

Sociolinguistic Aspects of Gender Diversity in Dialogic Discourse

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ABSTRACT. Gender diversity in dialogic discourse emerges as one of the significant directions of the social functioning of language and is closely shaped by the social identity of participants in this type of discourse. The gender factor manifests itself not only at the structural level of language but more prominently in its use within communicative strategies, politeness forms, speech acts and discourse construction. The differences observed in the speech of male and female speakers are realized through mutually contrasting features such as cooperation and dominance, indirectness and directness of expression, as well as emotional and informative styles.

The reflection of gender stereotypes in the meanings of linguistic units and lexical choices enables the verbalization of social relations and values within dialogic discourse that does not merely reflect existing gender differences but also functions as a social mechanism that reinforces or transforms them. The interaction of gender with other factors such as age, social status and cultural context determines the multifaceted nature of linguistic behavior. From this perspective gender diversity in dialogic discourse is evaluated as a complex manifestation of the relationship between language and society.

KEYWORDS: dialogic discourse, gender, sociolinguistics, social differentiation, speech behavior, language and society

INTRODUCTION.

The interaction between language and society stands as one of the primary research directions in modern linguistics. Sociolinguistics, in particular, examines the functioning of language within a social environment, how it varies across different social groups and which factors condition these variations. In this regard the gender factor comes to the forefront as one of the main components of the social differentiation of language.

One of the main objectives of sociolinguistics is to determine how language is used in society and to analyze the linguistic behavior of social groups. It is noted that *“the aim of sociolinguistic research is to clarify how different aspects of language are used in society and to identify people’s social linguistic needs”* [14]. In this context, gender functions not merely as a biological category but as a social construct that directly influences linguistic behavior.

The concept of gender is evaluated in modern scholarship as a social construction. Thus, *“the concept of gender encompasses the meaning of “social sex”, indicating that the characteristics of men and women are formed not only biologically but also socially. Language, in turn, serves as the primary medium through which these social differences are expressed. Therefore, it is stated that language “reflects the events occurring in society and supports the prevailing values and norms”* [11, p.122-123].

Modern gender linguistics is characterized by a multidisciplinary nature and develops through the synthesis of various approaches. It is noted that gender linguistics *“creates opportunities for analysis within sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, cognitive, and discourse-theoretical frameworks”* [10, p.65-73]. This necessitates the study of gender not only at the level of linguistic structure but also at the level of discourse and communication.

Dialogic discourse is of particular importance in this respect. During dialogue the social identity of participants, including their gender affiliation, influences speech strategies, style and communicative intentions. Research shows that *“in constructing dialogue, the biological sex of participants significantly affects their speech style and communication strategies”* [6, p.166-172].

Language and society develop in parallel, with language reflecting the structure of society as a system. Since society consists of various social groups, language also differs and varies across these groups. It is noted that *“since society is composed of various social groups, it is natural that the processes occurring within it are reflected in language in the form of variants”* [3, p.19-20]. Among these social groups, gender occupies an important place. Factors such as language and gender, language and age and language and social class lead to the formation of sociolects. Thus, *“sociolects emerge as a result of the relationships between*

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language and gender, language and age, and language and social class" [3]. This demonstrates that gender influences not the structure of language itself, but rather its usage.

One of the main reasons for language variation is the social environment. Different social groups use different linguistic means, which reflect their identity. It is stated that *"the use of different linguistic elements by various social groups within their environments leads to language variation"* [3, p.13]. From a gender perspective, these differences are particularly evident in speech behavior. The fact that male and female speakers use the same language differently is related to their social roles. These distinctions manifest not only at the lexical level but also in discourse construction, communicative strategies, and speech acts.

Dialogic discourse is one of the areas where gender differences are most clearly observed. This is because during dialogue, participants actively interact with one another, and social roles become more explicit. According to research, there are certain differences between male and female speech. For example, it is noted that *"women generally use a polite, empathetic, and cooperative style and tend to prefer indirectness"* [6, p.166-172]. Their speech frequently includes tag questions and emotional expressions. At the same time, women tend to use supportive expressions during dialogue and strive to maintain communication, which indicates that their communicative strategies are cooperation-oriented.

Male speech, on the other hand, is characterized by different features. Men tend to speak more assertively, directly and goal-orientedly, using more concise expressions to convey information and defend their positions [6]. This suggests a tendency to occupy a dominant position in discourse. These differences arise not only from individual characteristics but also from social structure. Through language, *"relations of power and status are realized"*. Thus, gender differences also reflect social hierarchy within discourse.

