

Let's Talk About Lex(icon)

A podcast created by students in the course "Language, Sex and Gender" at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

2023 Episode 6: The Force of Habit

In this episode of Let's Talk about Lexicon Victoria and Teresa look at Language, Sex and Gender through McMaster University's 2022 Production of The Force of Habit exploring trans histories, gender fluidity and roles, the binary and queer possibilities.

The Topics of discussion include:

Topic #1: Art and Social Justice [2:25]

Topic #2: Who Was Guillen de Castro y Bellvis? [5:55]

Topic #3: The Force of Habit Production [8:56]

Topic #4: How Language can do Social Just work [15:52]

Topic #5: Language producing Gender: Pronouns, Style and Prosody [19:40]

Topic #6: Embodiment [30:10]

Topic #7: Conclusion [40:00]

List of Resources:

To Learn More about Haudenosaunee, Anishinabe and the Dish with One Spoon:

Anishinabek Nation. (2021, June 23). *Dish with one spoon wampum belt* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZutAepSBYp8>

Cass Yorku. (2019, January 2). *Understanding the land acknowledgement* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNZi301-p8k>

Glover, F. (2020). A dish with one spoon. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/a-dish-with-one-spoon>

This one includes a short video from Rick Hill, an incredible scholar (and someone who's name you'll see a lot in relation to wampum research!)

Hart House. (2020, March 27). *Dish with one spoon* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ajw8b8R5REE>

Indigenous Education Network. (2020, December 3). *Lunch and learn dish with one spoon wampum with rick hill sr.* [Video]. YouTube.
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Ohneganos Ohnegahde:Gyo. (2021, January 17). *Sewatokwa'tshera't - The dish with one spoon* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQP73VGFO2o>

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Six Nations Polytechnic. (2016, April 5). *Hodinohso:Ni ecological knowledge & the dish with one spoon conversation in cultural fluency#2* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5szQHeQgFM>

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Knisely, K. A., & Paiz, J. M. (2021). Bringing Trans, Non-Binary, and Queer Understandings to Bear in Language Education. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 9(1), Article 1.

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The Force of Habit Production

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The Force of Habit. (2022, November). *Interviews*. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from <https://www.macforceofhabit.com/interviews>

About the Force of Habit by Guillen de Castro:

De Castro, G., & Jeffs, K. (2019). Critical essay: Bad Habits: Gender made and remade in la

fuerza de la costumbre. In M.R. Machit (Ed.), *The Force of Habit (La fuerza de la costumbre)* by Guillén de Castro (pp. 24–84). Liverpool University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16zjxxm.5>

Diversifying the Classics. (2022, February 27). *The force of Habit*. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from <http://diversifyingtheclassics.humanities.ucla.edu/translations/the-force-of-habit/>

How Language can do Social Justice work:

Barrett, R. (2017). Fierce Fish Who Pee: Indexicality and Identity Among African American Drag Queens. In R. Barrett (Ed.), *From Drag Queens to Leathermen: Language, Gender, and Gay Male Subcultures* (p. o). Oxford University Press.

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Meyerhoff, M. (2014). Gender performativity. In A. Bolin & P. Whelehan (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality* (pp. 1–4). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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Conclusion

The Force of Habit. (n.d.). *Local 2SLGBTQIA+ resources and initiatives*. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from <https://www.maforceofhabit.com/resources>

Music

Music under Dr Anderson's intro and outro: "[Robot Park](#)" by Podington Bear

Transcript

Dr. Catherine Anderson: Hi, I'm Catherine Anderson, and this podcast about language, sex, and gender is created by my students at McMaster University. Enough with the preamble, let's talk about lexicon.

Syrus Marcus Ware: Art can help us to imagine things and picture a future in a way that is hard to just articulate using words or even, you know, through direct action.

Victoria: Hi, my name is Victoria.

Teresa: and my name is Teresa

Victoria: and you are listening to

Dr. Anderson: Let's Talk About Lexicon.

Victoria: On today's episode, we'll be talking about language, sex, and gender, and how it interacts with art through the November 2022, McMaster University's production of the Force of Habit.

[Cut to Music: Fuck your Binary]

Victoria: um, so I think before we begin, we should, uh, do some formal introductions for our listeners. Uh, so Hi everybody My name is Victoria and I'm a fourth-year undergraduate student in Linguistics.

