

Investigating Gender- based Speech Variations in the Discourse of Pakistan Air Force Officers

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Abstract

Gender based language difference in workplace have been subject to extensive research in the western context over the last three decades. However, little attention has been paid to Pakistani context in particular. This study, therefore, explores the impact of gender on the speech of male and female officers of the Pakistan Air Force (P.A.F). Due to restrictions in access, data was collected through questionnaires and interviews as it was not possible to carry out the initial plan of observations and recordings. Seven aspects that have been widely researched by linguists in the field of language and gender were tested. Results showed high emotionality ratio in females as compared to males. Males were found to be more confident in their speech and were shown to exhibit more sense of humor as compared to females. Other aspects, such as assertiveness and indirectness in speech, indicated varied results. Regarding the claim that the language of males and females differs based on gender, most females disagreed while males agreed. Similar results were demonstrated about the assumption that gender-based language differences lead to misunderstandings in the workplace.

Key words: Language, gender, Pakistan Air Force officers, workplace communication.

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Introduction

Over the last thirty years, there has been plethora of research in the field of language and gender deriving from wide array of academic disciplines including sociolinguistics, social psychology, and educational psychology.

Sociolinguistics studies aimed to quantify the differences in male and females' usage of certain linguistic forms during conversations leading to various interpretations in understanding gendered talk at workplace (Coates, 2004). Studies focusing gendered conversational styles highlighted the notion that men and women talk differently and that the gender of the speaker plays a role in determining the way he/she talks (Opina, 2017). Munson, B., & Babel, M. (2019) says that special attention is paid to emphasizing the consequences of gender and gender-based differences in the perception of spoken language. Eisenberg, M. E., Gower, et. al. (2019),

Weirich, M., & Simpson, A. P. (2018) highlight the importance of self-determined gender identity to explain the differences between conflicting adult speech and speech production diversity.

Research in the field achieved momentum after the publication of Robin Lakoff's book in 1975. She believed that the speech of males and females differ based on gender and that the speech of females show their powerless position in society. Later, many linguists based their research on Lakoff's claims to see whether her theory is based on facts. For example, research has shown that females are politer than males (Nurjanah et al. (2017). Opina, K. G. (2017), says that apart from gender, the size of the group as well as the type or purpose of the conversation play an important role in employing reciprocal strategies. The verbal communication behavior of men and women in small group conversation is actually shaped by the intervention of this different factors. The results of the

study contradict previous claim that women are more likely to be abusive than men, and when they disagree, hire direct strategies (Koczogh, H. V. (2012). Similarly, it is believed that females focus more on standard language and forms of higher prestige (Trudgill, 1975 & Grondelaers, S., et al. (2019).

Despite the numerous studies in the field, most research has focused on English speaking cultures and no such research has been carried out in Pakistani context, specifically in the domain of Pakistan air force, reasons for which are discussed below. Pakistani workforce has been mostly based on segregation of genders in the past due to cultural and religious reasons, and parents would prefer medical or teaching professions for their daughters as these fields ensured maximum segregation and were considered the best options; although the situation has rapidly changed in the recent past. Now females are opting for other professions that were prohibited for them in the past. Pakistan air force started induction of females some years back and flying wing was one of the domains where females were recruited relatively late as compared to other specialties, as it was considered controversial. Most people held the opinion that females might not be suitable for such heavy duty jobs, although females are entering into such fields now, and proving themselves. In that context, the current research holds an important position as it is a pioneering study in the field and will help provide insights regarding supposed gendered based speech differences and resulting implications about performance of the officers in a seemingly new domain where females started working not long ago.

Access into an Air Force Base is not easy as civilians are not allowed to enter. Due to strict security, they can be allowed after proving their identity and purpose of visit. Research in such domains is close to impossible and the researcher had to face many problems and delays to get formal approval. The current research was possible after an official permission was sought from the air chief, after a long and tiring process, which is one of the reasons this field has been mostly ignored by researchers in Pakistan.

This study seeks to explore first, if the speech of males and females differ based on gender in the professional setting of Pakistan air force? Second, whether gender-based language differences in males

and females lead to misunderstandings? If yes, what strategies can be employed to mitigate those differences in order to improve cross-sex communication at workplace? The study is not covering all aspects of gender as the main focus is on the sociolinguistic aspect of gender; emphasizing the language of males and females at workplace.

Literature Review

Sociolinguists have long been interested to study the relationship between language and gender. For example, in early 20th century, research carried out in linguistic anthropology studied gender-based language differences in many languages. They identified distinct male and female linguistic patterns in many cases. It is believed that the subfield of sociolinguistics, known as language and gender, evolved as a part of women's movement, fought against the inequality between men and women (Paulston & Tucker, 2003). Biased views about females' speech being inferior in some way have been prevalent since ancient times. This can be seen from the views of an earlier linguist Poole (1646), who opined that the masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine (Karlsson, 2007). Kramarae has described male and female speech in the following manner:

English speakers believe that men's speech is forceful, efficient, blunt, authoritative, profound, effective, and masterful and that women's speech is weak, trivial, inefficient, tentative, hesitant, hyper polite, euphemistic, and is often marked by gossip and gibberish (Kramarae, 1977:43-56).

