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**Multilingualism and Gender Roles: A Sociolinguistics Study in
Bilingual Pakistani Households**



Malaika Saleem

MS Scholar, COMSATS University Islamabad, Vehari
Campus

Dr. Ali Ahmad

Associate Professor, COMSATS University Islamabad,
Vehari Campus

Abstract

This research investigates how multilingualism intersects with gender roles in bilingual households in Pakistan. Grounded in sociolinguistic and gender theories, the study explores how men and women use language differently in domestic settings, particularly through patterns of code-switching and discourse. The findings suggest that language use within families is deeply tied to social roles, men's speech often reflects authority and engagement in public domains, whereas women's language emphasizes politeness, caregiving, and the preservation of cultural traditions. Data were collected quantitatively from 70 participants across 15 families in Vehari, Punjab. The analysis reveals that language is not a neutral means of communication, but a powerful tool shaped by social hierarchies and gendered expectations. Women were found to switch between languages more frequently and rely on mother tongues in informal, intimate settings, while men primarily used Urdu or English, particularly in formal and public interactions. These patterns highlight how language can sustain or challenge traditional gender norms. By focusing on everyday language practices within homes, this study addresses a significant gap in sociolinguistic research and offers insight into how gender and language interact in culturally specific, multilingual environments.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Gendered Language Use, Code-Switching Patterns, Bilingual Households, Language and Gender

Introduction:

Pakistan is a culturally and linguistically diverse country, where many households are bilingual or even multilingual. There exist a pre-determined correlation between individual's language choice and his or her social identity and status. Language is an indicator and it reinforces an individual's position in social paradigm and signals shared social outlook. Pakistan, where different languages are arranged in a hierarchical fashion in choice remains an important phenomenon to be explored especially in the context of accordance with various functions and roles. English is being exercised as the official language of the state (Rahman, 2002). In the households, language is not just a tool for communication, but also a powerful force that shapes social behavior, identity, and gender roles. This study explores how language use within bilingual Pakistani families is connected to the construction and reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Although Urdu is playing the role of the national language of Pakistan. It is fundamentally the phenomenon of multilingualism that furnishes individuals with multiple choices in terms of language that is in turn connected to the trend of language shift and language maintenance or language loss. Fishman (1977) observed the use of various language varieties by a multilingual in accordance with corresponding functions. The social and economic instability in Pakistani society is linked to differences in how people, especially men and women, think about language and social roles. According to Coates (1986), the "difference" approach suggests that men and women should be seen as equal but different, because they grow up in different social environments or "sub-cultures" from a very early age. Bilaniuk (2010) believes that while language attitudes are influenced by gender roles,

ethnicity, and politics, it's still hard to give a clear explanation of how language beliefs, social behaviors, and gender or ethnic identities are all connected. Politeness is another worth noticing aspect in the context of language choices across the gender. Generally, it is assumed that women use more polite linguistic expressions as compared to their male counterparts. Calvert (2002) argues that identity development, commencing at formative years of an individual, represents a vital aspect of his/her life till adolescent age. Language embodies the social and cultural beliefs in terms of identity across gender. Lakoff (1975) identifies three types of politeness: formal, deference, and camaraderie. He suggests that women's speech often includes formal and respectful forms of politeness, while men's language is more about camaraderie and friendship. The differences in how men and women choose their words may reflect broader social differences between genders. Woman's use and choice of language has been described as a medium to identify their social status. They negotiate their identity using a particular code as tool to differentiate their selves from man and children (Farida, 2018). Fishman (1965) and **Gumperz (1982)** emphasize how multilingualism is not just a feature of a society but also a critical factor in shaping **social identity**, **cultural affiliation**, and even **social power dynamics**. In multilingual households, people often switch between languages (a practice known as **code-switching**) based on **social roles**, contexts, and power relations within the family or community. This makes language a tool for both **communication** and the **construction of social meaning**. In bilingual Pakistani families, language use is not neutral.

Background of the Study:

Pakistan is a linguistically rich and diverse country, home to over 70 languages. Urdu is the national language, English is widely used in education and official communication, and regional languages such as Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, and Saraiki are spoken across different provinces. Many Pakistani households are **bilingual or multilingual**, with individuals switching between languages depending on the context, audience, and purpose. This dynamic multilingual environment makes Pakistan an ideal setting for sociolinguistic exploration. In sociolinguistic terms, **language choice** in multilingual settings is a powerful social tool. **Fishman (1965)** and **Gumperz (1982)** argue that multilingualism does not merely signify the ability to speak multiple languages, but also reflects the **social, cultural, and political realities** of individuals. The choice of language can indicate one's social class, **ethnic identity**, or **affiliation**, and it is often connected to power dynamics within society (Bourdieu, 1991). For example, in bilingual households, **code-switching** (switching between languages) is often influenced by social roles and relationships, making it more than just a tool for communication but also an instrument for **identity formation** (Auer, 1999). Language is deeply embedded in social behaviors and plays a crucial role in the construction of social identities, including gender identities. Bourdieu (1991) introduced the concept of linguistic capital, where language use becomes a reflection of social power and cultural legitimacy. This concept suggests that the languages we speak are not neutral; rather, they signify who we are, where we come from, and which social groups we belong to. Furthermore, gender roles are central to how societies function, and these roles are often transmitted and reinforced through language. In many societies, including Pakistan, gendered expectations dictate how men and women should speak. Women are generally expected to use language in

more polite, indirect, and respectful ways, while men's speech tends to be more direct, assertive, and dominant (Lakoff, 1975; Holmes, 1995). This view is also supported by Coates (1986), who posited that women's speech is often shaped by social expectations of deference and formality, whereas men's speech is more likely to emphasize camaraderie and solidarity. In **multilingual societies** like Pakistan, language also plays a key role in expressing **gendered power relations**. According to **Holmes (1995)**, the use of **politeness strategies** in speech differs by gender. Women may use more **politeness markers**, while men may be more likely to **assert authority** in conversations. This is also true in Pakistani households, where **traditional gender roles** often require women to be **submissive** or **compliant** in interactions with male family members, especially in public or formal contexts. The dynamics of multilingualism in Pakistani households offer a unique perspective on how language use is connected to gender roles. In many Pakistani families, Urdu and English are often associated with formal, public, and respectful interactions, while regional languages (like Punjabi or Pashto) are used in more informal, private settings. The use of these languages is not just a matter of convenience; it reflects deeper cultural and gendered norms. In families where women speak more formal and polite versions of Urdu or English, they reinforce their subordinate position within the household hierarchy. In contrast, men may speak more informally or with greater assertiveness, often in regional languages or even in English to indicate status (Wardhaugh, 2006). Gumperz (1982) suggests that code-switching between languages in bilingual households can reveal underlying social hierarchies and gendered expectations. Men and women may switch languages or alter speech patterns to navigate social roles, with women often expected to use more formal and deferential language as a sign of respect and compliance.

Statement of the Problem:

In linguistically diverse societies like Pakistan, language is not merely a medium of communication; it is a reflection of deeply rooted cultural norms, power dynamics, and social roles. Within bilingual and multilingual households, language use often differs by gender, subtly reinforcing traditional gender expectations and hierarchies. Despite growing interest in sociolinguistics, there remains a critical gap in research that examines the intersection of language practices and gender roles within the private, domestic area especially in non-Western and culturally specific contexts such as Pakistan. Existing studies tend to isolate either multilingualism or gender, or they focus predominantly on public domains like schools, media, or workplaces in Western contexts. Consequently, the ways in which language choice, code-switching, and discourse patterns within bilingual Pakistani families contribute to the construction, reinforcement, or negotiation of gender roles remain largely unexplored. This lack of localized research limits our understanding of how everyday linguistic practices can sustain or challenge gendered identities in culturally embedded domestic settings. Therefore, there is a pressing need to investigate how language reflects and shapes gender dynamics in multilingual households in Pakistan.

