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**Language and Gender at Workplace:  
Speech Differences among Mostaganem University Teachers**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Master Degree in “**Linguistics**”

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## **Dedication**

*To my parents*

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## Abstract

The present research work is an attempt to explore gender speech differences at workplace in particular. In addition, it attempts to figure out how men and women communicate and use language differently. Therefore, the present research tends to prove that gender is not only the sociolinguistic variable that has an effect on the genders' communication but also there are other social factors. In order to analyze teachers' ways of using language during the work, the researcher opted for university teachers to be the target Community of practice (CoP). A questionnaire was administered to twenty (20) university teachers working at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem (ten males and ten females). The findings have showed that female teachers tend to use more interruptions, directives and louder voice at workplace. Besides, the attitudes of speakers depend largely on gender; the manners male and female teachers act and use through language reflect the teachers' beliefs and opinions about gender differences at workplace.

**Keywords:** Gender at workplace, speech differences, Language, university teachers.

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## **General Introduction**

Language is a system of communication among individuals. Furthermore, the area of language and society “sociolinguistics” is intended to show how our use of language is governed by many and different factors. Therefore, language is continually changing in order to meet the needs of people using it. Individuals vary in the linguistic forms they use. Speakers do not use just one way or form when expressing or communicating with one another, but they change their ways of speaking according to different factors. One of these factors, it is necessary to mention gender.

Accordingly, gender studies and language studies are both interdisciplinary academic fields, specifically the study of language began from thousands of years ago, while the study of gender is quite recent. However, gender studies have developed differently, achieving the greatest influence in North America when the era of feminism that began in the late 1960s and affected academic and public life as well as high and popular culture.

In fact, there was a belief that the way of communicating for men is different from that of women. Hence, many studies attempt to prove that there are gender differences in terms of using language, constructing ones’ identity. However, other recent studies come to prove that there are other factors which affect the gendered use of language for instance; context, identity, and attitudes of the speaker, in addition to other socio-cultural factors.

In order to study language variation in relation to gender at workplace, the present research takes the community of teachers in Mostaganem University as a context of investigation. Thus, this research aims at investigating the variation between men and women in terms of using language. Particularly, it attempts to examine gender differences in the formal and informal speech of male and female teachers at Mostaganem University. To achieve these goals, the researcher raises the following questions:

- Are male and female teachers aware about gender differences in mixed-sex conversations, and how they categorize them?
- To what extent does the gender variable contribute to the style teachers communicate with and to the accommodation techniques they opt for in their communication?

It is hypothesized that

- Male and female university teachers are aware about gender differences in mixed-sex conversations, and they confirm that these differences cause problems in communication.
- The gender variable contributes – to a good extent - to the style teachers communicate with and to the accommodation techniques they opt for in their communication

The target population in this research is the community of teachers at Mostaganem university. A questionnaire is used as the research tool. It was administered to Twenty (20) university teachers (10 males and 10 females) from different departments. After answering the questionnaire, data are collected from the teachers and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter reviews the main issues of language and gender. It introduces the main approaches in gender studies that are related to language differences. The second chapter presents the methodological framework of the study. It describes the research tool and the participants. The last chapter of the study is devoted to analyzing data, discussing the results and reviewing the major remarks of speech differences among university teachers in terms of gender.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## ***LANGUAGE AND GENDER***

## **Introduction**

Language is the special instrument of human beings that distinguishes them from non-human creatures. People use language to communicate and express their feelings and emotions; yet, they do not speak the same language. Men and women also use language differently, and this issue has been investigated by several scholars under the field of sociolinguistics and gender studies. This chapter highlights the previous studies carried out regarding language and gender, starting with a brief review on the history of language and gender research.

### **1. A Brief Review of Gender and Language**

Language is considered as a tool for human communication. It is featured by gender. The latter, with the advent of language and society studies, was not taken as an independent topic until the 1960s with the appearance of the feminist movement; and sociolinguistics advanced in the 1970s thanks to some well-known linguists as Lakoff, Trudgill, Zimmerman, West, Thorne and Henley.

However, when it comes to the relation between language and gender, it can be considered as an interdisciplinary field that deals with the ways of using language by both genders. Mary Talbot (2010) is one of the scholars who linked gender to language claiming that gender affects people's action in the world, and how the world treats them taking in consideration language in use. Before going deeper in the issues related to gender, it is important to shed the light on both language and gender approaches, as several significant studies have been done by sociolinguists, linguists, and philosophers.

### 1.1. Gender and Sex

Throughout history, the definitions of the terms “gender” and “sex” were misunderstood, as some scholars used them synonymously in earlier studies. On one hand, some scholars used sex to refer to gender in contradiction to grammatical gender, and sometimes used it for biological categorization. Gender, on the other hand, is taken as a social division based on sex, which can be acquired according to social and cultural attributes assigned for femaleness and maleness (Litosseliti, 2006). In other words, gender is about the behavior that conveys one’s social and cultural understanding of self in relation to men and women (Canary and Dindia, 1998).

By contrast, sex is defined as a biological distinction based on physiological and anatomical differences between men and women. So, gender is not something we have but that we do. According to Coates (1998), gender is shown and presented through doing (p.34). The French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in her book ‘The Second Sex’ (1949) also shows that gender is something we do, and she claims that, "the one is not born a woman, but becomes one." In her view, gender is determined through what we do more than who we are. (as cited in Parshley, 1956, p. 273)

Moreover, Meyerhoff (2006) differentiates the two terms “sex” and “gender”, suggesting that the term "sex" refers to a biological or physiological distinction between males and females, as opposed to the more social notion of gender. Meyerhoff (2006) also adds that gender is:

Not grammatical gender (i.e., different classes of noun that be called ‘masculine’, ‘feminine’). Not sex of the speaker, which (largely) reflects biological or physiological differences between people used increasingly in

sociolinguistics to indicate a social identity that emerges or is constructed through social actions" (p. 201).

Gender has been defined differently through differentiating it from 'sex' and 'grammatical gender'. However, it is necessary to review the interrelationship between language and gender.

## 1.2 Language and Gender

Language is something that people use in their daily life, in communication, asking for information, exchanging facts and so on. According to Sapir (1921) language "is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols" (p.8). Whereas, Hall (1968) defines Language as "the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral- auditory arbitrary symbols" (p.158). Therefore, language is a system of conventional spoken, manual, or written symbols by human beings who construct social groups.

The practice of language is important. Through language, people identify their identities and social role. That is, people are identified and their roles and status are known by virtue of language. Moreover, the term "gender" is derived from the Latin word "genus", which means kind or race. Yet, its general usage began in the late 1960s and 1970s, mainly in the professional literature of the social sciences. The following theories give a clear understanding of the concept of gender: (Fenstermaker and West, 2002, pp.26-30)

- The Biological Theory reduces the term "gender" to sex. That is, individuals are said to be either males or females, depending on their external and internal sex organs; as well as, secondary sexual development at puberty.

