

An Interpretation of *Pygmalion* from the Perspective of Language Variation

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Abstract—Based on the Labov's phonological variant theory and Halliday's register theory, the knowledge of sociolinguistics and linguistic variation, this study analyzes the dialogues between the Higgins and Liza in *Pygmalion*, aiming to reflect the process of language learning and the influence of social factors on the formation of language. From the perspective of language variation, this paper analyzes the characters and their language in *Pygmalion* from the perspectives of regional variation, class variation, gender variation and language change, aiming at exploring the importance of language in shaping social identity, revealing the slight or obvious changes as the time changing, and displaying the charm of language.

Keywords—language variation, class variation, regional variation, self-awakening

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Bloch, a language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates [1]. And also language has relevant relationship with society. On the one hand, the structure of language may influence or determine social structure. It also can establish and maintain social relationship between human. On the other hand, there is an opposite influence within human language, because of the different social backgrounds, ethnic elements or even age and gender, which means social structure and elements have large effect on human speech. Even though the choice of the words, rules of conversing can be the variable things.

Sociolinguists believe that language variation is social variation of language, and its main body is community. Therefore, the reason for language variation is that social conditions have a huge impact on it and gradually produce language variation. What factors lead to language variation and under what conditions language variation is most likely to occur are worthy of our research. The question to be discussed later is to explore the impact of language variation on personal development from the changes in Liza's social identity and living conditions. These developments are mainly reflected in the following two aspects: language development and mental development.

Pygmalion, written by George Bernard Shaw, which has been deeply interpreted by many scholars from the literary perspective. The play tells the story of a rural poor flower girl who is trained by phonetician Higgins to pretend to come from Hungarian nobility. At the same time, *Pygmalion* is also a resource of interest to the study of linguistics. In order to study the influence of language changes, this research is carried out to resolve the following questions. What is the reason for Liza's language variation? What impact did the trained language mutation have on Liza's life and career? Can language variations really reshape a person, both in

physic and psychology?

In this paper, case analysis and comparative analysis are used to demonstrate. By comparing Liza's language changes at different stages, her discourse changes in pronunciation, structure, word choice and dialogue are found out and the rules are summarized to find out the expression of language variation. Through the collection of the external discourse environment, it is found that the main reasons for language variation are as follows: people who live in different regions, gender, age and social class, will speak different language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Research on the Play *Pygmalion*

At present, the research on language variation at domestic and overseas is quite sufficient, and the research angle is also very new. Language variation is one of the phenomena of sociolinguistics, which has been studied by many experts and scholars at home and abroad from the aspects of phonology, vocabulary, grammar, social culture, social psychological factors and so on.

The domestic and foreign research views on language variation in recent years are given. The number of papers on language variation is the largest in cognitive sociolinguistics. Among them, the study of language variation can be divided into the following three aspects: linguistic variation within communities; the differences of language varieties and the study of mechanism of language evolution [2].

At present, the sociolinguistics research on *Pygmalion* has been quite comprehensive, especially the research on the regional and social variety of language in it. Sun [3] focuses on the influence of language variation on Liza's daily life from four aspects: regional variation, class variation, gender variation and language change, and explores the function of language variation in shaping one's social identity.

Yuan [4] compared the Liza's stylistic changes before, during and after phonetic training, showing the language change process from dialect to standard English and providing some materials for phonetic correction. Most of the studies on sociolinguistics in *Pygmalion* focus on the linguistic variations themselves, and few in-depth studies on the causes of linguistic variations in *Pygmalion* and the influence of linguistic variations on the protagonist.

At present, there are sufficient studies on the ideological awakening and identity transformation of the heroine in *Pygmalion* from the perspective of literature at domestic and overseas, but the research on the language variation in *Pygmalion* is not enough. In the Study of the feminist color in *Pygmalion*, Shaw [5] defined Liza as lost modern female. By elaborating the definition of feminism and its significance to lost modern female, feminism is also beneficial for females to

remain themselves rather than get lost. Zhu [6] starting with the analysis of the images of the two protagonists, this paper expounds the whole process of Higgins' behavior of disrespecting women and Liza's awakening of feminist thought, and probes into the rationality of Shaw's setting regret ending.

