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Gendered Discourse and ASL-to-English Interpreting

A Poststructuralist Approach to Gendered Discourse and the ASL-to-English Interpretive Process

Diana E. MacDougall, M.A., CI and CT

Abstract

Gender is a socially constructed concept. Individuals learn to perform "appropriate" gendered behaviours, according to the social norms of their respective societies. One form of gender performativity is expressed through discourse. Within the field of ASL-to-English interpretation, very little has been written on gendered discourse styles. Because this field is made up predominantly of white females, issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality influence the final interpreted utterance. This paper explores a post-structuralist framework of gendered discourse as a social construction and then analyzes the implications such gendered features may have on the interpretive process. Previous articles on the interpreting process are analyzed, adding the notion of gendered discourse, to explore the impact such socially constructed expectations have on message equivalence and speaker credibility.

Introduction

Much is written within sociology on the construction of gender. In Fenstermaker's and West's (2002) edited text on the same subject, West and Zimmerman's chapter describes gender as "an achieved status: that which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means" (p.3). More specifically, they argue that gender is "the product of social doings", that "gender itself is constituted through interaction" (p.6). Gender, they write, is an "accomplishment"; "it is something that one *does*, and does recurrently, in interaction with others" (p.16). How, then, do people "do gender" within discourse? Feminist linguist Mary Talbot (1998) defines discourse as "historically constituted social constructions in the organization and distribution of knowledge" (p.151). These constructions, she further states, "*shape* people, giving positions of power to some but not to others…only exist[ing] in social interaction in specific situations" (p.154).

Gender identity is also embedded within discourse. Our sense of gendered selves, Talbot (1998) writes, "is constituted in discourse", illustrating that people are not "passively shaped" into gendered beings, but "are active in their own construction" (p.157). In other words, gender is an outcome of social construction. Discourse is a material form of carrying out gendered norms within a given society. Sociolinguists Shari Kendall and Deborah Tannen (1997), write of the "'social construction' paradigm" (p.82) of gender and discourse research. They explain that, "in this paradigm, gendered identities…are maintained and (re-)created through social practices, including language practices" (p.82). Kendall and Tannen reiterate West and Zimmerman when they argue that "[i]ndividuals are active producers of gendered identities rather than passive reproducers of socialized gender behavior" (p.82).

The issue of dominance and power within discursive practices cannot be ignored within a hegemonic construction of gendered language. Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1999) writes, "The organization and signification of power are central to the constructionist framework [of discourse]..." (p.13). Citing Gramsci, she explains the "concept of hegemony [as] the taken-for-granted practices and assumptions that make domination seem natural and inevitable to both the dominant and subordinate" (p.13). This naturalization of the norm, Norman Fairclough (1989) calls "ideological power, [as] the power to project one's practices as universal and 'common sense'…and [is] of particular significance here because it is exercised in discourse" (p.33). In other words, hegemonic ideologies of men and women are embedded within a language, and expressed in terms that reinforce such constructions of a "naturalized dominance" over women and marginalized peoples.

Within the field of American Sign Language-to-English interpretation, very little has been written on gendered language and discourse styles, specifically how such features influence the interpreting process in terms of speaker credibility. One question that guides the research in this paper is, how do interpreters "do gender" (Fenstermaker and West, 2002) while interpreting? Is the actualization of gendered contexts observable in the interpreting process? Are interpreters *aware* that they are engaged in such gendered interactions of contexts? How do these features impact the interpreting process in terms of speaker credibility?

The goal of this paper is to expand our understanding of the interpretive process by examining the presence of gendered language within interpreting. For example, based on interpreters' socially constructed identity as either "girls/women" or "boys/men", how are issues of politeness, especially in face-to-face interactions, reflective of gendered language in the interpreting process? Do female interpreters utilize politeness strategies differently than male interpreters? Further, how does the gender (or perceived gender) of interpreters influence the perception of audience members as to the credibility of the message rendered? While there is a body of research regarding interpreter effects, in general, on the interpreting process itself, there is little research regarding gendered contexts within the interpreting process. Although this body of research has contributed to one's understanding of the interpretive process, the study of how male and female interpreters "voice differently" based on specific sociolinguistically established gendered language features has received limited attention.

In this paper, I first examine existing literature on gender and discourse. Next I analyze research on specific interactional sociolinguistic features within the interpretive process, in general, and then apply the gender question to each of these processes, respectively. The interpreter-based research topics used for this paper are as follows: how gender may impact the interpreting process (McIntire & Sanderson, 1993 and 1995); saving face and politeness strategies (Hoza, 1999); indirectness/directness discourse styles (Mindess, 1999); and speaker credibility (Lawrence, 1998). Each of the above issues has been explored within the interpreting process, in general; I will further this body of knowledge by including the notion of gender and discourse within interpreting.

A Brief Demographic Breakdown

To begin, a brief understanding of the field of interpreting is necessary. Historically, the profession of sign language interpreting was filled by volunteers, clergy, friends, and family members of D/deaf individuals (Stewart, Schein & Cartwright, 2004, p.6). Sign language interpreting was considered a helper, or service field, also labeled as "women's work", similar to "cashier, secretary, elementary school teacher, and registered nurse or nurse's aid" (Stewart, Schein, & Cartwright, 1998, p.174). Daniel Burch (2000) supports this gendered demographic

make up within the profession, writing that "[t]his inordinate disparity [of gender imbalance]…has unfortunately been due in part to the traditionally low wages of the profession, and its low value in a society…" (p.10). He further writes: "Pay parity and gender diversity are intertwined" (p.11). He ties gender and low wages together, explaining why the profession of ASL/English Interpreting is predominantly performed by females. Therefore, it is not surprising that, historically, the majority of interpreters were women. Today, there is still a 6:1 ratio of female to males in sign language interpreting (McIntire & Sanderson, 1995, p.102).

Currently, there are 12,442 members in good standing within the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) national organization (2006)[1]. *Members* include individuals as well as organizations (interpreting-related agencies, Deaf community-related agencies, post-secondary academic-related institutions). *A member in good standing* means that they are current on their dues for this year. On the annual membership renewal forms, *individual* members can opt to self-report on their gender and race/ethnic identities. Below are the (2006) demographic distributions according to gender and race/ethnicity. (See Tables 1 and 2)[2].

Table 1[1]

Gender	**2006 Membership Response** *(N=11,589)*	**% 100.0**
Female	10,089	87.0
Male	1,500	12.9
Totals	11,589	99.9(100)

2006 RID Individual Membership
Self-Reported Gender Distribution

[1]Tables 1 and 2 are from 2006 RID database on gender and race/ethnicity distribution. Phone interview. July 13, 2006. Melissa Bowhay.

[2]Phone interview. July 13, 2006. Melissa Bowhay, RID employee.

