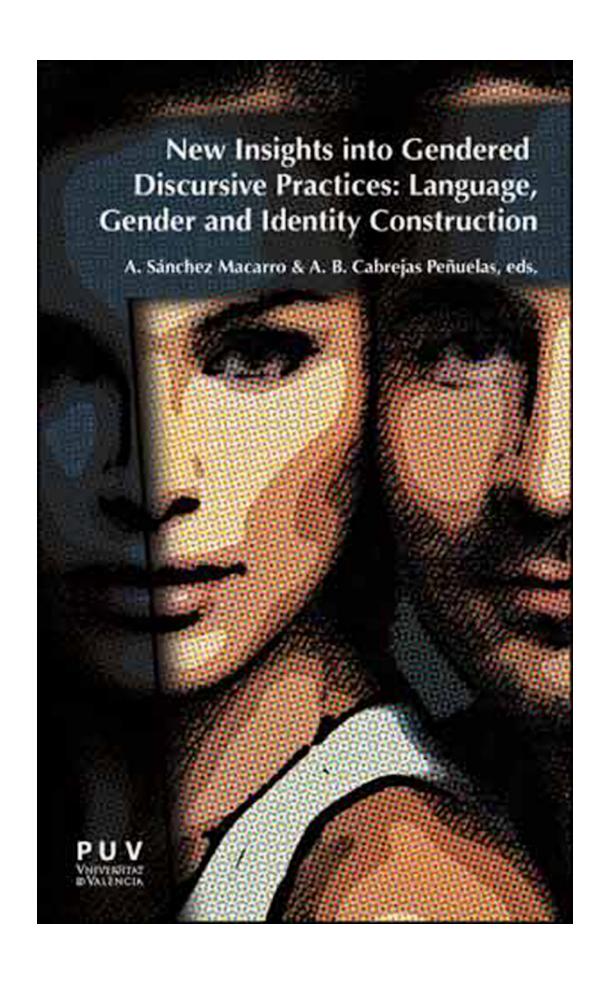
## New Insights into Gendered Discursive Practices: Language, Gender and Identity Construction

A. Sánchez Macarro & A. B. Cabrejas Peñuelas, eds,





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#### **Notes on Contributors**

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Rosa Muñoz Luna received her BA on English Language and Literature (2006) from the University of Málaga (Spain). She specialised in English linguistics finishing her MA on English Applied Linguistics (2008) from the same university. Muñoz-Luna obtained BAs in Education and Psychopedagogy from Salamanca Pontifical University (Spain), and MEd in TESOL from Exeter University (United Kingdom). After her academic formation years, she finished her European PhD on English Linguistics in 2012 at Málaga University, where she is currently working at the English Department as an interim teacher. Her research interests include English for specific purposes, motivation in language learning, phonology teaching and writing. She has published several papers in international journals on English academic writing and other aspects within applied linguistics.

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María Del Mar Rivas-Carmona is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Cordoba. She has previously taught at Harvard University and the University of Seville. Her classes focus on Discourse and Pragmatics and her research interests include discourse analysis, gender studies and literary translation. In addition, she has coordinated and participated in over a dozen research and teaching innovation projects on these matters, and she has supervised various doctoral theses and numerous master's theses on discourse, gender studies, language teaching and specialized translation. As regards her publications, she has published several books and numerous articles on women writers, pragmatics and translation. Standing out among her recent publications are two international co-editions on the cultural aspects of literary translation, published by Peter Lang and Narr Verlag.

**CARMEN SANTAMARÍA GARCÍA**, European PhD in Linguistics from Complutense University, Madrid, is a tenured Professor of Linguistics at Alcalá University, Madrid, Spain. Her teaching includes pragmatics, discourse analysis and methodology of the English language at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. These are also her areas of research together with corpus linguistics and computer-

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Mª Sandra Vázquez Hermosilla is a teacher of English at the Official School of Languages. For the past few years she has also worked at the University of Valencia where she has taken part in different research projects related to Language and Gender within the research group GENTEXT. Her research interests and her published works are centred upon gender and language issues, the phenomenon of (indirect) linguistic sexism and its manifestations in computer-mediated communication.

**Gora Zaragoza Ninet** is a lecturer at the University of Valencia. For the past few years she has published works which deal with the translation of 20th Century women novelists into Spanish. She has also translated and annotated a collection of short stories by Winifred Holtby, who was censored during the Spanish dictatorship. Beyond Gender and Translation she also works on Gender and Language together with the GENTEXT Research group at the University of Valencia and has also reflected on her English teaching practice and the implementation of ICT in the class (ANGLOTIC project).

