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ABSTRACT

The recognition of linguistic stereotypes based on gender and actual speech production were examined in 10 four-year-old and 10 six-year-old children. Eight linguistic forms were presented to the children in two different contexts in a story. After each sentence containing one of the forms, the children were asked whether a boy or girl had spoken, and occasionally asked to explain that choice. Analysis of the transcribed story-telling and responses show that affect was the strongest explanation for gender-marked items. Six-year-old boys appear to make judgments more in line with adult gender stereotypes. Assumptions about the kind of explanation associated with gender-marked items were largely borne out. However, it was not clear whether children fit their explanations to their choices in some cases, or chose in terms of their explanations, which represented their understanding of the event. Results were found to be congruent with earlier research on children's development of social gender identities. (MSE)

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LINGUISTIC MEASURES OF DEVELOPING SOCIAL GENDER IDENTITY

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The research reported here is focused on sociolinguistic processes in children's construction of social gender identities during their first year of formal schooling. The study is being undertaken in parallel with a project on the impact of schooling on social gender identity: the development of a social gender identity is a complex process and involves many aspects of children's activities slowly coming to be regulated by the particular social representations of gender dominant in their society (Duveen and Lloyd, 1986).

Lakoff (1975) has claimed that gender differences in language use are established by the age of five. Support for this proposition has come from subsequent studies by Meditch (1975) and Haas (1979). However, while the distinction between masculine and feminine forms of discourse has been well researched, its relation to social gender identities has received much less attention. Practically all the research and theory in this area has been concerned with the question of group differences between boys and girls in their use of language, often with the inference that such differences correspond to stereotypical gender identities. More than a decade ago Bodine (1975) noted that gender differences in spoken language are preferential rather than exclusive, though the significance of this point has not been explored.

Children, of course, neither behave nor talk in exclusively stereotypical ways. Rather, previous research from members of our group (Duveen, 1984; Lloyd, Duveen and Smith, 1988) as well as other studies (e.g. Edelsky, 1977; Mills, 1986) suggest that children develop an understanding of both masculine and feminine forms of thought, action and speech. In each interaction the particular identity to be assumed needs to be negotiated. Current ethnographic observations in our parallel project tend to confirm this separation between children's gender identity as a persistent, more or less stable social categorisation and their use of masculine or feminine resources at particular moments. All discourse entails shifting positions and shifting positions in children's discourse have been identified in some areas. Shatz and Gelman (1973), for instance, report the ability of children to modify the complexity of their speech utterances as a function of the age of their listener. Anderson (1977) has investigated the

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shifts in style that children produce for different roles in puppet games, and Streeck (1986) has demonstrated that children shift between teacher and peer roles in peer-tutoring situations.

Children's acquisition of language involves not only increasing skill in the manipulation of an expanding vocabulary, but also increasing skill in interpreting the talk of others. Neither talk nor interpretation are simply linguistic skills, but involve knowledge of social structure and its linguistic enactment (Edelsky, 1977). Both production and interpretation take place in accordance with a developing knowledge of what this social structure is. Most previous research on young children in this area has taken one of two routes. Firstly, researchers have looked for differences in language production that are gender-linked; and secondly, researchers have asked subjects for judgments - or interpretations - of specific linguistic features as 'gendered' productions. The two approaches are not straight-forwardly complementary: as Labov (1972) points out, judgments draw on knowledge of a stereotype rather than knowledge of the productions of actual speakers.

This particular project is looking at both recognition of linguistic stereotypes and actual speech productions. Over the course of 30 children's first year at school, we are gathering data from three different angles. During their first term, the children were video-recorded as they played in the classroom, so that we have a corpus of naturally-occurring conversation between age-peers. Ten girls and ten boys have also taken part in two tasks, presented in story-form, one of which assesses stereotypical knowledge of 'gendered' linguistic forms, and the other, children's associations of gender marking with specific actions, attributes, or situations which commonly arise in the classroom. The two story-tasks will be repeated in the children's third term, and a further corpus of conversation will also be collected at that time. The two story-tasks have also been presented to 10 6-year-old girls and 10 6-year-old boys from the top class of the school, as a contrasting group within child culture.
The remainder of this paper will be devoted to the initial results from the story-task looking at 'gendered' linguistic forms.

