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### Sociolinguistics Impact of Language With reference to Gender Discrimination

#### Abstract

*Sociolinguistics is a discipline which connects sociology with linguistics. It is a branch of sociology and as a concept it is concerned with how language use is a determinant of a given society's linguistic requirements. Every society has linguistic codes adequate for communication and interaction. Despite several theories added up to Literature in English from time to time, there seems to be continuous debates over the discrimination in context of Gender. Much of the discussion is centred on impact of this discrimination in society. There is a separation of boys and girls who are often found in childhood, at least in terms of games and outdoor activities.*

*The word 'gender' originally is a grammatical term that refers to the social roles and behaviour of individuals and these attributes of behaviour arise due to changes biologically as male or female. Literature has witnessed the roles of women evolving through ages, but until recent times, most of the published writers were men and the portrayal of women in literature was without doubt biased. A lot of it has to be blamed on the fact that in the ancient world, literacy was strictly limited, and the majority of those who could write were male. However, the contribution of women to oral folklore cannot be taken for granted – in folk songs, stories, poetry and literature in general. Here's a look at how women were portrayed in literature through eras.*

*This is a huge complex embracing virtually all aspects of social behaviour of which language is only one. It comes as no surprise to note that language spoken by and about women is different from that spoken by and about men. There are a number of subtle points connected with women's speech, where the differences apparently serve to maintain the generally inferior position which women occupy in virtually all societies. An observation made by researchers on gender-specific language usage is that women tend to use more standard language than men. Not everyone agrees with this, but the evidence for it is very powerful and many investigations have shown this objectively.*

*This research paper summarized that gender play a vital role in shaping the socio-linguistic pattern as the variations vary from one segment of age category to another and likewise gender also has differences in their variations, their psycho analytic attitudes or behaviors in terms of male and female. All these aforesaid variations in socio-linguistics have the greatest impact and affect the perception towards life and finally society.*

Introduction: Sociolinguistics is a discipline which connects sociology with linguistics. It is a branch of sociology and as a concept it is concerned with how language use is a determinant of a given society's linguistic requirements. Every society has linguistic codes adequate for communication and interaction. Sociolinguistics demonstrate how groups in a given society are divided by certain social variables like ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education, age, etc. and how adherence to these variables is used to categorize individuals in social class or socio-economic classes. The social study of language is a modern linguistic pattern because the modern linguists acknowledged and accepted that language by its nature is totally a social phenomenon.

This research paper is about the social differences which are bound to be reflected in the psychoanalytical attributes of individuals on the basis of gender and sex. It has been

found that in India there are so many variances which have been explained in speech, accent, attitude, perception, behavior etc. These are such characteristics that define the society, its classification, norms, rules etc. The word 'gender' originally is a grammatical term that refers to the social roles and behaviour of individuals and these attributes of behaviour arise due to biologically changes as male or female. In the past three decades or so intensive research has been carried out into the relationship of sociolinguistics and gender, largely by female scholars who have felt drawn to this theme because of the obvious discrimination against women which has taken place in the past and which is still to be observed today.

It comes as no surprise to note that language spoken by and about women is different from that spoken by and about men. The point has become even more interesting under the influence of the women's liberation movement. There are a number of subtle points connected with women's speech, where the differences apparently serve to maintain the generally inferior position which women occupy in virtually all societies. There is considerable evidence that although men speak more, females are superior speakers. The previous studies marshalled that girls do better than boys in language skills in the early years of schooling. P. Swaminathan (2013)<sup>1</sup> stated in his study that 75 to 80 per cent of the children who have reading problems or who are in remedial classes are boys. The latter also stutter more than girls. On the other hand, in societies with high illiteracy rates, it is most often the women who are illiterate. In bilingual societies, it is most often the men who are bilingual.

