THE LINGUISTIC MANIFESTATIONS OF GENDERLECT IN "EMILY IN PARIS" TV SERIES

Kristine Harutyunyan[*]
https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7860-9186
Anna Sargsyan[**]
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-331-5-3489
Yerevan State University

Sociolinguists study genderlect to better understand how gender and language intersect and to challenge stereotypes and assumptions about gendered communication. Genderlect refers to the idea that men and women, on average, tend to have distinct communication styles and tendencies. The aim of the present article is to study the genderlect in one of the most famous TV series from the sociolinguistic point of view. Within the frames of the article we attempt to illustrate the linguistic differences between men and women, to highlight various conversational behaviors and to detect the reasons of this gender-based diversity. The factual data of the research was taken from the scripts of the TV series, conditioned by the fact that the gendered language is best illustrated in everyday speech. The main findings of the article are the manifestation and clarification of linguistic differences of genderlect in the TV series.

Keywords: *sociolinguistic study, genderlect, linguistic differences, conversational behavior, TV series.*

Introduction

Being part of society people need to communicate with each other. Sociolinguistics deals with language and society, they are interrelated since one cannot exist without the other.

Sociolinguists study the relationship between language and society, they explain why we speak differently in different social contexts, and define the social parameters and social factors that influence the language we use while communicating. "The same message may be expressed very differently to different people. We use different styles in different social contexts" (Holmes, 2013). Social factors are basic components in

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[*] kristineharutyunyan@ysu.am
[**] annasargsyan@ysu.am

sociolinguistic explanations of why we speak differently in different social contexts. They are very important in describing and analyzing all types of information. In any situation linguistic choices generally indicate people's awareness of the influence of the one or more social factors.

"Genderlect" is a term coined by sociolinguist Deborah Tannen, which is a blend of "gender" and "dialect". The term to describes the idea that men and women, on average, have distinct and different styles of communication. As for J. Butler (1990), she challenges conventional understandings of gender and identity, particularly by deconstructing the binary framework of male/female and man/woman.

The present article aims to examine gender differences in the communication and language used in the TV series *Emily in Paris*, *Season 1*. In conducting the analysis of genderlect, we utilized the following methodological framework: corpus selection, transcription analysis, lexical and syntactic analysis, sociolinguistic considerations and qualitative analysis. In order to reveal the truthfulness of the statements connected with gender differences, one of the most famous Netflix TV series is analysed. The topicality of the research lies on the fact that genderlect encompasses controversial assumptions and its investigation in TV series is essential in gender studies.

Gender and language peculiarities in *Emily in Paris* TV series

Sociolinguistic studies show how language use is influenced or guided by social factors, such as class, profession, age or gender. Particularly our focus is on gender issues and differences that occur in everyday speech between the two sexes. Some linguists claim that women often use apologies, softening words, compliments, etc. (Lakoff, 1975). Obviously, gender issues are best manifested in everyday life.

The study of gender and language in sociolinguistics began in the 1970s and has developed since then. There exist two theories on language and gender: the Dominance Theory and the Gender Difference Theory. According to the dominance theory (Lakoff, 1975), the language used by women is powerless and unassertive. According to the gender difference theory, men and women belong to different subcultures (Tannen, 1990), hence the main reason for language diversity.

In her article "Gender and Social Influence", Carli (2001) interprets women's status by the following words, "Women's lower status relative to men is particularly highlighted in interactions between men and women. Consequently, women's relative disadvantage in influencing others would likely be greatest in their interactions with men."

Taking into consideration that the language differences between men and women are best illustrated in everyday speech and the fact that language used in TV series is abundant with the manifestation of everyday speech, it can serve as an object of investigation. The linguistic means used in the series is as fascinating and compelling to examine as the events going on around Emily.

"Emily in Paris" is an American romantic comedy-drama TV series created by Darren Star. The heroine is an ambitious American girl in her late twenties, a

marketing executive from Chicago who gets her dream job in Paris. Her company sends her as an American point of view to a French luxury marketing company. Emily's new life is filled with adventures and surprising challenges in work, love life and friendship.

Many linguists consider interruption in conversation to be a masculine characteristic. Interpreting the reason why men often seem to interrupt women in conversation, Tannen (1990) mentions the fact that men prefer not to support the other's talk but to lead conversation in another direction. In this way men want to gain central role and raise their rank in society. As an illustration let us examine the example from the first episode of the TV series below:

> EMILY: *Dough!* **Sorry** *I'm late. I've got some* **crazy** *news*
> DOUGH: *(Interrupts her) Wait. Me first. I leased the space on*
> *Wacker. Three years.*
> EMILY: **Seriously?!**

In the given instance we see that Emily comes to share great news about her new job, but Dough interrupts her by changing the subject of their talk. Longing to be the first, he prevents her from finishing her turn and starts his own conversation. We can also see that Emily's speech is more emotionally colored by the usage of exclamation marks, she supports Dough and expresses excitement and engagement in the conversation:

> EMILY: *It's amazing,* **isn't it?** *The entire city looks like*
> *Ratatoille.*
> DOUGH: *Beautiful.*
> EMILY: **Soooo beautiful***.*
> DOUGH: *How was the first day?*
> EMILY: *Great. OK.* **Maybe** *a few things got lost in translation.*
> **I mean***, it took them a minute to realize I was me and*
> *not Madeline. But I really feel like I can be a big asset*
> *here.*

In the above-mentioned dialogue Emily makes use of empty adjectives, hedges, tag questions and even simile. The extensive use of hedging devices and tag questions in Emily's speech express uncertainty, lack of confidence and forces feedback from the addressee. She is very excited by the fact that she moved to work in Paris, so, while talking with Dough about the city, she compares it with Ratatoille and also uses emphatic stress. In this way she tries to communicate her feelings and emotions through linguistic means. Then responding to Dough's question Emily acknowledges that there were some challenges on her first day; namely language and cultural differences.

> *MINDY: Ohh. You have friends in Paris?*
> *EMILY: No. My boyfriend's coming next week, **but…***
> *MINDY: Are you lonely?*
> *EMILY: No, **I mean, I don't know**.*

During the first encounter with Mindy (a Chinese girl who lives in Paris) in the park she shows concern for Emily's well-being in a new and unfamiliar city. Emily's response is very uncertain and hedged, which can be noticed by the usage of hedging devices and pauses in her speech. Mindy offers her company as she notices that Emily is somehow stressed and has mixed feelings about her social situation since she is still adjusting to her new life in Paris. Her answer shows that Emily is uncertain about her feelings and loneliness, so Mindy offers her company whenever she feels lonely.

> *JULIEN: **You know**, we are all **a little** afraid of you.*
> *EMILY: What? Afraid of me? How?*
> *JULIEN: Your ideas. They are more new. **Mayb**e they are better.*
> *EMILY: Yes, **very possibly**.*
> *JULIEN: Now you are here, **maybe** we feel we have to work harder. Make*
> *   more money.*

In the example above Emily speaks with one of her colleagues at workplace, Julien uses lots of hedges while trying to explain to Emily the reason for avoiding her. He starts with *You know* and uses *maybe, a little* to soften his speech and be more polite with Emily. Instead of saying that Emily's ideas are better, he uses *maybe* to soften the assertion, while Emily admits his thoughts with *very possibly*. This kind of indirectness is common in sociolinguistic interactions, as it allows speakers to convey their message while minimizing potential confrontation.

> *EMILY: **Oh, jeez**. I did it again. **I'm really so sorry**.*
> *GABRIEL: Emily, do you want to live in my apartment?*
> *EMILY: **Come on**, even you have to admit that the floor numbering*
> *   here makes **absolutely** no sense.*
> *GABRIEL: You are very wet.*
> *EMILY: **What? Oh. Yeah, um...** I **just** ran five miles, but **I don't***
> *   **really know** what that is in kilometers.*
> *GABRIEL: Can I get you a glass of water?*
> *   It's a long way to the fifth floor.*
> *EMILY: **Nah**, I have to get to work, but, **um, I promise** I won't bang*
> *   on your door again.*

Here comes the conversation with her neighbor Gabriel and this part is abundant with interjections, hedging devices, intensifiers, rising intonation. It is visible to the naked eye that all of these linguistic means are used by Emily. It makes her speech

more emotionally colored, subjective, somehow uncertain and polite. On the other hand, Gabriel is precise and neutral in his speech, but we can also notice the usage of some humorous cues associated with Emily's mistakes which is conditioned by the cultural difference. Emily's comment about the floor numbering making no sense reflects her perspective as an American in Paris and it also highlights language and cultural differences, reflecting the complexities of communication in a cross-cultural context.

> EMILY: ***I mean***, *it's part of the reason I'm here.*
> ANTOINE: *Sorry?*
> EMILY: ***Uh, yeah...*** *Never mind.* ***Sorry***. *It's a long story*
> ANTOINE: *Please. I'm curious.*
> EMILY: ***Well, I think*** *we can do much more on social.*
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> ANTOINE: *How are you enjoying Paris?*
> EMILY: *I love it.* ***I mean***, *who wouldn't,* ***right? I'm sorry*** *if I was talking too much about work. Sometimes I* ***just*** *get* ***a little*** *over enthusiastic, and,* ***uh,*** *I know it's a party.*

Another example is the dialogue between Antoione and Emily at a party. Emily makes implicit statements which are followed with an apology. This is a polite way of retracting or redirecting her previous statement. Her speech is filled with excessive number of hedges, polite forms, tag questions, etc. Antoine, in his turn expresses curiosity using polite forms and encourages her to continue the conversation. She politely responds to Antoine's question using hedging devices and tag questions. Then Emily recognizes and explains her enthusiasm for work with the help of hedges, interjections, downgrades which potentially deviated from social norms of casual conversation at a party. *Well, I think* is an assertion and suggestion about the potential for improvement in their social media efforts. All the linguistic means used in this dialogue soften the force of the utterances:

> SYLVIE: ***Oh, also......I think perhaps*** *last night you were* ***a little too*** *friendly with Antoine.*
> EMILY: ***What? No.***
> SYLVIE: ***Mm,*** *he seemed very friendly with you.*
> EMILY: ***I think*** *he was* ***just*** *being French.*

In the conversation with her boss Sylvie observes Antoine's and Emily's friendly talk and seeks clarification. Sylvie's speech is abundant with hedging devices, downgrades and interjections which decreases the force of her speech. And Emily in her turn, responds with a clear denial, and a kind of rhetoric question with a rising intonation which shows her emotional strain and anxiety about Sylvie's remark. Then

she offers an explanation for Antoine's behavior, referring it to the cultural norms by utilizing hedges and downgrades to sound more polite.

> EMILY: ***Uh, I don't know***. *See the sights?* ***I mean***, *Paris* ***is kinda***
>   *famous for its sights.*
> DOUGH: ***Yeah***. *Alone. While you're working.*
> EMILY: ***Well,*** *our lunches are* ***pretty*** *extensive here.* ***I mean***, *I could*
>   *spend three hours with you in the Louvre in the afternoon and*
>   *no one would miss me,* ***you know.***

In the example above we observe the conversation between Emily and Dough. Here Emily's speech is filled with hedging devices, lexical fillers, interjections, empty adjectives, markers of vagueness. Emily's usage of these devices indicates her uncertainty and hesitation, hedges in her response suggest that she is not sure about her plan. All these means soften her speech and tone down the force of the utterance. On the other hand Dough is short and precise in his statements and his response doesn't provide elaboration or commitment, it implicitly expresses disapproval. Further Emily introduces some justification with the help of hedges that softens her speech. In her last utterance she uses several hedges, such as *I could* (indicating possibility), *I mean* (softening the assertion) and *you know* (seeking agreement or understanding). All these linguistic means make her statements sound less assertive.

> EMILY: ***Mm! Oh, my God***! *I feel like I've never had an omelet before.*
>   *This was* ***amazing***.
> GABRIEL: *You sure you don't wanna go back to peanut butter?*

And the last conversation that we examine is between Emily and Gabriel. Emily's response is filled with enthusiasm and expressive language. Her speech is extremely emotional including interjections and empty adjectives which reflect her excitement and appreciation of the omelet. Gabriel's response, on the other hand, is more straightforward and less expressive. We notice a great difference of emotional expressiveness in these two utterances, referring this to gender difference.

Conclusion

The general view on gender-featured language considers that gender differences in language reflect different roles and status. In the examples of the TV series we observed, we came to the conclusion that Emily, as compared to men, used more hedges, intensifiers, tag questions and other politeness markers. The investigation of the TV series scripts shed light upon the linguistic peculiarities observed in the process of communication between men and women. Within the scope of our research, we have come to the conclusion that Emily and other female characters are more supportive in communication, they use more polite forms, lexical fillers, hedges, empty adjectives, interjections. Their speech is more emotionally colored and relationship building as

compared to men's, which is more direct and assertive. Thus, the results observed in the present study elucidate that the assumptions concerning gender and language diversity can be held to some extent.

Conflict of Interests
The author declares no ethical issues or conflict of interests in this research.

Ethical standards
The author affirms this research does not involve human subjects.

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Քրիստինե Հարությունյան
Աննա Սարգսյան

Հանրալեզվաբաններն ուսումնասիրում են գենդերը և լեզուն՝ ավելի լավ հասկանալու համար, թե ինչպես են հատվում սեռը և լեզուն, ինչպես նաև գենդերային հաղորդակցության վերաբերյալ կարծրատիպերին մարտահրավեր նետելու նպատակով: Ըստ գենդերլեկտի հասկացույթի՝ տղամարդիկ և կանայք հակված են հաղորդակցման տարբեր ոճերի: Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է՝ հանրալեզվաբանության տեսանկյունից ուսումնասիրել գենդերլեկտը մերօրյա սիրված հեռուստասերիալներից մեկում: Հոդվածի շրջանակներում փորձ է արվում ներկայացնել տղամարդկանց և կանանց լեզվական տարբերությունները, ընդգծել տարբեր խոսքային վարքագծեր և բացահայտել այդ գենդերային զանազանության պատճառները: Հետազոտության փաստացի տվյալները ստացվել են սերիալի ացենարներից, ինչը պայմանավորված է այն հանգամանքով, որ գենդերային լեզուն լավագույնս արտացոլված է առօրյա խոսքում:

Բանալի բառեր՝ *հանրալեզվաբանական ուսումնասիրություն, գենդերլեկտ, լեզվական տարբերություններ, խոսակցական վարքագիծ, հեռուստասերիալ:*