A study of female language features in same-sex conversation

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Abstract
The present study investigates women’s language use in same – sex conversations and the aim was to find out if the group of women that was tape recorded used typical female features in their language. This group of six women was given the topic “Men and women” and then they were free to talk about whatever they wanted. Four typical female language features were investigated; hedges, tag – questions, minimal responses and questions, and my result shows that these six women were frequent users of these language features and the results confirm previous research that has been made by, for example, Jennifer Coates.

Keywords: Women’s language, pragmatics, hedges, tag – questions, minimal responses, questions
1. Introduction

Many studies have shown that men and women differ in their language use, that they behave linguistically differently, and that the language of men is often seen as the norm, whereas women’s language is seen as inferior and something that stands out from the norm (Coates 1988: 2). Few
researchers that conducted the early sociolinguistic studies were interested in gender as an explanation for linguistic difference; they were interested in social class differences (Coates 2004: 52). Men and women´s language can be researched in many different linguistic fields, and I am going to look at women´s language from a pragmatic point of view;

Pragmatics enters the picture to augment the interpretations assigned by the semantic component of the grammar, to deal with the ways in which what is conveyed – what people succeed in meaning – outstrips what is strictly said. How, for example, can you throw lika a girl be understood as an insult? What is literally said is evaluatively neutral, but the derogatory message arises from background assumptions brought into play in interpreting the point of uttering those words in a particular context (Eckert & McConnell – Ginet 2003: 79)

In this essay, I am going to tape-record a group of women when they discuss and see if they use typically female features in their language.

1.1 Aim and question
The aim of this study is to see if the women in my discussion group use typical female language features when they speak. The language features that I am going to be looking for are hedges, tag – questions, minimal responses and questions.

The question that I want to answer in this essay is;

* Do the women in this study use typical female language features in their interaction with other women?

1.2 Language and gender
Some researchers say that the reason why men and women differ in their linguistic behaviour is because they are biologically different. Women are born with the ability to be more supportive and non-competitive, while men are not. There is no evidence to support this claim, so this can be seen as a stereotyping picture. Another explanation can be that of dominance; male dominance is reflected in language and men use all their available power to try to dominate each other and women. When women are dominated by men in this way, they usually seek support from other women instead of disagreeing with the men´s dominance. But there are some women that turn to more prestigious language forms to avoid being dominated by men (Wardhaugh 2006: 326-327).

Lakoff (1975, in Wardhaugh 2006: 327) has the opinion that women are powerless, and that men are
the dominant ones in society. Other researchers agree with her, but anthropologists have pointed out that women are never without power and effectively control some societies. Dominance clearly fails as a universal explanation of gendered language differences (Wardhaugh 2006: 327).

A third explanation can be that, from a linguistic point of view, men and women have learned to act according to their gender. Men learn to be men, and women learn to be women, because linguistic behavior is for the most part learned behavior. Men and women have different roles in society, and we may expect that the more distinct the roles, the greater the differences, and there seems to be some evidence to support such a claim, for the greatest difference appear to exist in societies in which the roles of men and women are most clearly differentiated (Wardhaugh 2006: 330).

When women speak to other women, they often speak to each other as equals and they are cooperative in their speech strategies, the group is more important than the individual and “When women talk to each other as friends their chief goal in conversation is not the exchange the information, but the maintenance of good social relationship” (Coates 1988: 4).

1.3 Linguistic features

Below, I present the four different language features that I am going to focus on in my essay. The reason why I chose these features was that they are considered to be typically female (Coates 2004: 87-93).

1.3.1 Hedges

Women are said to use more hedges than men, such as I think, you know, I’m sure, sort of and perhaps. These expressions can show both uncertainty and certainty about the topic that is being discussed, and can also be used to mitigate the force of what is being said. That women’s use of hedges could have something to do with unassertiveness is something that Robin Lakoff claims, but she has no empirical evidence to support that (Lakoff 1988, in Coates 1988:4). Jennifer Coates
argues that it is important to look at the different functions that hedges have and not just say that it is a sign of weakness to use them (Coates 2004: 88).

Another hedge that is more common among younger speakers is the word *like*. This word is used as a hedging device to partially detach themselves from the force of utterances that could be considered evaluative, either positively evaluative of self or negatively evaluative of others (Coates 2004: 89).

