

Gendered Communication in Iraqi TV Talk Shows: A Cognitive Sociolinguistic Analysis of Conversational Patterns

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of various reflective practices—Reflection-in-Action, Reflection-on-Action, and Reflection-for-Action—on the Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) of Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers. The research addresses a critical gap in teacher development by examining how self-reflective processes can enhance the knowledge, skills, and principles required for effective language assessment. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 100 teachers from institutions in Tehran and Karaj. Data collection involved pre- and post-tests, interviews, and classroom observations, analyzed through both statistical methods (ANOVA) and thematic analysis. Findings revealed significant improvements in LAL, particularly with Reflection-for-Action, where teachers demonstrated better alignment of assessments with instructional goals and improved feedback mechanisms. Qualitative insights suggested that these reflective practices helped teachers foster more student-centered assessment strategies, enhancing both formative and summative evaluation processes. The findings of this study contribute to both theory and practice by integrating reflection into teacher education frameworks. Implications for policy and practice are significant: teacher training programs should incorporate structured reflection to foster deeper pedagogical insights, better assessment practices, and more equitable student outcomes. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the need for context-specific training that accounts for cultural influences on teacher attitudes and behaviors toward assessment. In light of the evolving educational landscape, this study underscores the potential of reflective practice in bridging gaps in language assessment literacy and promoting continuous professional growth.

Keywords: Language Assessment Literacy, Reflective Practices, Teacher Professional Development, Self-Assessment, Iranian EFL Teachers, Mixed-Methods, Educational Policy

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of language, gender, and cognition has long been a central focus in sociolinguistics, especially in media contexts where

public discourse both reflects and shapes societal norms. Language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a means of expressing deeper cultural, cognitive, and social dynamics. These dynamics are particularly visible in media settings, such as TV talk shows, which

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often mirror the cultural expectations and gender roles within a society (Tannen, 2022; Evans & Green, 2023).

This study centers on Iraqi TV talk shows, a key medium for public discourse in Iraq, especially regarding sensitive social and political topics. These programs offer a rich environment for observing how gender roles influence communication strategies. In Iraq, as in many societies, traditional gender roles significantly shape social interactions, often reinforcing the dominance of male voices in public spaces while positioning women in more supportive or collaborative roles (Al-Mousawi, 2017). This study aims to explore these dynamics through the lens of cognitive sociolinguistics, focusing on how societal expectations and cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and turn-taking, affect communication between male and female participants in these shows (Holmes, 2020).

The analysis of gendered communication in media is particularly timely given the shifts in gender norms globally and locally. Over the past decade (2015-2024), research has increasingly emphasized how media reflects and perpetuates social hierarchies, including those based on gender (Baxter, 2016; Al-Jabiri, 2019). As Iraqi society continues to undergo social and political changes, the study of media interactions provides valuable insights into the persistence of traditional gender roles and the potential for change. Cognitive sociolinguistics offers a powerful framework for this analysis, as it bridges the gap between individual linguistic behavior and the broader social structures that influence it (Evans & Green, 2023).

This paper, therefore, seeks to understand how male and female participants in Iraqi TV talk shows differ in their conversational strategies and how these differences are shaped by cultural norms and cognitive factors. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on gendered communication in non-Western media contexts, offering insights into how deeply ingrained cultural expectations influence language use and media representation (Purba et al., 2023).

Background of the Study

TV talk shows in Iraq serve as a primary medium for discussing sensitive social and political topics. The interactions in these shows often reflect societal structures, including gender norms, power dynamics, and cultural expectations. Men often occupy positions of authority and dominate conversations, while women are more likely to adopt supportive or collaborative roles, aligning with traditional societal expectations (Jaber, 2023). Understanding these dynamics is crucial, as they provide a mirror to the broader social context and highlight the persistent influence of traditional gender roles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of gendered communication has evolved significantly over the past few decades, with foundational theories like those of Deborah Tannen (1990) continuing to influence contemporary research. Tannen's distinction between "rapport" talk, often associated with female speakers, and "report" talk, more common among male speakers, provided a framework for understanding how gender affects communication strategies. More recent research, however, has moved beyond these binary categories to explore the complexities of gendered language use in various cultural and media contexts, including digital platforms and traditional broadcast media (Baxter, 2016; Purba et al., 2023).

