

On Sex-Differentiated Language Usage in the United States *

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1. Introduction

All speakers of a language can talk to each other and understand each other quite well. No two speakers, however, speak exactly alike. As Fromkin and Rodman (1978) state, "some differences are due to age, sex, state of health, size, personality, emotional state, and personal idiosyncrasies" (p.257). Thus every speaker of a language has his/her own dialect, i.e., idiolect.

Beyond these individual differences, variations in a language may be observed geographically. In other words, a language may differ from one geographical region to another. The occurrences of linguistic variability may also be affected by many other factors such as socioeconomic class, occupation, educational background, age, sex, and a number of other social parameters (cf. Labov, 1972; Cheshire, 1982; Trudgill, 1983; Yule, 1986).

Among these linguistic variations, the study of sex-differentiated language has become one of the growing fields of study in sociolinguistics. As a number of linguists point out, the speech of men and women differs in many societies. Haas (1944), for instance, showed notable sex differences in Kosati, an American Indian language (i.e., a language of the Muskogean family spoken in Louisiana) (p.131). Sex differences in speech can also be observed in other American Indian languages and many other languages (cf. Trudgill, 1983).

Why do these sex-based linguistic variations occur? The first reason that might come to mind is the difference between male and female social roles. In other words, women and men are socialized into

varying gender roles, and the linguistic usage of both sexes reflects these differences (cf. Coats, 1987). As Trudgill states, "men and women speak as they do because they feel a particular kind of language appropriate to their sex. This kind of appropriateness of language usage is reinforced by various social pressures" (p95). It is thought that the roles of both sexes begin to diverge from the moment of birth. Boys are usually expected to use aggressive, definite, authoritative, and strong expressions and usually are allowed to swear to show masculinity and toughness, while girls are not encouraged to speak like boys and are expected to use polite, soft, less forceful, lady-like expressions. Tannen (1990) states that characteristics of gender patterns (male/female) have been seen in early elementary or even younger children (boys/girls) (p.257). Men and women play their roles within the limited frame of the society. As Trudgill mentions, society lays down different social roles for them and expects different behavior patterns from them (p.88). This may be the reason why the language differences of both sexes emerge.

In her influential book Language and Women's Place (1975), Robin Lakoff discusses ten characteristics of women's language in the United States as listed below:

- (1) Special vocabulary (specialized color terms), e.g., 'mauve', 'lavender', etc.
- (2) Weaker expletives, e.g., 'Oh dear!', 'Dear me!', 'Oh fudge!'.
- (3) Empty (clichéd) adjectives, e.g., 'divine', 'charming', 'sweet', 'adorable'.
- (4) The use of intensive 'so', e.g., 'I feel so happy.'
- (5) The use of the question intonation in conjunction with declaratives, e.g., tag questions in statements contexts.
- (6) The use of hedges of various kinds, e.g., 'sort of', 'kind of'.
- (7) Hypercorrect grammar, e.g., "He isn't here" instead of "He ain't here".
- (8) Superpolite forms, e.g., 'Would you please . . . ' or 'I'd really appreciate it if . . . '
- (9) Lack of a sense of humor.
- (10) Women speak with 'italics' by using voice pattern, i.e., pitch and stress.

As seen above, Lakoff makes a strong argument that female language differs in predictable and measurable ways. However, the data on which she bases her claims, as she herself states, have been gathered mainly by introspection; i.e., she has examined her own speech and that of her acquaintances, and has used her own intuitions in analyzing them. She admits that she does 'not have precise statistical evidence' (p.16).

The purpose of the present study is to follow up Lakoff's study. That is to test what she claims about sex-differentiated language usage in the United States; to test her assertion concerning the masculine, feminine, and neutral expressions which she makes. This paper is mainly concerned with a) Language 'of' women (Study I) in which I deal with items (1), (2), (3), and (4) given in the previous page and b) Language 'about' women (Study II) where the language which describes women differently from men is discussed.

The data on which the present study is based have been collected through a questionnaire (see Appendix) based on Lakoff's study. I made a questionnaire and distributed it to certain native speakers of English in the United States and those presently living in Okinawa, Japan. In order to obtain reliable results, I took into consideration the age, sex, and educational background of the informants. As seen in Table 1-1, I collected data from 185 informants. Ninety-five (51.4%) of them were male and ninety (48.6%) female. The age range extended from eleven to seventy-seven. The distribution of age groups is shown in Table 1-2 below. In addition, the informants' educational backgrounds are shown in Table 1-3.

Table 1-1: Information on Informants

Informants/sex	Male	Female	Total
Olivet College(MI.)	26	36	62
Detroit News (MI.)	9	6	15
Ford Auto Co. (CA.)	12	8	20
East Lansing (MI.)	3	6	9
Ed. Center (Military)	15	10	25
DOD Dependent School	4	4	8
Central Texas College(Kadena)	13	0	13
Okinawa Christian School	9	20	29
Univ. Professors	3	1	4
Total	95	90	185

Table 1-2: Age Group of Informants

Total	10-19	20-29	30-29	40-49	Over 50
185	74	37	26	25	23
100%	40%	20%	14.1%	13.5%	12.4%

Table 1-3: Educational Background of Informants

Total	Elementary	Junior high	Senior high	College	Graduate
185	1	15	40	101	28
100%	0.5%	8.1%	21.6%	54.6%	15.1%

2. Language "of" women (Study I)

In this section, I will discuss the language "of" women; more specifically, the following characteristic features of women's language will be discussed: color terms, expletives, adjectives, and the intensive "so".

2.1 Presentation of results

Table 2-1 presents Lakoff's classification of the words and expressions. Table 2-2 shows the results of the present study. Note that in both tables "Men" indicates Masculine expressions, "Women" indicates Feminine expressions, and "Both" indicates Neutral expressions.

Notice that Table 2-1 is different from Table 2-2. In the latter, "Both" is divided into "Men" and "Women." The items in the column "Men" under "Both" are those which were considered as neutral expressions by the respondents (i.e., appropriate for both men and women) but with a tendency to be used more often by men. Those in the column "Women" under "Both" were also considered as neutral expressions but with a tendency to be used more often by women.

