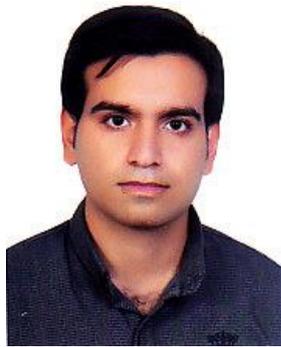# A SOCIOLINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE SPEECH AND THAT OF FEMALE SPEECH

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A B S T R A C T

It has been observed that male speech and female speech tend to differ in their form, topic, content, and use. Early writers were highly introspective in their analyses; more recent work has begun to provide empirical evidence. Male speech might be more direct. Men tend to use more of the non-standard variety of languages. However, women, more often than not, are more supportive, polite, expressive, talk more about home and family, etc. This study was conducted to sociolinguistically examine whether male speech is any different from that of female speech if age and level of education are treated as confounding variables. To collect the data, a researcher-made questionnaire was designed and were distributed to Behbahani participants. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through estimating Alpha Cronbach's value and its face validity was also corroborated by some experts. The results of the study demonstrated that gender differences are present in Behbahani people, and that as they grow older, they tend to use more non-standard Persian (Behbahani dialect). The findings of the study also confirmed that there is no significant correlation between level of education and the speech males and females produce.

Introduction

Observations of the differences between the way males and females speak were longer restricted to grammatical features, such as the differences between masculine and feminine in morphology in many languages. However, in the 1970s, women researchers started looking at how a linguistic code transmitted sexist values and bias. Lakoff's work (1975) is an example of this; she raised questions such as: Do women have a more restricted vocabulary than men? Do they use more adjectives? Are their sentences incomplete? Do they use more 'superficial' words? Consequently, researchers started to investigate empirically both bias in the language and the differential usage of the code by men and women.

The issue of women interacting differently from men has been discussed for hundreds of years. However, feminist movements in the 1960s realized that language was one of the instruments of female oppression by males. As a matter of fact, language not only reflected a patriarchal system, but also emphasized the male supremacy over women. Most of the work analyzing language was to do mostly with male language production. Labov's works (1972a, 1972b), for instance, described mostly the speech of men.

As cited in Wardhaugh (2006: 315), a major topic in sociolinguistics is the connection, if any, between the structures, vocabularies, and ways of using particular languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages. Do the men and women who speak a particular language use it in different ways? If they do, do these differences arise from the structure of that language, which would therefore be one kind of confirmation of the Whorfian hypothesis, or, alternatively, make any differences that exist simply reflect the ways in which the sexes relate to each other in that society, whatever the reason? May it be possible to describe a particular language as 'sexist,' or should we reserve such a description for those who use that language? If the answer to either question is affirmative, what could and should be done?

Gender difference has entered into English studies as a linguistic variable for a long time. The relation between language and gender has become one of the major issues in sociolinguistics since early 1970s. In our modern society, it would appear that women are equal with men. However, the harsh reality tells us that women are not provided with an equal opportunity even for discussions. Now the two sexes respectively command different communication styles. In other words, the language used by women is different from the language used by men.

Perhaps the most widespread belief about men's speech as compared with women's is that it is coarser and more direct. An early observer of style in language, Jesperson (1922; 1949), observed women's speech to be generally more conservative than men's in the following ways: Men are readier to coin and use new terms, pun, utter slang expressions, and employ profanity and obscenity. Women, on the other hand, are shy of mentioning certain parts of the human body and certain natural functions by the direct and often rude denominations which men and especially young men prefer when among themselves. Women will therefore invent innocent and euphemistic words and paraphrases which sometimes may in the long run come to be looked upon as the plain or blunt names and therefore in their turn shave to be avoided and replaced by more decent words, (p. 245). Reik (1954) affirmed that "we all know that there is a 'man talk' and a

'woman talk'" (p. 14). He observed that "men . . . will not hesitate to say 'Hell' or 'Damned.'. . . Women will rarely say 'It stinks' preferring to state that it has a bad smell" (p. 14).

This current topic arose from researchers' inclination in understanding if Iranian men's speech is any different from that of Iranian females with regard to their educational level and age. Thus, the current paper's objective would be an attempt to uncover the role of education and age as two moderating variables on the way Iranian man's speech is similar/different to/from that of Iranian women. It is hoped that the results of this investigation add to the literature on sociolinguistics in general and language and gender in particular.

