



## Jargon Perception from a Sociolinguistic View: Gender and Social Class

H M Al-Mutwali  

Department of English, College of Education, Alnoor University

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#### Correspondence:

Haneen Majed Al-Mutwali  
haneen.arp103@student.uomosul.edu.iq

### Abstract

This study deals with jargons used by workgroup members who are Mosuli Arabic speakers. It investigates jargons perception by lay people-certain group outsiders. It tests the hypothesis saying that lay people do not understand jargon terms used in specific occupations even though they are used by and perceived by the same dialect- Mosuli Arabic. It also tests if the rate of perception shows variance with the social factors of gender and social class. The data of the study are qualitative, represented by the jargons used by workgroup members, and quantitative, represented by the statistics and numerals of the questionnaire results. After collecting the qualitative data and through the questionnaire, lay people were asked about some jargons to test their perception of these terms. The terms are related to six workgroups: three of them are professions (physicians, electric engineers, and IT programmers), and the other three occupations are crafts (goldsmiths, car mechanics, and construction workers). Then, the results of the questionnaire were analyzed and discussed concluding that workgroup outsiders do not understand jargons used by workgroup members or insiders, and their rate of perception does not reflect social class nor gender distinctions.

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## دراسة في فهم مصطلحات العمل من منظور لغوي-اجتماعي: الجنس والمستوى الاجتماعي

حنين ماجد المتولي

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة النور  
المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة المصطلحات المستخدمة من قبل أعضاء مجاميع عمل ناطقين باللهجة الموصلية، إذ تبحث هذه الدراسة في فهم هذه المصطلحات من قبل الأشخاص العاديين ممن لا ينتمون للمجموعة المقصودة بالدراسة. تفترض هذه الدراسة بأن الأشخاص العاديين لا يفهمون المصطلحات المستخدمة في مهن محددة على الرغم من أنها تستخدم بنفس اللهجة العربية الموصلية. كما أنها تبحث فيما إذا كان معدل الإدراك أو الفهم يظهر تبايناً مع العوامل الاجتماعية كجنس الشخص (ذكر أم أنثى) والطبقة الاجتماعية.

إن بيانات هذه الدراسة على نوعين: نوعية وكمية. بيانات نوعية، متمثلة بالمصطلحات المستخدمة من قبل أعضاء فريق العمل، وبيانات كمية، متمثلة بإحصائيات وأرقام نتائج الاستبيان. بعد جمع البيانات النوعية ومن خلال الاستبيان، تم سؤال الأشخاص العاديين عن بعض المصطلحات لاختبار مدى إدراكهم لهذه المصطلحات.

وترتبط المصطلحات بست مجموعات عمل: ثلاث منها هي المهن (الأطباء، ومهندسو الكهرباء، ومبرمجو تكنولوجيا المعلومات)، والمهن الثلاث الأخرى هي الحرف (الصاغة، وميكانيكا السيارات، وعمال البناء. بعد ذلك، تم تحليل نتائج الاستبيان ومناقشتها وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن الناس ممن لا ينتمون لمجاميع عمل معينة لا يفهمون المصطلحات المستخدمة من قبل أعضاء مجموعة العمل، وأن معدل إدراكهم لا يعكس الطبقة الاجتماعية أو الفروق بين الجنسين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأسلوب، المصطلحات، العربية الموصلية، المهنة، الحرفة، الأطباء، مبرمجو تكنولوجيا المعلومات، مهندسي الكهرباء، الصاغة، عمال البناء، ميكانيكا السيارات، الجنس، الطبقة الاجتماعية والمهنة..

## 1-Introduction

People participating in recurrent communication situations tend to develop similar vocabularies, similar features of intonation, and characteristic bits of syntax and phonology that they use in these situations... This kind of variety is a register", (Ferguson , 1994(1). Register contains special terms for recurrent objects and events, and formulaic sequences or 'routines' that facilitate speedy communication, serve to mark the register, establish feelings of rapport, and serve other purposes similar to the accommodation that influences dialect formation. This special kind of vocabulary is called 'jargon' (ibid). Registers are characterised by the use of vocabulary which the members of the groups have developed to talk about their specialty, such specific vocabulary is called 'jargon'. 'Jargon' is a special technical vocabulary associated with specific areas of work or interest as a part of the register, (2).

