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GENDER – BIAS IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION (PECULIARITIES OF FEMALE VERBAL BEHAVIOR IN SCIENTIFIC ENVIRONMENT)

Attending scientific events and meetings, taking part in learned and professional conferences is generally believed to be essential for both job placement and professional advancement and provides excellent career opportunities for females. Women who are interested in improving their own professional lot are becoming increasingly active at this level. In fact, for the modern state of mood in scientific «post-soviet» discourse, the percentage of papers being read by women compares favorably to the percentage of the membership that is female. The spiritless, utilitarian woman of academia's past, so well described in *Academic women*, is being replaced in many cases by the professionally active and intellectually aggressive woman.

Clearly, the task of the professional woman is to shine at meetings, conferences, and colloquia. She can do this by reading significant papers and she does. Likewise, she can advance herself by taking an active part in the question and discussion panels, which follow papers. I think that women do not show themselves to the best advantage. It is part of the oral history of academia that the cogent comment, the provocative question, or the wise observation carefully phrased at an important meeting may well mark a turning point in one's career.

A careful analysis of the question-and-answer sessions of the «scientific discourse» enlightens some important differences in the way males and females respond verbally to papers. Areas in which differences are striking are the *number of comments* (for not all responses are questions), *length of responses*, *preresponse statements*, and *purposes of response*. We have been observing and recording female «conference» behavior for three years during Russian, Ukrainian and international gender and linguistic scientific conferences, symposiums, seminars, etc. We analyzed verbal female and male behavior when post panel discussions took place. All observations were noted on data sheets and tape recordings were made during these oral meetings. The data sheets were then processed as well as were the

transcriptions of the tapes. Thus, the data have been compared according to several directions or variables mentioned above. To verify the statistic validity of the data obtained we have applied SPSS Procedure MANOVA to establish whether any differences interact with variables of interest in the study, to separate repeated-measures analysis of various factors using this SPSS procedure. Also keeping in mind a potential dependency as a result in the data it was necessary to conduct two statistical analyses (MANOVA or ANOVA) for each set of dependent variables.

The data corpora were tremendous. One of the most telling facts provided by the data is that while women presented 50 percent of the papers and averaged about 42 percent of each audience, only 25 percent of all the responses to papers were made by them. Clearly, then, women do not take as proportionally active part in the comment portions of meetings as their male counterparts.

The preposition that men speak more than women surely is no longer new against stereotypic beliefs. Male verbosity and corresponding female brevity have been discussed in sufficient detail so that it is not surprising to note that the mean time used by women in asking a question was much shorter – less than half – than that of men: 24 seconds for women and 50 seconds for men. What is more fascinating that time it is the way in which the difference is achieved. The data indicate that women employ rather little prequestion predication and that women pose single questions much of the time.

Prequestion predication refers to all of the scholarly background information that is presented leading up to the question or comment. It frequently contains references to other studies or articles and generally serves to provide a clear, unambiguous context for the comment. It further serves to establish the credentials, the knowledgeability, of the person posing the comment. Such predications preceded only 20% of comments by women and a full 72 % of those from men. This means that the majority of questions posed by women were not supported by background references to prior studies or personal observations, while the contrary is true for those by men. Here are some unpreicated comment question starts:

«What information is there that... ?»

«How do you justify... ?»

«Could you please clarify... ?»

Compare those with the following rather elaborate but not unrepresentative male predications:

«Both linguists have stated that the normal one-word adjective position is before the noun. How does this compare with... ?»

«A preliminary paper I recently looked at out of Moscow held that... intrinsic patterns were first imitated then comprehended then produced. What evidence have you run across... ?»

The pattern of compounding prequestion predication, that is, providing multiple comments or citations before embarking on the question itself, was only once exhibited by a woman but occurred in one out of every seven male responses given.

Single questions also account for female brevity. The data show that women asked a mean of 1.45 questions each time they were recognized while men averaged 2.50. The difference is well over the level of significance. It is also interesting to note that a dialogue between a speaker and a member of the audience occurred almost five times as often when both members were male than when either one or both of the members were female. Here, a

dialogue is considered any exchange in which both members spoke at least twice with no intervening third speaker.

To introduce a question, women typically made the request personal, which resulted in women using a considerably higher number of first person references than men (70% total). The frames in which these first persons occurred are particularly important for more than 70% fell in what others scholars have suggested might be called «polite forms». The difference may be illustrated by comparing «I want to ask you what time it is» and «What time is it?»

Notice the examples below (emphasis mine)

«I would like to ask if... »

«My impression is that... »

«It seems to me that... »

«I wonder if... »

«It seems to me that it would be safe to assume that... »

Since the body of data offers far fewer instances of males with this pattern (a ratio of 2.7 to 1), the frequency of occurrence among female speakers must be taken to show it to be female preferential, to adapt useful sex-exclusive/sex-preferential dichotomy. The parallel male pattern appears to be merely to embark on the question or assertion without the personal preliminary remark. Interestingly, women also evidenced a higher number of both nominative and objective second persons than did males, used, however, in much the same way:

«Could you please clarify what... »

«Would you comment on... »

It appears that the imperative without realized *you* seems to be the male preferential form.

I conducted an informal survey of attitudes toward request forms using a three-level paradigm:

come here

will you come here

would you come here

and

hand me a pencil

can you hand me a pencil

could you hand me a pencil.

