Terms from Wardhaugh chapter 7 and 8
isolect “individual speech behavior” idiolect
sociolect
social networks: kin, religion, etc...
vernacular norms: solidarity rather than status
categorical rules “if x then y”
variable rules “generalizations based on surveys” (186)
continuum: individual speakers differ, and some may not fit the pattern, but generally there is a pattern. Social constructs are classes imposed in this continuum. The majority of speakers from various classes behave like each other even if some individuals do not. 175
Most interesting findings:

In Glasgow a study finds that among males the greatest differences between top class and second highest class, but among females the greatest difference was between the two middle classes. 175

In Detroit study social status was the most important determiner of linguistic difference. Biggest difference between lower middle and upper working classes. Females more standard than males, and older people also more standard than younger people. 174

More on Labov below if we have time.

Solidarity: women have a much greater need to use language to signal their social status than do men” (198) and “women generally dead the way in changes toward a standard and men tend to march in the opposite direction” (200) and “consensus among investigators that linguistic change often seems to originate in the lower middle class, with women in the
vanguard of social change” (201) and “in the working classes it is apparently males of all ages and sometimes young females who choose solidarity, whereas older females opt often for prestige” (202)

Unconscious change is natural in all strata where the literacy factor does not intervene 205

Unconscious change tends to come from below, from the lower classes

Conscious change tends to come from above 206

“The Philadelphia speech community is separating into two distinct speech communities: white and black. They share a large part of the general English language, and a number of local words as well....But the number of differences between them in
grammar and pronunciation seems to be growing steadily greater” (Labov via Wardhaugh p. 206)

Some argue that “African American Vernacular English [in the old Edition called “Black English”] and Standard English are diverging in the Brazon Valley in Texas...divergence is occurring between the English of blacks and whites” but others claim “that though there may be divergent features there are also convergent ones. ..AAVE is just like any other dialect of English; it has its own innovations but remains strongly influenced by the standard variety” (208)

Jocks vs burnouts on pp. 208-9

Scots (sometimes called ‘jocks’ btw) discussed on p. 212.
Best Discussion Questions:

Let’s look at questions: 4 on p. 168, 1 on p. 171, 2 and 3 on p. 179, 3 on 182, and 3 on 188.

I also very much like question 1 on p. 214. (I think we might notice and criticize ‘g’ dropping in someone we didn’t like, but not notice it someone we did like. Like counting the ‘uhs’ a speaker you don’t like makes, but ignoring it in a speaker you like.)

“Chomsky himself has never appeared to find much value in Labov’s work: for him it is a study of linguistic performance and has very little to offer to a better understanding of language” Wardhaugh 187
Language and social attitudes

An important recognition of modern linguistics is that value judgments about language should be recognized as socially based. As linguists, one of our tasks is to examine what people say and feel about language and isolate the social aspects from the purely linguistic ones.

An important example is the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammar, which we discussed in 319 and which Pinker takes up in some detail in Chapter 12 of *The Language Instinct*, taking a rather strong position against prescriptivism.

The debate is not a trivial one, and it is not entirely clear that people like Pinker are entirely correct. There are instances where prescriptivism is well-founded and very much needed, e.g. in teaching people to write clear prose.

You can find a sample of the debate in Geoff Nunberg's classic article *Decline of Grammar*, and Mark Halpern's more recent response *A War That Never Ends*.

As linguists we must examine these issues carefully and separate those instances where we are justified in criticizing someone's writing style -- e.g. where someone writes a passage that is difficult to understand or is unclear because of the incorrect use of specialized vocabulary -- from criticism of a pattern in some spoken dialect which is not inferior in any objective sense, but just happens to be different from an arbitrarily chosen standard. The biggest problem with prescriptivists is that they frequently confuse the two, railing against some usage not because it is objectively less clear than some alternative, but because of some social prejudice or arbitrary rule like "don't end a sentence with a preposition", which has no basis in linguistic fact.

We will see in this lecture that social factors play a very important role not just in how people think about other people's language, but in how they actually speak. As scientists, we want to examine these social factors and understand how they underly linguistic variation, rather than placing value judgments on the variation itself.

Classifying "correctness"

Linguistic analysis lets us state many of the issues that people debate more clearly. When this is done, people sometimes disagree less than they thought they did about "correctness" in English.

In particular, we can distinguish several types of linguistic "correctness":

1. Established criteria of educated written language
2. Issues on which educated people differ (and which may be different in written and spoken forms):
   a. who/whom did you see
   b. you should speak like/as your teacher does
   c. the data is/are unreliable
   d. I disapprove of him/his doing it
   e. get it done as quick/quickly as possible
   f. hopefully, she'll be there on time
3. Changes in the spoken language that some people resist:
   a. between you and I
   b. me and Harry went downtown
   c. was like for said
4. Pure inventions of self-appointed grammarians with no basis in linguistic structure or historical usage:
   a. prohibition of split infinitives
   b. prohibition of prepositions at the end of a sentence
   c. I shall vs. you will
   d. It is I

As we discussed in the first lecture, the final category is especially the result of trying to make English more like Latin, often by means of school grammars that were intended to prepare English-speaking students to learn Latin.

**Dialect variation and its evaluation**

How is that arbitrary rules of usage came to hold such sway over people's writing practices and trigger such strong emotional responses to the way that other people speak and write?

Essentially because language has a deep social function of defining group identity. You speak like the others in your social group, which can strengthen your bonds with them, but can also divide you from people in other groups who speak differently and can tell right away from how you talk that -- from the point of view of their group -- you are an outsider.

In the (1916) preface to his play *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw wrote that "It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him."

As the phonetician Henry Higgins says in the play's first act, "You can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshireman by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles. I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets."

In a society as conscious of hierarchy and origin as Shaw's England was, to "spot"
someone in this sense is an evaluation -- and usually a negative or even hostile evaluation -- not just an observation. As Higgins puts it,

This is an age of upstarts. Men begin in Kentish Town with £80 a year, and end in Park Lane with a hundred thousand. They want to drop Kentish Town; but they give themselves away every time they open their mouths.

