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people exchange their own skills, interests and experiences

### **5.2. Robert Foster(2004)**

Foster (2004) states that there are four basic functions of gossip

a)To provide information:

gossip is known as one of the techniques through which people exchange information or as Foster (2004:85) calls it a sort of tally sheet for public opinion.

b) To give entertainment:

Like the majority of forms of storytelling, gossip could be only used for fun and amusement. Foster (2004: 85) said that the gossipee might certainly be sensitive about the information being passed.

This does not contradict the fact that gossip can exist solely for the entertainment or recreational value of the gossipers though. It is the sheer fun which for most gossipers explains their involvement.

c) To enhance friendship:

According to Foster's theory (2004: 87), gossip is strongly related to friendship as it has an important role in building and enhancing relationships through a friendship or intimacy

## Gossip in “Big Little Lies”; a Sociolinguistic study

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### **Abstract**

Gossip is a linguistic phenomenon that almost appears in our daily conversations. In the present research paper, gossip in big little lies by Liane Moraity is discussed following in the steps of Deborah Johns (1980) in identifying the four basic functional types of gossip, Foster's (2004) functions of using gossips and Coates (1997) theories regarding the difference between men and women talk.

The study aims at exploring the most common situations in which gossips are used, the relationship between people gossiping, the difference between the way and the frequency men and women gossip. It also aims at analyzing types, functions and linguistic features of gossips used in the literary work under investigation. Different examples from various male and female characters are analyzed to reach the conclusions that; women gossip more than men and that there are specific linguistic features that each sex tends to use more than others. The purpose why each gender sex is also different as

**Moving Beyond Assumptions of Deviance:  
The Reconceptualization and Measurement of Workplace Gossip**

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### **Nomological Network**

**Uncertainty.** Gossip researchers have long theorized that gossip is an effective tool for gathering information and validating opinions (Paine, 1967). Recent research supports this, as the most common self-reported reason to gossip is to gather and validate information (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012). We would therefore expect that workplace uncertainty (e.g., job ambiguity, insecurity, and anxiety) would positively relate to the occurrence of WG. Although both positive and negative gossip can be used to gather information, gossip researchers have used a



## Talking behind their backs: Negative gossip and burnout in Hospitals



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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Gossip can both hinder and help in a hospital environment. Despite the fact that research indicated that it occurs most frequently in healthcare, it has not been studied in relation to other organizational manifestations such as burnout and engagement, or quality of care outcomes. We hypothesize that negative gossip, defined as negative evaluative talk about an absent third party would function as an indicator of organizational dysfunction.

**Methods:** A quantitative survey was conducted among doctors, nurses and residents in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia and Republic of Macedonia ( $N=532$ ). Specifically, we examined the role of negative gossip, in relation to burnout, job engagement, suboptimal care and patient safety in public hospitals.

**Results:** Results indicate that, after controlling for negative affect, negative gossip is positively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Negative gossip negatively correlated with job engagement and patient safety and positively correlated with suboptimal care, even after controlling for burnout. Negative gossip was positively related to the number of event reporting.

**Discussion:** Gossip is an important aspect of organizational functioning. The degree to which negative gossip is a coping mechanism of healthcare professionals is discussed.

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### 1. Introduction

Despite the fact that gossip can be considered a manifestation of the organizational culture and can provide valuable insights into the working climate of an organization, it has been rarely studied within healthcare organizations. In hospital settings gossip has been considered as a problem and the need to manage it has been emphasized (Thomas & Rozell, 2007). But also, it has been recognized as a way to express emotions and achieve positive outcomes like trust and support (Labianca, 2010; Waddington & Fletcher,

associations between gossip, job burnout, engagement, quality of care and patient safety within hospital settings.

### 2. Literature review

Organizational culture is a complex concept which can have many manifestations (Hunt, Sanchez, Tadd, & O'Mahony, 2012; Shortell et al., 2000; Wakefield et al., 2001). Such a manifestation that has not so far received much attention is gossip, which

### **Workplace Gossip and Deviance**

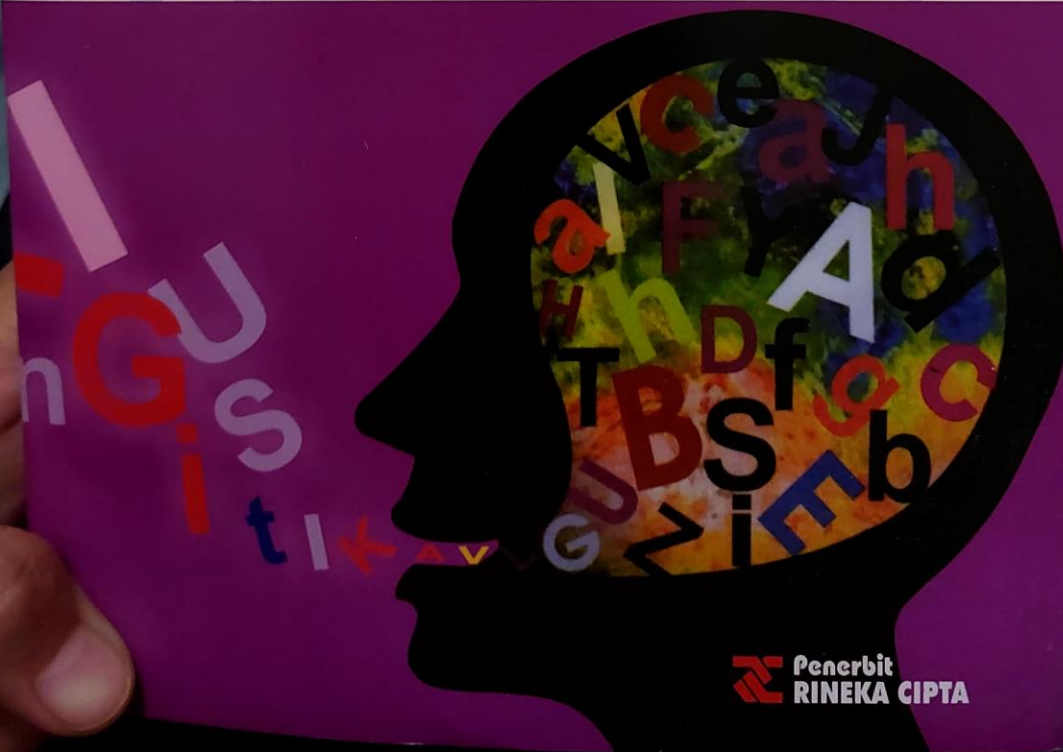
The field of organizational psychology has traditionally taken a very negative view of WG. With little empirical evidence, organizational practitioners have frequently drawn upon implicit theories of gossip to recommend that WG be completely eliminated from organizations (Noon & Delbridge, 1993). As a part of their deviance typology, Robinson and Bennett (1995) categorized WG as a form of workplace deviance, defined as a “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of the organization, its members, or both” (p. 556). Although this categorization was a very small part of their overall paper, the categorization has reinforced implicit theories of gossip, and artificially depressed research into WG by suggesting that WG should be studied as a subset of deviance. Although there have been warnings that WG is misunderstood and should be studied further (Kurland & Pelled, 2000; Noon & Delbridge, 1993), there has been little resulting WG-specific research.

We propose that organizational research has focused on an overly-narrow subset of WG that is consistent with negative implicit theories of gossip, but which is not representative of the majority of WG behavior. Although some extreme cases of WG may be deviant, *typical* WG

Abdul Chaer  
Leonie Agustina

# Sosiolinguistik

PERKENALAN AWAL



Penerbit  
**RINEKA CIPTA**



keragaman...  
an variasi atau...  
sial dan keraga...  
lompok yang keraga...  
nya, maka variasi...  
jadi seragam. Ker...  
nuhi fungsinya se...  
aneka ragam. Ker...  
ang jelas, variasi...  
nya keragaman...

berdasarkan kn...  
m yang diguna...  
bagi variasi ba...  
(a) penutur...  
90) membedak...  
dialek, dan...  
1969) memb...  
ensi sosial, da...  
riasi bahasa...  
nggunaannya...  
a itu, di ma...  
kat, apa jesa...  
arkan pen...  
ang apa, z...  
kut ini ab...  
utur deng...  
ga deng...

ra adala...  
bersifa...  
varias...  
kenaa...  
at, dan...  
tinggi...  
suara...

