

Gender and Use of the Masculine Generic:
A Look at Ratings of Speakers

by

Maria Paulette Barnes
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DEAN

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

Dr. R.A. Hoppe, Supervisor (Department of Psychology)

Dr. C.L. Collins, Departmental Member
(Department of Psychology)

Dr. A.A. Oberg, Outside Member
(Department of Communication and Social Foundations)

Dr. H. Gunasinghe, External Examiner
(Department of Linguistics)

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University of Victoria

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Supervisor: Dr. Ronald A. Hoppe

Abstract

Given the observed differences in communication style between men and women and the unparallel nature of the English language, gender-specific language is among the topics being studied for sexism in psychological research. One such use of language, the masculine generic, has been examined by Martyna (1980b). Martyna reported a tendency for males and females of various ages to match the generic they use with gender of the sentence agent in sentences that portray the agent in a traditional role. Additionally, Martyna found that females used the masculine generic less than did males and that males had an easier time imagining themselves as *he*, a form of the masculine generic, than did females. In this thesis, hypotheses based upon Martyna's (1980b) work were tested. Subjects listened to an audiotaped presentation of either a male or a female speaker who used a masculine generic or a gender non-specific generic. Subjects rated the presentation on evaluative, potency, and activity dimensions of a semantic differential scale. A MANOVA was carried out, and a significant generic by subject gender interaction of the activity ratings was found. Women in the study who were in the masculine generic conditions rated the presentation higher on the activity items of a semantic differential scale than did women in the gender non-specific conditions. Men, in contrast, gave higher activity ratings when a gender non-specific generic, rather than the masculine generic, was employed. It was also found that women were more variable in their ratings of the presentation:

Women in comparison to men had greater variances in their ratings on the evaluative dimension; and women who heard a male speaker use the masculine generic were more variable in their activity ratings than were those women who heard the male speaker use the gender non-specific generic. Taken with the findings of past research that showed that men and women tend to employ disparate generics, it was speculated that subjects who heard a generic that is inconsistent with that which they themselves employ gave higher activity ratings to the presentation than if a generic consistent with that which they (subjects) would typically use was employed in the presentation. Further work is recommended in order to validate the questionnaire used in the study.

Examiners:

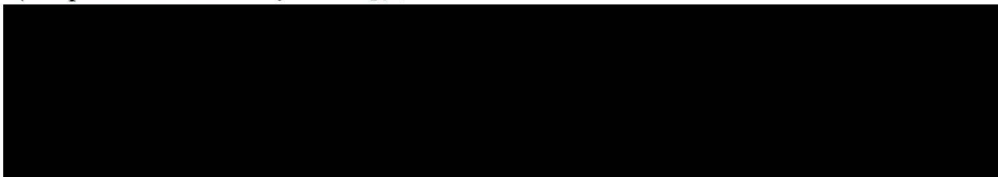


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(Department of Psychology)



Dr. A.A. Oberg, Outside Member

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Dr. H. Gunasheghe, External Examiner

(Department of Linguistics)

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I would also like to express gratitude to my other committee members, Caroline Collins and Antoinette Oberg. My initial interest in the charges of sexism levied at academic language came from discussions that were initiated by a seminar course on gender issues, which Caroline taught. Due to her direction, I was able to encounter a lot of relevant literature, and Caroline has always been available to talk about the implications of research on both an academic and practical level. Antoinette Oberg has offered insight into my investigation by suggesting that the methodology in the thesis follow the spirit of the study. Although I have not entirely succeeded at constructing such a design, I will not forget her astute advice. It will guide my work in the future.

Werner Müller-Clemm and Giselle Kolaric were kind to offer their time and energy to record the passage that was presented to the subjects in the study. I would like to extend a special thank you to Werner for his encouragement both inside and outside the academic realm.

Dedication

To my mother, Cary Barnes, for her unconditional love and support.

Chapter One: Introduction

In response to the extensive research initiated by the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, many authors have written about the power of language to affect reality. Though recent work does not espouse the Whorf-Sapirian notion in its strict form, that language determines thought, a weaker version has been adopted by scholars investigating gender differences in language (see Tarter, 1986). Namely, different thought patterns are believed to be reflected in one's language; there is a recognition that "Language uses us as much as we use language" (Lakoff, 1975, p. 3); and what is expressed through language reflects cognition. Indeed, language shapes the comprehension and perception of social phenomena (Giles & Coupland, 1991). With an analysis of language, therefore, it is possible to gauge societal attitudes of women and their position in society.

Academic Sexism?

From every angle of analysis, the issue of sexism in academia emerges as a difficult one. There seems to be little consensus on what constitutes serious gender-based violation of the responsibilities of scientific research. The goal of psychological science is to understand and to be able to predict behaviour, and an *objective* analysis of behaviour is sought by psychologists. Hence, the value-laden humanistic perspective and advocacy of contemporary feminist research, both of which often motivate investigations of sexism in science, are prone to charges of subjectivity. Some researchers (e.g., Gannon, Luchetta, Rhodes, Pardie, & Segrist, 1992) have argued that alterations in the conventional psychological expression of the experience of women have often been discounted as politically motivated or

anecdotal and irrelevant, especially when they have appeared in the form of literature, commentary, or as calls for social change.

Nonetheless, feminist researchers continue to assert that women are not allowed a voice equal to men's within our society (e.g., Martyna, 1980a). Specifically, many disciplines such as psychology are said to have bias in the form of a "masculine world-view" (Cameron, 1985). For instance, many of the influential models of psychological research were formulated with samples that used only men as participants (Tavris, 1992). As a consequence, the development and behaviour of females across all periods of the life cycle are compared to a male norm, and women are subsequently viewed as deviant.

Researchers focusing on women are typically labelled as *feminist*, and their results are considered subjective as well as prejudiced to favour women (Cameron, 1985). This marginalization serves to discount many psychological investigations and attempts at bias-free analyses of human behaviour, as it fails to acknowledge the presence of a male-bias in the majority of the existing psychological literature. The bias can be seen when psychologists neglect areas of study pertinent to women, including language and gender (Henley, 1977). Although many academic institutions are grappling with the notion that gender-specific language is sexist in that it excludes women, investigation on the subject of gender and reactions to language is sparse (see Cameron, 1985). Indeed, O'Barr and Bowman (1980) argued that in the realm of gender and language, there is little or no cross-referencing of mutually supportive studies.

Three lines of inquiry have emerged in recent study of language and gender (Cameron, 1985). Firstly, an exploration of differences correlated with gender is concerned with why girls and women use language differently than boys and men. Secondly, the unparallel nature of the English language is of interest. Thirdly, the extent to which females feel alienated is investigated: That is, are women, in comparison to men, challenged by being forced to learn and articulate their experiences in a male-dominated medium?

Women and Men Speak Differently. Perhaps the most widely studied phenomenon observed in the area of gender differences in language is communication style. Different speech styles are expected of males and females: It is socially acceptable for males to express their anger, use more expletives in their vocabulary, and interrupt females more frequently than females interrupt them (Lakoff, 1975). These are but a few examples, but they illustrate a trend that can be seen virtually throughout the life span.