Higgins (along with his creator Shaw and, apparently, Shaw's friend Henry Sweet, the real-life linguist who served as the basis for Higgins' character) shares his society's evaluation of the relative value of linguistic variants. Speaking to the cockney flower-peddler Eliza Doolittle, he says:

A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere, no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and The Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon.

Unlike many members of his society, however, Shaw saw class differences (and the speech patterns that mark them) as superficial and modifiable, rather than essential. As he wrote in another context, "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them."

His character Higgins earns his living by teaching upwardly-mobile businessmen how to talk like their social "superiors," and asserts that he could do the same with Eliza:

You see this creature with her kerbstone English: the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English. That's the sort of thing I do for commercial millionaires. And on the profits of it I do genuine scientific work in phonetics, and a little as a poet on Miltonic lines.

In response to such social barriers of dialect, Shaw wrote in his preface to *Pygmalion* that

The reformer England needs today is an energetic phonetic enthusiast: that is why I have made such a one the hero of a popular play.

The "reform" that Shaw has in mind is to teach the lower classes (and the provincials) to speak "noble English," as Higgins does with Eliza.

We think of today's America as a more egalitarian and tolerant place than Shaw's England was.
However, American regional and class-based accents are also subject to sometimes harsh evaluation.

You can find modern-day instructors promising this kind of "accent reduction" for foreigners and native speakers with regional dialects, as well as for actors. However, most socially or geographically mobile people either imitate local prestige dialects without formal instruction, or they simply to continue to speak as they are used to doing, and suffer (or enjoy) the consequences.

Most adults with a regional accents are happy enough with the way they are. Some are even militant about it, like the author of the manifesto *In Defense of a Southern Accent* (which, unfortunately, is no longer available online). His belief is that "Northern intellectuals . . . look down on the people of the South" and think that "speaking Southern indicates that you are at best unsophisticated and very likely uneducated."

---

**Sociolinguistic judgments**

When you hear a speaker of American English (or any other language you know well), you might often ask yourself what kind of person is talking:

- what sex?
- what age?
- from what part of the country?
- what social class?
- what race or ethnicity?

A particular accent can cause some people to react with quite visceral feelings of distaste and judgmentality. Such reactions may be a source of puzzlement and even shame to people who consider themselves intellectually above regional, class, or racial prejudice. Of course, an accent might also make some people feel homesick for the sounds of their native place, and sometimes an accent may seem merely exotic and interesting to outsiders.

A well-informed sociolinguist -- a modern-day Henry Higgins -- can often place speakers quite precisely in space, time, ethnicity, and social stratum. Higgins' claims are a bit exaggerated, but there is a kernel of truth to them.

Indeed, most people, not just linguists, are very good at guessing sex and age and individual identity, and fair at guessing geographic region. We're especially sensitive to social class markers in dialect areas we are familiar with.

Here are brief recordings of speakers American English from a series of different backgrounds and locations. How much can you figure out about each speaker?

Example 1  Example 2  Example 3  Example 4
Some features that distinguish regional dialects of American English

William Labov and colleagues at Penn are using telephone survey techniques to construct a detailed Phonological Atlas of North America.

Here are a couple of simple ways in which dialects of American English vary regarding particular distinctions of pronunciation, taken from the Atlas.

1. Many speakers -- especially those in the northern and western parts of the country -- don't distinguish the vowels of *cot* / *caught*.

2. On the other hand, many southern speakers don't distinguish the vowel in words such as *pin* / *pen* or *him* / *hem*: these two lax vowels are merged before a nasal consonant (but not in other contexts, such as *pit* / *pet*).
These are small ways in which we can identify a speaker by geographic origin. We are less likely than Shaw to think of someone's dialect as "keep[ing] her in the gutter to the end of her days." However, it is unusual for someone with a very distinctive accent to get a job as a radio news announcer in today's U.S.A. Depending on the case and the context, they might be at a disadvantage in competing for other kinds of jobs, housing, and so on.

"Matched guise" experiments, in which listeners hear the same material spoken with different accents, show that evaluations of traits such as intelligence can be strongly influenced by social stereotypes associated with ways of speaking. Similar experiments show that African-American or Latino speech markers can make the difference between being shown a house or apartment and being told that it is no longer available.

---

**Lexical distinctions between dialects**

Aspects of language other than pronunciation ("accent") set speakers apart as well. Vocabulary is one example. In the England of a half-century ago, *membership in the upper class* was signaled by subtleties of vocabulary choice that S. C. Ross called **U and non-U**, for "upper class" and "non-upper class" (Crystal, p. 39). Here are a few of the thousands of distinctions in question:
Many of these have no social connotations for speakers of American English today, or may even have opposite connotations (e.g. *wealthy* seems a "classier" word than *rich*).

That just goes to show the arbitrariness of most sociolinguistic markers: random facts of history lead to an association between some linguistic element and some social class. But to the extent that class differences matter in a society, the relevant linguistic elements can lead to highly significant consequences.

A clever parvenu might conceivably learn to imitate "received pronunciation," as Eliza Doolittle did under the tutelage of Henry Higgins. Many such phonological generalizations can be applied to all words, and thus the learning is a delimited task. However, the only way to master every nuance of U vocabulary is to spend your life with U people.

---

**Shibboleth**

People are very conscious of factors that distinguish the dialect of one group from another. Because of this, language can be a gatekeeper, determining a person's business and personal prospects as in *Pygmalion*, or much worse. One of the most infamous examples of language in this function is given in the Bible, in Judges 12:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jephthah then called together the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. The Gileadites struck them down because the Ephraimites had said, &quot;You Gileadites are renegades from Ephraim and Manasseh.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim, and whenever a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
survivor of Ephraim said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead asked him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he replied, "No," they said, "All right, say 'Shibboleth.'" If he said, "Sibboleth," because he could not pronounce the word correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time.