Teresa: And I'm Teresa. I'm, uh, my first year of Masters in Gender and Social Justice at McMaster. Uh, Victoria and I are both recording this on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and the Haudenosaunee Nations, which are within lands protected by the dish

with one spoon Wampum agreement. And we will include a few links to learn a little bit more about Dish with One Spoon cuz it's uh, quite important everybody who visits, lives on, plays, works, goes to school in these territories it is our responsibility to know what the Dish with One Spoon asks us. So, we'll include some links there to some videos and more learnings for you to explore a little bit more about Dish with One Spoon asks us to do. Uh, but right now we will say, it is intended to ask us to share from this dish, this land. Uh, uh, equally, we are all equal around the dish we all have to share from the dish, and that's us now. It's all people. Now. It's all life now, and it's all life into the future as well.

Teresa: We open this episode with the quote from Syrus Marcus Ware. "Art can help us to imagine things and picture a future that is hard to just articulate using words or even direct action." Syrus Marcus Ware is an artist, activist, and scholar. As a visual artist, he works within the mediums of painting, installation, and performance to challenge systemic oppression. Syrus' work explores the spaces between and around identities, acting as provocations to our understandings of gender, sexuality, and race. He joined McMaster's School of the Arts in September 2020, teaching courses in theatre and film studies and working with the School of the Arts faculty to develop the iArts program. Both Victoria and I hope a main takeaway from this episode is how art can play a significant role in picturing and building a hopeful future.

Teresa: I personally have a background in art education, and I am very excited about the possibilities of interactions with art. Uh, experiencing and learning with art is indeed significant and reflected in ideas surrounding teaching and learning, including from a couple of authors such as those of Knisely and Paiz from 2021. We're gonna be referring back to some core ideas from what they've shared throughout the episode today, and they wrote in that paper about trans-affirming queer inquiry-based pedagogies and how it's important for curriculum to include content that's locally relevant, uh, that we learned from queer people through and with their own art agency or voice.

Teresa: A quote from them says, "queer inquiry-based pedagogies also work towards equipping students to identify and resist all forms of normativity." We thought this McMaster play would be a fantastic example of how we can engage directly with actions suggested by authors such as these two. They even specifically pointed to engaging with work from activist artists and scholars and other public figures who are trans and gender nonconforming. The authors recommended some questions to how people interrogate their social settings, including why is it so? Who benefits? Who is marginalized? and what alternatives exist? And a key idea here I want us to all think about is what alternatives exist, right? This play is to draw back to what Syrus Marcus Ware said, something that demonstrates hope for a better future.

Teresa: For example, Preye Goodwin, an actor who played Hipólita in the Force of Habit, which is the theater play we are looking at today, noted in an interview that what they like most about the production and one of the goals for them is to let people know that this is something that's been going on and that it's important to have space for queer people where they can feel comfortable accepted and be in community a place without judgment.

Teresa: Considering context is always important in art education, which is of course part of my background. I'm pretty used to those concepts of context being important. So, encountering a regular pushback in sociolinguistics was a bit surprising to me in our readings throughout this

course. Context, indeed, always does matter. So, a big question for me as a non linguist is how can language do social justice work? What's the intersection between art and language. As I alluded to earlier, the art we're looking at in this episode is McMaster University's November 2022, production of the Force of Habit, a play by 17th century Spanish Playwright Guillén de Castro y Bellví.

Victoria: So, uh, Guillén uh de Castro y Bellví was a Valencian play writer present during the Spanish golden ages. Uh, the Valencian language is the dialect of. Um, Catalan um which has notable ties to French, Italian, Spanish. So, for those who don't know, a dialect is a language particular to a specific region or social group. Uh, so throughout, uh, Castro's lifetime, he produced close to thirty-five works. His plays usually vary in genre, but across his works certain characteristics signaled the influence of the Valencian traditions existing alongside the development of comedia. So, at the time of the Golden Ages in Spain, um, Spain was a very Catholic nation, and theatre developed into two types. So, the strong tradition of the church influenced religious drama and secular drama. Uh, the main type of secular drama was Comedia's, and so. Spanish Comedia's developed in the late 16th and early 17th century. So, during this time, the theatre became a space to perform the customs, concerns and anxieties of its citizens. The Comedia stages, the conflicting demands of desires and reputation, dramatizing the tension between our identities as they are and as we wish them.

