Gendered Identity Construction in Cooking Shows: An Analysis of the Language Used by Male and Female Chefs

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Abstract

This study examines gendered language use and identity construction in Pakistani televised cooking shows. Grounded in sociolinguistic frameworks such as difference theory (Tannen, 1990) and dominance theory (Lakoff, 1975), it investigates how male and female hosts employ distinct linguistic styles that mirror broader gender norms and cultural expectations. The data consist of two thirty-minute cooking shows, one hosted by a male chef and the other by a female chef, analyzed through qualitative observation of their interactions with both audiences and callers. The findings reveal that female chefs tend to adopt a more personal, relational, and affective communicative style, whereas male chefs display a more reserved, directive, and authoritative tone. These patterns underscore how media discourse not only reflects but also reinforces prevailing societal constructions of masculinity and femininity, offering insights into the intersection of gender, language, and mediated performance.

Key words: Language and gender, Identity construction, Cooking shows, Media discourse, Difference theory, Dominance theory

Introduction

Men and women are different. We hear that women can do anything men can do, and some women are fighting for men's jobs to prove it. Clothing styles tend to obscure the differences between the sexes. The Quranic and Biblical order of authority in the home is mocked by modern sociologists. God made men and women to be different. Men and women walk differently, think differently, eat differently, and even talk differently. They are motivated by different values and are affected by different emotions. They differ in every cell of their bodies. While there are varying degrees of difference between various men and women, including exceptions to almost every generalization, we can nevertheless specify several important differences. Men are considered stronger physically than women. They are guided more by logic than are women, who seem to rely a great deal on intuition and emotion. Men are usually more objective, women more subjective. Men are often realistic, women idealistic. Many men are self-assured, while women frequently need reassurance. Men seem to be more rigid in their thinking, while women are often more adaptable and thus more

susceptible to the influence of others. At the same time, women are generally more sympathetic than men. They seem to be interested in people, while men are more interested in objects.

There are also social differences between men and women. Two of the most significant theories on social differences between males and females are "difference theory" and "dominance theory". According to the difference theory (Tanned, 1990) men and women, even those within the same group, live in different or separate cultural worlds and, as a result, they promote different ways of speaking (Uchida, 1992). This theory is sometimes called two-culture theory. In simple terms, although men and women live in the same environment, they establish different relations with society as if each belonged to a different environment and culture, the result of which is consequently reflected in the language of both genders. The present study deals with differences in talking style or more specifically language differences between men and women which creates gendered identities of them. For that matter the chosen sample will be two cooking shows telecasted on Pakistani media, one hosted by a woman and the other hosted by a man, both thirty minutes long.

Using television media to conduct such a study is not something new. Vial, A. et al. (2025) uncovered persistent syntactic and semantic gender biases in children's television scripts from 1960–2018. The study shows that male-associated words tend to be agents and linked to agency (power, achievement), while female-associated words are more relational (family, home). Lakoff (1975) argued that women tend to use linguistic forms that reflect and reinforce a subordinate role. Not long after Lakoff (1975), other scholars began to produce studies that both challenged Lakoff's arguments and expanded the field of language and gender studies. Coates (1993) outlines the historical range of approaches to gendered speech in her book "Women, Men and Language". Other prominent researchers who worked on language and gender are Cameron (1985, 2008), Eckert (2003), Holmes (1982), Tennen (1990, 1996) and Jespersen (1922).

Gender is a range of physical, mental, and behavioral characteristics distinguishing between masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, the term may refer to sex (i.e. the state of being male or female), social roles (as in gender roles), or gender identity. When talking about gender in the context of Language and

Gender, it means to observe how our gender influences us in using different styles of languages, where the male and female gender can be deeply studied with respect to their language and communication. Language and Gender could be easily studied these days by observing its presence on media. Today, due to the wide usage of social media, viewers get to see a lot of avenues in which both men and women are coming forward to play their part. In television dramas women were previously shown playing typical roles, of a housewife or a mother, staying at home. But trends are changing, and a new kind of reality of a woman is depicted on media. We also see a lot of women entering the field of electronic journalism, running and controlling talk shows all by themselves. Not to mention there are a lot more female social media influencers now, then men.

