

A survey on speech style of Qazvin's women based on age and education

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Abstract

Language is a social factor connecting people together. There are different speech styles among individuals, this difference is due to the situation and the context they are in. The purpose of this paper is to study speech style of Qazvin's women in different situations. The authors have sought to find answers to the following questions: What is the relationship between speech style and age among Qazvin's women? What is the relationship between speech style and education among Qazvin's women? In this article, key concepts including style, language, gender and different reasons for the origins of linguistic varieties are stated first, and then we will study age and education, as two variables, and their impact on speech style of Qazvin's women.

Key words: style, language and gender, female language, age, education.

1. Introduction

Language is a very complex phenomenon that enables humans to communicate to each other and form a social unit. At the mid of 20th century, with the advent of linguists such as Labov and Fishman, the impact of social factors on structure and language use has been seriously taken into consideration. Some linguists including Fishman and Hudson distinguish between the two terms "sociology of language" and "sociolinguistics". Language is human specific; on the other hand, language is a kind of human's social behavior. Nowadays, linguistics includes extensive dimensions, one of which is to study language of community. It should be noted here that speech style in linguistic communities is different; the reason is attributed to non linguistic factors such as age, education, gender and culture. This research is of great importance in that we can establish a relationship between non linguistic variables of age and education in language use in daily conversations of Qazvin's women within the framework of sociolinguistics. In this paper, the relationship between speech style in terms of age and education, as two variables, will be studied. The authors first discuss different types of speech style on the basis of Labov's theory (1972). Then age and education and their influence upon the speech style of Qazvin's women are investigated. In this research, statistical population includes 100 women ranging

from 20 to 40 years old which are studied by two variables of academic and non-academic education. To gather data, the authors have designed a questionnaire and used field study method. The questions of the present research are as follows: what is the relationship between speech style of Qazvin's women and their age? What is the relationship between speech style of Qazvin's women and their education? Language and its social variables are of new and up-to-date issues and have drawn attention of sociologists of language, and numerous studies are being conducted on it. The framework of the present research is on the basis of Labov's theory (1972).

2. Key concepts of the research

2.1 Style

Style is one of the factors that are related to the language use in various social situations. In general, when different linguistic varieties are used in different social contexts and situations; we idiomatically refer to it as style. Generally speaking, linguists make a distinction amongst 3 to 5 styles in different languages. One of the most well-known style stratifications is Labov's one. Labov distinguishes amongst five styles of A, B, C, D, D', in language. Style A or colloquial style is a style used in daily conversation. Style B or cautious style (semiformal) refers to a style used by interviewee in confrontation with interviewer, so it is natural that speaker shows great attention to the speech in such a style. Style C or reading passage style is a style in which one reads a passage; it is used to investigate on phonetic variations. To this end, the researcher provides a passage and inserts his desired components and the speaker reflects phonetic variations through reading. Style D and D' are the most formal styles in which a great attention is given to the speech. In style D, individuals read a list of words carefully (including words considered by the researcher from perspective of phonetic variations), and in style D' which the greatest attention to the speech can be observed, a list of minimal pairs is read by emphasizing on the difference between two varieties of one linguistic variable (Labov 1972, quoted from Modarresi, 1368:190).

2.2 Language and gender

Cameron claims that there are different ways to use language. But a few ways are preferable to others from an aesthetic, ethical and functional point of view (Cameron, 1996:36). Gender is one of those non-linguistic factors that have a great effect on speech. Female speech is distinct from male speech in any linguistic community. Women are more sensitive to men toward their linguistic behavior and use forms having low social validity less. Women try to use valid linguistic features and since they play a key role in teaching language to their children, they convey those features to them. Jespersen (1992) states that gender based linguistic differences are observed in the lexicon. Women avoid using negative and curse words. Women move in the right route and won't deviate (Jespersen, 1922:236-233). According to Yule, men use words like "brilliant and divine"; whereas women use words such as "nice and pretty" instead (Yule, 1996:20-21).