- Gender in Linguistics refers to the grammatical classification of nouns and pronouns into feminine, masculine and sometimes neuter.
- The Social Constructionist Theory views gender as doing rather than being. That is, gender is a cultural performance and a recurring accomplishment that varies across contexts.

Gender refers to cultural and social attributes that have been acquired via socialization, as it has been showed earlier. According to Wardhaugh (2010), "gender is also a fact that we cannot avoid and a part of the way in which societies are formed around us" (p. 334). Besides, Cameron (2007), Coates (1986), Crawford (1995), Eckert (1989), Tannen (1990), Holmes & Meyerhoff (1999), and other scholars have considered gender as a social construct in the study of language and gender.

Moreover, gender is a fundamental aspect of society, which is deeply imbedded in social organization; not only a means of communication as it is constructed and enacted through discourse. Zimmerman and West (1975) clarify that gender is like something that we possess, and Butler (1990) claims that gender is something that we do or something that we perform. In addition, Kendall and Tannen (2001) commented as follows, "gendered identities are internationally achieved" (pp.556-557). This means that gender exists through the individuals' acts, active negotiation. Thus, it is constructed in their identities' performance.

To sum up, gender can be defined as something that is performed, enacted, and accomplished, and is "never static but is produced actively and in interaction with others every day of our lives" (Coates, 2006, p.66). In short, gender does not pre-exist the individuals, but is actively negotiated and constructed in the performance of their gendered identities, which in itself is an on-going process. "It is also clear that we produce certain speech patterns appropriate to the gender we identify with". (Simpson, 2009, p.621) This can

be explained by the conventions we make about how women talk, and if a man talks in the same way, he will then be called or described as 'woman'.

## **2. Approaches to Gender and Language Differences**

Throughout the second half of the last century, several approaches have reviewed how gender and language are interrelated

### **2.1. The Deficit Approach**

The Deficit Approach is concerned with women characterization. it is founded by the pre-feminist linguist Otto Jespersen who studied gender differences. Jespersen (1922) viewed females as "talking a lot but making no sense" (p.250). In this quote, he relegated females' language to a subservient status considering it as deficient and weak for that quantity of speaking does not correspond with quality.

The main theorists of this approach emphasize the differences between both genders as source of inequality. Lakoff (1975) was also one of the scholars, who argue that women's language style is deficient, powerless and unassertive. In addition, she argued that women in comparison to men use politer forms, more hedges, tags, and indirect requests that show their uncertainty.

However, this approach faced several criticisms from certain scholars, because they do not take local context and social background into consideration. For instance, Freeman & McElhinny (1996) and Lakoff (1975) divide ideas on women's language into three categories: the first refers to the lack of resources that would enable women to express themselves strongly. The second one is the language that encourages women to talk about trivial subjects. Finally, language requires women to speak tentatively. Furthermore, Lakoff (1975) adds a comprehensive list, which is provided below:

- Women use weaker expletives.
- Unimportant topics are associated with women's domain.
- Women use empty adjectives
- Women use tag questions more often than men do.
- Women express uncertainty through the use of the question intonation pattern (Freeman & McElhinny, 1996, p.232)

Her description of the language of women links the existing stereotypes about the speech of women with some results found after empirical studies.

## **2.2. The Dominance Approach**

The Dominance Approach, or the Power Approach, is associated with Lakoff's (1975) revolutionary work in the field of sociolinguistics; which is conducted from a feminist perspective. Thus, it has been assumed that it is derived from a traditional patriarchal negative description of females' speech. In fact, Lakoff described females as being passive speakers and even victims, seeing them as "the second sex" in terms of the French theorist, Simone de Beauvoir, in which Lakoff explained the speech differences of both genders from the perspectives of females' subordination to males' power and dominance. Accordingly, men's conversational dominance appears to reflect the domination of men over women (Freeman & McElhinny, 1996).

All in all, in this approach women's language is characterized by powerlessness, as it contains mitigations and inessential qualifiers that effectively disqualify women from positions of authority. The Canadian sociologist Dorothy E Smith claimed that the differences between men and women have their ground in our way of living and our way of organizing society which began to develop in Western Europe 300-500 years ago (Klein and Steinberg, 1989, p.3).

### 2.3. The Difference Approach

The Difference Approach or the Cultural Approach is associated with Tannen (1990). This approach assumes that males and females belong to different sociolinguistic subcultures, which means that both of them experience life differently. Since childhood, they have learnt distinctive linguistic behaviors.

However; this theory is developed as a reaction to Lakoff's (1975) Deficit and Dominance theories. The researchers who support this theory claim that the reason behind the different biological forms of language used either by men or women goes back to their early socialization. Simply put, when changing culture, the language changes and may develop as people live in different societies.

For example; on one hand, women are interested in making connections, seeking involvement, and concentrate on interdependencies between people (Chodorow, 1974; Gilligan, 1982; Boe, 1987). On the other hand; men prefer autonomy and seek independence, focusing on hierarchical relationships. Yet, several scholars tend to link such differences to socialization rather than biology (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Moreover; Deuchar (1988) suggests that the powerless members of society must also be more polite. Therefore, in communities where women are the powerless members, their speech would contain more elements of linguistic politeness. Similar to the previous theories, this one also ignores the interaction of other social variables; such as race, class, age and context (Henley & Kramarae, 1991; Kramarae & Treichler, 1990). For instance, the world of adults differs from that of children, race and racism and identical regulations affect in different contexts.

## **2.4. The Dynamic Approach**

The Social Constructionist or Dynamic Approach, also known as the contextualizing approach, challenged the previous approaches; as it changed the research question from the study of males' and females' speech differences, to understanding when, whether and how language use constructs gender difference as a social category. According to this approach, gender is a social construct that is achieved through someone's speech. That is, speech and gender vary according to the context.

Thus, the main principles of social constructivist gender theory are that gender is a social construct, the construction is performative in nature and these ideas theorised by Goodwin (1998) and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003). The limitation of 'gender' adheres the constraints of the society which makes 'gender' as binary. Yet, the perception links the performance to gender. So, doing gender, in this view, has effects.

## **3. Language Variation in Speech**

The ways people use language or speak differ from one another. Sapir (1921, p.147) claims that "everyone knows that language is variable". Hence, structure is considered the heart of language and variation defines its soul. According to Richard Hudson (1996), "The study of language variation is an important part of sociolinguistics, to the extent that it requires reference to social factors in which language varies from one place to another, from one social group to another, and from one situation to another" (p. 22).

Moreover, language use in relation to gender is an interesting topic for scholars to seek the sources of communication differences everywhere. Indeed, language varies, as Holmes (1992) argues, as if speakers come from different planets, as they have different ways of talking, thinking, and different brain organizations, due to the fact that it is affected by important factors; such as, the addresses, and the context (p. 245).

Although; several factors affect people's language and specifically the way of speech, one aspect is social variation that usually distinguishes people's affiliation regarding social class. Another aspect is stylistic variation, which refers to the speech of a given individual in different contexts. The last aspect, linguistic variation, is largely dependent on the environment the speaker finds him or herself in. In other words, speech differentiates people in terms of their age, gender, social class and ethnic groups. (Wardhaugh, 2006, pp.5-7)

Moreover, dialect is a variation of language. That is, the different ways of saying the same thing, but it reflects the social structure as gender, class, and age. In addition, there is also the register or simply the ways of stating different things, which reflects social process like division of labor, specialty, contexts, content areas, and specific activities (Halliday, 1987).

