



## So You Want to Enjoy a Trouble-free Communication! Stop to Spot the Variations: Linguistic and Non-linguistic

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### ABSTRACT

A single speaker will use different linguistic forms on different occasions, and different speakers of a language will express the same meanings using different forms. Speakers of a language make choices in pronunciation, morphology, vocabulary, and grammar depending on a number of non-linguistic factors: the speaker's purpose in communication, and some other non-linguistic features that cannot be used intentionally: age, and sex. If one person utters the sentence 'John is a farmer' and another says the same thing except pronounces the word farmer as 'fahmuh,' then the difference is one of accent. But if one person says something like 'You should not do that' and another says 'Ya hadn't oughta do that,' then this is a dialect difference because the variation is greater. A dialect is variation in grammar and vocabulary in addition to sound variations. There are occupational dialects (the word *bugs* means something quite different to a computer programmer and an exterminator), sexual dialects (women are far more likely than men to call a new house *adorable*), and educational dialects (the more education people have, the less likely they are to use double negatives). There are dialects of age (teenagers have their own slang, and even the phonology of older speakers is likely to differ from that of young speakers in the same geographical region) and dialects of social context (we do not talk the same way to our intimate friends as we do to new acquaintances, to the paperboy, or to our employer). There is a relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic variations. Understanding this relationship can help language learners to express themselves more appropriately. Such an understanding is an asset without which they run the risk of exposing themselves to being laughed at. This paper focuses on enabling learners of the English language to participate successfully in social and linguistic interaction through developing their communicative competence or through discovering how various aspects of the non-linguistic context influence the nature of linguistic communication.

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### Introduction

Studies on the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic variations are abundant. Some researchers used regional dialect data to better understand how linguistic and non-linguistic factors are interrelated. They tried to find relationship between *geography* and the different *variants* used by people. The non-linguistic feature of *occupation* has been another area of concern. *Age* factor has also been a determining external factor. Other researchers have claimed that *gender* plays an important role in choosing and using certain words. *Education* and *income* are still other factors that lead speakers of a language make different choices in pronunciation, morphology, vocabulary, and grammar. That is why a single speaker will use different linguistic forms on different occasions, and different speakers of a language will express the same meanings using different forms. Learners of the English language need to take these determining factors into serious consideration; otherwise, they will surely find themselves in a situation that makes a regrettable failure certain.

### Review of Literature

People speak differently, and an individual does not always speak in the same way on every occasion. Britain, like Moulton, was able to use regional dialect data to better understand how linguistic and non-linguistic factors are interrelated. Labov

found that people 'Up-island' in the more rural areas and smaller towns were more likely to use the centralized variants than people from 'Down-island' in the bigger townships. But this regional divide wasn't the only, or most noticeable, distinction between the groups he recorded. He also found that if a person was associated with the fishing industry they were much more likely to use the centralized variants than if they were associated with any of the other occupations. He also found that if he looked at Vineyarders of different ages he found some regular differences. People between the ages of 31 and 45 used centralized variants of the PRICE and MOUTH diphthongs more often than speakers in any other age group. Therefore, a speaker's choice of variant may be constrained by non-linguistic, 'external' factors such as the social situation (an interview in a doctor's surgery, say, versus an argument at home), or the speaker's educational and economic background, age, etc. For example, consider examples (1–5). In these cases, there are two forms, *was* and *were*, but note that the features of the context in which they appear also vary: in (2) the subject type is second person singular *you*. In (3) it is a plural noun phrase. (5) is an existential construction. Moreover, (4) is uttered by a young female, whereas (3) is attributed to a young male. These different features of the context – both linguistic

and non-linguistic –may influence whether a speaker chooses to say *was* or *were*.

1. They *were* all in Gaelic.
2. *Was* you home?
3. The plans *was* drawn up.
4. We *wasna* actually gan thegither.
5. There *were* four of us gied away with her to the blueberries.

