



Exploring Subjectivity in the Gender-Linked Language Effect: A Process Model¹

Anthony Mulac, James J. Bradac, Nicholas A. Palomares,
and Howard Giles

Tore Kristiansen has contributed to a lasting legacy in our understanding of language attitudes and standardization norms, particularly as they relate to Scandinavian settings and media (e.g., Kristiansen, 2001). Within these spheres, he has investigated the critical role of gender, suggesting the intriguing notion that men may be more linguistically insecure than women (e.g., Kristiansen & Thøgersen, 2006). In parallel, he has (within sociolinguistics) promoted the vitality of subjective, socio-psychological processes for our understanding language behaviors and variation (Kristiansen, Garrett, & Coupland, 2005) – a stance with which we have also been identified (e.g., Robinson & Giles, 2001). Our contribution herein links language attitudes – as manifest in studies of the evaluation of gender-linked language – to the subjective realities of language processing, one to which we trust Kristiansen would resonate.

Gender-based language is a meaningful and consequential enterprise of communication theory and research (Dindia & Canary, 2006; Stahlberg, Braun, Irmen, & Sczesny, 2007). One result that has emerged is the gender-linked language effect which has been demonstrated repeatedly in empirical studies over the last three decades (Mulac, 2006). The effect is consequential because systematic gender-related differences in evaluation, especially in initial encounters, can affect impressions of suitability for tasks and projections of the desirability for future interaction (Lindsey & Zakahi, 1998). Surprisingly, this stable effect has not been subjected to theoretical analysis hitherto.

The Gender-Linked Language Effect

We first must describe the object of theoretical scrutiny. As summarized else-

1. We are grateful to Marie Maegaard for generous assistance in crafting this contribution and Inge Lise Pedersen for helpful comments.





where (Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001), American women are generally found to use certain language features more than men, such as references to emotion (e.g., “excited,” “sad”) and intensive adverbs (e.g., “really,” “so”), whereas men tend to use other features more than women, such as elliptical sentences (i.e., a sentence wherein the subject or predicate is understood as in “Great picture.”) and references to quantity (e.g., “40’ tall”). In fact, these tendencies allow the multivariate statistical procedure of discriminant analysis to correctly recognize (i.e., classify) communicators’ sex with 82% accuracy on average.

Using transcribed language samples from a variety of populations (e.g., primary and secondary students, university students, and older individuals) in several communication contexts (e.g., oral and written descriptions of landscape photographs, public speeches, written essays on morality, and dyadic interactions), untrained observers have rated male and female communicators differently, even though the transcripts did not explicitly or implicitly indicate communicators’ sex. Unaffected by raters’ sex or age, female communicators generally received higher ratings on socio-intellectual status (e.g., high social status, literate, rich) and aesthetic quality (e.g., nice, beautiful, pleasing) than men, whereas men received higher ratings on dynamism (e.g., strong, aggressive, active).

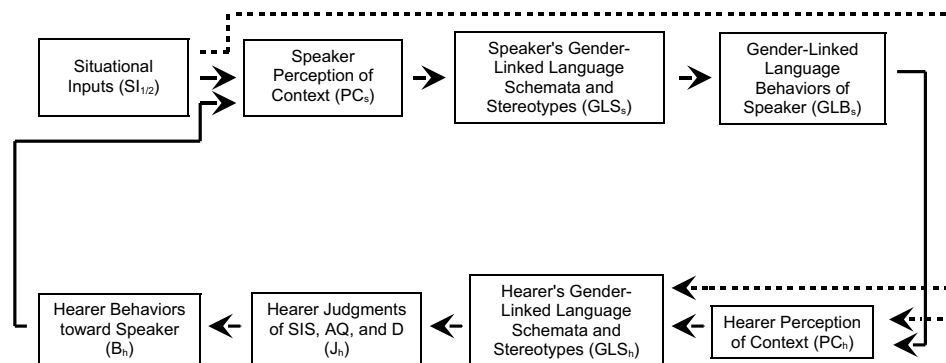
Results have consistently shown that the language features that distinguish male and female communicators correlated in ways consistent with these three evaluative dimensions. For example, references to emotion—a feature typically associated with women’s language—was negatively correlated with dynamism, whereas indirect requests—another typical female feature—was positively correlated with aesthetic quality (Mulac & Bradac, 1995). Moreover, across the studies, untrained observers who were asked to determine the sex of the communicators could only do so at a level of accuracy no better than chance or guessing (i.e., 50%), even though they were intelligent, native English speakers (e.g., university students). This sex-guess finding, thus, suggests that raters do not consciously or actively rely on gender stereotypes to influence their judgments (Mulac, Incantoro, & James, 1985).