Victoria: Unlike during the Elizabeth era in England, the Spanish stage permitted actresses to play female roles, and this gave play writers the opportunity to develop a variety of characters for them. The presence of actresses, however, did not diminish the appeal of the cross-dressing plot, which is very evident in Comedia's.

Victoria: So, these dizzying deceptions and the performance of identity are both dramatic techniques and thematic concerns in these plays. Gender becomes part of the structure the comedia examines offering a powerful reflection on how we come to be who we are. So, prior to the Golden Ages, the church was very opposed to theater. Um, the government was constantly intervening with them and trying to shut them down. Um, during this time, several laws were also created to keep women off the stage as it was deemed "immoral". Um, but, uh, by, uh, 1587, um, just before the start of the Spanish golden ages, women were legally allowed to perform on stage. So back to Guillén de Castro y Bellví, uh he was not afraid to tackle subjects that were thought to be highly taboo in Spanish society on stage, um, in particular regicide, bigamy and sexuality. So, the major themes explored across Castro's work include the formation of identity, including gender power, and authority.

Victoria: Uh, due to the church being so dominantly present at the time, Castro's plays may have been strongly influenced by the view of the church relating to gender roles, characteristics, and sexuality. So, the force of habit or la fuerza de costumbre, the play which we will be talking about focusing on, uh, is loaded with evidence of queer and trans histories holding within it gender oppressions that were then and are still now part of society. This play stands as proof that gender and non-conformity has always existed and has been ignored in eras through colonial, patriarchal and heteronormative worldviews and systems.

Teresa: A comedy written in the early 1600s that revolves around two siblings and the subversion of traditional gender roles. Félix assigned male at birth has been protected from a

vengeful grandfather by being brought up as a girl. Hipólita assigned female at birth has been brought up as a boy on the battlefields of Flanders. Part of the comedy in the play comes from the ridiculousness that ensues when the two siblings are reunited, and their parents try to force them to behave in line with their genders assigned at birth. The siblings horrify their parents with their complete reversal of feminine and masculine attributes. When the family is reunited, the father insists on making the siblings conform to traditional gender roles while Félix teaches his sister how to wear high heels, and Hipólita shows him how to use a weapon. The question of gender roles is complicated by the tangles of love. Castro thus uses the siblings to explore essential questions about the nature of identity and the limitations of a system in which the correct performance of gender is key to being accepted by family and friends alike.

Teresa: The original play from around 1610 upholds male supremacy in the gender hierarchy, even while showing that gender is not a fixed category. In this play, woman is a dirty word. The play's gender bending signals an anxiety about the lack of stability of masculinity, which was particularly poignant in the milieu of Spanish decline and masculinity crisis in the 17th century.

Teresa: McMaster's Production of the Force of Habit is part of a collaborative project called Engendering the Stage, focusing on the performance of gender and early modern European plays essentially around the early 16 hundreds as this one is. Playing with gender, was a part of theater practice across this part of the world and engendering the stage explores gender variance in queer residents as Dr. Peter Cockett, an associate professor in the theater and film studies program, and director of McMaster's production, and Dr. Melinda Gough, professor in English and Cultural Studies and the plays dramaturge note in the play's website. It's a work of theater and hence of imagination inviting us to imagine otherwise this production playfully explores what happens when the seemingly fixed boundaries of binary gender and sexuality in early modern Europe and in our present day turn out not to be so fixed. And that in these investigations we look to the past to imagine new horizons for gender equity today and into the future on professional and university stages and beyond.

Teresa: This is a good reminder of the power of art, language, imagination, and social justice work towards a hopeful future. And personally, I hear an awful lot of resonance here with Syrus Marcus Ware's, quote at the top of our, uh, episode. It's almost like we planned it that way, Victoria. As Dr. Cockett noted in email correspondence with their premise for the production was that the play was already queer and trans, and that we just worked to bring those aspects forward to the audience. But that said, it is important to note that the original play is certainly different from McMaster's performance.

Teresa: Dr. Cockett noted the original play ends horribly with killing and sex that is at best non-consensual, and the two siblings conformed to the gender binary, so they rewrote the ending. But he notes, we believe the spirit of that rewrite is contained in the original language. Dr. Cockett pointed out a particular section of the script, which is word for word from the original. It's the dialogue leading up towards dual between Félix and Otavio. In the original, they go offstage and fight in McMaster's version. They went off stage and had sex. If you read the text, or in our case here, listen to it. It should be clear that the idea for this adaption was embedded in the text.

