

Gender, Language and Solidarity:

An analysis of a short conversation between friends

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References

1 Introduction

Over the past several decades a great deal of research has been conducted on the perceived differences between the way men and women speak. Ranging from the relatively intuitive work of Robin Lakoff (1975), to the computer assisted discriminant function analysis work of Anthony Mulac et al (1988), the analysis, interpretation and social implications of gender-based variation in language have sparked much interest and much debate. Many claims have been tendered covering a wide range of grammar, lexis, intonation and discourse differences that can arise between speakers in mixed-gender conversation; and these claims sometimes contradict each other (see Aires, 1996).

It is the purpose of this paper to report the results of a study on a short sample of natural conversation and discuss the degree to which the results support or challenge some of the more commonplace claims in the literature today. This paper will attempt to show that the conversation studied here does not lend much support to the claims that men and women speak differently. To this end, four major claims will be examined: 1) women talk more/less than men; 2) women break the 'rules' of turn-taking less than men; 3) women use more standard forms than men; and 4) women's speech is less direct/assertive than men's.

In addition, this paper will also attempt to illustrate that the primary differences – and in some cases, similarities – in speaking that occur between the individual subjects are due mainly to the subjects' attempts to maintain or enhance solidarity in the group.

Before examining the procedure and results of this study however, it will be useful to review very briefly some of the claims regarding men's and women's speech that have been made by various researchers over the past thirty years.

2 Background - Claims of difference in men's and women's speech

2.1 Women talk more/less than men

There have been many studies over the years that comment on the volubility of men and women in conversational situations. Despite the number of English proverbs attributing gregariousness to women (see Coates, 1986), most research in this area seems to indicate that it is men who speak more. For example, Drass (1986), in an experiment on gender identity in conversation dyads, found that men speak more than women. In fact, James and Drakich (1993) completed a survey of a number of these studies and found that the bulk of the studies – 61 out of 63 – actually supported the claim that women speak less than men.

2.2 Women break the 'rules' of turn-taking less than men

Zimmerman and West (1975) and West and Zimmerman (1983), in a series of research projects set on university campuses, found that, in mixed groups and dyads, men interrupted women much more often. This they attributed to a display of power on the part of the men. Tannen (1984), however, argues – and also demonstrates with samples from a conversation between New York Jewish and Californian Christian subjects – that interruption is not necessarily a function of power but can also be a manifestation of

“collaborative speaking”. Finally, the results of a study by Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989) seem to indicate that men discriminate in their interruptions, choosing to interrupt women more often than men, while women do not discriminate.

2.3 Women use more standard forms than men

Much of the literature in this area seems to indicate that men have a tendency to use more forms in the vernacular while women gravitate towards the prestige forms of a language. According to Lakoff (1975) women are likely to use more standard forms of the language than men. This is supported by Macaulay (1977) who, in a study of lower-middle class men and women in Glasgow, found that men tended to prefer the vernacular pronunciation while women more often used the prestige form. More recently, Holmes (2001) reports that in Detroit, the vernacular “double negative” appeared more commonly in men’s speech.

2.4 Women’s speech is less direct/assertive than men’s

Lakoff (1975) was perhaps the first to note many of the linguistic items researchers today use to identify indirect speech in women’s language. Holmes (2001) and O’Barr and Atkins (1998) have both constructed convenient lists of Lakoff’s “women’s language”. The Holmes (2001) version is reproduced below:

- (a) Lexical hedges or fillers, e.g. *you know, sort of, well, you see.*
- (b) Tag questions, e.g. *she's very nice, isn't she?*
- (c) Rising intonation on declaratives, e.g. *it's really good?*
- (d) 'Empty' adjectives, e.g. *divine, charming, cute.*
- (e) Precise color terms, e.g. *magenta, aquamarine.*
- (f) Intensifiers such as *just* and *so*, e.g. *I like him so much.*
- (g) 'Hypercorrect' grammar, e.g. consistent use of standard verb forms.
- (h) 'Superpolite' forms, e.g. indirect requests, euphemisms.
- (i) Avoidance of strong swear words, e.g. *fudge, my goodness.*
- (j) Emphatic stress, e.g. *it was a BRILLIANT performance.*

(Holmes, 2001:286)

With the exceptions of d, e, f, g and j, these are all indications of indirect speech. O'Barr and Atkins (1998) in their study of women's language in courtroom settings found that while many women did make use of the language items that Lakoff suggested, there was a great deal of variation in that usage. Furthermore, they found that men also used this so-called "women's language". Crosby and Nyquist (1977), Eakins and Eakins (1978) and Johnson et al (1998) also found that women tend to speak more indirectly or tentatively and less assertively than men.

3 Research Subjects

Four subjects participated in the study. Their brief profiles are given below (Table 1)¹:

¹ All personal names occurring in this study are pseudonyms.

| Subject | Gender | Education | Occupation |
|---------|--------|-----------|---|
| Joe | male | secondary | title searcher (ex-bank manager) |
| Judy | female | tertiary | financial advisor/bank manager |
| James | male | tertiary | funeral director (owner and manager of several funeral homes) |
| Sarah | female | secondary | assists in funeral home |

Table 1: Brief Subject Profiles

All subjects are Caucasian Canadians of similar ethnic and cultural background, living in a small rural town in central Ontario, Canada. They are all in their mid fifties. Joe and Judy are a married couple as are James and Sarah. Joe and James have been close friends for over fifteen years. In their free time, Joe, Judy and James are all game hunters and regularly go hunting together. Sarah does not hunt. It was believed that the similar age, background and status of the participants would help control some of the variables that can affect language variation.