Precht (2008) shows in her examination of a corpus containing 900,000 words of informal conversations in work and in social contexts that men and women show little difference in the raw frequency of hedges. She looked at 27 different hedges, and eight show significant differences between men and women: Men have significantly higher frequencies than women for five (*about, basically, like + adj/noun, something like, pretty*), and women have significantly higher frequencies than men for three (*almost, maybe, well*) (Precht 2008: 98-99 & 102).

In her investigation of same-sex talk, Coates (1988) finds that women use more hedges than men, and the only hedge that men used more than women was *you know*. Women used the hedges *I mean* and *I think* much more often than the men and she explains this by saying that women exploit the multifunctional nature of hedges. They use them to mitigate the force of an utterance in order to respect the addressee’s face needs (Coates 1988: 8).

When women talk to other women, they tend to talk more about feelings and people than men do when they are in same-sex conversations. Men, on the other hand, talk about things. It can be very face-threatening when we talk about feelings and that can be the reason why women use hedges more than men; Men do not need to use hedges to the same extent because their topic choices may not be as sensitive and possibly face-threatening as women’s topics (Coates 1988: 9).
1.3.2 Tag Questions

Women use tag questions more often than men, but the usage does not differ that much. Examples of tag questions are *isn´t it* and *wasn´t it*. Holmes (1984) divides tag questions into two categories; tag questions that express *modal* or *affective* meaning respectively. Men are said to use more *modal tags* and *affective tags* are more popular among women (Coates 1988: 9, Coates 2004: 90).

Tags with modal meanings are *speaker-oriented*; the speaker wants his/her proposition to be confirmed by the addressee and these tags also seek information;

*She´s coming around noon isn´t she?*
(Husband to wife concerning expected guest)

The tags with affective meaning on the other hand are *addressee-oriented* and the speaker uses them to express his/her attitude towards the addressee, and this can be shown either by supporting the addressee;

*The hen´s brown isn´t she?*
(Teacher to pupil)

It can also be used to soften a speech act that is negatively affective;

*That was pretty silly, wasn´t it?*
(Older child to younger child)

Robin Lakoff claims that tag questions are associated with tentativeness, that women use them more than men do and that “tag questions decrease the strength of assertions” (Lakoff 1975 in Coates 2004: 90-91).

1.3.3 Minimal responses

Minimal responses are also called “back-channels” and examples of minimal responses are *right*, *yeah* and *mhm*. These words are used in conversation when the listener wants to show his/her support towards the speaker, and research shows that women use minimal responses more than men do. In mixed conversations, women use minimal responses to support the men, and women are said to do the “conversational shitwork” (Coates 2004: 87, Coates 1988: 5).

Back channels are often well placed in conversations and do not interrupt the flow of the speaker, and “female speakers also use minimal responses to mark their recognition of different stages of a
conversation, for example, to accept a new topic, or to acknowledge the end of a topic” (Coates 2004: 129). In her research, Coates finds two different ways that women, in same sex conversations, use minimal responses. When the women have a discussion, in which most of the women participate, minimal responses are used to support the speaker and they also show that they have the listerner’s attention. But when one speaker tells the others something, minimal responses are not used as often and when they do occur they are, for example, used by the listeners to show agreement with the fact that a new topic has been established. This shows that the participants in a conversation are sensitive to different types of talk and that they know how to use minimal responses depending on the situation (Coates 1988: 5 & 6).

1.3.4 Questions
Research has shown that women ask more questions than men, and Fishman (1980, in Coates 2004: 92) explains this by saying that questions and answers are linked together in conversation. A question, instead of a statement, gives the speaker power and

research findings so far suggest that women use interrogative forms more than men and that this may reflect women’s relative weakness in interactive situations: they exploit questions in order to keep conversation going (Coates 2004: 93).

In Sandra Harris’s research, she shows that questions are linked to powerful participants, because the person that asks the question controls what the other person can say because the answer has to be relevant. Other research, made by for example Barnard (2000), Barnes (1971) and West (1984) also confirms Harris’s findings that questions are mostly used by the powerful participants. The only time when men ask more questions than women is when the context has high status. In these contexts, men and women are supposed to be status-equal and examples of these contexts are the questionings after formal presentations at conferences and there have also been studies done of the academic seminars at Durham university. We also have to look at the different functions that the questions have and if the situations are symmetrical or asymmetrical (Coates 2004: 94).

