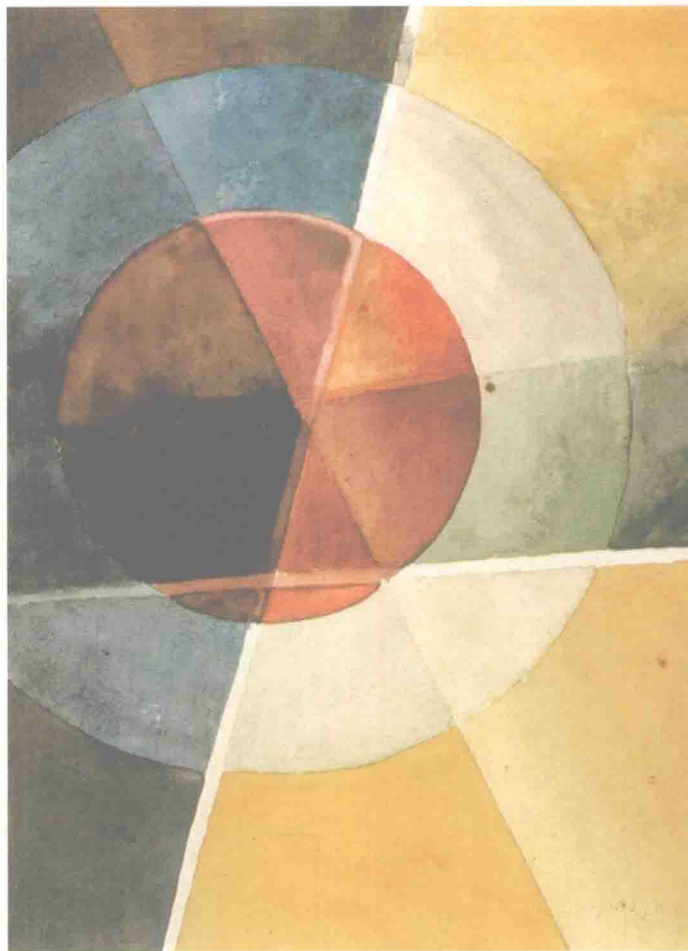


# *The Handbook of* **Language and Gender**



*Edited by*

**Janet Holmes and  
Miriam Meyerhoff**



**Blackwell  
Publishing**

# The Handbook of Language and Gender

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*Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff*



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# Different Voices, Different Views: An Introduction to Current Research in Language and Gender

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JANET HOLMES AND MIRIAM MEYERHOFF

## 1 Introduction

The purpose of *The Handbook of Language and Gender* is to provide an authoritative, comprehensive, and original collection of articles representing the richness and diversity of contemporary research in the area. Currently, language and gender is a particularly vibrant area of research and theory development within the larger study of language and society, and the contributions in this volume focus especially on more recent trends and developments. The volume comprises specially commissioned articles in five distinguishable but closely related areas, identified because of their importance in current language and gender research, and encompassing the breadth of interdisciplinary interests of researchers and students in this dynamic area.

This collection of articles will prove a valuable resource to students of linguistics, and especially to those interested in sociolinguistics and discourse studies from undergraduate level upwards. A quick glance at the contents will indicate, however, that the collection should also have much wider appeal; it is truly interdisciplinary, drawing on work from many different academic areas. There are articles which will be of interest to anthropologists and those interested in cultural studies, to sociologists and social psychologists, and to those concerned with organizational communication. There are articles which have obvious relevance to feminists, and to those working in gender studies, as well as to professional women, and those engaged in business and management. Moreover, because of the more practical orientation of some of the articles, especially in the final two sections, the collection will also be of interest to



applied linguists, to those working in education and language policy, to professionals engaged in the areas of Human Relations and Human Resources, and, we predict, to the educated reader.

Many collections of readings on language and gender are compilations of papers already written and published. Some consist of articles which are best described as “classic” (e.g. Tannen 1993; Cameron 1998; Coates 1998; Cheshire and Trudgill 1998). Many are constructed around a specific theme, such as power (Hall, Bucholtz, and Moonwomon 1992), gender identity (e.g. Hall and Bucholtz 1995; Bucholtz, Liang, and Sutton 1999), masculinity (Johnson and Meinhof 1997), communication (Wertheim, Bailey, and Corston-Oliver 1998), belief systems (Warner et al. 1996), bilingualism (e.g. Burton, Dyson, and Ardener 1994), second language education (Sunderland 1994), or sexist language (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001). Others focus more on a specific theoretical approach, such as social constructionism (e.g. Bergvall, Bing, and Freed 1996; Bucholtz, Liang, Sutton, and Hines 1994), communities of practice (e.g. Holmes 1999), or interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Tannen 1994). Still others take a predominantly descriptive approach, covering a wide range of contrasting languages and cultures (e.g. Kotthoff and Wodak 1997; Hellinger and Bussmann 2001).

By contrast, and as a useful complement to these varied emphases, the papers in this Handbook provide an indication of the range of issues currently under debate in the area, and outline the topical concerns of those working at the forefront of research in language and gender. The main themes are indicated by the five broad section headings, and a diversity of methodologies is represented (discussed further below). A wide range of languages are invoked in the different papers, in some cases as a core component of particular case studies, in others as brief but specific examples to illustrate a more general point. So, while most papers use English for exemplification, readers will also find references to languages as varied as Tongan, Tagalog, French, Bislama, Guyanese Creole, Gaelic, Dutch, German, Afrikaans, and Lakhota. Most authors provide an indication of where their own areas of research strength and interest fit into the wider field, and they also indicate how their own positions can be distinguished from those of others. Hence, readers are typically provided both with an authoritative overview of a theme or issue, and a thought-provoking specific illustration of current research in a particular area.

## 2 Overview of the Contents of the Handbook

The Handbook has five sections: Part I is made up of chapters that review aspects of the history of the study of language and gender, and provide theoretical background to this study. The chapters in Part II deal to some extent with negotiations of relations and the role gender and language play in such negotiations. In Part III, the chapters are concerned with issues of authenticity