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The Role of Gender Stereotypes in Speech Perception:
A Study on Internet Discourse

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Introduction

Headlines and book titles such as *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (John Gray, 1992) or *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps: How We're Different and What to Do About It* (Allan and Barbara Pease, 2001) are not only catchy and entertaining, but they also foster the idea that men and women are two essentially different beings. The prevailing idea that men and women are disparate nurtures the existence of gender stereotypes, which have prevailed in many cultures for numerous years. To what extent gender stereotypes are manifested in the English language is one aspect to be investigated in this thesis. In order to gain an understanding of the issue it is essential to challenge knowledge we consider common-sense, especially in regards to men and women. This, on the other hand, will be done in light of social constructionism and the Foucauldian discourse theory as these serve as a basis for understanding the ties between linguistic stereotypes and the perception of gender.

This thesis will examine whether sex and language are dependent of each other, i.e. whether men and women (or boys and girls) speak distinctly or whether they are merely perceived to speak differently. It thus needs to be examined whether men and women speak in similar ways (i.e. in ways that only differentiate slightly from each other) and whether assuming a causal relation between the two variables is thus a mere product of engrained gender stereotypes. If the issue really is a difference in perception, then these perceived differences in the language and speech styles of males and females will be examined in relation to societies' beliefs and expectations about male and female comportment. A bilateral effect as this can cause people to behave in line with expectations about their gender roles and which in turn can form a basis for perceiving and evaluating others. This thesis therefore rests on the assumption that there is no direct link between language and gender but that instead, gender stereotypes influence people's perception of others.

This thesis is divided into five parts; PART 1 will focus for one on the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender', two terms which are distinct from each other but often used interchangeably. Secondly, early work on sex differences will be discussed as well as the implications resulting from studies during this time. I will attempted to show how these studies have led to manifesting gender stereotypes by establishing 'male' and 'female' ways of speaking and how this belief triggered further research in the field of language and gender. A concise overview of these studies and concepts that aim at explaining gender differences are highly necessary to understand the development of stereotypes which were later challenged by postmodern feminist theories. Finally, more recent studies will be discussed,

focusing primarily on both new visions and discoveries in regards to stereotypically female and male speech styles as well as alternative ways of interpreting established ways of speaking.

In PART 2 I turn to the theory of social constructionism which explains the construction of gender stereotypes and challenges our assumptions about men and women and their gender roles.[1] Not only the concept itself will be adhered to, but also the connection it maintains to language. Furthermore, I will regard the Foucauldian discourse theory and Foucault's concept of discourse.[2] This theory provides a deeper understanding of how stereotypes are not only endowed within an individual and a society, but also how our beliefs eventually turn into 'truths' and continue to exist for many years. The reason these two theories are discussed in unity lies in my belief that they are in concordance to each other since the Foucauldian theory was an influential element in the theory of social constructionism.

PART 3 of this thesis is dedicated to understanding and challenging gender stereotypes. At first I define the term stereotype and provide some of its main functions. By examining various studies, this part explains how gender roles are established, how they come to be taken-for-granted and how they are passed down from one generation to another. The end of this chapter will also describe the concept of perception and the role gender stereotypes take on when we perceive language and talk. I argue here that gender differences do exist in language but these are frequently exaggerated and also tend to be perceived as more strong than they actually are.

The study of Internet discourse is the subject of PART 4 and it aims at explaining the phenomenon of transferring gender stereotypes from 'the real world' to the seemingly anonymous context of the Internet. I will argue that gender stereotypes remain present even in a medium that technically guarantees equality and that this is done voluntarily. Finally, the end of the chapter focuses on differences between face-to-face interaction and computer-mediated interaction.

PART 5 of this thesis entails the empirical study on gender stereotypes that I conducted. Based on the insights gained from Parts 1 – 4 I have created two questionnaires of my own to test whether gender stereotypes remain present and whether they do influence people's perception. Due to growing importance of the Internet, single statements from American chat room sights were incorporated into the questionnaires which were then

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[1] See Part 2 "Social Constructionism"
[2] See Part 2, chapter 8

evaluated by respondents according to variables such as politeness, assertiveness and sensitivity. I intend to test whether statements are perceived differently if the respondent knows that the chat room user was either male or female. The results are then discussed in light of my hypotheses and the research that has been examined in this thesis.

PART 1 - 'Women's' language vs. 'men's' language

1. Sex vs. Gender

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." – Simone de Beauvoir, 1968

When using the terms *sex* and *gender*, great caution must be taken not to use them interchangeably. These two terms are synonymous in others languages (e.g. French, Norwegian and Danish), but the English language does have two distinct words with specific meanings. We regard *sex* as "biologically founded" (Talbot 2010: 7), as it determines the bodily attributes which humans are born with, usually allowing a distinction between the male and the female sex.[3] *Gender*, on the other hand, is - as Barker suggested - a social phenomenon and it is what Talbot (2010: 7) describes as "learned behavior". Barker (2000: 384) defines *gender* in his work on cultural studies more precisely as:

> [t]he cultural assumptions and practices which govern the social construction of men, women and their social relations. Femininity and masculinity are culturally regulated forms of behavior regarded as socially appropriate to a given sex. Gender is always a matter of how men and women are presented.

Consequently, this means that gender depends on societal and cultural norms and it is not binary, i.e. it is not that someone is purely 'masculine' or purely 'feminine', especially since this definition is dependent on many factors. A person can act and be perceived as more or less masculine (or feminine) than someone else. "People are 'gendered' and actively involved in the process of their own gendering" (Talbot 2010: 8). Consequently, the term 'binary' is highly problematic in this field as "[m]uch of our experience does not fit neatly into binary categories, and it is better described as a continuum with indistinct boundaries." (Bing and Bergvall 1996: 1) This view allows terms such as *tomboy, sissy, bisexual, gay, lesbian, hermaphrodite, androgyne, transvestite, transgendered individual,* etc., which fit into our experience, to exist. In a strictly binary view, these terms would have to be categorized to either *male* or *female* and since this cannot be done, they are considered aberrations to believers of the binary concept.

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[3] Intersexuals complicate this definition as they are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that is neither clearly 'male' nor 'female'. Intersexed people may be born with mosaic genetics, i.e. having cells that contain XX chromosomes but also XY chromosomes. They might also be born with genitals that cannot easily be distinguished as belonging to the male or the female sex (e.g. a girl being born without a vaginal opening or a larger than average clitoris. An intersexed boy on the other hand may be born with a smaller than average penis or with a divided scrotum that has formed like a labia). Essentially this 'complication' is one that nature produces, it offers a wide range of sexes but it is humans who decide to construe a male/female distinction. *Intersex Society North America.* "What is intersex?" (29 Jan. 2015)

In accordance with this, Romaine (1999: 42) summarizes that "[s]ex is a biological term, and gender a psychological, social, and cultural one." The view that gender is a social construct is shared by many linguists nowadays and an additional aspect of gender must be acknowledged at this point, namely the notion that gender is something that is actively being *performed*. Butler (1990: 43-4) first argued for the *performance of gender*, a process one actively engages in, claiming that "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being." Another definition applicable to this concept is that by Barker (2000: 388), who defines performativity as the

> [d]iscursive practice which enacts or produces that which it names through citation and reiteration of the norms or conventions of the 'law'. Thus, the discursive production of identities through repetition and recitation of regulated ways of speaking about identity categories (e.g. masculinity).

These norms and conventions referred to by Barker take on a crucial part in gender performance. Butler (1993: 23 quoted in Talbot 2010: 206) explains that "the "coherence" and "continuity" of "the person" are not logical or analytical features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility." She further argues that the proclamation upon birth, such as 'it's a girl' initiates a process that she calls 'girling' and the utterance is therefore not merely stating a fact, but much rather a performance of gender. (Butler 1993: 232 quoted in Talbot 2010: 206) Butler suggests that performative acts enable the construction of gender and regards these acts as processes in which each individual is involved. This view is shared by Talbot (2010: 204-205), who rightly maintains that performing gender involves more aspects than clothing, speech and make-up. It also involves "how people comport themselves, including posture and gesture" (Talbot 2010: 204). These gender-performing elements have far-reaching effects, that is to say that 80% of the two-year-olds in USA can identify the sex of a person solely based on cultural and performative aspects such as clothing and hairstyle (Romaine 1999: 44). Western societies tend to establish marked clues that represent gender on a very superficial level.

According to Butler, drag queen performances explicitly denaturalize the performative act of gender as they portray the artificiality behind the gendered construction of 'female' behavior. "Drag demonstrates that what generally appears natural and spontaneous is in fact constructed and endlessly reconstructed: a repeat performance." (Talbot 2010: 206) Not only female behavior is illustrated in drag performances; drag kings are a phenomenon that is much less known, mainly because it developed rather late, i.e. in the 1980s and 1990s.

Halberstam (1998: 232) explains that a "drag king performs masculinity (often parodically) and makes the exposure of the theatricality of masculinity into the mainstay of her act."

Nevertheless, not only obvious examples such as drag queens and kings perform gender, but everybody performs gender to some extent in everyday life. The simple act of describing colors, for example, can give away information about one's gender. Romaine (1999: 2) explains that "[w]hen we hear someone describe a color as "baby blue", "carnation pink", "lavender" or "mauve", we imagine the speaker to be a woman rather than a man". Even if this assumption may seem stereotypical, it does hold some truth to it as these color descriptions are more commonly associated with the way women speak, hence hearing a man using them would seem rather peculiar. As a result, using such lexical items is a choice made by language users which ultimately can be seen as a way of performing gender.

This rather interesting view formulated by Romaine is the core issue to be investigated in this thesis. Certain words, phrases and expressions are commonly regarded as either typically 'female' or typically 'male' and consequently result in bewilderment when used by someone from the opposite-than-expected sex. However, in times of growing gender equality it might seem that anybody would be able to express themselves in however way they want, without being labeled or perceived strangely. It is therefore of great interest and importance to not only identify listeners' or readers' perceptions of speech and writing but to also understand what their judgment is founded on. These issues raise questions such as 'Do people nowadays still perceive certain aspects of language as typically 'male' or typically 'female'?' 'What causes language to sound 'female' or 'male'? 'Do linguistic gender norms exist and what happens if they are yielded?' These questions are to be addressed in detail within the course of this thesis.

Returning to the conventionalized ways in which gender is performed, it is worth noting that it is a highly socialized and institutionalized notion that will vary from culture to culture. It is noteworthy that its variability is in fact an indication of its constructiveness; were it a matter of biological sex, it would not be as diverse but much rather the same everywhere. In relation to this, Talbot (2010: 11) asserts that since gender "is not biological but psycho-social; it should always be considered in the context of social relations between people." This view is shared by Coates (1996: 232), who claims that "the woman we perform is not the same woman in all circumstances", but that this 'performed' woman will change from one scenario to another. Many different versions of femininity and masculinity exist and these gendered beings that we perform are culture dependent and mostly comply with the expectations held by a society. Romaine (1999: 42) provides an example that corroborates this

view, claiming that "American mothers are more likely to try to distract a male infant by dangling objects in front of him. This may promote the development of visual-spatial skills." With this, she suggests that a pseudo-biological explanation for differences between men and women - namely that men's visual-spatial skills are better than women's - can be accounted for by cultural habits. Romaine continues developing her argument by explaining that "[w]hen girls are exposed more often to special tasks, the gender difference declines sharply. If these differences were biologically determined, they would be largely immune to training." (Romaine 1999: 42) Therefore, seemingly biological differences can also merely be the result of different treatments of male and female babies.

With all this in mind, equating the notions gender and sex would be misleading and amiss and although one cannot conflate the two terms, a certain correlation between them is given. Talbot (2010: 9) summarizes this issue by stating that "people's behavior patterns come about in an interplay of biology and social practices, so that ultimately it is not really possible to separate the biological from the social." Although the phenomena which the two terms refer to are interconnected and cannot be separated from one another, caution needs to accompany this thought. There is often an underlying assumption that differences between men and women are given and inexorable when gender is equated with sex. Frequently political motives underlie these false assumptions, "[they] often accompan[y] as reassertion of traditional family roles, or justifications of male privileges." (Talbot 2010: 9). This issue will be highlighted in the course of this thesis[4], hence I will not go into detail at this point, but it needs to be noted that eliminating the distinction between sex and gender fosters long-held injustices. This works against achieving equal rights for men and women and therefore gender issues require constant reminding and sensitizing.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show that sex and gender are two terms that need to be considered with caution as they refer to different phenomena. Sex is a subject of biology, whereas gender is amalgamated with society and socially acquired behavior. Butler's notion of gender performativity is significant for this thesis; with this concept in mind, one can examine the ways in which gender is being performed in linguistics and whether or not women and men have different manners of performance. The next chapters entail a detailed overview of 'female' and 'male' speech patterns which are essential to understanding how gender stereotypes are formed. The order of presentation is a chronological one, mainly

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[4] See Part 3 "(Challenging) Stereotypes"

because it best portrays the development of the research in the field of gender linguistics over the years. At times, chapters are needed for an excursion to further elaborate a topic.

2. Early Work: The roots of developing gender stereotypes

In order to understand where our current normative beliefs of gender behavior stem from, it is paramount to investigate the history of gender linguistics. A concise outline of early research on the matter is not only interesting, but the assumptions held by scholars during this time are considerably different to what I believe to be true about 'female' and 'male' speech.

Some of the earliest work on men and women focused on sex differentiation, examining in particular phonological and lexicogrammatical aspects. As Talbot (2010: 4) points out, "[a] great deal of this study has focused on the existence of different pronouns or affixes specific to men and women, whether as speakers, spoken to or spoken about". Thus, a significant amount of interest was directed towards *differences* in male and female speech. One of the most polarizing linguists regarding the topic of gender differences was Otto Jespersen who wrote a chapter titled *The Woman* in his work *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (1922). Given the time in which his work emerged, great caution must be applied when reading it. Jespersen treats 'women's language' like a foreign element, deviating from 'normal language'. His view was that women's speech is deficient to that of men's and lists various examples of different cultures and tribes in which the language of men and women is said to be from two completely different worlds. (Jespersen 1947: 237-41) He makes so-called differences explicit in the field of vocabulary, claiming that "women in all countries are shy of mentioning certain parts of the human body and [...] will therefore invent innocent and euphemistic words" (Jespersen 1947: 245) and that "the vocabulary of a woman as a rule is much less extensive that that of a man." (Jespersen 1947: 248) Such sweeping generalizations follow through in the entire chapter and this biased and judgmental section was regarded by feminists as covering "a whole tradition of patronizing and sexist commentary by male linguists before feminism" (Cameron 1990: 216 in Voegeli 2005: 5). By singling out women, portraying them as abnormal and only dedicating one (!) chapter to this issue, women's language was off to a rough start and subject to many prejudices. Perhaps Jespersen's proposals would be more suitable if, instead of equating all men and all women, he had considered the deeper issue behind his 'findings', namely that men and women comply to gender roles and that their behavior reflects these. Nevertheless, Jespersen managed to turn attention to the subject matter, and his work served as a commencement for research in gendered ways of speaking.

2.1. Robin Lakoff's "Women's Language"

Jesperson's book touched upon the topic of language and gender research and provided grounds for further research. Early feminist work on this issue was done by Robin Lakoff, whose work became of great importance to both linguistics and feminist studies. It is worth to look at Lakoff's findings in detail as they provide the grounds for understanding gender stereotypes in (spoken) discourse. It must be said at this point, that many of her findings need to be questioned as they are often based on introspection rather than careful observations and empirical research. The implications offered by Lakoff are also questionable and will therefore also be examined and challenged in order to gain perspective of gender stereotypes.

In the early 1970s, the topic of gendered language was further developed by Robin Lakoff in her work *Language and Women's Place* (1973). In this monograph she established a set of features that ascribed to typically female speech. For the purpose of this thesis it is useful to examine these features in detail. When evaluating these features, the time of publication needs to be kept in mind, noting that little research had been done in the area before.

2.1.1. Lexical items

Women's language supposedly shows differences in "the choice and frequency of lexical items; in the situations in which certain syntactic rules are performed; in intonational and other supersegmental patterns." (Lakoff 1975: 8) An example of lexical differences would be the **precise color terms**: Lakoff claims that women make more detailed discriminations regarding colors than men (i.e. men rarely use words such as *beige, ecru, aquamarine, lavender, etc.*) Lakoff (1975: 9) states that men find discussions about such topics "trivial" and "irrelevant to the real world" and therefore do not discuss them. Another claim made is that women use weaker swear words such as *oh dear* whereas men use stronger expressions such as *shit*, claiming that society tends to tolerate screaming men in rage more than a woman in this situation (Lakoff 1975: 9-10). Women also tend to use different i.e. **affective adjectives** (e.g. *adorable*, *charming*, *sweet*), whereas men's reputation would be damaged if they were to use these adjectives (Lakoff 1975: 12).

2.1.2. Syntax

Regarding syntax, Lakoff asserts that women use **tag questions** more frequently than men in spoken communication. A tag question is a "midway between an outright statement and a yes-no question." (Lakoff 1975: 15) It is only usable in certain contextual situations, namely when

one is stating a claim but "lacks full confidence in the truth of the claim" (Lakoff 1975: 15). Lakoff also explains that these sentence types allow the speaker to avoid conflict with the addressee, and avoid committing themselves, thus becoming very tentative and approval-seeking. **Rising intonation** is also seen as a typically female trait in Lakoff's analysis. Sometimes an utterance which has the form of a declarative answer, has the rising intonation of a yes-no question and is uttered rather hesitantly. It seems as though the speaker were seeking information even though they are the only one with the needed information (e.g. when asked when dinner will be ready: *Oh ... around six o'clock...?*). Supposedly this shows the unwillingness to express an opinion taken to an extreme and weakens the force of the statement.

2.1.3.   Hedges

Hedges such as *sorta*, *kinda* and *you know* are filler terms which "reduce the force of an utterance" (Talbot 2010: 37) and "serve in many contexts to position their users defensively" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 184). Saying *Bill is short* instead of *Bill is kinda short* can be seen as unkind or unfriendly and the use of such a hedge mitigates this unfriendliness. However, according to Lakoff, women tend to use hedges even when the danger of expressing something unfriendly is not given. The use of phrases such as *I guess* or *I think* are used in declarations and *I wonder* in questions, all merely putting forth a suggestion and unwillingness to express their opinion bluntly (Lakoff 1975: 54). In addition, these hedges have their use as a form of 'protection'. When assuming that it will rain, one can express this either by saying *It will rain this afternoon* or *I guess it will rain this afternoon*. If it does not rain, the latter version protects one from an attack of a misleading prediction. (Lakoff 1975: 54)

2.1.4.   Further characteristics of 'female' speech

In Robin Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* (1973), the remaining data can be summarized as follows: women tend to use more intensifiers (e.g. *I like him SO much*), which Lakoff sees as hedges, but which have later on been regarded as a boosting devices. (Talbot 2010: 37) Furthermore Lakoff claims that women use more emphatic stress to seem more assertive when speaking because they assume not to be taken seriously. (Talbot 2010: 38) Finally, hypercorrect grammar is yet another characteristic seen as typically female by Lakoff, implying that it is expected of women not to seem uneducated and rough by using ungrammatical language.

2.2. Criticism regarding Lakoff's work

2.2.1. Misunderstanding Hedges

Some of the claims made by Lakoff in her book are inaccurate, especially in regards to the sweeping generalizations and simplifications that accompany her 'findings'. Talbot (2010: 38) argues that Lakoff's work paints the picture of inferior women in terms of language use. It is not always clear if she is stating facts or existing stereotypes. (Talbot 2010: 38) Later research replicated Lakoff's findings concerning women's use of particular discourse particles, but claimed that her interpretation of them was incorrect.

Coates (1993: 116) points out that it is important to not only note that women use hedges more frequently but also to look at their functions. Furthermore it should be investigated whether using hedges more often should be seen as a sign of weakness. If, for example, one looks at the use of the hedge *you know*, it becomes evident that its use has two distinct functions:

1) and that way we'd get rid of exploitation of man by man all that stuff/ *you know*/ you've heard it before (Holmes 1987 quoted in Coates 1993: 117)

In this example the hedge is used to express the speaker's confidence or certainty. In contrast, the following example of *you know* along with rising intonation illustrates uncertainty:

2) and it was quite// well it was all very embarrassing *you know* (Holmes 1987 quoted in Coates 1993: 117)

Holmes concluded in his study that women use *you know* more frequently than men when expressing confidence but less frequently to express uncertainty. This clearly challenges one of Lakoff's claims, which states that women's use of hedges is a result of lacking confidence. Hence it is important to view the function of hedges before drawing a conclusion about the speaker who uses them.

As opposed to Holmes, Coates (1996: 16 ff.) focused on hedges in single-sex discourse, in that of women. The topics of discussion were highly sensitive and hedges were therefore used as prevention from being too face-threatening (Coates 1993: 118). Coates explains that self-disclosure, i.e. sharing personal information about yourself, is a typical feature of stories told by women to their friends. A third of the "stories in first-person narrative told by women reveal sensitive personal information, compared with only 9 per cent of men's first-person narratives". Therefore, a possible reason for men's less frequent use of hedges is their choice of topic. Unlike women, men tend to dislike talking about personal

subjects and avoid self-disclosure, ultimately leading to a less frequent use of hedges (Coates 1993: 118).

Coates (1996: 171) furthermore criticizes that Lakoff's work implies three aspects that cannot naturally be assumed, namely that "women are normally unassertive; […] that the use of hedges is linked with unassertiveness; and […] that women use hedges more than men." Especially the first two points Coates links to 'pure speculation' and she asserts that hedges serve multifunctional purposes. The latter argument, that women use more hedges than men is explained by Coates due to their choice of topic.

A more recent study of hedges was done by Muffy Siegel (2002 quoted in Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 185), who claimed that the modifier *like* "loosens meaning criteria for the expression following it" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 185). An example would be the following sentence:

3) he has, *like*, six sisters

which would count as true even if he only had five sisters. In her study, Siegel found that girls used *like* more often than boys and she relates this to the assumption that girls were more willing "to produce speech as it is being planned online, with more spontaneity and less editing than [...] found in the speech of most of the boys" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 186). It is worth noting here that in the 90s the term *like* has been categorized by some linguists as "mallspeak" – a term coined by Patricia Skarda. She claims that *like* is a characteristic of the female style, i.e. what is thought as typically female speech behavior and used as a verb, an adjective and a conjunction. Furthermore, she claims that it is an approximation – an unwillingness to say one thing. Other hedges such as *you know* beg for agreement, as if the speaker were terribly sure of him or herself and *I mean* indicates that speakers do in fact not know what they mean (in Eckert 2005: 393). Returning back to the discourse marker *like*, it additionally needs to be mentioned that Eckert (2005: 394) agrees to previous claims that it is seen as a female trait but warns that "[w]hat is problematic is the situated nature of the evidence and the interpretation of this use." She refers to Suzanne Romaine and Deborah Lange (1991) when she explains that girls "use more of the kind of constructed dialogue that calls for the use of like." (Eckert 2005: 394-5). These results are corroborated with Eckert's study on adolescent (speech) behavior in which she followed a diverse age group in Northern California from fifth grade to eighth grade. She observed that the most frequent users of the discourse marker *like* are girls, and the most infrequent are

boys. This however, fulfilled a certain function, namely as a "means of construction and maintenance of the social order." (Eckert 2005: 386)

2.2.2.   The diversity behind tag questions

Romaine (1999: 155) also remarks about Lakoff's work that it implies four distinctive assumptions about women's language, namely "indirectness, emotionality, standardness and conservatism." She points out that these 'findings' demonstrate "a circularity in argumentation as well as a neglect of context." (Romaine 1999: 156)

Lakoff's explanation of tag questions is highly simplified and neglects various other functions. Lakoff did not categorize and differentiate the use of tag questions sufficiently. Coates (1996: 194) explains that one function is to "confirm the shared world of the participants." Unlike information-seeking questions, tag questions function as devices to signal that attention is being paid and to check that the other person involved in conversation is in agreement. Moreover, they help to structure and organize conversation and aid in the collaborative process of a conversation. Despite their multi-functionality, (tag) questions are - most likely up until the present day - redeemed as a 'weak' linguistic device attributed to 'typically female' speaking styles. The falseness of the claim that this device expresses powerlessness and subordination is demonstrated by Coates' argument that "powerful speakers, such as magistrates, doctors, teachers and presenters of TV discussions, use more questions than less powerful speakers." (Coates 1996: 200-1) Romaine adds that other studies testing these claims "found that men actually use more tag questions than women." (Romaine 1999: 156) However, the findings of these studies were not interpreted in a way that proposes that men lack confidence. This suggests that interpretation of data suffers bias and the majority of the time women are the victim of this bias.

The prime concern of tag questions in women friends' conversations is to express solidarity and thus they serve a collaborative purpose which ultimately does not make them powerless devices. Tag questions are merely another example of linguistic features that are seen as inferior as they deviate from the established *male* norm of speaking.

Conclusion

Lakoff's work addressed some interesting and valuable issues related to the topic of gender and language but her findings are somewhat problematic for various reasons. Setting up a list of characteristics of 'female' speech was a rather superficial account of her observations. More empirical research is needed to back these claims and moreover yet, Lakoff's reasoning

behind 'female' traits is based on a model of a deficient woman, which implicitly equates men's language use as the norm.

Nonetheless, besides all the criticism related to Lakoff's work, Talbot (2010: 41) highlights a crucial fact; namely that "Lakoff's speculations were very valuable [as] [t]hey set the ball rolling". The discussion triggered by her data was a truly essential contribution to the field of gender linguistics, calling for a political discussion regarding women's roles in society and oppressive views of women based on their use of language. Lakoff's work also generated extensive linguistic research in that field and sparked interest in not only linguists, but many non-linguists too. According to Talbot (2010: 42) Lakoff's work was a "landmark" for feminist research and provided useful insight to an "ideological construct of preferred female behavior (Eckert 2004; Talbot 2003)". It is therefore not surprising that Lakoff's 'women's language' can be seen as a grounds for generating stereotypes and misunderstanding speech features typically ascribed to women, which makes her work vital in uncovering gender stereotypes in communication. However, in spite of fostering existing stereotypes about women, Lakoff's work made it transparent that women battle many prejudices and difficulties in everyday language use.

In regards to my study, Lakoff's findings and the thereby fostered linguistic gender stereotypes provide the basis for the 'speech' segments used in my questionnaires. Her described characteristics have made it possible to identify language that is 'typically female' and can serve as a means of evaluation. It will be interesting to see, whether certain language features such as hedges, tag questions and intensifiers are really believed to be typically 'female' and whether violations such gender-appropriate behavior such as swearing and assertiveness are evaluated negatively when used by female speakers.

3. Excursion: 'Man-Made' Language and Gendered Language

At this point a brief excursion to a different phenomenon is necessary. The previous chapters have focused on differences in the speech of men and women, clearly placing women in an inferior position to men. This notion of inequality was further expanded in the 1980s, in which feminist scholars attempted to adduce explanations for said differences. A pioneer and widely discussed scholar of this period was the Australian feminist Dale Spender, whose book *Man-Made Language* received a significant amount of attention and was influential in some areas of linguistics, thus making it worth examining. Spender's assertions are rather controversial and provided grounds for further analysis. Some arguments put forward by her will be challenged and hence serve as a better understanding to why gender stereotypes exist.

She argues that language use is heavily influenced by sexist practices and that the English language is literally *man*-made.

In her introduction, Spender claims that "[i]t is because males have had power that they have been in a position to construct the myth of male superiority and to have it accepted" (Spender 1980: 1). She ascribes an immense amount of power and influence to men and their 'production' of the English language as we know it. By claiming that language is made by men, Spender asserts that meanings and functions correspond to male thinking and behavior; women merely use tools belonging to the 'reality' that is defined by men. "We impose them [i.e. man-made rules] on the world so that what we see conforms to what we have been led to see. And one of the crucial factors in our construction of this reality is *language*." (Spender 1980: 2) Romaine (1999: 22) refers to Dale Spender's view of language as *language as cause*. Arguably, this definition is fitting as Spender's view of language is that of an active one, claiming that it determines our perception of the world and causes gender divisions and inequalities accordingly. A few examples that underline Spender's viewpoint encompass words such as *spinster, foreplay* and *mother*. The term *spinster* refers to an unmarried woman and mainly has negative connotations. Romaine (1999: 93) argues that those who refuse to believe that *spinster* has a negative connotation will be proven wrong by a closer look at the context in which the word is used. The majority of collocations used with the word spinster are adverse e.g.: *gossipy, nervy, ineffective, frustrated*, *dried-up old* and *despised*. This is because "[c]ollocations transmit cultural meanings and stereotypes that have built up over time" (Romaine 1999: 93).

The male counterpart *bachelor* however, is almost a compliment and has largely positive connotations. The word *foreplay* diminishes the act and regards it as inessential when compared to penetration. The term *motherhood* labels every woman's dream, namely the feeling of completion once she has become a mother. As Spender (1980: 54) puts it, "society […] has a legitimated meaning for *motherhood* which means feminine fulfillment, which represents something beautiful, that leaves women consumed and complete with joy." It is not exaggerated to say that even nowadays a woman who claims not to want children and is unwilling to experience the 'joy of motherhood' is going to be regarded in a slightly negative way, in some cases may even be considered egoistic and heartless.

Spender also asserts that one of the major problems working against equality is the fact that 'male' speech is always taken as the norm, the standard, and any aspects that differ from it are regarded a deviation (Spender 1980: 3). This argument put forward by Spender highlights an important aspect of my own empirical study. Ideas and preconceptions about

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normative behavior are the basis for evaluating other people's (speech) behavior. This challenges the assumption of gender-free perception of speech and in order to test to what extent these ideas about normative behavior are manifested in our minds, it is necessary to evaluate people's perceptions of communicative acts. A particular interesting aspect will be to observe whether 'male' speech really is marked and attached to preconceptions and whether it will be perceived differently when used by females. Likewise, whether 'female' speech used by men will trigger different judgment as opposed to being used by women, is a core aspect of the study conducted for this thesis.[5]

Moreover, Dale Spender heavily criticizes the view implied by Jespersen and Lakoff that women are deficient[6], and claims that this false interpretation has led to inaccurate and bias research procedures in favor of men. "The presentation of skewed findings has helped to establish the deficiency of women's language and […] has thereby helped to confirm the validity of the initial premise that women's language is inferior." (Spender 1980: 7) With this, Spender makes a valid point and highlights the problem that the way in which one asks a question will determine the results and findings to that question (i.e. it will generate selective results). In general, many research findings portray differences between 'male' and 'female' speech styles as something being wrong with women's language which is deviating from the *male* norm. Nevertheless, Spender makes a very strong claim by asserting that "it is perfectly feasible to suggest that women have been obliged to use a language which is not of their own making." (Spender 1980: 12) Spender further goes on by saying that women are "borrowers" of the male language and will eternally remain "outsiders". As Romaine (1999: 23) puts it,

> [i]n a man-made language you either see yourself through male eyes and become alienated, or you become silent. Opting for the former means becoming bilingual, an all too common solution advocated in the advice industry in the form of seminars teaching women how to behave and speak like men in order to succeed in the business world. […] This means accepting as normal and legitimate a male point of view, one of whose central principles is misogyny.

Women's reality is often dismissed by men along the lines of "I think you have a case but why do you have to put it so vehemently/aggressively/irrationally/emotionally?'" (Spender 1980: 84-85) By doing so, Spender claims that women's views and arguments are oppressed by men, silencing them by way of removing value from what they are saying.

It is certainly correct that in the past and to a large extent in the present, most societies are dominated by male leaders and live by rules imposed by men. However, Spender's claim

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[5] See Part 5 "Empirical Study"
[6] The model of the 'deficient' woman is explained in Part 1, Chapter 5: "Explanations for 'female' speech behavior"

is too radical and erroneous in the sense that women had absolutely no influence on language. Moreover, it inaccurately implies that men and women are two completely binary different beings that are generally not mutually intelligible and thus have major difficulties in communicating with each other. Clearly there are differences in the way men and women articulate themselves, but these differences are blown out of proportion in Spender's work.

With her book *Man-Made Language* Spender clearly addresses an issue of equality from an angle that had received little attention before then and which sparked interest in reforming the English language to some extent. Measures have been taken to make language "gender-neutral" and to replace terms such as *chairman, waiter* and *fireman* with *chairperson, waitperson* and *firefighter* correspondingly. Spender responds to these changes in a highly pessimistic way, claiming that this does in fact not solve the problem of a sexist language as "the problem lies not in the words but in the semantic rule which governs their positive or negative connotations." (Spender 1980: 28) Another issue accompanying these changes is that people are not satisfied with these terms due to an underlying interest in finding out a person's sex (e.g. in chairperson). Humans are inclined to make sexual discriminations and are curious about such gender issues. Moreover, specific attention has also been paid to naming practices which used to be an indication of male possession. During the 1990s, "titles like *Mrs./Miss*, [became] part of women's linguistic revolt. " Romaine (1999: 3). At the same time, Romaine claims that such "cosmetic changes" are not sufficient as "it is still possible to use reformed language without changing one's thought processes." (Romaine 1999: 23)

In this sense, it is up to language users to refrain from certain offensive and stereotypical words and phrases in order to move into a direction of more equality in our society. Coates also draws attention to the mutual influence of discourse and social entities, claiming that discourse does not only reflect but also construct them (Fairclough 1992 quoted in Coates 1996: 261). Romaine (1999: 5) highlights another aspect of language and claims that although it is important "to our constructions of the meaning of gender, much of language is ambiguous and depends on context for its interpretation, a factor far more important than gender." To illustrate this, she gives the following example: "How about a drink later, honey?" This can have a completely different meaning when uttered for example by a customer to a waitress or alternatively by a woman to her husband as they talk about their schedules on the phone.

Conclusion

Taking all of this into consideration it comes to show that language and language reforms certainly contribute to social injustice and to maintaining social order as it is. However, it also becomes apparent that language is merely one factor of many, and that it is frequently overrated and overemphasized, especially when taken out of context and analyzed in isolation. Word meaning and discourse can only truly be understood in the context that they appear in and hence depend on a number of factors which all equally contribute to the meaning of a message. The power of words should nevertheless not be dismissed. Certain words carry strong connotations and must consequently be used with care. Reforms to make the English language less sexist and more neutral are small steps in the right direction, but are by no means the perfect and entire solution to the problem.

