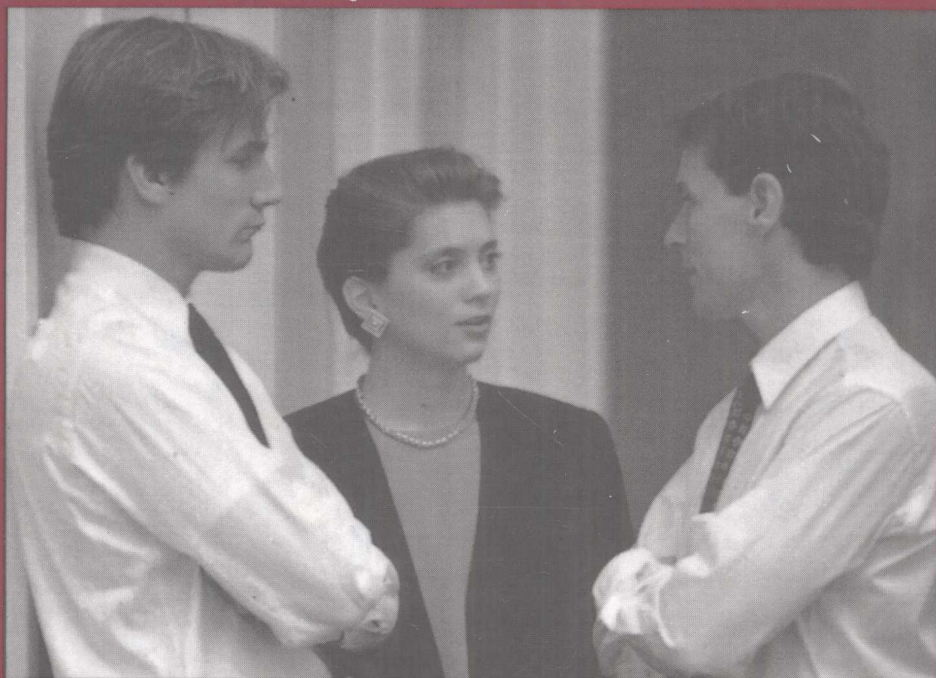


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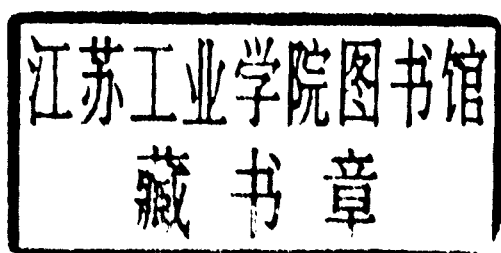


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To Robin Lakoff
pioneer, inspiration, mentor, friend

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Stanford, Calif.
January 1993

D.T.

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Gender and Conversational Interaction

Editor's Introduction

DEBORAH TANNEN

This volume explores the relationship between gender and language through the analysis of discourse in interaction. Some chapters compare the discourse of females and males; others analyze interaction among females. All the analytic chapters both provide model analysis of conversational interaction and make significant theoretical contributions to the literature on gender and language.

Of the many methodological and theoretical approaches to this topic currently being pursued, the one embodied in this collection can be thought of as ethnographically oriented discourse analysis or, alternatively, interactional sociolinguistics. The chapters provide context-sensitive microanalysis based on observation, tape-recording, and transcription of language as it is used in interaction. The time is ripe for this approach, as gender and language research nears the close of its second decade.

The year 1975 can be regarded as having launched the field of gender and language. That year saw the publication of three books that proved pivotal: Robin Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* (the first part appeared as an article in *Language in Society* in 1972), Mary Ritchie Key's *Male/Female Language*, and Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley's edited volume *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. These groundbreaking books made it possible to talk about—indeed, to see—systematic differences in the ways women and men tend to use language.

Lakoff's work in particular became a touchstone for subsequent research. Previous linguistic research had described the phenomenon of women and men using different forms of speech in American Indian lan-