Table 2[1]

Race/Ethnicity	**2006 Membership response** (*N=10,880*)	**% 100.0**
African/Black	538	4.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	143	1.3
Euro-American/ White	9,688	89.0
Hispanic/Latino	417	3.8
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	94	0.8
Other	117	1.1
Totals	9,626	88.6

2006 RID Individual Membership
Self-Reported Race/Ethnic Distribution

According to this recent information, the findings were "consistent with prior data regarding RID membership collected in the early 1990s… [indicating that] the profession remains heavily dominated by females" (Burch, 2000, p.10). In addition, the 2006 results show that 11% of ASL/English interpreters are members of non-white minority groups. Although there has been a slight increase in ethnic-racial groups over the last decade, the racial makeup of our profession remains made up largely of white European descendants, who are mostly females. Furthermore, the fact that the above racial categories fail to separate such minority groups by ethnicities is problematic. For example, the categories of "Asian" and "Hispanic/Latino" fails to recognize ethnic representation of such groups as S.E. Indians, Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos and Indonesians within the former category, and Chicanos within the latter category. A further breakdown by ethnicity groups would give us a better understanding of members who are interpreters of color and their experiences as interpreters. This is a reflection of the hegemonic racial attitude that makes up the majority of membership.

Gendered Language

There is extensive literature written from sociolinguists to differentiate between men's and women's discourse styles (Bonvillain, 2000, Butler, 1990 & 1993; Cameron: 1992 & 1998; Coates: 1993; Conrick: 1999; Holmes: 1995; Spender, 1990; Talbot, 1998; Tannen, 1990: Weatherall, 2002; Wodak, 1997). Traditionally within the field of sociolinguistics and gender there was a biologically deterministic, or essentialistic, approach toward biological sex and language differences. Sociolinguist Ruth Wodak (1997) illustrates this essentialist view of women and men originally seen within discourse styles. She cites a list of the traditionally expected gender norms for men and women within language:

> [A]s stated by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), 'women's language has been said to reflect their conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control' (p.1).

Wodak (1997) criticized this approach for analyzing gender and discourse "by merely looking at the speaker's biological sex" (p.1). Instead, she challenged researchers to look at a "context-sensitive approach which regards gender as a social construct" when researching discourse, reminding them to connect gender with the subjects' "socio-cultural and ethnic background[s] [along with] their age, their level of education, their socio-economic status, their emotions and the specific power-dynamics of the discourse investigated" (p.2). Wodak is arguing for a more comprehensive approach to sociolinguistic research in terms of gender and discourse. This approach proposed by Wodak to studying gender and language moved researchers away from a biological deterministic one toward a postmodernist and poststructuralist approach to the subject.

To understand the notion of a "gendered language", *per se*, we need first to understand the concept of "gender as performance", or as West and Zimmerman (2002) coined it, "the 'doing of gender'" (p.4) in societies. Individuals "doing" gender are held accountable for socially appropriate performances

of masculinity and femininity, or "risk gender assessment" by social members. Therefore, members of a society "design their conduct in anticipation of how others will construe (and evaluate) its gendered character" (p.37). In other words, gender is not merely acquired by virtue of one's sex; it is something that is "done". Furthermore, how one "does" gender carries with it social rewards or punishments, depending if one conforms or transgresses, respectively, to socially accepted gender behaviors in accordance with their biological sex.

As mentioned above, one form of accomplishing gender, according to Moloney and Fenstermaker (2002), is through discourse. Through interactions "constituted by language", gender is produced (p.194). Mary Crawford (1995) writes of a social constructionist view of gender and language. Instead of the traditionally essentialistic viewpoint of "sex difference" in discourse being viewed as fixed, (i.e. men and women speak the way they do due to "sex differences"), she argues that "[w]hen 'gender' and 'language' are thus placed in a social constructionist framework, different questions emerge than those that proceeded from a sex difference perspective" (p.18). There is no inherent *women's speech or men's speech, per se*, that individuals are born with; such differentiated gendered speech acts are learned through a child's socialization within his or her respective societies.

This shift from an essentialist to a constructionist approach to understanding gender and discourse was "brought about", according to Ann Weatherall (2002), "by the influence of poststructuralist ideas that stress the thoroughly discursive and textual nature of social life" (p.75-76). She uses the term *discourse* "to embrace two senses of gender as a social construction" (p.76):

> On the one hand, gender is constructed in the ways it is described in talk and texts. On the other hand, gender as a concept is itself constructed—a social meaning system that structures the way we see and understand the world. (p.76).

Weatherall's poststructuralist approach considers how language and discourse use "reflects and perpetuates gender stereotypes" (p.76), as well as how gender can become an "integral part of social life…produced through everyday

language and talk" (p.82). She writes, "[i]t is through language (and discourse) that gender is produced and gains its significance as a social category" (p.97).

Judith Butler's (1999) poststructuralist analysis of gender and society describes gender performance as a way to express socially acceptable gender identities for men and women. She writes, "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a 'natural' kind of being" (p.33). As Deborah Cameron (1997) argues, this form of interaction, although through behavioral performance and not discourse, per se, is Butler's view of "performativity and performance [and are] useful concepts for investigating the relationship of language and gender" (p. 29). Butler (1993) also writes about the "performative use of discourse" (p.231):

> Femininity [and masculinity are] not "product[s] of a choice", [*per se*] but…[i]t is in terms of a norm that compels a certain 'citation' in order for a viable subject to be produced that the notion of gender performativity calls to be rethought (p.232).

Her argument is that "performing of gender norms" requires "the performative use of discourse" (Butler, 1993, p.231). In other words, through "compulsory citationality" within a heterosexist language and discourse used to name and label things appropriately within a given society ("It's a girl!" or "I now pronounce you man and wife") (p.232), gendered subjects learn to perform according to their socially expected performances. This hegemonic form of discursive interaction naturalizes heterosexual norms of femininity and masculinity, thereby *de*naturalizing Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Allies ($GLBTQ_2IA$) identities within a rigidly dichotomous definition of gender. Butler (1993) writes,

> [T]he subject who is 'queered' into public discourse through homophobic interpellation of various kinds *takes up* or *cites* that very term as a basis for an opposition. This kind of citation will emerge as *theatrical* to the extent that it *mimes and renders hyperbolic* the discursive convention that it also *reverses* (p.232).

"Theatrical performances" is how Butler describes what people do when playing out socially appropriate gender norms that are not inherently natural to anyone, but learned through discursive and social interactions. Poststructuralism does not limit the notion of "gender" to merely the Western binary concept of the heterosexual male/female, boy/girl, man/woman.

Weatherall (2002) discusses how gay men and women use "language to transgress gender and/or sexuality norms by challenging a 'natural attitude'" (p.105) through speech acts. She cites instances where lesbian women perform female masculinities through discourse "to mark their sexual identity by using some of the speech characteristics typically associated with men [to avoid discourse] features associated with 'women's language' [that] carry implications of heterosexuality" (p.105). Further, she uses evidence of voice pitch to "signal gender identity…by studying gay men's and gay women's speech" (p.52).