4. Politeness and Standard Speech

Having examined the sexist tendencies the English language bears the focus now returns to speech styles and the different evaluations of 'male' and 'female' speech. One overbearing claim regarding gendered language is that women are both more polite and use more standard speech than men. These features are often explained by linking them to women's inferiority and lower social positions than men. These stereotypes have remained for many years and stem from experiments conducted by William Labov and Peter Trudgill. In fact, the most famous work on social stratification was done by the American linguist William Labov in 1966, in which he examined language variation in New York department stores. The research involved "large-scale patterns of language use, with a central interest in the processes of language change" (Talbot 2010: 19). Using a certain linguistics variable more often, in this case "the presence or absence of consonantal [r] in postvocalic position", allowed him to deduce what social class the speaker belonged to. According to Labov, the variable "is an intricate part of the linguistic structure of the New York City speech community." (Labov 2006: 55). Labov tried to collect data of different social classes of the New York population using a sociolinguistic interview. This was designed in such a way that a range of speech styles could be elicited ranging from formal and self-conscious to informal and relaxed. "Labov found that, as he expected, the higher up the social scale, and the more formal the speech style, the more often prestige variants occurred." (Talbot 2010: 20). Moreover, he found that in general women of all classes made use of prestigious forms more often than men in their social class. (Talbot 2010: 20). Romaine draws attention to some limitations of Labov's study, arguing that it involved male bias. She claims that the reading passage that

was asked to be read out by men and women ended "with a very unflattering comparison between dogs and a boy's first girlfriend" (Romaine 1999: 175). Also, the topic varied depending on the sex of the informant. Women were asked about childhood games while men, on the other hand, were asked about girls or "terms for female sex organs." (Romaine 1999: 175) This difference is thus likely to create very diverse rapport and therefore distort the results of the study.

Gender differences were also found in Peter Trudgill's research and his survey on language change in Norwich, England. This research was modeled on Labov's survey and consisted of taped interviews to elicit different degrees of formality with regards to the [ng] variable. Trudgill established four different categories of speech styles: wordlist style, reading passage style, formal and casual (Trudgill 1974: 46-51) and then used Registrar General's Scale to assign people to social classes. His findings show that women use a lower percentage of vernacular than men in the same social class category. More precisely he summarizes that "a high (ng) index is typical of male speakers as well as of WC [working class] speakers" (Trudgill 1974: 93). His explanation of this phenomenon is that "[w]omen in our society are more status conscious than men […] and are therefore more aware of the social significance of linguistic variables." (Trudgill 1974: 94) Moreover, he argues that this is due to women's less secure social position in society and because of the fact that women are rated in terms of their appearance instead of their occupation, in contrast to men.

This harsh assertion received a lot of criticism in the area of linguistics and gender studies. James (1996: 106) points out that a considerable critical issue with this view is that it implies that women in all speech communities over the world use prestigious forms and that they all have the same social goals, namely appearing to be a member of a higher socio-economic class, which overgeneralizes the issue.

These studies have participating in fostering the stereotype that women and more polite and use more sophisticated and prestigious forms in their speech when compared to the speech of men. By focusing on studies like these and paying less attention to studies which "have found no difference between women and men in standard speech features, or have found women's speech to be less standard than men's" (James 1996: 110), gender stereotypes are not being challenged but much rather strengthened. Making generalizations such as claiming that women use standard language to gain respect or to rise in the socio-economical hierarchy, is therefore very problematic.

Talbot (2010: 21) also criticizes Trudgill's findings and claims that many exceptions were ignored and not included in the findings. Another problem is that his study is based on

the speech of only 50 people. Correspondingly, generalizations must be tentative due to this small sample size. In addition, Talbot (2010: 23-24) points out that there is a problem with the view that the language use of men is regarded as the norm, resulting in a constant focus on the 'abnormalities' of 'female' language that need to be accounted for. Trudgill also refers to the male as the norm when talking about the fact that non-standard forms convey working-class 'roughness and toughness' which are tolerable for men but not acceptable for women. Women, in his view, strive to 'refinement and sophistication'. Talbot (2010: 25) argues that "Trudgill simply reiterates […] commonsensical association and notion of appropriacy".

However, despite all the criticism voiced in regards to Trudgill's hypothesis, it is perhaps not wrong to bear in mind that certain parts of it do apply to some women in some particular social settings and communities. Even if this view relates to a very old and traditional model of women in which women tended to stay at home and take care of the children and the housework it does not account for women in management positions using hedged and mitigated forms as well as standard forms. Romaine claims that even with an increased number of women in the workforce the situation has not changed hugely. Women are still expected to be good mothers and wives and the common view prevails that if you are a working mother you are neglecting your child(ren). This situation is described by Romaine as a game that women cannot win as it is played by male rules (Romaine 1999: 180).

Findings as the ones presented here on politeness and standard speech are taken into account in my own study. According the research discussed in this chapter, women are believed to be more polite than men and in turn expected to use more standard forms for previously mentioned reasons. This information serves as the basis for one of my hypotheses, namely that because of stereotyped expectations, female speakers violating norms of politeness will be perceived as much more rude and evaluated much more negatively than male speakers employing the same strategies[7]. Whether this is in fact that case, or whether stereotyped expectations have changed and women are in fact 'allowed' to be ruder (i.e. use fewer standard forms and employ swearing and taboo words), will be investigated within the empirical study (Part 5).

5. Excursion: Explanations for 'female' speech behavior

Having evaluated some 'typical' features of speech and behavior in men and women it is necessary to make a brief excursion and turn to explanations used in an attempt to account for differences in communicative behavior. These explanations are valuable in so far that they

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[7] See Part 5, Chapter 12.2. hypothesis #2

explore deep-held beliefs which form the basis of stereotypes. By evaluating models that explain these differences I hope to make visible the sources to stereotypical beliefs about men and women, some of which have been upheld until the present day.

In the 1960s and 1970s a wave of feminism emerged with a central question being what can be done to enhance the position of women in society. Up until then women were mostly regarded as 'the wife of …' or 'the daughter of …'. Linguistic research set out to investigate what could be done to improve conditions and to raise consciousness about gender inequality. These studies were meant to encourage women "to act in ways that would change the ingrained patterns" (Cameron 2009: 9). When focusing on differences between 'male' and 'female' ways of speaking, a number of interpretations have been suggested in regards to 'female' speech types. As a means of analysis, three generally accepted approaches: the deficit approach, the dominance approach and the cultural difference approach. Each model has its limitations, some more than others and for reasons given below, I will adopt none of these for evaluating 'male' and 'female' speech behavior. The models provided are, however, essential in the process of understanding how stereotypes are not only formed but also much rather made acceptable and legitimized.

The three main models of language and gender: deficit, dominance and difference

Deficit: This model suggests that "women are seen as disadvantaged speakers because of their early sex-role socialization" (Cameron 1996: 39). Proponents of this theory are Jespersen and Lakoff and the image they create in their works *The Woman* (1922) and *Language and Women's Place* (1973). In this view, women's ways of speaking are lacking something (e.g. credibility or power), thus they are ultimately in an inferior position to men.

Dominance: In this, "women are seen, often through an ethnomethodological frame, as negotiating their relatively powerless position in interaction with men: male social privilege is made manifest in recurrent patterns of language use." (Cameron 1996: 39) By assuming that women are naturally in a subordinate position to men, this model accounts for 'female' speech as a result to this constellation. Men are seen as naturally dominant, both in conversation and the world view in general. This view has been backed by Zimmerman and West (1975 quoted in Aries 1996: 79) and their work on interruptions and floor apportionment, who found that men interrupted women much more often than vice versa. One major problem with the dominance model, according to Talbot (2010: 101) is that "male dominance is often treated as if it is pan-contextual". To assume that men dominate in all contexts is absolutely unsound and a "monolithic perception of patriarchy" (Talbot 2010: 101). She calls out to be more

aware of different cultures and varying contexts. It is crucial to be much more specific when making claims about dominance and to regard different institutions (e.g. family), genres and situations.

Difference: Finally, this model, which is the dominant model in self-help literature[8], assumes that men and women grow up in different subcultures, hence different ways of speaking will be the outcome of this segregation. This view places men and women in two completely different binary categories and equates gender with other divisions. As Cameron (1996: 39-40) points out, "analogies are made between gender and other social divisions like ethnicity; segregation of the sexes during childhood and adolescence produces marked differences in their conversational goals and styles." This model was created by Maltz and Borker (1982 quoted in Voegeli 2005: 8) and their comparison of sex differences to culture differences are seen as a plausible explanation for gender differences in speech. Nevertheless, a limitation worth mentioning is that most research supporting this model is conducted among same-sex groups which ultimately ignores crucial factors such as dominance and power imbalance. (Voegeli 2005: 8).

Past research has almost always focused on the differences between men and women in terms of their language use, "overriding preoccupation with dichotomized gender differences, examining in particular the suppression of power that tends to accompany 'differences' work" (Talbot 2010: 102).

Distinguishing between these three models is not always an easy procedure and there is a good deal of overlap between deficit, dominance and difference. Different factors influence or interplay with each other and consequently certain features could be assigned to both one and another model. Lakoff's 'female' register for instance marks politeness and non-assertiveness, "both being an expression of a weaker role or position compared to the male" (Voegeli 2005: 8), and can either be interpreted as belonging to the deficit model or the dominance model as they are, in fact, somewhat contiguous. Voegeli (2005: 9-10) explains the difference between the two models as follows: "the dominance variant shows them [women] no to be inferior due to something they lack but portrays their inferiority as rooted in passive or active subordination."

More complexity is added to this field when analyzing particular features of 'female' speech such as (tag) questions and their functions. In her article *Conversational Insecurity*,

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[8] See Part 3 chapter 9.5.

Pamela Fishman (1990: 255-256 quoted in Voegeli 2005: 8) offers another interpretation of these elements. She claims that the function of tag questions is often to engage in a cooperative conversation as these questions permit a back and forth in conversation. Questions moreover demand answers, therefore they can be seen, according to Fishman (1990: 255 quoted in Voegeli 2005: 8-9), as the "female way" of demanding.

Each of these models that aim to interpret the language of women are riddled with problems and concerns and are by no means to be taken lightly. However, the emergence of the deficit and dominance model is embedded in the 1970s, a time in which focus on gendered interaction was completely new terrain and lacked profound research. The difference model dates back to a younger time and linguists in the 1990s such as Deborah Tannen have found this model to fit their explanations of difference. More attention to criticism towards this model will be given later in this thesis[9], but before that, it is essential to look at more previous research in the field of gender linguistics and draw attention to what has changed since Lakoff's revolutionary publication in the 1970s.

6. Revisiting Language and Gender: more recent findings and insights

As a result of feminist movements and a significant amount of research in the field of language and gender, a shift in the view of language use has taken place. Before attention was given to the topic of gender linguistics, the idea prevailed that the way men and women speak is the result of either being born as a man or a woman. However, this view has severe consequences as Talbot (2005: 468) maintains:

> [f]or an individual to be assigned to the category of male or female has far-reaching consequences. Gender is often thought of in terms of bipolar categories, sometimes even as mutually exclusive opposites – as in the "opposite sex"[…] On the basis of this gender assignment, naturalized norms and expectations about verbal behavior are imposed on people. There is a strong tendency for gender stereotyping to set in.

In addition to this James (1996: 116) warningly claims that once the gender-marked variables are taken as expressing gender identity, they play a significant role in developing stereotypes about sexes, "and particularly about women, since male speech is typically taken as the norm." The previous chapters have illustrated research findings and assumptions that engage in exactly this process, namely treating gender as having two mutually exclusive opposites, which produce two different sets of language. Clearly this view lays the foundation for the formation of stereotypes about differences in 'male' and 'female' speech styles. Researchers

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[9] See Part 3 "(Challenging) Stereotypes"

after Lakoff, Labov and Trudgill picked up on controversial issues and provided more insight to the topic of gendered language. Scholars such as Jennifer Coates, Pamela Fishman and Penelope Eckert made significant contributions to the field and their work must therefore be examined in order to understand the process behind stereotype formation of 'male' and 'female' language.

6.1. 'Woman Talk'

In the 1990s, during the 'postmodern turn', Jennifer Coates, a leading linguist in the field of gender linguistics, examined the language of women in her book *Women Talk* and touched upon old views of female language to look at them in new light. Her work is based on all-female conversations amongst friends, hence it needs to be pointed out that this poses a limitation to her findings. Conversation in same-sex groups is not that same as in mixed-sex interaction, but it is nevertheless useful to gain insight on some speech patterns in the phenomenon that is women conversations[10]. Coates reports to be drawn back and surprised that many women self-reported that their main activity when meeting up with other women was simply 'talk'. In this talk, an aspect that is often easily stereotyped is that of complaining, also known as 'bitching'. Bea, a woman recorded in Coates' study reports; "there is a negative stereotype of women that portrays us as indulging in character-assassination behind people's back." (Coates 1996: 51) Coates asserts that this type of behavior serves a specific function, namely to "talk about difficult subjects, to check our perceptions against those of our friends, and to seek support." (Coates 1996: 52) With this claim, Coates seems to agree with the theory that women seek support in their conversations, making agreement and understanding an aim of women interaction. The topics that women in her research claimed to talk about were mostly related to domestic activities but never concerned with 'complex' or more objective topics such as nuclear physics. (Coates 1996: 52-3) These topics, according to Coates (1996: 54) are possibly the result of reproduced scripts predetermined by a dominating male society. In this society, men and their speech are closely related to rationality and less emotional talk, whereas 'female' topics include emotional and much more trivial topics. The main aim of 'female' talk is thus 'comfortableness' in which serious topics have no space.

Moreover, a certain 'shape' comes to light in regards to conversations among women. Often this involves one woman reporting something and another woman mirroring this by

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[10] Studies such as the one by Martin and Craig (1983: 27-8) show that both women's and men's linguistic behavior varies depending on the constellation of the group. In same-sex conversations men tended to use the same number of qualifying words (*sort of, maybe*) as women did talking to men, but men used less qualifying words when talking to women. Moreover, both men and women produced equally many false starts in same-sex conversations as opposed to mixed-sex conversations.

claiming to do so as well. Coates (1996: 58) explains that the function of mirroring and sharing experiences "might improve understanding and therefore improve the quality of relationships" and once again links in to the idea that women are seen as needing to feel comfortable and safe in their conversations. Therefore, Coates (1996: 58) adheres that women's talk should be seen as '*vulnerable*', more specifically, mutually vulnerable as whatever one woman says is somehow mirrored and returned.

Another feature that occurred in Coates study of all women conversations was repetition. This included repetition of words, grammatical structures and patterns. Often this device functions to "maximize solidarity between […] friends" as it displays agreement and mutual affirmation (Coates 1996: 203-4). Other functions include organizing thought, emphasizing certain points, constructing textual coherence, signaling agreement, signaling disagreement in an acceptable way and affirming the group voice in a collaborative floor (Coates 1996: 204-22). Along with hedges and questions, repetition is a pattern "that *could* be called poetic", according to Coates (1996: 230). She adheres that the devices discussed above all function to master conversation effectively and successfully, a task that is vital for human survival and for successful communication.

The topic of interruption is one typically allocated to male speech behavior and supported by studies such as that by Don West and Candice Zimmerman (1975) who "claimed that men interrupt women more than women interrupt men, that men interrupt women more than men interrupt men, and that men interrupt women more even when women are in relatively more powerful positions" (Romaine 1999: 157). The issue of interruptions thus a 'male' trait, similarly found by Pamela Fishman (1978: 401-2), who reported that most of the work done by women was to support men and to encourage them to talk (and not vice versa). She describes it as women doing the "shitwork" of conversation (Fishman 1978: 405), always trying to initiate conversation and taking measures such as back-channeling or asking questions to maintain the conversation. Overall Fishman (1978: 404) asserts that there is an uneven distribution in the amount of work that is done in communication, in which women take the toll of encouraging and maintaining interaction, usually without receiving the same attention.

It is safe to say that the use of back-channeling, a process whose use is observed more in females, is also 'work'. Expressions such as *yes, ok, yeah, really, exactly, that's right* and *uh-huh,* indicate that "the listener is paying attention to and is in sympathy with what is being said." (Romaine 1999: 166) These features typically associated to women can actually be seen as skills, as something positive, and as tools that enable 'successful' conversation. It is the

evaluation of such features that creates a negative image. If these features of female speech are compared to the 'male norm', namely the less verbose talk, then some of these features can be seen as chatty and gossipy. It always depends on who decides what is 'good' and what is 'bad'; what is tolerated in a society and what is valorized or what is considered a negative trait. Societies have different social values of men and women which ultimately is the reason for categorizing accepted and unaccepted behavior.

6.2.   Singling out the *other* sex: 'Men talk'

A significant amount of research (and space in this thesis) has been devoted to examining the language of women. In all fairness, the language and the behavioral characteristics of men similarly call for evaluation. In her work titled *Men Talk*, Jennifer Coates studied the conversations of men and evaluated aspects that construct masculinity in all-male conversations. Coates (2003: 78) explains that stories play an important role in the construction of masculinity and that men portray themselves as "achievement-oriented, competitive and unemotional; but also exploring more feminine sides of themselves." The first three adjectives used in this description clearly place men conversations in a binary category that stands in opposition to all-women conversations. Amongst themselves, men tended to be much more competitive than women, who were very concerned with constructing a collaborative floor. Being emotional and showing signs of self-disclosure was considered weak and feminine, an aspect that most men tried to avoid demonstrating in their story-telling. Barker refers to Giddens (1992 quoted in Barker 2000: 229) whose opinion is in line with Coates's when explaining that men are not able to acquire emotional autonomy needed to closeness. They fail to develop vocabulary needed to establish intimacy such as that needed for describing feelings. However, as Coates does not fail to mention, some men engaged in the risk of seeming weak by being self-reflexive throughout their discourse and by being unafraid of self-disclosure. (Coates 2003: 78)

As opposed to all-female conversations focusing on relationships, Coates found that the content of stories in all-male conversations tended to entail action, giving hardly any weight to the characters in their stories or the relationships between them. Moreover, if other characters were mentioned, they tended to be male as well; a mixture of the sexes was usually of no issue, as opposed to women's stories. Nonetheless, Coates emphasizes that such stark and binary contrasts did not apply to all the conversations that she observed, and that "there are stories where women and men as narrators subvert gender norms and use the story form to explore alternative femininities and masculinities." (Coates 2003: 137) She concludes

however, that ultimately members of English-speaking societies would be able to guess the sex of the gender of the narrator. Therefore, according to Coates, differences in the conversations of men and women are generally speaking distinct enough to distinguish the sex of the participant, thus agreeing with the hypothesis that women and men talk in marked ways.

Evidently, just as in her work about all-female conversations, limitations exist in all-male conversations. In her later work focusing on men talk however, Coates does not fail to examine the aspect of mixed conversations. The conclusions she draws are rather interesting, especially in regards to the construction of masculinity. In her study of mixed conversations Coates (2003: 171) found that "men perform hegemonic masculinity", which was fostered by the presence of a woman. Dominance was an issue in conversations with female family members and often stories told by men functioned to perpetuate said dominance. Almost all of the conversations studied by her depicted a close relationship of hegemonic masculinity, their acceptance of it and the correlation to heterosexuality.

The issue of conversational dominance is one recorded by many linguists and has thus evolved to becoming a stereotypical 'masculine' trait in spoken interaction. Leet-Pellegrini (1980 quoted in Coates 1993: 113), for example, found that the conjunction of two factors led to conversational dominance: gender and expertise. For that reason, speakers "who were both male *and* well-informed dominated conversation" (Coates 1993: 113) leading them to cause more interruptions. Coates explains that the reason for male dominance was due to a style of interaction used based on power whereas women preferred an interactional style "based on solidarity and support" (Coates 1993: 113).

6.2.1.   The verbosity myth

Despite the general belief that women talk more than men, numerous findings have shown that the contrary is in fact the case. Cutler and Scott (1990: 254) suggest that it might actually be vice versa, namely that men speak more than women, and that this mistaken view may have emerged due to people's poor judgment of how much has been spoken. In their study on "Speaker Sex and Perceived Apportionment of Talk" they found that listeners judged female contribution in a mixed-sex conversation much higher than male contribution, even though their contribution was identical. Apart from this perceptual bias, Cutler and Scott also conclude that the content of speech was crucial in the way that contribution to typically 'female' topics was regarded much greater by women than men. (Cutler and Scott (1990: 264).

Throughout her book *Man Made Language*, Spender explains that the myth of the talkative woman has survived due to the fact that society has different expectations of male and female speakers: when men have the right to talk, women are expected to remain silent. Therefore, talking at any length will be perceived as talkativeness in women. *Chatter* (typically associated with women) has two main components: verbosity and triviality. The concept that women talk about 'trivial' topics has led to believe in their verbosity. Nonetheless, the fact that topics such as sport, politics and cars are regarded as 'serious' topics in contrast to childcare and relationships, which are regarded as 'trivial' topics is "simply a reflection of social values which define what men do as important, and conversely what women do as less important" (Coates 1993: 115). The issue clearly demonstrates that once again it is not a linguistic feature or a certain type of communicative behavior that carries a (negative) connotation. Much rather, society, or better yet, certain groups of society ascribe connotations to features and behavior, thus creating norms and establishing a code for appropriate behavior. Acting incongruously to these norms will accordingly generate criticism, attract negative attention and society will regard those as deviating from the norm.

6.2.2. Men and gossip

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 99) define gossip as "evaluative (and often critical) commentary on absent parties." Gossip has characteristically always been assigned to women and has been known to have a bad reputation. Nevertheless, in recent years studies have been made to test this claim. Deborah Cameron (1997) for example, analyzed the conversation of young men who were "hanging out" and found that they too did what can be characterized as gossip. In their conversation the young men labeled other (absent) men as "homos", "faggots" and "wimps". By doing so, they automatically established their own masculinity and "enforce[d] certain norms of masculinity" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003: 99).

What is remarkable about the phenomenon of gossip is that it can entail two very distinct functions. On one hand gossip, as mentioned, can enforce masculinity by juxtaposing the male and masculine self with the less masculine and therefore less valued (and in most cases absent) other. On the other hand, gossip does not necessarily have to refer to a talk in which the speakers are focusing on reporting and evaluating activities of absent parties.

6.2.3. Bossy men

One feature that often arises within the context of 'male' speech is that of commands and directives. In a study by Engle (1980b quoted in Coates 1993: 125) the language of parents

was investigated whilst playing with their children. This showed that fathers tend to give directions such as *Why don't you make a chimney*? or *Off! Take it off!* Mothers, on the other hand, use language that seems to be more of a consult than a command: *Do you want to look at any of the other toys over here*? and *What else shall we put on the truck*?

Coates (1993: 125) claims that this difference in interaction reflects "a difference in organization". The mother relates interaction to helping the child learn how to choose whereas the father is less concerned with the child's desire and instead introduces new ideas. This kind of behavior was observed amongst most parents in the study. One could argue that this differing behavior reflects the communicative goals of the sexes, especially that of women who tend to act co-operatively and seem to be more concerned with the well-being of others. Cleary these are very superficial connections and conclusions based on very little evidence, but the inferences made merely describe tendencies. At a closer look, the more interesting question is why mothers and fathers spoke differently to their children. Is it because society has molded them to speak and act in certain ways? Or is it merely their innate habit? Perhaps the next study can shed some more light onto this issue.

In a study by West (1990 quoted in Coates 1993: 125) directives of male and female doctors were investigated. It showed that male doctors tended to use imperatives such as *Lie down* and *Take off your shoes and socks* whilst female doctors preferred more mitigated forms. Their directives were formed "as proposals for joint action" using phrases such as *So let's stay on what we're doing* and *Maybe we ought to do this*. The effect of such directives was that female doctors' rate of compliant responses was higher (67%) than that of male doctors' (50%) (West 1990 quoted in Coates 1993: 126). One could argue that the deeply rooted expectations of men to be masculine and rougher than women is omnipresent and triggers such behavior. Findings from studies like this one and the former provide examples of behavior that is in line with cultural norms of expected behavior. These are surely no coincidences and give rise to the need to study cultural norms and stereotypes and their effect on linguistic choices that are made by men and women.[11]

6.2.4.   Swearing and Taboo Language

Coates (1993: 127) asserts that Lakoff's evidence for her claim that men swear more than women is "purely impressionistic". To examine this topic further, Coates has summed up various studies such as the one by Gomm (1981 quoted in Coates 1993: 127). In Gomm's study swearing appeared more often amongst male speakers. Both sexes swear more often in

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[11] See Part 3

single sex groups and male swearing decreases dramatically in mixed-sex conversations. Furthermore, women seem to be becoming more and more willing to use taboo words (Coates 1993: 128). Even these severely outdated findings show a tendency of change, namely that women are not the silent and shy beings afraid of swearing. Geoffrey Hughes (2006: 508) explains that after the women's liberation of 1969 provocative language use by women experienced a revolution as various groups were formed that used aggressive language. These groups helped to take away some of the pressure to use formal language and allow women to engage in swearing too. However, Hughes (2006: 510-11) maintains that swearing is still a trait typically related to men and less frequent amongst women.

What is crucial in the study of swearing (and in fact in all studies) is the consideration of other variables. It does not suffice to make a sweeping generalization that men swear more, without being mindful of age and social class. A study by Hughes (1992 quoted in Coates 1993: 128) shows that women in the working class are frequent users of taboo words and do not view them as swearing but as part of normal everyday language.

Conclusion

In this preliminary section of the thesis, influential early work by Jespersen, Lakoff, Labov and Trudgill has been considered. I have shown how early findings have enabled the manifestation of gender stereotypes and what explanations for sex differences have been formed. Research from the 1970s has led to the creation of a checklist itemizing 'male' and 'female' speech attributes, which has been taken for granted by many people. Later researchers have considered the multifunctionality of linguistic devices and thus have recognized the dynamics of interaction.

Coates' findings as well as those presented by other researchers in the previous subchapters may not exactly be cutting edge but they certainly demonstrate tendencies and gender-related issues which are of great importance. Her findings question some previous claims about men and women, such as female verbosity and the construction of alternative masculinities. However, certain established views of women and men are not refuted by the works of Coates, Fishman and Eckert: their findings show that women use hedges more frequently, that women's talk is organized cooperatively and that men are more dominant. What has changed nonetheless is the evaluation of these features; as opposed to Lakoff for example, more recent studies tend to question the functions of certain linguistic devices and reject the view that women's use of specific devices reflects their deficiency and inferiority towards men.

The belief to act in alignment to hegemonic masculinity and femininity imposes restrictions on men and women, suggesting them to behave a certain way in order to be accepted by society. Surely enough men also suffer from these limiting constraints, but it is essentially women who are at a great disadvantage. We are both constrained and enabled by language in ways that might not be as explicit as one might think. In order to explore these constraints, the next part of the thesis will shed light onto the theory of social constructionism and the Foucauldian Discourse theory. Both theories are needed in order to understand how certain stereotypes are not only established but also why, to some extent, they are considered to be true.

PART 2 - Social Constructionism and the Foucauldian Discourse Theory

7. Social Constructionism

During the 1990s various approaches to the study of human beings emerged including critical psychology, discourse analysis, deconstruction and poststructuralism. A common thread amongst these disciplines is the notion of social constructionism, which Vivien Burr (1995: 1) describes as follows:

> Social constructionism can be thought of as a theoretical orientation which to a greater or lesser degree underpins all these newer approaches, which are currently offering radical and critical alternatives in psychology, as well as in other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities.

The basis of this approach entails the view that humans derive their knowledge from social interactions, which underlies the influence of history and culture. It is an approach that is highly appealing to many scientists in numerous disciplines. (Steiner 2004: 27)

7.1. Historical Background

When reviewing the history of this discipline, claiming that there is one single source that can be regarded as the origin would be erroneous. As Burr (1995: 9) explains, "[i]t has emerged from the combination of influences of a number of North American, British and continental writers dating back more than thirty years." Writers from various different fields made meaningful contributions to what we now know as social constructionism including Kant, Marx and Nietzsche. They were of the same belief in regards to the power of language, to which Kant attributed an influential factor by asserting that humans did not create the world but that it exists despite us. However, what we humans do create, is the social structure that we impose on the world in our ways of thinking and believing.

The concept of social constructionism received a great amount of attention in 1966 due to the publication of *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. In addition to that, Kenneth Gergen, an American social constructionist submitted his paper *Social psychology as history* in 1973 which set the ground for key ideas about social constructionism. Gergen asserted amongst other claims that, concerning knowledge, "theoretical premises are based primarily on acquired dispositions [and] [a]s the culture changes, such dispositions are altered, and [...]

often invalidated." (Gergen 1973: 309) Thus, Gergen established the notion that knowledge is subject to constant change and that therefore no perpetually valid answers to questions exist. In addition to Berger and Luckmann and Gergen, Rom Harré and Paul Secord are seen as influential in the social constructionism movement. The work of the two psychologists titled *The explanation of social behavior* (1972) ascribes a similar role to language, claiming that language is not merely used to describe our world, but that it takes an active part in constructing it.

7.2. Social Constructionism – A Definition

According to Burr (1995: 1), social constructionism is an alternative approach "to the study of human beings as social animals." Due to the influence and importance of numerous other approaches such as philosophy, sociology and linguistics, it needs to be regarded as a multidisciplinary approach. Holliday *et al*. (2006: 137) point out, that social constructionism is closely linked to the concept of 'social representations', a term coined by Serge Moscovici. This entails views and ideas from the field of psychology, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy which are used to describe everyday behavior and events. Social representations can be understood as explanations that are culturally agreed upon and ultimately become commonsensical (Hewstone & Augoustinos 1998: 62). These explanations vary from one culture to another and are dependent of time and context. Therefore, as Sperber (1996: 1) asserts, "To explain culture, then, is to explain why and how some ideas happen to be contagious." As a result of its multifaceted nature, its boundaries are not clear and precise, but much rather permeable and overlapping. Thus it is almost impossible to provide a concise overview of constructionist theories and one must instead rely on grouping approaches that entail the following four assumptions: a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge, historical and cultural specificity, knowledge is sustained by social

nking about the concept of love, or experiences that we have gained throughout time, which, arguably do not require language to be interpreted. Language may therefore not be regaprocesses, and knowledge and social action go together. These tenets have been coined by Kenneth J. Gergen (1985) and best describe the foundation of social constructionism. (Burr: 1995: 2-5)

7.2.1. Deconstruction

The term constructionism entails in itself the notion of construction, i.e. that it is constructed from something. To assume however, that construction in this sense occurs as a result of

assembling dead matter or things at random would be awry. In the term construction, the notion of deconstruction is intricate. As Steiner (2004: 30) explains, "Deconstruction is an indispensable means in the process of social construction, because without deconstructing already constructed ideas, images and 'truths' there would be an endless number of co-existing and, thus, conflicting 'realities'." By being able to abandon and let go of established ideas a mutually agreeable reality can come into existence. Clearly speaking of only one reality is mistaken but for the means of this discussion a simplified understanding is sufficient. If there was no agreed-upon 'reality', a state of confusion would be the consequence. Barker (2000: 32) explains that deconstruction "involves the dismantling of hierarchical conceptual oppositions such as man/woman, black/white, reality/appearance [...] which serve to guarantee truth by excluding and devaluing the 'inferior' part of the binary." The purpose of this goes beyond merely reversing the order but to demonstrate relatedness of representation in each other. The meaning of this in social constructionist terms is that new 'realities' are created by dismantling and breaking up taken-for-granted knowledge, varying in believed and accepted 'truths' from one culture to another. Kenneth J. Gergen summarizes the deconstructive force of social constructionist texts the following way:

> Deconstruction theory further demonstrates [...] the dependence of the said on the unsaid, and the eternal aporia of the apodictic. With deconstruction theory, not only the object of the text disappears as a serious matter, but so does the mind of the author as an originary source. [...] Under these conditions, all attempts by authorities to establish knowledge, convey wisdom or establish values are placed under suspicion. (Gergen 2001: 45)

7.2.2.   A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge

One intrinsic trait of social constructionism is the importance of stepping back and reviewing the world and ourselves in a critical way. We humans have many categories and definitions that help us understand the world the way we know it, but social constructionism invites us to be more objective of our observations as it "challenge[s] the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation[s] of the world." (Burr 1995: 3) Even if our observations seem absolutely neutral and impartial at first, we must be aware of the fact that no observation is unbiased and objective. Subjectivity always persists when trying to understand the world and in contrast to positivism and empiricism, the nature of the world cannot be revealed by observation. As Burr (1995: 3) maintains, "what exists is what we *perceive* to exist." The suggestion that we must be mindful of the seemingly obvious and its actual subjectivity is highlighted in the issue of a critical stance towards taken-for-granted

knowledge. An interesting and relevant example put forward by Burr is that of gender. As we know it, humans are categorized as either male or female, and in the theory of social constructionism this categorization would be questionable in terms of "whether this category is simply a reflection of naturally occurring distinct types of human beings." (Burr 1995: 3) Thus, the question prevails why this distinction is of such great importance and why humans are not, for example, divided up into fat and thin or tall and short.

7.2.3.   Historical and cultural specificity

The second principle of social constructionism draws awareness to the specificity of history and culture in which knowledge is embedded in. "What we expect from reality, what we attempt to construct in a particular way and if we perceive something this or the other way is heavily influenced by our historical and cultural experience and expectation." (Steiner 2004: 32) This embodies the notion that where one is born and how one is brought up is essential in shaping our construction and perception of the world that we live in. Thus, variables of time and place are absolutely significant in the understanding of our world.

> This means that all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. Not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are seen as products of that culture and history, and are dependent upon particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time. (Burr 1995: 4)

7.2.4.   Knowledge is sustained by social processes

Another pillar of social constructionism is the belief that knowledge of the world is not acquired through the world's nature, but through social interactions. Hence, people construct meaning between themselves.