Consequently, styles of speech show that language variation has influence on groups and individuals. (O'Loughlin, 2000, p. 2). However; language has a changeable state, as it corresponds to the place where it is used and with whom it is used. No two people communicate exactly in the same way and there are unlimited sources of variation in speech. All of these elements have an impact on the choice of language form. To illustrate that, consider the following conversations:

**First Conversation:** Context (Between two strangers at the library)

A: Could you lend me that book, please?

B: Yes, sure.

**Second Conversation** Context (Between two friends at the library)

A: Pass me your pen, please?

B: Take it.

The examples above demonstrate how the addressee reacts differently according to the form of language utilized by the speakers. For that, we can notice in a man and a woman's conversation that the differences are overwhelming, because men and women on average tend to use slightly a different language style and of course their conversations differ from each other and the topics they discuss are also different and appear to correspond to the style of talk.

Tannen (1990) has her own explanation on the 'dual- culture' model and argues that "conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from other's attempt to put down and push them around" (pp.24-25). Differently put, this means that in a certain conversation, both male and female have a desire to show their control over the topic. For instance, the indirect ways of women to check the truth of a man's speech. The latter attempts to keep showing truths while the former insists on controlling the conversation.

### **3.1. Conversational Differences and Topics**

Several sociolinguists and scholars claim that men use conversation to gain status. Women on the other hand use it to express politeness and establish intimacy in relationships, due to the fact that they show their emotions more than men do. However, when it comes to the topic of conversation, women are involved in that of fashion, clothing, gossiping, decoration, and relationships; while, men are interested in sport, political science, and money. Keith and Shuttleworth (2000) suggest that

Women talk more than men, they are more polite, complain, ask more questions, and support each other, whereas men swear more, do not talk about emotions, talk about sport more, talk about women and machines in the same

way, insult each other frequently, authoritative, and give more commands."  
(p.222)

For instance, minimal response is one of the differences between genders. It is concerned with their ways of speech, and according to Carli (1990), paralinguistic features, such as, 'hm' and 'yeah', are used by women more than man; because it is associated with collaborative language use. When it comes to men, Zimmerman and West (1975) explain that their "Minimal responses are appearing "throughout streams of talk", such as "mm" or "yeah", may only function to display active listening and interest and are not always signs of "support work". In addition, the questions in conversations differ also between men and women. Men questions seek information, whereas, women use them to make the participants engage more in the topic.

Henry Moore (1922) adds another important variety, which is changing the topic of conversation. According to Bruce Dorval (1990), in his study of same-sex friend interaction, "Males tend to change subject more frequently than females in which, this difference may well be at the root of the conception that women chatter and talk too much" (as cited in Shazu, 2014, p. 95). In the end, Brown and Levinson (1987) worked on the Theory of Politeness. They suggested that there were two faces in politeness, positive and negative ones. Positive face refers to the speaker's desire to be liked and admired, while negative face refers to the speaker's wish to remain autonomous and self-governing.

### **3.2. The Use of Wide-Verbal Repertoire**

Verbal repertoire style refers to the total range of linguistic resources available to an individual or a community. According to Holmes (2000), an identity can be performed by a manager, for instance, to show how a woman manages meetings and achieves workplace objectives. (p.212). Yet, Stubbe (2000) claims that the most effective communicative style is a

'wide verbal repertoire style' integrating features associated with both masculine and feminine speech styles. It is used, for instance, by some managers who combine masculine and feminine speech characteristics in differing proportions.

Case and Oetama-Paul (2015) states that, "Those using wide verbal repertoire speech were simultaneously assertive and supportive. They demonstrated language flexibility and adaptability to situational needs and tasks demands mixing a range of discourse strategies to assist with achievement of transactional and achievement goals" (p.346). In this quote, they claim that males and females use such linguistic choices that are not associated to the same gender.

However, Janis Bohan (1993) rejected the idea of binary opposition, assuring that no one is a perfect speaker either masculine or feminine, and it depends on the context (p.19). Bohan (1993) also carried out a research about formal conversation between friends where the idea of the agency of speech occurs. That is, ideology and symbolism can be found in women and men' speech, especially when they want to show things like resistance to society.

#### **4. Gender Differences in Speech at Workplace**

Numerous researchers have explored gender differences in the use of language and speech styles in workplace situation. Yet, it should not be surprising that they would have different perceptions, beliefs, and categories for describing experiences, as workplace may construct the suitable place to discuss their social identities (Alderfer, 1977; Alderfer & Smith, 1982; Miller, 1983).

It has been assumed that males and females use different language styles all the time according to the social constructionist theory; however, these different styles are based on the social context and the interactions between them and the others (Coates, 2006). Morgan (1986) comments that "language is gendered, this means that there is a lack of objectivity in

the terms and expressions of men and women in language” (p.137). Whereas, other researchers based on the social position of males and females to explain how their language is gendered.

McRae (2004) highlighted a close link between the use of gendered speech styles and gender based differential access to jobs. In this study, she stated that the center point of the female speakers is the routine administrative issues; while, male speakers tends to center around the development of ideas. Mullany (2007) provides evidence of both women and men managers breaking stereotypically gendered expectations with the speech styles they use to perform their professional identities, and refutes the existence of clear gender differences in the language use in the workplace.

## **Conclusion**

The first chapter is all about summing up the most significant scholarly investigations in the field of gender and language. In fact, the difference has been explained with a quite range of scholars, for instance, the four approaches have been adopted to explain these differences. However, the first three theories have been firmly criticized for being deterministic and their findings need to be interpreted with some caution. In addition, the main focus of the scholars is men and women’s language, in which they avoid any kind of similarities. Broadly speaking, gender differences depend on many socio-cultural factors.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## ***RESEARCH METHODOLOGY***

## **Introduction**

The present chapter tends to explain the nature of the current research and the illustration of its design. It also describes the sample participating in this study, the procedures followed in data collection and analysis. The notion of 'Community of Practice' (CoP) is introduced and followed by the description of participants. In order to investigate the variation between male and female teachers at Mostaganem university in terms of using language, and as an attempt to examine gender differences in their formal and informal speech, the research instrument that was used to collect data is a questionnaire. The explanations for the methods used in data analysis are also provided in this chapter.

### **1. Research Design**

The research is conducted to test the following hypotheses:

- Male and female university teachers are aware about gender differences in mixed-sex conversations, and they confirm that these differences cause problems in communication.
- The gender variable contributes – to a good extent - to the style teachers communicate with and to the accommodation techniques they opt for in their communication.

The selection of appropriate and relevant research methods is taken into consideration to identify the research problems. For that purpose, the methods used in this study are selected in accordance with the aforementioned research hypotheses.