A theory posed by Maryann Neely Ayim (1997) is the "sex roles socialization theory of gender and language" (p.45). In essence, this theory states that women and men at an early age are socialized in the ways they are to "be" female and male. Women are socialized into language patterns that display "hesitance, insecurity, indirectness, weakness, deviousness, politeness, and hypercorrectness", leading to an overall perception of "inferiority" by the user of the language patterns and those who engage with her (p.46). Men are linguistically socialized into speech patterns that are perceived as "strong, dominant, forceful, and direct…" (p.46). Furthermore, Talbot (1998) writes that sex-preferential (what was historically referred to as sex-exclusive) differentiation in language is what she calls "doing gender", as a "part of 'behaving' as 'proper' men and women in particular cultures". Essentially, she asserts that the ways in which men and women speak is "highly culture-specific" (p.6-7).

These authors support the poststructuralist approach mentioned above to gender and discourse as being a social construct within a society. Talbot (1998) cautions, however, against buying into dichotomies of the bipolar categories of gendered speech, instead advocating for a "dialectical continuum" based on other factors besides gender. Nonetheless, she acknowledges the various theories and research posed regarding gender and language, giving credence to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: she questions if it is society that reflects

language or if language is a cultural reflection of one's society (p.15).

These authors illustrate how language and discourse shape concepts of femininity and masculinity within a given society, and more specifically, in a Westernized society. The point that gender is more than a binary concept consisting of two types of genders is a valuable one in gendered discourse research. Furthermore, these authors remind us to ask: what of discursive gender norms in non-Western societies? In communities of people of color? For working class people? For female/lesbian masculinities or male/gay femininities? Each of these issues is relevant to the topic of how language and discourse shape gender in each of them.

In summary, regarding the question, "what is gendered language?" and looking at gender as a social construction within a given society, it is easier to understand how gender can be performed through interaction and discourse. Therefore, gendered language, is a by-product, or an end-result, of gender performativity. Individuals "do gender" through performed speech acts that are construed as socially appropriate forms of speech for women and men. Typically, this "gender appropriate" discourse is defined by white, middle-class, heterosexual speakers. Those who deviate through transgressed speech acts (i.e.: lesbian masculinities and gay femininities or white middle and upper class women using swear words) are assessed accordingly in a heterosexual, white-normed, middle-class society. Gendered discourse, therefore, is a gender performance, played out by individuals in a society through conversation and interaction as a way of "doing gender" to fit in as their gender identity (and social norms) allows. Individuals, whether male, female or queered, learn to perform socially appropriate discourse (according to their respective race, ethnicity and class) to either avoid social rejection or to experience social acceptance as their gendered selves.

Examples of Spoken English Gendered Language Features

For the focus of this paper, an example of gendered language features introduced to the reader is limited to literature, in general, to feminine/masculine expectations within discourse, saving face and politeness strategies (indirectness and hedges), and pitch. I apply these features to specific interpreted

situations and discuss their impact on the interpretive process.

"Male-as-Normal" Principle

In terms of gender expectations within language and discourse, Conrick (1999) describes the "male-as-norm" principle as the "unquestioned acceptance of men's speech patterns as the 'norm' from which women 'deviate'. The underlying message…[of this principle] is that what men speak is 'real' language and…what women speak…is defined in relation to, the norm represented by men" (p.55). In the field of social science, and particularly in discourse analysis, this principle implies a hegemonic male bias when recording gender differences in language. Conrick argues: "Considering women's speech patterns as of secondary importance is hardly appropriate when women constitute more than 50 per cent of the world's population" (p.56). Taking this "deficiency" approach toward gender and discourse further, Spender (1990) contends that this dominance ideology has "the initial assumption that there is something *wrong* with women's language, [with] research procedure hav[ing] been frequently biased in favour of men" (p.7).

Politeness Strategies and Gender (Indirectness and Hedges)

Ayim (1997) looks at politeness from the lens of power and cooperation. Polite language is used by males *and* females when confronted by those in positions of power, for example, when interrogated by police or questioned by medical personnel (male physicians). Regardless of the gender, when placed into a lesser position of power, polite talk is used (p.63-92). This is supported by O'Barr's (1982) work on "powerless" language, specifically in courtroom settings. In other words, these two sociolinguists argue that, in situations where individuals feel subordinate or in lower status positions, such as a witness in court, or in a vulnerable situation such as a doctor's office, they will use "powerless language" discourse styles, regardless of their gender. Such "powerless language" features (also, unfortunately, referred to as "women's language"), include hedges, hypercorrect English, tag questions, and indirectness strategies, to name a few.

"Politeness", Holmes (1995) argues, is "behavior which actively expresses positive concern for others, as well as non-imposing distance behavior"…for instance, an "expression of

good-will or camaraderie, as well as…non-intrusive behavior which is labeled 'polite' in everyday use" (p.5). Specifically, she contends that it is women who primarily use politeness strategies in discourse (p.6). Following Erving Goffman's earlier work on politeness (1967, p.5-45), Holmes addresses definitions of "negative politeness" and "positive politeness" within source language utterances. The former refers to "[b]ehaviour which avoids imposing on others", and the latter refers to "sociable behaviour expressing warmth towards an addressee" (Holmes, p.5). Negative politeness strategies would involve not calling someone too late in the evening, or apologizing for interrupting a speaker. Positive politeness strategies would involve sending someone a greeting or birthday card, or calling a child "sweetie" (p.5).

Holmes outlines the components of polite behavior within the context of discourse. The author asserts that "politeness is always context dependent" (p.21), meaning that what constitutes politeness is determined and defined within a culture and its discourse expectations (e.g. burping as a compliment in some cultures). She looked at these discourse features as they pertained primarily to men and women of New Zealand, but she also pulled data from English speakers of England, Canada and the United States, as well.[3]

Pitch, Pronunciation, and Prestige

Bonvillain (2000) writes that *prosody* refers to stress, pitch, and length of an utterance. *Stress* "refers to the degree of emphasis placed on the syllables of words…. [p]*itch* or *tone* refers to the voice pitch accompanying a syllable's production…. [and] [l]*ength* refers to continuation of a sound during its production", for example, to indicate exaggeration (emphasis added) (p.15-16). Talbot (1998) refers to pitch as "how high or deep the voice actually is", adding that "male and female voice differences are clearly learned…[with]…differences between the sexes appear[ing] to be culturally, as well as anatomically, determined" (p.31). One aspect of "doing gender", according to Talbot, is in voice quality. Whereas anatomically, girls' and boys' speech organs develop slightly differently due to sex hormones at puberty, there seems to be some evidence that males and

[3]It needs to be noted that her subjects were primarily of European descent; issues of race, ethnicity, or sexuality are not considered, and therefore privilege a mainstream, Eurocentric approach to her work.

females consciously vary their pitch under different social situations. She contends that "differences between the sexes [in terms of pitch] appear culturally, as well as anatomically, determined" (p.33). Weatherall (2002) agrees with Talbot. She writes: "The idea that pitch…gets used as a cultural marker of gender, instead of…as being caused by sex differences, is consistent with a social constructionist approach" (p.52).