4 Research Method

A 15 minute conversation between the abovementioned subjects was recorded on a small analog dicataphone in the dining room of one of the subjects on Saturday, October 22nd, 2006. All subjects were seated around the dining room table with the dictaphone situated, in view, near the centre of the table. All subjects had been given advance notice that the recording session would be taking place.

After the conversation was recorded it was transmitted to the researcher – who was not present during the conversation – via telephone and re-recorded on a hi-resolution digital recording device. The resulting digital copy of the conversation, which

approximated the quality of the original recording, was then transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. Any indecipherable segments in the digital re-recording were equally indecipherable in the original analog recording.

Short personal interviews were then conducted with two of the subjects, Joe and Judy, in order to collect basic profile information and attitudes toward the procedure. Of note is Joe's comment, "We got so into the conversation that after a while we forgot there was a tape recorder."

The following transcription notation, based loosely on Ochs (1999), was used in this study (Table 2):

| | |
|-------|---|
| [| simultaneous speech |
| // | interruption (first speaker stops speaking) |
| // [| interruption (first speaker does not stop speaking) |
| ... | pause |
| (...) | unclear utterance |
| (xxx) | possible interpretation of unclear utterance |
| ↗ | rising intonation |
| ↘ | falling intonation |
| {xxx} | researcher comments |

Table 2: Transcription Notation

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Volubility

Claim: Women talk more /less than men.

5.1.1 Results

Table 3 below illustrates the volubility of each participant, expressed in number of words uttered:

| Subject | Word Count |
|---------|------------|
| Joe | 635 |
| Judy | 1229 |
| James | 593 |
| Sarah | 79 |

Table 3: Word Counts

It will be noted that while the variation between Joe's and James's word counts is negligible, there is a drastic difference in the word counts of the individual women. Where Judy speaks roughly twice as much as both Joe and James, Sarah hardly speaks at all. This sizable inconsistency in the women's word counts cannot lend conclusive support to the claim that women typically speak much more or much less than their male conversants. That is, if there were a general tendency for women to speak more or speak less than men, one would expect the women in this study to exhibit much more similar volubility; both women either speaking more than Joe and James or less. This is clearly not the case. If volubility cannot be reliably linked with gender alone here, then an alternative explanation is warranted.

5.1.2 Explaining the variation in the women's volubility

There are three factors which might help explain the difference.

5.1.2.1 *Familiarity with conversation topic*

One factor contributing to the diverse word count of the women speakers could be the participants' familiarity with the topic. As a brief look at the transcript will show, Sarah participated only once in the finance-related parts of the conversation (in line 129 she asks what Judy's exact title was). Most of her speaking is in conjunction with family topics or other non-finance conversation. Judy, on the other hand, being a financial advisor, is an expert in the field and could quite reasonably be expected to talk continuously on the subject. Even so, this only explains Sarah's silence during finance-related conversation. It does not explain why she chose not to speak much on other topics.

5.1.2.2 *Direction of conversation*

Another factor contributing to both Judy's high and Sarah's low word count, is the direction of flow of conversation. James, in an apparently facilitative role, asks Judy many direct questions. He then follows quickly on Judy's statements with follow-up questions that do not allow her to reverse the "questioner-answerer" roles, and this affects her word count. It may be that Sarah does not wish to interrupt the flow of the conversation (see section 5.2 below for more on interruptions).

5.1.2.3 Solidarity

As mentioned in section 3 above, Joe, Judy and James are all game hunters and often participate together in hunting excursions and target shooting sessions. Sarah is not a hunter, does not attend these sessions and as a result she may lack a degree of solidarity with the group as a whole. This could be affecting her comfort level and thus her general willingness to speak. Judy, on the other hand, because of her hunting connection with James, and of course, with her husband Joe, may feel more relaxed and inclined to speak. It is interesting to note here also that Moore et al (1983) found that subjects who were assigned “identical management positions” in their study did not show any differences in many aspects of their language. Thus it could also be possible that Sarah feels a lack of solidarity with the group due to the management statuses of the other members.

5.2 Interruptions

Claim: Women break the ‘rules’ of turn-talking less than men.

5.2.1 Defining “Interruption”

Throughout the literature there seems to be great variation in the way in which the concept of interruption is defined. In general, definitions can be divided into two broad categories: descriptive and interpretive. Descriptive definitions simply count any instance of speech overlap as an interruption (see Leffer, et al, 1982), while interpretive definitions attempt to determine the intent of an overlap. Some researchers using interpretive definitions claim that procedural overlaps – such as announcements that dinner is ready, for example – are not, in fact, interruptions (Tannen, 1994:59). For the purpose

of this paper, a primarily descriptive stance has been taken. Overlap – any case where two speakers are speaking at the same time – has been divided into two sub-categories: simultaneous speech and interruption. Simultaneous speech refers to timing errors such as when two speakers attempt to answer the same question at the same time. Interruptions occur where one speaker begins an utterance while another speaker is already speaking. The first speaker has the option of aborting the utterance or continuing until its intended finish. Furthermore, in this study, interruptions have been sub-classified as: uncontested and not resumed, uncontested but resumed, or contested. An uncontested and not resumed interruption occurs when the first speaker completely aborts the utterance and chooses not to return to it later. A good example of this is line 76 from the present study:

74. Judy: I'm last to know here. Well that's great.
75. Sarah: (You're admired.)
76. Judy: But what are //
77. James: // Don't know if it's a boy or girl yet.
78. Joe: Are you going to know?
79. Sarah: No.
80. James: No, they don't want to know.