[Audio from the Force of Habit production]

Octavio: What about this place?

Félix: I'd prefer one more secluded.

Octavio: I'll follow you wherever you go. I want to speak to you in private.

Félix: I can well believe it of your nobility and courage. Let's go behind those walls.

Octavio: I'll be right behind you, even though, by rights, I should choose the spot, you can.....

Félix: I certainly appreciate it, but I'm looking for a secluded and private place, so that no one bursts in on us, and to keep my bashful maiden sword from greater shame.

Octavio: It must be bashful indeed....

Félix: I'm Certain that in your heart it will cease to be so.

Octavio: That's the spirit! I'm happy to see you so fired up.

Félix: Enough. If this is truly what you desire, then follow me.

Chorus: Have fun boys

Félix: oh, we will

Victoria: Also, with regards to the end of the production, McMaster critiques Castro as being limited regarding how the final act was written. So basically, um, it ends with a heterosexual love and marriage, allegedly curing the siblings of their gender bending ills by conquering habit and restoring nature. Although many have felt disappointed by how the original play ended, it being somewhat forced and incomplete. Spanish Comedia's, uh, ending in this type are common, given the time and the state of mind the society was in during this period. For this reason, comedia scholar Kathleen Jeffs asks readers and an audience to focus on the body of the text or performance to identify the views lurking below the surface. This may be in part why theater is so beautiful and a good medium to look through as members of the audience can take it any way they want at face value they can, um, take it as viewing the play as conforming to these gender roles or through the underlying form gender and sexuality is being something that can be crossed in nonconform to as it was inferred, um, by the audio or the words just displayed.

Teresa: Theater as an artistic expression includes physicality, symbolism, imagery, music, and importantly for our topic today, of course, language, Dr. Cockett speaks about how they used the original text as evidence for, and a platform to explore trans histories, gender fluidity, and queer possibility. I love that. Queer possibility. So how does language do this kind of work? If queer inquiry-based pedagogies, ask us to resist normativity in all? Then I think we should go over some terms and ideas together.

Victoria: So first, let's, uh, talk about what exactly is gender. So, gender is, uh, "internationally emergent and socially contingent". So, what does this mean? Uh, it is produced through interactions and depends on social cues, connecting this directly to language some scholars

like Kiesling say that we produce our gender through such things as speaking like a man, which may mean using language to instruct and speak directly, rather, rather than the conception of feminine ways of using language.

Victoria: The idea of scholar Judith Butler appears often discussion of language, sex, and gender. Butler discusses the idea of gender as performance, which, which considering our topic of the theatrical play is a term we should define. Butler uses the idea of gender performance is that we behave in certain ways, which includes how we dress, move, speak, and use language. We create our gender in our gender is created because other people understand and recognize their behaviors as doing that gender. This is part of the idea of gender being internationally emergent and socially contingent. The fact that our community sees these acts as gendered is what makes them so known. In talking about gender ideas of performance and a theatrical production I think it's a good idea to make a note to clarify about the art of drag. Actors do appear in drag in the play. Most of the text is true to the original, but the team of director, producers, professors, actors, and students all work together to create changes to production. For example, they added a gender fluid, drag inspired chorus that through five original songs provided contemporary critical commentary on the actions of the characters, especially the ones trying their hardest to get Félix and Hipólita to conform to their birth genders. But as Barrett 2017 notes, drag is not an imitation of women. Queer theorists usually describe it as a "highly political deconstructive force working to undermine gender assumptions." And note that "drag may serve to question the rigidity of prescriptive gender roles acting as a tool of liberation".

Victoria: One of the two main character siblings is Félix, who is McMaster's production was played by Evelyn Speakerman. In the interview, Speakerman discusses her performance and goals for the production saying: "A goal I'm trying to personally achieve is, I know the show is largely about drag and camp camp as Saad bin Saud assistant director and composer like describe it, but a personal goal I really want to transcribe is Felicia is not a drag character. Felicia is trans, not drag. [But] sometimes it's hard to differentiate, especially since when I was first transitioning, oftentimes it was viewed as cross-dressing or drag rather than the actual trans experience. So that is something I definitely want to make clear that Felix is Felicia, that is not a character. At the end, the character is just very out there. It's very drag inspired, but I just want to really nail the emotions and the lines. It may look like drag and it might be more in tune with how the chorus is dressing in the drag sense, but it is not drag. This is who she is." Wow. Very powerful.

