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MASTER'S THESIS

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CLASS IN LITERARY WORKS: THE CASE OF LYNN NOTTAGE'S "SWEAT"

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MAGİSTR DİSSERTASİYA İŞİ

ƏDƏBİ ƏSƏRLƏRDƏ SOSİAL SİNİF KONSEPSİYASININ SOSİOLİNQVİSTİK TƏHLİLİ: LİNN NOTTAGENİN "TƏR" NÜMUNƏSİ ƏSASINDA

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic and the degree of research: As language is a central element representing class divergence in society, implementing sociolinguistic analysis of literary works is significant. The linguistic features of literary works express the social class to which the characters belong, their lifestyle, and their positions. In the modern world, where financial imbalance and class-based segregation remain serious global problems, examining how these dynamics are represented and produced through language in literature has compulsory relevance. This juncture between language and society, particularly concerning power and social hierarchy, is the focal point of sociolinguistics as an integrative field. A sociolinguistic analysis of literary works creates awareness about authorial methods and techniques, such as the characters' dialogue and social class accent.

As a type of literature, plays include intricate discursive spaces for analysis. They are combined with different semiotic modes such as dialogues, music, and visual cues that address dynamics of class, power, and identity. They contribute rich material for investigating language as an indicator of class distinction. Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* is a stunning representation of sociolinguistic analysis. The play provides a significant case for such analysis and fabulously depicts the American post-industrial class challenges, particularly how the working class becomes a victim of socioeconomic differences.

By analyzing this play, the research breaks the traditional sociolinguistic inquiries by contributing a broad understanding of how language negotiates social status and economic struggles in natural and everyday speech.

However, the majority of previous research has studied sociolinguistic aspects of literary language, little attention has been paid to the description of it in contemporary literature. As Sweat depicts the economic and social realities of 21st-century America, therefore, this topic is highly relevant.

The Object of the research: The play *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage, which serves as the essential literary source for sociolinguistic analysis, is the object of this thesis.

The Subject of the research: The subject of the thesis is the depiction of social class by character conversations, linguistic markers, and narrative techniques within the play. The focus is on comprehending the sociolects, word choices, dialects, and how they contribute to the vivid portrayal of social class distinctions within the play.

The aims and objectives of research: The central aim of the thesis is to investigate the role of language portraying social class differences in Lyn Nottage's *Sweat*. The following objectives are also set in the research process:

- To identify linguistic features that show class background in the character's language
- To analyze how socio-economic conditions affect the characters' speech and interactions.
- To explore how the themes of class divergence and economic hardships are displayed linguistically through the play.

The research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1) How does *Sweat* display linguistic differences across social classes?

2) What obvious patterns appear in the language of lower-class characters?

3) How does language reveal deep social problems like economic struggles, class-based discrimination, and racial pressure?

Research Methods: The thesis adopts qualitative research, which allows in-depth analysis of the dialogues and monologues of the characters, revealing sociolinguistic elements related to social classes. Discourse analysis techniques are utilized to do textual analysis with sociolinguistic theory. First, the play is analysed to find linguistic patterns, dialogical elements, and sociolinguistic features that portray social class differences. Then, the researcher conducts a close reading to unmask linguistic variations through social classes. These steps allow us to understand the function of language as a social indicator within the play.

The corpus used for the analysis is the play *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage. This play has been chosen because it examines social class, economic hardship, and linguistic variation within a modern American context. Characters' realistic dialogues, monologues, and conversations provide rich ground for analyzing how language mirrors social class stratification.

Scientific novelty of the research: This research introduces an important contribution by giving an unusual and broad investigation of the subject matter with a sociolinguistic and literary lens. The scientific novelty of the study lies in its integrative approach. This approach involves the intersection of language, class, and literary theories in examining the relationship between social hierarchies and linguistic expressions in Lynn Nottage's *Sweat*. Despite the significant consideration given to *Sweat* for its social and political description, the play's sociolinguistic components remain neglected. This study combines these elements to identify the representation of social structures through language in play. This thesis offers a detailed linguistic and sociological analysis of class representation in the play. This research also gives novel insights into how language functions as a tool for showing class identity in modern American drama. An important feature of the novelty of this research is the accurate analysis of social class dimensions, utilizing sociolinguistic principles that have not been implemented in the *Sweat* before. The thesis presents an intricate perspective by analyzing the depiction of class dynamics through linguistic features such as register, code-switching, etc.

CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Characterizing social class

Social class is a concept studied by the science of sociology. When defining the subject of sociology, individual sociologists refer to the interaction of people, the nature of social order and disorder, and the relationship of social classes. One of the primary concerns in the field of sociology is the social structure of society. Social structure refers to dividing society into classes by distinguishing people from each other. Classes are the core of social structure. All complicated societies are defined by some kind of organized social inequality or stratification (Turner, 2006).

Class gives significant input to organized social inequality in modern societies. It is a multifaceted term, and there is no precise definition of it. However, we can talk about cultural, political, and economic dimensions of class. The cultural dimension focuses on the style of living and behavior, the political one shows social change, and the economic dimension shows material diversity. Contemporary ideas about class are inevitably related to the progress of capitalist industrialism. In the philosophies of communists like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the concept of social class occupies an inescapable role. According to Marx, class identity or consciousness is an important thing in social class. Marx identified class conflict as the main force of social change (Turner, 2006).

Max Weber (Weber, 2010) defined class situation as "market situation." Weber's ideas about social class were different from Karl Marx's because he thought that class conflict couldn't cause social change.

W. Lloyd Warner is a prominent American sociologist who described a six-strata system of social class. According to him, society has three main levels: upper, middle, and lower, and each level has two strata within it. Upper: upper-upper, lower-upper, Middle: upper-middle, lower-middle, Lower: upper-lower and lower-lower (Rossiter, 2023).

The term *stratification* came to sociology from the natural sciences. Social stratification is the process of the formation of strata among the population and its consequences. Social hierarchy manifests itself both within the group and within the larger social system (Vahidov & Ağayev, 2008).

The existence of social class has long been a subject of debate. According to some scholars and sociologists, social classes exist in society and can be scientifically examined and analyzed. According to some conservative scholars like V. Pareto, social classes do not exist, and we cannot measure them. They thought that distinctions do not create classes and categories like poor or rich.

Society seems to be an institution in which people compete. The reasons people compete are different. These reasons can include status, education, wealth, etc. These are called forms of capital. Economic capital refers to investment and money, cultural capital refers to education, social capital shows group membership, and symbolic capital shows the prestige that a person has in society. Forms of capital define a person's position and power in society. For example, a person who has more economic capital will be superior to others in society, and this also applies to other capital. Sometimes, people's positions in society can change, which is related to their gradual acquisition or loss of capital forms. As we see, there are inevitable differences between people. These differences encompass wider groups, arrays, and make the idea of ***social class*** inevitable, too (Bourdieu, 1987).

People are aware of which social class they belong to. During surveys conducted in Great Britain between 1983-2022, people were asked, "What class do you feel you belong to?". 58% of respondents said that they belonged to the working class. The sense of belonging to the lower class in Britain appears to be fading, as fewer people identify with this social category. It represents people's awareness of the social category to which they belong. The answers of the respondents show three main reasons that connect people to a certain class: education, occupation, and income. The most interesting thing is that education is more influential on class than occupation. People who have passed different levels of education are classified as middle or upper class. One should not forget the contribution of regional differences to the issue of social class. For instance, most of the population of North England and Scotland is defined as working class. In contrast, the population of London is defined as middle or upper class (Heath & Bennet, 2023).

Some countries, like China, want a classless society. But it was not possible to achieve this because social stratification is a reality of life. Each social class has a unique behavior. There is also shared behavior, which is common behavior that belongs to every social class. Excluded behavior is behavior that is against the standards of one social class. Five crucial conventions characterize social classes:

1. **Bounded-** Social classes are characterized by different implicit limitations. Members of a social class have a certain degree of education or income, which creates implicit boundaries.
2. **Ordered-** All social classes are organized in a hierarchy based on their members' positions in society.
3. **Mutually Exclusive-** A person represents only one social class. But it can change through time.
4. **Exhaustive-** No one is left out in society. Everyone belongs to a social class.
5. **Influential-** Since social classes differ from each other, the behavior of their members is expected to differ as well (Hawkins, Coney, & Best, 2006).

Max Weber differentiated economic class from social class. According to him, economic classes are about people's property and jobs. But social class appears when this economic contrast is reinforced by mobility (Weber, 2010).

When talking about social classes, it is also necessary to talk about how they are formed. So, the famous sociologist Anthony Giddens argued that social classes are created during the process called "structuration" (Giddens, 1973). According to Goldthorpe, social classes are formed over time. The social class created within a certain period preserves its existence by being passed down through the generations. According to feminist critics, such as Acker (1973) and Delphy (1981), ancient approaches make women belong to the social class of their husbands. But today's approaches prove that the class situation of women and men should be analyzed separately (Acker, 1973). The role of the family in the formation of social classes cannot be overlooked. Family ties unite people in a certain class.

The concept of social class is very important to explain and understand the economic and social differences among people. This concept cannot be ignored, but its exaggeration can cause serious problems in society. Today, social classes consist of people who understand their boundaries, places, and frameworks. Analyzing the concept of social class, we clearly observe how it leaves deep traces in the development of society (Scott, 2002).

1.2. The language and social class

Language and society have been related to each other since ancient times. Language is a factor that serves society and functions as a social instrument (Veysalli, 2007). All changes in

society are reflected in language. According to scientists, the problem of social stratification of language is always relevant. If we look at ancient linguistics, we'll see that the reason for the emergence of ancient Indian linguistics is related to social differences in language usage.

According to Baudouin de Courtenay, language is not homogeneous. Language combines the speech of all levels of society. " Language is composed of not only the speech of upper classes, but also the lower classes." (Adamska-Sałaciak, 2001)

The language of each social class differs from the other in terms of style, phonetics, etc. We can easily distinguish the language of a professor from the language of a street vendor. The difference between the choice of words and sentence structure of a school graduate and a university graduate is also easily apparent. All these differences demonstrate how language is distributed across social classes (Holmes, 2013).

Holmes gives an example of the character Emmie, who comes from a rich Scottish family. She enters an expensive private school in England. One month later, she has difficulties in all her speaking tests. The teachers consider that she is not intelligent. But according to her mom, Emmie is very smart. The teachers say that they cannot comprehend her speech because of her Scottish accent. Mom says that it's the teachers' problem, not Emmie's (Holmes, 2013). Let's remember once again that in the previous section, we talked about the impact of regional differences on social classes. We have seen that the Scottish people are characterized as working class. In this example, we see how it affects language. Someone who speaks with a Scottish accent is perceived as being inferior to someone who uses Received Pronunciation.

According to another example by Holmes, middle-class children are more successful in school than lower-class children, because lower-class children speak and convey their ideas differently. This issue is studied by Basil Bernstein. He tried to understand why lower-class children speak differently. For instance, they use monosyllabic expressions, short sentences, etc. After long investigations, he concluded that the linguistic resources of these children are restricted. But in reality, they are not linguistically incapable, they are just exposed to a variety of languages and less written language (Holmes, 2013).

So the middle-class children who use a "prestigious" form of English are considered more intelligent. This causes social class inequality.

We can look at other examples to understand the relationship between social class and language.

Speaker A: Mary done it two weeks ago

I ain't got it

Speaker B: Mary did it yesterday

I haven't got it

Based on these examples, we see that B has a higher social status than A. Grammatical patterns of these two speakers show that they have different social-class dialects or sociolects. We can distinguish these differences not only by grammatical patterns, but also by phonetic features.

Society is divided into castes in India. It is easier to learn caste dialects than social-class dialects. Because there is a clear separation between castes. Social classes are not labelled beings; instead, groups of economically and socially similar people (Trudgill, 2000).

According to Grace, society has essentially two distinct groups: "the working class" and "the middle class". Members of the working class do manual work, get less education, whereas the latter is characterized as non-manual and educated. Each of them has typical language. Sometimes representatives of the lower class try to show themselves as prestigious by using the language of the upper class. They adopt the speech patterns of the upper class for reasons such as securing better job opportunities, etc. However, sometimes members of the working class are proud of their speech and choose to maintain their way of speaking. By doing this, they believe that they are preserving respect for their language. It also means maintaining social distance and consciously accepting social class differences (Rubrico, n.d)

The use of words like sofa or settee, pudding or dessert in the language was an indicator of the social class to which people belonged in Britain after World War II. This idea began in 1954 with the publication of Alan Ross's article "Linguistic class indicators". In the article, he analyzed the pronunciation, vocabulary, and writing styles of representatives of different classes. Ross coined terms like "U" and "Non-U" languages. The previous one belongs to the upper class, and the last one belongs to the non-upper class. Non-U language is classy, fashionable, and lavish. They speak fashionable way, because they want to sound good and attract attention. In contrast, representatives of the real upper class, U-language, do not lose their naturalness, and they don't

need to look fancy. These people know they have enough money and family connections, so they don't care to speak fashionably. For illustrating upper-class sounds, Ross used the novel by Nancy Mitford, "*The Pursuit of Love*," in his article (Saturday Review, 1956).