#### **Prologue**

This volume of the English in the World series is a welcome addition to language and gender studies. The chapters in this volume demonstrate the broadening range of vibrant and insightful research in the field. The interesting and exciting data presented in these chapters is a testament to the degree to which language use is permeated by gender across contexts. The papers here examine language data from magazines, advertising, social media, blogs, classroom engineering journals. and interactions. The authors approach this impressive range of data with an equally impressive range of methodologies, including linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, contrastive analysis, and conversation analysis. The authors of this volume also break new ground with papers that challenge a number of commonly presumed divisions within the field.

Since Lakoff's pioneering work, the study of language and gender has typically been divided between studies of representation (sexist language, discourse about women, etc.) and studies of language use (gendered differences in language use, gender in interaction, etc). The papers in the volume suggest that representation and language use are intimately related. In data drawn from a range of sources, these papers map the wavs in which aendered representations are also forms of interaction. The research presented here demonstrates that individual construction of gender identity cannot be divorced from the constructions of gender that circulate through public discourse and the media. Similarly, the papers in this volume challenge other assumptions in the field such as divisions between personal versus professional identities, the separation between public and private discourse, and the distinction between written and spoken discourse. This volume thus suggests new perspectives that integrate the various strands of language and gender research.

Although the papers in this volume provide new directions and suggest new possibilities for the field of language and gender studies, they also stand firm in their recognition of the original feminist goals of the field in fighting sexism and promoting gender equality. Across a diverse set of contexts, the authors remind us of the central role of language in reproducing forms of sexism and exerting forms of power. The authors also demonstrate the innovative and creative ways in which women (including linguistic researchers) use language to promote human rights and challenge forms of inequality.

Edward R. Barret University of Kentucky

#### Introduction

The first paper I ever gave on the subject of gender and language outside the United Kingdom was at The University of Valencia in 2006. My paper on the gendered practices of women in leadership was delivered at IGALA4, the International Gender and Language Association's fourth conference. This was a momentous occasion, not only for me personally, but because it was the first gender and language conference to be held outside America and Britain, many ways marked the first step internationalisation of this now flourishing field. In my view, the Valencia conference was the first in which a fruitful took place between aender and debate language researchers from English-speaking countries and their counterparts from Spain and other Mediterranean countries. Since then the field has gone global, with researchers from Africa, South America, Asia and the Middle East all working to one purpose: to critique and reveal hidden assumptions about gender and sexuality within discursive practices that continue to constrain the daily lives of both women and men.

It is easy to forget that gender and language is a relatively new subject area with a short history. Associated in the early 1970s with 'second wave' feminism, gender and language has now shifted its primary focus from the study of sexism and 'differences between men and women' to the discursive practices that produce gendered identities in general. Early research focused on two aspects: first, the presumed differences in how women and men *used* language, and secondly, how females and males were *represented* in language –as a code, as discourse, and in actual texts. Today, these quests appear more integrated in

a postfeminist concern to explore how and why individuals' identities are discursively constructed in gendered ways, and to critique the potentially constraining effects of such identities within different social contexts.

All the scholars in this volume embrace this social constructionist perspective of gender as relational, a process, something that is done, and a vital resource for constructing social roles and identities. According to this perspective, gender is a highly fluid and unstable social category, whereby constructs of masculinity and femininity are always negotiable and often competing. So, for instance, just as there are many inconsistencies and contradictions within any individual woman, there are always differences between women, governed by their age, class, sexuality, ethnicity, education, and so on. Gender is just one of many defining aspects of a person's identity, and therefore not considered to be a macro-social category that always 'behaves' in predictable ways. Rather, gender is best identified and investigated within specific, local contexts or communities of practice (or CofPs), where it may emerge as relevant (or not) through detailed, micro-analysis of linguistic interactions. Arguably, this new focus on the context, complexity and fluidity of gender has depoliticised the category to a certain extent. Nonetheless, a consensus remains that gender is still highly pertinent to the way people interact through language, and to the way they are and represented by gendered positioned discursive practices. The authors in this volume focus upon identifying the linguistic markers that index gender within spoken, written and multi-modal texts by deploying 'fit for purpose' discourse analytical tools such as conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistic analysis.