Awal

bicaranya tanpa melihat orangnya, kita dapat mengenalinya. Mengenal  
idiolet seseorang dari bicaranya memang lebih mudah daripada melalui karya  
tulisnya. Namun kalau kita sering membaca karya Hamka, Alisjahbana, atau  
Shakespeare, maka pada suatu waktu kelak bila kita menemui selebar karya  
mereka, meskipun tidak dicantumkan nama mereka, maka kita dapat  
mengenal lembar itu karya siapa. Kalau setiap orang memiliki idioletnya  
masing-masing, maka apakah berarti idiolet itu menjadi banyak? Ya, memang  
demikian, bila ada 1000 orang penutur, misalnya, maka akan ada 1000 idiolet  
dengan cirinya masing-masing yang meskipun sangat kecil atau sedikit cirinya  
itu, tetapi masih tetap menunjukkan idioletnya. Dua orang kembar pun, wama  
suaranya, yang menandai idioletnya, masih dapat diperbedakan.

Variasi bahasa kedua berdasarkan penuturnya adalah yang disebut  
*dialek*, yakni variasi bahasa dari sekelompok penutur yang jumlahnya relatif,  
yang berada pada satu tempat, wilayah, atau area tertentu. Karena dialek ini  
didasarkan pada wilayah atau area tempat tinggal penutur, maka dialek ini  
lazim disebut *dialek areal*, *dialek regional* atau *dialek geografi* (tetapi dalam  
buku ini kita sebut dialek saja). Para penutur dalam suatu dialek, meskipun  
mereka mempunyai idioletnya masing-masing, memiliki kesamaan ciri yang  
menandai bahwa mereka berada pada satu dialek, yang berbeda dengan  
kelompok penutur lain, yang berada dalam dialeknya sendiri dengan ciri lain  
yang menandai dialeknya juga. Misalnya, bahasa Jawa dialek Banyumas  
memiliki ciri tersendiri yang berbeda dengan ciri yang dimiliki bahasa Jawa  
dialek Pekalongan, dialek Semarang atau juga dialek Surabaya. Para penutur  
bahasa Jawa dialek Banyumas dapat berkomunikasi dengan baik dengan  
para penutur bahasa Jawa dialek Pekalongan, dialek Semarang, dialek  
Surabaya, atau juga bahasa Jawa dialek lainnya. Mengapa? Karena dialek-  
dialek tersebut masih termasuk bahasa yang sama, yaitu bahasa Jawa.  
Memang kesaling-mengertian antara anggota dari satu dialek dengan anggota  
dialek lain bersifat relatif: bisa besar, bisa kecil, atau juga bisa sangat kecil.  
Lalu kalau kesaling-mengertian itu tidak ada sama sekali, maka berarti kedua  
penutur dari kedua dialek yang berbeda itu bukanlah dari sebuah bahasa  
yang sama, melainkan dari dua bahasa yang berbeda. Dalam kasus bahasa  
Jawa dialek Banten dan bahasa Jawa dialek Cirebon, sebenarnya kedua bahasa  
itu sudah berdiri sendiri-sendiri, sebagai bahasa yang bukan lagi bahasa Jawa.  
Tetapi karena secara historis keduanya adalah berasal dari bahasa Jawa, maka  
keduanya juga dapat dianggap sebagai dialek-dialek dari bahasa Jawa.

Penggunaan istilah *dialek* dan *bahasa* dalam masyarakat umum  
memang seringkali bersifat ambigu. Secara linguistik jika masyarakat tutur



masih saling mengerti, maka alat komunikasinya adalah dua dialek dari bahasa yang sama. Namun, secara politis, meskipun dua masyarakat tutur bisa saling mengerti karena kedua alat komunikasi verbalnya mempunyai kesamaan sistem dan subsistem, tetapi keduanya dianggap sebagai dua bahasa yang berbeda. Contohnya, bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa Malaysia, yang secara linguistik adalah sebuah bahasa, tetapi secara politis dianggap sebagai dua bahasa yang berbeda.

Bidang studi linguistik yang mempelajari dialek-dialek ini adalah *dialektologi*. Bidang studi ini dalam kerjanya berusaha membuat peta batas-batas dialek dari sebuah bahasa, yakni dengan cara membandingkan bentuk dan makna kosakata yang digunakan dalam dialek-dialek itu. Namun, perlu dicatat bahwa dialektologi secara lebih luas juga membuat peta batas-batas bahasa.

Variasi ketiga berdasarkan penutur adalah yang disebut *kronolek* atau *dialek temporal*, yakni variasi bahasa yang digunakan oleh kelompok sosial pada masa tertentu. Umpamanya, variasi bahasa Indonesia pada masa tahun-tiga puluhan, variasi yang digunakan tahun lima puluhan, dan variasi yang digunakan pada masa kini.

Variasi bahasa pada ketiga zaman itu tentunya berbeda, baik dari segi lafal, ejaan, morfologi, maupun sintaksis. Yang paling tampak biasanya dari segi leksikon, karena bidang ini mudah sekali berubah akibat perubahan sosial budaya, ilmu pengetahuan, dan teknologi. Kalau Anda membaca buku yang diterbitkan dari tiga zaman yang berbeda, Anda akan melihat perbedaan itu. Dalam bahasa Inggris, kita bisa melihat bedanya variasi bahasa Inggris zaman sebelum Shakespeare, zaman Shakespeare, dan zaman sekarang (lebih jauh lihat Bab 9 tentang perubahan bahasa).

Variasi bahasa yang keempat berdasarkan penuturnya adalah apa yang disebut *sosiolek* atau *dialek sosial*, yakni variasi bahasa yang berkenaan dengan status, golongan, dan kelas sosial para penuturnya. Dalam sosiolinguistik biasanya variasi inilah yang paling banyak dibicarakan dan paling banyak menyita waktu untuk membicarakannya, karena variasi ini menyangkut semua masalah pribadi para penuturnya, seperti usia, pendidikan, seks, pekerjaan, tingkat kebangsawanan, keadaan sosial ekonomi, dan sebagainya. Berdasarkan usia, kita bisa melihat perbedaan variasi bahasa yang digunakan oleh kanak-kanak, para remaja, orang dewasa, dan orang-orang yang tergolong *lansia* (=lanjut usia). Cobalah Anda perhatikan bahasa yang digunakan para kelompok umur itu, niscaya Anda akan dapat melihat

perbedaannya dengan isinya, sintaksis, dan adanya variasi tinggi, akan perbedaan in juga morfologi Kota, dua kelompok lebih banyak lebih banyak seks (jenis bahasa. Cob mahasiswa oleh sekelo menandai p variasi bah manusia ya Oetomo (1

Perl juga meny para buru guru, par variasi ba bahasa m kerjakan. kosakata

Di kebangs tingkat-t Sunda r Dalam raja-raja kosakat akan be Jawa a berken

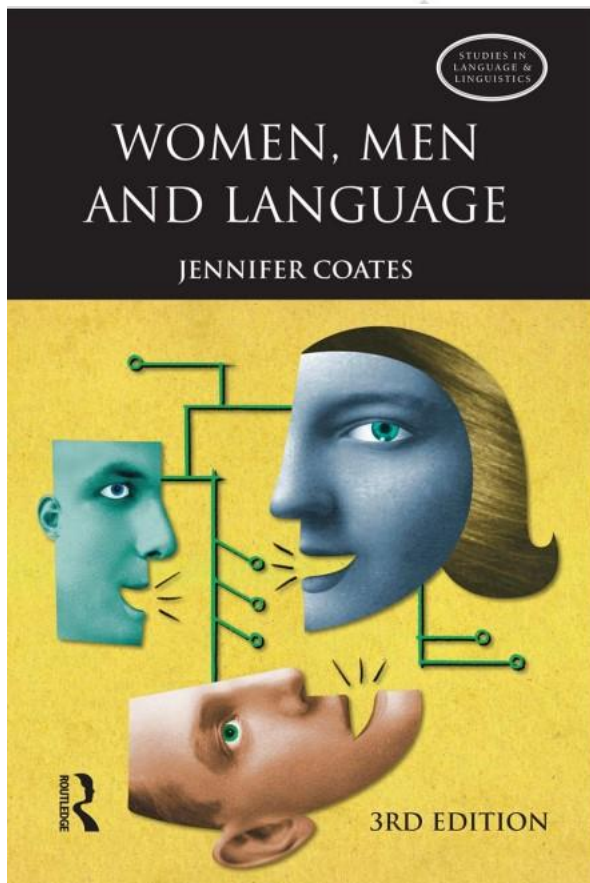
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## 2. Language and Society

In understanding language, the aspect of society has to be involved.

Chaika (1982: 1) states “language and society are so intertwined that it is impossible to understand one without the other. There is no human society that does not depend upon, is not shaped by, and does not itself shape language”.

Gossip itself has been considered as the way for woman to share her feelings or emotion to others (Coates, 2004: 103). When woman are gossiping, they will express their feelings toward someone who are they addresses to. Through gossip, woman will reveal their real feelings, such as anger, sadness, disappointment and happiness.



