

GENDER CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL DIALECTS IN ENGLISH- LANGUAGE DISCOURSE

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Abstract. *The article examines the phonetic, grammatical and lexical differences in female and male speech of social dialects in English-language discourse and its discourse-based analysis. It also provides an analysis of the speeches of the characters in the film “My Fair Lady”.*

Keywords: *social dialects, discourse, BNC (British National Corpus), sociolinguistics, gender, pragmatics, “sort of”, Received Pronunciation.*

Introduction

Unlike regional dialects, social dialects are used by different social groups in the same region, and words and sentences from the language of the social communities themselves play an important role in their study.

Although regional dialects have been studied since the end of the 19th century, the study of social dialects dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, studies on social dialects were primarily conducted in the United States. U. Labov and other linguists conducted these studies and laid the foundation for sociolinguistics, a new field of linguistics for that time. Scholars such as William Labov, Basil Bernstein, and Dell Hymes played an important role in the formation of sociolinguistics as an independent scientific field.

It should be noted that the study of social dialects has gradually begun to gain a wider scope in Great Britain. The most famous of the social dialects in this country are Standard English and Cockney dialects. Standard English was used among the upper classes of London and had Saxon features. Cockney dialect was adopted as the accent of the lower classes and began to be used outside London in the 18th and 19th centuries.

P. Trudgill evaluated two important aspects of language behavior from a social point of view. One of them is the role of language in the formation of social relations, and the other is the information it conveys about the speaker. This also shows the role of language in society and their interaction. For instance, we can mention the fact that two English speakers who do not know each other usually talk about health and the weather when they first meet in any social group. This serves to create a good atmosphere during the first meeting, soften the situation and establish mutual relations. According to Trudgill, communicating with others helps reveal information about people’s occupation, social class or social status. The style of speech conveys information about where a person is from and what kind of person he or she is. [6, p. 111]

There are various dialects of English in the world. We can distinguish the four most important of them:

The dialects of Standard English are mainly widespread in the media and used in official environments:

- British English - spoken in the United Kingdom, but also has regional differences. A standardized variety is associated with "BBC English", also known as Received Pronunciation.

- American English - mainly prevails in the United States, however the use of this dialect also has a global impact. In particular, the widespread use of American films produced by Hollywood, has made the use of this dialect popular.

- Australian English also has a different and unique vocabulary and pronunciation. For example, the phrase "G'day mate" used in Australian English is translated as "Alright, mate?" or simply "Hi, mate!" in British English. However, in American English it can be used as "Hey, man!" or "What's up, buddy?".

- Canadian English combines the common features of British and American English. For example, the pronunciation of the word "about" as "aboot" may refer to this.

Other groups of dialects include dialects associated with non-standard English-speaking communities:

- Vernacular English, used in African-American English - this language is spoken by many African Americans. For example, she be working

- Traditional Cockney dialect - a variety common in East London and spoken by the working class. For example, in this dialect, the combination "apples and pears" is used for the word "stairs".

- Scots (Scots language) - this language is one of the varieties of the Old Norse language spoken in Scotland. For example, the word "Aye" is used instead of "yes".

Another type of dialect is regional dialects. Regional dialects reflect local history and culture. These include:

- Southern American English (the southern dialect of America)

- Midwestern American English - a dialect variety widely spoken in the Midwest of America and is considered a "neutral" American accent. For example, the word "pop" is used for the word "soda", which refers to carbonated beverages. [7]

Lexical, grammatical and phonetic features of dialects and gender differences in social status can be observed in the film "My Fair Lady".

According to P. Trudgill, people use language as a response to social situations. Trudgill says that people do not use language simply to give automatic responses, but also use it as a code switch for their own purposes: they use language to manipulate people, distort events or convey them as they want, and express their intentions through language. An example of this can be seen in the film "My Fair Lady" in Eliza's use of the upper class's speech for her own purposes. For example, when Eliza is at Mrs. Higgins' house, she says in her dialogue with Professor H. Higgins: "Good afternoon, Professor Higgins. Are you quite well? Of course you are. You are never ill. Would you care for some tea?" – "Good afternoon, Professor Higgins. Are you quite well? Of course you are. You are never ill. Would you care for some tea?".

In the sentences above, Eliza is trying to prove that she is from the same class as Henry Higgins. Here, Eliza's goal is to manipulate the professor into believing that they are equal.

Speakers of this dialect usually drop the "h" sound at the beginning of words pronounced in Received Pronunciation. For example: 'e, 'e's, 'im, 'alf, 'ands, 'ead, 'ome, 'er, 'ole, 'ard, 'usband, 'ad, 'eard, 'adn't, 'avin', 'elp, 'enry, 'eache 'andkerchief, 'ere, 'ow, 'arm, 'imself, 'eat, 'ave, 'ospitality, 'iggins, 'uman, etc.

