

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN GENDER COMMUNICATION IN PAKISTANI TELEVISION TALK SHOW



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ABSTRACT

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The study aims to find out the differences in communication styles of Pakistani men and women. The present study attempts to provide a report on face-to face communication in a talk show, which is aired on AAJ NEWS channel Pakistan. To find out the differences in the use of linguistic features such as hedges, interruptions, directives and minimal responses in the language between men and women conversation, data was collected by recording clips of discussion, which was then transcribed. The results of the study indicate that there are differences between men and women in the use of linguistic features in their communication. The results also signify that the use of linguistic features is gender related and is affected by factors such as expertise of the participants in a particular setting and context of interaction. This paper limits itself to describe gender communication in a particular formal context. The study implies that stereotypical linguistic behavior associated with genders can be challenged if such behaviors are studied in different settings.

Contribution/ Originality: The study contributes in the existing literature of Language and Gender and Feminist Linguistics. Much of the work in this area of linguistics has been done in the western context so the present study is one of the few studies which have investigated the gender based linguistic differences in an eastern society that is fast changing and such differences are found to be on the decrease.

1. INTRODUCTION

As reported by many researchers there are differences between men and women in gender communication. The present study seeks to explore the difference among men and women in the use of linguistic features and the purpose behind such usage in gendered communication in formal communicative setting.

Communication style is gender dependent, as Tannen (2001) argues in her book that conversational approach of men and women have various set of rules and explanation of communication and that cross gender communication can be compared with cross cultural communication which is prone to conflicts. Gender communication can be seen as the way people socialize, develop and sustain their relationships. In terms of communication men and women are different in their form, topic, content and use.

Men and women communicate in specific ways debate vs. relate, report vs. rapport or competitive vs. cooperative, these are some of the style differences between men and women. Men look for easy solutions with problem solving and helpful advices, whereas in order to support relationships women are expected to save relationships by sharing and discussing. Coates (1986) found that when women converse with each other they only connect to one topic for a long time and they also expose more about their personal lives. Whereas, on the other hand men try to prove that they are better informed and they occasionally speak about their personal relationships and feelings. They mostly change topic and try to talk about new and something informational and they also try to talk less.

1.1. Research Questions

Q1. How are linguistic features of speech used differently by men and women in gendered communication?

Q2. What purpose do linguistics features serve in gendered communication?

1.2. Objectives

1. To find out the variation in the use of linguistic features by men and women in gendered communication
2. To explore the served purposes of the linguistics features in gender communication.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over 105 gender communication difference stated by Glass (1992) in her book, she concludes that men speak louder than women and do not talk about their private lives whereas women talk more about their private lives; these results are related to the results of Coates (1986). She also declared that women raise their voice in pitch and speaks slowly and without inflection, while men speak in high volume to show their position. The other results show that women in communication usually ask fewer questions whereas; men have an inclination to frequently interrupt. Further gender differences illustrated by Tse *et al.* (2002) among Cantonese speaking children. They observed utterances spoken during spontaneous play by children ages 3 to 5. He found syntactic differences between girls and boys as a major gender difference.

In sub field of sociolinguistic use of language in gender communication is explained numerously. Zimmerman and West (1975) suggested that male are characterized as competitive, and challenging in speaking styles of interaction, while females are characterized as having a co-operative, facilitative, and smooth speaking styles of interaction in a huge deal of language and gender research. Their styles are mostly concentrated on the features of interpersonal connections. In communication they construct the floor with cooperation, they usually talk in a polite form, avoid the arguments, use more hedges and as a supportive feedback they use minimal responses in communication. On the other hand, it should be distinguished that conversation generally restrains both cooperative and competitive fundamentals and by definition involve a certain minimum of cooperation and some degree of competition among speakers (Cameron, 1998).

Difference between genders in the use of language can be slight and influenced by several mediating features (Leaper and Ayres, 2007). Language reflects and transmits the social differences, so that should be easy to find the reflection of gender differences in language in the society. Gender difference is a suggestion of their different living styles and attitudes between genders but it is also an indication of the speeches. Leaper and Ayres (2007) found particularly college-aged student's language is naturally parallel and that certain environmental and conversational moderators elucidate case of men and women's differences in conversation.