After that, Mitford picked up on Ross's reference to her novel and spread his ideas about "U" and "Non-U" languages (Pocketbook UK, 2018). Her famous work, "*The English Aristocracy*," was published in the magazine *Encounter* in September 1955. Her view was that the more elegant euphemisms are used by the non-upper class or simply 'non-U'. She claimed that the aristocracy had a special language that could not be learned by everyone. Nancy also described non-uppers as "climbers" because they were climbing to be Upper. Most of those who used Non-U language were from America. They used the American version, which is not typical of uppers. Non-U language also includes words or phrases from different languages, especially, French language. Nancy Mitford's (1955) research showed that many of the words used by the upper class are the same as those of the working class. The Classification by Nancy Mitford is given in table 1.2.1

The Sentence choice of the U language is also different from the Non-U language. For instance: 1. "What? What did you say?" instead of "Pardon?", " Are you from England?" instead of "Are you from Britain?", " Have some more tea?" instead of "How is your cap?" (Saturday Review, 1956).

Table 1.2.1. The classification of words by Nancy Mitford

U Language	Non-U Language
Sofa	Settee, couch
Napkin	Serviette
Sick	Ill
Rich	Wealthy
Bike	Cycle
Pudding	Dessert
Spectacles	Glasses
Lavatory	Toilet
Stays	Corsets
Vegetables	Greens
Scotch	Scottish
Knave	Jack
Men and women	Ladies and Gentlemen
Looking glass	Mirror

Mitford's article sparked a great deal of interest among the British public, who had never heard of the terms " U" and "Non-U". People began to explore the concepts of social class and snobbery. Some took the article as a joke, while others took it very seriously. Soon, the terms "U" and "Non-U" became popular (Pocketbook UK, 2015)

1.3. Sociolinguistic aspects of social class

Sociolinguistics, a major branch of linguistics, examines the interaction of language with class, gender, ethnicity, and other social factors. Among these factors, social class plays a crucial role in shaping linguistic behaviour.

An example of the sociolinguistic aspect of social class is language variation. Depending on the level of education and socio-economic status, different social classes differ in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and the manifestation of grammatical structures in language. The phonetic reflection of social class differences in language was studied by the American linguist William Labov.

It is clear that large professional groups such as lawyers, secretaries, and waiters, which form different rungs of the social ladder, differ from each other in their linguistic characteristics.

But do they differ within a group, that is, on a smaller scale? Labov's "New York Department Store Study" helps us to find these differences (Holmes, 2013).

In this study, Labov examines the same type of profession in different social settings. He takes as participants the salespeople of three large department stores in Manhattan. Labov selects three stores that differ from one another in terms of status. They differ physically in their appearance, design, etc. During the study, Labov acted as a customer and asked his respondents, namely salespeople, the location of a particular store. It was determined in advance that this store was on the 4th floor. The question to be asked during the study was also known. “Excuse me, where are the women’s shoes?” and the answer would be “fourth floor.” Here, the interviewer’s main goal was to focus on how the salesperson pronounced the (r) sound in the words “fourth” and “floor.” There can be two versions: /fɔɹθ flɔɹ/ (Rhotic) and /fɔːθ flɔː/ (Non-Rhotic). If the (r) sound was pronounced clearly, the researcher scored it as a 1; if it was missing, he scored it as a 0 (Labov, 2006).

The results showed that 62% of Saks' (highest) salespeople pronounced (r) at least some of the time. 51% of Macy’s (middle) salespeople did the same. 21% of Klein’s (lower) salespeople used (r). These results proved that language use and linguistic features are related to social class.

Saks, who belongs to the upper class, uses r more, but Klein, who belongs to the lower class, uses r very little (Labov, 2006).

Labov noted: “If we were to examine the issue of language and social stratification in New York, we would first find that the higher-status group would pronounce the 'r' sound more prestigiously.” Through his research, Labov showed that the non-rhotic aspect characterizes the working class, while the rhotic aspect characterizes the upper class in New York City (Labov, 2006).

In all communities, language variation creates social and regional dialects. The difference between a social dialect and a regional dialect is that previous one reflects the social level of the person using it. In the early 20th century, upper-class people in England received an upper-class education. They learned RP (received pronunciation) in public schools. RP was considered the most prestigious accent in English society, the “received” accent of the Royal court. As mentioned earlier, social classes also differ in their vocabulary. Their vocabulary reflects their social prestige, wealth, and education; for example, lawyers do not speak the same way to the people they defend as to robbers (Holmes, 2013).

Children from lower-class families tended to use more informal or colloquial verb forms in New Zealand. For example: Standard: “I finished that book yesterday.” and vernacular: “I finish that book yesterday.” (Holmes, 2013)

In general, standard forms are used by upper social groups, while vernacular forms are used by lower social groups.

While reporting on social-class accents, Peter Trudgill notes: “Just as geographical barriers and distance play a role in the development of regional varieties, social barriers and social distance play a role in the development of social varieties. Innovations first start among members of the upper social group and then gradually spread downward, indicating that the effect of social distance is the same as that of geographical distance. In India, traditional society is divided into various castes. For linguists, studying the linguistic characteristics of castes is easier than studying the language of social classes because castes are relatively more stable, more clearly named, and distinct from each other. Thus, social class, which is a more complex phenomenon, is separated

from castes at some point. Because social classes are not clearly defined or labeled entities like castes. Social mobility is entirely possible, and it poses a challenge for linguistics (Trudgill, 2000).

By examining how the -ing suffix is pronounced in Norwich English, Trudgill showed two pronunciations: /ŋ/ and /n/ like /wɔːkɪŋ/ and /wɔːkn/. In this study, 60 respondents were divided into social classes according to their level of education, income, and housing. As a result of the study, it became clear that those who use /n/ in their pronunciation belong to the working class. /ŋ/ belongs to the middle-class pronunciation (Hughes, Trudgill & Watt, 2012).

The best example of working-class speech is the London accent of Cockney. Although Cockney is spoken in London, it is traditionally labelled as a working-class dialect according to English Accents and Dialects (Hughes, Trudgill and Watt 73). The typical final-ing [in], the absence of the initial [h] sound, and th-fronting are the main characteristics of this accent (Rampton, 2018).

Bernstein contributes to the social differentiation of language by emphasizing two speech codes: restricted and elaborated. The restricted code refers to the "working class" and its defining characteristics include short, grammatically simple sentences, short imperatives and interrogative sentences, limited use of adjectives and adverbs, etc. The elaborated code belongs to the middle class, where sentences are constructed based on the rules of the language, short questions and imperative sentences are rarely used, and implicit prepositions and pronouns are frequently used. Although restricted code is mostly used by the lower class, the higher class can also use it. However, elaborate code cannot be used by the lower class (Fərəcov, 2002).

Ben Rampton's study, "Styling and Migration, Ethnicity and Class Dynamics," describes how immigration caused by World War II led to a sharp division of society into classes in late 20th-century England. Many cities, such as London, welcomed immigrant workers, creating distinct working classes. Rampton observed how people's speech patterns changed (and how different speech styles mixed) (Rampton, 2018).

1.4. Social class in literature

Literature, which has the power to create change in society, also sheds light on social problems. Any literary work can make an enlightening contribution to society by showing problems such as injustice and inequality. For example, Victor Hugo's classic novel *"Les Misérables"*

touches on the problems of poverty and social injustice, encouraging readers to think about these issues. (Sanat Sanat, 2023)

Many representatives of world literature at different times have made the problem of social class the main target of their works. The theme of social stratification is a special feature in the work of the youngest but most prominent representatives of American literature. Theodore Dreiser masterfully reflected most of the problems of society, including social stratification, against the background of the lives of the heroes in his works such as *"Sister Carrie"* (1900) and *"American Tragedy"* (1925). It is known that Dreiser wrote about the negative aspects of his native society with heartache in his works and focused on various social classes. As we know, each social class has its style of speech. Dreiser created a portrait of various classes of the time by describing these different speech styles in all his works (Nuriyeva, 1997). If we touch on the theme of social stratification in American literature, it would be wrong not to mention Mark Twain. Mark Twain, known as the master of humour in American literature, exposed the injustice of American society and the issues of slavery in his works.

The description of the gap between social classes was an integral part of Jack London's works. His work *"Martin Eden"* tells the story of an ordinary boy belonging to the working class. This work reflects the inequality between classes and the misconceptions that exist about each class. Coming to Arthur's house (a representative of the upper class), Martin is fascinated by the valuable and elegant objects in his house (Romeo, 2024). Jack London expressed the differences between classes in deep shades. For example, when Martin was in this house, he did not want to speak, fearing that he would not be able to speak as nobly as they, and he could not use forks and knives like rich people. All this indicated the sharpness of the stratification at that time. He did not feel like he belonged to this elite and wanted to abandon the working class and get an education. Martin, as it were, wanted to "cleanse himself" to belong to the upper class. However, his class change was a very painful process (Romeo, 2024).

One of the American writers who transformed the political and social events of the time he observed in the world around him into the melody of a written text is Francis Scott Fitzgerald. His work *"The Great Gatsby"* shows the impact of World War I on social class. The unequal distribution of wealth in America is described in subtle shades throughout the novel. The work describes social stratification down to the finest detail. By describing different social classes, he gives messages about elitism. Fitzgerald divides the rich into 2 groups: Old money and New

money. Fitzgerald also introduces a third social group by including people like the "moneyless" (Fahmi, 2016-2017).

Considered one of the most successful social critics of his time, John Steinbeck is remembered for his masterful depiction of the hardships faced by the working class in his novels "*The Grapes of Wrath"* (1939) and "*Of Mice and Men"* (1937). *The Grapes of Wrath* depicts the realities of the Joad family, who come to California in the hope of finding work, facing the realities of a lack of jobs and low wages. Steinbeck also highlights the injustice of California companies and law enforcement agencies against the working class. The description of Tom's desire to return to prison proves how low the living conditions of the working class are. The work describes the lack of treatment of migrant workers as human beings, the humiliation of their honor and dignity in their own language. The tense relations between the landowners (upper class) and the workers (lower class) never improve (Steinbeck, 2006)

During the Great Depression, the working-class characters George and Lennie symbolize exploitation, discrimination, and economic struggles of the working class (Steinbeck, 1937).

It is known that Victorian England was divided into different social classes, and this was naturally reflected in the literature of that period. During this period, the position of a name in society was related to the class to which one was born. (Mitchell, 2009).

Charlotte Brontë's novel "*Jane Eyre*" can be considered a mirror of the social hierarchy of Victorian England. The novel depicts and criticizes class conflict. At the beginning of the novel, Jane's wealthy relatives mistreat her, saying "you have no money", reflecting the harsh reality of Victorian England (Khan, 2017).

In the work, Jane's cruel aunt, Mrs. Sarah Reed, is a representative of the upper class. She has the characteristics typical of upper-class women, such as not working, ordering servants, attending high-profile events, etc. Middle-class women were either married and worked as housekeepers, or single and became writers or tutored the children of wealthy families. The main character, Jane, lived in poverty and faced many social problems as a representative of the working class (Khan, 2017).

The problem of social class has also manifested itself in Azerbaijani literature at various times. During the 19th century Enlightenment, Mirza Fatali Akhundzadeh criticized the gap

between the rich and the poor in his comedies (for example, Haji Gara, Monsieur Jordan, and Dervish Mastali Shah). Jalil Mammadguluzadeh and the "Molla Nasreddin" school also openly demonstrated the problem of social class. *" My Mother's Book"* by J. Mammadguluzadeh depicts the clash between the feudal class (Sheikh Asadullah) and the enlightened class (Najaf). Sheikh Asadullah's opposition to the marriage of his daughter to the poor Najaf demonstrates the role of class discrimination and social status (Məmmədquluzadə, 1923).

Rustam Bey, one of the characters in the work *"The Tragedy of Fakhraddin"*, presents himself as the ruling class in society, relying on physical strength and wealth. He oppresses people below him. This character shows that social class differences manifest themselves not only on the economic level, but also on the moral and ideological level. Rustam Bey's oppression of the powerless not only shows his struggle for class hegemony but also emphasizes the system of subordination between classes (Vəzirov, 1902).

The emergence of socialist ideas in the early 20th century influenced Azerbaijani literature. Sabir showed the miserable condition of the poorer classes of society in his poems.

One of the writers who deeply describes the issue of social class in Azerbaijani literature is Jafar Jabbarli. In his works *"Sevil"* (1928), "*Ogtay Eloglu"* (1921), and *"Almaz"* (1931), the writer describes social class differences through the language of the characters and manages to create these differences in their linguistic characteristics.

As a conclusion, Azerbaijani literature has historically been a mirror of the social structure of society. The oppression of women from both gender and social perspectives in Jafar Jabbarli's drama *"Sevil"*, the hardships of the working people in Huseyn Javid's *"Ana"*, and the depiction of class oppression and social injustice in the drama *"Topal Teymur"* demonstrate the sensitive attitude of Azerbaijani literature to this topic (Cabbarlı, 1928; Cavid, 1926, 1925). These works once again prove that Azerbaijani literature has acted not only as an example of artistic creativity, but also as a social criticism and a call for change.

1.5. Sociolinguistic analysis of literary works.

One way to study sociolinguistics is through literature because literature can provide real-life examples of how language reflects social structures. Fictional texts play a key role in showing how language affects social status (Mittal, Vashist, & Chaudhary, 2024).

