VARIATION
IN
SUDANESE WOMEN
LANGUAGE
&
SEX DIFFERENTIATION

BY
AMAL MOHAMED AHMED

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULLFILLMENT
FOR A DIPLOMA DEGREE IN SUDANESE AND
AFRICAN LANGUAGES

1995
**LIST OF SYMBOLS**

The following list includes phonetic transcriptions and the symbols used to represent lexis and words indicated in this study.

- phonetic transcription slashes
- indicate length /a/ (long a)
- the subscript dot indicates verarization
- a U (short vowel)
- a U (long vowel)

### Consonants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>m</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>h</th>
<th>w</th>
<th>y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore Sudanese women speech as an exclusive language to them.

There are clear differences between the language of males and females not only in Sudan but also world-wide.

In Western English-speaking societies, research on women's talk has found that women speech is thought to be trivial.

In the Arabic language as in other some languages there is linguistic bias. In the Sudanese society there is a limited vocabulary uttered by women but not by men.

In this study the focus will be on examining the nature of sexism in language as general and the structure of Sudanese women's talk in particular.
LINGUISTIC VARIATION

Each language exists in a number of varieties and is in one sense the sum of those varieties. Variety of language according to Hudson (1980:24) is "a set of linguistic items with similar distribution". And according to Ferguson (1971:30) it is "anybody of human speech patterns which is sufficiently homogenous to be analyzed by available techniques of synchronic description and which has sufficiently language repertory of elements and their arrangements or processes with broad enough semantic scope to function in all normal contexts of communication".

The linguistic situation in all Arab countries is diglossic. There are two varieties of Arabic existing side by side; a high variety (al-fuṣaḥa) and a low variety (the colloquial), where each has a definite role to play. For example, a lawyer speaks literary Arabic while he is in the court undertaking his job as a lawyer and when he goes home he starts to speak to his family in the other variety i.e. colloquial Arabic.

Besides this, Arabic like any other language has its own dialects, while the term dialect refers, strictly speaking to difference between kinds of a language which are differences of vocabulary and grammar as well as pronunciation. Dialect can be used to apply to all varieties, not just to non-standard varieties.
The internal differentiation of human societies is reflected in their languages. Different social groups use different linguistic varieties. They exhibit grammatical differences which may be accompanied by phonetic and phonological differences.

Social dialects are based on stratification of the society which depends on the hierarchical ordering of groups within the society, status, economic situation and professions. A social dialect refers to non-regional differences. A speaker may show more similarity in his language to people from the same social group in different areas than to people from a different social group in the same area. And the linguistic differences in social dialects are due to social factors. Many social factors can come into play in controlling which variety from this verbal repertoire is actually to be used on a particular occasion, for example, if a speaker is talking to the people he works with about their work, his language is likely to be rather different from that he uses at home with his family. Then the occupational situation in socio-linguistic varieties according to use or situation, and these sorts of varieties are termed registers, involving numbers of a particular profession. In contrast with dialect it defines as varieties according to user. The language of Law, for example is different from the language of Medicine, which is turns different from the language of Engineering ..... etc. Registers are usually characterized by vocabulary differences.

Another linguistic variation is regional-dialect boundaries which often coincide with geographical barriers. It also seems to be the case that the greater the geographical distance between two dialects the more dissimilar they are linguistically, for instance, those regional
varieties of Shaygiyyah, Jaaalyyeen, and Rubatab is undoubtedly unlike the speech of people of the West and the East of Sudan. Arabic in Sudan is not the mother tongue in many regions of the Sudan.

Where non-Arabic language such as Fur, Nuba, Dinka, etc are spoken almost in all regions of the South of the country, Arabic in these regions is spoken as a second language or as "a lingua-franca" by people who speak mutually unintelligible languages.

There are also differences between the language of female and males, and the language used according to situation.
Chapter Two

VARIATION IN SUDANESE WOMEN LANGUAGE

Our focus here is to shed light on the role of women with the Sudanese culture, and how they affect the social system and the system values, through their own language. To fully appreciate the status of Sudanese women special attention should be given to their role in the community.

The Sudanese community is experiencing a period of transition in which the old and the new exist side by side. The age-old customs and attitudes rooted in an ancient culture have acted to partially impede the transformation process. Where as the urban groups are making rapid and far-reaching changes and transformation, the rural groups have stayed relatively poor and tradition-bound.

Women of privileged classes in urban areas differ considerably from the simple ordinary Sudanese women of the lower, illiterate and under-privileged class.