Background

Since Lakoff's (1975) publication of her book on women's language, much interest has focused on adult speech, or the speech of older children, but little research has been undertaken on the speech of young children. Edelsky (1977) however sought to chart children's acquisition of adult

stereotypes, and her work underlies our own story-task. Edelsky presented 24 sentences - a total of 12 forms each used in two different contexts - to subjects from four age groups: 6 years, 9 years, 12 years and adults. They were asked to judge whether each sentence would have been said by a man, a woman, or equally well by either. A number of subjects were then picked at random from each age group, and were interviewed about the reasons for their choices. Edelsky's procedures allowed her to count how often a particular item was assigned to men or women, to check on whether or not both instances of a particular form were treated in the same way by subjects; and to determine whether the judgments were based on knowledge of a linguistic stereotype, or some other aspect of the sentence. For example, 'Damn it, the television's broken' could be assigned to the man because men say 'damn it' and women don't, or for some other reason such as, that television is more important to men. Edelsky's results showed a gradual progression towards the acquisition of the adult linguistic stereotypes, although interestingly, the stereotypes were held most strongly at 12 years. Table 1 shows Edelsky's results for 6-year-olds and adults on the eight forms that we have used in our study.

TABLE 1. From Edelsky (1977)

ITEM	Assigned to (gender)	Age
Damn it	Male, low consensus	Adult
	Male, high consensus	6 yrs
Won't you please	Female, low consensus	Adult
	-	6 yrs
My goodness	Female, high consensus	Adult
	-	6 yrs
Adorable	Female, high consensus	Adult
	Female, low consensus	6 yrs
Tag	Female, low consensus	Adult
	-	6 yrs
Very	Female, low consensus	Adult
	-	6 yrs
Oh dear	Female, high consensus	Adult
	-	6 yrs
Command	Neutral	Adult
	-	6 yrs

Consensus: High = >70% to one sex, <15% to the other
Low = >60% to one sex, <15% to the other

Table 1 shows that 6-year-olds achieved Edelsky's measure of consensus on only two items: 'damn' and 'adorable'. She also notes that even here, children were not consistent in their judgments of the two separate instances of each item. In interviews, very few 6-year-olds could identify a particular linguistic form as being gender-linked, and

focused instead on topic. They appeared to utilise two areas of knowledge for their responses: one is that a particular domain comprising home, clothing, babies and small things is female-marked; and the other is that being angry, mean and bad is male-marked. By 9 years, children can express knowledge of such stereotypes as 'men swear and women don't'; and 'women are polite'. But it is not until 12 years that children can maintain a focus on linguistic form. So, when looking at 6-year-olds, we would expect them to respond overwhelmingly to topic; though Edelsky did also note that 6-year-old boys were 'somewhat superior to girls in their ability to consider that there might be linguistic correlates of sex roles' (1977:243).

Design of task

Given the 6-year-old results of Edelsky's study, 4-year-olds may appear to be an unlikely group for a similar study, firstly because of the difficulties of getting them to make judgments on sentences, and secondly because the results, on the face of things, would probably not be illuminating. However, (1) if a suitable way for presenting the task to very young children could be found, then as well as enabling us to gather this kind of data from younger children, 6-year-olds may also show more awareness of linguistic form. (2) Also, Edelsky asked children for judgments of adult speech: this (as she notes, p.227) is not a comparable task to asking adults for judgments of adult speech. Our aim is to get children's judgments of child speech. (3) Given that judgments arise from knowledge of linguistic stereotypes, and language is socially situated, then these judgments must develop from topic-based accounts like the ones that Edelsky received in her interviews. Therefore, although we can't expect much in the way of metalinguistic awareness from 4-year-olds (see e.g. Tunmer, Pratt and Herriman, 1984), a detailed study of the early, topic-based accounts that surround linguistic forms which later become 'gendered' may give us fresh insight on the development of social gender identity and its linguistic enactment.