Uncontested and resumed interruptions are when the first speaker returns to the utterance after the interrupter has finished. Line 166 is an example of this:

166. Joe: A little bit. A little bit. So your energy stocks are doing//
167. Judy: // just a tad
168. Joe: doing ok. Course, soon as OPEC announce they're going to do a production cut I think oil went up a buck and it dropped back forty cents yesterday, so...

Finally, a contested interruption is when the first speaker does not stop speaking but finishes all or part of the utterance, as in line 121:

121. Judy: Sure. Like if he absolutely said, “I want all my accounts and my GICs out of this transit – connected with this transit.” I could go through the managers and // [(betray the crew of them).
122. Joe: // [What they’re not - what they’re not going to do is they’re not going to lose one point five million dollars to a competitor just because of their own rules that are only for internal purposes. Rather than have that happen they’ll let the transfer take place.

It should be mentioned that despite this descriptive defining/coding of interruption in this conversation, it will be necessary to approach these interruptions briefly from an interpretive perspective in order to examine degrees of solidarity and/or power in the group.

5.2.2 Initial results

The first point worth noting is that this 15 minute conversation contained a fairly high number of interruptions. Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989:430), who also used a fairly descriptive interpretation of interruption, noted an average of 17.4 interruptions per group per fifteen minutes of discussion. The present study, however, counts a total of 37 interruptions in a conversation of approximately the same duration. This could indicate either a fairly regular “fight for the floor” in the case of intrusive interruptions or a great deal of “collaborative communication” in the case of supportive ones. When examining the intent of interruptions it was found that the bulk of the interruptions could be easily classified as “facilitative” or “supportive” as opposed to “intrusive” (see Tannen, 1984,

1994). This implies a much tighter group and corroborates the history and cooperative experience of the group.

When examining instances of interruption in natural conversation it is necessary to take into account the fact that people who speak more have a greater risk of both interrupting and being interrupted themselves (Smith-Lovin and Brody, 1989:425; Aries, 1996:105). Tables 4 and 5 list the number of times subjects interrupted other speakers and the number of times they were interrupted by other speakers relative to number of words they spoke during the whole conversation.²

| Subject | Word Count | Interrupted | Avg. # of Words |
|---------|------------|-------------|----------------------|
| | | | Between Interrupting |
| Joe | 635 | 13 | 49 |
| Judy | 1229 | 11 | 112 |
| James | 593 | 11 | 54 |
| Sarah | 79 | 2 | 40 |

Table 4: Number of times subjects interrupted

| Subject | Word Count | Was | Avg. # of Words |
|---------|------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| | | Interrupted | Between Being Interrupted |
| Joe | 635 | 13 | 49 |
| Judy | 1229 | 19 | 65 |
| James | 593 | 4 | 148 |
| Sarah | 79 | 1 | 79 |

Table 5: Number of times subjects were interrupted

² In all tables in this study “interrupted” refers to the action in the active voice only; “was interrupted” is used when referring to the passive voice.

Here, a similar, but reverse, pattern can be seen to that of volubility. Table 4 shows that Judy seems to have interrupted much less frequently, relative to her amount of talk, than did Joe and James, while Sarah interrupted more often.

Of even greater interest here, though, is Table 5. Here, one can see that, despite the fairly high raw figure for the number of times that Judy was interrupted (19), it is Joe who was interrupted most frequently relative to his word count. Conversely, James was interrupted much less frequently than his fellow speakers. There seems to be no gender specific pattern here supporting a general tendency for women to interrupt less frequently than men, nor any indication that the women are interrupted more often than men as a whole.

5.2.3 The role of relationship in interruptions

For a more detailed look at the nature of interruptions in this conversation, it is necessary to examine not only how many times an individual interrupted or was interrupted but also who they interrupted and who interrupted them. The following table (Table 6) shows this more detailed view:

| Subject | Was Interrupted By | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------------|------|-------|-------|-----------------------|------|-------|-------|-----------|------|-------|-------|
| | Uncontested - Not Resumed | | | | Uncontested - Resumed | | | | Contested | | | |
| | Joe | Judy | James | Sarah | Joe | Judy | James | Sarah | Joe | Judy | James | Sarah |
| Joe | - | 2 | 3 | | - | 3 | | | - | 4 | 1 | |
| Judy | 3 | - | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | | | 6 | - | 3 | |
| James | 1 | | - | | 1 | | - | | | 2 | - | |
| Sarah | | | 1 | - | | | | - | | | | - |

Table 6: Detailed breakdown of interruptions

Here, several interesting observations can be made:

1. When being interrupted, all subjects, except Sarah who was only interrupted once, contested the interruption approximately half of the time (Joe – 5/13; Judy – 9/19; James – 2/4; Sarah – 0/1). When interrupting, Joe's and Judy's interruptions were contested approximately half the time (6/11 and 6/13 respectively) while James's were contested closer to a quarter of the time (4/11). Sarah interrupted only twice and was not contested. There does not seem to be any clear evidence of gender patterning here.
2. Joe interrupted Judy 11 times and approximately half of these (6) were contested. Judy interrupted Joe 9 times and, again, approximately half (4) were contested. There is a near balance between the couple's ratios of contested to non-contested interruptions. It is also interesting to note that James interrupted Judy 6 times and Judy contested half (3) of these. No significant difference can be seen between Judy's contesting of Joe's and James's interruptions despite the fact that she naturally has a closer relationship with her husband Joe.