Literature Review

The study of gender differences in using language from different aspects such as lexical forms, syntactic structure, international patterns and discourse markers has been studied increasingly. The previous studies have contributed to characterize the male female language separately. In the past decades, the methodologies regarding language and gender have been limited to individual linguistic features. For example, Newman, Groom, Handelmn, and Pennebaker (2008) conducted a research on gender differences with respect to the use of intensifiers, hedges and tag questions in English and Persian natural occurring discourse. Based on 6 English and 8 Persian film scripts were taken to form a dataset. There were found, no significant difference between the groups of gender bound linguistic differences. Johanssen, Hovy, and Sogarrd (2015) conducted a

research on cross-lingual syntactic variation over age and gender using large scale corpora. It was shown that several age and gender with specific variations hold across languages, for example, women are more likely to use VP conjunctions. Bamman, Eisentein, Schnoebelen (2014) reported that women tend to use the prestige and standard forms (Newman et al., 2008).

As cited in Wardhaugh (2011: 318), phonological differences between the speech of men and women have been noted in a variety of languages. In GrosVentre, an Amerindian language of the northeast United States, women have palatalized velar stops where men have palatalized dental stops, e.g., female *kjatsa*'bread' and male *djatsa*. When a female speaker of GrosVentre quotes a male, she attributes female pronunciations to him, and when a male quotes a female, he attributes male pronunciations to her. Moreover, any use of female pronunciations by males is likely to be regarded as a sign of effeminacy. In a northeast Asian language, Yukaghir, both women and children have /ts/ and /dz / where men have /tj/ and /dj/. Old people of *both* genders have a corresponding /7j/ and /jj/. Therefore, the difference is not only gender-related, but also age-graded. Consequently, in his lifetime a male goes through the progression of /ts/, /tj/, and /7j/, and /dz/, /Dj/, and /jj/, and a female has a corresponding /ts/ and /7j/, and /dz/ and /jj/. In Bengali men often substitute /l/ for initial /n/; women, children, and the uneducated do not do this. Likewise, in a Siberian language, Chukchi, men, but not women, often drop /n/ and /t/ when they occur between vowels, e.g., female *nitvaqenat*and male *nitvaqaat*. In Montreal many more men than women do not pronounce the *l* in the pronouns *il*and *elle*. Schoolgirls in Scotland apparently pronounce the *t* in words like *water* and *got* more often than schoolboys, who prefer to substitute a

glottal stop. Haas (1944) noted that in Koasati, an Amerindian language spoken in southwest Louisiana, among other gender-linked differences, men often pronounced a s at the end of verbs, but women did not, e.g., male lakáws'he is lifting it' and female lakáw. What was interesting was that this kind of pronunciation appeared to be dying out, because younger women and girls do not use these forms. That older speaker recognized the distinction as gender-based is apparent from the fact that women teach their sons to use the male forms and men narrating stories in which women speak employ female forms in reporting their words. This practice is in direct contrast to the aforementioned situation in GrosVentre, where there is no such changeover in reporting or quoting.

In setting out a list of what she calls 'sociolinguistic universal tendencies,' Holmes (1998) does offer some testable claims. There are five of these:

a) Women and men develop different patterns of language use.

b) Women tend to focus on the affective functions of an interaction more often than men do.

c) Women tend to use linguistic devices that stress solidarity more often than men do.

d) Women tend to interact in ways which will maintain and increase solidarity, while (especially in formal contexts) men tend to interact in ways which will maintain and increase their power and status.

e) Women are stylistically more flexible than men.

Word-shapes in other languages contrast because women

and men use different affixes. In Yana, a (now extinct) North American Indian language, and Chiquitano, a South American Indian language, some of the words used between men are longer than the equivalent words used by women and for women, because the men's forms sometimes add a suffix (Holmes, 2013: 160). *Yana*

Women's form	Men's form	
baba-na	'deer'	
yaayaa-na	'person'	
t'et	t'et'-na	'grizzly bear'
?au	?au-na'fire'	
nissaklunissaklu-?i	'he might go away'	

In modern standard Japanese, these distinctions are more a matter of degrees of formality or politeness than gender; so the 'Men's' forms are largely restricted to casual contexts and are considered rather vulgar, while the 'Women's' forms are used by everyone in public contexts. Increasingly, too, as gender roles change, with more women in the workforce and more men prepared to assist in child-rearing, young Japanese women are challenging restrictive social norms, and using the 'Men's' forms. While initially women who used these forms were regarded as rather 'macho', the social meaning of these forms is changing. They are no longer so many signs of masculinity as of informality and modernity (Holmes, 2013: 161).