Research Questions:

How do male and female members of bilingual Pakistani households use language differently in various context?

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How do language choices in bilingual Pakistani households reflect and reinforce traditional gender roles?

Objectives:

To examine the patterns of language use among male and female members in bilingual Pakistani households

To explore how language choice reflects and reinforces traditional gender roles.

Significance of the Research:

These researches emphasize how language and gender roles are connected inside bilingual families in Pakistan, something that has not been studied much before. Most past research has focused on Western countries and public places like schools or offices, but this research focuses on how people talk and use language at home. It aims to show how the way men and women speak, or the languages they choose, can help create or support traditional gender roles. By studying these everyday conversations, the research helps us understand how language affects identity, behavior, and power in families. It can also help improve gender awareness in education and give voice to people who are often overlooked, especially women and girls in multilingual households.

Research Gap:

While **multilingualism** and **gender roles** have been extensively studied within sociolinguistics, the intersection of these two dimensions remains underexplored, particularly within the **cultural context of Pakistani households**. Existing literature predominantly focuses on **Western societies** or public domains such as **schools** and **workplaces**, with limited attention to the domestic sphere. There is a notable gap in research concerning how **language use within the home** plays a role in the **construction and reinforcement of gender roles in multilingual families in non-Western, bilingual settings** like Pakistan. This research aims to address this gap by offering **contextualized insights** into the intricate dynamics of **language and gender** in the private domain, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of sociolinguistic practices in culturally diverse, multilingual households.

Literature Review:

In recent years, researchers have paid more attention to how language and gender are connected, especially in countries like Pakistan where many languages are spoken and where men and women often have different roles in society. In Pakistan, languages like Urdu and English are seen as more prestigious, while regional languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto are commonly spoken at home. This creates interesting situations in bilingual families, where people speak more than one language and where language use often depends on gender (Haque, 2019). In many Pakistani households, men and women tend to use language differently. Men often use English or Urdu more because they need it for work or education, while women may use regional languages more often in the home. However, this is beginning to change as more women are getting education and jobs. As a result, women are also starting to use English or Urdu more, and this can lead to changes in their roles in the family and society (Ali & Mahmood, 2020; Gulzar & Qadir, 2021).

Studies also show that switching between languages known as code-switching and it

is linked to gender roles. For example, women might switch between Urdu and English when talking to their children or trying to show authority, while men may use formal language to maintain their traditional roles in the household (Farooq & Ahmed, 2017). So, language is not just used for talking, it also helps people to show their identity and power in the family. This study will look at how men and women in bilingual Pakistani households use language and how this reflects or changes their roles in the family. It will help us understand how language and gender are connected in modern-day Pakistan.

Historical Background:

Code-Switching, Diglossia, and Language Ideology:

Previous researches underscore that code-switching in Pakistani bilingual households often mirrors social hierarchies and cultural norms. Farooq and Ahmed (2017) observed that individuals switch between Urdu and English to navigate formal and informal settings, indicating a diglossic environment where English holds higher prestige. Haque (2019) further emphasizes that language choices are influenced by societal ideologies, with English often associated with modernity and upward mobility.

Identity and Language Choice:

Language choice serves as a marker of identity in multilingual contexts. Ali and Mahmood (2020) found that in Pakistani families, language selection often aligns with gendered expectations, where men and women use different languages to assert their identities. Gulzar and Qadir (2021) observed that language preferences are not only personal but also shaped by societal norms and family dynamics.

Gendered Communication Styles:

Research indicates that gender influences communication styles in multilingual settings. Khan (2018) noted that women often adopt more collaborative and inclusive language patterns, while men tend to use assertive and authoritative styles. These differences are reflective of broader societal gender roles and expectations.

Sociolinguistic Theories on Language and Gender:

Foundational theories by Lakoff (1975), Tannen (1990), and Butler (1990) provide frameworks for understanding language and gender dynamics. Lakoff's work on women's language, Tannen's analysis of gendered communication, and Butler's concept of gender performativity offer insights into how language both reflects and constructs gender identities.

Gender Roles in Pakistani Households:

Traditional Roles and Language Authority:

In Pakistani households, traditional gender roles often dictate language use and authority. Hussain et al. (2015) found that patriarchal structures assign decision-making and public communication to men, while women are expected to manage domestic spheres, influencing their language exposure and use.

Impact of Patriarchy on Language Use

Patriarchal norms significantly impact language use within families. The same study

by Hussain et al. (2015) highlights that women's language choices are often restricted, limiting their participation in broader social and economic activities.

Intersections of Gender and Multilingualism:

Language Use Patterns Across Genders in Bilingual Homes:

Research by Farooq and Ahmed (2017) indicates that in bilingual homes, men and women exhibit distinct language use patterns. Men are more likely to use English in professional contexts, while women predominantly use regional languages at home, reflecting societal expectations and access to language education.

Negotiation of Language Roles between Spouses and Generations:

Ali and Mahmood (2020) observed that language roles within families are negotiated between spouses and across generations. Children's language preferences can influence parental language use, leading to shifts in traditional language roles and challenging established gender norms.

Language and Gender Identity in Educational Materials:

Khan et al. (2014) conducted an analysis of Pakistani school textbooks and found that the language used often reinforces traditional gender roles. The study highlights how educational content can perpetuate gender stereotypes, influencing the development of gender identities from a young age.

Theoretical Framework:

This study looks at how language use in multilingual Pakistani households reflects and shapes gender roles using a number of interconnected sociolinguistic and gender theories. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, which sees code-switching as a calculated tactic to convey power dynamics and social ties, is essential to this investigation. Gender roles are frequently reflected in Pakistan's linguistic transitions between Urdu, English, and regional languages like Punjabi or Saraiki (Farooq & Ahmed, 2017). According to this approach, speakers purposefully choose their language to convey various social relationships and identify with specific social identities or hierarchies of power. The idea of marked vs unmarked choices is fundamental to the paradigm; one language is regarded as the "default" or unmarked version, whilst the other is marked and has extra social significance. The Markedness Model offers a useful lens through which to examine how speakers of Urdu, English, and regional languages like Punjabi or Saraiki transition between languages in multilingual Pakistani households. However, depending on the situation, regional or informal languages like Urdu are seen as more marked, signifying lower social status, domesticity, or informality. Broader cultural standards regarding which languages are seen as more valued or authoritative are reflected in this distinction.

For example, men are more likely to use English in formal contexts, like business meetings, to demonstrate their social dominance and professional standing (Farooq & Ahmed, 2017). In contrast, women may be more prone to speak Urdu or regional languages in the home, conforming their linguistic preferences to traditional gender norms of caring for others and nurturing. According to Myers-Scotton's paradigm, code-switching is a calculated act connected to social identity and power rather than just being a linguistic phenomenon. Code-switching allows people to navigate the gendered expectations that are ingrained in many social arenas, such as formal versus

informal and public versus private, while also negotiating their identities in Pakistani households. For instance, in order to conform to the nurturing and emotionally expressive role that is traditionally allocated to women, a woman may use Urdu or Punjabi in home relations while expressing her authority in a professional context using English. As a result, this usage of language emphasizes how gender and language choices interact, with men and women using language changes to indicate distinct social roles and power dynamics. According to the Markedness Model, code-switching is a deliberate and intentional activity in which speakers use certain linguistic choices to place themselves into their communities' social and gendered order.