3. James was interrupted 4 times: twice by Joe and twice by Judy. James, however, chose to contest Judy's interruptions but he did not contest Joe's. This could be an extra attempt at collaborative talk to create solidarity with Judy.

4. Sarah was interrupted only once, by her husband James, and this was not contested. She only interrupted twice during the entire conversation and both times it was Judy she interrupted. Judy did not contest either interruption. Here Judy was attempting to enhance solidarity by making extra effort to give Sarah the floor and invite her into the conversation.

5.2.4 The role of topic in interruptions

The subjects' relationship to or knowledge of the topic current in the conversation may have an effect on their tendency to interrupt. (see Aires, 1996:135). Two main categories of topic have been identified in this conversation: business/finance and family/other. Table 7 illustrates the average number of words between a subject's interruptions according to topic category.

| Subject | Conversation | Business/Finance Topic | | | Family/Other Topic | | |
|---------|--------------|------------------------|-------------|--------|--------------------|-------------|--------|
| | Word Count | Word Count | Interrupted | ANWBI* | Word Count | Interrupted | ANWBI* |
| Joe | 635 | 383 | 7 | 55 | 252 | 6 | 42 |
| Judy | 1229 | 794 | 8 | 99 | 435 | 3 | 145 |
| James | 593 | 411 | 7 | 59 | 182 | 4 | 46 |
| Sarah | 79 | 6 | 0 | NA | 73 | 2 | 37 |

*ANWMI - Average number of words between interrupting

Table 7: Interruption frequency according to conversation topic

Similar results to those in Table 4 above can be seen here. Joe's and James's frequencies of interruption are rather similar and much more frequent than Judy's during both topics in the conversation. However, there is a more significant point worth noting here. It is very interesting to see that Judy interrupted more frequently in business/finance related conversation (99) than she did in family/other related conversation (145). Joe and James, on the other hand, interrupted more frequently during the family/other related sections of the conversation (42 and 46 respectively) than in the business/family related (55 and 59). This seems to indicate that the subjects alter their conversation style based on topic. As has already been mentioned, solidarity seems to be an important aspect of this group's interaction, with most of the interruptions occurring as "collaborative" interruptions. The data in Table 7 suggest that these participants, in order to maintain and enhance this solidarity, are making extra effort to participate/collaborate in areas of conversation that have been traditionally identified with the opposite gender. That is, their rates of collaborative talk increase when they move into topic areas that have been more traditionally gender-typed – business was traditionally considered the arena of men while home was the arena of women. This has a very positive effect on solidarity.

5.3 Standard language use

Claim: Women use more standard forms of the language than men do.

5.3.1 Results

Non-standard forms include unusual or abbreviated grammar as well as unusual or slang lexis. To determine which gender makes more use of standard forms it is first

necessary to seek out the occurrences of non-standard forms. For the purpose of this study, any instance of unusual grammar that could be identified as an error or minor “slip of the tongue” was not counted among the non-standard forms. The conversation examined in this study provided relatively little data to compare with cases in the literature, however several interesting instances were identified.

In line 44 Joe uses the present tense in his narration of past events:

81. Joe: So Maggie walks into the room and Dave says, “Say something Maggie,” (and she says,) “I’m too shy.”

While Judy and James also gave brief past event narratives, Joe was the only participant who did so using the slightly less standard – and perhaps slightly less prestigious – present tense form. Joe was also the only one to abbreviate a two part lexical item. He uses “course” for “of course” in line 168.

Of greater interest however, is the occasional dropping of subject pronouns and auxiliary verbs by Judy in lines 22, 144 and 169,

22. Judy: Yeah, door-to-door. **Introduce the business** and just //

143. James: // Do you know the girls in town – and I’m speaking of Deb Taylor and (...)

144. Judy: **Heard the names.**

168. Joe: doing ok. Course, soon as OPEC announce they’re going to do a production cut I think oil went up a buck and it dropped back forty cents yesterday, so...

169. Judy: **Hard to follow, hard to predict.** You just have to go with the flow.
// [That’s what we used to ponder about.

and James in lines 77 and 176,

76. Judy: But what are //
77. James: // **Don't know** if it's a boy or girl yet.

175. Joe: Just on the speculation that it might. Now //
176. James: // **Screws up** the golf courses. (... ...)

Holmes (2001:291) discusses a study of language used by individuals during jury selection process. In the study it was found that male subjects tended to drop “non-essential” elements – such as subject pronouns – in certain sentences. Here both Judy and James exhibit this trait, which does not seem to support the claim that women use more standard forms of the language. Furthermore, if the topic context is taken into consideration, it will be noted that all of Judy’s pronoun drop instances occur while she is speaking about business/finance related topics. Conversely, James’s instances coincide with topics relating to family/other. This corresponds with the observations in section 5.2.4 above on interruptions and topic. Holmes (2001:311) suggests that this deletion occurs in more friendly, casual speech and this suggestion seems to be corroborated here. Thus, again one can see a possible tendency for participants, both men and women, to alter their speech in order to build solidarity in more traditionally gender-typed topics.

