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***GENDER AND POLITENESS* BY SARA MILLS,
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One observes that in recent years there has been a sudden increase of publications dedicated to linguistic (im)politeness and gender issues. Judged from this perspective, Sara Mills' *Gender and Politeness* is yet another valuable contribution to changing patterns in the studies of (im)politeness and gender. However, unlike the recent works on gender such as, for example, Tannen (1990), Uchida (1992), Holmes (1995), Coates (1996) or Macaulay (2001), only Mills' volume offers a new perspective on the relation between gender and politeness.

The main aim of the book is to develop a more community-based, discourse-level (that is the level of structures above the utterance) model of both gender and linguistic politeness and the relation between them. This is in marked contrast to an almost exclusive focus on the individual in most analyses of politeness (Lakoff (1975), Brown and Levinson (1987)). At the same time, as describing what gender and linguistic politeness are and how they function, this work also questions the stability and solidity of these entities. Instead, Mills perceives them as processes or acts of evaluation which people perform in conversation. By analysing various types of data, that is audio-recordings of conversations, questionnaires, interviews and anecdotes, the author aims to develop a complex, pragmatic model of interaction which can account for the way that gender, in its interactions with other variables like race, class, age, sexual orientation, contextual elements and so on, influences the production and interpretation of linguistic politeness and impoliteness.

In the first chapter the author considers the general problems connected with linguistic interpretation, most notably the model of the speaker, the hearer, and communication. The second chapter discusses the problems with Brown and Levinson's (1987) work on politeness. Various critiques of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model are drawn together, so that new forms of analysis can

be considered. The principal claim made here is that politeness cannot be understood simply as a property of utterances, or even as a set of choices made solely by individuals, but rather as a set of practices or strategies which communities of practice develop, affirm, and contest, and which individuals within these communities engage with in order to come to an assessment of their own and other's behaviour and position within the group. In the next chapter Mills analyses the way that politeness has often been discussed in relation to impoliteness and argues that impoliteness has rarely been analysed in its own terms. Moreover, this chapter focuses on how interactants come to decide that someone has been impolite to them. The fourth chapter, in turn, questions much of the so-far research on gender and language. It also formulates a new more process-oriented and performative model of language production and interpretation and its relation to factors such as gender. Consequently, the new model describes gender at the level of discourse rather than only at an individual and utterance level. The final chapter examines the stereotypes which abound in research on language and gender. Although notions of stereotype are crucial for interactants in order to come to an assessment of appropriateness, it is argued that these are hypothesised stereotypes which differ from individual to individual. In the conclusions Mills discusses the implications of this type of work for future research in gender, language and politeness.

The type of analysis which is developed in this book is concerned not with the individual utterance but rather with the constructed nature of talk within a particular context; therefore it is more influenced by works within pragmatics which focus on the interaction of individuals and context. For this reason, it might have been useful to investigate the relation between the community-based, discourse-level model of gender and linguistic politeness proposed by the author with Relational Pragmatics (Kopytko 2004) which seems to be based on similar premises.

On the whole, the work challenges the stereotypical assumptions about gender and develops a new, more contextualised form of analysis, reflecting the complexity of both gender and politeness, and also the complex relation between them. It also questions much of the research on language and formulates a new theoretical model of language production and interpretation and its relation to such factors as gender.

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