While the majority of modern sociolinguistic studies analyze the use of language in fiction, some still deal with whether the use of language in fiction is indeed "authentic" or real compared to how people speak in real life (Stamou 2014). Sometimes, it is said that fictional language cannot be utilized for serious linguistic research, as it is not derived from real-life data(Dynel 2011). On the other side, fiction shapes ideas about language and social issues; therefore, its analysis can be fruitful. The newer sociolinguistic approaches focus on how people use language in real situations to express their identities rather than language structures. It gives rise emerging of new terms like "style," "repertoire," and "performance". The sociolinguistic analysis of the following five works has been brought together, with a focus on the concept of social class (Stamou, 2018).

The speech of Grace, in Zadie Smith's "NW," has lower-class features like dropping the "h" sound in "Ask 'im if he can come..." or using "I weren't even meant to be there." The use of the word "innit" as a speech marker in "She's alone, innit?" also indicates lower-class speech (Bengtsson, 2021).

In the NW, the relationship between social class and age is also evident from the way the characters speak. Sometimes, social mobility can be observed within the same family. For example, in the work, Felix's improved social status also influenced his language. As a result, his speech is more prestigious than his father's, reflecting his upward mobility. His father, Lloyd, is stuck in the past, while Felix tries to jump classes with his speech because he wants a better future. Another example is Natalie Blake and her mother, Marcia. Natalie's speech is very clear, professional, and far from the characteristics of the working class. Unlike her mother, Natalie has created a new identity for herself and adapted herself to the new social class (Bengtsson, 2021).

Chinua Achebe's "A Man of People," provides us with rich source for sociolinguistic analysis. In one example, we see the conversation between the headmaster, Mr. Nwege, Odili, and the minister. Mr. Nwege and Odili are quite formal in their conversation with the minister. As Trudgill notes, "people of certain statuses are far from comfortable in conversation. When addressing the minister, they use a series of respectful expressions such as "honour', 'sir' and so on. Furthermore, Nwege and Odili tend to praise the Minister, such as "You have a wonderful memory," which shows the power differentials between representatives of different classes (Olaniyan, 2017).

The work also includes informal situations, for example, two friends, who are representatives of the same social class, demonstrate an informal, joking style of conversation. There is no status barrier between them, so they do not have to choose their words carefully. Odili jokingly calls her friend “a fool,” which is impossible to use in her speech with the minister. There are no appeals or structured speech expressions in the speech of the two friends (Olaniyan, 2017).

Sometimes, in literary works, a character’s linguistic choices change depending on their conversational partner. For example, in Kofi Awoonor’s “This Earth, My Brother” (1971), Smith, the district inspector of schools, adjusts his speech when addressing his illiterate steward, Sedu. He uses pidgin, saying, “Cook make chop?” (meaning “Have you cooked something?”), which reflects a simplified form of communication. However, when speaking to an educated person, he abandons pidgin in favor of standard English, highlighting how language is used to navigate social hierarchies. *Priscilla Queen Kparevzua, in his study, named “Sociolinguistic aspects of meaning in Kofi Awoonor’s, This Earth, My Brother…(1971) and Comes the Voyager at Last” (1992)*. In other words, the way people speak is shaped by their social environment (Kparevzua, 2020).

In another example, we see dialogue between Mrs. Thomas and the young man. Mrs. Thomas uses expressions such as “le me see”, “musta been around June”, “they was making a helluva noise”, etc. in her speech, which indicates her usage of non-standard English. Her style of speech suggests that she is uneducated and belongs to a lower social class. Thus, depending on their education, class, and environment, people can speak standard English, a pidgin form, or a local dialect (Kparevzua, 2020).

Language is not only a force that shapes a person's individual and collective identity, it is also a force that assigns a person to a particular social class in society. George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* is rich in examples that show the close connection between social class and language. The play demonstrates how a person's language and speech reflect their social class, and how they can be manipulated to hide the flaws of the social structure. Pygmalion proves that a person is either accepted or rejected by society based on the way they speak. A person's speech can either elevate or lower their prestige. Professor Higgins, a phonetician, speaks English correctly and is a representative of the upper class. Higgins claims that he can determine a person's class by observing their speech and dialect because language is also a mirror of social status. In the work, Eliza speaks with a Cockney accent and uses mispronunciations such as “Aaaaaahovooh”, making it clear that she is a representative of the lower class. Higgins condemns and humiliates her for this style of

speech. Higgins' condemnation emphasizes the contrast and social gap between the rich and the poor (Samplius, n.d).

Sociolinguistic analysis can also be applied to films. In big cities, people are constantly on the move, so it is difficult to determine where a dialect begins and ends. For example, in *My Fair Lady*, the upper-class dialect of RP and the lower-class dialect of Cockney are depicted. These dialects, which organize people's speech, link them to different social groups. Higgins observes a group of people talking in a market and correctly guesses their social identity.

In the film, the working-class people are often portrayed as drunk, lazy, while upper-class people are rich, well-educated, and more refined. They dress expensively, attend lavish parties, and adhere to strict social rules. Eliza, as a member of the working class, says: "Aooow! I ain't dirty. I washed me face n''ands afore I come, I did,". While analyzing this sentence, we can say that she says "ain't" instead of "am not", she also uses "me" instead of "my". She doesn't pronounce "b" in "before" and says "afore". She also uses "come" instead of "came". She also adds "I did" at the end of her statement. These factors prove that she is using a Cockney speaking style. Trudgill (2000) shows that taboos, which are words that are considered forbidden and offensive, are also used differently by social classes. For example, in British society, swearing and using taboo language are considered more masculine. This is why the upper-class woman in "My Fair Lady" faints when she hears Eliza use a swear word. In general, words such as "bloomin", "bloody", "ruddy", "arse", etc. are widely used and common among the lower classes (Trudgill, 2000).

There are different sociolinguistic characteristics of the lower class in My Fair Lady. For example, they say 'avin', blinkin', makin', mornin', liftin', etc instead of using 'ng' at the end. Other characteristics of the lower class are an elision of the 'h' sound in words like 'elp', 'aving', 'alf', 'here', etc. Pronunciation of vowels also creates the difference between the upper and lower classes. For example, Elza uses " ow", "iyee" instead of A, E, I, O, U in her speech. She also uses multiple negations in most of her sentences, like 'you ain't been near', "I ain't dirty", etc. Eliza also uses rolling "r," which indicates her lower-class status. The usage of incorrect pronouns, such as "meself," is another characteristic of the lower class. (Thren, 2018)

In My Fair Lady, each character uses speech patterns strictly corresponding to their social class. The film demonstrates the contrast between the speech of the upper and lower classes (Thren, 2018).

As can be seen, both literary works and films can contribute to sociolinguistic research for linguists. A sociolinguistic examination of these works shows how language is directly related to social identity, power dynamics, and class dynamics as a communication tool. To show readers where characters fit within society, authors employ language diversity. Literature continues to act as a mirror to linguistic realities, whether it is through "My Fair Lady," which symbolizes the upward mobility of language change, or "This Earth My Brother," which illustrates the linguistic distinctions brought about by social settings.

1.6. Analysis of Sweat's social context

Lynn Nottage was born in Brooklyn in 1964 to an intellectual family, with her father a child psychologist and her mother a school teacher and principal. Nottage's ability to observe real-life events began at an early age, and later, she translated her observations into the melody of written text. Nottage is closely interested in the literary drama genre and has written works in this genre. Her most notable works include "Intimate Clothing", "Ruined", "By the Way", "Meet Vera Stark," and "Sweat". Nottage is the only woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama twice, for Ruined and Sweat. Her achievements do not end there; she has also received a MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, a Guggenheim Grant, and so on (LitCharts, n.d.).

Nottage's literary works focus mainly on the lives of the working class, African-American women, and several social problems in society in early 20th-century America.

Nottage began writing "Sweat" after a friend in Brooklyn told her about his financial woes, and at the same time, the Occupy Wall Street movement was taking shape. Her friend didn't ask for money but wanted Nottage to understand the struggle of the working class. Nottage realized that the economic struggle in America was deeply rooted. To better understand this economic struggle, she chose the city of Reading, Pennsylvania, where poverty is high. Reading, which had not been considered a poor city until the 2000s, became poor in the 2000s after many factories closed. People who had once been considered middle class were now struggling with low-wage jobs or unemployment (USC Visions and Voices, 2018). People's constant job losses and low-wage jobs also affected their social relationships and personal growth. The Psychology of Working Framework argues that economic, social, and historical factors shape a person's work experience (Blustin, 2013).

The two and a half years of interviewing people in Reading for the play convinced Nottage that she was capturing the depth of the economic struggle in America. Over the years, she observed that Reading was once a place where immigrants from all over the world could easily find work, but that was no longer the case, and she described it as “a grape on the vine” (Wallenberg, 2020).

Nottage wrote: “In a homeless camp in a wooded area outside Reading, men supported each other. Their living environment was messy and dirty. But they didn’t give up despite the hardships. I asked about a noose hanging above their space. They said it always reminded them that there was something better. As I wrote the ending of “Sweat,” I thought about that noose and how the men supported each other. The Hofmann Industries workers who had worked for more than 30 years and were replaced by temporary workers felt betrayed. Steve, whom I met in Reading, inspired me to create the character Jason in “Sweat” (Nottage, 2015a).

Let's look at some of the social problems that are common in 21st-century America. The frequent case of a company laying off a large number of employees to reduce its business and cut costs has a serious impact on the working class. People are forced to work under the fear of being fired. The presence of free trade in the country, that is, the possibility of tax-free trade between countries, even if the rights of workers are not protected, also affects the working class. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was a trade agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico that focused on promoting trade. The agreement, which was signed in 1994, eliminated some tariffs on goods shipped between the three countries. It also encouraged new ideas, protected old businesses, and established new labour standards. While NAFTA had a good influence on the U.S. economy by increasing trade, it also caused job losses and an imbalance in trade (Paramount School of the Arts, 2002). As a result of the NAFTA agreement, many US factories were forced to move to Mexico. Wages in Mexico were very low.

One issue affecting the social context of “Sweat” is NAFTA, as explained above. The work highlights the miserable lives of workers affected by it.

In 21st-century America, companies often purchase goods or services from workers from other countries, which is called outsourcing, and causes local workers to lose their jobs.

Globalization has gravely affected American life, especially in rural areas. To understand this effect, it is enough to compare two American cities, Galesburg and Farmington. Like Reading,

these two cities are also among the most famous industrial cities in America. Following the implementation of NAFTA and the rise of globalization, Maytag, a profitable refrigerator manufacturer in Galesburg, closed its plant in 2002. The relocation of the plant to Mexico and the reduction in wages had a significant impact on workers (Cole, 2009).

The city, which was largely based on manufacturing, experienced an economic downturn, and many residents lost their jobs. The transition to a post-industrial economy has left the city struggling to find a new economic identity. Workers who are suddenly unemployed become increasingly disillusioned with their future and increasingly resentful of the economic system.

All of this mirrors the plight of the workers in Nottage's play, “Sweat”, who are frustrated by unemployment and uncertainty.

On the other hand, globalization has had a positive impact on Farmington, Missouri. Despite the closure of factories, Farmington has not suffered as much as other cities such as Galesburg, Illinois, and Celina, Ohio, because it has been able to attract new businesses. However, the workers are paid less and are deprived of their former rights. This suggests that even if the characters in Sweat find new jobs, they will not be able to secure the same financial stability or sense of dignity as before. As globalization accelerates, unions are beginning to disappear as a force for supporting workers. This real-life phenomenon is also reflected in Sweat. The government pits workers against each other, offering some promotions. All of this creates class and racial tensions and distrust. Cynthia's promotion in Sweat supports this (Cole,2009).

Thus, the economic situation of these two cities allows us to contextualize the struggles of Sweat's characters. The play reflects on the emotional and social impact of deindustrialization (Cole, 2009).

Pennsylvania is also among the states struggling with the effects of globalization. Pennsylvania lost 208,000 jobs—a 24% decline. Pennsylvania’s labor market lagged, and real wages fell 2% between 2001 and 2007. Trade with Mexico, Canada, and later China also hurt Pennsylvania. After NAFTA, the state lost 44,000 jobs. When China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, it lost 78,000 jobs. By changing its trade policy, the United States can change the situation at home and improve workers' lives. The workers' struggles in Pennsylvania are real and heartbreaking (Scott, 2008).

The movement that fights to protect workers from unfair treatment in the United States is called the labor movement. This movement stopped child labor, reduced working hours to 40 hours a week, and helped improve wages and working conditions. Labor unions played a major role in strengthening the middle class from the 1930s to the 1970s by negotiating collective bargaining agreements with workers. Despite all these steps, job losses and unemployment began to rise in the 1980s.

In September 2011, the Occupy Wall Street protest movement began. The movement protested economic inequality. The workers' self-proclaimed "we are the 99%" tried to show that only 1% of the country owned all the wealth (USC Visions and Voices, 2018).

In 21st-century America, wages for those without a four-year college degree have remained stagnant for decades. It is very difficult to find good jobs in the country's manufacturing sector. People of color and people with disabilities have fewer job opportunities than others. The role of women in the workforce has been declining. These problems are 0the result of the issues in the economy and government policies. However, the government can make a difference by taking strong steps (Campbell, Madland, & Negin, 2018). The characters in “Sweat” have a glimmer of hope for change.