All the authors show that by grounding their analyses within highly specific contexts, they can pave the way for identifying wider, gendered discourses that circulate within

broader cultural settings and can create exclusion and inequality. Their chapters provide fresh, critical insights about the ways in which our use of language constructs, reinforces and challenges gender identities that are approved by, and naturalised within hegemonic institutions such as the mass media, the internet and higher education. The papers in this volume move the field of language and gender forward by investigating the most up-to-date ways in which people today negotiate their sense of identity via the multi-modal resources of the mass and social media. The authors assess the ways in which digital interactions actively produce and sustain gendered identities in both the online and offline worlds. On the positive side, social networking forums such as Facebook or weblogs are shown to be a crucial resource by which young people negotiate their identities dynamically and thus maintain social relationships. However, less encouragingly, media artefacts such as female adolescent magazines naturalise genderstereotypical identities and behaviours that continue to women's full participation in social constrain professional life. In the final two chapters on teacher education and classroom practice, the respective authors still a salient category for gender is understanding professional identity construction, but this moves away from the stereotypical profile often assigned to women.

Overall, this volume contributes new, postfeminist insights on identity construction to the field of gender and language. Each of the authors shows that people can proactively manage the discursive resources at their disposal in order to negotiate different versions of their gendered identity, some highly conventional, others more contesting, within specific contexts. While gender differences are identified in some of the chapters, these are viewed as resources that people may exploit to achieve

strategic and relational goals. Finally, the volume reminds us that if we can deploy discourse analytical methods to reveal hidden assumptions about gendered identities, we can play an important role in making this world a better place to live as scholars and human beings.

JUDITH BAXTER Aston University, UK

### PART I MEDIA DISCOURSE

# Enforcing gender via directives in female adolescent magazines: a contrastive view in English and Spanish

Mercedes Díez Prados Universidad de Alcalá

#### **Abstract**

Teenage magazines are discourse manifestations that can be considered sites for the construction of gender roles to naturalize certain behaviours and foster certain values, beliefs and norms of action. Thus, this type of publication can be used as a tool to enforce gender by certain discursive practices. The aim of the present study is to shed some light on how this engendering process is enforced in English and Spanish, to discover similarities or differences between the two. In order to do so, advice columns extracted from American and Spanish publications are analyzed to try to unveil the way magazine writers and young female teenagers interact. After a brief revision of previous research on teenage magazines as socialization devices, the analysis of the extracts selected is tackled. The main line of argument is that gender is enforced via magazines written in both languages, directives in particularly in the form of imperatives and fulfilling different speech acts (command, advice, suggestion, invitation, permission, prohibition and warning); as far as the type of behaviour reinforced is concerned, the values transmitted

belong mainly to a traditional ideology in both cultures, although some differences are found regarding treatment of sexual desire in female adolescents, which is more naturalized in Spanish than in American magazines. All in all, magazines for female adolescents cannot be considered a stepping-stone to gender equality, since little progress has been made in the last two decades: the analysis reveals stagnation of topics and gender roles, when compared with previous studies.

Keywords: Gender and language, directive speech acts, female adolescent magazines, advice columns, persuasion.

#### 1 Introduction

Gendered beings perform gendered actions so that new members of society learn how to do gender according to their biological sex, so as to be considered members of the club. This learning to be male or female is a process that starts with birth and goes on for life; no individual escapes from this socialization process, even if we are aware of the asymmetry that this enculturation process may impose on others or on ourselves. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013: 20) claim that three principles govern gender: it is learned, collaborative and performed: "gender is not something we have, but something we do" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013: 20). According to these principles, gender must be taught and is, thus, enforced, which makes engendering a collaborative process (i.e. it is a social practice, Eckert and McDonnell-Ginet 2013).

Language is one of the main instruments to enforce gender and teenage magazines (teenzines, as Currie (1999) calls them) are language manifestations that can be considered sites for the construction of gender roles to naturalize certain behaviours, among others,

heterosexuality, concern over physical appearance, a quest for popularity or playing certain gender roles (for this latter issue, see, for instance, López Rodríguez (2007) or Jiménez Calderón and Sánchez Rufat (2011)). Language is both the process and the product of gendering: language reflects preexiting categories and, by doing so, constructs and maintains them (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013: 22).

Teenage magazines have been the focus of study of academic publications, predominantly those written in English, and, principally the ones published in the U.S. context; there also exists research on teenage Spanish magazines (e.g. Plaza Sánchez (2005) and (2009)), but, to my knowledge, none adopts a contrastive view between the discourse used in magazines written in these two languages and published in these two countries to gain insights into their linguistic and cultural similarities and/or differences. The phenomenon of an ever-growing globalized world and the obvious influence of the American culture on the Western world favours the hypothesis that magazines for American and Spanish female adolescents will have more points in common than discrepancies. Nevertheless, a contrastive study like the present one can provide some empirical evidence on the issue.