Margaret Gibbon (1999) also reports that "there is mounting evidence to show that we exercise some individual control over voice production and that we make social judgments on the basis of features of the voice". The consequences are obvious for both: "men [who use] high voices are considered effeminate and ridiculed. Women with (deliberately) low voices are given well-paid jobs as newscasters on television" (p.109). Conrick (1999) supports this by stating that "differences in pitch are subject to social learning", since the lower range of women's pitch can overlap with the higher range of men's pitch, reiterating that there is "no absolute cut-off point between them" (p.67). She contends that men and women deliberately attempt to "communicate different social images" through pitch; however, women's high pitch is often "associated with overexcitement and hysteria" and men's low pitch with "authority" (p.66-68).

Within the category of pronunciation are linguistic features, such as *hypercorrectness* and s*tandard v. non-standard English* (e.g.: working class social identities through discourse). "Hypercorrectness", according to Bonvillain (2000), is used by individuals, mostly in formal settings who are aware that their "colloquial style is criticized by the 'general' population (p.162). These speakers will usually "over correct" their speech patterns, becoming "more correct than they ought to be" (Talbot, 1998, p. 40). Conrick (1999) calls this socially conscious adjustment inspeech patterns *style shifting* (p.48). Gibbon (1999) also includes style shifting when recording the voice pitch and non-standard pronunciations of men in same-sex and different-sex interviews. The male interviewee's voice was lowered and prestige forms of English replaced with the lower-status version when answering questions for male interviewers (p.111). *Standard English* or "talking proper" is considered the prestige form of speaking commonly recorded in women's speech patterns. Since women are considered to be of lesser social status to men, linguists theorize that women will consciously strive for such equal status through the prestige

form of English (Conrick: 1999; Talbot: 1998; Gibbon: 1999). However, it must be acknowledged that issues of class and race also play a significant role in the use of standard English and pronunciation; it is not merely gender issues that influence speech patterns.

Gendered Language and the Interpretative Process

Gender, Language, and Power

In 1993 and 1995, McIntire and Sanderson raised the question of gender and the interpreter's role in terms of empowerment and power, respectively, through language and discourse. They remind the reader that "in U.S. society in general, being female means one is relatively disempowered [and that] society [also] views 'the handicapped' as lacking power" (1993, p.102). Combine a female interpreter with a D/deaf presenter, and the authors argue that "the two of them are entering an uphill battle" (1993, p.102) in terms of perceptions of empowerment, and hence, credibility.

Specifically, in their earlier article, they address the use of empowering language within discourse, arguing that "[w]omen and men make differential use of tag questions …color vocabulary, diluting and softening phrases vs. absolutes and strong language or cursing" (1993, p.103), concluding that "women's use of English for D/deaf men may have a debilitating impact" on that deaf presenter's credibility (1993, p.104). A female interpreting for a D/deaf male, they state, "could easily misrepresent him…in choice of lexical items…such as color terms, [and] in voice quality…" (1993, p.105). Furthermore, they quote Tannen in stating that "women are more likely than men to phrase their ideas as questions, take up less time with their questions, and speak at lower volume and higher pitch… [Tannen, 1990, p.246]", concluding that "women normally present themselves in a disempowered manner" (McIntire & Sanderson, 1993, p.105-106).

In McIntire and Sanderson's 1995 article, they address further the notion of gender, language and power, specifically in terms of courtroom interpreting and credibility of the D/deaf witness. They argue that, since

> D/deaf people are viewed by society in general as 'handicapped' and therefore relatively powerless, [and] since typical women's style…has a measurably negative impact on jurors, and presumably everyone else in the courtroom, including judges…,[t] he combination of a handicapped person along with a woman interpreter puts both of them at a disadvantage within a context that is based on power relationships (p.107).

In other words, both groups, women and D/deaf people, culturally and linguistically are viewed as inferior to a normalized male society.[4]

Specifically, McIntire and Sanderson (1995) challenge readers to consider the following situations within interpretive process scenarios: D/deaf males appearing "overly passive or powerless" (p.108), because of having female interpreters who use socially expected gendered language; "D/deaf females being portrayed as overly aggressive by male interpreters" (p.108); and D/deaf males and females being viewed as gay or lesbian, respectively, "because of cross-gender interpreting" (p.108) (whether their interpreters identify as GLBTQ$_2$IA or not). They recommend the "recognition and identification" (p.110) of such gendered language differences to begin resolving issues of power within the interpretive process experienced by interpreters and D/deaf speakers. In fact, the authors suggest that interpreter preparation programs begin to include "learning time to

[4]It needs to be stated that these notions of gender "differences" posed by linguistics, such as Deborah Tannen, and within the interpreting literature, present two concerns: one is that they assume an inherent discursive "difference" between men and women that implies a naturally occurring difference at birth. There is no evidence in research, either biological or sociological, that would support such a claim. Gender, thus gendered discourse styles, are socially constructed within a given society. Secondly, this also assumes a white, middle-class, heterosexual standard of gender norms within discourse. Since the population of professional interpreters reported through the national professional interpreting data base (see tables 1 and 2 above), are predominantly white and female, 78.5% and 81.3%, respectively, this hegemonic frame of "a" gendered language might be assumed as the standard. It does not take into consideration interpreters of color or GLBTQ$_2$IA interpreters who "transgress" gendered discourse expectations through discursive practices that express specific cultural or sexual orientation identities. This point must be made explicit throughout this paper.

linguistic, sociological, psychological and cross-cultural topics [to] help…resolve issues of power and control" (p.110).

While they offer sound, pedagogical suggestions, one of their recommendations is "considering recruiting more men into the field, in order to alleviate the issues around powerless language usage" (p.110). This is problematic to me, as it assumes a normative attitude toward "maleness" as socially acceptable instead of addressing the issues of a hegemonic, heterosexist masculinity within society. However, as this is a preliminary look at gender and language within the interpretive process, the work of these authors contributed much to the forward movement of research on gender and discourse within interpreting.

In terms of a dominance approach to gender and discourse mentioned above (Crawford, 1995; Conrick, 1999; Talbot, 1998), this hegemonic, "male-as-norm principle" affects the interpreting process, depending on the gender of the individual performing the task. If male speech is considered the "norm" and women's speech is considered to "deviate" from that norm, the perception of a male D/deaf presenter with a female voice interpreter, or that of a female D/deaf interpreter with a male voice interpreter can have negative effects in terms of source language speaker credibility and validity. This must be addressed in interpreter preparation programs and among working professional interpreters so as to inform those in the field to fully understand the impact gender plays within the target language utterance.

Politeness strategies and the Interpretive Process

Jack Hoza (1999) explores "the interpreter's impact on the face needs [politeness] of the speakers in interpreted interaction" (p.39), looking at Goffman's positive and negative face needs (Goffman, 1967, p.5-45) and the positive or negative politeness systems "used by speakers to address, or redress, one's face needs" (Hoza, 1999, p.54). "Face", according to Goffman, is "defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact…an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes…" (1967: 5). Using an "interactional sociolinguistic framework", Hoza analyzes "real-life scenarios in which interpreters have…made decisions regarding face" (p.39). Furthermore, Hoza uses Goffman's *in face* and *out of face* to explain how mismatches in interpretations and interactions

between individuals can "affect face, power relations, and the treatment of interlocutors" (Hoza 1999, p.57).