Of course, it's not that Ephraimites couldn't pronounce the word correctly, but rather that it had a different pronunciation in their dialect.

As a result of this story, we use the word "shibboleth" to mean an arbitrary linguistic marker that distinguishes one group from another. (The Hebrew word shibbôlet means "ear of corn; stream" as was chosen simply for its sound, not its meaning.)

A 20th-century parallel to the Biblical shibboleth story took place in the Dominican Republic in 1937, when tens of thousands of Haitians were massacred on the basis of whether or not they could roll the /r/ in perejil, the Spanish word for "parsley."

In both these cases, pronunciation served as an indication of the ethnicity of the speaker, with fatal consequences. Under more ordinary circumstances, we draw conclusions about other people based on their use of language, but for the most part the linguistic status of these differences is just as arbitrary as whether you say "ear of corn" as shibbôlet or sibbôlet.

**Prestige dialects**

More "grammatical" aspects of language use are particularly common in discussions of "good" and "bad" language.

In the debate about language standards, each of the several sides tends to get annoyed about various failures and stupidities of the others. One thing that gets linguists particularly annoyed is bad scholarship on the part of some language mavens, who pretend, without checking, that a principle they just thought up is hallowed by centuries of the best writers' usage, or is a necessary consequence of the fundamental laws of logic. This what we identified earlier as level 4 on the "correctness" scale: pseudo-correctness.

If it turns out that Shakespeare or The New York Times routinely violates the "rule" in question, the pretence is exposed. Linguists love this.

Pinker discusses several examples of this kind, and we discussed a few others in Lecture 1, so we won't spend any more time on the point here.

What is important for us to understand here is how such a thing could arise. It seems that the creation and perpetuation of arbitrary and nonsensical rules of usage is an extension of the use of language as a social gatekeeper. Using "proper" English in writing and formal speech is a badge of education and social status, a way to demonstrate to others that one belongs to the elite class and should be treated
with respect and put in positions of power. As such, it is a powerful asset, something desirable which is to be strived for and guarded.

This is a double-edged sword. Those who are in positions of social dominance -- or wish to be -- must be careful to learn the prestige dialect and use it correctly. But it is also in their interest to maintain their dominance by recognizing non-elites and exposing them on the basis of their incomplete mastery of the prestige dialect.

Odd quirks and arbitrary rules ensure that the dialect can only be fully learned through explicit instruction and prolonged exposure, helping to ensure that those born into privilege will retain it, and those born outside of the elite will have difficulty breaking into it.

Of course, the degree to which this holds depends a great deal on the society in question and how extreme its social stratification is. In the intensely class-based England of the recent past, speaking the prestige dialect was extremely important, as shown by the whole premise of *Pygmalion*, while in the somewhat more socially mobile egalitarian US of the present, it is less so. But even here and now, social markers in one's speech do have important effects.

These is an important recognition to keep in mind, for linguists, upwardly mobile people, and social reformers.

**Bilingualism, stigmatized dialects, and linguistic nationalism**

Just like any other element of social interaction, language inspires extreme emotions, and linguistic prescriptivism often takes on shades of nationalism as well as morality. In 1926, the National Council of Teachers of English urged its members to have their children recite this Better Speech Week Pledge:

```
I love the United States of America. I love my country's flag. I love my country's language. I promise:

• That I will not dishonor my country's speech by leaving off the last syllable of words.
• That I will say a good American "yes" and "no" in place of an Indian grunt "um-hum" and "nup-um" or a foreign "ya" or "yeh" and "nope."
• That I will do my best to improve American speech by avoiding loud rough tones, by enunciating distinctly, and by speaking pleasantly, clearly and sincerely
```

Feelings sometimes run a bit high about standards of English usage, but there are *real* language wars out there that tear countries apart. The Ephraimites died over the pronunciation of /is/ -- when completely different languages are in contact, it's even easier to make linguistic differences a point of conflict. For some echoes of the current topic, read a recent essay by Bob King on the Official English movement.
Social patterns in language

The way that people talk depends on where they come from and where they belong in their society. It also depends on the details of the particular speech situation. The study of variation in speech that depends on such matters is the domain of sociolinguistics -- variation in the form of language, especially as the result of social categories. You can learn more, both about the techniques and the conclusions of such research, by taking Linguistics 102, Introduction to Sociolinguistics.

Social dialect: g-dropping in English

Over the past few decades, sociolinguists have devised general ways of describing and explaining this complex tapestry of linguistic variation.

One of the many interesting results of this research is the discovery of systematic analogical relationships among different social and registral dimensions. For instance, there is a systematic relationship between social class and formality. Let's examine this relationship in a small case study: g-dropping in English.

What is g-dropping?

The term comes from the conventional orthography, which uses the digraph *ng* to represent the velar nasal [ŋ] and the single letter *n* to represent the alveolar nasal [n]. When the two vary in certain people's pronunciation, e.g. *she's* *opening/openin'* the door *it's* as if a *g* is being dropped, as far as the orthography is concerned.

In fact, there is no *g* sound involved at all.

The only difference in pronunciation is the place of articulation of the nasal consonant, i.e. whether the final nasal is *velar* (made with the body of the tongue pressed against the soft palate) or *alveolar* (made with the blade of the tongue pressed against the ridge behind the front teeth).

Thus in "g-dropping" nothing is ever really dropped -- it's just a question of where you put your tongue at the end of the word.

What words are candidates for g-dropping?

English speakers do not have a general alternation between final velar and coronal nasals.

E.g. *boomerang* does not become *boomeran'*; and

*ring* does not become *rin*.
We are only talking about **unstressed** *-ing* at the ends of words. In some dialects, g-dropping applies only to the inflectional suffix *-ing* (in present participles such as *trying*), and not in nouns such as *wedding* or *morning*.

*They were buildin' a house.*

but not *They live in a huge buildin'*.

For most speakers, it's a matter of **frequency**: nouns can undergo the process (as in mornin'), but verbs do so more often.

