

Gender Factor in National Varieties of English

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Abstract

The article focuses on studying male and female speech behaviour in two national variants of English – British and American – and research in realizing the rich potential of meanings developing in modern English dialogue discourse.

The analysis is not only based on functional and pragmatic approach to language study but also centers on modern trends in cognitive linguistics. The latest achievements of this area of linguistics are determined by the fact that appearance of various functional meanings of tags in dialogue discourse is highly dependent on sociocultural, cognitive, gender, psychological and a number of other factors.

Keywords: Functional pragmatics, Tags, Dialogue discourse, Communicative strategy, Gender factor

1. Linguistic Nature of Gender Differences

1.1 Approaches to “sex correlation”

At present, the term “gender” is widespread in academic literature with the meaning of “correlation of sexes”. The interest in this notion can be explained mostly by the fact that over the past 20 years human society reconsidered the interpretation of social organization of gender. As a result, correlation of sexes is viewed now as a form of social organization.

In addition, it should be mentioned that at the close of the 18th century the concepts of “democracy”, “class”, “art” and “culture” changed and broadened which, in turn, raised a range of questions concerning these social and political phenomena. During the last decade of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, a lot of key words became common in the English language or obtained new important meanings. These words while transforming their meanings followed specific patterns, and these patterns may serve as a certain guide to tracking the shifts in the way of living and thinking that caused language changes (Williams N., and Storey, R., 1966).

Two stages in gender research development process can be distinguished: biological determinism and gender research proper. Between these two stages, many linguists also contemplate a short period of initial accumulation of facts which questioned the dependence of gender category on biological peculiarities of the sexes. Scientists call this period transitional (Kirillina, 1998).

A specific feature of the first stage of gender research development – biological determinism – was recognition of the fact that psychological, cultural, behavioral and intellectual differences between men and women as well as peculiarities of their speech behavior were determined by their biological sex. “Things are the way they are by virtue of the fact that men are men and women are women - a division perceived to be natural and rooted in biology, producing, in turn, profound psychological, behavioral, and social consequences.” (West, Zimmerman, 1997) But such factors as sex correlation, age, education and culture were not taken into account. Moreover, the research had no connection with the data of other sciences; it was of purely descriptive character as it was entirely based on observing separately taken facts.

1.2 Transitional period in gender research development

The transitional period in gender research development lasted from the beginning to the middle of the 20th century. A separate direction was still to be evolved at that time. However, further development of gender research in linguistics was greatly influenced by F. Mauthner's and O. Jespersen's scientific works.

In his work published in 1913 F. Mauthner researches peculiarities of communication in various social strata and concludes that existing gender differences in language are determined by social and historical causes. Thus, among factory employees curse words are used mainly by men. According to F. Mauthner, women are less

educated, therefore foreign words are more often observed in their speech. The linguist considers that men are more educated, that is why they hardly turn to foreign words in their speech behavior and prefer their mother tongue equivalents. F. Mauthner also thinks that creative use of language is men's prerogative, women only being able to adopt the language used by men (Mauthner, 1921).

In 1922 O. Jespersen in his work "Language. Its Nature, Development and Origin" was one of the first linguists to describe in detail and pay attention to differences between men's and women's use of lexical units in modern English. O. Jespersen notes, in particular, that women in their speech prefer using euphemisms, a great number of intensifying words (for instance, such adjectives as "pretty, nice, vast", intensifier "so") and emphatic constructions (Jespersen, 1925).

The Danish researcher also underlines that women's vocabulary is less extensive than the men's one. "Most of those who are in the habit of reading books in foreign languages will experience a much greater average difficulty reading books written by male than by female authors, because they contain a lot more uncommon words, dialect words, technical terms etc." (Jespersen, 1998)

O. Jespersen as well as F. Mauthner considerably influenced the development of gender research in linguistics.

1.3 Language functioning within groups of people

It ought to be mentioned that in the late 20th century sociolinguistics provided scientists with a lot of statistic information about functioning of language within groups of people united according to their sex, age, occupation, being a citizen or a country dweller. Thus, quantitative research conducted in the USA, Great Britain and some other countries showed that speakers' gender exert certain influence on his/her linguistic competence. According to P. Trudgill, women belonging to different social strata in order to demonstrate their social status use more prestigious pronunciation forms and normative grammatical constructions. Men's speech is characterized by a great number of deviations from standard language due to their masculine type of behavior (Trudgill, 1974). Individual speech code develops under the influence of a number of factors, for instance social, cultural, economic and many others. One should also take into consideration extra linguistic and linguistic aspects of a speaker's speech behavior.

