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7. APPENDIX
1. INTRODUCTION

There are several studies, which indicate that the way people talk differs depending on whether they happen to be women or men. From this it follows that children at some point start copying the appropriate style for their gender. Because of this it is rather interesting to find out how children view gender differences concerning language usage among adults. Boys and girls copy their parents’ behavior in order to become men and women (Eckert 2003:10). But are they aware of differences or not?

As a further introduction to the topic I would like to briefly comment on the difference between the terms sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological category a person belongs to. Our sex is usually fixed before birth and is a matter of genes. Gender, on the other hand, is socially constructed. It refers to how people acquire characteristics that are perceived as masculine and feminine (Wareing 1999:66).

It should also be mentioned that accounts do differ over the extent to which differences between men and woman are biologically determined or not (Talbot 1998:7). When it comes to differences in language usage there is no convincing evidence for it to be biologically determined, whereas there is rather striking evidence for it to be learnt through socialization. One example is that of one of a pair of male twins who was raised as a female. At the age of four the twins' mother remarked on how feminine the "girl" was, including interests, speech, way of dressing, etc. (Romaine 2000:105). Differences in language usage will hence be referred to as a gender difference.

1.1. Aim and Hypothesis

The aim of the study is to investigate how children view gender conversational differences in language usage among adults. This has been done in order to find out whether their view corresponds to scientific studies in the field.
To enable this aim the following questions will be taken in consideration:

- Can there be said to be a clear difference between male and female language usage, according to researchers in the field?
- What parts of the language are most different/similar?
- Does the way children see gender differences in language usage correspond to what researchers say?

My hypothesis is that children are quite aware of gender differences in language. Most of the children are brought up by a man and a woman. Because of this I believe that they are likely to notice various kinds of differences between their parents; and one such difference could very well be that of language usage. Even if some children do not happen to have experienced these differences as closely as others, I still believe that they are aware of them through school, television, friends, etc.

1.2. Method

To begin with I will set out what researchers say about gender differences in language usage. My presentation starts with common stereotypes and general ideas. From that platform the folk linguistic stereotypes will be examined in more detail and it will be shown whether they hold up or not. This will be done by bringing more recent research on gender differences into the discussion.

From this survey follows my own data collection. A questionnaire, based on the various differences found in the literature, was constructed in order to carry out my study. The reason for choosing a questionnaire for my data collection was because I wanted to get hold of proportionally many answers. Apart from the fact that questionnaires elicit a larger set of data than for instance interviews, they make a comparison of results easier (Wray et al: 1998:167). And a comparison of the results with the literature as well as among respondents is crucial for
the study. Each question in the questionnaire had three alternatives, from which the children were supposed to choose one. (See appendix)

The data collection was made in a school from 38 pupils, 23 girls and 15 boys in year 6. As they are 12 years old my expectation was that they would not have any trouble understanding the questions. The reason for not choosing older pupils is that I did not want the respondents to have passed puberty; as I believe that is a period where awareness about many things, including gender differences, radically enhances. Of course there is no guarantee that none of the pupils have reached puberty; but as it would cost precious time and probably cause inconvenience among the respondents to find that out, I settle for the belief that most of them have not yet reached puberty.

When all data was collected the answers were compared with findings from the literature and analysed accordingly. Even if the aim is not to study girls' and boys' different views, but children’s, the nature of this field of study makes it redundant not to consider possible differences in the answers between boys and girls. In the following section it will be set out what researchers say about gender differences. The focus will be on conversational differences between women and men.

2. RESEARCH ON GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE USAGE

2.1. Narrowing down to gender differences

Differences in language usage depend on many things, far more than gender. The way people speak varies according to the circumstances. There are differences in terms of level of formality, as well as other aspects of the social setting. Language also varies according to geographical position, within as well as across national boundaries (Talbot 1998:19). By saying this I would like for the reader to bear in mind that gender differences in language usage is only part of the whole picture; but yet an important part.
2.2. Early differences and stereotypes

In early writing on the subject, which was mainly performed by men, the language produced by women seemed to be seen as deviating from the real thing. In 1922 the Danish grammarian Jespersen claimed that women have a smaller vocabulary; and that it was not always used properly. He also said that women suffer from an inability to complete sentences. None of these claims were, however, based on evidence (Talbot 1998:37). Similarly the familiar folk linguistic claim that women talk more than men has very little substance today, as there is a lot of evidence to the contrary (Talbot 1998:37). In the 1970s a study carried out in North America stated, as hypothesized, that women's language was characterized by uncertainty, weakness and excessive politeness. Later it was shown that these results were due to an inability to analyse the data; and were also heavily influenced by stereotypes. The kind of language referred to as "women's language" has been shown to be used by men as well (Talbot 1998:38-44).