Cooking show is a television genre that presents food preparation in a kitchen studio set. Typically, the show's host, often a celebrity chef, prepares one or more dishes over the course of an episode, taking the viewing audience through the food's inspiration, preparation, and stages of cooking. Such shows often portray an educational component, with the host teaching the viewers how to prepare different meals, but some are primarily for entertainment. While rarely achieving top ratings, cooking shows have been a popular staple of daytime TV programming since the earliest days of television. They are generally very inexpensive to produce, making them an economically easy way for a TV station to fill a half-hour (or sometimes 60-minute) time slot. A number of cooking shows have run for many seasons, especially when they are sponsored by local TV stations or by public broadcasting. Many of the more popular cooking shows have had flamboyant hosts whose unique personalities have made them into celebrities. Teleki et al. (2025) analyze masculine defaults in podcasts and large language models, showing that masculine discourse patterns are more robustly embedded and rewarded in LLMs

Two and a half decades back when there was only one channel in Pakistan, Pakistan Television Network (PTV), then there used to be only one cooking show which was telecasted once a week. It was hosted by chef Kokab Khawaja. The general norm of a cooking show is that it has only one person on stage who acts both as the chef as well as the host. There was no concept of a man in a program involving cooking as it was assumed that cooking is a woman's job to do. But then trends in

Pakistan changed and now we have three separate channels related to cooking; Masala, Zaiqa and Zauq where one can watch cooking programs twenty four/seven. Besides female chefs we can also see male chefs hosting the programs, teaching the audience various Eastern and Western dishes. The trend of cooking shows on YouTube channels are also increasing, the most popular one named Food Fusion. A study on cooking shows in authoritarian Turkey (2024) frames televised culinary programs as tools for gendered nation-building. It shows how cooking shows serve as "conservative gender edutainment," modeling instructive gender norms (modeling and othering) to female audiences.

The discourse used in cooking shows is generally associated with food, health tips and the recipes the chefs make. Live cooking shows are also conducted where the hosts also take live calls and talk to callers. They usually exchange greetings; the callers praise the cooking style of the chefs and requests them to make their favorite dishes. Other than this they also sometimes shift towards personal talk, usually by female hosts. Caliskan et al. (2022) confirm that word embeddings trained on internet corpora encode gendered biases: male-associated words often are verbs and dominant; female-associated words are more evaluative or kitchen-oriented. Similarly, Matwick and Matwick (2023) explored consumer research through cooking shows and cookbooks, using multimodal discourse analysis to study how food media shapes cultural values, desire, and identity

Objectives of the Study

- To examine gender differences in the language used by cooking show hosts.
- To investigate how male and female hosts construct gendered identities in cooking shows and how these identities differ from one another.

Research Question

How do cooking show hosts construct and portray gendered identities through their language use, and in what ways do these differ between male and female hosts?

Significance of Study

This study contributes to the understanding of gendered communication by examining how male and female cooking show hosts construct and perform gender identities through language. Grounded in Tannen's Difference Theory (1990), the research highlights how communication styles are shaped by distinct cultural orientations

where women's talk often emphasizes connection, rapport, and inclusivity, while men's talk tends to foreground status, authority, and task completion. The analysis also draws on Lakoff's Dominance Theory (1975), which situates these linguistic differences within broader power structures, suggesting that male communication patterns may function to assert control and maintain societal hierarchies, while female communication styles often reflect socially imposed expectations of accommodation and relationality.

By focusing on cooking shows, a seemingly neutral and domestic media context, this research uncovers how gendered discourse persists even in spaces traditionally associated with shared human activity. The findings will enrich scholarship in sociolinguistics, media discourse analysis, and gender studies by providing empirical evidence of how gender ideologies are reproduced, negotiated, or contested through televised interaction. Moreover, the study offers practical insights for media producers, educators, and communication professionals by revealing the subtle ways language use reinforces, or challenges gendered norms, thus contributing to broader conversations about equality and representation in the media.

Literature Review

Men and women differ in language use because they often fill different roles in society. Furthermore, culture may also contribute to the gender difference in language use. Boys and girls are taught to learn their gender-appropriate linguistic behavior during their childhood. With the development of the society, women's social position has improved a lot. Society shows more and more concern and respect for women. These are reflected in both male and female language use.

Lakoff (1975) claimed that women use a number of language features that, collectively, indicate uncertainty and hesitancy. These features, argued Lakoff, deny women the opportunity to express themselves strongly, and make what they are talking about appear trivial. According to *You Just Don't Understand* by Tennen (1990), the communication differences between men and women occur due to their different social roles and whether one is superior or inferior. Misunderstandings between men and women arise because their communication style is different. As Tennen (1990):

If adults learn their ways of speaking as children growing up in separate social worlds

of peers, then conversation between women and men is cross-cultural communication. Although each style is valid on its own terms, misunderstandings arise because the styles are different. Taking a cross-cultural approach to male-female conversations makes it possible to explain why dissatisfactions are justified without accusing anyone of being wrong or crazy (p. 23).

