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Communication Patterns**Corresponding Author:****Habibullah Jan**Email: Habibullahjan224@gmail.com**License:**

Abstract: *In this study, the gender differences in language use in Pakistani classrooms are explored from a sociolinguistic point of view. The research's objective is to explore the difference between male and female students in terms of their communication styles, their involvement in class, their politeness tactics, interruption behavior and conversational self-confidence. Language is not only a tool for communication; it can also reveal one's social and cultural identity, and gender is an important factor in determining the language behavior in education. The study is of a qualitative design with classroom observation, audio recording and semi structured interview adopted as data collection techniques. The subjects of the study comprised male and female students of selected educational institutions in Pakistan in English language classrooms. The findings show that there are distinct gender differences in classroom interaction. Students in the male gender were observed to take active role in discussion, interrupt more often, and use direct and assertive forms of language. It was observed that the male students were more active in discussion, interrupted more often and used direct and assertive language forms. The females, however, showed comparatively polite and cooperative communication style, and were hesitant in their communication, with many using hedges and respectful expressions. The interviews also revealed that cultural norms and negative judgments shaped the extent of participation of girls in school. The study also notes that teachers can inadvertently perpetuate the inequities when students participate by engaging more with the verbally dominant students, typically boys. The results corroborate important sociolinguistic theories proposed by Lakoff (1975), Tannen (1990), and Coates (2015), which all stress that gender differences in language are socially and culturally created. The study finds that traditional gender norms and social expectations have a strong influence on the classroom communication of Pakistan. It calls for gender-sensitive pedagogies that will foster equitable, balanced and inclusive classroom settings for both boys and girls to be confident and active learners, with a view to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning for all. The study makes a valuable addition to sociolinguistic literature by shedding light on the gendered communication style in Pakistani educational environment.*

Introduction

Language is one of the most important means of communication or interaction amongst human beings. It allows one to express ideas, feelings, and opinions, and to mirror cultural, social, and psychological realities of society. In sociolinguistics, language is considered a social phenomenon that takes on different forms based on age, class, ethnicity, education, and gender. Of all such variables, gender is one of the most discussed and researched areas since the language of men and women can be different in different communicative situations. These differences include such things as vocabulary, tone, politeness strategies, conversational style, interruption patterns and classroom participation. Holmes (2013) states that language use is greatly affected by social expectations and gender roles within a society.

After Lakoff's pioneering work in the 1970s, the link between language and gender was given an added dimension, making the study of the two a significant field. According to Lakoff (1975), women's language is more polite, hesitant, indirect and emotional in comparison to men's language, which is more assertive and direct. Her research paved the way for more sociolinguistic research on the influence of gender on the communicative pattern in society. Later, other researchers have suggested that the gender differences in communication are not necessarily defined as a lack of equality, but as two different cultural styles of communication: Tannen, 1990. Tannen (1990) said that man tends to speak in ways that define status and dominance, while woman talks to maintain social harmony and build relationships. It is these viewpoints that emphasize socially constructed and context-dependent gender-based linguistic variation.

Language is at the heart of teaching and learning in educational contexts. Classroom interaction takes place between teacher(s) and pupil(s) and among pupils. Classroom discourse has a significant impact on participation, confidence, understanding, and achievement. Gender differences have been shown to impact the way this happens in the classroom, as there are differences in questioning behavior, turn taking, interruption, and participation (Coates, 2015). In classrooms, the male students are often heard talking more and are more confident, while the female students are more polite and cooperative. These differences are not only linguistic, but also society-wide in the sense of the stereotypes and expectations it has for women.

Social and cultural structures play an important role in classroom communication in Pakistan. Pakistani society is mostly patriarchal, wherein gender roles are laid out and upheld by social institutions like mass media, education and family. Students' communicative behavior in class is often influenced by these cultural values. Females may not express themselves fully because of the societal standards of modesty and politeness for women, and males may be more assertive since assertiveness is encouraged for males. Furthermore, the medium of instruction and multilingual classroom in Pakistan pose additional challenges to classroom interaction. The use of English, Urdu and local languages in the classroom may be the norm for students, with some switching between the languages, which may also impact gender based language patterns.