Thus, the main purpose of the present paper is to study language as manifested in *teenzines* to gain access to the set of values, beliefs and norms of action being enforced in these publications; in order to do so, the language used in advice columns will be analyzed to try to unveil the way magazine writers and young female teenagers interact. The final aim of this investigation is to discover the role teenzines may play in "female teenage identity construction" (García Gómez 2010: 136) by means of the discursive devices used in them.

The research questions that guide this study are the following:

- 1. What issues are raised by girls in *teenzine* advice columns? How do the concerns depicted in these texts contribute to enforcing gender?
- 2. How is advice phrased (i.e. linguistic realizations) in English and Spanish in order to enforce given attitudes or behaviour? In what way are these linguistic devices persuasive?

In order to answer these questions and thus elaborate a discursive approach to the exploration of how gender is enforced in adolescent magazines, the linguistic realization of the exchanges in advice columns will be examined. The questions posed by the female readership will show their main concerns when facing a period of self-construction and self-identification and the answers provided by teenzine writers will most surely be affected by their perception and interpretation of their readers' attributed gendered roles. According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013: 9), studies show that male and female children are interpreted and interacted with differently by adults. Extrapolating this idea to magazine writers, they must be influenced by their perceptions and beliefs when they address a teenage female readership. Thus, by examining the messages addressed to female teenagers and the linguistic strategies used for it, it will become clear the way female gender is interpreted in *teenzines* for girls and how this interpretation may condition the construction of a gendered identity in a young and easily-influenced female readership (Currie 1999, Saz Marín 2007).

After a brief revision of studies dealing with the role magazines for adolescent girls play in their socialization process, the empirical study carried out to tackle the issue of enforcing gender in *teenzines* is presented: the theoretical framework used in the analysis, the methods for data collection, the results gathered from the analysis,

together with an interpretation of those results. Finally the concluding section recalls the main aims for the present study and the results obtained.

2

## Teenzines as socialization devices within a community of practice

Teenzines can be considered a linguistic social practice (i.e. discursive manifestation) of a community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) conformed by two hierarchically of members: magazine writers organized groups (constrained themselves by given editorial policies) and female adolescent readers. The relationship between the groups is asymmetrical, because the latter (i.e. female adolescents) resorts to the former (i.e. magazines writers) in order to receive orientation to participate in the world around them (Eckert 2006: 1). The community of practice is a "prime locus" of the process of identity and linguistic construction where certain discursive conventions take place (Eckert 2006: 4), and teenzines represent one of those discourses.

A large body of literature on teenzines has been carried out within the discipline of sociology (Pierce (1990), Currie (1999, 2001), Evans et al. (1991), Jackson (2005), Joshy (2012), among others), since female adolescent magazines are considered socialization devices. Peirce (1990: 492) examines the "socialization messages" teenage girls receive from Seventeen, number one American magazine for female adolescents, from 1961 to 1985, and concludes that, although the feminist movement in 1972 had an effect on the content of issues around that period (e.g. promoting magazine mainly self-development). the reinforces traditional ideologies (Pierce 1990: 498-499). Traditional roles stress "looking good, finding a man, and taking care of home and children [whereas] (...) feminist messages emphasize taking care of oneself, being independent, and not relying on a man for fulfilment or identity" (Pierce 1990: 497). According to Pierce (1990: 499), magazines for female adolescents can be "a powerful reinforcer of the traditional ideology of womanhood".

In the same line of argument, Currie (1999: 141) claims that "girls give the realities which they identify in texts ontological status: "realistic" messages offered by the text are seen to convey truth about the social world". If this is so, the messages transmitted in teenzines can wield a significant influence on their readership since young readers construct reality as they read. One vital issue to consider is what types of role models are being displayed in teenage magazines: are the values of education, hard work, perseverance and discipline being promoted? Or, on the contrary, are rapid and easy success and popularity prioritized? Teenzines, like the media in general, present celebrities whose lifestyle is not generally worthy of imitation as idols (García Gómez 2010: 149), which makes our youngsters to try to emulate them (Plaza Sánchez 2009: 133). This absence of constructive role models for womento-be in teenage magazines is also highlighted in Currie's (1999: 44) sociological study.