McMillan *et al.* (1977) found in his study that in genders male interrupts more repeatedly than female do. But when they are communicating in cross cultural communication women try to interrupt more than men. In communication the women favor collaboration style, whereas men are likely to setup power. Tannen (1990) sates that women usually use terms of address to support their speaker such as hmm, nodding, smiling, uh huh,

The Meta Analysis of [Leaper and Ayres \(2007\)](#) has investigated previous description of men and women differences using a series of representatives, as well as gender of a group, size of group, familiarity of participants and interview setting. They observed both language creation and perception studies. The results of the study suggest that naturally men are more confident and talkative than women. These findings spread uncertainty on earlier conclusion about men and women language explained above. Considering on mediating variables, the gender effects were commonly changed. For example, in non-special communication men were more talkative, whereas women converse more with classmates, in parent children relations and with partners.

[Shen \(1997\)](#) in his studies found that in discussion of politics, economy, health and love men participate more than women. Men hold the floor for long period of time, talk more on social topics, take longer turns and with confidence. Women on the other hand show sympathy and provide encouragement but in some situations such as in family they are more confident. In the study of conversational assertiveness men become more competitive and express more characteristics, especially in the situation where there are more male participants present. When men appear challenging in communication then fundamentally women are pushed to a listening role.

Women mostly play a role to set up and maintain their private relationship ([James and Drakish, 1993](#)). In contrast with men, women are always predictable to gain greater position. Usually women maintain relations with grace and show kindness towards others. The women further expected to share personal feelings relevant to interpersonal relationship more than men.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The present study is based majorly on qualitative paradigm. Linguistic variables during communication are divided into categories on the bases of hedges, use of interruptions, minimal responses, address terms and directives. These features are analyzed to observe the difference between men and women for the usage of these categories.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on "Dominance theory" advocated by [Spender \(1980\)](#). According to [Spender \(1980\)](#) dominance theory is about a condition whereby men and women are shaped by the culture and linguistic environment where there is inequality in power and status distribution in society.

This theory, which is also called "power-based theory", focuses on male dominance and gender division. This theory is method of gender difference in communication, which shows the influence of environment and culture on the speech of men and women across regions or contexts. The 'dominance' theory of gender differences focuses on the distribution of power in society, and suggests that women's speech reflect their subordinate position. It allows for the analysis of how asymmetrical power relations are achieved in daily interaction.

The central idea on which this approach rests is to understand the linguistics features, speech acts that produce a gender difference. Spender focuses on male dominance and reported that male is the power dominating in society. As reported by [Spender \(1980\)](#) women are reflected in subordinate position while making speech whereas men in super ordinate position.

Work within this model includes Pamela Fishman's studies, which claims women do the conversational support work that enables the conversation to happen and continue ([Fishman, 1983](#)). This is realized by asking questions, introducing topics, and making active listening signals. Fishman reported that the men in her studies would interrupt their partners, delay or omit back channel support, reject topics offered by women, and hold the floor for far longer periods than women. The strength of this approach is that it offers an account of how power is 'done' in conversations, how patriarchy can be achieved and maintained in the personal sphere between the married couples, for example. It can also be used to explain the reproduction of patriarchy as children learn gender-appropriate language use, which also teaches them their 'correct' role in society - domination or submission. According to this

model, women can in theory change their interactive patterns to subvert existing power relations. The main problem identified in the 'dominance' model is that there is no place within it for valuing the style of speech associated with women. The use of all the identified features is seen as a signal of submission, or lack of assertion. The dominance theory is one of most significant explanations of the commonly held belief that women are more polite than men in cross-sex conversations. In conversation men tend to be more dominating than women. The reflections of fewer interruptions in cross-sex conversations women are powerless regarding their social position. The 'dominance approach' provides a traditional, negative evaluation of women's speech, which is direct consequence of women's political and cultural subordination to men. Thus, women's linguistic inadequacies are attributed to societal inequalities between men and women, where men's conversational dominance appears to reflect the wider political and cultural domination of men over women (Freeman and McElhinny, 1996). Lakoff (1975) argues Women's manners of speaking are different from men, which reflect their subordinate status in society. Therefore the language of women expressed through the use of mitigation and inessential qualifiers are marked by powerlessness and tentativeness, which effectively disqualifies women from positions of power and authority. Freeman and McElhinny (1996) divide Lakoff (1975) ideas on women's language into three categories , the first idea refers that women are enable to express themselves strongly and to speak as a authority ; Secondly, language that encourages women to talk about trivial subjects and Finally, language that requires women to speak tentatively.