A Process Model of the Effect

In line with Kristiansen’s ethos and the thrust of this volume, we present a general process model (for a broader model of language attitude and studies see, Cargile and Bradac, 2001) which appeals to subjective processes mediating the gender-linked language effect. Briefly, we propose that specific features of situations (SI) that a speaker perceives (PC_s) both form and trigger his/her cognitive schemata and stereotypes reflecting the intersection of gender and language (GLS_s); the



speaker uses these cognitive structures to produce gender-linked language (GLB_s). A hearer or reader (i.e., message recipient) perceives the communication context (PC_h), which includes the situational circumstances and fixed speaker attributes such as sex, along with the speaker's language. In some cases, the context is rigidly preordained for speakers and hearers, or at least particular contextual features such as speaker attributes are fixed, whereas in other cases (probably most, actually) speakers actively shape the communication context (Giles & Hewstone, 1982); the speaker's language, thus, may play a causal role in shaping the hearer's perception of context. Both the hearer's perceptions of the context (PC_h) and the speaker's gender-linked language (GLB_s) activate hearer schemata and stereotypes (GLS_h) which affect hearer judgments of the speaker (J_h), and these judgments serve as one basis for the hearer's behaviors toward the speaker (B_h), including the hearer's linguistic behavior, which can play a role shaping the speaker's perception of context (PC_s). This causal chain can be made more complex by adding SI à PC_h and SI à GLS_h, as a loop. These additions indicate that common situational stimuli can affect both the speaker and hearer, with Figure 1 illustrating the model.



SIS = Socio-Intellectual Status; AQ = Aesthetic Quality; D = Dynamism

Figure 1. Structural Representation of the General Process Model of the Theory for the Gender-Linked Language Effect

Constructs of the Model

Having provided a very brief and abstract overview of the model, we now discuss its components.

Situational Inputs (SI) and Perceptions of Context: PC_s

Objectively distinguishing between features of a situation and interactants' per-



ceptions of it is difficult to untangle conceptually; hence, we deal with them together, albeit veering in the biased direction of the latter (i.e., subjectivity). A subset of the countless situations in which children participate leads to the formation of gender-linked language schemata and stereotypes, and arguably this subset is large. Any situation in which men or women, or girls or boys, speak may establish rudimentary knowledge or provide input to partially formed gender-related and language-related structures. A prototypical case might be a situation in which a child is watching a television program where a mother says to her young daughter, "Little girls don't talk like that." Such a combination may lead to the formation of gender stereotypes of ostensibly appropriate language. Even if such entreaties are rare in the media, we found that television programs aimed at pre-school children generally presented male and female characters who spoke using gender stereotypical language (Mulac, Bradac, & Mann, 1985).

Some situations make gender especially salient and are likely to activate gender schemata and stereotypes, including those related to language (e.g., Reid, Keerie, & Palomares, 2003; Palomares, 2004, 2008). Other situations can make non-gender categorizations or other dimensions of thought and perception salient, minimizing gender concerns. For example, when a train hits a gasoline truck at a crossing, for many involved people the dimension "inside the train/(getting) outside" will probably assume prominence. Although, even in this example, gender concerns may not be suppressed entirely, as some men may not want to appear frightened and rescuers may prioritize their efforts along gender roles (e.g., save women and children first). Apart from mixed-sex interactions, any situation wherein gender is relevant to the topic or a gender-based issue is the focus will likely raise the salience of gender and activate gender-linked language schemata and stereotypes (e.g., Palomares, in press). Yet, how people use these activated cognitive structures in language production is a function of speaker intentions and role requirements.

Speakers always create messages relevant to the perceived communication context, and hearers evaluate speakers and their messages in contextualized ways also (Cargile & Bradac, 2001). Many layers of context exist, including the occasion or situation, perceived speaker attributes, perceived speaker purpose, earlier remarks in a conversation, topic of discourse, perceived gender-related conflict or other features. Many of these contextual characteristics can readily trigger gender-linked language schemata and stereotypes, concepts to which we turn next.