Old letters, novels, diaries, and poems provide us with evidence of folk linguistic beliefs regarding gender differences in language. Coates has highlighted this situation in the following words:

Academics and scholars are as much the product of the time they live in, as are non-academics. Their work on language can be as subjected to prejudice and preconceptions as lay people's comments (1993:16).

One of the reasons for the assumed differences of speech in both sexes has been the difference of literacy ratio. History has shown that females from the middle classes and above were likely to get education

during the 10th century. Learning classical languages like Greek and Latin were not considered important for females. In this regard, Coates (1993:28) has stated that even Milton, when asked whether his daughters would learn other languages besides English, replied, "One tongue is sufficient for a woman". This point is highlighted by Coates (2003), who argues that before the 19th century, women were denied access to any form of higher education beyond the skills of reading and writing.

Earlier research viewed gender as a fixed, bipolar category, which could be correlated with language learning (Tannen, 1990; Opina, 2017). By contrast, later studies investigated the relationship between gender and speech patterns, defining gender as a dynamic characteristic grounded in social activities and contexts (Ellis, 2012; Norton, 2000). The shift in perspective from theories such as dominance (Lakoff, 1975) and difference (Tannen, 1990) to social constructivist approaches (Ehrlich, 1997; Pavlenko & Piller, 2008, Eckert & Ginnet, 2013) has led to alternative accounts of differences in learners' language gains between the two gender groups. In the dominance approach, which was proposed by Lakoff, differences characterizing male and female linguistic practices were argued to reflect female's subordinate status. She believed that linguistic forms that are typical of women's speech such as hedges, hypercorrect grammar, super-polite forms, or question tags highlight the tentative and powerless nature of females' language, indicating social hierarchies. Though Lakoff's theory was popular, it found no empirical justification to test its claims (Coates, 1986, McHugh & Hambaugh, (2010). However, it inspired further research about gender differences in language (Holmes, (2006). Difference theory stated that females and males belong to different but equal cultures, which develop distinct genderlects due to socialization in the same-gender peer groups (Pavlenko & Piller, 2008). This framework was popularized by Tannen (1994), who believed that females speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy while males speak and hear a language of aggression and independence. She also believed that females and males respond in a different way when confronted with a problem at workplace, to which she gave the name of trouble talk. She asserted that at workplace, females share their problems with a colleague expecting that the listener will sympathize with them. On the contrary, males deal with trouble

talk as complaints that need an immediate solution. She also believed that females are considered inferior and less capable because of their gender and that people specifically at higher positions are given priority if they are males. Females on the contrary, have a hard time practicing their authority if they get to a higher position. Tannen also believed that females often downplay their authority to make their subordinates comfortable because other females find an aggressive female boss unapproachable which makes the environment uncomfortable. The solution according to her is that both genders should adopt the strategy of mutual tolerance and adjustment in cross-sex communication. Earlier, Spender (1980) commented on this situation as follows "So women are damned if they do and damned if they do not; damned if they are assertive and damned if they are supportive, hesitant, polite and talk like women" (1980: 9-21). More recently, researchers focused on the speech of young speakers (male and female) to see if gender differences exist at young age, and concluded that differences are found even at adolescence, which have various factors as background reasons (Barbieri, 2008; Labov 2001; Schweinberger 2014, Hansen, 2017; Holmes-Elliott, 2016).

In communication, most cultures specifically American people believe that directness is aligned with power, while indirectness depicts dishonesty and subservience. They also believe that female's speech is usually more indirect. However, research has shown that this tendency to relate indirectness with female's style of communication is not based on facts. A study carried out on American males and females belonging to the same culture and geographical background yielded to same ratio of directness in their speech (Paulston & Tucker, 2003). Perhaps more striking is Keenan's (1974) findings of Malagasy speaking village in Madagascar. Here, males are indirect while females are direct. Females deal with bargaining in markets and also handle family conflicts etc. Surprisingly, instead of directness, indirectness is valued by tribesmen. Direct speech style which is praised by the West is deemed as feminine and impolite (Wardaugh, 1992).

Talking about female indirect speech style at workplace, Tannen (1994:34) asserted that the behavior of the females which others label as lack of confidence is the indirect way females give orders.

Numerous studies (Coates, 1993; Tannen, 1994; Spender, 1980; Macaulay, 2001) have concluded that females soften their demands and statements, whereas males are more direct.

Notably, society also pressurizes males and females to talk and gesture in specific ways. Usually when one variety is prohibited for one sex, in most cases that sex is female. In some African tribes and Eastern cultures, females are not allowed to call their husband by his name. Such norms mostly lead to females being treated in ways that seem strange to outsiders (Wardaugh, 1992).