Some languages signal the gender of the speaker in the pronoun system. In Japanese, for example, there are a number of words for 'I' varying primarily in formality, only women are traditionally confined to the more formal variants. Soar is used only by men in casual contexts and *Baku*, the next most casual form, is used mainly by men in semi-formal contexts, while women

are conventionally expected to use only the semi-formal variant, *Atashi*, the formal *watashi*and the most formal *watakushi* (forms also used by men in formal contexts). However, again modern young Japanese women are increasingly challenging such restrictions.

The linguistic features which differ in the speech of women and men in Western communities are usually features which also distinguish the speech of people from different social classes. In every social class where surveys have been undertaken, men use more vernacular forms than women. In social dialect interviews in Norwich, men used more of the vernacular [in] form at the end of words like *speaking* and *walking* than women. Across all social groups in Western societies, women generally use more standard grammatical forms than men and so, correspondingly, men use more vernacular forms than women. In Detroit, for instance, multiple negation (e.g. *I don't know nothing about it*), a vernacular feature of speech, is more frequent in men's speech than in women's. This is true in every social group, but the difference is most dramatic in the second highest (the lower middle class) where the men's multiple negation score is 32 per cent compared to only 1 per cent for women. Even in the lowest social group, however, men use a third more instances of multiple negation than women (90 vs. 59 per cent).

By their teenage years, most young people in English-speaking communities have developed an awareness of the significance of standard English variants, though they may not choose to use them. A common age-related pattern for stable vernacular forms, such as being the use of [in] for standard [ih], in *walking*, or [d] for [e] in *then*, or multiple negation. It indicates that they are high in childhood and adolescence, and then steadily reduce as

people approach middle age when societal pressures to conform are greatest.Vernacular usage gradually increases again in old age as social pressures reduce, with peoplemoving out of the workforce and into a more relaxed phase of their lives.In other words, the above lines suggest that as people get older their speech becomes gradually more standard, and then later it becomes less standard and is once again characterized by vernacular forms (Holmes, 2013).

Many social dialectologists have found that adolescents use particularly high frequencies of vernacular forms, especially if they are forms such as *ain't and* multiple negation which people clearly recognize and identify as non-standard. This provides empirical support for a proposed peak during adolescence when peer group pressure *not* to conform to society's norms is greatest. However, this pattern is not attributable to age alone. Like slang, vernacular forms act as solidarity markers; they can indicate membership of close-knit social groups. New York gang members, for instance, delete the *-Ed which* signals past tense at the ends of words much more often than adults from the same social group, but also more often than those labelled 'lames', young people who do not belong to gangs. Gang members more often say *miss* for *missed* (in utterances like *he missed the bus yesterday*) and *pass for passed* (*it passes me*) than 'lames' or adults. And they use more multiple negation than adults and 'lames' in the same social class. Membership of a close-knit social group is more important than age alone in accounting for these patterns (Holmes, 2013: 178).

It is obvious that the major researches based on language and gender have been focused on the social issues and individual linguistic phenomenon. Therefore, there is a

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research(IJAMSR) ISSN:2581-4281 Volume 1, Issue 7, September, 2018

https://doi.org/10.31426/ijamsr.2018.1.7.712

great need for observing gender's language to the point of functional variation. The current study is helpful to analyze male and female editorial writing with a comprehensive grammatical information by adopting MD analysis.

Research Questions

a) Can education result in a change in the way males and females speak?

b) How does age moderate men's and women's speech?

Methodology

Data Collection

To see if the way men's speech is any different to that of women's, a researcher-made questionnaire was used. 64.1 % of the respondents to the questionnaire were females, while 35.9% of them were male among whom 41.9% were single, and others were married. The oldest respondent was 67 years old, and the youngest one was 18. It should also be mentioned that the mode was 21. Also, 10.4 of the respondents might not have finished junior high school, 31% of them hold diploma, 9.6% of them hold associate degree, 38.3% hold B.A., 8.6% hold a M.A. or MSc, 1% hold PhD, and 1% were assigned in "other" group.

