

Volume 1, Issue 1

Research Article

Date of Submission: 13 June, 2025

Date of Acceptance: 20 August, 2025

Date of Publication: 26 August, 2025

Women's Language or Powerless Language

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Citation: Alalfy, S. (2025). Women's Language or Powerless Language. *J Interdiscip Hist Hum Soc*, 1(1), 01-05.

Abstract

Scientists have begun to record their observations about the difference between the language of women and the language of men since the middle of the seventeenth century ad, when studies appeared showing the linguistic differences between the sexes in the societies of the Amazon and the Caribbean. However, interest in the subject increased with the beginning of the twentieth century at the hands of anthropologists, and then the interest grew when the efforts of anthropologists mixed with those of sociologists. At that time, the conviction increased that gender, like other social structures, such as class, geographical area, and age, are all factors affecting speech. However, are these features that scientists have observed, are they achieved in all societies? Is it caused by the woman's gender or her weakness? If it is the first, then the phenomenon must be expelled, and if it is the second, then the man can also be characterized by it.

Keywords: Women's Language, Man's Language, Powerless Language

Introduction

Since men and women are governed by different social and behavioral rules, they are expected to have different interests, use different conversational forms, and react differently to others. Accordingly, we decide that men and women do not speak the same way in almost all societies, and this was clearly shown in Miller's book "The Japanese Language" (1967) when he said: "Women in Japanese society talk about different things than men talk about, and even if they talk about the same topic, they will also say different things" [1].

One Language for Men and Another for Women

When we talk about the differentiation of women's language from the language of men, we may find unfamiliar examples about this phenomenon. In some tribes of the Amazon River, we find that the language spoken by women is completely different from that spoken by men. The reason is that the men there do not marry from their tribe, but rather they are required to marry outside the tribe, and since each tribe has its own language, it was natural for the woman to speak a language other than the one her husband speaks. Add to the above that the inhabitants of the Caribbeans speak to men completely differently from women, and the reason was mentioned by The Dominican Breton (1664) in his book "Dictionnaire Caraibe-Francais", Where he is stated that the leader of the Caribs had exterminated all the indigenous people except for women who still preserved their ancient language; After that, Rochefort, C. (1665) - who spent a great deal of time among the Caribs - comes to confirm the great linguistic difference between men and women there, He says in his book "Histoire naturelle et morale des iles Antilles de l'Amerique" [The Natural and Moral History of the American Antilles] that men have many of their terms, which women understand, but they never use them, just as women have words and expressions that men never use, and they may laugh and ridicule them" [2,3].

One Language, Different Use

In many societies in which men and women use the same language, there are some linguistic features that are distinct between men and women. However, these features appear only in women's speech, given that man's language is the origin / criterion by which differentiation is measured; the one who meditates on many languages finds differences in

the linguistic use between men and women. In sidamo - a language used in Ethiopia - there are some words that only men use, and the opposite is also true, for the word (milk) men will say: (ado), while women will say it: (gurda); Adler, M.K. (1978) - as Miller noted before - that the Japanese language is one of the languages that reveals linguistic gender differences, as there is a group of personal pronouns, verbal inflections, and words suitable for women, and others suitable for men, and he saw that these differences affect not only the formulas used, but also the content, In the sense that Japanese women say different things even when they talk about the same topics that men touch upon, so it is difficult to give synonymous expressions from the woman's language to what the man says and vice versa, The following is an example of this, where we find the word used by the man different from the word used by the woman [4,5].

Words	Form used by men	Form used by women
Father	oyaji	otoosan
Eat	kuu	taberu
I am	boku	Watashi / atashi

Figure 1

However, in modern Japanese these characteristics have become associated more with public or formal morals than with gender; On the one hand, these feminine forms are used by everyone in colloquial contexts. On the other hand, we find that as a result of the increase in the social roles that women play in terms of work, and as a result of the presence of some males in the house and their help in raising children, women have begun to use masculine forms of speech [6].

General Features Characterize Women's Language

Some researchers were not satisfied with such differences in the use of vocabulary, so they enumerated distinctive features of women's language at all levels, Jespersen, O. (1921) was the first to try to define this in his book "Language, its nature, development, and origin", In this book, he dedicated a chapter called "The Woman", in which he made several claims about her language, among these allegations

- The vocabulary of women is much less than that of men.
- Women use adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns more widely than men.
- Her sentences are also less complicated than men [7].

However, Jespersen's claims in this chapter - almost all of them - were based on his personal impressions, and on some fictional characters! He claimed - for example - that a woman does not think before she speaks, so she may start a sentence and not finish it, and he evidenced his previous claim with some dialogues between fictional characters! Which is weird because the fictional character is a being of paper and words and not a real person, and the truth is that Jespersen's words in his book reflect the ideas and theories that were prevalent at the time in the study of language, as relying on the intuition of the linguist was the accepted method at that time, This is done instead of relying on data analysis, and the use of experimental and statistical methods, which became used in the decades that followed, and which are still used in all branches of linguistic studies until this time [8,9]. But despite all that, many of Jespersen's claims have been proven by experimental research. In an experimental research based on a huge collection of Arabic novels presented by men and women, it was found that the linguistic production provided by men has exceeded that of women by four times. Men produced (2,145,071) words compared to (678,430) words produced by women, which actually proves that women's vocabulary is much less than men's. Indeed, when distributing this huge amount of words to semantic fields, it was found that men excelled in (21) fields of Origin (24), The total number of words that men excelled in these fields reached (889) words, while women excelled in three fields, and their superiority was small, as they excelled by only (16) words [10].