To determine the accuracy of Lakoff (1975) claims other researchers have been critically studied empirically on above features. This resulted in many of the claims being rebutted. Zimmerman and West (1975) who focused on male dominance in interaction added the feature of interruptions and silence to the list above. They argued that interruptions are used to silence others and that men tend to interrupt women more than women interrupt men. The study of interruptions also proved to be more complex than originally thought of by West & Zimmermann who argued that interruptions are "a device for exercising power and control in conversation" (p,103) .

As the dominance theory indicated earlier that the approach to the study of gender is not without its limitation. The theory is almost based on men's dominant position in society, with women being portrayed as "weak, helpless victims of a patriarchy that forces them to act in weak, passive, irrational or ineffective ways" (Freeman and McElhinny, 1996). Effectively portraying women as deprived of power, authority, or influence and unimportant members of society (Uchida, 1998). Jaggar (1983) the dominance approach can be seen as a distortion of reality, "depreciating the amount of power women have succeeded in winning and minimizes the chances of further resistance" (p.115).

3.3. Research Participants

The present study adopts qualitative research design. The study has focused on the conversational patterns and features of a Pakistani AAJ NEWS channel talk show. There are five participants in the present talk show under study, two female politician participants and two male politician participants and the fifth one is the host. The main focus of the present study is to observe the difference in gender communication.

Host of the show: Asma Sherazi

Guests:Dr. Shireen Mizari: Pakistan Tehriq-e-Insaf (PTI)

Zahid Hussain: colonist and a writer analyst

Nisar khoro: provisional minister of Sindh and Pakistan people's party (PPP)

Uzma Bukhari: Pakistan Muslim league (PML)

3.4. Data Collection

The data is collected from a Pakistani talk show FAISLA APP KA on AAJNEWS channel. Researchers used tape recording of the conversation and later it was transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

The present study is based on the analysis of Pakistani news channel talk show. The talk show, FAISLA AAP KA aired on AAJ NEWS is the data source. The researchers observed the gender conversation through tape recording. In this show the topic under discussion is related to politics. The data of the study was collected while the participants were busy in communication. All the data for the study is slightly close to social communication. After recording, the data were transcribed. Some linguistics features like hedges, address terms, minimal responses, and interruptions and also speech acts such as directives were found. Robin Lakoff, one of the most famous linguists who worked on linguistic features questions who holds the power and where they apply it, she analyzed the relations between gender, language, and power in her book "language and women's place". The present study has also analyzed the differences in the way men and women spoke in the recorded and transcribed data, testing Dale Spender's theory. The data was analyzed through conversational analysis (CA) to explore how gendered differences were constructed and negotiated through conversation. The language of social communication is the main focus of Conversation Analysis (CA). The purpose of the study in CA is usually everyday natural conversation, as opposed to scripted. CA is normally based on orthographical transcription of audio and video recordings of speech in various situations. For conversation analysts recoding is almost important factor, in this manner they make it often possible to analyze the material and observe the things in conversation (Sidnell and Stivers, 2012).

Talk show is mentioned as the most basic form of gender communication to explore within Conversation Analysis. These are one of the strongest areas of gender communication, with specialized linguistic features and specific roles for the participants. It is somewhat pre determined and many linguistic features and speech acts in particularly create difference in gender communication. Although both subject and length of linguistic features are to some extent pre arranged, the gender communication in talk show makes remarkable data for conversation analysis (Clayman, 2012).

The analysis of collected data is presented in different parts consisting of analysis of gender differences in talk time, hedges, use of address terms, interruptions, directives and minimal responses. The differences between the genders in communications are universal which ultimately result in creating their gendered identity.

3.5. Talk Time

It was observed that female try to get maximum time to speak and express their opinions and thoughts as compared to their male counterparts, primarily through interruptions. The gender stereotype of modern society says that women have a tendency to talk a lot than men. Women are famous on the phone gossip, chitchat and always trying to communicate with their friends. Whereas the stereotypical men always wants to stay quiet, trying to talk less. This theory has been demonstrated false by almost all research carried out on the subject. According to Eakins and Eakins (1978) men in almost everywhere talk more than women, such as such in offices, meetings and in panel discussions.