Previous Researches:

Farooq & Ahmed (2017) is pivotal in exploring how code-switching operates within bilingual households in Pakistan. They observed that both men and women deliberately switch between Urdu and English depending on context, audience, and purpose. However, gendered patterns emerged where women were more likely to use Urdu or regional languages within the home, aligning with nurturing and domestic roles, while men favored English in formal settings to project authority and professional competence. Their findings provide empirical evidence of how language choice reflects and reinforces traditional gender roles, supporting the argument that code-switching is not neutral but laden with sociocultural significance.

Ali & Mahmood (2020) conducted a sociolinguistic study focused on language negotiation within bilingual families, particularly examining how gender and generational dynamics influence language use. They found that while older generations often stuck to regional languages or Urdu, younger family members and increasingly, women were adopting English for educational and aspirational reasons. This shift sometimes led to tension but also represented a subtle challenge to gendered language norms. The study highlights how changing socioeconomic roles, particularly of women, are reshaping linguistic identities within the domestic sphere.

Gulzar & Qadir (2021) investigated how **social norms and family expectations affect language attitudes and usage** in multilingual Pakistani households. Gulzar and Qadir found that while men have greater access to English due to their participation in formal education and public spaces, women's language use was often **confined to Urdu or regional languages** within the home. However, as women's access to education improves, their language repertoire expands, causing **a shift in traditional gender roles and authority structures**. Their findings emphasize the connection between **language use and evolving gender identities** in Pakistan.

Haque (2019) explored the ideologies surrounding language prestige in Pakistan, particularly focusing on the perceived superiority of English. The study found that English is closely linked with modernity, education, and upward mobility. In contrast, regional languages are associated with tradition and domesticity. This hierarchy directly affects gender dynamics: men, more involved in public spheres, tend to use English, whereas women, rooted in private domains, use Urdu or regional languages. Haque's work supports the argument that language ideologies play a key role in sustaining gendered divisions, especially in bilingual households.

Khan (2018) research on gendered communication styles in multilingual settings revealed that women tend to use more polite, empathetic, and indirect forms of speech compared to men, who adopt more assertive and direct styles. These patterns were found across languages but were especially noticeable when women used English or Urdu in formal settings. Khan argued that these linguistic tendencies reflect deep-rooted patriarchal expectations, where women are expected to be deferential. The study supports the broader claim that language use is a performance of gender identity, shaped by cultural expectations.

Hussain et al. (2015) focusing on Pakhtun society in Pakistan, Hussain and colleagues examined how patriarchal family structures shape language use. They found that fathers often dictate the dominant language used in the household and are the primary agents of English language promotion, especially for sons. Mothers, on the other hand, were more likely to use Urdu or Pashto and were seen as the bearers of cultural and emotional expression. This study highlights the gendered division of linguistic labor, showing how language is used to transmit both authority and affection along gendered lines.

Khan et al. (2014) and his team's analysis of Pakistani school textbooks is highly relevant. They found that textbooks frequently reinforce traditional gender stereotypes through language men are portrayed in leadership and professional roles, while women are depicted in domestic roles. These portrayals subtly influence children's understanding of gender and the appropriate language associated with each role. This study is important because it shows how educational materials shape early gendered language expectations, which are then carried into adulthood and the home environment.

Fatima & Sohail (2016) examined how mothers use English and Urdu to influence their children's linguistic development. They found that while mothers were aware of the prestige attached to English, they often chose Urdu for emotional bonding and discipline. Interestingly, educated mothers used code-switching strategically to balance authority and affection. The study underlined how transmission women play a central role in intergenerational language, and how this role is shaped by both educational access and gender expectations.

Iqbal & Raza (2022) explored the language practices of middle-class families in Punjab. Iqbal and Raza found that men often insisted on using English with their children to project social status, while women navigated between English and Punjabi, depending on context. Their findings highlight how linguistic choices are tied to gendered social mobility, with English functioning as a gatekeeper for success. The study further emphasizes that language is a tool of both empowerment and control in bilingual family settings.

Shah & Javed (2023) conducted a survey on digital communication patterns among Pakistani couples. They found that women were more likely to use Urdu and emoji-based communication in digital messaging with family members, while men often used English, especially for professional communication. This reflects how technology-mediated language use continues to reproduce gendered norms with men aligning more with formal and public language, and women with emotional and domestic discourse. Their findings suggest that even in new domains like digital interaction, traditional language roles persist.

Pavlenko (2014) explores how bilingual individuals express different gender identities across languages. It shows that language choice can influence perceived gender roles, especially in immigrant communities where traditional roles may shift due to cultural and linguistic adaptation.

Deumert (2015) examining multilingual digital communication, Deumert discusses how language use on social media reflects and sometimes resists gender norms. Multilingual women, especially in postcolonial societies, often adopt hybrid language styles to negotiate modern and traditional roles.

Sunderland (2017) focuses on gender representation in language education materials. It highlights how language instruction, especially in multilingual contexts, subtly reinforces or challenges gender roles depending on how languages and genders are portrayed in curricula.

Garrett & Johnson (2018) Investigates classroom discourse in bilingual schools. The study finds that teachers' language choices and gendered expectations shape students' academic identity formation, showing intersections between linguistic hierarchy and gender socialization.

Lanza & Damsa (2020) explores multilingual family interactions in transnational settings. It emphasizes how gendered parenting roles affect language transmission, with mothers often taking on the responsibility of maintaining heritage languages.

Methodology:

Research Design:

This research adopts a quantitative approach, emphasizing the collection and analysis of numerical data. It is a descriptive study, aimed at observing and reporting existing conditions without manipulating any variables. This design is useful for gaining insight into family member's perspectives and behaviors related to language use and gender roles. This approach was selected because it allows for data collection from a large sample, making it easier to analyze, compare, and interpret the findings. A questionnaire is used as the primary tool for data collection, complemented by informal observations.

Theoretical Framework:

This study draws on concepts from sociolinguistics and gender studies. Sociolinguistics provides insight into how language functions within social contexts, while gender studies reveal how language reflects or influences gender roles. These frameworks shaped both the design of our questionnaire and our interpretation of the findings. For the collection of data, the research will use Quantitative research approach, a survey questionnaire from multilingual families of Punjab Province. This quantitative, descriptive study will focus on collecting and analyzing numerical data to explore individual's perspectives on language use and gender roles. A structured

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questionnaire served as the main data collection tool, supported by informal observations, enabling analysis across a broad sample without manipulating variables.

Population and Sampling:

The research involved 70 Participants from 15 different families of Vehari, Punjab province. This approach helped maintain fairness and balance in the study.

All ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all family members. To protect privacy, no names or personal details were collected.

Research Instrument:

A structured questionnaire was used to gather the data. Basically, **a questionnaire is a data collection instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents** Creswell, J. W. (2014). Most of the questions were multiple choice or closed-ended to allow for easy quantification and analysis of responses.

To ensure clarity, the questionnaire was reviewed by teachers, and a small pilot test was conducted prior to the main survey to confirm that the questions were understandable and answered appropriately.

