



RESEARCH PAPER

Representation of Genderlect and Social Identities in Pakistan: An Analysis

Mamona Yasmin Khan ¹Dr. Iram Rubab ² & Fasiha Ali Akbar ³

1. Assistant Professor, Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English, GC Women University Sialkot, Pakistan
3. Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Pakistan

PAPER INFO

ABSTRACT

Received:

January 11, 2020

Accepted:

March 27, 2020

Online:

March 31, 2020

Keywords:

Social
Constructivism,
Pakistani Society,
Traditional Gender
Roles,
Communication

Corresponding Author:

mamonakhan12
34@gmail.com

This paper endeavors to study how male and female characters reflect differences in social identities through speech, gendered way of talking and misinterpretation in their articulation. Deborah Tanen's Difference theory as framework is used and data is collected from the dialogues of Pakistani drama serial "Anaa" and analyzed qualitatively using thematic approach. The results show that language of men is significantly different from that of women because of traditional gender roles assigned and assumed under the influence of ideologies propagated by different agencies including family, society, institutions and media discourses. Findings of the study can be useful to bridge the gap between the opposite sexes to bring harmony and healthy atmosphere especially in educational institutions and workplace. The study suggests that awareness about cross cultural communication should be made an integral part of syllabus especially in foreign and second language acquisition to bring harmony in opposite sexes and avoid social conflict

Introduction

Tanen (1990) opines that the conversation between male and female is as different as two different cultural dialects. She further argues that their communication is cross cultural and miscommunication occurs on the grounds of cultural differences not on inferior or superior basis. Hence culture plays a very vital role in constructing the discourse of both men and women because understanding of the world depends upon its culture. Media plays a significant role in shaping the views and ideologies of people and molding the constructed ideologies. It also constructs the realities as an active agent and represents culture, traditions, beliefs and worldview of any society through different forms. Pakistani

drama being the popular genre exhibits societal setup in which patriarchy is the most dominant theme.

Language has directly been linked to the power structure and ideology of a particular society. It acts as an intricate tool in framing the ideologies. Mass media acknowledges that media forms the public impression by keeping flawless interest. A particular ideology has particular information for the public. Fairclough (2006) opines that discourse of media have some intricate and complex ideological construction that vary with the passage and need of time.

Gender roles are constructed by the society in Pakistan. Williams (1995) argues that it can be associated to the beliefs of men and women of that society. According to assigned gender roles in Pakistani society, men are more interested in task oriented works whereas women are interested in building relationship. Most of the time these roles are built on the grounds of some stereotypes gender. Gender stereotypes and traditional perspective towards family work are encouraged by the public community in Asian countries especially in Pakistan. These attitudes shows that women is bound within four walls and is responsible for taking good care of their family and relations (Tang, 2016). He further opines that Pakistani women also analyzes their roles and the main role which an Asian women play is family role.

The drama serial *Anaa* is basically a story of two nawab families that has some social prestige in society. Daneen who is the protagonist and central character in this drama serial is a free spirited girl who wants to spend his life with her cousin Areesh according to her choice but Areesh's family does not allow her to do so due to some serious family issues. Areesh family ordered him to leave her family or break that engagement. Daneen refuses to do so whereas Areesh's family decided to marry Areesh with Aaniya and fix their marriage. To take revenge, Daneen decided to marry with a politician Saif who has higher status in society. He is not interested in Daneen and accepted her to fulfill his mother wish. But the relationship got worst after this due to their cultural differences in their life style.

Gender stereotypes are built on the basis of communication of men and women. And most of the time people misinterpret their conversation. These are the social issues that need to be addressed specially in Asian countries like Pakistan to remove misunderstandings regarding a particular gender and no such research has been conducted from this perspective in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Language and gender is the most trending issue of today's research because there exist differences in language of men and women (O' Loughlin, 2000). Crawford (1995) opines that language is a socially constructed phenomena and the meaning of communication is achieved only by looking at the cultural

context of society. That is why, in 21st century women is considered as a distinct being from men.

