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**GENDER ASPECT OF LANGUAGE VARIATION****Usachenko I.V.**

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The article outlines the range of issues dealing with gender studies in linguistics. The analysis of the theoretical sources that reflect language variation studies on the criterion of gender affiliation which can be registered at the levels of phonology, grammar, vocabulary, discourse is made. The basic differences between men's and women's speech at these levels are described. The hypothesis that gender differences are less tracked in today's society, but more in a conservative one because of clear separation of social roles is suggested. It is concluded that gender variation should be considered in the context of other social factors such as race, ethnic or social origin, age, education.

**Keywords:** linguistic genderology, gender studies, language variation, social role, language differentiation, prestigious / non-prestigious variant of pronunciation, sociolinguistic universal.

**Problem statement.** Formed at the intersection of linguistics and sociology, sociolinguistics studies language in a social context. This fact entails the need to study the social and stylistic variation of language. One of the important aspects of studying the social variation of language is the study of the interaction of language and gender.

Gender studies originated in the West for the first time and were based on the material of the Germanic and Romance languages. The emergence of works in this field was caused by the interest of such linguists as O. Jespersen, F. Mauthner, E. Sapir in the emergence of a social aspect in the linguistic description that considers language in relation to a society and a man in a society, and as a consequence, the emergence of new branches in linguistics namely sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pragmatics, theory of discourse and communication.

The concept of "gender" was introduced into the scientific use in order to demarcate the biological sex (*sexus*) from the social and cultural aspects present in the male-female concept, i.e. the division of roles, cultural traditions, relation of power connected with the gender of people [3, p. 24].

Sociologists and philosophers became the first scientists to make the scientific world look at gender issues through the prism of social, psycholog-

ical and cultural aspects, introducing the alternative namely "sex" – "gender". The term "sex" includes the biological characteristics of men and women, while "gender" is a complex of social and psychological processes, cultural factors in society that determine the behavior of the individual, the choice of social strategies, etc. [4, p. 180]. Thus, one can distinguish between biological and social sex. Consequently, genderology studies the relationship of the biological sex of a person with his cultural identity, social status, mental characteristics, behavior, including a linguistic behavior [6, p. 64].

The development of sociolinguistics in the 60s of the previous century was an impetus for more intensive systematic gender studies. Scientists were able to use a huge amount of statistical data on the functioning of the language in groups of people, united by one or another criterion (age, gender, education, profession, habitat, etc.).

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Conducting the scientific inquiry, we fixed the fact that gender studies were initiated in the British (M. Adler, R. Macaulay, S. Romain) and American linguistics (D. Cameron, R. Lakoff, D. Tannen). During the last decade, the gender problem is actively investigated in the native (O.L. Bessonova, A.L. Kozachyshyna, A.P. Martyniuk, K.V. Pishchuk-

ova, O.M. Kholod, etc.) and Russian (O.I. Horoshko, O.S. Hrytsenko, A.V. Kyrylina, V.V. Potapov, O.N. Tokarieva, etc.) linguistics. The subject of the study are the following aspects of gender characteristics: mainly phonetic (W. Labov, R. Macauley) and grammar (V. Wolfram, R. Fasold, J. Holmes), as well as differences in real communication (D. Cameron, J. Coates, P. Nichols, P. Fishman).

**Selection of previously unsolved parts of the common problem.** The scope of involvement of humanities and social studies into gender approaches are unequal and often diverse. The theoretical and categorical apparatuses, as well as the applied research methodologies, also vary. This fact determines the need to generalize the body of knowledge, united under the name of “theories of gender”, analyze functioning of gender in a particular social situation, and present the main ideas.

**The purpose of the article** is to study and generalize the spectrum of sociolinguistic studies of gender.

**Statement of basic material.** Summarizing systematic studies on the connection between language and gender, we can claim that the theoretical issues are concentrated in three directions: 1) the theory of deficit (explains the gender differences in the use of language by men and women by the fact that men’s speech is the norm; women’s speech presents deviation of this norm); 2) the theory of dominance (explains the gender differences in the language of the general patriarchal structure and interprets them in terms of manifestation of male privileges in the language); 3) the theory of differences (characterizes gender differences as the result of socialization and affiliation of women with different, but equal subcultures) [1, p. 22].

