

DIFFERENCES IN SPEECH STRATEGIES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN ENGLISH: A SOCIOPRAGMATIC APPROACH

Daminjonova Risolat Muzaffar qizi,

Sobirova Feruza Islomjon qizi

risolat216@gmail.com

f.sobirova@uzswlu.uz

Abstract

This article examines the differences in speech strategies used by men and women in English through a sociopragmatic lens. Although gender equality movements of recent decades have reduced many traditional linguistic distinctions, certain speech patterns remain deeply rooted in cultural norms. Drawing on the works of leading scholars such as Robin Lakoff, Deborah Tannen, Peter Trudgill, Jennifer Coates, and John Gray, the study explores lexical, pragmatic, and interactional features characteristic of gendered communication. Comparative insights from English and Uzbek further highlight how national culture, social expectations, and communicative traditions influence gender-based speech behavior. The analysis contributes to the broader understanding of gender sociopragmatics and the continual evolution of language within changing social contexts.

Keywords: Communicative, dominant, concept.

Introduction

Since the creation of the world, men and women have differed not only in their roles, responsibilities, and behavior, but also in their speech. Speech is the most essential means of social interaction among people across the globe. In any society, speech is shaped not only by grammatical rules but also by gender, social status, and communicative factors. Therefore, significant differences can be observed in the speech strategies of men and women in English. These differences are connected not only to the internal structure of the language but also to sociopragmatic factors — that is, the social and political roles of speech in society, expectations, and norms of communication.

According to research, women tend to use politeness, solidarity, and mitigation strategies, whereas men more often resort to directness, assertiveness, and dominance. Studying gender-based speech strategies helps gain a deeper understanding of interpersonal communication. Cultural and linguistic features of English can further intensify the differences observed in the speech of men and women.

Gender linguistics emerged as an independent field of study in the second half of the 20th century. Within this field, Robin Lakoff (1975), in her work “Language and Woman’s Place,” analyzed linguistic features characteristic of women’s speech, highlighting the prevalence of vagueness, politeness, and forms reflecting social pressure. Similarly, Deborah Tannen (1990), in her research “You Just Don’t Understand,” explained communicative differences between men and women through the concepts of “report talk” and “rapport talk”—speech oriented toward information versus speech oriented toward building relationships. Peter Trudgill, based on phonological and sociolinguistic studies, demonstrated that men and women tend to choose language forms associated with different types of social prestige.

Lexical differences related to gender include the words chosen by men and women, their emotional expressiveness, tone, and functional load in discourse. Women’s speech typically features softer expressions, cautious wording, and emotionally rich vocabulary. For example, women more frequently use phrases such as “I think...,” “Sorry, but...,” “I feel like...” Women also tend to use emotional intensifiers such as “so nice,” “absolutely amazing,” “really wonderful.” These lexical choices reflect a strategic sociopragmatic approach aimed at maintaining social harmony, avoiding conflict, and creating a positive impression.

Men’s speech, on the other hand, is characterized by clarity, directness, and minimal emotional coloring. Their speech is typically more task-oriented and concise. Examples include: “This is wrong,” “We need to act,” “I said no.” Such lexical choices indicate the dominant and straightforward nature of men’s communicative style.

In the English language, as ideas of gender equality have strengthened over the past decades, the differences between male and female speech have noticeably decreased. However, in certain situations, traditional speech patterns are still preserved: for example, women continue to use more polite expressions, while

men more often employ direct commands. This demonstrates that, despite cultural changes, the historical roots of gendered communication remain.

In both English and Uzbek, lexical and pragmatic differences exist in the speech of men and women. These differences are related not only to linguistic norms but also to national culture, social roles, and communicative traditions. Such analyses play an important role in the future development of gender sociopragmatics.