In his study of *linguistic variation* in New York City, Labov (1966) used the three criteria of education, occupation, and income to set up ten social classes. His class 0, his lower class, had grade school education or less, were laborers, and found it difficult to make ends meet. His classes 1 to 5, his working class, had had some high school education, were blue-collar workers, but earned enough to own such things as cars. His classes 6 to 8, his lower middle class, were high school graduates and semi-professional and white-collar workers who could send their children to college. His highest class 9, his upper middle class, were well educated and professional or business-oriented. In this classification system for people in the United States about 10 percent of the population are said to be lower class, about 40 percent working class, another 40 percent lower middle class, and the remaining 10 percent fall into the upper middle class or an upper class, the latter not included in Labov's study. In his later study (2001) of variation in Philadelphia Labov used a socio-economic index based on *occupation, education, and house value*.

In the area of morphology and vocabulary, many of the studies have focused on English. In a paper which, although it is largely intuitive, anecdotal, and personal in nature, is nevertheless challenging and interesting, Lakoff (1973), claims that *women* use *color words* like *mauve, beige, aquamarine, lavender, and magenta* but most *men* do not. She also maintains that adjectives such as *darling, adorable, charming, divine, lovely, and sweet* are also commonly used by women but only very rarely by men. Women are also said to have their own vocabulary for emphasizing certain effects on them, words and expressions such as *so good, such fun, exquisite, lovely, divine, precious, adorable, darling, and fantastic*.

In his study of linguistic variation in Norwich, England, Trudgill (1974) distinguishes five *social classes*: middle middle class (MMC), lower middle class (LMC), upper working class (UWC), middle working class (MWC), and lower working class (LWC). Trudgill interviewed ten speakers from each of five electoral wards in Norwich plus ten school-age children from two schools. These sixty informants were then classified on six factors, each of which was scored on a six-point scale (0–5): occupation, education, income, type of housing, locality, and father's occupation. Trudgill himself decided the cut-off points among his classes. In doing so, he shows a certain circularity. His lower working class is defined as those who use certain linguistic features (e.g., *he go*) more than 80 percent of the time. Out of the total possible score of 30 on his combined scales, those scoring 6 or less fall into this category. Members of Trudgill's middle middle class always use *he goes*, and that behavior is typical of those scoring 19 or more. His study is an attempt to relate linguistic behavior to social class, but he uses linguistic behavior to assign membership in social class. What we can be sure of is that there is a difference in linguistic behavior between those at the top and bottom of Trudgill's 30-point scale, but this difference is not one that has been established completely independently because of the underlying circularity.

Shuy's Detroit study (Shuy et al., 1968) attempted to sample the speech of that city using a sample of 702 informants.

Eleven field workers collected the data by means of a questionnaire over a period of ten weeks. They assigned each of their informants to a social class using three sets of criteria: amount of education, occupation, and place of residence. Each informant was ranked on a six- or seven-point scale for each set, the rankings were weighted (multiplied by 5 for education, 9 for occupation, and 6 for residence), and each informant was given a social-class placement. Four social-class designations were used: upper middle class, those with scores of 20–48; lower middle class, those with scores of 49–77; upper working class, those with scores of 78–106; and lower working class, those with scores of 107–134.

Another study is Macaulay's study (1977) of five variables in Glasgow: the vowels in words such as *hit, school, hat, and now* and the occurrence of glottal stops as replacements for [t] in words like *better* and *get*. Macaulay surveyed sixteen adults, sixteen 15-year-olds, and sixteen 10-year-olds, with equal numbers of males and females represented in each group. His forty-eight subjects were equally divided among four social classes: professional and managerial; white-collar; skilled manual; and semi-skilled and unskilled manual. In the case of children, the occupation of the father was used unless the mother was (or had been) in a 'higher' occupational group. Macaulay counted equal numbers of occurrences of each variable from each speaker as a further control for volubility.

Macaulay found a clear correlation between variation and social class, but in addition he was able to make certain further interesting observations. He found his two lowest classes to be much alike in behavior. With males, the greatest difference between classes was between his top class (professional and managerial) and the second-highest class (white-collar), whereas with females the greatest difference was between the two intermediate classes (white-collar and skilled manual). Increase in age also seemed to be associated with an increase in the difference between social classes, this difference showing itself to be clearly established in the 15-year-olds surveyed (but apparent also in the 10-year-olds).