Data Collection Procedure:

The data was collected over a period of one week from all members of families. Each person took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the form. The process proceeded smoothly, with the participation of all members. In cases if any member missed it at the certain time, additional time was allocated to ensure complete data collection.

Data Analysis Techniques:

The responses were analyzed using SPSS software, a tool designed for statistical analysis.

The findings were presented using percentages, averages, and charts. The data was categorized by gender and language background to identify patterns and relationships.

Ethical Considerations:

Before participating, families were informed about the purpose of the research. They provided written consent and were assured that their information would remain confidential. No names were recorded on the questionnaires.

Limitations of the Methodology:

The study faced a few minor limitations:

The sample size was limited to 15 families, which may not fully represent the views of the wider population. As the data was self-reported, some responses may lack complete accuracy. The research was conducted at a single point in time, making it unable to capture long-term changes. To help minimize these issues, the questions were carefully worded for clarity, and participants were selected randomly.

Chapter 4

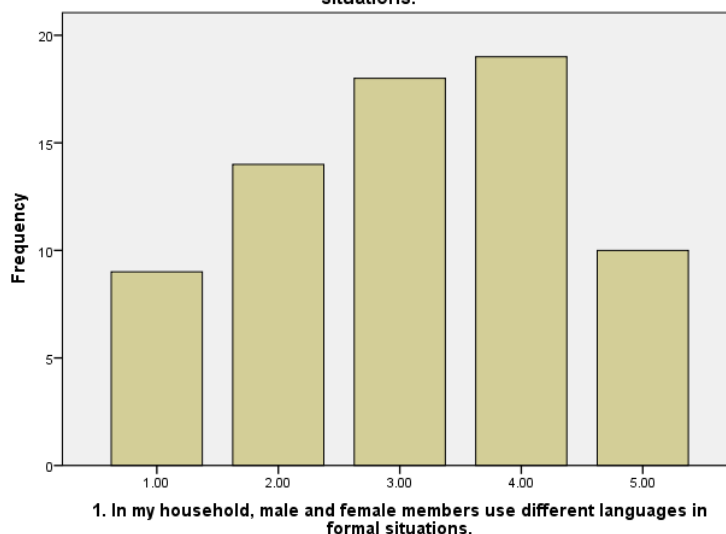
Data Analysis:

Frequency Tables and Bar graphs:

1. In my household, male and female members use different languages in formal situations.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	9	12.7	12.9	12.9
2.00	14	19.7	20.0	32.9
3.00	18	25.4	25.7	58.6
4.00	19	26.8	27.1	85.7
5.00	10	14.1	14.3	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

1. In my household, male and female members use different languages in formal situations.



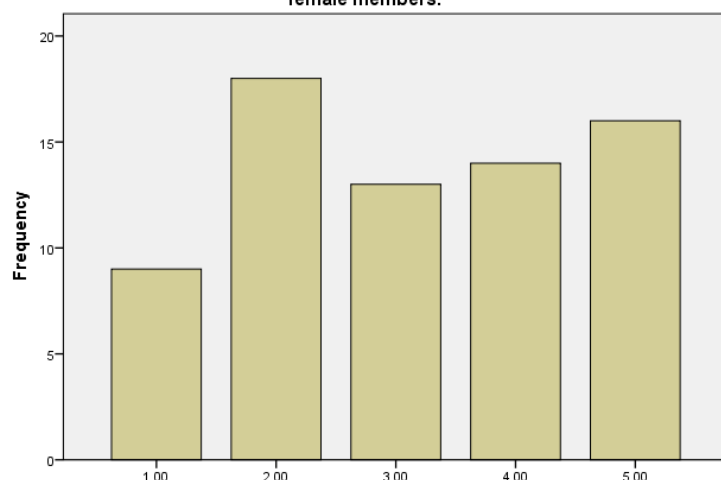
Most of the respondents (67.1%) agree that male and female household members use different languages in formal situations. This reflects the influence of gender roles on language preferences, suggesting that men may favor formal languages like English or Urdu, while women might use regional languages less in these contexts. Holmes, J. (2006) also explains Gendered Talk at Work: Constructing Gender Identity through Workplace Discourse. These distinctions reveal social expectations and identity expression tied to language choice in structured or official interactions within the household.

2. Male members are more likely to use English or Urdu outside the home than female members.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	9	12.7	12.9	12.9
2.00	18	25.4	25.7	38.6
3.00	13	18.3	18.6	57.1
4.00	14	19.7	20.0	77.1
5.00	16	22.5	22.9	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

Discusses how **language use is stratified across social domains**, often privileging

2. Male members are more likely to use English or Urdu outside the home than female members.



2. Male members are more likely to use English or Urdu outside the home than female members.

Over 61% of participants agree that men are more likely than women to use English or Urdu outside the home. This may reflect societal norms that grant men greater exposure to formal settings, such as workplaces or public spaces. Spolsky, B. (2004) discusses how **language use is stratified across social domains**, often privileging men in formal sectors, particularly in multilingual contexts like South Asia. The finding indicates that gender-based language preferences are shaped by social mobility and expectations, with men adopting formal languages for prestige or practicality, while women may use their native or informal languages more often.

Female members often use their mother tongue (e.g., Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, etc.) more frequently in informal or private conversations.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	9	12.7	12.9	12.9

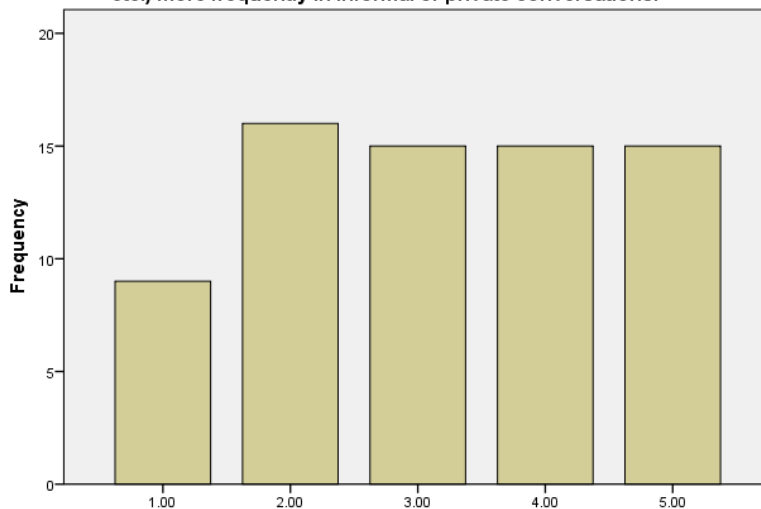
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	2.00	16	22.5	22.9	35.7
	3.00	15	21.1	21.4	57.1
	4.00	15	21.1	21.4	78.6
	5.00	15	21.1	21.4	100.0
	Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.4		
Total		71	100.0		

Female members often use their mother tongue (e.g., Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, etc.) more frequently in informal or private conversations.