> It is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated. Therefore social interactions of all kinds, and particularly language, is of great interest to social constructionists. (Burr 1995: 4)

Ultimately our notion of 'truth' is thus a product of the social interactions among ourselves, varying depending on time and place. These shared versions of truth and knowledge are therefore not bound to the nature of the world or objective observations of it, but to the interactions in which we are engaged in. In this sense then, the concept of eternity loses importance, as the understanding of our world is also related to its usefulness. (Steiner 2004: 33)

7.2.5.   Knowledge and social action go together

The understanding of the world is crucial to the way in which it is governed. There are in fact plentiful ways of understanding the world and each society has a set of negotiated understandings that have been agreed upon. The idea of money and citizenship are, for example, constructs that came into being because of society and are completely random at that, i.e. they could have been very different had we decided to choose other concepts. These agreements are the basis of future actions. In western countries, the crime of rape is servere and rapists who are caught are sentenced accordingly. In contrast, in some Arabic regions, it has occurred that women were held responsible for being raped. These women were then sentenced for public intoxication and for having sex outside of marriage.[12] This example goes to show that each society or community acts upon their own set of rules which are based on their endemic understanding of the world. Negotiated understandings vary throughout history, geography and culture and carry their own consequences. "Descriptions or constructions of the world therefore sustain some patterns of social interaction and exclude others." (Burr 1995: 5)

Conclusion

What is essential about the theory of social constructionism is the notion of an active human being whose actions depend on his/her perception and construction of 'truth', as well as the society the individual is a member of. This society is the institution that agrees upon norms and regulations that govern the world, or better yet, their understanding of it. Of course, this understanding – this 'common sense' – varies according to place, time and culture.

Steiner (2004: 34) correctly claims that gender knowledge constitutes a part of this common-sense knowledge and explains that "there are socially shared parameters of what is considered female or male, and what is seen as a deviation from femaleness or maleness." This view entails the belief that gender construction and perception are both social products and each individual member of a society has learned through the process of socialization how to use gender norms in order to assess others. Not only is assessment facilitated through such gender norms, but also the enactment of gender functions along these lines. The risk of being mindful of binary gender positions encompasses the danger of perceiving people subjectively. Gender stereotypes become deeply ingrained, daze judgment and ultimately lead to "perceiving the world along stereotyped patterns" (Steiner 2004: 34)

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[12] Goulding, Nicola; O'Sullivan, Phil. 2013. "Norwegian woman: I was raped in Dubai, now I face prison sentence". *CNN.*

7.3. Social Constructionism and Language

One question remains when discussing social constructionism, namely that of language. It is an important aspect of understanding the world and the debate about whether language is an expression of thought or if language preconditions thought, is an ongoing discussion.

7.3.1. The old "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" question

When thinking about what comes first, language or thought, an argument to put forward may be that language is not essential when we are thinking. We might be thinking about the concept of love, or experiences that we have gained throughout time, which, arguably, do not require language to be interpreted. Language may therefore not be regarded essential in perceiving and understanding the world but purely needed to communicate these emotions and thoughts.

In the view of social constructionism this idea is completely refuted. It is believed that language is something that "people use to give expression to things that already exist in themselves or in the world" (Burr 1995: 33) Language is not used to as a vehicle to vent out thoughts and emotions, it has a much more powerful role than that. As Burr (1995: 7) explains, "When people talk to each other, the world gets constructed." Romaine (1999: 15) seems to agree with this view by claiming that "[l]anguage can alter reality rather than simply describe it." Hence social constructionists ascribe a very active role to language as opposed to traditional psychological notions of language. To put it in other words:

> This means that the way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them, are provided by the language that they use. Language therefore is a necessary pre-condition for thought as we know it. (Burr 1995: 7)

Entailed in this belief is therefore the idea that culture modifies language which in turn shapes our thoughts. It is our communal understanding of language that enables us to categorize and make meaning of reality, ultimately making us products of language. There is nothing innate about human beings or the world itself that predetermines the categories that humans construct, which demonstrates the arbitrariness of everything. (Burr 1995: 44) Romaine (1999: 21) sums this up as follows: "We see the world though the categories of our native language. In this respect the concepts we learn to form and the categories we construct are influenced by the language we learn."

7.3.2. Language and Gender

Language's constructivist nature is of great importance in studying gender roles and stereotypes. Not only does language contribute to constructing thoughts, but 'gendered' language also creates perceived gender differences. Gender itself is in fact a construct of discourse and often women are disadvantaged in this process. "With language we bring different worlds into being. […] It both constructs and perpetuates that reality [in which women are inferior to men], often in obvious ways, but at other times in subtle and invisible ones." (Romaine 1999: 15) These worlds brought into being by us are purely arbitrary and moreover unstable. As easily as language constructs a certain reality it can change and modify said reality. As Weatherall (2002: 85) explains, "gender is not a stable set of traits […] Gender has no fixed or stable meaning. Rather gender is a social process". Hence, concepts such as femininity and masculinity are social constructs that are subject to variation and change. Speaking like a man or a woman is in turn an idea that derives from the culturally accepted norms of masculinity and femininity. Most features of speech such as tag questions or dominance are not a product of gender but entail other social meanings. Weatherall (2002: 95) precisely concludes that "cultural beliefs and values about women's and men's speech must be treated as something distinct from, but influential on, the language used by women and men during interaction."

The fascination behind language and its ability to construct people but also its attribute of being manipulated by people is one of the major issues in the study of discourse. It is thus worth addressing this topic in the next section.

8. The Importance of discourse

One might be startled at first to be confronted with encountering another theory in this thesis and question the importance in regards to the topic of gender stereotypes. However, discourse is a valuable and even essential way to understand the topic and to help provide answers to questions raised within this thesis. As I have argued previously, the social constructionist approach enforces that language constructs thought and thus selfhood. It is therefore crucial to take one step further and investigate the structures of language that make up who we are. In this context, Michel Foucault's notion of discourse needs to be explicated in order to aid in answering questions such as: Does gendered language actually exist? If yes, to what extent is it influential on gendered speech behavior? How, if at all, do stereotypes influence the way men and women produce and perceive speech?

The term discourse is in fact very loosely defined and can mean anything from 'communication', 'talk' and 'conversation' to 'reasoning' or to 'give forth'. As Sara Mills points out, "During the 1960s the general meaning of the term, its philosophical meaning and a new set of more theoretical meanings have always been kept in play, inflecting the theoretical meanings in particular ways." (Mills 1997: 3) This makes it difficult to ascribe one clear and comprehensive definition to the term discourse, which ultimately calls for the need to vary definitions according to the disciplinary context it appears in. For obvious reasons, the field of linguistics is the most applicable field to this theory in which the term discourse can be understood as "turning away from sentences as exemplars of usage in the abstract, that it, examples of the way that language is structured as a system, to a concern with language in use (Brown and Yule, 1983 quoted in Mills 1997: 9). Apart from linguistics, and in concordance with social constructionism, cultural theorist models of discourse are vital for attempting to understand gender stereotypes. Diane Macdonnell (1986) summarized and distinguished definitions by Foucault, Hindness, Hirst, Althusser and Bakhtin and concluded that their main commonality is "the institutional nature of discourse" (Mills 1997: 11) and the principle of 'exclusion'. The latter term results from 'discursive pressure' which has been implemented to establish what can be said and what is unacceptable. In that sense, "What seems to conform to the general acceptance or what equals public opinion becomes self-evident and speakable." (Steiner 2004: 41) Conversely, any topic regarded as 'abnormal' and is not to be thought, let alone be spoken of. A common view in western societies is that menstruation is a topic one should not speak positively of. This example given by Mills (1997: 12) highlights a gender issue that puts something natural and 'normal' into a self-evident and unspeakable context. There is no other way of thinking about menstruation than a negative one, it is the dominant discursive structure and other ways have been excluded. Jäger (2001: 34) adds that discourses "serve certain ends, namely to exercise power with all its effects. They do this because they are institutionalized and regulated, because they are linked to action." Dominant discourses are the ones that are granted authority and power and which are accepted by the wide public.

Mills puts forward another important aspect of Macdonnell's work namely that "whatever signifies or has meaning can be considered part of discourse" (Macdonnell 1986: 4 quoted in Mills 1997: 13). This very wide definition entails the notion that discourse does not entail only groupings of utterances but much rather consists of "utterances which have meaning, force and effect within a social context." (Mills 1997: 13) Only if considered in the embodiment of a social context can utterances be understood to their fullest.

8.1. Michel Foucault and Discourse

If we move to a more precise definition of discourse in order to gain a deeper understanding of the matter, the poststructuralist French philosopher Michel Foucault's discourse theory must be explored. Foucault opposes the view that language is governed by a set of rules and regulations in an autonomous way. He is "concerned with the description and analysis of the surfaces of discourse and their effects under determinate material and historical conditions." (Barker 2000: 19-20) Both language and practice are matters of concern to Foucault and to him, discourse produces knowledge through language, "which gives meaning to both material objects and social practices." (Barker 2000: 20) More importantly, Foucault analyzes an aspect that it very relevant to this thesis, namely the conditions that permit people to speak and the question of who is allowed to speak. For this analysis, Foucault concentrates on the issue of power which he views as "generative, that is, productive of social relations and identities." (Barker 2000: 20). For this reason, Foucault's view of discourse is best explained by analyzing his view of knowledge, truth and power. Discourse will only have an effect if these three elements are present.

Truth is considered by Foucault as something negative, something that needs to be constructed by societies rather than something that already exists. This idea entails the notion that certain other truths, or much rather other forms of knowledge must be excluded and disregarded to maintain the 'real' truth. To exemplify this, Norman Fairclough's (1992b quoted in Mills 1997: 18-9) example is of great use. In most western societies, any other knowledge of health such as alternative medicine or homeopathy is regarded humbug. "[A] great deal of effort and discursive work is expended on ensuring that alternative medicine is considered inferior" (Mills 1997: 19), only to preserve the image of the one and only 'scientific' and 'true' medical science. To Foucault it is therefore of great interest to investigate the processes which enable one type of discourse to evolve into the dominant discourse.

Quite clearly the above topic has close ties to the issue of power. Deciding on what is to become the dominant discourse cannot be done without the element of power. Foucault's view of power rests on a broader sense than the 'restrictive hypothesis', namely "that power is simply about preventing someone from carrying out their wishes and limiting people's freedom." (Mills 1997: 19) Power is more complex than that: to Foucault, "power and resistance are two sides of the same coin." (Burr 1995: 64) On a social level power is dispersed asymmetrically, meaning it is not only restrictive but it also conditions the production of speech. Ultimately power is therefore a product of discourse and "[t]o define

the world or a person in a way that allows you to do the things you want is to exercise power."
(Burr 1995: 64) When we exercise this power by analyzing someone or defining something
we are simultaneously producing 'knowledge'. Thus, power and knowledge are terms that are
intertwined to Foucault, as "knowledge is a power over others, the power to define others."
(Burr 1995: 64) To produce knowledge then means to have won a power struggle. Sara Mills
(1997: 21-2) exemplifies this with the discourse used in schools and universities, explaining
that what is being taught and studied is a product of whose version is endorsed.

Conclusion

Upon a closer observation of discourse and in particular Foucault's theory of discourse it has
become evident that the term is not easily defined. Van Leeuwen (1993a quoted in Wodak
2001: 9) sums it up by explaining that discourse can be understood "as a way of representing
social practice(s), as a form of knowledge, [and] as things people say about social
practice(s)". The concepts of 'truth', 'power' and 'knowledge' and Foucault's understanding
of them have shown that they are dependent of each other and vital in terms of understanding
discourse. Truth is very much dependent of what powerful discourses construct and agree
upon; likewise knowledge is a result of power struggles.

In accordance with this understanding of discourse, gender stereotypes in spoken
interaction are easier to detect and become more accessible. Analyzing discourses of a society
in the light of truth, power and knowledge can help to decipher implicit (and explicit) beliefs
and values about men and women and their roles in society.

> [C]larification of the relationship between language, thought and reality is
> essential. As Deborah Cameron (1990a) pointed out, what we believe about the
> debate on language makes a big difference. If we say women lack the means for
> expressing their world view in language and are therefore silenced, the problem is
> linguistic. If, however, women are muted because the language they speak is
> unacceptable to men, the problem is one of power." (Romaine 1999: 22)

Unchallenged stereotypes and taken-for-granted truths about women and men are the reasons
stereotypes do not cease to exist, in some cases causing negative and harmful repercussions to
the sex that is seen as inferior. What kind of stereotypes have been refuted and nevertheless
prevail will be examined in the following chapter and the role of perception will also be
discussed.

PART 3 - (Challenging) Stereotypes

9. What are Stereotypes?

Before commencing the complex topic of stereotypes it is essential to attempt a more precise definition of the term than the ones that have been offered in previous chapters and in addition to this, it is necessary to examine how stereotypes function and what effects they have on our perception, evaluation and behavior towards individuals.

Stereotypes were first adhered to by Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* (1922). Coming from a journalistic background, Lippmann did not focus on the aspect of social sciences. To him, stereotypes did not have an exclusively negative nature but rather considered them a cognitive construct which resulted from physical distance between people and the resulting anonymity between social categories. He claimed that the lack of intimacy in our acquaintances causes us to fill in any missing information using stereotypes in order to complete the picture in we have in our heads. (Hort 2007: 13)

Barker (2000: 392) defines stereotypes as "[v]ivid but simple representations which reduce persons to a set of exaggerated, usually negative, character traits. A form of representation which essentializes others through the operation of power." As Aries (1996: 163) points out, stereotypes are exaggerations that can lead to false representations of a certain group, which in turn "can lead to prejudiced perceptions, evaluations and responses to individuals." Categorizing people according to different variables is common and amongst these categories, sex is one of the major judgments made by perceivers. Berscheid (1993: ix quoted in Strand 1999: 94) highlights the importance of the category and explains that "knowledge of another's gender identity is the master key that immediately unlocks a … [sic!] vast array of beliefs and stereotypes about that person's nature". The stereotypes ascribed to women and men are very distinct from each other; women are usually described as emotional, tactful, subjective, sensitive towards others and tactful, which Aries (1996: 164) describes as "affective traits". Men, on the other hand, are generally viewed as dominant, assertive, objective, aggressive and competitive, which Aries (1996: 164) describes as "instrumental traits". Eagly (1987: 16) makes a similar distinction and labels these differences as *communal* and *agentic*. The former term is described as a sensitive and nurturing quality, concerned with the well-being of others, typically believed to be a trait of female behavior. The agentic aspect refers to assertive and controlling behavior which is believed to be a trait of men. This relates back to the time when women typically stayed at home as the caretakers of the family and depended on their men financially. The image of the domestic woman with

communal attributes has prevailed to such an extent that the belief of these stereotypical gender roles has not changed drastically. Eagly bases both of these terms on Bakan's (1966 quoted in Eagly 1987: 16) definition of these terms and simultaneously asserts that these dimensions do not portray a black-and-white view of men and women. She therefore stresses the "moderate quality" of gender stereotypes: "people's beliefs appear to represent the sexes as somewhat heterogeneous, partially overlapping groups, possessing different average levels of various attributes." (Eagly 1987: 17)

9.1.   How widespread are gender stereotypes?

Cheris Kramer's (1977: 155) study on gender stereotypes involving high school and college students and their views about women and men is a very relevant contribution to the issue. The study found that 36 of the 51 speech characteristics showed significant gender differences: women were believed to have character traits described as open, friendly, enthusiastic, polite, emotional, talkative, and to show concern for the listener. Their talk was regarded as gossip and gibberish whereas men were believed to be – amongst others – dominant, authoritarian, aggressive and to use slang and swear words. Kramer therefore concludes that stereotypical beliefs about women and men and widespread amongst white high school and college students (Kramer 1977: 158). These findings are corroborated by studies of Cunningham and Macrae (2011: 598) who conducted an experiment which tested gender stereotypes on the basis of colors (i.e. blue is for boys, pink is for girls). The results show that people do in fact have color-based stereotypic associations to gender and that this influenced the purchase of consumer goods as well as children's behavior. Cunningham and Macrae (2011: 608-9) conclude that even though gender stereotyping has been prohibited and warned against, implicit human actions continue to promote stereotypical ways of thinking.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the study of Mulac, Incontro and James (1985) which carefully tested gender-based language stereotypes in speakers' perception but made sure to separate it from the effect of naturally occurring gender-differences. This was done by evaluating tape-recorded and transcribed speech samples that formed four conditions: *language effect only* (naturally occurring gender differences), *language effect plus stereotype effect, stereotype effect only* and *language effect versus stereotype effect*. On a 12 item scale, participants rated statements according to factors of *dynamism, aesthetic quality* and *socio-intellectual status*. The results show that in naturally occurring speech samples where there was no knowledge of the speaker's sex, females were rated higher in aesthetic quality and socio-intellectual status whereas men were rated higher in dynamism. In the second condition,

when test-takers were aware of the sex of the speaker, speech was interpreted as before, but differences in the categories dynamism and aesthetic quality were much more profound than without the stereotype effect. (Mulac, Incontro & James 1985: 1106) This leads to the conclusion that stereotypes biased subjects' perception in the way that speech was perceived along gender stereotypes: female speech was seen as more pleasing and male speech as more aggressive. Aries (1996: 171) suggests that Mulac, Incontro and James' study demonstrates the implicit driving force of gender stereotypes to influence our perception and that "even if men and women were to change their language, the stereotype effect would to some degree counteract actual changes in behavior." This highly interesting claim will be taken up in the empirical study of this thesis.[13]

9.2.   The Functions of Stereotypes

The reduction of people to a set of traits usually does not happen at random, but much rather carries multiple functions. McGarthy, Yzerbyt and Spears (2002: 2) highlight three main functions of stereotypes: a) explanatory function, b) energy-saving function, and c) shared group beliefs. Strictly speaking then, stereotypes are not only a bad thing. As McGarthy, Yzerbyt and Spears point out, the first function aids in obtaining an understanding of the situation and involves a process of categorization whereas the second suggests they help the perceiver to save time and effort. What is in fact being understood however, is often wrong and only partial, i.e. no complete 'truths' are gained in the process of stereotyping. McGarthy, Yzerbyt and Spears (2002 : 4) therefore argue that the process aids in misunderstanding rather than understanding and furthermore point out the complexity of a tense relationship between falseness and understanding. On one hand stereotypes supposedly help us to make quick judgments and understand situations but on the other hand the process is one accompanied by falsehood and deficiency. Finally, the third function "implies that stereotypes should be formed in line with the accepted views or norms of social groups that the perceiver belongs to." (McGarthy, Yzerbyt and Spears (2002: 2) The shared element of stereotypes enables predictions about human behavior and stems from a common cultural origin of knowledge, social representations and ideology. These normative beliefs are shared "because the members of groups act to coordinate their behavior." (McGarthy, Yzerbyt and Spears (2002: 6) This general consensus is exactly what enables stereotypes to develop, to become internalized without being questioned and to remain persistent within a society. If a society accepts stereotypes and validates them they receive a stamp of 'truth', simultaneously causing people

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[13] See Part 5 "Empirical Study"

to act conform to them. Often stereotypes are enforced by indirect sources such as the mass media, politics and religion. Said factors make resistance and change of stereotypical thinking difficult which bares potentially dangerous consequence:

> […] the ways in which stereotypes function [are] a form of social control. The assessment that is offered in a stereotype is based on the leading percepts and preoccupations of those who reproduce them, and it is this assessment that underlies the perception and positioning of the 'difference' it regards. (Pickering 2001: 5)

Pickering's argument highlights the possible threat entailed within each stereotype, namely their ability to maintain and reinforce structures and patterns of social power. The belief that men are more suited for the professional world and more likely to be successful than women is an assumption that is commonly not perceived as a mere stereotype but that it may have some truth to it. This belief can have severe impacts on a society since our perception is influenced by such beliefs, hence shaping our view of reality.

Institutions such as schools can implicitly foster gender stereotypes; teachers often subconsciously attribute better skills in math and natural sciences to male students. A way in which this is legitimized is through what Hort (2007: 85) calls "geschlechtsbezogene Sozialisation" which is in a sense a form of gender polarization, i.e. considering boys and girls or men and women to be completely distinct from each other. Bing and Bergvall (1996: 16) warn that "[g]ender polarization makes it easier to limit opportunities and exclude girls and women from education, public office and the military and easier to deny them legal protection and highly paid positions." In a socialization process as such, we grow up believing and accepting gender stereotypes and prejudices and consequently our social order remains intact. This internalized knowledge is passed on from one generation to another and legitimizes social hierarchies, thus preserving discrimination against women.

What (linguistic) stereotypes exist and remain to be believed true today was discussed in Part 1. The next section will review studies that have disproven these gender stereotypes and will further show how gender stereotypes and gender-stereotypic behavior is acquired.

9.3.   Disproving gender stereotypical behavior

Numerous stereotypes have been constructed over the years and as shown in chapter 2 ("Early Work"(, most of these stereotypes disfavor women. This phenomenon is not bound to Western societies only, but extends to countries and cultures all over the world. However, the

fact that a lot of the so-called 'evidence' which is commonly taken for granted has been refuted by more recent studies should seriously question previous findings.

As Part 1 has shown, myths remain that women are more verbose and gossipy, but in face the opposite is true in public areas. Men have been found to speak more whereas women remain quieter. The myth that women interrupt more frequently than men has also been disproven and examples as these call for a serious need to question long-held beliefs.

One common stereotype, namely that women are generally less direct and more polite, is discredited by the results of Kulikck's (1993 quoted in Cameron 2005: 450) study, which show that in the Papa New Guinea village of Gapun, women were found to use vulgar language and verbal abuse in speech more frequently than men. This is an example of a community in which women are not seen as the refined, modest and silent sex that women are seen as in Western societies. Keenan (1974 quoted in Cameron 2005: 450) corroborates a similar view of women as Kulick does, with her study of the Malagasy in Madagascar. The results show a significant correlation between indirectness in association with male speech styles.

9.3.1. The importance of other factors and variables

Bernard Spolsky (1998: 37-8) highlights the importance of other factors than gender that affect language and maintains the view that the educational factor is one of the key elements affecting differentiation in speech style. He illustrates this on the basis of American ultra-orthodox Jewish communities in which males spend more time studying Jewish subjects, resulting in better knowledge of Yiddish and Hebrew but less proficiency in English.

Likewise a study by Alice Freed focused on similarities between men's and women's use of linguistic particles. Freed found that the sex of participants was in fact not a significant variable, but much rather found that the talk itself was gendered. She states that "the language used by the speakers […] was affected by the conditions under which they were speaking and by the communicative tasks which they were assigned." (Freed 1996: 68) Freed therefore stresses the importance of other variables that influence linguistic choices and furthermore emphasizes the similarities between men's and women's language. More precisely, this means that *both* men *and* women spoke in ways stereotypically associated with 'female' speech because the context of speech was one that is "symbolically (and stereotypically) associated with women." (Freed 1996: 67) This agrees with the view that gender is something that is being performed, that is dependent on context and that is ultimately also nested in preconceived ideas about normative gender behavior.

9.3.2.   'Positive'/reverse stereotyping

Interestingly, "more and more mainstream discourse on language and gender stresses […] that women are actually *superior* to men." (Cameron 2005: 454) Even though the idea of a defensive and insecure woman has not vanished, the idea is shifting more towards "the problem of the inarticulate, linguistically unskilled man." (Cameron 2005: 454) To underline her claim, Cameron (2005: 454) focuses on advertising campaigns of telephone service providers in the UK in the late 1990s. "In all four texts the "problem" is defined explicitly or implicitly as the lack of skill in using language for the purpose of creating and maintaining rapport with other people" (Cameron 2005: 457). Here men are being presented as lacking skills essential for successful communication and with allusions to very severe negative consequences, namely unemployment, personal discontent and educational underachievement. This highly positive image of women as the model language users is reasoned by Cameron as a result of gains made by feminism since 1970s which has enabled women to finally be recognized in their achievements and being rewarded for them. She does not, however, rule out the possibility that this is merely a strategy to distract from the underlying all-time-persisting truth that men continue to stay superior and more successful in important aspects such as life, job, education etc. In fact, up until the present year the unjust phenomenon of the gender gap remains. One very vivid exemplification is the unequal payment of men and women and women's inability of acquiring occupations in leading and powerful positions. Although women are just as educated and frequently excel in educational settings, they are underrepresented in well-paying positions and earn less than their male colleagues in the same position. Statistics revealed on "Equal Pay Day" in April 2014 in the US show that, according to the White House, women in full-time jobs earn only 77% of what their male colleagues earn and would thus have to work an extra 60 days to earn the same amount that their male counterparts earned in one year.[14] Despite numerous efforts and accomplishments by feminist groups, the gender gap may be getting smaller but it remains, and one cause this for this is remaining gender discrimination towards women.

Returning to new-found interest and appreciation of 'female' speech behavior, Cameron points out that what has changed in fact is "is not the dominant stereotypes of men's and women's linguistic behavior, but the value judgments made on that behavior" (Cameron 2005: 458) This is certainly true in western societies in which different skills have received more importance recently. More and more companies seek to hire employees that are verbally skilled, able to cooperatively solve problems in a team, who are able to reflect on themselves

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[14] Patten, Eileen. 2014. "On Equal Pay Day, key facts about the gender pay gap". *Pew Research Center*.

and their work and to create rapport as well as actively listen and express empathy, all in the favor of good teamwork and a successful business. This will also make workers seem more attainable and friendly to potential customers and buyers. All of these desired characteristics in a worker are put together into a role "that has elements of both nurturance and low status or powerlessness – qualities which figure in many familiar representations of "women's language." (Cameron 2005: 458-9)

9.4. What if women speak like men and vice versa?

Concern is also expressed by Cameron (2005: 462-3) who interestingly points out, that this positive image of women is in a fact a new model of the "good *person*" which consists of many 'feminine' qualities (good communicator, self-aware) but also some 'masculine' qualities (authority, enterprise, leadership). Nevertheless, the latter are qualities traditionally ascribed to men, so if they are used by men in addition to 'feminine' qualities, they are regarded as 'sensitive' men. Contrastingly, if women use these there will be no reward of any kind, as they are expected to use them anyway.

What makes matters worse is that when women employ 'masculine' strategies such as competitiveness and assertiveness, they tend to be looked down on and evaluated negatively. Talbot (2010: 196) addresses the controversy of women in a double bind with *The Wellington Language in the Workplace Project* which "produced a nuanced, contextualized exploration of gendered styles across a wide range of workplaces" (Talbot 2010: 196). It aimed at eliminating preconceptions of ineffective women and automatic superiority of men in the workplace. A case study focused on a female named Clara who supervised 50 staff members and who was described by them as 'queenly' (Holmes 2006: 55 quoted in Talbot 2010: 196). This meant that she could act in an authoritarian manner in spite of her sexuality. The study showed that she was able to engage in jokes (especially when being referred to as the queen) but at the same time her authority was not questioned when making decisions. Through repetition of her veto and the use of a jokingly 'robotic' voice Clara delivered the message in a clear yet less face-threatening manner. "In organizations in New Zealand being hard-nosed and adversarial is normal behavior" (Holmes 2006: 10 quoted in Talbot 2010: 198). However, women observed in course of this project tended to use self-depreciation and humor in a compensatory way which suggests that the strong, assertive and hard-nosed style remains a 'masculine' trait which, when adopted by women, is somewhat problematic. (Talbot 2010: 196) Women are required to act powerful and assertive when making decisions in the work place, nevertheless, applying solely these 'masculine' strategies always required some

'feminine' supportive behavior. As Holmes (2005: 52 quoted in Talbot 2010: 199) points out, women are faced with this "underlying pressure to counter or neutralize the effects of the authoritative and 'masculine' strategies". Acting against stereotypes and trying to take on different gender roles is not easy because "social constructions are regulated and have consequences." (Barker 2000: 257) It is therefore not surprising that women are often confronted with negative reactions when they do not act conform to other peoples' expectations.

Likewise, a study by Wiley an Woolley (1988 quoted in Aries 1996: 183) found that women's interruptions are evaluated more harshly than men's, and Wiley and Eskilson (1985: 1004-5) discovered that women adopting powerful speech were regarded as being more aggressive than men. Moreover, Lindsey and Zahaki's (1996: 767) study investigated the effects of deviation from gender-role specific behavior, i.e. women talking like men (in this case talking about themselves) and men talking like women (in this case asking a lot of questions). Their findings suggest that there is no clear-cut and definite way of interpreting behavior in opposition to gender-stereotypical behavior since judgment depended on the evaluator, but in general the results indicate that men are freer than women to adopt gender opposite behavior.

Bergvall (1996: 180) recorded academic conversations at the Michigan Technological University (MTU) between six women and twelve men and another group consisting of one woman and three men in a chemical engineering group. The recordings show that the women at this university "challenge the previous research which has found systematic women's silence in public settings" and quite the contrary, women were rather assertive in the interactions. By employing typically 'masculine' speech styles the women defied gender stereotypes but this resulted in their peers' disproval of them. The women were also more apologetic, hesitant and facilitative than their male colleagues, which also shed a negative light on them as their input was taken for granted. Bergvall (1996: 192) describes this situation as a "double-bind" and "no-win". No matter how they did it, women were regarded in a negative way, either receiving resistance from their peers or not being acknowledged for their work. This, according to Bergvall (1996: 192) suggests that "these women are subject to the forces of traditional stereotypes, even though, in interviews, they assert that the classroom is gender-neutral territory".

These previous examples show that no matter what women do, they always seem to be at a disadvantage because of the manifested stereotypes that regulate perception and evaluation. Some characteristics are only seen as acceptable for men but are considered

disturbing and unfitting when used by women as they "violate the norms of femininity." (Aries 1996: 183) In contrast, when men adopt 'female' speech, they are seldom evaluated negatively, but much rather benefit from this action and are regarded as sensitive. This ties in with the previous argument that stereotypes function to control and regulate societies, always in favor of those in power. As Pickering (2001: 3) sums up, "[stereotyping] attempts to maintain these structures as they are, or to realign them in the face of a perceived threat. The comfort of inflexibility which stereotypes provide reinforces the conviction that existing relations of power are necessary and fixed."

9.5. The role of the media in Gender Research: Self-help literature and its advice about talking like a man to be successful

As already briefly mentioned in the subchapter 'Sex vs. Gender', similarities between men and women are often neglected and dismissed. Those writing for a wider audience such as Deborah Tannen, John Gray, and Allan and Barbara Pease, disregard important parallels between men and women, (over)emphasize differences and "largely ignore unequal power or status" (Bing and Bergvall 1996: 4). The problem with these books is that they foster existing stereotypes and aid in keeping the myth alive that men and women are from two completely different planets. The difference model adopted mostly in self-help literature is chosen (as opposed to the deficient or dominance model), because the other models are too explicitly feminist (Cameron 1996: 40). Clearly, self-help books sell well and the educating, scientific factor behind this issue take a smaller role.

Interestingly self-help literature is mainly directed at women and focuses on two categories of their life: career and relationships. In regards to the former, these books often claim that women are not maximizing their potential at work because they are not speaking in the same way as men. The advice is to adapt their linguistic forms, i.e. speak like men and imitate them also in terms of body language.[15] Romaine (1999: 171) highlights a major problem enclosed in this advice, namely that it "treats symptoms of women's inequality rather than its causes." (Romaine 1999: 171) Arguably, men's success is rooted rather within their acceptance and power in society rather than in the way they speak and act. The latter aspect,

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[15] An example of this sort is found in Allan and Barbara Pease' book "Warum Männer nicht zuhören und Frauen schlecht einparken ([2010], [Why men don't listen and women can't read maps] (1998) which gives advice such as "Wenn Sie als Frau in einer männlichen Hierarchie arbeiten, haben Sie zwei Möglichkeiten: Entweder Sie gehen, oder Sie passen Ihr Wesen dem der Männer an." (2010: 381)

namely that of relationships can be improved by following simple steps as well, often found in women's' magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*[16].

A prime example of this kind of literature is Deborah Tannen's book *You Just Don't Understand* (1990). The advice found in her popularizing books focuses on heterosexual relationships and she accounts for the differences by comparing cross-sex talk to cross-culture talk. She asserts, for example, that "[i]f we recognize and understand the differences between us, we can take them into account, adjust to, and learn from each other's styles." (Tannen 1990: 17) In her view, communication between men and women equates to communication of people in different cultures. Quite clearly this comparison questionable as the lives of men and women in modern societies are highly interlinked and similar and it is by no means comparable to communication between people who have grown up in different continents and/or cultures.

In her monographs Deborah Tannen tells women how to act, thus sending the alarming message that women should change *their* behavior to fit the conversational style to that of men. The approach Tannen and many others take here is explained very clearly by Cameron (1996: 38) who points out that "[t]his genre is based not on the idea that women are *deficient* (as Lakoff suggests) compared to men, but on the idea that they are *different*, and that this causes misunderstanding." It is arguable though, that although this model of difference seems less sexist than the deficient model, as it does not obviously put women in an inferior position, it is discriminating towards women as they are being told to adapt to the verbal behavior of men: "The conclusion that people should learn to express themselves more directly has a ring of truth to it – especially for Americans." (Tannen 1995: 95) Even though the generalizing term 'people' instead of women, we can be sure that it is mainly directed at women since they are the prime target for Tannen's books. Furthermore, quotes like "[y]ou may seek to change yourself" (Tannen 1995: 308) suggest that change both in ways of thinking as well as in verbal expression need to take place for a better communication across the sexes.

In addition to that, Talbot (2010: 108) argues that Tannen fails to address and challenge the power relations, which is the actual issue behind these differences, thereby erasing the power differential. Disregarding this also means disregarding the consequences these 'accepted' differences generate.[17] Nevertheless, Talbot (2010: 108) asserts that this was

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[16] *Cosmopolitan* "How to make a man commit"
[17] One of the consequences of accepting messages such as those offered by Gray is that it makes real therapeutic work needed for repairing a relationship difficult. Zimmerman *et al.* (2001: 67 quoted in Signorella & Cooper

not Tannen's intention but it is worth mentioning at this point that self-help books, which tend to focus on such differences and emphasize these in order to give advice, are popular amongst couples wanting to improve their relationships[18] and consequently these books sell well and make profit. (Doss *et al*. 2009 quoted in Signorella & Cooper 2011: 372) The worrying aspects behind so-called 'self-help literature' is that advice presented in these books is not only accepted and taken for granted, but also they reinforce stereotypes and impact the ways in which readers perceive gender and relationships.

