

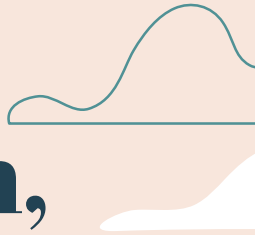
Male & Female Speech

A presentation made by:

- Inga Grableuskas
- Tanya Tokovenko
- Vitaliia Ladovyria
- Ha Lam Truong

Let's dig in!

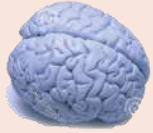




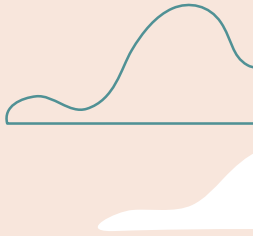
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**According to Deborah Tannen,
the author of "You Just Don't
Understand",
and John Gray, the author of "Men
Are From Mars, Women Are From
Venus"
the differences between men's and
women's speech are as follows:**

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1. Language and communication matter more to women than to men; women talk more than men.



2. Women are more verbally skilled than men.



3. Men's goal is connections to other people. Men talk more about things and facts, whereas women talk more about people, relationships and feelings. Men's using language tend to be about getting things done, whereas women's tend to be about making.



4. Men's way of using language is competitive, reflecting their general interest in acquiring and maintaining status; women's use of language is cooperative, reflecting their preference for equality and harmony.



5. These differences routinely lead to "miscommunication" between the sexes, with each sex misinterpreting the other's intentions. This causes problems in contexts where men and women regularly interact, and especially in heterosexual relationships.





Conversational Dominance

One of the major differences in women and men's speech is that men have been found to dominate conversations through the use of interruptions and overlaps, and that the amount of these conversational irregularities that took place rose significantly when men were talking to women.



Zimmerman and West (1975)

found that in conversations involving eleven mixed-sex pairs men interrupted or overlapped their female counterparts a total of fifty-five times, but were interrupted or overlapped themselves only twice.

In comparison, conversations involving single sex pairs produced significantly fewer interruptions and overlaps by men on men. It was also found that women are much more likely to interrupt their own sex. It shows how “women are concerned not to violate the man’s turn but to wait until he has finished.”



**By violating the speakers turn in this way,
there is the effect that “after overlaps and
especially after interruptions, speakers tend
to fall silent.**



Since most interruptions

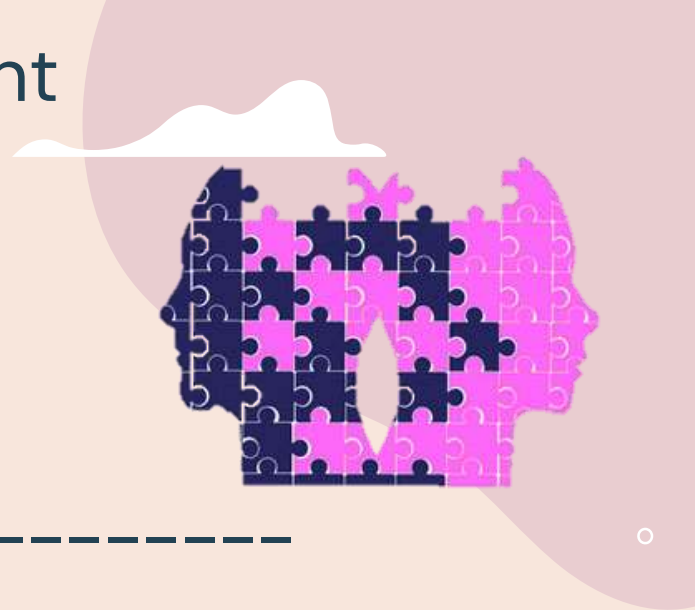


**(according to Zimmerman and West’s data)
are produced by men in mixed-sex
conversations, the speaker who falls silent is
usually a woman.”**

There is a difference in the amount of use of interruptions by men and women, with men being more likely to interrupt and less likely to be interrupted. Due to the size of the study⁺ and the way in which one participant differs greatly to the rest, it is impossible to state that this is entirely due to gender differences, yet the fact that the women involved only interrupted each other, and not the men shows a reluctance on the women's part to interrupt men, and a predisposition by the men to interrupt women more than men.



Speaker awareness is also evident when you consider the work of Kalcik (1975), who discussed a different style of interruption to that defined by Zimmerman and West (1975).



Kalcik defined an additional style of interruption, where a second speaker supported the conversational topic of the first speaker by finishing the idea. It was the female participants who used this style of interruption, and the male participants who were more likely to use the violation style.





—⁺Verbosity

The question of who talks more has been a long-standing area of discussion.

Tannen (1990) examined conversations between married couples and discussed at length the stereotypes of the wife who 'never stops talking' and the husband who comes home from work and barely utters a word about his day to his wife.

Phrases such as 'She never stops talking' and 'He never talks to me about work' being typical of responses.



Compared with this, is research carried out which found huge differences in amounts of speech when given a picture to discuss, with men talking much more than the women involved (Swacker 1975).



Tannen (1990) also commented on this talkativeness of men when she heard comments by wives who expressed their disappointment when their husbands told interesting stories about their day at work to friends, after remarking on their arrival home that ‘nothing much had happened today.’



It appears from this research that men in fact talk more than women, but do so to friends, rather than their partners.

Yet the perception of the chatty woman persists due to our socialization, which distorts our views of how much a certain person speaks.

It is clear that the women involved employed a greater amount of active listening devices (mmm, yeah, etc.) than the men.



Swearing and Vulgar Language

- + A traditional belief about the differences between men and women is the use of swearing and vulgar language.

Illustrated by the prevalence of phrases such as 'ladylike' behaviour, or 'swearing like a trooper' which point to the beliefs that swearing is a habit purely for men. A number of assertions have been made about female and male speech styles in this area.



It was claimed by Jesperson (1922) that women have an instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions and a preference for refined and (in certain spheres) veiled and indirect expressions.



Flexner (1960) claimed that “most American slang is created and used by males.” (Flexner 1960: xii). Also Lakoff (1975) claimed that while men use stronger expletives, women use politer versions such as ‘damn’ and ‘oh dear’.

Assertive and Tentative Speech Styles

A further common belief about language is that women are more tentative in their speech.



Lakoff (1975) highlighted the use of the **'tag question'** as an illustration of this.



Claiming that women use more tag questions than men, who in turn by using them less appear to be more assertive.

• Further research found that tag questions were more commonly associated with women's language (Siegler and Siegler 1976), illustrating people's attitudes towards women's speech and its tentativeness.



Another form of language which has been identified as being tentative speech is the use of *hedges*, for example, sort of, kind of, etc.



Lakoff (1975) described them as a feature of women's language which makes their language less direct. Within this study it was found that the women involved did in fact use hedges more than the men.

**Thank You
For Your
Time And
Attention!**