Another stereotype that does not really hold is that women gossip a lot and that men do not engage in such forms of conversation. Researchers speculate that the picture of gossip as a nasty kind of feminine talk derived from men's fears of what women might say to each other when they were alone. Wherever it originated, a study in 1997 showed that gossip occurred in the speech among a group of young men as well (Eckert 2003:99-100).

The belief that women's language is more polite and more "ladylike" goes centuries back and is very widespread. Believing that women swear less than men and use euphemisms to a greater extent belongs to this stereotype. Early writers claimed that this was a true description of female language. Today, however, these thoughts have been questioned and researchers tend to believe that was actually going on was an attempt to prescribe how women ought to talk (Coates 1993:20-23).
2.3. Conversational differences

Research on gender and conversation has emphasized that women use supportive and cooperative talk, while men's conversation involve competitiveness and fosters hierarchy (Eckert 2003:122). There are even a number of binary oppositions that have been used to characterize women and men's speech:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport</td>
<td>Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Lecturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Oppositional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering this, gender differences in conversation seem overwhelming. This, however, needs to be put in perspective. The experimental situations of research do not always provide the whole truth, and data can be very sensitive to how it is analysed (Eckert 2003:122).

This leads to the necessity of a more thorough examination of certain areas. I will now go deeper into what findings there are about conversational differences concerning quantity of speech, storytelling, feelings and topics, arguing and interrupting, dominance, jokes, questions, swearing, politeness and compliments and finally commands and directives. These specific areas have been chosen because there is research available for each one of them.

2.3.1. Quantity of speech

Studies on quantity of speech go against the stereotype that women talk excessively. In a study by Swacker (1975) women and men were asked to look at a picture and then describe it
from memory. When describing the picture the men talked considerably longer than the women. Of course any extended generalizations could not be made from this study. The interpretation made was that men and women might respond differently under test situations. The women could have felt that they were expected not to speak at length whereas the men could have felt that they were (Eckert 2003:115).

Research on amount of speech shows that women and men tend to talk more in different kinds of situations. James and Drakich (1993) found that men talk significantly more than women in task-oriented and formal situations. In studies of informal situations, on the other hand, there was a slight female dominance in quantity of speech (Eckert 2003:115-116).

Smith-Lovin et al. (1986) found that in same-sex groups the amount of speech was more or less equal between the observed women and men. In mixed-sex groups, however, the men spoke more and the women less than in the same-sex groups. These findings were interpreted as a modification of behavior in the direction of gender-appropriate quantity of speech, when moving into mixed-sex interactions (Eckert 2003:118).

Coates reinforces the findings of Smith-Lovin et al. as she states: "control of topic is normally shared equally between participants in a conversation. In conversations between speakers of the same gender, this seems to be the pattern, but when one speaker is male and one female, male speakers tend to dominate"(Coates 1993:113). Furthermore Coates reports studies where men talk more than women in diverse settings, such as staff meetings, television panel discussions and husband-and-wife spontaneous conversation (Coates 1993:115).

2.3.2. Storytelling, feelings and topics

Johnstone (1990) found consistent differences between stories told by women and stories told by men. The men in her study often spoke about themselves and their stories told of contests
of various kinds. The women’s stories, by contrast, were often about other people, both male
and female. The female storytellers were more likely to put forward the teller as foolish
whereas the men rather established the teller as heroic (Talbot 1998:56-57). Another
difference was found when one woman and one man were asked to collaboratively tell the
same story. The man contributed with action and the woman with feelings (Talbot 1998:65).
According to Romaine women’s usage of a wider pitch in intonation gives rise to the belief
that woman are more emotional than men (Romaine 2000:106).

Maria Ohlsson comments on the stereotype that women talk about feelings and that men are
unable to do this. She says that men's inability to talk about feelings is a myth; but it is
plausible that there are qualitative as well as quantitative differences in women's and men's
ways of doing this. Her main point is that certain topics are more frequent among women than
among men, and vice versa. Thus it is impossible to say that men are unable to talk about
feelings just because women might happen to do so more often (Ohlsson 2003:57).