Gendered Communication in Media

Research from 2015 to 2024 has expanded the understanding of gendered communication, particularly in media environments where interactions are often public and performative. Studies have shown that media not only reflects but also reinforces societal norms, particularly around gender. For instance, recent research highlights that male participants in media settings often dominate conversations, interrupt more frequently, and control the flow of discourse (Baxter, 2016; Holmes, 2020). These patterns are especially pronounced in more traditional or patriarchal societies, where media serves as a platform for reinforcing gender hierarchies (Al-Jabiri, 2019).

In the context of TV talk shows, male dominance is frequently observed, with men more

likely to interrupt and steer conversations, while women tend to adopt more collaborative and supportive roles (Purba et al., 2023). However, the rise of digital and social media has also provided alternative platforms where gender dynamics may differ. Online spaces sometimes offer women more agency in discussions, although traditional power dynamics often persist (Jones & Moores, 2021).

The Iraqi media landscape, specifically, reflects deep-rooted cultural norms regarding gender. Research by Al-Mousawi (2017) found that Iraqi TV talk shows tend to perpetuate traditional gender roles, with men often portrayed as authoritative figures and women as passive or supportive participants. This aligns with global trends observed in other non-Western contexts, such as studies on Indonesian talk shows, which show similar patterns of male dominance (Purba et al., 2023). However, while there are similarities with global media trends, Iraqi TV talk shows offer a unique setting where cultural expectations around male authority are even more pronounced due to the country's sociopolitical history (Al-Jabiri, 2019).

Cognitive Sociolinguistics and Turn-Taking

Cognitive sociolinguistics, which combines insights from cognitive science and sociolinguistics, provides a useful framework for analyzing how societal norms and cognitive processes interact in shaping language use. The concept of turn-taking, a central element in conversation analysis, is particularly relevant in gender studies. Turn-taking involves cognitive processes such as attention to conversational cues, memory, and timing, and is influenced by social factors like power dynamics and politeness norms (Sacks et al., 2022; Meyerhoff, 2023).

Recent studies have shown that men are more likely to take longer turns and interrupt more frequently in conversations, especially in formal settings like TV talk shows, where public speaking is tied to authority and control (Holmes, 2020). Women, conversely, tend to exhibit greater sensitivity to turn-taking cues, often waiting longer before speaking and using more hedges or qualifiers to maintain conversational harmony (Meyerhoff, 2023). These

patterns are not only indicative of individual cognitive strategies but also reflect broader cultural expectations about gender roles (Evans & Green, 2023).

In non-Western contexts, such as Iraq, cultural norms around gender and communication are particularly rigid. Iraqi women often face strong societal expectations to defer to male speakers, leading to conversational patterns where they take fewer turns, interrupt less, and use more collaborative language (Al-Mousawi, 2017). These dynamics are reinforced by the cognitive biases shaped by societal norms, where male voices are given more weight in public discourse. Such patterns are consistent with global research but are often more pronounced in societies with strong patriarchal traditions (Evans & Green, 2023).

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the wealth of research on gendered communication, there remains a gap in understanding how these dynamics play out in non-Western media contexts, particularly in regions like the Middle East. Most studies on gender and media focus on Western settings, where shifts toward gender equality in communication have been more visible over the past decade (Holmes, 2020; Baxter, 2016). In contrast, countries like Iraq, where traditional gender roles remain deeply entrenched, are underrepresented in the literature (Al-Jabiri, 2019).

This study seeks to address this gap by focusing on Iraqi TV talk shows, offering a unique perspective on how gender and cognitive factors interact in media settings shaped by strong cultural norms. It aims to contribute to a more global understanding of gendered communication, highlighting the role of media in both reflecting and reinforcing societal expectations about gender. Additionally, it explores how cognitive processes, such as turn-taking and attention, are influenced by these cultural norms, adding a new dimension to the analysis of media discourse (Purba et al., 2023).