Several studies have been conducted on the topic of gender and language in different parts of the world; however, very few studies have been done in the Pakistani educational setting especially in relation to classroom discourse. Research on language learning problems, teaching practices and code-switching tendencies is more common in the local studies, whereas the gendered patterns of classroom interactions are under-researched. The lack of research leaves a wide gap in knowledge about the distinct use of language by boys and girls in Pakistani classrooms, and the impact of this on communication and participation. Hence, the purpose of this study is to find out the gender difference

in language use in the classroom from a sociolinguistic point of view with reference to Pakistan.

The study also has significance because it makes a contribution to the field of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, in the context of the study of language use in an authentic learning environment. It also offers teacher, curriculum and educational policy makers insights into gender sensitive pedagogy. Knowing how gender influences communication can contribute to an inclusive and balanced classroom that encourages all students to participate equally. Moreover, this study is a contribution to the linguistic scholarship of Pakistan, as it is an under-researched area and provides localized sociolinguistic insights.

Objective of this Study

1. To examine how male and female students use language differently in Pakistani classrooms. It also seeks
2. To identify communication strategies commonly employed by students
3. To analyze how gender influences classroom participation and interaction.

Research Questions

1. How do male and female students differ in language use in Pakistani classrooms?
2. What communication strategies are commonly used by male and female students?
3. Why does gender-based linguistic differences occur in classroom interaction?

The study is only confined to selected educational institutions in Pakistan and only the classroom interaction in English language classrooms is emphasized. Time and resource constraints limit the study to not including all levels of education and areas of the country. However, it is hoped that the results will shed some light on the use of language and gender in the educational environment of Pakistan.

Literature Review

One of the most important fields of sociolinguistic studies has been language and gender over the past few decades. Sociolinguists believe that language is not just a way of communicating, but it also embodies social identity, social norms and power dynamics in society. Gender differences in language have received much scholarly interest, as men and women can be observed to have different communication styles in different social contexts. These differences can be seen in their pronunciation, the use of vocabulary, conversational style, politeness strategies, the way they interrupt, and discourse organization. Because the classroom is a social and learning space, it is a significant context in which to explore how communication is different in different gender groups between students and teachers.

The foundation of gender and language studies was laid by Robin Lakoff in her influential work *Language and Woman's Place*. Lakoff (1975) claimed that women's language is different from men's language in some aspects. She says that women use more polite forms, tag questions, hedges, intensifiers and indirect expressions. She felt that the language characteristics are a result of the inferior social status of women in a male-dominated society. It has been called the "Deficit Theory," and Lakoff proposed that women's language is seen as less authoritative, and less powerful than men's language. Later scholars attacked Lakoff for being too general and having no empirical evidence, but her research led to a new area of study focusing on language and gender.

After Lakoff's contribution, a number of scholars examined gendered communication in a variety of ways. Spender (1980) made a claim that language reflects patriarchy and is dominated by men. The linguistic practices were always geared towards men, and men historically had control of language production and social institutions, according to Spender. Zimmerman and West (1975) likewise completed conversational analysis and uncovered that males interrupt females on a higher rate in conversations, thus suggesting interruption is an expression of dominance and power. They concluded

that their results supported the "Dominance Theory," that believes linguistic differences are a result of unequal power dynamics between genders.

The work of Deborah Tannen (1990) also shed a new light on the issue, with the launch of her "Difference Theory." According to Tannen, there is a different cultural style of conversation among men and women, and as such, different styles of communication. Her theory is that typically, women use language to build intimacy, co-operation and emotional connection, and men use language to build status, independence and authority. She said that when it comes to communication between men and women, they may have different ideas about what it means when it comes to how it's done. Tannen's research sparked a shift in focus from dominance and deficiency to cultural differences in communication styles. Her theory was controversial, as it essentially perpetuated the binary model of gender communication, but it helped the understanding of gendered communication patterns.

