Abstract: Language is a multidimensional phenomenon in the context of which one might observe lingual differentiation resulting in the appearance of lingual varieties. Factors that can be attributed to the observed lingual differentiation are geographical area, social characteristics of the speakers, communicative situation and the contact / coexistence of languages. Members of each social class create a special cultural subsystem, which, of course, includes language. In addition, there is a direct and not accidental relationship between social stratification of the society and lingual diversity. Social networks with their parameters (density of population and variability), serve as factors influencing formation of language varieties. This article aims to highlight and explain the role of social class and social network in the formation of language varieties. Although the argumentation developed in this paper highlights the importance of two above mentioned factors in shaping lingual differentiation, they alone could not be the only interpretive tools of lingual diversity. Ways of how lingual differentiation happens, mutual impact between social lingual forms and idiolects, especially within certain geographical area, might be the subject for the further research.

Keywords: Lingual Diversity, social class, social network, multiplicity, density, gender.

Introduction and Problem Statement

The language is multifaceted and complex, as is the language of any community that uses it. After all, language is a social product. That is why it is as varied as the society from which it emerges and which it serves in cognitive and communicative veins. That means that the language community is not characterized by lingual uniformity / homogeneity, in other words, «speakers» who belong to one and the same lingual community use not the same language in different communicative situations. On the contrary, this language is characterized by a
diversity / heterogeneity of lingual behavior, what, however, does not break it down or degrade it. A closer look would convince us that thanks to it (heterogeneity) language exists and functions. It is therefore the language of many and varied components and is a particularly complex and multidimensional mechanism, full of lingual varieties that are influenced by a number of factors such as the «geographical area, the social characteristics of the speakers, the communication situation and the contact / coexistence of languages» [Archakis & Kondili, 2004 p. 57].

In terms of how language changes / diversifies in relation to the social characteristics of its speakers, Labov’s work, has been a motivator for many researchers. In addition to Labov’s research [Labov, 1972], the research of Trudgil [1974, p. 91-95], Milroy [1980, p. 139-172, 175], and others were important. The research highlighted the social class, the social network, the multiplicity and density of the social network, gender in relation to the social class and the social network, as variables that differentiate the linguistic diversity and push for adoption or non-adoption, of linguistic types of prestige. These social characteristics are considered fixed and given, which is why they are called independent variables, while lingual types are called dependent variables, as their appearance is related to some of the structural features of the speaker.

In the light of this correlation, the study of lingual differentiation is of particular importance in the context of the different tendencies that arise from the corresponding descriptive, evaluative, and normative judgments on the discussion of globalization, which raises concerns and dilemmas. Therefore, the topicality of this work is based to that fact.

**Study’s goals and objectives**

In the context of this problematic, the purpose of this paper is to explain the role of social class and social network in the formation of lingual diversity. The individual questions, which arise and will be answered, are the objectives of the work, as follows:

a. Why do speakers from different social layers speak differently?
b. How do concepts, such as the multiplicity and density of the social network, affect lingual diversity?

c. How does the speaker’s gender, interact with the social class and social network, and, what effect does it have on the percentages of use of lingual types of prestige?

**Social class and lingual differentiation**

According to the general principles of sociology, there are three social classes that hold to varying degrees the essential goods of social life, namely wealth, prestige and power, the high, the middle, and the working class [Mikros, 2009 p. 131]. Every social stratum adopts common values, attitudes, cultural patterns and a sense of diversity with respect to people belonging to another social class, elements that will also be incorporated into their language choices.

In order to define the social class, however, we must adopt a specific sociological approach that explains the ways in which sociolinguistics views the social class as a factor that interprets language choices. As a general rule in sociolinguistic studies the «functional sociological model of Parsons» is adopted [Mikros, 2009 p. 133]. Finally, in this particular theoretical context, lingual diversity in relation to «in the sense of social status and norm» leads us to «lingual types of prestige» [Mikros, 2009 p. 136].

In addition, members of each social class create a particular cultural subsystem, which also includes the language. There is a direct and non-accidental relationship between social stratification and the lingual diversity defined by our social consciousness. Subconsciously or consciously we choose among «equivalent types» [Mikros et al., 2001 p. 136] demonstrating our integration into a «specific social class».

We therefore use lingual diversity in a stratified society to declare that we belong to a social class, as an element of identity but also as an element of differentiation from members of other classes, as the choice between different lingual types is determined by socially evaluative acceptance which they either enjoy or do not enjoy. Thus, the link between social stratification and lingual
Diversity seems to be the «prestige» [Mikros, 2009 p. 138], but without being the only one [Mikros, 2009 p. 149; Guy, 1988 p. 51].

At the same time, language, and thus lingual diversity, except for communication «is a social indicator». Different social groups use different social dialects [Sociolinguistics, 2016], to perhaps encapsulate their social identity / position and as a sign of solidarity with their group. This is logical, as language is used as a symbol of «different and distinct social roles and identities» and thus social diversity is perceived as «a statement of integration into a social group» [Stamou, 2005 p. 6]. In addition, as there is a consistent relationship between social class and language, we will find that people from different social classes speak differently even at vocabulary level, where members of the upper class adopt a different word from that used by members of the other two social classes [Holmes, 1992 pp. 146–149].