Even though it was not expressed explicitly, Ohlsson says that there are differences in what
women and men talk about. Coates and Romaine, on the other hand, state that topics
discussed do differ between the genders; and that men talk more about politics and sport and
women about personal relationships (Coates 1993:115 and Romaine 2000:122).

According to Eckert women and men have strong reasons to act in this gendered way. This
is because of society's powerful normative view that women should care about other people
and promote warm feelings. Men, on the other hand, are normatively focusing on their
individual accomplishments. And if people feel that they ought to fit these norms, it is quite
understandable that they are reinforced (Eckert 2003:141). The power of these norms is
revealed whenever someone makes extreme attempts to accommodate the "wrong" norms for
their gender. A woman, for instance, who uses male characteristic speech, is likely to be
frowned upon (Romaine 2000:103).
2.3.3. Arguing and interrupting

*Arguing* is a word that historically is connected to men rather than women. *Quarrel*, on the other hand, is a word that historically is connected to women rather than men. The difference between the two is that arguing canonically involves giving reasons and using rational principles to support a position; and quarrelling does not necessarily include these characteristics. Generally quarreling is seen as more emotional and has a more personal orientation (Eckert 2003:101).

One suggested reason for the situation to be this way is that through history it is generally men who have engaged in debates and argumentation in newspapers, radio and television. Furthermore Deborah Tannen (1998) suggested that few women liked to partake in this kind of verbal combat, as they often saw it as likely to promote individual advancement rather than intellectual gain (Eckert 2003:102).

About interruptions the common belief is that men interrupt more than women and that women get interrupted more than men. The problem in scientifically examining interruptions is in defining what an interruption is. In early studies a distinction between an overlap and an interruption was made. An overlap was determined as when a second speaker starts speaking before the first finishes, but at a point where a new turn in the conversation is anticipated. The definition of an interruption is thus when the second speaker starts speaking at a point where these turn-taking conventions are violated; and when the first speaker ceases talking. Tannen argues that, by supporting the speaker rather than violating the space of speech, overlapping is often a positive conversational strategy. Furthermore it is argued that a speaker who is allowed to speak without anyone breaking in or saying anything is likely to feel frozen out rather than supported (Eckert 2003:111).

Studies have shown that women make a considerable use of overlap as a conversational strategy in informal settings. However, it is hard to say whether or not this constitutes a
gender difference, as there has been very little equivalent research about men's conversation (Eckert 2003:112).

The ability to interrupt someone is somewhat about dominating the conversation. Pamela Fishman (1983) studied conversation among heterosexual couples and depicted men as dominating their partners. They did that by using both silence and interruption. Fishman also showed that men did not bring their partners' topics into the conversation. The result of that was that women often failed when trying to start a conversation on a topic they chose (Eckert 2003:112).

### 2.3.4. Jokes

In institutional conversations jokes tend to follow a hierarchical structure. Successful jokes are those that go from a higher position in the hierarchy to a lower position, rather than vice versa. So if a doctor were to tell a joke about a nurse it is likely to arouse enthusiasm. A nurse, on the other hand, can tell a joke if it is directed to the person him-/herself, or to someone further down the hierarchy.

Research made on jokes in TV-discussions (Almlöv & Ohlsson 1996) showed that men told significantly more jokes than women. A program that had one female and one male linkman showed the same tendency. Here the man initiated all jokes except one. The manner in which the jokes were told also showed the difference between the genders. While the women frequently used quick responses to other jokes, the men quite often used jokes in an argumentative style, where they used paradoxes and provoking exaggerations.

In informal conversations women produce more humorous replies than men, by building on each other's contributions. Men, on the other hand, introduce more jokes and take more humorous initiatives (Ohlsson 2003:69-70).
2.3.5. Questions

A study of couples in conversation, performed by Fishman (1980), showed that the women in the sample used three times as many yes/no and tag questions as the men. During the whole conversation transcribed 370 questions were asked in total. The women asked 263 of them, two-and-a-half times as many as the men (Coates1993:122 and Talbot 1998:82).

A survey of people buying tickets at a Central Station also established that women ask more questions than men. This pattern was even more significant when a woman addressed a male ticket-seller (Coates1993:122).