Regarding the notion of interactional sociolinguistics, Hoza pulls from both Goffman and Gumperz. He states:

> Goffman's work (1967, 1974) on *self* and *face* as social or interactive constructs, and his notion of *framework*, are key components of interactional sociolinguistics [and] provide a way of discussing how an individual perceives situations (e.g., social interactions)… Gumperz, (1982) whose work on *conversational inference*…[is defined as] 'the situated or context-bound process of interpretation, by means of which participants in an exchange assess others' intentions, and on which they base their responses (p.53).

Lastly, Hoza uses Deborah Schiffrin's explanation of interactional sociolinguistics as a foundation to set up his premise of politeness and face-saving strategies utilized by interpreters, even on a subconscious level. Citing her work, Hoza writes:

> The interactional sociolinguistic framework is 'grounded in a view of the self and what it does (e.g., make inferences, become involved) as a member of a social and cultural group and as a participant in the social construction of meaning' (Schiffrin, 1994, p.101). In face-to-face interaction, 'when listeners share speakers' contextualization cues, subsequent interactions proceed smoothly' (Schiffrin, 1994, p.100) (Hoza, 1999, p.53).

In Hoza's article (1999) regarding interactions within dialogues, he states that "if one person uses positive politeness and the other uses negative politeness, the person using negative politeness is putting him/herself in a lower position" (p.58). I wondered: Do female interpreters use negative politeness strategies more than male interpreters? Do interpreters of color, regardless of gender, use more politeness strategies than Caucasian interpreters? Where does class play into this notion of politeness? This is an area of study that must be addressed in order to bring about equality between D/deaf and hearing

interlocutors via the interpretation. Since, historically, D/deaf people have experienced marginalization within the mainstream majority society due to hegemonic, audistic attitudes towards them as "less than" or "inferior" to hearing people, it behooves us as interpreter educators and scholars to understand the dynamics of powerless/powerful language within the spoken target utterance to be able to address this with students in the classroom and within the professional interpreting task itself. In this way, conscious efforts will be made through awareness of linguistic, cultural, and social considerations to match the D/deaf speaker's original intent, including the interpreter's own status in society, how such internalized world views weave into the interpreted target language utterance, and, indeed, into the specific interactive situation, itself. For instance, regardless of the setting (e.g.: classroom, business meeting, medical, legal), an awareness of the interpreter's own background in terms of gender identity, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or class, politeness strategies can influence the communication and intent of a message between those using our services, both D/deaf and hearing participants. Bringing this awareness to the forefront of student and working interpreters will allow the source message within an interactional sociolinguistic framework to be rearranged for such equivalences between two interlocutors.

Hoza (1999) believes that interpreters use socially constructed face considerations between interlocutors who do not share the same language or culture. He provides three separate scenarios to illustrate this point. However, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on one particular scenario. This scenario deals with a female interpreter using positive politeness strategies that she feels represent the intent of a D/deaf student with her fellow classmates. During a group feedback session for graduate students' educational posters, classmates give feedback and suggestions for change in each others' individual projects. The feedback from hearing participants follows "an explicit rule of politeness: say[ing] something nice first, then provid[ing] criticism couched in this positive comment" (Hoza, 1999, p.43).

However, when it is time for the D/deaf student to give feedback, she states a negative first ("…the color of the poster seems a bit dull. You *should* use a brighter color"(emphasis mine)) and follows it with a positive ("but I agree that the pictures are really clear and the poster focuses on one concept,

which is nice for this group of students") (p.42). The interpreter, upon thinking about the message, reverses the order and voices: "'I agree that the poster focuses on only one concept which is nice for this group of students and the pictures are really clear, but *I'm wondering* about the color because it *might* not catch the children's eye. *Perhaps* a brighter color would work better for that'" (emphasis mine) (p.42).

Two things are happening here. First, the interpreter changes the order of the information. In terms of what is happening with the rearrangement of the above source message, Anna Mindess (1999) reminds the reader that there are differences in communication styles within different cultures in which interpreters must be fluent. The field of intercultural communications, she believes, can better inform those of us working in the field of ASL/English interpreting. She writes, "The wider perspective we gain in this study [of intercultural communication] will be invaluable for achieving a deeper appreciation of American Deaf culture" (p.141).

One difference between hearing and Deaf cultures is the use of indirect and direct conversational styles, respectively. Using a continuum, she illustrates the degree of indirectness/directness between several cultures. While Japanese communication "is seen as representing the epitome of indirectness [in comparison to American culture]" other cultures, like Israeli and American Deaf, "would characterize the typical American style as 'beating around the bush'" (p.150) (See Table 3a).

Table 3a

Mindess Cultural Indirectness/Directness Continuum

Continuum			
Japanese Culture	American Culture	Deaf	Israeli
[---------*----------*----------*----------*----]			
INDIRECT			**DIRECT**

Furthermore, Mindess reports "American Deaf culture… tends to employ a direct mode of expression. Citing Harlan Lane in her work, she writes: "'Hinting and vague talk in an effort to be polite are inappropriate and often offensive' … Deaf people have no patience for ambiguity…straight talk is an expression

of intimacy and solidarity between the Deaf" (Mindess, 1999, p.151).

The fact that this particular interpreter in Hoza's study chose to use intercultural communication considerations while interpreting indicates a cultural awareness between the two groups, as well as illustrating the intent of the D/deaf student in alignment with her hearing peers. If directness in Deaf interaction is a sign of intimacy and connectedness, and not an intention to offend, then rearranging the source utterance to match those of the hearing students is a correct cultural adjustment.

However, within gender and discourse literature, there is another continuum that may be formed to represent what sociolinguists report as the indirectness/directness differences between men and women. This assumes a white, middle class, heterosexual standard of "genderlect", as Tannen coined the term for gendered differences within discourse, (1990: 42); differences within racial, ethnic, class, and sexual orientation would further inform the field of sociolinguistics on issues of power and dominance within gender and language (as well as the gender differences within each group), and would show quite a different continuum. Nonetheless, a preliminary continuum of American English discourse regarding gender and indirectness/ directness embedded within Mindess's continuum could look like the following: (See Table 3b).

