ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to investigate the phenomenon of gender related differences in male and female speech patterns in relation to language varieties used by women among Urdu speech community in Aligarh.

In order to furnish a proper perspective on this work it is necessary to analyse in some details, the variations in verbal repertoire of Urdu speakers in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse and lexicon. It is generally held that there exists a difference between male and female speech but it is to be stressed through supportive details that the differences between the speech of the two, do not result from the sex difference but from the social inferiority of women.

It is also considered that there is a total cleavage between the male and female speech. This seems to be an oversimplification of facts for the gender of a person can only determine choices to certain forms of a language. It is observed that there are certain linguistic forms that are used only by females, while other forms are preferred by men. These differences are known as gender preferential differences.

It is also highlighted that women hardly resort to stigmatized language and they generally use prestige forms more than men. They are more and more prone and sensitive to the prestige forms of language than their counterparts. Manifestations of conservative and innovative elements in women’s speech are also discussed elaborately. Irrationality of the notion that regards women’s speech as aberrant is examined with illustrations.

Though the speech of both sexes is influenced by each other’s way of speaking. It sharply differs not only in communicative
strategies but also in lexicon and morphology. Various queer and quaint Urdu expressions of day to day conversation have been scrutinized with an emphasis on women’s use of Urdu in their daily round of talk.

A sociolinguistic analysis of women’s Urdu speech in Aligarh has been carried out in this thesis. A vast amount of data was collected during the field work in Aligarh. The analysis particularly is limited to the women’s specific terminology of the sociolect. This study is the sociolinguistic analysis of women’s terminology in six different chapters. Each chapter has its own sub-sections. A summary of our conclusions is given here in the end.

The present study is conducted with a view to examining the female speech of the Urdu speaking community of Aligarh. According to a general belief females speech is considered to be different from males speech but it is not because of their sex but because of their inferior position in the society and also due to double standards of the society for measuring their behaviour.

Women’s behaviour regarding their day to day talk is generally assumed as aberrant. The assumption about women’s speech (language) is irrational and unfair for it fails to do full justice to the nuances of words and expressions used by women. It is surprising that women’s standard forms are considered objectionable whereas men are found more wanting in making use of sophisticated language during the course of conversation.

The first chapter in my thesis deals with the theoretical background of "sociolinguistics and throws a good deal of light on the scope of its study". It embodies some theoretical observations about "male and female speech", with reference to the method of data analysis. There are some observations about men and women’s use of Urdu words and expressions in their different social situations. Women talk more than men, says Cameron, not
because they are women, but because there is a tendency for gaining higher status to talk more.

Chapter second covers “phonological variation”. It has been observed about the phonological variation that the variant forms used by females are fewer than males. The number of variant forms in the speech of the male is quite high. Even the frequency of switching of these variant forms depends upon the context and is slightly reduced among the females. It is remarked about the use of polite expressions that they are present in the repertoire of both males and females. It is females who are expected to observe them more as compared to the males. This presence of polite and impolite expressions in the repertoire of both males and females and the frequent use of variant forms by both sexes may be because of the age factor. They both have a similar opportunity of education and share the experiences gained from the outside of their homes.

Chapter 3 entitled “Morphological variations” contains various reduplicated forms. It has been divided into three forms i.e. total, partial, and echo forms.

Chapter 4 deals with “syntactic variation”. Males use some explicit commands in order to express their dominance; females use more modalized interrogatives. But in some cases it is gathered from the data that some females also use explicit commands as are used by males. Sometimes females refuse to accept the male dominance and superiority complex. From the male interruptions overlaps and topic control, sentence incompleteness results. Males interrupt the speech so that the females should leave their talk incomplete.

It is noticed that both the males and females use back channel noises and minimal responses as shown in the data.
Females use back channel noises like hmm, mm to show cooperation. They use more adjectives than males.

Minimal responses such as hu, ha, are used by females in greater frequency but males use this response “hu” after a lengthy remark of a woman. It is neither to encourage her nor to elaborate. Such minimal interactions operate to discourage interactions.

