

LANGUAGE AND GENDER DIFFERENCE IN DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Many empirical researches on Gender and language have been conducted by numerous sociolinguists in order of finding out the relationship between them. These differences between women's and men's language consisted in terms of phonology, lexis, syntax, dominance and difference in discourse analysis. Some other studies have investigated the influence of female - male language differences on maintaining the imbalance power between the two genders. This paper will aim at finding out the relationship between gender and language in political debates in Albanian and English while trying to identify the impact of gender based language in displaying the difference and dominance in conversational interaction. Political debates in English and Albanian will be analyzed in order to distinguish cross gender and cross language differences through the use of linguistic and discourse features such as: turn taking, dominance, minimal response, overlaps, hedges, interruptions etc.

Key words: language, gender difference, discourse, dominance, interruptions.

1. Introduction

Throughout history in different cultures, religions, and nations existed stereotypical belief that women speak more than men as well as sayings that women should not speak in public, but leave that to men, in other words: 'women are words and men are actions'. Even today in the Kosovo's institution such as the parliament of Kosovo, in which women are presented in percentage of 30% have been distributed some folders to its members which included some proverbs dedicated to women, some of them being very discriminating and prejudicial towards women's character such as: "***Silence is the only gold that women possess***" and "***Silence and modesty are the women's most beautiful jewelry***" Very controversial sayings for women who are supposed to represent people's interest by discussing in the parliament's podium. Moreover the women's network of Kosova on the other side reacted at the declaration of the vice prime minister of Kosova, Hajredin Kuçi in the last session of the assembly who stated that: "***he does not want to deal with women, but with men***" (Tahiri.L: 2013)

That woman are talkative and speak more than men, there are many sayings in English and Albanian that support this belief: "***There are two types of women, those that speak always, and those that never remain silent***" (O. Wild), and "***Women have become talkative because of the man's power that deprived them of everything except of the tongue***" (J.Xoxa)

Do women speak more than men in political debates? On whose side is dominance? Who gets the floor in Albanian and English political debates? Does language that women use differ from the language that men use in Albanian and English? "What are the cross gender differences? What are the differences between Albanian and English debates? Whose language variety is more prestigious, the women's or the men's? These are the questions that will be addressed in this research and the answers to these research questions will be sought through the research.

2. Literature Review about Language and Gender

There are some early recordings on the difference between women's and men's language variety in Albanian according to the foreign Albanologist Maximilian Lambertz, who succeeded in introducing us the spoken variant of the Maliza Arbresh, while penetrating in their social 'tissue'.

He is the first of the dialectologists who studied the mixture of the Arbresh language with that of Italian, while distinguishing women's language.

He stated that: "Language of every Arberesh individual is traversed by Italian elements the more he moves out of his village, and has to deal with Italians. Because of this reason, women's language is purer for some degrees than that of men's" (M.Lambertz, 1923) cited in (Gj.Shkurtaj , 2009 ;365)

Similarly Albanian men of Mandrica (Bulgaria) because of their business dealings and encounters with Greeks, Bulgarians, and Turks were polyglots in contrast to women who were not able to speak different languages.

Thus, according to Bojka Sokolova(1967) cited in GJ. Shkurtaj ; Albanian women of Mandrica, and elsewhere in Albanian and Arbresh Diaspora, have always shown an emphasized spirit in preserving native language and other ethno cultural features of their mother land . We have to deal here with the phenomenon which can be exemplified with the conditions which these women were subjugated to in the past by not attending school, not leaving their place for a long time, and having nothing to do with Bulgarians or other nationalities. For these reasons, nowadays you can find in Mandrica older women that are not able to speak Bulgarian but they speak a pure Albanian instead.

While, in relation to language perseverance and conservatism ,Jespersen states that women are more conservative than men, they keep the traditional language that they learnt from their parents and they hand on to their children, while innovations are due to the initiative of men (Cameron, D 1998:229).

Mainly because of the differences that existed between men and women, regarding tradition, labor division, temperament and character in Albanian region, cities and villages, these differences existed in speaking varieties as well, such as; terminology, lexical choices that women used in their daily life, housework, cooking, cleaning, baby talk towards their children etc.

On the other hand, with the improvement of social conditions for women, education, employment, gender equality, the development of internet and technology, these differences became smaller, while women gaining a new status in all social spheres of life.