Macaulay found that, when individual rather than group behavior was plotted for each variable, a continuum of behavior was exhibited in each case. That is, there was considerable variation within each of the four classes, with the behavior of certain individuals in each class overlapping the behavior of individuals in neighboring classes; however, the means for most classes, except the two lowest as noted above, were clearly different from each other.

It can be concluded from Macaulay's study that the linguistic behavior of individuals forms a continuum in the same way that social organization is continuous.

Shirley Brice Heath's account of a Carolina speech community suggests that the *sex* of the child affects verbal behavior toward him or her from very early on and shows young children responding to models of male and female language use in their family and in the community. *Age-graded* variation is a stable variation which varies within a population based on age. That is, speakers of a particular age will use a specific linguistic form in successive generations. This is relatively rare. Chambers (1995) cites an example from southern Ontario, Canada where the pronunciation of the letter 'Z' varies. Most of the English-speaking world pronounces it 'zed'; however, in the United States, it is pronounced 'zee'. A linguistic survey found that in 1979 two-thirds of the 12 year olds in Toronto ended the recitation of the alphabet with the letter 'zee' where only 8% of the adults did so. Then in 1991, (when those 12 year olds were in their mid-20s) a survey showed only 39% of the 20-25 year

olds used 'zee'. In fact, the survey showed that only 12% of those over 30 used the form 'zee'. This seems to be tied to an American children's song frequently used to teach the alphabet. In this song, the rhyme scheme matches the letter Z with V 'vee', prompting the use of the American pronunciation. As the individual grows older, this marked form 'zee' is dropped in favor of the standard form 'zed'.

Men and women, on average, tend to use slightly different language styles. These differences tend to be quantitative rather than qualitative. That is, to say that women make more minimal responses than men is akin to saying that men are taller than women (i.e., men are on average taller than women, but some women are taller than some men). The initial identification of a *women's register* was by Robin Lakoff in 1975, who argued that the style of language served to maintain women's (inferior) role in society ("female deficit approach"). A later refinement of this argument was that gender differences in language reflected a power difference (O'Barr & Atkins, 1980) ("dominance theory"). However, both these perspectives have the language style of men as normative, implying that women's style is inferior.

More recently, Deborah Tannen has compared *gender* differences in language as more similar to 'cultural' differences ("cultural difference approach"). Comparing conversational goals, she argued that men have a *report* style, aiming to communicate factual information, whereas women have a *rapport* style, more concerned with building and maintaining relationships. One of the ways in which the communicative competence of men and women differ is in their use of minimal responses, i.e., paralinguistic features such as 'mhm' and 'yeah', which is behavior associated with collaborative language use (Carli, 1990). Men, on the other hand, generally use them less frequently and where they do, it is usually to show agreement, as Zimmerman and West's (1977) study of turn-taking in conversation indicates. Men and women differ in their use of questions in conversations. For men, a question is usually a genuine request for information whereas with women it can often be a rhetorical means of engaging the other's conversational contribution or of acquiring attention from others conversationally involved, techniques associated with a collaborative approach to language use (Barnes, 1971). Therefore women use questions more frequently (Fitzpatrick, et al., 1995; Todd, 1983). In writing, however, both genders use rhetorical questions as literary devices. For example, Mark Twain used them in "A War Prayer" to provoke the reader to question his actions and beliefs.

As the work of DeFrancisco (1991) shows, female linguistic behavior characteristically encompasses a desire to take turns in conversation with others, which is opposed to men's tendency towards centering on their own point or remaining silent when presented with such implicit offers of conversational turn-taking as are provided by hedges such as "y' know" and "isn't it". This desire for turn-taking gives rise to complex forms of interaction in relation to the more regimented form of turn-taking commonly exhibited by men (Sacks et al., 1974). According to Dorval (1990), in his study of same-sex friend interaction, males tend to change subject more frequently than females. This difference may well be at the root of the conception that women chatter and talk too much, and may still trigger the same thinking in some males.

Men tend to be more verbally aggressive in conversing (Labov, 1972), frequently using threats, profanities, yelling and name-calling. Women, on the whole, deem this to disrupt the flow of conversation and not (Eder's 1990) as a means of upholding one's hierarchical status in the conversation.

