Transition from last class

- Studies of the relation between language and gender focused on multiple issues.
- One is sexism in language.
- Another is the general assumption that women’s language is different from men’s language. In particular, women’s language has been characterized by the use of hedges and boosters.

‘Standard’ language and gender

- Sociolinguistic studies on the speech of men and women also showed that both genders differ in their usage of so-called ‘standard’ or ‘prestige’ forms of a language.
- Women have been reported to use more standard/prestige forms than men.

‘Standard’ language and gender

- For example, in all English-speaking cities where speech data have been collected, women use more ‘ing’ and fewer in’ pronunciations than men in words like swimming and typing.
- In Montreal, both men and women tend to delete the [l] in phrases like il y a and il fait. However, men do so more often than women.
- In Sydney, some women and men pronounce the initial sound in thing as [f], but the men use this pronunciation more than the women.
- In Detroit, for instance, multiple negation, such as I don’t know nothing about it, is more frequent in men’s speech than in women’s.
‘Standard’ language and gender

• Peter Trudgill, a sociolinguist, holds that the single most consistent finding to emerge from sociolinguistic studies since the early 80’s is the following:
  • When a gender group uses more of a linguistic form, the tendency is:
    – Women → standard, prestige forms
    – Men → vernacular forms, not admired overtly by the society as a whole, not cited as correct forms.

‘Standard’ language and gender

• This pattern is evident at a very young age.
• A study 30 years ago showed that in a semi-rural New England village, boys used more –in’ than girls, who used more -ing.
• Later studies in Boston and Detroit identified the same pattern:
  – Boys used more vernacular forms such as consonant cluster simplification: las’ and tol’ for last and told.
  – Boys pronounced the and then with [d].

‘Sociolinguistic universal tendencies’

Holmes’ (1998)

1. Women and men develop different patterns of language use.
2. Women tend to focus on the affective functions of an interaction more often than men do.
3. Women tend to use linguistic devices that stress solidarity more often than men do.
4. Women tend to interact in ways which will maintain and increase solidarity, while (especially in formal contexts) men tend to interact in ways that will maintain and increase their power or status.
5. Women are stylistically more flexible than men.

Research question

• The question now of course is: Assuming these differences/tendencies are indeed true, why do they exist?
Questions #1 and 5

- Section 4.2 presents different approaches to the study of the relation between language and gender. How are these approaches different? Which one catches your attention the most? Can you relate these approaches to your experience and/or the experience of those around you? How?
- We mentioned in class that studies have shown that women are more likely than men to use the prestige variety spoken in a community. What are some of the proposed explanations for this case of variation, as discussed in Section 4.7? Has this gender-based sociolinguistic variation been observed in the Arabic-speaking communities as well? Explain.

Approaches to language and gender

- Deficit/Insecurity.
- Dominance.
- Difference/Cultural.
- Community of practice.

Are we asking the right questions?

- There is, however, something skewed about this whole discussion. Can you see what it is?
- Why do we have to explain ‘standard’ usage?

Men’s speech

- Breaking away from the standard can signal a rebellious attitude.
- Boys may like to do it more than girls.
- Vernacular forms can come to be associated with toughness.
- How do people react to recorded vernacular speech? Who wins in a street fight?
- Still, is this really about language only?

‘Standard’ language and gender in the Arab world

- Haeri (1996): Pharyngealization; palatalization; and the qaaf.
- ‘Access’ and ‘role’.

Women’s speech and MSA

- But is it true that Arab women use less MSA than men?
- Bassiouney’s Study of talk shows.
- Women held the floor more (9 to 8 in one show).
- They interrupted and sounded assertive on multiple occasions.
- Men occasionally used titles of address when addressing women.
- They also used MSA as much as, if not more than, men.
Women’s speech and assertiveness

- Interruption (middle of the sentence and face-threatening) vs. overlap (end of sentence and typically supportive).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.7</th>
<th>Number of interruptions and overlaps initiated by women and men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruption initiated by</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlap initiated by</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indexicality and projection of identity

- **Indexicality**: A relation of associations through which utterances are understood.
- Use of MSA is indexical in that sense. It is associated with authority, education, and expertise.
- MSA is used to project an ‘expert identity.’

Symbolic use of language

- The case of Berber-speaking women.
- The case of Anglophone wives of Tunisian men.
## Question #2

- In Section 4.3, Bassiouney writes: “... what outsiders may miss is the great diversity of the situation of men and women in the Arab world” (p. 134). What is the evidence given in support of this quote in subsections, 4.3.1 through 4.3.5?
- In short, gender cannot be isolated from other social variables when studying sociolinguistic behavior.

## Next class agenda

- Article on the Political and Social Impact on the Linguistic Behavior of Iraqis.
- Language policy and politics: Bassiouney's Chapter 5, pp. 198-210, and also sections 5.7 and 5.8, pp. 256-263.