

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF
GENDER ON THE LANGUAGE USE OF 400 LEVEL
STUDENTS**

BY

BAMAIYI, ESTHER EDEBO

OCTOBER, 2010

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF
GENDER ON THE LANGUAGE USE OF 400 LEVEL
STUDENTS**

BY

**BAMAIYI, ESTHER EDEBO
(U07EN2013)**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,
FACULTY OF ARTS AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS
(B.A. HONS) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

OCTOBER, 2010

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research project was conducted solely by me, writers and sources of information and data used have been duly acknowledged in the bibliography.

Bamaiyi, Esther Edebo

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work titled “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Influence of Gender on Language use of 400 Level Students” has been read and approved as having met the requirement for the award of B.A. (Hons.) Degree in English Language.

Dr. (Mrs.) F. A. Frank-Akale
Supervisor

Date

Dr. Dili Ofuokwu
Head of Department

Date

External Examiner

Date

DEDICATION

Dedicated to God Almighty and to my dearest parents Mr. & Mrs.
Bamaiyi Okpe

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my project supervisor Dr. (Mrs.) F. A. Frank-Akale, for her encouragement and assistance towards the completion of this project and for patiently taking her time to go through this work and make necessary meticulous corrections of the manuscript. I am also grateful to my Head of Department Dr. Dili Ofuokwu, Dr. S. A. Abaya and all my other lecturers both within and outside the Department of English and Literary Studies.

My most sincere gratitude goes to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Bamaiyi Okpe. I owe them an everlasting debt of gratitude. To my all my siblings, especially my brother Onucheojo, my sisters Iye and Bamaiyi. God bless you all.

I am sincerely grateful to my friends Clement Joshua, Chioma Rita Okpe, Aminat Yetunde Hammed, Olajumoke, Olaniyi, Lenge, Recheal, Grace, Anny and those not mentioned. I would not have achieved so much without you. “Thanks”. I love you all.

This acknowledgements will not be completed if I fail to acknowledge Mr. and Mrs. Emmanuel Owoicho, Aunty Alice, Uncle

Peter and Uncle Jude for their assistance and support when I needed them most.

My greatest gratitude goes to God for his boundless love and limitless mercies. For the grace to accomplish my mission in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria I give you all the glory, honour and adoration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	i
Declaration	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	ii
Certification	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	iii
Dedication	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	iv
Acknowledgement...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	v
Table of Contents.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	vii
Abstract	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	ix

CHAPTER ONE

1.0	Introduction...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
1.1	Background of the Study.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
1.2	Statement of the Research Problem...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
	Research Questions...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
1.3	Aim and Objective of the Study.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
1.4	Significance of the Study ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
1.5	Scope and Delimitation... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0	Introduction...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8
2.1	Language and Its Function...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9

2.2	Language and Society...	...	...	...	...	...	12
2.3	Language and Gender...	...	...	...	...	...	14
2.4	Differences in Male and Female Speech...	...	...	...	...	...	15
2.5	Influence of Gender on Interaction...	...	...	...	...	...	19
2.6	Theoretical Framework...	...	...	...	...	...	23

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0	Introduction ...	...	...	...	...	...	27
3.2	Data Collection Technique ...	...	...	...	...	...	27
3.3	Method of Data Analysis ...	...	...	...	...	...	27

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0	Introduction ...	...	...	...	...	...	29
4.1	Data Presentation ...	...	...	...	...	...	29
4.2	Data Analysis	...	...	...	...	...	29

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0	Introduction...	...	.....	...	...	...	40
5.1	Summary...	...	.....	...	...	...	40
5.2	Conclusion...	...	.....	...	...	...	41
	Bibliography...	...	.....	...	...	...	42
	Appendix...	...	.....	...	...	...	44

ABSTRACT

The thrust of this study is a sociolinguistic analysis of the gender on language use. The method of investigation used for this study is questionnaire and audio-recoding. This study has established the fact that the differences between male and female in ways of interacting often leads to wrong notions, meanings and interpretations given to certain statements and gestures. It was also discovered that the differences between male female in the aspects of turn taking, use of minimal responses, use of questions, shift between topics, loud and aggressive arguments, often result in miscommunication and misinterpretation and when this happens, it leads to breakdown in communication.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

People have always known that gender and language use are connected. Women and men however, do not use completely different forms but different quantities or frequencies of form. Though both sexes use particular form, one sex shows greater preference for them than the other. Research shows that women tend to use more of standard forms than men do, while men use more of the vernacular forms than women do. Gender itself is an influential factor accounting for different speech patterns among men and women.

Therefore, the major pre-occupation of this study is to examine the differences in the use of language between men and women and the influence of gender on the use of language. This study is aimed at bringing to limelight such factors that are responsible for differences in the use of language between men and women and by implication how gender interfere with language use.

This study focuses on the speech patterns of men and women in general and in particular 400 level students of the Department of English and Literary studies, A.B.U., Zaria, Samaru campus. This study

seeks to examine the differentiation between male and female use of language and how gender consideration influences speech patterns. This has to do with how gender influence interaction among sexes.