2. Method
I have tape-recorded a conversation between six women and I gave them “Men and women” as a starting-off subject and then they were free to talk about whatever they wanted to talk about. I decided to ask my female friends and family members if they wanted to be part of this discussion, so these six women are my friends and the only thing I told them before taping this conversation was that I was going to look for language features that are said to be typical for women to use, but I
did not tell them what these language features were. The conversation was 32 minutes long and I sat with them listening to the conversation but I did not interfere. I know these women from before, and they are used to talking to me and the only thing that differed from our normal conversations was that there was a tape recorder in the room at this moment and that I did not participate in the conversation, I only observed. Afterward, I transcribed the conversation and looked for the four different language features that I have mentioned earlier in the essay. I gave each language feature a special color and when I found a word or phrase that fitted into one of these five language features I marked it with that special color to make it easier to spot it in the transcribed text.

2.1 Material and data

In this essay I am doing a conversational analysis and my material is my recordings and the transcription of the conversation is an interpretation.

These six women are between the ages of 21-33. The participants “P”, “M”, “I”, “E” and “L” are all studying at the university to become teachers whereas “H” has already graduated from the university and is now working as a teacher. The university has also been the place where most of these women have met; “P”, “M”, “I” and “E” met when they attended the same class at the university, but “E” and “I” are the only two who spend time together in their spare time. “L” is a friend of “E” and “I” and they also met at the university. “H” is a friend of “E”, and they often spend time together in their spare time. These six women are not all best friends and the six of them do not all spend time together outside school, and some of them had not even met before this group conversation, but they are open people so I did not see the fact that these women were not “best friends” as a big problem when I asked them to participate in this conversation, because I was quiet sure that they would talk and interact even though everyone did not know each other that well.

There is only one of these six women that has English as a native language, and that is “H”. “P” does not have English as a native language but she lived in an English speaking country for many years. “P”, “E”, “I” and “M” have studied English at the university because they are becoming English teachers. “L” is the only one who has not study English or lived abroad. So most of these women are used to speaking English, but it is still something that I have to keep in mind when I look at my results.

These women are almost the same age; they are all studying except one who graduated a few years ago and is now working, most of them know each other from before and five out of six women have lived in an English speaking country, has it as their native language or has studied it at the university. So in this way it looks as if these women are status-equal, but some people are more
open and outgoing than others and that may affect how much these women will speak during the conversation, if they feel comfortable enough and if they feel like they have something to contribute to the conversation.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Hedges

In total, 70 hedges were uttered during the conversation;

   Like: 51 times
   I think: 12 times
   Sort of:  2 times
   You know: 1 time
   I mean:  3 times

Like was the hedge that was used the most, but this word can be used in many different ways; it can be used as a pure hedge but it can also have a grammatical function in a sentence. 17 times it was used as a pure hedge, as in example (1).

(1) “H” – Do you do the whole dancing..?
     “E” – No
     “P” – Watching each other?
     “E” – No!
     “L” – We have like a scoreboard..
     “E” – Yeah, almost, I was giving a score

In this example, the word like is used as a hedge because it does not have a syntactic function in this sentence. The sentence would work just fine without like, so “L” could have said “We have a scoreboard”. Hedges can show insecurity and in this example it works as an insecurity marker, and “E”’s response confirms that, because she corrects “L” by saying that it was not really a scoreboard, but “almost”.

In this conversation there are 13 examples of when like has a grammatical function in a sentence. In example (2), the women are talking about the television program “Så ska det låta”:
“H” – Who was on it? Was Kevin on it?

“E” – Yeah, and Sebastian..

“H” – From Idol?

“E” – Yeah! And Anna Maria Espinosa something. And a girl that looked like a deer.

“H” – Like a deer?

Like has a grammatical function in these two sentences. The word is needed to be able to express these sentences and it cannot be removed.