### The Characteristics of Qualitative Research

For many years, qualitative writers had to discuss the characteristics of qualitative research and convince faculty and audiences as to their legitimacy. Now these discussions are less frequently found in the literature and there is some consensus as to what constitutes qualitative inquiry. Thus, our suggestions about the method section of a project or proposal are as follows:

- Review the needs of potential audiences for the proposal or study. Decide whether audience members are knowledgeable enough about the characteristics of qualitative research that this section is not necessary. For example, although qualitative research is typically accepted and well-known in the social sciences, it has emerged in the health sciences only in the last couple of decades. Thus, for health science audiences, a review of the basic characteristics will be important.
- If there is some question about the audience's knowledge, present the basic characteristics of qualitative research and consider discussing a recent qualitative research journal article (or study) to use as an example to illustrate the characteristics.
- If you present the basic characteristics, what ones should you mention? A number of authors of introductory texts convey these characteristics, such as Creswell (2016), Hatch (2002), and Marshall and Rossman (2016).
  - *Natural setting:* Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. Researchers do not bring individuals into a lab (a contrived situation), nor do they typically send out instruments for individuals to complete. This up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research. In the natural setting, the researchers have face-to-face interaction, often extending over a prolonged period of time.
  - *Researcher as key instrument:* Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol—an instrument for recording data—but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information and interpret it. They do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers.
  - *Multiple sources of data:* Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual information rather than rely on a single data source. These are all open-ended forms of data in which the participants share their ideas freely, not constrained by predetermined scales or instruments. Then the researchers

### The Researcher's Role and Reflexivity

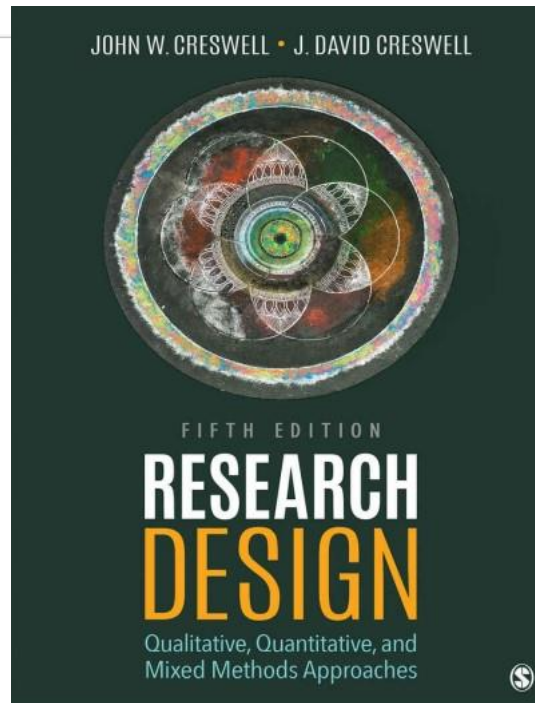
As mentioned in the list of characteristics, qualitative research is interpretative research; the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants. This introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the qualitative research process (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2013). With these concerns in mind, inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status (SES) that shape their interpretations formed during a study. In addition, gaining entry to a research site and the ethical issues that might arise are also elements of the researcher's role.

Reflexivity requires commenting on two important points:

- **Past experiences:** Include statements about past experiences with the research problem or with the participants or setting that help the reader understand the connection between the researchers and the study. These experiences may involve participation in the setting, past educational or work experiences, or culture, ethnicity, race, SES, or other demographics that tie the researchers directly to the study.
- **How past experiences shape interpretations:** Be explicit, then, about how these experiences may potentially shape the interpretations the researchers make during the study. For example, the experiences may cause researchers to lean toward certain themes, to actively look for evidence to support their positions, and to create favorable or unfavorable conclusions about the sites or participants.

How can reflexive thinking be incorporated into your qualitative study (Creswell, 2016)? You can write notes about your personal experiences during the study. These notes might include observations about the process of data collection, hunches about what you are learning, and concerns about reactions of participants to the research process. These ideas can be written as **memos**—notes written during the research process that reflect on the process or that help shape the development of codes and themes. In writing these reflective notes, how do you know whether you are being sufficiently reflexive for a qualitative study? Sufficient reflexivity occurs when researchers record notes during the process of research, reflect on their own personal experiences, and consider how their personal experiences may shape their interpretation of results. Also, qualitative researchers need to limit their discussions about personal experiences so that they do not override the importance of the content or methods in a study.

Another aspect of reflecting on the role of the researcher is to be aware of connections between the researcher and the participants or the research sites that may unduly influence the researcher's interpretations. "Backyard" research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) involves studying the researcher's own organization, or friends, or immediate work setting. This often leads to compromises in the researcher's ability to disclose information and raises issues of an imbalance of power between the inquirer and the participants. When



## 12.7 Women, men and language: conclusions

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, sociolinguistic research has moved on from the simple correlation of linguistic form with social category. Researchers now analyse spoken and written data with the aim of understanding how gender is constructed in everyday life and of assessing the role of language in the creation and maintenance of contemporary masculinities and femininities. There is increasing emphasis on the need to be aware of similarities as well as differences between male and female speakers, as well as to assert the plurality of masculinities and femininities. The spread of language and gender research to non-English-speaking communities and the adoption of the CofP approach have led to more studies which emphasise the importance of 'looking locally'. This has inevitably improved understanding of the variety of ways gender is manifested linguistically in different communities. It has also brought new communities of practice to general notice. Finally, the study of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered speakers has unsettled the heteronormativity of earlier research and is widening the questions we ask.

It is likely that some of these initiatives will prove in the long run to be more fruitful than others. But what does seem certain is that the field of language and gender will continue to flourish, not least because of our continuing fascination with gender and with sexuality. We understand that women and men are similar in many ways, but it is difference which fascinates us, and so we will continue to be in thrall to research which we can read as telling us about women's ways of talking, men's ways of talking, and differences between them.

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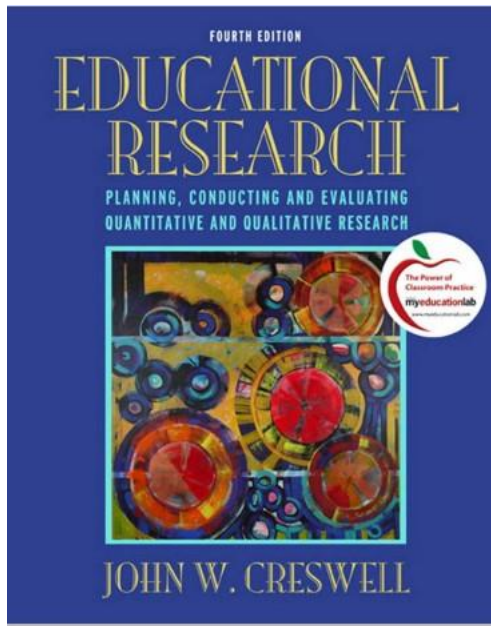
## WHAT ARE THE FIVE PROCESS STEPS IN QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION?

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There are five interrelated steps in the process of qualitative data collection. These steps should not be seen as linear approaches, but often one step in the process does follow another. The five steps are first to identify participants and sites to be studied and to engage in a sampling strategy that will best help you understand your central phenomenon and the research question you are asking. Second, the next phase is to gain access to these individuals and sites by obtaining permissions. Third, once permissions are in place, you need to consider what types of information will best answer your research questions. Fourth, at the same time, you need to design protocols or instruments for collecting and recording the information. Finally and fifth, you need to administer the data collection with special attention to potential ethical issues that may arise.

Some basic differences between quantitative and qualitative data collection are helpful to know at this point. Based on the general characteristics of qualitative research, qualitative data collection consists of collecting data using forms with general, emerging questions to permit the participant to generate responses; gathering word (text) or image (picture) data; and collecting information from a small number of individuals or sites. Thinking more specifically now,

- ◆ In *quantitative* research, we systematically identify our participants and sites through random sampling; in *qualitative* research, we identify our participants and sites on purposeful sampling, based on places and people that can best help us understand our central phenomenon.
- ◆ In both *quantitative* and *qualitative* research, we need permissions to begin our study, but in *qualitative* research, we need greater access to the site because we will typically go to the site and interview people or observe them. This process requires a greater level of participation from the site than does the *quantitative* research process.
- ◆ In both approaches, we collect data such as interviews, observations, and documents. In *qualitative* research, our approach relies on general interviews or observations so that we do not restrict the views of participants. We will not use someone else's instrument as in quantitative research and gather closed-ended information; we will instead collect data with a few open-ended questions that we design.
- ◆ In both approaches, we need to record the information supplied by the participants. Rather than using predesigned instruments from someone else or instruments that we design, in qualitative research we will record information on self-designed protocols that help us organize information reported by participants to each question.
- ◆ Finally, we will administer our procedures of *qualitative* data collection with sensitivity to the challenges and ethical issues of gathering information face-to-face and often in people's homes or workplaces. Studying people in their own environment creates challenges for the qualitative researcher that may not be present in *quantitative* research when investigators mail out anonymous questionnaires or bring individuals into the experimental laboratory.