Cultural factors play a significant role in the sociolinguistic analysis of gender diversity. Language is not only a means of communication but also a carrier of culture. It is noted that *"language is the mirror of national culture, and behind it stand the culture and lifestyle of the people"* [1, p.68].

According to the linguocultural approach, gender stereotypes are reflected in the lexical and phraseological system of language. Through cultural codes, images of men and women are constructed and these images are reproduced in discourse. From this perspective, gender is not only an individual trait but also a cultural construction. Through language, this construction is preserved and transmitted from generation to generation.

One of the key issues in the sociolinguistic analysis of dialogic discourse is how it is realized in different communicative environments - formal and informal contexts. As the social environment changes, linguistic behavior also changes, and these variations become more evident through the gender factor. Sociolinguistic studies note that language variation is determined not only by regional or social groups but also by the context of communication. In this regard *"contextual variability"* is one of the main factors determining language use [7, p.221]. Gender differences in dialogic discourse should therefore be analyzed within this framework of contextual variability.

In formal discourse, for example, in academic settings, official meetings or institutional communication both male and female speakers tend to adhere more closely to normative language forms. However, gender differences do not disappear completely. Studies show that even in such environments, women tend to use more polite and indirect expressions, reflecting socially constructed expectations and roles. For instance, in formal dialogue, a female speaker may say:

– *"In my opinion, this issue could be approached somewhat differently"*.

In this sentence, mitigating elements such as *"in my opinion"* and *"somewhat"* ensure an indirect expression of stance. In the same situation, a male speaker's utterance may be more direct:

– *"This approach is incorrect; an alternative should be proposed"*.

This difference reflects not only linguistic choice but also distinct communicative strategies.

In informal discourse gender differences become even more pronounced. In everyday communication, male speakers tend to adopt a more relaxed and sometimes aggressive style, whereas female speakers more frequently use emotional and expressive means. These differences are closely linked to social stereotypes.

In this regard, it is noted that *"the use of different linguistic elements by various social groups within their environments leads to language variation"* [3, p.22]. Gender, as one of these social groups, conditions the functional variation of language. Politeness strategies occupy a special place in the sociolinguistic analysis of gender diversity, as politeness regulates social relations through language, with gender playing a significant role in this process.

Research shows that women's speech is more often based on positive politeness strategies. Women tend to establish emotional connections with their interlocutors, affirm their opinions and use expressions that sustain dialogue. These features are clearly observed in dialogic discourse. For example:

– *"I agree with your point, but perhaps it could also be explained this way?"*

Such sentences simultaneously perform the functions of agreement and presenting an alternative viewpoint. On the other hand, male speakers tend to employ more negative politeness or direct strategies. They express their positions openly and use fewer mitigating devices. For example:

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– *“This idea is not appropriate; another option should be chosen”.*

These differences were also noted by Robin Lakoff, who argued that women’s speech *“is characterized by uncertainty, tag questions, and a polite, indirect style of speaking”* [8]. According to Lakoff, *“the expected speech style of women reflects and maintains their subordinate position in society”* [8]. This demonstrates that language is not only a means of communication but also serves to maintain social hierarchy.

One of the most significant aspects of gender differences in dialogic discourse is the relations of power and authority. Through language, social relations are constructed and these relations manifest differently from a gender perspective. It is emphasized in contemporary gender studies that discourse is one of the main means of constructing gender identity. It is noted that language *“shapes perceptions about gender and reinforces existing gender norms”* [2]. This means that dialogic discourse not only reflects existing relations but also reproduces them. For example, consider the following dialogue in a workplace setting:

– *Female employee: “If you find it appropriate, we could organize this project in a different way”.*

– *Male manager: “No, it will remain as it is”.*

In this dialogue, the indirect strategy of the female speaker and the direct stance of the male speaker clearly demonstrate social hierarchy and gender-based communicative differences. At the same time, gender stereotypes are also constructed through discourse. For instance, certain expressions may carry negative connotations for women but positive ones for men. It is noted that language *“can reflect gender inequality and some words may be used in derogatory meanings for women”* [6].

In the sociolinguistic analysis of gender diversity, other social factors, particularly age, play an important role. The belonging of language users to specific age and gender categories directly affects their discourse patterns. It is noted that *“different age and gender groups using the same language employ different words and discourse models”* [15]. This shows that gender differences are shaped together with other social factors. For example, in the speech of young women, more emotional and expressive elements may be observed:

– *“It was really very interesting!”*

An older male speaker, on the other hand, may prefer a more neutral and informative style:

– *“The information was useful”.*

These differences are related not only to individual characteristics but also to social norms and expectations.

