doesn't he

(2) Modal: a, f
   Affective-Facilitative: b, d
   Affective-Softening: c, e

(3) Open question.

Intercultural Reflection

1. According to Tannen, women are sociolinguistically marked —not only in terms of how they look but also how they are addressed. Even for a writer like Tanner, people scare more about the fact that she is a woman rather than what she tries to say. However, though men are physiologically marked, they have the option to stay unmarked in society.

Some of her observations of the American society apply to that in China. For example, women spend more time and money on makeup, bags, cloths and shoes than men do. A woman writer is usually referred to as a "female writer" while a man writer is seldom referred to as "man writer".

In other aspects, situations are different in China. For example, in modern Chinese, forms of address and surnames do not convey marital information.

2. Terms like "working mother" and "girl driver" are so common in English that people may hardly notice them. Yet if people start to think about them, they will first realize that men are not referred to in the same way as "working father" or "boy driver". The gendered terms take men as the default and women are treated as deviant from the norm. It is the same with "actress" and titles like "Ms." or "Mrs".

Gendered language affect perceptions which, in turn, affect behavior. When people hear words such as "girl driver", they are reminded of not only the gender of the driver but also the gender connotations of the driver. This could be unfair as a man

who is driving is always treated as an individual rather than an example of the people of the same gender. There could also be subtle biases when a judge is called "Ms" in the courtroom.

It can also affect the choices men and women make. For example, when girls grow up learning they are not the ideal image of a particular role, their options are limited. If a "tough, ambitious"woman is called a "bitch", girls could be reluctant to air their opinions and go for their dreams.

Therefore,using gender-neutral language can be a meaningful move toward gender equality.

3.
(1) Chinese characters with the radical "女" include:
a. 妖、奴、奸、婪、妒、嫉、婊、娼、妓
b. 好、妙、娆、妩、姣、婷、娴、嫩、婉、娇、婧、媚
According to Lan (2009), all the characters in group a. are derogatory, carrying the negative connotations of women in the Chinese culture. Characters in group b. are descriptive words for positive things. In these words, women are evaluated and judged as passive entities while men, who are not represented in the characters, are the judges.

(2) Chinese honorifics are words and phrases that indicate social respect or deference in the spoken or written language.In general, language referring to oneself exhibits self-deprecating humbleness, while language referring to others shows approval and respect.

When referring to oneself, the first-person pronoun was to be avoided in most situations. Instead, athird-person descriptor was used such as "晚辈" or "在下". More derogotary terms are used for wife, concubines than for husband. For example, "贱内", literally meaning this worthless wife, is a common term for wife. Similary, "贱妾", meaning this worthless consort, refers to concubine.

(3) Other examples include:
Idioms: 才子佳人、夫荣妻贵、龙飞凤舞、男耕女织、男尊女卑
Phrases: 兄弟姐妹、夫妻、儿女、父母、男女、男孩女孩

According to Lan (2007), all the pairs follow a fixe pattern, i.e., male and female ordering. Reversion of the order sounds odd in Chinese.
Always referring to men first and women second, speakers of the language accept and get used to the male-as-priority mentality.

For more examples and explanations on language and gender, refer to
蓝纯（编）（2007）。语言导论。北京：外语教学与研究出版社。
蓝纯（2009）。语言学概论。北京：外语教学与研究出版社。

For more studies on language and prejudice, read

Tannen, Deborah (2004). *Language and Prejudice*. New York: Pearson & Longman.