Gender-Linked Language Schemata and Stereotypes: GLS_s

In a discussion of gender schema theory, Bem (1985) offered a general definition of the "schema" construct and of gender schemata particularly:





EXPLORING SUBJECTIVITY IN THE GENDER-LINKED LANGUAGE EFFECT • 65

A schema is a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception...More specifically, schematic information processing entails a readiness to sort information into categories on the basis of some particular dimension, despite the existence of other dimensions that could serve equally well in this regard (p. 187). ...The dimensions chosen as cognitive organizing principles thus function as a kind of nonconscious ideology, an underlying or deep cognitive structure influencing one's perception without conscious awareness. Such is the nature of schematic processing generally. Such, in particular, is the nature of gender-schematic processing" (p. 189).

People have linguistic stereotypes of many sorts, including stereotypes of men's and women's language. Thus, for example, women are believed to be generally tentative and polite, whereas men are thought of as direct and harsh in their language use; and men interrupt more and speak less than women (e.g., Tannen, 1990). When men and women consciously try to imitate or parody the language of the "opposite" sex, they draw upon this stereotypical knowledge—men may use "empty" adjectives (e.g., "it was divine") while raising the pitch of their voice. We hypothesize that gender-linked linguistic stereotypes affect language performance primarily when communicators consciously attempt or plan to speak in gender-related ways (Herring & Martinson, 2004; Hills, 2000). Such intentional planning may sometimes reflect the hierarchy principle (Berger, 1997) that suggests deviations from a typical pattern (e.g., a man using male language features) cause a speaker to vary those features most easily controlled and demand the least cognitive effort. In the case of a man imitating female language, pragmatic features may be the first option (e.g., topic), then phonological features (e.g., pitch), followed by lexical features (e.g., word choice), with the last option being syntactic features. Research is consistent with this claim to an extent (Hills, 2000).

Individuals likely draw upon a different kind of knowledge when speaking in situations where there is no special intention to use male or female language because the focus is elsewhere, which is probably true of most situations. We propose this different kind of knowledge exists in the form of gender-linked language schemata. Speakers draw upon schemata unconsciously and automatically to achieve a wide variety of goals, and situations that heighten gender salience will energize these schemata, just as these situations energize more general gender schemata. Gender-linked language schemata reside at the intersection of gender identity and linguistic knowledge. Gender-linked language stereotypes are explicit knowledge available to conscious thought, whereas gender-linked language schemata are implicit, existing largely outside of awareness.

Extant evidence and arguments support the plausibility of our gender-linked language schemata construct. In studies of gender-linked language, one pattern is





invariant: Although when asked to identify the sex of a speaker from a typed transcript respondents cannot do so beyond chance levels, they do consistently evaluate the speaker as a result of linguistic features related to the speaker's sex (and gender). This effect indicates a process wherein gender-linked linguistic features function implicitly to stimulate evaluations. These features are not consciously associated with speaker sex in the way that linguistic features reflecting stereotypes are, but nevertheless they affect respondents' judgments systematically and consistently. Additionally, some of the gender-linked language features associated with the gender-linked language effect are syntactic variables (e.g., dependent clauses, sentence initial adverbials), and linguistically untutored persons are typically (albeit not always) unaware of syntactic variation. For other non-syntactic features (e.g., references to quantity and judgmental adjectives), that speakers monitor their performance in order to produce more or fewer of them in spontaneous interactive speech with the purpose of appearing masculine or feminine is highly unlikely. However, the fact that men and women can adopt language styles that exhibit features of the "opposite" sex, as in situations of accommodation (Hogg, 1985; Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann, & Gibson 1988; Palomares, 2008), suggests that men and women learn both male *and* female gender-linked language schemata.

Perhaps, gender-linked language schemata are constituted by relatively general, stable dimensions and attached to these dimensions are specific linguistic items, ranging from particular words (e.g., "nightingale") and phrases to syntactic categories (e.g., dependent clauses). These linguistic items may be relatively unstable, varying across epochs, generations, cultures, and social trends. Candidate dimensions are directness (i.e., direct-indirect), succinctness (i.e., succinct-elaborate), emotionality (i.e., affective-instrumental) and personalness (i.e., personal-contextual). Mulac et al. (2001) found that untutored American respondents perceived gender-linked language variables along these dimensions, with typical male-linked variables being perceived as relatively direct, succinct, instrumental and personal and female-linked variables being perceived as relatively indirect, elaborate and affective.