Men communicate to show their status and authority whereas women communicate to build connections. It is in the nature of a woman that she cannot live in isolation. She needs to build ties with people around her, spread love and take love. Whereas men are innately authoritative. They want to show their power and strength to people around them and for that matter they do not care much about building relationships rather than showing their dominance. Similarly, another communication difference between men and women shows that men go for facts while women go for emotion. In discussing her novel, *The Temple of My Familiar*, Walker (1989) explained that a woman in the novel falls in love with a man because she sees in him "a giant ear." Walker (1989) went on to remark that although people may think they are falling in love 'because of sexual attraction or some other force, "really what we're looking for is someone to be able to hear us. We all want, above all, to be heard, but not merely to be heard. We want to be understood, heard for what we think we are saying, for what we know we meant". With increased understanding of the ways women and men use language should come a decrease in frequency of the complaint "You just don't understand" (Tannen, 1990). Men go for more public talk for the same reason that they want to tell everybody how confident and powerful they are while women go for private talk as they like privacy. They are usually good secret keepers, and they like to discuss their emotions and feelings in private. According to the dominance theory by Spender (1980), men interrupt more in mixed sex conversations while women like to listen.

The same year that Lakoff (1975) published her observations, dominance theorists West and Zimmerman undertook an investigation into interruption rates in mixed-sex conversations. In the eleven conversations they analyzed, they found a total of 46 male interruptions and only two female interruptions (Sadler,2011). Jokes and stories are another difference between men and women. According to sociolinguistic research, humor in conversation often reflects gendered patterns of

communication. Studies suggest that men tend to use jokes more frequently as a means of displaying wit and establishing status within interactions, while women are more likely to employ narratives or personal stories to maintain conversational flow and solidarity (Coates, 2007; Holmes, 2006). Research also indicates that men may structure jokes in ways that invite group laughter and collective amusement, whereas women, when telling jokes, sometimes preface or accompany them with self-deprecating laughter, which can affect the delivery and reception of the humor (Cameron, 2007; Holmes & Marra, 2002). Rather than suggesting a difference in intelligence, these patterns reflect socially constructed conversational styles and expectations surrounding gender and language use.

Githens (1991) commented on Tennen's research:

> If we believe that women and men have different styles and that the male is the standard, we are hurting both women and men. The women are treated based on the norms for men, and men with good intentions speak to women as they would other men and are perplexed when their words spark anger and resentment. Finally, apart from her objection to women having to do all the changing, Tannen states that women changing will not work either. As Dale Spender theorized, women who talk like men are judged differently -- and harshly. A woman invading the man's realm of speech is often considered unfeminine, rude or bitchy.

When it comes to conflict and compromise then we see that men create conflict while women generally try to avoid conflict and compromise. This compromise is made on her part so that the conflict can be avoided which acts as a threat to relationships, which women do not want to lose. Men like to talk on sports, politics and so on whereas women like to talk on feminine things like fashion trends, beauty, feelings and so on. According to the views of Robin Lakoff, whatever women say seem not be much authentic and powerful rather empty. Lakoff (1975) stated that women use phatic (empty) language; apologize too much and can't tell jokes, for example. Although her findings have formed the basis for a huge amount of research in the field, the viewpoint that women's language reflects their inferior place in society is generally seen as outdated. In fact, it must have already seemed a little out of place in 1970s California (Sadler,2011).

Language Differences Between Men and Women

Among the many differences between men and women, the most interesting is that of the language they use to communicate. Language differences are basically the differences in the way men and women communicate by uttering words. These language differences include lexical differences; which concern words, syntactical differences; concerned with sentences, phonological differences; concerned with sounds and to some extent morphological differences as well, concerned with meaning of an utterance. The linguistic forms used by women and men contrast to some extent in all speech communities. For example, Holmes (1993) mentions the Amazon Indians' language as an extreme example, where the language used by a child's mother is different from that used by her father and each tribe is distinguished by a different language. In this community, males and females speak different languages. In some communities, men and women speak the same language, but some distinct linguistic features occur in the speech of women and men. These differences range from pronunciation or morphology to vocabulary. Holmes (1993) refers to Japanese language, where different words, with the same meaning, are used distinctively by men and women. For example, in this language when a woman wants to say 'water', she uses the word 'ohiya' whereas a man uses the word 'miza' (Yule, 1998). Furthermore, women tend to use the standard language more than men do. Tanned (1990) believes that females generally use speech to develop and maintain relationships. They use language to achieve intimacy. Tannen (1990) states that women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, while men speak and hear a language of status and independence. Tannen also states that such a communication resembles cross-cultural communication where the style of communication is different. According to Kaplan and Farrell (1994) and Leet-Peregrini (1980) messages (e-mails) produced by women are short and their participation is driven by their desire to keep the communication going on (Nemati & Bayer, 2007). The investigation and identification of differences between men's and women's speech date back across time. Until 1944, no specific piece of writing on gender differences in language was published. As stated by Grey (1998), it was in the 1970s that comparison between female cooperativeness and male competitiveness in

linguistic behavior began to be noticed.