The basis of feminist linguistics was laid by the denouncement of men's dominance in social and cultural life (Borneman, 1991, Janssen-Jurreit, 1975).

Admittedly, pioneers of conducting gender research in linguistics are American and German scientists. Works of such outstanding representatives of foreign gender linguistics as O. Jespersen, W. Labov, P. Trudgill, R. Lakoff, D. Spender, J. Coates, D. Cameron, P. Smith, B. Priceler, M. Adler, and J. Holmes are especially valuable.

A significant piece of research in the field of linguistics is Robin Lakoff's "Language and Woman's Place" where the author investigates peculiarities of women's speech behavior which may be traced in modern English at all levels (Lakoff, 1973).

1.4 Problems of gender research in Russian linguistics

Problems of gender research have also been studied by representatives of Russian linguistics: E. A. Zemskaya, M. A. Kitaygorodskaya, N.N. Rozanova, E. M. Bakusheva, A.P. Martynyuk, E. P. Goroshko, A. V. Kirillina, I.I. Khaleeva, E.A. Babenkova, O.N. Prokudina, L.V. Stepanova, G. Sh. Khakimova and others.

In recent years, more and more Russian scientists started to research the influence of gender on a person's speech behavior which demonstrates growing interest in this problem in this country.

All works devoted to gender research in linguistics may be conventionally divided into two groups: some study language of the genders (men and women), others study language about the genders. The former, a more numerous group of studies, focus on the way representatives of different genders speak while the latter focus on the way they are spoken about.

One of the first works in the area of gender analysis was the research of T.B. Kruchkova "Some Experimental Research of the Peculiarities of Using Russian by Men and Women" in 1975. In her work, the author studied peculiarities of using parts of speech in fictional texts written by men and women. The author concluded that fictional texts of female authors contained more pronouns and particles; also there was a tendency to more frequent use of the particles "not", "neither" and "nor" in women's speech. As for fictional texts of male authors, nouns were more frequently used.

A.A. Veilert (1976) investigating oral utterances discovered rather frequent appearance of verbs and conjunctions in women's speech. Moreover, the author noted that women had a much richer vocabulary than men. A.A. Veilert observed a great number of abstract nouns as well as adjectives and adverbs in men's speech.

In the second half of the 20th century, the gender research direction as such was developed. It became possible owing to the development of sociolinguistics and feminism upsurge in Germany and the USA. It is during this period when linguists studied peculiarities of gender manifestations at different levels of language (lexical, grammatical and syntactic). One may observe certain strategies and tactics in men's and women's speech behavior as well as gender preferences in the choice of lexical units, syntactic constructions etc.

2. Communicative strategies and tactics in linguistics

Investigating gender peculiarities of dialogue discourse, many researchers pay attention, in the first place, to communicative behavior strategy. Most researchers agree that the male type of speech behavior is known as "competitive", which assumes competitiveness, autonomy, striving for possession. The female strategy of communicative behavior assumes interpersonal interaction, sociability and expression of feelings ("cooperative" type). "Male" communication is less interlocutor-oriented; it is aimed at expressing one's own principles. "Female" communication is directed towards the interlocutor, mutual understanding and dialogue.

It is admitted in any culture that woman's social status is less significant in comparison with the man's because man's activity in social sphere is viewed as more socially significant as opposed to woman's activity which is less productive.

A lot of Russian and foreign scientists' studies confirm the existence of differences in men's and women's speech behavior. Gender-sensitive models of speech behavior are not assigned by nature; they are "constructed" by society, determined by institutions of social control and cultural traditions.