The American linguist Robin Lakoff (1971)<sup>2</sup> who in the early 1970s focussed her attention on certain themes with the language and gender complex above those which she rightly felt were in need of rectifying within linguistics discipline. Her work stimulated other scholars to engage in this study and soon language and gender was a burgeoning research area in universities across the western world. Hence, the purpose of this research is to throw

light on gender studies as it is necessary to examine the psychoanalytical dimensions in going deep into the discrimination of language of male and female.

The two opinions emerged on this relationship, one is the *difference approach* which established that male and female language is dissimilar without attributing this to the nature of the social relationship between men and women. The other is the *dominance approach* which observes language use by females and males as reflecting established relationship of social control of the latter over the former. With the maturation of research on language and gender the simple ‘difference – dominance’ dichotomy was increasingly regarded as unsatisfactory and insufficiently nuanced.

Before beginning a discussion on gender and age it is important to stress that statements made in this context are taken to apply to groups of people, in this case men and women. They are generalisations whose justification, if this holds, derives from their applicability to majorities with groups. The personality of the individual can always lead her or him, not to conform to a pattern claimed for her or his group. For example, to maintain that men have a competitive style of social behaviour in elite society is a generalisation which virtually everyone would agree on. However, they are men who are not competitive in this respect. Because they form a relatively small minority the generalisation still holds. In the earliest of these studies, the work by Fischer (1958)<sup>3</sup>, it was reported that the speech of three- to ten-year-old boys was similar to that of adult males in terms of colloquial pronunciation. That is, the boys produced a greater proportion of contractions and consonant deletions (e.g., *fightin'*) than did female peers. In a more recent study of Edinburgh schoolchildren, Romaine (1975)<sup>4</sup> found trends towards sex differentiation in the use of several phonological variables, though her results did not reach statistical significance. Romaine's most general finding was that boys as young as six use more non-standard phonological forms than do girls of the same age. In addition to these findings of gender-dependent phonological variation, there are at

least three studies that reveal differences along morpho-syntactic dimensions, although the 'children' in these studies tend to be somewhat older. Cheshire (1982)<sup>5</sup> examined the use of more than a dozen grammatical features (e.g., present tense verb suffix /s/, negative concord) in the speech of nine- to thirteen-year-old girls and eleven- to seventeen-year-old boys in Reading, England. The results were very much like those in the phonological studies, in that for all but two of these variables; the males used non-standard forms more often than did their female peers.

It is assumed by all researchers on language and gender that men and women use language differently. This is taken to findings of this study what is called socialisation, the growing into a society from early childhood onwards. Gender roles are presented to infants and lead them along paths full of preconceived opinions. The first act of gender difference is giving of names. Females and males are usually recognisable by their first names although a few names, e.g. *Hilary; Anmol, Gholu, Chottu, Kinjal* (abbreviated forms), can apply to both genders. Infants are then treated as one gender or the other, though occasionally parents resist the allocation of gender to children if this does not match what they were wishing for. So much seems fairly innocuous but the reinforcement of gender allocation can take on subtle forms based on whether children comply to the role they are assigned. Parental approval or disapproval is often expressed according to how one conforms to one's gender role: *good boy, good girl; bad boy, bad girl* are common assessments made of children. While many parents use such labels without thinking it may well show how much they in turn internalised notions of gender roles during their own youth, i.e. in their own formative period.

Attributes of the two genders are conveyed early on to children. There are differences between boys and girls, not just in external physiology, but in mental makeup. Reason is for boys while emotions are for girls. Crying becomes increasingly unacceptable for boys who are supposed to come to terms with unpleasant situations in a rational manner. Girls are

allowed to display emotion which is not a male thing, only in extreme circumstances which are regarded as exceptional. Boys learn early on to hide fear and anxiety. There are linguistic manifestations of these slots for the genders. Diminutive formations are commonly used for girls, which stresses their lack of power and conversely their need for protection. For instance, there is *girl* and *girlie* but no *boy* and *boyie*. Different ways of passing their time are related to children at an early stage. Think of the toys given to children to play with: guns for boys, dolls for girls. A competitive, public role is suggested for boys and a more domestic, docile role is assumed for girls. Already in early childhood there is an asymmetry which increasingly widens into many areas of social behaviour. Differences between men's and women's speech may range from differences in pronunciation and grammar, which are scarcely noticed except by linguists, to obvious differences systematically taught to children. Since there are few barriers to communication between the sexes, differences between women's and men's speech must be accounted for on a different basis. Women's speech is frequently more conservative and evaluated as better than men's speech.