Method

Eight linguistic forms were presented to the children twice in two different contexts. Two items were altered to suit these subjects: as 'adorable' is not commonly used by English 4-year-olds (or adults), 'sweet' was substituted; and as 'damn' was considered rather strong school fare for children of such tender age, 'blast' was substituted. The test-sentences are given in Table 2.

TABLE 2. LINGUISTIC ITEMS IN TEST SENTENCES

Blast it, it's broken
Blast it, I've spilt my tea
I'm going to draw a sweet picture
What a sweet bear
Oh dear, I dropped the crayons
Oh dear, I forgot my scarf
Won't you please let me have the 'phone
Won't you please let me have the teapot
The water is very hot
I am very tired
We're friends, aren't we
I can go on the slide, can't I
Look how I go down
Look at me swinging
My goodness, it's time to go home
My goodness, what a mess we've made

A story describing an afternoon at school, having as its protagonists one girl and one boy, was written in order to present the test-sentences to 4-year-olds. The children are described playing together on a variety of toys. The test-sentences are delivered as speech referring to their activities. To help keep the child's attention, a series of pictures of the toys was shown. After each item, all children were asked who it was who had spoken - the boy or the girl. This proved unproblematic. Further, each child was asked on several occasions to explain their choice. The story-task was repeated with 10 each of 4-year-old girls and boys, and 10 each of 6-year-old girls and boys. Each presentation of the story was tape-recorded, and the tapes were subsequently transcribed.

Results

The results fall into two parts. Firstly, we shall discuss the assignation of the test-sentences to the boy or girl protagonist by the boy and girl subjects; and secondly we shall discuss the explanations that the children gave of their assignations; and the relationship between the type of explanation and the linguistic form and/or topic in which it was embedded.

1. Assignation of items to boy or girl protagonist: Simon and Jenny

Tables 3 and 4 show the sentences that were allocated to either Jenny or Simon by at least 7 out of the 10 subjects in each age by gender group.

TABLE 3. ITEMS ASSIGNED TO JENNY OR SIMON

By Six Year Olds

By GIRLS

Jenny (>7/10)	Simon (>7/10)
Sweet bear	Blast it ... broken
Sweet picture	Won't you please ...teapot
Very tired	Blast it ... spilt tea
My goodness ... hometime	
Can't I	

By BOYS

Jenny (>7/10)	Simon (>7/10)
Sweet picture	Look ... down
Sweet bear	Very hot
Won't you please ... teapot	Blast it ... broken
Very tired	Blast it ... spilt tea
Won't you please ... 'phone	My goodness ... hometime
	Aren't we

Six-year-olds allocate both instances of 'sweet' and both instances of 'blast it' in the direction of the linguistic stereotype. The only other item on which there is agreement among girls and boys is 'I am very tired', which is allocated to Jenny. Apart from this, members of each gender group claim 'My goodness it's time to go home' for their own, and both sexes allocate 'Won't you please let me have the teapot' to the story-child of the opposite gender. This may be because they want to allocate possession of the teapot to the story-child of their own gender. Boys, however, also allocate the other 'Won't you please' item to Jenny.