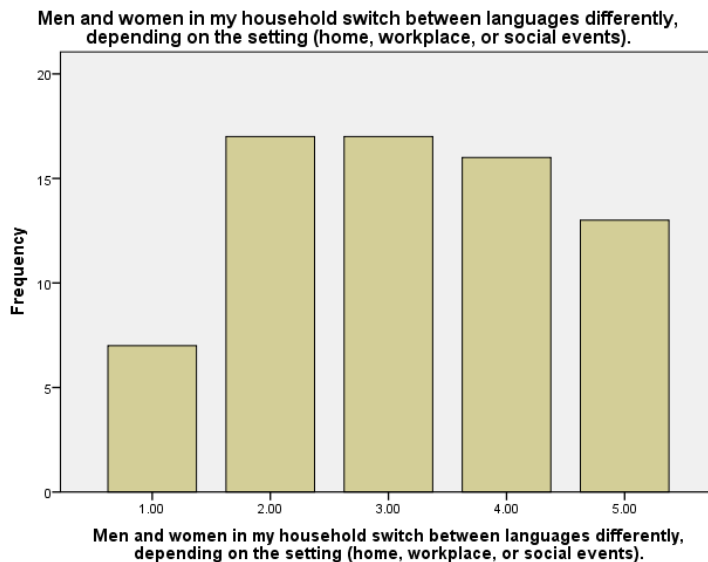
Female members often use their mother tongue (e.g., Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, etc.) more frequently in informal or private conversations.

Approximately 64% of respondents agree that women frequently use regional languages, such as Punjabi or Sindhi, in informal conversations. This pattern emphasizes women's roles in maintaining cultural and familial bonds through their native language. It also reflects how private spaces allow for emotional and expressive language choices. Holmes, J. (1992) highlights the gendered use of language in public versus private domains and how women's speech is often more relational and nurturing, especially in informal settings. These results highlight the gendered division of linguistic domains, where mother tongues serve as tools of comfort, intimacy, and cultural continuity, especially among female speakers.

Men and women in my household switch between languages differently, depending on the setting (home, workplace, or social events).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	7	9.9	10.0
	2.00	17	23.9	34.3
	3.00	17	23.9	58.6
	4.00	16	22.5	81.4
	5.00	13	18.3	100.0

Total	70	98.6	100.0
Missing System	1	1.4	
Total	71	100.0	

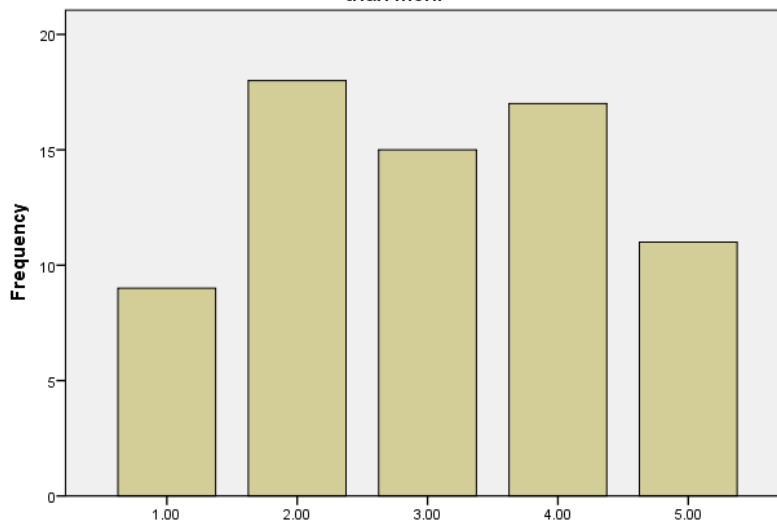


Nearly 66% of participants believe that men and women switch languages differently based on context (e.g., home versus workplace). This indicates gender-sensitive adaptability in language behavior. It reflects how societal expectations and situational demands influence speech patterns, with each gender navigating their roles through language. Sadiqi, F. (2017) **Focus on gendered language patterns** in culturally and linguistically diverse societies. Women may shift between informal and formal tones more flexibly, while men might adjust their language use based on authority, setting, or peer influence.

Women in my household are more likely to code-switch between languages than men.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	9	12.7	12.9	12.9
2.00	18	25.4	25.7	38.6
3.00	15	21.1	21.4	60.0
4.00	17	23.9	24.3	84.3
5.00	11	15.5	15.7	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

5. Women in my household are more likely to code-switch between languages than men.



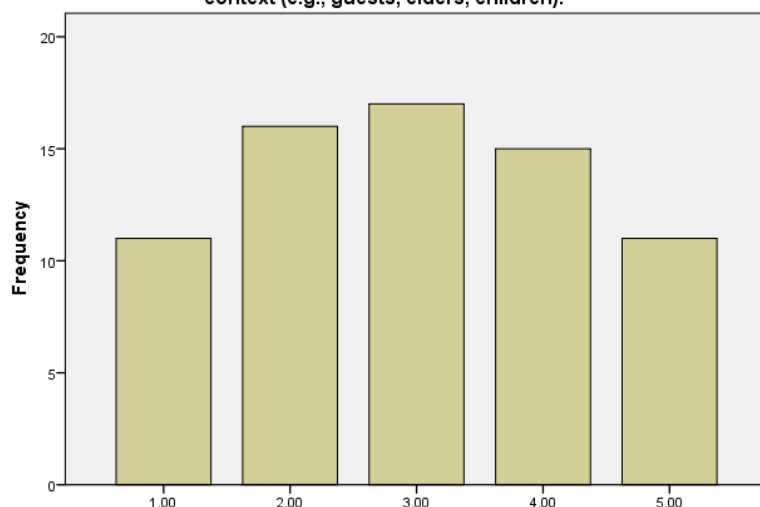
5. Women in my household are more likely to code-switch between languages than men.

Approximately 61% of respondents agree that women code-switch more frequently than men. This suggests women engage in more linguistic flexibility, possibly due to social roles that require balancing emotional tone, politeness, or clarity. Code-switching can be a strategic tool for inclusion, cultural negotiation, or adapting to context. These findings imply that female communication is more nuanced and varied, reflecting their role in managing social harmony and relationships. This aligns with recent research by **Ali and Zahid (2020)**, who found that female university students in Pakistan code-switched more frequently than males, often to express emotion, maintain relationships, and navigate diverse social settings.

Language choice in our home varies based on who is speaking and the social context (e.g., guests, elders, children).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	11	15.5	15.7	15.7
2.00	16	22.5	22.9	38.6
3.00	17	23.9	24.3	62.9
4.00	15	21.1	21.4	84.3
5.00	11	15.5	15.7	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

6. Language choice in our home varies based on who is speaking and the social context (e.g., guests, elders, children).



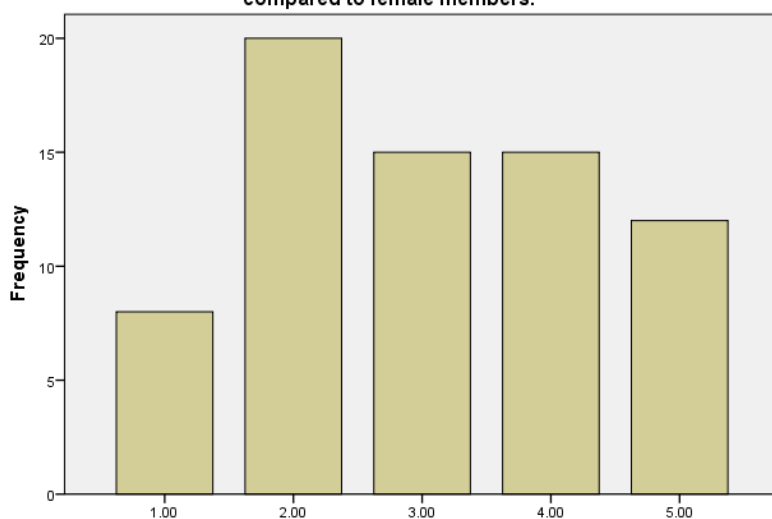
6. Language choice in our home varies based on who is speaking and the social context (e.g., guests, elders, children).

