

Do Women Really Talk More Than Men?



One of my most common teaching experiences I encounter is when I pose a question to my students. Either it is a blank look (... *that is if their not texting from their clandestine cell phones*) or one or two of the same students will venture to raise their hands. Usually, those hand raisers are my female students.

Last semester a female student again responded with an answer that was not only the right answer but a lengthy one. A male student whose facial expression was one of total frustration suddenly interjected and said – **“Why do you have to talk so much?”**

Ah... why do you have to talk so much?

Is there really an answer to that?

At first it was reported that women used almost three times as many speaking words each day than men. And this was the standard explanation of why women appeared to talk more.

New research in 2007 by Matthias Mehl, psychologist at the University of Arizona digitally captured the daily conversations of 400 university students. The results were 16,215 words for women and 15,669 for men, but the most spoken words recorded in a day were 47,000 by a man and the least was 700 by a woman. However, there was no surprise to the topics of conversation – men spoke of sports and technology and women about relationships.

One of the criticisms of the University of Arizona study is that it was done with college students who may be more

talkative because of their away from home surroundings and having to form new social relationships. To date, no studies have reported possible differences in various age groups or social conditions. **But like my male student, there is a common perception that women do talk more than men.**

If you were asked who talks more on a cell phone – men or women what would be your response? If you answered women, you would be surprisingly wrong. Reports by Cingular and AT&T indicated that in 2004 – 2005 men were talking 35% more on cell phones, but by 2007 women had caught up to almost being even. We will just have to wait until the next report comes out to find out if women are equal talkers or edging men out!

Perhaps it is not who talks more than the other but what is actually the topic of conversation. Professor's Mehl's study did demonstrate something that most of us can agree on – men talk more about sports and technology and women about relationships.

I think it's safe to say men and women talk about what is of interest or of importance to them. How much they talk – well I guess that just depends on how much they have to say about what is of interest or of importance to them as well.

By Joyce Hansen