Lyn Nottage highlights how the lives of working-class people, victims of economic and financial struggles, are meaningless. For example, Freddy Brunner, an elderly worker at Olstead, is in debt after losing his job and being abandoned by his wife. He burns down his house and even tries to take his own life in a fit of depression, all of which shows how his life is ruined.

The steelworkers in the play work in harsh conditions and are denied opportunities to advance in their careers (Mohammed, 2020).

Nottage uses the language of the characters in “Sweat” to show how companies exploit and take advantage of their workers. They pay them just to get by. The workers are unable to save money or spend it on leisure. Jason tells Chris that no matter how hard he works, he will never be able to save as much money as he wants. The workers work more than 10 hours a day, so they do not have enough money or time to spend with their family or friends.

Things get even worse in the middle of the play when the company announces that they are going to take a 60% pay cut. Cynthia's ex-husband, Brucie, talks about how the company is turning them into its slaves with this new contract (Mohammed, 2020).

Lynn Nottage sets her play in an industrial city to show how the 2008 economic crisis hurt workers in many American cities. NAFTA is alluded to when Cynthia mentions that the company plans to move most of its cars to Mexico. Unable to pay her debts, Tracy goes to the union office for help. But all she is offered is a bag of groceries and a few supermarket vouchers. Unable to pay her tuition, Chris drops out of school and works double shifts. Financial worries and fears become a daily conversation (Mohammed, 2020).

The play describes how a group of close friends, steelworkers, drift apart when their jobs at the Olstead mill are at risk. The economic downturn destroys their friendships and intensifies class struggle. "Sweat is considered the microcosm of present-day America and its racial and economic struggles. (Bayat & Hadaegh, 2021)

As can be seen, the play depicts the impact of globalization and deindustrialization on America using the example of the city of Reading. The play reflects the economic recession of the 2000s and its devastating effects on the working class.

The play also shows how economic problems lead to racial and social divisions. As competition for work increases, dissatisfaction arises among workers, especially among whites, blacks, and immigrant workers. This is a bitter result of the decline of the manufacturing industry. An example of this is the changing attitude of her friend Tracey towards Cynthia, a black woman, after she is appointed to a management position at Olstead's factory. The resulting economic and social struggle results in Tracey's anger at Cynthia. Tracey believes that her friend's promotion is also due to her race.

Tracey's linguistic choices reveal how economic struggles fuel racial stereotypes. She singles out blacks by saying, "They are less clean." She uses the words "grab" and "fingernail" to describe Cynthia, emphasizing the savage nature of blacks.

Economic and social problems, it seems, create racial hatred. When workers like Tracey face hardship, their frustrations are directed at people of colour. This is evidence that economic downturns exacerbate racial tensions (Bayat & Hadaegh, 2021).

Nottage reflects the social reality of Pennsylvania workers through the characters of Sweat and reveals an exploration of class injustice.

The play explores how racial diversity affects friendships and job opportunities. Tracey claims that her friend Cynthia, who is African-American, was promoted to a management position because of her race. This racial tension also affects the relationship between their sons, Chris and Jason, who are two close friends. When Cynthia's son Chris talks about going to college, he emphasizes their different paths (Kirton, 2023).

In Sweat, Lynn Nottage shows how racial diversity creates divisions between people who have lived there for generations and those who are more recent to the community. In a conversation between Tracy and Oscar, a young Colombian American who works in a bar, it is clear that, despite being born in Reading, Tracy does not fully identify Oscar with the community.

The influx of more immigrants to the city and the closure of businesses have angered many white workers, and immigrants have become the target of their anger. The racial conflict in Sweat reaches its most intense point in Act 2, Scene 6. Nottage shows that this struggle can even escalate into racial violence (Kirton, 2023).

The play is not just the story of a group of factory workers but a mirror of the economic conditions faced by all American workers. The play highlights how globalization, deindustrialization, and corporate greed have destroyed once-thriving cities like Reading. The work not only depicts the economic struggles of post-industrial America but also reveals the impact of the social context shaped by NAFTA, globalization, and racial tensions on the characters' lives, relationships, and psychologies.

1.7. Representation of social class in Sweat

The concept of social class is at the heart of Sweat. The original dialogues and vivid stories of the working class add a special color to the work. The working class was emotionally affected by the economic decline. Sweat indicates the economic hardships and tensions of factory workers, depicting how financial instability influences their hope for the future.

One of the most significant characteristics of Sweat is its nuanced depiction of the intersection between race and class.

The play depicts working-class frustration with declining wages, job security, and quality of life. Nottage acknowledged that class, rather than race, is the most significant dividing line in Sweat. Despite the detailed depiction of class struggle, the work does not end with a straightforward solution to these problems. However, the author urges the audience to overcome these divisions (Mazelis, 2016).

Sweat explores the concept of social class as experienced by men across generations. Jason and Brucie, who represent the working class, reflect the impact of the economic downturn on them. Brucie, who has lost everything, acts as a warning to Jason. Jason, who has positive thoughts about the future, is confronted with reality. His growing anger and sadness are violently expressed in Oscar, an immigrant worker. Thus, it becomes clear how class struggle is passed down from generation to generation and acts as a legacy (GradesFixer, 2024).

The way a person earns money and what kind of job he has shape their social position in society. Thus, the educated, more money-earning class and the working class have their own social positions. As shown in Sweat, companies often exploit the working-class employees. The limitation of the welfare of employees is a clear example of this. The salary that is only enough to meet daily needs, hard-working hours, psychological tensions, and stress is related to the limitation of the welfare of this class. Nottage touched on this issue in the play and showed the injustice that the working class is subjected to. In the play, the company exploits its employees by not giving them career advancement. This is further emphasized by Tracey's question to Stan, "Have you seen anyone move up in this company in twenty-eight years?" Employees who have worked for more than twenty years are stuck in the same position and are not given the chance to develop. In addition, the company refuses to provide a retirement fund for its employees, which is their right. Thus, it is impossible for the employees who leave the company to improve their lives (Aidilla & Anwar, 2019).

The play opens with an excerpt from Langston Hughes' poem "Let America Be America Again," which criticizes the illusion of the American Dream and calls on the working class to reclaim the opportunities denied to them. The play displays the Reading as a microcosm of the larger working-class struggle in America. Financial problems also affect the psychological health of employees (Nottage, 2015b).

The psychological health of employees with a lack of work-life balance is questionable. The company does not provide them with health insurance and states that it is not responsible for accidents that occur at work. Workers are not given rest rights; they work long hours, and as a result, their psychological state deteriorates. Even Chris, citing this situation, says that the loud noise and monotonous work in the factory are making him increasingly tired, and he finds it difficult to go to work every dayThe play reflects the impact of the harsh living conditions of the working class on their families and future generations (Aidilla & Anwar, 2019).

The struggle of workers for labor rights has social consequences as well as economic consequences. Their children are also affected by this struggle, and sometimes their lives are completely changed. Jason and Chris, representatives of the working class, support the strikers. But this struggle poses a threat to their future. Because at this time, another worker, Oscar, is attacked, and Stan is seriously injured. The arrest of Jason and Chris puts their future opportunities in doubt. These events show that workers not only suffer physically, but they also fight to protect their jobs. This struggle tears apart their families and sometimes puts their own lives in danger. The play demonstrates that the working class, who are participants in this struggle, which involves both physical and psychological factors, are very valuable and deserve respect as human beings (eNotes, n.d.).

In Sweat, Lynn Nottage explores how social class shapes people's lives and relationships in the town of Reading during a time of economic decline. The play explores the relationship between class and money, as well as its impact on friendships and race relations. Nottage emphasizes that such class and economic struggles are a much more serious issue that affects entire communities, rather than individuals (Sanders, 2021).

The work also shows the impact of the concept of social class on people’s friendships and family relationships. After moving up to a higher position, Cynthia is seen by her friends and family as part of the company, not one of them. This demonstrates the deep class divide between employees and management, making it difficult for Cynthia to maintain her friendships and other relationships.

Drawing on his own experiences, Nottage exposes the fragility of working-class life, the struggle for economic survival. Sweat highly values the collective labor of the working class and presents them as a fundamental but invisible force in the economic struggle. For years, workers

like Tracey, Cynthia, Jessie, etc., have been working hard to protect their dignity and goals, as well as their jobs. The working class, exposed to economic oppression, has difficulty maintaining its solidarity. They are psychologically, morally, and sometimes physically shaken. Thus, through Sweat, Nottage presents social class as a lived experience. The work criticizes the impact of capitalism on the working class.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will use a qualitative research method to examine how social class is represented through language in Lynn Nottage's Sweat. Qualitative research concentrates on analyzing meanings, language, and social interactions rather than relying on numerical data, making it appropriate for this study as it explores how language in Sweat demonstrates social class variation.

Instrument

Textual analysis is the essential instrument for this study. This research also uses close reading and discourse analysis. Close reading is utilized to explore linguistic features, such as variations in grammar, vocabulary, and speech registers. Discourse analysis deeply explains power relations through class dynamics and social identities. It also demonstrates how language constructs social identity in different contexts.

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select exchanges and dialogues that explicitly or implicitly mirror social class affairs. These consist of personal storytelling, monologues, job-related discussions, and interpretations of social discrimination.

Data and Data Source

The primary material for this research is the script of Sweat by Lynn Nottage, published in 2015. The study centers on dialogues and interactions among characters to understand linguistic indicators of social class. In addition to the script, this study also uses a recorded performance available on Youtube, which gives important context for analyzing. Watching the stage performance offers a chance for observing the characters' performative and non-verbal elements, such as tone, voice, gestures etc. Thus, it helps to deepen the sociolinguistic analysis of the characters' speech.

The link is available on Youtube: https://youtu.be/lBZybMFADgs?si=1UmXi9gYhUDu-71t

Additional materials are scholarly articles on sociolinguistics and studies on language and social class.

Data Collection

The data is collected in several steps. Firstly, the full script of Sweat is reviewed to analyze appropriate dialogues and interactions that show social class distinctions. Then, crucial linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and speech registers are highlighted, concentrating on how they show class differences. The researcher groups selected dialogues in terms of indicating power dynamics or economic struggles, etc.

Data Analysis

This study engages discourse analysis and sociolinguistic theory to delve into the conditions in which social class is composed through language. The investigation concentrates on:

- Vocabulary and slang usage
- Grammar and sentence structure
- Dialect or regional speech patterns
- Power relations in conversational structure
- Code-switching and register changes

Limitations

This study targets only one literary work, which may restrict the generalizability of the outcomes. Furthermore, the analysis is interpretive and may be affected by the researcher's subjective insight into sociolinguistic features.

CHAPTER III. ANALYSIS (FINDINGS) AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Unveiling class and authority through language in Act 1

Act 1 is composed of 7 scenes, and the following sections portray selected excerpts from each scene, accompanied by corresponding findings and discussions.

In scene 1 of the play, the author describes a layered conversation between a parole officer, *Evan,* and two imprisoned men, Chris and Jason. Their interaction gives us a glimpse of the burden of the past and the quest for atonement. In this exchange, Parole Officer Evan occupies a higher position on the social ladder than Chris and Jason. Evan uses authoritative and complete sentences. He utilizes language to dominate and keep them in check.

Evan: "I am not one of your stupid friends" (Nottage, 2015, p. 6).

This sentence carries the notion of institutional power. In society, people are selected based on their social status. We can't address a teacher the same way we address a friend. Through this sentence, Evan reminds Jason that they don't have equal rights in this conversation.

Evan: "……you know what happens to young men that don't cooperate? Huh? Huh?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 7).

Due to Jason's short and empty answers, Evan reminds Jason of his authority again. His reiteration of *Huh? Huh?* signals his aggression and threat. He also notes that he can make things very challenging for Jason with his pen. He emphasizes the role of the pen and reminds that he doesn't need physical force, because the pen, language itself, is powerful in showing reality in institutional settings.

Evan utilizes invective words like *moron, fucking games, fucking nigga* to create pressure on Jason. These kinds of insulting words show the relation between language, power and authority, racial tensions, and social conditioning. Jason's invective words are emotional, while Evan's phrases are strategically weaponized.

Like Jason, Evan is also a black man who knows Jason's struggle. Sometimes he utilizes informal language to show sociolinguistic accommodation. Evan reduces social distance and shows

his intimacy to Jason with these types of words. Furthermore, considering that the formality of the conversation depends on the speakers, we can accept that it is normal for Evan to use insulting words. In any case, he would not speak to someone of the same or higher rank in that manner. However, the fact that Jason is guilty changes the situation.

Evan's shift from formal language to antagonistic speech can be considered code-switching. Firstly, he maintains a professional tone due to his institutional power. Then, as Jason continues with meaningless and empty responses, his language becomes more forceful. This switch can be a strategy to affirm domination, and also can reflect the sharpened tension between Jason and Evan.

Additionally, Evan's speech is grammatically correct, his vocabulary choice is formal. For example, using words like *defiant*, *reluctant*, *protocol*, and *belligerent* indicates Evan's higher social status. Even though it is difficult for Jason to engage with these terms. Evan also repeats his words and uses strategic questions to corner Jason.