The modern sociolinguistic studies increasingly consider gender socially and not biologically determined. An important view on gender is originally from Judith Butler (1990), who suggested that gender is a performative concept in which people do and say things over and over differently to construct and express gender. This perspective also shaped the contemporary fields of gender studies in which attention was focused on the language as a reflection of gender differences and the wider social and cultural identities. Jennifer Coates (2015) went on to suggest that conversational styles are not based on gender-defined categories, but on a variety of factors, including context, social relations and cultural expectations. Women's conversations often are cooperative, supportive and participatory, whereas men's conversations can be competitive and status asserting.

Classroom interaction is an important space of sociolinguistic study in educational settings. Researchers claim that classroom discourse is not neutral, as it is influenced by social factors such as gender, class and culture. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) emphasised that classroom communication can be traced in terms of interactional patterns, and that, in some cases, the teachers regulate participation and turn-taking. Genders can affect participation and communication, however, within these structures. Sadker and Sadker (1994) discovered that men and boys typically get more attention from teachers and ask more questions, participate more in discussions, and tend to be the more dominant gender of the classroom, while female and female students participate less. These differences can impact on confidence, engagement in learning and performance.

Additional studies of classroom discourse have indicated that there are differences in communication strategies between male and female students. In the study conducted by Holmes (2013), it was found that female students tend to adopt a "polite", "collaborative" and "supportive" style of speech when interacting with others, while male students are more likely to adopt a direct and competitive style of speech when interacting with others. These differences are related to broader societal norms of masculinity and femininity. In many cultures assertiveness and dominance is linked to the male, while politeness and cooperation is linked to the female. This means that when it comes to communications in class, students are following the norms of society beyond the classroom.

The phenomenon of interruption and turn taking has been investigated in some classroom studies. Conversational power and dominance are frequently linked with interruptions (West and Zimmerman, 1983). In discussions, male students tend to interrupt more often, and female students may be reluctant to interrupt to keep discussions polite and harmonious. But there are some recent studies that are questioning this assumption and indicate that interruption patterns can differ depending on context, topic, and institutional culture. This means that one needs to go beyond simple generalisations to comprehend gendered communication.

Politeness has also been a subject of much discussion among gender and language researchers. Brown & Levinson (1987) suggested the politeness theory which stated that a speaker's choice of language strategies can serve to preserve social relationships and maintain face. Women are frequently said to speak in "less aggressive" or "more diplomatic" ways, and to express themselves indirectly to prevent conflict with others or to keep them cooperating. Female students might use hedges, tag questions, and mitigated requests more often than male students in classroom situations. These approaches can help to create a smoother interaction, but can also create the sense of less confidence or authority.

Sociolinguistic studies of gender and classroom discourse in Pakistan are relatively scarce, in a context of the country. Pakistan is a multilingual and culturally diverse nation where English is an official language, used as an educational language as well as Urdu and the regional languages like Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi and Balochi. Classroom interactions in Pakistan are thus not only gendered, but also shaped by linguistic diversity and cultural expectations. Pakistani society is basically patriarchal in nature, where traditional gender norms affect educational experiences and communication patterns. Social expectations of modesty and respect for women may be a barrier to girls expressing their opinions in a mixed gender classroom and for boys to be confident and assertive.

A few studies on language attitudes and classroom participation have been conducted in Pakistan. Rahman (1996) talked about the sociolinguistic situation in Pakistan and emphasized on the link between language, identity and social power in Pakistan. Linguistic use in the classroom was discussed by Mansoor (2004) who observed that social class and educational background have strong influence in classroom language use. These studies, however, were not explicitly concerned with gender dynamics of classroom interaction. The study carried out by Khan and Ali (2017) revealed that female students tend to be less active in the classroom discussions but they perform successful academically. The researchers claimed that the communicative behavior of woman students is greatly influenced by the cultural expectations and classroom environment.

Research in KPK also shows that cultural values have a significant influence on men and women's interactions in education. Many classrooms have a skewed gender ratio in the way they participate verbally, with boys being the majority and girls the minority. These patterns are not necessarily associated with intellect, but rather to socialization and cultural norms. Researchers have also noted that teachers can at times be subconsciously discriminatory against either genders by treating males and females differently. Male learners might be encouraged to express themselves more freely while female learners may be given less chance to express themselves.