46

#### Chapter FOUR Gossip

The impression that women talk too freely and too much in private situations is summed up in a word: gossip.

Although gossip can be destructive, it isn't always; it can serve a crucial function in establishing intimacy--especially if it is not "talking against" but simply "talking about." The label "gossip" casts a critical light on women's interest in talking about the details of people's lives.

Evidence that the negativity of the term reflects men's interpretation of women's ways of talking can be seen in the following excerpt from Marge Piercy's novel *Fly Away Home*. Daria falls in love with Tom partly because he differs from her former husband, Ross, in this respect:

It surprised her what he knew about the people around him. Ross would never have known that Gretta disliked her

GOSSIP

son's teacher, or that Fay had just given walking papers to her boyfriend because he drank too much in front of her boys. For a man, Tom had an uncommon interest in the details of people's lives. Gossip, Ross would call it, but she thought it was just being interested in people.

75

Not only men disparage an interest in the details of people's lives as "gossip." The great southern writer Eudora Welty, remembering her Mississippi childhood, writes that her mother tried to keep a talkative seamstress from telling stories about local people in front of her little girl: "I don't want her exposed to gossip," Welty recalls her mother saying, "as if gossip were the measles and I could catch it." But far from having a bad influence on the child, the gossipy stories about people that Welty loved to hear inspired her to become a writer. When people talk about the details of daily lives, it is gossip; when they write about them, it is literature: short stories and novels.

Mary Catherine Bateson draws another parallel--between gossip and anthropology, the academic discipline that makes a career of documenting the details of people's lives. She recalls that her mother, Margaret Mead, told her she would never make an anthropologist because she wasn't interested enough in gossip.

#### IN GOSSIP BEGINS FRIENDSHIP

Telling details of others' lives is partly the result of women's telling their friends details of their own lives. These details become gossip when the friend to whom they are told repeats them to someone else--presumably another friend. Telling what's happening in your life and the lives of those you talk to is a grown-up version of telling secrets, the essence of girls' and women's friendships. In Alice Mattison's story "New Haven," which I quoted in Chapter Two, Eleanor tells Patsy that she is falling in love with a married man. As soon as these words are out, Eleanor feels "a

little ashamed to lack her secret suddenly," but "she also feels pleased; she doesn't have to guard it, for once.

And it's exhilarating to talk about Peter." I was struck by Mattison's phrasing--"to lack her secret"--which captures the way that having a secret makes a person feel enhanced, and telling it is giving something away--in the sense of possession as well as the idiomatic sense of revelation. Mattison also captures the pleasure in not having to hide something, and being able to talk about what's really on your mind.

Not only is telling secrets evidence of friendship; it creates a friendship, when the listener responds in the expected way. Eleanor does not know Patsy well, but she would like to. There is an affinity<sup>76</sup> and a budding friendship between them; they have taken to going together for coffee and ice cream following the rehearsals of

**You Just Don't Understand**

You Jus Don't UNDERSTAND  
 Women and Men in Conversation  
 Deborah Tannen, .).

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## Gossip in Evolutionary Perspective

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Conversation is a uniquely human phenomenon. Analyses of freely forming conversations indicate that approximately two thirds of conversation time is devoted to social topics, most of which can be given the generic label *gossip*. This article first explores the origins of gossip as a mechanism for bonding social groups, tracing these origins back to social grooming among primates. It then asks why social gossip in this sense should form so important a component of human interaction and presents evidence to suggest that, aside from servicing social networks, a key function may be related explicitly to controlling free riders. Finally, the author reviews briefly the role of social cognition in facilitating conversations of this kind.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, gossip has acquired a decidedly shady reputation. It is seen as malicious, destructive, and largely reprehensible. Describing a person as an “old gossip” implies someone with more time on their hands than they know what to do with, too much hanging over the garden gate waiting for some passerby to pause for idle chat. To engage in gossip is to speak ill of one’s fellows, to interfere with the smooth running of the social relationships within which we are all embedded: in a word, to undermine the very fabric of society. Yet, the term *gossip* itself did not originally have that meaning. It meant simply the activity that one engaged in with one’s “god-sibs,” one’s peer group equivalent of godparents: in other words, those with whom one was especially close.

This way would not exist without there being large groups in the first place.

However, we should first ask what evidence there is that language is used in these various ways. In part, this really concerns the distinction between social and technical uses of language.

Language is concerned with the exchange of information; that, after all, is what it (or, at least, grammar) is mainly designed to do. However, linguists and those in most other disciplines interested in language have traditionally assumed that the information to be exchanged is factual knowledge about the world; in other words, language evolved to allow our ancestors to exchange information about aspects of the physical world in which they lived. “This is how you make a good spear. . . . If you throw your spear this way, you are more likely to kill the prey. . . . I just saw some bison down by the

To be able to make this claim, I need first to step back in evolutionary time to what we might see as the ancestral state from which modern humans sprang. This is the nature of social relationships that pertain among our primate cousins. I then argue that language evolved as a mechanism for bonding large social groups, and that it does so precisely because it allows us to exchange information about the state of our social networks. In this context, the problem of free riders (those who take the benefits of sociability without paying the costs) is a central issue for which gossip provides a particularly powerful mechanism of control.

### Origins

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## The Virtues of Gossip: Reputational Information Sharing as Prosocial Behavior

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Reputation systems promote cooperation and deter antisocial behavior in groups. Little is known, however, about how and why people share reputational information. Here, we seek to establish the existence and dynamics of *prosocial gossip*, the sharing of negative evaluative information about a target in a way that protects others from antisocial or exploitative behavior. We present a model of prosocial gossip and the results of 4 studies testing the model's claims. Results of Studies 1 through 3 demonstrate that (a) individuals who observe an antisocial act experience negative affect and are compelled to share information about the antisocial actor with a potentially vulnerable person, (b) sharing such information reduces negative affect created by observing the antisocial behavior, and (c) individuals possessing more prosocial orientations are the most motivated to engage in such gossip, even at a personal cost, and exhibit the greatest reduction in negative affect as a result. Study 4 demonstrates that prosocial gossip can effectively deter selfishness and promote cooperation. Taken together these results highlight the roles of prosocial motivations and negative affective reactions to injustice in maintaining reputational information sharing in groups. We conclude by discussing implications for reputational theories of the maintenance of cooperation in human groups.

*Keywords:* gossip, prosocial behavior, reputation systems, cooperation, social dilemmas

Cooperation is fundamental to social life, yielding benefits ranging from the production of public goods to rewarding feelings of cohesion and solidarity (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981; Kollock,

cooperate (Brown, Palameta, & Moore, 2003; Dunbar, 1996, 2004; Frank, 1988). But how can individuals make accurate judgments about another's cooperative tendencies, in particular in the initial

orientation (van Lange, 1999; van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, & Joireman, 1997). If, as hypothesized, prosocial gossip is indeed driven by preferences for cooperation and fairness, then we would expect more prosocial individuals to experience greater negative affect after witnessing unfairness, to be more likely to gossip (frustration hypothesis), and to experience greater relief after gossiping (relief hypothesis).

Finally, we also included, in the gossip condition, an item measuring participants' beliefs about how much their notes would affect the play of the person to whom they were writing. We included this item for two reasons. First, we wanted to determine if participants who wrote a prosocial gossip note believed that the recipient of the note would trust and utilize the information provided rather than simply discounting it as cheap talk (Farrell & Rabin, 1996). Second, in a related vein, if negative affect motivated participants to pass on helpful information to vulnerable others, then we would expect perceptions of the efficacy of information sharing to be positively correlated with the extent of negative affect relief.

**Positive and negative affect change.** To test our hypotheses that engaging in prosocial gossip would create negative affect relief and increase positive affect (our relief hypothesis) and that participants' prosocial value orientation would moderate this effect, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) entering experimental condition and scores on the measure of social value orientation as the independent variables and entering participants' change from Time 1 to Time 2 in our frustration composite and the measure of happiness as the dependent variables. We found significant multivariate effects for our experimental condition,  $F(2, 97) = 5.52, p < .01$ , prosocial orientation,  $F(2, 97) = 5.03, p < .01$ , and the Condition  $\times$  Prosocial Orientation interaction,  $F(2, 97) = 7.52, p < .001$ . Participants in the gossip condition demonstrated a greater decrease in frustration ( $M_{decrease} = 18.39$ ) than participants in the control condition ( $M_{decrease} = 7.16$ ),  $F(1, 98) = 7.40, p < .01$ . Likewise, participants in the gossip condition demonstrated a greater increase in happiness ( $M_{increase} = 16.90$ ) than participants in the control condition ( $M_{increase} = 5.57$ ),  $F(1, 98) = 5.85, p < .05$ . Taken

situation in which it is produced. As a methodological strategy, I advocate that first we examine the situational context for the forces that explain why people do what they do. If no such forces can be found in the immediate context, only then should we rely on prior socialization to explain present behaviour.