2.2.1 *Female language*

Many tribes (including Caribbean ones) in Small Antilles believe that men and women speak different languages and accents. Lakoff believes in feminine language. According to him, linguistic difference between men and women is in 3 areas of lexicon, syntax and pronunciation (Lakoff, 1973:52-51). Lakoff states a few characteristics for female speech as follows:

1. Words that women use are those they are interested in such as dusting ...
2. One of the linguistic features of women is using words such as “slick”, “cute”; whereas men use words indicating power like “cool”.
3. Women continuously utter predicative sentences in the interrogative form with rising intonation.

The food is very delicious, Isn't it?

4. Women use hedges in their speech. Phrases like “well”, “you know”, “I think” make the feeling that the speaker doesn't speak with a full confidence.
5. Women use degree adverbs a lot, like “so”.
6. Female speech is more polite than male's. So, women use appropriate and pleasant words instead of offensive and coarse words (Lakoff, 1973:54-56).

2.3 *Linguistic varieties*

Linguistic varieties involve different factors as follows: geographical region, social class, gender, ethnicity, age, style and education. Sociologist of language considers linguistic community as a complex and interwoven grid of linguistic exchanges whose members have common knowledge and attitude toward functional patterns of their own language and other members (Zia Hosseini, 1388:207). Fromkin and Rodman (1974) put their ideas about linguistic varieties in this way: every individual has its own linguistic variety reflecting his linguistic features (Fromkin & Rodman 1974, quoted from Babaei, 1389:15). Every language has different idiolects, social and regional varieties. Every individual may have different linguistic features considering the geographical region where he was born and grown in. In a certain area, social factors, in turn, lead to variations. Social varieties should also be studied within the framework of each one of geographical accents and dialects.

2.3.1 *Education*

Education is one of the factors resulting in linguistic varieties. Speech style and individual's linguistic behavior in a community are identified on the basis of education level. Those who have

higher education use the most formal style and extensive speech abilities and are able to use appropriate linguistic variety in different situations. Education reveals individual's social character properly (Keshavarz, 1371; quoted from Mohammadi, 1389:43). The more formal a conversation is the more attention will be given to the speech. As a result, speech style shows more conformity to the educated people's speech. Speech style is extremely influenced by education. It is necessary to point out Labov's theory here: in an investigation into New York English community, change of /t/ to /θ/ as well as pronunciation of /r/ after vowel are studied. Using /t/ instead of /θ/ in words /thing/ and /through/ lacks social validity among upper, lower and middle social classes whereas, pronunciation of /θ/, as a valid linguistic feature, is peculiar to the upper class. This study also showed that using /r/ after vowel in a word like "car" is used by upper class as a valid linguistic feature. Not only belonging to a certain social class, but also the social realities like imitation and tendency to walk the same as the upper social classes lead to linguistic variations, so that the rate of using /r/ after vowel in formal style among lower middle class overtakes the upper class, because they desire to reach the upper class level. That is why they excessively use valid forms and according to Labov, they turn to hypercorrection (Modarresi, 1368:199).

2.3.2 Age

Age is one of another important factors leads to linguistic variations and varieties and has biologic aspect. In a community, individuals at different ages have different behavioral patterns. So, the relationship of age and linguistic variables should be studied from two aspects of generation and age grading. People speak differently at different ages. At any age, there are tendencies separating it from other age groups. Amongst teenagers, behaviors against the norms of the society like linguistic behaviors are common. In early stages of life, invalid forms are used by children more than adults. Hajikazemi (1383) argues that any individual passes 3 different stages which are linguistically important during his life: 1) childhood and early stages in which the child starts learning rules and lexicon 2) teen years and the youthful years and at last 3) adulthood stage, at this period person acquires more stable patterns compared to previous stages from linguistic point of view. The studies have indicated that the youth and teenagers have more tendencies to use invalid linguistic forms (Hajikazemi, 1383). In this research, statistical population involves 100 Qazvin's women. 50 women have academic education and 50 women have non-academic education. Half of the sample is 20 to 30 years old and the other half ranging from 31 to 40.