To achieve this, data will be collected from 400 level students; forty (40) students (20 males and 20 females) were selected at random for this study from the Department of English and Literary Studies. 400 level students who I relate with daily are selected because it will be easier to collected data for this study. Participants will be interviewed and questionnaire issued out and data will be collected, discussed and analysed explicitly.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

When we tell people about ourselves or our circumstances, or ask for information about others and their circumstances, we are using language in order to exchange facts or opinions. This use of language is often called ‘referential’, ‘propositional’ or ‘ideational’. Language is used by human beings in social context, communicating their need, ideas, and emotions to one another (Labov, 1981:83). Human language according to Sapir (1921) ‘is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a

system of voluntarily produced symbols'. Language as Sapir rightly said is human. Only humans' possess language and all normal human beings uniformly possess it. Animals also have a communication system but it is not a developed system. That is why language is said to be species-specific and species-uniform.

Language gives shape to people's thought; it guides and controls their entire activities. It is a carrier of civilization and culture as human thoughts and philosophy are conveyed from one generation to the other through the medium of language (Syal and Jindal, 2001:5).

Ultimately, attitudes to language reflect attitude to the users and uses of the language. People generally do not hold opinions about language in a vacuum. They develop attitudes towards languages which reflect their view about those who speak the language, and contexts and functions with which they are associated (Holmes, 1996:344).

One topic that has come to the fore in sociolinguistics in recent years is the connection if any, between the structure, vocabularies and ways of using particular languages and social roles of the men and women who speak these languages. There are grammatical differences

between the speech of two speakers which gives us cues about their human social backgrounds.

Gender studies have shown that language users have a wide range of beliefs and knowledge about language that go beyond the rules and representations of specifying grammars. The social roles that men and women play, their different values and social networks (who they talk to most), and their sensitivity to contextual factors including characteristics of the person they are talking to are relevant factors in accounting for people's speech patterns. More so, there are other reasons underlying the differences in the use of language of males and females. One of such factors is culture. Since different people in different societies have distinct ways of life, and language to a considerable degree is influenced by culture, their use of language will highly be influenced.

It is against this background that this study is carried out to examine the differences in the speech patterns of men and women and to do a sociolinguistic analysis of the influence of gender consideration on interaction among 400 level students of the Department of English and Literary Studies, A.B.U., Zaria.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The differences between women and men in ways of interacting are usually as a result of the different social and cultural background. Research has shown that men and women differ significantly in their use of language. This basic fact has created a fundamental problem in the interpretations and meanings usually given to discourse. This inevitably means that often time, one out of the two parties involved in discussion usually give wrong notions, meanings and interpretations to certain statements and gestures. When this happens, it leads to breakdown in communication. It is from this perspective that this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. Do men and women speak differently in the process of communication?
- ii. How do the roles played by men and women affect their language use?
- iii. What are the factors responsible for different language usages by men and women?
- iv. Does gender affect interaction among males and females?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This project aims at a sociolinguistic study of the effect of gender on language use among students. It seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. To identify the differences in the speech patterns of 400 level male and female students.
- ii. To highlight how the roles played by men and women affect language use.
- iii. To highlight the underlying factors accounting for these differences.
- iv. To identify the effects of gender on interaction.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is very significant because it would bring to limelight the terms and expressions used by male and female student of the Department of English and Literary Studies, A.B.U., Zaria. Since it focuses on the issue of language and gender, it would serve as a source of information and discovery to those who do not understand how gender consideration influences interaction.

1.5 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This study focuses on male and female use of English language in general. The problem of language use within varying contexts and situations is not only peculiar to A.B.U. students but also to different people globally. This study has been limited to 400 level male and female students of the Department of English and Literary Studies, A.B.U., Zaria for easy collection of data. Also, the familiarity and the level of interaction that exist within the group as course mates will go a long way to aid in providing adequate data for analysis. A random selection of forty (40) students: twenty (20) of which are males and twenty (20) females was used to collect data for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

There has been considerable interest on the study of sociolinguistic variation associated with speaker's gender. Over the years, there has been an explosion of research in this field. Many articles have been published both in learned journals and edited collections. Sociolinguistics, among other fields of study within the scope of linguistics has several evidence on gender related issues.

Sociolinguistics has been defined as the study of language in its social context. The study of language in its social context means crucially the study of linguistic variation. In different social contexts, an individual will speak in different ways. This is called stylistic variation. Moreover, speakers who differ from each other in terms of age, gender, social class, ethnic group, for example, will also differ from each other in their speech, even in the same context - this is called social variation. Sociolinguists are interested in both stylistic and social variation.

According to Gumperz (1971), sociolinguistics is ‘an attempt to find correlated between social structure and linguistic structure and to observe any change that occurs’. Hudson (1995) sees sociolinguistics as ‘the relationship between language and society’, while Holmes (1994) conceives sociolinguistics as ‘aimed towards theory which provides a motivated account of the way language is used in a community and of people when they use language’. Coulmes (1997) perceives sociolinguistics as ‘an investigation of how social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlates with social attributes such as class, sex and age’.