Theoretical Framework

Genderlect Theory and Difference Approach by Tannen (1990)

Tannen undertook this study and come up with "Difference approach" from her book "You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation" (1990). Genderlect theory is termed as Cross Cultural Communication theory by Deborah Tannen because she was of view that culture difference has much influence on our way of communication and sometimes speakers misinterpret communication because they belong to different cultural backgrounds Both genders speak same language but the way they are speaking shows that they speak different languages Two essential dynamics encourage us to communicate daily for the sake of involvement and independence (Tannen, 1986)

Tannen (1990) states that men try to attain the central position by exhibiting their knowledge of the world. They always try to achieve high rank while communicating with some other person. On the other hand, women always try to use certain words that show discussion and intimation. They use "rapport talk" to maintain association and exchange of information. They are more polite in nature and also show unification that has long lasting effect on the minds of other people as compared to men. On contrary, men use "report talk" to establish their status. Their relationships are framed in hierarchic order and their purpose is to offer knowledge and thus control the conversation. Women most of the times use such clauses that indicates the imbalance of power. The purpose of women's conversation is to give suggestion rather than openly explain what she wanted to say. Hence women's small talk is meaningless for men because they called it empty rhetoric conversation that does not reveal any kind of information whereas men always try to impart knowledge while communicating.

This theory focuses not only on use of language by a particular gender but also on characteristics related to one gender. Moreover, she claimed six points for male and female language. Those six points are men want to get status and women want to get support, men show independence whereas women show intimacy, men always give advice whereas women understand everything, men share information with others while women express feelings, men order and women propose and men always create conflicts whereas women compromise

Gender is dependent on cultural practices and beliefs and is manifested in all facets of our social life. A Roohul Amini (1989) claimed that culture is multifold in nature. It has many common beliefs, attitudes, values and practices for interaction and transmission from one age to another highlighted by members of society. Each human being belongs to a specific group of society that has totally different culture as well as thinking patterns. Culture is a social commodity and is

always learnt by interaction with other people as pointed out by Sapir (1921) that words are the most important symbols used in culture. Choice of words reflects the cultural element of that society. Language always exists in the context of culture and vice versa. So without culture, language cannot survive. Hence it can be concluded that language and culture are closely interrelated and language used by a person is the representation of culture of that society. Mills (2003) analyzes gender interaction with one another through polite and impolite way. Her focus was on attitudes of men and women with respect to politeness. After careful analysis of Brown and Levinson's model (1987), Mills affirms that most of the time women behave in a polite way but sometimes they are also treated in an impolite way. Both these ways have great effect on interpretation of men and women discourse. Hence according to Mills (2003), politeness is considered as an important evaluation device to analyze male and female utterances in society. Akbar (2009) opines that the factors of media and cultural transmission are interrelated. Media helps a lot to promote and carry cultural patterns and traditions. There is strong hold of American culture on the whole world so this is the need of hour that Asian countries should protect their culture from foreign attack. He further argues that foreign culture must not be adopted in Pakistani dramas and media must play an important role to forbid all these things. Khan, Khalid and Jabeen (2011) state that it is impossible to avoid the influence media exerts in this age because a large population of our society is interested in watching Pakistani dramas on screen. In patriarchal society, men have much power to speak as compared to women in public spheres as this is well seen through visual media but Tannen (1990) clears this misconception that men are superior from women rather she focuses that men are different from women because there is cultural difference in brought up of both the genders that is why they both speak differently according to their culture.

Research Methodology

The research design is essentially qualitative and the qualitative techniques are used for data collection and analysis to cope up with the scope and nature of this research. According to Creswell (2011), qualitative research is used to explore and understand meaning of text by keeping time and money safe. Thus by using this method, the researchers explore and analyze the differences of speech between two genders living in same society. The study tries to remove the popular misconception of so called stereotype theory that men and women have traditional roles therefore bound to speak differently. This misconception is also present in other cultures as well. In order to deconstruct the ideologies of people, researchers have selected this Pakistani drama. A few studies so far have been conducted regarding this social issue especially in Pakistan. Another reason of selecting this data is to create awareness in society and particularly in youth thus change their mindsets as our youth is more interested in watching Pakistani drama serials. It is episodic data taken from the selected episode by employing non probability purposive sampling techniques in order the selected data be representative and suit to the nature of this study. The interactional utterances of

the major characters (male and female) are selected and transcribed after careful listening. The data is analysed rigorously following thematic approach.