The assumption of men and women being different or alike is incorrect. Each person regardless of his/her sex assignment is an individual with equal opportunities. Various character peculiarities of men and women are caused not by their biological assignment to this or that sex. And these peculiarities (physiology and spiritual state) are best reflected in the English words "sex" and "gender". According to G. Brandt, "sex" is a set of biological, physiological, natural inborn features, while "gender" is a complex of speech, behavioral personal peculiarities which constitute men's and women's spiritual difference subject to cultural influence (G. Brandt, 1998). People's speech is directly related to communication. According to L. Arliss' theory of communication and statement, "communication is a means of our learning about everything", "it always bears value load reflecting interlocutors' worldview." (L. Arliss, D. Borisoff, 1996) Thus, considerable differences of men's and women's worldview influence communication. Communication cannot be viewed disjointed from language as it is through language and other sign systems that worldview and, accordingly, gender peculiarities are expressed.

2.1 "Communicative strategy" and "communicative tactics"

Before turning to concrete examples, such terms as "communicative strategy" and "communicative tactic" should be considered. Interest in this topic has been growing; many new works devoted to communicative strategies and tactics appeared recently. Among the most outstanding ones are the works of Issers (2008), Mikhalyova (2002), Parshina (2007). The question of communicative strategies and tactics in political discourse was approached by A.V. Mishlanov (2006), V.U. Andreeva (2009), A.V. Lanskikh (2008), E.V. Rubleva (2006) and M.V. Yurina (2006).

The notion "strategy" has been studied in such scientific areas as military science, economics, political science, psychology, linguistics. In any of the mentioned areas, the strategic approach "is based on general knowledge and cognitive models of society and individual" (Issers, 2008).

There is no single approach to defining communicative strategies and tactics in linguistics. Thus, O. Issers views communicative strategies as "a complex of speech operations aimed at achieving communicative objectives" (Issers, 2008).

According to O. Parshina, a communicative strategy is "a supertask of speech dictated by the speaker's practical objectives", "a specific direction of speech behavior in a specific situation to achieve the aim of communication" (Parshina, 2007).

A. Lanskikh gives the following definition of a communicative strategy: "general macrointention determining organization of the communicant's speech behavior according to communicative or non-communicative objectives of the speaker and specific communication setting".

Analyzing the above listed definitions, we may conclude that the concept of communicative aim is crucial in defining a communicative strategy. Thus, a communicative aim determines the whole strategy of communication, and "it is expressed in the choice of the manner of talk, of the form and content of the message, proper form of speech, setting etc." (Karasik, 1992)

In our research, we view a communicative strategy as a part of communicative behavior or communicative interaction, where a number of verbal and non-verbal means are used for achieving a specific communicative aim, communicants' personalities and communication setting being taken into account.

Communicative tactics fulfill the function of the means of communicative strategy realization and correlate with individual communicative intentions. Tactics facilitating the achievement of similar aims are joined into groups. Thus, "a strategy constituted by these tactics is determined" (Lanskikh, 2008). For realization of a certain tactic, communicative moves are used, which, according to O. Issers, "serve as an instrument of realization of this or that speech tactic" (Issers, 2002).

As any communication is always either verbal or non-verbal interaction, one of the main present-day problems is discovering the specifics of its realization mechanism in the process of communication and in searching for means of opposition to such influence.

2.2 Two types of influence: verbal and communicative

Scientists single out two types of influence: verbal and communicative. The key factors determining the possibility and effectiveness of verbal influence are:

1. Linguistic – the interpretive factor of variational reflection of reality, appears in the lexical sphere. It is based on the mechanisms of verbal influence on consciousness.
2. Extra-linguistic – the factor of social demand for information with all its semiotic, psychic, ethno-cultural, social, cognitive and other characteristics of a person's life.
3. Semiotic – an idea about the meaningful variety of linguistic expressions in accordance with objectives, goals, match or mismatch of ideas about linguistic variants of denoting an object or phenomenon, communicants' understanding and correction of choice.
4. Social – selection and batching of information, correlation of negative and positive details (for instance, praise of feasible elements of criticism, criticism of positive assessment), knowledge and consideration of stereotypes and myths of mass consciousness, authoritative statements.
5. Cognitive – a person's processing of information: inert perception, misinterpretation of evidence, perception of false casual connections leading to inadequate reflection of reality (Baranov, Parshin, 1990).
6. Speech activity – one of the ways of obtaining knowledge, learning about the world. Linguistic competence is the top of an iceberg at the foot of which there are such cognitive abilities as image representation, logical conclusion based on it, getting new knowledge on the basis of existing knowledge, drawing up and fulfilling plans (Issers, 2002).
7. Psychological – emotional verbal influence on the addressee: a) persuasion (logical arguments) – reliance on consciousness, intellect; b) suggestion (emotional arguments) – appeals to emotions and putting the addressee into the psychological state necessary for the addresser's aims (Aristotle, 1978). Communicative influence assumes influence on the addressee's knowledge (cognitive level), relations (affective level) and intentions (connotative level) in the direction necessary for the addresser.