Shockingly selective representation of information and dubious interpretations are not confined to mass literature for lay people. Many scientific studies report finding differences between male and female behavior even if their results show otherwise. Shaywitz *et al*. (1995 quoted in Bing & Bergvall 1996: 13) for example, reported findings that described a homogenous group of women, claiming that in their study they all processed language bilaterally. Nonetheless, 42 percent of the women in their study (eight out of nineteen) showed signs of 'male' lateralization and were completely ignored in the publication of the study. (Bing and Bergvall 1996: 13) This example demonstrates that even in scientific literature differences are overgeneralized and similarities are omitted.

Research findings like these which focus on gender differences are the perfect source for self-help literature. The subject of 'correct speaking' is featured heavily in these books, an issue for which Cameron coins the term 'verbal hygiene' (Cameron 1996: 36). This aspect of 'prescriptivism' entails, according to Cameron, "self-improvement activities such as elocution and accent reduction, Neurolinguistic Programming, assertiveness training and communication skills training" (Cameron 1996: 36). These activities are not very different from those in the past where women received elocution lessons to acquire a certain accent that was a marker for a higher social class. The 'revival' of such activities has become more and more important over the past years, the reason being more presence of public figures who receive help in formulating their speeches but also the essential need for correct articulation and competent communication in the workplace. Much of these self-help programs on improving communication are directed at women, suggesting that it is *them* who need to adapt to the 'male' norm and adjust their means of communication to that of men. Cameron (1996: 37) warningly claims that these practices are "of little use and at worst quite oppressive".

2011: 372) explain that therapists describe it as difficult to really help a couple when such 'truths' as those offered by Gray become accepted as they are not in line with relationship research.

[18] Alone John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are From Venus* was used by 23% of the couples in Doss *et al*.'s (2009 quoted in Signorella & Cooper 2011: 372) study to improve their relationship.

9.5.1.   A matter of asking the right questions

 "The answers have changed, but the questions have not. Researchers and the media remain fascinated with any new way to pose the question: How are men and women different?" (Bing and Bergvall 1996: 15) Questions as those coincide with a problem that Butler (1999: 30) addresses, namely that "one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within that binary pair". Such a restricted view caters to uphold stereotypes and needs to be changed. The subject of asking the right questions in regards to research in the field of gender linguistics is one worth awarding some attention to, as research questions are an influential aspect of the outcome of a study. Many studies have produced findings that are contradictory to the stereotypical ones, as the previous subchapter has shown. Moreover, even if so-called differences have been observed in male a female (speech) behavior, the real question behind them is what they imply and how important they really are. Simply focusing on differences and their established implications plays an active role in cultivating gender stereotypes which are, as we have seen, largely at the cost of women. Bing and Bergvall make a very compelling argument in regards to this issue:

> By refusing to allow oversimplification and by asking new questions, we can abandon the tired and repressive old dichotomy, 'How do women and men speak differently?', remembering that every time we seek and find differences, we also strengthen gender polarizations. (Bing and Bergvall 1996: 24)

It is therefore immensely important to move away from questions such as the one above and focus on an aspect that entails the knowledge of gender disparity. Knowing that gender roles are social constructs, Bing and Bergvall (1996: 4) propose that research questions should be formulated in ways saying 'How are men and women taught to speak differently?' This entails the view that differences between the speech of men and women are not biologically reasoned but are much rather results of social construction.

9.6.   Gender acquisition

Learning a language is a complex process that involves the mastering of phonology, grammar and lexicon as well as syntax. However, being knowledgeable in these aspects does not suffice in terms of having a comprehensive understanding of a language. Linguistic competence is of additional great importance which entails the "knowledge of cultural norms of spoken interaction." (Coates 1993: 143) Many researchers agree on the fact that these cultural norms are crucial in becoming a functioning member of society and communicating

in an understandable manner. Ochs and Schieffelin (1983 quoted in Coates 1993: 143) conducted studies based on the belief that learning how to speak is synonymous of learning to become a part of a specific culture. It seems as though 'rules' within a culture vary from one to another, and what may be acceptable in one culture is unacceptable in another. It does not seem, however, that that men and women comport identically in any culture and that much rather, gender roles are distinguished. For that reason, it is plausible that children growing up in these cultures acquire speech patterns and linguistic competences that are based on these specific cultural norms. Being a boy or a girl is therefore a cultural role assigned to each individual and that carries expectations of comportment and behavior. Coates (1993: 143) describes this as "a two-way process" and explains it as follows:

> in becoming linguistically competent, the child learns to be a fully fledged male or female member of the speech community; conversely, when children adopt linguistic behavior considered appropriate to their gender they perpetuate the social order which creates gender distinctions. (Coates 1993: 144)

Thus, children learn gender-appropriate (linguistic) behavior and equally maintain the social structure of a society by applying these norms. Passing them down from generation to generation is what keeps social patterns intact. James (1996: 155) corroborates this view and claims that

> [b]oth children and adults are generally very aware of 'gender-appropriate' behavior, and will try to conform in their behavior to how they see other members of their own group behaving. […] These language patterns become part of the social construction of gender, and in this way, existing gender differences become perpetuated and even exaggerated." (James 1996: 115)

This exaggeration of gender differences is arguably the root and cause for perceived gender differences and for the existence of gender stereotypes. Hence passing down expected gendered behavior has far-reaching consequences and plays a crucial role as to how societies are formed and to the social positioning of men and women respectively.

9.6.1. Gender salience in children

Gender display of children has been the subject of various studies and an issue of great importance in understanding gender stereotypes. Pitch is an important aspect of studying gender differences and one common stereotype in regards to it is that men have low and loud voices, which are frequently used in voice-overs of movies. Women on the other hand are supposed to have high-pitched voices, soft and quieter. Work on pitch has proven to be a powerful tool in identifying the salience of gender in children due to the fact that children's

vocal tracts merely depend on the size of the child, not on gender. This means that boys and girls of the same age and size have same-sized vocal tracts and therefore speak in the same pitch range (speaking of an age before puberty). However, quite interestingly studies by Lieberman (1967 quoted in Coates 1993: 146) and Sachs, Lieberman and Erikson (1973 quoted in Talbot 2010: 30) show that babies and children alter their voices depending on the sex of the addressee. In the study, listeners recognized speakers' sex and guessed it correctly 81 per cent of the time. This is by far a greater number than chance level and they concluded that one reason for this outcome was that children adjusted their voice quality to make it sound more masculine (i.e. lower) or feminine (i.e. higher), depending on what their sex was. This would mean that, despite the fact that that boys' and girls' vocal tracts are very similar in size and should therefore not have different voice qualities, differences in voice qualities are found and suggest that "male and female voice differences are being learned" (Talbot 2010: 31). Similarly, in a study by Naslund (1993 quoted in Strand 1999: 88) on the production of /s/ amongst males and females, findings were in line with previous results and showed that by the age of eight, most boys and girls produced the fricative in a very similar style to adult production, respective of their gender. Strand (1999: 88) concludes that this "indicates that children acquire salient gender-linked linguistic traits very early in the process of language acquisition".

These differences are not limited to voice quality and linguistic traits but are manifested in behavioral attitudes as well. In a study by Penelope Eckert (2006 quoted in Talbot 2010: 207) preadolescents were examined in California, focusing on their entry into the 'heterosexual marketplace'. This process involved boys and girls in different ways, "since within the heterosexual social order the resources available to them differ." (Talbot 2010: 207) According to the study, boys are not expected to change their behavior drastically when becoming older. Girls on the other hand are expected to modify their carefree nature of running around on the playground and being active to becoming observers of their male counterparts. This process is regarded essential in acquisition if femininity and is accompanied by preoccupations of "stylization of the body and a flamboyant linguistic style." (Talbot 2010: 207)

9.6.2. The role of parents and schools in the process of gender acquisition

A stereotypically male speech characteristic is dominance is very much related to context, especially to the context of family. Erickson (1990 quoted in Coates 1993: 153) studied family conversation in an Italian-American family at the dinner table and found that male

dominance was established by the whole family collaboratively. In addition to that, politeness is yet another communicative competence which is learned and which is not observed to the same extent in men and women. Gleason (1980 quoted in Coates 1993: 155) studied the way mothers and fathers taught their children forms of politeness and found that despite treating boys and girls equally, mothers used more polite forms than fathers. This implicitly signaled children that it is more typical of adult females to use polite forms. Moreover, Coates (1993: 155) suggests that adult treatment of children is heavily dependent on the context of interaction and this relates back to the issue of asserting the importance of other variables. Taking these findings and isolating them from their context and implications may do nothing but foster stereotypes and stereotypical behavior. It is essential to keep in mind that gender is merely one variable of many in understanding and interpreting discourse, and that neglecting other variables would be like neglecting other ingredients in a recipe - the result would simply not be the same.

Penelope Eckert (2005: 382) asserts that the institution school plays an essential role in determining and solidifying gender stereotypes from an early stage in life. Separations of tasks such as bake sales, cheerleading and organizing dances are 'behind-the-scenes' jobs rewarded to girls whereas men tend to occupy managerial positions such as class-president, student council, etc. In American high schools heterosexuality in fostered and taken as the norm by events such a declaring "cutest couple" or king and queen at prom. In regards to linguistic differences between boys and girls she agrees with the view that they reflect social order, a heterosexual order to be exact, which simultaneously puts "pressure on boys to be aggressively masculine" (Eckert 2009: 386).

Finally, Coates (1993: 166) sums up a variety of factors that lead to the acquisition of gender. These include amongst others: commenting on linguistic behavior (e.g. swearing, politeness, etc.); provision of linguistic models by adults used by children as identification; different verbal treatment of boys and girls (adults are more likely to interrupt girls than boys); responding differently to the same linguistic strategy depending on whether it was used by a boy or a girl (e.g. more acceptable for boys to talk assertively than girls); children's participation in stereotypical behavior appropriate to gender-roles, maintaining differences in female and male speech styles.

9.7. The self-fulfilling prophecy and the concept of Autostereotype[19]

Acquiring language is an immense part of socialization and in order to fit in and be accepted children and adolescents adopt culturally-approved gender-roles by applying the 'correct'[20] language features. One major topic of discussion is whether stereotypes are merely a reflection of social reality or if said reality has only been established through stereotypes. To be more topic specific, the question of "whether the choices made by speaking subjects in their performances of identity reproduce or challenge the existing social order" (Cameron 2009: 13) continues to be relevant. Answering this however is not easy as both processes are closely intertwined. Nevertheless, what can be said is that categories per se influence social perception and lead to categorical thinking. Rüdiger Hort (2007: 26) argues that when perceiving someone from a specific social group it is plausible that we automatically take in certain information and ascribe substantial value to that information which complies with our preconceived image of someone.

Complying with other people's expectations is a phenomenon manifested in theories such as *normative influence* (Deutsch and Gerard 1955 quoted in Eagly 1987: 14) and *self-fulfilling prophecy* (Merton 1948 quoted in Eagly 1987: 14). These claim that the behavior of children and adults is to some extent a product of communal expectations in regards to both verbal and non-verbal behavior. If a tourist for example has the preconceived idea that people in the south of Europe are lazy and said tourist travels to Spain, (s)he will perceive the long siesta as a verification of his idea and thus the stereotype of 'lazy Southerners' will have become firmly established. Hort (2007: 27) points out that the desire to confirm a mental image results in a self-fulfilling prophecy, since facts and clues that lead to confirmation are subconsciously extracted whilst anything contradicting this view is disregarded.

Rüdiger Hort (2007: 18) furthermore draws attention to the concept of *Autostereotypen* which are images we have of ourselves. These images are then compared to those people who bare the same nationality as us or the same age, occupation and to evaluate our own form of existence.

> Diese Form der sozialen Orientierung wird durch das Bedürfnis der Anerkennung und Akzeptanz durch andere und durch die Bestätigung des richtigen Handelns ermöglicht. Ähnlichkeiten bezüglich des Habitus, der Ästhetik und des Geschmacks, des Austretens oder der Sprache einzelner Gruppierungen (z.B. Jargon) können mitunter anhand dieses sozialpsychologisch sehr relevanten Aspekts der Konformität erklärt werden. (Hort 2007: 18)

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[19] C.f. Rüdiger Hort (2007: 18)

[20] 'Correct' in the sense of in line with the linguistic behavior expected from their gender role.

What Hort describes here is the phenomenon and desire to be accepted by members within a society which ultimately calls for conformity. Individuals' desire for acceptance and confirmation of identity is fulfilled when they have a lot in common with others. Eagly (1987: 18) makes a valid point by saying that "[t]he idea that people may apply stereotypic expectations to themselves suggests that people's own attitudes and values have the stamp of societal gender roles on them." To what extent expectations about gender-roles affect individuals' behavior was tested in various studies.

Synder, Tanke and Berscheid (1977 quoted in Aries 1996: 184) told male participants in their study that they would be interacting with both attractive and unattractive women, and this knowledge (i.e. knowing if their partner was attractive or not) influenced the mode of interaction. The self-fulfilling prophecies were manifested in the way that different women received different treatment, depending on stereotypes held by the perceiver. The roles were reversed in a study by Zanna and Pack (1975 quoted in Aries 1996: 184) where a group of women was told that they would meet an attractive male partner. As a result, women acted in ways that, as they believed, corresponded to their partner's stereotypical, ideal woman, thus proving that gender-role stereotypes have a powerful force in guiding people's behavior.

However, to assume that we are driven completely by expectations would be erroneous since expected behavior is not always fulfilled and reactions or "another person's expectancy-confirming behavior" (Eagly 1987: 14) are in fact diverse. The relationship between expectancy and behavior is contingent on various conditions. Eagly (1987: 14) points out that humans are clearly not robotic-like creatures that behave consistently and within the norms at all times, that there are in fact many occurrences in which behavior varies from that of the norm. Nonetheless, Eagly (1987: 15) claims that expectancy-conforming behavior is most common when expectancies are shared broadly by a society because they are easily observable by everybody.

10. Perception

Expectations about people's behavior can be found within each individual; we experience human interaction on a regular basis and from past experiences we have formed expectations about gender-appropriate behavior. These expectations are not limited to speech sounds and voices; they are manifested for numerous aspects of gender, including comportment, posture, gesture, clothing, etc. Our expectations influence our perception and any deviance from these will strike us as abnormal and even disturbing.

> Although some of the assumptions made [within] the perceptual system are inborn, others are learned through experience … [sic!] Consequently, because our knowledge of the world guides what we see and hear, stereotypes have a great deal of potential to influence perception. (von Hippel et al. 1995: 181 quoted in Strand 1999: 93)

It is exactly these learned assumptions generated through experience that are of great interest in the light of this thesis. It is established that each individual bears stereotypical thoughts within them, especially in regards to gender issues. Consequently, it needs to be brought to attention how intransigent stereotypes affect our perception of reality.

Stereotypes are formed in a process that is initiated through perceivers' constructed impressions of (groups of) people based on various aspects which Strand (1999: 93) sums up "as physical cues about gender and race, observable behavior, and judgments of competence and sociability." This process is usually an automatic one which serves as a basis for inferring personality traits. The cognitive approach suggests that person perception as well as impression formation is rather overwhelming as it entails taking in a lot of information at once and thus only specific information is selected and organized into categories by perceivers. These basic impressions tend to remain valid for a long time and are the foundation of stereotypes. Once these stereotypes are established, perception is always guided into a specific direction.

Even more so, a study by Smith (1979 quoted in Aries: 1996: 167) found that listeners are not only influenced by stereotypes, but might actively engage in confirming their expectations about individuals. It is important to note that perceptions are often exaggerated and oversimplified, hence often induce faulty views of reality. Geis (1993: 12 quoted in Strand 1999: 95) adds an essential point when explaining that stereotypes

> enhance perceptions, interpretations, and memories that are consistent with stereotypical attributes and obscure, diffuse, or cause us to disregard or forget information that is inconsistent with them…. [sic!] Thus, even when women and men behave alike, we see them as different.

What Geis suggests here is that when listeners hear things that are not conform to their expectations, they may add information or purposely overhear or reevaluate certain features for it to be in line with the listener's expectations. All this leads to believe that stereotypes are a major driving force in our perception, and that stereotypes about men and women in our society simultaneously shape our perception of them. This explains why women in leading positions are frequently perceived as 'bitchy' and 'cold' when adopting 'male' speaking

patterns. Talking in a way that does not conform with what we believe to be true about a certain gender is evaluated negatively.[21]

To test whether gender stereotypes really do influence our perception, various studies have been designed and the findings are remarkable. A study by Newcombe and Arnkoff (1979: 1301) involved participants listening to tape recordings of both female and male speakers using tag questions and qualifiers identically. Although test-takers' perception was quite different, most perceived women using these linguistic devices more frequently. In another study by Cutler and Scott (1990: 253) recorded dialogues on mixed-sex conversations were rated and despite male and female contribution being equal in these conversations, women were perceived as being more talkative. In regards to this, Romaine (1999: 161) makes a valuable point by claiming that it may merely seem "that women talk more because men expect women to be silent." She argues that the positive association of women falling silent is rooted as far back as fairy tales in which the "female virtue results in virtuous characters speaking less than the villainous ones. The more she speaks, the more likely she is up to no good." (Romaine 1999: 165) Once again, if the stereotype engrained is that women are more reserved and quiet, then their talk will be perceived in disagreement to the expectations.

What has become evident with these studies is that gender stereotypes are palpable in the process of speaker perception. Even when there are no differences to note in the way women and men articulate themselves, listeners tend to hear and perceive differences anyway. This leads to the assumption that a speaker's sex is an influential category in perceiving the world. Knowing the sex of the interlocutor triggers deeply rooted gender stereotypes which in-turn influence evaluation of what is perceived. To condemn this completely, however, would be wrong since this is done for a reason: incoming information is often overbearing and complex and calls for the need to be categorized, simplified and organized, all of which is done by applying stereotypic structures. Using stereotypes is therefore a helpful way of encoding new information and if what is perceived does not conform to our expectations, it is likely that we make up for this by adjusting out perception and reinterpreting features to fit our expectations. Aries (1996: 188) furthermore points out, that stereotypes are indeed important in the evaluation of a speaker, but they should not be taken as the sole determinant. Gender stereotypes are context dependent and in moments where gender is not as salient, gender stereotypes will be of lesser importance.

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[21] This is demonstrated in a study by Lawrence, Stucky and Hopper (1990 quoted in Aries 1996: 173) which found that men using 'female' speech suffered no form of discrimination, whilst women adopting 'male' speech forms were evaluated negatively.

Conclusion

The research presented in this chapter of the thesis demonstrates that our perceptions do not always reflect reality correctly as we often perceive things in accordance to stereotypes. Even if no gender differences can be noticed, we create features that we hear and take our evaluations more seriously than what is actually heard. A preeminent role in person perception is played by gender stereotypes, the extent to which remains rather unknown. Despite disproving gender stereotypes and refuting claims, stereotypes remain persistent. These shared beliefs are context dependent and fulfill important functions that are by no means random, and are therefore not easy to discard. Nevertheless, a word of warning must be spoken in regards to the harmful nature of stereotypes: many biases are at the cost of women, disfavoring them when compared to men. 'Female' speech styles are evaluated negatively, especially when used by women. Men, on the other hand, can use the same speech styles and will tend to be evaluated less negatively than women employing those same speech styles. Finally, the prescriptive nature of stereotypes must be adhered to anew: manifested ideas about how men and women *should* behave in a society have a powerful impact on behavior, which, when deviated from, usually results in worse consequences for women than for men.

Many of the studies presented in this chapter stem from the 1970s-1990s and focus on rather small-scale evaluations of spoken interaction, but it would be interesting to test whether recent studies would elicit similar results. One might expect that gender equality has become a greater issue and that (some) stereotypes may have disappeared. In order to test this, Part 5 of this thesis will examine this phenomenon using a questionnaire. However, since the late 20th century numerous developments have changed the means of communication. The Internet has become more accessible and has simultaneously facilitated communication as well as altered it. Given that times have changed and computer-mediated language comprises a great deal of teenagers' language and that of young adults, extracts used in the questionnaire for this thesis have been derived from teenage chat rooms.[22] To what extent computer-mediated conversation bears gender-stereotypic behavior and how this type of communication differs from face-to-face communication will be the focus of the next chapter.

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[22] See part 5 "Empirical Study"

PART 4 - Internet Discourse

11. Online Communication

Chat has been available on the Internet since the late 1980s and became increasingly popular over the years with a peak in the 1990s. Regardless of being a relatively 'old' medium nowadays, Internet chat remains a vital means of communication. Herring (2005: 205) explains that "[c]omputer-mediated communication (CMC) comprises a variety of interactive socio-technical model including e-mail, discussion lists and newsgroups, chat, […] and IM (Instant Messaging)." The importance of chat rooms for teen communication is shown in the study of Pew Internet and American life Project (2007 quoted in Kapidzic & Herring 2011: 39). In their study, Pew Internet and American life Project found that of roughly 93% of American teenagers using the Internet, 20% continue to visit chat sites even though social network sites such as Facebook and other instant messaging sites are becoming more and more popular. This type of communication is also found in online gaming such as *World of Warcraft*, which is popular among many teenagers. (Kapidzic & Herring 2011: 39)

Subrahmanyam, Smahel and Greenfield (2006: 396) note a decisive characteristic of the virtual space of the Internet: "they [adolescents] are creating and, more to the point, co-creating their Internet environment through processes of social interaction." Quite clearly it would be wrong to assume that users of chatrooms are subject to external rules in a completely alien environment. Teenagers in chatrooms contribute greatly to the environment and the atmosphere of online communication. To what extent this is different from 'real' or face-to-face communication and how, if at all, gender stereotypes become visible in this process will be analyzed in the next subchapter.

The Internet grants space for the discussion of embarrassing topics and the exploration and establishment of new relationships such as friendship and dating. It therefore needs to be considered an "important socialization agent for adolescents." Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004: 663) Moreover, teenagers increasingly prefer to communicate via text rather than speech, thus making the Internet an important medium of communication. Especially teenagers regarded as "socially awkward" prefer using the Internet as they feel more comfortable and may gain more self-esteem through online communication. Unfortunately a negative consequence of this is that teenagers are becoming less empathetic for others as empathy tends to get lost when relying mainly of technological interaction. (Uhls *et al*. 2011: 167)

One of the most interesting aspects about the Internet was the possibility of being anonymous. In theory this means that gender, age, ethnicity, origin and other variables are obsolete and trivial in regards to communication. Thus, the notion of equality emerged, allowing women and men to express their opinions and thoughts completely freely, without hesitations or worries about breaking traditions that are held in normal mixed-sex face-to-face conversations. However, at a closer look, this assumption becomes very questionable and, as Eisenchlas (2012: 336) comments, "a democratizing technology cannot in itself guarantee social equality, nor erase social, political, and cultural factors that impact on its adoption and use." In accordance to this, Herring (2005: 202) explains that

> [t]he Internet is said to be inherently democratic, leveling tradition distinctions of social status, and creating opportunities for less powerful individuals and groups to participate on a par with members of more powerful groups. Specifically, the Internet has been claimed to lead to greater gender equality, with women, as the socially, politically, and economically less powerful gender, especially likely to reap its benefits.

With regards to gender, online-communication lacked the possibility of demonstrating physical and auditory cues and thus hindered the display gender. A huge difference to face-to-face conversations must have therefore been that traditional patterns of speech such as male dominance and female inferiority were eliminated and an equal interaction was enabled. Whether this is in fact the case will be examined in the next subchapter.

11.1. Gendered interaction in CMC

Roughly thirty years have passed since the Internet has first been introduced and it is not possible to evaluate if this seemingly anonymous and equal platform enabled the expected kind of communication. Before answering this, it needs to be pointed out that

> [e]xtrapolating from the properties of a technology to its social paradigm known as "technological determinism" (Markus 1994) – tends to overlook the fact that the development and uses of any technology are themselves embedded in a social context, and are shaped by that context (Kling et al. 2001). (Herring 2005: 202-3)

The findings of the first studies in the 1990s concerned with this issue raised awareness to the problematic claim concerning a so-called gender-free and neutral space known as the Internet. Eisenchlas (2012: 336) in fact asserts that stereotypical gendered behavior is reinforced on-line. The Internet and on-line communication did not appear without any connotations and pre-conceived ideas about communication. It is therefore not surprising that sooner or later,

CMC adapted traits and cultural patterns of face-to-face communication and gender inequality.

Studies on CMC started to receive attention in the early 1990s; Selfe and Meyer (1991 quoted in Herring 2005: 206) for example focused on power dynamics on the Internet and found that even in seemingly anonymous online interaction, male participants dominated conversations. In accordance to these findings, other researchers a few years later noted that men were also more aggressive in online discussions (Herring 1992, 1993, Ebben 1994, Sutton 1994 quoted in Herring 2005: 206). Herring (1993 in Herring 2005: 206) also found that "women were more likely than men to react aversively to aggression in on-line interaction, including falling silent and dropping out of listserv groups." Another characteristic found of female users in CMC was the use of more hedges (Herring 1992, 1993, 1994 in Kapidzic and Herring 2011: 39) and a more empathic and supportive attitude towards other users (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Tynes 2004: 658). Men, on the other hand, showed more signs of violations of politeness norms, strong assertions and were generally not hesitant to demonstrate conflicting views to those of their interlocutors. In addition to this, gender differences were found on both discourse-pragmatic and stylistic levels: boys tended to use more assertive and resolute language as opposed to girls who were found to be more passive and cooperative. Findings also show that girls were often more friendly whereas boys used language that had a sexual tone and that was flirtatious. (Kapidzic & Herring 2011: 51) Even in more recent studies gender differences were recorded such as the one by Iosub *et al.* (2014: 1) where female contributors show more signs of emotional connection and social affiliation than their male counterparts. Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004: 663) point out that "categories of identity are just as salient online as off and that teens got to great lengths to overcome the "facelessness" and "placelessness" of the medium to present themselves and learn about the critical categories of identity of others."

Some research conducted on IRC and the way gender is performed suggests that performance of gender is difficult to detect as performances show variation. Rodino (1997 quoted in Eisenchlas 2012: 336) for example, found several different and sometimes contradicting forms of performing gender. She therefore concludes that thinking in binary categories for the performance of gender is faulty, as this would mean that gender is already an identity before it is performed, rather than an active construction and a product of interaction. While this is a valid claim and that links into Butler's concept of gender performativity, it must be noted that the observed behavior are mere generalizations and tendencies. Some researchers document multiple parallels between the gender-specific

linguistic features characteristic of CMC and those recorded about face-to-face communication, including features such as "verbosity, assertiveness, use of profanity, politeness (and rudeness), typed representations of smiling and laughter, and degree of interactive engagement" (Herring 2005: 207). Some of these features are regarded as being more typical of female behavior, others of male, but it is important to stress that these are mere propensities and by no means an intention to define male and female speech/CMC behavior.

In general, many findings on CMC show that "[g]ender differences in on-line communication tend to disfavor women." (Herring 2005: 209) Similar to face-to-face communication, women are less likely to control the topic or to be heard. With all this in mind, the concept of gender equality in online interaction becomes seriously questionable and raises the question of why gender disparity exists in an anonymous medium in which gender should theoretically be of no issue.

11.1.1.   How anonymous are chatrooms and CMC really?

This question can only be answered by clarifying the term or idea of "anonymity". In truth, "anonymity was somewhat difficult to achieve in the early days if the Internet, requiring the use of anonymizing service or the ability to forge e-mail addresses." (Herring 2005: 206) Clearly this was no job of lay people, which made it difficult to be anonymous. Another issue behind anonymity is that "[i]n practice [...] IRC users give off gender cues frequently (an average of once every three to four lines of text [...])" (Herring 2005: 212) This suggests that even if anonymity were a goal to reach in IRC, it is hardly possible to do so, merely because of the (linguistic) choices participants have to make when communicating. Moreover this means that the longer a user communicates, the more information they will reveal about their gender, hence, gender asymmetry continues to persist "despite the greater anonymity and relative absence of externally imposed power hierarchies in synchronous CMC." (Herring 2005: 212)

Nevertheless, the real issue behind anonymity is that it is not really desirable to Internet users in CMC. Although many chat sites do not require users to state their real names, age or gender, many users specifically choose to do so. Especially the indication of gender is only a simple click and clears positions in chat rooms. [23] Users tend to be contacted by mostly male users if they indicate being female and vice versa. Certainly some users choose to stay anonymous and not give away any clue as to what their real name is or what gender they are

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[23] When entering a chat room, users have the possibility of selecting a gender and then proceed to creating a nickname to enter the room.

by using a gender-neutral nickname. Nevertheless, what makes the matter of anonymity more complex is that "gender is often visible on the Internet on the basis of features of a participant's discourse style – features which the individual may not be consciously aware of or able to change easily." (Herring 2005: 206) Certain aspects of speech are regarded as typically male or typically female and are thus indicators of the 'speaker's' sex. When using these features, users unconsciously emit information about their gender "and this information does not depend in any crucial way on visual or auditory channels of communication; text alone is sufficient." (Herring 2005: 207)

Interestingly Herring (1996 quoted in Herring 2005: 208) notes that trying to pass as the other gender is not easy due to the fact that individuals tend to act inappropriately and expose themselves through appreciative and contentious messages. This not only shows that there tend to be gender differences in the way users express themselves but it also suggests that stereotypes about online gender styles exist and are present in many, if not most, people's awareness and way of thinking.

In conclusion to this subchapter a word of warning must be spoken. These identified gender differences are generalizations that provide an overview of inclinations found in online communication and must therefore be handled with caution. As Barton & Lee (2013: 69) correctly point out, these features "provide a snapshot of how identities are represented through the structure of a message" and it does not suffice to take them as fixed language patterns. Similar to spoken interaction and the findings recorded in that area, Internet discourse is just as prone to being stereotyped and it is therefore crucial to examine *why* such language features exist. This issue will be addressed in more detail in the subchapter "CMC vs. face-to-face interaction".

11.1.2. Nicknames and the 'asl' code as identity markers

In addition to linguistic features being gender identity markers, nicknames are a vital aspect in communicating gender on the Internet. Van Doorn, Wyatt and Van Zoonen (2008: 364) note that "[n]icknames play a crucial part in performing an identity in both channels, as they can be used to display information that contributes to the performance of one's age, sex, location, and body type (amongst others)." Even though nicknames are free to be chosen by users and thus provide the opportunity to remain 'neutral', most users decide to display their sex with the help of a specific sex-binary nickname (e.g. Dollface29). Correspondingly, Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004: 663) found that a majority of the users in their study on the construction of identity in teen chat rooms chose to express their gender via their

nickname. Moreover, Van Doorn, Wyatt and Van Zoonen (2008: 364) found that those who decided to use sex-neutral nicknames in IRC (Internet Relay Chat) were ignored and it was those who were clearly identifiable as 'boys' or 'girls' who received the most attention. This leads Van Doorn, Wyatt and Van Zoonen (2008: 364) to conclude that nicknames "are subjected to the logic of a binary gender system that only allows for either a male or female subject position."

Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004: 659) found very similar results in their study on 'constructing sexuality and identity in an online ten chat room'. They claim that nicknames are the "primary vehicle through which teen participants present their identity to others in the chat room – a kind of substitute for the face and body." (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Tynes 2004: 659) With this, they also offer an explanation for teenage sex-display in chat rooms. Due to the lack of other features that are apparent in face-to-face interaction, other measures are taken to exhibit information about the 'speaker's' sex, which seems crucial to most teenagers that are active in chat rooms. Besides displaying the users' sex, nicknames often make use of (strong) gender stereotypes, sometimes in combination with sexual connotations (e.g. Hotgrl56Hot) which, according to Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004: 659), "seem to compensate for the absence of physical identity in dealing with important adolescent concerns."

Interestingly enough, the need or desire to expose characteristics online to create identity, is not limited to IRC. On a different platform, namely Flickr[24], real names are not required but yet many users willingly assign themselves screen names that are similar to (part of) their real name. (Barton and Lee 2013: 69) This ties in with the self-categorization theory (Turner *et al*. 1987 quoted in Eisenchlas 2012: 336) which "proposes that people internalize group prototypes and activate them when a particular category becomes germane to the interaction." Hence, when the issue of gender arises in conversation, people use gendered language and consistently act in ways 'appropriate' to their gender.

