

Gender



Without question, women and men have the tendency to use language both the same and differently, especially when taking turns.

While some of the following may seem to be stereotypes (and may prove to be stereotypes with further research), current research makes the following claims...

Examples of Different Language Strategies by Men and Women:

Minimal Responses: Also known as a backchannel, these include terms such as *mhm*, *yeah* and *right*. They are typically used more by women than men, especially when showing agreement and support of a current speaker. Men tend to use these terms to assert dominance.

Hedges: Include terms such as *I think*, *perhaps*, *like* etc. While it is claimed women use these more than men, it may be argued that the use is centered more closely to context and could be used by either gender. These terms express levels of uncertainty.

Tag Questions: Include terms such as *isn't it?* These terms relay tentativeness, and while some researchers claim they are more specific to females, there is no conclusive evidence that this is true. It is argued that these depend on attitudes and context.

Questions: It is believed women use more interrogative questions than men, seemingly as a method to keep conversation active. It is also believed that people with more power use more questions in conversation than those with less.

Commands and Directives: It is believed that males and females use commands and directives differently, especially when used in same-sex groups. Males tend to use more explicit commands ex. *Gimme*, while girls tend to be more inclusive ex. *Let's play*.

Swearing and Taboo Language: There is widespread belief that males use more taboo forms than females. Research shows that male-male conversation uses substantially more taboo words than female-female, while mixed conversations tend to accommodate both sides.

Compliments: Research shows that women give more compliments, and also receive more. Women tend to compliment each other on appearance, while men tend to compliment each other based on skill and possessions.

Both men and women participate in conversations and turn taking situations regularly.

Strategies used by men and women differ for turn taking, and examples can be seen in both mixed gender and same gender conversations.

Mixed talk: Men and Women having conversations:

Do women and men have equal speaking rights?



Holding/Hogging the floor (Coates 116-119): Research states that men tend to dominate conversation (especially in the public sphere) more than women, contrary to popular belief.

Within a sociolinguistic context, it is argued that since men are dominant in social settings, women may be expected to be more silent; therefore, when women talk it is perceived as talkative. Research shows that rank holds less power than gender in conversation dominance: men dominate conversation more than women.

Non-cooperational speech (Coates 120-121): Can be seen when one or more people do not cooperate in conversation.

Typically, females try harder to keep a conversation going, using terms such as *you know(?)*, in places where pauses are not being filled by whomever they are speaking with.

Generally, males fail to give responses at all in non-cooperative speech, and participate in more delays and pauses than females.

In a study conducted by Victoria DeFrancisco (1998), seven couples were studied regarding non-cooperational speech:

Turn-taking violations in the daily interaction of seven couples (based on DeFrancisco 1998:179) (Coates 121):

	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>Men (%)</i>
<i>No response</i>	32	68
<i>Delayed response</i>	30	70
<i>Inadequate response</i>	40	60
<i>Interruption</i>	46	54

Same gendered talk:

How do men and women converse differently in same gendered groups?



General characteristics and Turn Taking (Coates 126-138):

All-female groups:

- Cooperative/collaborative rather than competitive
- More flexible
- Problems: discuss more personal issues
- Talk about people and feelings
- ...*Turn Taking*...
- Often violate one person at a time
- Open up conversational floor
- Overlapping and minimal responses
- Simultaneous speech is understood: multilayered conversations

All-male groups:

- Competitive
 - Hierarchies emerge in conversation: submission and dominance
 - Problems: discuss more circumstantial differences
 - Talk about current affairs, travel and sports
 - Ask questions to gain information
 - Wish to achieve solidarity
 - ...*Turn Taking*...
 - Prefer one at a time, little overlap
 - Playing the expert: hold floor and talk for a long time about a subject
 - Verbal sparring: rapid-fire turns
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