Influence on the addressee's consciousness assumes presence of the subject and object of influence and represents "an action aimed at someone or something in order to achieve or infuse something" (Ozhegov, 1990).

Research and analysis of communicative strategies and tactics of British and American men's and women's speech behavior has shown that it is rather difficult to speak about working out a single classification because people's communicative behavior is determined by a great number of factors. O. Issers distinguishes "general" and "particular" strategies (Issers, 2002), classification of particular strategies being rather complicated due to the variety and instability of communicative situations.

2.3 Two main groups of communicative strategies

In this article we did not pursue the aim to work out a classification of communicative strategies and tactics, but applying the existing ones was not effective due to the specifics of the studied phenomenon. We have analyzed texts of British and American dramatic works of XIX-XXI centuries and found out the most frequently represented communicative strategies and tactics used for their realization. Taking into account the statement that "communicative strategies correlate with pragmatic principles of communication" (Yurina, 1996), but unlike the conventional character of the latter, communicative strategies do not always stay within the scope of politeness and principles of cooperation, the strategies we have observed may be subdivided into two main groups: 1) strategies preventing cooperative communication based on G. Grice's principles; 2) strategies facilitating

cooperative non-confrontational communication.

We have observed the following strategies used in the speech of British men and women: strategies preventing cooperative communication – evasion, lowering the communicative partner's status, communicative disagreement, open negative reaction; strategies facilitating cooperative communication – raising the communicative partner's status, creating positive mode of communication, solidarity.

The strategy of evasion is realized through the tactics of readdressing, change of the topic or avoiding direct answers. The aim of the communicant choosing this communicative strategy is to give a negative answer at the same time trying to avoid direct confrontation. Unwillingness to come into an open rift is typical, in the first place, of American female characters.

The strategy of open negative reaction is more typical of male than of female characters in both national variants of English. However, it should be noted that among female characters, the use of this strategy and tactics realizing it are more often illustrated by American women who, unlike English women, more openly demonstrate their emotions.

The strategy of lowering the communicative partner's status is equally used both by male and female characters. Applying this strategy, communicants aim at accusing the interlocutor, proving his/her wrongness, questioning his/her opinion. In order to achieve these aims, tactics of reproach, denunciation and accusation are used. In modern plays, the tactic of mockery is often used for lowering the interlocutor's communicative status.

The strategy of communicative opposition is realized through such tactics as distancing, unwillingness to keep up the conversation.

The second group of the studied strategies is comprised of communicative strategies supporting conventional communication based on the principles of politeness and cooperation. They include, for instance, the strategy of raising the communicative partner's status which is realized through the tactics of expressing interest in the interlocutor's speech content, compliment (more often used by male characters). In order to create positive mode of communication, tactics of positive statement and emotional support are used.

2.4 Tag questions in male and female speech in two varieties of English – British and American

As oral communication practice shows, interrogative sentences are an integral part of men's and women's speech (especially in the American variant). This makes it necessary to pay special attention to their forming and functions.

Women tend to ask more questions. At the same time, they are considered to use tag questions expressing the phatic function more often than men. Example:

Princess: [Smiling]: I'm sorry, I apologize. You're a New Yorker, Mr. Harvey?

Fleming: I'm proud of it, madam.

Princess: New York's wonderful, isn't it? It has something that no other city in the world has got. (W.S. Maugham "Our Betters", Act 1, p.36)

The underlined tag question is expected to express interest in the interlocutor and is a formal negation.

In the speech behavior of characters in American plays, negation in tags may bear different meanings.