In another example, instead of saying “cup of tea” [ˈkʌp əv ti:] in separate intonations, Eliza pronounces them as one word with the same stress: “cuppatea” [ˈkʌpə,ti:]. [4, p. 114-116]

In addition, Eliza's father pronounces the consonants "s" as "sh". We can observe this in the film in the pronunciation of two sentences:

1. I give 'er the greatest gift any human being can give to another – [grɛɪtɪft]
2. I come about a very serious matter – [ʃɪə.ri.əs]. [1]

One of the differences between the two language communities (Received Pronunciation and Cockney dialect) is their verbal repertoire. Language registers are language variations that are formed in connection with certain professions or topics, that is, styles are also formed between social classes. According to P. Trudgil, language styles are examples of a specific language type that is formed in a certain social context. While the formal style is a language style used mostly by the upper class, the informal style is used by representatives of the lower class.

One of the main features of this film is that one of the main characters of the film, Henry Higgins, uses socially accepted and correct pronunciation forms in Standard English, chooses words according to situations, and constructs grammatically accurate sentences. According to the film, Henry Higgins has a high social status in society and, even though he treats people rudely, he is accepted as a role model in terms of language and status. We can conclude from the work that language is a means of social advancement and acceptance for women, whereas a symbol of power and authority for men. Consequently, women's speech is more appreciated or criticized, while men's speech is less socially pressured.

When talking about the lexical characteristics of social dialects, it is important to address gender differences. Studies have shown that the expressions used by women and men differ in some ways. Scientists have contributed to the field, offering various interpretations of gendered language use.

One of the first linguists to express a distinction between male and female language was Otto Jespersen. His work “Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin (1922)” considers men’s language as the norm, while women’s language as a deviation from this standard. According to Jespersen, women's modesty and conservatism prevent them from fully using language, particularly in terms of linguistic innovation, however men can create “new” expressions using language tools. In addition, he emphasized that women's vocabulary is more limited than men's.

In subsequent studies, Barrie Thorne, a professor of Sociology and Women's Studies, and Nancy Henley, a specialist in language and nonverbal communication, emphasized that women of the same age, social class, and education level tend to choose a variant that is closer to the "correct" form of speech than men. In other words, they focus more on prestige. [3, p. 17]

Dale Spender (1985) also moved away from the idea that women cannot fully use language and noted the dominance of men in language use and communication.

Differences in language use between women and men are most evident in sociolinguistic studies. In all sociolinguistic studies conducted, it has been determined that women use more standard and prestigious speech than men. Thus women belonging to the same social class use less non-standard language tools and stigmatized units than men. Labov (1972) explains the difference between language types as follows: “in attentive speech, women prefer prestige models more than men and use less stigmatized

forms”, in addition, “women are more sensitive than men to changes in language and quickly adopt and use new forms”, but “men use more non-standard forms than women in stable sociolinguistic stratification”. [8]

Trudgill, in his 1972 article “Sex, covert prestige, and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich,” supports Labov’s view that women are closer to the standard language and use high prestige forms of language. [5, p.179-181]

Poussa argues that the sociolinguistic differences between working-class men and women in Cambridgeshire have improved along history that differ from North Norfolk. In North Norfolk, male speakers work on local farms as soon as they leave their schools, where they live nearby other farmers and are tied to their land in a system of "tied cottages". In contrast, However, the situation is different for women belonging to the working class of rural origin. After graduating from school, they go to work as servants in the homes of middle-class families or aristocrats on a stay-at-home basis. This is a sudden separation from their family and social environment, where they begin to adopt the standard language rules of the upper social class. As a result, women tend to become bi-dialectal, abandoning the stigmatized characteristics of their local dialects in relation to their future spouses. For Cambridgeshire area, this situation is totally different. In this territory, working-class men and women begin working together from their early ages.