Over 61% agree that household language choice varies depending on who is speaking and the social context. This emphasizes how factors such as status, relationships, and setting affect communication. For instance, one might speak differently to children, elders, or guests. These variations show that language is not uniform at home but highly dynamic, shaped by social roles, age, and the relational structure of household interactions involving both men and women. This aligns with the findings of **Farooq and Anwar (2018)**, who observed that language choice in Pakistani bilingual households shifts contextually based on speaker identity, age, and relational hierarchy within the family structure

Male members use a different language when communicating with elders compared to female members.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	8	11.3	11.4	11.4
2.00	20	28.2	28.6	40.0
3.00	15	21.1	21.4	61.4
4.00	15	21.1	21.4	82.9
5.00	12	16.9	17.1	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

7. Male members use a different language when communicating with elders compared to female members.



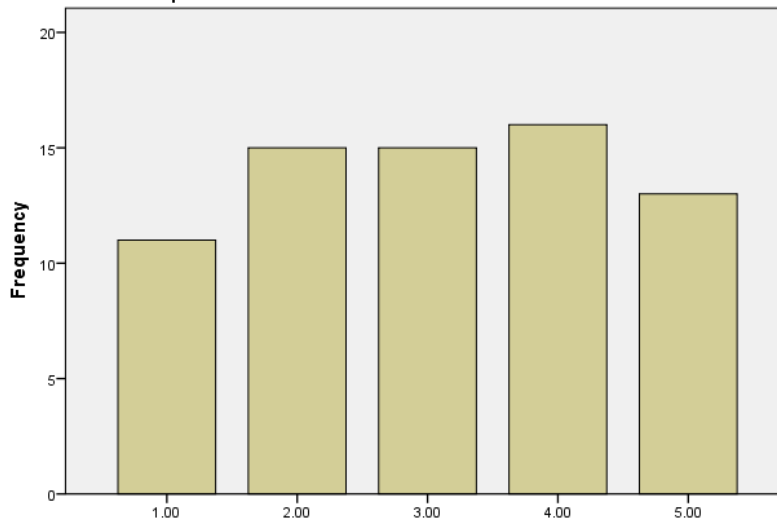
7. Male members use a different language when communicating with elders compared to female members.

About 60% agree that men and women use different languages when communicating with elders. This reflects the cultural importance of respect, possibly expressed differently by gender. Men may use formal language to assert authority or hierarchy, while women might use softer or more respectful tones in their native languages. The findings suggest that linguistic strategies are gendered, and norms around politeness and formality vary by the speaker's gender. This is supported by **Mahmood and Qureshi (2019)**, who found that gendered communication styles in Pakistan are shaped by sociocultural expectations, with women more likely to use respectful, relational tones and men favoring formal or authoritative language depending on the social hierarchy.

Language usage by women is more influenced by norms of respect and politeness in the household than it is for men.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	11	15.5	15.7	15.7
2.00	15	21.1	21.4	37.1
3.00	15	21.1	21.4	58.6
4.00	16	22.5	22.9	81.4
5.00	13	18.3	18.6	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

8. Language usage by women is more influenced by norms of respect and politeness in the household than it is for men.



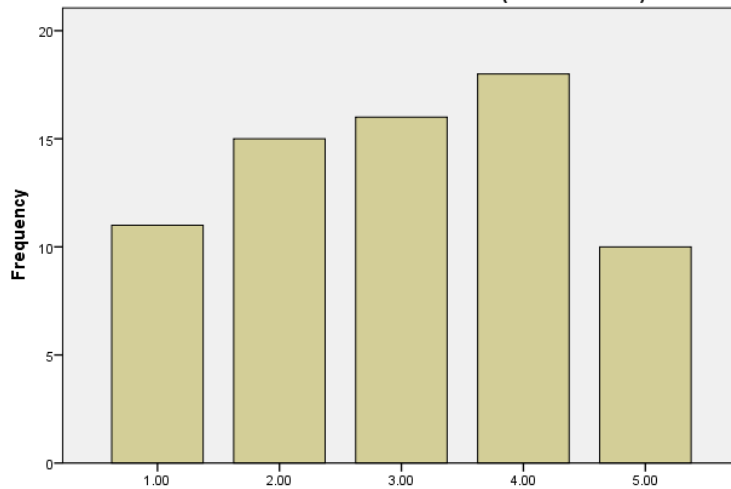
8. Language usage by women is more influenced by norms of respect and politeness in the household than it is for men.

Roughly 60% agree that women's language use is more guided by norms of respect and politeness compared to men. This reinforces traditional gender expectations that associate women with nurturing and harmony. The data reveal that women are culturally conditioned to maintain respectful speech, often through softened language or honorifics. This expectation creates a linguistic gender divide where women are more restricted or directed in how they express themselves. This is supported by Archer and Jagodzinski (2015), who found that women tend to use more polite, mitigating, and indirect speech forms than men due to culturally ingrained gender norms that emphasize female modesty, emotional labor, and relational harmony.

In our household, the language spoken during decision-making discussions differs based on who leads the conversation (male or female).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	11	15.5	15.7	15.7
2.00	15	21.1	21.4	37.1
3.00	16	22.5	22.9	60.0
4.00	18	25.4	25.7	85.7
5.00	10	14.1	14.3	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

9. In our household, the language spoken during decision-making discussions differs based on who leads the conversation (male or female).



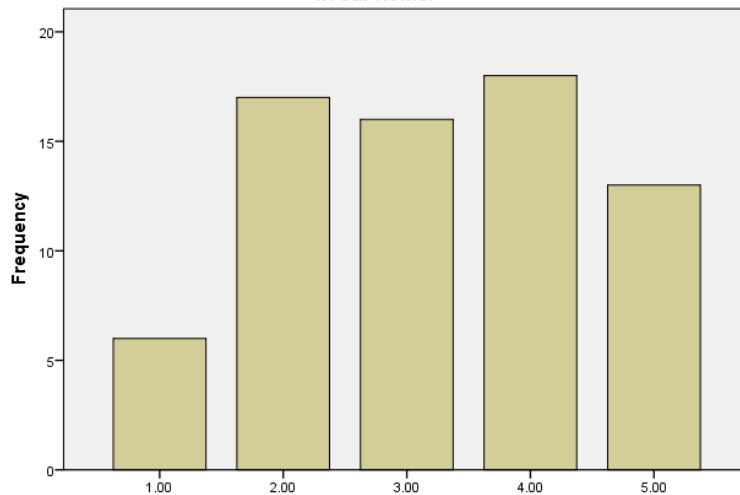
9. In our household, the language spoken during decision-making discussions differs based on who leads the conversation (male or female).

Around 64% of participants agree that the language used during household decision-making depends on whether a male or female leads the conversation. This implies that authority and leadership in communication are linked to gender roles. Male-led discussions may use assertive, formal language, while female-led ones may be more inclusive or emotionally expressive. In this context, language becomes a reflection of power dynamics and role performance. This aligns with findings by **Tannen (2017)**, who noted that gendered communication styles in leadership reflect broader social expectations, where men are socialized to display dominance and decisiveness, and women to foster cooperation and emotional engagement, even in decision-making settings.