But if Jespersen was correct in that and supported by the empirical research, the same research proved wrong in his claim that women use pronouns more than men. In the same research, we found that men's production of pronouns amounted to (30,804), while women's production amounted to (7,094), meaning that men outnumbered women by four times as well [11].

Although the researchers of the feminist movement criticized Jespersen a lot for his claims in the chapter "The Woman", they welcomed Lakoff's work in a way that we consider unjustified. Lakoff was one of the researchers most influenced by what Jespersen did, and she worked on identifying a number of linguistic features that characterize women's language, that explain - in her belief - women's lack of self-confidence and their distance from accuracy, and the following is a presentation of these features

- Frequent use of hedging terms such as: you see, sort of, you know... etc
- Frequent use of adjectives empty of meaning, such as: cute, and this was also alluded to by Jespersen [12].
- Frequent use of intensifiers, such as the word "so" in the phrase: I like him so much, and this hint reflects the woman's penchant for hyperbole and exaggeration as Jespersen stated [13].
- Excessive grammatical correctness, such as persistence in using the correct forms of verbs; Males, for example, drop the letter /g/ from words ending in /ing/, while girls are less likely to drop it.

- The use of superpolite forms of language, such as the frequent use of indirect requests and euphemism, a feature mentioned by Jespersen as well [14,15].
- Accuracy in identifying colors.
- Avoid strong swear words.
- Frequent use of the tag question, such as: She is beautiful, isn't she?
- Tendency to rising intonation when declaring a statement like: it's really gōōd.
- Emphatic stress, like pressing a word within a phrase: it was a brilliant performance [16].

This is what Lakoff decided about women's language, but some saw a kind of contradiction in what she decided. On the one hand, we see she decide that women use more hedging phrases, and those phrases - as she claimed - indicate by their nature a lack of confidence / certainty, then on the other hand, we see she decide that women use intensifiers a lot and this is against the previous one [17].

However, Lakoff saw that both of them indicate a loss of confidence. On the one hand, the woman uses hedging phrases to lose confidence in her words, and on the other hand, she uses intensifiers to force the recipient to take her words seriously. Her use of intensifiers is evidence of her belief that the recipient does not hear her words seriously, or does not pay attention to what she saying, and therefore hedging and the abundance of intensifiers is an indication of a loss of confidence.

Whatever it is, the truth is that most of these observations that Lakoff decided were also based on intuition, and on personal observations, nothing more. Like her professor Jespersen, Lakoff did not provide any statistical or experimental evidence for what she said. So a number of researchers tested Lakoff's claims about lack of confidence and the frequent use of the tag questions, and found that empirical material does not always confirm these intuitive judgments. Consider this in the works of: Dubois, B. and Crouch, I. (1975) - Brower, D.; Gerritsen, M.; and De Haan, D. (1979) - Cameron, D.; McAlinden, F.; and O'leary, K. (1989); However, Fishman, P. Agreed that women use more tag questions, but followed the experimental method [18,19,20]. Fishman collected material consisting of (52) hours of tape-recorded conversations for three couples of similar age, cultural and social background, She found that women used the tag questions more than men. Out of (370) questions, women used the tag question (87) times, while men used the tag question (29) times only [21]. However, most of these researchers did not pay attention to the different purposes and contexts in which the tag question is used or not. The mistake that many of these researchers made is that they dealt with the tag question for all its purposes as if it were one style. It is true that there are levels of linguistic employment of the tag question, as it may be used for doubt, such as: you went there, didn't you?, It may be used for politeness and softening, such as criticizing others, but while reducing the negative impact of criticism, such as saying: You made some noise, didn't you?, It may be used for challenging, such as: You will not do that again, will you?, It may be used to encourage others to speak: It is beautiful, Isn't it?, It is used to facilitate for the receiver, as the teacher does to make it easier for the students to answer, so he says: The subject changes the verp, isn't it?, Which of these tag questions do women use the most?! Therefore, Holmes, J.

(1984) refuted Lakoff's claim about the tag questions, which the latter considered as evidence of weakness and lack of self-confidence, Holmes analyzed a corpus consisting of equal percentages of the words of men and women, and she found that the tag question that is used as evidence of uncertainty was used by men (24) times, with a rate of (61%), while women used it (18) times, with a percentage of (35%) [22]. Accordingly, it is not possible in any way to attribute a distinctive feature to the language of women before the results are repeated to confirm it.