Baugh (1988) notes that individuals commence to socialise within society from their early childhood ages, and they can improve certain judgements regarding language usage and its cultural dimensions. According to this process, men and women tend to adopt some linguistic behaviours relating to humans whom they respect. It is a broader sociolinguistic tendency for users (speakers) that accomodate their speech toward socially valued models. [8]

According to R. Wardhaugh's research, there are differences between female and male dialects. In his opinion, women pay more attention to sociolinguistic norms than men. He also touched on an interesting example in his book. In the example, he highlighted several adjustments that a woman had to make in order to be liked by society when a position previously performed only by men began to be performed. This was related to Margaret Thatcher's tenure as British Prime Minister. She was told that she had an excessively "creaky" voice that was not suitable for this position and that she spoke in a high and sharp tone. Margaret Thatcher was advised to lower her voice, speak more slowly, and switch to monotone speech. This turned out to be a successful choice and she was well received by her supporters. According to the example here, it is clear that a woman had to adopt certain changes in order to be able to work in a position that was always performed by men in society and to be liked. [6, p. 317]

R. Wardhaugh, in his book, comprehensively explains gender differences and states that most of the research conducted in the field of morphology and lexis has been conducted on the English language. In his book, he touched on one of the interesting articles by R. Lakoff, where he noted the word choices of women and men. According to the article, women use more color adjectives such as mauve (light purple), beige (beige), aquamarine (blue-green), lavender (lavender color) and magenta (dark pink-purple), while men almost do not use them. In addition, he says that adjectives such as adorable (lovable), charming (attractive), divine (perfect) and sweet (sweet/kind) are also widely used by women. However, men rarely use them. [6, p. 318-319]

R. Wardhaugh also touched on grammatical differences in gender diversity. He summarized the ideas of Ann Brand and Robin Lakoff and concluded that the

intonations in the speech of women and men also differ. For example, women use more intonations related to surprise and politeness. In addition, women sometimes use rising intonation instead of falling intonation when answering a question. According to Lakoff, this shows that women are less sure of themselves. Referring to this, he said that women use more question additions (tag questions) when speaking. For example, "They caught the robber last week, didn't they?" He confirms with this example that women are not sure of what they are saying. However, these claims have been refuted by other researchers and have been determined to be untrue. [6, p 321]

It is necessary to find out the phrase "sort of" is used as a pragmatic marker in the speech of British women and men, based on research by Hanna Miettinen and Greg Watson. This research was conducted using the British National Corpus (BNC). This article evaluates the phrase "sort of" not as a lexical unit, but as a pragmatic marker. Here, it is examined in what densities, in what situations and across age ranges these phrases are used in the speech of women and men. According to various opinions, the phrase "sort of" is used more by women and is perceived as a sign of weakness and powerlessness, but the article proves that this is not the case. The phrase "Sort of" is considered a hedge term, and according to many researchers, it was considered exclusively women's language and a symbol of weakness. According to R. Lakoff, women use these phrases to appear less "masculine". Jan Aijmer, a corpus linguistics and English language researcher, says that this expression is more often used in informal and relaxed conversations. That is, with the help of these expressions, the listener understands the speaker more easily. He says that this expression is more often used between close friends, colleagues, and people who are likely to draw conclusions about each other. [2, p. 108-109]

The pragmatic marker "sort of" is completely different from the lexical unit sort of. The pragmatic marker can appear anywhere in a sentence, even within phrases and phraseological units. We can look through a few sentences where the pragmatic marker "sort of" is used:

- They are sort of pieces
- But are the department themselves all very sort of happy and jolly?
- Well Sidney sort of lives upstairs.
- I refused to answer these questions just sort of simply.

It is clear from the examples given above that the expression "sort of" is used in oral speech as a pragmatic marker. The translation of these expressions is based on the degree of proximity and level of understanding between the speaker and the listener. [2, p.110]

Finally, it would be useful to provide the frequency of use of this expression between men and women according to age. Hanna Miettinen and Greg Watson have determined these differences in a graphical form based on statistics. Gender differences in the use of this expression begin to emerge after the age of 15. Women start using this pragmatic marker more often in the 15-24, 25-34 age groups and after the age of 59. However, these figures are very different for men. They usually use this expression more often in the 35-44 and 45-59 age groups. Men use the expression "sort of" twice as often as women in the 35-44 age group, but women use the expression "sort of" more often than men in the 15-34 age group. [2, p.112]

As a result, the article is about the development of social dialects based on gender differences and their research. In the article, we got acquainted with the opinions of

several linguists. One thing they all have in common is that women use more colorful expressions than men, and at the same time, less stigmatized expressions are found in their speech. This is indicated as a reason for limiting women's speech. But for men, this system does not work like that. Since they use language more freely, they are free to create new expressions.

The article examines the speech of characters based on the film *My Fair Lady*, and here too, it is revealed that men are dominant in terms of speech. Eliza follows all of Henry Higgins' instructions to fit into the upper social class and become one of them, and as a result, she gains the sympathy of people by having a beautiful speech.

Finally, the article also examines the expression "sort of" as a pragmatic marker and conducts a corpus-based analysis. Based on these results, it is emphasized that this expression is used more by women as a "hedge" or to soften the situation, while men use it more often, mainly in certain age ranges.

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Links:

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