Jargon is 'a kind of masonic glue between different members of the same profession' (Hudson, 1978) (3). It was firstly used, in the late fourteenth century to mean the twittering of birds. From this sense, it passed on to refer to any form of speech/writing containing unfamiliar terms used by a particular group of people or to mean 'talk that cannot be understood'. "jargon reflects a particular profession or occupation, it is pretentious, with only a small kernel of meaning underneath it, and it is, deliberately or accidentally, mystifying", (ibid).

Outsiders to a discourse or professional community are not able to follow what specialists write and talk about. Swales (1990) (4) points that if one does not have sufficient awareness or understanding of the conventions of such specialised discourses and genres, they are not easily to be understood. Even if the listeners are in a position to understand every word of what is written or said and even being a native speaker in such contexts situated in specific professional practices, is not necessarily helpful .

This study investigates jargon terms used by certain workgroup members in Mosul. It tests jargon perception (understanding) by outsiders and investigates if this perception varies in accordance to the sociolinguistic factors of gender and social class.

## 2 .Aims and Scope of the Study

This research tackles jargons used by workgroup members, who are Mosuli Arabic(MA) speakers, as special terms within some occupational varieties of MA. Jargons, that are investigated in this study, are related to six workgroups: three crafts (goldsmiths, car

mechanics & construction workers) and three professions (physicians, electric engineers & IT programmers). Jargon terms are usually mystifying and not easily comprehended by workgroup outsiders. So, the research aims to examine jargon perception from a sociolinguistic view to test its perception according to the outsiders' gender and social class. And to discuss the reason behind variation in perception, Whether the perception is social class or gender-affected .

## 3 .Research Questions

1-Do people understand jargons used by workgroup members (goldsmiths, car mechanics, construction workers, physicians, electric engineers & IT programmers)?

2-Does the rate of jargon perception show variance with accordance to the sociolinguistic variables of gender and social class?

3-If the rate varies with accordance to gender or social class, and what is the logical manifestation of this social and gender-varied perception ?

## 4 .Hypothesis

1 -It is hypothesized that people do not understand jargons and the rate of perception may be attributed to certain social factors. Within this hypothesis, there are two minor ones :

a- Gender: males show a higher rate of perception than females .

b- Social Class: people who occupy jobs that require academic qualification show a higher rate of perception than others who occupy jobs that do not .

## 5 .Literature Review

Sociolinguists and anthropologists say that social factors are 'analogous' to geographical differences in causing numerous language varieties. That is, just as geographical differences cause different dialects, social differences create linguistic variation too (Salzmann, et. al., 2012: (5).

### 5.1 .Gender

Gender is an obvious factor associated with sociolinguistic differences. This field has gained a lot of interest by applied linguists, whether ethnographically and ideologically. At the ethnographical , they wanted to explain that women and men act differently. As for the ideological, they aimed to show that language is used as a means to construct inequalities between men and women. Though, these tendencies give two aspects in language and gender research; how men and women talk, first, and second how men and women are represented in language as a

code. Now, the concern seems to be an integration of the ethnographic and the ideological quest in that it seeks to explore how language users' identities are revealed in gendered ways within communities of practice, (6).

Trudgill 1974, (2) as cited in Baxter (2011: (6), finds that men and women use different forms phonologically and concludes that women tend to use more standard forms than men who usually use more vernacular forms. However, Milroy (1980), as cited in Baxter (2011: (6), in her Belfast study, finds that social networks are more influential than gender within a certain context; moreover that the difference between women's linguistic behaviour are more evident than the similarities in the same context. Since the 1990s the field of language and gender has moved from focusing on gender differences towards gender diversity .