Apart from that, the one who meditates on the linguistic features identified by Lakoff for the language of women finds that most of them are linked to a general claim that women are more polite than men. Are women really more polite? And if so, is this politeness related to being a woman? Or by being the weakest in society? Some may think that the use of polite formulas - whether by a man or by a woman - is often associated with weak people, who are in a lesser position in society, Evidence for this is the study of courtroom language by O'Barr, W. and Atkins, B. (1980). The researchers asked: Is the language of the female witness different from the language of the male witness? Accordingly, they analyzed the sessions of a court in North Carolina, USA, and the researchers looked at the linguistic features that distinguish between male witnesses and female witnesses, which Lakoff called "woman's language", and found that the female witnesses did indeed use the linguistic features that Lakoff decided above, where politeness, hedging, tag Questions, adjectives empty of meaning ...etc, However, these features did not stop at the end of the female witnesses, but the male witnesses also used them a lot, and accordingly the researchers concluded that the matter is not related to sex as much as it is related to the human status in terms of strength and weakness, and from here they called this type of language the name "Powerless Language", This is instead of Lakoff's term "woman's language" [23].

Accordingly, can we say: "Women's use of this speech pattern results from their societal weakness, not because they are female"? The truth is that this is not permanent, We may find cases in which women use the same speech pattern, but not because of their weak position in society, but because they are female, and the evidence for that is the studies carried out by West, C. (1984 - 1998) in which she analyzed the language of interaction between doctors and patients in a local clinic, and she discovered that doctors usually interrupt their patients while they are talking, except in one case, which is if the doctor is female, then the opposite is the case; Here we find the female doctor in a position of power,

and she is supposed to control the interaction, but what prevented her from doing so? It is her gender, not her marital status [24]. So, sometimes a person may use the powerless language as a result of his weaker position, but other times his use of it is due to the weakness of his gender.

However, the issue of defining features specific to women's language did not stop at Jespersen or Lakoff and her approach based on the powerlessness of women and the dominance of men.

Rather, Holmes, J. (1998) made several allegations regarding women's language, and called these claims "Sociolinguistic Universal Tendencies", and the following is a group of them

- Men and women have developed different patterns of language use.
- Women are more inclined than men to focus on affective functions in dealing.
- Women are more inclined than men to use linguistic tools that emphasize solidarity and harmony.
- Women tend to interact in ways that preserve and increase solidarity, while men tend to interact in ways that preserve and increase their power, especially in formal contexts.
- A woman's style is more flexible than a man's [25].

And the previous characteristics, although many see them as applying to many women in many societies, we believe that generalizing them to all societies is premature. And our negation of generalization does not mean that it is not possible in any case, as it is possible, but with conditions; the generalization is about the women language in a specific society and a specific class at a specific time; One of the biggest mistakes made by researchers - feminist researchers in particular - is that they often focus on the language used by middle-class white women, and when they see some linguistic features in their language, they generalize these features to all women around the world. The truth is that many of the current studies have shown that women's verbal behavior is based on many variables, including: context, class, race, education, degree of intimacy... and others. Many linguists have noticed - for example - that the Powerless style of women does not apply to African-American women [26]. And researchers from Poland and Japan have shown that the language used by certain groups of women, such as: workers, has changed their language in recent years, especially with regard to politeness and exaggeration in grammatical correctness. Polish researchers described the language of Polish women as harsh and rude [27]. As for the Japanese, they said: The girls of Japan have left the verbal formulas usually associated with women, and in England we often hear female ministers and presenters of programs on radio and television speaking with confidence and competently, and using direct and strong language [28].

Conclusions

- When we search for the differentiation of the language of women from the language of men, we may find unfamiliar examples of this phenomenon. We have found tribes in which women speak a language other than the one used by men, as is the case in the Caribbean islands and some inhabitants of the Amazon River. However, this is due to societal reasons that have nothing to do with woman in terms of being a woman.
- However, we may also find that women speak the same language as men, but their use of this language differs greatly from that of men.
- We found in many societies distinctive features of women's language, and Jespersen (1921) was the first to try to define this, and Lakoff (1975) followed him in many of his observations, and although these observations were intuitive and impressionistic, recent empirical research proved correct. Some of them denied others.
- Some may believe that these features are related to the weak societal status of women, and therefore these features have nothing to do with gender but with weakness, so it is more appropriate to say the powerless language, not the language of women.
- However, many researches found women in a state of power and control, but they still retained the features of powerless language, which brings us back to saying the language of women, and if we see that women's language and powerless language are two sides of the same coin, it seems that women feel weak in their depths even if they are in a position of strength.
- Some researchers have tried to develop general features of the language of men and women in what is known as the Sociolinguistic Universal Tendencies, and despite its relevance and that it is - indeed - generalizable, this generalization we see as premature.
- There have been societies and social classes in which these traits have not been expelled. Rather, there have been societies in which the traits that the researchers talked about were inversed, such as the society of Malagasy, for example; but despite that, human beings in general - it seems - have a mental schema for what is good for the man and what is best for the woman, The proof is that we found the societies, in which these features were inversed, disapproving it, and we – untill now disapproving a woman who speaks in a masculine style or a man speaks in a feminine as well.

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13. Ibid, p. 250
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15. Jespersen (1921:245)
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