This chapter thus, reviews some related literature on language, society and gender, and how gender as a sociolinguistics variable affects interaction among males and females.

2.1 LANGUAGE AND ITS FUNCTION

Halliday (1970:140-165) proposed three broad functions of language; ideational, interpersonal and textual. Jakobson (1960) and Hymes (1962) propose about half a dozen functions, while Stubbs (1995:46) building on Jakobson’s and Hyme’s contributions proposes the following:

Directive/co native/ persuasive functions: The speaker in this use of language directs the hearer to carry out an action (Audu, stop it! Lock the door!). The second aspect of this function is persuasive or pleading; that is, prayerful (give us this day, our daily bread).

Poetic function: The language user uses it creatively to achieve aesthetic purpose. The example of the popular children's rhyme 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' comes readily to mind here for its rhyme and rhythm.

Contact function: What Stubbs (1995) calls contact function is also called phatic function of language. This is the use of language for brief social or psychological interaction, usually displayed in short greetings or opening up a channel of or for communication.

A: Hello how was the office today?

B: Well, not bad, how about yours?

A: Hope your boss was not difficult today?

B: Thank God, he was better today.

Metalinguistic function: A language performs this function when it draws attention to the code itself for the purpose of clarification. A good example is "the grammar of Yoruba language".

Referential function: The language user, in this function ensures that the meaning of a word or expression is the physical object which the utterance stands for. It is denotative.

Contextual/situational function: Here the language user in these utterances is relating to others his experiences with regard to the immediate environment, physical or psychological.

Ideational function: a language user falls on this function when he is expressing his experience of the real world including the inner world of his own consciousness.

Interpersonal function: Language could be used to establish and maintain social relation such as conversation and getting things done. It is used by individuals to achieve social cohesion.

Textual function: With this function, language is used to provide links with itself and with features of the situation in which it is used.

The issue of the functions of language can be concluded by presenting Brown and Yule's (1983) position. They identified two functions of language; transactional and interactional. Transactional function is concerned with the expression of content while interactional is concerned with expressing of social relations and personal attitudes.

Across all the views and perceptions of the functions of language, the stand taken by Brown and Yule (1983) rightly covers the basis of language. They have not only covered the literary function of any language but considered the semantic implication of the use to the language. This suggests that both the surface and deep structure of a language use have been considered in their views. Halliday on the other hand, proposes a more functionally and sociologically based way of using any language. The above opinions are rightly accepted to be adequate for this study.

2.2 LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

Society according to Collins Paperback Dictionary and Thesaurus (2006) is seen as a “human being considered as a group in an organised community. It is also an organised group with common aim and interests. Human development has greatly been enhanced by language and its development.

According to Trudgill (2000) gender differentiation in language “arises because language as a social phenomenon is closely related to social attitudes. Men and women are socially different in that society lays down different social roles for them and expects different

behaviour patterns from them. Language simply reflects social fact. Many ethnic groups use a distinct language associated with their ethnic identity, where a choice of language is available for communication, it is often possible for an individual to signal their ethnicity by the language they choose to use. Speech differences in interaction may be reflected in people's social network (Holmes 1996:190).

Sex differences in language are often just one aspect of more pervasive linguistic difference in the society reflecting social status or power differences. The fact that there are clearly identifiable differences between women and men speech in the communities reflects demarcated sex roles in this communities. Sex-exclusive speech forms reflect sex-exclusive social roles (Holmes, 1996).

Another way that language affects society is in sexist language. The theory is that language affects the way we view men and women because it treats men and women differently.

The concept of class differences dominates the viewpoint of the above opinions and this may rightly form the bedrock of the aforementioned problems in this research.

2.3 LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Rebecca Hiscock (1986) cited by Cameron (1990) opines that ‘language is in one sense the inalienable birthright of every human being, regardless of gender...’ Rebecca’s opinion has failed to put into consideration the aspect of language learning and this may not adequately cover the notion of language use.

Wadak (1977) opines that gender is “not a pool of attributes ‘possessed’ by a person, but... something a person does... And varies between different racialized ethnic and religious groups as well as for members of different social classes”.

According to Thorne et al (1983) the term gender.

“does not refer to grammatical gender (the system to be found in some language of organizing certain word class into contrasting categories of masculine, feminine, neuter) but referred to social categories based on sex but encompasses behaviour, roles and images that, although not biologically determined are regarded by society as appropriate to its male and female members”.

Gender is therefore distinguished from sex in that sex is referred to as a biological component of male and female, whereas, gender component what is socially learned and acquired.

More so, sociolinguistic study of gender shows that variation in the use of language according to gender is intimately connected to socio-cultural patterns which reflect socio-economic and political inequality and male dominance in many societies.