Gender-Linked Language Behaviors: GLB_s

The schemata and occasionally the stereotypes give rise to language performance. We think of gender-linked language as a multivariate phenomenon, as a cluster of masculine or feminine linguistic features the boundaries of which are fuzzy and the membership of which varies as a function of speaker idiosyncrasies and occasion. These clusters are "fuzzy sets" with prototypical and peripheral constituents. That any particular language feature is invariably associated with male or female speakers is a false statement. Rather, women use some features more frequently



than men do, whereas men use others more frequently. However, some features have been associated consistently with either male or female speakers across several studies, and these are candidates for prototypicality (Holmes, 1998; Mulac et al., 2001). Male features that may be prototypical are: references to quantity, judgmental adjectives, elliptical sentences, directives, locatives, and “I” references. Potentially prototypical female features are: references to emotion, intensive adverbs, dependent clauses, sentence initial adverbials, long mean length of sentences, uncertainty verbs, oppositions, negations, and questions. On the other hand, some linguistic features have produced mixed results across studies, although the results have favored women slightly: personal pronouns, tag questions, hedges, fillers, progressive verbs, and justifiers. These may be peripheral constituents, apparently in the female cluster (Mulac et al., 2001). As with other linguistic phenomena, the discriminating features likely change over time, as suggested above. Perhaps the ability to distinguish men and women linguistically will disappear as (or if) society moves toward egalitarianism and androgyny.

Speculatively, the male and female clusters may be organized as networks (Aitchison, 1994; Bem, 1985), with prototypical linguistic features constituting centrally positioned nodes that are easily activated and that have many connections with other linguistic features in the network. Peripheral features, on the other hand, may be less easily activated and may have relatively few connections with other features. Activation of a central node may increase the probability that several relatively peripheral linguistic features will be activated—a “linguistic cascade” effect, but activation of peripheral features may activate few or no other members of the network.

Effects on Hearer Judgments: J_h

One point that emerges from our discussion of gender-linked language schemata, hearer perception of context, and the gender-linked language effect is that although speakers draw upon schemata in many situations when speaking (or writing informally), hearers judge the subtle features constituting the male and female clusters in terms of gender stereotypes, or at least are capable of doing so when asked to respond to rating scales reflecting stereotypes (e.g., those items comprising the Speech Dialect Attitudinal Scale, see Mulac, 1976). We would predict with high confidence that hearers would rate explicitly gender-stereotypical language in the same way. Therefore, when asked to think in terms of gender-stereotypical dimensions, respondents are able to discriminate among language samples (even when they cannot consciously identify speaker gender), and research is consistent with this prediction (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). This outcome raises a question for future research: When exposed to the subtle, ostensibly schema-driven linguistic features that produce the gender-linked language



effect, what thoughts arise spontaneously in the minds of respondents? Are these spontaneous thoughts associated with gender in some indirect, associative way, for example, thoughts related to power? (We would not expect explicit gender-related thoughts, given that respondents are unable to identify speaker gender accurately.) Or do these thoughts reflect other classificatory or evaluative dimensions unrelated to gender?