In order to check university teachers' awareness of differences existing between males and females' speech, and whether these differences may cause problems of communication in

the domain of work -or community of practice, it is necessary to introduce and explain the notion of 'Community of Practice' (CoP).

In this respect, after defining CoP, a brief presentation to the characteristics of the informants is provided. The tool of investigation (questionnaire) is also presented and followed by the data collection procedures.

## **2. Community of Practice**

According to Wenger (1998), a community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who share passions or concerns for something they do, and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better. In addition, CoP takes us away from the community defined by a location or by a population. Instead, it is defined by social engagement after all, it is the engagement that language serves, not the place and not the people as a bunch of individuals.

According to Wenger (1998; 94), mutual engagement is the pivotal component that plays a key role in practice. It enables action, typically via "regular interaction". Therefore, if we take the master two teachers and students of S&Gs as a community of practice, that is they engage in the same thing they have something in common. According to Abdelhay (2008, p.117), the participants of this community: "develop practices, routines, stories proper to the department but which may overlap to practices of other teaching communities". It means that, there is a mutual engagement among individuals of any community of practice. In which there is an earlier history that join them together.

To illustrate, in a university CoP, the teachers and even the students start long time before they come to participate at such CoP. Another thing is that this community for instance may go further, extend and influence other teaching community or CoPs.

Another definition of community of practice is by a joint enterprise, as its name proposes the joint enterprise for Wenger (1998) refers to the joint for the joint action. It means that the members of a community tend to do or to act together. In the case of sociolinguistics teaching and learning community, the joint enterprise was to ensure that students come to confine the subtle sociolinguistics and gender studies ideas. In another sense, joint enterprise is the community's interpretation and the response to its shared situation.

Finally, the CoP is defined by a shared repertoire for supporting the joint enterprise in which, it refers to the daily habits such as washing your face every day, rituals for special occasions, ways of speaking, modes of walking, so far and so forth. To support those ideas, (Wenger, 1998) suggests that the repertoire includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence which has become part of its practice". (Wenger, 1998, p.83)

That is to say, because of the shared repertoire, members of the CoP machinate meaningful expressions about their ambient world and their identity. In addition, it is important to note that the repertoire is not fixed, but it will change over time as response to different factors.

### **3. Participants**

The CoP targeted in this research is academia, namely the community of university teachers. Regarding the fact that universities are considered as one of the main mixed-gender workplaces in Algeria where teachers may have daily interactions, the population approached in this research is the community of teachers at Mostaganem university.

The informants in the present study are twenty (20) university teachers from different departments in Mostaganem university. The participants are of both sexes; ten men and ten women to know how each gender thinks about the opposite gender speech. It was also used to know who is accused when communication failure happens, and to what extent they agree about some gender stereotypes in Algerian society and their attitude towards these clichés.

#### **4. Research Instrument**

Generally, there are several procedures of collecting data that could be used by the researcher in the field of language and gender such as questionnaires, interviews, participants' observations, note-taking, recording, etc. Each instrument can boost the validity of the results accordingly. However, the researcher opted for one tool, the questionnaire.

##### **Teachers' Questionnaire**

The questionnaire aims at investigating how male university teachers differ from female ones in terms of language in relation to gender differences. Therefore, according to the research objectives, the questions were designed to obtain necessary information and attitudes

The primary and only tool of obtaining data in this research is the questionnaire. It is a pre-planned set of questions designed by the researcher to yield specific information about the topic. These questions include: closed-ended (or structured) questions which require answers with yes/no or provided options, and open-ended (or unstructured) questions that are to be answered without choices to be limited to but give the respondents free space to provide their own answers, and multiple-choice questions which involve the subjects with a set of alternatives provided to select one or more answer between them.

The teachers' questionnaire in this study depends on closed-ended questions as to provide a quantitative or numerical data, and open-ended questions to present qualitative or text

information. The questionnaire consists of mixed questions to benefit from all types of questions in gaining information. What is sought by the questionnaire is the reflection of what the respondents want to say. For that, it was better for the questionnaire to be designed in such way.

In order to know if there are speech differences between male university teachers and female ones, especially at workplace, the questionnaire includes a part with questions about demographic information (gender and experience of teaching). A second part consists of seven questions about the way both genders communicate and how they perceived the differences among each other. A third part consists of ten gender stereotypes and clichés, teachers are asked to state whether they agree or disagree on them.

In addition, the questionnaire was used to show who tend to use more speech accommodation during mixed-sex conversation. Therefore, the design of the questionnaire was based on both close-ended questions and open-ended ones to yield different and unexpected data. (see Appendix)

## **5. Data Collection**

The questionnaire was written in English, yet translated when addressed to teachers from different departments in Mostaganem university. The data needed in this present research has been collected after being distributed to twenty participants. The teachers provided their opinions on their ways and forms of using language in their working process and daily communications with other teachers. how they interact and how they use language to manage or to achieve their purposes.

Prior to data analysis, it is necessary to mention that data are to be quantitatively and qualitatively approached and analyzed. Despite depending on one research tool, the content of

the questionnaire combines both, quantity and quality. As qualitative data are based on unstructured or semi-structured research instruments, the quality in the questionnaire reflects the few open-ended questions

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the research methodology. The researcher has described the research design, the CoP under investigation (university teachers), and the research instrument (the teachers' questionnaire). The chapter has also described the procedures of designing the questionnaire, distributing copies to the informants and collecting data. Additionally, in this chapter, the research methodology was discussed along with the rationale for the selection of research tool, target population and methods of data treatment. The following chapter provides the analysis of data and discusses the findings.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## ***DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS***

## Introduction

The investigation of speech differences among teachers is crucial. The tool used in this investigation is the questionnaire that will provide qualitative and quantitative results. The present chapter provides the analysis of data obtained from the teachers' questionnaire. The analysis is illustrated with tables and figures and followed by relevant interpretations. The chapter, further, discusses the research findings.

### 1. Data Analysis

In this section, the answers of the teachers to each item in the questionnaire will be analyzed. The first part is concerned with the general information about the participants. The second part attempts to reveal teachers' opinions about gender differences. The third part is concerned with the teachers' agreements and disagreements on some stereotypes and clichés related to gender at workplace.

#### Part One:

Teachers answered the questions about their genders and experience as follows:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Number	10 (50%)	10 (50%)
Total: 20 (100%)		

**Table 1. Informants' Genders**

As it is planned, the numbers of male and female teachers are equal. This will help the research reach more valid results.

<b>Experience</b>	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	More than 20 years
<b>Number</b>	6 (20%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)

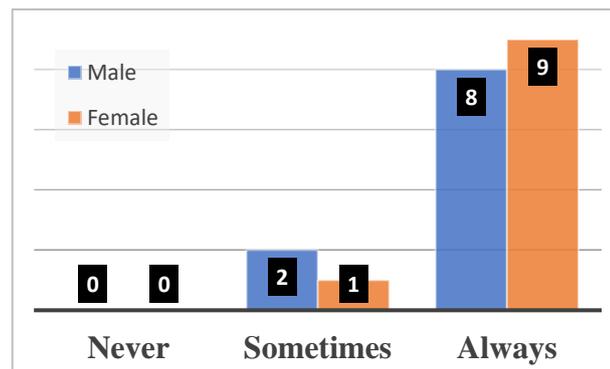
**Table 2. Informants' Experience**

As shown in table 2, eight (8) participants are teachers who taught for 10 to 15 years. Six (6) others have taught for 5 to 10 years; while only four (4) have the experience of 15 to 20 years, and only two informants have more than twenty years of experience.