From a grammatical point of view, Jason's sentences are grammatically loose because he generally ignores auxiliary verbs and subject pronouns. For example, he says *"I dunno"* instead of *"I don't know"*, *"you asking me?"* instead of "*are you asking me?", "I can't go to Loco's?"* instead of *"Can I not go to Loco's?"* etc. Contrary to Evan's vocabulary, Jason produces poor and minimal word choices such as *nah*, *yeah*, etc. Jason also uses working-class slang like *"fuckin' guys steal", "big fucking dude"* etc.

In the first scene, we also see another character named Chris. The interaction between Chris and Evan is different from that with Jason. Chris utilizes more thoughtful, formal, and complete sentences. This stems from his interest in education. He expresses his concerns about life, money, and work. "*I'm talking bullshit…seven, eight dollars an hour"* (Nottage, 2015 p. 12) demonstrates his frustration with low-wage job.

When speaking about work and education, Chris produces more standard language. Then, he code-switches and uses more emotional and informal language when speaking about his disappointments and struggles. Chris's speech rotates between informal street language and formal language.

His use of negative concord, like *"ain't offering nothing real"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 12), displays his working-class background. Chris also uses words like *shit, bullshit, fuckin, psh* which indicates his lower social status.

Chris: "After throwing a little money in my pocket, I can think about finishing up my bachelor's" (Nottage, 2015, p. 11).

This sentence proves that Chris wants to earn a living by getting an education. This fact shows that Chris still wants to move up the social ladder and achieve this through education. Through his emotional speech, Chris reveals the problems the working class faces, such as financial instability and lack of upward mobility. With *"The emotions are here, in my chest, pressing there, pressing"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 12), Chris reflects the pain within people from the working classes. His repetition of the word "pressing" makes his speech powerful.

In his speech, Chris alludes to religious faith by saying, *"Look to God for forgiveness"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 11). Religion is a symbol of dignity and hope for the working class. So use of this phrase shows his working-class background.

Like Jason, Chris also omits auxiliary verbs like in *"People, they're a trip. You know?"* (Nottage, 2015, p 11).

Chris's language is a mixture of the working-class vernacular and emotional outbursts. His speech shows his ambition to escape from the obstructions of the working class. The conversation between Evan, Chris, and Jason displays how social class is profoundly intertwined with language. These three characters display a colourful social background through their language, which helps us discover their social identities.

The second scene from Sweat is full of sociolinguistic elements that manifest the characters' race, social class, and economic conditions. Firstly, the fact that these conversations happen in a bar has valuable implications on its own. It is a safe place for working-class people to convey frustrations. The ritual of drinking emphasizes the solidarity of the working class. In literature, the motif of drinking is associated with the despair and socio-cultural distress of the lower class. Just as Steinbeck's 1937 novel "*Of Mice and Men"* depicted alcohol as filling the loneliness and spiritual emptiness of workers, Nottage presents alcohol here as a symbol of the social isolation and helplessness of the working class. Furthermore, drinking and drunken speech are more often seen

as a characteristics of working-class speech, too. They use informal, non-standard English, associated with their working-class backgrounds.

Cynthia: "I don't believe ya!" (Nottage, 2015, p. 14).

In this example, Cynthia uses the contraction of *you.* Other characters also use these kinds of colloquial contractions. They say *dunno* instead of *don't know, or gimme* instead of *give me*- showing informal, spoken English. The phonetic reduction of *going to- gonna* is also used by characters. In expressions such as *"You gonna apply?", "You gonna report?",* characters omit *are*. This omission is related to non-standard usage of language. In the sentence *"It's been a helluva lot better since....."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 25) by Cynthia, she again uses phonetic reduction. Helluva is a merging of *hell of a* into a single unit, and is generally related to working-class dialects in the U.S.

Jessie says, *"I gotchu"* towards Oscar. It is a phonetic contraction of " I have got you", and is used in close relationships, in informal and working-class speech. Jessie also uses *" C'mon"* several times, which shows casual speech and expresses urgency, insistence, or appeal. Another example of contraction in this scene is *"gotta"* by Cynthia. It is a contracted form of " *got to*" and is typically related to conversational speech.

Stan: " That don't sound like him"(Nottage, 2015, p. 17).

This shows Stan's use of non-standard English grammar, as he uses *don't* instead of *doesn't* in this sentence. These characteristics are indicative of working-class dialects in American English, particularly in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and White working-class English. These markers highlight the characters' lack of formal education.

Characters like Cynthia and Tracey use *"Get outta here!"* several times, and the usage of this phrase is related to working-class and blue-collar speech, especially in American English. It is a common informal phrase that is used in non-standard language.

Stan: "I was kinda hopin' I'd see Brucie" (Nottage, 2015, p. 26).

Stan uses *"g"* dropping in the word *hoping* and colloquial contraction like *kinda* instead of *kind of* both of which are characteristics of working-class speech. According to Trudgill, working-class speakers tend to use -in' while middle-class speakers use –ing pronunciation at the end of the words. Stan's use of *hopin'* aligns with Trudgill's findings. Another example:

Cynthia: "Frank's lookin' for reasons" (Nottage, 2015, p. 27).

Cynthia's dropping of –g at the end indicates her working-class background according to Trudgill's theory.

The characters' speech displays their economic hardships and frustrations. Cynthia dreams about running from poverty with a cruise, *"I'm taking a cruise through the Panama Canal in summer"* (Nottage, 2016, p. 16). Her desire for a luxury adventure mismatches with her daily chores, displaying the class divide between reality and delusion. This scene also shows the shocking news of Stan's house burning down, emphasizing the destructive influence of job loss on working-class families.

Cynthia: "Nobody's going nowhere" (Nottage, 2015, p. 27).

Cynthia uses double negatives as a familiar characteristic of non–standard English, emphasizing the working-class linguistic identity.

Characters often used invectives like *shit, fuck, damn, hell, muthafucking* to convey solidarity and emotional intensity. Jessie's drunken slurs like *" You are a damn cripple", " Witch!* represent a loss of composure due to alcohol. This situation is frequent in a working-class climate where alcohol is a component of social interactions.

In another example, power dynamics are evident from the dialogue between Stan and Tracey. Stan mentions about NAFTA, but Tracey reacts like *"What the fuck NAFTA*?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 20). She also answers to Stan's question *"Don't you read the paper?"* like "No*, "I'm dyslexic."* It is clear that some part of the working class strives to acquire knowledge and is interested in political issues. While others, like Tracey, ignore information and do not seek to be aware of them.

Cynthia: I might apply.

Tracey: Get outta here.

Cynthia: Why not?...

Tracey: Management is for them, not us. (Nottage, 2015, p. 24)

From this dialogue, we see Tracey reacting with despair to Cynthia's application for a management position. Tracey asserts that positions such as management belong to "them" (upper–class), not us (working-class). With these pronouns, she highlights permanent boundaries that separate the two groups. In another example, Tracey says that if Cynthia is promoted, she will throw her name into the mix (Nottage, 2015, p. 25). Here, Nottage uses sarcasm to emphasize that the lower class cannot be promoted.

This scene also includes racialized language examples. In general, such racial language stereotypes are used a lot when addressing Oscar throughout the play. Oscar is a Colombian-American who is in his twenties, and he works at the bar. Tracey's judgement to Oscar: *"You Puerto Ricans are burning shit down all over Reading"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 21) express how language displays racial differences. Oscar highlights his Colombian identity and tries to correct her by saying this. Tracey's disregard of his response highlights racial essentialism.

Stan omits the subject in *"Not a light bulb, not one single nut or bolt,"* which is famous in working-class speech. (Nottage, 2015, p. 25)

The interaction between Stan, Jessie and Tracey uses humour and sarcasm to display frustration with bureaucracy. Stan emphasizes that burning down a house is against the rules and requires permission and money. Even Cynthia answers like "*I must burn down my home, it's a little money trap*" (Nottage, 2015, p. 20) to him sarcastically. This answer suggests that having a house means a financial burden for them. While speaking, Stan again uses contractions like *dunno, ya* and Cynthia uses insulting words like *shit* and *crappy* several times (Nottage, 2015, p. 20).

Stan's speech at the end of the second scene in Act 1, can be considered the climax of this part. He criticizes corporate management, stressing the disassociation between workers and principals. He says: *"They don't wanna get their feet dirty, their diplomas soiled with sweat"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 26). This statement creates a metaphorical contradiction between physical labour and ruling education. It carries the idea that educated people evade manual labour. He uses negative words against managers like *Wharton MBAs, shitty product* etc.

As we see, the way characters speak shows their social backgrounds, highlighting class differences through vocabulary, grammar, etc. Language also serves to understand power

structures in society. In the play, the characters' speech provides us with a critique of economic and social inequality.

In the scene 3, we witness the conversation between three characters - Stan, Jason and Chris.

Jason: ……. It's in beautiful condition. Mint.

Chris: Phat. You gonna do it? (Nottage, 2015, p. 28)

The dialogue between Jason and Chris is highly informal and indicates their friendship. Chris uses *"You gonna do it?"* instead of *"Are you going to do it?"* and it shows casual, spoken, and non-standard language. His usage of urban slang *phat* (meaning, cool) is related to Black youth culture (Urban Dictionary, n.d). Another slang term is *mint* used by Jason. The term *mint* is an urban slang term describing something excellent (FastSlang, n.d). Here, it is used to show enthusiasm for cars and motorcycles. Using these terms signals working-class male conversations where brevity is important. This dialogue displays how slang reflects subcultures and emphasises social belonging.

Jason: *" ……. if she ain't paying for it then she don't got no say"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 29).

Since double negation occurs in working-class speech, it is natural that Jason, as a representative of the working class, would use it as well. Even he uses three negations like *ain't paying, don't got*, and *no say*, in one sentence. The standard form of this sentence would be: *"If she isn't paying for it, then she doesn't have any say."* He also uses another double negation, *"don't have nothing left…"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 29). This example also includes misuse of auixiliary verb *doesn't.* These multiple negations are a common feature of "uneducated" language. With this sentence, Jason shows that working-class speakers tend to use their own linguistic rules against societal expectations.

In another example, Stan uses *watcha instead of "what are you"* His usage of *waiting on* instead of *waiting for* reflects regional and dialectal variation.

With his statement *" .....how hard you work there will never be enough money to rest"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 30). Chris underlines working-class economic realities and pressures. The deprivation of leisure and entertainment opportunities for the working class is criticised by his statement. It is not only about material poverty, but also cultural and psychological isolation. He

mentions the names of brands like *Nike Flightposite* and *Air Jordan XVII*, emphasising how prestigious brands destroy financial savings. He presents how everyday meals are expensive for working-class members by saying that *"having dinner at Olive Garden is expensive"*(Nottage, 2015, p. 30).

In this scene, characters use the contraction of *because* several times. The contraction of because is "*cuz*," and it shows informal speech associated with youth vernaculars. It can also be an indicator of solidarity and familiarity. It is a relaxed form that is used in spoken language.

Chris uses "g" dropping at the end of words like *dunkin'* and *fuckin'*.

In many situations, education and attending college are important signals of the upper class. Jason highlights Chris's lack of college education to show his dominance in conversation. In the final parts of this scene, the characters again use linguistic indicators such as *ain't', wanna*, and *kinda* several times.

Scene 4 also contributes to sociolinguistic analysis. It begins with the conversation between Stan and Brucie, then Cynthia and Tracey join them.

Stan: "You watching this?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 35)

Stan: "They bring in temps?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 36)

These sentences omit the auxiliary verbs such as *are* and *did*. Standard form of the first sentence would be *"Are you watching this?"* and the second, *"Did they bring in temps?"* From the sociolinguistic perspective, ignoring auxiliary verbs is familiar in fast-paced conversation. This omission makes speech sound more spontaneous. The omissions adjust with working-class and regional dialects.

Stan also uses *fuckin', workin'* which indicate the omission of –ing in working-class pronunciation. He says: *work* '*em*, as a reduced form of *them*, that is used in spoken English, especially in working-class speech.

Stan: " ...gonna be dope, y'all." (Nottage, 2015, p. 35)

Stan again uses a phonological reduction of *going to* and the slang word *dope* meaning *great*. He uses the contraction form, as *y'all instead of you all*, to create solidarity between working-class people.

Stan highlights the illusion of the American Dream in his speech with Brucie. After 28 years of work, the company discarded him and didn't even consider his injury. Stan's hard work didn't guarantee his safe future. He uses sharp language and insults like *hard-ass lawyer, shit* to show deep anger of workers to controllers. Nottage describes exploitation of workers by the example of Stan's story. With the injury Stan faces harsh reality of worthless and understand he is nobody for the company. Repetition of the word *nobody* is the realisation of him. In his speech, he also repeats *twenty-eight years* several times, which shows his anger and disappointment with the system. He omits the subject *it* in the sentence like "*Got me out of that vortex"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 36) and the subject I in the sentence like *"Can't feel my toes"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 37). He also says "*I been jacking all…"* instead of saying *"I have been…."* All these grammatical omissions are related to working-class speech.