Data Analysis

Status Vs Support

As this episode opens, we see two characters Daneen and Saif who are on a so called honeymoon trip. Saif is a status conscious politician quite opposite to his wife, Daneen who is a free spirited girl. She had been overjoyed when she came to know about that trip and has some affection towards her husband but her husband does not reciprocate. Even there, he himself was busy in his work. Being a husband, he wanted to impose certain limitations on his wife while Daneen tried to strengthen her bond with her husband on that trip for which he was not keen. Daneen tries to convince him but Saif does not support her. He rather gets irritated and insists on her going back to room .thinking this act quite below his status. He asserts his central position and high status and orders her to move to the room.

Saif wants to secure central position by expressing his status in front of others as well as in front of his wife and tries to show that he has greater knowledge and high status as compared to his wife.

This shows apathetic attitude of Saif towards his wife because of status difference. Tannen (1990) argues that life for women is just like a community in which they are trying to support their partners and this is more important for them than power and Daneen is trying to do the same thing. Women always try to share their feelings with their close friends. When Daneen is upset, she calls Izaa in the absence of her husband to share her feelings about the bad behavior of her husband but fails to do so out of the fear of her husband's arrival. Izza wants to comfort her by inquiring about their relationship but Daneen at once starts to support her husband and does not reveal anything. She also tries to cover up for her husband's absence by telling Izza that her husband is taking a bath, when he is in fact neglecting her for his work.

Independence Vs Intimacy

Saif is seen as an independent character who wants to spend his life according to his own way. According to Tannen (1990), life for such men becomes a competition in which they always want to struggle for preservice of their independency and try to avoid failure. His marriage to Daneen was a contract based on the condition that they will maintain their distance even after their marriage for which both were agreed. His independency is shown in Scene: 10.

After marriage Daneen wants to build intimacy with her husband that is why she wants to spend time and communicate with him. Unfortunately, Saif

does not have any interest in Daneen because he has some asymmetrical arrangement to get independence.

In the same episode another male character "Areesh" tells his wife "Aania" that he is not going to discuss his whereabouts to the wife. Here we see that Aania is trying to communicate with her partner but he is not in that mood.

Information Vs Feelings

Saif's basic purpose of trip is to sensitize Daneen about his busy routine that is clearly a meta-message of superiority. Whereas Daneen has some feelings for her husband which he does not care about. She suppresses her feelings and the very next day she got frustrated with staying within four walls of a room. Whenever Daneen demands time from him, he tells her about his busy schedule and that he is busy in some political meetings and has to meet a lot of people. Moreover, Saif always uses rapport talk in this episode to become dominant in their conversation. That is why his words carry information (Tannen, 1990).

Advice Vs Understanding

Men tend to dominate the communication in different ways including advice, suggestions and asserting themselves where deemed fit. Whereas, women always try to understand and cope with the situation. Daneen needs attention of her husband who remained busy in business meetings. Whenever she goes to see him outside the bedroom, he strictly advises her to enjoy herself by staying within the hotel premises. Daneen convinced herself that he has some prestige in front of others that is why he does not allow her to come in front of them. She gets irritated because of the constant depressing situation and the next day she goes outside to enjoy herself ignoring the advice of her husband. On her return, when he inquires about her absence and scolds her for not attending his calls, she admits her mistake and explains that she forgot to take her her phone along with her.

Conflict Vs Compromise

Time and again, Saif raises conflict by not giving proper time to Daneen but she compromises on all these instances and keeps enjoying alone. Though they both were on honeymoon trip but Saif remains busy in his meetings with other people and does not give proper time and care to his wife. At the end, Daneen wants to get back to their home as early as possible but still has to wait two days for her husband is not free from his tasks.