It appears that there are at least three levels of politeness as the paradigm stands and several more with the insertion of *please*. There is the unadorned command that is least polite, the present tense modal plus a command that is somewhat polite, and the past tense modal that is very polite. The frequent confusion about end punctuation, exclamation mark or question, indicates that many are not quite sure whether what they have created is a command or a question.

Not only are the pronouns of interest in this pattern but also so are the verb forms. Women in this data show a distinct preference for past modal structures, markers of very polite and often subservient speech:

«Mightn't it be the case that... ?»

«Would the relationship... ?»

«It seems to me that it would be safe to assume that... »

Here an *is* construction would be both less tentative and more assertive. Women used *please* 1.93 times as often as did men.

The purpose of a question or comment, likewise, varied to a degree between the sexes. The most frequent single purpose for responding to a paper was not to speak directly to the topic of the paper but rather, for both men and women, to ask that material outside the domain of the paper to be clarified. Of the male responses, 40 percent were tangential questions, as were 31 percent of the women's. An equally popular question style for women (also 31 percent) was to request a clarification of material covered in the paper. For men the second most frequent response type was to make a tangential statement. Table below illustrates the relative frequency of response type according to sex.

Table 1. The relative frequency of response type according to sex

Type of Response	Females	Males
Tangential question	1	1
Clarification of in-paper data requested	2	6
Tangential assertion	4	2
Counter data offered	3	3
Supportive data offered	5	4
Reinterpretation of in-paper data	0	5

These data clearly indicate that women and men do not perform in the same way at learned and professional meetings. And, I think it may well be assumed that the differences reflect a difference in male-female professional behavior. Further, it may well be that these differences work to the professional woman's disadvantage. Here, an ethnography of professional behavior would clearly be helpful.

If it is true that the clever comment, the wise remark, the well-phrased assertion at professional meetings do in fact work favorably for career advancement, then it behooves women to identify precisely which patterns are most and least productive. Once these are identified, it may work to woman's advantage to acquire a second set of verbal ploys so that she may show herself off to best professional advantage.

Also we would like to make a couple of general colligations to this point:

The distinctions in speech behavior of persons, stipulated by their sex, are manifested in all levels of language structure, covering all elements of language system, but it is discourse where these distinction can manifest maybe more clearly.

These distinctions aren't inventory (the definite linguistic units don't exist in language which are used only by men, or only by women). All these distinctions possess probable character (i.e. they are displayed in some regularities and frequencies of their usage).

We assume that the frequency and the character of distinctions in each language differ greatly and manifest themselves with various degree of intensity but we need a comparative analysis to promote this study further.

The whole system of the factors (from ethnic up to individual) influences on the degree and the character of manifestation of distinctions, stipulated by person's sex.

Social factors (social stereotypes and the norms of behavior, education, social surrounding, etc.) can influence, but only meditatively. They can influence on the intensity and the degree of manifestation of these distinctions, but, apparently, cannot generate them independently.

We would like also to stress that it's very complicated to set up the connection between individual and social factors, to understand their influence and complex interaction. That's why the sex-differentiation isn't very simple for study (because it is enough difficult to trace, to fix, to separate these differences and to understand their exact origin). The special (non-traditional) methods of linguistic technique are required.

Also to my mind we have made the start for further developing in this field namely in our home linguistics and tried to illuminate this problem (the existence of sex-biased in scientific discourse) from the very beginning.

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ОППОЗИЦИЯ «МУЖСКОЙ»/ «ЖЕНСКИЙ» КАК ПРОЯВЛЕНИЕ ОППОЗИЦИИ «ВЫШЕ» / «НИЖЕ»

Лингвистическое выражение оппозиции «мужской / женский», или, как её ещё называют, гендерной оппозиции, вызывает пристальный интерес культурологов. «Сближение/удаление, (от)давание/ (от)бирание, появление/исчезновение, метаморфозы и т.п. мифологизируются в кругу действия оппозиции м/ж» [1, с. 77]. Исследователи, однако, отмечают, что эту оппозицию нельзя трактовать однозначно, а порой она вообще не поддаётся рациональной интерпретации. «В достаточном числе случаев оппозиция м/ж как бы навязана извне как абстрактный классификатор и объяснение затрудняет самих носителей традиций. (...) Легче всего говорить об обычной вариативности или об ослаблении или даже вырождении оппозиции, но, пожалуй, разумнее предположить, что «функциональные» основания перекрываются чем-то иным» [1, с. 80-81].

Как мы постараемся доказать, лингвистически выраженная оппозиция 'мужской' / 'женский' не есть собственно оппозиция по половому признаку (для того, чтобы она стала таковой, нужны дополнительные семы), а представляет собой разновидность оппозиции 'выше' / 'ниже'.

Традиционная структура общества породила взгляд на женщину как на низшее существо. Отсутствие равноправия женщин с мужчинами (права на образование и права на труд) давало мужчинам основания для пренебрежительного взгляда на женский пол. Советский строй, создав реальные условия для равноправия, уничтожил экономические предпосылки для такого взгляда. Достижения и успехи женщин в науке, культуре, на производстве доказали справедливость точки зрения Пушкина на возможность для женщины быть достойным членом общества. Напомним – в 1835 году поэт писал: «Одна