### Part Two:

The informants have answered

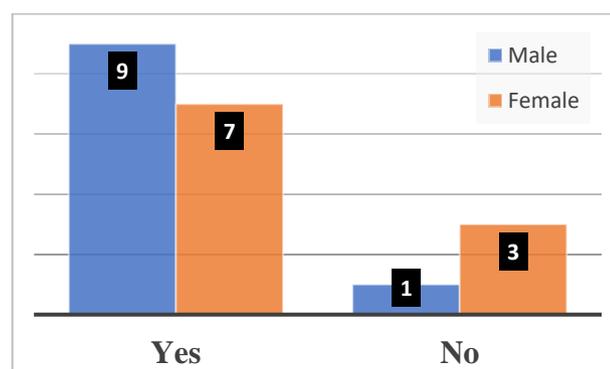
1. How often do you communicate with your colleagues at your Department?



**Figure 1. Frequency of communication**

The majority of participants (17) from both genders reported that they always communicate with their mates at their department, while only three claimed that they sometimes do. No informants opted for 'never'.

2. Do you use the same speech style when speaking to male and/or female colleagues?



**Figure 2. Shifting the style with the opposite gender**

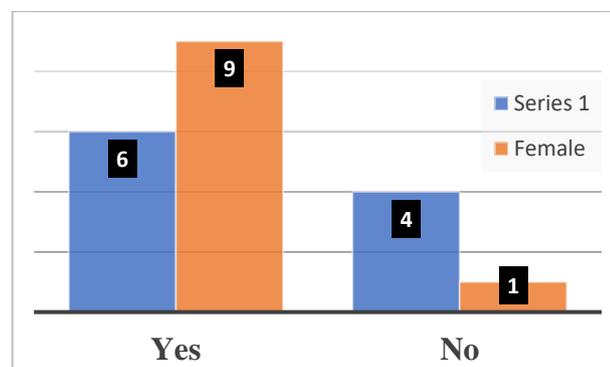
The majority of participants (16) stated that they shift their style of communication with the opposite gender. However, only four teachers claimed that they do not change their speech

style with the opposite-gender teachers. It is noticed that female teachers who claimed that they shift the style are more than the male ones. The results indicate that teachers opt for other styles due to the gender factor.

3. Do you prefer communication with the same gender teachers, or you have no problem with mixed-gender conversation? (if there is a problem, please state why)

Most of the informants claimed that they interact with the opposite gender colleagues, and some of them preferred the same gender to engage in conversation with. The respondents, thus, varied in the answers by opting for interaction with a male, a female, or both. As for the problems that teachers could have experienced with mixed-gender interaction, no teacher claimed that they had such problems.

4. Do you feel any differences between both genders' speech during mixed-gender conversations?



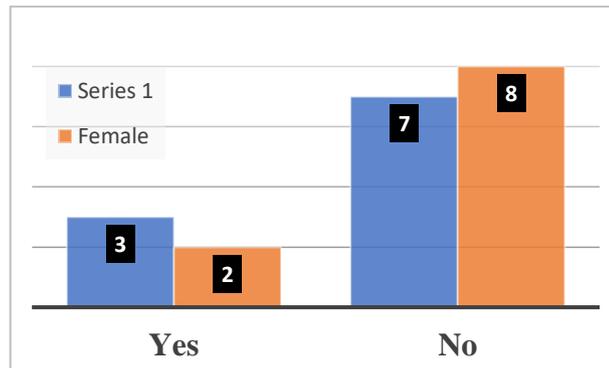
**Figure 3. Speech differences in mixed-gender conversations**

Two-thirds (15) of the participants claimed that they feel the speech differences in mixed-gender conversation. More females (9) feel such differences than males (6). However, four male teachers and one female do not feel such differences.

Those who opted for 'yes' were asked to justify and explain. All male teachers who claimed that they notice speech differences justified that they are aware of gender differences

in terms of speech. Females showed a greater tendency to believe that there is a particular disparity between their linguistic behaviors and that of males due to the interests, needs and topics of talks among each gender group.

5. Do you think that these differences lead to misunderstanding at workplace?

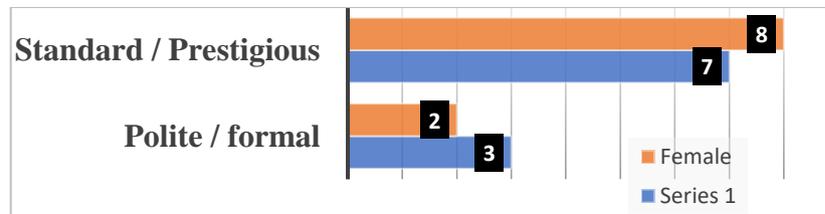


**Figure 4. Mixed-gender conversations lead to misunderstanding**

The majority of informants claimed that no misunderstanding is caused by the differences in mixed-gender conversation. Eight (8) females and seven (7) males opted for 'no'. As for the ones who thought such speech differences lead to misunderstanding, three male and two female informants chose 'yes'. This indicates that less misunderstandings are caused by speech differences in mixed-gender conversations.

Teachers were asked to exemplify. Some males stated that they experienced a misinterpretation of women colleagues' kind words and ways in speech in order to attract them. Some females stated that men tend to use strong words that women misinterpret as blaming them or imposing their opinion. However, one female teacher considered 'women talkativeness' as a communication barrier.

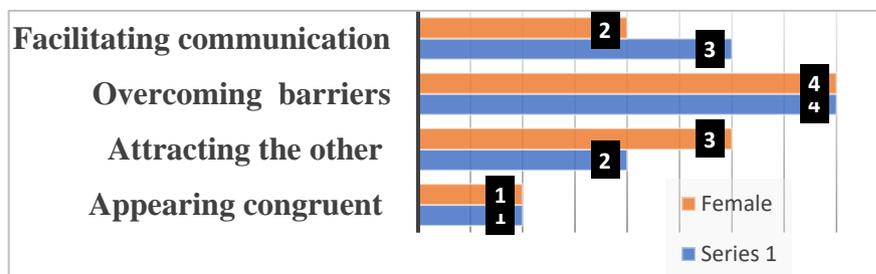
6. Do you accommodate (choose specific forms of expressions that are similar with those of the other) during mixed-sex conversation? (*Please, answer regarding your gender*)



**Figure 5. Speech accommodation**

As figure 5 shows, three (93) male teachers tend to opt for formal and polite forms. This view was shared by two (2) females. Notably, using standard and prestigious forms of language is more apparent from both genders. Seven (7) males and eight (8) females accommodate their speech while communicating with their colleagues through prestigious and standard forms. Teachers were asked about the ways of accommodation. Females mentioned loud voice, interruptions and directives, whereas male teachers admitted the use of strong words and expressions.