Another means of creating identity in the anonymous realm that is the Internet is the question concerning 'asl'. This abbreviation stands for age/sex/location and is frequently used in chat rooms to generate information about other users by merely asking *Hey, what's your asl?* As Herring (1998 quoted in Herring 2005: 210) states, "[u]sers frequently ask other participants about their biological sex, along with their age and location (abbreviation "asl"). It seems that this information is vital to most users, as the interest in this question can be observed in numerous chat rooms. Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004: 660) claim

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[24] An image and video hosting website used to share images and photos with an online community.

that "age and sex are the primary categories to which people are assigned." These variables are usually easily identifiable in face-to-face interaction but this is clearly not the case in online communication. Hence these aspects need to be made explicit on the Internet due to its ambiguous nature and the desire to inquire this information from fellow chat room participants. Other than satisfying the curiosity of users, the 'asl' code serves a further function, namely that of a conversation opener; the acquired information can then serve as a tool for choosing a chat partner. (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Tynes 2004: 660)

11.2. CMC vs. face-to-face interaction

The empirical part of this thesis is based on Internet Relay Chat (IRC) which is a synchronous form of communication and therefore the chosen area of CMC. One characteristic of synchronous CMC in chat rooms is that there is "[l]ittle variation […] possible in message length in most chat modes, given constraints on buffer size and typing time in real-time interaction." (Herring 2005: 211) Most messages are therefore very short and only consist of four to twelve words, depending on the number of participants. Messages tend to be shorter in group conversations than in dyads. (Herring 2005: 211) As opposed to emails, blog entries or forum discussions, chatroom conversations happen in real time with very little delay, users respond immediately and simultaneously to each other's messages. However, equating IRC to spoken interaction solely on this basis would be incorrect. As Greenfield and Subrahmanyam (2003: 715) assert, "chat is considerably less synchronous than spoken discourse, because one must compose a message in writing before sending it". Another deviation from face-to-face conversations is the turn-taking rules applied to chatroom conversations. Online we encounter multiple conversations occurring simultaneously with overlaps, group conversations, small group conversations and dyads. Multiple conversational threads are usually not be found in face-to-face communication and a further difference noted by Greenfield and Subrahmanyam (2003: 717) is that IRC lacks visual cues such as gaze between two people which is present in face-to-face communication. Moreover, through engagement in public chatroom sites, users are confronted with a much larger network than they would be in face-to-face communication. This enables communication with people from different areas and thus access is granted to a wider and larger scope of individuals. (Greenfield & Yan 2006: 392)

Despite all these differences, face-to-face and online communication bare plentiful similarities. Researchers such as Kapidzic and Herring stress the resemblance of online communication with face-to-face communication and attempt to explain why linguistic

differences can be found in online communication. To come back to the issue raised in the chapter "Gendered interaction in CMC", Kapidzic and Herring (2011: 40) suggest that "Internet users transfer their offline communication patterns into asynchronous computer-mediated messages." This assertion is also brought forward by Greenfield and Subrahmanyam (2003: 721) who concluded from their study on online discourse in a teen chatroom that "[m]any strategies in chat are the same as those used in ordinary face-to-face communication. In some cases, these strategies are adapted directly from face-to-face oral conversation into this new written environment". This claim is also asserted in a later study which found that strategies of male and female users varied by being more or less active in seeking a partner (respectively). The conclusion drawn from this is that the behavior may reflect social norms which expect girls to be less direct than boys in the expression of their sexuality (Subrahmanyam, Smahel & Greenfield 2006: 404). Van Doorn, Wyatt and Van Zoonen (2008: 359) seem to agree with this view and claim that "[c]onventional gender norms are […] transported online through the classification schemes people rely on both off- and online." Clearly there are numerous exceptions to these examples but it is undeniable that there is a positive correlation between specific online behavior and variables such as gender and age. (Herring 2005: 207)

Concluding these findings it comes to show that gender neutrality and anonymity is hardly attainable on the Internet, even if this is tried. Herring (2005: 212) claims that it is an immense effort to try and act as someone else on the Internet, which ultimately leads most participants to act the way they do in 'real life', "regardless of the name or character description they choose." In a study few years prior to that, Herring (1998 quoted in Herring 2005: 212) found that "89 per cent of all gendered behavior in six IRC [Internet Relay Chat] channels indexed maleness and femaleness in traditional, even stereotyped ways". Even with the theoretical possibility of neutrality and anonymity, a large percentage of participants in chat rooms display gender images similar to those observed outside of the virtual world. Van Doorn, Wyatt and Van Zoonen (2008: 371) explain this phenomenon in the following way:

> The internet, or in this case IRC, is indeed not an anonymous "thing," but is made up of people who bring their everyday experiences to a realm where their actions together constitute a shared, temporal reality. It is important to keep in mind, then, that this "reality" consists of discourses that originate from an embodied understanding of how our world works and who/what/how we can be to make our lives as livable as possible.

Quite obviously many researchers seem to agree that patterns from spoken discourse are transported to the virtual world simply because their reality is reconstructed in that medium.

An interesting question however remains, namely that of *why* this is done. There seem to be some benefits and advantages of applying known and traditional patterns in CMC. A possible explanation for this is offered by (O'Brien 1999 quoted in Herring 2005: 219) that who claims that "[p]ositive motivations for signaling (and even exaggerating) gender difference include gender pride, the social approval accorded to individuals for behaving in gender-appropriate ways, and the pleasure that can be derived from flirting". Quite commonly this behavior fosters gender stereotypes and preconceived ideas about how men and women should communicate. Moreover, negative motivations for indicating gender differences entail a fear of and thus an eagerness to avoid a gender-free environment since it could involve unfamiliar social behavior (O'Brien 1999 quoted in Herring 2005: 219).

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, various researchers treat chatroom communication differently. Perhaps the best way to correctly identify the phenomenon is to regard its multifaceted nature and diversity. While characteristics of spoken interaction such as brevity, incompleteness, spontaneity and speed are persistent in chatroom discourse, features of written communication such as the medium itself (writing/typing is required) and so-called anonymity of conversational partners and multiple overlapping conversations also prevail. No agreement has been reached about whether online communication is a hybrid of written and spoken interaction or if it composes a new genre altogether. The suggestion proposed by Greenfield and Subrahmanyam is perhaps the most fitting one:

> chat is more of a register of written language with many of the stylistic features of spoken language. […] Its spontaneous conversational context and somewhat evanescent nature […] present conditions that push this written medium in the direction of oral language characteristics.   (2003: 722)

Taking this into consideration, it is valid to assume the existence of parallels between CMC and face-to-face communication. Equating the two would be erroneous, as the written medium prevails in CMC. However, as pointed out, numerous features allow for a treatment of CMC similar to spoken interaction. For that reason, the empirical study of this thesis will focus on single chat statements generated from online teen chat rooms. In order to test stereotypes, test-takers will be asked to rate each statement along the lines numerous variables.

PART 5 - Empirical Study

12. Research ideas

So far this thesis has examined early approaches to the issue of language and gender in depth and contrasted them to more previous findings that have shed some more light onto possible reasons for gender differences in speech and their meanings. The theoretical basis provided in the previous chapters of this theory serve as a foundation for analyzing the data acquired through my own study.

Before commencing with my thesis I regarded language and gender as a controversial combination that sparked my interest. I did not know, however, that my taken-for-granted knowledge would be so immensely questioned. Only through researching the issue I began to realize that the aim of my empirical study would not be to investigate how men and women speak differently, but much rather if these differences are really as grave as we assume and if gender stereotypes influence our perception of speech and other communicative behavior. Therefore, it is without a doubt that a thesis promoting the social constructionist theory should question taken-for-granted knowledge as opposed to merely relying on preconceived ideas. Clearly this entails pursuing a field work study of my own.

12.1. Aim

The general objective behind this chapter is to investigate if peoples' evaluation is influenced by gender expectations and stereotypes, or whether language is evaluated gender-neutrally. Based on the insights gained from Part 3 of this thesis, I argue that gender stereotypes are present within almost everyone and that these internalized stereotyped patters trigger gender-performance expectations and perceptions. People act in ways that are normative because they fear being judged negatively and confronted with discrimination. For this reason, it is assumed that individuals enact behavior aligned with gender norms in all areas of life and all types of communication. As Part 4 of this thesis has shown, even on seemingly autonomous platforms such as the Internet, behavioral and linguistic gender differences are projected. To what extent these differences prevail and whether differences are perceived along gender stereotypes is the primary aim of the empirical part. The results obtained will then either support or refute the claim that perception is guided by deeply ingrained gender stereotypes.

12.2. Hypotheses

Based on the research provided, numerous hypotheses underlie this empirical part.

Part 1

1) Statements are perceived differently depending on whether they are uttered by female or male speakers.[25]

As Part 3 has demonstrated, the content of communication is not always the most crucial aspect, but an important factor in perception is the sex of the speaker. In chapter 9.4. a study by Wiley an Woolley showed that women's interruptions were judged more harshly and Wiley and Eskilson's study demonstrated a tendency to evaluate women's powerful speech more aggressively. The research from this part furthermore suggests that men and women are perceived and evaluated differently, depending on whether their communicative behavior is in line with established gender norms. In Part 4 gendered interaction in online communication has been discussed and research findings by Herring, demonstrated in chapter 11.1.1., suggest that trying to pass as the opposite gender is not easy as each individual tends to communicate in gender-appropriate ways, i.e. in ways that are accepted and regarded as 'normal'. This furthermore supports the hypothesis that female and male speakers are perceived differently, especially when violating norms of behavior, as male and female speakers are expected to interact in certain gender-distinct ways.

2) Rude and insensitive statements are perceived more negatively when believed to be produced by a female speaker.

This hypothesis is based on the previous one and on the research presented in Part 1 and 3. Predominantly research findings from Trudgill and Labov have shown that women are believed to be more polite and tactful and thus this hypothesis entails the assumption that any violation of this belief will result in a negative evaluation. Due to the engrained stereotypes and beliefs that people hold about women, deviation from the norm is likely to be perceived more harshly.

3) Respondent's sex influences the evaluation of statements: female respondents perceive 'harsh' statements uttered by female speakers more negatively.

Another assumption resulting from the research in Parts 1, 3 and 4 is that men and women are not only perceived differently, but also perceive *others* differently. If men and women are

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[25] 'Speakers' here refers to Internet 'users'. The term 'speaker' will be used from now on instead of 'users' (even though technically there is no spoken language), in order to clarify the positions and to avoid confusion between Internet user (i.e. speaker) and respondents/recipients.

expected to comport themselves in particular ways, it is likely that female subjects perceive violations of 'female' behavior more strongly and negatively than male subjects. Everyone is aware of their own gender-role to some extent and of their gender-appropriate behavior. Moreover, a study by Biber et al. (2002: 38) on sexual harassment in online communication found that women reacted more seriously and negatively to sexually explicit jokes and pictures. There seems to be a slight tendency of women being more aware of and sensitive to profanity and harshness, thus suggesting that female subjects will evaluate these statements slightly more negatively than their male counterparts.

Part 2

4) When the sex of the speaker is not known, statements employing stereotypically male characteristics are believed to be uttered by male speakers.

5) When the sex of the speaker is not known, statements employing stereotypically female characteristics are believed to be uttered by female speakers.

6) Stereotyped expectations are widespread amongst the subjects.

These three hypotheses rest on the research findings of Part 1 – 4 and on the assumption that individuals in our society have stereotyped expectations and preconceived ideas about gender-roles which are in turn projected onto speakers. With these notions about how men and women tend to (and *should*) speak, individuals can make educated guesses on the sex of a speaker based only a short fragment of a communicative act, as will be the case in Part 2 of the questionnaire.

12.3. Method

12.3.1. Why the Internet and why teenagers?

One might wonder why exactly the statements for the questionnaires[26] were taken from teen chatrooms. The answer to that is that the Internet has become increasingly important over the past years with an immense impact on adolescents and their behavior. As Greenfield and Yan (2006: 393) point out:

> [a]s an artifact system with enormous social complexity, the Internet has not only had pervasive positive impacts on modern society, but has also caused various societal concerns about privacy, pornography, Internet crime, security, virtual community, and intellectual property rights. This unique combination of technical and social complexity makes children's understanding of the Internet both challenging and important to developmental researchers.

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[26] Both questionnaires can be found in the appendix.

To study this understanding and to observe the use of the Internet amongst young individuals is therefore of great importance. Greenfield and Subrahmanyam (2003: 723) make a very valid point when claiming that "[y]oung people today are the most native speakers of the codes of the Internet, creating the language and the codes as they go along." This is certainly true, not only at the time of their study but also in present day chatrooms. Certain terms, phrases and idioms are created in this community, which have absolutely no meaning to 'outsiders'. Teenagers are avid users of the Internet and thus the prime interest of this study. Moreover, Eckert (2005: 381) explains that adolescence is a "life-stage at which a tremendous amount of identity work is being done, and gender is perhaps more salient in this work that at any other life-stage." Teenagers are therefore more likely to employ stereotypically male and female linguistic devices that serve as a useful basis for this study.

12.3.2.   Electronic ethnography

As it is typical of in the methodology of ethnography, I acted as the observer in chatrooms by creating a nickname to be granted access to the chatroom but I did not participate in the interaction. Only on a few occasions I acted as a participant, namely when being sent a private message. In those cases I answered briefly to terminate the interaction. The purpose of this was to grant neutrality and to focus on mere observation. The provider recommended care when using the site and warned that some users might not be within the required age range of 14-19. Another feature of the chatroom entailed the function on entering or leaving it, i.e. the choice of being 'in' or 'out' and thus being able to take part in interaction or not. A list on the right side gives users an overview of who else is present in the chatroom.

After roughly three hours of attendance in the chatroom, logs were printed out and single statements were selected to incorporate into the questionnaires. Statements were selected on the basis of a) knowledge of the sex of the speaker (i.e. obvious nicknames such as PrettyGirl29), and b) diverse content (acts of flirtation, invitation, swearing and rather 'neutral' as well as those that seemed stereotypically male or female).

The final statements selected for Part 1 of the questionnaires are the following:

1) ah kewl
   i have loads to do as well
   so annoyin, hate it

2) heyyy don't be mean Star_lord
name calling isnt tolerated
am i right BubleBee? :D

3) well get this straight i am not like u 😐 and i would never want to be lol
you're just jealous cuz you have no friends and no life
you seriously needa get laid dude :D

4) oh, i'm bored as usual. How are you? 😃

5) pfff, Sayli youre a dumb fool for studyin

6) i hate pakistanis..actually theya re pieces of shit.....
so shut up aboutit now

7) oooooh! that's pretty tough!
I really hope your studying goes well :)

8) whats new pussycat

9) really?????? Omg!
lol I thought u were only kidding hahahah

10) can i be your pet
so i can sleep with u all night

11) u seriously expect people to be forced from their country, persecuted, corralled and
discriminated against and even murdered and do nothing about it?
how silly

For questionnaire A, some of these statements were associated to female speakers and some to male speakers. In questionnaire B, the same statements were used, however where a statement was ascribed to a male speaker in questionnaire A, it was ascribed to a female speaker in questionnaire B. Likewise, where a statement was ascribed to a female speaker in questionnaire A, it was ascribed to a male speaker in questionnaire B.

As already mentioned, these statements were not selected at random, but according to certain characteristics and traits that were grouped into three categories, 1) **neutral** statements, 2) statements containing stereotypically **female** characteristics, and 3) statements containing stereotypically **male** characteristics.[27] Whether or not a statement was considered having any gender-specific traits depended on the linguistic and communicative devices found

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[27] To see an overview of the grouped statements see chapter 12.4.1.

within a statement. Based on the research findings by Selfe and Meyer, Herring and Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes presented in Part 4, chapter 11.1, 'male' behavior in online communication included traits such as dominance, aggression, violations of politeness, assertiveness and flirtatious/sexual language. 'Female' behavior, on the other hand, was observed by Kapidzic and Herring, Selfe and Meyer and Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tymes to entail traits such as reacting aversively to aggression, showing empathy and support, using more hedges and typed representations of laughter. Considering this, the selected statements were evaluated as follows:

Part 1: Evaluating statements

Statement #1: "ah kewl…"	• relatively **neutral** • slightly empathetic • slightly self-centered
Statement #2: "heyyy don't be mean…"	• stereotypically **female** • concerned with well-being of others ('other-centered')/sensitive to others • face-saving • upset with violation of politeness • question at the end to seek approval/agreement • representation of laughter/smiling • repetition of 'y' in 'hey' for emphasis
Statement #3: "well let me get this straight…"	• relatively **neutral** • ambiguous because has 'male' and 'female' features: • representations of laughter and use of emoticons • rather controlled • BUT • negative tone • direct • impolite/rude/curt • reference to sex/sexual language
Statement #4: "oh im bored…"	• relatively **neutral** • quite polite • concerned with others
Statement #5: "pfff Sayli youre a dumb fool…"	• stereotypically **male** • negative/insensitive to others • rude/curt • bold and direct • assertive • somewhat aggressive
Statement #6: "I hate pakistanis…"	• stereotypically **male** • impolite/curt • aggressive • direct • negative • self-centered

	• bold/insensitive to others • impulsive • assertive
Statement #7: "ohhh that's pretty tough..."	• stereotypically **female** • positive/friendly • empathetic • concerned with well-being of others ('other-centered')/sensitive to others • use of emoticons/visual representations of laughter/smiling • extensive 'o' in 'oooooh' for emphasis • use of exclamation mark for emphasis • use of intensifier 'really'
Statement #8: "whats new pussycat"	• stereotypically **male** • sexual innuendo • no use of emoticons • direct/blunt • assertive
Statement #9: "really???? Omg!"	• stereotypically **female** • extensive use of laughter and exclamation marks for emphasis • attention and sensitivity towards others
Statement #10: "can I be your pet…"	• stereotypically **male** • ambiguous meaning • sexual innuendo • direct/blunt • assertive
Statement #11: "you seriously expect people to…"	• relatively **neutral/ambiguous** • direct • assertive • insensitive towards others • showing empathy towards another group

The stimuli presented here show the statements used for both questionnaires in Part 1 and provide the basis of judgment and evaluation. Statements were interpreted in ways that correspond to gender-specific behavior observed in studies by the aforementioned researchers. Clearly this process is rather bias and relies on the sole interpretation of my view of the statements, however, for the means of this study it is not primarily the language itself that is being focused, but rather subjects perception of it in combination with an image of a male or female speaker. The statements provide enough linguistic and communicative material to serve for the purpose of this study.

Part 2 of the questionnaire was the same for both questionnaires (A and B) and as for Part 1, the selected statements were based on a variety of criteria. The three statements used are the following:

12) i tried it like ONCE

it is now officially known as the ouchy machine haha

13) lol

i have no life either!

i just stare at the screen all day and night :P

14) i didnt ask u......it shows ur childish ass behavior

i bet u still depend on ur mom and u are wasting her money on here ....dude do work and stop hitting

The statements were chosen on the premise to represent stereotypically female characteristics, neutral characteristics and stereotypically male characteristics. The detailed categorization and description is as follows:

Part 2: Guessing the sex of the speaker

Statement #12: "I tried it like ONCE…"	• stereotypically **female** • use of intensifier 'like' • capitalization for emphasis • representation of laughter ("hahaha") • 'ouchy' → use of final 'y' as a form of diminutive/making it sound small and cute
Statement #13: "lol …. I have no life either…"	• relatively **neutral** • some self-disclosure • representations of laughter (lol, :P)
Statement #14: "I didn't ask you…"	• stereotypically **male** • aggressive, use of swearing and taboo words • insulting/direct/blunt • insensitive towards others

12.3.3. Creating the Questionnaires

After gathering 14 statements, two questionnaires were created; questionnaire A and questionnaire B. Under the guise title of *Language in Teenage Chat Rooms* the questionnaires were meant to distract from the actual issue, namely to investigate how gender stereotypes influence perception. Part 1 (i.e. questions 1-11) entailed attitudinal questions that aimed at uncovering opinions, beliefs and values of subjects. The items on the questionnaire were rated using semantic differential scales by which respondents were "asked to indicate their answers by marking a continuum […] between two bipolar adjectives at the extremes." (Dörnyei 2007: 105) These bipolar pairs were *polite* vs. *rude*, *assertive* vs. *hesitant*, *direct/blunt* vs. *indirect/vague*, *sensitive towards others* vs. *insensitive towards others*, *self-centered* vs. *oriented towards others* and *bad/inappropriate grammar* vs. *good/appropriate*

grammar. The left adjective was scored with the number 1, the right adjective with the number 4 (e.g. **1** = polite, **2** = quite polite, **3** = quite rude, **4** = rude).

Part 2 (i.e. questions 12-15) were also attitudinal questions and questions 12 – 14 required subjects to assign an either female or male speaker to the statement. For this, subjects had to mark how sure they were of the sex of the speaker on a scale from 1 to 6 (**1** = very sure that the quote stemmed from a **female** speaker and **6** = very sure that it stemmed from a **male** speaker). Finally, question 15 aimed at investigating gender stereotypes. Respondents were explicitly asked to describe the following characteristics as either typically female or typically male: *assertive, polite, hesitant, dominant, co-operative responsive, concerned with keeping conversation intact, attentive, talkative, direct, demanding, tactful, gossipy, competitive* and *authoritarian*.

The very last part of the questionnaire entailed factual questions including personal data of the respondent such as age, sex, country of residency and origin. Whether respondents received university education was also asked and if yes, which subject(s) they studied.

I paid attention to wording the questions simply in order to avoid confusion and ambiguity. Nicknames were changed and most phrases were slightly altered as to guarantee anonymity (thus, the selected statements served merely as a basis for subjectively generated statements). Both questionnaires entailed the exact same statements; they differed only in the sex of the speaker that was allocated to the statement (e.g. in questionnaire A the statement *oh i'm bored as usual. How are you?* was ascribed to a female speaker, and in questionnaire B that same statement was ascribed to a male speaker). This way a direct comparison could take place, allowing the same statement to be evaluated as if it were said by both a female and a male speaker. Afterwards the questionnaires were piloted in two a small groups, each group receiving a printed version of either questionnaire A or B. The results were then evaluated to eliminate those statements that triggered responses unclear results. The questionnaire was then adapted to comprise more statements that included either stereotypically male or female features or whose content was diverse.

12.3.4. Distribution

In order to obtain a large group sample the method of data collection for this study focused on the quantitative approach of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered and available for completion for roughly two months. Candidates were sampled along the lines of non-probability sampling, namely of convenience opportunity sampling. This meant that the target population was selected based on availability and accessibility.

Many respondents stemmed from the 'Institute of English and American Studies' in Vienna, due to the distribution of the questionnaires in some lectures at the institute. Postings in various English-speaking Facebook groups granted access to test takers from other disciplines and other parts of the world. Nevertheless, most test-takers were from Western societies, especially from Austria, thus providing a good means for comparison as it made up a rather homogenous group. Furthermore, most candidates completed the questionnaire in less than 10 minutes.

By means of online distribution I gathered 155 responses for questionnaire A and 155 responses for questionnaire B, hence reaching a total of 310 usable and completed questionnaires. As table 1 shows, most test takers were under the age of 30 and only 3.2 per cent of the respondents were over 30 year of age. This is essential to a study of this kind, as the topic of internet language is one that only a certain age group can understand and associate to.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of the age of respondents

Age of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
<= 30 years	300	96,8
> 30 years	10	3,2
Total responses	310	100,0

The majority of the test takers claimed their mother tongue to be German and most respondents also maintained that their country of residency was Austria. Other countries of residency included England, Chile, Hungary, France, Portugal and the Netherlands, usually only representing one or two respondents.[28]

12.4. Results

Both questionnaires were completed by 155 respondents each, thus coming to a total of 310 completed questionnaires. The data were analyzed using the statistical computer program SPSS and the program was in German hence tables entail some German titles but are translated where necessary. The matrixes were adjusted in ways to match the data and for the

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[28] For more detailed information on respondents see tables 1-4 in appendix.

last question for example, the value 1 was assigned to female and value 2 for male. The data were then displayed in tables and diagrams.

As a study of this scale and breadth is filled with limitations and shortcomings, it is not surprising that the Pearson chi squared tests identified a number of responses as statistically insignificant. In some cases however, statistical significance was given by obtaining a *p*-value lower than 0.05. These results will be the first ones to be discussed in each part, as they show that the chance that the results are based on mere probability is no greater than 5 percent.

12.4.1. Part 1 – Perceiving gender differences

Due to the large amount of data obtained in Part 1, the eleven statements from the questionnaire were grouped into three groups. Group 1 entailed statements that were rather neutral, group 2 consisted of statements that employed stereotypically female characteristics and group 3 enclosed statements made up of stereotypically male attributes[29]. As table 2 shows, each group consisted of three to four statements.

Table 2: Grouping of statements

GROUP 1 'Neutral'/ambiguous statements	GROUP 2 Stereotypically female statements	GROUP 3 Stereotypically male statements
Statement #1	Statement #2	Statement #5
Statement #3	Statement #7	Statement #6
Statement #4	Statement #9	Statement #8
Statement #11		Statement #10

Each statement was assessed along six categories. The first one to be discussed is the category **"polite vs. rude".** The results obtained show the statements were rated very differently depending on the group.

Interestingly, scorings for statements in group 3 (i.e. statements with stereotypically male characteristics) were perceived very differently depending on the sex of the speaker. As table 3 shows, the sex of the speaker emitted results that are highly significant at a *p*-value of 0.000.

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[29] To view the statements see appendix.

Table 3: Test of statistical significance in group 3 for criteria "polite vs. rude"[30]

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.	Partielles Eta-Quadrat
Korrigiertes Modell	35,041[a]	3	11,680	16,394	,000	,041
Konstanter Term	5241,647	1	5241,647	7356,930	0,000	,865
sex of respondent	,933	1	,933	1,309	,253	,001
sex of speaker	10,105	1	10,105	14,182	,000	,012
sexrespondent * sexspeaker	,645	1	,645	,905	,342	,001
Fehler	815,074	1144	,712			
Gesamt	13336,000	1148				
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	850,115	1147				

This means that female speakers were perceived as more polite than male speakers using the exact same statement. Figure 1 shows the ratings of polite vs. rude, 1 being polite and 4 being rude. Despite being the same, statements next to an image of a female speaker were perceived as slightly more polite with a median of 3.13 whereas male speakers uttering the same statement were scored with a 3.47, i.e. closer to the digit 4 representing 'rude'.

Figure 1: Scoring for criteria "polite vs. rude" in group 3
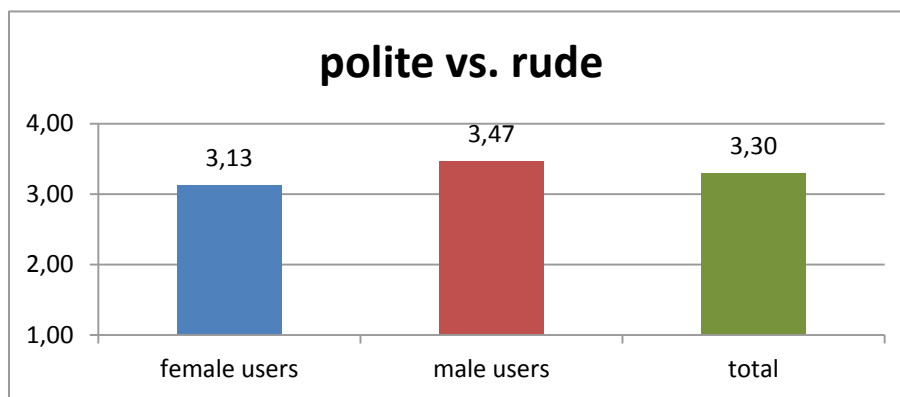
Statements in both group 1 and group 2, however (i.e. neutral and stereotypically female statements), showed no significant difference between female and male respondents. As figure 1 shows, both male and female subjects rated statements fairly equal regardless of the sex of the speaker.[31]

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[30] The tables have been generated in a German program and therefore they include German titles. For means of exactness these have not be translated to English, only the most important categories such as 'sex of speaker' have been translated for better understanding.
[31] See tables 5 and 6 in the appendix.

The second category to be discussed is "**direct/blunt vs. indirect/vague**". The results show that statements belonging to group 3 were evaluated in ways that showed statistical significance. As before, group 3 proved to be the most significant with results varying significantly depending on the sex of the speaker.[32] Statements portrayed next to the image of a female speaker were rated closer to *indirect/vague* (median of 1.41) whereas male speakers were seen as more direct and blunt with a median score of 1.26. Statements from group 1 and 2 showed no significant differences between male and female ratings.

In the third category of discussion, "**sensitive towards others vs. insensitive towards others**", the differing results for male and female speakers in group 3 are highly significant. Despite uttering the same statements, female speakers were perceived as more sensitive than male speakers. As figure 2 demonstrates, the median score given to female speakers was 3.15, i.e. closer to sensitive (which is demonstrated by the number 1 on the scale). Male speakers were given a higher median score namely 3.45, thus placing them closer to insensitive (represented by the number 4 on the scale).

Figure 2: Scoring for criteria "sensitive vs. insensitive" in group 3
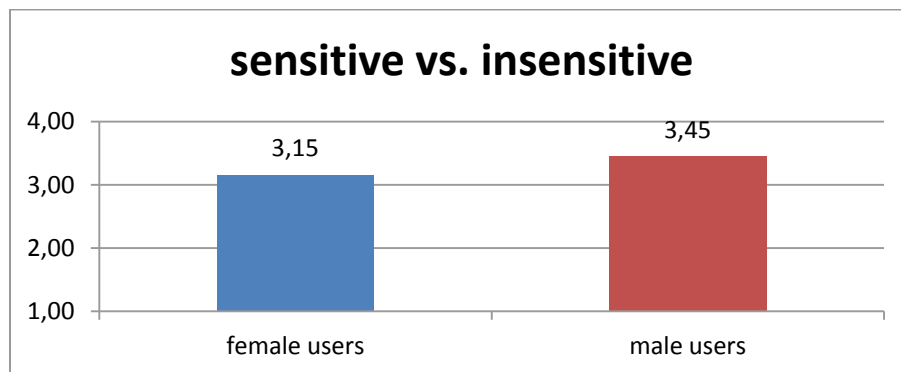
Statements in group 1 and 2 did not display any significant differences between male and female speakers nor between male and female respondents.

Overall the category **"self-centered vs. oriented towards others"** omitted highly significant results for statements in group 3. As table 4 discloses, the *p*-value for the sex of the speaker is 0.000 which means that statements were perceived very differently depending on whether statements were uttered by a female speaker or a male speaker.

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[32] See table 6 in appendix

Table 4: Test of statistical significance in group 3 for criteria "self-centered vs. oriented towards others"

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.	Partielles Eta-Quadrat
Korrigiertes Modell	29,688[a]	3	9,896	9,254	,000	,024
Konstanter Term	2522,967	1	2522,967	2359,325	,000	,673
sex of respondent	6,322	1	6,322	5,912	,015	,005
sex of speaker	19,571	1	19,571	18,301	,000	,016
sexrespondent * sexspeaker	4,285	1	4,285	4,007	,046	,003
Fehler	1223,347	1144	1,069			
Gesamt	6706,000	1148				
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	1253,035	1147				

Table 4 furthermore shows that not only the sex of the speaker was of significance but also the sex of the respondent. Female respondents rated statements differently than their male counterparts. As figure 3 indicates, female speakers were generally perceived as more oriented towards others than male speakers uttering the equivalent statement (1 = self-centered, 4 = oriented towards others). Likewise, the sex of the respondent was crucial in the process of perception. Male subjects perceived female speakers as significantly *more* oriented towards others (2.67) than female subjects did (2.26).

Figure 3: Scoring for criteria "self-centered vs. oriented towards others" in group 3
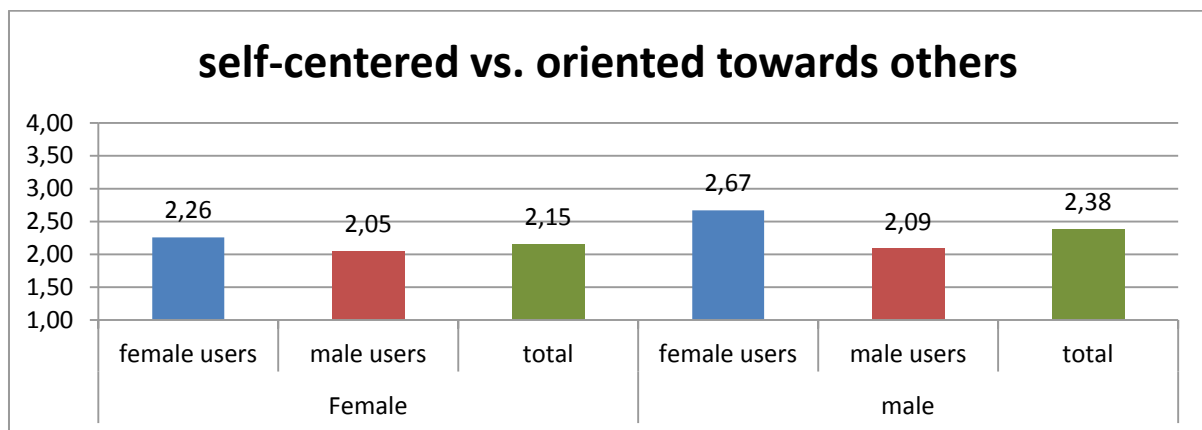
In contrast to the previous data, results from group 2 (i.e. stereotypically female statements) were of significance to the category "**bad/inappropriate grammar vs. good/appropriate grammar**". As figure 4 reveals, where 1 represents bad/inappropriate grammar and 4 represents good/appropriate grammar, male subjects perceived statements in this group as

slightly more grammatical and appropriate than female subjects with a median total score of 3.07 as opposed to female subjects' median score of 2.87.

Figure 4: Scoring for criteria "bad/inappropriate grammar vs. good/appropriate grammar" in group 2
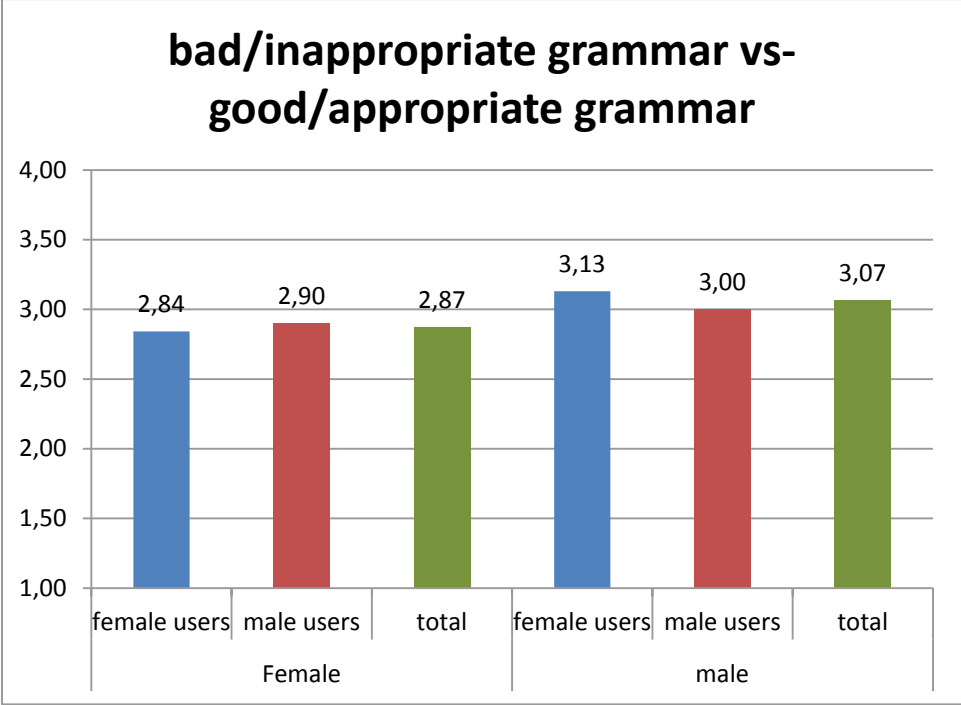
The category "**assertive vs. hesitant**" was the only category with no statistically significant data. None of the three 3 groups elicited results that varied between the two sexes, and statements were constantly seen similarly in regards to this criteria by female and male subjects regarding statements uttered by female and male speakers.