Reflecting social status or power difference, Lakoff (1975) in her research claims that women's language as a whole reveals women's social powerlessness and is thus dominated by stylistic features significantly insecurity and lack of assertiveness. She further argues that female language is consequently heavily influenced by the pragmatic principle of politeness which basically rules adaptive social behaviour.

The different views of language and gender as elicited above have come to a common ground that language and gender are inseparable and if any major difference exists, it becomes obvious in the intention of the user.

2.4 DIFFERENCES IN MALE AND FEMALE SPEECH

A variety of explanations has been proposed for gender difference in language use (for example, Henley and Krammer 1991; Uchida (1992; Noller 1993). Some argue that innate biological differences account for sex differentiated rates of language acquisition

as well as for psychological orientation or temperament (Buffery and Gray 1992; Mc-Glone 1980; McKeever 1987; Gottman and Levenson 1988).

Other researchers put a great deal of stress on socialization as an explanatory factor (Maltz and Broker 1982; Tannen 1987). In many societies, girls and boys experience different patterns of socialization and this, it is suggested leads to different ways of using and interpreting language (Holmes 1995:7).

Lakoff (1975) claims that there are a number of lexical, grammatical and phonological features that characterize women's language" lexical differences were said to relate to the use of certain colour contour (e.g. Beige, ecru) and certain adjectives of approval (e.g. adorable, charming). A postulated grammatical differences concerns the use of tags (i.e. form such as "isn't it", won't you?" phonological differentiation was illustrated in terms of rising intonation contours.

Krammer (1977) reports that men's speech (particularly English speakers) is forceful, efficient, blunt, authoritative, serious, effective, sparing, and masterful". On the other hand, it is believed that women's

speech is “weak, trivial, ineffectual, hesitant, hyper-polite, euphemistic, often characterised by gossip and gibberish”.

Hartmann (1976) studied the language of women and claimed to have located some of its euphemistic qualities. She describes their language as ‘flowery’, ‘tentative’, and ‘qualified’ and therefore a lesser or deficient form. She went further to state that female used more qualifiers than men, and that men used more absolutes. Women were also claimed to use intensifier and this is responsible for the lack of precision in women’s speech (Jespersen, 1922).

On prestige, Thorne and Henley (1975) claimed ‘that women use status linguistic forms more than men. They said that women compared with men of the same social class, age and level of education, more often choose the form close to the ‘prestigious’ or ‘correct’ way of talking. Similarly, Trudgill (1975) claims that women constantly produce linguistic forms which are closely approached to those of standard language or have higher prestige than those produced by men.

Traditionally, it is observed that women are talkative. However, research findings contradict this position. It has been established that men talk more. For instance, Swacker (1975) had her thirty-four

informants (17 of each sex) talk into a tape recorder. She found out that men talked much longer than women usually until the tape was finished.

Studies on interruption phenomena in conversation also shed more light on sex differences in language. According to the stereotype of women's language, women are supposed to nag, chatter, talk too much and little too little, and are therefore prime suspect on any measure of interruption (1980:43). But research findings reveal the opposite; for instance, Zimmerman and West (1975) found that 98% of interruption in mixed sex conversation was made by male.

Interruption is a mechanism by which males can prevent females from talking and they can gain the floor for themselves. This contributes to the contraction and maintenance of male to supremacy. Romaine (1999) has put forward a hypothesis that women's language beyond being polite, tends to show solidarity as opposed to men's, which shows power.

Furthermore, on the single-sex conversations that have been analysed, women tend to see conversation as an opportunity to discuss problems, share experiences and offer support as against the men who

see the discussion of personal problem as an abnormal component of conversation

2.5 INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON INTERACTION

Gender consideration in interaction between males and females has linguistic and social effects on language use. One of the linguistic consequences of gender differentiation in language seems to be linguistic change. Certainly, differences in women's and men's language are regularly associated with changes in language. The neo-grammarians argued that linguistic change was caused by the twin mechanisms of sound and analogy; sound change altered by the system and analogy made the system regular again. The functionalists on the other hand, argue that change occurs because of the opposing demands of the need to communicate and the desire to make as little effort as possible Coates (1993).

The study of linguistic change has a long history, but our understanding of the role played by individual speakers is still in its infant stage. It was observed that gender in speech plays an important role on the mechanism of linguistic change. More accurately, the gender of the speaker plays a significant part in innovation.

Labov (1972a: 301 – 4) cited in Coates (1993) reflected the prevailing view that women were innovators. He claims that women play an important part in linguistic change. However, more recently, he has modified his views, and now argues that change is precipitated by linguistic differences between men and women rather than being associated with one particular gender.

It has been argued that different patterns of interaction lead to miscommunication between sexes which are part of the social effect of gender consideration in interaction on language. Maltz and Broker (1982) argues strongly that “... women and men develop different rules for engaging in, and interpreting, friendly conversation...”.

The different use and interpretation of minimal responses can lead to serious miscommunication. First, men may think women are agreeing with them and are irritated when this turns out not to be the case. Second, women are disconnected by men’s infrequent use of minimal responses and accuse them of not listening.