It appears that women attach more weight than men to the importance of listening in conversation. Men, however, interrupt far more frequently with non-related topics, especially in the mixed sex setting (Zimmerman and West, 1975) and are apt to greet her conversational spotlights with silence, as the work of DeFrancisco (1991) demonstrates. All of this suggests that men see conversation as a means by which to draw attention to themselves, either by interruption or by questionably undermining what the woman has to say by non-paralinguistic response.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 90) state, "women's language has been said to reflect their [our] conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurture, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control."

One of the fundamental findings of sociolinguistics, which has been hard to disprove, is that *class* and *language variety* are related. Members of the working class tend to speak less standard language, while the lower, middle, and upper middle class will in turn speak closer to the standard. However, the upper class, even members of the upper middle class, may often speak 'less' standard than the middle class. This is because not only class, but class aspirations, are important.

Studies, such as those by William Labov in the 1960s, have shown that social aspirations influence speech patterns. This is also true of class aspirations. In the process of wishing to be associated with a certain class (usually the upper class and upper middle class) people who are moving in that direction socio-economically will adjust their speech patterns to sound like them. However, not being native upper class speakers, they hypercorrect, and end up speaking 'more' standard than those whom they are trying to imitate. The same is true for individuals moving down in socio-economic status.

Basil Bernstein, a well-known British socio-linguist, devised in his book, 'Elaborated and restricted codes: their social origins and some consequences,' a social code system which he used to classify the various speech patterns for different social classes. He claimed that members of the middle class have ways of organizing their speech which are fundamentally very different to the ways adopted by the working class.

In Basil Bernstein's theory, the restricted code was an example of the speech patterns used by the working-class. He stated that this type of code allows strong bonds between group members, who tend to behave largely on the basis of distinctions such as 'male', 'female', 'older', and 'younger'. This social group also uses language in a way which brings people together, and members often do not need to be explicit about meaning, as their shared knowledge and common understanding often bring them together in a way which other social language groups do not experience. The difference with the restricted code is the emphasis on 'we' as a social group, which fosters greater solidarity than an emphasis on 'I'.

Basil Bernstein also studied what he named the 'elaborated code' explaining that in this type of speech pattern the middle and upper classes use this language style to gain access to education and career advancement. Bonds within this social group are not as well defined and people achieve their social identity largely on the basis of individual disposition and temperament. There is no obvious division of tasks according to sex or age and generally, within this social formation members negotiate and achieve their roles, rather than have them there ready-made in advance. Due to the lack of solidarity the

elaborated social language code requires individual intentions and viewpoints to be made explicit as the 'I' has a greater emphasis with this social group than the working class.

**Differences According to Various non-linguistic Factors Gender**

One of the non-linguistic variables is the factor of *gender*. In other words, there is a relationship between *gender* and linguistic behavior.

**Table 1**

	men's form	women's form
1. American Indians	/kas/	/ka/
2. The Black	/r/	/r/
3. multiple negation	He <b>doesn't</b> like <b>nobody</b> .	He likes <b>nobody</b> .
4. taboo sound	/z/ is not taboo. amanzi	/z/ is taboo. amandabi
5. tag question	isn't it? You know. I think.	isn't it? You know. I think.
6. emotional words	damn, shit	oh dear, fudge divine, charming, adorable
7. hedging : a bit, sort of, I guess	Φ	She's <b>a bit</b> like Jane in that.

1. Haas (1944) observed that in Koasati, an Amerindian language spoken in southwestern Louisiana, among other *gender*-linked differences, men often pronounced an *s* at the end of verbs but women did not, e.g., male lakáws 'he is lifting it' and female lakáw.

2. What has happened in New York City is that for various reasons *r*-pronunciation in words like *farm* and *car* has become prestigious (or, alternatively, that pronunciation of such words without the *r* has become stigmatized). What is important is that it is the women of a particular social class who seem to be in the vanguard of change so far as *r* is concerned in New York City. In this case, the change seems to be motivated by a desire to be like those who have higher social prestige. In other words, because using *r* is more prestigious, females are more sensitive to using it than males.