Brucie claims that economic struggles force people to blame other marginalized groups rather than the whole system. His reference to his father picking cotton shows the old days of labor activism. As a member of the working class, his speech has special characteristic features. For example, "*He don't know my biography*" (Nottage, 2015, p. 37). He misuses auxiliary verbs, which is typical of working-class dialect. The correct form will be "he doesn't." He also says, "*If you ain't notice…."*. The use of *ain't* is one of the characteristics of the working class.

Brucie: "You got a minute?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 38)

Tracey: "You want me to talk him?"(Nottage, 2015, p. 42)

Cynthia: "Chris tell you his news?"(Nottage, 2015, p. 42)

Brucie: "You doing okay?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 42)

Again, all these sentences demonstrate omission of auxiliary verbs, a characteristic of working-class speech. The standard form of these sentences will be: "*Have you got a minute?",* "*Do you want me to talk to him?*", "*Does Chris tell you his news*?", "*Are you doing okay*? ". Tracey

also omits *to* in *talk to him*. These omissions display the working-class inclination to prioritize clarity and efficiency in communication.

Brucie uses the word *useta* instead of *used to*, which is a common feature of non-standard speech. He also uses contractions like *cuz, gotta,* and *watcha* several times.

Tracey's use of *"ignore 'im"* is an example of h-dropping. The omission of the initial /h/ sound in words like *hear, have,* and *him* is associated with working-class dialects like Cockney, Yorkshire, etc. It also happens in American English varieties. So, her use of /h/ dropping symbols group identity between working-class representatives.

Brucie says *"if things was good…"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 43), and the use of *was* in this sentence is a characteristic of non-standard grammar. In standard grammar, we use *were* after plural words. Here, the use of *was* displays Brucie's lack of grammar knowledge. Additionally, he uses brief and fragmented speech patterns. Generally, throughout scene 4 in act 1, the characters use extremely vulgar language. They use a lot of swearing and offensive words in their speech. These insults (*mutafucking*, etc.) are mostly used between Brucie and Jessie, and even Jessie calls him a misogynist. While doing all this, they drink alcohol, a habit that is related to the working class. This scene gives a rich source for sociolinguistic analysis, and the characters' speech shows class conflict, class struggles, etc. The scene criticizes the whole system, showing how labour and loyalty to companies face exploitation rather than reward.

Scene 5 happens outside the bar, where Tracey and Oscar have a tense conversation. Their dialogue displays social hierarchies, racial and economic tensions in Reading, Pennsylvania. Tracey conveys offence and jealousy toward Cynthia's promotion. Tracey recommends that she deserves this promotion, but she doesn't want to accept "unwanted" suggestions from managers. This sentence has a hidden idea which suggests that either Cynthia admitted those "unwanted" suggestions for this job, or she was promoted because she is a minority. In their conversation, Tracey establishes dominance over Oscar with her linguistic choices. She frequently interrupts Oscar and humiliates him directly. Her linguistic aggression shows her idea that Oscar is not a member of this workplace, and she doesn't care about Oscar because he is an immigrant worker. She shows her dominance with the sentences like *"Are you retarded?", "Can you leave?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 46)

Tracey uses several characteristics of working-class speech, such as *"Don't you got something?"* instead of *"Don't you have?"*

She also uses *"I betcha they wanted a minority…*" (Nottage, 2015, p. 48). "*I betcha*" is the blending form of "*I bet you*" and is familiar in conversational American English. Usage of this phrase makes conversation casual, and this kind of blending is used mostly by working-class representatives. Tracey utilizes the pronoun *they* when talking about managers. This pronoun emphasizes the social boundary between Tracey's position and the manager's position in society. It also expresses racial frustrations and social class anxieties.

Oscar's speech involves nonstandard subject-verb agreement, a common characteristic of working-class speech. For example, *"They's looking to train…."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 47). As is generally recognized, standard grammar demands *"are"* after plural pronouns like they, we, and you. However, in the sentence above, Oscar says "they's" instead of "they're", which differs from standard rules. Oscar also uses a non-standard question form like "*You work at the plant?"* He ignores the auxiliary verb *do*. The word plant marks closeness with industrial work surroundings. Instead of the word "factory", it is used in blue-collar communities frequently. Oscar pronounces 'em instead of them in different sentences, like *" ….me to tell 'em."* This type of pronunciation is a common characteristic of informal, spoken English. Other examples of working class features are his use of *I dunno, cuz, kinda, ain't* several times in scene 5.

Oscar inquires about job potentials at Olstead's. Tracey highlights the position of family connections with this sentence: *"My dad worked here, I work here, and my son works here"(*Nottage, 2015, p. 49). She displays the gatekeeping mechanisms that newcomers can face by emphasizing the importance of social networks in employment. So, newcomers have problems accommodating the workplace.

Scene 6 describes the confrontation between Tracey and Cynthia at Jessie's birthday party, after hearing the news of Cynthia's promotion. This scene provides vivid data for sociolinguistic analysis.

At the beginning of the scene, Stan, Jessie, and Oscar ask Cynthia questions about her new job. While talking about her job, Cynthia code-switches between two registers, formal and informal, using workplace jargon (*supervisors, computer*) and storytelling.

Cynthia: "It's like discovering that you're only just a few miles away from the ocean. But you didn't know because it was on the other side of the mountains" (Nottage, 2015, p. 54).

She resembles her promotion from an ordinary worker to a supervisor, to crossing mountains. Here, "mountains" refers to boundaries like social class, race, etc. Cynthia shows social distance between factory workers and office staff with these sentences. After the promotion, there are visible changes in Cynthia's speech. She tends to use formal speech when talking about her job.

Stan: You got a list?

Cynthia: I got a desk, whoa, and a computer (Nottage, 2015, p. 53).

This dialogue shows the lack of auxiliary verbs, which is common in Blue Collar English. In his question, Stan omits *have*. Cynthia's sentence shows her workplace identity, and her use of *whoa* expresses her awareness of the prestige of her new job. She says *whoa* because she doesn't want her friends to see her as an outsider. Stan's question is also somewhat ironic and probing. It is difficult for women, especially black women, to demonstrate their authority due to gender. By asking this question, Stan is questioning her supervisor's authority. The fact that Cynthia has not only a list, but also a computer and a desk, confirms her workplace authority.

Stan: "You been warming….." (Nottage, 2015, p. 51)

Stan's non-standard use of you been warming, instead of you have been warming is related to working-class dialect. In this scene, he also uses *gimme* several times, instead *of give me*, a common feature of non-standard spoken language.

Another character in this scene is Jessie, who celebrates her birthday party and utilizes several characteristics of working-class dialect. Firstly, she uses phrases like *dunno, ain't, wanna, watcha, cuz*, and *ya* several times. She uses non-standard question forms like "*You okay*" (Nottage, 2015, p. 58) instead of "*are you okay*?" and "*Everything okay*?" instead of "*Is everything okay*?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 52). Jessie also uses auxiliary verbs incorrectly in the third person singular. In one example, she says *"she don't"* instead of *"she doesn't.* (Nottage, 2015, p. 51)

Jessie: Betcha proud of your ma?

Chris: She's aight.

In this exchange, Jessie uses the reduction of "*bet you*" and uses *ma* instead of mother to show familiarity. Chris says *aight* instead of *alright* to be cool. In another example, Chris says *"WHASSUP?!"* the blended and contracted form of *"What is up?"* Firstly, the /t/ drops and remains *wha*, then *s* and *up* blend into *ssup*, after that, the whassup is created.

Cynthia again uses non-standard forms like, "*Sweet don't enough …"*, the word sweet requires "doesn't" after it, she also says: " *What the fuck you doing here?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 53),* and she misses "are" after "what". Her vocabulary often includes words that indicate blue-collar identity, one of which is "Carhartt". By saying that, she shows that she wears clothes from this work wear brand and emphasizes the manual labour culture and identity. From her conversation, we can also see that she underwent a psychological change when she moved from factory worker to supervisor. She describes how, on her first day, her body was automatically moved as if she were in a factory. The fact that her body required movement was due to her working-class background. But then she remembered that she could sit, meaning her position had changed (Nottage, 2015, p. 53).

At the end of this scene, we witness a conversation between two best friends, Tracey and Cynthia. Tracey demonstrates her distance by avoiding sitting next to Cynthia, illustrating changes in the social hierarchy at their workplace. After her friend's coldness, Cynthia asks questions, and their conversation showcases various non-standard grammar usages. Cynthia repeats the sentence "*You got a problem, tell me to my face*" (Nottage, 2015, p. 58-59) twice, missing the word *if*. This omission reflects her direct, confrontational tone. Tracey replies, *"I see you getting pretty chummy with them*" (Nottage, 2015, p. 59), which reveals Tracey's jealousy. Following scene 5, this marks the second time she refers to managers as *they*. By using 'them," she indicates a division between managers and factory workers. Cynthia's line "*There's a lotta pressure…"* displays a non-standard usage of "a lot of," which is characteristic of working-class dialect. Ultimately, the use of direct speech, contractions, and informal grammar makes this scene valuable for sociolinguistic analysis and emphasizes the workplace struggles between the characters.

Act 1, Scene 7 features the conversation between Chris, Brucie, and Jason. Firstly, Chris and Jason try to ignore Brucie's loan request, but their stance changes when Brucie warns them about the risk of losing their jobs. He illustrates that he was in the same condition as his previous

position, stressing the risks they face. This conversation draws attention to how worried employees are about job security. An unknown future causes psychological frustration and raises the tension of the moment. The scene of work is an impressive representation of the workers' collective struggle and belief in preserving their current positions in volatile circumstances.

They use colloquial language, informal conversational expressions, slang, and contractions, a common feature of showing camaraderie. The scene opens with Brucie's question, *"Your mom inside?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 61) - a question that omits the verb "is." Throughout the scene, Brucie frequently utilizes non-standard question forms. Other examples are: *"You got a minute?"(Nottage, 2015, p. 61),* which misses *have,* and *"She know about this?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 63), which omits *does.*

Brucie's speech includes expressions such as *gotcha, c'mon, gotta go, cuz, and yo*, which express his use of non-standard grammar.

Chris: " What are you talkin' about?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 63)

The phonological reduction of –g reflects Chris's working-class background and spoken language rather than formal grammar.

Characters also use vulgar expressions such as "*fucking assholes*", "*sly muthafuckas*", "*fuck that*". These words are prototypical in the lower-class people's sociolect. Their rough expressions might reveal their anger, resentment, and mental states about current economic conditions.

Brucie's representation of his own experience at the textile mill - *"We walked out of the textile mill thinking big, they locked us out, beat down our optimism"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 63) —signals a certain "working-class wisdom." His suggestion of money to Chris and Jason signals workers' solidarity against the circumstances.

As we have seen, Act 1 of Lynn Nottage's Sweat is valuable for sociolinguistic analysis. In this act, we have analyzed the language of the characters and obtained various results. First, we observed that Parole Officer Evan's speech is superior to the others in terms of both lexical choices and grammatical position. However, when talking to people of the lower class, he changes his register and behaves according to their speech. Act 1 follows how Cynthia's language changes as she changes her position. After her promotion, she speaks in a more formal register, adding words related to the workplace to her vocabulary. In addition, characters such as Stan and Brucie express

the frustration and pain of their social class through their language. They see injustices towards factory workers and emphasize their dissatisfaction with the system. Tracey's language also highlights the conflict between the working class and the rulers. Her language demonstrates the neglect of migrant workers. The features in the characters' language not only emphasize their lower-class status but also sometimes act as a means of preserving their social class identity.

3.2. Act II through a sociolinguistic lens

Act 2 of Sweat digs deeply into the themes of social strata, financial struggles, and individual conflict as the protagonists face the consequences of their past decisions. The problems in Act 1 become more serious, demonstrating how characters' financial instability continues to affect their relationships and personalities. Act 2 highlights the lasting effects of job loss, social divisions through linguistic options, and emotional clashes. This section explores the connections between labor conflicts, race, and personal issues, emphasizing the influence of external pressures.

The first scene of Act Two takes place in two apartments. Firstly, we witness the reunion of Tracey and her son Jason, then we see the reunion of Cynthia and her son Chris. The conversation in the first apartment demonstrates financial desperation and the common traumas of the working-class people. The second apartment reveals the destruction of their past community and the long shadow of past mistakes.

In the first scene of Act Two, the verbal cues of social class appear through the characters' lexical choices, linguistic styles, and interactions. Jason's language involves informal reductions and slang, such as *"They're just tats. Get over it"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 67), *cuz, ma, kinda, wanna*, which describe a lower-class speech. His speech includes the phrases like *"Fucking hell"* and *"Jesus, look at you"* express anger and melancholy of people who belong to lower socioeconomic groups. He also uses non-standard question forms and omits auxiliary verbs like *"You got anything to drink?* (Nottage, 2015, p. 65)

"You know what I'm talkin'" (Nottage, 2015, p. 66) - Here, Jason's pronunciation of talkin' reflects his working-class background. The omission of –ing is directly related to his class according to Trudgill's theory.

Tracey's word choices also reflect her lower-class background and anger toward the system. Her sarcastic use of "*I'm not running a money farm"* (Nottage, 2015, p.66) expresses her

financial hardship. Her anger is also shown in "*Gimme back my money, and get the fuck outta here"* (Nottage, 2015 p. 66). The use of *Gimme* instead of *Give me, outta* illustrates non-standard grammar often connected to lower-class language. The conversation about "*five dollars*" signals the working class's economic struggle.