Early work on stylistic differences in the speech of men and women and charges of sexism within the English language have had an impact on the field of psychology, yet the research has been criticized. The conclusions made by authors such as Lakoff (1975) and Henley (1977), critics charge, are based largely upon anecdotal material obtained from studying the media and from conversations with colleagues and friends. Also, though the idea of power is prevalent in their discussion (women are described to be at a disadvantage in terms of status in society when compared to men), Lakoff and Henley failed to present any

empirical evidence to systematically obliterate a potential power and gender confound (see Hall, 1984). Lastly, a double standard seems to exist in contemporary psychological research. Men are seen to exert power when they talk more than women; when silent, women have no power; when men refuse to speak to women, however, they are deemed as having power (Tannen, 1990)!

Censure of earlier work that looked at stylistic differences between men and women is not intended to undermine the seriousness of sexism in language. Gender is a prevalent factor, claimed Tannen (1990), and gender inequality exists at every step of an interaction, whether private or public. Awareness of gender differences, argued Tannen, is necessary to reconstruct the beliefs that society holds about how to effectively communicate (i.e., how to employ the language deemed appropriate for men and women to use).

English Unparallel. Many researchers (e.g., Lakoff, 1975; Henley, 1977; Cameron, 1985) viewed the group with the majority of power in society as one in which women are under-represented and one that uses language in many forms to oppress women. The English language contains words such as *master* and *mistress* that originated in parallel; the words in present form, however, have different meanings based on gender. Some of the titles used for men and women illustrate another discrepancy. Women are referred to as *Miss*, *Mrs.*, or *Ms.*, while men are addressed as *Mr.*. The first two terms for women indicate marital status; *Mr.*, on the other hand, is ambiguous in this regard. Further, one repeatedly encounters that the more demeaning the job is for a woman, the more likely *lady* is used in

its title (e.g., *cleaning lady* and *lady of the evening*). There is no counterpart to this phenomenon for men: *Garbage gentleman* does not have a place in conventional speech. Moreover, many speakers justify the use of *lady* to politely allude to a woman. Implicit in this reasoning is that there is something less noble about the word *woman*, for womanhood requires a courteous form of reference because it lacks inherent dignity and purity (as does the occupation of cleaning lady) on the social ladder (Lakoff, 1975).

Male-Dominated Medium? Masculine Generic Research. Historically, the masculine generic was presumed to serve two functions in the English language. It was employed to specifically indicate males, and to refer to a generic (hu)mankind. As such, the masculine generic was intended to connote humanity, *man* is used in comparison to *a/the man*; the masculine generic included the masculine pronoun *he*; and persons and occupations are considered generically, and tagged with *man* as in *The average man on the street* and *postman*, respectively.

Martyna (1980b) studied the use of the masculine generic by males and females. People who represented a wide range of ages were studied; Martyna's sample included subjects at a number of academic levels ranging from students in kindergarten to those enrolled in college classes. Males and females in the study were asked to complete sentence fragments that described individuals in traditionally masculine, traditionally feminine, and neutral roles. Sentences such as "When an engineer makes an error in calculation..."; "When a secretary first

arrives at the office..."; and "When a teenager finishes high school..."; respectively, were employed. Miscellaneous topics such as the weather served as filler items. Martyna reasoned that if *he* was an adequate generic term, it should be commonly used whenever a pronoun must be chosen without specific knowledge regarding the sentence agent's (engineer, secretary, high school student, etc.) gender.

Instead, it was found that the masculine generic was not an adequate generic term. For sentences that described traditionally masculine roles, *he* was inserted by subjects ninety-six percent of the time. For those sentences that included the traditionally feminine roles, *she* was used eighty-seven percent of the time. To the neutral sentences, subjects responded with *he* sixty-five percent of the time, and gave alternatives to *he* in thirty percent of the cases.

Upon closer analysis, females used *he* less than males regardless of the sentence fragment scenario. This trend appeared at all age levels. Martyna (1980b) tested whether feminist awareness accounted for the findings of some of older females in the study. On a post-test questionnaire, an equal number of males and females indicated that they were feminist. Thus, reported feminism did not appear to account for the gender difference in masculine generic use.

On the same questionnaire, Martyna (1980b) queried subjects on their use of imagery during the sentence formation task. Both males and females indicated that they had imagined a person whose gender matched the choice of pronoun used for the traditional roles. For neutral sentences, however, only ten percent of

the females in comparison to sixty percent of the males reported imagery. All of the imagery based upon the neutral sentences was of a male.

Bolstered by the results of her investigation, Martyna (1980b) faulted the masculine generic on three counts. Firstly, an inequality must exist in English as there is non-parallelism between masculine and feminine terms. In other words, why is there no feminine generic in widespread use?

Secondly, ambiguity is created by utilizing the masculine generic. On any given usage of *he* or *man* (as in *The chairman went for lunch*) it is not always possible to infer whether to include women and girls in the interpretation. An example from a sociology textbook makes this point. The following quotation happens to be accurate *only if* the individual is male.

The more education an individual attains, the better his occupation is likely to be, and the more money he is likely to earn (Martyna, 1980b, pp. 75-76)

Proponents of the masculine generic would see the present wording of the quotation as applicable to men *and* to all humans.

Thirdly, with masculine generic use, exclusiveness is a factor for females. For instance, Meehl (1967) described any researcher who often appears in print without contributing to the quest for knowledge (i.e., the researcher who said a lot about a little):

His true position is that of a potent-but-sterile intellectual rake, who leaves in his merry path a long train of ravished maidens, but no viable offspring (Martyna, 1980b, p.74).

It is obvious by his characterization that Meehl's researcher was not a woman, despite his "correct" use of the masculine generic.

Martyna (1980a) argued that while questions regarding the inequity of power between men and women may not be easily untangled and studied, issues of clarity are. Especially important for academic disciplines is a recognition that cognitive confusion, for both genders, will result from masculine generic use. A change in language is necessary, according to Martyna, in order to communicate clearly and effectively.

Resistance to Change

Begg (1991), on the other hand, referred to those who want the English language changed as "paranoid" (p. 17). He claimed that words in and of themselves must not be regarded as exclusive or offensive. Upon inspection of the roots of the word *man*, for instance, Begg argued that *man* comes from the Latin *manus* which means *hand*, and is not meant, historically or at present, to indicate one particular gender.

For language, Begg contended, is not to be interpreted literally. To illustrate, the *man* in words such as *mandate* and *manage* in no way implies a male escort to a party or a description on a man's birth certificate, respectively. Thus, unnecessary energy would be expended in the eradication of large parts of

our language. Moreover, many of the changes hitherto have been ridiculous according to Begg: A chair, after all, is a piece of furniture, not an important member of a meeting.

Change Necessary

The position of other scholars (e.g., Martyna, 1980a) stands in stark contrast to that of Begg and his light-hearted remarks. To see the assertion of sexism in the English language as trivial or as an intellectual luxury fails to recognize its importance and its potentially deleterious effects. Cameron (1985) posited that change in language is a necessary factor in the liberation of women from positions of unequal power. And although Begg deemed it reasonable to call male and female police officers *policemen* and advocated the terming male stewards *stewardesses*, one can assume the unpopularity of this stance for both genders. Given that men in the teaching profession wanted to use a masculine pronoun to describe the generic teacher -- *she* in the generic sense, male teachers decided, was responsible for low salaries and a poor public image (see Martyna, 1980a) -- it is possible to infer that stewards resented the connotation of femininity in the term *stewardess* and that policewomen disliked the masculine description of *policeman*. As a consequence, both groups appear to have opted for a neutral characterization of their occupation: The words *flight attendant* and *police officer*, respectively, are presently used.