Like can also function as a reporting verb, a word to introduce a quotation, as in example (3) when the women are talking about buying clothes for their children:

(3) “P” – Of course we are doing it, of course! I saw this little jumpsuit, like a sports outfit for a little boy and it was bright baby blue and it’s got a Superman S on the tummy. If it’s a boy, I will get him that. And if it’s a girl I’m going to get that little dress that’s got strawberries on it

“M” – I try to think about that when I buy clothes for my son and a few months ago we went to icehockey and it’s so loud, so we bought like, what do you call it? Örons territory, and they only got pink and I was like “it does not matter”, so he got pink ones and everyone was like “oh, cute little girl”, and I was like “it’s a boy”, only because he had pink..

“M” uses like as a reporting verb three times in a row and 17 was the total number of times that the women used like in this way.

I think was also used many times by the women, and that is also a hedge that is said to be used more among women than men. Previous research has shown that women use hedges to mitigate the force of what is being said (Coates 1988: 8). When someone uses I think it may signal that the person is unsure about what he/she is saying, as in example (4).

(4) “M” - Next month he will be one, yeah

“E” - I think I saw you in the newspaper like a really long time ago, like when he was..
“M” - New born? Maybe?

“E” - I think it was like, I think you answered a question..

“E” is not really sure if she had seen “M” in the newspaper, and she shows this by using I think as an insecurity marker.

But I think does not always have to indicate that you are insecure about what you are saying. In example (5), “P” is telling the other women about a movie she has seen:

5) “P” - Well, I think gender does matter tremendously, I watched a movie last night, in swedish it was called “Ett land utan kvinnor”, it was supposed to be futuristic and it was based on UNESCO's numbers for how many women have disappeared, I mean foetus, new borns, grown women. And they say that 35 million women have disappeared in India during the last 10 years.

“P” tells the women that she thinks gender matter tremendously, and she uses I think to show that she thinks it is important and in this example it does not seem that I think is used as an insecurity marker, because she seems sure about her opinion. This also confirms previous research, which has shown that women use hedges in many different ways and that it does not always have to show weakness.

3.2 Tag questions

Only two tag questions were uttered during the conversation. The first tag question, shown in (6), was uttered by “P” when the women were talking about the cave monkey Lucy:

(6) “And the breast were deflated, not pumped like they are right now, I mean this is not normal, is it? If we look at hamsters, dogs, cats..”

“P” is using a tag with modal meaning; She wants her statement to be confirmed by the rest of the group. She wants to know if the others have the answer to her question, because tags with modal meaning can also be used to seek information. “P” is using the tag question variety that is said to be more commonly used among men.
The other tag question, see (7), was uttered by “E” when the group was talking about what they had done during the weekend:

(7) E – So, what did you guys do this weekend? No?
L – Watching You Tube
E – Yeah, what did we do?
L – Watching You Tube
E - We watched a movie, didn’t we?

When I look at this part of the conversation it seems as if “E” is not listening to what “L” is saying. “L” answers “E”’s question in a way that suggests that they had spent time during the weekend because when “E” asks “Yeah, what did we do?” it is “L” that answers the question again using the same answer as before. “E” does not seem to listen to “L”’s answer because she asks “We watched a movie, didn’t we?” “E” is unsure about what they had done the past weekend, and wants her statement confirmed by the women that she knew that she had spent the past weekend with. This tag has a modal meaning, just like the previous one.

Tag questions are said to be used more by women because they are more insecure and need to have their statements confirmed (Lakoff 1975 in Coates 2004: 90-91). These women only uttered two tag questions, and their reason for doing this may be that there were only women in the group and no men, or because they know each other so well that they feel secure enough to say their opinions without doubting its relevance. The two tag questions had to do with the fact that “P” and “E” were wondering about something, and they wanted their statements confirmed because they wanted to know the answer, not because they were insecure about their own opinions. I do not know if the women would have been more insecure about their thoughts and opinions if there had been men in this discussion.

3.3 Minimal responses
During this conversation, the women used a lot of minimal responses, and the most common word was Yeah. In total, the word Yeah was used 61 times and mostly by “E”; she used the word 18 times.

These women used Yeah many times collectively to show support to the speaker, and in example (8) we will see this:
(8) P – Yes, we want to find out, because we may want to be able to choose little outfits.

