1. Cite a communication theory (such as Robert Plutchik’s theory of primary and mixed emotions, Leon Festinger’s theory of Cognitive Dissonance, Jack Gibb’s theory on the use of non-defense arousing language, Mark Knapp’s theory on the stages of relationships) or a communication behavior (such as displays of emotions, lying, equivocating, effective or ineffective listening, nonverbal behaviors) or a communication strategy (such as using “I” statements, paraphrasing or perception checking) that you found of interest in any chapter in our textbook.

2. Throughout the paper cite the page(s) in our text where this theory, communication behavior or communication strategy was described.

3. View a film (or a video or DVD) mentioned at the end of any chapter in our text that illustrates that theory, behavior, or strategy.

4. Write a Video Critique Assignment paper that includes the following:
   
a. **A separate Introduction** that states why you chose this particular film to illustrate the theory, behavior, or strategy you have cited. This should be approximately one page in length.
   
b. **A separate detailed description** (no less than 1.5 pages) which explains how the theory or behavior or strategy (or any combination of the three) was/were illustrated in the chosen film.
   
c. **A separate Conclusion** which summarizes whether you believe that the illustrated theory, behavior, or strategy was effective in the film. If so, why? If not, why not? This should be no less than half a page

All work must be computer printed, stapled and have pages numbered. THIS ASSIGNMENT MAY ONLY BE DONE ONCE.
Extra Credit: VIDEO CRITIQUE ASSIGNMENT

Introduction

I chose to watch a video of the film *When Harry Met Sally* (1989) to illustrate some researchers’ (John Grey, Ph.D. and Deborah Tannen, Ph.D. to name but a few) point on language use: that many men and women often use language for different purposes. Beginning on page 192 of our textbook, *Looking Out Looking In*, the authors discuss topics often chosen by a particular gender. Then on page 193 of the textbook the authors highlight that men and women often have different reasons for communicating. I thought the film *When Harry Met Sally* illustrated both of these topics a number of times in a number of scenes. It is these topics and these scenes that I will write about in this paper. I first saw this film shortly after it was released and I remember the stir it made in the workplace and with many of my friends of both genders. Harry, played by Billy Crystal, makes a statement that went along the lines of, “*Men don’t really only want to have women as friends, on some deep level, they are always thinking what would it be like to go to bed with her.*” This statement really got “the different sexes” in my environment talking about this issue so I thought it might be both fun and interesting to revisit this film for this assignment.

I am a male and I do notice that my girlfriend and I seem to use language for different purposes. I don’t know if it is because of our individual personalities, because each of us was simply born that way or if because each of us was
taught to use language differently. I hope that by completing this assignment it will give me an opportunity to further explore these issues. I will reread those pages in our textbook with a critical eye as I look for scenes in the film to either validate or invalidate some of the behaviors I note. I am also considering doing a Book Report and I now may choose to read the works of Dr. Tannen or Dr. Grey to further my intellectual curiosity on the subject of gender and communication styles. There may be some truth that the different genders have been taught different styles or this may simply be the perpetuation of gender stereotypes (i.e., women nag too much, men rarely listen carefully to what women have to say, women gossip too much, men interrupt too much). Hopefully by viewing this film, at the very least, I will have a better understanding of gender’s impact (if at all) on communication.
When Harry Met Sally begins with two recent college graduates in Chicago carpooling together to New York. The film makes it appear that when they first meet neither Harry nor Sally has any patience for the other. Harry appears to be a “know-it-all” and Sally appears to be very strong-willed and strongly opinioned in her own right. On page 194 of our textbook there is a statement which reads, “Because they use conversation to pursue social needs, women typically use statements showing support for the other person, demonstrations of equality, and efforts to keep the conversation going.” I think this point was illustrated exactly when Sally (Meg Ryan) and her friend Marie (played by Carrie Fisher) are in a bookstore in New York having a conversation. As I watched this scene it appeared to me that each friend allowed the other to finish a sentence or if one interrupted the other, it was to show support. I noted the scene when Harry and Sally were in a Sharper Image™ store shopping for a wedding gift, Harry did interrupt Sally and he did not use the interruption as a “support mechanism.” The authors of Looking Out Looking In then go on to write (on page 195) that, “men are more prone to dominate conversations and one-up their partners.” I think the car ride from Chicago to New York, almost in its entirety exhibits Harry (Billy Crystal) doing exactly this. His vocal volume goes up as he interrupts Sally quite often, to strongly make his point. She attempts to respond and he interrupts her, again with loud voice, to tell her why she’s wrong.