B. Definition of Language Variation

The term linguistic variation (or simply variation) refers to regional, social, or contextual differences in the ways that a particular language is used [7]. The second person singular, for example, has two forms of "you" in Mandarin, as symbol of "您" and "你", these two different variations, are variations of the second person singular.

With the developing of sociolinguistics in the 1960s, the people pay more and more interests in linguistic variation. The person who live in the world can speak at least one language, and in some extent many part of people in the world speak more than one. In fact, each speaker has certain characteristic feathers of his own speaking way. Even Americans, most of whom speak only English, usually know more than one dialect. Variation is characterized as "variation, far from being peripheral and inconsequential, is a vital part of ordinary linguistic behavior" [8]. The formal study of variation is known as variationist (social) linguistics.

C. Reasons of Language Variation

Language variation is not accidental, but the result of both internal and external factors of language. The internal factors of language, namely the elements of language ontology, determine the rules and forms of language variation. This variation occurs at all levels of the language system, such as phonology, vocabulary and grammar. Sociality is the fundamental attribute of language and the root of language variation. Without variation there can't be language evolution. According to the theory of language variation, language as a symbol system cannot be independent of human society, and any variation of language is affected by society [9].

D. Type of Language Variation

Language variation can be classified from the following three perspectives: the causes of language variation; the range and level of language variation in language system; the social role of language variation [10]. There are two types of language variation from a sociolinguistics point of view: linguistic and sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is classified with dialect variation, regional variation, idiolect and variation with gender and so on [11]. For example, social variety refers to the linguistic variety characteristic of a particular social class. It has to do with separation brought about by different social conditions. Accent is an important marker of social variety.

A case in point is "Received Pronunciation" (RP) in British English. Regional dialect is a linguistic variety used by people living in the same geographical. In most cases, the regional dialects spoken in two neighbouring areas are mutually intelligible to a great extent, and the change from one dialect to another is very often a gradual, rather than an abrupt process.

1) Regional variation

Regional Varieties of English, is defined as different

countries and regions have formed their own Varieties of English in the process of long-term use of English, which not only maintains the characteristics of standard English, but also adds some characteristics different from standard English [12]. For an instance, I personally define "great dialect variation" as differences at the linguistic level over a relatively small area (on a world map). Even though this is not a very accurate definition, and some languages vary greatly within themselves, so the criteria for considering African and Malay languages are relatively special, while, the rest of the continents are basically measured by linguistic differences.

Regional dialects can be divided into area dialects and local dialects. Area dialect refers to a dialect of a larger region. For example, Cantonese is widely used in Guangdong and Guangxi. Local dialect refers to the dialect used in a certain place, generally refers to the dialect used in larger cities, such as Pekingese, Shanghainese, Shandong dialect and so on. There is a good example to show the relationship between accent and regional variation and social class.

(1) Pat: Hello?

Caller: Hello, is Mark there?

Pat: Yes. Just hold on a minute.

Pat (to Mark): There's a rather well-educated young lady from Scotland on the phone for you.

As we can see from the conversation, the person who answered the phone did not know the woman at all, and could only tell from her voice that she was young, highly educated and from Scotland. Pat could tell by the quality of her voice that she was young, and by her upper-class accent that she was highly educated. "Mark" and "there" are rhotic sounds.

2) Social variation

a) Differentiation between male speech and female speech

The language used by men and women have some special features of their own. Gender differences in language are mainly reflected in the following aspects: Firstly, women use standard variety more frequently than men. This is because women currently have a lower social status than men, lack confidence in their speech, and use standard language to seek respect from men.

Secondly, females are more likely to use less assertive language, using more question tags. Thus, sounds are more polite and friendly than male tongues. Gender differences exist in almost every kind of languages. For example, in Thai, the end-of-sentence modal word "krab" is only used for men and "ka" is only used for women. When greeting others in the morning, men would say "Sa Wat Dee Torn Chao krab". The female expression is "Sa Wat Dee Torn Chao ka".

Despite the current social vigorous advocacy of equality between men and women, inequality between men and women still often happens, such as men interrupting women without any reason or denigrate women without any basis. Linguists have found gender discrimination in language, often in daily communication. Male tends to be in the dominant position. In a group of people, men tend to have much to say. Even if words spoken by female are reasonable, they are usually ignored.

According to Sapir Woolf's hypothesis, language is not

only a product of society, but it can in turn influence human thinking and mental constructs [13]. Many words in English describe men in a positive or neutral sense. But once they are used to describe women, they immediately take on an additional layer of derogatory meaning.