12.4.2.   Part 2 – Grading of typicality

Part 2 of the questionnaires was concerned with eliciting gender stereotypes and their effect on perception by grading the typicality of 'male' and 'female' speech styles. Subjects had no idea what the sex of the 'speaker' (i.e. user) in the following three statements was and had to judge each statement on a scale from 1 to 6 ranging from typically female (= 1) to typically male (= 6).

The most interestingly rated statement is the third statement: *i didnt ask u…* The rating of this statement is interesting because although both male and female subjects tended to ascribe this statement to a male speaker, it was perceived slightly different by men than by women.

As table 5 shows, men tended to perceive this statement a little more 'masculine' than women, shown by the higher score towards the number 6, which stood for *male* (total score of 4.17 by male subjects as opposed to a score of 3.99 by female subjects).

Table 5: Median scores for male and female subjects scoring statement *"i didnt ask u…"*

Statement: *i didnt ask u…*

(Scoring 1=typically female, 6=typically male)

Sex of subjects	Questionnaire	Median	Standardabweichung	N
	A	3,71	1,652	124
F	B	4,27	1,643	128
	Total	3,99	1,668	252
	A	4,44	1,711	16
M	B	3,95	2,248	19
	Total	4,17	2,007	35
	A	3,79	1,669	140
Total	B	4,22	1,727	147
	Total	4,01	1,710	287

We can speak of a tendency towards statistical significance because the *p*-value was at 0.089, i.e. very close to critical 0.05 mark.[33] What this category therefore shows is that there was a rather strong tendency to statistical interaction between the sex of the subject and their rating of the statement.

For the other two statements different tendencies can be observed. The first statement, *i tried it like ONCE…* was indicative of a perception along female stereotypes: as figure 5 and table 6 show, female subjects in questionnaires A and B rated the statement with a median of 2.12 and 2.17 respectively, thus resulting in an total score of 2.15. Similarly male subjects tended to rate this statement as typically female with a median score of 1.80. Men and women combined rated this statement with a total median of 2.10. This number indicates that subjects tended to perceive the statement as one produced more likely by a female speaker.

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[33] See table 7 in appendix.

Table 6: Median scores for male and female subjects scoring statement *"i tried it like ONCE…*

Sex of subjects	Questionnaire	Median	Standardabweichung	N
F	A	2,12	1,207	124
	B	2,17	1,249	128
	total	2,15	1,226	252
M	A	1,94	1,063	16
	B	1,68	1,003	19
	Total	1,80	1,023	35
Total	A	2,10	1,189	140
	B	2,11	1,228	147
	Total	2,10	1,207	287

Figure 5: Grading of typicality for statements in Part 2
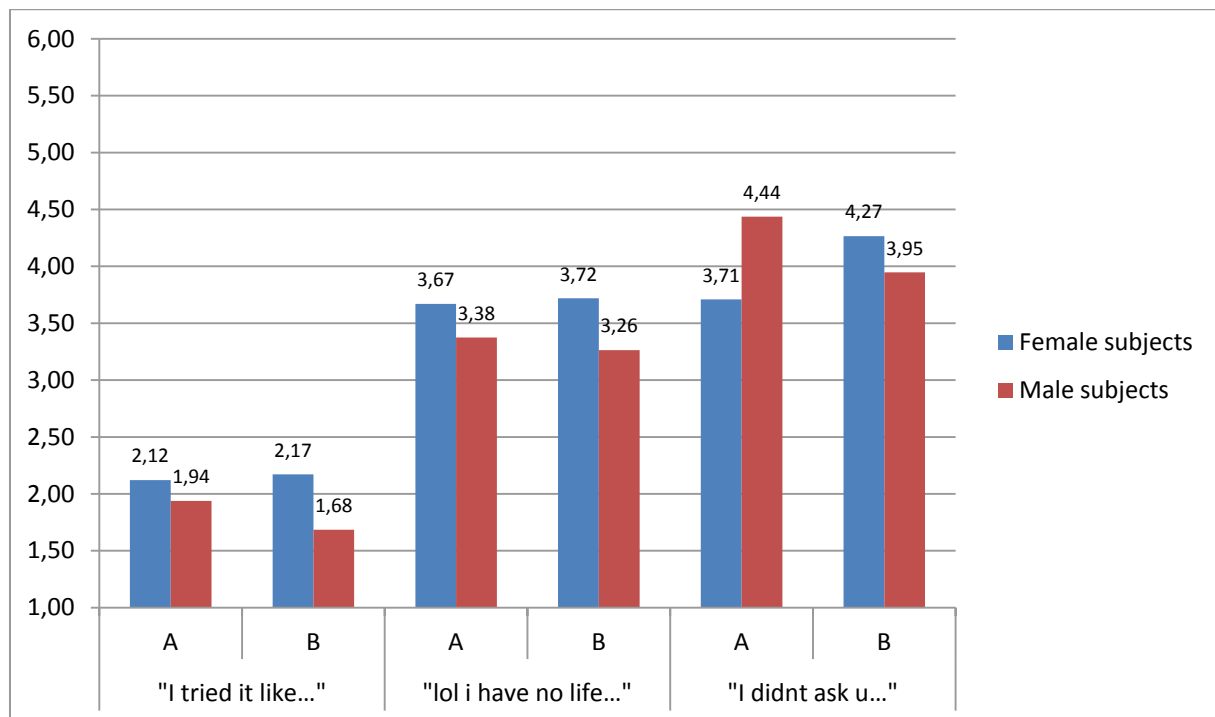
The final statement of this kind was the second statement of Part 2, *lol i have no life…* As figure 5 demonstrates, there is no observable leaning towards one gender or the other. The median scores all range around the middle digits, the exact total median being 3.65.[34] Both male and female subjects seem to have no clear inclination towards the statement.

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[34] See table 8 in the appendix.

The chi-squared tests for statistical significance emitted values lower than 0.05 in regards to sex differences in perception. Male and female subjects therefore did not vary in their perception of these statements.[35]

12.4.3.   Part 2 – Explicit Gender Stereotypes

The final part of the questionnaire focused on investigating how present gender stereotypes are within individuals and how widespread they are. By asking test subjects to allocate different characteristics to a specific sex it can by no means be assumed that these characteristics are believed to be true for every female and male individual. However, the knowledge of gender specific and stereotypical features can be made salient and entails various implications.

As done in the previous sections of the questionnaire, the results of this part were interpreted using a test of statistical significance. Interestingly, in regards to differences between male and female subjects there was only one adjective whose p-value was lower than 0.05, i.e. that proved to be statistically significant.[36] The adjective *cooperative* retrieved a p-value of 0.017 and one can therefore speak of a statistically significant result. As figure 6 shows, both men and women clearly allocated this attribute to females: 73% of all male subjects and 88% of all female subjects believed that being cooperative was a (stereo)typically female trait. This distribution shows that even though both sexes believed that this attribute was typically female, the degree of agreement varied. Female subjects in this study were generally more sure than male subjects that cooperative is a typically female trait.

Figure 6: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *cooperative* to men and women
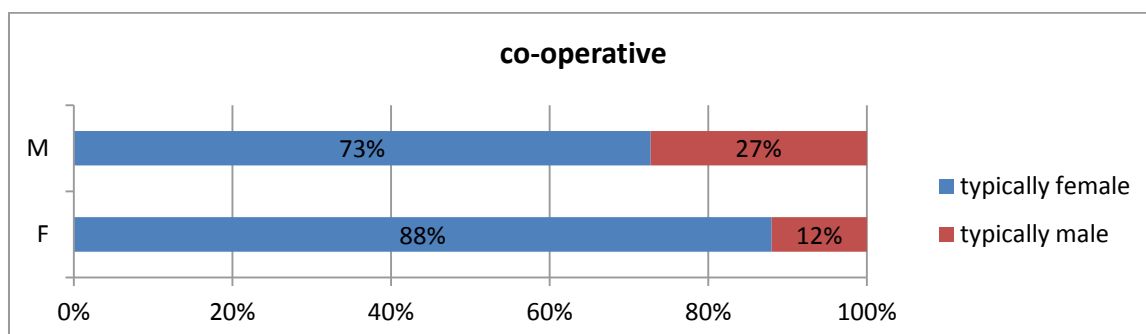
In regards to the remaining characteristics i.e. *assertive, polite, hesitant, dominant, responsive, concerned with keeping the conversation intact, attentive, talkative, direct,*

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[35] See tables 9 and 10 in the appendix.
[36] See table 11 in the appendix.

demanding, tactful, gossipy, competitive and *authoritarian* it can be said that also here tendencies are observable. As opposed to the attribute *cooperative*, male and female subjects did not differ greatly in their view of typically male and female traits for these characteristics.

As table 6 attests, the majority of the characteristics do not only show visible leanings to one gender or the other, but these tendencies are additionally in line with male and female stereotypes. In this sense, the attributes *polite, hesitant, cooperative, responsive, concerned with keeping the conversation intact, attentive, talkative, tactful* and *gossipy* were regarded as 'female' attributes, thus corroborating manifested stereotypes about women. Men, in contrast, were ascribed to the attributes *assertive, dominant, direct, demanding, competitive* and *authoritarian*. Likewise these attributes correspond to the domineering stereotypes held in western societies about men.[37]

Table 6: Overview of typically male and female characteristics

| | | Sex of respondents | |
| | | F | M |
		Distribution (%)	Distribution (%)
assertive	female	16,0%	9,1%
	male	84,0%	90,9%
polite	female	92,4%	84,8%
	male	7,6%	15,2%
hesitant	female	87,2%	87,9%
	male	12,8%	12,1%
dominant	female	14,0%	12,1%
	male	86,0%	87,9%
co-operative	female	88,0%	72,7%
	male	12,0%	27,3%
responsive	female	88,0%	81,8%
	male	12,0%	18,2%
concerned with keeping conversation intact	female	91,2%	81,8%
	male	8,8%	18,2%
attentive	female	86,8%	87,9%
	male	13,2%	12,1%
talkative	female	93,6%	93,9%
	male	6,4%	6,1%
direct	female	13,6%	6,1%
	male	86,4%	93,9%
demanding	female	47,2%	36,4%
	male	52,8%	63,6%
tactful	female	88,0%	87,9%

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[37] See also figures 1-12 in the appendix.

	male	12,0%	12,1%
gossipy	female	94,4%	93,9%
	male	5,6%	6,1%
competitive	female	27,3%	18,2%
	male	72,7%	81,8%
authoritarian	female	14,8%	6,1%
	male	85,2%	93,9%

What is remarkable is that the attributes scoring highest in agreement are *talkative* and *gossipy*, both reaching 94% by female and male subjects and in both cases being attributed to women.[38] As is made visible in figure 7, there is no discrepancy about where to place this characteristic; the attribute was rated by respondents as a typically female one.

Figure 7: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *gossipy* to men and women

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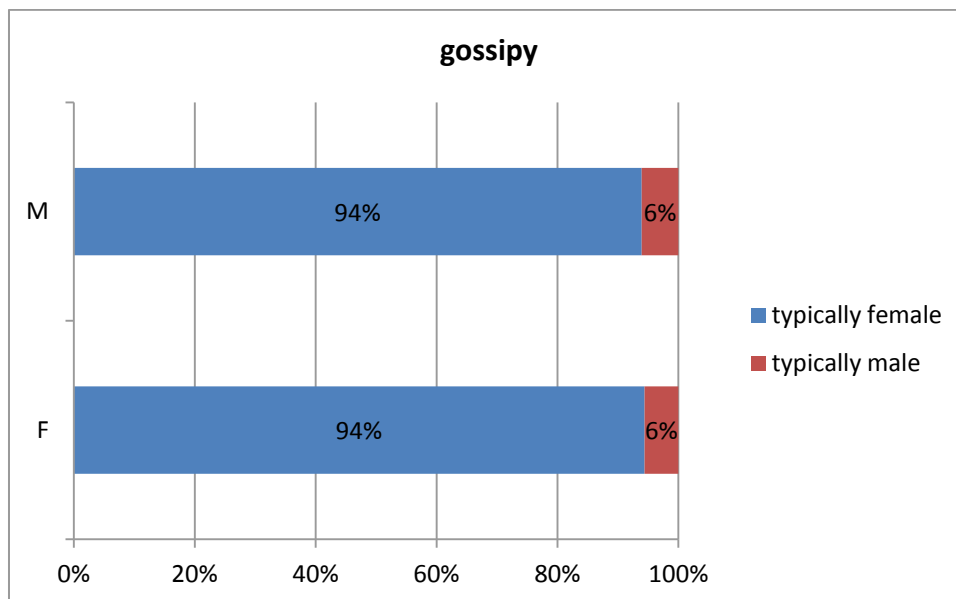
[38] See figure 13 in the appendix.

12.5. Discussion

12.5.1.   Part 1 – Perceiving gender differences

The category **polite vs. friendly** showed that most statements were not evaluated differently in regards to these criteria. However, statements employing stereotypically male characteristics obtained highly significant results which showed that female speakers were perceived as more polite than male speakers. Stereotypically male statements were evaluated differently by subjects but in ways unexpected. This ultimately means that hypothesis 1 is partially accepted, however hypothesis 2 is rejected. Female speakers who employed 'male' strategies such as swearing and assertiveness were seen as more polite than male speakers producing the same statements. The reason for this may be that nowadays swearing and the use of taboo words does not trigger an as adverse reaction as it may have in the past. Swearing and taboo words seem to have become more widespread in the use of 'female' language and could therefore have desensitized people's perception in a way that lets them perceive such behavior as less rude.

Another explanation for this outcome may be that positive, friendly-looking images of female speakers could have weakened the force of the statements and perception along gender stereotypes may have taken place. Seeing a friendly image of a female speaker as opposed to an image of an aggressively looking male speaker could result in a correspondingly more positive and negative perception and evaluation. In this sense it is a difficult distinction of whether photos and images substituting 'real' bodies (as one encounters in face-to-face communication) neutralize gender differences or not. The absence of the human body required subjects to evaluate statements based only on the statement itself and the image of the speaker. Ultimately it is also possible that this special scenario triggered and even strengthened stereotypical projections, leading subjects to evaluate female speakers more politely than male speakers, despite having the same language input.

The category "**direct/blunt vs. indirect/vague**" provided some very interesting results. Subjects rated statements in group 3 differently depending on the sex of the speaker and hypothesis 1 can therefore be seen as partially accepted. Female speakers were rated as more indirect and vague than male speakers. This is in line with the stereotype that women are less direct and blunt than men, however, the contradiction lies within the type of statements used. Women employing typically 'male' strategies in communication did not lead to a negative perception of them, thus rejecting hypothesis 2. The reasons for this may be similar to those mentioned above, namely that it is no longer of great importance for women to be

humble, shy and hesitant, ultimately resulting in a less negative evaluation of them if they do show behaviors opposing this view.

The criteria "**sensitive towards others vs. insensitive towards others**" shows the exact same development. Only statements in group 3 proved significant differences and the results indicate that female speakers were perceived more sensitive than male speakers. It can be assumed once again, that also for this category gender stereotypes influence the perception in such a way that despite using stereotypically male language, females are perceived as more sensitive, i.e. in ways aligning their gender roles.

One of the most significant results was depicted in the results of the category "**self-centered vs. oriented towards others**". Here not only the sex of the speakers was significant but also the sex of the respondent. This was one of the only instance in which hypothesis 3 was partially accepted: female and male subjects rated perceived statements differently. Female speakers were rated by both sexes as less self-centered and more oriented towards others. In addition to that, male subjects perceived female speakers as even more oriented towards others than female subjects did. Similar to the previous categories it can be assumed that gender stereotypes subtly influenced respondents' perception in ways that coincided with existing gender stereotypes.

The final significant category "**bad/inappropriate grammar vs. good/appropriate grammar**" showed significant results for statements in group 2, i.e. stereotypically female statements. These statements were perceived more negatively by female subjects, thereby partially accepting hypothesis 3. A possible explanation may be that many female subjects are students of English and thus more alert to and aware of grammatical mistakes and therefore more critical.

The fact that the results for the category "**assertive vs. hesitant**" elicited no conclusive and significant data suggests that it was either not possible to rate the statements along these lines or that the criteria was not apt to fit the selected statements in the questionnaires.

12.5.2. Part 2 – Grading of typicality

In Part 2 of the study the only statement that proved to have a tendency towards statistical significance in regards to sex differences amongst the respondents was the third one (*i didnt ask u* […]). The statement was originally uttered by a male speaker in the teenage chat room and it was also perceived as such, thus accepting hypothesis 4. The utterance shows traits of stereotypically male communicative traits such as aggression, the use of swearing and taboo

words and a clearly face-threatening act.[39] Fascinatingly, male subjects perceived the statement slightly differently, namely more towards 'male' i.e. masculine than female subjects. A possible explanation for this could be that men in our society are very aware of their gender roles and thus of gender-appropriate behavior. It could be that swearing and down-putting tactics as observed in this statement are common strategies that male subjects in this study employ themselves and that they observe in other males therefore (unconsciously) regard as typically male.

Statement 1 entailed features that can be categorized as stereotypically female such as representations of laughter (*hahaha*), use of the modifier *like*, capitalization for emphasis (*ONCE*), the onomatopoetic word *ouchy* with final *y* possibly as a form of a diminutive and simultaneously admitting to weakness/pain which is stereotypically 'unmanly'.[40] It is likely that these features were picked up by the subjects of this study and perceived along gender stereotypes. By believing that certain characteristics are either typically male or typically female the perception and judgment of the participants was altered in a way that lead them to believe that the statement was elicited by a female speaker. In this case, hypothesis 5 can be regarded as accepted.

The second statement of Part 2 does not present tendencies in perception as opposed to the other two statements discussed. One can argue that the utterance can be regarded as rather neutral as it neither employs strongly noticeable stereotypically male nor female characteristics (*lol i have no life either!* […]). As opposed to the other two statements, these seemingly neutral linguistic devices and ostensibly gender-free communicative acts did not trigger a perception along gender stereotypes amongst the test-takers. The fact that the median score for this statement was 3.65 highlights the uncertainty within the subjects when allocating it to either a female or male speaker. To sum up, the scoring of this utterance suggests that the 'neutral' language in itself could not be ascribed to a male or female speaker and therefore suggests that certain linguistic devices are needed to make the reader or listener aware of the sex of the speaker by activating gender stereotypes.

12.5.3.   Part 2 – Explicit Gender Stereotypes

The final section of the questionnaire aimed at eliciting subjects' knowledge of gender stereotypes. By bluntly asking candidates which characteristics they regard as typically male or female, results could be gathered to determine how widespread gender stereotypes are amongst the respondents. The results showed that the attribute *cooperative* was of statistical

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[39] See chapter 11.1. for gender stereotypes in online communication
[40] See chapter 11.1. for gender stereotypes in online communication

significance and it can therefore be concluded that both men and women are knowledgeable of the fact that this attribute is stereotypically seen as a female trait. However, more female respondents attributed this characteristic to the female gender than male respondents.

All of the remaining attributes were likewise inclined to be assigned to the 'correct' gender, i.e. in ways that corresponded to gender stereotypes. For this reason, hypothesis 6 is regarded as accepted. Especially the stereotypically female attributes *gossipy* and *talkative* were rated with a strong accordance of 94 percent. This suggests that these attributes are even more widespread and connoted as 'female', resulting in overall high agreement.[41] It can moreover be argued, that these two traits are extremely stereotypical of 'female' speech which have been spread out and fostered by the media and in popular culture for decades. Talkative women, as this paper has frequently demonstrated, have been looked down on, not been taken seriously and have been the target of ridicule for many years, thus resulting in no surprise that this stereotype has remained deeply engrained within our taken-for-granted knowledge.

Concluding, the results of Part 1 show that in some cases statements were perceived differently whether they were believed to be coming from a male or a female speaker. However, claiming that this study managed to prove that perception along gender stereotypes is widespread would be erroneous. Only some statements suggest this, whereas others demonstrating no significant signs of gender-bias perception. The results suggest that women are less likely to be criticized and perceived negatively when employing 'male' communicative strategies and that these have perhaps become more acceptable among the younger generations. Nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned once again, that a study of this scale and sample size is only able to provide an overview of tendencies and does not claim to be scientifically or statistically significant.

In regards to Part 2 and the grading of typicality the data is indicative of the fact that gender stereotypes tend to influence the evaluation of speech/writing. The statement with stereotypically female linguistic devices was perceived as being uttered by a female speaker and the statement entailing stereotypically male linguistic devices was consequently believed to stem from a male speaker. The neutral statements with less obvious gender stereotypical cues could not be allocated to either gender by the respondents.

Moreover, the results of Part 2 also demonstrate that knowledge about gender stereotypes is widespread amongst the respondents. Each characteristic was assigned the

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[41] Interestingly in Steiner's (2004) study respondents were most hesitant about assigning this attribute to a gender. Given that subjects were not able to leave questions unanswered in this study, subjects were not able to claim that this was a stereotypical question. However, subjects also refrained from biasing the result as a means of protest by assigning stereotypical characteristics to the *opposite* sex.

'correct' gender, thus accepting the hypothesis that knowledge about gender stereotypes remains present and to some extent 'true' up until today. Furthermore, the data exhibit, that male and female respondents generally agreed upon male and female traits, only differing in the degree of agreement when it came to the attribute *cooperative*.

Conclusion

The study was able to answer the question if gender stereotypes are widely established by demonstrating that there is no doubt about which attributes are typically 'female' and typically 'male'. In Part 2 there was no attribute that showed complete disagreement amongst the respondents, thus suggesting that stereotyped expectations are present in the mindset of individuals. The fact that these expectations exist seem to have an effect on people's perception of communicative acts. Part 1 of the study has shown that in some cases, statements are perceived differently depending on the subjects' knowledge of the sex of the speaker. Interestingly, the statements that gathered these results were those associated to stereotypically male (linguistic) behavior, i.e. those entailing violations of politeness, swearing, taboo words and assertiveness. Contrary to hypothesis 2, namely that rude and insensitive statements are perceived more negatively when believed to be produced by a female speaker, this study has shown that – when a difference in perception was noted – female speakers were always perceived as more polite, sensitive and oriented towards others. This may be related to the fact that gender stereotypes about women's linguistic and communicative behavior are so deeply engrained that nothing can alter people's perception in a way that contradicts these stereotyped expectations. These results therefore propose that there is no direct link between language and gender per se, but that that gender stereotypes influence people's perception of others. Rating identical speech acts differently whether believed to be uttered by a male speaker or a female speaker is an indication that supports this assumption. However, these results were only obtained for about a third of the statements. The rest show no difference in perception, i.e. respondents did not rate male and female speakers differently. For that reason the results can only suggest a tendency of gender stereotypes influencing people's perception.

Finally, it can be noted that the study was able to demonstrate inclinations of evaluation along gender stereotypes when the sex of the speaker was unknown. The initial part of Part 2, which required respondents to guess the sex of the speaker uttering the statement, demonstrated that gender stereotypes are engrained in such a way that gender predictions can be made solely based on a short statement without any context. This suggests

that individuals have stereotyped expectations about language which allow them to make predictions that correspond to gender-appropriate behavior.

12.6. Limitations

The study is hampered by many drawbacks and must therefore be read and judged accordingly. One problem involved in the design of this study was the use of the research method. Using a non-probability sampling method bears advantages and disadvantages, and as Dörnyei (2007: 98) explains, the samples gathered are "less-than-perfect compromises that reality forces upon the researcher." Due to its unsystematic nature, results cannot be generalized easily as the scope of test takers is very homogeneous. It is very likely that a different sample of people (i.e. older, people from different fields, somewhat less educated test-taking individuals) would have elicited a different result. Surely most respondents were (implicitly) aware of issues related to gender equality and thus rather careful in judging the statements as not to appear discriminating.

Moreover, an issue remains when treating communicative acts such as chat sequences as spoken discourse and displaying them without a context. As this thesis has demonstrated, Internet language is mixture between spoken and written communication, which suggests that not all features are salient that one might encounter in face-to-face communication. Clues about the sex of the speaker are usually very obvious and dominant in spoken discourse such as voice quality, attractiveness, non-verbal cues such as gaze, which cannot be said for online communication. Here we are dealing with hypothetical speakers and it is possible, that in some instances some respondents did not pay great attention to the picture in the questionnaire and therefore did not become aware of the sex of the speaker. This may have prohibited perception along gender stereotypes.

Nevertheless, the use of selected statements from chat statements bears advantages too. Many other studies in this field have been conducted by using artificially constructed speech acts. Most of the statements in this study, however, are authentic and were only marginally changed to grant anonymity of the speaker. Moreover, chat room language covers a very relevant area in this day and age thus is one worth investigating.

Finally it needs to be mentioned that questionnaires of this sort are problematic in themselves. Due to the required simplicity of the questions and items for complete intelligibility, the obtained data is rather basic. Questionnaires, unlike interviews, do not provide in-depth insight into minds of people and "provide a rather 'thin' description of the target phenomena." (Dörnyei 2007: 115) The results can therefore only show tendencies and

people's inclinations but providing reasons and explanations is never an easy or simplistic matter. Respondents were only given a scale from 1 to 4 or 1 to 6 and this somehow triggers a bias result as 'neutral' statements cannot really be rated as such by selecting the middle digit. However, at the same time this hinders subjects from selecting the middle digit in cases where they are unsure and do not have a tendency.

Conclusion

The studies considered and challenged in this thesis have demonstrated the complexity behind the diverse topic of language and gender. By challenging taken-for-granted knowledge and investigating social beliefs that lead to the specific understanding of the world, this thesis has demonstrated that there is no direct link between sex and language. Claiming that gender is the dominant aspect influencing a person's linguistic choices is erroneous: other variables such as age, social class and context are all highly relevant in contributing to a certain mode of expression. Concepts such as femininity and masculinity are social constructs that are subject to variation and change. Speaking like a man or a woman is in turn an idea that derives from the culturally accepted norms of masculinity and femininity.

Nevertheless, for political and financial reasons, the media, self-literature and members of a society continue to assert and make-believe that differences between women and men are grave, which ultimately leads to a difference in perception. The true factor influencing perception of speech, however, is that of gender stereotypes which have been manifested and left unchallenged in people's minds over many years. The indirect relation between language and gender has been explained in light of social constructionism and the Foucauldian discourse theory.

The empirical part has gathered results that partially corroborate long-held gender stereotypes and has made aware that knowledge of gender stereotypes and stereotyped expectations have persisted up until the present day. While this small-scale study can under no circumstances be regarded as representative, they deserve to be reported as they provide insight to thought-provoking inclinations. The compiled data suggests that while gender stereotypes remain, they seem to be receding and perceived in weaker forms. It seems as though the number of possibilities for women to express themselves in different ways has grown and that somewhat different speaking styles are not as surprising because of their rarity.

Nevertheless, to assume that gender stereotypes are no longer an issue is a false and dangerous assumption, since this line of thought fosters and legitimizes gender discrimination. While sexist language plays a crucial part in maintaining existing conditions, it cannot be regarded as the sole solution to solving inequality. The dominant concern should be that of unchallenged beliefs and the postulated indisputable male power and privilege. Once this is done, and gender polarization is no longer reinforced, outdated and misleading views about men and women can be forgotten.

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Appendix

Language in Teenage Chat Rooms: Questionnaire A

This survey examines the language in **teenage chat rooms**. The survey will take roughly 7 minutes to complete, and will greatly aid a student with their Diploma Thesis. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

The extracts used in this study were taken from American chat room sites (photos and nicknames were changed in order to respect users' privacy).
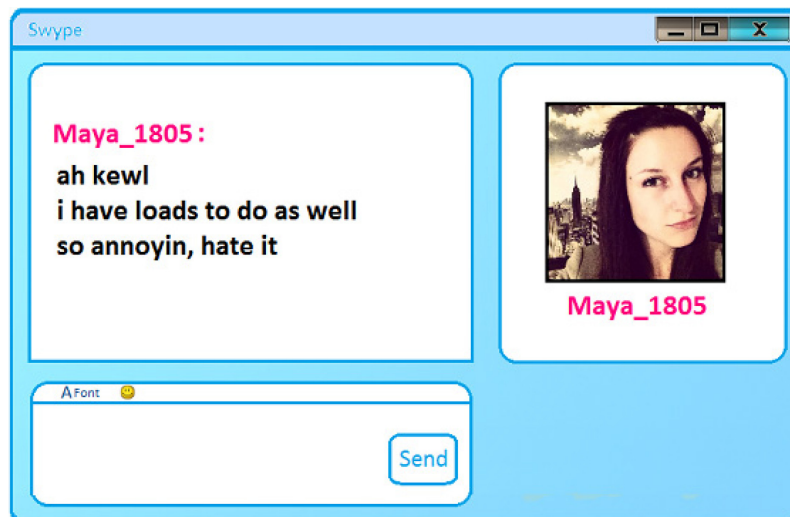
PART 1

You will read **11 statements** taken from various chat rooms. Each statement is taken from group conversations comprised of both male and female participants. All the participants are within the ages of 14-19.

For each statement, you will be asked to **make judgments** in six categories such as **tone, grammar** and **appropriateness**. Each category will be on a **scale from 1-4**
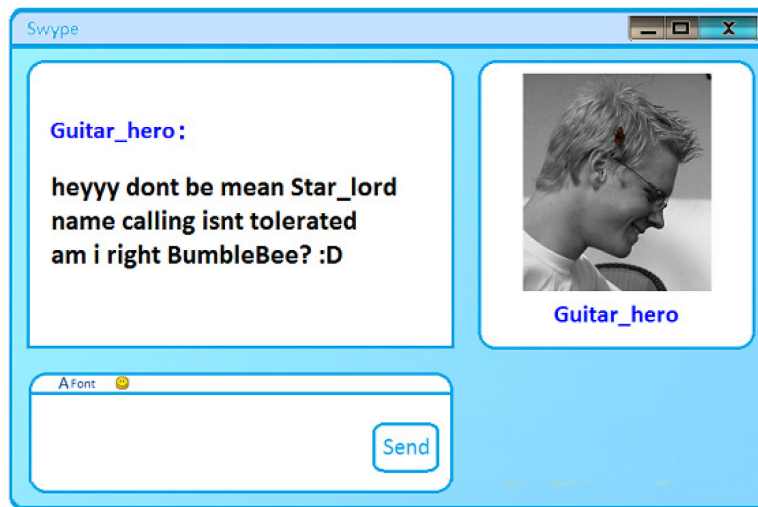
For example: When asked to rate whether the statement is polite or rude, each number represents a different dimension of that scale (e.g. 1=polite, 2=somewhat polite, 3=somewhat impolite, 4=impolite.)