But that’s not the most important thing, but quite important

Yeah

M – It’s nice to know who you are talking to

P – And a name

Yeah

“P” is talking about her pregnancy, and when she tells the group about the fact that she wants to find out whether it is a boy or a girl, the other women use Yeah to support “P”, to show that they are listening, but we do not know if the women agree with what “P” has said. “M” is the only woman that supports “P” more openly by saying “It’s nice to know who you are talking to”. It is hard to know if the women use Yeah just to support the speaker, to show that they are listening, or if it is also used to show agreement with what is being said. When the women use Yeah collectively there may be women that use that word just to show that they are listening while others may use it to show that they agree with what is being said, so the collective Yeah can mean different things depending on which one of the women you ask.

When the women use the word Yeah, it never seems to interrupt the flow of the conversation and this supports Coates’ findings that these words are well placed in the conversation and does not cause any interruption (Coates 2004: 129).

As mentioned before, “E” is the person that used the word Yeah most frequently among the women, and she uses it a lot to show that she agrees with what is being said, as we will see in example (9):

(9) P – So if you are a dragking, you are a girl dressed like a man?

E – Yeah, and the girl that wanted to be a man, was in the group as well

H – No, she was in the fitcrew

E – Yeah, but also in the dragking group

H – She was in both of them

E – Yeah

In this example, “E” uses Yeah to support and agree with “P”:s and “H”:s questions and statements.
I think it is quite interesting that “E” chooses the word Yeah when she wants to support “P” and “H”; there are other words she could have used, for example Yes and Of course. I do not have the answer to the question why “E” says Yeah instead of Yes, but maybe it has to do with the fact that Yeah is a word that can confirm that you are listening but it can also show agreement with what is being said. In one way, Yes is more definite and if a person uses that word while listening to someone telling something it might signal more strongly that they agree with what is being said. Yeah can be hard to define in that way.

3.4 Questions

During the conversation, 46 questions were asked and this is how they were distributed between the women:

“H” - 10 questions
“E” - 12 questions
“P” - 14 questions
“M” - 8 questions
“I” - 0 questions
“L” - 2 questions

Previous research shows that women use questions to keep a conversation going but also that questions are linked with powerful participants (Coates 2004: 93). Half way through the women’s conversation, silence occurred and everyone was looking at each other. As we will see in example (10), “E” is the person that tries to break the silence; she does not do it once but three times in a row:

(10) SILENCE

E – I thought about something but I forgot
P – No, I think we should be quiet
     E – Yeah, me too
SILENCE

E – So, good talking huh?

Yeah

E – So, what did you guys do this weekend? No?

Here it seems as if “E” is using her questions to keep the conversation going, a language feature that is said to be mostly used by women because they are weak in interactive situations (Coates 2004: 93). But is that really the case here? “E” is using questions to keep the conversation going but she knows the women that she is talking to and she does not need to keep the conversation going if she does not want to. Can it be situation based? To be taped while having a conversation with your friends is not that common, and maybe “E” feels that the conversation needs to continue just because of the taping? On the other hand, “E” may be interested in what the other women had been up to during the weekend but it may not look like that because it seems a bit forced.

If we look at the way the questions are distributed among the women, we can see that “H”, “P” and “E” asked most questions and they are also the women that in this conversation can be seen as the most “powerful”. These three women talked the most in general during the conversation, and with the help of their questions they were able to decide what the conversation was going to be about. In example (11), “E” shows this when the women were talking about what they had been up to during the weekend:

(11) E – No, was just kidding. But yeah, then? I want to know what you did, what did you do?

M – Yesterday we went to a BBQ party in Hille, outside Gävle..

E – Yeah

M – And we had our little son at my dad´s place, so this morning I was just waking up and I missed my son. Nine in the morning I just take the car and get him. I miss him so much

E – Yeah

M – And yeah, that´s pretty much it

“E” asks “M” a direct question, “E” wants to know what “M” has been doing, not anyone else, and
when “M” is telling about her weekend it is “E” that on her own confirms what is being said with the help of the word yeah. “M” had been very quiet up until this moment in the conversation so maybe “E” asked these direct questions to “M” to get her more involved in the conversation? These women are status-equal, but that does not mean that some of the women are more outgoing and talkative than others, in this case “E” is a powerful participant because she can decide over the topic with the help of her questions and can also give away questions to the other participants.

“P” is the participant that asked the most questions during this conversation, but she did not control what was being talked about in the same way as for example “E”. “P” asked many questions within the topics that were being discussed; it was not often that she with the help of her questions introduced a new topic.