In this paper I will consider two examples of women's conversational style: question-asking and the use of you know. Both are seen as indicative of women's tendency to be more "insecure" and "hesitant" and are said to arise from a socialized female personality. Rather than using these as evidence of personality traits, I shall explore the character of conversational interaction in which they occur. By doing so, we will see that these speech patterns are attempted solutions to the problematics of conversation.

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# Conversational Insecurity<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Concrete ways that women talk are frequently explained as a result of female "personality" and socialization. This paper offers an alternative social explanation for the depiction of women as "insecure", using data from tape recording of three male-female couples in their homes. Looking at the seemingly insecure behaviour of women in actual conversational settings, their activity can be demonstrated to be embedded in the necessary work involved in producing successful interactions.

## Key words

Conversational analysis; male-female conversation; question-asking; women's - insecurity, personality, speech; "you know"; socialization

## INTRODUCTION

Discussions of the way women act, including the way they talk, often rely on some notion of a female "personality". Usually, socialization is used to explain this personality. Women are seen as more insecure, dependent and emotional than men because of the way that they are raised. Socialization is seen as the means by which male-female power differences are internalised and translated into behaviour producing properly dominant men and submissive women (Bardwick and Douvan 1977; Lakoff 1975). Lakoff (1979) has probably been the most explicit in offering this personality-socialization explanation for women's speech patterns:

"Linguistic behavior, like other facets of the personality is heavily influenced by training and education. Women speak as they do - and

At the most general level, gossip behavior includes "idle talk" or "chit chat" about daily life. Dunbar (2004), in this issue, defines it broadly as conversation about social and personal topics. In some feminist criticism, gossip is nearly synonymous with "women's talk" in general (E. B. Brown, 1990; Coates, 1988; Eg-gins & Slade, 1997; Jones, 1980; Spacks, 1982) or "girl talk" (Eckert, 1990). Rysman (1977) traced the etymology of the term as it refers specifically to women. The parallels in men's conversation—"shop talk," "shooting the

influence.

### Information

As a mechanism of information exchange, gossip is frequently described as an efficient and, at times, exclusive means of gathering or disseminating information. From gossip, "the individual gets a map of his social environment" (Hannerz, 1967, p. 57), particularly in low-accessibility networks spread thin by high mobility. At the group level, gossip has been aptly called "a slow scanning of the total informational resource of the group" (Roberts, 1964, p. 441) or "a sort of tally sheet for public opinion" (Szwed, 1966, p. 435). The "official line," in this age of sophisticated and instantaneously informed publics, is often dismissed in favor of "the inside scoop" that only gossip can provide (Ayim, 1994; Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1998; Levin & Arluke, 1987; Rosnow, 2001). Suls (1977) observed that, although it may be possible to communicate directly with other people regarding needed social comparison information, gossip may be the better means to such knowledge if the information sought is of an unfavorable kind. From the tradition of social exchange in psychology, gossip is often portrayed as a kind of currency, traded like any other, and assessed for its value by the taker on the basis of timeliness, usefulness, and, especially, rarity. Rosnow and Fine (1976) observed that the transactional nature of gossip seemed to parallel traditional patterns of economic exchange.

Bergmann (1993), in a related vein, believed that it is the unequal distribution of knowledge

England, Addison and Steele's *Tatler* and *Spectator*, which were penny periodicals for the burgeoning middle class, were early prototypes of today's gossip columns. People looked to these gossipy writers, as people do today, as sources of social knowledge and the proper ways to live and behave.

The fact that informality and privacy are important conditions for the transmission of gossip (Hannerz, 1967; Schoeman, 1994) necessarily makes gossip "scarce," because people naturally guard the flow of information about themselves (Derlega & Chaikin, 1977; Hannerz, 1967; Haviland, 1977; Szwed, 1966). Yerko-vich (1977) pointed out that "information, no matter how salient or scandalous, isn't gossip unless the participants know enough about the people involved to experience the thrill of revelation" (p. 196). Bergmann (1993) wrote that informational exchanges between spouses at the end of the day might *not* be gossip for that very reason: "The 'thrill' and commitment does [*sic*] not nearly reach the normal dimensions of gossip conversations" (p. 68), although precisely where along this continuum gossip begins or ends is certainly hard to say.

People sometimes go to extraordinary lengths to gather personal information about their fellow humans. Haviland (1977) reported people habitually peeking in their neighbors' doorways, and children have sometimes been recruited as proxies (Goffman, 1959; Haviland, 1977; Hotchkiss, 1962). The latter, Rosnow (2001) pointed out, has the double advantage of easy access and impunity from sanctions for later spreading the information. Priests and politicians have resorted to making liquor available

## *Influence*

Establishing friendship at the dyadic or group level is closely related to boundary enforcement and gossip's influence function, widely discussed by gossip writers. As a means of corraling (or expelling) the wayward and eccentric, gossip is acknowledged to be an efficient social mechanism. The aim of gossip could be either to reform or to stigmatize the sinner, as Cox (1970) put it. Enquist and Leimar (1993) and Dunbar (2004), in this volume, maintain that gossip is a kind of informal policing device for controlling free riders and social cheats. In fact, these authors posit that, evolutionarily, this is the most important function of language in general and gossip in particular.

It is not much of a deductive leap to realize that what one hears about others can just as easily be said to others about oneself; in this way, we can learn how to behave—what to do and what not to do—from listening to gossip. Children no doubt learn the norms of their culture, neighborhood, and various professions by listening to frequent object lessons concocted ad hoc by parents. Coworkers learn what is expected of them by hearing stories holding high performers up to praise and low performers to shame; the “corporate culture” in an organization is commonly expressed this way in gossip stories (Kurland & Pelled, 2000; Noon & Delbridge, 1993). Indeed, culture in general depends on repetition of norms and mores in many forms, both formal and informal, to maintain its hold on members. Gossip is arguably the most common form because it requires no special skill to produce, as do storytelling and singing, for instance (Abrahams, 1970). Many forms of

when a person “directly interferes in another’s impression-management, hence forcing the audience to redefine his victim’s role” (p. 88).

One of the conditions for gossip to be influential is that people must agree on the norms for behavior and what constitutes acceptability; gossipers typically articulate these things. Eckert (1990), for instance, in her study of adolescent girls’ gossip, referred to a “good person” (p. 95) as having acquired symbolic capital in the eyes of his or her age group and, therefore, having relatively more power to influence others. Such people are repositories of group norms, and their opinions therefore have more weight in shepherding conformity. Conformity is essential for the survival of the group as a whole, which may account for the particularly vitriolic form of gossip observed in groups under pressure to survive and in open competition with one another (Cox, 1970; Gluckman, 1963).

Gossip’s potential to restrict freedom motivates people not only to minimize their eccentricities but also to minimize gossip about themselves whenever possible. People might try to be present, for example, when they sense they may be being talked about (Gilmore, 1978), or they may try to ferret out the sources of gossip about themselves. Haviland (1977) observed that although people are intensely and often indiscreetly curious about their neighbors, they go to considerable lengths to hide details of their own daily lives. Szwed’s (1966) Newfoundlanders also guarded themselves by various means against “overexposure.” Residents in Gilmore’s (1978) Spanish town did not even invite neighbors into their homes, for fear of giving them the opportunity to talk about “all that is ‘wrong’ ” (p. 94) there. Although vulnerability to the influence of gossip will vary



## Talking behind their backs: Negative gossip and burnout in Hospitals



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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Gossip can both hinder and help in a hospital environment. Despite the fact that research indicated that it occurs most frequently in healthcare, it has not been studied in relation to other organizational manifestations such as burnout and engagement, or quality of care outcomes. We hypothesize that negative gossip, defined as negative evaluative talk about an absent third party would function as an indicator of organizational dysfunction.

**Methods:** A quantitative survey was conducted among doctors, nurses and residents in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia and Republic of Macedonia ( $N=532$ ). Specifically, we examined the role of negative gossip, in relation to burnout, job engagement, suboptimal care and patient safety in public hospitals.

**Results:** Results indicate that, after controlling for negative affect, negative gossip is positively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Negative gossip negatively correlated with job engagement and patient safety and positively correlated with suboptimal care, even after controlling for burnout. Negative gossip was positively related to the number of event reporting.