Lakoff (1975) also asserted that females' speech depicts lack of confidence and their inferior social status in the society. Consistent with the earlier research, later research carried out both in academic setting (Clarricoates, 1980; Stables and Stables (1995) and workplace (Tannen, 1995; Holmes, 1992, Baxter, 1999; Kirkwood, 2009) confirmed Lakoff's claims. Confidence is believed to be an acquired trait that can be developed or undermined based on circumstances (Doey, Coplan & Kingsbury, 2014) and parental impact and schooling input are believed to be the main causes in determining lower confidence ratio of females in later life (Avolio, Rotundo & Walumbwa, 2009).

A meta-analysis study was carried out to measure the confidence percentage, concluded that females are less confident as compared to males (Bleidorn et al., 2015). Recently, a 2020 study carried out to see if there's any difference in confidence ratio among men and women while performing number-line estimation, a common spatial-numeric task predictive of math achievement, also showed less confidence ratio of females as compared to males in the domain of math cognition (Rivers et al., 2020). Recent researchers found that, males appear more confident at workplace, hence exert more influence and have higher chances of promotions ((Sarsons & Xu, 2015; L Guillen et al, 2018).

Another aspect focused by researchers in the field of language and gender is the difference in the sense of humor employed by males and females. Humor is a highly valued quality and is defined as expressions that are valued by others as funny (McGraw & Warren, 2010). Humor is thought of a universal behavior that exists in most cultures (Apte, 1985). The benefits of employing humor include reduced

stress (Martin & Dobbin, 1989), improved social interactions (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003), and increased motivation (Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995). At workplace, employing humor leads to increased employee creativity (O'Quin & Derks, 1997) and job satisfaction (Decker, 1987). On the contrary, recent research has also found that using humor at work may be risky and may lead to reduced status (Bitterly, Brooks, and Schweitzer, 2017). Humor is displayed in different ways among males and females. It is believed that males exhibit more sense of humor as compared to females at workplace and male's humor style is usually teasing, while feminine style is self-mocking (Tannen, 1990). Women may interpret male style as hostile, while males often mistake female style as self-deprecating, thus rendering them under confident and incompetent (Cahill & Densham, 2014). According to researchers, humor in gendered research has been experimental, resulting in females' social construction as the deviant and deficient group with "neither the wit to create humor nor the sense of humor to appreciate it (Crawford & Gressley, 1991). Their research, based on a humor ratio among males and females at the workplace, found more similarities than differences. They also found that males employ hostile humor and joke-telling, while females preferred anecdotes and stories. It is thus believed that unlike males, females' assessment of a good sense of humor focuses on compassion rather than hostility, one that breaks social tension, eases another's unhappiness, and cheers rather than wounds (Holmes, 2006).

Researchers in the field also believe that females are more emotional as compared to males (Lakoff, 1975) and that males repress their emotions or are emotionally inexpressive due to patriarchal privilege (Pease, 2012). However, recent research has challenged this argument. Researchers now strongly believe that males actually practice softer or more emotional forms of masculinity (Forrest, 2010; Roberts, 2013; Holmes, 2015), which as a result, has led to more prominent strand of gender equality. Factors such as environment, hormones, genetic makeup and processing of emotions in the brains of males and females also lead to difference in their emotionality ratio (Kret & Gelder, 2012). Some cross-national studies even suggested that the impact of gender on emotional display varies from country to country (Fischer & Manstead, 2000) and that

emotionality ratio among males and females depends on cultural factors as well. In order to test Lakoff's claims about gender differences, one notable research was carried out by Latić, E., & Čeljo, A. B. (2018). They studied the language used by males and females in the context of courts in America. They noted some instances where female speech depicted the feminine style mentioned in Lakoff's theory whereas males showed less features mentioned by Lakoff's model overall. However, they also noticed some males exhibiting feminine speech patterns mentioned by Lakoff. They concluded that features described by Lakoff as characteristics of female's language cannot be generalized and attributed to all females and that the way males and females speak is more about their position in the power hierarchy as in their research, females from higher backgrounds did not display features attributed to their language described by Lakoff.

Assertiveness is used for requesting what one wants, conveying both positive and negative messages to people (Bishop, S. (2013). Though it is a communication tool, it was studied under the discipline of psychology, and psychologists were trained to measure the level of assertiveness and guide individuals accordingly (Crawford, 1995). Assertiveness has also been linked to the speech of males according to Lakoff's model (1975). Later, many researchers (Crawford, 1995) found that Females speech is shown as non-assertive in books, and magazine articles and they are believed to be passive aggressive, indirect, or silent having communication deficit although many researchers found no empirical evidence for this claim (Fodor & Epstein, 1983; Crawford, 1995). Some researchers though believed that females do speak less assertively and hence are considered less competent and knowledgeable (Carli, 1990). It is also believed that when females use direct speech they are labeled as unfeminine, and when they use a feminine style, they are ignored, criticized or labeled as incompetent (Lakoff, 1975; Crawford, 1995).