**Where does g-dropping come from?**

As it turns out G-dropping is actually a **more conservative pattern**. The present participle suffix was originally pronounced with a coronal, not a velar nasal: in Early Middle English, this inflection was *-inde* or *-ende*. There was a derivational ending *-ung* for making nouns out of verbs, which produced words like present-day "building."

If you know **German**, you may recognize this distinction, which is preserved in that language:

*senk-* "sink, lower"

*senk-end* "lowering" (*Steuer senkende Massnahmen*, "tax lowering measures")

*Senk-ung* "lowering" (*Steuersenkung* "tax cut")

In English, the *-ende* suffix lost its *-de* ending, and the *-ung* suffix was weakened to *-ing*. This led to a confusion of the two suffixes, and eventually, in some dialects, including the written standard, they **merged into the modern *-ing* suffix**. One result is that it's hard to classify *-ing* as inflectional or derivational.

they were **saying** (an **inflected** form of the verb)

a famous **saying** (a **derived** noun with somewhat idiosyncratic meaning: it refers to a specific turn of phrase, not just any utterance or act of speaking)

In 19th- and early 20th-century England, the g-dropping pattern (which really was the "non-g-adding pattern") marked the **rural aristocracy as well as the lower classes**.

Thus this passage from John Galsworthy's 1931 novel *Maid in Waiting*:

```
-- Where on earth did Aunt Em learn to drop her g's?
-- Father told me once that she was at a school where an undropped "g" was worse than a
```
dropped "h". They were bringin' in a country fashion then, huntin' people, you know.

The velar pronunciation, a middle-class innovation a couple of hundred years ago, was as much anti-rural as it was pro-upper-class. It has since become the norm for most educated speakers.

Note, however, that for most speakers, the two suffixes never completely merged. Recall that "g-dropping", i.e. the alveolar pronunciation, is more common with the participial form than with deverbal nouns. The reason, of course, is that the former originally had the alveolar nasal while the latter originally had the velar.

**How does g-dropping work today?**

Nearly all English speakers drop g's sometimes, but in a given speech community, the proportion varies systematically with class. For instance, in a 1969 study done in New York City, Labov found that in casual conversation, g-dropping varied with social class as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower class</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>Lower middle class</th>
<th>Upper middle class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of g-dropping</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In other words, as class status "rises," percentage of g-dropping falls.

However, formality also matters: members of a given social stratum drop g's more often in less formal speech. Thus for the lower class members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Casual speech</th>
<th>Careful speech</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of g-dropping</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 1969 NYC study, this pattern was maintained across the full interaction of social class and degree of formality:
A similar pattern was found in percentage of g-dropping from a study done in Norwich, England:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Casual speech</th>
<th>Careful speech</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle middle class</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper working class</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle working class</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower working class</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall g-dropping rates seem to be somewhat higher in Norwich compared to New York. This reflects the role of geographic variation, i.e. regional dialect differences. Nevertheless, the general pattern of double dependence on social status and formality is maintained.

Similar studies have been done in many places, for many linguistic variables other than g-dropping, and the pattern is always the same: there is a sort of systematic analogy between social class and
formality. There are several competing theories about why this is true, but the parallel between class and formality always holds.

Class is not the only social variable that tends to work this way: gender is also relevant. Another study of g-dropping, this time in Los Angeles, compared males and females of similar socio-economic status. Male speakers (other things equal) tend to use more informal (or lower-class) modes of speech than females do, and this study was no exception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Joking</th>
<th>Arguing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the same time, for both males and females, the percentage of g-dropping was greater in joking than in arguing -- presumably because joking creates a more informal speech style.

Next we'll examine two kinds of language change in the United States that are partly based on personal identity, but in somewhat opposite ways.

In the pronunciation of [r] in New York City, a trend was found toward the overt prestige pattern associated with the upper classes, away from the previously preferred local pronunciation.

In the pronunciation of [ay] and [aw] on Martha's Vineyard, a trend was found toward the covert prestige pattern associated with the local dialect, rather than the more widespread standard in American English.

**R-fulness in New York**

A classic example of social categories marked by pronunciation is the status of [r] in English, when that sound is not followed by a vowel (i.e. when it's in the coda of a syllable).

an r-ful (or "rhotic") pronunciation: New York

the General American (or "Midwestern") prestige pattern

an r-less (or "non-rhotic") pronunciation: New Yawk

the more local (New England) prestige pattern, at least formerly
Some background: When the English colonies were founded in America, the prestige pattern in England was to pronounce all r's. During the 18th century, however, the prestige form in England developed the r-less pronunciation that is still standard there today. (Many regional dialects in England still pronounce all the r's.) On the Atlantic seaboard, in continual contact with England, this prestige form was widely adopted as well, so that port cities such as Boston, New York, and Savannah developed an r-less prestige pattern, as did British colonies settled later than the Americas, such as South Africa and Australia. (Philadelphia never developed this pattern, and maintained the r-ful pronunciation all along.) As the inland population moved westward, the non-coastal r-ful dialect was taken along and that became the General American pattern, which more and more is displacing the r-less varieties. An important exception is the Southern dialect area, where the r-less pronunciation spread quite widely as a regional prestige pattern.

In the 1960's, William Labov, now a senior professor at Penn, studied the speech of New Yorkers with an ear to this question. His experiment was quite ingenious. He visited three department stores that catered to different social classes.

**Saks 5th Avenue (high prestige)  on Fifth Avenue at 50th Street**

![Saks 5th Avenue](image)

**Macy's (middle prestige)  on Herald Square, at 34th Street**

![Macy's](image)

**S. Klein (low prestige)  formerly on 14th Street at Union Square**

![S. Klein](image)
Labov asked a clerk for the location of some previously chosen item, say shoes, that was on the fourth floor.

When the clerk answered, he noted whether the [r]'s in the words were pronounced, and then asked "Excuse me?" to get a more emphatic, careful pronunciation as well.