**Discussion:** Gossip is an important aspect of organizational functioning. The degree to which negative gossip is a coping mechanism of healthcare professionals is discussed.

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### 1. Introduction

Despite the fact that gossip can be considered a manifestation of the organizational culture and can provide valuable insights into the working climate of an organization, it has been rarely studied within healthcare organizations. In hospital settings gossip has been considered as a problem and the need to manage it has been emphasized (Thomas & Rozell, 2007). But also, it has been recognized as a way to express emotions and achieve positive outcomes like trust and support (Labianca, 2010; Waddington & Fletcher,

associations between gossip, job burnout, engagement, quality of care and patient safety within hospital settings.

### 2. Literature review

Organizational culture is a complex concept which can have many manifestations (Hunt, Sanchez, Tadd, & O'Mahony, 2012; Shortell et al., 2000; Wakefield et al., 2001). Such a manifestation that has not so far received much attention is gossip, which

## 5. Discussion

Results of the study show that controlling for negative affectivity, negative gossip is positively associated with burnout, in terms of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Alternatively

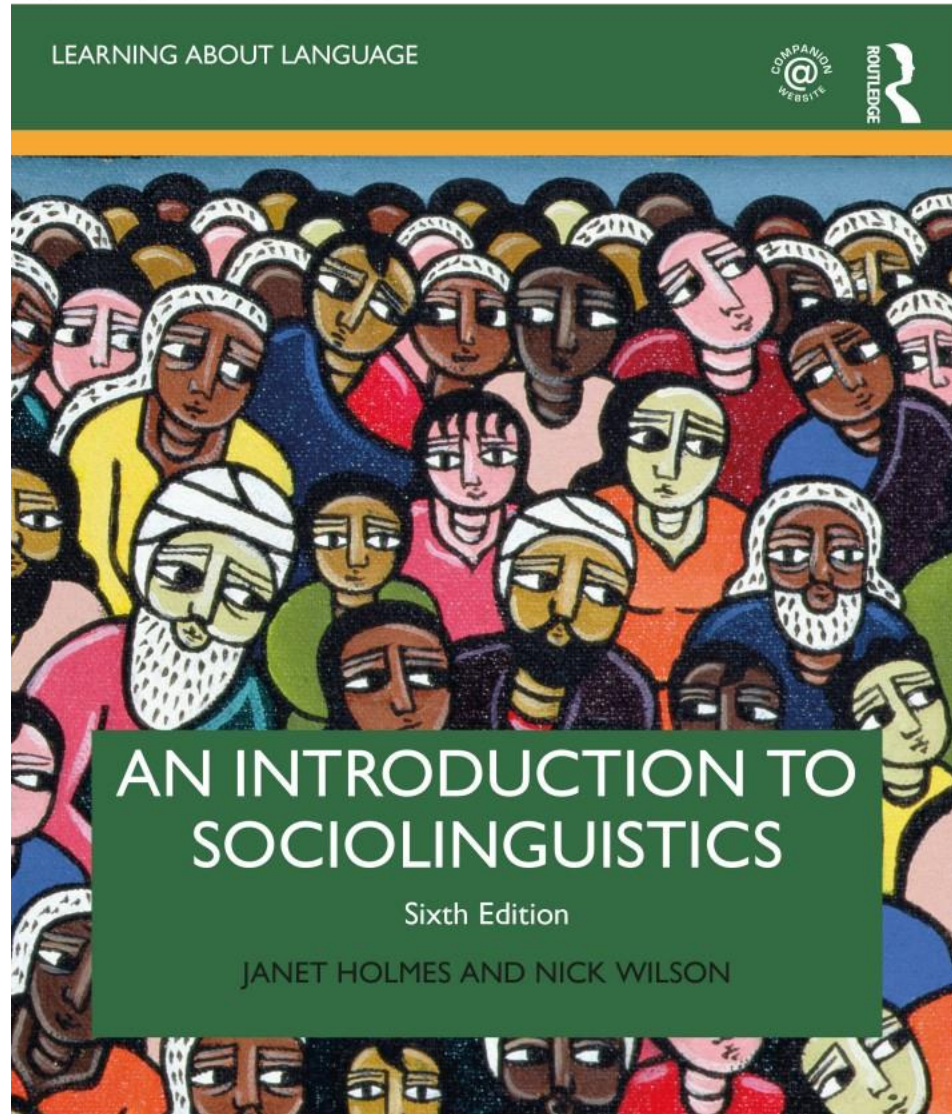
negative gossip is inversely related to job engagement. Controlling for burnout, negative gossip is also negatively related to patient safety and positively related to suboptimal care. As reported in the literature (Levin & Arluke, 1985; Watson, 2012) relationships of gossip were stronger for women. Future research should explore whether gossip takes place in different forms among men and whether therefore different methodologies are needed to assess it.

## Strengths and Limitations

QD is a pragmatic and effective method for describing human experiences and events. Strengths lay in its straightforward approach, focus on participants' perspectives, and adaptability to various research contexts. QD studies aim for a comprehensive summary of events in everyday terms, staying close to the data and the surface of words and events (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). This approach is useful for gaining firsthand knowledge of experiences from the perspective of participants, making it particularly relevant in mixed-method research, questionnaire development, and projects aimed at understanding patient, relative, or professional experiences (Neergaard et al., 2009) QD studies are also less encumbered by pre-existing theoretical and philosophical commitments, drawing instead from the general tenets of naturalistic inquiry (Bradshaw et al., 2017). This allows for a focus on the natural state of the phenomenon being studied, without the pre-selection of variables or a priori commitments to a theoretical view (Sandelowski, 2000). QD offers a kind of interpretation that is low inference, making it easier to reach a consensus among researchers. The focus is on presenting facts in everyday language without the need for high levels of abstraction or theoretical framing (Sandelowski, 2000).

However, QD faces challenges in terms of perceived academic credibility, subjectivity, limited contribution to theory, and generalizability concerns. QD is often seen as a less sophisticated form of research, sometimes leading researchers to claim methods they are not using, in pursuit of epistemological credibility (Sandelowski, 2000). Descriptions are inevitably filtered through human perceptions, posing challenges in ensuring interpretive validity. What is chosen to be described can be influenced by the researcher's perceptions and inclinations (Sandelowski, 2000). As QD studies are less theory-driven, they may not contribute significantly to the development of new theories or conceptual frameworks (Sandelowski, 2000), although this does not always necessarily have to be a goal in qualitative research. Despite these limitations, it remains a useful method, and as previously stated, is an ideal entry point for master's level students and research trainees.

**Gossip** describes the kind of relaxed in-group talk that goes on between people in informal contexts. In Western society, gossip is defined as “idle talk” and considered particularly characteristic of women’s interaction. Its overall function for women seems to be to affirm solidarity and maintain the social relationships between the women involved.





## 1.1 Sociolinguistics

### 1.1.1 A description

We can define **sociolinguistics** as *the study of language in relation to society*, and this is how we shall be taking the term in this book. **Sociolinguistics** has become a recognised part of most courses at university level on 'linguistics' or 'language', and is indeed one of the main growth points in the study of language, from the point of view of both teaching and research. There are now major English-language journals devoted to research publications (*Language in Society*, *Language Variation and Change* and *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*) and a number of introductory textbooks, apart from the present one. Most of the growth in **sociolinguistics** has taken place since the late 1960s. This is not meant to imply that the study of language in relation to society is an invention of the 1960s – on the contrary, there is a long tradition in the study of dialects and in the general study of the relations between word-meaning and culture, both of which count as **sociolinguistics** by our definition. What is new is the *widespread* interest in **sociolinguistics** and the realisation that it can throw much light both on the nature of language and on the nature of society.

Like other subjects, **sociolinguistics** is partly empirical and partly theoretical – partly a matter of going out and amassing bodies of fact and partly of sitting back and thinking. The 'armchair' approach to **sociolinguistics** can be fairly productive, whether it is based on facts collected in a systematic way as part of research or simply on one's own experience. In particular, it allows the

### 1.1.3 **Sociolinguistics and the sociology of language**

I defined **sociolinguistics** as ‘the study of language in relation to society’, implying (intentionally) that **sociolinguistics** is part of the study of language. Thus, the value of **sociolinguistics** is the light which it throws on the nature of language in general, or on the characteristics of some particular language. As we might expect, students of society have found that facts about language can illuminate their understanding – after all, it is hard to think of any characteristic of a society which is as distinctive as its language, or as important for its functioning. ‘The study of society in relation to language’ (the converse of our definition of **sociolinguistics**) defines what is generally called THE SOCIOLOGY OF LANGUAGE.