4. Summary
In this essay I have looked at women’s language use in same-sex conversation. The four language features that I was looking for was hedges, tag-questions, minimal responses and questions, and I wanted to see if they used these features in their interaction with other women.

My results show that these six women use typical female features in their language, and my result supports what, for example, Jennifer Coates has shown in her research.
These women used many pure hedges and the most common word was *like*, and it was used both as an insecurity marker but it also had a grammatical function in some sentences.

Only two tag-questions were uttered during the conversation and both of them had a *modal* function; the women wanted their statements confirmed by the others because they were insecure about what they had said.

The minimal response *Yeah* was used 61 times in total and it was mostly used as a confirmation from the listeners that they were paying attention to what the speaker was saying. But because women use *Yeah* as a confirmation and as a word to indicate that they agree with what is being said made it difficult sometimes to determent what these women meant when they used the word *Yeah*.

Some of the questions that were uttered were used to keep the conversation going and the questions can to some extent be linked to the powerful participants in this conversation.

References

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Appendix

Yellow – Minimal responses
Purple – Hedges
Green – Tag questions
Turquoise - Questions

E – You start!
H – Okay, I was at her place earlier today and we were watching a documentary about lesbians that were living in a..
E – Collective..
H – Yeah, I was just thinking the other day, why do lesbians always, or not always but most of the time want to be with other women that are butch? If you are lesbian, and attracted to females, why do you want to be with a female that looks and acts like a man?

Yeah, Mmm

P – What about the male perspective, have you ever wondered, I have friends that are gay and one of them is a girl that looks like a boy, and if you are interested in men why do you go for a man that looks like a woman? That’s the same question.
H – Is it just the stuff that are down there that are repulsive, because if you want to be with a guy you want to be with a guy for the way they are? Men have certain qualities that women don’t.

P – Like speech patterns...
H – Yeah

L – I have a friend who is a lesbian, and she says that it is nothing sexual at all, only emotions, so the things down there...
M – Yeah, they fell in love with the person.
L – Yes
E – It’s weird, cause it’s almost like a heterosexual relationship, like...
P – Yes, yeah yeah

E – Most of the time that you see in the media.
L – And one girl is the girly girl...
E – And the other’s boyish
L – Yeah
H – Like the two girls we saw, one was very butch and was going through some sex change to become a man, and the other girl was kind of sort of, manly but not really, and it was like okay wait, okey she’s a girl who’s lesbian, who wants to be with another girl who’s gonna be a man, why don’t she just go for a man instead of a girl that is turning in to a man?

P – Just because she is in love with this person

Yeah, Mmm

H – Yeah, I know, but it is just trying to wrap your mind around it, it’s confusing.
P – Why do you live in a commune with other lesbians?...
H – **Yeah**
P – **MmM, I could** not live in a comune or a whole communite, cause it **seems** too close for me, I want to be able to shut my door at people

**Yeah**

E – They were not together at first, they broke up, but they **like** chose to live together **anyway**. And then the other girl got a boyfriend...

H – That she had a kid with

E – **Yeah**, but they still stayed together

P – And they all live together and look after eachother's paths

H – And it was just the couple that was together from the beginning, they were the only two that lived there, with one of the girls kids, then they broke up but stayed living together. And one got another girlfriend, who did not live with them, and the other one had a boyfriend, that she had a kid with that did not live with them. They stayed living together those two girls. And they were **like** ”we are going against society because people do not expect us to do this and that’s why we are doing it, we have reach our goal”, and I was **like** ”okay”...

E – They had a dancecrew, what’s it called? **Fitcrew!** Like a dancing team or **something**.

H – It was only girls, butch girls.

E – And they had a dragking group as well.

H – **What were they called?**

E – I can’t remember

P – **So if you are a dragking , you are a girl dressed like a man?**

E – **Yeah**, and the girl that wanted to be a man, was in that group as well

H – No, she was in the fitcrew

E – **Yeah**, but also in the dragking group

H – She was in both of them

E – **Yeah**

P – **Of course** she was in both of them

E – **Yeah**, but at first, the girl that wanted to be a man, at first it was **really** important for her to, **like well** ”I’m not a man and I am not a woman, it’s not important”, but then it was very important that **like** other people saw him as a man and not as a woman

H – When he started going through a sex change, he was **like** ”I’m a man, I want everyone to know that”...
P – I can sort of understand that, if it was so important and being through surgery and hormone treatments and change your whole identity from the inside, I can understand that.