2.1 Language cross gender differences influenced by powerlessness awareness.

That women are less powerful than men in life, public sphere and politics and that they are expected to be polite, obedient, indirect, talk less and assertive, Robin Lakoff tells a story about the seven swans:” A girl’s seven brothers are changed into swans. She can transform them back into men only by sitting in a tree for seven years sewing them shirts out of daisies. If she utters one word during this period, she will fail. She succeeds, despite terrible obstacles. The moral: silence and obedience are the path to success for a women” (Lakoff,R, 2003: 162)

Similarly, in the terms of men’s power Ronald Wardhaugh gives an example:” There is also a very interesting example from English of a woman being advised to speak more like a man in order to fill a position previously filled only by men. Margaret Thatcher was told that her voice did not match her position as British Prime Minister: she sounded too ‘shrill.’ She was advised to lower the pitch of her voice, diminish its range, and speak more slowly, and thereby adopt an authoritative, almost monotonous delivery to make herself heard.” (Wardhaugh,R. 2011; 337)

On the other hand, sociological studies have made known that women are more prone to use linguistic forms thought to be ‘better’ or more ‘correct’ than those used by men. Trudgill provides two reasons for this. Firstly, women in our society are generally more status-conscious than men, and therefore more sensitive to linguistic norms- an idea known as hyper-correction. Secondly, “working-class speech...has connotations of or associations with masculinity, which may lead men to be more favorably disposed to non-standard linguistic forms than women.” (Trudgill: 1983: 162)

Women also tend to hypercorrect more than men, especially in the lower middle class. The definition of hypercorrection is:” the erroneous use of a word form or pronunciation based on a false analogy with a correct or prestigious form, such as between you and I for the standard between you and me”. Thus, the women tended to hypercorrect more than men because they tried to use prestigious variety of language for the reason of having been felt deprived from privileged social status.

Moreover, women may be using linguistic resources as a way to achieve status which they were deprived from. Since women have long been denied equality with men as far as educational and employment opportunities are concerned, these are not reliable indicators of a woman's status or the status she aspires to. Although the marketplace establishes the value of men in economic terms, the only kind of capital a woman can accumulate is symbolic. She can be a "perfect" housewife, a "perfect" mother, a "loyal" wife, a "reliable" friend, a "devoted" believer, a "dedicated" citizen and so on, with respect to the community's norms and stereotypes for appropriate female behavior. In this logic, the use of the standard might be seen as yet another reflection of women's powerlessness in the public sphere. This interpretation accorded well with one of the assumptions made by early gender scholar such as Lakoff (1975), who saw women's language as the "language of powerlessness"

In Albanian culture and tradition, in pre-war time, men were considered as the main and the only means for providing for their families. Women were less employed, less educated and discriminated. They were occupied with housework, raising children, preparing food for the visitors who were welcomed in separate rooms for men guests known as "oda e burrave", according to Albanian society norms and traditions. Thus being separated from men in general and male guests in particular, unemployed and uneducated, spending their free time doing handicrafts for their daughters' dowry surrounded by other women, they developed a quite different language variety from that of men's.

3. Cross gender Phonological differences in English and Albanian

Numerous studies and researches have been conducted by Trudgill, Labov, Millroy and Martin while investigating linguistic features such as phonological variability of male and female differences. The aim, on the one hand, was to identify the stratification of these variables and, on the other hand, to find support for the means of synchronic change. Women were found to be closer to a prestige norm (Received Pronunciation) than men.

Therefore, from a large number of now classic findings emerging repeatedly, it is verified that there are also strong correlations between patterns of social stratification and gender. One of these sociolinguistic patterns is that women, regardless of other social characteristics such as class, age, etc., tended to use more standard forms than men (Trudgill, 1974) study in Norwich of

the variable (**-ing**), that is alternation between alveolar /n/ and a velar-nasal /-ng/ in words with- ing endings such as reading, singing, In relation to the variables of social class, style, and gender.