When out of the clerk's sight, he jotted down the pronunciations and basic details about the clerk (sex, age, race, job).

This technique is called a rapid and anonymous survey.

The overall results show that the clerks pronounced [r] more often when they worked in a higher-prestige store.
Of course, within a store, some jobs are higher-prestige than others. So for the largest sample, Macy's, Labov compared the results for three different occupational groups, and found an even stronger pattern.

In the careful pronunciation, Labov found that the lower the prestige, the greater the increase in use of [r] when speaking more carefully. Overall percentage of [r] use in the word *floor* is shown here.

The explanation is that the workers at Saks were secure in their language use (since theirs was the
when speaking more carefully, were linguistically insecure and tended to adjust their pronunciation in the direction of the prestige form.

The r-less pronunciation used to be the prestige form, as it is in England. However, during the course of the 20th century, the more general American r-ful pattern came to be perceived as the standard. We can see the effects of this change if we compare the speech of younger and older workers at each store.

The older Saks workers reflect the fact that the r-less pronunciation was previously the prestige form in New York. They are linguistically secure, and have largely maintained their pronunciation in the face of change.

The younger Saks workers grew up as the r-ful prestige form was being established, and so have adopted it in greater numbers.

The older Macy's workers are upwardly mobile and linguistically insecure: they have adopted the newer prestige form, using it more than the same-aged workers at Saks. This is called hypercorrection.
(i.e. "overcorrection").

The **younger Macy's workers** have less experience with (and less upwardly mobile interest in) the broader prestige pattern, and are only slowly adopting it.

The **Klein's workers** are sufficiently distant in social class from the Saks standard that they are much less likely to adopt it.

**Hypercorrection** by the lower middle class, as a result of linguistic insecurity, was confirmed in a more detailed study by Labov. This involved interviews with working class, lower middle class, and upper middle class speakers living on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Similar results were found not only for "r" but also for the pronunciation of sounds such as "th" (*the*), "aw" (*awful*), and "a" (*bad*).

Interviews with these groups led to the following results in the **relatively careful speech** of tape-recorded interviews, with a pattern very much like that in the department store data. This chart shows the approximate overall percentage of r-fulness. The age groups are also somewhat different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Upper Middle Class</th>
<th>Lower Middle Class</th>
<th>Working Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The view of language use by age gives us a snapshot of **change in progress**:

Assuming that the **younger Saks workers maintain their r-fulness** as they age, then in the next generation we expect to find older workers with increased use of [r] relative to the situation at the time of the study. This is confirmed by the current situation in New York, where r-fulness maintains its status as a prestige pronunciation.

For the **Macy's workers**, the story told here implies that the younger workers, as their attitudes and experience change, will **increase** their use of [r].
**Diphthong centralization on Martha's Vineyard**

In a separate study also in the 1960's, Labov found what might be considered the opposite of the New York situation on the island of Martha's Vineyard, in Massachusetts.

The point of variation is the pronunciation of the diphthongs [ay] and [aw] in words like *lied* and *loud*. Among many Vineyarders, these sounds can be pronounced in all phonetic contexts with the centralized value [ɔy] or [ɔw] (instead of [ay] or [aw]) found only before a voiceless sound in other dialects, i.e. in *light* and *lout*.

The centralized pronunciation is actually the older form, and was the most common pronunciation in 16th and 17th century English. In the 19th century, however, it had been replaced in most dialects by the lower examples typical in American English today.

The following chart shows that, while centralization is not very common among the older islanders, it's very common in some younger age groups, but less so in the youngest category.

(These figures are not percentages, but rather a "centralization index" derived from acoustic measurements of the diphthongs; higher numbers mean more overall centralization.)

![Centralization chart for different age groups on Martha's Vineyard](chart.png)
What accounts for this jump in centralization in the 31-60 age range?

We need to know more about the social situation on the island in order to understand the pattern.

Historically the island was a successful whaling and fishing center.

More recently the fishing industry has dwindled, and has been replaced by a service industry for wealthy mainlanders with summer homes.

Economic conditions for islanders have deteriorated as a result, and many natives leave the island.

These changes have led to negative attitudes toward the mainlanders on the part of many locals.

"You people who come down here to Martha's Vineyard don't understand the background of the old families of the island... strictly a maritime background and tradition..."

Labov found a strong correlation between positive attitudes toward life on the island and degree of centralization.

In general, people who have left the island for a time and then decided to return have done so, at least in part, due to strong emotional ties to the island and its history. This has led them to shift their speaking to a style they associate with the natives of the island.

This generalization is confirmed anecdotally by a mother's statement regarding her son:

"You know, he didn't always speak that way... it's only since he came back from college. I guess he wanted to be more like the men on the docks..."
A similar distinction can be found between two regions of the island:

**up-island**: rural areas where some fishing survives (to the southwest, e.g. Chilmark, Tisbury)

**down-island**: small towns with many summer homes (to the northeast, e.g. Edgartown, Oak Bluffs)

Residents who remain in the more traditional way of life (up-island) show much stronger centralization.
All these patterns support the interpretation of centralization as a marker of solidarity with the island and its traditional ways, in opposition to the mainland and the new service economy.

Because this pronunciation is not the standard, prestige variety, the appeal of the non-standard form is called **covert prestige** -- based on group identity rather than the general norm.

A person proud of the local tradition, and remaining in that location, will tend to keep or even enhance the local dialect practices despite frequent exposure to the standard variety through the media and through personal contacts.

This is one of the important ways in which groups can diverge in their linguistic practices despite the trends of the larger society in which they are found. Exposure to different speech norms through personal contact, or through the national media, represents the overt prestige form of the language, but does not affect covert prestige.

**Language and Gender**

Sometimes, there are very clear differences between the forms of language typically used by women and those typically used by men.