More so, women use questions rhetorically and as part of the general strategy for conversation maintenance while men interpret questions as simple request for information. There is a clash between

direct and indirect modes: men interpret questions at face value while women see them as facilitating the flow of conversation. This is an area which has the potential for miscommunication.

In addition, when a female speaker takes turn in conversation, she acknowledges the contribution of the previous speaker and can then continue the current topic. Male speakers do not feel that there is need to make a link with the previous speaker's contribution; they are likely to ignore what has been said before. In mixed conversation, this means that women become resentful at having their comments ignored, while men will miss the cut and thrust of the conversations played according to their rules.

Furthermore, shift between topics tend to be abrupt in all-male conversations, whereas women typically build on each other's contribution. So topics are developed progressively in conversation.

Women tend to see conversation as an opportunity to discuss problems, share experiences and offer reassurance and support. For men, the discussion of personal problems is not a normal component of conversation. Tannen (1991:49) describes a breakdown of communication between husband and wife's self-disclosure by giving

advice. The wife felt comforted by her friend's response but was upset by her husband's. The statement of problem then has quite different meaning for women and men, and their linguistic responses differ accordingly.

Similarly, loud and aggressive argument is a common feature of speech in all-male group. However, women try to avoid displays of verbal aggressiveness. As a result, verbal conflict is problematic in mixed talk since most women see displays of verbal aggression as disrupting conversation while for men such displays are part of the conversational structure.

The evidence from all-female groups is that women value highly the role of listening. Men on the other hand, seem to construe conversation as a competition where the aim is to be speaker. These two approaches of conversation inevitably lead to clash in mixed interaction.

Simultaneous speech occurs when more than one speaker speak at the same time, has different meaning for male and female speakers, and is a potent source of misconception. Male speakers value speakership and therefore try to grab the floor. Women's talk on the other hand, contains frequent instances of simultaneous speech but these

can rarely be described as interruption. Simultaneous speech comes into conflict in cross-gender talk.

From the ongoing, new facts have emerged that the basic factors that influences male and female speech are inevitable. Some of these include: linguistic change, innovation, miscommunication etc. The problems equally call for a point of agreement in related discourse between females. However, Brun cited in Coates (1993) has taken a different dimension by considering age parameter as a basic factor influencing language use. Whatever theoretical perspective by the above experts, the differences in language use are gender based.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework in any research work provides a guideline for which valid judgement can be made. It is based on this fact that the study adopts Robin Lakoff's study of women's register as a theoretical framework. It is believed that the theory will enhance the focus and content of the study.

ROBIN LAKOFF'S THEORY OF WOMEN'S REGISTER

Many theories exist in the field of language study. The field of sociolinguistics is not an exemption. Among these theories, the Lakoff's

theory of women's register has been greatly favoured in this research along side with the deficit hypothesis and male dominance.

Deficit hypothesis propounded by Basil Bernstein, states that "the social success of members of a society and their access to social privileges is directly dependent on the degree of organization of their linguistic message. The theory behind Bernstein's distinction is that different linguistic forms originate in the different psychological and social experience of their speakers, thus regarding these experiences as being determined by membership of a particular social class.

Male Dominance

Thorne and Henley (1975) argued that male dominance has powerfully shaped the meaning of words referring to both sexes, thus:

Words associated with males more often have positive connotations, they convey notion of power and leadership. In contrast, female words are more often negative, conveying weakness, inferiority, immaturity, a sense of trivial.

Feminist writers have also identified male dominance as the chief cause of language differences between males and females. Lakoff (1975) argues that "women used these features (what Lakoff calls

woman's language) because they are denied means of strong expression within a male-dominated society.

Lakoff (1993:48) has commented as follows:

The ultimate... is that women are systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it as demonstrated by their linguistic behaviour along with other aspects of their behaviour....

Lakoff believes that the distinction between men's and women's language is a symptom of a problem in our culture, and not primarily the problem itself.

Wardbaugh (1988:309) opines that men and women in their interactional patterns in conversation, exhibit the normal 'power' relationship that exist in society, with men dominant and women subservient.

Lakoff (1975) propounded the theory of female register. She emphasised that; the female register relies essentially on the idea that there are sex-exclusive markers (linguistic features that are used by only one sex) rather than sex-preferential markers (features used more frequently by one sex than by the other). For instance, it is the case that adjectives of approval such as lovely, gorgeous, divine are used exclusively by women, but great, terrific, neat and so on are used by

both sexes, then it is not unreasonable to see the situation in terms of an opposition between female and neutral discourses.

This theory helps us to identify linguistic and cultural factors responsible for the differences in the speech of males and females, language users and also helps us to understand the science of the meaning of same speech by both male and female but different interpretation.

We can therefore, conclude that because the role of men and women are structured by the society. Hence, they exhibit the normal 'power' relationship that exists in the society (male dominant and women subservient). Thus, their linguistic patterns are influenced by their behaviour since that is how they are have been brought up to behave.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter primarily presents the methodology of the study. And it is divided into three sections: sources of data, data collection technique and method of data analysis.