Similarly Labov found out that there are some phonological variations between sexes in pronunciation of /æh/ and /oh/. Accordingly:” ...a close examination will show that women show more concentration in the extreme values, especially for /oh/. The progressions of the number informants in each category show that men and women follow the same stylistic variation, but that the total shift of the women speakers is much greater. The tendency of women to follow an extreme pattern of stylistic variation which we may call hypercorrection is an important aspect of the structure of New York City English.” (W.Labov, 2006; 196)

Whereas according to Gj. Shkurtaj regarding phonological and pronunciation differences between men and women in Albanian language it states that: “From our research even though not elaborated enough, we can say that there is a kind of difference between men and women’s discourse in the field of pronunciation. It appears that from the previous observations in the city of Tirana and in many southern countries, the pronunciation of the phoneme /rr/ as a mono vibrant /r/ is a more occurring feature in female gender than in male gender. Likewise, the forms with /r/ are more frequent in standard language, and maybe in a way, indicators of being from the capital or other southern cities of Albania, whereas vibrant /rr/, draws upward towards northern parts “ (Gj.Shkurtaj, 2009 ; 372)

Additionally;” Women, it seems, are considerably more disposed than men to upgrade themselves into the middle-class and less likely to allocate themselves to the working-class - a finding which confirms the common observation that status consciousness is more pronounced among women”. (Martin 1954:58)

According to Labov, ”women in the lower middle class, lead in the introduction of the new standard forms, of many of the phonological variables studied in the United states, The UK, and other industrialized countries such as Sweden, while men tend to lead in instances of change from below” (Labov, W. 1990)

4. Cross gender lexical differences in English and Albanian

Nevertheless women raising children use ‘baby talk’ language variety which is not common for Albanian male mentality, they curse more than men and do not swear or use taboo words. Accordingly: “From the currently available research, even though not explored enough, it turns out, however, that women speak in a different manner from men. Often they possess a different lexis of their own especially for intimate parts or phenomena of feminine life and in everyday speech in general which is distinguished from men’s language, even from their spouses or adult sons.”(Gj.Shkurtaj, 2009; 365)

Moreover Linguistic means used by women to express their thoughts, beliefs, feelings and ideas, unveil the truth about their social status and interaction that through many years have placed them in marginal position, and forced on them rules and regulations. This is clearly reflected even nowadays in women’s language that can be unquestionably described in forms of hesitations and euphemisms.

There is also a difference in cross gender language in the use of euphemisms in Albanian and according to Eqrem Çabej: ” Women in their language, even for the phrase ‘to kill someone’ they say: *‘e nxiruan, e shkretuan, e përmbisnë’* .For the ‘deceased’, women use the words: *‘i ziu, i nxiri’* whereas men mainly use the words *‘i shkreti*, in Skrapar; *‘i shuari’*, in North ; *‘i mjeri’*. Such expressions are the features of the ‘women’s language’ (language des femmes) (E.Çabej,1978; 23)

“Similar sorts of disparities exist elsewhere in the vocabulary. There is, for instance, a group of adjectives which have, besides their specific and literal meanings, another use, that of indicating the speaker's approbation or admiration for something. Some of these adjectives are neutral as to sex of speaker: either men or women may use them. But another set seems, in its figurative use, to be largely confined to women's speech. Representative lists of women only adjectives are: adorable charming, sweet, lovely, divine and intensifiers such as: *“awfully”, “pretty”, “terribly”, “quite”* (Lakoff,1973; 51)

Further on, Lakoff states that there is also a difference in the use of lexical items such as the case of color names: “Women, then, make far more precise discriminations in naming colors than do men; words like *beige, ecru, aquamarine, lavender*, and so on, are unremarkable in a women's active vocabulary, but absent from that of most men. I have seen a man helpless with suppressed

laughter at a discussion between two other people as to whether a book-jacket was to be described as 'lavender' or 'mauve'. Men find such discussion amusing because they consider such a question trivial, irrelevant to the real world". (Lakoff, 1973; 49)

Whereas in Albanian language, women, in their speech are prone to using diminutive suffixes, mostly in a liking way for example:, *çikirush, bukuloshe, zemerushe, dali im, picirruki im* etc.; they tend to use a lot of the superlative forms of adjectives like: *shumë e zonja, jashtëzakonisht e bukur, shumë e pavyer, tepër elegante, shumë shtirëse*, etc. Albanian women's gender specified language can be illustrated by the use of some linguistic structures such as wishes, curses, euphemistic expressions, etc, because women are predisposed in believing in paranormal phenomena such as, bad augur, bad luck and redemption. This can be presented with the frequent use of expressions such as: *pika i raftë! , dreqi në bark i hiftë, syri i keq mos e pafitë, t'shtifsha n'dhe! t'plaçin syt, t'u thafshin durtë, t'daltë e dala, etc.*