One explanation for this, presented by both Coates and Talbot, is that questions are part of the conversational sequence question + answer. These two are linked together since questions demand an answer. In terms of interaction it can thus be argued that questions are stronger than statements, as they have the power to elicit a response. Another possible reason for the clear difference in question-asking could be that women, because of their gender-role prescribed by society, feel less inhibited about asking for information (Coates 1993:122).

These explanations might sound as if women dominate men in this respect. I leave it to the reader to decide, but Talbot also mentions a possibility that women ask interested questions simply in order to engage in interaction (Talbot 1998:82).

2.3.6. Swearing

Lakoff (1975) stated that women tend to use weaker word-forms such as oh dear, my goodness and that men use stronger forms as shit, damn. Coates (1993), on the other hand, claims this evidence to be impressionistic. In analyses of cartoons, Kramer (1974) found that the male characters use swearing to a much greater extent than the female characters. When students were asked to identify captions for the cartoons as female or male, there was a 66%
agreement on the sex of the speaker. The students gave the difference in swearing between the captions as a means of distinguishing male speech from female speech.

In an analysis of young speakers it was found that the male participants swore much more frequently than the female participants in same-sex groups. The frequency of male swearing, however, dropped dramatically in mixed-sex groups (Coates 1993:127-128).

2.3.7. Commands and directives

Directives can be seen as trying to get someone to do something. West (1990) found differences in directives between men and women when studying doctors communicating with their patients. Male doctors used explicit directives such as:

- "Lie down"
- "Take off your shoes and socks" (Coates 1993:125).

Female doctors used more implicit directives, often formulated as proposals:

- "Okay, well let's make that our plan"
- "So let's stay on what we're doing" (Coates 1993:125-126).

Female doctors also used the pronoun we rather than you:

- Maybe what we ought to do is, is to stay with the dose...you're on" (Coates 1993:126).

A study of how parents talked when playing with their children (Engle 1980) revealed that fathers give directions to a greater extent than mothers. The mothers in the study instead consulted the child:

- "What else should we put on the truck?" (Coates 1993:125).

This study also showed that the fathers used more directives when playing with their sons than with their daughters.
2.3.8. Politeness and compliments

Even if as stated earlier the belief that women are more polite than men was actually an attempt to prescribe how women ought to talk, the study of the doctors could perhaps be seen as evidence in favour of the folklinguistic belief. The answer to that lies within how politeness is defined. The definition of politeness given by Coates, based upon Brown and Levinson's (1980) theories, is exemplified by greeting others when we see them, asking people how they are and expressing approval for what they do and for what they feel about things. Examples of impoliteness are to baldly ask for something "Give me some cake" or to ignore someone we know (Coates 1993:130).

In a number of empirical studies it has been found that women use politeness strategies a great deal more than men do. (Talbot 1998:91) Brown (1980) studied men and women in a Mayan community in Mexico, to test the old belief that women are more polite than men. Even if it was found that women used more words that are connected to politeness it is hard to state that women really are more polite than men. This is because women and men used rather different styles of interaction (Coates 1993:130-132). Other studies in New Zealand and the USA strongly suggest that women, more frequently than men, both initiate and receive certain kinds of polite speech. But like the study mentioned above, it is hard to draw any absolute conclusions from this. One problem mentioned is that the sort of self a person presents in a study is likely to fall under the gendered stereotype characteristics for male and female speech (Eckert 2003:137).

When it comes to compliments, research in Britain, New Zealand and the United States suggests that women give as well as receive more compliments than men. Holmes (1988) studied a corpus of 484 given compliments, and found that most of them, 51%, were given to a woman by another woman. Only 9% were given to a man by another man, while 23.1% were given to a woman by a man and 16.5% to a man by a woman.
Giving and receiving compliments is less remarkable for women in a same-sex group than it is for men. Female-to-female and male-to-male compliments differ concerning both topic and tone. Women frequently give compliments on appearance, whereas men rather give compliments on skill or possessions (Coates 1993:128).

2.4. Summary of conversational differences

The research on conversational differences is in general not very extensive and hence it is dangerous to make clear generalizations. Some differences, though, are rather well supported. The clearest difference is in asking questions; studies have shown that women ask up to two-and-a-half times as many questions as men. Women also talk more about feelings, use more terms that are connected to politeness and both give and receive more compliments. Men swear more, even if the amount drops in mixed-sex groups. They also tend to talk more and tell more jokes, especially in formal situations. When it comes to gossip and interruptions current research cannot really say if they constitute gender differences or not.