The theoretical analysis of the source base revealed that the result of the first studies stated the conclusion that the speaker’s status to some extent affects the quality of the statement (W. Labov, P. Trudghill). After analyzing the oral interviews of New Yorkers, W. Labov found that women tend to use non-stigmatized (standard) phonological variants more than men. This desire brings them together with the style of the middle class and removes from the style of communication in the working circles [13]. Similar results were obtained in the process of studying the gender aspect of the language on the material of other European languages (Philips, 1987; Gьnthner, Kotthoff, 1991).

Based on the scientific research of W. Labov, we can argue that his model of gender differences differed from other concepts for several reasons. Firstly, the researcher focused not on morphology, but on phonology; secondly, the scientist analyzed the real speech of a large number of informants, but not of a few (the introspective method was not used); thirdly, the scientist considered the result of his research as probable, while allowing the possibility of variation, which made it possible to draw a conclusion that the speaker varies the use of the language and does not pronounce the same phonological variant of the word in all cases of its use; fourthly, Labov’s data provided an opportunity to conduct quantitative research (preliminary data were not statistically handled using the methods chosen by researchers for data collection). The method of quantitative analysis not only was used by the followers of W. Labov, but is also applied today.

The work of P. Trudghill, conducted on the material of the English language (pronunciation in Norwich, England), demonstrated that women more often use more prestigious forms of pronunciation, motivating this desire to signal their status linguistically, taking into account their social subordination in society. Among such cases, for example, is the use of the prestigious nasal “ng” by women and the stigmatized “n” by men. But it’s necessary to note that men used a non-prestigious variant when they were spoken a dialect rather than the Standard English language; therefore, a non-prestigious form was the symbol of solidarity and group membership [20].

It should be noted that the object of gender linguistics is presented more often by a female variant of a language, because as a rule, the language of men is considered as a norm, and the one of women as a deviation in it, and therefore it is considered to be a marked variant of speech [6, p. 65].

Further studies of sociolects on the material of specific languages showed the need to take into account extra-linguistic factors in explaining linguistic characteristics, depending on the gender of the speaker. Such works (J. Coates, P. Nichols) showed that the interaction of typical female occupations (teacher, nurse, hairdresser) with different social groups involves the influence of the latter on the use of language by representatives of these professions [8; 16].

A greater conservatism of the “female language” is also reflected in a number of works in the field of sociolinguistics, although the validity of this fact is taken by some scholars as questionable (K. Nablings) [15].

Gender stereotypes were the main factor in interpreting data. For example, among the reasons for the desire of women to use more standard forms, they called a concentrated attention of women on language, appearance, different symbols, because of the lack of self-realization and self-affirmation in the professional sphere, the presentation of an example of a “proper language” to their children due to the dominance of women in their educational process. However, D. Cameron notes that such arguments should not be taken seriously because the woman in this case is considered as a mother, wife, and housewife, that is, it is about substitution of categories. The scholar points out that a more correct language may be related to a number of factors, including the level of education (very often women have a higher one than men) and the nature of the activity (women usually work in schools, hospitals, shops, offices, etc., men work physically) [7].

The end of the 60s and early 70s was celebrated by the Women’s Movement in the United States and Germany, which has become a major impetus in gender linguistics. The fundamental work in the field of linguistics was the study of Robin Lakoff “Language and Woman’s Place”, which substantiated the anthropocentricity of language and the defect of woman’s image in the worldview. According to R. Lakoff, there are the following main differences of the female variant of the language from the male one: women use words that are not used by men (mauve); more empty “evaluating” adjectives can be found in women’s statements

(adorable, sweet, divine, cute); women choose question forms (including tag questions) in cases when men choose affirmative ones; forms expressing uncertainty (well, you know, I wonder, I guess, I believe) are more common in women's speech; intonation intensifier (so, very, really) are more characteristic of women's speech (so nice, very nice, really charming); hyper-forms in grammar is the characteristics, more commonly pertain to women (hyper-correct grammar); the use of apologies ("I'm sorry, but I think that ...") and modal structures (can, should, should, ought: "We should turn up the heat?") are typical for women; lack of sense of humor (women do not know how to tell jokes and often do not understand anecdotes) [14].