Table 2-1: Results of Lakoff's Study

Men:	Shit!
Women:	lavender, aquamarine, mauve, Oh dear! Oh fudge! Dear me! divine, adorable, sweet, lovely, charming, so unhappy, so sick, so beautiful, so dumb
Both:	terrific, neat, great, cool, groovy

Table 2-2: Results of the present study

Men:	Shit! <u>outstanding</u>
Women:	lavender, aquamarine, mauve, Oh dear! Oh fudge! Dear me! <u>Oh my!</u> divine, adorable, sweet, lovely, charming.
Men:	great, cool, groovy, so dumb!
Both	Women: <u>Gosh!</u> <u>Gee!</u> terrific, neat, so unhappy, so sick

Note: the underlined items were added by me in the questionnaire. In my questionnaire, the informants were asked to choose either "Men," "Women," or "Both" for each word, when considering which sex might use the items more often.

2.2 Color Terms

Lakoff claims that fine color distinctions such as 'beige', 'lavender', 'mauve', 'aquamarine', and so forth are more common to women than to men. Let us, as Lakoff suggests, "imagine a man and woman both looking at the same wall, painted a pinkish shade of purple. The woman may say 'The wall is mauve.', but no one consequently forms any special impression of her as a result of the words alone. If the man should make the same utterance, however, one might well conclude that he was imitating a woman sarcastically or was a homosexual or an interior decorator" (p.8). In this connection, Stecker and Cooper (1980) also states " . . . women describe color of sweaters more specifically than men. Women typically utilize specific color terms in naming, whereas men more often employ combinations of basic color terms and saturation adjectives" (p.379). Observe the following Figures 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3 from the present study.

As can be seen in these Figures given below, the percentage under "Woman" is very high compared to "Man" and "Both" as expected. This means that these terms are apparently feminine expressions. If we take a closer look at them, however, we may find that the percentage of the term 'aquamarine' in the column "Both" is much higher compared to the other two terms. As is evident from Table 2-1 below which indicates the male informants' result, 47% of the teenage boys consider "aquamarine" as a neutral expression. This might have resulted

because the color "aquamarine" is relatively popular among boys. Or the word "boat" in the sentence "The boat is aquamarine" in my questionnaire might have affected the male teenagers' answers because it seems to be much more related to boys than to girls.

Figures

2-1: The wall is lavender.

2-2: The boat is aquamarine.

2-3: The flower is mauve.

Man: 1.6%
Woman: 77.8%
Both: 20.5%

Man: 18.4%
Women: 49.7%
Both: 31.9%

Man: 0.5%
Woman: 84.3%
Both: 15.1%

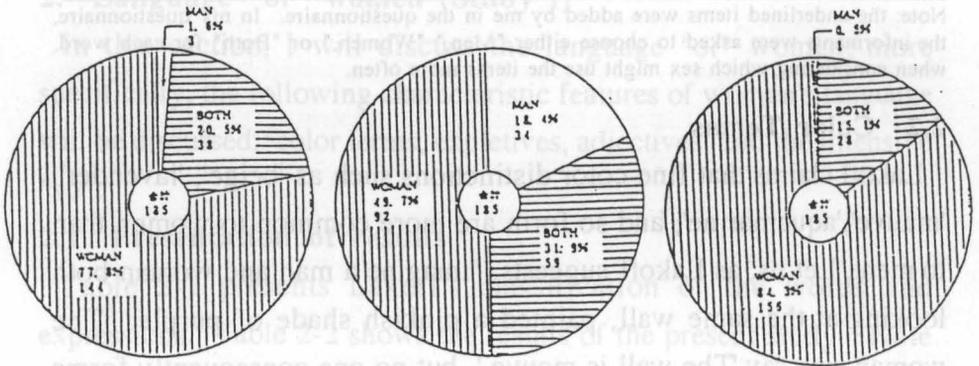


Table 2-1: Male Informants' Responses to Color Terms

Age	11-19			20-29			30-39			40-49			50-77			Total		
	Num.	(32)		(19)	(11)		(17)	(16)		(95)								
Ans.	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B			
1. %	3	81	5	0	74	26	0	82	18	6	71	24	0	75	25	2	77	21
	(1)	(26)	(5)	(0)	(14)	(5)	(0)	(9)	(2)	(1)	(12)	(4)	(0)	(12)	(4)	(2)	(73)	(20)
2. %	24	27	47	32	32	37	28	55	18	24	59	18	6	63	31	23	43	33
	(8)	(9)	(15)	(6)	(6)	(7)	(3)	(6)	(2)	(4)	(10)	(3)	(1)	(10)	(5)	(22)	(41)	(32)
3. %	3	91	6	0	95	5	0	82	18	0	77	24	0	81	19	1	87	13
	(1)	(30)	(2)	(0)	(18)	(1)	(0)	(9)	(2)	(0)	(13)	(4)	(0)	(13)	(3)	(1)	(81)	(12)

Note: 1=lavender; 2=aquamarine; 3=mauve. M stands for "Men," W for "Women" and B for "Both." The numbers of the informants are indicated in parentheses. Note that the percentages shown in the following tables (i.e., Tables 2-1, 2-2, 2-4, and 2-5) have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.

As is obvious from Table 2-2 given below, in any age group women represent a higher percentage of usage of the color terms under investigation. With this result, therefore, we can generalize that women tend to make a precise observation of colors and use color terms more often than men, as Lakoff and other linguists have already demonstrated.

Table 2-2: Female Informants' Responses to Color Terms

Age	11-19			20-29			30-39			40-49			50-77			Total				
	Num.			(42)			(18)			(15)			(8)			(7)			(90)	
Ans.	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B		
1. %	2	81	5	0	74	26	0	82	18	0	63	38	0	71	29	1	78	21		
	(1)(29)(12)			(0)(16)(2)			(0)(15)(0)			(0)(5)(3)			(0)(5)(2)			(1)(70)(19)				
2. %	21	41	38	6	67	28	0	73	27	13	75	25	0	71	29	12	57	32		
	(9)(17)(16)			(1)(12)(5)			(0)(11)(4)			(1)(6)(2)			(0)(5)(2)			(11)(51)(29)				
3. %	0	76	24	0	89	11	0	87	13	0	88	13	0	86	14	0	82	18		
	(0)(32)(10)			(0)(16)(2)			(0)(13)(2)			(0)(7)(1)			(0)(6)(1)			(1)(74)(16)				

Note: 1= lavender; 2=aquamarine; 3=mauve. M stands for "Men," W for "Women" and B for "Both." The numbers of the informants are indicated in parentheses.

2.3 Expletives

In the discussion of "meaningless" particles, i.e., "expletives," Lakoff gives the following examples:

- (a) Oh, dear, you've put the peanut butter in the refrigerator again.
- (b) Shit, you've put the peanut butter in the refrigerator again.