3.1 SOURCES OF DATA

The main focus of attention of this study is on the use of English language among male and female students. Hence, the sources of the data are 400 level students of the Department of English and Literary Studies. Forty (40) students (20 males and 20 females) were selected at random for this study.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

For the collection of data, participant's observation the, use of questionnaire and audio recording were the main techniques employed. The respondents were asked questions at different places and periods within the department and their responses were recorded.

3.3 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

This method of analysis in this study is based on Lakoff's (1975) levels of analysis. She identified a number of linguistic features which

she claimed were used more often by women than men and which in her opinion express uncertainty and lack of confidence.

The features to be considered using Lakoff's analysis for this study are: lexical hedges, tag-question, verbosity, adjectives, intensifier, hyper-correct words etc. Each data collected has been discussed under the relevant topics above as appropriate. Below is a sample analysis.

QUESTION: Men and women use different speech patterns

TABLE 3.1:

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Agreed	26	65
Disagreed	8	20
Not sure	Nil	
No response	6	15
Total	40	100%

From the above, it would be seen that 65% of the respondents agreed that male and female use different speech patterns and six respondents did not answer this question.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the analysis of the words and expressions used by male and female students in different situations. This method of analysis is based on Lakoff's level of analysis. It is my hope that the illustrations given and the analysis done will convey the information that will enhance a comprehensive study of the use of English language among male and female students.

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The presentation is immediately followed by the analysis through discussions. In the structural interview and questionnaire which was the method used in the data collection, forty (40) students (20 males and 20 females) were used.

TABLE 4.1: PERSONAL DATA

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Age		
16 – 25	36	90
26 – 35	4	10
Total	40	100%

The table above show that majority of male respondents fell within the age 15 – 25 while the highest range of female respondents still fell within the range of 15 – 25 with the total of 90 percent. This invariably show that the highest number of students in 400 level English language class falls within the range of the appropriate year of study in the higher institution.

QUESTION: Men and women use different speech patterns

TABLE 4.2:

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Agreed	40	100
Disagreed	Nil	
Not sure	Nil	
No response	Nil	
Total	40	100%

From the above, it would be seen that 100% of the respondents agreed that male and female use different speech patterns. The interview conducted also confirmed this. This is in line with the view of Holmes (1995) that women and men use different speech forms but different quantities or frequencies of forms. Many scholars have found that there are grammatical differences between the speeches of two speakers which give us cues about their human social background.

QUESTION: Tick which of the following factors is or are most responsible for the differences in the speech patterns of male

TABLE 4.3a

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Socialization	14	35
Male dominance	7	17.5
Culture	11	27.5
Social inequality	4	10
No response	4	10
Total	40	100%

From the above table, majority of the respondents ticked socialization, which is 35% and culture which is 27.5% of the total number. This shows that socialization and culture are the factors most responsible for the differences in the speech patterns of male. This agrees with the opinion of Holmes (1995:7) that “in many society, girls and boys experience different patterns of socialization and this, it is suggested leads to different ways of using and interpreting language”. She further states that one of such factors in accounting for people’s speech patterns is culture. Four respondents did not respond to this question.

QUESTION: Which of the following factors is or are most responsible for the differences in the speech patterns of female?

TABLE 4.3b

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Socialization	10	25
Male dominance	15	37.5
Culture	9	22.5
Social inequality	3	7.5
No response	3	7.5
Total	40	100%

From the above, it would be seen 37.5% of the respondents ticked male dominance and 25% of them ticked socialization as some of the factors most responsible for the differences in the speech patterns of female. In line with the above, Tannen (1990) asserts that “gender differentiation is parallel to sub-cultural differences Vs social dominance”. Because of the background female have been relegated to, they tend to use intensifiers such as “very”, “actually”, “never” etc more than the male in order to strengthen their expressions and this is responsible for their lack of precision in speech Jespersion (1922). From the interview conducted, there was practical display of this speech form. Out of forty (40) respondents, only three did not respond.

QUESTION: When compared to male students, the form of language used by female students is

TABLE 4.4

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Standard	40	100
Colloquial	Nil	
Non-standard	Nil	
Unrefined	Nil	
No response	Nil	
Total	40	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 100% of the respondents concurred with the fact that when compared to male students, the form of language used by female students is standard. Looking at the above, Trudgill (1975) claims that “women consistently produce linguistic forms which are more closely approach those of standard language or have higher prestige than those produced by men”. Females responses in most of their expressions such as “mmhmm”, “ehmm” etc. The interview carried out on this speech mannerism clearly confirmed that female often use minimal responses than male. Maltz and Broker (1982) observed that the different uses and interpretations of minimal responses can lead to serious miscommunication.