Thus, the terms used to designate one's group are more than mere words in the eyes of people who are represented in a variety of fields. Given the

relevance of language and its accompanying connotations, it was necessary to appropriate a method in order to systematically investigate perceptions of language use. For this purpose, I modified the matched-guise method employed extensively by Lambert and colleagues (e.g., Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Filenbaum, 1960; Lambert, Gardner, Barik & Tunstall, 1963; Lambert, 1967).

The Matched-Guise Technique

The goal of Lambert's research was to elicit biases or stereotypical impressions, if present, from a social group about representative members of a contrasting group. With an interest in in-group versus out-group ratings, Lambert developed a matched-guise technique. He asked both English and French Canadians to listen to recordings of bilingual individuals who read a two minute academic passage in French and English. Subjects were unaware that the persons presented on the audiotape were bilingual and that they (subjects) were hearing the same persons twice, once in English and once in French, randomly ordered with other speakers. The subjects then rated their impressions of speakers on personality scales. With the matched-guise technique, therefore, subjects served as judges of the speakers presented. The matched-guise method has been found to be a valuable measure of group biases in evaluative reactions, and it has been shown to be a reliable one (Giles, 1977).

Modifications to the Matched-Guise

Although Martyna (1980b) examined subjects' imagery using traditional roles, no information was obtained to compare the influence of the masculine

generic and of a gender non-specific generic on the impressions of subjects. That is, the method used by Martyna did not allow a direct investigation of the extent to which individuals judge the use of the masculine generic in the speech of others.

The matched-guise technique allows subjects to form impressions of a person who is presented via an audiotaped recording. For evaluative purposes, Lambert et al. (e.g., Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Filenbaum, 1960; Lambert, Gardner, Barik & Tunstall, 1963; Lambert, 1967) were able to assess subjects' perceptions of persons presented in an experimental setting. In the present study, I modified the matched-guise method reported by Lambert and his colleagues by adding activity and potency dimensions in order to allow a broader analysis of person perception (see Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1971). Subjects were asked to listen to either a male or female speaker and to rate both the speaker and the content of the speaker's lecture (the same in all conditions with the exception of the type of generic used). Subjects' ratings of the audiotaped presentation were obtained by using a semantic differential rating scale.

Hypotheses

The work of Martyna (1980b) illustrated that in completing sentence fragment scenarios, males used the masculine generic more often than did females. I posited that the gender-based differential practice of employing the masculine generic would allow for the prediction of a speaker gender by generic by subject gender interaction to occur on evaluative, potency, and activity

dimensions. Because females were found to use the masculine generic less than males (Martyna, 1980b), I hypothesized that the women in the study would rate the speakers who used the masculine generic lower on the semantic differential scale than the speakers who used the text which referred to both genders, especially if the speaker was female. Thus, the female speaker would receive the lowest ratings by women when she gave the lecture that contained the masculine generic because her generic as a female was inconsistent with the women's expectations; i.e., expectations based upon what the subjects themselves would use. The opposite pattern was predicted for men: Speakers were predicted to be rated higher when they spoke with the masculine generic in comparison to those speakers who employed a gender non-specific generic. The ratings by men were to be highest for the male speaker who used the masculine generic as this was the style of speech that the men themselves would employ. Lastly, the overall ratings of men and women were expected to be higher in the gender non-specific generic condition in comparison to the masculine generic condition.

Chapter Two: Method

Subjects

Forty men and forty women enrolled in a first year psychology course at the University of Victoria participated in the study.

Materials

A passage from Titchener (1921) was read and recorded by the male and the female speaker (see Appendix A). This particular passage was chosen as it afforded a number of opportunities to present to subjects one of the two generic conditions. The male and the female speaker read the passage onto an audiotape, this constituted the lecture presented to subjects. The passage was recorded by both speakers in approximately three minutes and fifteen seconds. The lecture was presented to subjects via a portable 30 cm x 20 cm x 5 cm audiotape player.

A semantic differential scale was developed for the purposes of the investigation (see Appendix B). The first part of the questionnaire asked subjects to rate the speaker, the second part asked subjects to rate the content of the speaker's lecture (the same passage was modified for generic use in all conditions). The individual items included in the semantic differential scale were chosen based on their correlation ($r > .43$) with the respective evaluative, potency, and activity dimensions reported by Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum (1971). Although the same three dimensions of the semantic differential scale were used to rate the speaker (Part 1 of the questionnaire) and the content of his or her

lecture (Part 2 of the questionnaire), different items for each dimension were utilized for rating the speaker than those that were used for rating his or her speech. The individual items used for the questionnaire are outlined in Table 1 according to dimension.

Design

A 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design based upon speaker gender, the type of generic listened to, and subject gender was employed. An audiotaped presentation of either a male or female speaker who read one of the two generic forms was presented as a psychology lecture to both men and women in the study. The masculine generic lecture contained *he, men, etc.*, whereas these words were replaced with *he and she, men and women, etc.*, in the gender non-specific version. Four experimental conditions existed in the study. Men and women were assigned to hearing a female speaker using the gender non-specific generic; a female speaker using the masculine generic; a male speaker using the gender non-specific generic; or a male speaker using the masculine generic.

The dependent measure in this design was a seven-point semantic differential scale. Subjects were required to listen to the speaker whom they heard on the audiotaped presentation and rate him or her on evaluative, activity, and potency dimensions that were expressed in polar terms on the seven-point scale. The questionnaire was presented to subjects in two parts. The first part obtained ratings of the speaker, the second part of the questionnaire obtained ratings of the lecture.

Table 1

Questionnaire Items: Breakdown by Dimension of Semantic Differential Scale

Evaluative Dimension

(Part 1)	nice--awful	(Part 2)	valuable--worthless
	honest--dishonest		true--false
	good--bad		pleasant--unpleasant
	fair--unfair		
	kind--cruel		

Potency Dimension

(Part 1)	brave--cowardly	(Part 2)	deep--shallow
	light--heavy		strong--weak
	relaxed--tense		

Activity Dimension

(Part 1)	hot--cold	(Part 2)	sharp--dull
	fast--slow		
	active--passive		

Procedure

Testing occurred over a six week interval and in sessions of varying numbers of participants; groups of one to six subjects were tested on each occasion. All subjects were greeted by the author and asked to listen to a three minute audiotaped recording of an academic passage. It was explained to subjects that the recording was of a professor giving a psychology lecture. Subjects were asked to rate the instructor (speaker) and his or her lecture on the provided two part questionnaire. After all the subjects in a session had completed the questionnaire, I spoke with those who were willing to discuss the experiment, my hypotheses, and issues of sexism as they related to generic use and language in general. As there was no pre-determined set of questions asked and the conversation was dependent upon each subject's decision whether or not to participate in this aspect of the experiment, a detailed analysis of these remarks was not carried out. Rather, the purpose of collecting the data was to guide future research. (The transcript of the responses made by subjects in the interviews appears in Appendix C.) Finally, subjects were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

One goal of the present study was to identify if the ratings made by men and women would be different depending on speaker gender and the type of generic used. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine any differences between groups. Each of the evaluative, potency, and activity scores on the questionnaire served as separate dependent variables.

Gender differences were also investigated in the area of variability of ratings: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was carried out on the ratings of men and women in the study on the three dimensions. Lastly, Spearman's correlation coefficients were calculated in order to examine if the evaluative, potency, and activity items that were used to obtain ratings of the speaker were positively correlated with those used by subjects to rate the lecture.