Consequently, according to R. Lakoff, the linguistic behavior of a woman can be characterized as uncertain, less aggressive (compared with the male one), humane, attentive, compromising, non-dominant, and focusing on the interlocutor. The fact of such incompetence and uncertainty in itself creates a negative impact on her image. However, there are frequent cases when a woman uses "male" language tactics. In this case, she is perceived as mannish, audacious, feminist, whose behavior can lead to communication failures. This situation is called the "double bind" situation.

In further works, almost every aspect became the subject of individual sociolinguistic studies, which both confirmed and contradicted the conclusions of R. Lakoff. Among these, for example, there were: experimental recordings of spouses' conversations (J. Fishman), conversations of the elderly people (M. Hartman), seminars in student groups (P. McMillan) in which more frequent use of tag questions by women was noted; discussions at academic conferences (B. Dubois, I. Crouch), informal conversations between students (J. Lapadat, M. Sezahal), professional conversations in the workplace (P. Johnson), which, on the contrary, were characterized by the use of this construction by men in most cases.

The main result of experimental "inspections" of Lakoff's hypotheses was the awareness of the multifunctionality of most parameters singled out by her [2, p. 68]. Thus, New Zealand sociolinguist J. Holmes found that the element "you know" can express both uncertainty and confidence. In her study, she also reviewed tag questions. It turned out that they may have reference value (is characterized by the rise of intonation and expresses uncertainty about the content of the statement, is used by the speaker in order to confirm the correctness of his statement) and affective value (the ones characterized by the rise of intonation, signaling solidarity, closeness, used to engage the interlocutor before the conversation are called facilitating, those characterized by the rise of intonation and tone down offensive remarks or categorical statements are called softening). Experiments by J. Holmes showed that men more often used facilitating questions and women used reference [10].

In 1980, W. O'Barr and B. Atkins conducted the study that put some doubt on the views of R. Lakoff on so-called "woman's language". The object of the study was presented by 150 hours of audio recordings of speeches of witnesses during speeches in the courtroom. The conclusion was

that the demonstration of this type of behavior (use of "women's language") is possible both from the side of a man and a woman. Thus, the researchers found that a weak, powerless language was used by persons with a low social status and / or those who had no experience in testifying in court, emphasizing the fact that linguistic differences arise on the basis of "specific authority or power", but not sex [18].

American sociolinguistics Deborah Tannen in her work "You Just Don't Understand" says that the main reason for the difference between the languages of men and women is the goal of communication: for most women, conversation is a means of closeness and development of relationships, while men try to keep their own independence through conversation and maintain their status in society [19, p. 88]. Researchers E. Weber, K. Oppermann and others confirm Tannen's data on the differences in the goals of communication between men and women.

Briefly describing the features of female and male speech according to D. Tannen, one can distinguish the following:

- holding conversation (men interpret conversation as a process of sharing information while preserving their independence and irritability with regard to women's attention to details, and women interpret it as interactions based on congeniality and sense of empathy, accompanied by attention to detail as a result of interest);
- status positions (men tend to manipulate status during the conversation and feel comfortable when they need to establish and maintain their status in the group, women often establish close relationships and the factor of comfort, i.e. the presence of friends and / or people whose position is equal with their (women's);
- sphere of communication (men prefer public performances, women - private conversations);
- topics for discussion (men talk more often about politics, sports, economics, i.e. they do not discuss personal relationships; women also consider a private conversation to be acceptable);
- the style of listening (men have informational style of listening, women have meta-informational one, i.e. such that includes the factor of relationship) [19, p. 198].

The researcher J. Holmes found similar differences between the languages of men and women. She even suggested that these characteristics might claim to obtain the title of sociolinguistic universals [12], but the further development of gender linguistics pointed to the need to study linguistic behavior in specific communicative situations, thereby abandoning the idea of universalization.