Theories of Language and Gender

Many researchers have studied the vast area of language and gender. The research on language and gender started as back as 1922, when Jespersen (1922) talked about it in his article *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin*. Jespersen (1922) basically published a set of ideas about women's language which he observed in the women around him. According to his viewpoint, women talk a lot. They use half-finished sentences because they speak before they have thought about what they will say. Such ideas proposed by Jespersen (1922) caused a lot of heated debate by women of that time. They argued that Jespersen has marginalized by saying such things. After this many women researchers also came to the scene talking about the male dominance and 'men talk'.

Robin Lakoff's Language and Woman's Place

As discussed earlier, Lakoff (1975) wrote the famous article *Language and Woman's Place*. Lakoff's work introduces to the field of sociolinguistics many ideas about women's language that are now often commonplace. It has inspired many different strategies for studying language and gender, across national borders as well as across class and race lines. Lakoff (1975) believes that the use of tag questions by women is the sign of uncertainty. Dubois and Crouch (1975) launched a critique on Lakoff's claims, especially on tag questions. They examined the use of tag questions within the context of a professional meeting and concluded that at least in that context males used tag questions more than females did. Their conclusion was that Lakoff's hypothesis might be biased in favor of highly stereotyping beliefs. Dubois and Crouch (1975) questioned Lakoff's findings as Lakoff had used introspective methods in her study. They argued that her conclusions were based on uncontrolled and unverifiable observation of others and were based on a highly non-random sample of people. Her work is noted for its attention to class, power, and social justice in addition to gender. Lakoff proposes that women's speech can be distinguished from that of men in a number of ways mainly hedges, empty adjectives, super polite forms and tag questions.

Deborah Tannen's Difference Theory

Tannen (1990) started working on language and gender when she observed a dinner

conversation with her friends when she was doing her PhD research work. She realized how her male friends interrupt more and try to show their dominance whenever possible while her female friends try to listen more and show that they are enjoying their time very much. Tannen (1990) in her book talks about the differences between men and women speech by saying that women go more for understanding while men for advice. As is evident from an example from the book when she relates an incident:

> When my mother tells my father she doesn't feel well, he invariably offers to take her to the doctor. Invariably, she is disappointed with his reaction. Like many men, he is focused on what he can do, whereas she wants sympathy (Tannen, 1990).

Methodology

This study is exploratory in nature, and the primary focus is on the language differences between male and female chefs in cooking shows. The nature of this study is qualitative essentially. Qualitative research is concerned with drawing an insightful picture of some phenomenon and conducted in natural setting with no controlling factors involved. It is also more detailed and exploratory as compared to quantitative research, aiming to describe the causes or implications of the matter in hand. Moreover, in qualitative research the findings are usually tentative and always have room to evolve. Apart from that, the researcher has a more active role in qualitative research, and the analysis and interpretation of data is largely dependent on his/her point of view or perspective. According to Stake "qualitative research is concerned with structures and patterns, and how something is" (2010). In addition, qualitative research is inductive in nature as theory is derived from the results of qualitative research. Whereas quantitative research is 'deductive' in nature as in this type of research hypothesis is based on some already known theory. The population of this research project includes all the cooking shows telecasted on national as well as international electronic media. The sample selected for the analysis of this research project are basically two cooking shows. One is *Simply Shai*, telecasted on Masala TV, hosted by a female chef, chef Shai while the other is *Chef Zakir Live*, telecasted on Hum TV, hosted by a male chef, chef Zakir. Both the shows are thirty minutes long. The reason of selection of these cooking shows is that they are hosted by female and

male chefs respectively which allowed the researcher to carry out a thorough analysis of the language use by both the hosts as they acted as the representatives of their genders. The research will be carried out firstly by analyzing both the shows textually i.e. analyzing the language of the chefs. Then the researchers will look into the factors which contributed to making the gendered identities of both the chefs. The researchers will use the tool of observation for this research study. By observation the researchers will be able to analyze the language of both the chefs and how it is creating a certain kind of gendered reality about them.

Textual Analysis of *Simply Shai*

Table 1 gives an account of the linguistic features of the language used by the female host in her cooking show.