5.4 Direct speech and assertion

Claim: Women use less direct, less assertive speech than men.

5.4.1 Results

While Lakoff's (1975) collection of "women's language" is quite extensive, including features such as special lexis, speaking in "italics" and empty adjectives, only a few of these can be applied to directness/assertiveness. While there were relatively few of these features in this conversation when compared with other elements – such as interrupting – it is nonetheless worthwhile to explore them.

Hedges and tag questions are language features that express indirectness and, according to Lakoff (1975), uncertainty. Declaratives with rising intonation are often thought to express the same.

Table 8 illustrates some of the more common features of indirect language occurring in this conversation:

| Language Feature | Subject | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|------|-------|-------|
| | Joe | Judy | James | Sarah |
| Hedges | | | | |
| "I guess" | | 1 | | 1 |
| "I think" | 3 | 1 | | |
| "maybe" | | 1 | | |
| "I mean" | | 2 | 1 | |
| "you know" | 3 | 2 | | |
| "might" | | 1 | 1 | |
| Rising intonation in declaratives | | 1 | 1 | |
| Tag questions | | 1 | 2 | |
| Total | 6 | 10 | 5 | 1 |
| Word count | 635 | 1229 | 593 | 79 |
| ANWBF* | 106 | 123 | 119 | 79 |

*ANWBF - Average number of words between features

Table 8: Use of indirect language

As can be seen, when the raw counts are calibrated against the total word count of each participant, Sarah's and Judy's values once again fall on either side of those of the male participants. Judy seems to use indirect features less often than the others (on average every 123 words), while Sarah uses them much more (on average every 79 words; though this figure clearly lacks convictive force due to Sarah's low word count).

Judy and James were the only two subjects to use rising intonation in declarative statements:

33. James: Oh yes. [We have a two-year-old and you have a four-year-old. ↗

213. Judy: Yeah, and they also have the plays during the summer and the pantos at Christmas. Pantos are interactive. ↗ It's very neat.

While James may indeed be expressing uncertainty, Judy's rising intonation is checking Sarah's and James's familiarity with "pantos".

Again, with regard to tag questions it is Judy and James who provide the only examples:

29. James: No, we're not going to talk about that (eline), are we? ↘
47. James: // She didn't get that from her grand father, did she? ↘
100. Judy: Hey, but we're going to be bachleorettes next week, aren't we? ↘

All of these tag questions have falling intonation and as such are spoken to invite the listener to agree with the speaker and thus build solidarity; in James's case it is to joke with Joe and in Judy's it is to form a connection with Sarah. In no way do they express uncertainty or insecurity as Lakoff (1975) suggests.

Finally, while there are no instances of direct imperatives in this conversation, in line 59 Joe does use an indirect command in order to get Sarah to elaborate verbally:

55. Joe: Do you get to see Emily a lot?
56. Sarah: {nods head}
57. Judy: That's good.
58. James: [Three times a week.
59. Joe: **[You can expand on it.**
60. Sarah: Oh yes, I should be expanding, yes [I do
61. Judy: [Yes, because he can't hear your head shake.

The above data do not lend any support to the claim that women use less direct or assertive language than men. The use of these indirect language features seems more likely to be the result of the fairly consistent attempts to maintain and enhance solidarity in the group.

5.5 Summary

Overall, it can be seen that: 1) variation in volubility cannot be reliably connected to the gender of the subjects in this study; 2) interruptions were made frequently by most subjects and these were shown to correlate more accurately with topic and subject relationship than with gender; 3) use of standard, or non-standard, forms in this conversation also seemed to correlate with topic and relationship more convincingly than with gender; and 4) there was no evidence to indicate a general difference in direct/assertive speech between male and female subjects. Finally, many of the individual differences could be readily attributed to attempts at enhancing and maintaining solidarity in the group, often through collaborative talk but also through silence – the subject's choice not to contest an interruption, as seen with Judy and Sarah.

While the data above seem to indicate that the variation of language between subjects was related to issues of solidarity rather than gender it is important to remember that there are a number of variables influencing the speech of the subjects, many of which are difficult to isolate, such as personality or current mood. Thus care must be exercised when basing conclusions on such a small sample of conversation. For example, it could be that Sarah is a particularly quiet person who does not usually speak much in groups. Or it could be that her mood and the events of the day influenced her volubility. These factors are very difficult to account for.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to analyze a short sample of natural conversation and note the degree to which it supports or challenges the claims in the literature. As has been shown, there does not seem to be much evidence to support many of these claims. Rather, the data here indicate that variation in the subjects' speech can be explained as relating primarily to the enhancement and maintenance of solidarity in the group which often manifested in the group's collaborative talk.