For instance, here are a few of the many cases where Japanese men and women traditionally use different lexical items to express the same meaning (examples from Janet Shibamoto, *The Womanly Woman*, in Philips et al., Eds., "Language, gender and sex in comparative perspective"):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men's form</th>
<th>Women's form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hara</td>
<td>onaka</td>
<td>stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tukemono</td>
<td>okookoo</td>
<td>pickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mizu</td>
<td>ohiya</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bentoo</td>
<td>obentoo</td>
<td>box lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kane</td>
<td>okane</td>
<td>money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hasi</td>
<td>ohasi</td>
<td>chopsticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umai</td>
<td>oisii</td>
<td>delicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuu</td>
<td>taberu</td>
<td>eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kutabaru/sinu</td>
<td>nakanaru</td>
<td>die</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is not an accident that nearly all the traditionally "female" nouns have the polite or honorific prefix /o-/; this is one of many ways in which Japanese female speech has been characterized as being more polite than male speech. These days, many younger Japanese women would no longer choose to use the specific female forms.

**Terminology: sex vs. gender**

The different words traditionally used by Japanese men and women are obviously not determined directly by their complement of chromosomes, or by the nature of their reproductive organs, any more than the fact that all of them speak Japanese rather English is. Such linguistic differences are part of a cultural (re)construction of a biological difference -- a marking of gender differences that appears to be dying out in Japanese culture, as the roles and attitudes of men and women change.

The available terminology of ordinary English does not always make it clear -- if we want to -- whether we are talking about biological or cultural differences. In recent years, many people have attempted to impose this distinction on the terms "sex" and "gender", using the first for the biological distinction and the second for the cultural one.

In fact, *sex* originally referred to biological differences based on reproductive roles, while *gender* simply meant class or type. It is through the use of the latter in grammar to refer to noun classes in certain European languages that it came to mean specifically the classes masculine and feminine.

And in ordinary usage the two terms frequently overlap in meaning, so it is not always clear whether the biological or the cultural meaning is intended, and one must be careful. Nonetheless, this recently created distinction between *sex* and *gender* is a useful one because it does correspond to a real and important distinction in concepts, thus it will be used here.

During the last decade of research, it has become clear that gender especially is a very complex category. Theories are still being developed which try to grapple with the complexity but they share the idea that gender, unlike sex, is a continuous variable. A person can be more or less 'feminine' and more or less 'masculine.' Furthermore, a man can display 'feminine' characteristics just as a woman may demonstrate 'masculine' ones.

**Biology/sex/language**

There are biological differences between Men and women that are relevant to language, for example the size of the larynx. Males and females differ little in stature before puberty, but post-pubescent males are about 8-9% taller, according to a database maintained by NIST.

With respect to the length of the vocal folds (the tissue in the larynx that is responsible for producing voiced speech), this overall difference between the sexes is magnified by approximately a factor of seven: the vocal folds of post-pubescent males average about 50-60% longer than those of females of the same age.
Top view of the vocal cords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Ratio M/F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AnAC in degrees</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMF in mm</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWP in mm</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAG in mm</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPG in mm</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG in mm</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AC: anterior commissure
VP: tip of vocal process
AnAC: angle of bilateral vocal folds at AC
GWP: glottic width at vocal process level
LEG: length of entire glottis
LAG: length of anterior glottis
LPG: length of posterior glottis
LMF: length of membranous vocal fold
excised larynges from 10 males and 10 females, average age 58 for the males and 66 for the females)

As a result, adult human males have significantly lower voices than females do, out of proportion to their rather small difference in average height. Though the pitch of anyone's speech depends very much on circumstances, under comparable conditions, (adult) human females voices are likely to show pitches roughly 75% higher than those of male voices. This difference reflects not only the difference in vocal cord length, but also a difference in vocal cord mass -- and perhaps some socially-conditioned factors as well. A graph showing data from various studies is reproduced below (taken from Kent 1994):

![Graph showing data from various studies on voice pitch and age](image)

Because the larynx also drops lower in the neck in post-pubescent males, the overall adult male vocal tract length is about 15% longer on average. This means that resonance frequencies (including the formant frequencies that determine vowel quality) are also about 15% lower in adult males as compared to females. This is about 175% of the difference expected on the basis of the average overall size differences (8-9%). This difference also means that adult males are even more subject to the risk of choking on aspirated food that is a price the human species pays for adapting its vocal organs to speech.

None of the other species of apes shows a similar sexual dimorphism of the vocal organs, although overall size differences between the sexes tend to be larger in other apes than in homo sapiens.

**Culture/gender/language**

When we look at the linguistic behavior of men and women across languages, cultures and circumstances, we will find many specific differences.
Quite a few languages show lexical and morphological differences like those exemplified above for Japanese.

However, explicit and categorical grammatical and or even lexical marking of speaker gender is not the norm. Instead, we usually find differences in the frequency of certain things (words, or pronunciations, or constructions, or intonations, or whatever), especially when the circumstances of utterance are taken into account. This has been explained by Trudgill as follows:

Linguistic sex varieties arise because ... language ... is closely related to social attitudes. Men and women are socially different in that society lays down different social roles for them and expects different behaviour patterns from them. Language simply reflects this social fact.... What is more, it seems that the larger and more inflexible the differences between the social roles of men and women in a particular community, the larger and more rigid the linguistic differences tend to be. ... Our English examples have all consisted of tendencies ... The examples of distinct male and female varieties all come from ... communities where sex roles are much more clearly delineated.

It has often been observed that (other things equal) female speech tends to be evaluated as more "correct" or more "prestigious", less slangy, etc. Men are more likely than women to use socially-stigmatized forms (like "ain't" or g-dropping in English). On the other hand, women are usually in the lead in changes in pronunciation, typically producing new pronunciations sooner, more often, and in more extreme ways than men.

A number of stylistic differences between female and male speech have been observed or claimed. Women's speech has been said to be more polite, more redundant, more formal, more clearly pronounced, and more elaborated or complex, while men's speech is less polite, more elliptical, more informal, less clearly pronounced, and simpler.