According to Holmes, this field 'engulfed in a wave of social constructionism'. Social constructionists view gender not as something immutable or static, but rather as dynamic, i.e. something that is enacted and changes through interaction, not as something pre-exist in interaction. Many research studies adopt this view in the field of language and gender, such works have evidenced that men and women do not speak differently at work, but rather switch between feminine and masculine speech style depending on several factors that are of multiple levels like the norms of the workplace community, the culture of the social workplace group, to the wider social considerations of how should men and women speak and behave at work (7).

Gender differences in language can reflect social status and power differences, i.e., social roles of men and women are reflected in their speech. In communities where women and men share similar social roles, they do not speak different forms. Holmes states that "...where women's and men's social roles overlap, the speech forms they use also overlap. In other words, women and men do not use completely different forms" (8). On the other hand, in Bengali society, for example, where a woman is considered subordinate to her husband, women do not address their husbands by their first names, similar to a younger person who is not permitted to address a superior one by his first name. "Gender-exclusive speech forms (i.e. some forms are used only by women and others are used only by men) reflect gender-exclusive social roles" (8).

Since gender differences cause different linguistic behavior, although few studies are made about gender differences in understanding, this study tries to test if the linguistic behavior of perception (understanding) reflects gender diversity, and to justify this difference; if there was.

## 5.2 .Social Class

The sociolinguists do not agree about a single definition of the notion of social class. Ash (2013) (9) says that social class is a central concept in sociolinguistics, it is one of the sociolinguistic variables which stratify the speech communities accordingly. Discussing the treatment of social class, he reviews a number of previous studies that treats social class as an independent variable as New York City Department Store Study, the lower East Side Study, and Philadelphia: The Neighbourhood Study by Labov, in addition to Trudgill's Norwich Study, Horvath's study of Sydney, Cedergren 's study of Panama City.

In Trudgill's study of Norwich (1974), as cited in Ash (2013)(9), the social class index is based on five factors (1) occupation; (2) father 's occupation; (3) income; (4) education; (5) locality (the neighbourhood in the city of Norwich); and (6) housing (house ownership, age of the house, and building type). While most researchers do not depend on occupation as a sufficient individual factor, Horvath (1985), cited in Ash (2013)(9), in her study of variation and change in Sydney , uses occupation alone effectively. She categorizes the speakers on the basis of their occupation into three ranks: middle class, upper working class, and lower working class. Cedergren's study of Panama City (1973), as cited in Ash (2013) (9), ranks the speakers into four strata depending on occupation, education, and barrio of residence. This shows that there are many ways to rank the speakers of certain society. Then Ash (2013) (9) adds that " if social class is determined by a combination of features, the single indicator that accounts for by far the greatest portion of the variance is occupation. Some researchers use occupation alone as a determiner of social class, and it is hard to imagine a composite index that excludes occupation ". Thus, this study depends on occupation as an individual factor to examine how is the linguistic behavior reflected through social class .

## 6 .Previous Studies :

Tracing the literature, jargon has not been much investigated, and the few studies of jargon are interested either in jargon translation or in the linguistic modification of loanwords used as jargons. Larger number of studies dealing with jargon in Malaysia and Indonesia have been found, and lesser number of studies have been found to investigate jargon in Arabic. The most relevant ones are:

**6.1.Salman and Mansoor (2017) (10):** this research paper investigates the Iraqi Arabic loanwords that are used as computer, internet and mobile phone jargons concerning the way these expressions are adapted or modified to match the phonological- morphological system of Iraqi Arabic. The source of data was the researchers' personal observation of the contexts in which the jargons are used. In addition to the observation, the researchers did some interviews

depending on a nine-item questionnaire to validate the researchers' source of information. The analysis of the expressions has proved that the morphological adaptation of the loanwords occur in number, gender, negation, possession, the definite article and word-formation, and it also reveals that some phonological changes have been introduced to match the morphological modifications .