The difference between **sociolinguistics** and the sociology of language is very much one of emphasis, according to whether the investigator is more interested in language or society, and also according to whether they have more skill in analysing linguistic or social structures. There is a very large area of overlap between the two and it seems pointless to try to divide the disciplines more clearly than at present. Much of what follows in this book could equally well have been written in a textbook on the sociology of language. On the other hand, there are some issues which such a textbook ought to include which this one will not, notably most of what is called ‘macro’ sociology of language, dealing with the relations between society and languages as wholes. This is an important area of research from the point of view of sociology (and politics), since it raises issues such as the effects of multilingualism on economic development and the possible language policies a government may adopt. However, such ‘macro’ studies generally throw less light on the nature of language than the more ‘micro’ ones described in this book, because the notion of ‘language X’ is usually left unanalysed. (There is a good discussion of the relations between **sociolinguistics** and the sociology of language in the introduction to

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## WOMEN AND GOSSIP

I will initially define Gossip as a way of talking between women in their roles as women, intimate in style, personal and domestic in topic and setting, a female cultural event which springs from and perpetuates the restrictions of the female role, but also gives the comfort of validation.

It seems to me that women form a speech community,<sup>3</sup> with language skills and attitudes of our own, as well as those shared by the wider speech community.<sup>4</sup> There continues to be a debate about how best to describe 'women's language' as Lakoff calls it (Lakoff, 1973; p. 45); as a style (Thorne and Henley, 1975; p. 11), or as a 'genderlect' (Kramer, 1974; p. 54, note 1). Gossip is a narrower term than these, a specific type of women's 'language' or 'style'.

My use of the term Gossip as a type of women's language is also of course more specific than the term 'gossip' as it is generally used. However the anthropological literature on gossip in this broader sense is relevant to a discussion of women's gossip, emphasizing as it does the social functions of gossip.

Anthropologist Gluckman's main thesis is that gossip, defined as a 'general interest in the doings, the virtues and vices of others', has a social function in maintaining 'the unity, morals and values of social groups' (Gluckman, 1963; pp. 308, 312). Paine emphasizes on the other hand the importance of gossip as 'a genre of informal communication' (Paine, 1967, p. 278). Women's gossip illuminates the 'unity, morals and values' of women as a social group, and provides the informal communications network that transmits these female values and concerns.

## 5. Functions

I have divided gossip into four functional categories: house-talk, scandal, bitching and chatting. As function varies, there are some accompanying variations in topic and formal features.

(a) *House-talk*. If shop-talk is a term for the male occupational register, house-talk can describe the female version.<sup>7</sup> Its distinguishing function is the exchange of information and resources connected with the female role as an occupation. This usually centres around concrete tasks, as in the exchange of recipes, household hints and dress patterns. It also includes the discussion of relationships from a strictly practical point of view: how to catch a husband, how to manage a child. House-talk provides an informal but thorough training in the female role.

House-talk may also take on a secondary function in meeting emotional needs for support and recognition. House-talk may then become a more intimate sharing of feelings and attitudes about women's work, and thus merge into other categories of gossip: complaint (bitching) or more intimate self-disclosure (chatting).

(b) *Scandal*. Women's gossip is often dismissed as malicious scandal-mongering. However this is only on aspect of gossip, and rather than being distinguished by malice, it is marked by a considered judging of the behaviour of others, and women in particular. This judgement is usually made in terms of the domestic morality of which women have been appointed guardians. The 'misbehaviour' of other women, especially sexual misbehaviour, is frequently seen as an attack on the job security of all women, and therefore behaviour which must be policed.<sup>8</sup> Inasmuch as this judgement is harmful to other women, the fault lies not in female maliciousness, but in sexist moral codes which women enforce but do not create.

The second function of scandal is to cater for women's interest in each other's lives,

providing a cultural medium which reflects female reality, and a connection between the lives of women who are otherwise isolated from each other. There also seems to be a kind of entertainment value for women in hearing how others live, perhaps a kind of vicarious enjoyment of a range of experience beyond the small sphere to which the individual woman is restricted. When judging the behaviour of others is minimal, while an interest in the lives of others as meaningful for one's own is predominant, scandal merges into the category of more intimate gossip, chatting.

(c) *Bit*ching. While scandal keeps women's dissatisfaction focused on each other, and so does not threaten men, bitching is the kind of gossip that men feel most uneasy about. Bitching is the overt expression of women's anger at their restricted role and inferior status.<sup>9</sup> Overt, that is, in that it is expressed, but in private and to other women only.<sup>10</sup> The anger expressed in bitching is privatized; women's oppression is not discussed as a general concept, but in the relating of specific, personal complaints. Consciousness-raising in the women's movement is bitching in its political form.

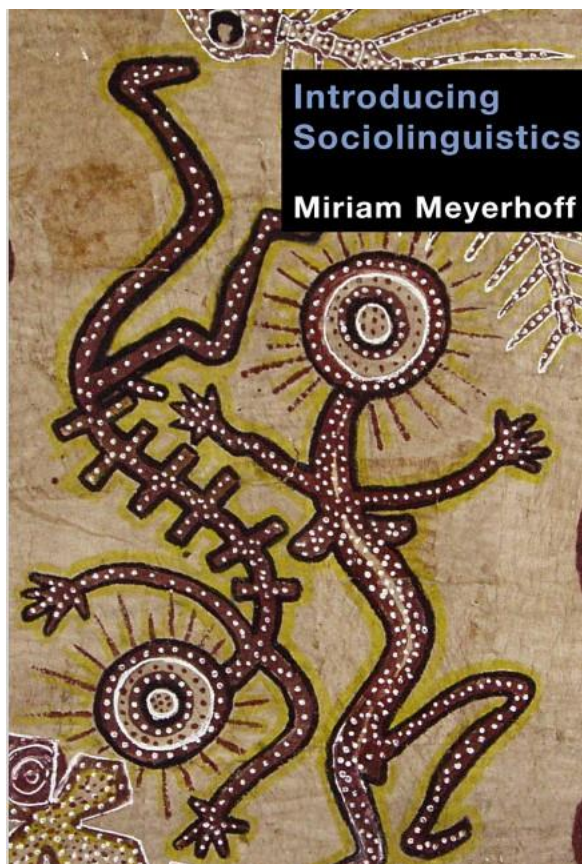
As a form of gossip, bitching is essentially cathartic. The women speaking do not expect to change, but want only to make their complaints in an environment where their anger will be understood and expected.

(d) *Chatting*. Chatting is the most intimate form of gossip, a mutual self-disclosure, a transaction where the skills that women have learned as part of their job of nurturing others are turned to their own advantage. Chesler's description cannot be bettered:

'... many dialogues between women seem "senseless" or "mindless" to men. Two women talking often seem to be reciting monologues at each other, neither really listening to (or "judging") what the other is saying. Two personal confessions, two sets of feelings, seem to be paralleling one another, rather "mindlessly", and without "going anywhere". In fact, what the women are doing—or where they are going—is toward some kind of emotional resolution or comfort. Each woman comments upon the other's feelings by reflecting them in a very sensitive matching process. The two women share their feelings by alternating the retelling of the entire experience in which their feelings are embedded and from which they cannot be "abstracted" or "summarized". Their theme, method and goal are non-verbal and/or non-verbalized. Facial expressions, pauses, sighs and seemingly unrelated (or "non-abstract") responses to statements are crucial to such dialogue. A very special prescience is at work here. On its most ordinary level, it affords women a measure of emotional reality and a kind of comfort that they cannot find with men. On its highest level, it constitutes the basic tools of art and psychic awareness' (Chesler, 1972; p. 268).

Chatting sessions such as this provide a continuous chorus and commentary on the incidents of women's daily lives, in an evaluative process that also provides emotional sustenance.

Gossip is a staple of women's lives, and the study of gossip is the study of women's concerns and values, a key to the female subculture.



## WHAT IS **SOCIOLINGUISTICS**?

If I had a penny for every time I have tried to answer the question, 'So what *is sociolinguistics*?', I would be writing this book in the comfort of an early retirement. And if there was a way of defining it in one simple, yet comprehensive, sentence, there might not be a need for weighty introductory textbooks.

**Sociolinguistics** is a very broad field, and it can be used to describe many different ways of studying language. A lot of linguists might describe themselves as sociolinguists, but the people who call themselves sociolinguists may have rather different interests from each other and they may use very different methods for collecting and analysing data. This can be confusing if you are coming new to the field. Is **sociolinguistics** about how individual speakers use language? Is it about how people use language differently in different towns or regions? Is it about how a nation decides what languages will be recognised in courts or education?

The answer is: yes, yes, and yes. Sociolinguists conduct research on any of those topics. For example, if a speaker describes a funny or amusing situation as 'kicksin', I know they are from, or have spent a good deal of time in, the English-speaking Caribbean. I am drawing on sociolinguistic (social and linguistic) knowledge to draw this inference.