2.5. Children and gender

When children are brought up gender differences are reinforced. To exemplify this we can, as Eckert puts it, "imagine a small boy proudly following his father. As he swaggers and sticks out his chest, he is doing everything he can to be like his father - to be a man. Chances are that his father is not swaggering, but the boy is creating a persona that embodies what he is admiring in his adult role model" (Eckert 2003:10). This pattern is also true for a small girl who dresses up and minces around in her mother's high-heeled shoes. Even if they will not act quite like this as adults, their early performances will surface in their male and female behaviour. Eckert also mentions the constraints on who is able to perform which behaviour. A boy who tries a little mincing is for example not very likely to be considered as cute (Eckert
Another characteristic that enhances gender differences is that children spend much time playing in single-sex groups and that the groups of boys and girls tend to be rather different (Talbot 1998:86).

Einarsson (1981) studied preschool children's awareness of gender differences. The children had words and phrases told to them; and their task was to reply with she, he or do not know. The results showed that talks nicely, likes children, and sings were associated with she. Swearwords, fights, competes, spits, dirty and is funny were associated with he (Ohlsson 2003:58-59). Even if this study is not explicitly on conversational differences it definitely can be seen as evidence for early awareness of gender differences.

2.5.1. Children and conversational differences

Observable differences have been found in language usage among boys' and girls' playgroups. In general girls use language to create and maintain cooperative activities. Boys, on the contrary, use language to assert dominance and the use of commands appears quite frequently. Even if this advocates a clear difference it should also be mentioned that the research on girls' networks is not at all as extensive as that of boys' (Romaine 2000:123).

Similar patterns in, for example, the use of commands, as in the above mentioned study of doctors, have been found when examining boys' and girls' playgroups. The boys used explicit commands:

"Gimme the pliers"(Coates 1993:124).

The girls, on the other hand, used softer commands:

"Let's go around Subs and Suds"

"We could go around looking for more bottles"(Coates 1993:124).

It should be remembered that these differences in girls' and boys' language were found when they played in same-sex groups; and that the result does not say that girls are incapable of
using more forceful directives (Coates 1993:125). Mills also states that directives as well as interruptions occur more often in boys' speech.

An area where research on children goes against the pattern of adult speech was found in quantity of speech. Smith and Conolly (1972) found that girls talk more and were also more linguistically able than boys. Mills also found girls to have a higher communicative competence than boys; and that boys tended to be more dominant than girls. But there is research, Haas (1978), that depicts boys as more talkative (Mills 1995:181).

It is rather clear that in most parts of language, except in amount of speech, conversational differences among children are quite similar to those of adults. In the next section it will be dealt with how children comprehend the speech of adults. Because of the similarities in conversational patterns between children and adults the study will to some extent also show how aware children are of their own language.

3. RESULTS

The children in the study seem to be rather aware of women and men's conversational styles, and therefore to some extent also of their own styles. Their answers corresponded or closely corresponded to what researchers say in eight out of nine questions. The only question where a clear difference was seen between the children and researchers was in that of gossip, where research has stated that there is no notable difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Gossip</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men and women gossip equally much</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women gossip more than men</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men gossip more than women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

61% of the children believe that women gossip more than men, compared to 11% who believe that men gossip more than women.
I find it quite plausible that the children hold the stereotype as the truth here. If you have no evidence to go against a stereotype it can still be considered true. And it is most likely that the children in the study were not aware of what researchers have found. Even if less likely it is of course possible that women they know happen to gossip to a greater extent than men they know.

Concerning politeness and compliments most of the children answered that they are equally used between the genders; compared to research, which slightly favours women in these respects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Politeness</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women and men speak equally politely</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men speak more politely than woman</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman speak more politely than men</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even if most of the children answered that women and men talk equally polite, the statement that women talk more polite than men clearly got more votes than the opposite statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Compliments</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men give more compliments than women</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women give more compliments than men</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and woman give equally many compliments</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the fact that most children thought that men and women give equally many compliments, the answers were rather equally distributed between the other two alternatives.

An interesting finding was that only one of the girls answered that men speak more politely, but nine girls out of 23 said that women do. The same is true for the boys' answers, even if less clear. Therefore their answers cannot be said to go against research either.