Findings and Conclusion

Hence, the analysis shows that though there are differences in the speech style of men and women but this discrimination is not socially constructed. Neither is it on the basis of inferiority or superiority but there is a cultural

difference between these two genders. Tannen (1990) states that men and women have different words thus different worlds. In brief, genderlect style is present in this episode of Pakistani drama serial "Anaa". All the characters show the standard gender stereotypes in this episode of drama. The genderlect features present in the category of rapport style includes public meetings, autonomous nature of men due to high status in society, conflicting attitude, knowledgeable and judgmental style whereas the category of report style includes asking questions, telling stories, compromising and listening behavior of women. This exhibits the social state of Pakistan in 21st century when speech style becomes a criterion of social value of Pakistani society. Tannen (1990) argues that genderlect performs two basic functions of rapport and report talk for both the sexes. This idea converges women's eagerness for connection versus men's need to direct attention and distribute information. These basic functions throw light on how male and female are using language to manipulate the conversational designs for their own benefit.

Above descriptions show that people in our society misinterpret the conversation of both the genders. They are quite appropriate in their conversation as they brought up is from that particular culture. Their communication patterns are different because of their cross-cultural differences. However, behavior of men and women is constructed socially most of the time and this is the reason that their language reflects those differentiations. In short, genderlect theory has shifted its focus to the way how speaker demonstrates gender during their conversation. Following themes emerged out of the data.

Language socialization has very much impact on the use of language. Language and gender are complexly linked together and are developed when we practice it on a daily basis.

Men in our society always show some attitude and have some power to do anything they want but on the other hand, women are unable to do such things. They, most of the time, remain subjugated in front of the male members. In certain cases if they disobey their male counterparts, they suffer for the whole of their lives. These lines clearly show the independent attitude of men and caring nature of women.

Men want to secure a central position by expressing their status in front of others as well as in front of their female members and try to show that they have greater knowledge and high status as compared to their female members.

Men try to assert themselves by using rapport talk whereas women always admit the mistake and explain their position. Tannen (1990) states that women always select words that show discussion and intimacy to maintain association and exchange of information. They are more polite in nature and also show unification that has a long-lasting effect on the minds of other people as compared to men.

This research analyzes the gender differences through language, to reveal manufactured beliefs, gender stereotypes and power relations, through the selection of distinguished genderlect features in speech. The data revealed that imbalance of power between genders exists in Pakistani society.

Future Implications

The study has pedagogical implications as the students can be sensitized by creating awareness about the relationship and issues of language and gender. The future researchers can conduct the study about other cultures by identifying genderlect in different genres of literature produced in other countries thus developing understanding in cross cultural communication. The myth of gender being different biologically, mentally and emotionally and that both have different communication styles can be solved by taking into account the context of cross cultural communication. Moreover, the stereotypes of women being talkative, uncertain, emotional and ever polite whereas men are assertive, confident and rough can be challenged.

References

- Akbar, M. W. (2009). Cultural Invasion of Western Media and Muslim Societies. *Global Media Journal: Pakistan edition*, 2(2).
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge University Press.
- Coates, J. (1987). *Epistemic Modality and Spoken Discourse*. Transactions of the Philological Society 110-131.
- Crawford, M. (1995). *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language* (Vol. 7).Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in Mixed Methods Research. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4, 269-284.
- Fairclough, N. (2007). *Language and Globalization*. Routledge.
- Haas, M. R. (1944). Men's and Women's Speech in Koasati. *Language*, 142-149.
- Khan, A. N., Khalid, S., Khan, H. I., &Jabeen, M. (2011). Impact of Today's Media on University Student's Body Image in Pakistan: A Conservative, Developing Country's Perspective. *BMC Public Health*, 11(1), 379.
- Kramer, C. (1974). Women's Speech: Separate But Unequal?. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 60(1), 14-24.
- Mills, S. (2003). *Gender and Politeness* (Vol. 17).Cambridge University Press.
- O'Loughlin, K. (2000). The Impact of Gender in the IELTS Oral Interview. *International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Research Reports 2000: Volume 3*, 1
- Roohul-Amini, M. (1989).Outline of Culture. Tehran: Atar Press.
- Sapir, E. (1921). *An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Williams, C. L. (1995). *Still A Man's World: Men Who Do Women's Work* (Vol. 1). Univ of California Press.
- Tang, C. (2016). *Asian Women's Gender Role, Work-family Balance, and Mental Health*
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women And Men In Conversation* New York: Morrow.