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The British linguist Jennifer Coates (in Mesthrie, 2003: 229) has also been concerned with differences in women's and men's speech. Her position is more explicitly a feminist one. She argues that interpretations of women's and men's speech that relate this primarily to power and male dominance have given rise to rather negative view of female speaking styles. One of her aims has been to 'revalue' women's talk. Furthermore, early work on women's language had labelled it as 'tentative' or 'powerless'. More recently, and in reaction to this, there has been a move to value women's talk more positively, using terms such as 'co-operative'. In addition, much of Coates' work has focused on informal conversation in all female groups. Her account of women's talk is highly positive. She found that the conversations she analysed were characterised by cooperation, with women concerned to support one another's contributions rather than compete for the floor.

### Dialect

There are longer-established approaches to the issue of variation as a result of geographical location. Well before sociolinguistics became identified as a discipline, students of language gave serious attention to the variations in language that correlated with the locality where the language was spoken. The study of regional **dialects** played a major role in the **historical linguistics** that flourished in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, until the interest in diachronic changes (over time) was challenged by the concern for synchronic description of a language system at any one time, with a preference for the present.

It was long obvious (and sometimes troubling) that people who spoke what they considered the same language had different words for the same thing or different pronunciations for the same word. The Bible has an account of the first exploitation of this difference. In the Book of Judges (12: 4–6), there is the story of a struggle between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites. After the battle, the Gileadites made use of the different pronunciation of the Ephraimites (who called a small river *sibboleth* rather than *sibboleth*) to identify the enemy. Two thousand years later, William Caxton, in the preface to one of the first English books that he printed, bemoaned the difficulty he had in choosing between northern and southern English forms. Should one print *eggys* or *eyren*, he asked, and how would a speaker of the northern dialect fare ordering eggs in London? Regional differences in variety continue to be the characteristic of humour (a southern accent is laughed at in Tunisia just as in the USA) and prejudice (it is not always easy to book a room in a northern US hotel by telephone if you have a Black or Southern accent).

LOCATING VARIATION IN SPEECH 27

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# Lakoff and Women's Language: A Critical Overview of the Empirical Evidence for Lakoff's Thesis

Amalie Due Svendsen 

## Introduction

In 1973, Robin T. Lakoff published *Language and Woman's Place*, a study which has become widely recognized for its assertions about linguistic gender differences and their significance to gender inequality. Lakoff claimed that women employ a distinct style of speech, 'women's language', which comprises linguistic features that demonstrate and reinforce women's inferior position in society. This article creates a critical overview of four studies motivated by Lakoff's work, and investigates whether there is empirical evidence for the claim that women employ tentative language to a larger extent than men. In particular, I will concentrate on tag questions to highlight one tentative feature. I will discuss the methods and findings of each study in relation to Lakoff's claims, and finally I will discuss general gaps and problems identified in the studies. In agreement with contemporary scholars, 'women's language' will be referred to as 'tentative language' in the discussion of the four studies.



# AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

RONALD WARDHAUGH  
AND JANET M. FULLER

SEVENTH EDITION

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# 1

## Introduction

### Key Concepts

How to define and delineate the study of sociolinguistics  
What it means to 'know' a language  
How language varies across speakers and within the speech of one person  
The social construction of identities  
The relationship between language and culture  
Research design and methodologies for sociolinguistics research

Sociolinguistics is the study of our everyday lives – how language works in our casual conversations and the media we are exposed to, and the presence of societal norms, policies, and laws which address language. Since you are reading this book, you may already have some idea what the study of sociolinguistics entails; you may already have an interest in, and knowledge about, regional dialects, multilingualism, language policy, or non-sexist language. And we will cover all of these topics, along with many others – what social class and ethnicity might have to do with language use, why we do not always 'say what we mean,' the role of language in education.

But we would like to encourage readers to approach the study of sociolinguistics not as a collection of facts, but as a way of viewing the world around you. In sociolinguistics, we seek to analyze data so that we can make generalizations about

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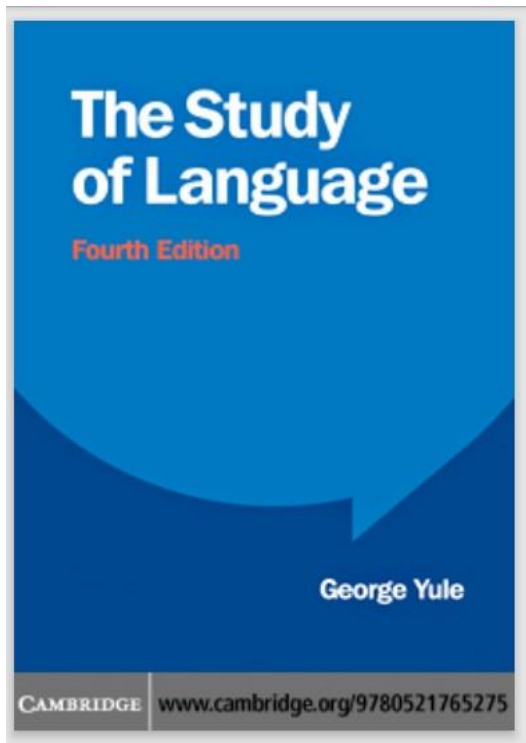
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The term **sociolinguistics** is used generally for the study of the relationship between language and society. This is a broad area of investigation that developed through the interaction of linguistics with a number of other academic disciplines. It has strong connections with anthropology through the study of language and culture, and with sociology through the investigation of the role language plays in the organization of social groups and institutions. It is also tied to social psychology, particularly with regard to how attitudes and perceptions are expressed and how in-group and out-group behaviors are identified. We use all these connections when we try to analyze language from a social perspective.



**LEXICAL MEANING OF THE MAIN FEMALE CHARACTERS  
IN NETFLIX'S *BRIDGERTON* MOVIE SERIES**

**THESIS**

By:

**Izatu Umma Restunindya**

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**THE USE OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES MANAGING ROMANTIC CONFLICTS  
CONTEXT IN *BRIDGERTON'S* NETFLIX SERIES (2020)**

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**Abstract**

Romantic conflicts can be managed with the use of politeness strategies. Therefore, this study was carried out to investigate the usage of politeness strategies performed by main male and female characters in *Bridgerton's* Netflix Series (2020) while dealing with romantic conflicts. The aims of this present study are at identifying the types of politeness strategies employed by main male and female characters in *Bridgerton's* Netflix Series (2020) and revealing politeness strategies impact romantic conflicts of main male and female characters in *Bridgerton's* Netflix series (2020). In order to conduct this study, this study adapted theory of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and conflict resolution strategies as proposed by Sillars et al (1983). The method applied was a descriptive qualitative method since the data were in the forms of utterances and being identified descriptively based on the theory adapted. This recent study found that all types of politeness strategies employed by main male and female characters in *Bridgerton's* Netflix series (2020) while dealing with romantic conflicts. This research revealed that there are differences regarding Simon and Daphne applying types of politeness strategies. Other than that, positive politeness is mostly employed to actualize cooperative strategy in dealing with romantic conflicts. Furthermore, in applying competitive strategy in dealing with romantic conflict main male and female characters preferred adapting off-record. The least strategy in

the 'real' world. That is one of the reasons why a number of linguists have found Chomsky's asocial view of linguistic theorizing to be a rather sterile type of activity, since it explicitly rejects any concern for the relationship between a language and those who use it.

We must acknowledge that a language is essentially a set of items, what Hudson (1996, p. 21) calls 'linguistic items,' such entities as sounds, words, grammatical structures, and so on. It is these items, their status, and their arrangements that language theorists such as Chomsky concern themselves with. On the other hand, social theorists, particularly sociologists, attempt to understand how societies are structured and how people manage to live together. To do so, they use such concepts as 'identity,' 'power,' 'class,' 'status,' 'solidarity,' 'accommodation,' 'face,' 'gender,' 'politeness,' etc. A major concern of this book is to examine possible relationships between 'linguistic items' on the one hand and concepts such as 'power,' 'solidarity,' etc. on the other. We should note that in doing so we are trying to relate two different kinds of entities in order to see what light they throw on each other. That is not an easy task. Linguistic items are difficult to define. Try, for example, to define exactly what linguistic items such as sounds, syllables, words, and sentences are. Then try to define precisely what you understand by such concepts as 'social class,' 'solidarity,' 'identity,' 'face,' and 'politeness.' Finally, try to relate the two sets of definitions within some kind of theory so as to draw conclusions about how items in these two very different classes relate to each other. Do all this while keeping in mind that languages and societies are constantly changing. The difficulties we confront are both legion and profound.

There are several possible relationships between language and society. One is that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behavior. Certain evidence may be adduced to support this view; the *age-grading*