Although there is considerable international research on language and gender there are some lacunae in the Pakistani sociolinguistic literature. The focus of most local studies is on language policy, bilingualism or English language teaching and gendered classroom communication has received comparatively little attention. In addition, studying discourse analysis and patterns of interaction in Pakistani classrooms has received little attention. The existing studies are sometimes based on detailed quantitative surveys but not detailed qualitative analysis of actual classroom interaction. Hence, research is needed that explores the differences in the use of language by male and female students in real classroom contexts.

The current study aims to fill this gap, explore gender difference in language use in Pakistani classrooms in light of the sociolinguistic approach. It emphasizes aspects of communication (e.g., participation, politeness, interruption, turn taking, conversational style). The study investigates the classroom discourse of Pakistani educational institutions as a way of understanding the construction and negotiation of gender identities through language. It also gives an understanding of the links between social norms and education communication practices.

Methodology

This section discusses the method of research employed for the study of gender differences in the use of language in Pakistani classrooms. It refers to research design, population, sampling method, data collection and data analysis procedure. The study is qualitative, and sociolinguistic in nature since the aim of the study is to investigate and analyze the communication patterns of male and female students in class contexts.

The research is qualitative in nature since it is not aimed at obtaining a number, but is aimed at understanding the language behavior, conversational style and interactional pattern. Qualitative research enables the researcher to explore the social construction and use of language in educational settings. As this study focuses on classroom discourse, participation, politeness strategies, interruption patterns and turn-taking behavior, a qualitative approach is deemed to be most appropriate.

The study population is students of selected educational institutions in Pakistan. The study is particularly interested in English language classrooms since classroom interaction is more visible and communicative activities are often carried out in these classrooms. To compare language use and communication strategies of male and female students, both are included in the study. Participants are selected using purposive sampling as this type of sampling enables the researcher to choose respondents who are directly related to the study objectives.

The data is gathered by classroom observation, audio tape recordings and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observation allows the researcher to observe natural interaction between the students and teacher. Of special interest during the observation are the participation patterns, interruption, politeness, questioning behaviour and conversational dominance. Audio recordings are employed in order to accurately capture the actual discourse and linguistic features of the classroom. Selected students and teachers are also interviewed using semi-structured interviews, to gain insight into their attitudes towards gender and classroom communication. Semi-structured interviews are flexible, enabling respondents to share their experiences and opinions.

Data is analysed using thematic and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis is helpful to see if there are any common themes in communication and sociolinguistic patterns in classroom interaction, and discourse analysis is applied to the analysis of language structures, conversational strategies and interactional behaviour. The analysis in particular is directed to the differences between male and female students as regards politeness, confidence, turn taking, interruption and participation. The results are analyzed using the sociolinguistic theories on gender and language perspective, particularly Lakoff (1975), Tannen (1990), and Coates (2015).

The ethical aspect is considered thoroughly during the research process. Classroom observation and recording is in collaboration with educational institutions. Participants are briefed on the study's goal and consent is asked before being interviewed and/or recorded. The identity of the participants to the research is not disclosed and confidentiality is ensured and anonymity is kept.

While the purpose of this study is to present a detailed account of gender differences in the use of language in the classroom, there are some limitations. The study is conducted in selected institutions and limited to classroom interaction in the context of English. The findings are not generalizable to all educational institutions in Pakistan as there was a time and resource constraint. The study, however, offers useful sociolinguistic information on gendered communication in Pakistani classroom.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of the data collected through classroom observation, audio recording and semi structured interview in selected educational institutions in Pakistan is presented in this section. The aim of the

analysis is to look at the differences between male and female students in relation to language use in classroom interaction. The analysis is based on participation patterns, politeness strategies, interruption, turn-taking and conversational confidence. The findings are analyzed using the theories of Lakoff (1975), Tannen (1990) and Coates (2015) from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

It was noted that there were differences between male and female students in the ways in which they participated during the classroom observations. In an observed English language class of 32 students, students of the male gender gave more contributions in the open discussion. For instance, when the teacher asked someone about the structure of essays, three male students blurted out their answers at the same time and sometimes even in the same sentence. The students were silent until they were prompted by the teacher. When the female students knew the answer, she waited for the students to ask her before giving the answer.