**6.2 .Al-Quraishi and Mansour (2020) (11):** this study examines the use of English loanwords in Iraqi Arabic with reference to the medical jargon. It aims at shedding light on the process of modifying the borrowed terms used by the medical field members without translation but with Iraqi Arabic style. The data were collected through observation and questionnaire. Data analysis shows that the terms are really borrowed and modified by the medical staff speakers to match the Iraqi Arabic language , and this loanwords modification is both phonologically and morphologically. The data also reveal that most of these modifications occur in number, gender, possession, the definite articles, negation, and word formation as morphological modification. While the phonological modifications occur in simple aspects of pronunciation.

## 7 .Methodology

### 7.1 .Data Collection

As stated earlier, this study deals with jargon used by six workgroup members in Mosul. Two types of data are needed for this study to be conducted: qualitative & quantitative. The qualitative data are the jargon terms used by insiders (workgroup members), while the quantitative data are gathered to check the outsiders' perception or understanding .

Since similar studies have not been conducted in Mosul earlier, there is no ready-made corpus. Thus, in order to be authentic and reliable, the data of the study are collected by the researcher herself, though the data are said to be primary data. Data collection process was not an easy task to do, it took much time and effort. The difficulty is attributed to the numerous settings the data were collected from , i.e., the data are gathered from work fields related to both crafts and professions. So, the researcher adopts three data collection methods: observation with interview for the qualitative data represented by the special terms of each occupation (jargons), and then a questionnaire for the quantitative data through choosing some of these terms from each occupation and ask the lay people (workgroup outsiders) about them to examine their understanding of jargons .

The researcher designed a questionnaire to test people's perception with reference to gender and occupation (as a factor to test the social class). The questionnaire contains two sections, one section is specified for people who occupy professions, and the other is for people who occupy crafts. With regard to gender, the

questionnaire has an obligatory point to be answered about gender, so people have to choose, i.e. male or female. Both of the two sections contain three questions, and each question asks to choose one of three occupations thought to be related to some given jargon terms.

The questionnaire is made by using Google forms, then shared and posted on social sites. Receiving the responses in the form of excel, they are checked and sent by the researcher to a specialist in statistics. The specialist is consulted to analyse the data using SPSS software statistics, then to draw tables that show the variance in people's answers with regard to gender and occupation.

### 7.2 .Data Analysis

Data analysis, as mentioned earlier, deals with the results of the questionnaire. This section presents a slight description of the samples with regard to occupation and gender. Then, after showing the test results, it presents the analysis of the responses examining if there is a link between the rate of the correct answers and the sociolinguistic variables of gender and occupation .

#### 7.2.1 .Sample Description

This study was conducted on a number of adult lay people, all of them are older than 18. As shown below in table (1), the samples are males and females and occupy different jobs.

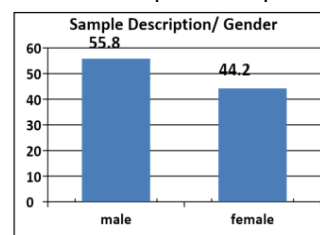
Table (1)Sample Description

rate %	Number	Variable Classification	Variable
55.8	92	Male	Gender
44.2	73	Female	
100 %	165	Sum	
52.1	86	Craft	Occupation
47.9	79	Profession	
100 %	165	Sum	

#### 7.2.1.1 .Gender

The male samples are more than the females, and thus their rate is larger. Males' rate is (55.8 %), and females' rate is (44.2%). Yet, this difference between the two rates is little and doesn't negatively affect the result, as shown in table:(2)

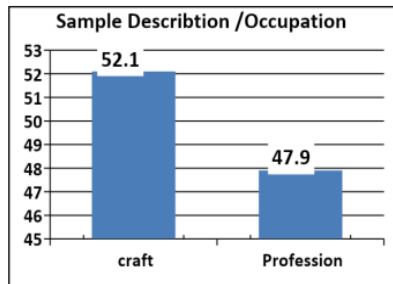
Table2. Sample Description /Gender,



#### 7.2.1.2 .Occupation

Concerning the job occupation, it can be seen that samples who occupy crafts, whose rate is (52.1%), are not much more than samples who occupy professions whose rate is (42.9%). The difference between the two rates is not enough to negatively affect the study results, as shown in the following table:

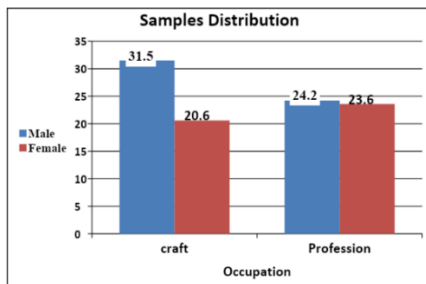
Table 3 Sample Description/ Occupation



### 7.2.1.3 .Gender across Occupation

This table shows that the number and the rate of males who occupy crafts are more than females (31.5%) for males and (20.6%) for females. On the other hand, profession occupation rates are approximately similar (24.2%) for males and (23.6%) for females. This difference of gender distribution concerning occupation reflects certain things about the Mosul society. The difference is attributed to the conventions and the traditions of Mosul that the Academic career is more suitable for women than the non-academic one, in addition to the difficulties that face women in dealing with the harsh nature of such occupation which leads women to prefer professions rather crafts.

Table (4) Sample distribution/ Gender across Occupation,



### 7.2.2 .Responses Test:

The questionnaire includes two sections each with three questions. One section is answered by samples who occupy professions, while the other section is dedicated to craft occupation. The questions dedicated to craft occupations contain jargons used in professions work fields i.e. they contain terms used by physicians, IT programmers, and electric engineers, and vice versa. The samples should match the terms to the related occupation. The number and the rate of the correct answers are shown in the table below:

variable Mean The difference between arithmetic means

Table 5 Sample Description/ correct answers

The numbers and the rates of the correct answers show that most of the questions were answered incorrectly – the samples fail in matching the jargons to their suitable work fields. This means that they do not understand these terms except the jargons used by car mechanics which their related answer shows (72.2%) rate of correct answers. This rate of correct answers is attributed to the extended use of car mechanics jargons in everyday life not only in the workgroup situation, it may be also attributed to the people’s much interest in cars according to their necessity and their everyday use. Katamba (1993 (12) comments on such case saying "sometimes the jargon of a specialist group seeps into the common language of the wider community. This is particularly likely to happen where the activities of that subgroup are fashionable or impinge directly on the life of the wider community". Similarly, IT jargons, which have (50%) rate of correct answers, seem to be more understandable than other workgroups jargons. This can be attributed to the spread of computers use in everyday life. The rate of the correct answers of IT jargons is less than the rate of car mechanics jargons, and this may reflect that people are more interested in cars rather than computers .

The responses test is made to show the differences among the samples' answers according to two sociolinguistic variables, gender and occupation. To examine if there are significant differences in the samples' responses, Null Hypothesis was adopted against the Alternative Hypothesis .

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the responses neither concerning gender nor occupation .

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant difference among the responses according to both gender and occupation .

Note that (p) value should be more than (0.05) for Null Hypothesis to be approved.

#### 7.2.2.1 .Gender

Table (6) shows the test results of the differences between males and females, regardless occupation.

The response test shows that p value is more than (0.05). This means that Null Hypothesis, which hypothesizes that there are no differences between males' and females' answers , is approved. This means that males and females share a similar rate of perception which is in fact an indication of their non-understanding. This similarity means that jargons comprehension does not vary with regard to gender, i.e. jargons perception does not depend on the sociolinguistic variable of gender .