Table 1 Textual Analysis of the female host's show

No.#	Textual Element	Linguistic Device / Category	Specified Type / Function
1	Welcome to 'meetha meetha' Thursday	Lexical Choice	Empty Adjective
2	Apko 'bra he' maza ata hai	Intensifier	Strengthening impact
3	Jb ap khate hai tau 'apko bra maza ata hai kiunke wo velvety hoti hai, it melts in your mouth and it gives you such a wonderful flavor.'	Repetition / Redundancy	Repetition of the same idea again and again
4	'makes you feel like when you are in love, tau wohe wali feeling ati hai'	Metaphorical / Emotional Language	Discussion of feelings like 'love'
5	Tau wohe wali feeling ati hai, 'lekin pata nae mujhe nae pata is bat main ktni haqeeqat hai'	Epistemic Modality / Hedge	No assurance of what she said is true or not
6	'Main zada shauqeen nae hun chocolate ki'	Personalization / Shift in footing	Moving from general to personal talk

7	'Us main buhut kam meetha hai, sugar jo hai, shakur jo hai wo buhut kam hai.'	Repetition / Redundancy	Unnecessary repetition
8	It triggers a chemical in your brain which 'ah…' makes you feel like when you are in love	Hedge / Filled pause	Hesitation, uncertainty
9	'Shinning, glistening, glossy and beautiful'	Adjectival Piling / Lexical choice	Use of many adjectives to glorify melted chocolate
10	'Mere apnay bachay nae hain'	Personal Disclosure	Being very personal in a cooking show
11	'Kuch kam tau aurtain kr he nae skti'	Gender Ideology / Power Discourse	Accepting her weaker reality

Textual Analysis of *Chef Zakir Live*

Table 2 gives an account of the linguistic features of the language used by the male host in his cooking show.

Table 2 Textual Analysis of the male host's show

No.#	Textual Element	Linguistic Device / Category	Specified Type / Function
1	Starts with Salam (without any smile)	Formal Greeting / Pragmatic Choice	Reserved and formal behavior
2	Starts with increased traffic on roads	Topical Choice / Gendered Discourse	General 'men talk'
3	Quickly covering the recipe	Discourse Management	Not digressing or being irrelevant
4	Says goodbye himself before the caller	Turn-taking / Power Discourse	Controlling the call
5	Mazedar sa break	Lexical Choice	The only empty adjective used
6	Focusing on the recipe only	Interactional Style /	No specific

		Discourse Strategy	interaction with the audience
7	Talking very smoothly	Fluency / Absence of Hedges	No use of hedges

Gendered Identity and Our Social Environment

By observing the above tabulated data, we can see how both the chefs differ from each other. Before discussing the construction of gendered identity of both these chefs through their programs, the researcher will discuss the basic concept of what gendered identity is. Identity as we all know is a person's conception and expression of their individuality and group affiliations (e.g. national identity or cultural identity). While gendered identity is the identity created of a person due to his gender. When nothing except the gender and its related characteristics of a person is noted by others, it makes a gendered identity for him or her. Gendered identity is a controversial term as it hides the individualistic qualities of a person and any or all of a person's traits are observed as an influence of his or her gender. While studying language and gender many people believe that the gendered identity formation of a person is a conscious projection but here, we see that both the samples that the researcher selected for this research study were the recordings of 'live' cooking shows. This means that there was no backstage crew involved to give the hosts any scripted text to speak. All they spoke was very unconsciously done, which cannot be called a conscious projection. However, still gendered identity of both the hosts was formed. Though it was not conscious but it is interesting to see that what they speak was due to the influence of the society in which we all live.

Since our childhood we are brought up in such a social environment which creates an atmosphere for particular factors to influence us which later on aids in making our gendered identity. Girls are taught to be feminine, and calm while boys are aggressive and love to fight. If at home siblings are caught up in a fight, girls are ordered to remain quiet to solve the issue, while boys are promoted to argue and show their dominance. In recent times teenagers and young ones are also learning through media. Media projects women as weak and under superiority of men. In certain dramas men are shown as the dominating one, arguing for what they want and interrupting others in a conversation. The same is the case with these selected chefs

and even all of us. It is our training which starts since we are little ones, which constructs our gendered identity.

Gendered Identity of the Female Chef

1) Opening & Framing

- Smile + "welcome to meetha meetha Thursday"
    - o Device: Positive politeness (solidarity), branding tag.
    - o Analysis: The smiling delivery and the evaluative adjective *meetha* index friendliness and affiliation (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In Lakoff's terms, *meetha* functions like an "empty adjective", pleasant evaluation without propositional content (Lakoff, 1975).
    - o Opens by gender-typing the event as "sweet," aligning the show with affective/domestic registers stereotypically feminized.