Noteworthy are the studies by K. Nordenstam [17], P. Fishman [9], and J. Holmes [11], which have found that women more often perform "spade work", supporting a conversation with men, using particles, questions, which are the signal of attention to the speaker, and thus provide a change of topics and interlocutors. Men, by contrast, are more focused on the subject under discussion, and do not pay attention to changing topics or interlocutors. In addition, during the study of D. Zimmerman it was found that men have verbal aggression: they interrupt interlocutors more often [21].

The researcher N.B. Mechkovska notes that stylistically men's speech is more diverse and contrasting than women's, but women more rarely use such an abundance of abusive expression and vulgarity than men. Among other differences between male and female characteristics in the language, the scholar highlights the following: the female language is more conservative; women's emotions are expressed not in words, but intonation, despite the fact that their language is filled with emotionally-evaluative, diminutive-hypocoristic words, euphemisms; women are more sensitive to speech fashion and more often adopt prestigious variants; men are less likely to use hyper variants; men's speech is syntactically more complex and intellectually richer; women's neutral speech contains more emotionally marked elements and intonation is more diverse. Also N.B. Mechkovska distinguishes phonetic differences, namely phonemes, stating that voice quality of men is characterized by a smaller opening of the mouth; men's vowels are less clear and pragmatically less expressive. In addition, women's phonetics can be

characterized by more active participation of the lips (in comparison with men's articulation of the same labial sounds) [5, p. 259].

**Conclusions.** The results of the scientific research have made it possible to establish the fact that studies in genderology outlined some systematic differences in the use of language by men and women. Gender differentiation is described in different languages, and can be observed at different levels of the language system namely phonology, grammar, vocabulary, discourse. However, the variation of the language on the gender criterion is observed at different levels and with varying intensity – from predominant to mandatory use of one or another variant. Thus, we can argue that gender differences are poorly traced in a developed society, while more stringent ones are found in conservative cultures because of the clear differentiation of social roles of sexes. Gender variation should be considered in the context of other social factors such as race, ethnicity and social affiliation, age, education, etc.

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## ГЕНДЕРНИЙ АСПЕКТ МОВНОЇ ВАРІАТИВНОСТІ

### Анотація

Стаття окреслює коло питань, присвячених гендерним дослідженням в лінгвістиці. Здійснено аналіз теоретичних джерел, що відображають провідні розробки у вивченні варіативності мови за критерієм гендерної приналежності, яка виявляється на рівнях фонології, граматики, лексики, дискурсу. Описано основні відмінності мовлення чоловіків і жінок на вказаних рівнях. Висувається припущення, що лінгвістичні гендерні відмінності менше відстежуються у сучасному суспільстві, більше – у консервативному з причини чіткого розмежування соціальних ролей. Робиться висновок про те, що гендерну варіативність доцільно розглядати в контексті інших соціальних факторів, таких, як раса, етнічна та соціальна приналежність, вік, освіта.

**Ключові слова:** лінгвістична гендерологія, гендерні дослідження, мовна варіативність, соціальна роль, диференціація мовлення, престижний / непрестижний варіант вимови, соціолінгвістична універсалія.

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## ГЕНДЕРНЫЙ АСПЕКТ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ВАРИАТИВНОСТИ

### Аннотация

Статья очерчивает круг вопросов, посвященных гендерным исследованиям в лингвистике. Осуществлен анализ теоретических источников, отражающих ведущие исследования вариативности языка по критерию гендерной принадлежности, которая проявляется на уровнях фонологии, грамматики, лексики, дискурса. Описаны основные различия речи мужчин и женщин на указанных уровнях. Выдвигается предположение о том, что лингвистические гендерные различия меньше отслеживаются в современном обществе, больше – в консервативном по причине четкого разграничения социальных ролей. Делается вывод о том, что гендерную вариативность целесообразно рассматривать в контексте других социальных факторов, таких, как раса, этническая и социальная принадлежность, возраст, образование.

**Ключевые слова:** лингвистическая гендерология, гендерные исследования, языковая вариативность, социальная роль, дифференциация речи, престижный / непрестижный вариант произношения, социолингвистическая универсалия.