Appendix

Transcript - casual conversation (October 22, 2006)

Notation:

| | |
|-------|---|
| [| simultaneous speech |
| // | interruption (first speaker stops speaking) |
| // [| interruption (first speaker does not stop speaking) |
| ... | pause |
| (...) | unclear utterance |
| (xxx) | possible interpretation of unclear utterance |
| ↗ | rising intonation |
| ↘ | falling intonation |
| {xxx} | researcher comments |

Note: All names in this transcript are pseudonyms.

1. James: Well Judy was telling us about her new job.
2. Judy: Yeah, yeah. Well, I'm excited. I'll pick up coffee for the girls in the morning. And, uh, we're meeting at the, ah, Landsdowne and Monaghan branch. So, uh, then we'll kick off - I've got a schedule of what we're doing. Actually, Wednesday, we get a bank on a skid. That's what they call it. [A bank on a skid.
3. James: [A bank on a skid?
4. Judy: Yeah, they deliver the bank. It's on skids, all the stationary, everything we need for the offices.
5. James: Oh, ok, you mean the paperwork, not the building itself.
6. Judy: No, no, the building's actually still under construction.
7. Joe: [She actually already did that once.
8. Judy: [I don't know how we're going to actually move in.
9. James: Yeah?
10. Judy: [Yeah.

11. Joe: [(...) - the Wasega Beach branch. She was part of that team.
12. Judy: We // [were in a trailer.
13. Joe: // [And they started in a trailer and they wheeled - literally pulled the trailer in on a, on a truck and that's what they used as a branch until, er, as a bank until the branch was built.
14. Judy: But we're supposed to get the computers this Thursday or Friday. And we're supposed to actually open on Monday, on the thirtieth. I don't know how that's going to happen. I guess we may be wearing jeans and it might be still un- under construction, as we're dealing with our first clients. I've got a ton of people that want to come and see me.
15. James: Uhn. [I'll bet.
16. Judy: [Relatives included.
17. James: Well that's what they're hoping for, Judy.
18. Judy: Yeah.
19. James: That's what you got that job.
20. Judy: Yeah, well we have to do - we're going to do a neighbourhood walk-around. Five thousand of those have gone out in the neighbourhood and we'll do a neighbourhood walk-around.
21. James: Like a door-to-door or...?
22. Judy: Yeah, door-to-door. Introduce the business and just //
23. Joe: // It's called "co-op calling."
24. Judy: Yeah, yep, we're going to walk the neighbourhood. (...) - it's pretty cool.
25. Joe: Now do you wear any special outfits when you're walking the neighbourhood?
26. All: {laughing}
27. James: Now, remember, this is for your son Joe. He doesn't want to know about any of that stuff.

28. Joe: I thought this was just a professional conversation between people with no, no censorship allowed.
29. James: No, we're not going to talk about that (eline), are we? ↘
30. Joe: That's right.
31. All: {laughing}
32. Judy: But we could talk about Emilys. We have two Emilys.
33. James: Oh yes. [We have a two-year-old and you have a four-year-old. ↗
34. Sarah: [Emily Thompson?
35. Judy: Well, [three, yeah.
36. Sarah: [Emily Thompson?
37. Judy: Emily Thompson. ↘
38. Joe: She's three now, she'll be four next summer. [Next year when they come home in August.
39. Judy: [Yeah, when they come home.
40. Sarah: Oh, right their last name.
41. Judy: Yeah, Thompson, yeah.
42. James: Mmm hmmm.
43. Judy: Yeah. So we were talking on the phone with her but she doesn't really like the phone, but the speaker-phone is working out great, just great. And Dave asked her why she didn't want to speak on the phone and she said, "Because I'm too shy." It was pretty cute.
44. Joe: So Maggie walks into the room and Dave says, "Say something Maggie," (and she says,) "I'm too shy."
45. Joe, Judy: {laughing}

46. Judy: Yeah, it's going to be fun when they //
47. James: // She didn't get that from her grand father, did she? ➤
48. Joe: [Nooooo.
49. Judy: [Nooooo. No. No.
50. Sarah: [{laughing}]
51. Joe: I'm not sure who she got it from. She didn't get it from her mother either.
52. Judy: She wants to, uh, go on the boat, she wants to fish and we're going to have a lot, a lot of fun.
53. James: That's cool.
54. Judy: Yeah.
55. Joe: Do you get to see Emily a lot?
56. Sarah: {nods head}
57. Judy: That's good.
58. James: [Three times a week.
59. Joe: [You can expand on it.
60. Sarah: Oh yes, I should be expanding, yes [I do
61. Judy: [Yes, because he can't hear your head shake.
62. Joe, Judy, James: {laughing}
63. Sarah: I guess, average, two days a week.
64. Judy: [Ohhhhh! ➤
65. Sarah: [(...) working.
66. Judy: Oh, nice.