Hearer Behavior toward Speaker: B_h

As a result of the hearer's evaluation of speaker socio-intellectual status, aesthetic quality and dynamism, the hearer's behavior toward the speaker will be affected, especially in initial-impression situations. This outcome will be true even in mass-mediated contexts where some viewers, for example, send e-mail to news commentators (e.g., Wolf Blitzer or Greta Van Susteren), and the e-mailers may even receive feedback from the commentators in the form of televised reactions to the e-mail. In more commonplace face-to-face situations, hearer reactions to a speaker's use of gender-linked language can be immediate and will serve as one form of situational input to the speaker: in some respects, $B_h = SI$. If the hearer judges the speaker as highly dynamic (e.g., a man using male-linked language features), then the hearer may perceive the speaker as dominant and may attempt to reciprocate dominance or acquiesce. If the hearer is male (especially), the perception of speaker dominance may activate the hearer's schemata for male language features. The hearer's reciprocated dominance, if this occurs, may in turn energize the speaker's male-linked language schemata. However, if the speaker is judged as high in socio-intellectual status and aesthetic quality (e.g., a woman using female language features), a hearer may perceive the speaker as literate and pleasing, which may enhance credibility in situations where literacy and pleasantness are valued. If the hearer is a female (especially), the perception of literacy and pleasantness may activate schemata for female-linked language features. If the hearer conveys his/her judgment of credibility to the speaker, particularly if the hearer uses female-linked language in conveying this judgment, the speaker's female-linked language schemata may be further energized and behavior reflecting these schemata reinforced. In situations of mixed-sex interactions that encourage accommodation, the perception of a male speaker's dominance may activate male-linked language schemata in female hearers, while the perception of a female speaker's literacy and pleasantness may activate female-linked language schemata in male hearers. Via the explanatory mechanisms in our model, we might be capable of accounting for a range of gender-linked language phenomena, although supportive data await.





Relationships among the Constructs: Theorems worth Testing

The abstract representation of our model's general axioms— $SI \rightarrow PC_s \rightarrow GLS_s \rightarrow GLB_s \rightarrow PC_h \rightarrow GLS_h \rightarrow J_h \rightarrow B_h$ —yields 21 logically compelled theorems and since B_h can be a type of situational input to the speaker (SI), additional theorems emerge. Also, if $J_h \rightarrow B_h$ and $B_h \rightarrow GLB_s$, then $J_h \rightarrow GLB_s$, then a hearer's judgments can affect the language behavior of a speaker. Indeed, if B_h is a situational input to the speaker, then the causal chain becomes a causal circle, which indicates a higher degree of interaction among the elements (see Figure 1).

Some of the theorems have, as it happens, already been tested empirically. For example, the general axiom of $GLS_s \rightarrow GLB_s$ has been demonstrated (Palomares, 2004, 2008; Reid et al., 2003) as has the more complex, $PC_s \rightarrow GLS_s \rightarrow GLB_s$ (Palomares, in press). Many studies have supported the theorem $GLB_s \rightarrow J_h$ which represents the gender-linked language effect (e.g., Mulac & Lundell, 1986; Mulac et al., 1988), whereas $GLB_s \rightarrow B_h$ has been supported (and investigated) in only a few instances (e.g., Hogg, 1985), and these studies focused upon language behavior exclusively. In other words, to examine the effect of a speaker's use of gender-linked language on hearers' non-language behaviors, such as non-verbal attempts at dominance, could prove interesting. However, as is often the case when exploiting a logical machine, some of the compelled relationships are not highly meaningful (to us, at least) when the relatively abstract macro-variables (e.g., situational inputs, gender-linked language schemata and stereotypes, and so forth) become concrete.

Nonetheless, a number of relationships and, theorems arising from our model suggest empirical tests—as in the following that focus on for example hearer's behavior. First, if $B_h \rightarrow PC_s$ then a hearer's behavior toward a speaker can affect a speaker's perception of context, as we speculated earlier. Hence, a hearer's use of the intensifiers “really” and “so” are two molecular language variables associated with a speaker's judgment of high hearer socio-intellectual status, and this judgment may heighten the extent to which the situational dimension of status is salient in Giles and Ryan's (1982) sense of the term “status-stressing contexts” ($+B_h \rightarrow +PC_s$).

Second, the idea that a hearer's behavior may constitute a causal factor in the production of speaker schemata and stereotypes is suggestive ($B_h \rightarrow GLS_s$; Mulac et al., 1985), as is the notion that a hearer's behavior may be linked to a speaker's use of gender-linked language ($B_h \rightarrow GLB_s$), and perhaps reciprocally so (e.g., $+B_h \rightarrow +GLB_s$, a form of mutual accommodation as in Mulac et al., 1988). Third, this behavior may be linked to the hearer's own language schemata and stereotypes ($B_h \rightarrow GLS_h$), perhaps reinforcing them (i.e., $+B_h \rightarrow +GLS_h$).