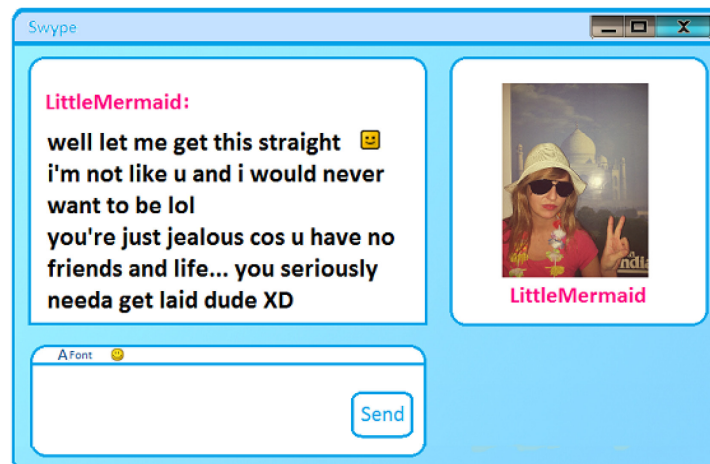## Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	Rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	Hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	rude	
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant	
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague	
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others	
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others	
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar	

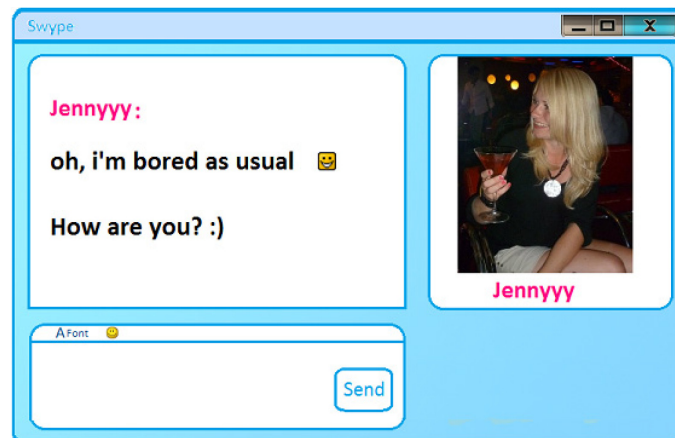**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

polite	1---2---3---4	rude	
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant	
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague	
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others	
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others	
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar	

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

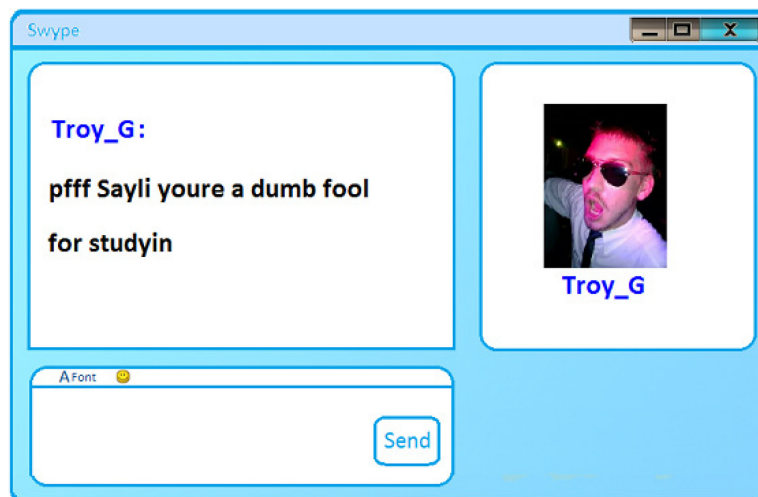**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

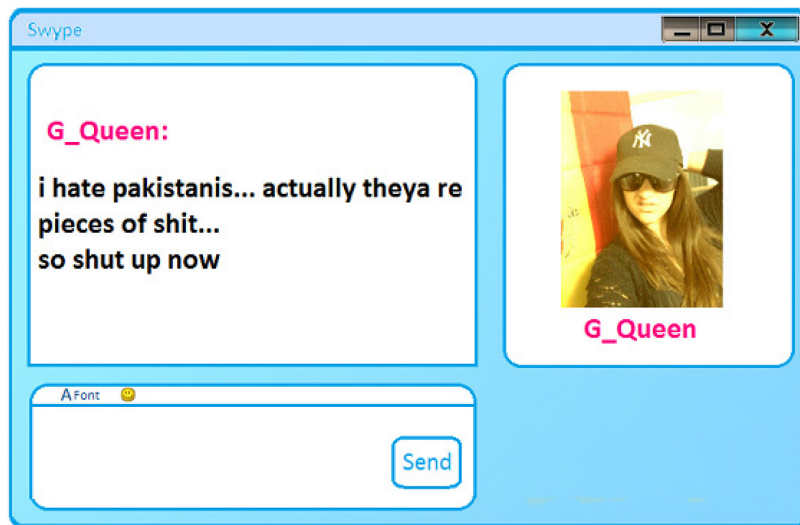|		
polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	Rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	Hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

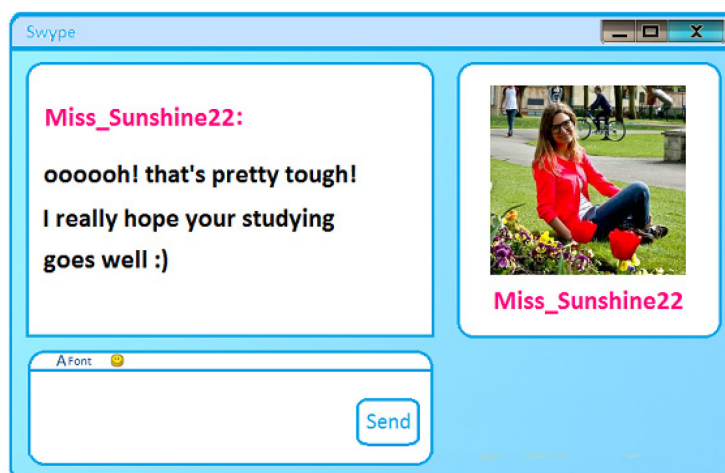**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

polite	1---2---3---4	Rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	Hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

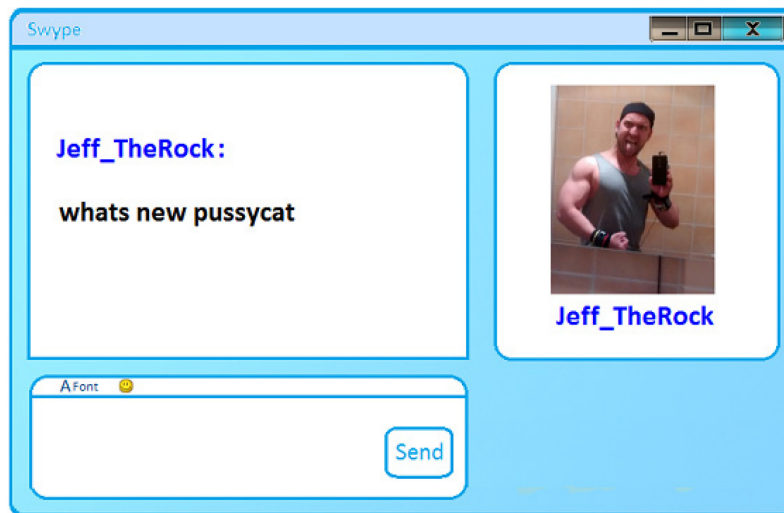**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

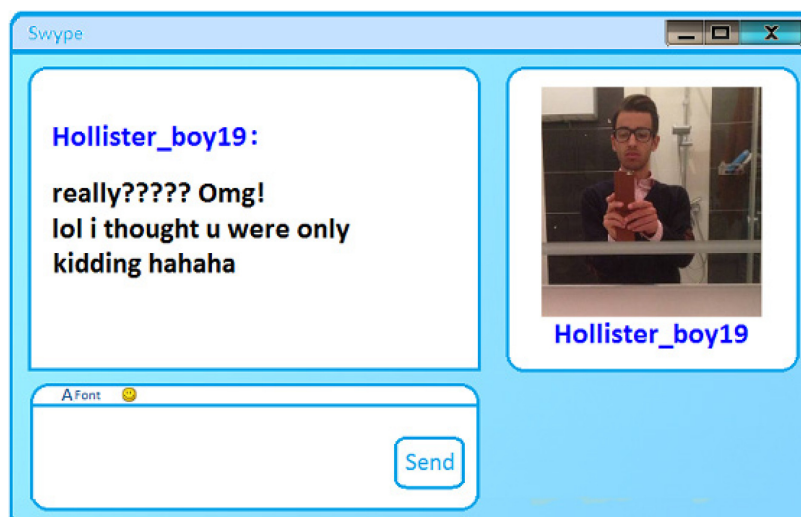**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

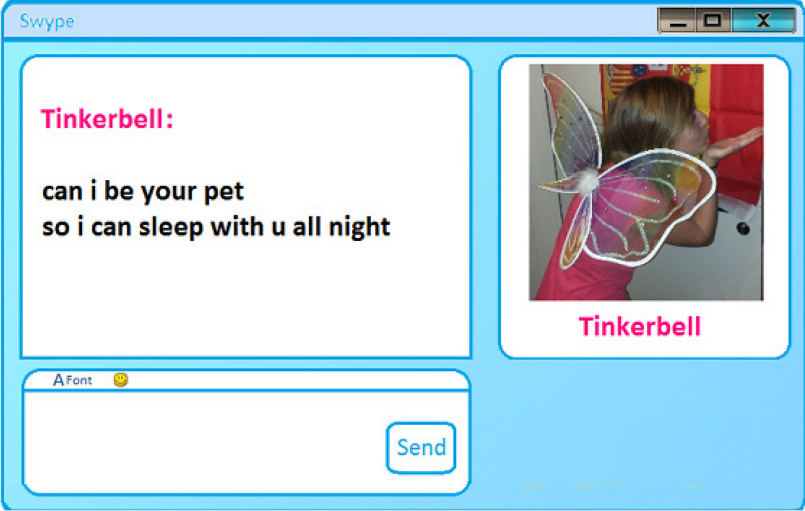**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Please read the following statements below. For each statement, rate how likely you think the statement is written by a female user or a male user.

In this part of the survey, the rating is on a **scale from 1 – 6.**
(1=extremely likely to be female, 2=very likely to be female, 3=likely to be female, 4=likely to be male, 5=very likely to be male, 6=extremely likely to be male)

The following statement might have been written by a...

Female   1---2---3---4---5---6   Male

The following statement might have been written by a...

Female   1---2---3---4---5---6   Male

The following statement might have been written by a...


```
Swype                                    _ □ X

 i didnt ask u.....it shows ur childish
 ass behavior
 i bet u still depend on ur mom and
 u are wasting her money on
 here... dude do work and stop
 hitting

 A Font  🙂

                              Send
```
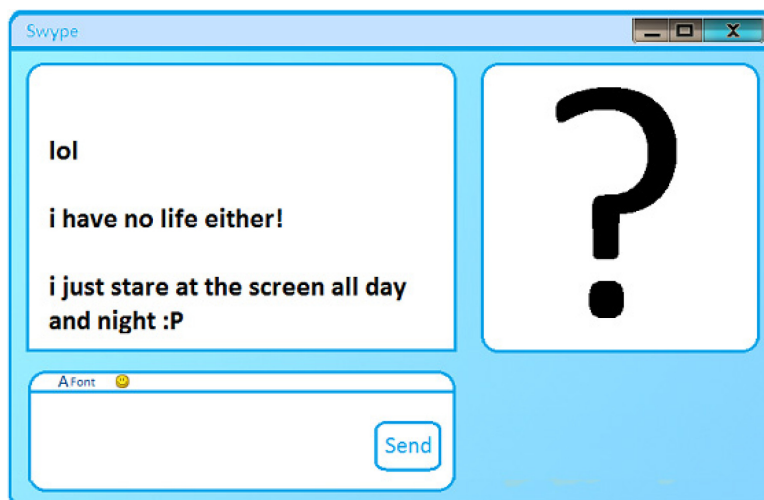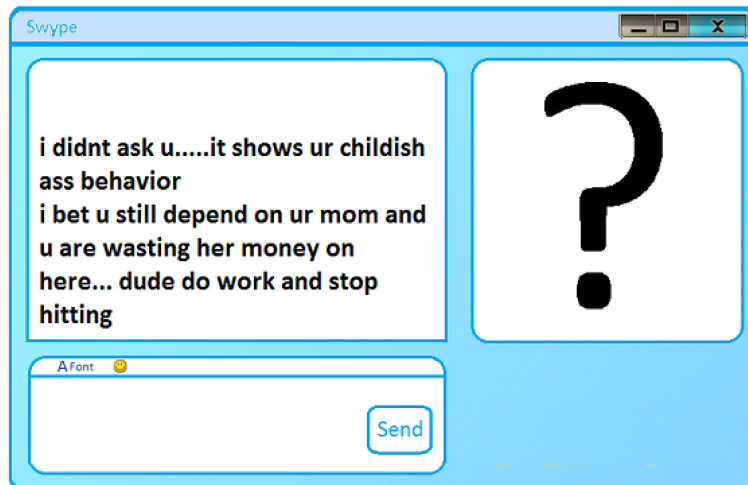
Female   1---2---3---4---5---6   Male

In this part of the survey, we will be asking you to decide which of the following characteristics are seen in our society as typically male and typically female behavior in spoken interaction. In the following list next to each adjective, please select "male" if you believe the adjective typically describes a male attribute, or "female" if you believe the adjective typically describes a female attribute.

attribute	male	female
assertive		
polite		
hesitant		
dominant		
co-operative		
responsive		
concerned with keeping conversation intact		
attentive		
talkative		

direct		
demanding		
tactful		
gossipy		
competitive		
authoritarian		

Finally, please fill out your personal information

Please indicate:

Age	
Sex	
Nationality	
Mother tongue	
Which country do you live in?	
Do/did you study at university? If yes, what subject(s)?	

THANK YOU for your participation! Please don't forget to click **"absenden"** (=send) :)

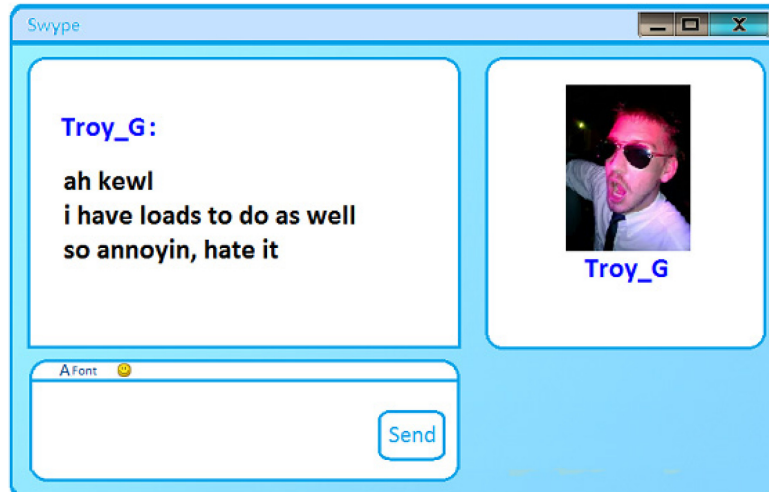## Language in Teenage Chat Rooms: Questionnaire B

This survey examines the language in **teenage chat rooms**. The survey will take roughly 7 minutes to complete, and will greatly aid a student with their Diploma Thesis. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

The extracts used in this study were taken from American chat room sites (photos and nicknames were changed in order to respect users' privacy).
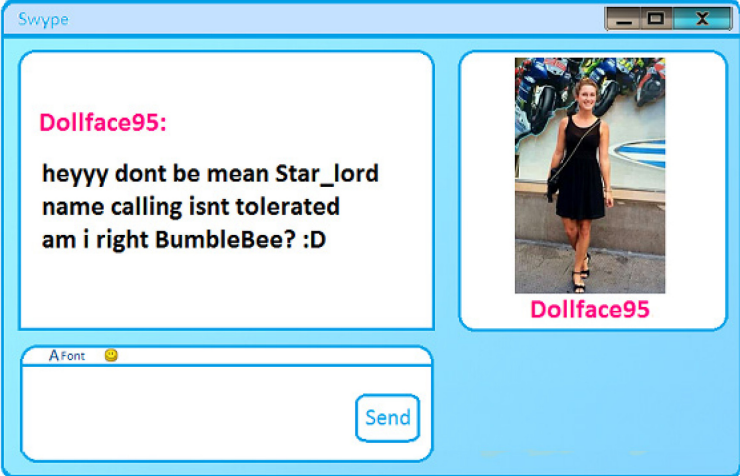
PART 1

You will read **11 statements** taken from various chat rooms. Each statement is taken from group conversations comprised of both male and female participants. All the participants are within the ages of 14-19. For each statement, you will be asked to **make judgments** in six categories such as **tone, grammar** and **appropriateness**. Each category will be on a **scale from 1-4** For example: When asked to rate whether the statement is polite or rude, each number represents a different dimension of that scale (e.g. 1=polite, 2=somewhat polite, 3=somewhat impolite, 4=impolite.)

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	Rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	Hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

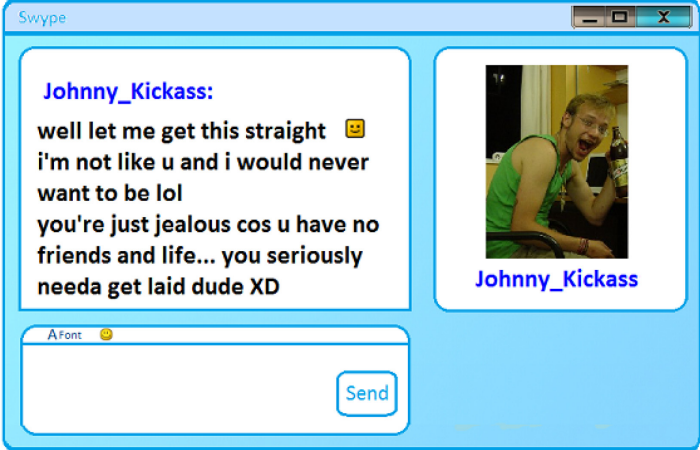|		
polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

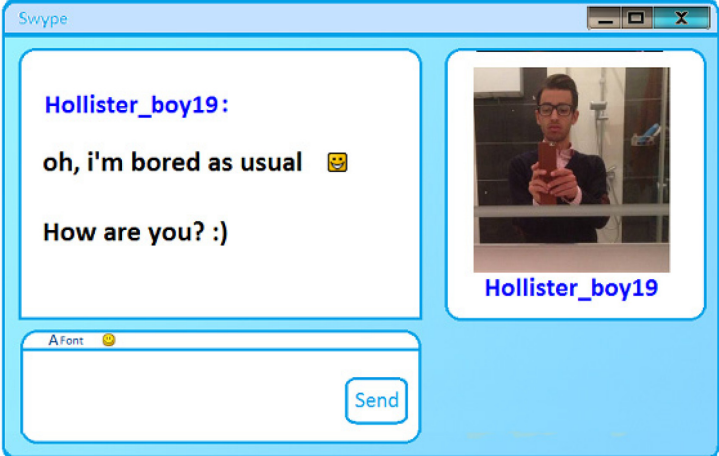**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

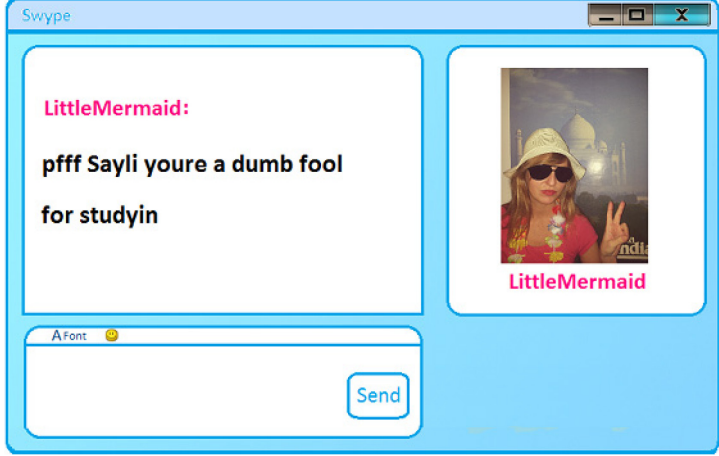**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

polite	1---2---3---4	Rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	Hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

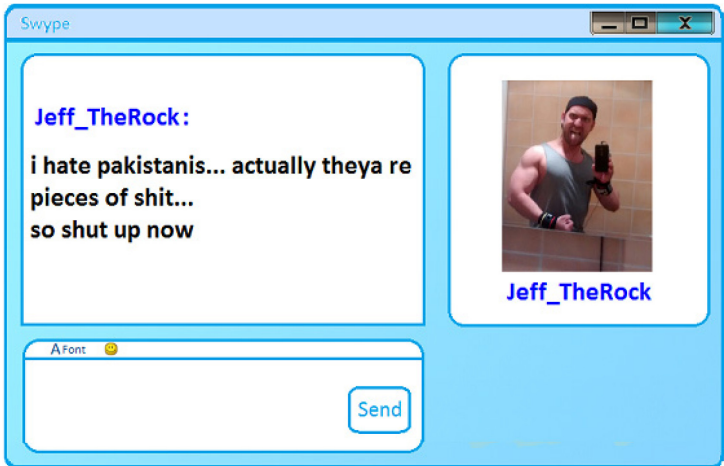|		
polite	1---2---3---4	Rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	Hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

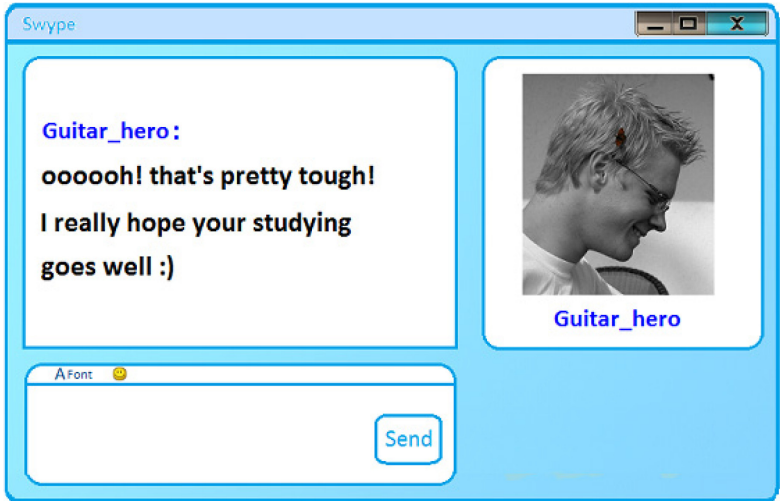**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

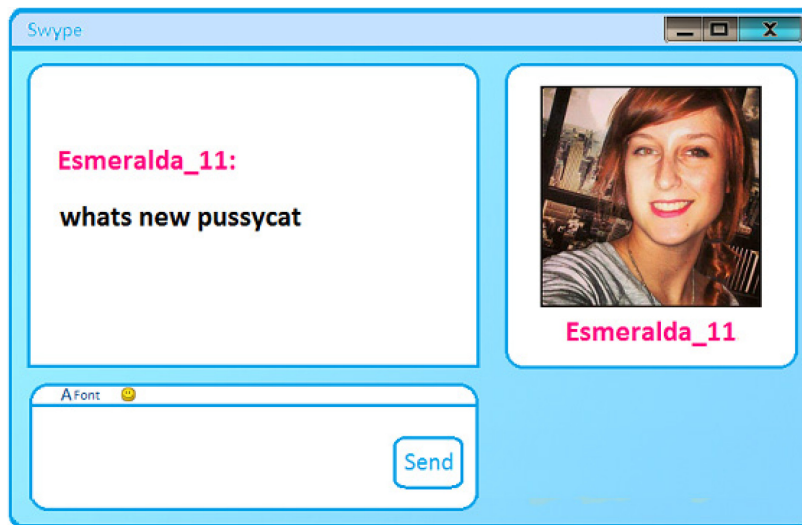|		
polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:

polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

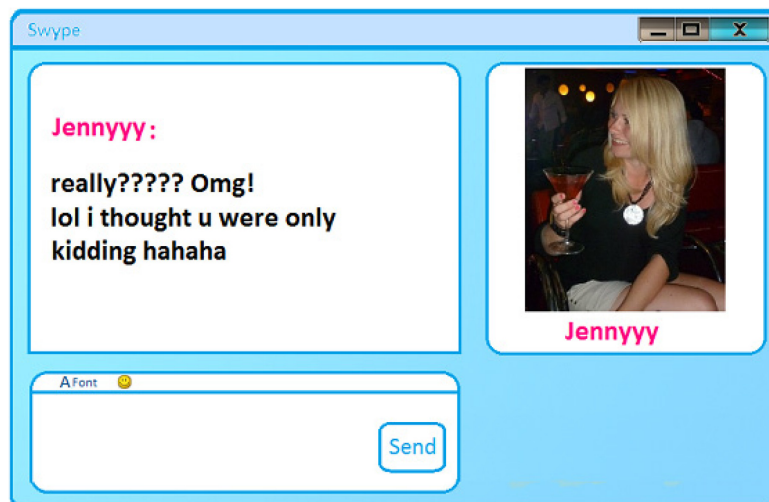**Read the following statement and decide if the statement is/uses:**

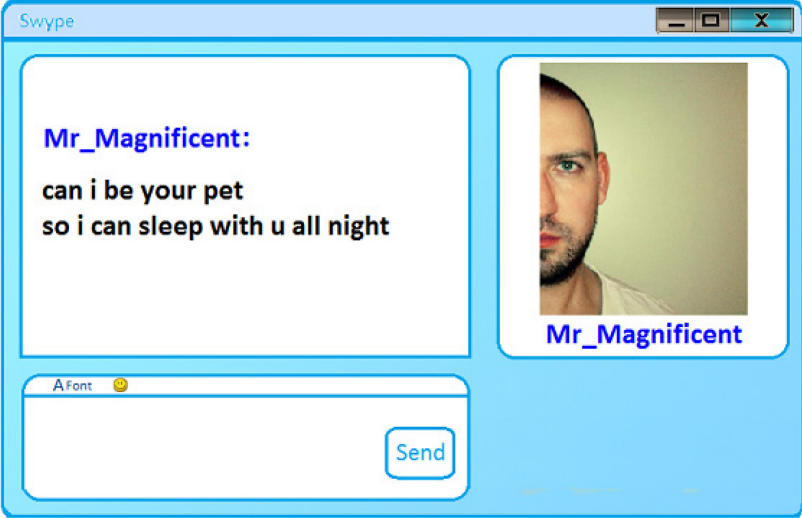|		
polite	1---2---3---4	rude
assertive	1---2---3---4	hesitant
direct/blunt	1---2---3---4	indirect/vague
sensitive towards others	1---2---3---4	insensitive towards others
self-centered	1---2---3---4	oriented towards others
bad/inappropriate grammar	1---2---3---4	good/appropriate grammar

Please read the following statements below. For each statement, rate how likely you think the statement is written by a female user or a male user.

In this part of the survey, the rating is on a **scale from 1 – 6.**
(1=extremely likely to be female, 2=very likely to be female, 3=likely to be female, 4=likely to be male, 5=very likely to be male, 6=extremely likely to be male)

The following statement might have been written by a...

Swype

i tried it like ONCE

it is now officially known as the ouchy machine hahaha

A Font

Send

?

Female   1---2---3---4---5---6   Male

The following statement might have been written by a...

Swype

lol

i have no life either!

i just stare at the screen all day and night :P

A Font

Send

?

Female   1---2---3---4---5---6   Male

The following statement might have been written by a...

Female	1---2---3---4---5---6	Male

In this part of the survey, we will be asking you to decide which of the following characteristics are seen in our society as typically male and typically female behavior in spoken interaction. In the following list next to each adjective, please select "male" if you believe the adjective typically describes a male attribute, or "female" if you believe the adjective typically describes a female attribute

attribute	male	Female
assertive		
polite		
hesitant		
dominant		
co-operative		
responsive		
concerned with keeping conversation intact		
attentive		
talkative		
direct		
demanding		

tactful		
gossipy		
competitive		
authoritarian		

Finally, please indicate your personal information

Please indicate:

Age	
Sex	
Nationality	
Mother tongue	
Which country do you live in?	
Do/did you study at university? If yes, what subject(s)?	

THANK YOU for your participation! Please don't forget to click **"absenden"** (=send) :)

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of respondents' sex

Sex		Frequency	Percent
Gültig	F	252	81,3
	M	35	11,3
	Gesamt	287	92,6
Fehlend	System	23	7,4
Gesamt		310	100,0

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of respondents' mother tongue

Mother tongue - Please indicate:

		Frequency	Percent	Gültige Prozente	Kumulierte Prozente
Gültig	(austrian) german	1	,3	,3	,3
	Austrian German	3	1,0	1,0	1,3

Bengali	1	,3	,3	1,6
Bilingual	1	,3	,3	1,9
Bosnian	3	1,0	1,0	2,9
Croatian	1	,3	,3	3,2
Dari	1	,3	,3	3,5
Dutch	1	,3	,3	3,9
Engines	1	,3	,3	4,2
English	3	1,0	1,0	5,2
English	27	8,7	8,7	13,9
English, German	1	,3	,3	14,2
English, Romanian	1	,3	,3	14,5
English/German	1	,3	,3	14,8
Farsi	1	,3	,3	15,2
French	2	,6	,6	15,8
G	1	,3	,3	16,1
Germ	1	,3	,3	16,5
German	68	21,9	21,9	38,4
German	152	49,0	49,0	87,4
german and english	1	,3	,3	87,7
German, Chaldean	1	,3	,3	88,1
German, English	1	,3	,3	88,4
German, Polish	1	,3	,3	88,7
German/Serbian	1	,3	,3	89,0
Germen	1	,3	,3	89,4
Gernan	1	,3	,3	89,7
Hungarian	1	,3	,3	90,0
Hungarian	2	,6	,6	90,6
Italian	2	,6	,6	91,3
Italian	1	,3	,3	91,6
Kazakh	1	,3	,3	91,9
Latvian	1	,3	,3	92,3
Polish	1	,3	,3	92,6
Portuguese	1	,3	,3	92,9
Romanian	1	,3	,3	93,2
Russian	2	,6	,6	93,9
Russian	4	1,3	1,3	95,2
Russian and German (raised bilingually)	1	,3	,3	95,5
Russsian	1	,3	,3	95,8

		Häufigkeit	Prozent	Gültige Prozente	Kumulierte Prozente
	Serbian	2	,6	,6	96,5
	Serbian Language	1	,3	,3	96,8
	Slovak	3	1,0	1,0	97,7
	Spanish	2	,6	,6	98,4
	spanish/French	1	,3	,3	98,7
	Ukrainian	1	,3	,3	99,0
	Ukrainian	2	,6	,6	99,7
	Wienerisch	1	,3	,3	100,0
	Gesamt	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of respondents' country of origin

Which country do you live in? - Please indicate:

		Häufigkeit	Prozent	Gültige Prozente	Kumulierte Prozente
	A	1	,3	,3	,3
	Ausrtia	1	,3	,3	,6
	Australia	15	4,8	4,8	5,5
	Austria	60	19,4	19,4	24,8
	Austria	193	62,3	62,3	87,1
	austria now	1	,3	,3	87,4
	Austria, Vienna	1	,3	,3	87,7
	austria/Russia	1	,3	,3	88,1
	Austrian	1	,3	,3	88,4
	Aut	2	,6	,6	89,0
	AUT	3	1,0	1,0	90,0
	Bosnia	1	,3	,3	90,3
Gültig	Canada	5	1,6	1,6	91,9
	Chile	1	,3	,3	92,3
	Chile	1	,3	,3	92,6
	England	1	,3	,3	92,9
	England	1	,3	,3	93,2
	France	1	,3	,3	93,5
	Germany	1	,3	,3	93,9
	Hungary	1	,3	,3	94,2
	Hungary	1	,3	,3	94,5
	Ireland	1	,3	,3	94,8
	Korea	1	,3	,3	95,2
	Latvia	1	,3	,3	95,5
	London	1	,3	,3	95,8

Portugal	1	,3	,3	96,1
The Netherlands	1	,3	,3	96,5
UK	4	1,3	1,3	97,7
US	1	,3	,3	98,1
Usa	1	,3	,3	98,4
USA	3	1,0	1,0	99,4
Vienna	1	,3	,3	99,7
Vienna	1	,3	,3	100,0
Gesamt	310	100,0	100,0	

Table 4: Minimum, maximum and median age of respondents

Age - Please indicate:

N	Gültig	310
	Fehlend	0
Median		22,73
Standardabweichung		4,240
Minimum		16
Maximum		47

Table 5: Test of statistical significance for criteria "polite vs. rude" in group 1

Abhängige Variable: **Polite vs. Rude (Neutral statements)**

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.	Partielles Eta-Quadrat
Korrigiertes Modell	1,795[a]	3	,598	,519	,669	,001
Konstanter Term	2996,902	1	2996,902	2600,323	,000	,694
Sex of respondents	,310	1	,310	,269	,604	,000
Sex of speaker	1,217	1	1,217	1,056	,304	,001
sexrespondent* sexspeaker	,226	1	,226	,196	,658	,000
Fehler	1318,473	1144	1,153			
Gesamt	8218,000	1148				
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	1320,268	1147				

Table 6: Test of statistical significance for criteria "polite vs. rude" in group 2

Abhängige Variable: **Polite vs. Rude ('female' statements)**

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	Df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.	Partielles Eta-Quadrat
Korrigiertes Modell	,181[a]	3	,060	,112	,953	,000
Konstanter Term	1011,121	1	1011,121	1875,373	,000	,686
Sex of respondents	6,778E-05	1	6,778E-05	,000	,991	,000
Sex of speaker	,057	1	,057	,106	,745	,000
sexrespondent* sexspeaker	,003	1	,003	,005	,945	,000
Fehler	462,058	857	,539			
Gesamt	2824,000	861				
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	462,239	860				

Table 6: Test of statistical significance for criteria "direct/blunt vs. indirect/vague" in group 3

Abhängige Variable: **direct/blunt vs. indirect/vague ('male' statements)**

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	Df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.	Partielles Eta-Quadrat
Korrigiertes Modell	6,348[a]	3	2,116	4,677	,003	,012
Konstanter Term	881,054	1	881,054	1947,547	,000	,630
sexrespondent	,009	1	,009	,020	,888	,000
Sexspeaker	2,192	1	2,192	4,845	,028	,004
sexrespondent * sexspeaker	,046	1	,046	,101	,751	,000
Fehler	517,536	1144	,452			
Gesamt	2571,000	1148				
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	523,884	1147				

Table 7: Test of statistical significance for Part 2, statement "*i didnt ask u*"

Part 2: Statement: *i didnt ask u…*

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.
Korrigiertes Modell	22,542[a]	3	7,514	2,614	,051
Konstanter Term	2043,035	1	2043,035	710,816	,000
Gsex	1,280	1	1,280	,445	,505
Questionnaire	,033	1	,033	,012	,915
gsex * questionnaire	8,353	1	8,353	2,906	,089
Fehler	813,402	283	2,874		
Gesamt	5460,000	287			
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	835,944	286			

Table 8: Median scores for Part 2, statement "*lol i have no life*"

Statement: *lol i have no life...*

(Scoring 1=typically female, 6=typically male)

Sex	Questionnaire	Median	Standardabweichung	N
F	A	3,67	1,201	124
	B	3,72	1,357	128
	Total	3,69	1,280	252
M	A	3,37	1,455	16
	B	3,26	1,046	19
	Total	3,31	1,231	35
Total	A	3,64	1,230	140
	B	3,66	1,327	147
	Total	3,65	1,278	287

Table 9: Test of statistical significance for Part 2, statement "*i tried it like ONCE*"

Statement: *i tried it like ONCE...*

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.
Korrigiertes Modell	4,704[a]	3	1,568	,959	,413
Konstanter Term	1501,703	1	1501,703	918,378	,000
gsex	4,293	1	4,293	2,625	,106
questionnaire	,030	1	,030	,018	,893
gsex * questionnaire	,198	1	,198	,121	,728
Fehler	462,753	283	1,635		
Gesamt	4287,000	287			
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	467,456	286			

a. R-Quadrat = ,010 (korrigiertes R-Quadrat = ,000)

Table 10: Test of statistical significance for Part 2, statement "*lol i have no life...*"

Statement: *lol i have no life...*

Quelle	Quadratsumme vom Typ III	df	Mittel der Quadrate	F	Sig.
Korrigiertes Modell	4,417[a]	3	1,472	1,010	,389
Konstanter Term	478,138	1	478,138	328,074	,000

gsex	3,438	1	3,438	2,359	,126
Questionnaire	,313	1	,313	,215	,644
gsex * questionnaire	,706	1	,706	,485	,487
Fehler	412,447	283	1,457		
Gesamt	1688,000	287			
Korrigierte Gesamtvariation	416,864	286			

a. R-Quadrat = ,011 (korrigiertes R-Quadrat = ,000)