Yeah

H – But before that, he was like, Hmm, ”What’s female, what’s male”.
E – Like, ”Gender is a lie”
H – Yeah, ”gender is a lie”, I don’t know
P – That sounds like political.

MmM

P – And also that thing that we are together to go against society
E – And they also had like alot of piercings and I don’t want to be mean but it looked like they never showered, you know that kind of very..
H – That was only those two girls..
E – No, well not the, yeah..
H – The girls that lived together in the, yeah
P – Well, I think gender does matter tremendously, I watched a movie last night, in Swedish it was called ”Ett land utan kvinnor”, it was supposed to be futureistic and it was based on UNESCOS numbers for how many women have disapeared, I mean foetus, newborns, grown women. And they say that 35 Milion women have disappeared in India during the last 10 years.
E – How many?
P – 35 milion. And this was so futureistic, so they had breed out women, no, this is true, the numbers true..
E – Okay okay
P – But if it continues, of course, you would assume that a woman would get an increased value because they are so rare, but we know it is not true..

Yeah

P – In china they kidnapp wives, and this was horrible, of course they paid alot of money for a woman but not to her but to her closest male who owned her. So, male and female, it would be great if it did not matter.
E – Yeah, but I think that even, I mean, I don’t think that men are like better than women or the reverse but I think we are different. I don’t think that, I think that there are some biological difference..

Yeah

E – Don’t think that we are all the same, it’s just like the gender thing is also like a physical difference, but maybe not the way that it is today. I don’t think that everything is female and male today. But that’s like..
P – It’s probably not genetic..
E – No
P – It’s probably behaviouristic, but..
E – But some..
P – If you compare to nature, if we look at deers, the male has the big anklers...

Yeah

H – I think it has alot to do with how we raise our kids too. (Yeah) I’m a pre – school teacher and I see it when the kids, like three year olds, come in through the door and you say to a little girl ”Oh, you look so cute today, with a pink princess dress” and to the boys ”Oh, what a cool T-shirt with a motorcycle on it” or what ever. And when the girls climbe up you say ”Oh, don’t fall” and when the boys climb up higher you are like ”Look”.

Yeah

P – And if a boy gets a scratch and does not cry you say ”Oh, you are a tough boy”. But maybe we have breet the human race to become different, maybe the first humans were very, very similar, there are theories about that, what’s that called, that little cave monkey? Lucy! Have you seen her?

Yeah

P – They say that the males were not that much bigger, were they?
E – I do not know that..
P – And the breast were dillated, not pumped like they are right now, I mean this is not normal, is it? If we look at hamsters, dogs, cats..
H – Only when they are breastfeeding..
P – Yes, that’s when they got, and I mean..
E – I never thought about that..
H – Me neither
E – You learn something new everyday

Yeah

SILENCE

E – I thought about something but I forgot
P – No, I think we should be quiet
E – Yeah, me too

SILENCE

E – So, good talking huh?

Yeah

E – So, what did you guys do this weekend? No?
L – Watching You-Tube
E – Yeah, what did we do?
L – Watching You Tube
E – We watched a movie, didn’t we? Or did we? Oh, we watched ”Så ska det låta”, yes, and..
H – Who was on it? Was Kevin on it?
E – Yeah, and Sebastian..
H – From Idol?
E – Yeah! And Maria Espinosa something. And a girl that looked like a deer.
H – Like a deer?
E – Yeah, with really big eyes, and she was not very good.
P – But she looked pretty
E – Yeah. It was not that good. But we were kind of good, we play also, we also play like when we watch it, we sing and we guess..
Do you do the whole dancing...?

No

Watching each other?

No!

We have like a scoreboard..

Yeah, almost, I was giving a score

Did you win?

I always win

Oh!

No, was just kidding. But yeah, then? I want to know what you did, what did you do?

Yesterday we went to a BBQ party in Hille, outside Gävle..

Yeah

And we had our little son at my dad´s place, so this morning I was just waking up and I missed my son. Nine in the morning I just take the car and get him. I miss him so much

Yeah

And yeah, that´s pretty much it

How old is he now?

One year..

Next month he will be one.

I think I saw you in the newspaper like a really long time ago, like when he was..