She mentions that people would classify the first sentence as part of "women's language," the second as "men's language" (p10). Although many women are coming to use sentences like (b), as she states, this seems to be a relatively recent development. She further notes that while the majority of Middle Americans might overlook the use of (b) for men, they would still disapprove of its use by women. She thus mentions that in any event the "stronger" expletives are reserved for men, and the "weaker" ones for women. As other linguists, such as Bailey and Timm (1976) and Oliver and Rubin (1975), have already demonstrated, men tend to use rough, aggressive, sometimes vulgar, strong expletives which symbolize dignity and authority, while women have a tendency to use more polite, refined, "lady-like" expletives.

Now, let us observe Table 2-3 below which shows the results of my investigation of "expletives." As shown in the table, the expletive "Shit!" is masculine and more attributed to men, and expletives such as "Oh, dear!", "Oh, fudge!", "Dear me!" and "Oh, my!" are feminine.

Table 2-3: The results of the present study of "expletives"

Men	Women	Men	Both	Women
	Oh dear!			
Shit!	Oh fudge!	(none)		<u>Gosh!</u>
	Dear me!			<u>Gee!</u>
	<u>Oh my!</u>			

Note: Underlined items in Table 2-3 are added by myself.

Now observe Table 2-4 below. For expletives "Gosh!" and "Gee", 56% and 51% of the informants chose "Both", respectively. These expletives, however, seem to be more common among women than men because 40% and 39% of the informants chose "Women" while only 4% and 10% chose "Men", respectively. If we consider Figures 2-4, 2-5, and 2-6 and Table 2-4, however, two interesting facts emerge. First, the percentage for "Shit!" used by both sexes is 48.6%, almost as high as the percentage of men (50.3%). A cause for this tendency may be clarified with Table 2-4, where 50% of female teenagers and 72% of women in their 20's, and 87% of women in their 30's considered "Shit!" to be a neutral expletive. The same table shows that 25% of women in their 40's and 14% of women aged over 50 considered the expletive neutral.

Figure 2-4: "Shit!"

Man: 50.3%
 Woman: 1.1%
 Both: 48.6%

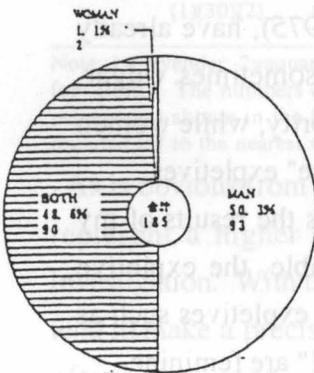


Figure 2-5: "Oh, fudge!"

Man: 5.5%
 Woman: 58.1%
 Both: 25.4%

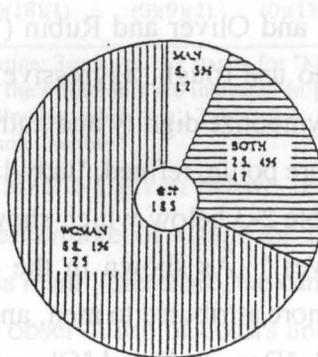


Figure 2-6: "Oh my!"

Man: 0.5%
 Woman: 72.4%
 Both: 27%

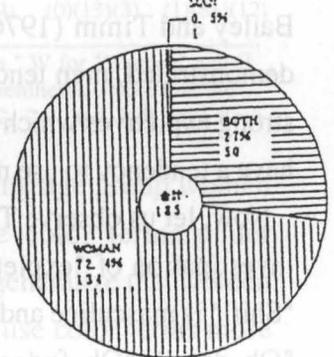


Table 2-4: Female informants' responses to expletives

Age Num. Ans.	11-19 (42)			20-29 (18)			30-39 (15)			40-49 (8)			50-77 (7)			Total (90)		
	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B
1. %	45	5	50	28	0	72	13	0	87	75	0	25	86	0	14	42	2	56
	(19)	(2)	(21)	(5)	(0)	(13)	(2)	(0)	(13)	(6)	(0)	(2)	(6)	(0)	(1)	(38)	(2)	(50)
2. %	2	93	5	0	94	6	0	93	7	0	100	0	0	100	0	1	94	4
	(1)	(39)	(2)	(0)	(17)	(1)	(0)	(14)	(1)	(0)	(8)	(0)	(0)	(7)	(0)	(1)	(85)	(4)
3. %	7	60	33	0	72	28	0	93	7	0	88	13	0	86	14	3	72	24
	(3)	(25)	(14)	(0)	(13)	(5)	(0)	(14)	(1)	(0)	(7)	(1)	(0)	(6)	(1)	(3)	(65)	(22)
4. %	2	93	5	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	88	13	0	86	14	1	94	4
	(1)	(39)	(2)	(0)	(18)	(0)	(0)	(15)	(0)	(0)	(7)	(1)	(0)	(6)	(1)	(1)	(85)	(4)
5. %	0	81	19	0	78	22	0	87	13	0	100	0	0	71	29	0	82	18
	(0)	(34)	(8)	(0)	(14)	(4)	(0)	(13)	(2)	(0)	(8)	(0)	(0)	(5)	(2)	(0)	(74)	(16)
6. %	2	33	64	0	50	50	7	40	53	13	38	50	14	57	29	4	40	56
	(1)	(14)	(27)	(0)	(9)	(9)	(1)	(6)	(8)	(1)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(4)	(2)	(4)	(36)	(50)
7. %	12	36	52	0	50	50	7	40	53	13	38	50	29	29	43	10	39	51
	(5)	(15)	(22)	(0)	(9)	(9)	(1)	(6)	(8)	(1)	(3)	(4)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(9)	(35)	(46)

Note: 1=Shit! 2=Oh dear! 3=Oh fudge 4= Dear me! 5=Oh my! 6=Gosh! 7=Gee!

From these facts, it is apparent that younger women tend to use "stronger" expletives like "Shit!" more freely than older women. This may be supported by Oliver & Rubin's statement: "... younger women seemed generally to be much freer with their use of the 'stronger' expletive, while older women (over 55) seemed to fit the model Lakoff suggests, namely eschewing usage of these 'stronger' expletives even in the more intimate situations" (p.191). As to this tendency shown by younger women, Oliver & Rubin state: "The freedom of the younger group might well relate to women's lib activities" (p.191).