#### 7. Why do you use accommodation technique(s)?



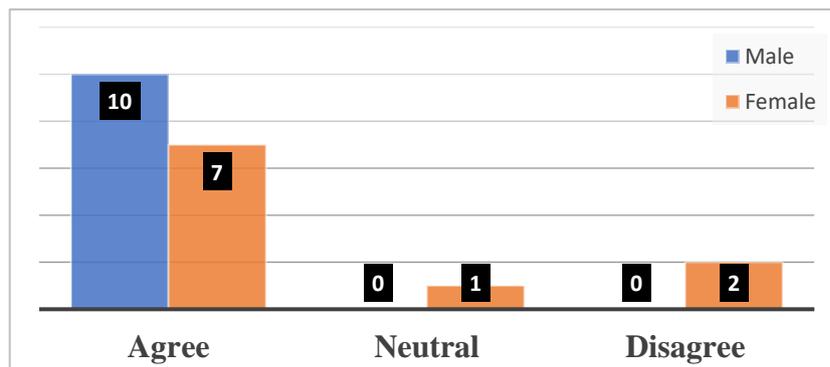
**Figure 6. Reasons of speech accommodation**

Informants showed different answers about the reasons of any techniques or ways that teachers use in order to accommodate with the opposite gender. Two (2) females and three (3) males stated that they accommodate for the natural desire to facilitate communication and to help to better understand the message. Four (4) females and four (4) males consider their accommodation as a way to overcome communication barriers. Three (3) females and two (2) males use such techniques of accommodation in order to attract to the other gender by being

similar to them. Other informants -one male and one female- stated that the desire to appear more congruent with the person with they are interacting is the reason.

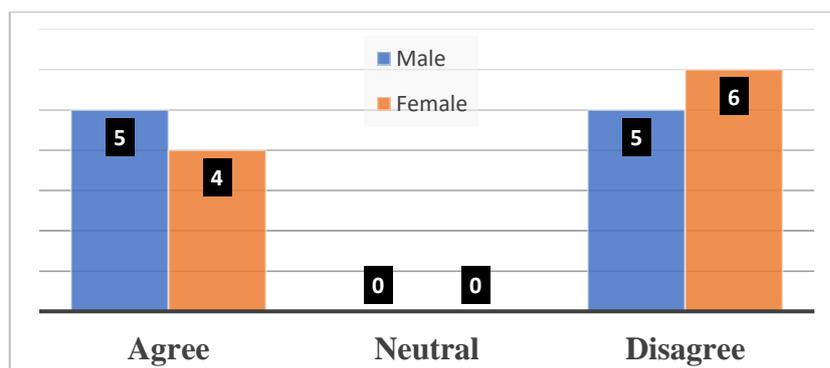
### Part Three:

Teachers were asked to say whether they agree, disagree or are neutral to ten stereotypical statements and clichés relevant to gender in their CoP. The following graphs demonstrate their answers on each statement.



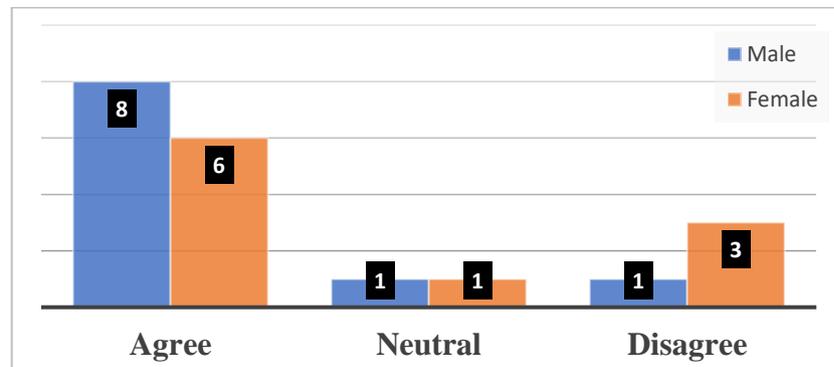
**Figure 7. Women talk more than men**

Such stereotype received the agreements from both male and female teachers. All males agreed, and seven females did too. It is noted that one female was neutral in answering, and three (3) others disagreed. The results describe that the quantity of female speech is proved to be higher, and that is proved through the agreements of male and female teachers.



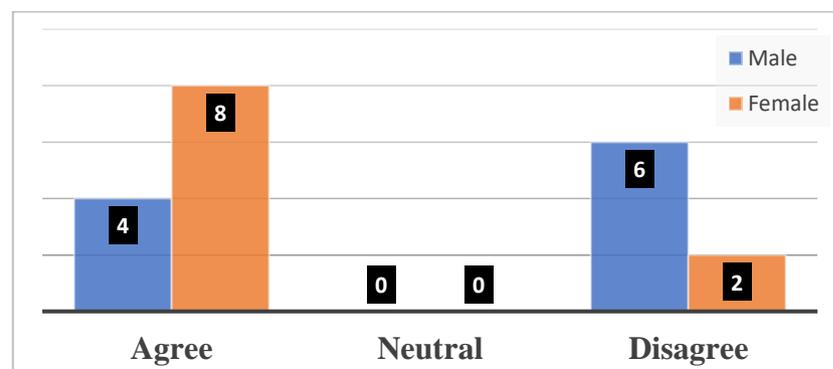
**Figure 8. Men are more dominant in conversation**

Male and female informants provided different answers. Half of the male respondents (5) agreed, and the other half (5) disagreed that men are dominant in conversation. Even four (4) females agreed on this statement. However, six (6) females did not consider the male dominance in conversation. Thus, it is confusing to decide which opinion is closer as both sides gave variant answers.



**Figure 9. Men are more assertive and direct in their speech**

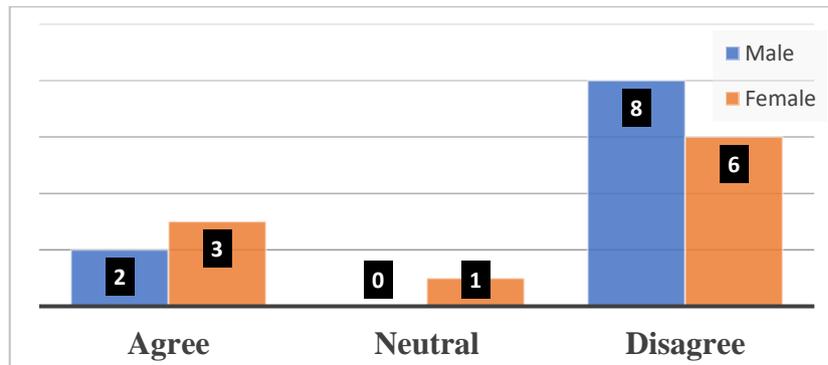
Eight (8) male respondents agreed on the cliché that men are more assertive and direct, while only six (6) females agreed. However, three (3) female teachers did not consider such cliché true, along with one (1) male who disagreed. It is remarked through the answers that both men and women confirm the assertiveness and directness of men.