In their critique of Lakoff's theory, Henley and Kramarae (1991) argued that male and female language patterns need to be critically examined and explained. Male's speech forms should be examined as distinctive cultural forms, just as females' forms are studied. It is important to view male and female's language in relation to power/status hierarchies

related to gender and to their situation in society. The speech of one group should not be labeled as normative or as deviant. Researchers (Crawford, 1995) have criticized the trend where females are pressurized to use men's language and their language is considered as deviant. It is also important to note that in the context of language and gender research, not all findings have reported differences. However, males used more refined language when addressing females than they did when talking to males, unlike the popular beliefs that males and females in cross sex communication face problems of miscommunication and confusions on the basis gender (McHugh & Hambaugh, 2010). Another example is the study conducted by Maltz and Borker (2008) who confirmed most of Lakoff's claims.

Many linguists (Hooks, 1990; Freed & Greenwood, 1996; McHugh & Hambaugh, 2010) argued against taking gender as independent variable and believe that factors such as education, social class, religion, age, societal norms are not focused in most research studies.

In the context of language and gender research, Eckert and Mc-Connel-Ginet (2013) proposed a model called Community of Practice. According to this approach, the best way to examine the relationship between language and gender is to analyze it within a specific context. They defined this model as an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor, and standard practices emerge in the course of this joint endeavor. The current study followed this approach. Using a social constructionist framework allows constructing power, roles and identities on the basis of interactions (McHugh & Hambaugh, 2010; Elsey, 2017). The current study aims to focus speech differences in the context of a workplace that was previously male-dominated and recently starting recruiting females, although still manifesting disparity in terms of ratio.

Method and Methodology

The current study is a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative research, comprising mixed gender and mixed-status employees of P.A.F. A data archive was created by recording interviews (besides questionnaires) and subsequent transcription, enabling analysis of the conversations that were recorded.

Questionnaire

Data was collected from a total of 130 participants through a closed-ended questionnaire. There are ten Air force bases in the country. Officers from three bases, that is, P.A.F Base Peshawar (Badaber), P.A.F Base Chaklala and Air Headquarters Islamabad were selected due to ease in access. Questions were based on studies carried out in the field. The options provided in the Lickert scale were designed to cover most aspects in the responses to ensure maximum variability. Questions were arranged in a logical order. SPSS was used for the analysis.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted at P.A.F Base Chaklala. Interviews were semi-structured as it offers flexibility to approach participants differently. Interviewees included five (5) male pilots, three (3) female pilots, one (1) female aeronautical engineer, and one (1)

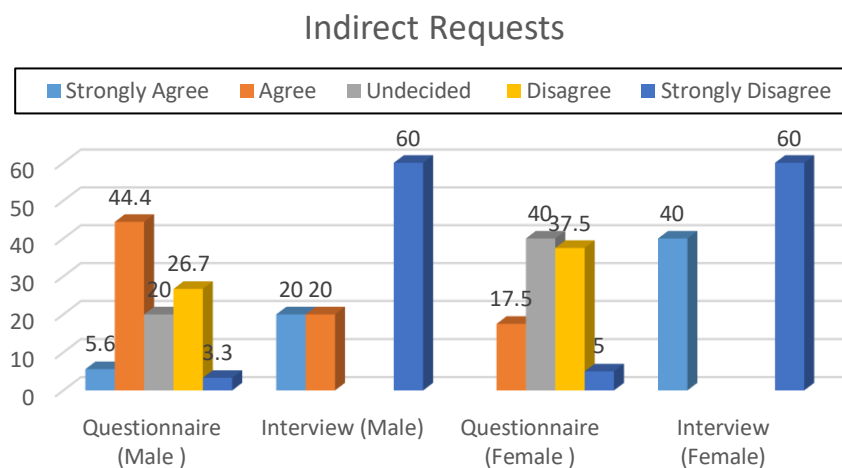
female from the administration wing. Interviews were recorded and notes were taken where necessary. Sub-questions followed major questions for probing purposes. The researcher participated in discussions with caution to not guide the participants in their responses and avoid influencing their opinions. Data was transcribed and coded.

Audio data was transcribed, anonymized and managed using Microsoft Excel 2019. It was also used to make tables, drafts and calculating percentages. Moreover, Microsoft Word 2019 has been used to arrange the data in tables as well.

Data Analysis and Results

The results showed both confirmation of some aspects mentioned in literature, while contradiction in other areas. The specific environment of P.A.F also contributed to yielding different results in certain aspects, if not all.

1. Indirect Requests



Linguists claim that female make indirect requests at workplace while males are direct (Coates, 1993: Tannen, 1994), illustrated that 17.5% females agreed with the assumption, almost 40% were not sure about this aspect as they mentioned that they never noticed such difference, while 37.5% disagreed with this assumption. Interestingly, in males' case, a high percentage of 44.4% agreed while respondents with much smaller ratio disagreed or had not experienced any such difference.

In the interview data, majority of females with 60% ratio disagreed to this assertion while the rest gave varied response with lesser frequency including a 40 % ratio of females who strongly agreed. We see almost similar pattern in case of male respondents, with 60 % disagreeing to the claim. This result shows that the two genders held almost similar views. Officers who affirmed this assertion said that females in Pakistani society are asked to act politely due to societal restrictions and culture, which in turn make them diplomatic and indirect.