**Density and multiplicity of social network as factors influencing language diversity**

Lingual diversity, «a prototypically organized pooling of linguistic elements» [Hudson, 1980 p. 24], is significantly influenced by the multiplicity and density of the social network, that is, the two determinants of the open or closed nature of the network. First, it should be noted that the social network functions in Milroy’s research «both as a quantitative variable that characterizes the speaker and as an interpretive category of lingual diversity» [Mikros, 2009 p. 158], and more generally as a lever to its members in relation to the adoption and maintenance of shared values, behavioral homogeneity and «empowerment of the norm» [Mikros, 2009 p. 160]. The looseness of the links within the network will allow for a greater heterogeneity affected by other variables, such as gender and class.

Specifically, the density of relationships is related to their reciprocity and means that members of the network interact with each other and «share the same social contacts» [Mikros, idem]. On the other hand, the multiplicity of relationships indicates that two people are related to each other at the same time in multiple relationships. Both of these concepts are criteria for calculating a speaker’s connection to his / her local social network [Mikros, idem], and, as Milroy [1980,
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p. 175] argues, despite the stability of parameters such as social class and gender, the closeness of one’s relationship with one’s local community will lead to a language that «approximates the spoken local norms» [Milroy, idem].

On the other hand, according to Salami [1991 pp. 233–237] the coexistence of gender with the social network shows that the differentiated «use of phonological variables between men and women» is linked to «differences in the density and multiplicity of the networks they enter into». In another case, quantitative research data suggests that lingual change begins «through the involvement of the two sexes in different pressure networks» [Milroy, 1992 p. 111]. In conclusion, on the basis of social class and gender «there may be involvement in different types of networks that impose different kinds of lingual behaviors» [Mikros, 2009 p. 169]. Indeed, as Spolsky suggests, in some cities, working-class men have formed more closed social networks, while women tend to create more open networks, reaching out to members outside their community, leading to the adoption of language types of acceptance by the wider society [1998 p. 38].

**Speaker-gender interaction with social class and social network**

The socio-lingual variable of gender in relation to social class and social network, seems to have a significant influence on the choice of status, which is confirmed by various studies. The general tendency is for lingual types of status to be adopted mainly by women, generally guardians of social institutions, a phenomenon termed by Fasold [1990 p. 92] a «sociolinguistic model of gender».

It seems that women adopt socially recognized language types with the intention of «gaining the social status they have been deprived of» [Archakis & Kondyli, 2004 p. 151]. In this light, gender differentiation is interpreted on the basis of different social role attitudes [Kyriakis, 2012]. Moving on the same line, Key [1975 p. 103] holds that women incorporate socially established forms of speech in an attempt to gain the prestige that «their male-dominated societies take away from other aspects of their lives». They subconsciously «claim equality with men» through their lingual diversity. At the same time, Lakoff, focuses on the fact that women have been socialized since their childhood «in a thoughtful and polite
language», a lingual variety that adheres strictly to grammar rules [1975 p. 61]. And for Trudgill [1983 pp. 167–168] women indirectly, by adopting socially «high» speech, claim their limited social status. According to Trudgill [idem], women, bearing the primary responsibility of raising children, accept and use «the socially established language variety» to transmit it to them as an «additional supply on their social evolution».

Examining, on the other hand, lingual diversity in relation to gender and social network variables, that is, «wider family» formations with members «associated with strong feelings of friendship and acceptance of a single scale of social values» [Milroy, 1980 pp. 139–172], it was found that women again «exhibited wider use of phonetic types of prestige, across all variables considered».

There are, however, cases in which the results of research vary not only because of the gender variable but also because of its interaction with social class. Specifically, in the experiment of Giles et.al [1980, pp. 260-282] the lingual indicators of the «working class» were attributed to the male gender, while the indicators of the «middle class» were attributed to the female gender. This experiment led to the conclusion that «the characteristics of speech denoting social class and gender overlap so strongly» that the judges recognized the lingual elements that signified gender differences, as social class denominators. In addition, Trudgill [1974, pp. 91–95] points out that the gender-based use of the same linguistic variable «-ing» is not equable. On the contrary, based on the variable of social class, there is differentiation. In particular, both men and women, who belong to middle and working classes, use the same language variable, while middle class women, adopt the use of the language variable «about six times more than men of the same class».

**Conclusion and further research**

In conclusion, lingual diversity, as we have seen, is influenced and interpreted through complex, inextricably interconnected and two-way non-lingual variables, «through a synthesis of micro- and macro-sociological parameters» [Mikros, 2009 p. 170], such as social class, social network and gender. The social class and the
social network, in particular, could not in themselves be capable of interpretative tools of lingual diversity. It is necessary to «link these parallel social actions» in order to understand more fully «their contact with individual language use» [Mikros, idem]. It is possible that the ways in which they are combined and the two-way influence between them and individual language use, especially in specific geographical areas, are the subject of further research.

References:


