A. GENDER

S. Romaine. 1994. *Language in society*: the word *sex* has biological implications. The word *gender* is more appropriate: it distinguishes people based on their social and/or linguistic behaviour.

Women and men from the same speech community may use different linguistic forms.

1. **Gender-exclusive speech differences: highly structured communities**

   (i) Gros Ventre (Amerindian tribe in Montana)
   pronunciation differences, for example:
   
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{l}
   [\text{kja}^l \text{tsa}] \quad \text{women’s form} \\
   [\text{dža}^l \text{tsa}] \quad \text{men’s form} \\
   \text{‘bread’}
   \end{array}
   \]

   (ii) Bengali (in India)
   Women: initial [l]
   Men: initial [n]

   (iii) Yana (extinct Amerindian language)
   words used by men are longer than the same words used by women

   **Study the Example #2, p.161.**

   (iv) Japanese
   Vocabulary differences, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s form</th>
<th>Men’s form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ohiya</td>
<td>mizu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onaka</td>
<td>hara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oisii</td>
<td>umai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taberu</td>
<td>kuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delicious</td>
<td>eat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Pronouns also reflect gender differences in Japanese:

   **Study the examples on p. 161**

Changes in modern Japanese: vocabulary differences reflect degrees of formality as opposed to signaling gender!
2. **Gender-preferential speech features: social dialect research**

Speech styles of women and men vary in the frequencies with which they employ particular linguistic alternatives.

-ing [ŋ] vs. -in’ [in] more women use the –ing form

In Montreal French, men delete [l] more often than women in phrases such as _il y a_ or _il fait_.

In Sidney (Australia) words like _thing_ may be pronounced with initial [f] more frequently by men!

*Women tend to use more standard forms!*

3. **Gender and social class**

| Study Figure 7.1 on p. 164 |

In the highest and the lowest social groups women score similarly to men: social status appears to be more important than gender identity.

Gender identity is more important in the other social groups!

Multiple negations (non-standard forms!) are used in the lower middle class group 32% by men vs. 1% by women.

Vernacular forms are used more frequently by men: a typical pattern in many speech communities. This pattern is apparent also for young children – for example, boys use more the _in’_ form, than girls; their speech contains more frequent consonant cluster simplification in words such as [las] for _last_, [toul] for _told_, etc.

4. **Explanations of women’s linguistic behaviour**

4.1 **The social status explanation**

Hypothesis: women are more status-conscious than men, thus they use the standard form. Standard forms are associated with higher social status -- women want to signal social status when using standard speech.

Counter argument: working women (having social status!) employ more standard forms than women staying home – Stay-home women reinforce the use of vernacular forms used by those they are in social contact.
4.2 Woman’s role as guardian of society’s values

Study the Example #6 on p. 168

Society expects “better” behaviour from women – thus it is expected that women speak the standard variety. Comment!

In certain social context women use more standard forms than men; in other context they move away from the standard, for example, mother/child conversation, see p. 168. Implications?

4.3 Subordinate groups must be polite

Women may employ rising pitch at the end of declarative sentences more frequently, whereas men use a steady or lowering pitch. The rising pitch variant is interpreted as a questioning contour and, according to R. Lakoff (1975), this leads to women’s self-presentation as hesitant, uncertain, and lacking in assertiveness.

“tag questions” (sentences in which the speaker makes a declarative statement and adds on a tag in the form of a question about their assertion).

Examples: Jane came home, didn’t she? It is cold here, isn’t it?

Lakoff states that women use tag questions as a signal of their reluctance to make direct assertions. They can “avoid committing themselves and thereby avoid conflict with the addressee”

Such a deferential style may be perceived as the speaker’s uncertainty and lack of definite opinions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Tag Questions</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softening</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Softening tags: mitigating the force of command or criticism.

Examples:
Open the oven door for me, could you?
You’re driving rather fast, aren’t you?
Facilitative tags: they indicate the speaker’s desire to engage the addressee in continuing conversation.

Examples:
Still working hard at your office, are you?
The hen’s brown, isn’t it?

Holmes (1984): There is a significant difference in the functional role of tags in women’s and men’s speech. Men more often use tags for “speaker-oriented” goals, to obtain or confirm information about themselves, whereas women more often use tags for “addressee-oriented” goals, particularly as strategies to engage addressees in talk.

4.4 Vernacular forms express machismo

Study the example #8, p. 169.

Men may regard vernacular forms positively: covert prestige!

5. Some alternative explanations

The influence of the interviewer and the context

- women accommodate the interviewer more than men: they tend to use more standard forms;
- men use more vernacular forms when talking to a male interviewer;
- women use more standard forms than men in a formal interview.

In the interaction of gender with several social factors, there are speech communities where gender is alone influences speech patterns:

Examples:
   (i) Tyneside, England
   (ii) Reading, England

Study Figure7.2 on p. 174.

B. AGE

1. Age-graded features of speech

   (i) Pitch differences: social implications!
• Lower pitch – socially expected from public figures; they are taken more seriously (Margaret Thatcher underwent training to lower her pitch);

Study the Example #11, p. 175

• Cultures differ with regard to expectations concerning pitch differences.

(ii) vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar may reflect age difference: social implications!

Study the Example #12, p. 176.

Middle-class Glaswegians (a Scottish dialect around Glasgow): pronunciation differences between 10-year olds and teenagers (p. 176)

Slang relating to age (p. 176)

2. Age and social dialect data

Research shows that in Britain and in the US there is not much gender-related difference in the speech of children; in Denmark, however, the difference may be there at the age of four (the role of daycare there): girls use fewer vernacular forms.

Vernacular use in English-speaking countries are fewer for middle-age speakers, but again, it increases for old-age speakers: decrease of social pressure!

Study Figure 7.3 on p. 178

Middle-aged speakers, in general, use more standard forms. Explain!

Study the usage of multiple negation in different age groups, Figure 7.4, p. 179

3. Age grading and language change

Increase or decrease of a linguistic form over time: linguistic change!

When a form is on the increase, we talk about innovation.

Higher use by younger speakers!

Study Table 7.1 on p. 180
C. **IS LANGUAGE SEXIST?**

Language *reflects* sexism in society: language itself is *not* sexist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>unmarked</th>
<th>marked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>heir</td>
<td>heiress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laundry worker</td>
<td>laundress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poet</td>
<td>poetess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actor</td>
<td>actress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but: governor (governs a state)</td>
<td>governess (takes care of children)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>l’ami</th>
<th>l’amie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le chanteur</td>
<td>la chanteuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The male form is unmarked!

Male referential forms: *chairman, postman, Museum of Man*

But:  

- *chairman* → *chairperson*  
- *postman* → *letter carrier*  
  etc.

Generic ‘man’ and ‘he’:

- mankind  
- the man in the street  
- ape-man  
- man-made  
- Peking-man  
- Neanderthal man

**riddle:** *If a man can walk seven miles in seven minutes...*

Are these terms really generic?

???

*Man, being a mammal, breastfeeds his young.*

In attempting to eliminate the generic *he*, it is assumed that language affects thought; research shows that generic *he* tends to suggest that a male referent is in mind (to be discussed in detail later).