Next observing Figure 2-5 below, which indicates the informants' responses to the expletive "Oh fudge!," we find that this figure also shows that a relatively high percentage of female informants consider the given expletive a neutral one. As is evident from Table 2-5 which indicates male informants' responses to expletives, 44% of the teenage boys consider "Oh fudge!" to be a neutral one. This apparently means that young boys tend to use feminine expletives. What we can sum up

from the data at hand is that neutralization in the usage of expletives seem to be under way. In other words, male expletives like "Shit!" are increasingly being used by young women, while female expletives like "Oh fudge!" are being adopted by younger men.

Table 2-5: Male informants' responses to expletives

Age Num. Ans.	11-19 (32)			20-29 (19)			30-39 (11)			40-49 (17)			50-77 (16)			Total (95)		
	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B
1. %	41	0	58	42	0	58	36	0	64	65	0	35	75	0	25	56	0	43
	(19)	(0)	(13)	(8)	(0)	(11)	(4)	(0)	(7)	(11)	(0)	(6)	(12)	(0)	(4)	(54)	(0)	(41)
2. %	6	88	6	0	95	5	0	82	18	6	82	12	6	88	6	4	87	8
	(2)	(28)	(2)	(0)	(18)	(1)	(0)	(9)	(2)	(1)	(14)	(2)	(1)	(14)	(1)	(4)	(83)	(8)
3. %	15	39	44	5	68	26	9	73	18	0	77	24	13	69	19	9	60	30
	(5)	(13)	(14)	(0)	(13)	(5)	(1)	(8)	(2)	(0)	(13)	(4)	(2)	(11)	(3)	(9)	(58)	(28)
4. %	0	91	9	0	90	11	0	91	9	0	94	6	0	81	19	0	90	11
	(0)	(29)	(3)	(0)	(17)	(2)	(0)	(10)	(1)	(0)	(16)	(1)	(0)	(13)	(1)	(0)	(85)	(10)
5. %	0	75	24	0	74	26	0	55	46	6	53	41	0	56	44	1	65	33
	(0)	(24)	(8)	(0)	(14)	(5)	(0)	(6)	(5)	(1)	(9)	(7)	(0)	(9)	(7)	(1)	(62)	(32)
6. %	21	41	36	11	53	37	18	18	64	12	18	71	25	13	63	18	32	50
	(7)	(13)	(12)	(2)	(10)	(7)	(2)	(2)	(7)	(2)	(3)	(12)	(4)	(2)	(10)	(17)	(30)	(48)
7. %	27	30	41	11	37	53	18	18	64	12	29	59	6	19	75	17	28	55
	(9)	(10)	(13)	(2)	(7)	(10)	(2)	(2)	(7)	(2)	(5)	(10)	(1)	(3)	(12)	(16)	(27)	(52)

Note: 1=Shit! 2=Oh dear! 3=Oh fudge 4= Dear me! 5=Oh my! 6=Gosh! 7=Gee!

As Trudgill states, "In most Western societies . . . , many people have altered or are altering the way they feel about what is appropriate as far as sex roles are concerned" (p.95). He mentions that "these beginnings of a move away from sex-role stereotyping probably explain the fact that linguistic differences between younger men and women now appear to be smaller than in the case of older speakers" (p.95). This statement supports our observation made above.

2.4 "Empty" adjectives

In the previous section I demonstrated that a difference seems to exist in the type of expletives used by men and women. Similar types of differences have also been illustrated with reference to 'empty

adjectives.' As Lakoff mentions, there seems to be "a group of adjectives which have, besides their specific and literal meanings, another use, that of indicating the speaker's approbation or admiration for something" (p.11). Some of these adjectives may be neutral as to the sex of the speaker; i.e., they may be used either by men or by women. "But another set seems, in its figurative use, to be largely confined to women's speech" (p.12). Representative lists of both types are shown in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6: The results of Lakoff's study on adjectives

Men	Women	Both
(none)	divine adorable sweet lovely charming	terrific great cool neat groovy

Table 2-7: The results of the present study on adjectives

Men	Women	Men	Women
	divine adorable sweet lovely charming	great cool groovy	terrific neat
<u>outstanding</u>			

Note: The underlined item is added by myself.

In Table 2-7, I present the findings of the present study. As Lakoff claims, words such as 'terrific,' 'neat,' 'great,' 'cool,' 'groovy,' are all neutral adjectives. If we examine the data of the present study closely, however, these words can be classified into "Men" and "Women" as shown in Table 2-7 above.

Observe Figure 2-7 which indicates the percentage in the column "Men" as 42.7%, almost as high as that in the column "Both" (49.7%). This denotes that the word "cool" is a neutral expression but is used relatively more often by men. In Figure 2-8, we can see that the

word "neat" is also used by both sexes. With careful examination of the figure, however, it is apparent that the percentage of the column "Woman" is higher than that of "Man." This signifies that the word "neat" is a neutral adjective but is used relatively more often by women.

Figure 2-7: That is a cool backpack!

Man: 42.7%
 Woman: 7.6%
 Both: 49.7%

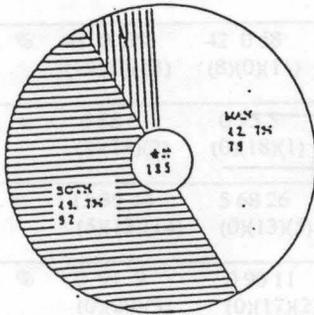


Figure 2-8: That is a neat pen!

Man: 11.9%
 Woman: 28.6%
 Both: 59.5%

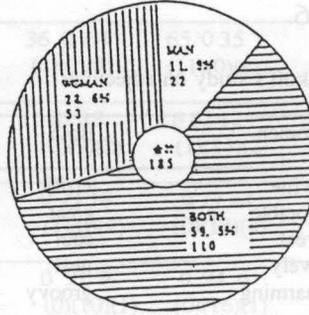
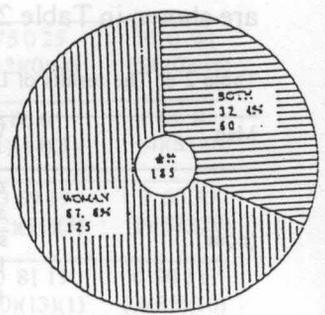


Figure 2-9: It is a lovely day!