This interaction is shown in an extract from the classroom recording:

Teacher: "What is the thesis statement in an essay?"

Male Student 1: "Sir, it is the main idea."

Male Student 2: "It controls the essay."

Female Student: "I think... it tells the reader about the topic."

From this interaction it is seen that male students were more confident and quick to respond, whereas the female student was hesitant and polite using the hedge "I think." Lakoff (1975) has found that a woman's use of hedges and tentative language is often due to the desire to be polite and indirect in her speech as a result of social norms. Male pupils, however, showed directness and confidence in their answers.

Another important observation was related to interruption patterns. Male students interrupted fellow students and teachers more often than female students in group discussions. In one activity in the classroom, a female student tried to explain a point in a literary text but a male student interrupted her before she could finish her point.

Female Student: "The writer perhaps wants to show—"

Male Student: "No, actually the writer is criticizing society."

When the interruption occurred, the female student remained silent, and did not resume her explanation. These were seen throughout day-to-day classroom observations. This discovery is in line with Zimmerman and West's (1975) theory of interruption as conversational dominance. Male students in the Pakistani classroom environment were seen as more socially comfortable in asserting their authority during the discussions whereas female students were seen as withdrawing after being cut off. The classroom observations were confirmed by the students' interviews. One of the female participants expressed the following:

"But sometimes I know the answer, but but I am afraid boys talk too fast and talk too loud, I am shy to speak in front of the entire class."

Another female student said:

"I feel more at ease when I'm in girls only classes, and in the mixed classes, I fear that I'll make a mistake."

The answers to these questions suggest that there are high expectations for class participation that are socially and culturally shaped. For females, public speaking was linked to fear of judgment and embarrassment, especially in public spaces with males. Male participants, however, had different attitudes on classroom interaction, though.

A male student said:

"I like to answer quickly because knowing that will make me look reliable. Teachers also notice students that are talking more."

A male taking part in the activity said:

"The teacher assumes you know nothing if you don't say anything."

The reactions indicated that active participation was interpreted as competence and authority by male students. Their language use showed a socialization of men to be confident and assertive.

Analysis also showed high politeness strategy differences. There was a high frequency of polite markers like please, sorry, and excuse me by female students as compared to male students. In one of the activities in the classroom, one girl inquired:

"Excuse me sir, may I explain this point again?"

In contrast, a male student said:

"Sir, this answer is wrong."

The female student's statement was indirect and respectful; the male students was direct and assertive. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the strategies which speakers use are linguistic means for maintaining face and social relations. It seems the female students were more interested in keeping the peace and avoiding conflict while the male students cared more about communicating directly.

One other important result was the conversation confidence and speech style. During discussions, boys tended to talk louder and take longer to talk than girls. Women students tended to speak in a gentler voice and responded in a shorter manner. Teachers also noted this difference in interviews. One teacher stated:

The problem is that, "Male students typically lead the classroom conversation although females' students are usually more capable academically."

Another teacher observed:

"Boys tend to come across as more confident and talking about themselves more, whereas girls tend to be more ready."

These responses reflect that not only learner's language choice matters, but also teacher's perception and interactional attitude towards language choice in the classroom. Teachers can unwittingly perpetuate gender differences by attending more to verbally active students.

This study's results are very consistent with Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory, which suggests that language is used differently by men and women because they have different conversational cultures. In this study, the male students' language often demonstrated authority, confidence and dominance, while the female students' language cooperatively and politely helped them to keep harmony. Likewise, Coates (2015) claims that women tend to speak in a way that puts a greater focus on support and cooperation than competition.

The findings also show that the interaction in the classroom is greatly influenced by the cultural norms of the Pakistani society. In many communities in Pakistan, it is expected that girls would be polite, modest and less talkative, whereas boys are encouraged to exhibit confidence and leadership. Such cultural expectations have a direct impact on classroom discourse and participation patterns.

The overall result of the data analysis indicates that there is a significant difference between language usage of boys and girls in Pakistani classrooms. Male students tend to make most of their contribution using direct speech, interrupt speech or participate confidently using language forms, while female students tend to use language forms that are polite and hesitant. These differences are not bio-genetic; they are created socially and culturally. The results also indicate that imbalanced participation can impact students' confidence, engagement in the classroom and learning opportunities.