QUESTION: Tick the appropriate features that characterize male speech

TABLE 4.5a

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Forceful	14	35
Lovely	1	2.5
Blunt	7	17.5
Cute	Nil	
Interruption	9	22.5
Pretty	Nil	
No response	9	22.5
Total	40	100%

From the above, 35% of the respondents ticked forceful and 17.5% ticked blunt as some of the features that characterize male speech. In line with this response, Krammmer (1977) reports that “men’s speech (particularly English speakers) is forceful, efficient, blunt, authoritative, serious, effective, sparing, and masterful”. Nine (9) respondents did not respond this question

QUESTION: Tick the appropriate features that characterize female speech

TABLE 4.5b

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Forceful	Nil	
Lovely	10	25
Blunt	2	5
Cute	10	25
No response	18	45
Total	40	100%

In Table 4.5b above, 25% of the respondents went for both lovely and cute as the appropriate features that characterise female speech. In line with the above, Lakoff (1975) claims that “there are a number of lexical, grammatical and phonological features that characterise women’s language: lexical differences were said to relate to the use of certain colour (e.g. beige, ecru) and certain adjectives of approval (e.g. adorable, charming, cute, lovely etc). From the interview carried out, it was discovered that female use hedges than male. Hedges are linguistic forms such as “I think”, “I’m sure”, “you know”, “sort of” and “perhaps” which expresses the speakers’ certainty or uncertainty about the proposition under discussion. This is also used mostly by female speakers to reflect their general insecurity. Eighteen respondents out of 40 gave no answer to this question.

QUESTION: To what extent does culture and environment influence choice of words among male?

TABLE 4.6a

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Very strongly	12	30
Strongly	21	52.5
Not strongly	2	5
Non of the above	Nil	
No response	5	12.5
Total	40	100%

From the Table 4.6a, it can be seen that 52.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that culture and environment influence choice of words among male. This is in line with the view of Holmes (1996:190) that “many ethnic groups use a distinct language associated with their ethnic identity. Where a choice of language is available for communication, it is often possible for an individual to signal their ethnicity by the language they choose to use. Five (5) out of forty respondents did not answer this question.

QUESTION: To what extent does culture and environment influence choice of words among female?

TABLE 4.6b

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Very strongly	11	27.5
Strongly	14	35
Not strongly	6	15
Non of the above	Nil	
No response	9	22.5
Total	40	100%

Based on the table data above, 35% of the total respondents strongly agreed that culture and environment influence choice of words among female. As explicated above in 4.6a, people’s ethnic groups determine their choice of language. Out of 40 respondents only 9 did not answer this question.

QUESTION: How aggressive and authoritative is the use of words by men?

TABLE 4.7

DATA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Very strongly	10	25
Strongly	16	40
Not strongly	6	15
Non of the above	Nil	
No response	8	20
Total	40	100%

From the above, 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that men use aggressive and authoritative words as seen in Table 4.5a. Krammer (1977) did not mice word when he asserted that male speech is characterised by forcefulness, authoritative, masterful etc. Out of 40 respondents only 8 did not answer this question.

Question 4.8: In one paragraph, give your reasons for this manner of speech forms

The responses from this question shows that the respondents are aware of the component of gender as seen in some of their responses: “the culture and society permits that”, “African culture influences how male and female use language”, “I think nature has a role to play”. This is in line with the view of Wardbaugh (1988:309) that men and women in their interactional patterns in conversation, exhibit the normal

“power” relationship that exist in the society, with men dominant and women subservient.

Question 4.9: In one paragraph, describe the administration of Prof. Joshua Adebayo as the Dean of Faculty of Arts

From the responses, it was observed that the male made more direct declaration of facts or opinion than the female. Some of the responses from the male confirmed this. For instance, “he was not strong handed”, “results were never released on time”, “he is slow but highly political”.

4.10 In one paragraph, comment on the personality of Dr. (Mrs) Gani

The manner of responses from both male and female students was almost the same. This shows that this difference in their speech pattern is not a total or absolute one. This is in line with the view of Holmes (1999) that men and women, however, do not use completely different forms but different quantities or frequencies of form.

4.11 In one paragraph, comment on the current standard of education in Nigeria

The response to this question shows that male students are more verbose than the female students as against the stereotype that women talk excessively. The interview carried out also gave the same result

Coates (1993:33) asserts that this is an age-old belief that women talk too much.

From the analysis above, a summary can be made that most of the respondents agreed with the position made by Coates (1973) that females and males do not speak different language, the differences lies on the linguistic form... where the gender of the speaker determines which forms are chosen.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to demonstrate that the inherent differences in male and female use of language, that is, the sex exclusive and sex preferential markers. This study has examined the language use among male and female students of the department of English and Literary Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

5.1 SUMMARY

This chapter gives a summary of whole concept. This project is consists of five chapters. From the study carried out, it can be said that male and female use different speech patterns. Cultural and environmental, factors are argued to be the underlying factors responsible for these differences.