Fourth, a general hypothesis suggests that a hearer's behavior toward a speaker may be causally linked to the hearer's subsequent judgments of socio-intellectual





tual status, aesthetic quality and dynamism; the hearer's behavior may indirectly generate his/her own judgments. Thus, for example, if a hearer uses highly dynamic language, this may elevate his/her judgments of speaker dynamism via a perceptual assimilation effect ($+B_h \rightarrow +J_h$). Similarly, the idea that a hearer's behavior may constitute a causal factor in the production of speaker schemata and stereotypes is suggestive ($B_h \rightarrow GLS_s$), as is the notion that a hearer's behavior may be linked to a speaker's use of gender-linked language ($B_h \rightarrow GLB_s$), perhaps reciprocally (e.g., $+B_h \rightarrow +GLB_s$, a form of mutual accommodation as in Mulac et al., 1988). The idea that this behavior may be linked to the hearer's own language schemata and stereotypes, perhaps reinforcing them (i.e., $+B_h \rightarrow +GLS_h$).

Other theorems seem interesting to us also as in the case of a hearer's judgments of speaker socio-intellectual status, aesthetic quality and dynamism can affect the hearer's perception of the communication context. Perhaps gender-linked language judgments induce heightened gender salience in situations where gender is not readily apparent, as in e-mail exchanges between strangers ($+J_h \rightarrow +PC_h$; e.g., Thomson, Murachver, & Green, 2001). Judgments based on gender-linked language may also affect a hearer's gender-linked language schemata and stereotypes, perhaps reinforcing them ($+J_h \rightarrow +GLS_h$). These same hearer schemata and stereotypes may affect a speaker's gender-linked language behavior ($GLS_h \rightarrow GLB_s$), although the hearer's behavior is necessarily a mediating variable ($GLS_h \rightarrow B_h \rightarrow GLB_s$; unless one believes in mental telepathy), and the schemata and stereotypes may also affect the hearer's perceptions of the context ($GLS_h \rightarrow PC_h$). The last-mentioned relationship suggests that the energized schemata, for example, may heighten the extent to which gender is situationally salient for the hearer ($+GLS_h \rightarrow +PC_h$). Another theorem suggests that a hearer's perception of context may affect a speaker's gender-linked language behavior ($PC_h \rightarrow GLB_s$). The two theorems together suggest a process wherein energized hearer schemata can genderize perceptions of context which, in turn, may heighten the likelihood of a speaker's use of gender-linked language ($+GLS_h \rightarrow +PC_h \rightarrow +GLB_s$), a version of a Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal, 2002).

To summarize, our theorems suggest that a hearer's behavior may affect his/her own judgments of a speaker (e.g., socio-intellectual status) and may also affect his/her own perceptions of the communication context, as well as his/her own language schemata and stereotypes. The speaker's actual, objective use of gender-linked language features does not solely determine a hearer's gender-related evaluative judgments. The hearer is an active agent in the process of language-attitudes activation. This same hearer's behavior, prompted by his/her evaluative judgments and perception of context, may also influence a speaker's use of gender-linked language (a Pygmalion effect), may reinforce his/her gen-





EXPLORING SUBJECTIVITY IN THE GENDER-LINKED LANGUAGE EFFECT • 71

der-linked language schemata and stereotypes, and may change his/her perception of the communication context.

Additionally, a hearer's gender-linked language judgments may affect the hearer's own perception of the communication context. The hearer's perception of context may in turn influence his/her gender-linked language schemata and stereotypes, and vice versa. The theorems indicate a reciprocal relationship. The hearer's gender-linked language judgments may also affect these schemata and stereotypes, which may reinforce or intensify them. A speaker's gender-linked language behavior may influence both his/her own and the hearer's perceptions of context, and the hearer's behavior toward the speaker may affect the speaker's perception of context (as suggested in the previous paragraph), all of which supports the idea that language is a shaper of communication situations (Giles & Hewstone, 1982).

Conclusions

Our model can be applied to various communication situations. For example, imagine two men and two women are dining at a rather formal restaurant, and unexpectedly a large person passes their table wearing a white duck costume. This situational input interrupts their serious conversation and the context becomes a humorous one. One of the men says, "I wonder if that means duck is tonight's special?" and the woman across the table replies, "Yes, a seven-foot tall particularly stupid duck." Prior to the man's utterance, he draws upon several kinds of knowledge, including his world-knowledge of ducks and restaurants, general grammatical knowledge, and knowledge of speech act types, which are energized simultaneously with gender-linked language schemata, in this case female-linked language schemata (e.g., uncertainty verbs and questions, dangling from the "indirect" pole of a directness dimension). The woman who responds draws upon the same knowledge and male-linked language schemata (e.g., judgmental adjectives and references to quantity, dangling from the "direct" pole of a directness dimension, respectively). This example illustrates a portion of the general process model via an egalitarian situation of mutual accommodation.

