

## Language and Gender

*Language and Gender* is a new introduction to the study of the relation between gender and language use, written by two of the leading experts in the field. It covers the main topics, beginning with a clear discussion of gender and of the resources that the linguistic system offers for the construction of social meaning. The body of the book provides an unprecedentedly broad and deep coverage of the interaction between language and social life, ranging from nuances of pronunciation to conversational dynamics to the deployment of metaphor. The discussion is organized around the contributions language makes to situated social practice rather than around linguistic structures or gender analyses. At the same time, it introduces linguistic concepts in a way that is suitable for nonlinguists. It is set to become the standard textbook for courses on language and gender.

PENELOPE ECKERT is Professor of Linguistics, Professor (by courtesy) of Cultural and Social Anthropology and Director of the Program in Feminist Studies at Stanford University. She has published the ethnography *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School* (1989), the book *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* (2000), and many linguistic articles.

SALLY MCCONNELL-GINET is Professor of Linguistics at the Department of Linguistics, Cornell University. Together with Ruth Borker and literary scholar Nelly Furman, she edited and contributed to *Women and Language in Literature and Society* (1980) and with linguist Gennaro Chierchia, co-authored *Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics* (1990), which has recently been revised for a second edition.

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PENELOPE ECKERT  
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## *Acknowledgments*

Our collaboration began in 1990 when Penny was asked to teach a course on language and gender at the 1991 LSA Linguistic Institute at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and Sally was asked to write an article on language and gender for the *Annual Review of Anthropology*. We decided to combine these projects into a joint effort to rethink approaches to language and gender, and particularly to bring together our work in quite different areas of linguistics. Penny's focus in linguistics has been on sociolinguistic variation, and she was employing ethnographic methods to examine the embedding of linguistic practice in processes of identity construction. Sally came to linguistics from math and analytic philosophy, and has divided her career between teaching and research on language and gender, especially the pragmatic question of what people (as opposed to linguistic expressions) mean, and on formal semantics. Both of us, in our individual writing and teaching, had begun to think of gender and language as coming together in social practice. Penny was then at the Institute for Research and Learning in Palo Alto, California, where she worked with Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. Their notion of *community of practice* provided an important theoretical construct for our thinking about gender, about language use, and about how the two interact. We owe special gratitude to Jean and Etienne.

Each time we thought we'd finished working together, a new collaboration would come up. Our *Annual Review* article appeared in early 1992, and we presented a greatly abbreviated version as a talk at the Second Berkeley Conference on Women and Language. In 1993, we gave a public talk at the LSA Institute at the Ohio State University that grew into the paper in the volume edited by Mary Bucholtz (who was a student in our Santa Cruz course) and Kira Hall in 1995. Early in 1997, at the International Conference on the Social Psychology of Language, we participated in a session organized by Janet Holmes on communities of practice in language and gender research. With Miriam Meyerhoff, Janet edited a special issue of *Language in Society*, based on that session and including a paper from us.



*x Acknowledgments*

At that point, we went off on our separate ways again. Various people had suggested that we try our hand at a textbook on language and gender, but we were both occupied with other projects, and were reluctant to take this one on. Frankly, we didn't think it would be much fun. We owe the turnaround to the exquisite persuasive skills of Judith Ayling, then the linguistics editor at Cambridge University Press. She has since left publishing to go into law, and we imagine she's a formidable lawyer. Andrew Winnard, who took over from Judith in 1998, is the one who has had to deal with us during the writing process. He has been wonderfully patient and supportive, and always a joy to be with. We also thank our capable and accommodating copy-editor, Jacqueline French.

The book took shape during a four-week residency at the Rockefeller Study and Research Center in Bellagio, Italy. Bellagio is a dream environment, and it gave us time to engage with one another with none of our customary home worries and responsibilities. The others with whom we shared our time there were enormously stimulating, and we are grateful to them all for their companionship, their conversation, and their bocce skills. And like everyone who experiences the magic of Bellagio, we are eternally grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation, and to the director of the Center, Gianna Celli, and her wonderful staff. We left Bellagio with drafts of most of the chapters in hand, but in the succeeding couple of years those chapters and the organization of the book have changed radically.