5. Cross gender syntactic differences

Apart from phonological and lexical differences between women's and men's language some syntactic differences may be identified as well and according to Robin Lakoff:" When we leave the lexicon and venture into syntax, we find that syntactically too women's speech is peculiar. To my knowledge, there is no syntactic rule in English that only women may use. But there is at least one rule that a woman will use in more conversational situations than a man. (This fact indicates, of course, that the applicability of syntactic rules is governed partly by social context - the positions in society of the speaker and addressee, with respect to each other, and the impression one seeks to make on the other.) This is the rule of tag-question formation." (Lakoff, 1973; 53)

Therefore, using tag questions or declarative statements with rising final intonations when the speaker lacks confidence and wants confirmation from the addressee or in the cases when the speaker is certain about the information but in order to facilitate conversation requires yes or no questions from the addressee are features of women speech. Naturally, men also use tag questions but their intention mainly is asking for exact answers not because they lack confidence in declaring the statement. Such features are probably part of the general fact that women's

speech sounds much more 'polite' than men's. Aspect of politeness is as we have just described: leaving a decision open, not imposing your mind, or views, or claims, on anyone else.

It is considered that women's language is more standard and polite than that of a men's language, but nowadays you can find women who swear, especially teens maybe for the reason of fitting in into the modernity's norms. Accordingly: "Often we listen to the swearing from the mouths of children, teens, adults, even from women itself. From the examples presented in the dictionary, we can conclude that men swear more than women, but women also swear more than it was expected from them traditionally, and especially when they accompanied by the same sex."(Ibrahimi, M. 2009; 32)

6. Dominance and difference in mixed gender discourse

Obviously, men and women differ in their beliefs, perceptions and mainly in their use of language and according to Haas:" Male speech and female speech have been observed to differ in their form, topic, content and use. Early writers were largely introspective in their analyses; more recent work has begun to provide empirical evidence. Men may be more loquacious and directive; they use more nonstandard forms, talk more about sports, money and business, and frequently refer to time, space, quantity, and objects. Women are often more supportive, polite, and expressive, talk more about home and family, use more words implying feeling, evaluation, interpretation, and psychological state" (Haas, 1979).

On the other hand, popular works by Deborah Tannen show that that while men view conversations as a way to establish and maintain status and dominance in relationships, women see the purpose of conversation to create and foster an intimate bond with the other party by talking about topical problems and issues they are communally facing (Tannen, 1990). One way of maintaining dominance in conversation in mix gendered group is through interruption as cited in West and Zimmerman (1983) that men dominate women by interrupting them in conversation.

Whereas, other academic research argues that women use less powerful speech: they tend to swear less, speak more politely, and use more tag questions and intensifiers (Lakoff, 1975). Women also are inclined to interrupt less than men do; researchers have hypothesized that this is possibly because of their apparent lower status to men and due to community norms that impose this gender status hierarchy. Tannen continues to summarize the differences between men and

women at the basic level, such as:” If women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, while men speak and hear a language of status and independence, then communication between men and women can be like cross-cultural communication, prey to a clash of conversational styles. Instead of different dialects, it has been said they speak different genderlects. (Tannen, 1990 ; 18)

Therefore, conversational patterns in cross gender studies offer evidence for the essential difference between men's and women's linguistic performance by the means of *question tags* and *interruptions*. Other linguistic tools which display the difference between women's and men's language use is the amount of speech and control of topic.

Interruptions are manifested through the violations of the rules of conversation. According to Sacks/Schegloff/Jefferson's (1974) model of the structure of conversation, *turns of speech* are assigned such that the current speaker has the largest options. Overlaps are done at the end of the first speaker's turn and the beginning of the next speaker's turn. Moreover, overlaps in interaction are generally considered as facilitating conversational tools. Finally, another facilitating strategy is the use of minimal responses such as: *aha, uhm, ehe* etc . During the turn of the first speaker the addressee will provide agreement or encouragement through these interjections

7. Methodology used for the research

With the goal of answering hypothetical questions presented in the introduction such as: Do women speak more than men in political debates? On whose side is dominance? Who gets the floor in Albanian and English political debates? Does language that women use differ from the language that men use in Albanian and English? “What are the cross gender differences? What are the differences between Albanian and English debates? Whose language variety is more prestigious, the women's or the men's?