Table 1: education level of statistical population

Education	Percent
Diploma	50
B.A graduate	32
M.A graduate	15
PhD	3

Total	100
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As the table shows, 50 percent of the sample has diploma degree, 32 percent B. A degree, 15 percent M.A degree and 3 percent PhD. In the present study, the researchers design a questionnaire including 10 questions considering 5 speech acts: invitation, compliment, request, apologizing and saying good bye. Two questions are considered for each speech act. The answers are arranged from A to D to evaluate the style. The styles are respectively as follows: deferential formal, ordinary formal, cautious and colloquial. In this research, after studying the questionnaires and data collection, the authors came to the following conclusions for each one of speech acts: for speech act of invitation, compliment and saying good bye, request and apologizing, sample groups have used cautious style, ordinary formal style and deferential formal style respectively.

3. The relationship between speech style and Qazvin’s women age

In this research, nominal scale (categorical variable) is deferential formal, ordinary formal, cautious and colloquial in speech style. After data analysis, the relationship between speech style and age is determined. It is shown in table 2.

Table 2: The relationship between age and speech style

		Speech style				total
		a. deferential formal	b. ordinary formal	c. cautious	d. colloquial	
Age	From 20 to 30	196	145	88	71	500
	From 31 to 40	168	170	90	72	500
	total	364	315	178	143	1000

To do this research, sample population included 100 women who answered 10 questions in a given questionnaire. At the end, we received 1000 answers. As figures and data indicate in table 2, younger women (20 to 30) use deferential formal styles more and colloquial style less. The older women (from 31 to 40) use both ordinary formal style and deferential formal more and colloquial style less. Findings of the research suggest that both groups have more tendencies to use formal style (ordinary and deferential) and use colloquial style less. As Qazvin’s women grow older, their speech style will not become more formal and polite.

4. The relationship between speech styles and education among Qazvin's women

Since speech style has nominal scale (categorical variable) and education is also categorized; to explain the relationship between speech style and education, table 3 is presented here:

Table 3: The relationship between education and speech style

		Speech style				
		a. deferential formal	b. ordinary formal	c. cautious	d. colloquial	total
Education	Academic	177	153	91	79	500
	Non-academic	187	162	78	73	500
	total	364	315	169	152	1000

As mentioned before, to carry out this study, 100 woman statistical population answered 10 questions and the result was 1000 answers. As it can be seen in table 3, given the figures and data, both groups with academic and non-academic education use deferential formal style more and colloquial style less with only one difference: non-academic group use deferential formal style and ordinary formal style more and colloquial style less than academic group. So the findings of data analysis show that both academic and non-academic groups are inclined to use deferential formal style, that is, poor education doesn't cause speech style of women to be less formal and impolite.

5. The relationship between speech style of Qazvin's women and different types of speech acts

The authors came into another conclusion which is the relationship between different speech acts and speech styles. According to the questions included in the questionnaire, two questions are assigned to one speech act. After data analysis, the relationship between speech acts and speech styles is observed which is presented in table 4.

Table 4: The relationship between different speech acts and speech styles

	a. deferential formal	b. ordinary formal	c. cautious	d. colloquial	total
invitation	46	43	75	36	200
compliment	44	80	35	41	200
request	107	74	8	11	200
apologizing	140	29	24	7	200
saying good-bye	24	80	39	57	200
total	364	316	178	142	200

According to the table 4, participants in the study have used cautious style, ordinary formal and deferential formal style for invitation, compliment and saying good-bye and for request and apologizing respectively.

6. Conclusion

After studying the influence of speech style of Qazvin's women on the basis of age and education, it can be concluded that in both studied age groups (20 - 30) and (31 - 40), younger women (20 - 30) have more tendency to use deferential formal style first, and then ordinary formal style. The older women (31 - 40) are more inclined to use ordinary formal style first and then deferential formal style. As a result, as Qazvin's women grow older, their speech won't become more formal. Given the educational level (academic and non-academic), both groups selected deferential formal style. In general, speech style of Qazvin's women is formal. According to the figures, using deferential formal style is more than other styles. Even women with non academic education use this type of speech style more than the educated and academic women. May be the reason is that they desire to reach the educated people's speech level and make their own speech more polite and formal.

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