However, one may declare that the fundamental traditional concepts of their roles are similar. Woman is traditionally considered to be the most important member of the family in all classes of the society. It is her duty to keep the home and look-after the children. Nevertheless, the social position of a family is customarily controlled by the master of the house (husband).
In the urban areas, the majority of the underprivileged women are busy all day working around the house, preparing food, and attending to their children. The domestic routine absorbs practically all the women's time while the husband is working hard so as to earn enough money to maintain his children, and his wife and in some cases, some members of his family (mother, sisters, aunts, etc.). These types of women are more likely illiterate and scarcely participate in discussion on general issues of the society. Since they have no spare time to take part and may be, because the range of their experiences is limited and more related to the petty respects of home. Women in general hardly go to public places i.e. cafés, clubs, etc. Which are the spots of social and political gatherings of men.

Women usually serve the best portion of the food to the men of their family and they eat alone and after men finish with their meals as a sign of respect of men. For these the actual feminine style of speech emerges freely and naturally when women meet and socialize with each other specially in occasions such as funerals, wedding, social visits and some public religions festivals.

The basic characteristics of this variety are probably more obvious on the intonational level as well as the usage of certain lexical items.
SUBJECT

The group selected for this brief study, is a group of women from different areas. Their ages are about 19 - 24. They use the same word for example / wūb / . These groups of women frequently meet each other in social visits and occasions. They usually sit in groups, according to their ages, I am going to investigate here their languages.

METHOD USED IN THE STUDY :-

I have listened to different groups of women and in different situations such as happy occasions (wedding ceremony), funeral ceremony, fare well parties and ordinary conversation.

I have classified the list of words into three categories according to use. These classifications are :-

First words used in happy occasions, second words used in unhappy occasions and the third words used in ordinary dialogues.

However, some words used in a certain occasion, may be used in another one with different implications with the addition of other words. For example the word / tītjazi / is used in the three situations, and in each one it has a separate meaning according to the situation it is used in.

This schedule shows the classification of words :-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy Occasions</th>
<th>Unhappy Occasion</th>
<th>Ordinary Dialogues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ kadi /</td>
<td>/ woub /</td>
<td>/ adji /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ gādir alla /</td>
<td>/ wururūjk /</td>
<td>/ areatu /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ wāshiaeti /</td>
<td>/ yākkāfilbala /</td>
<td>/ bari /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ baxitusāsid /</td>
<td>/ tadfinīni /</td>
<td>/ gahartak /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ ji dlay /</td>
<td>/ aturābafi xaʃmi /</td>
<td>/ gahartik /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/ sāgami / &amp;</td>
<td>/ bariya /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/ sāgam /</td>
<td>/ kur /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ afaq alhamil</td>
<td></td>
<td>/ simiḥaw silimna /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ tarʃa /</td>
<td></td>
<td>/ bitummi -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ wāy /</td>
<td></td>
<td>/ waddummi /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ wadd ajʕay /</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis of these categories above will be as follows:

The first column contains groups of lexis used in happy occasions, and we find that there is one lexis in the column used in another situation i.e. ordinary dialogue. It is /gādi‘alla/. These words are used only by women i.e. most of the young girls do not use them.

The second column contains words used in happy occasions. These words are used by both women and girls. Some of these words are used in every day speaking as /ażi/, /sağami/, and /woub/.

The third column contains words used in ordinary dialogues by both women and girls. The words in this column are more common in their use than those of the other columns.
KALAM ALNISWAN

1. /āţjá/  an exclamatory expression, meaning "how come!"
2. /areyu/  wish this would be.
3. /ismala alek/  "God bless you".
5. /ya kafilbala/  said when mentioning bad events.
6. /ahayya/  used when in pain or when hearing news of someone's death etc.
7. /wāy/  a cry of pain.
8. /kadi/  said by women in appreciation of something.
9. /ṣagami & /ṣagam/  used to showbad luck.
10. /alturaba fi: khami/  said for "regret", or in case when the results of her work turn to be unsatisfactory or failing.
11. /badi/  used for negation.
12. /gahartak - gahartik/  said to someone who makes a compliment without saying ma sha'allah.
13. /gadir alla/  God is powerful.
14. /ađan alhamil tarfa/  the ear of the pregnant is deaf; said for unspeakable evils.
15. /siminaw silimna/  we heard it and we are safe.
16. /waftari/  how lovely, this phrase is used when see and admire beautiful persons and scenes.
17. /baxitusağid/  fortunate and happy (congratulations).
18. /ji:dei/  said when there is something happy.
19. /bitumi - waddumi/  daughter of my mother, son of my mother, these are used when someone is dead.
20\ /bariya/  it's used when someone is ill.
21\ /kur/ said by women when disliked matters are mentioned.
22\ /wururuk/ said when there is badness.

SEX DIFFERENTATION

It is known from linguistic research that in many societies the speech of men and women differs. In some cases the differences are quite small and are not generally noticed; they are probably taken for granted in the same way as, different gestures or facial expressions.

