

Gender and Speech: Class Facilitation Reflection Paper

Takemah Adams, Tom Devine, Michael Gesese-Elsenpeter, and Melanie Nielsen

Department of Communication and Media Studies, St. Norbert College

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Dr. Toni Morgan

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Positionality

Approaching this project as a group, we quickly discovered that we had very diverse perspectives on the topic of gender. As an equal mix of men and women, our personal experiences with different gender roles and norms ensured we brought unique perspectives to the table. Tom says he “was genuinely intrigued learning about what men and women would consider to be ideal speech. Before I read the article, I would not have known that women often make an effort to alter their speech to adapt to what people consider to be desirable female speech. Being a male, I would have no idea that women feel the need to adapt to what is considered desirable. I feel that this ties into the idea that people consider men to be above women in society, and that is what makes women think that they should adjust to what men assume is ideal speech. I say that it is most certainly not right to assume women need to adjust to what people think ideal speech is in society.” Takemah says she “was incredibly shocked that the female speech was closer to the ideal even though female speech is seen as more polite and passive and men’s speech is seen as more aggressive and assertive. I always believed that the confidence that men portrayed in their speeches were more sought after in the ideal speaker than the softness portrayed in women’s speeches. As someone who has a naturally soft and quiet voice, I always believed that my voice was kind of annoying and that no one would take me seriously in large conversational groups but this research says otherwise.”

Michael says “Ideal speech wasn’t really anything I paid attention to before this article. I wasn’t aware that females were viewed & portrayed the way they are in the media, this could be viewed as my male privilege.” Melanie says she “approached the article with a little bit of “bitterness”. I see myself as a strong woman who typically uses assertive speech in my daily life

as I am confident in my contributions to conversations. Therefore, when the article explained that women are typically seen as ineffective when they are tentative, and rude when they are assertive, I was a little upset. I have had some encounters with people who do not think my opinion is valuable, but overall I am used to being respected when I share an opinion. I was very interested in what this study would ultimately find out about this stereotype.”

Research

We ultimately led the class in discussing the article “Women’s and Men’s Ratings of Their Own and Ideal Speech” by Chris Kramer. The authors were interested in this topic because it is often assumed that female speech is less effective than male speech. The article put that idea to the test by having men and women consider a list of speech characteristics such as enunciation, pitch, and forcefulness. They then had women and men rate their own speech and the qualities of “ideal” speech against this list. The study found that female speech is actually closer to the “ideal” than male speech. This was a very interesting finding because women are often told they need to change their speech when, in fact, their speech may be more effective than men’s. We also learned that one major setting where this may not be the case is when women are presenting to a large group. In that setting, men tend to value a deeper-pitched voice so they may be less receptive to a female in that role (Kramer, 1978).

In our search for an article to present, we also considered three other articles. The first was “Sexuality and sexism: Differences in ambivalent sexism across gender and sexual identity” by Lucy J. Cowie, Lara M. Greaves, and Chris G. Sibley. The article taught us about Ambivalent Sexism Theory (AS) and its two dimensions, carrot, and stick. This theory is mainly directed and aimed at people who are heterosexual, but obviously, not everyone is heterosexual. The article taught us about hostile sexism and benevolent sexism and the distinction between the

two. “Hostile sexism is an aggressive behavior towards women, while Benevolent sexism is used to lure women towards conforming to traditional femininity with positive reinforcement and regard” (Cowie, 2019). Overall, the article does a good job of highlighting many ways that gender and sexuality play a huge role in the treatments people will receive from other individuals. It highlights the inequalities in sexualities well. We think people should all be treated equally no matter what one's gender and sexuality are.

We also read the article “Gender, Language, and Social Influence: A Test of Expectation States, Role Congruity, and Self-Categorization Theories” by Scott A. Reid, Nicholas A. Palomares, Grace L. Anderson, and Beverly Bondad-Brown. This study taught us that Role Congruity Theory is the idea that people will be more accepting of a person or a group if they “fit the mold” and expectations associated with their group. We also learned that Expectation Theory is the idea that people predict the skills and characteristics of others based on what they already know about that person’s group. In this case, Expectation Theory showed that, when men believed they were listening to someone who was college-educated, they were more influenced by an assertive voice. When men believed they were listening to a woman, they were more influenced by a tentative voice. The study found that women were not influenced by the speaker’s assertiveness or tentativeness, nor by their categorization (Reid et al., 2009).

Finally, we read “The Differential Effect of Local–Global Identity Among Males and Females: The Case of Price Sensitivity” by Huachao Gao, Vikas Mittal, and Yinlong Zhang. The authors reviewed what is associated with male and female identity at a local and global level. Females are more likely to give their attention to individual services which are related to a local identity. Oppositely, males can be known to be more devoted to companies or brands which are related to a global identity. Precisely, women will usually choose smaller things with dual

relationships. On the other hand, males prefer “larger collectives” with wider relationships. The authors can testify that identity incongruence takes away the shopper’s cognitive resources and results in lower price sensitivity. Throughout the article, they can do 5 tests to help develop this claim. Although males and females are similar in ways of wanting to socially attach to things and people, they are different in choosing the things that they prefer (Gao & Zhang, 2020).

Discussion Reflection

While facilitating the discussion, we learned that it’s really important for students to participate in class, otherwise, the speaker just feels like they are simply talking to themselves. During Michael’s portion of the presentation, he felt uncomfortable with the lack of participation, specifically with the discussion questions he had presented to the class. He felt empathy for professors and other public speakers that have to face less-than-enthusiastic audiences sometimes. We thought the Kahoot and other activities we incorporated into the facilitation went well because we had more participants. We feel that we could have made the text on our slides more concise. That would have allowed the audience to focus on our oral presentation rather than reading the whole slide. The challenge of facilitating the discussion and the activity for Michael, personally, was talking in front of an audience. He feels that “It’s more pressure than simply raising a hand to guess answering a professor's question because now the shoe is on the other foot, which means I better know what I am talking about”.

References

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