Teresa: We've talked about gender performance and drag, but I'd like to get more into how language produces gender. Scholars talk about how language is a social practice, and it plays a part in how we understand social categories like gender. It's a tool that people use to create gender, but what does that actually mean? How does language accomplish this?

Teresa: Context is important. The broader social system of meaning that recognizes certain acts as producing certain gendered performances can vary from place to place and time to time. That is culture. So, a person's style of speaking can't be determined in isolation. Dr. Cockett noted in an interview that. In this production, we wanted to explore the messy middle. We are very interested in the historical context, but ultimately, we are accountable to our

contemporary audience, not the playwright or original text. So, it can be the way we use language, that is the actual words we use, how we speak that is how we sound, the style and prosody of our voice, and it can be our embodied performance. When thinking about language, gender, and the actual words we use, pronouns may come to mind. Pronouns as an aspect of language, produce, gender. I love how the scholar Conrad, in a 2020 article explained it.

Teresa: I'll read a, a lengthy quote here, but said very well, much better than I can certainly. "For gendered pronouns, especially the pronouns used by and about a person are part of the complex tapestry of linguistic identity formation and performance. Just as pronouns can be used to recreate an area a person's gendered location in the world, misusing pronouns, intentionally or accidentally can constitute a form of symbolic violence that systemically oppresses people whose gendered existence is already marginalized." All extremely important ideas to apply to what we're talking about today. Of course, in the force of habit, the Chorus acts as context for the audience, providing reflections on the actions of the characters, and feedback about the play's message through both dialogue and song. At one point, when Félix has just had a bit of a pep talk and is working up the courage, they walk off stage, the chorus steps in and says "Isn't he amazing? We love her."

[Audio from play]

Félix: I know what you do. Thank you so much.

Chorus: Aww. Isn't he amazing. We love her. That went so well.

Victoria: Speaking of pronouns, our society today has aimed to adapt and become more inclusive in our language. It is important as it can help people from a wide, wide range of backgrounds feel welcome, respected, and valued. Much of our everyday language is implicitly biased towards two genders, male and female, and one sexuality heterosexual. And this usually dismisses or shadows individuals who identify as non-binary or part of the LGBTQ+ community. In light of this, I would like to share some examples of how our society has become more inclusive in our language, as well as through the medium of art.

Victoria: So, since the play originally in Spanish, I think it would be interesting to look at how the Spanish language has developed. Uh, there's an interesting podcast called The Vocal Fries, and in one of the episodes they talk about inclusive language within Spanish. I'll put the link in the show notes for anyone who'd like to listen. It's a very interesting, uh, podcast, so I recommend, um, so inclusive language can be defined as "the language that avoids the use of certain expressions or words that might be considered to exclude a particular group of people, um, especially gender specific words." The idea behind inclusive language is to include, uh, the whole human diversity in the language you use, including those who don't identify with any of the two genders linked to biology.

Victoria: In the episode, they talked about the Royal Spanish Academy. Um, they are an institution that, uh, validates or invalidates the changes in use and the new words adopted by Spanish speakers. So their official position about inclusive language is that the changes proposed. Uh, so the use of the letter E in place of a, in feminine words and o in masculine words, uh, in certain articles and nouns is unnecessary and foreign to the Spanish language. So the reason that they may feel this way, um, given is that they feel that they fear that the

change to the language will result in the language being lost or that it will relate, erase, variation, and variation for those who don't know is the different ways of labeling the same person or thing. That being said, many individuals are starting to use this inclusive language, adopting the E onto gendered words such as pronouns, articles, and nouns. For example, changing the ending of amigo and amiga meaning friend to amige is more inclusive as well as changing the pronouns such as el and ella (he and she) to elle.