2) Four-minute "background of chocolate"

- Device: Extended preface; topic development & footing shift from host to "teacher/expert."
- Analysis: Although you note it as "digression," it can be read as ethos building (establishing expert identity) and didactic scaffolding before procedure. Tannen's Difference perspective (1990) would hear this as rapport + narrative framing; Holmes (1993) remind us "verbosity" is a stereotype, topic prefaces can be genre-appropriate ways to legitimate expertise.
- Two competing gendered readings:
    1. Reproduction of stereotype ("women talk a lot/digress").
    2. Resistance via technical/historical discourse (industrial production, types, characteristics), challenging the "intuitive home-cook" feminine trope with institutional/technical knowledge (indexing authority).

3) Lexis: Empty adjectives & intensifiers

- Data: *meetha meetha*; Urdu intensifiers buhut, bara/bra ("very/really").
- Device: Evaluative lexis and intensification.
- Analysis: Intensifiers heighten stance and involvement (Holmes, 1993). Lakoff links women's higher intensifier rates to weaker assertive force; later work reframes intensifiers as audience-design (Bell, 1984) and engagement tools that make procedural talk vivid.

- Repetitive positive evaluation constructs chocolate as pleasure/love, aligning cooking with affect and care (feminized labor).

4) Repetition & Rephrasing

- Data: Restating "same idea again and again," giving reasons for simple steps.

- Device: Pedagogic repetition, reformulation, and justification.

- Analysis: In televised instruction, repetition reduces processing load and supports viewers who take notes in real time; it's didactic, not merely "verbosity."

- Still, the burden of justification ("explaining even simple things") can reflect gendered expectations that women mitigate authority by over-reasoning.

5) Hedges & Epistemic Modality

- Data: *"lekin pata nae… kitni haqeeqat hai"*

- Device: Hedge, epistemic downtoner.

- Analysis: Classic Lakoff feature, it mitigates commitment and softens face-threats. Politeness theory treats this as negative-politeness (avoiding imposition), and risk management in live broadcasting.

- May index gendered norms of deference, yet also a professional safeguard (avoiding overclaiming).

6) Affective & Metaphoric Language

- Data: Linking chocolate to "being in love."

- Device: Affective metaphor, experiential stance.

- Analysis: Aligns culinary talk with embodied pleasure and emotion; a hallmark of engagement in food media.

- Reinforces the cultural pairing women–emotion–sweetness; but it is equally a marketing discourse of indulgence common across genders.

7) Personal Disclosures

- Data: "loves chocolate," "no kids," "used to live in Quetta… walnuts," "house in New York."

- Device: Self-disclosure, narrative personalization, stance-taking.

- Analysis: Tannen's rapport talk: building closeness through personal narrative; Communication Accommodation (Giles et al.) to a domestic audience.

- Personal life in a professional setting can be read as a gendered demand for

relatability placed more on women. Yet the NY/Quetta references also index cosmopolitan and local capital, shoring up expert legitimacy (global culinary literacy + local authenticity).

8) Interaction with Callers

- Distribution: 3 calls (2F, 1M).
- Style with female callers: longer calls, sweeter tone, "very fine," indirect acceptance ("I will try").
    - Devices: Positive politeness (praise, warmth), indirect refusals, intensification ("very").
    - Analysis: Supportive listener stance, minimal questioning → facilitates callers' face needs; recipient design (Bell, 1984) and accommodation toward perceived expectations of female callers.
- Style with male caller: reserved, ~30 seconds, closes with "thank you for calling."
    - Devices: Tighter turn management, expedited closing.
    - Analysis: Style-shifting by interlocutor gender; less affiliative work, more transactional.
- The asymmetry (length/affect) reproduces gendered expectations of women as supporters of other women in domestic talk spaces while de-escalating with men. It also shows institutional control: she can allocate time and close calls, but typically exercises it more gently.

9) Code-switching & Audience Design

- Data: Urdu–English mix (e.g., *buhut, meetha, break, history*).
- Device: Code-mixing, register blending.
- Analysis: Indexes a Pakistani, media-savvy audience; English terms for technical/industrial processes + Urdu for affect/valuation → functional distribution (technical vs. emotive).
- Mirrors glocalization: global chocolate industry discourse + local affective lexicon.

10) Genre Expectations vs. Gender Ideology

- Labeling the 4-minute preface and personal talk as "irrelevant" leans on a procedure-first model (often associated with the male host's style). Cooking

shows, however, are infotainment; narrative, brand voice, and audience bonding are core genre moves.

- Some "gendered" features (hedging, intensifiers, personal narrative) may be genre-functional; nevertheless, their distribution can still index gendered identities within the show's institutional setting.