Man: 0%
 Woman: 57.6%
 Both: 32.4%



Among the listed adjectives, the word "lovely" shows a striking result. As illustrated in Figure 2-9, 'lovely' is apparently a feminine adjective since the percentage of the column "Woman" is very high. But compared to other adjectives, excluding "cool" and "neat", the percentage under "Both" is relatively high. Interestingly enough, as shown in Table 2-8 below, the higher the age goes up, the higher the percentage under "Both" seems to go up. In other words, as the age goes up, the more neutralized the word "lovely" becomes. Among the over 50's, the percentage under "Both" is 52.2% which is higher than the percentage under "Woman" (47.8%). This means that the neutralization of the feminine adjective "lovely" seems to be much more advanced than in other age groups.

Table 2-8: It is a lovely day!

Age/Sex	Both	Woman	Total
total	32.4% (60)	67.6% (125)	100% (185)
10-19	17.6% (13)	82.4% (61)	40.0% (74)
20-29	37.8% (14)	62.2% (23)	20.0% (37)
30-39	38.5% (10)	61.5% (16)	14.1% (26)
40-49	44.0% (11)	56.0% (14)	13.5% (25)
over 50	52.2% (12)	47.8% (11)	12.4% (23)

2.5 Intensive "so"

Women also differ from men, according to Lakoff, in their use of intensive "so". She asserts that "so" is more frequent in women's than men's language, though certainly men can use it" (p.54). The results of Lakoff's study are shown in Table 2-9 below.

Table 2-9: The results of Lakoff's study on the intensive "so"

Men	Women	Both
(none)	so dumb	(none)
	so unhappy	
	so sick	
	so beautiful	

Key (1972) also makes a similar statement: "Females may be inclined to make more use of intensifiers: so, such, quite, vastly" (p.19). Jespersen (1964) as well claims that the little intensifying adverb "so" has "something of the eternally feminine about it" and he quotes from Punch of January 4, 1896: "This little adverb is a great favorite with ladies, in conjunction with an adjective. For instance, they are very fond of using such expressions as 'He is so charming!' 'It is so lovely!' etc." (p.250).

According to the present study, however, as is evident from Table 2-10 and Figures 2-10 and 2-11, the intensive "so" can be considered as a neutral expression. To put it more precisely, "so unhappy", for instance, may be classified as a neutral expression on the basis of the data shown in Figure 2-10, although many women still use it. Figure 2-11 also indicates that "so dumb" is a neutral expression. With a closer glance, however, we find that the percentage in the column "Man" is slightly higher than that in the column "Woman." This means that "so dumb" also can be classified as relatively masculine. This result may have been yielded due to the word "dumb;" that is, the respondents might have been influenced by the general idea of men who tend to use more stigmatized forms than women (cf. Coats).

Table 2-10: The results of the present study on the intensive "so"

Men	Women	Men	Both	Women
(none)	(none)	so dumb		so unhappy so sick so beautiful

Figure 2-10: I feel so unhappy!

Man: 3.8%
 Woman: 42.2%
 Both: 54.1%

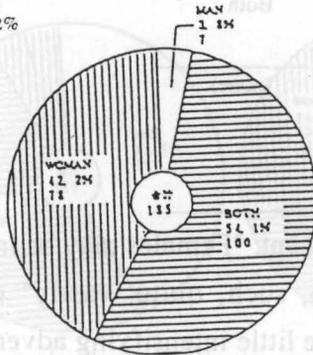
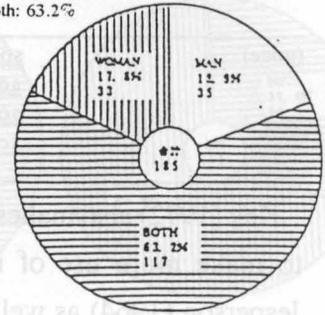


Figure 2-11: Fred is so dumb!

Man: 18.9%
 Woman: 17.8%
 Both: 63.2%



3. Language "about" women (Study II)

3.1 Introduction

This section consists in all of five parts. In section 3.2, I will consider the words "woman" and "lady" and study the different connotations they might have. Section 3.3 will be concerned with the study of pair of gender-based words such as "bachelor" and "spinster," "widow" and "widower," and so forth. In section 3.4, I will take up pronominal neutralization and sexism. Finally, in section 3.5, I will deal with the different implications involved in saying "He is a professional" and "She is a professional."

3.2 Woman or Lady?

Let us first consider the words "woman" and "lady" in job terminology. Which is more appropriate, "cleaning woman" or "cleaning lady?"

Table 3-1: His aunt is a cleaning (woman, lady)

Total	Woman	Lady
185	56	129
100%	30.3%	69.7%

As shown in the table above, 69.7% of the informants chose "lady" as an appropriate word in a given context, while 30.3 % chose "woman." In connection with the use of "lady" in job terminology, Lakoff states ". . . the more demeaning the job, the more the person holding it . . . is likely to be described as a lady" (p.23) (emphasis mine). The statement then supports the result presented in Table 3-1 which indicates that "lady" is considered as more appropriate than "woman" in the given context.

With reference to language "about" women, Lakoff claims that "lady" is a euphemism for woman (p.21). According to Lakoff, a euphemism is supposed to put a better face on something people find uncomfortable (p.23-4). In other words, a euphemism is necessary to remove from thought, the unfavorable connotations that the word "woman" may have (cf. Trudgill) or the job that cleaning woman, janitor, etc., may have.

Now let us take up the case of "woman doctor" and "lady doctor." In contrast to the previous item, opposite result is seen in Table 3-2 below. That is, 30.3% of the informants chose "lady" as an appropriate word in a given context, while those who chose "woman" showed much higher percentage i.e., 69.7%.

Table 3-2: The new head of a hospital is a (woman, lady) doctor.

Total	Woman	Lady
185	129	56
100%	69.7%	30.3%

This seems to fit the model suggested by Lakoff. According to Lakoff, in the case of "a cleaning woman," her occupational category seems to require ennobling; thus, many people choose "a cleaning lady" as an appropriate one. In the case of "doctor", however, it does not need to be exalted by conventional expressions because she has dignity enough from her professional status (p.24-5). Accordingly, the use of "lady" with higher status professions seems to be very condescending; i.e., it may constitute an insult. In case of men, however, there seems to be

no such dichotomy. Thus, "garbage man" or "salesman" is the only possibility, never garbage gentleman. The stigma attached to the job itself, however, is commonly overcome by the use of the term "sanitation worker" or even "sanitary engineer".

3.3 Pair of Words

In English, there are a number of pairs of words for males and females which seems to differ only in the sex of the person, such as "bachelor" and "spinster," "master" and "mistress," and "widow" and "widower." At first glance, they seem to be equivalent. Actually they are not equivalent at all in real usage. In this section, I will examine some non parallel usages of these pair of words given above.