2. Confidence in Speech

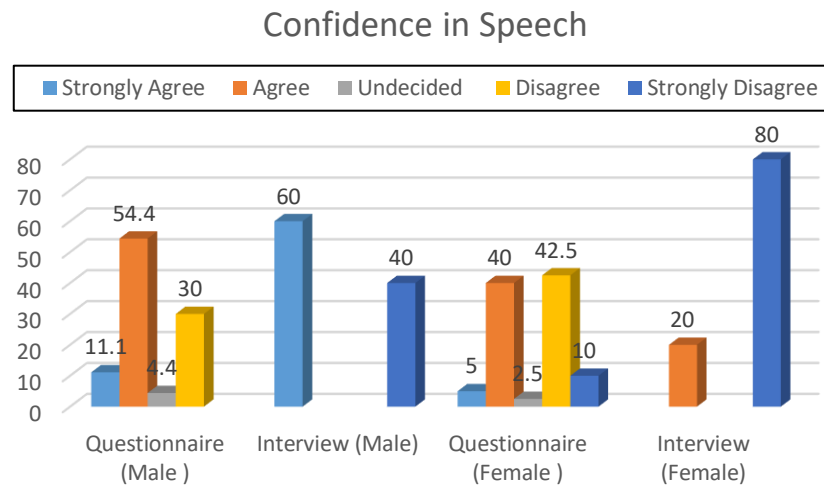


Fig: 2.

When officers were asked about the assumption that male's speech shows more confidence level (Lakoff, 1975; Kirkwood, 2009, Rivers et al, 2020), female data yielded both confirmation and contradiction of existing body of literature, with a difference of mere 2.5%. So, no clear pattern is established here. Majority of males, with a percentage of 54.5% agreed while a lesser percent i.e., 30% disagreed and the rest said that they did not notice any difference in confidence level on the basis of gender. Here we can see a marked difference in the opinions of both genders.

Interview data of females however led to a contrast as 80% refuted the claim. In the case of male responses, most of them verified the claim while a relatively smaller number disagreed to it i.e., 40%.

Interview data highlighted some reasons behind the responses of both genders where most of the females strongly rejected the claim as they opined that they did not experience any difference in the context of Air force. Some male officers however told the researcher that as females' induction started relatively recently in the Air force, they appear to be under-confident initially, but with the passage of time, they gain confidence due to the grooming environment and the fact that females are provided equal opportunities and exposure. Here we see a difference in the results of data due to the specific training and environment which leads to a boost of confidence level in case of females which is not evident in their earlier career.

3. Sense of Humor

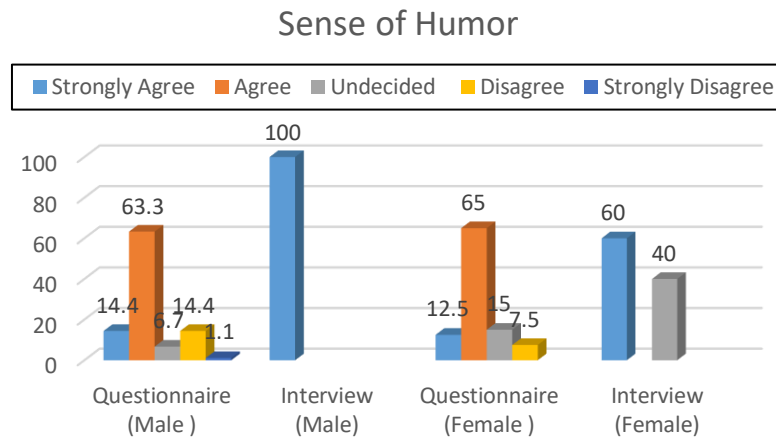


Fig: 3.

Research in the field stressed that males exhibit more sense of humor than females (Crawford 1995, Tannen, 1990). Vast majority of female respondents i.e. 65% in quantitative data agreed to this. We see almost similar ratio in case of male responses which clearly establishes this assertion that male employ more sense of humor in the setting of P.A F.

Interestingly, all of male and most of female respondents agreed to this view in case of interviews though with a difference of 40% increase in case of males, which signifies the fact that this claim is not merely a stereotype, also challenging research (Crawford & Gressley, 1991). Probing into

background reasons led to some interesting answers. One reason mentioned by male officers was the high number of male officers in the Air force as compared to female officers which help them be more casual while females are less in number, so they are more conscious about their image. Another reason that was highlighted was societal pressure. In Pakistani society specifically, females' speech is under reservations as compared to males. People are not used to females telling jokes in official set-up as they can be taken wrongly. The society is still male-dominated to a great extent and males enjoy many liberties and more freedom. Hence, humor is one such liberty denied to females in most workplaces.