Table 11: Test of statistical significance for Part 2, male and female characteristics

Chi-Quadrat-Tests nach Pearson

		Sex
assertive	Chi-Quadrat	1,080
	df	1
	Sig.	,299
polite	Chi-Quadrat	2,142
	df	1
	Sig.	,143[a]
hesitant	Chi-Quadrat	,012
	df	1
	Sig.	,912[a]
dominant	Chi-Quadrat	,087
	df	1
	Sig.	,769[a]
co-operative	Chi-Quadrat	5,723
	df	1
	Sig.	,017[a,*]
responsive	Chi-Quadrat	1,003
	df	1
	Sig.	,316[a]
concerned with keeping conversation intact	Chi-Quadrat	2,878
	df	1
	Sig.	,090[a]
attentive	Chi-Quadrat	,030
	df	1
	Sig.	,863[a]
talkative	Chi-Quadrat	,006
	df	1
	Sig.	,940[a]
direct	Chi-Quadrat	1,492
	df	1
	Sig.	,222[a]
demanding	Chi-Quadrat	1,378
	df	1
	Sig.	,240
tactful	Chi-Quadrat	,000

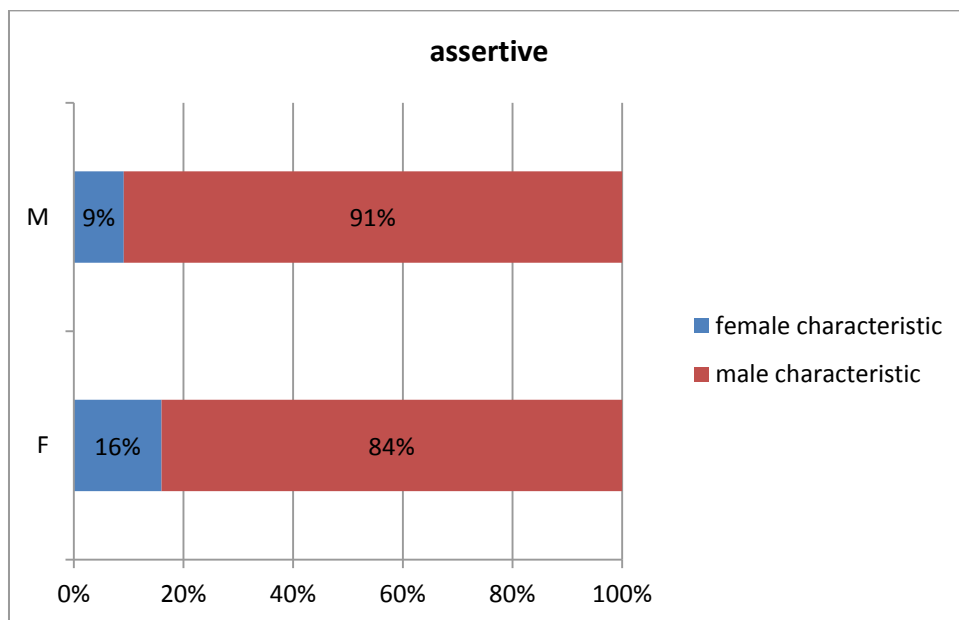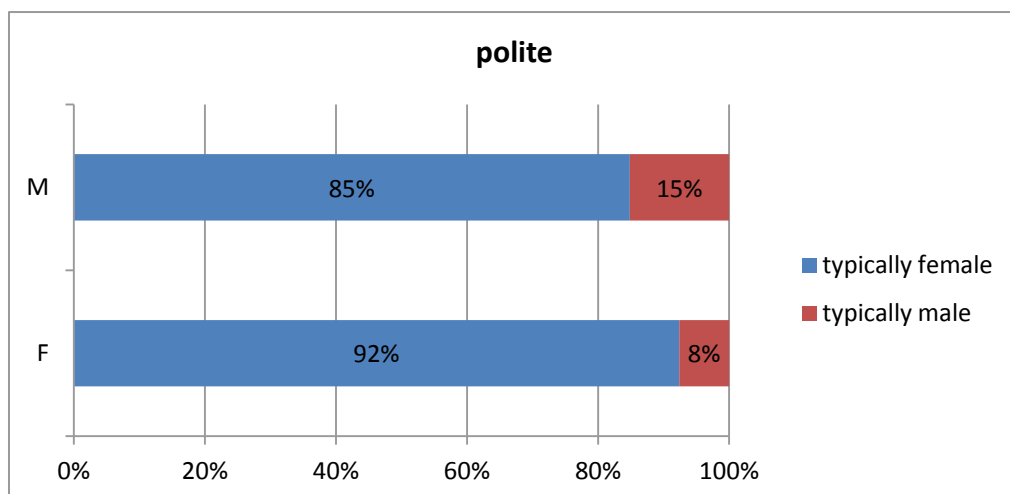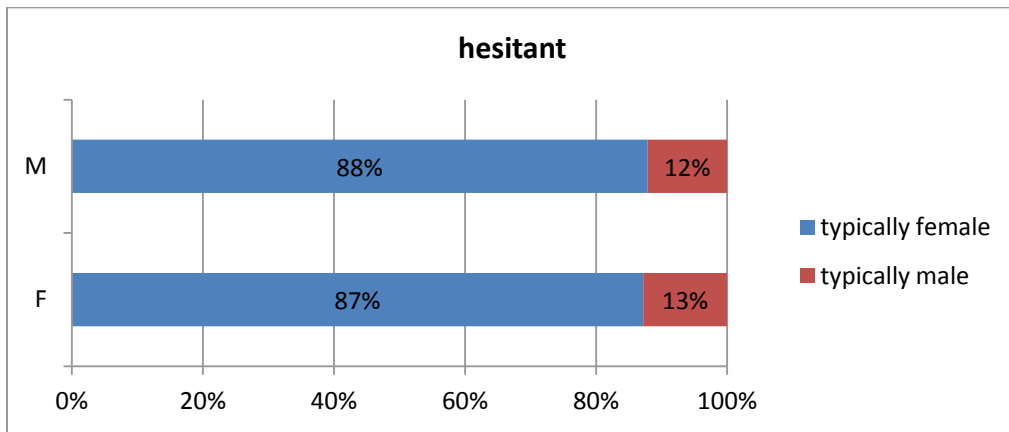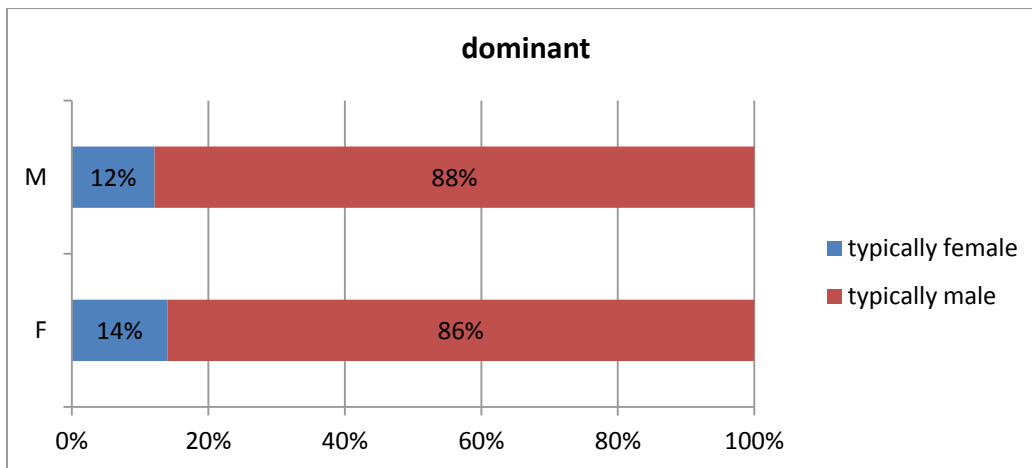|		
	df	1
	Sig.	,984[a]
gossipy	Chi-Quadrat	,012
	df	1
	Sig.	,914[a]
competitive	Chi-Quadrat	1,254
	df	1
	Sig.	,263
authoritarian	Chi-Quadrat	1,874
	df	1
	Sig.	,171[a]

Figure 1: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *assertive* to men and women

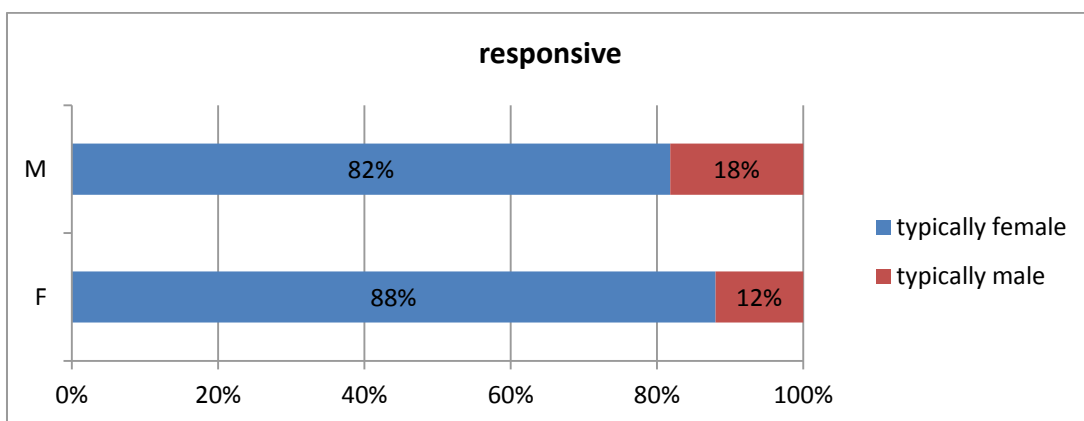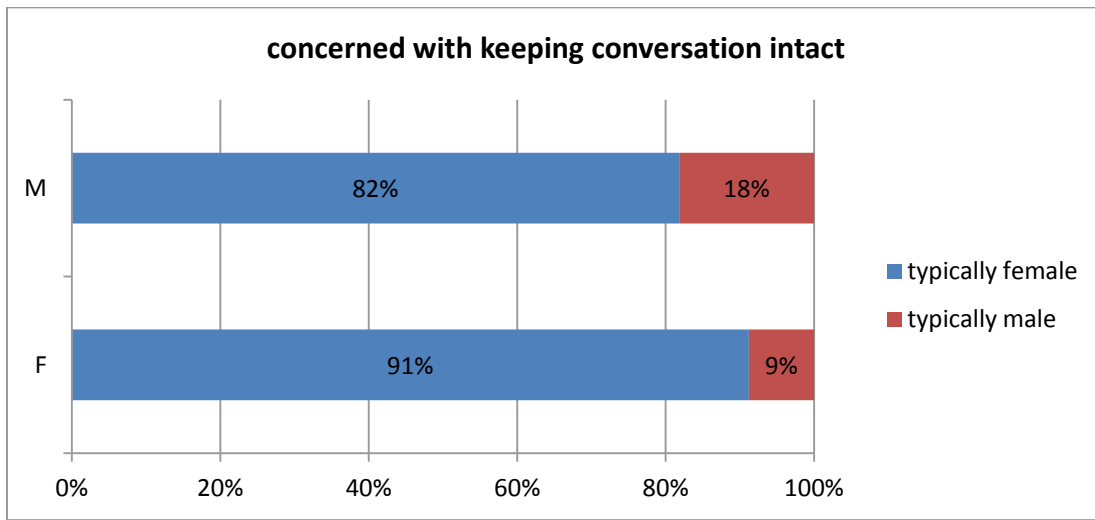Figure 2: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *polite* to men and women

Figure 3: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *hesitant* to men and women

hesitant

M: typically female 88% | typically male 12%
F: typically female 87% | typically male 13%

- typically female
- typically male

Figure 4: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *dominant* to men and women

dominant

M: typically female 12% | typically male 88%
F: typically female 14% | typically male 86%

- typically female
- typically male

Figure 5: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *responsive* to men and women

responsive

M: typically female 82% | typically male 18%
F: typically female 88% | typically male 12%

- typically female
- typically male

Figure 6: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *concerned with keeping conversation intact* to men and women

Figure 7: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *attentive* to men and women
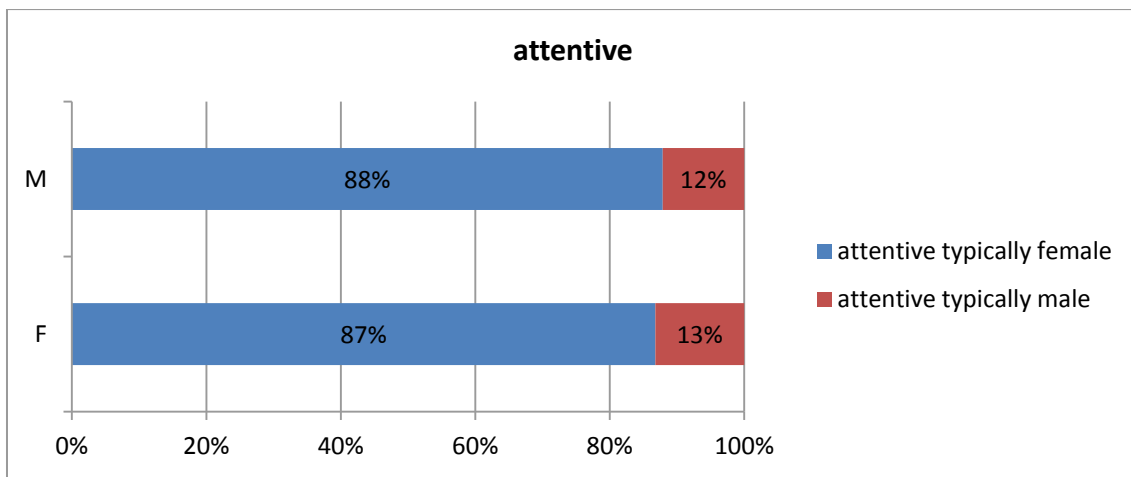

Figure 8: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *direct* to men and women
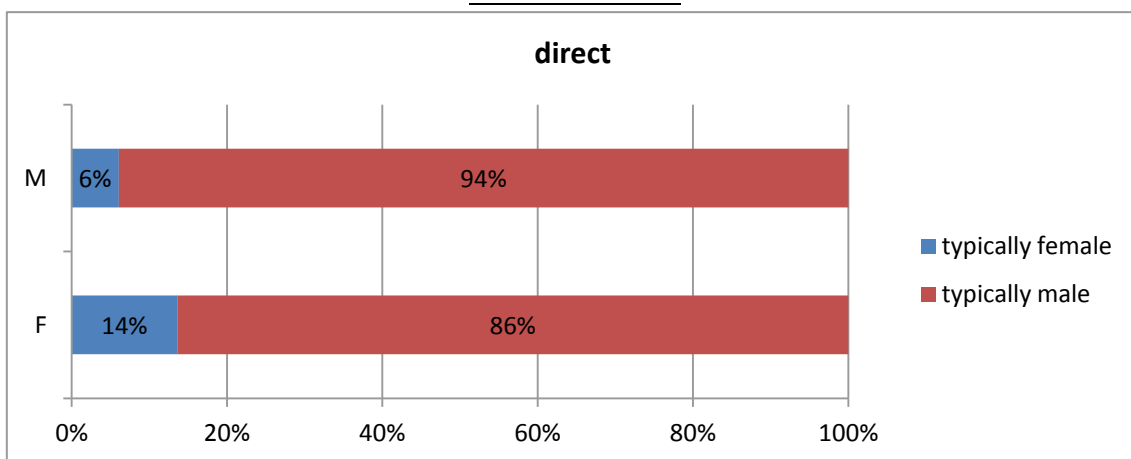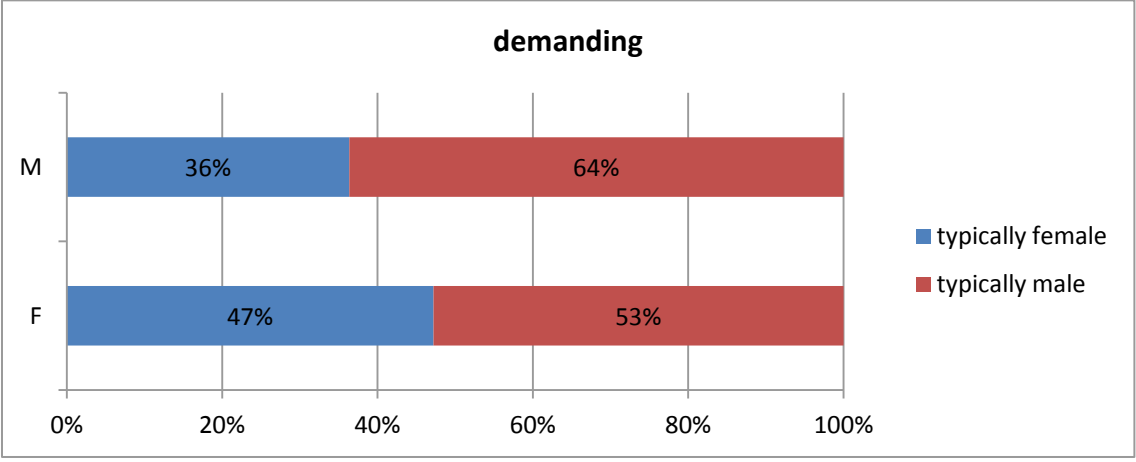
Figure 9: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *demanding* to men and women

Figure 10: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *tactful* to men and women
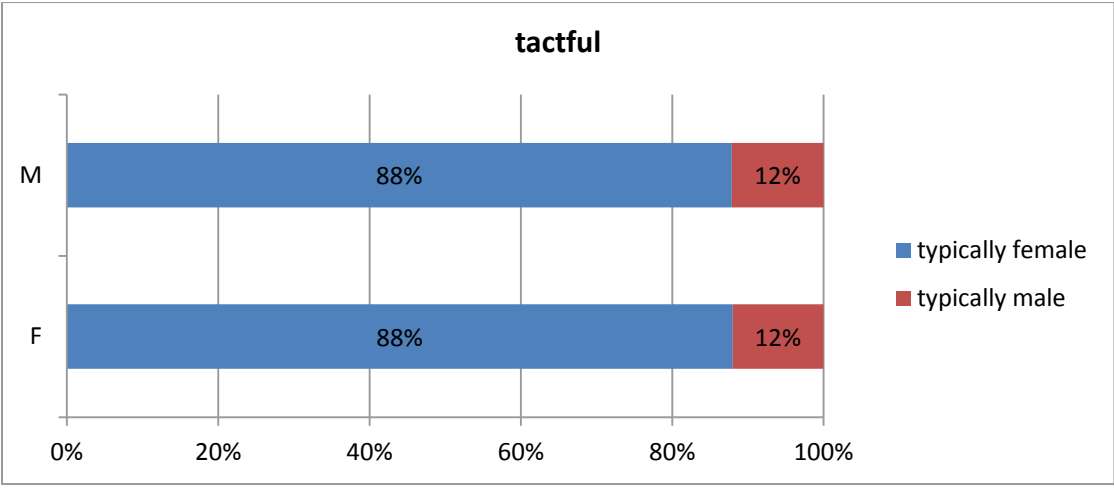

Figure 11: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *competitive* to men and women
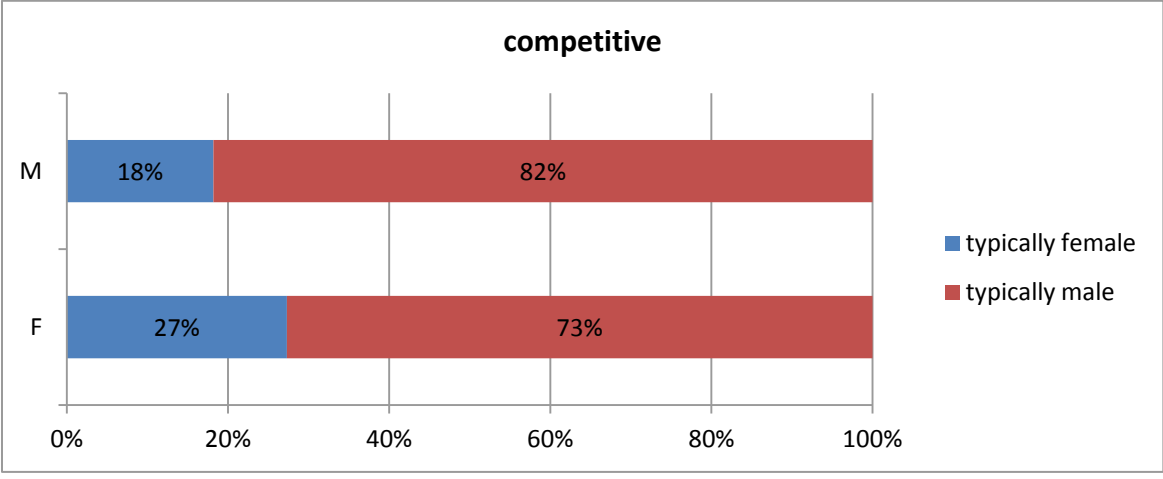
Figure 12: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *authoritarian* to men and women
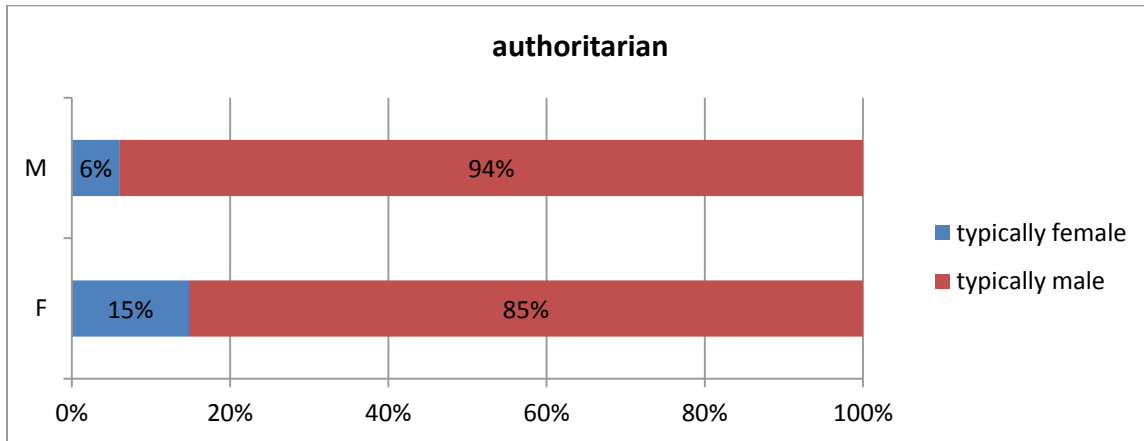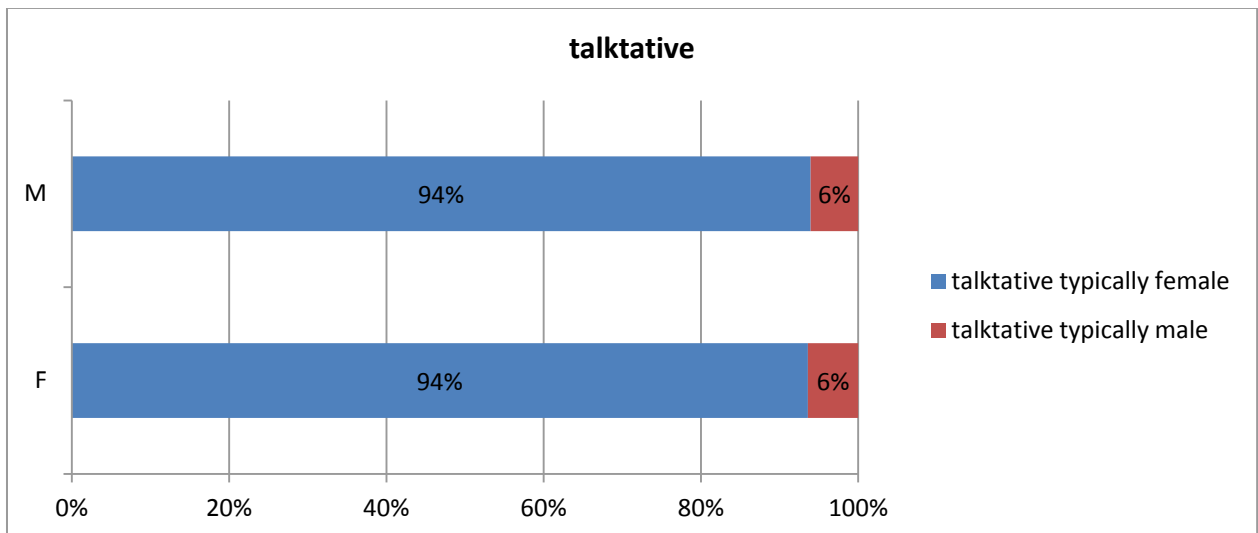

Figure 13: Percentages of male and female respondents ascribing the characteristic *talkative* to men and women

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit untersucht geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede im Sprachgebrauch. Männer und Frauen weisen bestimmte linguistische Verhaltensmerkmale auf, die sich voneinander unterscheiden. Besagte Unterschiede werden oftmals verschieden wahrgenommen und demensprechend positiv oder negativ bewertet. Die Evaluierung von einzelnen Sprachmerkmalen (linguistic devices) unterliegt fest verankerten Stereotypen und ist gleichzeitig kulturabhängig.

Als theoretische Grundlage der Arbeit dienen unter anderem feministische Sprachforschung, die zur Unterscheidung der Begriffe „sex" und „gender" führten und im Rahmen der Gender Linguistik eine wichtige Erkenntnis darstellten. Judith Butlers Konzept der „gender premormativity" wird des Weiteren erleuchtet und fungiert als tragende theoretische Analyse von Sprachevaluierung. Hier wird argumentiert, dass Unterschiede im Sprachgebrauch nicht aufgrund einer biologischen Disposition erkennbar, sondern besagte Unterschiede vielmehr als Produkt von Geschlechtsstereotypen und angelerntem bzw. normiertem Verhalten erklärbar sind.

Ein besonderer Fokus auf geschlechtsspezifische Sprachmerkmale fand in den 1970er Jahren statt. Damals stellte Robin Lakoff (1975) fest, dass Frauen weniger „effektiv" kommunizieren als Männer und ihnen demnach unterlegen seien. Lakoff wurde dahingehend stark kritisiert, ihre Feststellungen würden hauptsächlich auf Geschlechtsstereotypen basieren. Trotz ihrer sehr umstrittenen Forschungsergebnisse war Lakoffs Beitrag essentiell, da er den Auftakt für die (feministische) Sprachforschung setzte. Daraufhin entwickelten sich verschiedene theoretische Ansätze und Modelle bezüglich der Ungleichheit von Frauen, wie z.B.: Dominanz, Differenz und Defizit. Diese drei Modelle versuchen zu erklären warum Frauen Männern unterlegen seien. Es folgen weitere Studien zur Behandlung geschlechtsspezifischer Unterschiede.

Dass Frauen Männern allerdings keinesfalls unterlegen sind, wird im zweiten Teils der Arbeit thematisiert. In den 1990ern wurde immer mehr Fokus darauf gelegt, Gründe für den unterschiedlichen Sprachgebrauch zu erforschen. Studien von Coates (1993, 1996, 2003) zeigten, dass viel mehr die *Evaluierung* von einzelnen Sprachmerkmalen zu der Sicht führen, Frauen würden eine unterlegene Rolle einnehmen. Gewisse Sprachmerkmale, die oftmals Frauen zugeordnet werden, sind negativ behaftet und führen somit zu einer negativen Beurteilung. In westlichen Kulturen unterscheidet man „female language" (redselig, schwatzhaft, kooperativ, hilfsbereit, am Wohle des Anderen interessiert, etc.) und „male language" (kompetitiv, Leistungsorientiert, dominant, direkt, objektiv, etc.). Diese

Charakteristika sind sowohl positiv als auch negativ besetzt und begründen sich in stereotypischen Ansichten. Stereotypen wiederrum sind oftmals politisch motiviert und übernehmen einen wesentlichen Teil im Prozess von Sprachevaluierung. Unser Verständnis der Welt und ihren Strukturen beeinflusst daher unsere Wahrnehmung; wenn wir demnach glauben, dass Frauen sprachliche Varianten nutzen, die Unterlegenheit ausdrücken (wie z.B. häufiges Fragenstellen oder als Fragen formulierte Antworten geben), dann werden wir sie auch als solche wahrnehmen. Ziel ist es, diese festgefahrenen Stereotypen und Weltanschauungen zu hinterfragen, aufzubrechen und somit Ungleichheit und Ungerechtigkeit zu eliminieren. Trotz vermehrter Aufmerksamkeit auf ‚Gender Equality' werden Frauen nach wie vor diskriminiert; sie erlangen oft schlechtere Berufe und bekommen geringere Bezahlung für die gleiche Arbeit als ihre männlichen Kollegen.

Der empirische Teil der Arbeit befasst sich mit der oben erwähnten Problematik, insbesondere mit der Sprachevaluierung. Hierzu wurden zwei Fragebögen angefertigt, bestehend aus fünfzehn kurzen Sätzen, welche aus Internet-Chatauszügen stammen. Besagte Sätze sollten im Fragebogen aufgrund folgender Charakteristika beurteilt werden: *höflich* vs. *unhöflich, selbstsicher* vs. *zögernd, ungehobelt/schroff* vs. i*ndirekt/ausweichend, sensibel anderen gegenüber vs. unsensibel anderen gegenüber, egoistisch* vs. *empathisch,* und *grammatikalisch gut/angemessen* vs. *grammatikalisch schlecht/unangemessen*. Beide Fragebögen unterschieden sich nur in einer einzigen Variabel, nämlich der des ‚Sprechers' der Sätze; wenn z.B. Zitat #1 in Fragebogen A einer weiblichen Sprecherin zugeordnet wurde, wurde es in Fragebogen B einem männlichen Sprecher zugeordnet. Somit erlangt man die vergleichende Einsicht, ob genau derselbe Satz mit exakt gleichen sprachlichen Merkmalen aufgrund von Geschlechtsstereotypen anders beurteilt wird. Es stellt sich die Frage ob Frauen, die sich genauso ausdrücken wie Männer, anders bzw. negativer wahrgenommen werden. Den letzten drei Zitaten der Fragebögen wurde kein Sprecher bzw. keine Sprecherin zugewiesen, es galt also das Geschlecht des Sprechers bzw. der Sprecherin zu erraten.

Die abschließenden Ergebnisse der Studie weisen darauf hin, dass für ca. ein Drittel der verwendeten Zitate, unterschiedliche bzw. geschlechtsspezifische Wahrnehmungen festzustellen sind. Weibliche Sprecherinnen werden als höflicher, sensibler und selbstloser bewertet als männliche Sprecher. Daraus ergibt sich die These, dass Sprache anders, bzw. nach bestimmten Geschlechterstereotypen wahrgenommen und beurteilt wird.

Die Auswertung ergab außerdem, dass das Geschlecht einer Person anhand von sprachlichen Merkmalen sehr wohl erkennbar werden kann. Diese Studie erhärtet den Verdacht, dass geschlechtsstereotypisches Denken zum Teil noch immer unsere

Entscheidungen beeinflussen. Dies ist deshalb eine elementare Erkenntnis, da sie Licht auf ein Thema wirft, dass nach wie vor wenig Aufmerksamkeit genießt und zu schwerwiegenden Konsequenzen führen wie z.B. berufliche Diskriminierung.

Europass-Lebenslauf

Angaben zur Person

Nachname(n) / Vorname(n)	**Roya Zeweri**
E-Mail	royazeweri@hotmail.com
Staatsangehörigkeit	Deutsch
Geschlecht	Weiblich

Berufserfahrung

Zeitraum	November 2010 - heute
Beruf oder Funktion	Nachhilfelehrerin
Wichtigste Tätigkeiten und Zuständigkeiten	Betreuen von Haupt- und GymnasialschülerInnen bei Hausübungen, Schularbeitsvorbereitungen, Referaten und Projekten
Name und Adresse des Arbeitgebers	Schülerhilfe, Schaumannstraße 22, 2100 Korneuburg
Tätigkeitsbereich oder Branche	Pädagogik

Zeitraum	Juli 2014 – Juli 2014, Juli 2013 – August 2013, Juli 2012 – August 2012, Juli 2011 – Juli 2011
Beruf oder Funktion	Betreuerin im Feriencamp
Wichtigste Tätigkeiten und Zuständigkeiten	Kinder im Alter von 3 – 12 Jahren tagsüber pädagogisch betreuen mit kreativen Spielen, ausgewählten Ausflügen und sportlichen Aktivitäten
Name und Adresse des Arbeitgebers	Kleine Leut' gut betreut, Volksschule Langenzersdorf, Steyrergasse 22, 2103 Langenzersdorf
Tätigkeitsbereich oder Branche	Pädagogik

Schul- und Berufsbildung

Zeitraum	Oktober 2008 - heute
Bezeichnung der erworbenen Qualifikation	Lehramtsstudium für Englisch und Spanisch
Hauptfächer/berufliche Fähigkeiten	Englische und spanische Sprach-, Literatur-, Landes- Medien- und Kulturwissenschaft, Pädagogik
Name und Art der Bildungs- oder Ausbildungseinrichtung	Universität Wien, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien

Zeitraum	Januar 2013 – Juni 2013
Auslanderfahrung	Erasmus Semester
Name und Art der Bildungs- oder Ausbildungseinrichtung	Universidad de Alicante, Carretera de San Vicente del Raspeig, s/n, 03690 Alicante, Spanien

Zeitraum	1995 – 2008
Bezeichnung der erworbenen Qualifikation	Matura und International Baccalaureate (IB)
Hauptfächer/berufliche Fähigkeiten	English, Deutsch, Geschichte
Name und Art der Bildungs- oder Ausbildungseinrichtung	Vienna International School (VIS), Straße der Menschenrechte 1, 1220 Vienna

Persönliche Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen

Muttersprache(n)	**Deutsch**
Sonstige Sprache(n)	Englisch, Spanisch