It is true that some people put their assumed role aside in later life, frequently as a result of questioning the basis for such roles. But such major re-orientations in life are not the rule. Instead most people continue along the path which was set for them in childhood and adolescence. There are advantages to this. The gender roles supplied by society allow those who confirm them to enjoy the benefits. Men can assert themselves in public and occupy good jobs and women can accept the support and economic backing from men which goes with a domestic role. Such descriptions are close to stereotypes but they are accurate for large sections of western societies and many others as well, if they were not, these societies would be organised differently. The problems arise with the discriminations which are endemic to such a socio-economic system. The very public presence of males can be

interpreted as hegemony over women. Even if not all women wish to assume such public roles, the opportunity should be open to them. The extent to which we carry assumptions about what gender should occupy what positions in society can be seen in the unmarked or default use of many titles. Surgeons are taken to be male unless specified otherwise. Nurses are females unless one speaks of male nurses. Now while the work of neither of these individuals is inherently of greater value than that of the other, the social prestige of the surgeon is far greater.

There has been a recent reemphasis in sociolinguistics, led by researchers working on the interaction of language and gender, to renew this tradition of reaching out to other fields in order to benefit from what they can tell us about the interpersonal functions of languages and communication. Sociolinguistic studies have for some time standardly adopted the methodologies of participant observation or network sampling that are drawn from anthropology and sociology. Over the last two decades many studies have been conducted on social psychology and have been accompanied in the interest of methodologies and theories that underlie many themes of sociolinguistics. Traditionally, the justification for different employment patterns along gender lines appealed to the larger physique of men and their greater strength vis a vis women. These physiological differences were often compared to those in the animal world. It is true that in the mammal world, the males of species are generally stronger, one just needs to look at a bull or a boar to see that. But division of labour according to gender would only make sense in manual jobs, but even there the ever increasing automation of labour has meant that physical strength is becoming less and less of a consideration. The employment opportunities of women versus men have to do with power in society.

*Gender and power*

If gender consists of roles allocated to males and females and determined by society then it is not a given one, at least very much less than one's biological sex is given. Scholars nowadays refer to gender as constructed; it is something which is performed by individuals who adopt categories of beliefs and behaviour which are associated in a given society with their biological sex. Both scholars and laypersons have noticed that there are also differences between men's and women's speech in English. Not only this, they have noticed that the linguistic differences are reflections of the difference between the role of women in Indian society and that of men.

It has observed that women are more sensitive than men to overt sociolinguistic values. Because language in this case is a reflection of social role, women are at a disadvantageous side, even more of a disadvantage if they try to speak men's language. Women in elite societies at least appear to be more status-conscious and sensitive to the social significance of certain linguistic variables. On the other hand, because of the association of certain working class values with masculinity, men may value working class speech as a symbol of masculinity. An observation made by researchers on gender-specific language usage is that women tend to use more standard language than men. Not everyone agrees with this, but the evidence for it is very powerful and many investigations have shown this objectively. An explanation which appeals to a power differential between men and women would seem to give an acceptable answer. If one group has been traditionally discriminated against, then assuming the accent of prestige will afford some power by association.

This paper concluded that gender play a vital role in shaping the socio-linguistic pattern as the variations vary from one segment of age category to another and likewise gender also has differences in their variations, their psycho analytic attitudes or behaviors in

terms of male and female. All these aforesaid variations in socio-linguistics have the greatest impact and affect the perception towards life and finally society.

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