Men have a great many expressions peculiar to them, which women understand but never pronounce. On the other hand, women have words and phrases which men never use, or they would be laughed at or scorned. Thus, it seems that women have another language different from men’s language.

However, men and women, do not speak different languages. Rather, they speak different varieties of the same language. The differences are mainly lexical ones.

Jesperson suggests that differentiation, in some cases, may be the result of the phenomenon of taboo. He points out that it is known that when the Carib men were on the war-path they would use a number of words which only adult males were allowed to employ. In
Sudan both males and females use taboo words. Sometimes Sudanese women are not allowed to mention the name of her father-in-law or his brother, and she can call them uncles for respect.

As I mentioned before, girls are told not to use certain words and boys are told not to use the feminine variety. Thus, from an early age each sex members in the speech community are made to recognize the socially acceptable norms of linguistic behaviour for each sex, when a boy approaches the age of manhood, choice of the inappropriate variety or mixing of varieties may lead to accusing him of being "effeminate".

"The feminine variety is basically characterized by the use of certain lexical items as well as by certain intonational pattern.

The lexical items which are probably the major features of this variety can never occur in masculine speech since they are regarded as absolutely in appropriate. Males do enjoy a passive knowledge of such items but they do not constitute part of their active lexical entries"

(Al-Tahir, 1974:2)
Chapter Three

LINGUISTIC BIAS

Linguistic bias is a problem in language. The He/man issue recognized in the majority of the world's language: a specific he/man as in "he is my brother" and a man for all scenes and a generic he/man used in a mixed setting as in "everybody should bring the money", and all students (males and females) should leave the class otherwise he will not be admitted. It is the latter kind that raises much controversy and opposition, especially by feminists who considered it as biased against women, and thus making women feel neglected.

Lakoff, (1975) says that it is a feature of linguistic imbalances which brings into focus real-world imbalances.

The ambiguity of the generic masculine results when specific meanings are not easily separable. A funny picture might result for such a situation as in:"Man being pregnant and breast feeds his baby", an absurd situation an example of women social inferiority which is reflected in the English language is the naming convention which advocates women subordination and/or absence. It indicates that women are only certain in a he/man issue but that they are also treated as the property of man or as inferior to him. Titles are important in the (English) language as well as in the larger society because they give information to and about people(Lakoff, 1975). Each one has distinct characteristic, an important component of sexism is that one sex is superior to other and has the right role. Although sexism can be directed by male and female, but in most cases males are its target.
Variation due to the sex of the speaker has been the subject matter of recent research. Economic factors, for many years ago, led to sex discrimination. Women have been unjustified. Now in many countries there is a call for equalities between men and women.

If a woman is addressing a man older than her, and she wishes to display respect, she tends to modify her speech in tone and choice of lexical items.

A grown-up girl will normally adopt the masculine variety in the presence of her father, older brother or uncles. This same girl when addressing her younger brothers or intimate young retain her feminine variety unless she is addressing in the presence of one or more male strangers (Trudgill 1975:182).

On the lexical level and the area of morphology and vocabulary, many of the studies are conducted on English. Lakoff (1973), for example, claims that women use color words like mauve, beige, aquamarine, lavender, and magenta, but men do not. She also maintained that adjectives such as charming, divine, lovely and sweet are also commonly used by women but only very rarely by men. Women also are said to have their own vocabulary for emphasizing certain effects' words, and expressions such as so good, such fun, darling, precious and fantastic.

Sudanese women subdivide the main seven columns (Rainbow) into many divisions.

INTONATION :-

When we turn to certain grammatical matters in English, we find that Brenn (1975) claims that the intonation patterns of men and women vary somewhat. Women use certain patterns associated with surprise and politeness more often than men. Women may answer
CONCLUSION

Women speech variety in comparison to males is a product of the separation between men and women.

From the data collected I noticed that the lexical used by women are also used by young and educated girls and did not represent any problem to them.

Also the women's language reflects their social positions. The speech of an old women never disappeared since they lived and associated with their daughters, it's natural thing to pass their style to them.

Women in their speech are more careful unlike men who speak freely.
SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Sudanese society nowadays tends to fill the gap between the two sexes. There are recent studies concerned with the speech of women such as the study of Zenab Azrag which is especially concerned with women of Omdurman and Samia Adnan's who tackled the speech of women in her Master research. But all the studies not completely comprehensive.

The study must be accurate to have an accurate result. The present research is limited only to the lexical level because it is a small research, and there is not enough time to tackle all linguistic levels. Furthermore, personal circumstances which prevent me of doing or making a comprehensive study.
REFERENCES


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Chapter One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List Of Symbols</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Variation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variation In Sudanese Women Language</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method Used In The Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalam Alniswan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Differentation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Bias</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Level</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intonational Level</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion For Further Research</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>