Traditional gender roles influence the languages used by males and females in our home.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	6	8.5	8.6	8.6
2.00	17	23.9	24.3	32.9
3.00	16	22.5	22.9	55.7
4.00	18	25.4	25.7	81.4
5.00	13	18.3	18.6	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

10. Traditional gender roles influence the languages used by males and females in our home.



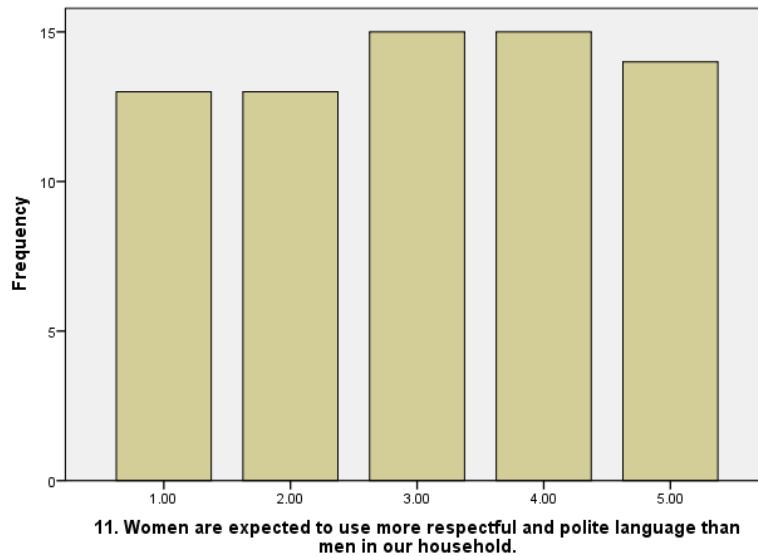
10. Traditional gender roles influence the languages used by males and females in our home.

Nearly 66% believe that traditional gender roles influence language use at home. This suggests that men and women are socialized to speak in ways that align with expected behaviors—dominance and independence for men, politeness and empathy for women. The data show that language is not neutral but reflects broader social norms, where linguistic choices reinforce or challenge existing gender expectations. This is supported by Weatherall (2015), who argues that gendered language practices are deeply shaped by cultural ideologies, with women expected to be more cooperative and relational, while men are associated with assertiveness and authority in both public and private discourse.

Women are expected to use more respectful and polite language than men in our household.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	13	18.3	18.6	18.6
2.00	13	18.3	18.6	37.1
3.00	15	21.1	21.4	58.6
4.00	15	21.1	21.4	80.0
5.00	14	19.7	20.0	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

11. Women are expected to use more respectful and polite language than men in our household.

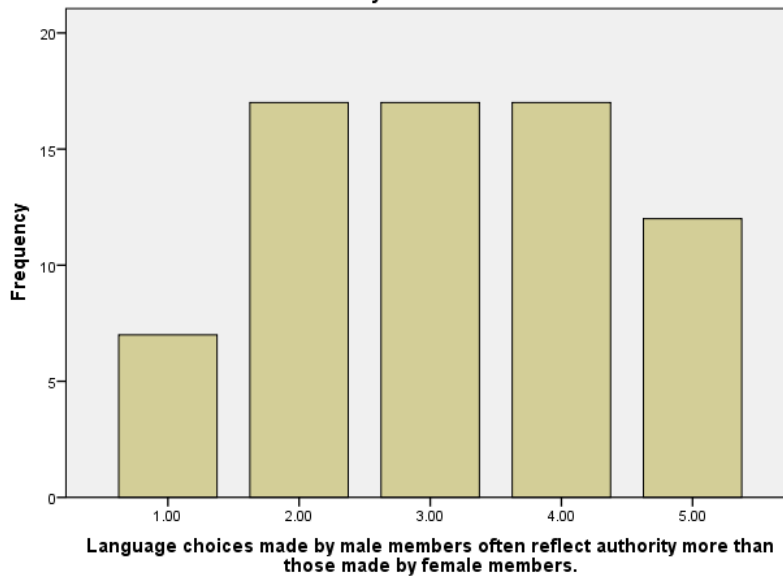


About 63% of respondents agree that women are expected to use more polite and respectful language than men. This expectation aligns with societal norms that impose behavioral restrictions on women, influencing their speech. Such norms may limit self-expression and create unequal standards in conversations. The findings suggest that women are held to a higher standard of linguistic decorum, reinforcing the cultural association of femininity with submissiveness and refined verbal conduct. This is supported by **Lakoff and Bucholtz (2014)**, who emphasize that women's language is often constrained by expectations of politeness, deference, and emotional sensitivity, reflecting and reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies in both private and public communication.

Language choices made by male members often reflect authority more than those made by female members.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	7	9.9	10.0	10.0
2.00	17	23.9	24.3	34.3
3.00	17	23.9	24.3	58.6
4.00	17	23.9	24.3	82.9
5.00	12	16.9	17.1	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

Language choices made by male members often reflect authority more than those made by female members.

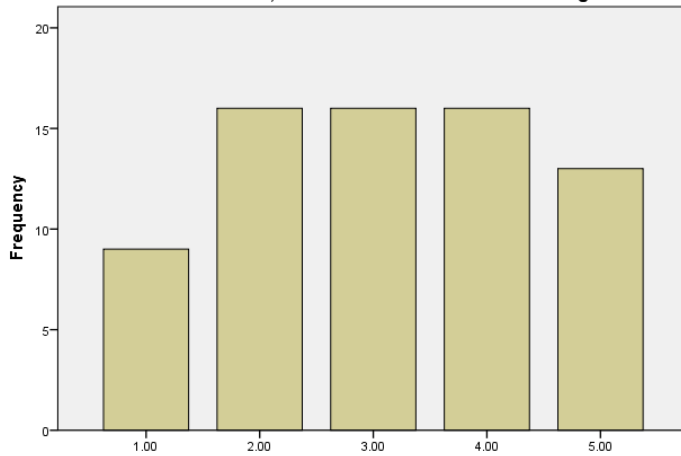


Approximately 66% of respondents believe that men's language conveys more authority than women's. This highlights how communication is connected to power structures. Male speech often includes direct or commanding expressions, which contribute to a perception of dominance. In contrast, female language may be viewed as softer or less assertive. These differences underscore how societal roles and authority are maintained through speech patterns that align with traditional gender identities. This is supported by **Coates (2015)**, who found that male speech is often characterized by dominance strategies and directness, while female communication tends to favor cooperation and mitigation, reinforcing hierarchical gender norms in spoken interaction.

Female members are expected to use their mother tongue when speaking with children and elders, while males tend to use Urdu or English.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	9	12.7	12.9	12.9
2.00	16	22.5	22.9	35.7
3.00	16	22.5	22.9	58.6
4.00	16	22.5	22.9	81.4
5.00	13	18.3	18.6	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

13. Female members are expected to use their mother tongue when speaking with children and elders, while males tend to use Urdu or English.