The following table (Table 1) highlights the talk time of both male and female conversation:

Table-1. Talk time of gender conversation

Program	Total clip time	Talk time of Men		Percentage	Talk time of Women		percentage
Faisla Aap Ka AAJ NEWS	26:45	1	6:37	60%	1	4:14	80%
		2	4:23		2	8:13	

Data Presentation

The general result of the study as shown in table 1, point out that the difference between men and women exist in terms of talking duration within a single communicative event. As the gender stereotype of modern society says that women are more talkative than men. The above table confirmed that statement. Women tend to be more talk active than men. In the talk show women spend more time in communication than men do. For instance, as

mentioned in the above table that the talk time of first woman was 4:14seconds while the talk time of first man was 6:37 seconds. The talk time of second man was 4:23seconds and the talk time of second woman was 8:13seconds. The results show that in communication women spend more time talking than do men. Women with great ability talk longer than the men. The present study has shown that the women talked more and the men listened more.

3.6. Hedges

Holmes (1983) interpret hedges as devices which are used to adjust the power of sentence in a way so as to make the conversation more polite and these devices also represent the attitude of listener toward speaker. It also asserts speakers force on others. It is also stated as compromises devices, which indicate imprecision of propositional satisfaction. Sometimes hedges are stated in a way to soften the speaker's statement. For instance, in present talk show the female host used hedges to show softness in conversation. Dixon and Foster (1997) says that hedges are seems as polite utterances to signaling agreement and non obligation. The hedges are increase or decrease the power of threatening acts and avoid burden on the addressee. In the present talk show female host and female participants used hedges in formal context like " *g haan, bilkul, exactly, bilkul bilkul, bilkul theek hey, accha*". The female host used more hedges to show that she is considerately listening. Sometimes hedges manifest speaker's confidence. The examples from the recorded and transcribed data are as follow;

Shireen Mizari: mein heran hoon.

Bhai kis definition se

Aapke sekeh sakte hain

Asma Sherazi: jeehan

Zahid Hussain: Pakistan ke andar 80% firkarwarana violence hai

Asma Sherazi: bilkul

Shireen Mizari: aur professionals kojo

Asma Sherazi: jee han

Zahid Hussain: dusritamam tanzeemen

Asma Sherazi: jeehan

Zahid Hussain: kazi Essaki reports bhi

Asma Sherazi: exactly

Nisar Khoro: Mein chaudry Nisar ko kyun kahun mein tou Nawaz Sharif se kahunga

Asma Sherazi: jeebilkul

Uzma Bukhari: mujhe kuch guzarish atkamoqa milna chahiye

Asma Sherazi: jeejee

Shireen Mizari: ye public funds hain

Asma Sherazi: bilkulbilkul

Shireen Mizari: Sindh and Baluchistan mein bhi zahirsi bat hain bhihorwa

Asma Sherazi: bilkul theak hai

Zahid Hussain: sab se pehle apne josarwalkia national action plan kyun nahikamyabhorwa?

Asma Sherazi: jeebilkul

Uzma Bukhari: katai tor peksibhisooratmein

Asma Sherazi: acha

3.7. Interruptions

Interruptions symbolize a clear destruction that gives one speaker's huge access to other's attention, so their occurrence is linked to dominance, power and status. West (1979) previous have found in his studies that it is generally that the more powerful people like men interrupts the less powerful one like women. In the present study,

it is interesting to note that the female host was found to be interrupting more as she held the power of controlling the program and the conversational contributions by different participants. Some of the examples are as follows;

Shireen Mizari: jab ke violence kiahai in tanzeemon ne

Asma Sherazi: Interrupts (matlabwotanzeemen)

Asma Sherazi: lashkar-e-jhangwikobhi de rahehain is mein....

Shireen Mizari:interrupts (aur ye dekhien ye bhi)

Shireen Mizari: hakumat ka jorawaya hai aur position hai is par bohat se sawalatuth'tehain

Asma Sherazi:interrupts (bilkul bilkul aur Zahid sahib)

Zahid Hussain: aapko yad hoga

Asma Sherazi: Interrupts (Alqaida ke andar)

Zahid Hussain: Kazi Essa ki reports.....