Chapter Three: Results

Bartlett's test of sphericity was carried out in order to discern if the three dependent variables, evaluative, potency, and activity dimensions, were correlated with each other. The results of the test revealed that they were, $p < .0001$. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the ratings of the speaker and of the lecture combined for the three dimensions of the semantic differential scale (i.e., subjects' total score on the questionnaire). Contrary to what was predicted, no three-way speaker gender by generic by subject gender interaction was found, multivariate $F = 1.44, p < .238$. However, the analysis yielded a significant two-way interaction between generic and subject gender. Subsequent univariate analyses performed for each separate dimension indicated that the interaction was significant for the activity measure, $F(1, 72) = 3.30, p < .005$.

As depicted in Figure 1, women in the masculine generic condition gave higher activity ratings to the presentation ($M = 3.13$) than did women in the gender non-specific generic condition ($M = 2.72$). Men, in contrast, rated the presentation higher on the activity items when a gender non-specific generic was employed ($M = 3.35$), in comparison to when the masculine generic was used ($M = 2.47$). The cell means and standard deviations for the evaluative, potency, and activity dimensions appear in Tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

A MANOVA was carried out on Parts 1 and 2 of the questionnaire in order to determine if the significant generic by subject gender interaction on the

Figure 1. The Generic by Subject Gender Interaction:
Mean Activity Ratings of Speaker.

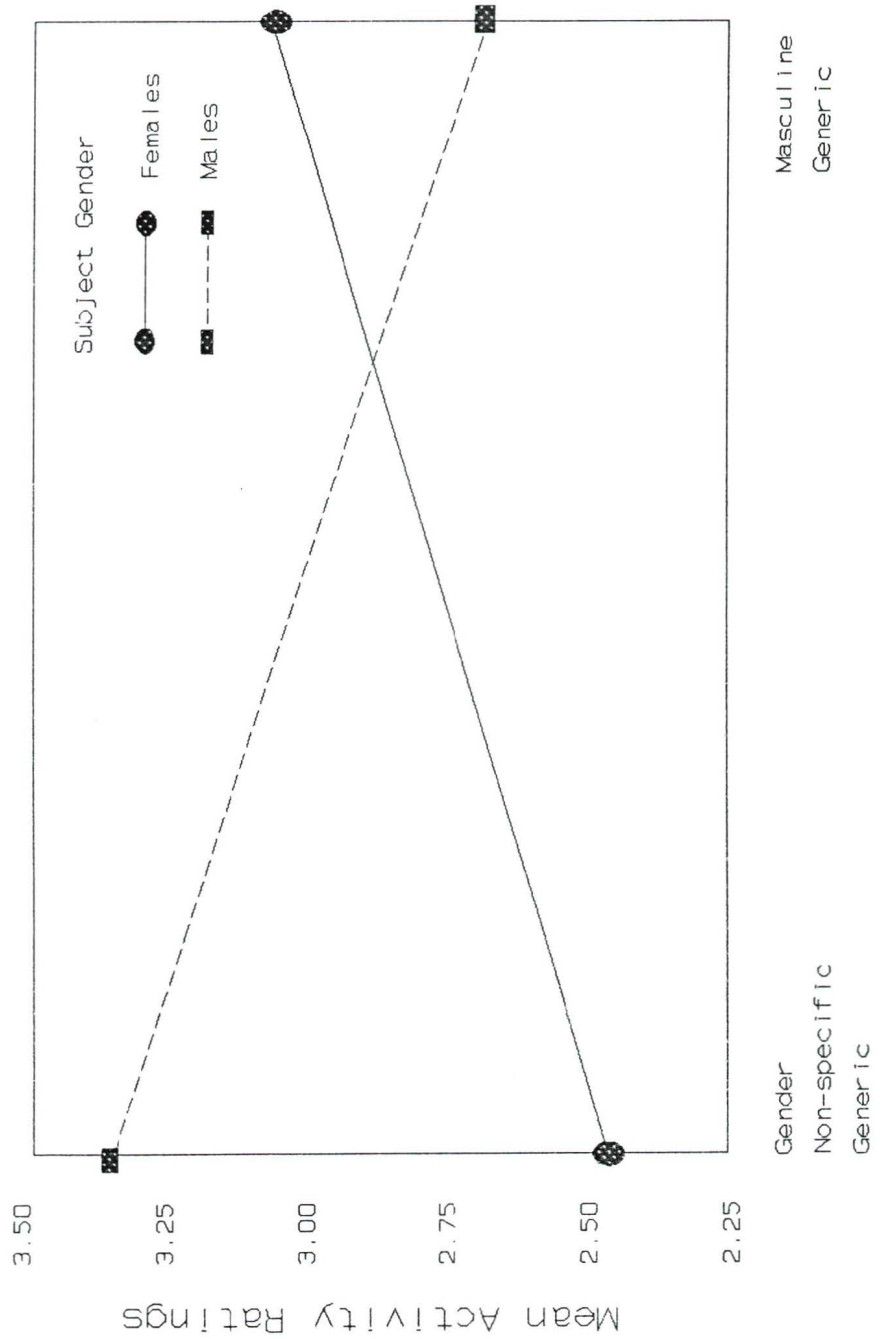


Table 2

Cell Means and Standard Deviations of Subjects' Ratings on the Evaluative Dimension

Generic							
Masculine Generic				Gender Non-Specific Generic			
<u>Male Speaker</u>				<u>Male Speaker</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	4.36	1.89	10	Women	4.76	2.29	10
Men	4.52	1.33	10	Men	4.82	1.75	10
<u>Female Speaker</u>				<u>Female Speaker</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	4.76	1.92	10	Women	4.16	1.72	10
Men	4.35	1.52	10	Men	4.53	1.42	10

Table 3

Cell Means and Standard Deviations of Subjects' Ratings on the PotencyDimension

Generic							
Masculine Generic				Gender Non-Specific Generic			
<u>Male Speaker</u>				<u>Male Speaker</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	3.85	1.51	10	Women	4.27	1.83	10
Men	4.26	1.85	10	Men	4.23	1.02	10
<u>Female Speaker</u>				<u>Female Speaker</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	4.53	1.26	10	Women	3.75	1.35	10
Men	4.21	0.96	10	Men	4.32	1.78	10

Table 4

Cell Means and Standard Deviations of Subjects' Ratings on the ActivityDimension

Generic							
Masculine Generic				Gender Non-Specific Generic			
<u>Male Speaker</u>				<u>Male Speaker</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	2.95	2.49	10	Women	12.47	1.12	10
Men	2.60	1.34	10	Men	3.15	1.65	10
<u>Female Speaker</u>				<u>Female Speaker</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	3.30	2.00	10	Women	2.47	1.88	10
Men	2.83	2.25	10	Men	3.55	2.27	10

activity items could be explained as a difference between separate (cf. totalled) ratings of the speaker (Part 1) and ratings of the lecture (Part 2). The obtained results showed that there was no significant generic by subject gender interaction for the activity items used to rate the speaker or for those used to rate the lecture, multivariate $F = 1.85, p < .102$.

Given the results from Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, I determined that the evaluative ratings of the presentation were more variable among the women in the study than among the men, $F = 4.48, p < .05$. On the activity items, women who listened to the male speaker use the masculine generic in his lecture were more variable in their ratings of the presentation than were the women who heard the male speaker use the gender non-specific generic, $F = 5.20, p < .05$.

Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated for each dimension in order to determine the reliability of the evaluative, potency, and activity items on Parts 1 and 2 of the questionnaire (see Table 5). A positive correlation was found between the evaluative items that represented the speaker, and those which represented the speaker's lecture, $r = .52, p < .0001$. The potency items on the two separate parts of the questionnaire were not correlated, $r = -.04, p < .75$. In terms of the activity dimension, those items that were used to obtain ratings of the speaker were positively correlated with those used to gauge subjects' ratings of the lecture, $r = .50, p < .0001$. Unexpectedly, ratings of the lecture on the evaluative dimension were positively correlated with potency ratings of the speaker, $r = .39,$

Table 5

Correlations Between Ratings of Speaker and Ratings of Lecture for Evaluative, Potency, and Activity Items

Ratings of the Lecture	Ratings of the Speaker		
	Evaluative	Potency	Activity
Evaluative	+ .52*	+ .39*	+ .26**
Potency	+ .17	-.04	+ .27**
Activity	+ .20	+ .28**	+ .50*

* p < .0001

** p < .05

$p < .0001$, and with activity ratings of the speaker, $r = .26$, $p < .05$; ratings of the lecture on the potency dimension were positively correlated with activity ratings of the speaker, $r = .27$, $p < .05$; and potency ratings of the speaker were positively correlated with activity ratings of the lecture, $r = .28$, $p < .05$.

Chapter Four: Discussion

An underlying assumption of recent work which has studied issues relating to language and gender is that language has the power to determine social context (Giles & Coupland, 1991). For instance, the diminution (by today's standards) of the efforts of many to secure the vote for women a century ago was characterized in the cutesy term *suffragette*. Moreover, gender is a critical variable to consider in any investigation of the rules of language discourse. Thus one sees differential use of language by men and women (Lakoff, 1975), and that women in expert roles are questioned more so than are men in the same roles (see Tannen, 1991).

The research of Lambert and his colleagues (e.g., Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Filembaum, 1960; Lambert, Gardner, Barik & Tunstall, 1963; Lambert, 1967) has been influential in inciting the recognition that speakers can be rated based upon an audiotaped presentation. The present work, however, allows for a more detailed look at how speakers are rated, for it extends the Lambertian matched-guise technique from a solely evaluative assessment to one that includes potency and activity along with the evaluative dimension in a semantic differential rating scheme.

In the present study, subjects were able to give their impressions of a speaker by completing a broader (i.e., three-dimensional) rating scheme. It is possible to understand the generic by subject gender interaction on the activity items of the questionnaire in light of Martyna's (1980b) research. Martyna discovered that females and males showed a different pattern of generic response

when completing sentence fragments with traditionally feminine, traditionally masculine, and neutral sentence scenarios. Males were found to be more likely to use the masculine generic than were females, and females tended to use more alternatives to the masculine generic. Although the task at hand for subjects in the present investigation was quite different than it was for subjects in the Martyna study, it is possible to infer that a generic which is inconsistent with one's own usage jars the subject, and he or she tends to give the presentation higher ratings on activity items. To elucidate, women who heard the speaker using the masculine generic responded by giving the presentation higher activity ratings in comparison to other women who listened to the gender non-specific generic lecture. In the masculine generic condition, women did so because the generic used in the lecture was different from that which she, the subject, would typically use.

The results for the men in the study are the opposite to that of the women, but the same explanation is put forth: Men who heard a speaker lecture with the gender non-specific generic gave higher ratings on the activity items of the questionnaire than men who listened to the audiotape of the speaker employing the masculine generic. Again, this was because the gender non-specific generic is not the generic that men tend to employ.

The ratings made by men and women were not found to differ significantly on either the evaluative or the potency dimensions. With respect to the potency items, because the two parts of the questionnaire were found not to be

significantly correlated it is probable that either the items used to rate the speaker or those used to rate the speaker's lecture were not appropriate for the modified matched-guise technique employed in the present investigation. In fact, as can be seen in Table 5, the items used for potency ratings were positively correlated with the evaluative and activity items in three out of the four possible instances.

Further research is needed to validate the particular items used for the potency factor to ensure that they do in fact adequately apply to perceived potency in both a male and a female speaker. It remains to be seen if the terms "light--heavy" and "deep--shallow" allowed for an appropriate characterization of a speaker's and of a lecture's potency, respectively. I recommend that a questionnaire which includes a greater number of items corresponding to the three dimensions be used with a greater sample size in the future.

It is important to recognize that the subjects' ratings on the activity items were generally low. On average, subjects responded to the presentation by giving ratings below four, the neutral point in the "active--passive" range. As such, the overall presentation (speaker and lecture) was perceived as inactive or passive rather than active. An explanation that may account for this trend, that ratings tended to be around the neutral or low marks for the evaluative and potency ratings as well, is that the passage used to represent the speaker's lecture was chosen for its neutrality. I wanted the lecture to be neither interesting nor uninteresting, potent nor weak, active nor passive, so that differences in ratings would reflect responses to the speaker and to the type of generic that was being

employed in the lecture. Thus it is likely that subjects regarded the lecture as neutral in content and this influenced their ratings of the presentation.

The discovery that women as a group showed more variance in their ratings on the evaluative dimension than men is best considered with the remarks made by subjects during the informal interviews that followed the audiotaped presentation (see Appendix C for the transcript of the interviews). Some of the women who gave their opinions of the masculine generic could be placed into one of two possible categories. There were women who appeared strongly against use of the masculine generic. For example, one woman said, "The masculine generic limits people in how they think and what they will do". Other women seemed to staunchly support masculine generic use. One woman who heard a gender non-specific version of the lecture stated, "I noticed the "he and she". It was awkward. *He* doesn't bother me, as a female".

Some of the men in the experiment, on the other hand, tended to hold opinions that were not as different from each other. Based upon an analysis of the interview transcripts, it was apparent that men were, on average, ambivalent with respect to generic use. For instance, one man remarked:

I don't think I rated him [the speaker] any higher because he was a male. It wouldn't matter if it were a female -- although maybe I would have rated her higher. I don't know.

The rationale, albeit speculative, behind the explanation for the differential variability finding is that the use of one generic versus another is a more salient

issue for women than it is for men. It is possible that women have given more thought to the implications of the use of different generics. Women may believe that this is an issue that affects them directly, consequently, they hold stronger opinions on the subject. Most of the calls for change have come from researchers who are women and who report discrimination due to speech style as a critical cause of concern for many women (e.g., Martyna, 1980a; Cameron, 1985). The finding that women's ratings were more variable on the activity dimension when they heard the male speaker use the masculine generic in comparison to women who heard the male speaker using a gender non-specific generic suggests that some women have very different activity ratings of the same generic.

As expected, differences between men and women in the study were witnessed. Despite the differences, it is recognized that in research requiring the participation of human subjects, gender is not a variable to be considered in isolation. Further research must attempt to conceptualize subject gender together with age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Along with gender, such a variety of variables is likely to give a more complete account of any differences in ratings of a generic between men and women. Additionally, it would be interesting to see if level of education would influence ratings of either generic. Given the changes in publication standards that have recently been implemented by many psychological periodicals to enforce gender neutral language (Gannon et al., 1992), one would expect that third- or fourth-year psychology students would be

more sensitive to masculine generic use and would prefer to encounter a gender non-specific generic more than would first-year students.