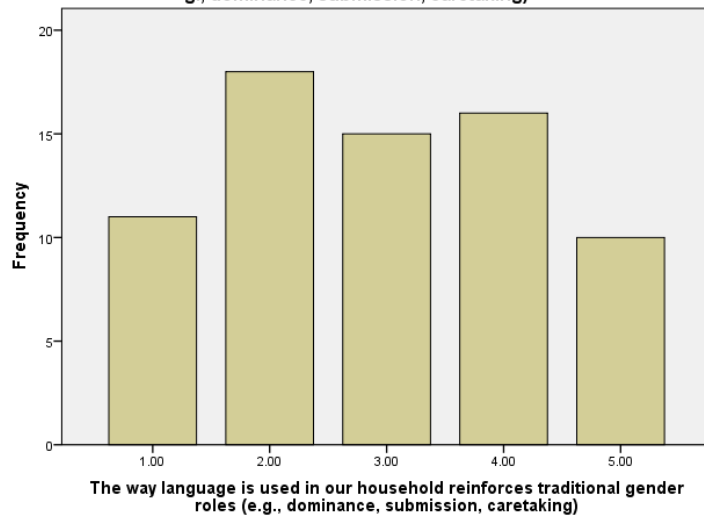
13. Female members are expected to use their mother tongue when speaking with children and elders, while males tend to use Urdu or English.

Over 62% of respondents agree that women tend to use their mother tongue when speaking to children or elders, while men generally prefer Urdu or English. This indicates how linguistic choices reflect caregiving roles for women and formal, status-oriented roles for men. Women's use of language helps maintain cultural continuity and nurture emotional bonds, while men's preference for national or formal languages may signal authority or distance in communication, influencing family interaction patterns. This is supported by Farooq and Ahmed (2017), who found that in bilingual Pakistani households, women are more likely to use regional languages such as Punjabi in private, nurturing domains like home and caregiving, while men often adopt Urdu or English to assert formality and social status.

The way language is used in our household reinforces traditional gender roles (e.g., dominance, submission, caretaking)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	11	15.5	15.7	15.7
2.00	18	25.4	25.7	41.4
3.00	15	21.1	21.4	62.9
4.00	16	22.5	22.9	85.7
5.00	10	14.1	14.3	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		

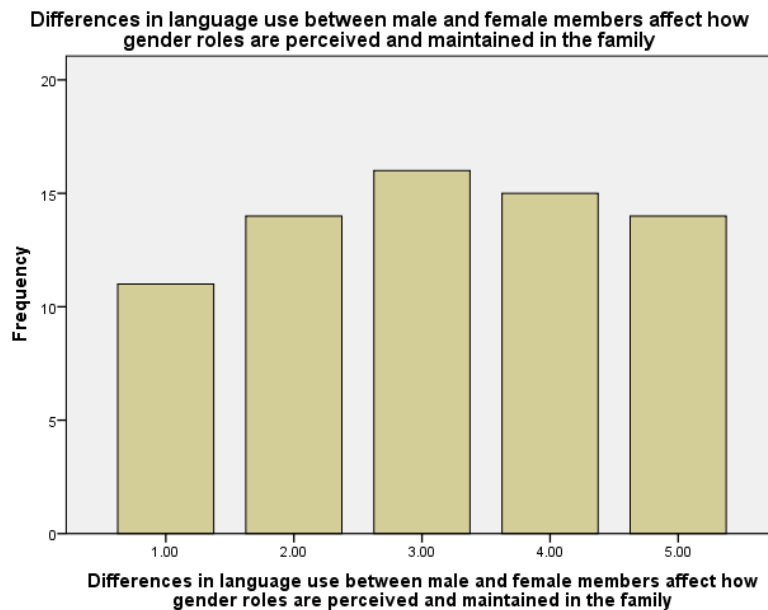
The way language is used in our household reinforces traditional gender roles (e.g., dominance, submission, caretaking)



About 60% of respondents believe that language used in households reinforces gender roles such as dominance, submission, and caregiving. The language people choose reflects their expected duties men are often seen as commanding, while women are viewed as nurturing. These patterns reproduce existing gender hierarchies and limit flexibility in identity expression. This indicates that language is not merely a tool for communication; it also serves as a mechanism of social control that reinforces traditional domestic roles and relationships. This interpretation is supported by Sadiqi (2019), who explains that language within family and social structures often mirrors and perpetuates gendered power relations, where men's speech tends to convey authority and control, while women's language emphasizes care and relational harmony.

Differences in language use between male and female members affect how gender roles are perceived and maintained in the family

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1.00	11	15.5	15.7	15.7
2.00	14	19.7	20.0	35.7
3.00	16	22.5	22.9	58.6
4.00	15	21.1	21.4	80.0
5.00	14	19.7	20.0	100.0
Total	70	98.6	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.4		
Total	71	100.0		



Nearly 63% of respondents agree that differences in language use between male and female members influence perceptions of gender roles. This suggests that language shapes not only interactions but also individual identities. Communication styles reinforce how people are regarded whether as strong or gentle, leaders or caregivers. As a result, gender roles are maintained not just through actions but also through everyday linguistic behaviors that subtly shape family dynamics and expectation. This is supported by Pavlidou (2019), who argues that gendered speech practices are central to constructing and perpetuating societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity, especially within intimate and familial contexts where language acts as both a mirror and mechanism of gender role reinforcement.

Findings:

A majority of respondents (over 60% for each item) acknowledge that men and women use different languages based on the setting, whether it's formal or informal, or at home versus in public.

Men typically prefer Urdu or English in formal settings, as these languages reflect prestige and authority, while women often use regional or mother tongues, especially in private or nurturing contexts.

Male speech is associated with authority, dominance, and assertiveness.

Female speech, on the other hand, is linked to politeness, care, and emotional expression, particularly in interactions with children, elders, or in caregiving roles.

Women are believed to code-switch more frequently than men, likely due to social roles that require greater emotional intelligence, politeness, and adaptability.

Men's code-switching is often linked to asserting authority or aligning with formal roles.

Respondents believe that women's language use is more regulated by politeness norms, while men's speech is perceived as more direct or commanding.

These language expectations reflect broader gender socialization, reinforcing behavioral norms from an early age.

Language in household contexts is seen to reproduce gendered identities, with men as decision-makers and women as caregivers.

Communication styles and language choices reflect and sustain gendered power dynamics within the home.

Differences in language use shape how male and female roles are perceived by others in the family and society.

Male speech is viewed as strong and authoritative, while female speech is seen as caring and respectful.

Conclusion:

A study on bilingual households in Pakistan reveals that language use is not merely a tool for communication but a profound reflection of entrenched gender roles and societal expectations. The findings highlight distinct linguistic patterns between men and women, shaped by traditional norms that assign specific roles and authority. Men predominantly use languages like English or Urdu in formal and public settings, perceived as prestigious and authoritative, aligning with their societal roles as decision-makers and leaders. Their speech tends to be direct and assertive, reinforcing their positions of control. Conversely, women are more likely to use mother tongues such as Punjabi, Sindhi, or Pashto in private, nurturing contexts, particularly with children and elders. Their language is characterized by politeness, emotional sensitivity, and care, reflecting expectations of gentleness and respect. Women also engage in more code-switching to navigate relational and emotional demands, often prioritizing relationship-building over personal expression.

These linguistic patterns subtly reinforce traditional roles, women as caregivers, men as leaders—making language a powerful tool of social control that upholds power hierarchies. Even in urban, modern households, these traditional expectations persist. However, increasing education and public participation among women are gradually reshaping language use, with greater use of English signaling empowerment and visibility in formal spaces. Ultimately, the study emphasizes that language in bilingual Pakistani households is a mirror of identity, a marker of status, and a performance of gender, where every linguistic choice reflects who speaks, how they are perceived, and the roles they are expected to fulfill in family and society.

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