Table 3b

Mindess Cultural Indirectness/Directness Continuum
(with modifications to include gender)

Continuum				
Japanese Culture		American Culture	Deaf	Israeli
[-------*----------+----------*---+----------*----------*---]				
INDIRECT	*American women*	*American men*		**DIRECT**

The second thing that is happening here is that the interpreter chooses vocabulary that is more indirect than the D/deaf student uttered in her original message. While Hoza argues that the interpreter uses face saving and positive politeness strategies by considering how the mainstream

hearing society (in America) gives feedback; therefore, working toward interactional equivalence in her interpretation, I argue that a gendered construction of discourse may have even more of an influence as to why she chose the wording and order in which she did. For instance, the specific wording, italicized above (*I'm wondering; might; perhaps*) softens the more direct approach taken by the D/deaf student (*should*). Holmes (1995) explains that "[b]eing polite may…be a matter of choosing the right words" (p.72). However, choosing words such as "a *bit, seems*, and the tag *didn't you* [at the end of a statement]…weaken or reduce the force of the utterance" (p.72). As I have illustrated above, this is called *hedging*. Holmes uses the utterance (also in the Hoza's scenario), *perhaps*, as an example of hedging, because, she states, it "makes the utterance gentler" (p.73). She cites Robin Lakoff as labeling such a politeness strategy as "characteristic of 'women's language'…express[ing] a lack of confidence and reflect[ing] women's social insecurity…" (p.73). Wodak (1997) reminds the reader that, hedging as a linguistic strategy used by women "allow[s] us to pay attention to the face needs of all participants" (p.250).

Regarding the interpreter in Hoza's study, my question is not in her choice to rearrange the source message within an interactional sociolinguistic framework for cultural equivalence between two interlocutors, but in her decision to soften the message using indirect terms, such as *I'm wondering, might,* and *perhaps*, especially for the direct term of *should* by the D/deaf student. This is not to say that the production of the content was inaccurate, but I am saying that the choice of vocabulary may be a result of gender socialization to couch criticism with "indirect phraseology", as Hoza called it (1999, p.42). Had the interpreter been a male, aside from the cultural adjustments in politeness strategies to state a positive before a negative, would there have been a need by the male interpreter to phrase the critique with indirect terminology in the same way as the female interpreter?

Politeness Strategies While Interpreting

Hoza's research begs the question of politeness to the interpreting process; I link the notion of gendered discourse as a social construction to this question. The issue of hedging within discourse and the interpreting process is a unique one. Scholars have looked at hedging, in general, as a form of

women's language. It is viewed as a strategy to "avoid seeming too masculine by being assertive and saying things directly" (Talbot, 1998, p.39), with phrases such as *you know, kind of, sort of*, and *I think*. Scholars have also shown that men and women in "subordinate roles" or in positions of powerlessness will also use hedging within discourse (Holmes, 1995; Ayim, 1997; Conrick, 1999; Bonvillain, 2000).

Hedging strategies are defined as ways to avoid appearing too direct or assertive with another and to form connections within a conversation (Tannen, 1990). Holmes (1995) states that "hedging" is seen as a negative politeness strategy, because it takes into consideration the other speaker's feelings by reducing "the force of the utterance" (p.72). Furthermore, Conrick (1999) states that "'[h]edges' are ways of softening statements, making them less direct, more non-committal, using words and phrases like: 'sort of', 'kind of', 'I think' 'perhaps', and 'you know'…(p.79). This may account for the decision made by Hoza's female interpreter in this scenario, where she softened the message in the D/deaf student's original feedback to her classmates. Her internalized need to not offend the other hearing graduate students influenced her choice to use indirect terminology to couch the true intent of the D/deaf source message: to participate and interact with classmates on an interactional level that was equal in status and setting.

To illustrate this further, Stewart, et al., (2004) include a brief profile of certified ASL/English interpreter and linguist Brenda Nicodemus. She conducted a study where five male and five female professional interpreters viewed a Deaf man in five different role-playing vignettes. The scenarios were confrontational in nature, from teasing to more serious in context. Nicodemus, in this pilot study focusing on gendered bias while interpreting, found that the female interpreters tended to use hedges to soften an insult and "euphemistic terms and other less graphic descriptions" when interpreting for a dirty joke. Furthermore, the females used "politeness strategies to soften face-threatening messages", and included "face-saving devices such as hedges, softeners, hesitancies, and minimizers in their communication", while the male interpreters "tended to be more direct and use less mitigating strategies" (p.230). Comparatively speaking, the male interpreters "used slang and other vulgar terms in their interpretation" for the same passages (p.229).

Regarding her research on gender variation in interpretation, Nicodemus states, "Research on gender variation in language poses interesting questions for us as interpreters….The question follows: when interpreting for the opposite sex, does our interpretation reflect our gender bias?" (p.229). Indeed, from a poststructuralist framework on a social construction of gender and discourse, the question may more appropriately be *how* our interpretation reflects our gender biases, instead of whether it *does* or not, since the larger body of research on the subject argues that people in societies are taught "appropriate gender performances" from infancy on, including within interactive speech acts. Therefore, the presence of gender norms within discourse is assumed from this framework; what we do with this presence is the issue facing this analysis.

Gender and Credibility

Shelley Lawrence (1998) begins to approach the question of *credibility* by addressing, on a macro level, the effect of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters on audience perception of D/deaf speaker credibility. She explores how different interpreters incorporate awareness of "content, structure, organization, delivery, and speaking style [to] yield differing perceptions to different audiences" (p.157). Her focus is on the attitudes and opinions of D/deaf and hearing audience members regarding the credibility of D/deaf speakers, in general, without a particular emphasis on gender, *per se*. Specifically, I will look at her analysis of the hearing audience members only on the attitudes and opinions of the voiced renditions from the interpreters and consider how gender could be a significant indicator of speaker credibility.

Lawrence defines *speech credibility* as "an audience's perception of the believability, plausibility, and trustworthiness of a speech, [containing] a combination of content, speaker and delivery" (p.143). To determine the impact interpreters had on audience perception of D/deaf speaker credibility, she allowed audience members to listen to male and female interpreters' target language utterances of D/deaf speakers' source language messages. Then she had audience members rate the message for credibility based on seventeen attributes under three different constructs. They are as follows: (See Table 4).

Table 4

Content	Personality	Delivery
Familiarity with topic	Enthusiasm†	Convincibility†
Organization	Friendliness†	Pacing
Experienced	Sincerity†	Undertandability
Competence	Honesty†	Fluency
	Interesting†	Confidence†
	Open-Mindedness†	Clarity
		Flow of Delivery

(† added)

In terms of her overall findings, Lawrence states the attributes that had a significant impact on the audience members. Under the Personality construct, only *enthusiasm* and *open-mindedness* had a statistically significant impact on audience participants at the .05 level. In the Delivery construct, *understandability, convincibility, fluency* and *confidence* showed a statistical significance at the .05 level (p.148).

The construct of "Content" is task-oriented, and not gender-specific. Additionally, the attributes of *pacing, understandability, fluency* and *clarity* under the "Delivery" construct can be measurable units related to skill and competence within the process of ASL/English interpreting. These pose no problem for objective evaluations. However, although I believe my colleague deserves to be commended on this groundbreaking study, certain attributes in terms of "Personality" and "Delivery" constructs are problematic from a sociological perspective. The attributes marked with a (†) are not only socially- and culturally-bound values, but are also related to socially constructed gender expectations. As stated earlier in this paper, Wodak (1997, p.1) illustrates that emotionally descriptive words are generally applied to women in western societies, with more aggressive words being attached to men.