Future work must also validate the questionnaire that was used in the present study. Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1971) have examined the items that appeared on the questionnaire in order to establish item and dimension reliability, yet they caution that replication is necessary to establish the construct validity of a particular measure. For example, the item "beautiful--ugly" has a high correlation with the evaluative dimension, but it is unlikely that men are referred to as *beautiful* as often as women are. *Handsome*, in contrast, is probably more of a *masculine* term in common speech.

The passage chosen for the psychology lecture to be given by speakers on the audiotape may not have been the best choice for obtaining ratings of speaker and generic use. The particular passage was picked because it expressed many references to the masculine generic and thus to the *he and she* gender non-specific generic in the altered version of the original. It is worthy to note that subjects who heard the gender non-specific generic made a number of remarks to the effect that *he and she* came up unusually often. One subject stated:

I noticed "he and she". It was almost too complicated in comparison to if he [the speaker] would have used "they".

As another subject expressed her opinion:

I noticed the gender non-specific generic because I thought that using *they* would have been a better alternative.

The use of another gender non-specific generic type such as *they* may have lead to a less obtrusive communicative tool. Moreover, given that the passage was written in 1921, it could be that some subjects recognized that because the lecture was outdated the masculine generic was the appropriate generic for the passage.

One subject said:

I thought that the gender non-specific generic was in line with this old lecture. It [the lecture] didn't seem recent and therefore [the gender non-specific generic use] was inconsistent.

As Gannon et al. (1992) have argued, many aspects of sexism in language have been "previously unresearched" (p. 390). Due to the scarcity of scientific data directly related to tapping responses to generic type, one is unable to conclude whether the masculine generic as a form of speech contributes to sexism. However, from the findings reported by Schneider and Hacker (1973) it is possible to infer that use of the masculine generic leads to a different type of interpretation than does use of a gender non-specific generic (Frank & Anshen, 1983). Subjects who were asked to choose illustrations to correspond to *Man and His Environment* and *Man and His Family* selected significantly more pictures of men alone. Those persons exposed to *Family Life* and *Urban Life* titles singled out more illustrations of men, women, and children. This corroborates Martyna's (1980a) position and lends credence to the concerns of some researchers that disparate messages, which depend upon the generic that one chooses to communicate with, are being sent.

Questions concerning the comprehension and perception of a message, both of which are issues of clarity, and the exclusion of women, which is an issue of sexism, were not answered in the present investigation. Yet these challenging concerns deserve decisive counsel. As the writers of academic discourse have been advised against use of the masculine generic (Gannon et al., 1992), it is surprising that the most recent study directly looking into the use of generics to be published, Martyna (1980b), was carried out approximately fifteen years ago.

From a scientific standpoint, the task awaits for researchers to determine the appropriateness of masculine and gender non-specific generics. The results of the present study illustrate that this is an important task as a presentation was differentially rated according to which generic is utilized in an academic lecture. It would be fruitful to investigate whether credibility and persuasiveness of speakers and the content of their message would likewise be rated differently. In other words, what particular aspects of an evaluative dimension, if any, are differentially affected by a generic? Does the gender of the speaker figure in any found differences? For this type of analysis, it is suggested that a closer examination of the items which correspond to the evaluative, potency, and activity dimensions is carried out.

Clearly language does have the power to subordinate; optimistically, it has the power to liberate. It is the responsibility of researchers to address what types of language constitute the former and to investigate what sorts of contexts correspond to the latter. As Lambert (1980) advised, the most critical task facing

the social psychology of language is the dismantling of social discriminations (Giles & Coupland, 1991).

Throughout history, countless instances in which efforts at linguistic and political change have coincided have been recorded. Changing conditions within factors such as group membership, cultural values, and language have lead to our social reality being continually revised and altered (Giles & Coupland, 1991). Given the flux, and in consideration of the calls for research to operate within the societal (i.e., political) framework that one experiences, it is time for psychologists and linguists to give attention to issues surrounding language and gender. Only then will the parameters become defined for a true generic and only then will one encounter truly generic speech.

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Appendix A

The psychologist whose systematic thinking is firmly outlined will write with a perspective; his¹ work will be logically coherent and duly proportioned; and the need of illustrative observations will constantly suggest problems, which his students will be interested to solve. On the other hand, he will run the risk of forcing facts to suit his system, and of neglecting facts that refuse classification under his rubrics. The psychologist who confines himself to an exposition of the experiments so far made has the great advantage that he never transcends observation; his work gives us the tested materials out of which a science may some day be built; but he is also at a disadvantage in that he lacks perspective, makes too much of this and too little of that, fails to catch the suggestion of new experimental issues from the thought of men to whom the laboratory is foreign or abhorrent. The psychologist who takes a middle position has the advantage of perspective and the advantage of the facts. His difficulty is to bring the experimental results - results of all degrees of accuracy, obtained from widely different points of view, and oftentimes partial and incomplete - into connection with what he regards as established psychological principles; to square them with what seems stable in the psychologies of tradition and reflection; and his danger is the danger of premature systematization.

So long as men differ in temperament, so long shall we have books of these different kinds. All of them, in their own measure and degree, stand in the direct line of psychological development; for it is beyond question that the

psychology of the future will be an experimental psychology. Temperament, however, is an extremely variable thing, and prompts to many other modes of psychological expression. There are still books, and good books, that pay scant attention to the experimental method. There are books that deal with all the collateral problems of psychology. There are books that seek to give a scientific account of the things and selves of common sense. A representative library of psychology - books and pamphlets and magazines - is both costly and extensive; a representative knowledge of psychology, in all its forms and branches, is probably beyond the reach of any individual.

All this means, not that the student of psychology should be disheartened, - for there is no single chapter of psychology that is closed, that cannot be amended and extended by further work, - but that he should choose his special subject within the general field. And if he decides to throw in his lot with the experimentalists of the human laboratory, he may be assured that he could not join their society at a more favourable time. The experimental method, having conquered the whole domain of nature and of life, is pressing forward to the highest reaches of mind to thought itself. It needs no gift of prophecy to foretell that the first half of [the next] century will mark an epoch in the history of scientific psychology.

Appendix B

INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this study is to assess person perception on the basis of limited information about a person. You are to form an impression of the woman² whom you listened to on the audiotape and express your perception of her² using the following rating scales. In the second part of this questionnaire, we ask you to express your perception of this person's message (the lecture itself).

Here is how to use the rating scales:

With respect to the speaker, if you feel that the woman whom you heard **STRONGLY** possesses the characteristic at one end of the scale, place an "X" in the appropriate box:

loud X : ___: ___: ___: ___: ___: ___ soft

OR

loud ___: ___: ___: ___: ___: ___: X soft

If you feel that the woman **MODERATELY** possesses the characteristic at one end of the scale, place an "X" in the appropriate box:

old ___: ___: ___: ___: ___: X : ___ young

OR

old ___: X : ___: ___: ___: ___: ___ young

...continued

If you feel that the woman ONLY SLIGHTLY possesses the characteristic at one end of the scale, place a "X" in the appropriate box:

calm ___ : ___ : X : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ agitated

OR

calm ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : X : ___ : ___ agitated

If you consider the woman to be NEUTRAL on the scale, both sides of the scale EQUALLY ASSOCIATED with her, or if the scale is COMPLETELY IRRELEVANT to the woman on the audiotape, place an "X" in the middle space:

safe ___ : ___ : ___ : X : ___ : ___ : ___ unsafe

Please Note: These same rating principles are to be used in PART II when we ask you to consider the content of the speaker's lecture.