Jason: *"Seriously? Five dollars, what's that, three cigarettes and a Slurpee?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 66)

He emphasizes the obscurity of such an amount for the middle or upper class. But "5 dollars" is valuable for workers. Tracey's protective answer, "*It's for my back pain*," signals her addiction.

Cynthia: "You got sorta mannish?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 68)

Cynthia's phrase includes grammatical and lexical features that show the character's social background and attitude. The word *sorta* is a colloquial reduction of *sort of.* This word serves to soften the directness of the sentence. Use of *"you got"* instead of *"you have gotten,"* emphasizing an informal dialogic tone. The word *mannish* conveys a mocking tone rather than *masculine,* reflecting a change in Chris's appearance. In another example, Cyhnthia uses *coulda,* a phonetic contraction of *"could have*", familiar in working-class dialects.

Scene 2, from Act 2, happens in a bar where the Olstead factory's supervisor, Cynthia, faces her ex-co-workers. The conversation between her and Jessie, Jason, Tracey, and Chris reveals their desire to learn the truth about the company's plans. Cynthia speaks about the company's secret decisions towards factory workers, and they show angry, unruly, and frustrated reactions to her. Cynthia mentions how the company has transported machines to Mexico, their plan to reassess contracts, and the idea of a sixty percent reduction in employee salaries.

Cynthia: I promise you. I didn't know. .....I'm in there fighting for us.

Tracey. Us? You promised!!! (Nottage, 2015, p. 71)

Cynthia's replacement from *I* to *us* mirrors her desire to maintain group solidarity, pointing out that she still feels like she belongs in the same group as her friends. Tracey's ironic question, *Us?* shows their broken bonds. This question also conceals distrust, and Tracey feels betrayed by

the idea that her friend now belongs to a different social group. Furthermore, Cynthia demonstrates her former class identity by misusing the phrase "in there".

"Tracey. Then why have you been avoiding us?

Cynthia. ..... I'm working. And for your information, I'm the only supervisor who's even bothered to give you real face time." (Nottage, 2015, p. 71)

Tracey's accusatory question again includes *we vs you* mentality and emphasizing group solidarity. Throughout the first act, Tracey keeps Cynthia out, saying that the management position is not for her but for "*them*"—those of a higher social class. However, in the dialogues that take place in the second act, she now includes Cynthia in that "*them*." This change in perspective emphasizes Tracey's reception of Cynthia's development in social status, but also her growing sense of alienation from herself. In response to this, Cynthia's averting answer assumes that she is not like other supervisors; she deals with the problems of the employees, so she is a friend, not an enemy. On the other hand, it indicates that other supervisors are not communicating with employees, emphasizing the carefree and unbothered nature of the upper class.

Tracey: "Did they send you here?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 71)

By saying *they,* Tracey is referring to management, and by referring to *you,* she is directly pitting Cynthia against the employees. By using the verb *send,* Tracey is indicating that Cynthia is a messenger and is under the control of others. She is questioning Cynthia's loyalty and is trying to clarify whether she is here to help or for some other purpose.

Tracey's phrase "*We're not mules"* can be considered a metaphor for oppressed laborers-animals that work hard but have no rights. This comparison reinforces that the working class is being treated very unfairly. Her language mirrors the mental strain of workplace hardships. These kinds of animal metaphors are used by working-class people in conversations about power and oppression.

"Cynthia:……. they don't want to carry the burden anymore.

Jessie: We are the burden?

Jason: Fucking Burden?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 72)

Cynthia's sentence portrays the factory workers as a bulk, rather than fundamental representatives of the company. The fact that the working class, who have considered themselves valuable for their labor and hard work for many years, are suddenly accused of being seen as a burden by the system causes them a deep psychological and moral shock. For them, this means losing the identity and social position they thought they had until now. Jessie and Jason's nervous repetition of the same word is representative of their group solidarity. Besides, Jessie's saying "we are" instead of "are we" reminds informal conversation.

This scene also reminds us frustration towards NAFTA, with Cynthia's reference to it as *"bullshit."*

Cynthia: I'm telling what's going on…..If I walk away, then you got nobody. I'm on your side.

Tracey: Ok, act like it. I only see the same excuses. We're friends! (Nottage, 2015, p. 74)

Cynthia assigns her authority over Tracey with the sentence *"I'm telling …"* and the phrase *"you got nobody"* emphasizes Cynthia's mediator role. Cynthia makes it clear that she has chosen her side. Tracey's statement displays a gap between expectation and action. She blames Cynthia for not acting and still sees her as one of *them.* Cynthia stands on the boundary between employee and management, and Tracey's speech obliges her to choose a side.

In this scene, Cynthia also informs the workers about the sixty percent pay cut. This news serves as the climax for the workers, triggering their outrage. They express their hatred toward the system through words like *goddamn, bastard, hell,* and *fuck*. Tracey pronounces '*them* and *fuckin'* several times, which is related to working-class speech.

While Tracey and Jason utilize direct accusations, emphasizing their feelings of betrayal, Cynthia tries to keep a distance with her words and acts coolly. This is due to her change in social status. Cynthia's speech is more restrained and controlled. She shows a way out and tries to guide the workers, thus demonstrating her social mobility. She uses metaphor and calls the management *vipers* (Nottage, 2015, p. 75), highlighting their danger. Management is compared to vipers due to its predatory nature. This predatory class (management) does not protect the rights of workers; on the contrary, they abruptly fire them, reduce wages, close factories, and move factories to cheaper regions. Her direct imperatives and conditional sentences display that she is a negotiator and acts

as a bridge. Cynthia also uses code switching from informal speech to formal, emphasizing decisions of the company. So scene 2 from Sweat reinforces power dynamics, group solidarity, difficulties faced by employees with sociolinguistic elements like code switching, contractions, etc.

The scene 3 occurs in Cynthia's birthday and describes her as thoughtfully and lonely while Stan talks to her. Cynthia mentions her labour pains and disappointments as one of the black workers. She remembers feeling a sense of accomplishment when she rose to the position of supervisor. But it was also difficult for her because she had to lay off employees, including his own son. Stan reminds her that it makes them even angrier that no politician is doing anything about the mass layoffs. Cynthia admits that she is overwhelmed with guilt. Then, Tracey and Jessie arrive, and we witness their tension with Cynthia. In the end, Tracey admits that she used to admire Cynthia's toughness, but Cynthia doesn't anymore. Tracey suggests she join them in solidarity, but Cynthia refuses and explains that one of them should stay within the system to secure their future. This scene paints a harsh truth that two old friends are now on opposite sides of an economic battle.

The scene begins with Stan's non-standard question forms. He asks Cynthia, *"You all right?"* instead of "Are you all right?", *"Hot in there?"* instead of *"Is it hot in there?",* "*You want me to crank the air?"* instead of *"Do you want me to crank the air?"* These question forms are common in informal speech, but considered ungrammatical in formal language.

Cynthia's sentences provide us with information about her working-class pride related to industrial labour. The fact that she has a union card shows her economic stability compared to other workers. Linguistically, her sentences have non-standard grammatical structures. Her choice of *folk* rather than *people* reinforces a dialectal variation. Her statement *"I wanted this job so bad"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 77) displays a strong desire to obtain a higher status in society. She pictures other workers as "*white hats*," and it reinforces the distinction between job hierarchies. The workers who are absent from manual work occupy higher-status positions.

Stan's phrase like "It ain't your fault" ain't is used in place of isn't or aren't in working-class dialects. This phrase is frequent in Stan's speech, signals his non-standard use of language. His other phrase, " *a lotta drinks….."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 78) interplays rhythmic contraction of "lot of." Stan's speech includes the words like: folks and guys which represent more casual-style and people from working-class often refer to each other with these words. It creates a sense of belonging and solidarity between them. He says: *"I watch these politicians talking…."* (Nottage, 2015, p.

79). Linguistically, the grammatically correct form of the sentence doesn't include "talking", but includes "talk". Generally, he dismisses auxiliary verbs, sounds ('em instead of them), uses contractions (cuz instead of because), and uses many non-standard forms.

Tracey's speech carries emotional weight and shows her powerlessness as a working-class member. In her statement, *"They didn't give us a fucking choice"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 79) she blames "them" (management) and is disappointed. *"After all them years"* shows her misuse of "those" as "them," especially in working-class American English. Both Tracey and Cynthia use working-class speech, but Cynthia's speech is more proficient than Tracey's. Her syntax is more consistent, displaying that she computes her words attentively.

Cynthia shows her new role with her sentence *"I'm trying to hold things together…"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 80). This expression shows that she considers her role valuable and important in society. It also declares how the character realizes herself and the importance she places on her social position.

Another example from Tracey, *"Since I could count money"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 81), signals that her childhood was spent working. She also uses *wanna* instead of want to in different situations (wanna spend money, etc.). Tracey's spontaneous outbursts, non-standard grammar, and repetitions picture her profound bond to labour.

The Scene 4 from Act 2, introduces the conversation between Jason, Chris, Stan and Brucie. Each of them mirrors their working-class identity through their linguistic repertoire. For example, Brucie's repertoire includes words like *whassup. ,* double negatives like, *"I don't gots to report to nobody"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 86), omitting auxiliary verbs like "*You guys hanging though*?" (Nottage, 2015, p. 85)*, "You right?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 85), *"You start school?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 86), phonetic reductions like *awright. Awright* is frequently used in place of *"all right,"* common in African American Vernacular English and working-class dialects. He also says *"This don't have"* instead of *"This doesn't have."* These characteristics emphasize the absence of formality of middle or upper-class representatives, showing Brucie's blue-collar status.

In this scene, Chris's linguistic choices, *I dunno, gots to, dude, fuckin'* represent his cultural background. He code switches between informal and formal registers while speaking about his former experiences, his desire to study, etc. His use of the contracted form of *"Look at you*" as

"look atcha" aligns with working-class vernacular. As his father, Chris, also omits auxiliary verbs like *"You hear me?"* in the place of *"Do you hear me?"*. This scene displays Chris as a young Black working-class man who wants to build his future despite his family's past.

Jason's aggressive phrase "*Fucking pricks"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 88) indicates his hostile attitude toward the company. His clipped statements like "Leave it." (Nottage, 2015, p. 86), "Hell, yes!" (Nottage, 2015, p. 88) express a supportive attitude towards his colleagues. Unlike Chris, Jason has no desire to get an education, etc., because his whole life is connected to the mill. Stan as a bartender doesn't show the same level of excitement as the others.

Chris: "I'm not gonna be a punk-ass bitch! That's what they want

Brucie: You think they give a damn about your Black ass? They don't even see you! (Nottage, 2015, p. 88)

This dialogue shows strong social variability and racial issues. The insult "punk-ass bitch" to display that he will not give up even when conditions deteriorate. He is a representative of the young working class who is trying to protect the rights of workers. He utilizes *"gonna"* instead of *"going to"* which reinforces nonstandard speech. As an older representative of working-class black workers, Brucie sends a message to his son about the hardships of the fight against the system. According to his statements, it is clear that the system ignores black laborers, and Chris has no chance. This idea supports the misfortune of the American Dream. While Chris represents rebellious perseverance, his father represents broken faith.

Finally, Nottage describes each character's social place in society through their language throughout this scene. Their speech informs us how Brucie is broken by economic struggles and his son, Chris, is looking for other options (like getting an education) but also trying to maintain his working-class identity. Jason embodies the frustration of the white working class.

Scene 5 depicts the growing tension within the working class due to economic and racial struggles. At the beginning of the scene, Stan learns that Oscar has taken a job at Olstead. Later, Tracy, a former factory worker, enters the scene, and when she encounters Oscar, she begins to use insults. The scene depicts the struggle between the white workers who have been laid off and the marginalized minority workers who are trying to get ahead. Grammatical features of the characters in this scene (Stan, Oscar, Tracey) characterized by elision of sounds, spoken contractions, non-

standard grammatical structures. For example, they use *ain't* instead of *isn't* several times, in the examples like "*Ain't my problem*" (Nottage, 2015, p. 91) by Oscar, "I ain't desperate"(Nottage, 2015, p. 94) by Tracey and " Ain't gonna like it" (p.91) by Stan. The last example also includes "gonna", a common characteristic in working-class dialect. Characters omits auxiliary verbs as: *"You want my opinion?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 91) by Stan.

"Oscar: It's not my problem. I been trying to get….. each time I asked any of 'em, I get nothing but pushback" (Nottage, 2015, p. 91)

His use of "I been" without "have" is a common characteristic of informal, non-standard speech and makes sense of fight over time. He changes the tense from past *asked* to present *get*, which is a non-standard use of tenses grammatically. He also drops the "th" sound in "them" as a working-class dialectical feature. Oscar's statement, "*It's not my problem,*" displays that he doesn't feel like he belongs in the same union as the workers, because the union has never accepted him.

Oscar's speech mirrors his feelings of marginalization. He drops the final consonant ing frequently, such as *disrespectin'.* He also utilizes code-switching by including Spanish words or phrases in his English sentences like "*Got a jar of Buena Suerte from…."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 92). Code-switching symbolizes his Latino heritage. Slangs like *fuckas* are an important part of his speech and serve to express the sense of frustration and hostility to the system.