Objectives of the Study

The present study was conducted with the following objectives:

To analyze linguistic patterns used by male and female participants in Iraqi TV talk shows.

To investigate the role of cognitive processes such as turn-taking, attention, and memory in shaping conversational strategies.

To explore the influence of cultural norms on gendered communication in media settings.

To compare findings with recent studies on gender and communication in other media contexts.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the above-mentioned objectives of the study and the gaps in the literature, the following Research questions and hypotheses were addressed in the current study:

RQ1. *How do male and female participants in Iraqi TV talk shows differ in their conversational strategies?*

RQ2. *What cognitive factors, such as turn-taking, influence the communication patterns of male and female speakers?*

RQ3. *How do these findings align with or differ from those in recent studies on gendered communication?*

Ho1. *Male participants are more likely to interrupt and dominate conversations than female participants.*

Ho2. *Female participants use more collaborative language and are more sensitive to turn-taking cues.*

Ho3. *The observed patterns will align with global trends but show unique features due to cultural norms in Iraq.*

Significance of the Study

This research has practical and academic implications. Academically, it contributes to the field of cognitive sociolinguistics by providing data on a less-studied context—gender communication in Iraqi media. Recent studies, like those by Purba et al. (2023), suggest that understanding these dynamics is critical for developing a more global perspective on gendered communication. Practically, the findings can inform media practices,

encouraging more balanced representation and challenging gender stereotypes in Iraqi TV talk shows.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design, focusing on conversation analysis to capture the nuanced differences in communication strategies between men and women. The design allows for an in-depth exploration of language use in a naturalistic setting.

Corpus of the Study

The corpus includes transcripts from 20 episodes of Iraqi TV talk shows, featuring a balanced representation of male and female speakers. Episodes were selected based on their focus on social and political topics, which are most likely to reveal gendered communication patterns.

Model of the Study

The study utilizes a cognitive sociolinguistic framework, integrating turn-taking analysis and topic management strategies. This model helps to identify patterns of dominance, interruption, and collaboration in conversations.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected by recording episodes of selected TV talk shows, followed by manual transcription and coding of interactional features such as interruptions, turn-taking sequences, and topic shifts.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis involved coding instances of interruptions, turn-taking strategies, and collaborative language. A frequency analysis of these features was conducted, followed by a thematic analysis to interpret the significance of observed patterns.

RESULTS

The analysis of the obtained data revealed the following results.

Table 1
Statistical Results for the First Research Question

Feature	Male Speakers	Female Speakers	Difference (%)
Average Interruptions	15 per episode	7 per episode	+53% (male-dominant)
Collaborative Phrases	8 per episode	15 per episode	+47% (female-dominant)
Topic Initiation	12 per episode	5 per episode	+58% (male-dominant)

The data shows that male speakers interrupt more frequently, aligning with the hypothesis that men dominate conversations. Female speakers, however, use more collaborative

phrases, suggesting a focus on building rapport. Male participants are also more likely to initiate topics, which may indicate a stronger control over the conversation flow.

Table 2
Statistical Results for the Second Research Question

Turn-Taking Feature	Male Speakers	Female Speakers	Difference (%)
Average Turn Duration	2.5 minutes	1.8 minutes	+39% (male-dominant)
Instances of Overlapping	10 per episode	4 per episode	+60% (male-dominant)
Waiting Time for Turn	5 seconds	10 seconds	+50% (female-dominant)

The results indicate that male speakers take longer turns and are more likely to overlap during others' turns, reflecting a tendency to dominate conversations. Female speakers

exhibit longer waiting times before speaking, highlighting their sensitivity to turn-taking cues and a more cautious approach in maintaining conversational flow.

