

### The Chattering Classes

adapted from an article by **Fiona MacRae**

- 1 It might leave the man in your life lost for words. If, that is, you can stop him talking long enough to tell him. Contrary to popular belief, women are not all that talkative, research has found. But when women speak, it's worth listening because they use more varied and thoughtful language than men.
- 2 Psychologist Geoffrey Beattie from Manchester University reviewed 56 studies into male and female communication and discovered that 24 concluded men used more words per day. Only two of those studies pointed to women being the more talkative sex. He then carried out his own study. He recorded 50 conversations on a variety of topics. He gave volunteers scripts of the exchanges with every fifth word missing and asked them to fill in the gaps. The words spoken by women were harder to guess because they used language more carefully, said the professor. For example, when paying compliments, the men tended to rely on bland and therefore more 38 words, such as 'nice' and 'good'. A typical male compliment might be: "You look really nice today." A woman, however, would be more likely to say: "I really love your jacket. Where did you buy it?" Overall, the men's words could be guessed 81 per cent of the time, compared with 71 per cent for the women.
- 3 Professor Beattie said: "It is men who are more likely to talk for the sake of talking when engaged in social chitchat by recycling their words with ritualistic and redundant language that doesn't contain new information. Female 'nattering' is little more than a cultural myth."



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