So that we can assess your impressions most effectively, MAKE EACH ITEM A SEPARATE AND INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT and DO NOT LOOK BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN ITEMS. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impression, your immediate feelings about the person on the audiotape and her lecture that is of concern. On the other hand, do not be careless as your true first impressions are of interest here.

PART I

Please rate the SPEAKER whom you heard on the audiotape on each of the following items:

nice ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ awful

dishonest ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ honest

cowardly ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ brave

hot ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ cold

good ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ bad

light ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ heavy

unfair ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ fair

slow ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ fast

cruel ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ kind

tense ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ relaxed

active ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ passive

PART II

Please rate the lecture which you heard on the audiotape on each of the following items:

worthless ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ valuable

deep___:___:___:___:___:___:___ shallow

false___:___:___:___:___:___:___ true

sharp ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ dull

weak___:___:___:___:___:___:___ strong

unpleasant___:___:___:___:___:___:___ pleasant

How well is the message of the lecture being presented by the speaker?

clear___:___:___:___:___:___:___ unclear

Thank you for your participation! Please turn over your questionnaire so that the experimenter can identify that you have completed this portion of the study.

Appendix C

Male Speaker, Gender Non-Specific Generic**Responses by Female Subjects:**

--- I noticed "he and she".

--- The gender non-specific generic seemed awkward in the lecture.

--- I noticed "he and she" -- it interfered with the text of the lecture.**

--- There seems to be more of an effort now to change sexist language. It would be interesting to look at elementary children and see what they think.

--- I noticed "he and she". It was almost too complicated in comparison to if he [the speaker] would have used *they*.

--- I *really* noticed a difference with "he and she". I appreciate when the gender non-specific generic is used; I probably would rate a male more harshly if he used masculine generic. Apparently there is a computer program on campus that asks for users to answer the question "Are you male? yes __, no __" -- I was outraged when I heard that!**

--- *They* may have been a better choice so as to not distract from the lecture.

--- I noticed the gender non-specific generic. I use *she* in my essays because I'm a female. I had a feminist English teacher 2 years ago

who did the same. I like university because the gender non-specific generic and the masculine generic are in use. If a professor uses the masculine generic it is okay because others use a gender non-specific generic or a feminine generic. *They* would be a good alternative when possible.

--- I find that guys usually [generically] use *he* and girls usually [generically] use *she*. Here, I noticed the "he and she", it came up a lot.

I had a professor, she was quite a feminist, and I wrote in an essay the word *mankind*. I think that she took marks off because of that. It wasn't fair, it's just a word.

Responses by Male Subjects:

--- I saw the exclusive use of *she* in an economics computer program. That was a good idea as something different.

I noticed it [the gender non-specific generic], but I wasn't bothered by it. People are making more of an effort these days to change. It [a gender non-specific generic] doesn't get in the way of the message

--- I noticed it but not specifically.

--- I've never had a male English teacher so it's always been drilled into my head to not specify gender. To me it doesn't matter whether *he* is [generically] used or whether *she* is [generically] used. I prefer to alternate.

Around here with the Martlett [student newspaper on campus] you get pretty conditioned to these kinds of things.

I noticed it [the gender non-specific generic], but it didn't bother me. This lecture used it too much, though.

--- I don't think I rated him [the speaker] any higher because he was a male. It wouldn't matter if it were a female -- although maybe I would have rated her higher. I don't know.

People have been making a change in their speaking recently. I notice it more now than a few years ago.

--- I think that this is an important issue. Some people, the radicals, take it too far, but others don't take it seriously enough. The university, though, is very different from the rest of the world, say the business world. I don't remember anyone on Bay Street [business area of Toronto] making an effort to use a non-specific gender approach.

--- The passage was filled with a lot of jargon. There are only so many syllables supposed to be in a sentence. [The gender non-specific generic detracted from the lecture] possibly a little.

--- It is an important issue [use of the gender non-specific generic] and it's going to take some time to get general acceptance. You know, ten years ago I never thought to check my writing to see

whether it offended anyone, and now I do. This intellectual change has to start somewhere, and this is a good a place as any.

Nowadays there are books to learn how to avoid the masculine generic in the B. C. government. Guidelines on how not to exclude, that is progress.

Well, men, or the educated ones, perpetuated and created the language. Now that women are entering into positions of power they are questioning the past. What we had before is not always right.

--- I noticed the gender non-specific generic and would have noticed if I had heard the masculine generic. I think it's an age thing. My dad, for example, would say, "The psychologist, *he* ...". I had a teacher last year who would correct us for using *he* only. So now I use *he and she*.

--- I noticed the gender non-specific generic because I thought that using *they* would have been a better alternative.

--- If we change the language to use gender non-specific generic speech then professors could probably learn something.

--- I've heard a lot at the university about this type of issue. Certain female friends of mine hate to hear *he*.

Female Speaker, Gender Non-Specific Generic

Responses by Female Subjects:

--- Why wasn't *she and he* used? **

--- I'm used to hearing the masculine generic; makes no difference in most cases.

--- "He and she" takes away from the message of the text; I couldn't grasp what was being said. **

--- I noticed the "he and she". It was awkward. *He* doesn't bother me, as a female. **

--- I thought that she [the speaker] used "he and she" just to be polite. **

--- [Generic awareness] depends on education. I found that "he and she" detracted from the lecture. I accept the masculine generic to mean *he and she*. **

--- In Chinese we don't have a problem we use *it* -- it can be animate or inanimate, and it refers to people, individuals without gender. *Nurse* is ambiguous, so is *physicist*, for example.

I didn't notice "he and she" used here.

I think that the universities are making more of an effort because we are more educated. This [research] is a good idea.

Responses by Male Subjects:

--- I would judge a male more harshly if he used the masculine generic.

--- It is the comparison. If we were brought up with the gender non-specific generic, it wouldn't sound any different.

I have a professor who uses *she* only. At first it sounds funny but you get used to it. And we would quickly get used to *he and she*.

--- I don't care what's used -- whether it's *he* or *she*. This person [the speaker] made too much of an effort to use both. It bothered me. There shouldn't be a change just because of those women libbers. I think the emphasis on *mankind* meaning *man*, is men's role in protecting women, their [men's] greater physical body size. When we think of a person it's natural to think of a man. Women have a way of getting men to be aggressive for them. They are crafty, women.

Aggression is indoctrinated in us from the day we are born. I want to hold on and protect what is dear to me. It's natural.

Anyone who thinks that studying this [masculine generic or gender non-specific generic] is important must be a raving lunatic and should be shot. I know I'm a bit of a male chauvinist pig but what can I do? [Note: As an aside, this subject mentioned that his sister

had just completed her graduate thesis in a traditionally masculine field.]

--- What is important is the content of the message.

Communication is for one person to get an idea to another person.

As long as that is done, it doesn't matter what is used.

Just because it's "politically correct" to speak a certain way, I don't see why we have to change because of radical feminists.

Too much has been made of this *he/she* thing.

I made a note of it [the generic used], but it didn't bother me. I just noticed it and that was it.

I suppose *mankind* is okay -- we all know what it means. But, at the same time, as a male I guess I'm in no position to judge what women think is important.