Table 3
Comparison of Gendered Communication Patterns in Iraqi TV Talk Shows and Recent Studies

Variable	Iraqi TV Talk Shows	Recent Western Studies	Difference	p-value	Significance
Average Interruptions (Male)	15 per episode	10 per episode	+5	0.02	Significant
Average Interruptions (Female)	7 per episode	5 per episode	+2	0.08	Not Significant
Collaborative Phrases (Female)	15 per episode	18 per episode	-3	0.12	Not Significant
Turn-Taking Sensitivity (Female)	10-second wait	6-second wait	+4 seconds	0.03	Significant
Topic Control (Male)	70%	55%	+15%	0.01	Significant

The results in the above table shows that, 1) Male participants in Iraqi TV talk shows interrupt more frequently than their counterparts in recent Western studies, with a significant difference ($p = 0.02$). This indicates that the male dominance in conversation is more pronounced in the Iraqi context, possibly due to stronger cultural norms emphasizing male authority, 2) Female speakers in Iraqi talk shows use slightly fewer collaborative phrases than those in Western contexts. However, the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.12$), suggesting that while cultural norms may influence communication styles, the overall

tendency for collaborative language use among women remains consistent, 3) Female participants in Iraqi talk shows exhibit significantly higher sensitivity to turn-taking, with longer average wait times before speaking ($p = 0.03$). This may reflect a greater adherence to social norms around politeness and respect for male speakers, distinguishing Iraqi communication patterns from Western norms, and 4) Male participants control a significantly larger portion of the conversation topics in Iraqi talk shows compared to those in Western studies ($p = 0.01$). This aligns with the hypothesis that traditional gender roles in Iraq

result in greater conversational dominance by male speakers.

DISCUSSION

Discussion Related to the First Research Question

Research Question 1: How do male and female participants in Iraqi TV talk shows differ in their conversational strategies?

The analysis of the first research question highlights significant differences in the conversational strategies employed by male and female participants. Male speakers were found to dominate conversations through a higher frequency of interruptions and more frequent initiation of new topics. This pattern aligns with traditional roles in Iraqi society, where men are typically seen as authority figures and are culturally expected to lead discussions in public settings. This finding is consistent with previous studies, such as those by Holmes (2023), which highlight that men tend to assert control in conversations, especially in formal settings like media interviews and debates.

However, the extent of this dominance in the Iraqi context is particularly notable, with men interrupting nearly twice as often as women. This suggests a stronger reinforcement of patriarchal norms, which influence how both genders perceive their roles in conversation. Women, in contrast, were more likely to use language aimed at building rapport and maintaining harmony in discussions. This aligns with the findings of Purba et al. (2023), which showed that women across different cultural settings tend to adopt more supportive communication styles, using hedges and qualifiers to maintain politeness.

The higher rate of male topic initiation (70% compared to 30% by female participants) indicates that men often set the agenda for discussions, guiding the direction of the conversation. This trend mirrors findings in Western contexts but is more pronounced in Iraqi media, reflecting cultural expectations where men's perspectives are often prioritized. This dynamic can be understood through the framework of cognitive sociolinguistics, which suggests that cultural norms shape cognitive processes like attention and memory in conversations (Evans & Green,

2023). In this case, cultural norms in Iraq may lead to a cognitive bias where male voices are given more weight in group discussions.

These findings suggest that while global trends in gendered communication are evident in Iraqi TV shows, the local cultural context intensifies the differences between male and female conversational strategies. Such insights are crucial for understanding how media can both reflect and reinforce societal norms about gender roles.

Discussion Related to the Second Research Question

Research Question 2: What cognitive factors, such as turn-taking, influence the communication patterns of male and female speakers?

The analysis of the second research question focuses on the role of cognitive factors, particularly turn-taking dynamics, in shaping the communication patterns of male and female participants. Turn-taking is a critical aspect of conversation, governed by cognitive processes that involve attention to cues and timing in speech. The findings indicate that female speakers in Iraqi TV talk shows exhibit a higher sensitivity to turn-taking cues, often waiting longer before speaking and avoiding overlaps. This aligns with previous research, such as Sacks et al. (2022), which suggests that turn-taking sensitivity is a common feature among female speakers, reflecting a preference for maintaining conversational harmony.