Victoria: Another example of gender inclusivity is within music and the music platform. So, an article released by Spotify in Germany stated "language and our understanding of it, is constantly evolving. And in Germany, there has been a movement in more recent years to help move away from the gender binaries within the language to provide room for inclusivity and diversity within existing words and grammar. This is called gender inclusive language or Gender Responsible Language." Gender Responsible language as we see it on Spotify, means using and developing language that addresses all genders or identities in an equally visible and appreciative manner. It refers to language use where with regards to personal designation aims at the equal treatment of people of all gender. So, in Germany, it has been received that the use of the generic masculine as default has started being avoided. Instead, many individuals have decided to use the asterisk to denote gender. This is what they're employing on the Spotify app. Um, they also state that they adopted this on their many social media platforms when engaging in interviews and panels by verbally stressing the word ending. As the article states, Language shapes our consciousness and thinking by using gender responsible language, we raise awareness for these issues and support people in gradually incorporating these changes into their own day-to-day lives.

Teresa: Victoria, as, as the linguist in the room or in the audio space right now, I really appreciate your expertise with this because I am, uh, I'm coming at this from a totally different angle.

Victoria: Thank you.

Teresa: But speaking of which, there's a few other words to define. So, we've got style and prosody. When thinking about how language produces gender through how we speak, we can consider the linguistic terms of style and prosody. Everyone speaks with some kind of style, which is important to note because to claim to not have a style is to presume yourself to be the default and to have an unmarked status. So, let's go through some of those terms and thank you, Victoria, for your help on this one. Uh, to start off, let's talk about what does unmarked mean.

Victoria: So, unmarked refers to the normal or the neutral form of a word used in a particular language. So, this is considered the norm and it's what we expect, um, on, uh, marked on the other hand means, um, it's the ways in which the words change, or they're added to express a different in special meaning. So, this is what is not normal in a particular language. So, a general example, uh, so you guys get the idea of what these terms mean is, for example, asking how someone is. This phrase is marked in Germany as it's not the norm to ask someone you don't know how they are. But in Canada, however, it is unmarked as you can ask anyone this question and it's normal in our everyday conversation. So, Sarah Mills suggests that female terms are marked and indicate as sexual overtone, such as terms like mistress, madam, and

hostess, whereas unmarked male terms such as bachelor's show Freedom and Independence. Although they have an identical meaning, um, when contrasting words like bachelor to spinstress, um, the female, uh, words take on a more negative connotation. Other marked forms in our language also include actress and ballerina, and traditionally language has been strictly binary in designing sexual gender, but, uh, this is rapidly changing. On the other hand, uh, style is a particular manner, manner of using language. So, it is a set of linguistic variants with specific social meanings. So, an example of this would be formality. So, um, example is how formal and informal you are in your speech.

Teresa: Thank you for that. Super appreciated. And I have to tell you, before I started this course, which is, uh, what, three months ago, I guess the word prosody was entirely new to me. So, uh, if you wouldn't mind given a brief definition of that word, prosody.

Victoria: Yeah. So, uh, prosody refers to the qualities of speech such as, uh, the variations in pitch, pace, rhythm, uh, stress patterns and loudness that all convey, uh, meaning to the listener.

Teresa: And I will say through the kindness of Dr. Cockett, we have access to some audio clips of the play, and I think we can put some examples in here about Prosody so that as you say, the variation in the way people are speaking.

[Audio from play]

Hipólita: Oh, brother, how limply you draw your sword! There's no wind in your sails! Give me the sword, and I swear I'll teach you to fight with the same spirit as you embroider!

Hipólita: You must grab the sword like this, and you must look ferocious.

Master of Arms: That is correct, and the posture is excellent.

Hipólita: Let us fight.

Master of Arms: If that is your wish, my lady.

Hipólita: Let's leave it for later— my father is coming.

Galvan: Lucky man!

Master of Arms: What do you mean?

Galvan: If she had fought with you, you'd be short an eye, or a nose.

Don Pedro: Hipólita, what is this? You insist on trying to be a man when you are a woman?

Hipólita: I can't stand this, father.

Don Pedro: Give the sword to your brother.

Hipólita: If I could give my arm too, then he might hold it properly.

Teresa: We'll talk a little bit about embodiment. So, style and prosody, as kindly defined by Victoria, can be closely connected to embodiment, ways of speaking, link to ways of being and

all are sorted through the social categories we culturally create, like gender. In recent years, socio linguists, which are people or scholars who study how society and cultural norms affect speech are examining how people use their voices and their bodies to communicate social identities, the way a person speaks and the way they communicate with their body come together to create a socially understood whole. This bodily communication can be what a person wears, how they gesture, and generally how they move.