For some examples:

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

The word “professional” in the first sentence reminds people of a professional lawyer or a doctor, which is a decent job, but the word “professional” in the second sentence reminds people of a prostitute or a lowly status in English speaking countries.

- (3) Andrew is loose.
Monica is loose.

When the word “loose” is used to describe men, people mostly translate it as free-spirited, or careless, without much malice. And when describing women the word “loose” is often translated as slutty by nature and hurtful. This is undoubtedly a kind of gender discrimination in language, and examples of this abound in life.

Examples in *Pygmalion* [14]:

- (4) Higgins: Sit down.

The flower girl: Oh, if you're going to make a compliment of it-

Higgins: Sit down.

Mrs Pearce: Sit down, girl. Do as you're told. (Shaw, 2018, p. 64)

(5) The note taker: A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere-no right to live. (Shaw, 2018, p. 30)

(6) Higgins: How can she? She's incapable of understanding anything.

Besides do any of understand what we are doing? If we did could I ever do it? (Shaw, 2018, p. 86)

The first example is taken from Act II, in which Liza, frustrated by Higgins, seeks out his voice training. Liza goes to visit Higgins, but Higgins is impatient to entertain her. As early as 1974, Sacks and Schegloff jointly proposed the turn-shifting mode, believing that in an ideal conversation when party B finishes speaking can the other party speak. Turn-Taking for conversation appears in the position of transition association of itself, namely, TRP.

However, this rule is often violated in actual conversations as the conversation between Higgins and Liza. The interruption of Liza's speech reflects a phenomenon of gender inequality. What's more, Liza didn't dare to refute the conversation, but accepted it in silence, which shows how often women's voices are interrupted.

The second and third examples illustrate Higgins' disdain for Liza and his bias towards women. In the play, Higgins argues that the language of Shakespeare and Milton is the most standard. Higgins says remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and The Bible [5].

b) Linguistic differences between social classes

The division of social classes is mainly based on the

economic status of people in the society. In the field of sociolinguistics, social economy is the main basis for distinguishing social groups. Generally speaking, economic income determines one's social status [15]. Labov's pronunciation survey of New Yorkers was a groundbreaking study of language variation. First, Labov observed that the black Community in New York generally did not pronounce the final “-r” sound, and only used the “-R” sound in formal situations as whites did. This is the case of his famous Labov-New York Study 1966. He firstly selected a department store and learned that shoes were sold on the fourth floor. Then he went to the first floor and asked a black salesman [16].

(7) Labov: Excuse me, which floor are the shoes on?

Salesman: Four. (No “-r” sound)

Labov: Excuse me, what floor?

Salesman: Four! (with “-R” sound)

Labov [16] points out that if you take a random lower-class person in New York City and talk to them casually, they will rarely roll their tongues, and as they become more formal, they will roll their tongues more often. The middle class has the same style and the more formal the tongue rolling is.

III. MANIFESTATIONS OF LANGUAGE VARIATION

After language training, the use of pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax of Liza's receiving language has changed to different degrees compared with that before training.

A. Sound Variation

1) Before training [5]

(8) The flower girl: Nah then, Freddy: look wh'y' gowin, deah.

Freddy: Sorry.

The flower girl: Theres menners f'yer! Tə-oo banches o voylets trodinto the mad. (Shaw, 2018 p. 6)

In this dialogue, Liza pronounces the end letters “ing” by /in/ and turn you to f'yer (turn /ju:/ to /ju/). And putting random endings on words there.

(9) The flower girl: Ow, eez yə-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' dəooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them? (Shaw, 2018, p. 8)

The whole sentence is full of mistakes, only simple pronouns and modal verbs are used correctly, the rest of the vocabulary is wrong. Liza omits phoneme h in her speaking and pronouns /au/ to /i/ wrongly. What more, when she tends to request the compensation, she puts the tone at a wrong position of a sentence to have a strange tone. For example, she should say “how kind of you to let me come” with the stress on the second word “kind” instead of on the word “you”.

(10) Liza: I want to be a lady in a flower shop stead of sellin at the corner of Tottenham Court Road. (Shaw, 2018, p. 64)

We can see that stead is a misuse of instead -ing is often read as -in by an uneducated person (Stead of sellin=instead of selling).