Furthermore, how did individual audience members score such traits? What value systems did they use to determine the measure of credibility for each one? What social and

cultural norms did they bring with them to the survey? Under the "Personality" construct, Lawrence reports "the audience hearing the female interpreter perceived the speaker as more enthusiastic than…the male interpreter" (p.147). *Enthusiasm* is a value-ladened term. If the female interpreters did not display such a characteristic, were they negatively scored for this? Conversely, if the male interpreters were considered "too enthusiastic" (read: too feminine), did this have a negative result in scoring?

In the survey, female interpreters ranked higher in impacting speaker credibility for open-mindedness, as well. Did the results show female interpreters as producing a more "credible" target message because of the audience members' subconscious, socially constructed gender norms expressed through discourse styles? Lawrence writes that "[n]one of the attributes in this study [were] (sic) positively influenced by the male interpreter[s]" (p.147). Why is this? Did audience members look at the terms in the survey and positively attach them to females? In other words, if female interpreters were seen as displaying some of these attributes (e.g., "successfully" performing her gender through discourse as opposed to transgressing socially accepted gender norms within discourse), was it seen as more positive when they used them in comparison to their male counterparts? Finally, knowledge of the gender (as well as race, ethnic, or class) of the audience participants would inform the researcher as to their frame of reference in terms of preferred speaker styles. These are not explained, as the focus of Lawrence's study was not specifically on gender or race/ethnicity, *per se*, but on the overall impact of such attributes overall on the interpreting process.

Credibility and Interpreting

The above-mentioned authors of sociolinguistics state that the non-standard form of English is sought after by men, in general, and by men *and* women from less advantaged social and economic classes and minority groups (Bonvillain, 2000; Talbot, 1998; Conrick, 1999; Gibbon, 1999). Will issues of "hypercorrect" English, typically assigned to women's speaking styles, negatively affect how the audience perceives the D/deaf speaker? How about the female interpreter who uses more of the vernacular style of speech? With a message coming from a female interpreter, will the audience perceive the D/deaf

speaker to be "uneducated" or of a working class background more than they would if the same utterance was coming from a male interpreter?

Prosody is a significant feature within the ASL-to-English interpreting process. Within Stephanie Feyne's curriculum (2002), she and her students focus on prosodic features, such as "register…stress, affect, pauses, pitch [and] loudness…" to accurately "carry metanotative information" (p.24). Barbara Neal Varma (1998) focused her thesis specifically on the topic of voice gender (pitch) of interpreters and its effect on the credibility of the source language utterance produced by D/deaf presenters. Whereas issues pertaining to gender and language were implied, her focus was more on the interpreter's natural pitch between male and female interpreters using the same script (hence, same vocabulary and sentence structure); her focus was not on issues of spontaneously uttered gendered language features, specifically (Varma,1998). Varma's conclusions reveal that the "highest [credibility] ratings were found" from listening to "either the expressive male voice or monotone [calm] female voice" based on the message receiver's "cultural experiences and expectations" (p.35). Essentially, Varma suggests that interpreters could "increase the effectiveness of the communication they are translating by accurately conveying the content of the message while using paralinguistic cues that match the cultural expectations of hearing participants" (p. 35). In other words, using the culturally constructed gender norms for "natural pitch" assigned to females and males, *along with message equivalency*, will increase the source credibility of D/deaf presenters among hearing message receivers.

Linking Feyne's and Varma's work, as well as the previously mentioned discourse scholars to this current analysis, could it be in Lawrence's survey that audience members were reacting to voice pitch of the female interpreters when they were positively rating such attributes as *enthusiasm, friendliness, sincerity, honesty, interesting*, and *open-mindedness*? If male interpreters displayed any of these features, thereby transgressing socially accepted norms of male speech patterns, could this have negatively affected the results of her survey? Could this be why "[n]one of the attributes in this study were (sic) positively influenced by the male interpreter[s]" (p.147)? Further analysis including gender, as well as race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality,

will provide for a more thorough understanding of credibility of the D/deaf speaker.

Implications

The implications of this analysis are two-fold. The first is from a sociological framework of discourse, gender, and issues of power and dominance expressed through language. The second is on interpreter preparation programs and curricula designed to incorporate a poststructuralist approach to teaching interpretation that includes gender discourse as a social construction and its impact on the interpreting process. I address each separately below.

Gendered Language and Issues of Power and Dominance

Fairclough (1989) writes of "the place of language in society: that language is centrally involved with power, and struggles for power…" (p.17). Furthermore, he states that "language as a social practice [is] determined by social structures" and is expressed through discursive interactions (p. 7). These "orders of discourse [are] sets of conventions associated with social institutions…[and] are ideologically shaped by power relations in…society as a whole" (p.17). Further, he writes: "Language varies according to social identities of people in interactions, their socially defined purposes, social setting, and so on… language use is socially determined" (p.21). In other words, an individual's socialization in terms of gender expectations, racial/ethnic identity, and class background are all social constructions of how one eventually views the world. These socially constructed ideologies are materialized in the language we use, evidenced through interactional discourse. Interactions occur across sex, race/ethnic, class, and gender lines. Fairclough calls this "discourse as a social process" (p.22). It is learned in one's society through interaction with others from one's linguistic/cultural community. Because of this socialization process, Fairclough warns:

> [w]e ought to be concerned with the processes of producing and interpreting texts, and with how these cognitive processes are socially shaped and relative to social conventions, not just with the texts themselves… the way people interpret features of texts depends upon which social-more specifically, discoursal-

conventions they are assuming to hold (p.19).

This has serious implications for ASL/English interpreters, not only in the context of gender, but also of race/ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. For instance, do interpreters' views of their social identities influence their interpretive process, in terms of attitudes toward intersectionalities of gender, race, class, and sexual orientations of others involved? Since socialization happens on a cognitive level, these internalized attitudes need to be pulled out and made explicit to working interpreters.

Alice Harrigan (1997) reminds the reader that "the 'average' interpreter [is] white, female, and occasionally gay (male or female) and reaffirms the need "to diversify the profession [of ASL/English Interpreters]" (p.104). She writes:

> Recognizing that privilege and oppression are factors that influence a communication event, it becomes possible to analyze situations in terms of how interpreters use their power as members of the majority [hearing] culture (p.106).

Since hearing interpreters are predominantly white and female, how might (albeit internalized or subconscious) hegemonic ideologies of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia, as well as audism, impact the interpreted target language utterance? Conversely, how might audience members negatively view the target language message based on their own hegemonic assumptions about D/deaf people, women in society, or more specifically, interpreters of color?

As mentioned in the introduction, the issue of dominance and power within discourse is also implicated in this study. Harlan Lane (1985) states the following about language and power and the interpretive process:

> [They] are so intimately related that an interpreter cannot translate a single word, cannot even appear on the scene, without communicating messages about group loyalty. Much of what the interpreter mediated between two cultures, explicitly and implicitly, is a struggle for power (p.1).