In terms of conversational patterns, it has been observed or claimed that women use more verbal "support indicators" (like mm-hmm) than men do; that men interrupt women more than they interrupt other men, and more than women interrupt either men or other women; that women express uncertainty and hesitancy more than men; and that (at least in single-sex interactions) males are more likely to give direct orders than females are.

For nearly all of these issues of stylistic and conversational differences, there are some contradictory findings, and it seems that one must look closely at the nature of the circumstances in order to predict how men and women will behave verbally.

Nevertheless, it is clear that in many circumstances, women and men tend to use language differently.

Within the domain of culture, two broad classes of explanations for such gender effects have been offered: difference theories and dominance theories.

According to difference theories (sometimes called two-culture theories), men and women inhabit different cultural (and therefore linguistic) worlds. To quote from the preface to Deborah Tannen's
1990 popularization *You just don't understand*, "boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures, so talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication."

According to *dominance* theories, men and women inhabit the same cultural and linguistic world, in which power and status are distributed unequally, and are expressed by linguistic as well as other cultural markers. In principle, women and men have access to the same set of linguistic and conversational devices, and use them for the same purposes. Apparent differences in usage reflect differences in status and in goals.

The general consensus is that both sorts of explanations are appropriate to some degree, but the discussion is sometimes acrimonious and political. For instance, Tannen has been criticized by some feminist writers as a "deeply reactionary" "apologist for men", who "repeatedly excuses their insensitivities in her examples and justifies their outright rudeness as merely being part of their need for independence." Those who criticize Tannen in this way argue that the behavior of the men in her examples reflects a desire for domination rather than a different set of cultural norms.

**What about the other genders?**

Discussions of male and female speech and language, whether construed as biological or cultural or both, leaves out the fact that human sexuality is not nearly as binary as the basic opposition between XX and XY chromosomal complements. As discussed above, this has been one of the motivations for introducing the term *gender*, since gender characteristics may be present to varying degrees across individuals, or for a particular individual across occasions.

An interesting analogy between sexuality and language is suggested in the following quote from a book review in the October, 1997 issue of *Scientific American*, written by anthropologists Tom Boellstorff and Lawrence Cohen:

> ... humans have biological potentials that take a completed shape under specific personal and social circumstances ... we would argue that *H. sapiens sapiens* has evolved so that we have no sexual orientation without reference to a particular, historically located culture, just as we have no way of speaking without using a particular, historically located language.

There has been considerable interest in *gay and lesbian language*. In particular, the speech of gay males is stereotypically marked, and there have been some attempts to find out what sorts of gay-specific speech varieties really exist, for which particular groups and circumstances. The detailed linguistic characteristics of marked varieties of gay male speech, and their relationship to actual or stereotypical female speech varieties, remain largely unexplored by scientists, though they are extensively exploited by comedians.

**Pop psychology**
Over the past decade, public awareness and interest in the topic of language and gender has grown enormously, mostly focused on some popular and effective presentations of the two-cultures theory. Though both critical and scientific response to these works have been mixed at best, they have sold millions of copies, and been extremely influential in forming popular opinions on the subject.

The first and most important of these was Deborah Tannen's 1990 work *You just don't understand*. Opposed reader reviews from www.amazon.com:

1. This book changed the way I look at the world. It is truly a tool for life and probably the single most important book I have every read.
2. Whining misrepresentation. Tannen represents herself as an objective linguist but does little more than rail against men and make a biased, self-serving case for women. Thankfully, most women with whom I've discussed her work see through it and its reductive claims about report talk (men) vs. rapport talk (women).

Another work in this genre is John Gray, *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus*. More reader reviews from www.amazon.com:

1. This is good - men and women do not speak the same language. I have always known this but was unable to articulate it as well as John Gray. We read pieces of it to each other, laughing and giggling we say "yes, that is how you behave" and "now I know why you act that way".
2. Absolute twaddle. Gray is a charlatan at best, a caveman at worst. This take on gender relations is insulting to men, women, and aliens.

**Research results or stereotypes?**

What does the two-culture theory say? The basic ideas go back at least to the early 1980's, beginning with John Gumperz's research on misunderstandings in intercultural communication involving immigrants, and Marjorie Goodwin's studies of conversational interaction among African-American children in Philadelphia. The most influential recent exponent of the theory has been Deborah Tannen.

In Tannen's version, women use language to achieve intimacy, resulting in what she calls "rapport talk." For women, "talk is the glue that holds relationships together," and so conversations are "negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus." Men, on the other hand, use language to convey information, resulting in what Tannen calls "report talk." Because men maintain relationships through other activities, conversation for them becomes a negotiation for status in which each participant attempts to establish or improve his place in a hierarchical social order.

Is this true? Many people have criticized Tannen's ideas as social stereotypes, based on overgeneralization of limited research findings, or on anecdotes. For example, Alice Freed writes (in the *Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference*)

The anecdotal nature of much of the material that Tannen provides emerges as still another
area of weakness in her work. She uses her stories as a basis for sweeping generalizations, claiming, for example, that men but not women offer advice when others are seeking what Tannen calls understanding and that men but not women provide unrequested information in response to questions.

It is difficult to test the broadest generalizations offered -- those about "rapport" vs. "report" for example -- but many more specific claims can be and have been tested over the past 20 years or so of research. Predicted differences are sometimes found but sometimes are not. Linguistic behavior is influenced by many other factors--age, class, ethnicity, social setting, and individual personality -- and gender effects interact with other factors in complex and interesting ways.

A case study: use of tag questions

Tag questions are grammatical structures in which a declarative is followed by an attached interrogative clause or 'tag', such as

1. You were missing last week, weren't you?
2. Thorpe's away, is he?

In her influential (1975) work *Language and Women's Place*, Robin Lakoff depicted a typical female speech style, allegedly characterized by the use of features such as hesitations, qualifiers, tag questions, empty adjectives, and other properties, which she asserted to have a common function: to weaken or mitigate the force of an utterance. Thus tag questions "are associated with a desire for confirmation or approval which signals a lack of self-confidence in the speaker."