TABLE 4. ITEMS ASSIGNED TO JENNY OR SIMON

By Four Year Olds

By GIRLS

Jenny (>7/10)	Simon (>7/10)
Sweet bear	Blast it ... spilt tea
My goodness ... hometime	Oh dear ... crayons

By BOYS

Jenny (>7/10)	Simon (>7/10)
-	Look ... down
	Blast it ... broken
	My goodness ... hometime
	Sweet picture
	Oh dear ... crayons
	Oh dear ... scarf
	Won't you please..teapot
	Very tired
	My goodness ... mess

What is most noticeable about the 4-year-olds is that 4-year-old boys do not allocate any items to Jenny - but allocate 9 items to Simon. This looks like a male

preference for allocating the speech to Simon, particularly when compared with the girls, who only agreed on two items each for Jenny and Simon. Apart from this, both boys and girls associate one 'blast it' item with Simon, albeit different ones, and each claims 'My goodness, it's time to go home' for the story-child of their own gender. These are the strongest similarities to the 6-year-olds. 'Oh dear I dropped the crayons' is associated with Simon by both girls and boys, an item on which there is no strong agreement at 6; and at 4, 'I am very tired', which 6 year olds gave to Jenny, is allocated by boys to Simon.

2. Explanations and relationships with test-sentences
Table 5 gives examples of the children's explanations of their allocations.

TABLE 5. EXPLANATIONS FOR CHOICES

4-year-old-Girls

Blast it, I've spilt my tea
- because she knocked it over
- because he spilt it all over the floor

My goodness, it's time to go home
- because she wanted to go home
- because her mummy's there

4-year-old-Boys

My goodness, it's time to go home
- because he wanted to go home
- because he likes going home, so he went clompering home

I am very tired
- because he was just tired
- because it's been a hard day

6-year-old-Girls

What a sweet bear
- because she loved bears
- because she wanted to pretend it was a baby

Won't you please let me use the phone?
- because she wants to use the phone
- because she was the mummy and he was the dad

6-year-old-Boys

Blast it, it's broken
- because he didn't like things being messed up
- because girls don't say 'blast it'

Won't you please let me use the phone?
- because boys sometimes say 'I want the phone'
- It sounded like her. Girls do sound like that

In order to see whether the test-sentences receive particular kinds of explanation, a coding system was devised whereby each explanation can be assigned to one of 11 categories. These are as follows:

TABLE 6. EXPLANATORY CATEGORIES

1. Don't know/no response
2. Simple assertion (because she did)
3. Story logic (reference to prior events)
4. Circumstances (introduction of new material)
5. Actor (she kicked it)
6. Intent (she wanted to play with it)
7. Affect (she liked it)
8. Action or attribute ascribed to boys generally
9. Action or attribute ascribed to girls generally
10. Other
11. Reference to linguistic form

The main results of interest fall into the Actor, Intent, Affect, Generalised Behaviour and Linguistic Form categories, so our discussion will be confined to these.

2.1 Actor

e.g. 'Because he's the one that made most of it'

All children used this category equally for both Simon and Jenny, at both 4 and 6 years. This implies that being an actor or agent is not in itself gender-linked; and furthermore, suggests that items which are allocated and explained in terms of actors will not themselves be 'gendered'. This is borne out when we see which items attract Actor explanations: 'Oh dear', 'very' and 'My goodness' receive Actor explanations from both 4 and 6-year-olds, items on which there is no clear gender consensus.

2.2 Intent

e.g. 'Because Simon wanted to make it all up again'

There is no statistically significant difference between 4-year-old girls' and boys' use of this category to explain their allocations to either Simon or Jenny. However, boys use it for Jenny rather less often than one would expect. By 6 years there is a marked change: girls use intent for Simon more than expected, and boys do not use it for Simon at all. So there is little change between 4-year and 6-year-old girls' use of intent, but a statistically

significant change between 4-year old and 6-year old boys. At both ages, boys use this category infrequently for Jenny; at 4, intent was one of the most used categories for Simon, but boys' use ceased altogether by 6. This suggests that intent explanations would be linked to items that are gender-marked among boys. The only item that receives a clear majority of Intent explanations is 'won't you please'. This is not a gendered item at 4, but at 6 boys allocate both 'please' items to Jenny.