3. Research in Detroit shows that there is a higher prestige of using *multiple negation* by males.

4. Zulus females are forbidden to use *z* in such a word as *amanzi* (water). Females must use *amandabi* instead.

5. When we turn to certain grammatical matters in English, we find that Brend(1975) claims that the intonation patterns of men and women vary somewhat, women using certain patterns associated with surprise and politeness more often than men. In the same vein, Lakoff says that women may answer a question with a statement that employs the rising intonation pattern usually associated with a question rather than the falling intonation pattern associated with making a firm statement. According to Lakoff, women do this because they are less sure about themselves and their opinions than are men. For the same reason, she says that women often add *tag questions* to statements, e.g., 'They caught the robber last week, *didn't they?*'

6. Adjectives such as *adorable*, *charming*, *divine*, *lovely*, and *sweet* are commonly used by women but only very rarely by men.

7. *Hedging* provides a way out, should disagreement occur, qualifying statements with non-absolute language, such as '*sort of*', '*I guess*', etc. Hedging is frequently used by women. Well, I *sort of* looked at him, and then he *kind of* looked back. Then *I guess* I kept looking.

**2. Age**

The other non-linguistic variables is the factor of *age*. In other words, there is a relationship between *age* and linguistic form.

**Table 2**

	Older	Younger
1. multiple negation	He likes <b>nobody</b> .	He <b>doesn't</b> like <b>nobody</b> .
2. /t/ /d/ /m/ deletion consonant clusters word final	test , told	tes , tol
3. centralization	/ haʊs/ /aʊ/ /waɪf/ /aɪ/	/əʊ/ /həʊs/ /əɪ/ /wəɪf/

1. According to Table 2 *multiple negation* is a feature of the speech of *younger* people rather than of older people.

2. Consonant variables like the final *t* and *d* in words like *test* and *told* are frequently deleted by younger people; however, such a final cluster simplification is not frequent among older people.

3. Gimson (1962, pp. 83–5) observed that in mid-twentieth-century Received Pronunciation (RP) the first part of the diphthong in a word like *home* was tending to become increasingly *centralized* and the whole *diphthong* itself monophthongized. He found such pronunciations mainly among the younger members of fairly exclusive upper-class social groups. Labov concentrated his attention on the way native Vineyarders pronounced the vowels in the two sets of words: *out*, *house*, and *trout* and *while*, *pie*, and *night*. He observed that the first parts of the diphthongs in such words were being centered: [aʊ] to [əʊ] and [aɪ] to [əɪ], with that centering more noticeable in the first set of words than in the second. He called the variable in the first set the (aw) variable ([aʊ] or [əʊ]) and the variable in the second set the (ay) variable ([aɪ] or [əɪ]). He set out to collect a large quantity of (aw)s and (ay)s to find out who used the variants of each. He plotted his findings from his sixty-nine natives of Martha's Vineyard on various graphs to examine the relationships between the degree of centralization and such factors as age, ethnicity, occupation, and place of residence. The survey conducted in the 1930s for the Linguistic Atlas of New England provided Labov with data for the earlier linguistic situation on the island. By age level, Labov (1972b, p. 22) found the distribution of the centralized variants showed that centralization is most obvious in the 31–45 age group.

**3. Social class**

*Social classes* differ in their use of language and pass these differences on from generation to generation.

**Table 3**

	higher class	lower class
1. /r/	r-full	r-less
2. multiple negation	He likes <b>nobody</b> .	He <b>doesn't</b> like <b>nobody</b> .

1. Pronouncing *car* and *cart* in New York City in their *r*-less varieties marks you as using a type of pronunciation associated with lower-class speech in that city. New Yorkers are conscious of this fact and may vary their use of *r* according to circumstances.

2. The Detroit study investigated the use of *multiple negation* as a linguistic variable in that city. The study showed that there is a very close relationship between the use of *multiple negation* and social class. Whereas upper middle-class speakers used such negation on about 2 percent of possible occasions, the corresponding percentages for the other three social classes were

as follows: lower middle class, 11 percent; upper working class, 38 percent; and lower working class, 70 percent.

#### 4. Level of education

There is a relationship between the *level of education* and pronunciation of certain words.