Table 3-3: Which sentence is more natural?

- a) Mary hopes to meet an eligible bachelor.
- b) Fred hopes to meet an eligible spinster.

Total	Bachelor	Spinster
185	181	4
100%	97.8%	2.2%

Let us first consider the case of "bachelor" vs "spinster." Which sentence is more natural, (a) "Mary hopes to meet an eligible bachelor" or "Fred hopes to meet an eligible spinster"? The answer to this question are shown in Table 3-3 above. As is evident from the Table above, 97.8% of the informants consider "eligible bachelor" as natural, but only 2.2% of them consider "eligible spinster" as natural. As for this non parallel usage of bachelor/spinster, Lakoff states "If someone is a spinster, by implication she is not eligible (to marry); she has had her chance, and been passed by" (p.32). On the other hand, "to be a bachelor implies that one has the choice to marry or not, . . ." (p.33). Fromkin and Rodman as well touch on this matter and mention ". . . it is insulting to be called a spinster and even more so an old maid but certainly not to be called a bachelor" (p.279). There seems to be nothing inherently pejorative about the word spinster. But, as Lakoff says, "Spinster normally seems to be used pejoratively, with connections of prissiness, fussiness, and so on" (p.32). On the

contrary, "bachelor" is at least a neutral term, often used as a compliment" (p.32). Thus, the connotations seem to reflect the different views society has about an unmarried woman as opposed to an unmarried man (cf. Fromkin and Rodman, *ibid.*).

Now observe the cases of "mistress" and "master." Lakoff mentions that "mistress" requires a masculine noun in the possessive to precede it (p.29). This point can be supported by the data shown in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4: Which sentence is more natural?

- a. Lucy is a mistress. b. Lucy is Bob's mistress.

Total	A mistress	Bob's mistress
185	28	157
100%	15.1%	84.9%

Table 3-5: Which sentence is more natural?

- a. Mary is John's widow. b. John is Mary's widower.

Total	Widow	Widower
185	164	21
100%	88.6%	11.4%

Like "mistress," the word "widow" also commonly occurs with a possessive preceding it, the name of the woman's late husband (cf. Lakoff, p.34), as is evident from Table 3-5 above, but "widower" may not be preceded by a possessive, the name of the man's late wife. The reason for this distinction seems to be found in the following point made by Lakoff: ". . . women are given their identities in our society by virtue of their relationship with men, not vice versa" (p.35). As for this matter, Penlosa (1981) as well states, "Not only do the words denoting females have certain derogatory connotations not shared by their male counterparts, but females are regarded as the possessions of males. One cannot just be a mistress, one must be somebody's mistress" (emphasis mine). On the contrary, he adds, "while a person might be somebody's widow, one cannot be someone's widower" (p.129).

3.4 He or She?

Which pronoun might we expect to find in the following sentence?
Will it be (a) he or (b) she?

Say, what did you think of Lakoff's latest paper, where
(a. he b. she) makes the claim that . . .

According to the data shown in Figure 3-1 given below, 82.7% of the informants, all of whom did not know who Lakoff was, chose (a) he as an appropriate pronoun in the given context, while those who chose (b) she are 11.4%, and those who chose both (a) and (b) are 5.9%. This shows that, as Lakoff states, ". . . last name alone sets up a strong assumption that it is a male colleague being referred to" (p39).

Figure 3-1: Choose an appropriate pronoun

His: 82.7% (153)
Her: 11.4% (21)
Both: 5.9% (11)

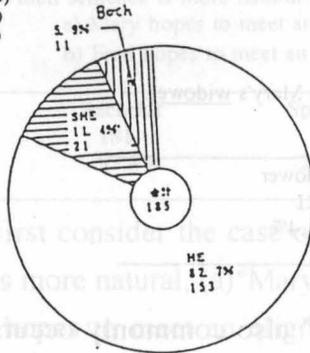
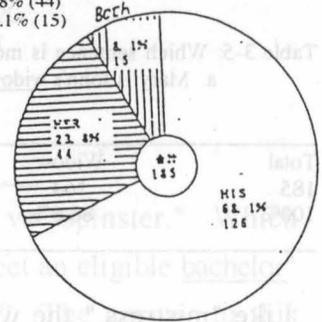


Figure 3-2: Choose an appropriate pronoun.

His: 68.1% (126)
Her: 23.8% (44)
Both: 8.1% (15)



This may happen because traditionally, as Frank and Ashen (1983) state, a woman seems to be identified "in terms of her relation to the men in her life. She starts out life with her father's name, which she trades for her husband's last name if she marries. If her husband dies, she retracts his name, and she may even keep it after a divorce" (p.14).

Now, consider the sentences "Everyone takes (a. his b. her) seat." Generally, many people seem to choose (a) his with an "unmarked" or "neutral" meaning. This is clear from Figure 3-2. As is seen in Figure 3-2 above, 68.1% of the informants chose (a) his as an appropriate pronoun in the given context, while those who chose (b) her are 23.8%, and those who chose both (a) and (b) are 8.1%. Here, again, we can observe another case of non parallel usage of pair of words as

we already seen in the previous sections. That is, although the "unmarked" or a 'neutral" masculine pronoun "his" can be used referring to men and women, the feminine pronoun "her" may not be used as such except in an all-female group (cf. Lakoff). Trudgill also touches on this matter and considers the case given above as a reflection of traditionally male-dominated society (p.29).

The use of the masculine pronoun "his" is dominant in the given context. If we examine the data closely, we become aware that 31.9% of the informants chose either "her" or both "his" / "her." Thus, I assume that people are becoming more conscious of discrimination in language "about" women and tend to change their linguistic behavior. In this connection, it may be appropriate to quote Trudgill here: ". . . increased awareness of the discriminatory nature of this differentiation [i.e., the unequal usage of pair of words] seems currently to be leading to a linguistic change for some speakers" (p.98). Concerning the feminist movement in relation to language change and linguistic behavior, Trudgill states, ". . .the movement amongst feminist and others to reduce sexual discrimination and sex-role stereotyping has also led to a number of conscious attempts to influence and change languages and linguistic behavior" (p.96).

Penalosa also touches on the matter of unequal usage of he/she or his/her and states "Bodine (1975) interprets the current movement against sex-indefinite he as a counterreaction to the attempts by prescriptive grammarians over the past two and one-half centuries to displace singular they and their from the language" (p.130). Although the results of the present study shown in Figure 3-2 show that 31.9% of the informants are presumably becoming conscious of changing linguistic behavior, it may take quite a while to replace sex-indefinite "he" and "his" with another pronoun.