4. Emotionality

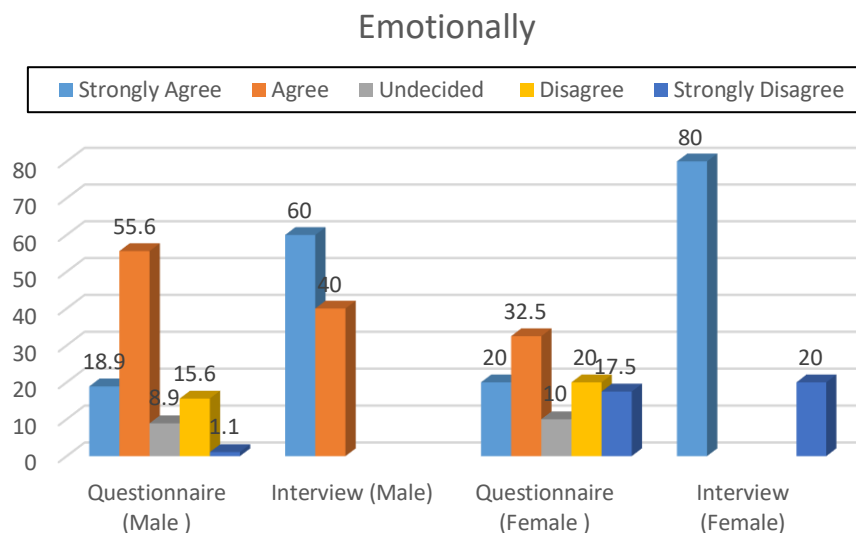


Fig: 4.

Quantitative data in response to the claim that females are more emotional showed mostly affirmations though some respondents gave varied responses. The situation was much clearer in data obtained from male subjects as 55.6% agreed, and a small percentage were not sure that this aspect is related to gender while 15.6% disagreed to the claim.

On the basis of responses from both the genders, interview data verified the claim. Most of the respondents told the researcher that they have

experienced that females are more sensitive and emotional by nature, on the basis of their interactions at workplace. One male officer said that males are stronger and have more control over their emotions, although he also mentioned that he didn't experience performance errors on part of females so far. Another male officer mentioned that there are no performance issues at the moment because of the less percentage of females' officers in the Air Force. With time when their number increases, then it can lead to problems as sensitivity can affect their work negatively.

5. Assertiveness

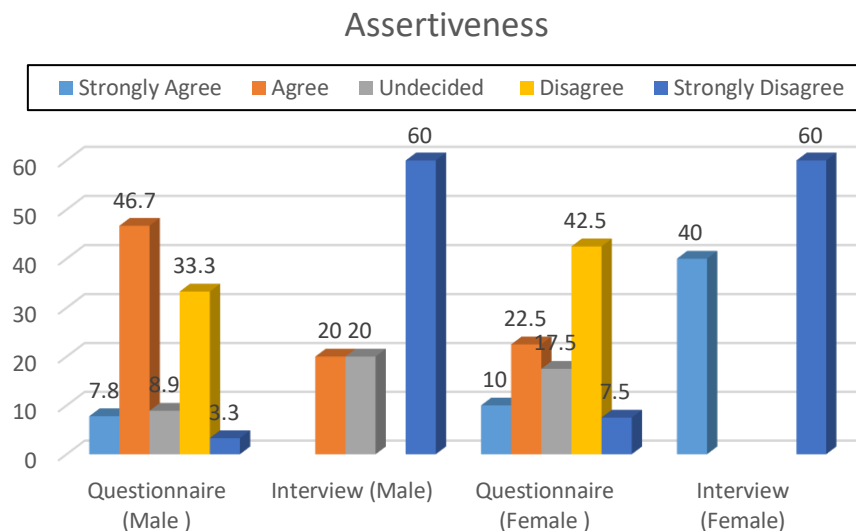


Fig: 5.

There is a common belief in the field that females are less assertive (Lakoff, 1975; Crawford, 1995). Interestingly, relatively same number of males agreed and females disagreed to this view in questionnaire data.

In the case of the interviews, 60% of females disagreed, while 40% agreed. Similar disapproval response was given by male officers. However, some officers told the researcher that they have seen assertive female officers in the Air force because if she is an immediate boss, she has to be bossy and assertive in order to prove to higher authorities that she can maintain order. One female officer informed the researcher that she has experienced females are more assertive, on the basis of her experience in the Air force. Here we see a different pattern of more assertive females in the Air force as compared to civil workplaces as all officers are given equal opportunities to become good leaders, which further mitigates the gap.

6. Gender-based Linguistic Differences

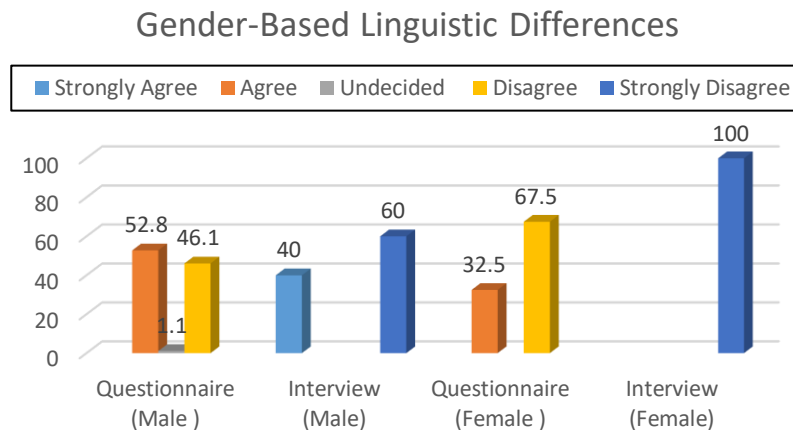


Fig: 6.