Liza's father, Doolittle, particularly comes from low-class,

wearing a garbage-taking costume, with a rough manner and low status. He's a loafer, a liar, and uses nonstandard language.

In Act II, When Doolittle pretends to get his daughter Liza back from Professor Higgins, the dialogue shows that taking his daughter is false and taking money is real. Because Doolittle had lived in the city for a long time, his words and deeds revealed a kind of brutality and snobbish. He speaks Cockney, not standard English. He addressed Professor Higgins as professor Iggins, dropping the phone /h/.

2) *After training:*

(11) Liza: Oh well, if you put it like that-Ahyee, bøyee, cøyee, deyee-

Higgins is rectifying dialect pronunciation of Liza, and she wrongly pronounces here in London accent [ei] [bi:] [si:] [di:] by ['a:ji:] ['bə:ji:] ['sə:ji:] ['də:ji].

(12) Liza: How do you do, Mrs Higgins? [17]

From these two sentences, it can be seen that Liza is actively correcting her pronunciation and consciously civilizing her language. Liza is conscious of her pronunciation and takes some time to think before she speaks. She does not make strange sounds and uses an upper class way of speaking when greeting

B. Syntactical Variation

In addition to the diversity of phonetics, discourse structure and grammar are also a major factor of language variation.

1) *Before training*

a) *Double negation*

Liza's lowly status made her frequently use double negatives. The phenomenon of double negation is more obvious in Black English. Black English is just another non-standard variety of English, which differs from standard English in way similar to those in which other non-standard varieties of English differ from the standard variety. One characteristic of Black English is the use of double negatives. Many grammarians now consider the double negative to affirm that non-standard English is spoken by an uneducated person, or even vulgar. Double negation is widely used in Black English, as well as southern American dialects and British dialects.

(13) Liza: I cant hear no difference cep , that it sounds more genteel-like when you say it [14].

This sentence seems like the meaning as I can't hear the difference (between you and I). However, what Liza want to express is I can hear the difference, because there are some explanations following: "except that it sounds more genteel-like when you say it."

(14) Liza: Let him say what he likes. I don't want to have no truck with him [14].

Liza uses this sentence with double negation, the text meaning that I will have no truck with him and he can't interfere with what we do. Liza thinks Higgins is a detective investigating her, and she impatiently disapproves.

Liza's father Doolittle also used double negatives frequently, when he sold his daughter to Higgins for five

pounds, and was adamantly opposed to taking ten pounds. It showed his selfishness and his fear that he would be constrained by an extra five pounds to live freely.

In the dialogue between Doolittle and Higgins, the gap between social classes and the ugly status quo of English society are exposed. Examples are as follows: "I shouldn't neither" is equivalent to sentence "I shouldn't have the heart to spend ten either". "Marry Liza while she's young and don't know better" means Doolittle persuaded Professor Higgins to marry his daughter, telling him it would be too late for Liza to regret the cheap marriage when she grew up.

b) *Tense omission*

Many languages have grammatical means to indicate the time when an action or event occurs, or when a state or process holds. This phenomenon is called tense. In English, verb forms are typically used to signal the time when an action or event occurs or a state holds [18]

(15) Liza: ...I always been a good girl...

(16) Liza: ...But I done without them...

(17) Liza: ...All he come here for was to touch you for some money to get drunk on... [17]

These sentences all indicate the perfect tense, but the word "have" is missing. Due to the absence of tense, readers will have errors in understanding the original text due to time.

c) *Inconsistent Subject-Verb*

A simple sentence with "inconsistent" contains a subject and a verb, and it may also have an object and modifiers. However, it contains only one independent clause. A compound sentence with "inconsistent" contains at least two independent clauses.

(18) Liza: Ah-ah-ah-ow-oo-o! One would think you was my father [17].

2) *After training: applying rhetorical sentence*

(19) Liza: What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? What is to come of me? [17]

In these sentences, Liza questions her future and her present situation. The rhetorical methods of parallelism and questions are properly used to strengthen the tone of discourse.

(20) Liza: There'll be spring every year without you. England still will be here without you. There'll be fruit on the tree and a shore by the sea. There'll be crumpets and tea without you. Art and music will thrive without you.

Somehow Keats will survive without you.