Teresa: In the force of habit, there's a scene where Costanza, the mother of the siblings, is trying to teach Hipólita to be a woman. Costanza says, your eyes wander too freely for an honest woman. In this way, Costanza is recognizing embodied communication that is socially understood in gendered ways and because a free gaze is coded masculine, she's working to correct in scare quotes, this behavior in Hipólita. Hipólita even explicitly exclaims that:

[Audio clip from Play]

Hipólita: even if I say nothing, this dress speaks volumes its torture!

Victoria: So, throughout the play, the siblings express gender coded behaviors. So gender coded behaviors are words or phrases associated with a particular gender, specifically male and female, which are often based on stereotypes.

So Hipólita walks broadly and speaks strongly and loudly. She's directing her speech and often is ready to confront others and speak her mind. Félix expresses feminine code behaviors, um, which is evident to one of the songs that, um, the Chorus Sing called Boys Who Want to Cry.

[Audio of "Boys Who want to Cry by Saad Bin Daud]

Victoria: So, language in the form of metaphor also underlines this coding. One character is instructing Félix to "Seek diligently like a narrow piece of thread searching for the eye of a needle" and Félix responds "finally, a reference I understand! In this play and even our contemporary context, needlework is gender-coded as feminine. Through the clothes of the characters, we can also see gender stereotyping. Women are seen in long dresses, heels, and with tied hair and men with their swords at their sides, and in their proper attire. Don Pedro works hard to foster these gender stereotypes in his children, wanting Hipólita to both look and act like a woman and Félix like a man. At the beginning of the play Don Pedro questions why Félix is wearing a dress and the only possible explanation he can think of that, uh, Félix would be dressing this way is if he had joined the church as at that time only individuals' part of the clergy wore gowns and long attire.

Victoria: So, the use of the word woman is also used in a negative connotation throughout the play. Um, from Don Pedro's perspective, women are seen as less than men. Um, men are usually seen as courageous and strong, and women as weak and cowardly. So, through his speech we can see these, these examples of the negative connotations. So, for example, Don Pedro says, you whine like a woman to Félix. Um, and, uh, it, its gender coded that only woman I cry or show emotion. And also, in the play when Hipólita wants to help him fight, he says, stay here, woman, or, and where do you think you're a going woman? So, he places emphasis on the word woman instead of for example, saying her name as a sort of reminder to Hipólita that

she's in fact a woman and she can't do these womanly things. Uh, he also uses phrases like, I will not allow womanly man, womanliness is contagious, and teacher to be cowardly.

Victoria: Going forth. I think we should talk about, um, felicitous and infelicitous. So, in, uh, linguistics, um, these terms were coined by John Langshaw Austin, an English philosopher and linguist. So he focused on, um, how the speaker encodes their intentions in their words. And in 1995, he presented something called the Speech Act Theory in one of his lectures at Harvard University, which came to be published as. How to do things with words in 1975. So, this theory says not only does the language describe reality and present information, but also performs acts. So in this theory, um, there are two types of utterances are words or statements. And these are either declarative or performative. So, a declarative utterance is something which describes or denotes a situation, states facts, and can either be true or not. A performative utterance, on the other hand, is a sentence that performs an action and can either be true or false. Um, these are considered as having their own meaning and usually affect both the speaker and the listener.

Victoria: So, when a performative does what it's supposed to do, it's called felicitous, and when it doesn't, um, uh, if it's either self-contradictory, irrelevant, or insincere, uh, it's called infelicitous. So, for a performative work, it, it had the power that, um, it needs to follow certain Felicity conditions. So, these conditions were coined by Austin, but were then further developed by, um, his student, John Searle. And these include, um, the essential condition. So, this means, um, like essentially what you were saying. So, the speaker, um, intends to act as it can be seen from the utterance that he or she is able to perform. And it's the attention of the, um, hearer to perform the intended act. There's also the, in sincerity condition is basically, you mean what you say, the speaker's is sincere and committing what he or she has uttered. The preparatory condition this means you can say what you do, you're able to perform the utterances and are not under the control of another's power. Both a speaker and hearer will agree, um, that it is situationally appropriate for you to perform the act, and the speaker has the power of authority to utter the act. And last, there's a propositional context, which is a circumstance in which an utterance is produced.