The research will be done while observing and analyzing three political TV debates of mixed gender in Albanian and three of those in English. These debates were chosen because there is one to one discourse interaction; therefore it is easier to measure the duration of speech, the longest speech turn, dominance, interruptions and differences in the spoken discourse.

8. Differences in language use in three debates in Albanian

In three political debates male discourse consisted of informal speech, using hedges like “ *o burrë*” (*o man*) - 2x, addressed female speaker, *cynical laughter* -3X, “*haj zoti na rujt*”, “*a jini bre n'veti?*” “*po shkoni po ju mani ders*”. Folk proverbial sayings like:”*Punen e sotit mos e le per nesar*” and “ *Katuni që shihet nuk do kallauz*”

Whereas, female discourse was more standard avoiding informal speech. The female speakers reminded male speakers that they had been talking for half an hour with: *Lem te perfundoj , se une fillova ,” qasje e këtillë, arrogance e këtillë*”.

Other non-standard forms and expressions having many errors were found in male discourse such as: ”*erov*”, ‘*ket*’, ‘*qy qy*’ ‘*m’fal bre*’ ‘*do te perkrahmi*’, ‘*per Shqiprije*’, ‘*i ter kostoja*’, ‘*pruar*’, ‘*10 ditev*’, ‘*kam nje mbeshetje te fuqishem*’

Female discourse was more standard by even using some foreign phrases such as ‘*facilituar*’ *hektike*, ‘*abstrahim*’ ‘*ekselent*’ *ect*. There were many interruptions conducted by male counterpart and some of the interruptions were done through cynical laughter.

9. Differences in language use in three debates in English

The differences in language use between female and male candidates consisted in the use of some informal expressions such as: ‘*What the heck*’, ‘*that’s baloney*’, ‘*that’s absolute baloney*’ and idiomatic expressions such as: “*you let the chips lay where they may*” and “*we can’t bury our heads in the sands*” by the male candidate. There was also cynical laughter by the male side. On the other side, female discourse contains richer terminology; their speech is more standard avoiding informal expressions and there were citations from famous personalities such as Benjamin Franklin’s quote:”*If we sacrifice liberty for the sake of security, we will wind up losing both*”. Female language is full of adjectives and intensifiers such as:”*remarkable*’ *remarkably X 3, incredible, dreadful, and great*’.

The differences in the language use between two speakers in the second debate consists in the use of some idiomatic expressions by the male side: “*With one hand you give it, with the other you take it*”, “*glass half empty, glass half full*”, “*they are getting the short end of the stick*”, “*you get knocked down, you get up and start again*”. Whereas the female candidate uses the citations such as mr. Reagan’s quote:” *Freedom is always one generation away from extinction,*

we don't pass it to our children in their blood stream. We have to fight for it, and protect it and hand it to them"

Female discourse on the other side tends to be more polite whereas male discourse consists of some other informal expressions such as: *"heck a lot better"* *"my goodness"* *"blla blla blla"* towards female speakers

10. Conclusion

The findings of the debates analyses clearly show that there are significantly differences between women's and men's language in Albanian and in English in particular, as well as the differences that exist between debates in Albanian and English in general. The differences mainly consist in the use of standard speech by the side of women both in Albanian and English. Men are mostly found in using informal expressions in Albanian and English in general.

Some of the women according to debate analyses have used far more adjectives and intensifiers than men did.

From the results it can be concluded that in Albanian debates longest speech duration was on the men's side as well as the longest speaking turns. As far as interruptions are concerned in Albanian debates, women are found in making more interruptions than men.

Regarding debates in English, the longest speech duration was on the women's side, in three debate samples, whereas, the longest speaking turns are found to be on the men's side. Women in both cases, in English and Albanian tried to be more polite, whereas men are found to perform a cynical laughter in most cases as a response to women's statements.

The most significant difference between debates in English and Albanian is respecting the coo speaker in the debate by not interrupting them, but using time reasonably in rebuttals for answers

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