On the basis of aspects mentioned earlier, and the claims made by linguists that male and females have different speech patterns (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990), female respondents' response was quite clear as only 32.5% of females agreed, while majority i.e. 67.5% disagreed with the claim. So, this makes the analysis very clear. On the contrary, the response of male officers was mixed as 52.8% agreed while 46.1% disagreed. (One male interviewee, who agreed to the claim, said that he has noticed differences in his workplace experience. (He gave the example of the famous book in the field of language and gender by John Gray, *Men are From Mars: Women are from Venus*). Here we see that in few aspects including the presence of differences on the basis of gender, the respondents' views differ on the basis of gender as males agree to the claims and females disagree, which is why the researcher analyzed male and female data separately.

All females disagreed with this assertion during interviews. Majority of male officers with a high percentage of 60% also disagreed and 40% of males agreed. One female aeronautical engineer said that in the Air force, mostly technical terms are used, so we have relatively less deviation margin in terms of speech. However, this was an individual view which was not shared by all.

7. Misunderstandings

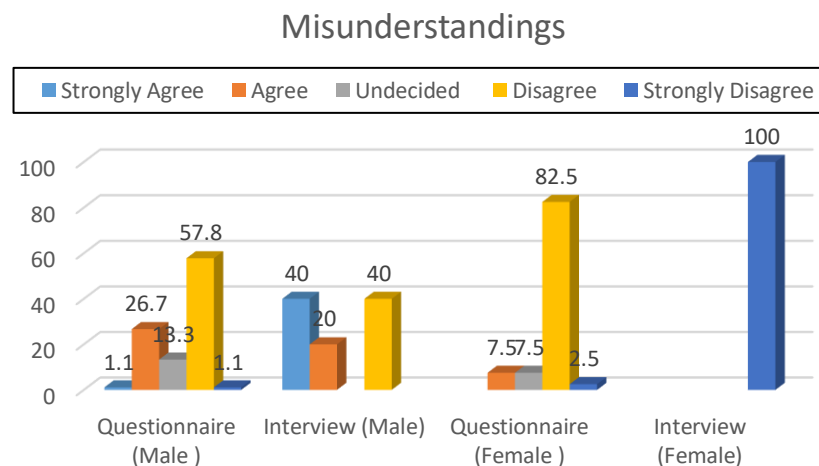


Fig: 7.

Some linguists (Tannen, 1990) believe that gender-based speech differences in males and females lead to misunderstanding at workplace. Both genders disagreed to the claim although the ratio had some difference as females' disagreement percentage was 82.5% while it was 57.8% in case of males. Interview data showed disparity in views i.e. females disagreed with higher percentage while males' disagreement and agreement ratio was similar. We again see difference in responses on the basis of genders.

Discussion

The starting point of the research was to analyze the role played by gender in the speech differences of male and female officers of Pakistan Air force and note the extent to which claims made in literature were supported or challenged. The researcher analyzed male and female data separately as results differed in some aspects in case of male and female responses.

Researchers claim that females are more indirect and soften their demands at workplace while males are more direct (Tannen, 1994; Macaulay, 2001). Data showed some discrepancy in quantitative and qualitative data. Males agreed to this claim in higher ratio while females gave mixed response. Almost similar picture can be seen when subjects were asked about the assertion that males are more confident as compared to females (Lakoff, 1975; Bleidorn et al., 2015). Data showed slight differences as both male and female officers agreed but males' ratio was higher. Reason behind females' indirectness was societal pressure that forces females to act politely and diplomatically. Almost similar results were obtained regarding the claim that males are more confident as compared to females (Lakoff, 1975; Bleidorn et al., 2015). Although some officers mentioned that females are less confident when they enter the workplace and gradually gain confidence due to the specific grooming and conducive environment where females are equally facilitated, rather encouraged. Research in the field of language and gender has postulated that males employ more humor at workplace as compared to females (Tannen, 1994; Holmes, 2006). Both male and female officers in qualitative and quantitative data mostly agreed to this claim. Here we see societal pressure creeping into apparently highly advanced and technical environment of the Pakistan Air force. Data revealed that females are conscious about their image because

joke telling in case of females is not socially accepted and they can be taken wrongly or considered overly frank. Air force like other workplaces still doesn't present an example where females can enjoy equal status in all aspects, although we did see discrepancy between empirical studies and data in the two aspects discussed above. I.e. indirectness and confidence ratio and the main reason was the specific training and environment of the Air force.