In asking questions, where research showed the most significant difference, the children believed it to be more equal.
Table 4. Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men ask more questions than women</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women ask more questions than men</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and women ask equally many questions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the children thought that women and men ask equally many questions. But note the low percentage of answers in questions asked by men, compared to women.

It is also interesting here that none of the girls answered that men ask more questions than women, but four of the boys did. This can be interpreted as if the girls are aware of the socially prescribed trait, which was also shown to go along with research. It is stranger that four boys answered that men ask more questions.

When it comes to quantity of speech, where research tends to depict men as more talkative, the children said it is equal.

Table 5. Verbosity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men talk more than women</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and women talk equally much</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women talk more than men</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that most of the children thought that women and men talk equally much.

48% answered that women and men talk equally much, while the rest of the answers were equally divided between men talking more and women doing so.

When looking separately at the girls' and the boys' answers it was found that most of the boys said that men talk more than women. The boys thus answered according to research findings. And even if equality in amount of speech was by far the most frequent answer among the girls, there were six girls who said that women talk more than men, compared to three who said that men talk more. It seems like the girls support the stereotype rather than research. I find it interesting that the answers between boys and girls differ on a question where there is, even if pointing in different directions, a clear stereotype as well as quite well
supported research findings. An interesting result on whether it is positive or negative to talk a lot was that none of the children answered that it is negative to talk a lot. This might be an explanation for why the boys answered that men talk more than women: since they find it positive to talk much they want this trait to belong to their gender.

A clear difference between how the children view women and men was seen in the question about jokes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Jokes</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women joke more than men</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men joke more than women</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and men joke equally much</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one of the children answered that women joke more than men.

55% said that men joke more than women and only 3% said that women joke more than men. The remaining 42% claimed that women and men joke equally much. These 42% were rather unequally distributed between the girls and the boys though.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women and men joke equally much</td>
<td>Boys 4</td>
<td>Girls 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52 percentage of the girls said that women and men joke equally much, compared to only 27 percentage of the boys.

When considering research this outcome is not all that surprising. Because it has been found that men tend to joke more than women in mixed-sex conversations, the boys' answer is understandable. Since the boys, for obvious reasons, are never present in female single-sex conversation, their references to this question only include situations where men joke more than women. Hence not so many of the boys answered that the amount of joking is equal. The girls, on the other hand, can have access to pure female conversation; and if more jokes or
humorous initiatives are taken here than by females in mixed conversation, their answer is understandable as well.

About interruptions the answers were fairly equally distributed between the three alternatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. Interruptions</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women interrupt more than men</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men interrupt more than women</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and men interrupt equally much</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 of the children answered that women and men interrupt equally much, compared to the other two alternatives that got 11 votes each.

The alternative where men and women interrupt equally much got slightly more votes than the others, which were equally frequented. There were no distinguishable differences in the answers between boys and girls either. Perhaps their answers were surprisingly similar, but since it cannot be stated whether interruptions constitute a gender difference or not I will make no further comments on it.

When it comes to swearing and feelings the answers were somewhat expected. Most of the children thought that men swear more than women and that women talk more about feelings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. Swearing</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men swear more than woman</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and women swear equally much</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women swear more than men</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 of the children thought that men swear more than women and only one child thought that women swear more than men.
Table 10. Feelings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men talk more about feelings than women do.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and women talk equally much about feelings</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women talk more about feelings than men do</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same pattern is seen in this question, as in the above presented question about swearing.

Since this corresponds to old stereotypes as well as to scientific research there is not really much to say about it, apart from noticing the children's awareness. An interesting point, however, that goes against all this, is the boys' answers to the question about feelings. Even if only one boy said that men talk more about feelings than women do (which perhaps is striking itself), there were more boys who said that women and men talk equally much about feelings, than who said that women do. I fail to find a reason for this in the literature. Perhaps these boys have heard somewhere that this is the way it should be. Of course there is also a possibility that the men they have encountered talk as much about feelings as women they know do.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In research of this nature it is very hard to state what is actually the case and what is prescribed by society. Did the children answer what they personally thought, or what they believed they were supposed to answer? This caveat applies for all research in the field. My standpoint, however, is that what people say should be considered true, as long as it is not proven wrong. Children are also believed to be more honest than adults. Concerning this study it is a reasonable statement since they have had less time to be moulded into prescribed personalities.