In the dialogue, Eliza uses comparisons and metaphors to highlight the improvement of language skills. More importantly, she also used Keats as an example. This shows that she not only accepted the knowledge of phonetics but also came into contact with literary knowledge, and her level of knowledge is constantly improving.

C. Lexical Variation

Vocabulary selection is an important aspect of highlighting language variants. Generally, the language of the educated upper class is more formal and logical. The language of the uneducated was more crude and straightforward. This means that people of different classes have different ways of

expressing the same meaning. In Britain, people are divided into three classes: upper class, middle class and lower class. But since 2001, the Office for National Statistics has divided people into seven social classes. That is, “socioeconomic classification”. The British believe that you can tell a stranger’s social status without introduction by listening to his accent. If it is using Received Pronunciation (RP), he or she may come from upper class.

1) Before training:

Liza’s often use irregular negative words, such as “ain’t”. “Ain’t” is the Conckney dialect of English, in which “ain’t” stands for “am not”, “aren’t”, “hasn’t”, “hadn’t” and “doesn’t”, etc.

(21) The Flower Gil: I aint done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman...

(22) The Flower Gil (still nursing her sense of injury): Ain’t no call to meddle with me, he ain’t [17].

2) After training:

(23) Liza: I can’t. I could have done it once; but now I can’t go back to it [5].

Higgins had his usual harsh words for Liza, but Liza wasn’t being submissive this time. She countered Higgins with words, expressing her anger and sadness. It can be seen from here that with the growth of cultural knowledge, the sense of consciousness be aroused.

Although Liza tries hard to learn and imitate the pronunciation habits of the upper class, she eventually fails. She can’t be polite all the time. For an example:

(24) Liza: Walk! Not bloody likely.

...

Clara: I will. Goodbye. Such nonsense, all this early Victorian prudery!

Higgins: Such damned nonsense!

Clara: Such bloody nonsense.

Pickering: But don’t you think something might be done? I mean something to eliminate the sanguinary element from her conversation [5].

As the conversation progressed, Liza give herself away. Although she was still singing a very quiet voice, her next sentence was foul language. Freddy said it was the most fashionable language, and Clara imitated it. Clara represents a fallen aristocrat. In the background of falling in the family, Clara lived an ordinary life. She came into contact with all kinds of people. Although her mother wanted to make her look like a dignity girl, her language changed with the condition of social environment. “Bloody” is the most taboo of curses, used in the middle of a sentence with no particular meaning and as an emphasis. As a representative of the upper class, Mr Pickering used “sanguinary” instead of “bloody”, which sounded more refined.

D. Summary

In the play, Liza received six months of training, and her social status was clearly improved by her self-expression and the way other people treated her. (Self-expression: pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and proper use of language all improved significantly.) Mr.

Nepommuck, who was proficient in various languages, firmly believed Liza was a Hungarian aristocrat. People started actively talking to her and surmised her at least a royal princess. After six months of language correcting, Liza shifted from a street flower girl to a member of the upper-class social elite.

IV. CAUSES AND FUNCTIONS OF LIZA’S LANGUAGE VARIATION

George Bernard Shaw’s play *Pygmalion* fully shows that language variation plays a great role in the conception and characterization of literary works. It is the constant change of language that makes the character image more stereoscopic.

A. Causes for Liza’s Language Variation

1) Motivation to learn

Willams and Burden [19] believed that motivation is a kind of cognitive and emotional motivation. Learning motivation is the internal process or internal psychological state that is stimulating the individual to carry out learning activities, maintaining the interest in learning and leading the learning activities towards a specific goal [19]. According to the theories of Gardnen and Lambert [20], there are two types: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, refers to learners’ learning for a practical purpose, with a strong utilitarian purpose, such as finding a decent and satisfying job or reward. Liza was clearly instrumental in learning phonetics.

The first two acts of the play detail Liza’s family and social environment. Liza was born in London, and It wasn’t fit for a pig to live in. Liza was a street flower girl, despised everywhere, who sacrificed her dignity to make a living. Until one day, I met Professor Higgins. Although he was impolite and bad-tempered, many people respected him because he could identify people’s identity and social status through pronunciation, and he was respected for his profound knowledge. Liza saw the power of knowledge, and her motivation was to improve her social status through knowledge, from a lowly flower girl to a regular flower clerk. Secondly, Liza emphasized more than once that she was a “decent person” and “decent girl”, indicating that she valued her own identity and conduct very much. At the same time, she was also a girl with strong self-esteem and eager to be respected by others.