Data obtained regarding the assertion in the field of language and gender that females are more emotional (Pease, 2012) led to mixed response from females and mostly agreement pattern in case of male respondents, challenging some research on the topic (Forrest, 2010; Roberts, 2013; Holmes, 2015). Those who agreed to the claim informed the researcher that though they have experienced more emotionality ratio in females, however the less number of females currently in Air force is preventing highlight issues if any. In future, more females' induction may lead to more conclusive results. Mixed data was obtained regarding the claim that females are less assertive (Carli, 1990). Interestingly, males mostly agreed while females disagreed to this view in quantitative data while interview results offered some contrast as high ratio of males also disagreed. One female officer told the researcher that she has experienced more assertive females because they have to prove their competence and are therefore under pressure. Here we can see some results challenging the existing body of literature that claimed that females are less assertive, although empirical studies on the topic also brought into light lack of empirical data on the topic (Fodor & Epstein, 1983) or the aspect that females are depicted as non-assertive and incompetent unnecessarily in literature (Crawford, 1995). Regarding the claim that the language of females and males is different on the basis of gender (Tannen, 1990), more than 50% females in quantitative data disagreed while males agreed although interview data showed some similarity pattern in the response of both genders. Almost similar results can be seen in response to the assertion that the language differences of females and males lead to misunderstandings at workplace (Tannen, 1994). Females disagreed with a higher percentage in both quantitative and qualitative data which shows the discrepancy in response on the basis of gender and the fact that more males affirmed this view.

Conclusion

As with any research, this study has some strengths and weaknesses. It might not be appropriate to make claims about how representative this study might be with respect to other workplaces or Air force bases in other countries, nor can one make blanket recommendations based on a single study. The study presented focused on analyzing the speech differences on the basis of gender in a domain where there is limited to no access of civilians but holds an important position in terms of defense. It only scratches the surface of the topic. Due to restrictions in access, data from only three bases could be obtained. Although for a pioneering study, where there were difficulties in access, the data obtained still offered a good starting point. The fact that initial plan of observations and recordings could not be executed might have impacted the results. It is possible that if we had included more bases and increased sample size results could be more decisive and generalizable. There are different wings in the Air force (as they are called) that are completely different from each other in terms of job specifications and roles such as flying, accounts, weather forecast, aeronautical engineering, air traffic control, administration etc. The current study could only include officers from flying, aeronautical engineering and administration, due to limited access. If a broader spectrum of specialties could be included, more in-depth analysis was possible. Also, officers from flying wing spend three years for training in academy while officers from other wings spend six months which also led to differences as those officers that get six months training manifest more traits which they bring from civilian mode of life and those having three years training are more refined. (This statement was given by a pilot in interviews). Additionally, a longitudinal study might be very helpful for future researchers as many officers mentioned that the number of females in many specialties is increasing. Despite all the difficulties and initial problems in obtaining permission for research in a highly sensitive organization, where there was no history of research on such topics, the study did offer many valuable insights. Some aspects discussed such as sense of humor and emotionality ratio showed differences though in other areas such as assertiveness and confidence, results showed less differences because of the specific training and environment (which is highly conducive and facilitative for females).

According to literature, women in position of authority face a double bind; she can be either a good woman or good executive who is assertive and not liked (Lakoff, 1990:206). The research confirmed this claim and was restated in the words of a male interviewee. He said that women in position of authority are excellent bosses but then they are not liked. So females have to choose between being good professionals or likeable.

Interestingly, the response of males and females also differed (on the basis of gender) in some aspects such as the presence of differences in the speech of males and females and the resultant misunderstandings. Higher number of females disagreed while males agreed. There is a need for more in-depth research in such organizations where female participation was previously denied. Large data samples can highlight if there is any bias in the response of males and bring into surface the real picture. The situation can be better explained in the words of female officer who said that we have to put double efforts in order to prove that we are equally capable in all aspects.

It is hoped that the findings of this research will lead to increased awareness about male/female speech patterns. Also, the study might help parents and teachers having more knowledge about gender-based identities and constructs and minimizing any chances of discrimination with girls and boys based on gender, leading to a more balanced, equality-based personality development of both girls and boys while growing up. This aspect is backed by research as well (Avolio, Rotundo & Walumbwa, 2009). This will lead to a better work environment that is more harmonious and more relaxed.

Possibilities for Further Research

While the study has provided some initial possible answers, it also raised many questions that need further research. For future research, several improvements and adaptations are possible. The results can be more representative and generalizable in higher concentration in terms of data, leading to more significant insights; using the current study as a starting point. Variables such as class, educational background, age, etc. were taken as constant. They can be incorporated in future research. Further research can compare the performance of numerous specialties within the Air Force to see whether the

difference in the training span leads to some differences in data obtained.

Furthermore, a comparative research between different forces such as Army, Police, Navy and Air force might lead to interesting and meaningful results. Additionally, foreign officers taking part in military exercises and courses such as Basic Staff Course, Combat Command Course, and Staff College, etc. might give it a global perspective and help highlight differences on the basis of different cultures/countries etc. Such studies can be used to facilitate a better and harmonious work environment in institutions. The study can also be carried out in informal contexts, like observing officers in non-official setup.

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