The model reflects a conception of gender that is rooted in the self-concepts and culturally-based schemata comprising gender identity. The model is to an extent a fluid conception in that some situations intensify the salience of gender identity, whereas others diminish it; also, there is individual variation in the degree to which gender identity is chronically accessible, and there is variation in the extent to which this identity is linked to biological sex in culturally mandated ways. A great majority of the studies on gender-linked language have in fact oper-





ationalized gender as biological sex, which raises interesting questions in light of the rather consistent results—and very stable male-female differences in the case of Mulac (2006) and associates' research—that have been obtained. For example, referring to the latter research, have the stable differences between male and female speakers been produced by a subset of the sample who are gender schematic and, therefore, for whom gender is chronically accessible? The fact that stable linguistic differences have been found across a wide variety of communication contexts, some of which seem unlikely to have triggered gender identity salience, suggests that the answer to the chronicity question may be “yes,” as does research that directly tested some aspects of this question (Palomares, 2004). Indeed, that biological sex creates between-group syntactic and semantic differences has long been denied (Jespersen, 1922). The general implication is that gender is often best viewed as a dynamic rather than a static concept.

The connections among gender schematicity, chronic accessibility, gender-linked language behavior, and the gender-linked language effect are prime targets for future research. Although the relationships between variables suggested by a few of the theorems that our model generated have been investigated, many other possibilities are open for further investigation. At the level of individual constructs, directly investigating the notion of gender-linked language schemata will be useful. Some preliminary research in this regard has been conducted (Mulac et al., 2001), but at this point the construct is supported mainly by the results of research related only indirectly and by logic. There is direct evidence supporting the existence of gender-linked language stereotypes (Herring & Martinson, 2004; Hills, 2000) and adducing similar evidence for gender-linked language schemata would be desirable. This construct is novel, unlike say perception of context, so investigating it empirically could easily suggest new paths for research. In a similar vein, also useful would be to investigate the notion that gender-linked language features are organized as prototypical networks interconnected in some way to the relatively stable schematic dimensions of directness, succinctness, emotionality and personalness. Most of the theorems are capable of yielding hypotheses that are testable; a few are not (e.g., $GLS_s \rightarrow GLS_h$). The question therefore becomes: Which are the most interesting or important? We have indicated our preferences above and are confident that over time future research will reveal the extent to which our speculations are fruitful. By these means, we underscore Kristiansen's faith in the belief that subjective constructs and processes of the kind highlighted herein have theoretical bite for our understanding of language variation and change.



References

- Aitchison, J. (1994). *Words in the mind: An introduction to the mental lexicon* (2nd ed.). Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.
- Bem, S. L. (1985). Androgyny and gender schema theory: A conceptual and empirical integration. In T. B. Sonderegger (Ed.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation: Psychology and gender* (pp. 179–226). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Berger, C. R. (1997). *Planning strategic interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Brown, R. (1965). *Social psychology*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Cargile, A. C., & Bradac, J. J. (2001). Attitudes toward language: A review of speaker-evaluation research and a general process model. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 25* (pp. 347–382). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Canary, D. J. & Dindia, K. (Eds.). (2006). *Sex differences and similarities in communication*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Giles, H., & Hewstone, M. (1982). Cognitive structures, speech, and social situations: Two integrative models. *Language Sciences*, 4, 187–219.
- Giles, H., & Ryan, E. B. (1982). Prolegomena for developing a social psychological theory of language attitudes. In E. B. Ryan & H. Giles (Eds.), *Attitudes towards language variation: Social and applied contexts* (pp. 208–223). London: Edward Arnold.
- Herring, S. C., & Martinson, A. (2004). Assessing gender authenticity in computer-mediated language use: Evidence from an identity game. *Journal of Language & Social Psychology*, 23, 424–446.
- Hills, M. (2000). *You are what you type: Language and gender deception on the Internet*. Unpublished bachelor's honors thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Retrieved April 17, 2008 from http://www.netsafe.org.nz/Doc_Library/Internet_language_dissertation.pdf
- Hogg, M. A. (1985). Masculine and feminine speech in dyads and groups: A study of speech style and gender salience. *Journal of Language & Social Psychology*, 4, 99–112.
- Holmes, J. (1998). Women's talk: The question of sociolinguistic universals, In J. Coates (Ed.) *Language and gender: A reader* (pp. 461–483), Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Jespersen, O. (1922). The women. In O. Jespersen (Ed.), *Language: Its nature, development and origin* (pp. 237–254). London: Allen & Unwin.
- Kelly, G. A. (1955). *The psychology of personal constructs*. New York: Norton.
- Kristiansen, T. (2001). Two standards: One for the media and one for the school. *Language Awareness*, 10, 9–24.

