

Reaction Paper
Chapter 10: Gender
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Often confused, sex and gender are clearly separated linguistically because one's XY designation biologically is not what we mean when referring to the socially proscribed "role" assigned to gender. And yet one's sex/gender does have an effect on speech. Women are more "advanced" according to work by Di Paolo cited in Labov, and Guy Bailey and colleagues in, for example, the "pronounced" homonyms "pull" and "pool" and "still" and "steel." This gender difference is further supported by Eckert's Detroit study in which girls were the pioneers of "boss" for "bus."

Exclusive features vs. preferential are a reflection of societal emphasis on relationships (whether the referent is female for example, and the speaker is male, etc. may be important in that society.) Preferential features are more malleable.

Direct indexing and conventional implicature are closely related in that if you were to say "My mother cut himself by accident." But indirect is associated with "para" words concerning things like aggression, dominance, etc. If you said, for example, "She picked up his baseball," is it linguistic confusion from the L1 over the adjective associated with baseball, or the masculine (or indirect) association with the activity of sport that colors the pronoun "his."

Whether a use is reflexive enough seems common-sense (working class features, or geographical use of a missing 'r' in New York for example) but then

are brought into the “paradox” which is evident, but debated. The best defense against which is Eckert’s observation of outdated analysis techniques.

I think “lamination” is the best term to describe why terms can mean so many things in so many ways and seem to create a “paradox” when analyzed too microscopically. This is supported by conversational implicature which is done all the time to modify ourselves as we speak. On one end of the spectrum are pronoun labels which clearly define sex, in the middle, words like “pretty” which are normally assigned to one or the other gender, and then lamination which allows for contextual alteration of ones speech.

Despite all the research, even gender (which seems so “clear” at first) does not pin down the use of words, even in the estimation of, for example, the Lakota women and men who say that certain words are gender-based, when in fact, the usage is more loose than that. Language is liquid.