--- It's an interesting question [the study of generic use]. I can see how people want to be politically correct.

--- I didn't find that the "he and she" took away from the lecture. I did notice it though.

It didn't bother me either.

--- I think that the "he and she" took away from the meaning of the lecture. It was hard to concentrate on what was being said.

The woman [the speaker] used many multi-syllabic words and I wonder if males would feel threatened because of her advanced

level of knowledge and how [she spoke]. I found it [the lecture] to be complicated. Maybe because of her [the speaker's] gender and level of expertise, other males would feel threatened.

--- The [purpose of the] study was pretty clear because of that [gender non-specific generic used in the lecture]. I kind of knew what you were looking at because I noticed "he and she" so many times.

--- I didn't notice it [gender non-specific generic in lecture] either.

--- I heard a difference. The gender non-specific generic got in the way of what was being said. In the past ten years we've changed from *mankind* to *humankind*. And even some feminists don't like the word *human* -- they think it's bad because it contains *man*.

--- I wouldn't have paid much attention to the *he* version. It's more natural, I'm used to hearing it more.

Male Speaker, Masculine Generic

Responses by Female Subjects:

--- I have many friends who are women and who are professionals. We need something different from the masculine generic; the French *on*, for example. *He and she* is awkward. The masculine generic excludes, I don't like it. Besides, a change necessary despite any effort: Language is important.**

--- The masculine generic limits people in how they think and what they will do.**

--- I don't know if I noticed [that the masculine generic was used].

--- It would make a difference to me if a female used *he*. I would expect her to be more sensitive.

--- But it is important! Why is it that psychologists are assumed to be male?***

--- Me too [would be more annoyed hearing a female use masculine generic]. You wouldn't expect it.

I don't mind reading *he* in old text books, but I do wonder why they [the authors] don't use it [masculine generic] for nurses.

--- Have you looked at what [high school students] think? They might be more open to the gender non-specific generic.

I think if I would have heard *he and she* I would have noticed it more. But I have more awareness now than before. I have a teacher who was asked by a student if he would use *he and she*, and he said, "No". But I had never been in a class before when a student asked that kind of question.

--- I was surprised to hear only "he" being used for the psychologist and for the student. I thought it was sexist. I have classes where we make an effort to use the gender non-specific generic so that is why I'm sensitive to it.**

--- I thought that the gender non-specific generic was in line with this old lecture. It [the lecture] didn't seem recent and therefore [the gender non-specific generic use] was inconsistent.

--- We sometimes forget that language is progressive and can change. The university is very good at making an effort. I am almost thirty [years of age] and open to new ideas about our speech. It's too bad that others in the rest of the world aren't; or, those in the history department. They love exclusion of those other than the status quo.**

Responses by Male Subjects:

--- It doesn't make any difference whether it's *he and she* or *he*. If I had a prof for a course who used only *she*, I'd probably tell people. It just doesn't happen.

I'm so used to hearing the masculine generic that I didn't even notice it until reading the debriefing. Although, if you would have asked me I would have remembered.

--- I don't care what [type of generic] is used. I'm used to hearing both.

I would be more annoyed if I heard a female using *he* only.

People are definitely making an effort more than before, like in the past five to six years. I have a male instructor who uses *she*

[generically]. After the first few times I thought, "Right on!", and after that I just got used to it as I'm sure other students did.

--- I think that this a very important issue for women. All you have to do is take a look at any of the men's washrooms here on campus. The writing on the walls [literally] is pretty racist and sexist, it's really frightening.

--- I didn't notice [the masculine generic].

--- Me neither.

--- I noticed [the masculine generic use] only slightly.

It was the masculine generic.

I was concentrating on the lecture itself. I thought we'd have to recall it or something. If I concentrated on the "he", I wouldn't be able to remember it [the lecture].

--- Yeah, slightly.

--- I don't even know which was used.

Yeah.

Do you think that as women get into an equal number of positions of power that they will stop regarding this as important? I mean, when women are stopped from feeling insecure as women, maybe this won't be an important issue.

--- I didn't really notice the "he"s.

I don't think that I'm part of the group who feels excluded by this language, so I'm not the one who should decide.

--- I didn't either [notice masculine generic].

This is an important issue because recently we have become aware of what is "politically correct". I would have noticed [the masculine generic] more if it were a woman speaking.

--- No, I didn't note the masculine generic.

No. If the gender non-specific generic would have been used I maybe would have noticed. The university is different in that there is more attention put on gender and language.

Female Speaker, Masculine Generic

Responses by Female Subjects:

--- I think that people are likely to make attributions about a speaker without seeing him or her.

--- It is interesting [the question of rating generics], and worth studying.

--- Was it the gender non-specific generic in this lecture, or masculine generic? I don't think I noticed.

--- I think it's better if a female uses the masculine generic rather than a man. Men, I think, are likely to not want to offend anyone listening.

--- I have friends who use *he* to spite feminists.

--- I didn't even notice [the masculine generic]! I'm still not sure what was used.

I find some profs you can tell if they think the gender thing is important right away. Some, you know, the real feminist ones will [generically] use *she*, some other profs [generically] use *he*. It just depends.

--- Me neither [didn't notice masculine generic].

To me, this is really important. But what bothers me is when profs say other things, like, I went to a prof once and he said to me: "Oh [exasperated], you're just like my wife" -- just because I couldn't do something.**

Responses by Male Subjects:

--- Women are also referred to as men's objects, as possessions (such as boats) in language. I get tired of seeing the masculine generic in the paper and in places other than the university. We're educated to be nonsexist in language.

--- I don't think I noticed it [what generic was used].

On the surface level, maybe it's [use of the masculine generic] not important, but it could be implicit -- I don't know, male dominance?

--- Me neither. I know that all through school, in English [class] or whatever, we were never told how to write nonsexist language. It was only at university, in 115, 116, an English course that I'm taking

that the professor gave us handouts. If I didn't have that, I wouldn't know.

The masculine generic doesn't bother me, but if I was a girl it might.

--- I noticed the "he", it's normal.

--- The university is different from other places, you hear *she* [generically] used instead.

When I hear the gender non-specific generic, though, I do notice it.

--- I didn't even notice [the generic]. I don't see what all the big fuss is about.

--- The masculine generic just sounds natural to me. I work for a male-dominated place, the infantry, and we're all "infantry men".

There is only one female in our whole unit. The gender non-specific generic is something I really notice.

--- I came from a college and was in a nursing program. *She* was always used as a generic and all the nurses shown to us in videotapes were females. It maybe wasn't right but it didn't keep me from going into nursing.

--- Yeah, I heard the masculine generic.

--- Yeah.

I think the gender non-specific generic is important. Some profs, you know, who have been teaching for thirty years make it awkward.

They'll say, "He -- Oh! I mean *he or she*". These are the profs who get most flack from students. But if we are taught to think of *he and she*, it's not a problem.

** Women who seemed to either support or express dislike of masculine generic use

Endnotes

¹ In the gender non-specific generic condition, *her*, *he and she*, and *men and women*, etc., are inserted in place of the underlined text. The order of *he and she* was not altered in this passage (cf. *she and he*) because any change to this conventional usage pattern was thought to be salient to subjects and likely to alert them to the purpose of the investigation.

² To subjects who heard the male speaker, *man* and *him* respectively, appeared on the instruction form.

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Author:



Maria P. Barnes

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