This study is an applied and cross-sectional research. The population of this research are all the people in Behbahan in 2018. Using Cochran formula, 10 districts of Behbahan were randomly selected, and in the next stage the frequency of the families was systematically selected. In the third stage, in each family, a person aged

18 or above filled out the questionnaire. All codes of ethics were considered at all stages of data collection. The gathered data were fed into SPSS version 23. To analyze them, the researchers used t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson. The significance level in the current study is 0.05. Face validity of the items was checked by 3 experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was also checked through Alpha Cronbach's value. The table given below shows the reliability of the instrument exploited.

Table 1. The reliability of the items

Variable	Number of points	Example	Cronbach's alpha
Hospital	9	I use Behbahani dialect in government-run departments including hospital as I believe it enhances my chance of getting my job done	0/87
Friendly conversations	4	In our friendly conversations, I use my dialect as it shows our harmony	0/70
University	9	If I useBehbahani dialect when talking to myBehbahani university professors, chances are I get better grades	0/68

**International Journal of
Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research (IJAMSR) ISSN:2581-4281**

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation,… of the main variables

variable	min	Max	Mean	S.D	t	sig
hospital	12	45	35/09	5/47	122/83	0/00
Friendly conversations	8	20	14/65	2/42	118/15	0/00
university	23	81	33/90	4/88	134/26	0/00

Table 2 reveals the minimum and maximum scores, mean, standard deviation along with the results of one-sample t-test for all the variables of the research.

Table 3. T-test for the relationship between gender and main variables

Variable	gender	Mean	S.D	T	Sig
Hospital	women	35/03	5/75	0/29	0/02
	men	35/21	4/94		
sFriendly conversations	women	14/43	2/55	2/32	0/03
	men	15/02	2/14		
University	women	34/16	5/35	1/39	0/04
	men	33/47	3/89		

Based on the obtained results of table 3, the researchers investigated the relationship between gender and main variables, thus t-test was conducted. The obtained results suggest that in all the variables (hospital, friendly conversation, and university), there is a significant relationship as the p value for all of them is less than 0.05.

Table 4. Variables Correlation Matrices

Variable	-	Hospital	Friendly conversations	University	old
Hospital	Pearson	1			
	Sig				
Friendly conversations	Pearson	0/49	1		
	Sig	0/00			
University	Pearson	0/21	0/08	1	
	Sig	0/00	0/11		
Age	Pearson	0/12	0/09	0/19	1
	Sig	0/01	0/07	0/00	

As the above metric demonstrates, there is a correlation between age and the way people use language in hospital or in their friendly conversation, that is to say, as people grow older, they use Behbahani dialect more, but no statistical correlation between age and friendly correlation was observed as the p value exceeded 0.05.

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research(IJAMSR) ISSN:2581-4281 Volume 1, Issue 7, September, 2018

https://doi.org/10.31426/ijamsr.2018.1.7.712

Table 5. ANOVA between education and main variables

Variable	degree of education	Mean	S.D	F	Sig
Hospital	Cycle and lower	34/20	4/47	1/86	0/08
	Diploma	34/25	5/50		
	Associate degree	34/50	6/03		
	B.A	35/98	5/22		
	M.A	35/17	6/82		
	Ph.D. and higher	39/20	1/78		
	Other	33/00	2/82		
Friendly conversations	Cycle and lower	14/35	1/96	1/20	0/30
	Diploma	14/26	2/18		
	Associate degree	15/17	2/53		
	B.A	14/84	2/61		
	M.A	14/79	2/90		
	Ph.D. and higher	15/80	1/78		
	Other	15/00	1/41		
University	Cycle and lower	34/10	4/67	1/22	0/20
	Diploma	33/32	4/21		
	Associate degree	35/17	4/30		
	B.A	33/80	4/16		
	M.A	35/35	9/75		
	Ph.D. and higher	36/00	4/18		
	Other	32/00	1/41		

As the obtained significant level of the relationship between education and aforementioned variables in table 5 exceed that of 0.05, it is safe to say that there is no significant relationship between education and study variables. Accordingly, the hypotheses can safely be rejected as long as ANOVA is concerned.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study of conduct to sociolinguistically explore male's and female's speech. To this end, a researcher-made questionnaire was used and were distributed to the participants of the research. In what comes under,

discussion regarding the findings of the research is presented.