- Kristiansen, T., Garrett, P., & Coupland, N. (Ed.) (2005). Subjective processes in language variation and change. *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia*, 37, 1–250.
- Kristiansen, T., & Thøgersen, J. (2006). Rigtige mænd er ikke bange for engelsk [Real men are not afraid of English]. In J. N. Jensen, O. Ravnholt, & J. Schack (Eds.), *Ordet Fanger. Festschrift til Pia Jarvad I anledning af 60-årsdagen* (pp. 85–114). Copenhagen: The Danish Language Council.
- Lindsey, A. E., & Zakahi, W. R. (1998). Perceptions of men and women departing from conversational sex role stereotypes during initial interaction. In D. J. Canary & K. Dindia (Eds.), *Sex differences and similarities in communication* (pp. 393–412). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Mulac, A. (1976). Assessment and application of the Revised Speech Dialect Attitudinal Scale. *Communication Monographs*, 43, 238–245.
- Mulac, A. (2006). The gender-linked language effect: Do language differences really make a difference? In K. Dindia & D. J. Canary (Eds.), *Sex differences and similarities in communication*, 2nd ed. (pp. 219–239). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mulac, A., & Bradac, J. J. (1995). Women's style in problem solving interaction: Powerless, or simply feminine? In P. J. Kalbfleisch & M. J. Cody (Eds.), *Gender, power, and communication in human relationships* (pp. 83–104). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Mulac, A., Bradac, J. J., & Gibbons, P. (2001). Empirical support for the gender-as-culture hypothesis: An intercultural analysis of male/female language differences. *Human Communication Research*, 27, 121–152.
- Mulac, A., Bradac, J. J., & Mann, S. (1985). Male/female language differences and attributional consequences in children's television. *Human Communication Research*, 11, 481–506.
- Mulac, A., & Lundell, T. L. (1986). Linguistic contributors to the gender-linked language effect. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 5, 81–101.
- Mulac, A., Wiemann, J. M., Widenmann, S. J., & Gibson, T. W. (1988). Male/female language differences and effects in same-sex and mixed-sex dyads: The gender-linked language effect. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 315–335.
- Palomares, N. A. (2004). Gender schematicity, gender identity salience, and gender-linked language use. *Human Communication Research*, 30, 566–588.
- Palomares, N. A. (2008). Explaining gender-based language use: Effects of gender identity salience on references to emotion and tentative language in intra- and intergroup contexts. *Human Communication Research*, 34, 263–286.
- Palomares, N. A. (in press). Women are sort of more tentative than men, aren't they? How men and women use tentative language differently, similarly, and counter-stereotypically as a function of gender salience. *Communication Research*.



EXPLORING SUBJECTIVITY IN THE GENDER-LINKED LANGUAGE EFFECT • 75

- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvick, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman
- Reid, S. A., Keerie, N., & Palomares, N. A. (2003). Language, gender salience, and social influence, *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 22, 210–233.
- Rosenthal, R. (2002). The Pygmalion effect and its mediating mechanisms. In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement: Impact of psychological factors on education* (pp. 25–36). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Stahlberg, D., Braun, F., Irmen, L., & Sczesny, S. (2007). Representation of the sexes in language. In K. Fiedler (Ed.), *Social communication* (pp. 163–187). New York: Psychology Press.
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. New York: William Morrow.
- Thomson, R., & Murachver, T. (2001). Predicting gender from electronic discourse. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 193–208.
- Thomson, R., Murachver, T., & Green, J. (2001). Where is the gender in gendered language? *Psychological Science*, 12, 171–175.