In a survey as early as 1889, Bok observed that magazines have historically fulfilled the traditional mothers' role of confidante (in Currie 1999: 41); in fact, most teenzines include advice sections, which perform this role. Eckert (2006: 364) points out that, as children approach adolescence, much of the authority exerted on them by adults (mostly parents and teachers) is replaced by "the age cohort"; by extrapolation, magazine writers seem to assume, in part, parents' advisory role, and, thus, their messages become of utmost importance. But what is true is that adolescent readers seem to willingly accept this kind of

authority from magazine writers, while tending to reject parents' and teachers' control. What, then, makes adolescents not to feel controlled or bossed around by magazine publishers as they do when parents or teachers try to impose their rules or principles? According to Currie (1999: 41), girls' magazines, from their inception, adopted a personal form of address, since textual messages targeted the intimacy of readers' lives. The present study argues that, although power exerted via the directive function is pervasive in teenzines' discourse, the linguistic realization of the speech acts that fulfil this function is redressed with in-group markers, which can be considered a form of positive politeness strategy; thus, advice writers adopt a friendly tone that helps them gain the reader's trust, becoming her confidantes.

Teenzines are almost exclusively read by girls, regardless of their cultural background (Currie 1999, Plaza Sánchez 2009). This is demonstrated in the amount of magazines for girls published, as opposed to those directed to boys, as pointed out in a report published in 2004 (Tweens, Teens, and Magazines) by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a non-profit American foundation. This study mentions the difference in themes addressed in magazines for girls and for boys: beauty, cosmetics, people, and relationships in female magazines versus electronic gaming, sports, music, cars and other hobbies for boys, assertions which are in line with other studies. For instance, Signorelli (1997: 28) claims that the articles she studied (a total of 378 in four issues of the four leading teen girl magazines, Sassy, Teen, YM and "typically focused on gender-stereotyped Seventeen) topics". Curiously enough, themes in girls' magazines do not differ from those found in magazines for female adults and, likewise, perpetuate traditional roles (Cabellos Castilla and Díez Prados 2000).

The themes in teenzines may be chosen by editors according to (presupposed) girls' and boys' interests, but, if that dichotomy in topics is cemented, the social distance between the sexes is also encouraged, which, in turn, is an obvious manifestation of gender enforcement. Why couldn't teenzines for girls include articles on electronic games, or on different sources of entertainment, such as in boys' magazines? Aren't girls interested in those free-time activities? And, why not dealing with personal relations and physical appearance in magazines for boys? Wouldn't that help overcome the stereotype that men don't cry and are not concerned with their looks? Media would certainly be "the avantgarde of cultural and social change" (Kruse, Weimer and Wagner 1988: 261) if they contributed to the achievement, once and for all, of emancipated women and new men by promoting a reconciliation of topics and, consequently, interests, irrespective of sex. As García Gómez (2006) points out, gender stereotypes still play a crucial role in people's lives, and being aware of the different roles men and women are assigned can be a stepping-stone to avoid the recurrence of inflexible traditional male or female behavioural patterns. As Eckert and McConell-Ginet (2013: 9) assert: "With differential treatment, boys and girls do learn to be [emphasis in the original] different".

All in all, the aforementioned studies on the topic seem to obtain the same results: girls' magazines hold a stagnant ideological stance, since they defend traditional sexist roles. Likewise, García Gómez (2009: 627), in his study on the construction of identity by Spanish and British teenagers in weblog writing, observed that bloggers use discursive strategies that present them as "subservient to or subsumed into the loved one when romance is blossoming"; contrariwise, when romance fails, female bloggers represent the self as powerfully rejecting their ex-boyfriends by the

use of discursive strategies that remind stereotypical patterns of male language use (i.e. insults, taboos, obscene metaphors). Therefore, when in love, girls seem to adopt a submissive role towards their lovers, but react with "androgynous behaviour patterns" (García Gómez 2009: 631) when they feel rejected by their couples. However, this masculinization of girls' reactions does not seem a step in the right direction for gender equality, but an attempt by women to switch roles with men.

#### *3 Theoretical framework*

Building upon the sociological studies aforementioned, particularly the work carried out by Currie (1999, 2001) and developing her argument that "the textual format itself facilitates the acceptance of the 'adolescence' constructed on magazine pages" (Currie 2001: 265), I argue that gender is enforced via directives in magazines written in English and Spanish. My intention is to develop a discursive approach to the study of how linguistic form may facilitate assimilation and acceptance of advice by female adolescents in a very vulnerable period of their lives in which they are forming their identities and are searching for their self-esteem (Saz Marín 2007: 40).

Since the main function of advice columns is to ask for and provide guidelines for a form of behaviour, these sections in magazines abound in directives, which can be defined as speech acts that speakers use to get something done by someone else: "In using a directive, the speaker attempts to make the world fit the words (via the hearer)" (Yule 1996: 54). According to Tsui (1994: 116), directives are discourse acts that expect a non-verbal action from the addressee, not giving him/her the possibility of nonfulfilment. This function can be verbalized in different ways,