2.3 Affect
e.g. 'Because she likes the teddy bear'
Four-year-old boys use affect more than expected for Jenny explanations, and 4-year-old girls use affect less than expected for Simon explanations. So already at 4 we have gender-marking in affect, and the difference is statistically significant. At 6 years the same pattern is observed, although the figures just fail to reach statistical significance at the $p < 0.10$ level. What is significant for the 6-year-olds is the low use of the category for Simon explanations, and the much higher - almost treble - use of the category for Jenny explanations. This shows that by 6 years, explanations in terms of affect are not favoured by either boys or girls for Simon. This suggests that the strongest consensuses on gender-linking will occur on linguistic items whose allocation to Jenny or Simon is explained in terms of affect. And this is in fact the case: 'sweet' items are explained overwhelmingly in terms of affect, and at 6 this is the strongest gender-linked item. 'Blast it' items are explained in terms of Actor at 4, but at 6 Actor and Affect categories are used equally, and these items also attracted 5 references to linguistic form. The remaining two items, the 'Look at mes' and the tag-questions are also explained in terms of Affect at 6, but not at 4 These are not strongly gendered, although boys do assign one 'Look' item to Simon, and girls assign one tag item to Jenny.

2.4 Generalised Behaviour
e.g. 'Because she's a girl and normally boys don't draw sweet pictures, they sort of draw fighting pictures and things like that'
No 4-year-old gave an explanation in terms of the general behaviour of either boys or girls. We have eleven instances of 6-year-old use of this category in our data - and all of them were made by boys. As we see the expression of generalisations as an important step towards the acquisition of linguistic stereotypes, this finding is in line with Edelsky's impression that boys are in advance of girls in realising that there might be linguistic correlates of sex roles. It could also be, of course, that boys are more concerned than girls to mark a distinction.

2.5 Linguistic Form
e.g. 'Girls don't say blast it'
Children from all groups used this category, although as you would expect, 6-year-olds used it more (10 instances) than 4-year-olds (4 instances). However, as further evidence for Edelsky's point just mentioned, 4-year-old girls used it least (once), 4-year-old boys used it just as often as 6-year-old girls (three times); and 6-year-old boys used it twice as often as 4-year-old boys and 6-year-old girls (7 times). What is also of interest is the type of item which attracted an explanation of this kind. Most comments (six in all) referred to 'blast', four referred to 'won't you please', two to 'my goodness', and one each to 'sweet' and 'oh dear'.

Conclusion

We are as yet at an early stage in this project, and the results must be taken as a first and tentative analysis. The most striking aspect of our findings is their similarity to Edelsky's work. Although our study is being undertaken in a different culture and more than a decade later using different procedures, the parallels are clear. Our 6-year-olds show greatest consensuses on 'blast it' and 'sweet', the items equivalent to Edelsky's 'damn it' and 'adorable'. Affect emerged as the strongest explanation for gender-marked items, and it has links to the negative affect domain identified by Edelsky. Further, 6-year old boys appear to make judgments more in line with adult gender stereotypes. In terms of the relation between gender-marked items and the explanations the children gave, we can see that our initial hypotheses of the kind of explanation that is associated either with gender-marked items, or items that come to be gender-marked, are largely borne out. This is important for the development of linguistic stereotypes, or of the ability to perceive in these terms. We cannot say, however, whether items which are not yet consciously marked tend to provoke explanations of a certain sort, or whether the nature of the explanation provides associations which become attached to linguistic items. That is, if the relationship we have found is non-arbitrary, then we cannot as yet say whether children fit their accounts to their choices, or choose in terms of their account, which itself represents their understanding of the event.

Finally, our results are congruent with our earlier work looking at children's developments of social gender identities. This showed that while girls and boys had equal access to knowledge of gender marking, it was the boys who used this knowledge to assert a social gender identity through the use of masculine toys in play (Lloyd and Duveen, in press).

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