3.5 The Word "professional"

In this section, I will discuss the differences in the connotation that the word "professional" might have in the sentences given below.

- (a) He is a professional.
- (b) She is a professional.

What kind of job might these people do? Hearing and knowing no more about the subjects of the discourse than this, as Lakoff states, in the case of (a) one may normally imagine that his job is "a doctor," "a lawyer," "a professor," or one of the other relatively higher status professions. On the contrary, in the case of (b) one may think that her job might be "a prostitute."

Interestingly enough, the data presented in Table 3-6 show that most informants think that he/she is "a doctor," "a lawyer," "a teacher," and so forth. Contrary to our expectation, however, only two male informants think that she is a "prostitute (call-girl, hooker)."

Table 3-6: Professions

Informants Jobs / ans.	Male		Female		Total
	Men's	Women's	Men's	Women's	
Doctor	48	49	56	58	211
Lawyer	40	38	48	42	168
Athlete	49	22	27	13	111
Teacher	15	29	27	29	100
Business-executive	15	21	19	21	76
Accountant	9	7	8	7	31
Nurse	0	20	1	9	30
Engineer	10	3	9	0	22
Musician	2	2	4	11	19
Movie Star	2	6	4	5	17
Attorney	3	4	3	2	12
Salesperson	5	1	2	3	11
Hairdresser	0	4	0	5	9
Designer	0	2	1	5	8
Artist	2	0	2	3	7
Car racer	4	1	2	0	7
Writer	1	0	2	3	6
Model	0	1	0	4	5
Architect	2	0	2	1	5
Librarian	1	2	1	1	5
Police	2	1	1	0	4
Carpenter	4	0	0	0	4
Photographer	2	0	1	1	4
Journalist	1	1	1	1	4
Pilot	2	0	1	0	3
Hooker	0	2	0	0	2
=(call girl)					
Gigolo	1	0	1	0	2

Traditionally, women have not been prominent in the professions such as doctor, lawyer, professor, and other relatively higher status professions. This seems to have made a fixed idea concerning professions; that is, people have often associated these professions with males not with females. This stereotyped view of professions may reflect women's inferior position in which they find themselves in

society. Through the data at hand, however, we can see that more women nowadays go into the professions which have been traditionally occupied by men. This presumably reflects that social structure has been changing in the United States. With the change of social structure, people's interpretation of words such as "professional" seems to have been changed.

4. Summary and Conclusion

4.1 Summary

In the present study, I have investigated sex-differentiated language usage in the United States as a follow-up study of Lakoff's Language and Women's Place (1975) whose data was collected mainly by introspection.

The data used in this study were collected through questionnaire made on the basis of Lakoff's study, which was distributed to the native speakers of English in the United States and those presently living in Okinawa with the help of friends, acquaintances, and teachers both in Okinawa and in the United States. My informants numbered one hundred eighty-five. Ninety-five of them were male and ninety of them were female.

During the present investigation I also have found, as many linguists have already pointed out, that sex-differentiated language usage definitely exists in American English. Although most of the results I obtained are similar to what Lakoff claims, I found that some words or expressions behave differently, so that their sub classification is needed. For example, the usage of words or expressions like "aquamarine," "Shit!," "Oh fudge!," "neat," "cool," "lovely," "professional" and that of the intensive "so" seems to have been changing -becoming more sexually neutral - presumably because of social changes and other factors such as age, education, family background and so forth of the respondents of the questionnaire. Social changes have surely been going on in the United States. It

seems, as Jespersen suggested, that this is beginning to modify even the linguistic relations of the two sexes (p.254).

The findings in the present study are briefly as follows. In section 2.2, I dealt with the color terms and found that "lavender" and "mauve" are feminine adjectives as Lakoff claims but "aquamarine" is becoming neutralized especially among the teenaged male informants. In section 2.3, I discussed masculine and feminine expletives and found that neutralization of some of the expletives like "Shit!" and "Oh fudge!" is under way especially among younger people. On contrast, however, the expletive "Oh my!" seems to be neutralized, especially among older generation.

In section 2.4, I was concerned with the so-called "empty" adjectives like "divine," "adorable," "charming," "terrific," "great," "cool," "neat," and "groovy." All the given words showed the same result as Lakoff's. As for the word "lovely", however, it shows a tendency to neutralization which increases among those over 50's. In this same section, I also subclassified Lakoff's neutral adjectives into two subclasses: "great," "cool," and "groovy" as "Men" subclass (i.e., more masculine) and "terrific" and "neat" as "Women" subclass (i.e., more feminine), respectively. Among these sub classified adjectives, "neat" and "cool" show dominant characteristics in the respective subclass.

In Section 2.5, the case of intensive "so" was discussed. Lakoff claims that the intensive "so" is feminine, but I came up with a result that shows that in general, the usage of the intensive "so" seems to have been neutralized, especially among the younger generation. In section 3.2, I took up the words "woman" and "lady" and discussed them in connection with their usage in job terminology but the result was the same as Lakoff mentioned. In Section 3.3, I considered the non parallel usages of some pair words such as "bachelor" vs "spinster," "master," vs "mistress," and "widow," vs "widower." Here, again, the results were the same as Lakoff's.

In section 3.4, I discussed the usage of the sex-indefinite pronouns "he"/"his" and the choice of "he" or "she" in referring to someone's last name. The results I got were almost the same as what Lakoff claimed. In the case of the sex-indefinite pronoun, however, 31.9% of the informants chose "her" or both "his" and "her." I, therefore, assumed that people were becoming more conscious of discrimination in language "about" women and tend to change their linguistic behavior.

In section 3.5, I took up the word "professional" in the context of the sentences: (a) He is a professional and (b) She is a professional. For sentence (a), my results were the same as Lakoff's; but for sentence (b) most of the informants thought that she is a doctor, a lawyer, a professor, and the like, and only two male informants thought that she is "a prostitute (call-girl, hooker)" as Lakoff suggested. This difference with Lakoff's study reflects that people's linguistic behavior has been changing along with the change of social structure in the United States.

4.2 Conclusion

As I have already mentioned, in this study, I dealt with sex-differentiated language usage in the United States and found some differences from Lakoff's claims. She discusses sex differences in language in terms of different roles and unequal roles or status in society. People's linguistic behavior may change along with the change of the views and values of society. Thus, if one views women as inferior, as Fromkin & Rodman state, then special speech characteristics will be viewed as inferior. When everyone in society stands equally and is treated as such, however, there will be little concern for the sexual non parallelism existing in language (p.279).

