Introduction

The study of discourse and gender is an interdisciplinary endeavor shared by scholars in linguistics, anthropology, speech communication, social psychology, education, literature, and other disciplines. Lakoff describes her book as an attempt to provide diagnostic evidence from language use for one type of inequity that has been claimed to exist in our society: that between the roles of men and women (1975: 4). She posits a cycle that begins with the unequal role of women and men in society, resulting in differential gender socialization by which girls learn.  

Language and Gender Dominance

It was precisely such advice and the discourses generating them that became the target of work by feminist linguists in the early 1970s, as part of second-wave feminism. The Berkeley linguist Robin Lakoff wrote a highly influential book, Language and Woman’s Place (Lakoff, 1975), on the speech of women, arguing that women’s language is a result of the powerlessness of women within the hierarchical nature of gender relations, and that as a result women’s speech style shows uncertainty and powerlessness (in contrast to the...