Chapter 5 deals with “lexical differences”. It deals with a large corpus of women’s vocabulary. This chapter is limited to the exhaustively collected data that has been used in the illustrative examples for the validation of the analysis. There are some specific terms of utensils, jewellery, color terms and items of clothing that are not used by them now. Some colour terms are not common in either of sexes. uda:, na:rangi, meṭmela:, pya:zi are confined to women. Words like hēra:, la:l, gula:bi, pi:la:, ni:la: are common in use of both sexes. This chapter deals with some specific expressions / phrases that are exclusively used by women like ummi:d se hona:(be conceived), hī:ng lege na: phiṭkēri aur rāng bhī ċōkha: ho ja:e(trying to get good results without efforts). However some phrases like that are used by males also, for instance, meri billi mujhe hi mia:ū( ), jesi ma:i vesi ja:i (like daughter like mother). Some other expressions and phrases are also common to male and female. These are collected through the field survey.

Males and females are said to include different lexical items in their total repertoire depending on the range and kinds of fields in which they are involved. For example there are certain colour terms which are common to both males and females such as la:l, hēra:, ni:la:, pīla:, bhūra:, gula:bi etc. But there are some colour terms such as ra:nī, u:da:, pya:zi, mēhdi, rupehla: , ka:sni etc which are exclusively used by females. This may be due
to the females sensitive nature to observe things more minutely than males.

Our data is based on adult, adolescent, female's and male's day to day language. It contains food items, terms of clothes, euphemistic terms, terms of curses and contempt, terms of swearing, some terms of ornamentation and idiomatic expressions that are specific to females.

Chapter 6 examines "the variations at discourse and communicative strategy levels". It is believed that females are more status conscious than males because of their lifestyle that confers very little status on them, hence they are expected to talk less or rather keep silent. But today they hold certain responsible chairs and give a talk on matters of contemporary interest and even they set tones for discussion. They create and maintain relationship of closeness and equality. They recognize the speech rights of others and allow them to speak. They use minimal responses and use back-channel noises for having co-operative attitude and active involvement.

Females as compared to males become less aggressive when they cannot prove their point while males always want to dominate others through their speech. They are less cooperative in conversation and sometimes even they reject the topic when they are not comfortable with that. This false perception gives rise to feelings of superiority and dominance over females.

Interruptions and overlaps are the two irregularities in the turn taking of conversation and may be seen in the males more as compared to females. However, with regard to the same sex group conversations both interruptions and overlaps may be seen, but the degree of irregularities is different.
By the analysis of the collected data it is revealed that males interrupt conversation with a view to indulging their passion for superiority.

In these days of computer age language as a whole is undergoing variety of striking differences both in formal and non-formal styles. The youth of today have a predilection for SMS and are given to lavish use of slangs and shorter forms of expression. They very much like to write 'thnx u' in place of 'thank you'. To them language has become 'lingo' whereas great is preffered to 'gr8'. Expression (such as) like 'sexy' and 'hot' that are used at comfort levels are gaining wide currency all around. Yet all such linguistic changes in day to day use are not very comforting to the older generation.

Women's social life is exhibiting a variety of changes in a rapidly changing world and also opening up newer possibilities for their education and employment. They have acquired higher status and rejected old and rigid norms of society. Having abandoned regimented lifestyle, females have begun to work with men in various walks of life. It shows that today the role of men and women in our society is collaborative and complementary. It is observed that the speech of both the sexes has been influenced by each other's speech. It is also found out that the males who were earlier given to using dominating language have begun to condescending to employ the language which was once known as women's language.

It is a hard fact that male and female speak differently. The present study explains that men and women make differences not only in lexicon but also in communicative strategies. When there is conversation between men and women, men usually tend to interrupt and very often monopolize the conversation whereas women encourage transaction of a good talk through the use of
facilitative tags and variety of other suitable means as well. In addition to difference between male and female conversation the thesis also examines language varieties used by women in Urdu speech community. Female's use of Urdu language in day to day life is treated here in great detail with a view to catching the very nuances of their expressions. Various queer and quaint words of Urdu employed by women have been analysed to indicate that they are strikingly different from those used by males. The thesis studies differences in Urdu speech in relation to gender with a primary focus on women’s particular use of Urdu in their daily round of talk.

Varied shades of meaning in the everyday women’s parlance are clearly perceptible. Many of their words and expressions do not belong to the text book and are not in frequent use. It is concluded that the work is likely to introduce the Urdu speech community to a different genre of language and may enrich the Urdu speakers repertoire of words and expressions.