#### 7.2.2.2 .Occupation

Table (7) shows the test results of the difference of the responses rates between craft and profession

correct Answers		Jargons	Question	Occupation
Rate %	Number			
50%	43	/ ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن /	Match these jargons to the suitable occupation	craft
46.5%	40	/ ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن /		
38.4%	33	/ ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن /		
40.5%	32	ڤيسكرن اوف سيد / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن /	Match these jargons to the suitable occupation	Profession
72.2%	57	/ ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن /		
46.8%	37	/ ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن / / ڤيسكرن ڤيسكرن /		

Response test / Gender (6)

Variable	Mean	The difference between arithmetic means	P Value
Male	1.4239	0.0829	0.634
Female	1.5068		

The response test shows that P value is (0.136) that is more than (0.05). This means that Null Hypothesis, which hypothesizes that there are no differences among the samples concerning occupation, is approved. Similar to gender, occupation differences have no effect on people's perception of jargons as it is shown in the above samples who occupy crafts and professions share a similar rate of non-understanding.

### 7.2.2.3 .Gender across occupation

To get more accurate results, males and females responses are tested with regard to occupation to see if there are significant differences concerning their answers.

a- Males' results

Response test / Male across occupation (8)

Table 7 Response test / Gender

variable	Mean	The difference between arithmetic means	P Value
Craft	1.3372	0.2577	0.136
Profession	1.5949		

Male	Occupation	Mean	The difference between arithmetic means	P Value
	Craft	1.3846	0.0904	0.711
	Profession	1.4750		

This shows that P value is more than 0.05. It indicates Null Hypothesis approval which proposes that there are no significant differences between males' responses who occupy crafts and males who occupy professions. Even if means are taken into consideration, they have approximate rates in that craft workers mean of perception is (1.3846) and professionals' mean is (1.4750). This means that weather the males occupy

crafts or professions, they have the same degree of jargons understanding.

b- Females' results

Response test / Female across occupation(9)

Female	Occupation	Mean	The difference between arithmetic means	P Value
	Craft	1.2647	0.4532	0.067
	Profession	1.7179		

The table above shows that P value is (0.067), although it is not that much difference but still more than (0.05). It indicates Null Hypothesis approval which proposes that there are no significant differences between females' responses who occupy crafts and females' responses who occupy professions. But if we neglect P value and take the means into consideration, a slight difference can be noticed. Female craft workers' perception mean is (1.2647), while female professionals' mean is (1.7179). This variation in means of perception or rate of correct answers may be attributed to female craft workers' lesser mingle with other people from different occupations simply because females' crafts like cooking, sewing, weaving, embroidery, coiffure or even hairdressing are performed at home or in certain situations specified only for women having certain job. Women who occupy crafts in Mosul usually do not work at the markets nor at their own shops except some exceptional instances. Lesser mean of female craft workers' correct answers may be also related to their social class as their jobs do not need an academic qualification so they cannot understand loan form jargons like those borrowed from English. On the other hand, the female professionals have a higher mean of correct answers that could be attributed to their mingle with other people from different social classes and who occupy various jobs at their work field institutions; this leads to increase their knowledge. The other reason could be their academic qualification that enables them to understand the loan words. If we compare this difference with the difference between male craft workers and male professionals, the difference of perception means between females is more than that between males. However their occupations and academic qualifications are different, males share approximate perception means. This approximation is attributed to the nature of their work fields involving mingling and interacting with people of various occupations and different social classes, consequently, leading to increase their knowledge and perception.

### 8 .Findings

This study hypothesized that jargon terms show some ambiguity and are often not understood by people who do not belong to a certain group within which jargons are used. Jargon perception has been tested with regard to sociolinguistic variables of gender and social class that depends mainly on occupation. Data analysis shows the following findings :

1 Jargon perception with regard to gender: Both males and females show approximate rates of correct answers. However, the wrong answers were more than the correct ones. So, it is concluded that males and females have the same rate of incomprehensibility .

2 Jargon perception with regard to social class: According to Ash (2002) (13), social class is mostly determined by occupation. So, data analysis, regarding occupation, shows that people who occupy professions and crafts share approximate rates of incorrect answers. The correct answers were less than the incorrect ones. Thus, the study has found that social class differences do not show differences in jargon perception .

Jargon perception with regard to gender across -3 social class: The results show that there is no difference in jargon perception between males who occupy professions and males who occupy crafts. The same case is reflected in females' answers. The P

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