**Table 4**

	more educated	less educated
1. assimilation or vowel harmony	/bekon/ /e/ → /o/ /begir/ /e/ → /i/	/bokon/ /bigir/
2. deletion	/seyl/	/sel/
3. addition	/dom/	/domb/
4. metathesis	/ozr/	/orz/
5. devoicing	/mehdi/	/meti/
6. simplification	/kabu:tar/ /diva:r/ /su:ra:kh/	/kavu:tar/ /tifa:l/ /su:la:kh/

1. Jahangiri reported that in such words, e.g., /bekon/ which means 'Do!', the vowel in the first syllable varies between [e] and [o] as it assimilates to the second vowel, i.e., comes to resemble it in pronunciation. In this study forty speakers, divided equally between males and females and assigned to groups on the basis of amount of education, produced the individual percentages of assimilated vowels in casual speech. All members of the university- educated male group use less assimilation than all members of the next group, those with secondary education, and those, in turn, less than the men with primary education, and so on.

2. /seyl/ which means *flood* is pronounced /sel/ by less educated Iranians.

3. In Persian, less educated people often add *b* to *dom* which means tail; the educated do not do this.

4. Less educated people in Iran may change the order of two sounds in such words as *ozr* (apology) and *ask* (photo).

5. The *d* sound is devoiced *t* in such a proper noun as *Mehdi* by less educated people.

6. Less educated Iranians may simplify *b* in *kabutar* (pigeon) and produce *v*. The next change can be deletion of /u:/, and finally *v* is simplified into *f*, and /kafter/ is produced.

/kabu:tar/ simplification /kavu:tar/ deletion /kavtar/ simplification /kaftar/

*Beneshin!* (Sit down!) is the other example:

/beneshin/ deletion /benshin/ deletion /beshin/ assimilation /bishin/ metathesis /binish/

The sounds /d/, /v/, and /r/ in *divar* (wall) and *surakh* (hole) may be changed into /t/, /f/, and /l/ respectively.

The conversation below is between a professor and his student.

**Professor:** Hello, *Michelle*. Can I help you?

**Student:** Hello, *Professor*. I was wondering if you had a few minutes to, uh, talk to me about my essays.

**P:** Sure. Sit down.

Since they are enjoying different levels of education, the professor and his student are using different forms of address: *Michelle* and *Professor*.

#### Geographical or natural barrier

A change may spread directly from one city to another. A physical barrier such as a *river* or a range of *hills* can prevent diffusion.

**Table 5**

	north part of Humber river	south part of Humber river
Diphthongization	/u:/ to /au/ /hu:s/ to /haus/	no change /hu:s/

The table shows that *Humber river* is functioning as a *geographical* barrier: the simple vowel /u:/ is diphthongized or

changed into /au/ in the northern part of the Humber river. However, in the southern part of the river, /u:/ sound is not diphthongized.

#### Conclusion

Foreign language learners in general and Persian learners of English language may find it almost impossible to spot and stop, to receive the right response, and to get rid of unwanted laugh unless they enjoy the ability to discover the relationship between the linguistic variations and such non-linguistic variations as *gender*, *age*, *social class*, *level of education*, and *geographical* or *natural barriers* which lead to linguistically different behaviors. The unwary language learners will certainly use the language so inappropriately that a trouble-free communication may not be ensured and enjoyed. Discovering the relationship between these two types of variations which seem to be correlated can help language learners to avoid producing the following inappropriate forms that are often found in the utterances and the writings by the unwary learners.

1. (Father:) Your dress is absolutely *adorable*, my *darling* daughter. You look simply *divine*, *sweet* in that dress.

2. **Wife:** Yes ... I wish he were here. I'm getting hungry!

**Husband:** *Why don't you* ask that man for help?

3. Lift me up, *mother* — I can't see.

The point is that the underlined words in number 1 above are rarely used by men. In order to sound more natural, we can safely delete the underlined part in number 2. Because such a question is more frequent in females' speech, according to Fitzpatrick, et al., 1995. *Mummy* is a better alternative to *mother* in number 3, for *mummy* is more frequent in children's speech.

Learners of the English language should be able to discover the relationship between such linguistic and non-linguistic variation in order to participate successfully in social and linguistic interaction.

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