Sally has been teaching language and gender courses to undergraduates at Cornell during the years of working on the book, and their comments and questions as well as those of her graduate student assistants and graders have been very helpful in showing us what worked and what did not. Beyond that, Sally thanks her language and gender students over an even longer period, far too many to name individually, for thoughtful insights and imaginative and stimulating research projects. Cornell graduate students with whom Sally has worked on language and gender issues in recent years include Lisa Lavoie, Marisol del Teso Craviotto, and Tanya Matthews; all offered useful suggestions as the book progressed. Sociolinguist Janet Holmes very generously read and commented on the draft of this book that Sally used in her spring 2001 course and her keen eye helped us make important improvements. In the summer of 2001 Sally and Cornell anthropologist Kathryn March co-taught a Telluride Associate Summer Program for a wonderful group of high-schoolers on language, gender, and sexuality, using some draft chapters from this book; Kath and the rest of the TASPers offered acute and thoughtful comments.

xi Acknowledgments

Sally's first large language and gender project was *Women and Language in Literature and Society*, co-edited in 1980 with the late Ruth Borker, an anthropologist, and Nelly Furman, a literary theorist. Not only did she learn a lot from her co-editors (and from conversations with Daniel Maltz, Ruth's partner), but throughout this period she also corresponded with Barrie Thorne, Cheris Kramarae, and Nancy Henley, active figures early on in the field of language and gender. And she drew heavily on the expertise of colleagues from other disciplines in the Cornell Women's Studies Program. Co-teaching experiences with Nelly Furman, Ruth Borker, and Kathryn March stand out as particularly important. And Sally thanks Sandra Bem for many encouraging and enlightening lunchtime conversations and for her reading of the Spring 2001 draft of the book.

Penny came to the study of language and gender later than Sally, through the study of phonological variation in Detroit area high schools. In the course of her ethnographic work it became painfully (or perhaps joyfully) clear that gender had a far more complex relation to variation than the one-dimensional treatment it had been traditionally given. She owes her very earliest thoughts on this issue to Alison Edwards and Lynne Robins, who were graduate students working on this project at the University of Michigan in the early eighties. Since then, she has benefited from the probing minds of many sociolinguistics students at Stanford who have engaged together with issues of the relation between identity and language practice. She thanks most particularly the *Trendies* (Jennifer Arnold, Renee Blake, Melissa Iwai, Norma Mendoza-Denton, Carol Morgan and Julie Solomon) and the *Slicsters* (Sarah Benor, Katherine Campbell-Kebler, Andrea Kortenhoven, Rob Podesva, Mary Rose, Jen Roth Gordon, Devyani Sharma, Julie Sweetland, and Andrew Wong). In addition, undergraduates over the years in Penny's Language and Gender course at Stanford have contributed countless examples, particularly from their often ingenious field projects. These examples have brought both color and insight to our thinking about language and gender, and many of them appear in this book. She is also particularly appreciative of her exhilarating lunchtime conversations with Eleanor Maccoby, whose probing mind and intellectual honesty have been a tremendous inspiration.

Both of us have learned much from conversations with scholars in other disciplines as well as from our contacts, casual and more formal, with colleagues in language and gender studies. Some of these influences are acknowledged in the text, but we want to express general appreciation for the intellectual generosity we have encountered over the past few years.

*xii Acknowledgments*

This book is very much a collaborative effort. Every chapter contains at least some prose that originated with Penny, some which came from Sally. We have worked hard to try to articulate a view that we can both endorse. The fact that 3,000 miles usually separated us made this close collaboration even more difficult, but we think that the result is a better book than either of us would have written on our own. It's been both more fun and more anguish than we'd expected. Our names appear in alphabetical order. Finally, our partners, Ivan Sag (a linguist) and Carl Ginet (a philosopher), have played a double role, not only supporting the project enthusiastically, but also offering us trenchant criticism at many different points. They are probably as happy as we are to see the end of this project.

We dedicate this book to the memory of Ruth Ann Borker, a pioneer in language and gender studies. Blessed with insight, imagination, and a formidable intellect, Ruth was passionate about ideas and about people, especially the students whom she loved to introduce to the unnoticed social and cultural complexities of everyday kinds of communication. This book aims to continue the lively conversations and debates about language and gender that she did so much to launch.