

Grzegorz A. KLEPARSKI, Marta PIKOR-NIEDZIAŁEK

GENDER AND LANGUAGE: TOWARDS A FEMINIST PRAGMATICS BY CHRISTINE CHRISTIE, EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2000. PP. 202. ISBN 0-7486-0935-0

In recent years there has been a sudden increase of publications dedicated to feminist issues treated from different angles and points of view. Also pragmatics – the much-unwanted child of Chomskyan wedlock – is more and more frequently treated from new angles, including diachronic perspective in such works as, for example, Arnovick (1999) which offers seven case studies in English illocutionary development. Judged from this perspective, Christie's *Gender and Language: Towards a Feminist Pragmatics* is yet another comprehensive, hence valuable contribution to changing patterns in the studies of language and its use. However, unlike the recent works on pragmatics such as, for example, Kasher (1998) or Verschueren (1999), only Christie's volume deals with the concept of feminist pragmatics.

At the very outset of her book the author adopts George Yule's (1996:3) definition of pragmatics that *pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said*, and, because Christie's book does not presuppose any prior exposure either to pragmatics or feminist studies on the part of the reader, this definition seems to be fully sufficient for the purposes set for her work. Both pragmatic and feminist approaches to language use are introduced in the two opening chapters of the book. In the first chapter such issues as *sentence meaning* and *speaker meaning* are discussed. Moreover, the author explains why studies of language in use need a pragmatic dimension and why pragmatics and feminism are relevant to one another. The second chapter presents the diversity and common concerns of feminist research as well as feminist approaches to language use. It also introduces such concepts as language and power, and accounts for why feminist studies of gender and language use need pragmatics. The aim of the third chapter is to familiarize the readers with a set of analytical tools employed within pragmatic studies such as, for example, *entailment*, *presupposition*, *implicature* and *textual coherence*. In addition, it focuses on the

scope of pragmatics and the generation of both word meaning and prepositional meaning. The remaining chapters of the study are devoted to discussing various approaches to discourse analysis such as, *speech act theory*, *Gricean pragmatics*, *politeness theory* and *relevance theory*. It is worth pointing out that the discussion of each of these approaches is accompanied by a sample analysis of gender differences in language use.

In spite of the fact that the book is an introductory guide to feminist pragmatics one gets the impression that the critique of methods to discourse analysis is far too brief, and hence superficial. More importantly, the author of the book seems to be far too selective in the choice of the approaches to discourse analysis she discusses since only a fraction of them is presented – in a cut-and-paste manner – and applied to the study of gender. One would expect to find within the canvas of such an introductory book at least some sections that would present even in a cursory manner such aspects of discourse analysis as *variation analysis*, *ethnography of communication*, *conversation analysis*, *the Birmingham school*, *textual linguistics* and *interactional sociolinguistics*. Obviously, the question that may be raised at this point is whether the approaches evidently disregarded by the author of the book are of any relevance to feminism and the studies of gender or whether gender plays any role in their application.

Likewise, one cannot escape the feeling that such pragmatic principles, as, for example, *politeness principles* are not universal. Kopytko (1995:487) claims that *a speaker should not be seen as a deterministic device, or an abstract concept devoid of attitudes, personality*. Christie's book provides evidence which proves unambiguously that a single politeness strategy can be understood in quite distinct ways and that the gender of the interlocutors appears to have an impact on which strategies are selected and how they function. Finally, it seems that approaches to discourse cannot be universal unless they incorporate the studies of gender into their analyses.

On the whole, this work certainly offers a new perspective on discourse analysis because it postulates that the studies of gender must necessarily be incorporated into the analysis of different approaches to discourse if the analysis is to be both complete and verifiable. In fact, Christie's volume shows that pragmatics and the study of gender are much interrelated. Therefore, if an analyst starts with analyzing discourse, sooner or later he or she will end up analyzing gender differences and vice versa. Other studies analyzing language and gender that have been published so far looked for evidence from such branches of science as anthropology, dialectology, sociolinguistics and social psychology but – to the best of our knowledge – no other work has ever made the connection between studies of gender and pragmatics that evident and clear. Christie (2000:30) writes: *pragmatics provides a solid descriptive basis for analysis, and feminism rich insights into socio-cultural phenomena such as*

gender. It seems fairly clear that to disagree with this statement would be a grave and empirically groundless mistake, to say the least.

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