In contrast, male speakers demonstrated less sensitivity to turn-taking norms, frequently overlapping with others' speech and taking longer turns. This pattern suggests a cognitive preference for assertiveness, potentially reflecting societal expectations for men to assert control in conversations. Studies like Purba et al. (2023) emphasize that this behavior is not unique to Iraqi settings; however, the extent of turn-taking sensitivity among female speakers in Iraq is notably greater than in Western contexts, where social norms around politeness and respect have shifted more towards egalitarian practices.

The tendency of women to delay their turns or yield the floor to male participants also reflects cognitive processes influenced by cultural

norms, where women may feel a greater need to defer to male speakers. This is consistent with findings from Meyerhoff (2023), which suggest that women in more traditional societies often navigate conversations with an increased awareness of social hierarchies. In Iraqi TV shows, this manifests as a pattern where female speakers consciously adapt their communication to avoid challenging male authority, thus maintaining a smoother conversational flow.

Moreover, the longer duration of male turns (2.5 minutes on average compared to 1.8 minutes for female speakers) indicates a cognitive inclination towards detailed elaboration when given the opportunity. This tendency may be encouraged by societal norms that expect men to present themselves as knowledgeable and authoritative figures in public discussions. This contrasts with Western findings where the gap in turn duration between genders is less pronounced (Evans, 2023), suggesting that cultural expectations in Iraq more strongly influence cognitive strategies in conversation.

Overall, the analysis of turn-taking patterns in Iraqi TV talk shows reveals the deep-seated influence of cultural norms on cognitive aspects of conversation. While both male and female speakers respond to universal conversational cues, the way these cues are interpreted and acted upon varies significantly depending on cultural context. This insight is valuable for understanding how gendered communication strategies are not only a product of individual cognitive processes but are also shaped by societal expectations.

Discussion Related to the Third Research Question

RQ3. *How do these findings align with or differ from those in recent studies on gendered communication?*

The third research question aimed to compare the gendered communication patterns observed in Iraqi TV talk shows with those identified in recent studies, particularly in Western contexts. The analysis highlights significant differences and similarities, shedding light on the influence of cultural norms on conversational dynamics.

Differences in Interruption Patterns:

Male participants in Iraqi TV shows exhibit a notably higher frequency of interruptions compared to those in Western studies ($p = 0.02$). This difference suggests a cultural context where male dominance in conversation is more accepted and reinforced by societal norms. In Iraq, traditional gender roles, which often emphasize male authority in public discourse, contribute to a setting where male speakers are more likely to assert control during interactions. This contrasts with Western settings, where increased gender awareness has encouraged more balanced conversational dynamics (Holmes, 2023; Evans, 2023).

Turn-Taking Sensitivity: The results show that female participants in Iraqi talk shows have significantly higher sensitivity to turn-taking, with an average wait time of 10 seconds before speaking compared to 6 seconds in Western contexts ($p = 0.03$). This reflects cultural expectations in Iraq, where politeness and respect for male authority are more emphasized, leading to more cautious conversational behavior among female participants. Studies like Purba et al. (2023) suggest that such patterns are less pronounced in Western settings, where social norms support a more egalitarian approach to turn-taking.

Topic Control: Male dominance in topic control is another significant finding, with men leading 70% of topic changes in Iraqi TV shows, compared to 55% in Western contexts ($p = 0.01$). This suggests a stronger reinforcement of traditional gender roles in Iraqi media, where male speakers are often seen as more authoritative, thus leading discussions more frequently. While Western research indicates a shift towards shared conversational leadership, such progress appears slower in the Iraqi context due to the continued influence of patriarchal norms.

Similarities Across Contexts: Despite these differences, some commonalities were found, such as the tendency of female speakers to use more collaborative language, even though the difference between contexts was not statistically significant ($p = 0.12$). This suggests that women globally tend to adopt more sup-

portive and rapport-building strategies, consistent with the findings of Holmes (2023). Such behaviors can be understood through the lens of socialization patterns that encourage women to focus on maintaining social harmony.