A deeper sociolinguistic analysis of gender diversity in dialogic discourse shows that gender differences manifest not only in communication strategies but also in the semantic structure of language and lexical choices. The semantic load of linguistic units often reflects gender-related stereotypes present in society, and these stereotypes are actively realized in dialogic discourse. In this regard it is noted that language *“not only reflects the values and relations existing in society but also indirectly preserves and transmits them. This explains how attitudes toward gender are formed in dialogic discourse”* [13, p.26]. For instance, the fact that some lexical units related to women carry emotional or negative connotations, while expressions related to men tend to occupy neutral or positive semantic fields, demonstrates the gendered asymmetry of language. Consider the following example:

– *“She is a very emotional woman”.*

– *“He is a very principled man”.*

In these two sentences, the semantic load of the words “emotional” and “principled” creates different social evaluations, illustrating how language carries gender stereotypes. At the same time, semantic derogation (the process of acquiring negative meaning) is particularly significant from a gender perspective. It is noted that semantic changes occur in language use related to gender categories, reflecting various social relations [9]. This process leads to certain words referring to women acquiring negative connotations over time.

One of the main characteristics of dialogic discourse is its interactive nature. Within this interactivity, the gender affiliation of participants directly influences discourse construction. Structural elements of discourse question-answer patterns, the structure of utterances, interruptions, strategies of agreement and disagreement are organized differently depending on gender. Research suggests that male speakers tend to interrupt more frequently during dialogue, which is associated with their tendency to occupy a dominant position in discourse. Female speakers, on the other hand, tend to prioritize strategies aimed at maintaining the continuity of dialogue. These differences are clearly observable in the structure of dialogic discourse. For example:

– *Woman: “I think this issue could be approached a bit differently...”*

– *Man: “No, the main point is that...”*

In this example the interruption by the male speaker changes the direction of the dialogue and reflects power relations within the discourse structure.

According to modern approaches in discourse analysis, language does not merely transmit information but also shapes and regulates social reality. Thus, discourse *“shapes perceptions about gender and reinforces existing gender norms”* [5, p.56; p.92]. This indicates that dialogic discourse has not only a communicative but also an ideological function.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, gender is one of the key components of social identity constructed through language. Language not only reflects existing identity but also creates and transforms it. In this regard dialogic discourse serves as a primary platform

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for the construction of social identity. Sociolinguistic literature emphasizes the close relationship between language and identity, noting that language is one of the main means of determining an individual's social belonging. Gender is one of the key indicators of this belonging.

During dialogue participants express their gender identity through various linguistic means: lexical choices, stylistic features, intonation and stress and communicative strategies. For example, female speakers may use more empathetic expressions:

– *“I understand you; this situation is really difficult”.*

A male speaker, in the same situation, may adopt a more solution-oriented approach:

– *“This problem can be solved in this way”.*

This difference illustrates how gender identity is constructed within discourse.

Language is a dynamic system that develops in parallel with social changes. Transformations in gender relations also directly influence language and discourse. In the modern period, the strengthening of ideas of gender equality has led to certain changes in language use as well.

Studies show that language change is closely related to social factors, and the social differentiation of language determines its directions of development. In this regard gender also functions as one of the key factors of language change. For example, in modern discourse, the use of gender-neutral expressions is increasing: *chairman* → *chairperson*, *businessman* → *businessperson*. These changes aim to make language more inclusive from a gender perspective.

At the same time the increased participation of women in public life has influenced their position in discourse. Speech previously considered more passive has, in the modern period, begun to acquire more active and assertive features [16]. In the sociolinguistic analysis of gender diversity, cultural context plays a particularly important role. Each society possesses its own gender stereotypes and social norms, which are expressed through language.

According to the linguocultural approach, language *“is the mirror of a people's culture”* and behind it stands the lifestyle of that society [1, p.71]. In this sense gender relations as an integral part of culture, are also reflected in language. For example, forms of address in Azerbaijani reflect gender differences: *bəy* (Mr.), *xanım* (Ms.), *müəllim* (male teacher), *müəllimə* (female teacher). These forms express not only gender but also social status and cultural relations.

Across different cultures the evaluation of male and female speech also varies. In some societies, the emotional nature of women's speech is perceived as a positive trait, whereas in others it may be regarded as a sign of weakness.

For a more systematic analysis of gender differences in dialogic discourse, it is necessary to refer to the typology of communicative strategies. In contemporary research, gender-based communicative behaviors are classified within various strategies that directly influence discourse structure. In this regard the following gender-differentiated communicative strategies are mainly observed in dialogic discourse:

- 1.Cooperative strategy – more typical of female speech
- 2.Competitive strategy – more characteristic of male speech
- 3.Emotional-expressive strategy
- 4.Informative-dominant strategy

The tendency of female speakers to prefer cooperative strategies is related to their orientation toward maintaining relationships in communication. These features manifest in dialogic discourse through responding to the interlocutor's ideas, supporting them and sustaining the dialogue. It is noted that women *“support the interlocutor through expressions that activate listening and strive to strengthen relationships”* [6, p.166–172]. For example:

– *“Yes, I understand you; it really is a difficult situation”.*

– *“Yes, you are right, but there might also be another option”.*

Such expressions strengthen cooperation and mutual understanding within dialogue.

On the other hand, competitive and dominant strategies prevail in male speech. These strategies aim at transmitting information, expressing positions and managing discourse. Thus, male speech *“uses more direct means to convey information, defend positions, and demonstrate status”* [6, p.166–172]. For example:

– *“This is the solution to the problem”.*

– *“No, this option is not correct”.*

Such expressions reinforce a commanding position in discourse and create communicative dominance.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, one of the most important features of language is its variability. In dialogic discourse this variability also differs according to gender. Language users employ different variants depending on the social situation, interlocutor and communicative purpose. It is noted that language variation occurs under the influence of social factors and different social groups prefer different linguistic forms [7, p.67-68]. Gender is one of these significant factors.

Female speakers may tend to prefer more standard language forms, which can be explained by their greater adherence to social norms. International studies also show that women more frequently use normative language forms, whereas men are more inclined toward non-standard variants. For example:

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– Female: “I am going”.

– Male: “I’m going, ya” (non-standard, colloquial form)

This difference reflects not only phonetic variation but also social belonging.

At the same time, code-switching in dialogic discourse may also manifest differently depending on gender. Speakers shift between different linguistic styles according to their social roles and this shift becomes a means of expressing gender identity.

Discourse has not only a communicative but also an ideological character. From a gender perspective, this feature becomes even more evident, as language expresses and reinforces existing gender ideologies in society. It is noted in gender studies that language “can serve to maintain patriarchal structures and reinforce gender norms” [9, p.69]. This demonstrates the ideological function of dialogic discourse. For example, gender stereotypes are clearly visible in the following dialogue:

– “This job should be done by a man”.

– “This field is difficult for women”.

Such expressions contribute to the reproduction of social stereotypes through discourse. On the other hand, modern discourse also includes expressions that challenge these stereotypes:

– “Women can also succeed in this field”.

This demonstrates the transformative potential of discourse.

In the modern era an important part of dialogic discourse is formed in the digital environment particularly on social networks. In this context gender differences manifest in new ways. Sociolinguistic studies emphasize the impact of social media on language behavior and note that changes in the social environment lead to changes in language use. On social media women tend to use a more emotional and interactive style, while men more often construct information-oriented and sometimes argumentative discourse. For example:

– Female user: “This topic really affected me-what do you think?”

– Male user: “This information is incorrect”.

These differences show how gender is reconstructed in digital discourse.

Participants in dialogic discourse often employ accommodation strategies toward their interlocutors. This process is known as pragmatic accommodation, and gender significantly influences it. Female speakers tend to favor strategies aimed at adaptation and harmony, whereas male speakers are more inclined to maintain their positions and control discourse. In this sense linguistic behavior is shaped not only by individual factors but also by social and situational influences. It is noted that language users employ different discourse models because they belong to different social categories [12].

CONCLUSION.

The results of our study suggest that gender diversity in dialogic discourse constitutes one of the key directions of the social functioning of language and is primarily manifested at the sociolinguistic and pragmatic levels. The differences observed between female and male speech are reflected in communicative strategies, politeness forms, discourse structure and lexical choices and these distinctions are conditioned by the social roles and cultural stereotypes existing in society.

At the same time it is determined that dialogic discourse not only reflects gender differences but also shapes and reproduces them. Gender interacts with other social factors such as age, status and communicative environment thereby forming the complex structure of linguistic behavior. From this perspective gender diversity in dialogic discourse emerges as a relevant and multifaceted object of study for both linguistics and the social sciences.

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