But even if it is taken that the children shared their honest opinions there are other circumstances that might affect the results. As an example the outcome of some questions
would have been radically different if the 'equality-alternative' had not been an option. The result on the question about amount of questions asked by women and men showed that they ask equally many questions. If, on the other hand, the 'equality-alternative' had not existed, the result would have shown a clear gender-difference and would have agreed with research instead of going against it. Another problem that this alternative creates is that a child who was not certain, or did not really care, probably chose this alternative. The other side of the coin, though, is that it is a possible alternative and thus has to be included. Another point, if we stay with the belief that children who did not care about the study chose this alternative, is that they are less likely to affect the results in a misleading way.

Despite these difficulties it can still be concluded that the 12-year-old children studied are rather aware of conversational differences among adults. Their answers also, to a great extent, corresponded to what researchers say. In the question about gossip, though, the children (and probably most other people too) are likely to hold an old stereotype as the truth. From this it can be concluded that research findings have not really been supported. The importance of them doing so is also evident. To defend the claim that research on this particular subject has not been supported, it can be argued that it would not be fair since it is not yet really shown whether or not gossip differs between the genders. Then again, it can be argued that if this is what is known today, then that is the picture that should be presented. Doing that would at least not reinforce a stereotype, which is probably false.

A question that arises from the children's overall awareness is whether or not they view these differences as unequal. The general viewpoint in the literature is that any difference is basically unequal. Obviously some differences have led to and still are reasons for inequality and neglect, which of course are unacceptable in our society. But in the striving for equality between women and men, not only concerning conversational differences, an important point is almost absent or at least put forth very vaguely. It is the question of whether or not gender
differences are wrong whatsoever. Since it has not been shown that differences between women and men are only created by society and not at all by nature, the striving for equality should concentrate on how people view differences rather than on trying to eliminate them. Many differences through history have been all wrong and necessarily been eliminated. But in the society of today, where equality issues have reached very far, a change of focus is needed. A difference itself is not unequal. It is how we treat and react to differences that establish equality or inequality. The point that should be highlighted is that there can still be differences in an equal society. Since this paper has shown that children already by the age of twelve can be well aware of gender concerning conversational differences between women and men, the importance of not depicting male or female traits as superior is essential. A suggestion for further studies is to examine children's views from an equality perspective. Do children see these conversational differences as unequal?

5. SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to examine how children view gender differences in language usage among adults; and to compare their answers to current research. Research on the topic does not represent definite truths, although some differences came out rather clearly. It was found that the children were quite well aware of gender differences between women and men. In eight out of nine questions their answers were close to research findings. The importance of research findings reaching out to the public was also shown. Furthermore it was shown that studies of this kind must be carefully analysed, since there are many aspects that can affect the results. Because the children proved to be aware of gender differences, the importance of how differences are viewed was highlighted.
6. REFERENCES


Kvinnors och mäns sätt att tala

Jag är:  □ Flicka  □ Pojke

Sätt ett kryss i rutan framför det svarsalternativ du tycker stämmer bäst.

1a. □ Män talar mer än kvinnor
    □ Män och kvinnor talar lika mycket
    □ Kvinnor talar mer än män

1b. □ Det är positivt att tala mycket
    □ Det är negativt att tala mycket
    □ Det är varken positivt eller negativt att tala mycket

2. □ Kvinnor skämtar mer än män
    □ Män skämtar mer än kvinnor
    □ Kvinnor och män skämtar lika mycket

3. □ Män ställer fler frågor än kvinnor
    □ Kvinnor ställer fler frågor än män
    □ Män och kvinnor ställer lika många frågor

4. □ Kvinnor och män talar lika artigt
    □ Män talar artigare än kvinnor
    □ Kvinnor talar artigare än män

5. □ Män ger fler komplimanger än kvinnor
    □ Kvinnor ger fler komplimanger än män
    □ Män och kvinnor ger lika många komplimanger

6. □ Kvinnor avbryter mer än män
    □ Män avbryter mer än kvinnor
    □ Kvinnor och män avbryter lika mycket

7. □ Män och kvinnor skvallrar lika mycket
    □ Kvinnor skvallrar mer än män
    □ Män skvallrar mer än kvinnor

8. □ Män svär mer än kvinnor
    □ Män och kvinnor svär lika mycket
    □ Kvinnor svär mer än män

9. □ Män talar mer om känslor
    □ Män och kvinnor talar lika mycket om känslor
    □ Kvinnor talar mer om känslor

TACK!