Because men's and women's speech differed so sharply, Jennifer Coates reissued her book "Women, Men and Language" in a modernized version and noted that doing so was not easy. She emphasizes: "I added two chapters to the second part: one on conversational dominance and the other on same-sex conversation. This reflects an important shift in the 1980s within sociolinguistics—from research focused on grammatical and phonological differences toward greater attention to gender and conversational practices. The idea that gender is a cultural construct encouraged researchers to examine conversation more broadly as gendered performance. I added a section on 'Gender in the workplace' to Chapter 11. I also added the final chapter (Chapter 12), which introduces readers to the latest developments in language and gender research."

From this, we can understand that as time passes and society changes, speech also evolves, updates, and develops to some extent. American author and relationship counselor John Gray, in his book "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus" (1992), repeatedly emphasizes that men and women differ not only psychologically but also in their manner of speaking—they are almost two entirely different worlds. The book argues that the most common relationship problems between men and women stem from fundamental psychological differences between the sexes. Gray explains this through the metaphor that became the book's title: men and women come from different planets — men from Mars and women from Venus — and each has adapted to the norms and customs of their own planet but not to those of the other.

For instance, men often say that when women raise problems in conversation, offering them a solution does not always satisfy them; women are sometimes more interested in talking about the problem than solving it. The book claims that each gender has its own distinctive way of responding to stress and stressful situations, and that understanding these differences is crucial.

The formation and development of speech involves psychological mechanisms, as well as the lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic tools of language. Studying the

differences in speech between men and women in English requires a sociopragmatic approach, as the usage of linguistic units is determined by social roles, gender norms, and cultural expectations within society.

In recent decades, as the ideas of gender equality have gained strength in English society, the differences in speech strategies have somewhat diminished. However, in some cases, traditional speech patterns still persist. For instance, women tend to use more politeness, caution, and emotional intensifiers in their communication, while men's speech is characterized by direct commands, assertive opinions, and brevity. This situation illustrates that the historical roots of gender communication remain relevant.

The differences in gender speech are not solely based on biological factors but are also grounded in social and cultural influences. Therefore, when comparing English and Uzbek languages, the distinctions shaped by national culture become evident. In Uzbek society, traditional gender roles maintain forms of women's speech that are polite, cautious, and respectful, while men's speech reflects more commanding, assertive, and concise forms. Overall, the sociopragmatics of gender is a complex interplay of the lexical-semantic characteristics of language, speech situations, social roles, and cultural norms. A deep analysis of the differences in speech between men and women helps to better understand the social nature of language and also serves to prevent potential pragmatic mismatches that may arise in intercultural communication.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that gendered speech strategies, while gradually converging due to social change and growing gender equality, still retain many traditional features shaped by cultural and historical influences. Women tend to employ more polite, empathetic, and expressive forms, whereas men more often rely on direct, assertive, and task-oriented language. Insights from sociolinguistic research reveal that these distinctions are not biologically determined but rather socially constructed and continuously evolving. Understanding these patterns across languages—particularly in English and Uzbek—provides valuable perspectives for the further development of gender sociopragmatics and deepens our comprehension of how language reflects and shapes social identity.

References

1. Lakoff, R. (1975). Language and women's place. Harper & Row.
2. Tannen, D. (1990). You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation. Ballantine Books.
3. Trudgill, P. (2000). Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society. Penguin Books.
4. Mamadaliyeva, N. (2020). Gender-specific speech characteristics in the Uzbek language. [In Uzbek].
5. Qurbonov, A. (2019). Linguoculture and speech culture. [In Uzbek].
6. Karimova, A. (2025). Lexical and pragmatic differences in male and female speech in English and Uzbek. [In Uzbek].
7. Coates, J. (2015). Women, men and language: A sociolinguistic account. Routledge.
8. Gray, J. (1992). Men are from Mars, women are from Venus. HarperCollins.
9. Nurullayeva, M. (2022). Key features of developing speaking skills in English. [In Uzbek].
10. Egamberdiyeva, S. (2025). Gender speech strategies and cultural-pragmatic factors in English–Uzbek communication.