In the present study, I was especially concerned with lexical traits of sex-differentiated language. But I would like to continue to study and investigate other aspects of sex-differentiated language such as phonological traits and syntactic-pragmatic characteristics.

I must also note that the results of this study cannot be applied to everyone in the United States since my informants were only 185 in

number and limited to a few regions listed in section 1. Therefore, further investigation is definitely necessary for making much more reliable generalizations.

This kind of study on sex-differentiated language usage, I believe, should be taken into consideration in the field of English Language Education. In this connection, and in closing this section of conclusion, I will quote the following statement from Lakoff:

"For the teacher of second language, it is important to realize that social context is relevant in learning to speak a second language fluently. It is also important for a teacher to be aware of the kind of language he or she is speaking; if a woman teacher unconsciously teaches, "women's language" to her male students, they may be in difficulties when they try to function in another country ; if a female anthropologist learns the "men's language" of an area, she may not be able to get anywhere with the inhabitants because she may seem unfeminine, and they will not know how to react to her. Language learning thus goes beyond phonology, syntax, and semantics, but it takes a perceptive teacher to notice the pitfalls and identify them correctly for students" (p.47).

(Note that the underlined passages in the above quotation are mine.)

Note

* This is a revised version of my B.A. thesis submitted to College of Education, the University of the Ryukyus in 1990.

I would like to thank Professors Susumu Yamauchi and Peter Petrucci for their valuable suggestions on an earlier version of this paper. Naturally, any remaining errors are strictly mine.

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A p p e n d i x

This study may contribute to our knowledge of how people use the language in certain contexts and thus may assist researchers in the study of the language and the status of women in English speaking culture. Your participation in this work is very much appreciated.

Please fill in the following blanks about yourself, as this information is needed for the analysis of responses.

- (1) Age: _____ (2) Sex: Male ____, Female _____
- (3) Highest grade level reached in school: Elementary School ____
 Junior High ____, Senior high ____, College ____, Graduate School ____
- (4) Occupation (If retired, former occupation): _____

1. Who is more likely to use the following expressions, man, woman, or both? Please put a check mark _____.

- | | | | |
|--|-------|---------|--------|
| 1. The wall is <u>lavender</u> . | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 2. The boat is <u>aquamarine</u> . | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 3. The folwer is <u>mauve</u> . | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 4. <u>Shit!</u> | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 5. <u>Ohdear!</u> | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 6. <u>Oh fudge!</u> | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 7. <u>Dear me!</u> | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 8. <u>Oh my!</u> | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 9. <u>Gosh!</u> | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 10. <u>Gee!</u> | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 11. What a <u>terrific</u> idea! | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 12. That's a <u>great</u> idea! | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 13. That's a <u>cool</u> backpack. | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 14. That's a <u>neat</u> pen! | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 15. What a <u>groovy</u> sports car! | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 16. What an <u>outstanding</u> motorcycle! | man__ | woman__ | both__ |
| 17. What a <u>divine</u> idea! | man__ | woman__ | both__ |

18. That dog is just adorable! man__ woman__ both__
19. How sweet of you to do such a thing for me! man__ woman__ both__
20. It's a lovely day! man__ woman__ both__
21. Oh, that's charming, isn't it? man__ woman__ both__
22. I feel so unhappy! man__ woman__ both__
23. That movie made me so sick! man__ woman__ both__
24. That sunset is so beautiful! man__ woman__ both__
25. Fred is so dumb! man__ woman__ both__

2. Which of the words in the parenthesis () would you choose? Circle the appropriate one.

1. A (woman, lady) that I know works at K-mart.
2. A (woman, lady) that I know is a dean at Yale University.
3. A (woman, lady) that I know makes amazing things out of shoelaces.
4. His aunt is a cleaning (woman, lady).
5. The new head of the hospital is a (woman, lady) doctor.
6. A (woman, lady) that I know works at Macy's.
7. She's only twelve, but she's already a (woman, lady).
8. After ten years in jail, Harry wanted to find a (woman, lady).
9. She's my (woman, lady), so don't mess around with her.

3. Which sentence sounds more natural? Circle (a) or (b).

1. a. He is a master of academic politics.
b. She is a mistress of academic politics.
2. a. Rhonda declined to be my mistress, so she returned to her husband.
b. John declined to be my master, so he returned to his wife.
3. a. Lucy is a mistress.
b. Lucy is Bob's mistress.
4. a. Mary hopes to meet an eligible bachelor.
b. Fred hopes to meet an eligible spinster.
5. a. Mary is John's widow.
b. John is Mary's widower.

4. What kind of job might the following people do? Please write some examples.

1. He is a professional.

2. She is a professional.

5. Choose the appropriate word in the parenthesis ().

1. Say, what did you think of Lakoff's latest paper where (he, she) makes a claim that ...
2. Everyone takes (his, her) seat.
3. If a person wants to ingratitate (himself, herself) with Harry, (he, she) should tell him some jokes.

6. Please write any feminine (women) or masculine (men) words or expressions you can think of.

1. feminine (women): _____

2. masculine (men): _____

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

論文要旨

アメリカ英語における性差による言語使用の違いについて

与儀峰奈子

世界の色々な言語に女性・男性の性差による話し方の違いが存在することは多くの言語学者によって指摘れ、社会言語学的な観点からの研究が盛んに行われている。

アメリカ英語におけるその分野の研究はRobin Lakoff (1975)の著書 *Language and Women's Place* が導火線となった。Lakoffの研究は本人の内省と周囲の人を観察したものに基づいたものだが、その著書の中で「女性の言葉」と「女性に関する言葉」について言及し、性差によって話し方が違うことと、女性は男性と異なった表現をされていることを指摘している。

本稿では、Lakoffが「女性の言葉」の特徴として指摘した「専門的な色彩ことば (mauve, lavender, aquamarine) のような特殊な語彙」"Oh, dear!", "Dear me!", "Oh, fudge!" のような弱い虚辞 (weaker expletives), 'divine' や、'charming', 'sweet', 'adorable' のようなLakoffの言ういわゆる empty adjectives (ほとんど意味のない形容詞), 誇張表現としての副詞 "so" (intensive "so")と「女性に関する言葉」について、185名のアメリカ英語のネイティブ・スピーカーにアンケートを行い、性差による言語使用の違いについて考察した。