67. Sarah: Yeah, it's good.
68. Judy: Oh, she's //
69. Sarah: // We have another one on the way too.
70. Judy: Oh, did ya? Oh, nice.
71. Joe: I forgot to tell you.
72. Judy: Oh.
73. James: (Give her to Joe.)
74. Judy: I'm last to know here. Well that's great.
75. Sarah: (You're admired.)
76. Judy: But what are //
77. James: // Don't know if it's a boy or girl yet.
78. Joe: Are you going to know?
79. Sarah: No.
80. James: No, they don't want to know.
81. Sarah: They could know, but they didn't want to.
82. Judy: Well, when Dave, Maggie and Emily come home in the summertime they're thinking of touching down in British Columbia and checking out that whole area of the country, because, uh //
83. Sarah: // That'll be nice.
84. Judy: [Yeah, but
85. James: [How long do they have though?
86. Judy: Well, I don't know, maybe a week, or a week //
87. Joe: // or maybe

88. Judy: twelve, seven, // [nine days, I don't know.
89. Joe: // [I wouldn't think they would come for less than ten days
90. Judy: Yeah.
91. Joe: You know, in that I think your fares are better if they're ten days or more.
92. James: So you touch down in BC and spend a day.
93. Judy: Yeah.
94. James: When it comes down on, you've got another half day travel to get here,
95. Judy: Yeah.
96. James: And by the time you're home from the airport, you're probably about another day and you got to get back in that time frame too, so //
97. Joe: // Well, they're only relatives, we don't want them to stay too long.
98. All: {laughing}
99. Joe: Just kidding.
100. Judy: Hey, but we're going to be bachleorettes next week, aren't we? ➤
101. James: [Yep.
102. Sarah: [Oh, you're not going.
103. Judy: No, because I have to start my new job. Yeah, and I can't not be there, I mean, it's a team-building week and too much going on to - I just couldn't do it.
104. James: Yeah. I can understand. You have to get over - you have to meet new people.
105. Judy: There's that whole other second half of the staff that we haven't met yet, all the up-front tellers and things.
106. James: But will you take any of your current clientele?

107. Judy: Yeah, they want to come.
108. James: Yeah, I was just going to say, is that acceptable with the banking order?
109. Judy: No, no. Umm, they can come and do things and deal with me if they like but we cannot transfer any of the funds because they are numbers on another branch's books and you can't just take them.
110. Joe: Unless they absolutely insist // [to put it in (checking)].
111. Judy: // [It has to go through the managers and – because I have a fellow in Marmora who's got about one point five million bucks on deposit there and he wants to come – he only ever deals with me. And he wants to come to me in Peterborough.
112. James: That's kind of a cushy feather in your cap.
113. Judy: It is. But I can't take a hundred – one point five mil out of Marmora and just transfer it.
114. James: Mmm hmmm.
115. Judy: But, umm, we just recently had something like that happen. A client there kept coming in and they were kept saying, "Oh, you're at transit such and such and that's out of Perth." "No I deal here. I've been here for three years." But because we've got access card and we're all connected you don't have to change your account. [Sometimes you're still involved.
116. James: [Just the person (... -all) the account.
117. Judy: Well, Because (...) whatever transit it originated at. Because they can deal from any branch, any bank. Because they've got all the figures going in and coming out and automatic this and that so it's very complicated.
118. James: But where do you get credit? Through Marmora? Or through Peterborough then. If that // [...).
119. Judy: // [If I was to renew a GIC of his, I would get the credit but the numbers would stay on the Marmora book. Yeah. So. [It's a real touchy thing.
120. James: [And the new person coming in and taking your spot could win him over so to speak?
121. Judy: Sure. Like if he absolutely said, "I want all my accounts and my GICs out

of this transit – connected with this transit.” I could go through the managers and // [(betray the crew of them).

122. Joe: // [What they’re not - what they’re not going to do is they’re not going to lose one point five million dollars to a competitor just because of their own rules that are only for internal purposes. Rather than have that happen they’ll let the transfer take place.

123. Joe, Judy, James: (...)

124. Judy: I mean, if I don’t give him the rate that he wants on his GICs, he, you know, he says, “I’ll go some place else” and he will eventually but //

125. James: //And that’s all he’s got it in is a GIC?

126. Judy: Well, he’s got, umm, he’s got RISK too, he’s an older fellow so he needs to have his stuff in RISK. He’s got, umm, a K-bill I think, in there. But he doesn’t like mutual funds, he’s not a risk taker and he just is happy with anything I give him and he won’t go to the manager, he comes to me. That may be a problem, you know, // [down the road.

127. James: // [(...)

128. Joe: (...)

129. Sarah: What exactly is your position Judy?

130. Judy: Financial advisor.

131. Sarah: Oh.

132. Joe: You know how Walter’s a certified financial planner? Judy has the same, uh //

133. Judy: // accreditation

134. Joe: Accreditation // [but through banking.

135. Judy: // [but mine’s banking.

136. Joe: She took all the same courses through the, uh, through the, uh – securities commission courses and so on like that as well so she has all the same things that Walter has only – but it’s designed for a banker, not a private // [person.