The pattern of Age Grading is usually found to be a U-shaped curve (Downes, 1984) in which the use of non-standard linguistic variables tends to peak during adolescence. Peersman, Dalemans, Vandekerckhove, Vandekerckhove and Van Vaerenbergh (2016) indeed showed that both the chat word probability and the regional word probability peak between the ages of 13 and 15, which corroborates the presence of the Adolescent Peak Principle. The latter finding is quite remarkable given the on-going dialect loss processes in Flanders, which mainly affect these younger groups. However, except for West-Flanders, most adolescents produces regional speech with a wide geographical reach rather than small-scale local dialect forms (Peersman et al., 2016). The results we achieved is in sharp contrast with the findings of Downed (1984) and Peersman et al. (2016). In this study, we found that as individuals grow older, they tend to use more of non-standard variety of Persian (Behbahani dialect). We further found that no statistically significant difference can be observed between the age of the interlocutors and their friendly conversation.

Based on the data we gathered, we found that gender can moderate men's and women's use of non-standard variety of languages. This finding is also in contrast with Peersman et al. (2016). In accordance with Plevoets' (2008) study, Peersman et al. (2016) found no significant effect for gender. Additionally, although female adolescents are thought to be the innovators of newly incoming non-standard (in this case chatspeak) forms, our results suggested no change in the gender effect on the probability that chatspeak features are produced

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research(IJAMSR) ISSN:2581-4281 Volume 1, Issue 7, September, 2018

https://doi.org/10.31426/ijamsr.2018.1.7.712

during the adolescent peak (Peersman et al., 2016). However, the results we obtained are in line with a large body of research who support the notion and believe that men's speech is essentially different from female's speech (for example see, Wardhaugh, 2011; Holmes, 2013; Nemati& Bayer 2007; Lakoff, 2004; Alvi, Mahmood &Rasool, 2016 etc.)

In the current research we also found that level of education cannot moderate men's and women's use of non-standard variety. The varieties of a language can be classified as regional dialect and social dialect based on speaker's geographical origin and social background. The educational implication of the regional and social dialects can be considered within the standard and non-standard category. This is because a variety spoken by a certain social group or region can be emerged as a standard variety; while the other varieties remain in the status of non-standard variety (Hudson, 2001).

It is argued that the varieties of a language play an important role in educational context. In this connection, learning is claimed to be better and more successful when conducted on the variety spoken by students (Cheshire, 2005). However, selecting and compromising standard and non-standard varieties in different spheres of life, such as in education, politics, social, etc., seems complex and controversial. For example, Cook (2003:12*) described the situation of practically using the two varieties in an academic setting as follows:

At the heart of the aspiration to relate theory to practice is a constant tension between language as viewed by 'the expert' and language as everyone's lived experience. The two are by no means easily

reconciled and… are likely to be aggravated by an attempt to impose insensitively an 'expert' view which runs contrary to deeply held belief. Nowhere is this more apparent than in our attitudes to the language education of children, and the belief which they reflect about the 'best' language use. These provide a good illustration of the kind of problematic issues with which applied linguistics inquiry engages.

Theoretically, the experts should value the different dialects of a language while preparing textbooks and National Exams. But as shown in the above extract, the variety used by experts is considered as a 'good' variable and positively valued (Tegegne, 2015). Thus, it can be concluded that the results of the study are in line and homogenous with the conclusion made by Tegegne (2015) who found that as students' dialect implemented in education, their gain can be increased that is to say, if Behbahani dialect is implemented in the classroom, chances are those students using Behbahani dialect in their home can significantly improve their scores in exams.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This study was conducted to see if some confounding variables, namely age, gender, and level of education can moderate the way men's and women's talk. As a matter of research fact, no research is without its flaw (s). In this study we used a researcher-made questionnaire. Further study with a different population in a larger city with a different instrument is needed to fully investigate the effect of these confounding variable on men's and women's speech. To use different instruments, it is suggested that future

International Journal of
Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research (IJAMSR) ISSN:2581-4281

researchers use other means of data collection such as interviews. Also future researchers can use longitudinal research. They can live with the people of a specific region and collect the needed data. In this way, the results they would obtain can support easier.

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