

GENDER-EFFECTED LANGUAGE AND ITS IMPACT ON CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Cinsiyete Göre Dil Kullanımı ve Onun Kültürler Arası Anlayışa Olan Etkisi

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Öz: Bu makale Ronald Wardhaugh'ın " Sosyodilbilime Giriş " adlı kitabına dayanmaktadır. Ronald Wardhaugh cinsiyet konularında yaptığı araştırmalarında Lakoff Deborah Tannen ve Eckert'in düşüncelerini dahil etmiştir. Bu araştırmada esas olarak, günlük konuşma söz konusu olduğunda çoğunlukla kadın ve erkeklerin farklı dili kullandığı olduğu üzerinde durulacaktır (Wardhaugh,2010). Buna ek olarak, kadın ve erkeklerin dil söz konusu olduğunda farklı düşündükleri ve kendilerini nasıl ifade ederken neden farklı dil kullandıklarını açıklamayı amaçlıyoruz. Bu farklılıkların bilinmesi, farklı cinsiyetleri anlamak ve günlük yaşamımızda daha dengeli olabilmemiz için bize yardımcı olabilir. Cinsiyet meselelerinin farkında olmak her gün gördüğümüz birçok problemi ortadan kaldıracaktır .

Anahtar kelimeler: Cinsiyet, dil , konuşma , anlam ve tarafsızlık

Abstract: This paper is based on a book by Ronald Wardhaugh "An Introduction to Sociolinguistics". In his elaboration of gender issues Ronald included Lakoff's, Deborah Tannen's and Eckert's thoughts. This research will mostly emphasize in which sense women and men are different when it comes to every day conversation (Wardhaugh, 2010). It will explain why men and women think differently when it comes to language and how they express themselves in different way and also in which way gender shapes a language that is used (Wardhaugh,2010). Learning about these differences may help us to understand different sexes and to have more balanced everyday life. Being aware of gender issues may eliminate many problems that we see every day.

Keywords: Gender, language, conversation, meaning and neutrality.

Makale Gönderim:
11.05.2015
Kabul Tarihi:
29.05.2015

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INTRODUCTION

There is always a question should we strive to have gender neutrality when it comes to language or should we shape it in accordance with biological differences. Gender has been one of the biggest “growth” areas within the sociolinguistics in recent years. Do the men and women who speak in particular language use it in different ways? May it be possible to describe a particular language as sexist? “Most slang terms for woman in her corpus are negative, and most deal with physical appearance and sexual promiscuity; by contrast ,far fewer terms for men are negative ,and those that are do not have the same focus upon the body and sexuality” (Hall, K. & Bucholtz, M., 1995, p.15).We must know that there is difference when we say gender and sex. Sex is biologically determined while a gender is social construction. Gender involves (genetics, psychological, social and cultural difference between males and females). “We have claimed that person’s gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others”(West, C. & Zimmerman H., 1987, p.140). Holborow said that difference associated with gender have not same power in comparison to social class. He thinks that social division is more significant than the sexual one. (Wardhaugh, 2010 pp.333-334)

Verbal skills of the males and females may result from different socialization practices. “The verbally represented world is gendered. When children learn to talk they learn to create linguistic sense of self. This self is gendered from a very early age” (Romaine, S., 2009, p.15). Many observers described women’s speech being different than men’s; men’s speech usually provides the norm but the women speech is judged. Women speech is trivial (gossip-oriented, corrupt, illogical, euphemistic or deficit is highly suspect) but men speech is precise, cultivated and stylish. Apparently men gossip as women but in different way; they talk about non-consequential matters (cars, sport) and also the exhibit competitive negative behavior including insults and challenge. Women talk is more cooperative, supportive and feedback oriented talk. (Wardhaugh 2010, pp.335-336)

Word Differences

English language makes certain distinctions when it comes to gender. It can be seen from examples such as: actor-actress, waiter-waitress, and master-mistress. Some of these distinctions are reinforced by patterns of usage and semantic development. For example master and mistress have different ranges of use and meaning. “The words master and mistress were both once used as titles and terms of respect: while master has almost completely disappeared as a title (except for young boys in the south of the USA), mistress has taken on the meaning of the woman with whom a husband cheats on his wife” (Winkler, E.G., 2007, p.237). Other words which reflect similar

differentiation are boy-girl, man-woman, gentleman-lady, bachelor-spinster and even widower-window. You can say "She is Lukac's widow" but you cannot say "He is Stefany's widower". Lakoff states that equal words referring to men and women do have quite different associations in English. "To some people, while calling a sixteen year old female a girl is perfectly acceptable, referring to a sixteen year old male as a boy, despite boy indeed being the correct term in this instance, may suggest connotations of immaturity and for some teenage boys, sound as if the boy being referred to was a small child" (Mills M., "Sexism in Language-An Analysis of Non-Parallel Use of Paired Gender Nouns"). Lady is really euphemism for woman, but gentleman is not nearly frequent enough to classify as a euphemism for man" (Lakoff, R., 1973, p.58). Another example of language difference according to gender could be taken from a Koasati, American language spoken in Louisiana in which men often pronounced "s" at the end of the verb but women did not. (Wardhaugh, 2010 p. 337)