Let us consider some examples where interrogative utterances are used in the function of request for information. The main purpose of any question is request for information, that is why in the speech behavior of both male and female play characters, interrogative questions apart from the phatic function may fulfill the function of information request.

We have also noticed the use of tags in expressing certain irritation. Thus, Joan from D. Storey's play "The Restoration of Arnold Middleton" is depicted by the author as a negative character. The use of tags in Joan's speech is expected to convey her irritated and even defiant tone. The use of the lexical intensifier "so" and the adjective "inconsiderate" with a negative affix in the previous remark emphasizes this irritation.

Mrs. Ellis: You're so inconsiderate, Joan.

Joan: It would be different, wouldn't it, if he ever should have any interest in them? (D. Storey "The Restoration of Arnold Middleton", p. 162).

The use of tags is noticed to express the heroines' sarcasm and irony; it is related to the context of the play which is extremely tragic.

In this passage, negative utterances in the heroine's speech, regardless of the author's remark about "quick

temper” and “sorrow”, are full of sarcasm. In her utterances negation is expressed both explicitly (by means of the particle “not” with auxiliary and modal verbs) and implicitly (“so inconsiderate”). The general content of a certain range of tags is characterized by a cruel, accusatory tone.

It is appropriate to mention that in most cases of American male speech short tags are replaced by various interjections (huh, OK, hey, eh etc.).

The interjection “huh” marked by relatively recent appearance in English, is particularly interesting. Nevertheless, its relative weight among other interjections is constantly growing, this growth turning out to be typical of the American variant of English. Thus, the appearance of disjunctive questions with this interjection in this or that play, may serve as an indicator of a character’s belonging to American society. A number of male characters replacing in their speech the short tag with the interjection “huh” belong to undereducated tier of American society.

3. Final Analyses

In British women’s speech, tags are more often used in the phatic function. They are marked by special prosodic contours expressing additional shades of meaning – support, request, sympathy, worrying, favour, admiration (formal negation). In American women’s speech, the phatic function of disjunctive questions is somewhat leveled as we have noticed negative connotations prevail – sarcasm, displeasure, imposing opinion – traced owing to corresponding prosody.

From functional-pragmatic point of view, more frequent use of tags with negative connotations in British women’s speech indicates the famous emotional restraint of English people compared to other nationalities, while American women’s speech reflects boundary-spanning between male and female speech behavior as a result of society democratization. In men’s speech in both variants of English, the use of tags in the phatic function gives way to other ones – requesting information, expressing irony, sarcasm or anger. At the same time, in American male characters’ speech elliptic constructions are replaced by interjections (“huh” and others) in tags and this fact indicates strong expressiveness of implicit negation and male characters’ lack of education. As for infrequent use of the interjection “huh” by American undereducated female characters, it is also caused mainly by democratization of American society, when female speech resembles male speech very much. The typical feature of tags is their impossibility outside dialogue.

Thus, male and female speech behavior depends on the influence of some factors on the speaker’s personality: ethnical, sociocultural and individually psychological factors. Women’s psycholinguistic peculiarities manifest themselves at the emotional level. Women are more emotional, sensitive and impulsive. They are more subject to stresses and changes of mood than men and it is reflected in their speech behavior.

Nevertheless, differences in men’s and women’s speech behavior should not be considered universal as their speech behavior often depends on communication setting, communicants’ social and cultural level. Sometimes, in women’s speech one can trace features typical of the male type of speech behavior (mainly in American women’s speech).

In the course of studying gender differences in dialogue texts, communicative behavior strategies were brought to the forefront. Social conditions being equal (social and professional status, age, communicative role etc.), men and women have different strategies of speech behavior. Gender roles vary according to the communicative situation and the speaker’s intention. Gender is a “floating” parameter which influences a person’s communicative behavior.

The strategy of male communicative behavior assumes competitiveness, autonomy, striving for possession of control (competitive type). The female strategy of communicative behavior assumes interpersonal interaction, sociability and expression of feelings (cooperative type).

“Male” communication is less interlocutor-oriented; it is aimed at expressing one’s own principles. “Female” communication is directed towards the interlocutor, mutual understanding and dialogue.

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