2) Constraints social identity transformation

Human society must give anybody a certain social identity. Social identity refers to the identity one has in society, the identity one is accepted in society. Often, the limitations and failures of social identity transformation lead to the awakening of Liza’s mind.

On the one hand, there is the growing conflict between Liza and Higgins. Liza thinks she can improve her social identity through her own efforts, but the reality is not. Higgins hold that Liza is just a “thing” that he buys or sells. When Doolittle want to take his daughter back home, Higgins is furious about that, “Nonsense! He can’t provide for her. He shan’t provides for her. She doesn’t belong to him. I paid him five pounds for her” [16]. Higgins wants Liza to marry a nobleman and bring his experiment to a fitting end. It was all out of his vanity. Liza was just a wager in their eyes. On the other hand, Liza found herself feeling increasingly

uneasy after the experiment, worried that she would be able to support herself as before, despite learning “gentlemanly manners and habits.”

The passage also gives the answer “I can’t go back to it and I tires to get back into the old way with her” [16]. Although Liza looked like a noble lady, she had no ability to support herself. She had to rely on marriage and her father’s inheritance to make a living. She realizes that the difference between a gentleman and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how others treat her. Therefore, with the awakening of the mind, her language variation momentum going.

B. Functions

The levels and forms of language variation are diverse, and the correct use of language variation forms is conducive to the smooth progress of daily communication. Language users can construct the meaning of interpersonal communication by consciously choosing the forms of language variation. Focusing on variation from the level of language system, Liza improved her social status from sound variation, lexical variation and syntactic variation.

1) Temporary rise in social status

A reflection of the contexts of situation in which language is used, and the ways in which one type of situation may differ from another [21]. He believes that the choice of language forms is largely restricted by the cultural environment. According to people’s actual use of language, the difference of language environment can be summarized as the following three variables: field of discourse, tenor of discourse and mode of discourse. The change of these three variables will lead to the variation of language, determine the difference of the meaning of language choice and the range of the form of choice, and form a variety of linguistic situational variation—register.

Liza, a flower girl, at the bottom of the social ladder, speaks cockney and sells flowers for a living; after six months of phonetic training with Professor Higgins, she was considered a Hungarian princess by virtue of her elegant pronunciation. In Liza’s short time, the huge rise in social class must be attributed to different registers. It is clear that Liza’s level of language in drama can be divided into three categories: non-standard stage, semi-standard stage and standard stage.

In its non-standard phase, Liza’s language was full of foul language, slang, casual words and a tone that was often impatient. For example, at the beginning of the story when Liza and Higgins meet in the first time, Liza sells flowers to a gentleman on a noisy street. Higgins, a phonetician, is interested in the language she speaks, so he takes notes for her language, but he is thought as a detective by bystanders. Liza is afraid that she is being investigated for something illegal, so she rushes to explain her complaint to the public. What Higgins evaluates about Liza is shocking because Liza’s language is so non-standard. For instance, a woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live [16].

At the semi-standard stage, Liza’s language is much more civilized than it used to be, with obvious grammatical errors, curses and the occasional rhetorical device. But when talking about other topics, it will change into the original form of language. The semi-standardized language made Freddy, an

aristocrat, not expose her lower-class identity, but moved by Liza’s beauty and speech. Freddy tells Miss Hill that this is the language of the moment and then Clara also imitates her. So from these evidences, Liza’s words gradually convinced people of her “aristocratic blood.”

To reach the standard stage, Liza’s language through a series of rigorous training, can be said to have reached a perfect state. People admired the ease with which she spoke and the vivacity with which she shone in the grand Garden. Higgins’ first student, Nepommuck, finally confirms that Liza is a Hungarian Princess. Thus, Liza has changed her social status through hard training, which also reflects the importance of language for social identity recognition.

2) Contributing to Liza’s Self-awareness

Culpeper [22] has noticed that the more powerful participant usually has more freedom to be impolite in carrying out impoliteness and usually makes use of the on-record impoliteness strategies. At the beginning of the play, as she attempts to improve her social status by correcting language, she turns to Professor Higgins for help, even though he despises her and humiliates her. Even in such a harsh learning environment, Liza was able to endure it.