After this “carpooling experience” both Sally and Harry go their separate ways until they meet, by chance, in the bookstore where Sally is having her
conversation with her friend Marie. They agree to have dinner and during this dinner I find a very different Harry and Sally in terms of both their speaking and listening styles. During dinner as Sally is discussing why a recent relationship with a boyfriend dissolved and she is expressing her innermost thoughts and feelings about this, Harry (at least to me) really seems to be listening to her and rarely interrupts her. He waits until she finishes sentences and then either prompts her or uses open-ended questions ("so then what happened?") to get her to open up even more. He showed empathy for her and I thought he was quite the good listener. To me, this showed that we need to treat each individual and each communication event as a unique experience as the stereotype or the studies showing men interrupting more really was not evident in this scene, and I thought it a lengthy and important scene for "setting the stage" for where their relationship was about to go.

The authors write (page 193) that, "Men, on the other hand were more likely to discuss music, current events, sports, business and other men." This idea was illustrated each time that Harry and his male friend Jess (played by Bruno Kirby) were shown in scenes together. Other than music each of the topics noted above were discussed, and for quite some time! The film shows Harry and Jess sharing time while doing things together. Their conversations take place while engaged in an activity, and in this case, a sports-related activity in that they were at a batting-cage together, taking swings, while having a full-blown conversation that appeared to satisfy them both. Neither Harry nor Jess seemed to feel the need to look at each other as they engaged each other in this "deep conversation," a point that gender communication specialist Dr. Deborah
Tannen brings up in her books, men often don’t look at each other while speaking, yet women seem to find this an important aspect of the communication process. Even in one scene which was shown with a split screen to represent Harry at home in his bed watching the film *Casablanca* and Sally in her apartment watching the same film, Harry really wants to talk about the characters in the film and the details of the film, whereas Sally seems to want to push the conversation to their relationship (metacommunication, as studied earlier in our textbook in Chapter One on pages 30-31).

So, early in the film we see Harry fulfilling the stereotypical role of the American male and Sally equally fulfilling her stereotype for her gender. But as the authors conclude on page 198 “While there are some differences in male and female speech patterns, they may not be as great as some popular books suggest—and some of them may not be due to biological sex at all!” As I watched the characters in this film evolve, so did their conversational styles so I tend to agree with the authors that some individuals may speak a certain way or in a certain style, but not all communication differences can be attributed to gender.
Conclusion

As I think I was beginning to formulate on the last page, the more I look at the research on gender differences and the more I think about the way the characters in the film used language, I am leaning toward the thought that some men and some women may speak in a certain style, and I think that they were most probably taught to speak in that manner, and that what can be taught can also be untaught. I believe there are probably a lot of other factors that influence communication style such as region of the country, age of the people engaged in the communication, each of their past experiences, attitudes and expectations, and even the time of the day that the communication is taking place. Deborah Tannen writes (in her book *That’s Not What I Meant*), that many of us place a tremendous importance on our primary relationship (be that a lover or a spouse) and that “*expectations of such relationships are nearly-maybe in fact-impossible. When primary relationships are between men and women, male-female differences contribute to the impossibility. We expect partners to be both romantic interests and best friends.*” Harry did appear to interrupt Sally more than she interrupted him, and Sally did appear to speak to her female friends about different topics than she spoke to Harry about, but I am still not so sure that it was because of their gender alone. Maybe this is what each was taught and maybe they were taught that way because of the culture in which they were each raised. I believe there were a great number of factors that played into these differences and so one cannot draw a definite conclusion that inherently men and women communicate differently.