137. Judy: // [Because I'll never be out in the general public doing that. I'll always be connected to the bank.
138. James: To go out for yourself?
139. Judy: Yeah. Should be a //
140. Joe: // She can write one exam.
141. Judy: Should be a chore //
142. Joe: // And get her certificate as well as her personal financial planner designation. She can, but //
143. James: // Do you know the girls in town – and I'm speaking of Deb Taylor and (...)
144. Judy: Heard the names.
145. James: They're with, ah //
146. Joe: // Pat Miller?
147. James: No. The other one.
148. Joe: Lisa (...).
149. Judy: Lisa, over there. Ok.
150. James: Well, they're moving out of his office, totally, and they're linking up with a brokerage house.
151. Judy: Oh!
152. James: So what you now have is, you have, as far as I know it's just (...) in town, that's hooked up with a brokerage house. You've got Pat Miller, Mutual, (...) Mutuals, and it's my understanding (...), period. Done. I don't know about Paula. But she might have moved into a brokerage house or a facsimile thereof. (...) branch. I don't know how that system is set up.
153. Joe: Yeah, some of them are hooked up with investor syndicates, some are hooked up with TD Waterhouse. // [(...) old days TD Waterhouse.
154. James: // [Yeah, but she, she was telling me the other night they're with a brokerage firm. Now I don't know if somebody comes in and says, "I want to buy X"

and she goes back to her affiliate and says, “Buy X for them”. I don’t know what she has to have between that to make that happen – more education? Other than she says we wanted Lynn to move, to keep her shoes. She does not want to get into that, so they’ve agreed to disagree and go their separate ways. So, I mean, there’s obviously a marketplace out there // [and (...) people.

155. Judy: // [A lot of, umm, a lot of them too aren’t really fully accredited and label themselves the title of financial planner which doesn’t necessarily really make them one. So // [some read the speculations and registrations but -
156. Joe: // [Yeah, they don’t have someone who don’t have their designation. They’re trying to get more regulations in – but, too many people have lost too much money, is the problem. You know, and, uh //
157. Judy: // Mutual funds are terrible too. I don’t like them.
158. Joe: You’ve just got to be careful.
159. James: That’s what we’ve got with Walter. Equities – I can’t – I don’t want to follow that.
160. Judy: I know. Don’t look at the market right now.
161. James: Why? What’s it doing today?
162. Judy: It’s down. It’s down every day last week. It’s bad.
163. James: Is it?
164. Joe: Well, //
165. James: // Is gold and oil back up?
166. Joe: A little bit. A little bit. So your energy stocks are doing//
167. Judy: // just a tad
168. Joe: doing ok. Course, soon as OPEC announce they’re going to do a production cut I think oil went up a buck and it dropped back forty cents yesterday, so...
169. Judy: Hard to follow, hard to predict. You just have to go with the flow. // [That’s what we used to ponder about.

170. James: // [(...) like sheep that can control just by their words.
171. Joe: Well, that's right. It's no different than the weather man can. All they have to do is threaten mass – hurricane that might come anywhere near the southern United States and the price of oil jumps two bucks a barrel.
172. Judy: Mmm.
173. Joe: And that's all it takes.
174. James: Mmm.
175. Joe: Just on the speculation that it might. Now //
176. James: // Screws up the golf courses. (... ...)
177. Judy: But to change the subject, I was going to ask you, have you been to West Bend or anything recently?
178. Sarah: (...)
179. James: [(...)
180. Judy: [(...)
181. James: We were at Lake (Littlepuck)... [for a vacation.
182. Sarah: [It was nice there.
183. Judy: {laughing}
184. Joe: I did once. It was c- cold, it was the last, the December one right? For Christmas?
185. Judy: A friend of mine and her husband went //
186. Joe: // (...) I was four feet from the propane heater.
187. James: Oh good.
188. Joe: [(...)
189. James: [(...)

190. Judy: [You get hot cider.
191. Joe: We had to stand in the isle (...) //
192. Judy: // Yeah and you take a little afghan and you put it over your lap and you have hot cider and popcorn and you sing Christmas carols and the one we went to was a lot of fun. I liked it.
193. Joe: Yeah. Yeah.
194. James: [{laughing}]
195. Judy: [Well I like Stirling Festival Theatre better, actually. // [I think you get more bang for your buck there.
196. Joe: // [(...)]
197. Judy: I saw Oliver, and Oliver was wonderful, wonderful on stage. What else did we see? Oh, I'm going to see Pinocchio, opening night, this Christmas.
198. Joe: Her and one of her girlfriends dragged me and her girlfriend's husband to this one – it turned out to be about four guys who went on a camping trip to get to //
199. Judy: // find themselves.
200. Joe: Find themselves.
201. Judy: And I thought it was going to be hilarious!
202. Joe: It wasn't! It was the worst – it had // [(...)]
203. Judy: // [At intermission they said it was time to go.
204. Joe: Both of us guys stood up and we started to walk out and they said, "Wait! (It's only the intermission.)"
205. All: {laughing}
206. Joe: It was just awful.
207. Judy: But I like Stirling. We // [go there often.
208. James: // [I do too. I like it too.

209. Judy: It's really // [fun.
210. Joe: // [It's a nice little facility. You know.
211. James: And they usually have two types of shows. Well, some of them - kids, adults.
212. Sarah: (...)
213. Judy: Yeah, and they also have the plays during the summer and the pantos at Christmas. Pantos are interactive. ➤ It's very neat.
214. James: I've been to one of those.
215. Judy: Yeah. They interact with the audience.
216. Sarah: Yeah. We went to //
217. James: // (John' Ostrich's)
218. Judy: And I saw the (...) (Parish, big old hall murder). It was really cute.
219. Sarah: Was that there?
220. Judy: It was there one summer and we saw that. It was cute. They get good entertainment and Catherine, umm, the director – she writes a lot of stuff. She's ah,

{END OF TRANSCRIPT}

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