New born? Maybe?

I think it was like, I think you answered a question..

Oh yeah!

And I was like "Ahhh”. I had Gefle Dagblad

Yeah

I will be looking for the birthday ads now

Yeah

What´s his name?

Ellioth. It´s fantastic, you have something to look forward to

Not quite yet..

It´s not supposed to be this big, but I can´t suck it in! Have you tried sucking it in when you had
the bump? It’s not so good, it does not work!

H – I have a bump, but not a baby bump
P – That’s a difference, I was showing Roger in the car and I was like sucking it in..
L – Why are you sucking it in?
P – I wanted to see if I could
M – Do you know what, if it’s a boy or a girl?
P – Not yet, but I think, I’m very big, this is only ten weeks..
M – Oh, okay! Maybe it’s two?
P – They said one heartbeat, so..
M – Ohhhh
E – Are you going to find out?
P – Yes, we want to find out, because we may want to be able to choose little outfits. But that’s not the most important, but quite important

Yeah

M – It’s nice to know who you are talking to
P – And a name

Yeah

P – I would like a name
M – I loved to know who was in my, it’s just really like, you can speak to it in another way
P – Cause we got little nicknames
M – Yeah, have you decided what name?
P – Not yet
M – Not yet?
P – Not yet, we are still deciding. You can decide as well and the baby pops out and it does not look like a Anna or a Tomas, it looks like something, someone completely different. Something?

Yeah

H – Like my sister did with their son that was born a couple of months ago, they had a list of names, first names and middle names, that they read to him and his grunting decided what name he
M – So what’s his name?
H – Rowan Alexander
P – Oh, that’s nice! Cause we like Alexander
H – I like that too. When you were talking, you wanted to know what it was so you could pick out outfits I was like ”Yeah now we are back to the male/female thing”..

Yeah

P – Yes
H – Yes, isn’t that funny cause we try to think about not doing it but it’s always.
P – Of course we are doing it, of course! I saw this little jumpsuit, like a sports outfit for a little boy and it was bright baby blue and it’s got a Superman S on the tummy. If it’s a boy, I will get him that. And if it’s a girl I’m going to get that little dress that’s got strawberries on it
M – I try to think about that when I buy clothes to Elliot and a few month ago we went to ice hockey and it’s so loud, so we bought like, what do you call it? Öronskydd, and they only got pink and I was like ”it does not matter”, so he got pink ones and everyone was like ”Oh, cute little girl”, and I was like ”It’s a boy”, only because he had pink..

Yeah

M – I think he has a lot of pink outfits, I think it’s nice
P – It depends on what suits the child
M - Yeah
E – I always buy pink things for my friends sons, like this is pink, very important
P – In that case, shouldn’t you keep it gender neutral, why buy blue for a girl and pink for a boy?
Why not go for..
E – Green?
P – Green
M – I have a lot of red for Elliot and everyone thinks he’s a girl..
E – Because of the red?
M – Yeah. Red jacket, red coach, vagn..

Yeah

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M – Everyone like "cute girl"
P - Yeah
E – I don’t think red is a girl..
M – No!
E – I like blue and pink
P – Boys have only got blue and black..
E – Yeah
I – I don’t want to say it’s wrong to pick girl pink and guys blue, not always, but if you are aware of this gender thing, I don’t think it’s bad always, I don’t know, yeah
P – I think it’s maybe important to let the child know, the little boy, that it is okay for you...

Yeah

P – At pre school if you want to wear the princess tiara..
M – Yeah
P – That’s fine, why not? You do not even have to say anything about it, just play along, make it natural
H – We have a mom at the pre school I work at who is a pre school teacher herself and she is very into putting Hello Kitty, pink, hat on her son when she brings him to daycare, she’s like "Look, have you seen his hat today”, make a big deal out of it. And I was like ”yeah, okay”. And the other day she was like "Have you shown them what you have on your shirt today”, I had not even noticed his shirt, and he had like a little flower or something, she’s like ”you have flowers on your shirt, have you shown them” and I was like "Ohhh”, like doing the opposite of what you are suppose to do, like it’s a shirt. Is it comfortable, does it keep you warm? Good!
P – Do you think it’s nice? Do you like it?
H – Yeah. It’s like the opposite effect of what she is trying to do