**Figure 10. Women are politer than men**

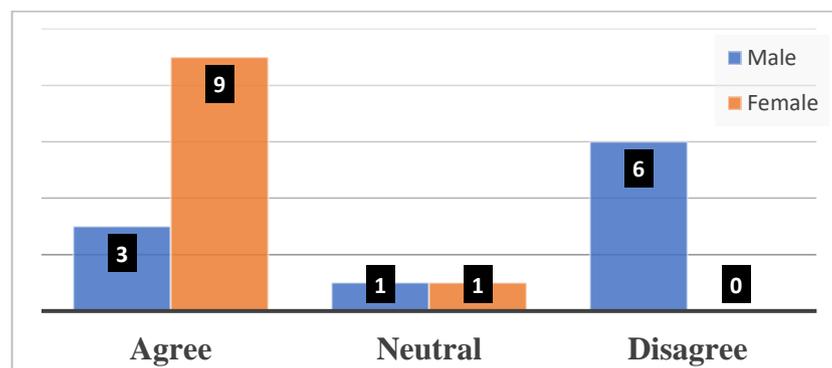
Eight (8) female respondents agreed on the cliché that women are politer than men, while only four (4) males agreed. However, six (6) male teachers did not consider such cliché

as true, along with two (2) females who disagreed. It is remarked through the answers that women praise their politeness despite the considerable denial from males that such politeness is not more than men's politeness.



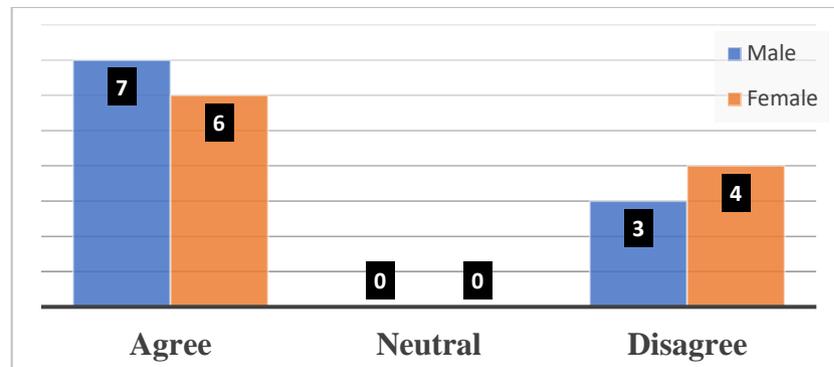
**Figure 11. Men interrupt women more than women do**

The statement that men do more interruptions than women received eight (8) disagreements from males and six (6) from females. The informants that agreed on this are three females (3) and two (2) males. It is necessary to consider females' disagreements on the statement because it reflects the objectivity of females as the statement reflects the cliché of 'women interrupt more'.



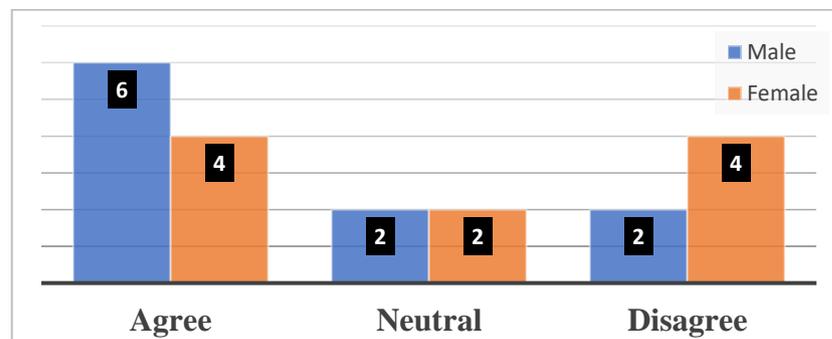
**Figure 12. Women are more verbally skilled than men**

This stereotype received the agreement of nine (9) female informants and three (3) males. However, six (6) males did not consider women more verbally skilled. Two informants from both genders were neutral. Females could be biased to such positive description since no female participant disagreed on it.



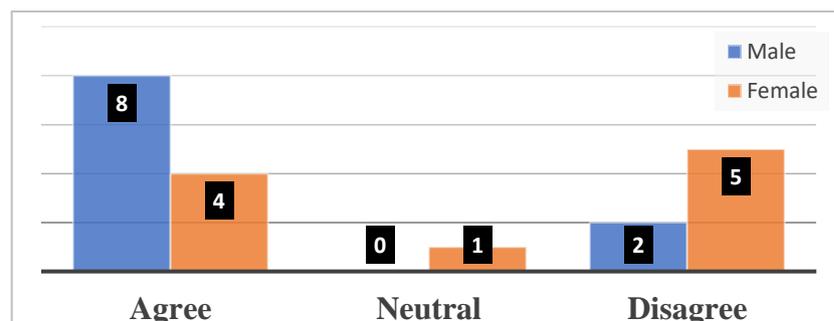
**Figure 13. Men use prestigious language with female colleagues**

As figure 13 shows, agreements are more than disagreements on the cliché that men use prestigious language with female mates. Six (6) females and eight (8) males agreed. Yet, three (3) males and four (4) females did not consider men's language to be prestigious with women. The agreements of female indicated that such cliché is confirmed to be true.



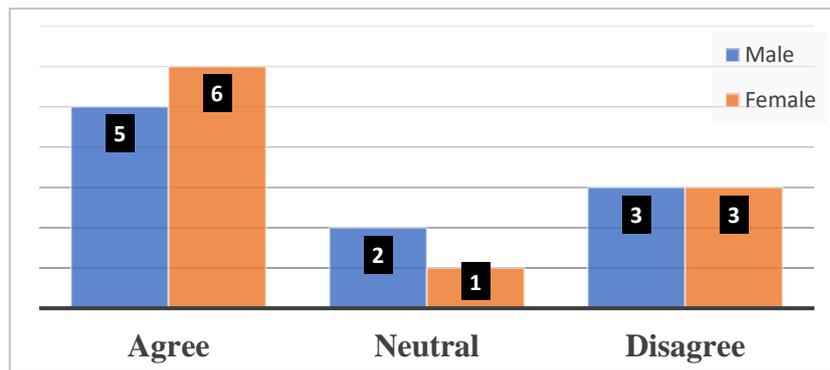
**Figure 14. Men use polite forms with female colleagues**

Six (6) male respondents -compared to four (4)- agreed that men use polite forms with women at work. Four (4) participants were neutral (two from each group). Yet, four (4) females disagreed on the statement. This confirms the female teachers' uncertainty about the statement.



**Figure 15. Women use loudness, directives and interruption at work**

Almost all male teachers (80 agreed that women use louder voice at work, perform more directives and interruptions, noticeably four males agreed on that too. However, half of the female informants (5) did not agree along with two (2) males. This shows how women shift their style at work to be stronger.