Discussion

The female host chef Shai started her program with a big smile on her face, saying 'welcome to meetha meetha Thursday'. According to Lakoff (1975), women use empty adjectives and it is evident from this beginning line from the female chef. There is no point in calling a day's name as sweet. The dish that she makes in this program is chocolate brownies and what she do is first she builds a background of chocolate. She starts telling viewers about the history of chocolate, how it was produced, how it is taken to factories and then manufactured. Then she talks about the different types of chocolates and their characteristics. This whole session takes about four minutes, which is way too long if a viewer is sitting at home, having a pencil and a notebook in his or her hand, waiting for the chef to start the recipe. This again can be proven from Lakoff's (1975) work when she says that women digress and they talk a lot. The way the female chef gives the historical and technical details about chocolate and the different dishes of chocolate made around the world shows that she wants to prove that she is a learned and intellectual being. She makes a lot of use of 'buhut' and 'bra' in bra maza aya, which are intensifiers. Another important point noted is that she restates the same idea again and again and gives reasoning for even simple, understandable things. Women also talk about their personal life and the same could be seen of this chef. At three times in the show, she shares with the viewers that she loves chocolate, she has no kids, she used to live in Quetta where her mother used to give her walnuts and that she has a house in New York. All these details regarding her personal life were not necessary to be told in a cooking show, but she does, due to the gendered identity engraved in her by her social environment. Another irrelevant thing is the discussion of feelings like 'love', a topic very dear to women. Though it is not required in a show like a cooking show, but she still discusses it, relating love and chocolate.

Now the researcher will talk about the way the female chef dealt with the callers.

There were total of three telephone calls in the show. Two female callers called while one male caller. The female chef talked more sweetly with the female callers, and they were also relatively long calls when compared to the call of the male caller. In response to 'how are you' by the caller she said, 'very fine', which shows she used intensification as she used the word 'very'. She didn't ask any questions from the callers, just gave them the answers and listened to them very attentively. Her attitude was very open and supportive. When the callers requested her to make their favorite dishes, she didn't directly refuse them but said she will try to make them as soon as possible. When she talked to the male caller, she was a little reserved. The call was only half a minute long and said 'thank you for calling' at the end of the call.

Gendered Identity of the Male Chef

1. Device: Formality / Reserved Opening

- **Data:** He starts the show with "Salam" without a smile.
- **Analysis:** This shows a very reserved and formal style of speaking. Unlike the female host who smiled and used "meetha meetha Thursday," his opening creates distance between himself and the audience.
- This reflects the socially constructed masculine identity where seriousness and restraint are valued over warmth and emotional expression.

2. Device: Topic Choice (Public Sphere Talk)

- **Data:** He begins by discussing traffic problems on the roads.
- **Analysis:** Choosing traffic as the first topic indicates a tendency toward "men's talk," which is often associated with public, serious issues rather than personal or emotional concerns.
- This highlights how gendered language reinforces the division between public (male) and private/emotional (female) spheres.

3. Device: Task-Oriented Style

- **Data:** He quickly starts with the recipe without digressions or storytelling.
- **Analysis:** His style is linear and efficient, focused solely on the task of teaching the recipe, unlike the female host who digresses with history and personal anecdotes.
- This suggests that the male host positions himself as an "expert chef" rather than as an entertainer or companion, projecting authority through brevity and

focus.

4. Device: Call Management (Authority in Interaction)

- **Data:** He ends the calls himself and even interrupts one of the callers.

- **Analysis:** This shows control over the conversation and turn-taking, asserting authority over the caller's participation.

- This aligns with Spender's Dominance Theory (1980), where men are seen to dominate discourse, often normalizing their authority while women are expected to defer.

5. Device: Direct Refusal (Lack of Politeness)

- **Data:** When a caller asked him how to make crispy chips, he bluntly said he could not help her at that time.

- **Analysis:** He uses no hedges or politeness strategies, directly refusing the request. In contrast, the female host avoided saying "no" and instead softened refusals with honorifics.

- This reflects gender asymmetry in politeness expectations—society tolerates men's directness but expects women to be accommodating.

6. Device: Minimal Use of Empty Adjectives

- **Data:** He uses "mazedar sa break."

- **Analysis:** This is the only instance of an empty adjective in his show, unlike the frequent use of such adjectives by the female host. His limited use suggests avoidance of "feminine" linguistic markers.

- In Lakoff's (1975) framework, empty adjectives are tied to women's language; the male chef's avoidance reflects a performance of rationality and authority.

7. Device: Absence of Hedges

- **Data:** He speaks smoothly and fluently, without hesitation markers like "maybe" or "I think."

- **Analysis:** His style reflects confidence and certainty, showing that he knows what he wants to say.

- This contrasts with women's stereotyped "tentativeness" and reinforces the perception of men as more assertive and authoritative speakers.

8. Device: Divided Attention During Calls

- **Data:** While listening to callers, he continues preparing the recipe.

- **Analysis:** This indicates that the recipe remains his priority, while the caller is secondary. In contrast, the female host gave full attention to her callers.

- This reflects a task-oriented, authoritative masculine identity that values efficiency over relationship-building, reinforcing asymmetry in interactional expectations.

Discussion

The male chef starts the show in a very formal and reserved style, saying 'salam' without any smile. The first topic that he discusses is of traffic problem on roads, very typical of a male to discuss such a topic. It can be considered as the general 'men talk'. Unlike the female chef, he starts the recipe very quickly, without any irrelevant digression. The dish that he makes in the show is a sweet dish named Shahi Tukray. His style indicates that he does not communicate with the audience as such, he just continues with telling the recipe and how to make it. This means he is more focused on fulfilling his role as a chef, not the host of the show. There are two telephone calls in his show, both of which are by female callers. In response of 'how are you' he says 'theek thak' and that too without any smile. In the other show when the female host was taking the calls, all of her attention was focused on what the callers were saying but on the other hand when the male host is taking the calls he listens to the callers and side by side also continues with the recipe. The male chef seems to control the calls as he himself says goodbye, while the female chef waited for the callers to finish the call. At one time the chef also interrupts the caller. This controlling of the call and interrupting the caller proves the authoritative and dominating nature of a typical gendered male in our social environment.

When one of the callers asked the male chef to help her by guiding her how to make crispy chips for her son's lunch box, he acted very uncooperatively saying that he cannot help her right now. On the other hand, the female chef in her show didn't say direct no to anybody which means she used honorifics. But in the case of the male chef, we see that he directly refused the caller, and he didn't care about using honorifics. At one time in the show, he also makes use of an empty adjective like the female chef, but it is the only empty adjective that he uses. The adjective is 'mazedar sa break'. It is very odd to attach the word 'mazedar' to break, so it is an empty adjective. But this is the only similarity of him with the female chef. Unlike the

female chef, the male chef didn't use hedges in his show. He talks very smoothly, as if his mind functions fast and he knows what he has to say before he speaks. We see that although the male chef is not forced to talk the way he did but still, he sketched a gendered identity of himself in the show, which is the result of the social environment he is brought up in.

Conclusion

The present study explored the differences between men and women in the way they use language. The researcher began by establishing the relationship between language and gender and explained why it remains a significant area of discussion in contemporary sociolinguistic research. Media discourse was highlighted as a key site where gendered identities are performed and reinforced, with television shows constructing particular notions of masculinity and femininity. Beyond media, the social environment in which individuals are raised also plays a crucial role in shaping gendered identities. Cultural practices such as teaching girls to remain tolerant, nurturing, and non-confrontational, while encouraging boys to assert superiority and dominance, contribute to the unconscious internalization of gender roles.

The analysis was based on recordings of two televised cooking shows from Pakistani media, one hosted by a male chef and the other by a female chef. A detailed linguistic examination of both hosts revealed how their language use contributed to the construction of gendered identities. The female chef was observed to be more lively and expressive. She engaged in digressions, shared personal experiences, and employed linguistic devices such as hedges, intensifiers, and honorifics. She also demonstrated greater cooperation and warmth in her interactions with callers. In contrast, the male chef adopted a more formal and reserved style, focusing primarily on delivering the recipe rather than engaging socially. His interactions with callers were shorter, more controlled, and at times authoritative, as seen when he interrupted a caller or directly refused a request.

Overall, the findings illustrate how language functions as a powerful tool in shaping and reflecting gendered identities, both in media representations and in broader social contexts.

Future Recommendations

1. Future research could expand the scope of analysis by including a larger

sample of cooking shows and other genres of media programming to see whether similar gendered patterns emerge across contexts.

2. A comparative study across different cultural and regional settings would help identify whether these patterns are uniquely Pakistani or part of a broader global trend in media discourse.

3. Incorporating audience perspectives through surveys or interviews could provide valuable insight into how viewers interpret and internalize gendered language use by media figures.

4. Future studies might also consider the role of digital media and online cooking platforms, where interaction between hosts and audiences can be more immediate and dialogic, potentially reshaping gendered communication styles.

5. A longitudinal approach could investigate how gendered linguistic practices in media evolve over time, especially as social attitudes toward gender equality continue to change.

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