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BAELS3B

Read “The Influence of Feminism and Feminist Linguistics (Sunderland, pp.111-120) which highlights Maltz and Borker’s paper **‘A cultural approach to male–female**

**miscommunication’** and do the class work.

Instructions:

1. In a matrix (four columns), list down five differences in women’s and men’s language use in ‘cross-sex’ conversation, the explanations of such differences given by the authors(one-two sentences), and the research evidence cited by the authors (two-three sentences summary of findings). 25 pts

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| Women’s speech | Men’s speech | Explanation | Research evidence |
| 1. Minimal responses might seem and means, “I agree with you.” | Minimal responses might seem and means, “I’m really not listening.” | -Men think that women are always agreeing to them.  -Women get upset with men who seems to be not listening. | -Different rules can lead to repeated misunderstanding.  -These are two separate rules for conversational maintenance. |
| 2. See questions as part of conversational maintenance. | See questions as requests for information. | Women view conversations as interactional, thus conversation for them requires participation from those involved and back-and-forth movement between participants. | -Women give more extended signs of interest and attention, such as interjecting comments or questions during speaker’s discourse (Kalcik 1975).  -Women give off and look for signs of engagement such as nods and minimal responses. |
| 3. Conventions for beginning an utterance and linking it to the preceding utterance. | Ignores preceding utterances/comments. | -Women’s speech/rule seem to call for an explicit acknowledgment of what has been said and making connection to it.  -Men do not have such ‘rule’ in their speech. | Kalcik (1975) shows how narrative “kernels” serve as conversational resources for women and the group and the group as a whole. |
| 4. Interpret verbal aggressiveness as personally directed | Interpret verbal aggressiveness as one conventional organizing structure for conversational flow. | -Speech for women is to create and maintain relationships and to criticize others in acceptable ways.  -Speech for men is to attract and maintain an audience. Men are used (or tend to) assert dominance, hence aggression is of normal occurrence. | Hannerz (1969:86) describes aggressiveness in men as, “debates over minor questions of little direct import to anyone,” enjoyed for their own sake and not taken as a signs of real conflict. |
| 5 Elaboration and continuity | Linear | -In storytelling, men operate with a system in which topic is fairly narrowly defined.  -In storytelling, women tend have the topic develop progressively and shifts gradually. | For women, it’s natural that conversation grows out of the interaction of its participants, rather than being directed by a single individual. Unlike with men who tend to have a speaker (talks) & audience (listen) dynamic. |

2. Are these descriptions true to your own experience? Explain briefly. (10 pts)

* Personally, yes. We women have always been the subject of oppression since the beginning of time and we feel that no one helps us and supports us more than fellow women. We tend to be very sensitive to aggression not because of we are ‘weak’ but more of because the systematic oppression. We have been silenced for a long time that we love to see the people we are talking to are listening and interested and thus our speech tend to be interactional. We love to elaborate, ask questions, interactive, and are verbose since we know how stifling it is to not be able to give opinions.

3. Comment on Maltz and Borker’s claims and generalizations. Are you agreeable with these? Are these convincing and valid? If not, what can you suggest to improve the paper? (15 pts)7

* They suggested that men and women have different cultural rules for friendly conversation and that these rules come into conflict when women and men attempt to talk to each other. The cultural rules are listed above and as a modern woman, and reading their generalizations of women’s speech, I find it very agreeable. It’s true that women love the people they are interacting with, to continue and pick-up the conversation, it’s also true that we find verbal aggression as personally directed, it’s true that our minimal responses may mean as “I’m listening” (but do note that it is not by any means, agreeing.)
* What I find not valid enough is how they generalize men’s speech. Or this may stem from misinterpretation and miscommunication with men I have interacted with as a woman, but men aren’t as dominant as they generalize. Their minimal responses are not “I’m really not listening” and most women do think of that way. I personally do not know if men view questions as requests for information, since Maltz and Borker generalize them as all-knowing, but most men I have interacted with do not answer questions very well and very often. The only most notable and most valid point is that men are truly accepting with jokes—whether it’s sensitive and dark. Jokes shared among and within men are highly valued or viewed as normal between ‘brothers’.