Hence, teachers should use gender sensitive teaching approaches that facilitate equal participation, and develop supportive learning environments in which boys and girls are equally at ease expressing ideas.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This section summarizes the findings, recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for future research that have been identified in the study. This study was an attempt to explore the gender differences in the use of language in Pakistani classrooms from a sociolinguistic point of view. The research compared the differences between male and female students in their communication patterns, their participation, their politeness strategies, their interruption behavior, and their conversational confidence through classroom observations, audio recording of their communication, and semi-structured interviews.

The results of the study show that there is a significant difference between male and female communication in classroom settings in Pakistan. Male students were typically found in the class to be more active in the classroom discussions. They often began talks and cut people off, and were more likely to voice their opinions confidently. Female students were more reserved in their expressions, and were reluctant to speak unless the teacher gave permission. They showed politeness, hesitation and indirectness in their language use through the use of hedges and respectful expressions. The results of this study corroborate Lakoff's (1975) claim that because of social norms and expectations, women's language is marked by politeness and tentativeness.

The study also revealed significant differences between the patterns of interruption of male and female students. Male students talked over others more often and talked more to take control of classroom discussions. Very few students, if any, were given to an interrupter, and female students were more likely than male students to engage in cooperative conversational behavior. This discovery is consistent with the position of Zimmerman and West (1975) that interruption serves as a symbolic gesture of "dominant" and "powerful" speech. The interviews also indicated that many female students were reluctant to speak in the mixed gender classes due to shyness and embarrassment in front of the male counterparts. Active verbal responses, however, were seen as an indicator of confidence and intelligence by male students.

Another significant finding of the study is that it shows how the classroom is strongly affected by the cultural and social norms of Pakistan. Traditional notions of gender roles affect students' communication in educational contexts. Male students are encouraged to express themselves with confidence and assertiveness; female students are expected to be polite, modest and reserved. These social expectations have an impact on classroom engagement and communication. The results thus indicate that gender differences in language use are not only socially constructed but also not genetically determined.

Another important aspect of the research was the power of the teacher to influence classroom discourse. The teachers' interviews showed that they tended to communicate more with the verbally active students, typically the boy students. Female students were often well prepared academically but there was less oral participation. This indicates that there might be gender disparity in classroom interactions that is not intentional.

The study results validate the sociolinguistic theories that Lakoff (1975), Tannen (1990), and Coates (2015) had proposed. Male students spoke competitively and assertively, and female students spoke cooperatively and politely. The study also illustrates, however, that the differences are not necessarily due to gender but depend on cultural context and educational environments.

From these results, it is recommended that teachers use gender sensitive pedagogies to build gender balanced and inclusive classroom environments. Educators should ensure that female students are

given opportunities to talk and voice opinions with confidence to ensure they are all given a voice. Classroom and group discussion should be organized in a manner that avoids a few students dominating the conversation. Teachers should also be made aware of any unconscious biases that may mean that they interact more with boys than girls.

Schools must hold workshops and communication skill development programmes to build the confidence of students, especially female students. Encouraging students to share their ideas without being criticised, by providing supportive classroom environments, can enhance participation and learning. Moreover, planning classroom interaction strategies and language teaching methods, curriculum designers and policymakers must take gender into account.

There are some limitations to the study. It was carried out in selected educational institutions and was mainly oriented to the English language classrooms. The sample size was small by the time and resources constraints and results could not be extrapolated to the rest of the educational institutions in Pakistan. The study also was limited to a focus on verbal classroom interaction and failed to examine the online or digital classroom.

Comparative studies can be carried out in future in various provinces, educational levels and linguistics in Pakistan. Additional studies could also explore gender disparity in digital learning contexts and online interaction in the classroom. Qualitative methods with smaller population may yield a more general statistical knowledge of the communication patterns of women and men in Pakistani education.

Finally, it is concluded that gender differences in language use can be clearly seen in the classroom in Pakistan and it is closely tied to social, cultural and educational issues. To address these differences, it is important to understand them so that learning environments are equitable and effective, enabling all learners to feel confident to participate and communicate.

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