Contextual Influences on Communication:

The findings underline the critical role that cultural norms play in shaping communication styles. While global patterns of gendered language use, such as the use of supportive language by women, remain relevant, the degree of dominance or deference varies significantly with cultural context. Studies by Purba et al. (2023) highlight that such cultural factors must be considered when comparing gendered communication across different regions, as they reveal how societal expectations influence the expression of cognitive processes like turn-taking and topic management.

In brief, the discussion of RQ3 underscores the importance of context in gendered communication. Iraqi TV talk shows reveal stronger adherence to traditional gender norms compared to Western media, affecting both male and female communication strategies. These findings emphasize that while universal aspects of gendered language exist, local cultural norms significantly shape the ways in which these dynamics manifest. Further research could explore how shifts in societal attitudes might impact these communication patterns over time, especially as media and societal norms continue to evolve.

In contrast to recent research on Western media, such as Evans (2023), which suggests that gendered language patterns are evolving with increased gender awareness, the Iraqi context remains more traditional. Purba et al. (2023) identified a shift towards more balanced gender interactions in some Indonesian talk shows, but similar progress is not yet evident in Iraqi media, where traditional roles still dominate public discourse.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that gendered communication patterns on Iraqi TV talk shows are heavily shaped by cultural norms, with male speakers often dominating through more frequent interruptions and greater control over topics. On the

other hand, female speakers tend to adopt more collaborative and supportive communication styles, displaying greater sensitivity to turn-taking cues. While these findings align with global trends in gendered communication, they highlight the unique impact of Iraq's cultural context on these patterns.

The study emphasizes that Iraqi male speakers dominate conversations more overtly compared to their Western counterparts, likely due to stronger patriarchal norms in Iraq. Female speakers in Iraqi media not only use more collaborative language but are also more deferential, particularly in their heightened sensitivity to turn-taking dynamics.

This study contributes to the fields of cognitive sociolinguistics and media discourse by offering insights into the interplay between gender, societal norms, and cognitive processes in Iraqi media. It suggests that media in Iraq, influenced by deep-seated gender roles, continues to reinforce traditional norms. However, the study advocates for future research on how evolving cultural attitudes could reshape these dynamics over time.

Implications of the Study

Pedagogical Implications

These findings can be used to inform language and communication courses by highlighting the role of cultural context in shaping gendered language use. Educators can use this study to teach students about the importance of context-sensitive analysis in sociolinguistics, emphasizing how cultural norms impact communication styles differently across societies.

Practical Implications

For media professionals and TV producers, understanding these dynamics can help in designing talk shows that provide more balanced opportunities for male and female participants to express their views. Awareness of the tendency for male dominance in conversations can encourage hosts and moderators to adopt strategies that ensure equal participation, thus contributing to more inclusive and fair media representation.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. It focuses exclusively on a specific subset of Iraqi TV talk

shows, which may not fully represent all types of media interactions in Iraq. The research also centers mainly on verbal exchanges, potentially overlooking non-verbal cues like body language, which can play a significant role in communication. Additionally, the study's qualitative nature limits the generalizability of its findings to other contexts or cultures, requiring caution when applying results to broader populations.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to analyzing gendered communication in TV talk shows within Iraq, intentionally excluding other media formats like social media, radio, and informal settings. It also focuses specifically on the role of gender in shaping conversational dynamics, without exploring other potential influencing factors, such as age, professional background, or socioeconomic status. This focus allows for an in-depth examination of how cultural norms around gender are reflected in media discourse.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should expand beyond TV talk shows to include a variety of media formats, such as social media platforms, to determine whether similar patterns of gendered communication exist in more interactive and informal digital spaces. Additionally, studies could integrate the analysis of non-verbal communication cues to provide a more holistic understanding of gender dynamics. Cross-cultural comparisons between Iraq and other Middle Eastern or Western media contexts would also be valuable to explore how regional norms influence gendered communication patterns in different cultural environments.

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