His phrase *"No, Hello Oscar"* emphasizes that people come to the bar every day, but they don't see him. It makes him feel marginalized, and now he doesn't want to care about the union that excluded him. Oscar's father's past experiences, such as sweeping floors at Olstead, deliver the painful testament of generational struggle and the rigidity of the working-class members.

The conversation between Stan and Tracey delivers the position of unemployed workers who get little support from the union. Stan's question to Tracey *"You keeping yourself busy?"* omits the auxiliary verb *are* and Tracey's answer *"Been walking the line…"* omits pronoun *I.* Tracey's use of *woulda* instead of "*would have*" makes her speech more authentic. Her use of *betcha* implies her natural conversational style, highlighting her blue-collar worker identity.

The dialogue between Tracey and Oscar at the end of this scene mirrors the conflict between local workers and migrant workers. Tracey's attack on Oscar with abusive words *fuck-face scab* (Nottage, 2015, p. 94) is her anger towards the system. Oscar's response to Tracey breaks his

silence as a migrant worker: *"If you wasn't a woman, I'd….."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 94). His misuse of *"wasn't" instead of "weren't"* is a representation of his working-class speech. Oscar's decision to take a new job at Olstead's emboldens him. He can now escape his previous inferior position. This makes him feel that he has the right to retaliate against Tracey. From a sociolinguistic side, this change in his reaction to Tracey highlights the perceived potential for social mobility. It is an opportunity for him to voluntarily leave the bar where he feels worthless. In his conflict with Tracey, upward mobility encourages him to do something that he has not done before. He no longer sees himself as inferior.

All these show that people's social position is closely linked to their job. Oscar, who previously felt invisible, gains social visibility thanks to his new job. Oscar is now stronger, more stubborn, and independent. All of this affects his speech and choice of words, too. The difference between Oscar and Cynthia is that Oscar ignores the fact that Tracey and others see him as a traitor. As a migrant worker, he only thinks about his interests. All this stems from the prejudice of local workers against migrant workers. Unlike Tracey, Oscar has no moral bond to these workers.

In the 6th scene, all the resentments of class reach a climax as Oscar arrives at the bar just two days before the 2000 U.S. presidential election. Oscar's arrival causes complete commotion. Characters begin to dispute the issues about betrayal, desperation, stagnation, and class segregation. Jason beats Oscar cruelly and Stan wants to calm down the wrangling. Jason accidentally bashes Stan on the head with a bat.

In the beginning of the scene, Chris, Jason and Stan apply non-conversational forms of grammar and vocabulary usage. Chris uses: *" The workers ain't feeling"* instead of *"are not feeling."* Stan utilizes *"Whatcha gonna do*?" in place of *"What are you going to do?"* Jason introduces several non-standard question forms like *"Go where?", Not*? etc. Stan produces unpolished kind of syntax like *"How long wuz you together?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 98) reminding the speech of marginalized communities.

Chris's discourse markers like *yo* and "*she's all like"* reflect a spoken register that maintains the speech in daily, working-class existence. His speech is filled with inner-city slang, such as "playa" and "crib". Playa is a slang characterizes the man who is successful and admired by others. Crib refers to "home" or "house". These types of linguistic markers signal the speaker's belonging to a distinct sociolect marked by their community, socioeconomic class. His sentences also include

double negatives like *"Don't say nothing, Jason."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 98) His use of "Now they got us fighting for scraps" (Nottage, 2015, p. 98) signals economic precarity and highlights the division between workers and "they."

Jason: "What I done?, Eleven dollars an hour? No thanks." (Nottage, 2015, p. 101)

Jason starts with a rhetorical question and uses a non-standard question. Instead of using *did* he uses *done*. The second statement sends a refusal of the salary being offered to him. He mirrors labor dissatisfaction and demand for a fair salary. His hyperbole "*They'll work us down to nothing if we let 'em"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 101) reveals exploitation of workers and portrays power dynamics in the workplace.

"But they know they can always find someone willing to work hard." (Nottage, 2015, p. 101)

With this sentence, Jason reaches the climax of his thoughts by showing how employers take advantage of people in desperate situations. The phrase "*work hard*" is actually a metaphor for hard work. Jason wants to make it clear that the company can always find people who work for low wages for such jobs.

Oscar also introduces double negatives like *"I don't have no problem with you."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 104)

Influenced by the 2008 significant events, Scene 7 describes Chris, Jason, and Evan, three men who interact after past trauma and incarceration. Chris and Jason think about how their life could be different. They feel guilty and judged by society. Evan invites them to sit down and resolve it together. Chris and Jason utilize working-class colloquialisms *ain't, gonna*, *shit* etc. Jason uses double negation conveying emphasis, *"It don't cost me nothing."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 109) He also portrays misuse of auxiliary verbs like "it don't" in place of "it doesn't". Chris's use of "*people be looking at me now"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 108) instead of *"people are"* is related to a lack of grammar knowledge. Evan also utilizes informal speech and creates several sentences with *ain't, whatcha, etc*. Despite this, his speech is more measured and has an advisory tone. Evan's advisory tone signals his stable position in society. His grammar is more standard than Chris's and Jason's, and his register is between formal and informal. Evan chooses reflective and calm words in the face of the volatile words of others. Chris and Jason's language shows their emotional trauma and social position. Since the scene shows the self-struggle of Jason and Chris, their conversational

patterns contain many ideas. For example, Chris's statement *"All I see is a closed door"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 108) shows his alienation and hopelessness.

Scene 8 occurs several years after in a reopened bar and we witness reunite of characters- Chris, Jason, Oscar, and Stan. Chris and Jason abide to use working-class features which display their social status, for example, "*don't walk outta here"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 112) by Chris. The scene also mirrors Oscar's social transformation, and the change in his position is evident in his language. His speech is more controlled and unflustered. He utilizes Standard English sentences than in previous scenes, for example, *"It's this artisanal stuff. A guy makes it." (Nottage, 2015, p. 111)* Oscar, once invisible, now has authority in the bar and controls the conversation with his questions, for example, *"What are you drinking?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 111) His sentences are confident and clear: *"I'm the manager."* (Nottage, 2015, p. 111) When a disagreement arises between Chris and Jason, Oscar is extremely patient and respectful. He uses calm words to defuse the tension: *"Wow, what's going on here?"* (Nottage, 2015, p. 112) This calm tone reflects Oscar's newfound status and sense of belonging in society. Jason and Chris understand his new position and are verbally submissive. They apologize and use short sentences.

The changes in Oscar's language are key indicators of his social mobility. While he used to use more street language or non-standard expressions, he now speaks in a standard, clear, and polite manner. His language is now that of a socially responsible person, which clearly shows how his social mobility is reflected in his language.

Table 3.2.1 lists the main speech-related characteristics found during the analysis to help comprehend how class stratification is represented in the play's language.

Table 3.2.1. Language as a marker of social stratification in Sweat

Linguistic Feature	Example(s)	Character(s)	Social Class	Comment
Phonetic Contractions	*Dunno, outta, ya, whassup*	Jason, Tracey, Stan	Working Class	Describes informal, everyday speech
Non-Grammatical Sentences/ Question forms	*"That don't sound like him", "They's looking", "You got a list?", "You doing okay?"*	Stan, Oscar, Brucie	Working Class	Speech patterns reflect informal grammar norms
Double Negatives/ ain't	*"They ain't offering nothing", "If she ain't paying, she don't go no say"*	Jason, Chris, Stan	Working Class	Non-standard grammar, emotional emphasis
Slang	*Mint, Phat, Playa, Crib*	Jason, Chris	Working Class	In-group language, urban youth culture
Lexical Choices	*"We're not mules", "We are the burden", "A fist pressing right here"*	Tracey, Chris	Working Class	Emotive expressions tied to identity and struggle
Pronoun Usage	*"Management is for them, not us"*	Tracey	Working Class	Reinforces group division/ class awareness
Pronunciation (ing dropping)	*Disrespectin', Lookin'*	Oscar, Cynthia	Working Class	Gradually reduced in upward mobility
Lexical Sophistication	*"Belligerent", "Reluctant to observe protocol", "Defiant"*	Evan	Middle Class	Formal and legal vocabulary
Display of Authority	*"I'm not one of your stupid friends"*	Evan	Middle Class	Assertive, Commanding tone
Insults	*Hell, Goddamn*	Tracey, Oscar	Working Class	Emotional language, shows anger
Social Mobility	*Cynthia: More money, more vacation....→ "It's number sixteen on my list"*	Cynthia, Oscar	Upward Mobility	More formal and reflects higher position
	"I'm the only supervisor..." Oscar: "No hello" → I'm the manager"			

CONCLUSION

Sociolinguistic elements in Lynn Nottage's "Sweat" elaborately indicate the characters' social realities, identities, class struggles, and interpersonal dynamics. The play utilizes language as a forceful tool, shedding light on the struggles of working-class individuals.

- Throughout the play, personal pronouns - such as "we" and "they"—are not just linguistic tools, but also effective instruments for conveying social identity and socio-economic belonging. Even though these pronouns can be utilized by both the working class and the upper class, in Nottage's Sweat, they operate as an indicator of class boundaries. For example, when Tracey introduces herself as a working-class individual, she utilizes the pronoun "we" to encapsulate the difficulties of this class, its struggles, and its pessimism about what lies ahead. In parallel, she denotes the management (upper class) as "they," drawing an obvious separation between the two groups. Such pronoun usage by the author is not coincidental, but rather shows her intentional approach to convey how language functions as a tool for depicting social class hardships. As a result, pronouns in Sweat deepen the invisible but powerful distinction between social classes and prompt the audience to consider this distinction.
- Recurring use of slang by the characters reveals their cultural background and is accepted as a marker of identity. It supports a sense of solidarity between working-class members.
- The utilization of double negatives increases the realness of their speech patterns. Double negatives are the index of characters' regional dialect and cultural heritage.
- The employment of non-standard questions declares working-class members' informal communication style. It mirrors the nuances of their social communications.
- One of the characteristics of the working class in Sweat is the use of language forms that go beyond grammatical norms. Expressions that are considered "incorrect" from a grammatical point of view (for example, she don't instead of she doesn't) demonstrate not only a lack of grammatical knowledge, but also a social and ideological position. Such non-standard language forms, on the other hand, act as an indicator of the educational level and social position of the characters, and on the

other hand, represent a form of passive resistance to the rules and system accepted by society. This dual function reveals that language in the work is not only a means of communication, but also a means of expressing social identity and class relations.

- The intentional use of insults in their speech behaves as a defensive mechanism or to convey disappointment. These verbal choices reveal the strain and power dynamics within the community.
- The characters' passion for social mobility is related to their linguistic selections. As Oscar and Cynthia move into a higher position in the social ladder, their linguistic repertoire displays subtle changes. Their registers are formal, authoritative, or polished. Their language shows their accommodation to their new social roles and highlights the linguistic modifications accompanying upward mobility.
- The character Chris's language portrays the juncture of education and social class, reinforcing his internal conflicts and desires. His linguistic repertoire shows the strain between upbringing and education, highlighting the role of language in shaping social identity.
- Sweat's characters utilize contractions and informal expressions that show their working-class index. The use of shortened words such as "gonna", "wanna", and "gotta" demonstrates characters' restricted connection to linguistic prestige.
- The social status of the characters is also reflected in their pronunciation. Characters such as Tracey and Stan omit the final –g in –ing endings (sayin', goin'). This characteristic of pronunciation is common in the working-class language.
- As people move up the social ladder, their language and linguistic characteristics change significantly. The speech patterns of Cynthia and Oscar are a clear example of this. As social mobility occurs, their speech becomes more polite, controlled, formal, and grammatically precise. These changes are not limited to word choice and grammar- they also manifest themselves in phonetic elements such as tone and stress. After being promoted, Cynthia's speech becomes more controlled, measured, and formal, as if she is trying to speak in her new social position. On the other hand, Oscar's speech becomes bolder, more emotional, and somewhat harsh. He no longer feels isolated, but rather, as if he is taking a stand against society, raising his voice more. This brings a tone of confidence, freedom, and defiance to his speech. He is

no longer a silent and compliant figure, but a figure who speaks and protests. These changes show that language is not just a means of communication, but also an indicator of social status and individual identity.

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APPENDIX I

Abstract

This research uses a strong sociolinguistic lens to examine social class representation in Lynn Nottage's renowned play, Sweat. The main purpose of this study is to investigate how linguistic choices mirror social class differences and socioeconomic struggles among the characters.

This study involves analyzing the play; Act One includes seven scenes, while Act Two comprises eight scenes. Drawing on discourse analysis, linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches, it investigates the sociolects of working-class characters in Sweat, portraying the existing socio-economic realities of a declining industrial town. This research identifies distinctive traits of working-class language, including the repeated use of vulgarisms, contractions, non-standard question forms, and double negations, among others. By revealing these characteristics, this thesis emphasizes how literature portrays and assesses real-world social stratification, offering invaluable insight into the sociolinguistic dynamics of social class struggle. The outcomes emphasize obvious differences in linguistic behavior of characters from distinct social backgrounds, portraying that Nottage's description of working-class language creates a detailed and dynamic image of contemporary class struggles in America.

Keywords: Lynn Nottage, Sweat, Sociolinguistics, Social class, Lower-Class Speech, Class-Conflict

APPENDIX II

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