Asma Sherazi:interrupts (exactly KaziEssaki reports file)

ZahidHussain: haqiq ulallah masood kemarayepejo.....

AsmaSherazi:interrupts (taqreer kithijo)

The above examples show that the female host interrupts more than other participants in conversation. Sometimes, interruption is a sign of familiarity and acquaintance with the topic or the speaker. Like as in above example, she interrupts “*exactly Kaz Essa ki reports file*”, showing familiarity with the topic and at other times familiarity with the participants.

3.8. Directives

According to Searle (1975) directives are the type of speech acts that are meant as attempts by speaker to get hearer to do something. Common examples includes of acts into this kind are requesting, ordering, begging, pleading, inviting, advising and permitting.

A number of directives were found in the collected data, which were from the male politicians but all of these were in the form of request that does not show them to be in power position during the conversation

The examples are as follows;

NisarKhoru: dekhien jee mein guzarish kar raha hun

UzmaBukhari:Asma ye dekhien guzarish krne ka moqa milna chahiye

NisarKhoru: Mujhe baat complete karne den

Meri guzarish hai

Asma mujhe sirf do jumle bolne allow karen

3.9. Minimal Responses or Back Channel

Minimal responses are also known as back channels, positive feedback. In any communication the minimal responses can be identified as, supportive comments, positive feedback and agreement offered by listener to speaker. The Common examples of minimal responses are “hmmm, yes, uh huh, yeah and right. Minimal responses show listener’s verbal or non-verbal communication to support the speaker. Women most frequently use minimal responses. The same was found in the present study where the female host used a lot of minimal responses, and the most frequently word was “hmmm”. In total 16 to 18 times the word “hmmm” used by female host. She used this word “hmmm” commonly to show support to the speaker and make the discussion flowing smoothly. Some of the instances from the recorded data are as follows

Shireen Mizari: literally hum ne jo drafting kihain

Asma Sherazi: hmma

ShireenMizari: 2 saalmein criminal justice system ka reform karenge

AsmaSherazi: hmma

ShireenMizari: hate literature tha

AsmaSherazi: hmm

ShireenMizari: nectar bhi operationalize nahi horwa puri tarah

AsmaSherazi: hmm

ShireenMizari: aurjo dangerous chee zhai

AsmaSherazi: hmm

ShireenMizari: kese wonahi hain deshatgar tanzeemen

AsmaSherazi: hmm

ShireenMizari: jab ke violence kia hai in tanzeemon ne

AsmaSherazi: hmm

ZahidHussain: sab se pehlewazir-e-allajoke is ko command karnahai

AsmaSherazi: hmhm

ZahidHussain: ya ye aik bat or bhihai

AsmaSherazi: hmhm

ZahidHussain: Pakistan mein jo inteha pasandi hai us mein

AsmaSherazi: hmhm

Asma Sheerazi as the host show that she is listening through such minimal responses. The above examples support the idea that the word “hmmm” is well place and does not became any reason for interruption in the conversation.

4. CONCLUSION

In the present study researchers have looked at the use of linguistic features and speech acts in a conversation by the two genders. The linguistic features that this study searched for and found were talking time, hedges, interruptions, minimal responses and directives. The data for the present study shows that the five participants (two male and three female participants) used these features in their communication. Not just men but also women raised their voices in the recorded data in order to occupy the conversational floor. Talking time of women was found to be more than that of the men. Speakers used polite forms, but this could be because of formal situation. Likewise, female host in the study used hedges again and again to create softness in conversation. The findings of the study demonstrate that female host interrupted more than other participants during conversation Furthermore men used directives but in the form of request for a chance to speak which defies their power in this particular communicative event. Finally there were minimal responses or back channels used more by the women to show an agreement with the speaker. The study concludes that the stereotypical association of linguistic features with particular genders can be challenged with variables such as context and expertise. We perceive that men are more talk active and supposed to dominate and lead the conversation in formal situation. Therefore this study shows that women get maximum time and talk more to express their thoughts and opinions. Secondly, the hedges for instance are not always indicate of lesser confidence and therefore associated with women; they can be used as supportive statements. Similarly, interruptions are not always by men as this study also shows that the host who happens to be women interrupts more in order to control the discussion.

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