Consequently we can understand why there is frequent insistence for usage of neutral words such as; chairperson, letter carrier, salesclerk and actor. The language is reflecting social structure and the social structure is changing. Romaine (1999, pp. 312-13) concludes that attitudes toward gender equality are not matching language usage. It is the people who use language who are and who are not sexist, for example Chinese, Japanese, Persian and Turkish do not make the gender distinctions. As we know it English makes it through system of pronouns. There are gender differences in word choice in different languages. In Japanese male refer to himself as *boku* but female uses *watasi* or *atasi*. In Thai too women emphasized a repeated action through reduplication whereas men place a descriptive verb instead. (Wardhaugh, 2010 pp. 338-339)

There is also a variety of a language of the Dyribal people in North Queens (Australia) which is gender differentiated. So normal everyday language 'Guval' is used by both genders but if a man's mother in law is present or woman's father in law, they use Dyalnuy. Another Australian aboriginal language, spoken by approximately 90 to 150 people has gender differentiated dialects. Men use one dialect among other men and women use the other among other women. A person can use the other sex's dialect only in specific circumstances such as storytelling, joking and certain singing rituals. There is also the presence of taboos –one variety may be forbidden to another gender, that gender is usually female gender. (Wardhaugh, 2010 pp. 339-340)

Holmes (1998) made a list of sociolinguistics tendencies for testing;

1. Women and men develop different patterns for language use.
2. Women tend to focus on the affective functions of an interaction more often than men do.
3. Women tend to use linguistic devices that stress solidarity more often than men do.

4. Women tend to interact in ways which will maintain and increase solidarity while male tend to interact in ways which will maintain and increase their power and status.

5. Women are stylistically more flexible than men.”(Wardhaugh, 2010 pp. 341-342)

Gender Differences

There are also stereotypes when we consider gender; men are more interested in topics such as business, politics, legal matters, taxes, sports. Women are more interested in social life, books, food, drink, life troubles and lifestyle. Also it is noted that women speak less forcefully and men swore more. But there is also gender-appropriate behavior. When women try to use direct language to signal independence and professionalism they may be judged as impolite and aggressive. Male and female researchers agree that men speak more than women do. Women are also reported to use more polite forms and compliments but men use talk to get things done. James and Drakich added that what is important in female relationship is sharing intimate feelings and confidences but when it comes to males, sharing activities is more important.(Wardhaugh, 2010 pp. 343-344)

Another interesting fact in cross-linguistics is that men frequently interrupt women and women interrupt men less frequently (Zimmerman and West). James and Clerke noted that men are much more likely than women to use interruption as a means of dominating and controlling interaction. Women ask more questions than men, use more back challenging signals like “hmm” to encourage others to speak, and do not protest as much as men when they are interrupted. Men interrupt more, challenge, dispute and ignore more, try to control what topics are and are inclined to make categorical statement. Their interactional patterns in conversation show that man is dominant and woman is subservient. (Wardhaugh, 2010 pp. 344-345)

One explanation is that language can be sexist. It has been claimed that women and men are biologically different and that difference has serious consequences for gender. Women are predisposed to be involved with same gender and to be mutually supportive and non-competitive. Men are predisposed to independence and vertical relationships. Language behavior is learned behavior because men learn to talk like men and women learn to talk like women. “From infancy male and female children are interpreted differently and interacted with differently. Experimental evidence suggest that adults perception of babies are affected by their beliefs about the babies’ sex” (Eckert P.& McConnell-Ginet, S., 2003, p.17). There are differences in understanding, the “hmmm” the women use means “I am listening” but when man use it means “I am agreeing”. So women think that men never listen and men think that women always agree with them. (Wardhaugh , 2010 pp. 346-347)

Aggression in conversation by women is understood as something personally directed, negative and disruptive but by men this is the way of organizing things. Women's conversation (discuss, share and search for reassurance) and men's conversation (look for solution, give advice and even lecture others) are totally different. (Wardhaugh, 2010 pp. 347-348)

CONCLUSION

Some aspect of language would be easy to change and some other would be more difficult to change. Difficult changes in language may appear in some words as "she" or "he" and easy appearing changes in language that have been done are: early humans form early men, salesperson from salesman; ordinary people form common man and etc. We may not be able to play with language and choose which aspect of variation we can eliminate and which we can encourage. Social change is mandating language change. Some feminist want to go further and clean up a language and even deny neutrality. Lakoff said that they want to reclaim language for themselves. It can be very utopian to think that language will ever become neutral. Humans use everything around them to make differences among themselves. (Wardhaugh, 2010 pp. 350-353-35)

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