In other words, if D/deaf members in the mainstream (hearing) society are already viewed as "handicapped" or disadvantaged (McIntire & Sanderson, 1993 & 1995), and women, in general, (and interpreters of color, specifically) are valued less in a patriarchal, white, middle-class, heterosexist society, then it is easy to argue that ASL/English interpreters face issues of power in terms of how each chooses to interpret, especially if the interpreter is female, a female interpreter of color, a lesbian, gay male or transgendered interpreter.

For instance, in public settings where language that is viewed as "inappropriate" for women to utter (e.g., swearing, strong commands to subordinates), how might the interpreter inadvertently distort the intent of a message by a D/deaf speaker by omitting the swear words or changing them to less offensive terms (e.g. *s#&t* to *shoot*; *d*#n* to *darn*) or using a more indirect speech act as opposed to the more direct one originally intended (e.g., "If this happens again, I will fire you!" vs. "If this happens again, I will have to let you go")? Furthermore, if female interpreters are more uncomfortable with interrupting (for message clarification or in turn-taking strategies) than their male counterparts, how might the D/deaf participant(s) be viewed by the hearing participant(s)? Conversely, how will a male interpreter alter the intent of a message if interrupting happens without thought to the status of the other participants?

Fairclough (1989) asks: "But what about unequal encounters where the non-powerful people have cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from those of the powerful people?" (p.47). He answers this himself: "[It is the] white middle-class gatekeepers [who] are likely to constrain the discourse types which can be drawn upon to those of the dominant cultural grouping" (p.47). Similarly, *women's language/powerless language* is the term originally coined by linguist Robin Lakoff in the 1970s in referring to language used by women (Talbot, 1998). Such speech is designated to individuals of "low status" or "inferior positions in society" (Bonvillain, 2000; Coates, 1993) and "working class" (Conrick, 1999) backgrounds. These labels are given from a traditionally male-oriented field of linguistics, sociology, and anthropology, not only in terms of who did the research (men), but also who the informants were that were studied (males) (Coates, 1993; Conrick, 1999). The assumed world view as *the* male view was, at the time, the norm. Socially constructed gender performativity through

discourse, whether the interpreter is consciously aware of her target language utterance or not, has an impact on not only the credibility of the D/deaf speaker, but possibly on the skewing of the message itself. Conversely, if a male interpreter is voicing for a female D/deaf speaker, socialized understandings of masculine and feminine speech acts may interfere with the word choice in the interpretation. And what of interpreters who identify as GLBTQ$_2$IA? How might their speech acts be viewed as transgressing socially constructed norms of men/women? Each of these must be analyzed through a social constructionist lens.

Implications for Interpreter Preparation Programs

The second implication of this study is on interpreter preparation programs themselves. While interpreter preparation programs traditionally have looked at the technical and mechanical aspects of interpreting through various models used to explain the cognitive processes involved (Seleskovitch & Lederer, 1989; Cokely, 1992; Colonomos, 1992; Gish, 1997), little has been written about creating curricula designed to incorporate a poststructuralist approach to teaching ASL/English interpretation that includes gender discourse as a social construction and its impact on the interpreting process. Developing course materials and classroom discussion groups within existing programs will lend to further molding the "whole interpreting student", and eventually, a more sensitive interpreter in terms of working within a diverse population, in general, and one more aware of gender issues, specifically, within interpreting regarding issues of power and dominance through discourse. Fairclough (1989) writes that "in discourse, people can be legitimizing (or delegitimizing) particular power relations without being conscious of doing so" (p.41). Bringing to the consciousness of interpreting students' minds, and indeed already working interpreters, issues of power and hegemony regarding gender and the intersectionalities of race/ethnicity, class and sexuality will lead to working toward equality between D/deaf and hearing people, and toward a truer representation of the intent of the source message meaning.

Limitations of this Analysis

For the focus of this paper, a limited number of gendered discourse features were cited and analyzed as to their influence

within the interpretive process. Sociolinguistic literature is abundant on the issue of gender and discourse, in general. However, the scope of this analysis limited the number of discourse features addressed, both due to its length and because of the limited corresponding literature available within ASL/English interpretation. What is needed further (and is the next goal of this researcher) is a deeper look at gendered discourse and interpreting through other interpreted scenarios documented and recorded for specific gendered discourse features, including issues of race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality, to provide for a more thorough understanding of how gender and discourse play out within the interpreting process.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the poststructuralist approach to gender and discourse, in general, and how a social construction of interactive discourse influences the ASL-to-English interpretive process, specifically. Gender is a social construct, created and perpetuated within a given society as a way of articulating how boys/girls and men/women "do gender" through interactions with others. This poststructuralist view illustrates how language and discourse perpetuate gender stereotypes within society, produced in everyday talk, either through the doing of one's assigned gender or one's gender identity. Conversely, GLBTQ$_2$IA speech acts as either female masculinities or male femininities in terms of pitch and prosody, challenge "natural attitudes" in society.

Gender is an instance of socially constructed behavior of males and females. It is not naturally inherent, in terms of biologically occurring for individuals at birth, like one's sex; it is learned through socialization of children within society, and the social expectation of gendered behaviors will vary according to societies and cultures. Gendered discourse and its respective gendered features are instances of gender appropriate expressions within a given society. And because gender socialization is so deeply embedded within a society, I think it is safe to say that gender as a social construction is here to stay.

In summary, therefore, regarding the question of the impact of gendered language discourse on the interpretive process, the question becomes *how* interpreters use such gendered features to "do gender" while interpreting (compared to the question: *do*

interpreters use such features?). Sociolinguists do not argue over whether gender performance occurs during speech acts within discourse. On the contrary, due to the gendering of girls and boys through social discursive practices, by the time we reach adulthood, such subconscious gendered interactions with others seem normalized and virtually go unquestioned.

The question is also how we, as social scientists and interpreter educators, can tease out on a cognitive level if the actualization of gendered contexts are observable in the interpreting process by interpreters and audience members, and if the interpreters are *aware* that they are engaged in such gendered interactions of contexts. The challenge will be to bring this awareness to the forefront of interpreters' minds. Within interpreter preparation programs, the challenge is to give language and meaning to gendered discourse features so as to articulate such features and to discuss within academic and professional settings with students and professional interpreters, respectively, on an intellectual and critically analytical level what it is that is happening within their discursive practices. Given the fact that D/deaf individuals deal with issues of oppression regarding marginalization of language and generalized disempowerment from a mainstream society that views them as "less than" their non-deaf peers, the study of gender and discourse and its influence on the interpreting process is imperative, if producing a target language utterance equal in meaning and intent is the goal. Working towards equality in target language utterance, as well as representing D/deaf speakers' intent and social status, both culturally and through a socially appropriate interactional framework can be achieved with the an informed interpreter on issues of gender discourse features, thus empowering D/deaf participants in the interpretive setting, as well as the non-deaf participants, alike.

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