**Figure 16. Women use strong expressions at work**

Informants have answered differently to this stereotype. Five (5) males and six (6) females agreed on the statement that women use strong expressions at work. Less numbers of disagreements are reported by three males and three females. The results indicate that women show much verbal power and performativity through their speech.

## 2. Findings and Discussions

The presentations of the questionnaire analysis have been demonstrated in qualitative and quantitative ways. At this point, the results are discussed with relevance to the data collection tool. Indeed, the teachers' questionnaire unveiled crucial information about their interactions with one another. Their awareness degree about gender differences could urge them to give reliable and valid answers.

Initially, the factor of experienced teachers who participated, such experience could help them adapt with the setting and members of the community. Also, there is no serious lack of communication between female and male teachers. Regardless their gender and mixed-sex

conversations, male and female teachers work together, share and discuss many educational and personal issues. Exchanging thoughts was also evident through their confirmation that there are several reasons to communicate and accommodate with the other.

Feeling the difference between male and female speech implies that an individual tends to modify their speech while interacting with the opposite gender so that they do not feel the difference. It could also be that social norms hinder such differences, that is, what is acquired from society. Nevertheless, it is not denied the educational level reflects the teachers' awareness about these differences between men and women speech styles.

The findings also indicated that gender stereotypes have their impacts on teachers' attitudes and beliefs. However, such clichés concerning speech style received different views and comments from male and female teachers. Starting from the stereotype that women are talkative, informants shared the agreements on such fact. However, such fact has not been scientifically confirmed through studies. Such debate reflects that what is overgeneralized in the society makes itself imposed as a fact.

Choosing formal and polite forms of language while communicating, however, is not proved to be performed by one gender more than the other. Further, the gender roles contribute to the identification of behaviors expected from and towards a woman or a man in a particular culture. As for the interruptions, men and women showed contradictions in the answers. Each gender's answers seem to be biased. As a matter of fact, interruption is proved to be performed by women more than men.

Communicative skills have been confirmed to be debatable. Some results showed that women are verbally skilled, and others showed that men are more successful than women in communication due to the directness and assertiveness. Despite the wide literature on

comparing male and female speech style, less studies had distinguished one gender's communicative style effectively. To add, misunderstandings appear in the conversations between both genders, some teachers believe that this happens as misinterpreting intentions. However, the dissimilarities in speech styles between males and females do not reflect much problems in women and men communication.

Thus, communication is not successful only when teachers are aware about such differences. Interacting with the opposite sex simply implies paying attention to the language they use. For instance, women teachers tend to have louder voices reflecting a liability in the social norm that interprets or associates a deep voice with authority.

The fields of conversations are stereotypically known among the community members. To clarify, each gender has their topics of interest. To illustrate, men are more prone to talk about objective debates, material and mechanical things and activities, whereas women are used to talk about people, relationships, clothes, feelings and children. Therefore, some features that describe each gender are hidden and unknown to individuals unless they communicate regularly with the opposite gender.

The results obtained from the questionnaire prove that it is ordinary and natural to shift the style when addressing the opposite gender. Despite the contradictory results related to those showing agreement on using the same style, teachers opted for several ways and reasons of accommodating with the other. That indicates that they already believe such style-shift is occurring. As no one changes or imitates, individuals may modify their speech according to the situation and the person with whom they are interacting.

Finally, speech accommodation seemed to be more as a subconscious process that allowed teachers simultaneously shift the way of speaking like being more or less prestigious,

Appearing more or less congruent with others. As it is noted that male teachers exhibited more convergence accommodation than women. That is explained in our society as they expect conservativeness from women. A marked behavior from females is using directives and loud voice only at work.

### **Conclusion**

All in all, what can be valid in a given speech community may not be so in another. Even among individuals, impacts are relative. The present chapter represented the practical part of the study. It provided the analysis of data obtained from the teachers' questionnaire. The analysis was quantitative and qualitative. After presenting data, the researcher interpreted the major findings with some discussions.

## General Conclusion

The findings of the present research indicated that male and female teachers working at Mostaganem university, with different educational levels, from different socio-cultural backgrounds, and having relatively-high awareness about gender differences, feel the differences existing in the conversations and language practices among their opposite gender colleagues. Differences have occurred to be more related to topics of interest, style, loudness of voice, directiveness and interruptions.

The teachers' awareness about gender difference in terms of speech have consciously and unconsciously contributed to obeying the social and cultural norms related to stereotypical thoughts. Misunderstanding could be the result of gender conditioning between males and females at workplace. Females, due to sociocultural norms, are still conservative, while males still appear to be performing convergence accommodation.

Some studies relate gender differences to the social position of males and females in their society in the sense that men and women live in different worlds and, therefore, they have different cultures. That is to say, there have always been differences between men and woman from the day of birth as they dress differently, act differently, have different opinions, and what is more commonly noticed is that they have and are aware of the variety of dissimilarities in their speech.

As this study opted for one social context and one workplace. It could be preferable for more valid and reliable results to investigate the case of gender differences among individuals in cross-workplaces or in larger communities.

The interest in gender studies, indeed, is in constant expansion among scholars and researchers. It is recommended for further research to highlight gender performativity. That is, analyzing how the differences that male and female teachers distinguished by can contribute to giving them power at workplace. Judith Butler's theory of gender performance and performativity could have been used in such research.

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# APPENDIX

## Teachers' Questionnaire

This Questionnaire is a part of a Master dissertation. In order to investigate the difference between female and male teachers' speech at the Department of English and whether these differences lead to misunderstanding at the place of work, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions regarding your experience as a team member at the Department.

### Part One:

Gender: Male  Female

Experience: .....

1. How often do you communicate with your colleagues at the Department?

Never  Sometimes  Always

2. Do you use the same speech style when speaking to male and/or female colleagues?

Yes  No

3. Do you prefer communication with the same gender teachers, or you have no problem with mixed-gender conversation? (if there is a problem, please state why)

Male  Female  Both

Explain, please

.....  
.....

4. Do you feel any differences between both genders' speech during mixed-gender conversations?

Yes  No

If yes, how?.....

.....

5. Do you think that these differences lead to misunderstanding at workplace?

Yes  No

If yes, give an example

.....  
.....

6. Do you accommodate (choose specific forms of expressions that are similar with those of the other) during mixed-sex conversation? (*Please, answer regarding your gender*)

7. Why do you use accommodation technique(s)?

- a natural desire to facilitate communication and to help to better understand the message
- a way to overcome communication barriers
- a technique to be attracted to the other gender by being similar to them
- a desire to appear more congruent with the person with whom you are interacting

## Part Two:

To what extent do you agree with the following gender stereotypes, clichés and thoughts in your community of practice?

1. Women talk more than men

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

2. Men are more dominant in conversation

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

3. Men are more assertive and direct in their speech

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

4. Women are politer than men

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

5. Men interrupt women more than women do

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

6. Women are more verbally skilled than men.

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

7. Men use prestigious language with female colleagues.

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

8. Men use polite forms with female colleagues.

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

9. Women use loudness, directives and interruption at work.

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

10. Women use strong expressions at work

Agree  Disagree  Neutral

*Thanks for your Collaboration*