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Lakoff, “Language and Women’s Place”

Thesis: “‘women’s language’ “submerges a woman’s personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject-matter and uncertainty about it; and, when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object—sexual or otherwise—but never a serious person with individual views” (48).

“Women experience discrimination in two ways: in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language uses them” (46)

Methods:

Evidence:

Women are taught to use language differently than are men [Provide examples]

Lexicon (word choice): color terms: women use more nuanced terms, i.e. mauve

Weaker “meaningless particles” i.e. Oh dear v. Oh shit (51)

(52) adjectives: “Woman only” divine, lovely-If men use these, it denigrates them Significance?

Shows expectations and position of women are different from those of men; women expected to be “ladylike”; (51) women are denied more forceful linguistic resources, which ‘reinforces’ men’s position of strength in the real world”

Also: (47) if girls aren’t allowed to speak strongly, they grow up to be women who cannot express themselves forcefully or speak precisely.

These patterns show that women are in more marginalized positions in society, vis a vis men- and these patterns reinforce those power inequities: women don’t want to use strong language because reinforce negative stereotype that women are “too emotional”;

Syntax (grammar): Women use more tag question, don’t they?(55) avoids conflict; less assertive.

Use rising intonation (56): even with non-question? Speakers who do this not taken as seriously.

The language uses women differently than it uses men (i.e. talk about women differs than talk about men) [Provide examples]

“lady”(59): sounds less serious than “woman” (like Romaine)

Asymmetric pairs (Romaine's term): for linguistically equal terms, female pair is often sexualized; female is referred to relation to the male, but vice versa
Naming: men more likely to be referred by their titles; "Ms" misfired (72)

Significance and Resonance [TO DO IN LECTURE]: Why does this matter? To what extent are these trends still true today (and how would we know?). How does this work compare to our previous course readings?

Women, especially women of color are marginalized; men also limited in emotional range because of "toxic" or "hegemonic" masculinity

(75-76) "women's lib movement: important to fight "right " battles; i.e. point out asymmetries "herstories;" not naming hurricanes only after women (this has changes)

For teachers: being aware of how they use language with students

Teachers of (foreign) language- be aware of social context in which language is embedded

Language make us participants in our own subjugation; even the subjugated can be (unwittingly)

complicit in reproducing gender-biased ideologies.

(73) linguistic imbalances-> point to real world imbalance, external situation that needs changing.

Resonance with other readings? Romaine "English man made" (labelling, naming, asymmetrical pairs)

How does this reading relate to our reading coming up



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