Lakoff's description of female speech style was based on her remembered impressions rather than on any systematic, quantitative observation. When subsequent researchers went out and counted things, they often found it difficult to confirm her observations. For instance, some studies found that men actually used more tag questions than women did.

Thus Cameron et al. (1988) looked at tag questions in a 45,000 word sample from a British corpus of transcribed conversations, called the "Survey of English Usage" (SEU). There were nine sections of 5,000 words each; three of all-male conversation, three of all-female conversation, and three of mixed-sex conversation. In this corpus, there were 60 tag questions used by men, and only 36 by women. This is a significant sex difference, but in the opposite direction!

When they looked more closely at the function of the tag questions in this corpus, a further sex difference appeared -- which on closer examination seems not primarily to be a sex difference at all.

Holmes (1984) distinguishes two functions of tag questions: modal vs. affective. Modal tags "request information or confirmation of information of which the speaker is uncertain":

But you've been in Reading longer than that, haven't you?

Affective tags "are used not to signal uncertainty on the part of the speaker, but to indicate concern for
the addressee”:

1. Open the door for me, could you?
2. His portraits are quite static by comparison, aren't they?

Affective tags are further subdivided into two kinds: softeners like the first example above, which conventionally mitigate the force of what would otherwise be an impolite demand, and facilitative tags like the second example, which invite the listener to take a conversational turn to comment on the speaker's assertion.

When the tag data in the SEU study are categorized in this way, it turns out that in the category of modal tags -- that is, the tags that genuinely express uncertainty -- are much more likely to be used by men, while the affective tags are only somewhat more likely to be used by men:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modal tags</strong></td>
<td>9 (25%)</td>
<td>24 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective tags</strong></td>
<td>27 (75%)</td>
<td>36 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total tags</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suspecting that something besides sex/gender was involved here, the authors of this study turned their attention to another corpus. This database consisted of nine hours' recorded unscripted talk from three broadcast settings: a medical radio phone-in where the participant roles were ... doctor and caller/client; classroom interaction recorded for ... educational TV, in which the salient roles were those of teacher and pupil; and a general TV discussion programme, in which the roles were ... presenter and audience.

In each case, one of the participants can be identified as "powerful" -- "institutionally responsible for the conduct of the talk", and typically also endowed with greater social power and status in the context of the conversations -- doctor vs. patient, teacher vs. student. The data was sampled so that men and women were equally represented in the "powerful" and "powerless" roles. All tag questions were identified and classified according to Holmes' categories. The results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Powerful</td>
<td>Powerless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modal tags</strong></td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>9 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First, in this database -- unlike in the SEU data -- there is no significant overall difference in tag usage between the sexes.

Second, men continue to use modal tags relatively more often, and affective tags relatively less often.

The most striking difference by far, however, is not the sex/gender effect but the power effect: it is only the people who are in charge of the conversations -- the "powerful" speakers -- who use affective tags.

The results of the tag question study can be interpreted in several different ways. One view would be that Lakoff's general orientation is confirmed, even though she was wrong about the facts: affective tags are used by people who feel that they are in control of a conversation; the greater use of tag questions overall by men in the SEU data means that the men in those conversations felt more powerful. Another interpretation of such data has been that women's higher proportion of affective tags, which are used to manage the flow of conversation, means that women are saddled with a higher proportion of "interactional shitwork."

Yet another interpretation might be that Lakoff was wrong: men are actually more insecure about their opinions (whence men's greater usage of modal tags), and less interested in controlling the conversational actions of others (whence powerful men's lower usage of affective tags).

Overall, the interpretation of gender differences in language use -- and the extent to which such differences are emphasized in the first place -- seems to have a strong political component. Certainly the more abstract interpretations that are sometimes given to observed differences -- for instance, the conclusion that women are more cooperative and men more competitive in conversation -- are highly political and should be considered in that light. In evaluating such interpretations, it is well to remember how widely they can vary.

An older set of sexist stereotypes about gender differences in communication -- very different from Tannen's -- are expressed in Rudyard Kipling's 1911 poem *The female of the species*. Kipling depicts the stereotypical man as an equivocator, "whose timid heart is bursting with the things he must not say." Men in conversation are therefore ready to compromise and to discuss all sides of an issue, and tend to be diverted by humor, doubt and pity. A woman, on the other hand, "who faces Death by torture for each life beneath her breast / May not deal in doubt or pity -- must not swerve for fact or jest." For a woman, "her contentions are her children," and anyone who disagrees will be met with "unprovoked and awful charges -- even so the she-bear fights." The conclusion, for Kipling, is that women should be excluded from politics.
So it comes that Man, the coward, when he gathers to confer
With his fellow-braves in council, dare not leave a place for her.

No doubt many Edwardian men (and even some women) felt the same thrill of recognition, in reading Kipling's poem, that many contemporary women (and men) feel in reading Tannen or Gray. The large number of copies of Kipling's poem on the net suggests that some contemporary men still respond this way to it.

We should have learned since Kipling's time that this rush of feeling, in response to the well-crafted expression of a social stereotype, is not to be trusted. To quote from a recent article by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet:

> Women's language has been said to reflect their (our) conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control [...] When we recombine all these abstractions, we really do not know what we have. Certainly we don't seem to find real women and men as sums of the characteristics attributed to them.

**Gender-neutral language and the problem of English pronouns**

Over the past couple of decades, a great deal of gender-specific terminology in English has been replaced by gender-neutral terms: *chairperson* or *chair* for *chairman*, *server* for *waitress* or *waiter*, etc. Although it rubs some older people the wrong way, most people seem to agree that elimination of incidental gender marking is a good thing, especially in the case of terms for jobs and social roles, since it helps to eliminate sex-role stereotyping.

The most difficult area in English is the pronoun system. Third-person singular pronouns are marked for gender -- he/she/it. The traditional usage was to view the masculine pronoun as unmarked. Here is a link to a [wide-ranging discussion of this problem](#) and current alternatives for dealing with it.