Victoria: So, on the other hand, for an utterance to be infelicitous this happens because there was either a misfiring in the speech act which was caused by some other, uh, situation or circumstance, or if there was, um, an abuse. So, if the act was in sincerely performed or the speaker never attended to do, what they said. So, for example, um, the statement I now declare, you husband and wife can be felicitous only if the officiant has the legal right to pronounce the two as husband a wife. So, for example, in the movies, when two people are getting married, the utterance is infelicitous as the person officiating, the actor has no legal authority to pronounce the two as husband and wife. So, Context is necessary in a analyzing and utterance since it helps speakers to achieve the aims of conversation. Context can include who's speaking, uh, where the conversation happening, uh, what topics, um, are being covered in the conversation and how it's being delivered. Context is essential in determining Felicity conditions of speech acts since you provide information for the situation in which an utterance is produced.

Teresa: All of this linguistics detail is so fascinating to me. Thank you, Victoria. All this is an important idea when thinking about language, sex, and gender, because it creates ideas of norms and social categories. For scholars of linguistics, it's important to be critical of ideas of Felicity, because if not exclusionary categories are created that degrade, ignore, misunderstand, and erase the existence of identities and the experience of certain communities of practice. The scholar Hall explains this idea well, and again, lengthy quote, but scholars know what they're talking about, and they say it better than my paraphrasing could. So here we go.

Teresa: Queer linguistics invites us to discuss the conversational practices of all sexual identities, whether marginal or central to organizations of heterosexual kinship as potentially felicitous on a more localized level. While much of the early research in the field has focused on the language practices of understudied sexual identities, like queer theory, queer linguistics is necessarily concerned with how heterosexual normativity is produced, perpetuated and resisted, but it seeks to localize these productions within specific communities of practice.

Teresa: I was excited by that quote because it links back very nicely to what we talked about up at the top with the trans-affirming queer inquiry-based pedagogical model asking us to challenge normativity in all forms.

Victoria: So as the scholar Bessner suggest media images can disrupt and or reinforce gender inequalities. So having these forms of art, uh, like the play covering topics of gender and sexuality may stop the reinforcing of gender inequalities moving us towards inclusivity and acceptance of the gender neutral, the trans community, queerness and non-conformity in both media and in entertainment.

Teresa: Let's return again to that quote from Syrus Marcus Ware.

[Audio Clip of Syrus Marcus Ware]

Syrus Marcus Ware: Art can help us to imagine things and picture a future in a way that is hard to just articulate using words or even, you know, through direct action.

Teresa: The hope of futures that the theatrical, linguistic, artistic expression helps us imagine is evidence in interviews with cast and directors. Dr. Melinda Gough again, the dramaturge, notes on the plays website that inviting us to imagine otherwise, this production playfully explores what happens when the seemingly fixed boundaries of binary gender and sexuality in early modern Europe and in our present day turn out to be not so fixed.

Victoria: So, actor Preye Goodwin also notes that they helped at the play in parts to the audience, acceptance, understanding, and Build community, because that's the thing we really need. That's what everyone needs. Just acceptance in community, a place without judgment. And as the closing song in the play Shouts,

[Audio from the play: Song - Fuck your Binary]

Teresa: Art can indeed help us to imagine a different and hopeful future, and with the force of habit acting as evidence of trans history's gender fluidity, and queer possibility, this looking to the past in our contemporary context creates that picture, that platform and space to imagine a hopeful future. As the chorus sing:

[Audio from the play: Song - Fuck your Binary]

Teresa: The Force of Habit website is a rich resource we consulted for this episode, and we'll link it in the show notes.

Victoria: We particularly wanted to point out the local 2SLGBTQIA+ resources and initiative section, which is a great page visit if you want to learn more about and get involved at the local level, just like suggested by the Trans-affirming queer inquiry based pedagogical model, and we discuss at the top of the show noted.

Teresa: Thank you so much for your time, Victoria. Thanks to everybody for listening.

Victoria: Yeah, thank you everybody. I had a great time sharing all this information with you and, uh, learning a lot in progress as well,

Teresa: Exactly. Likewise. I really think both of our expertises, uh, complimented each other for this particular assignment.

Victoria: Yes, I agree.

Teresa: Thanks so much everyone.

[Audio from the play: Song - Fuck your Binary]

Dr. Catherine Anderson: You've been listening to. Let's Talk about Lexicon. This podcast was created by students at McMaster University where I, Catherine Anderson am a prof in the Gender and Social Justice program and the Department of Linguistics and Languages. Thanks for listening, and remember that the lexicon has power, so use it wisely.

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