In Act one, Liza has 16 communications with Higgins, among these chances, there were 7 times indirect responses, 3 times using emotional words to express helplessness, and 2 times complaining about her terrible fate. It can be seen that Britain in the 19th century was a typical patriarchal society. The merciless oppression of women by men and the inequality of education caused Liza to lack “self-awareness” and find it difficult to realize that she was living in an unequal era.

For example, there’s a scene in Act Two where Liza’s father sells Liza to Higgins for five-pound note and no more. Some readers interpreted this as a sign of “principle”. However, this seemingly principled transaction actually exposed the oppression on women in the patriarchal society of nineteenth-century Britain. Women not only does not have personal freedom but were also spiritually bound. In such a social environment, women could hardly enjoy their due social status.

Liza’s self-awakening goes through two stages from spontaneity to consciousness. Despite her humble status, Liza is self-reliant and earns money by her own labor in a foreign land. Early in the play, Higgins quietly notes Liza’s non-standard language, which makes Liza nervous, but instead of backing down, she argues with a potentially oppressive man and uses crowd sympathy to get away. In fact, Liza is a very smart girl. She not only has independent thoughts but also has inexhaustible motivation to pursue higher social status.

3) Changing Liza’s View of Love

Higgins is eccentric, linguistically obsessed, who is not good at considering other people’s feelings and tends to be outspoken. However, through the whole time accompanying, Liza admires Higgins, tolerates his flaws and bad temper, brings him slippers, and listens to his orders. Because she relies on the language skills Higgins gave her, and she indulges in the wealth Higgins created for her. Gradually, Liza falls into a trap and loses herself.

The Ambassador’s Ball is the turning point for Liza to

wake up to reflect her relationship with Higgins. She expects Higgins to admire her performance in the ball. While, Liza doesn't reward what she wants for her unequal social status. Liza understands that fame and status do not the price of love. Respect and equality are the key to love. Realizing that she's just a commodity in Higgins' eyes, she says that "I sell flowers, but I don't sell myself" [16]. She also shared her thoughts on love that I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! I am a slave now, for all my fine clothes [16].

C. Summary

By analyzing the causes and results of the variation of the Liza's language, we can have a more comprehensive and clear understanding of the heroine's image and personality characteristics. She has successfully improved her social status and identity through phonetic training. In the daily life with Higgins, she has not only learned the knowledge of the upper class, but also acquired the corresponding wisdom from the knowledge. At the end of the 19th century, most ordinary women had low social status and low education level, which to some extent led to their obedience to marriage. Women should have a certain awareness of their own identity and self-worth, and should understand that love is free and equal, rather than controlled by the male society.

V. CONCLUSION

Since the 1960s, when sociolinguistics was introduced, linguistic variation has turned into a major object of study in sociolinguistics. This article analyzes the linguistic variation in *Pygmalion* from a sociolinguistics perspective, aiming to find out how the linguistic variation in the play changes Liza and thus conclude the important role of linguistic variations in shaping social identity and characters' thoughts.

Chapter 2 begins with the definition, classification, and causes of linguistic variation, and then presents a more comprehensive account of the gender codified variation and regional variation in the dialogue of *Pygmalion*. Chapter 3 collects specific dialogues from the play to analyze the linguistic variation in the flower seller more visually, in three aspects: sound variation, syntactic variation, and lexical variation, respectively.

The analysis revealed that Liza's phonological, syntactic, and lexical expressions has changed significantly before and after the training. In terms of phonology, strange pronunciations were reduced, swallowed sounds and mispronunciations are corrected, and the habit of speaking upstream language is gradually developed; in terms of syntax, grammatical errors and sentence structure integrity, such as double negation and subject-verb inconsistency, are significantly reduced; in terms of vocabulary, after the training, Liza used rhetorical appropriateness, formal vocabulary, consistent singular and plural, and standardized daily civilized language, etc. In general, after Higgins' training, Liza has transformed from a country flower girl to a so-called Hungarian princess.

On the one hand, the findings of this study, deepened the understanding of the relationship between language use and social factors is the basis for greater attention to the importance of language and social function. On the other hand, it has helped people to appreciate *Pygmalion* from a

sociolinguistics perspective.

The analysis shows that there are interactions between discourse phenomena and social factors in the process of language use, and language codes no longer represent simple codes but also contain complex social factors. It can be seen that language is inextricably linked to society.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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