These differences in the speech pattern of male and female results in miscommunication and misinterpretation in the process of interaction. While the most obvious function of language is to communicate information language also contributes to at least two other equally important, but less often recognised, function; to establish and

maintain social relationships and to express and create the social identity of the speaker.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that in our society and others like it, there are male and female differences in their use of language. They do not use completely different forms but different quantities or frequencies of the same form. In a society where gender plays a major role language also has a key role to perform in the contribution of that role. Differences in the gender roles, identities of men and women, hierarchical nature of gender relations and the dominance of men constitute the factors that contribute to the differences in language use. Gender differentiation does not exist in vacuum: it interacts in a complex way with other kinds of social differentiation. But language and gender are developed through participation in everyday social practice. In other words, language and gender are inextricably linked.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akindele and Adegbite (1999). *The sociology and politics of English in Nigeria*. OAU Press, Nigeria.
- ANA Conference/Convention. Sub-theme (2002). *Women and Gender*. Asaba, Delta State.
- Coates Jenner (1993). *Women, Men and Language*. Longman Group Limited, England.
- Crystal David (1997). *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Edwards Derek (1997). *Discourse and Cognition*: SAGE Publication Limited, London.
- Holmes Janet (1995). *Women, Men and Politeness*: Longman Group Limited, New York.
- Holmes Janet (1996). *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*: Addison Wesley Longman Publish, New York.
- Holmes and Pride (1982). *Sociolinguistics*: Harmonsworth; Penguin.
- Jespersen, O (1992). *Language: It's Nature Development and Origin* London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Labov William (1972). *Sociolinguistics Patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press, USA.
- Lakoff, R (1975). *Language and Women's Place* New York: Harper and Row Publishing Co.
- Peter Trudgill (2000). *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. Penguin books Ltd. London.

Ronald Wardbaugh (1988). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Basil Blackwell Inc. USA.

Syal and Jindal (2010). *An Introduction to Linguistics: Language; Grammar, and Semantics*. Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi.

Thorne, B. and Henley, N. (1975). "Languages and Sex Difference and Dominance" In *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* Vol. 7.

Zimmerman, D. and West, C. (1975). "Sex Role Interruption and Silences in Conversation" in Gumpeiz, J. (1982) ed. *Language and Social identify: A cultural Approach to Male and Female Miscommunication* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a final year student of English Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. I am carrying out a research on a socio-linguistic analysis of how gender influences interaction among male and female language users, which is in partial fulfilment of my B.A. Degree in English Language. This research is purely for academic purpose and all the information given will be treated confidentially.

You are therefore required to answer all the questions as best as you can.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

SECTION A (PERSONAL DATA)

Sex: Male Female
Age: 16 – 25 25 – 35

Educational Qualification: Tertiary

SECTION B (QUESTIONS)

- (1) Men and Women use different speech patterns
(a) Agreed (b) Disagreed (c) Not sure
- (2a) Tick which of the following factor(s) is or are most responsible for the differences in the speech patterns of male
(a) Socialization (b) Male dominance
(c) Social inequality (d) Culture
- (2b) Which of the following factor(s) is or are most responsible for the differences in the speech patterns of female?
(a) Socialization (b) Male dominance
(c) Culture (d) Social inequality

- (3) When compared to male students, the form of language used by female students is: (a) Standard [] (b) Colloquial []
(c) Non-standard [] (d) Unrefined []
- (4a) Tick the appropriate features that characterize male speech
(a) Forceful [] (b) Lovely [] (c) Blunt []
(d) Cute [] (e) Interruption [] (f) Pretty []
- (4b) Tick the appropriate features that characterize female speech
(a) Forceful [] (b) Lovely [] (c) Blunt [] (d) Cute []
- (5a) To what extent does culture and environment influence choice of words among male? (a) Very strongly [] (b) Strongly []
(c) Not strongly [] (d) Non of the above []
- (5b) To what extent does culture and environment influence choice of words among female? (a) Very strongly [] (b) Strongly []
(c) Not strongly [] (d) Non of the above []
- (6) How aggressive and authoritative is the use of words by men?
(a) Very strongly [] (b) Strongly []
(c) Not strongly [] (d) Non of the above []
- (7) In one paragraph, give your reasons for this manner of speech forms -----
- (8) In one paragraph, describe the administration of Prof. Joshua Adebayo as the Dean of Faculty of Arts-----

- (9) In one paragraph, comment on the personality of Dr. (Mrs) Gani

10) In one paragraph, comment on the current standard of education
in Nigeria -----

ORAL INTERVIEW

1. What can you say about the performance of the Super-Eagles in the last World Cup Match?
2. Give any reason(s) why President Goodluck Jonathan suspended the Super Eagles.
3. Some people are of the opinion that women are myopic in their views. Do you agree to?
4. Do you agree that men use aggressive and authoritative language?
5. Why do most people break-up their relationships when they discover that their partners are cheating on them?
6. Most people are not in support of IBB's intention to contest for the post of presidency. What is your opinion?
7. What do you have to say about the standard of education in Nigeria?
8. What is your opinion about the mass failure in the last 2009 NECO result?
9. How can you as an individual participate in rebranding Nigeria?
10. Most students are not in the habit of reading except there is a test or examination. Do you agree?