Research Paper

Cross-Cultural Analysis of Turn-Taking Patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English Conversations: A Focus on Gender and Age

Hind Mohammed Sami Aljanabi[1], Parivash Esmaeili[2]*, Ghanim Jwaid Idan[3], Bahram Hadian[4]

[1]Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English Language, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
hind.mohammed@uokerbala.edu.iq

[2]Assistant Professor, English Department, Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Najafabad, Iran
g.parivash@gmail.com

[3]Assistant Professor, Department of English Languages, College of Education, University of Karbala, Karbala, Iraq
ghanim.j@uokerbala.edu.iq

[4]Assistant Professor, Department of English, languages, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran
bah.hadian@khuisf.ac.ir

Abstract
Turn-taking is a fundamental aspect of human communication, reflecting cultural norms, social hierarchies, and individual identities. This study examines turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations, focusing on the influence of gender and age on conversational participation and power dynamics. Using a mixed-methods design, the study analyzes quantitative metrics such as average turn length, interruptions, and response rates, alongside qualitative insights into social norms and cultural values. The findings reveal significant cross-cultural differences, with Iraqi Arabic conversations characterized by shorter turns, more frequent interruptions, and pronounced age and gender hierarchies, while American English conversations exhibit longer turns, fewer interruptions, and more egalitarian participation. These results align with theories of cross-cultural communication, such as Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context cultures, and highlight the role of cultural norms in shaping conversational behaviors. The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of turn-taking as a sociocultural phenomenon and offers practical implications for intercultural communication training, language education, and conflict resolution. Limitations include the reliance on televised and university-based data, and suggestions for future research include expanding the corpus to include more languages and informal settings, as well as incorporating participant interviews and experimental designs.

Keywords: *Turn-taking, Cross-cultural communication, Iraqi Arabic, American English, Gender, Age, Conversation analysis*

تحلیل بین‌فرهنگی الگوهای نوبت‌گیری در مکالمات عربی عراقی و انگلیسی آمریکایی: تمرکز بر جنسیت و سن
نوبت‌گیری یکی از جنبه‌های اساسی ارتباطات انسانی است که هنجارهای فرهنگی، سلسله مراتب اجتماعی و هویت‌های فردی را منعکس می‌کند. این مطالعه به بررسی الگوهای نوبت‌گیری در مکالمات عربی عراقی و انگلیسی آمریکایی می‌پردازد و تأثیر جنسیت و سن را بر مشارکت در گفتگو و دینامیک قدرت مورد بررسی قرار می‌دهد. با استفاده از یک طرح روش‌شناسی ترکیبی، این مطالعه معیارهای کمی مانند میانگین طول نوبت، وقفه‌ها و نرخ پاسخدهی را تحلیل می‌کند و در کنار آن، بینش‌های کیفی در مورد هنجارهای اجتماعی و ارزش‌های فرهنگی ارائه می‌دهد. یافته‌های تفاوت‌های قابل توجهی بین فرهنگ‌ها را نشان می‌دهند، به طوری که مکالمات عربی عراقی با نوبت‌های کوتاه‌تر، وقفه‌های مکرر و سلسله مراتب سنی و جنسیتی بارز مشخص می‌شوند، در حالی که مکالمات انگلیسی آمریکایی نوبت‌های طولانی‌تر، وقفه‌های کمتر و مشارکت برابرتر را نشان می‌دهند. این نتایج با نظریه‌های ارتباطات بین‌فرهنگی، مانند فرهنگ‌های با زمینه بالا و پایین هال (1976)، همسو است و نقش هنجارهای فرهنگی در شکل‌دهی به رفتارهای گفتگویی را برجسته می‌کند. این مطالعه به درک نظری نوبت‌گیری به عنوان یک پدیده اجتماعی-فرهنگی کمک می‌کند و پیامدهای عملی برای آموزش ارتباطات بین‌فرهنگی، آموزش زبان و حل تعارض ارائه می‌دهد. محدودیت‌ها شامل اتکا به داده‌های تلویزیونی و دانشگاهی است و پیشنهادات برای تحقیقات آینده شامل گسترش پیکره زبانی به زبان‌ها و محیط‌های غیررسمی بیشتر و همچنین استفاده از مصاحبه‌های مشارکتی و طرح‌های آزمایشی می‌باشد.
واژگان کلیدی: نوبت‌گیری، ارتباطات بین‌فرهنگی، عربی عراقی، انگلیسی آمریکایی، جنسیت، سن، تحلیل گفتمان

Introduction

Conversation is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, serving as a primary means of sharing information, maintaining social bonds, and negotiating relationships (Levinson, 2013; Kendrick et al., 2017). It is through conversation that individuals express their thoughts, emotions, and intentions, while also navigating the complexities of social hierarchies and cultural norms. However, conversational structures vary significantly across cultures, influenced by sociocultural norms, values, and power dynamics (Hall, 1976; Tannen, 1990). These variations are particularly evident in the phenomenon of turn-taking, which is central to the organization of conversation and is highly sensitive to cultural differences (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Stivers et al., 2009).

Turn-taking refers to the process by which speakers alternate in conversation, ensuring that one person speaks at a time while others listen. This process is governed by implicit rules and conventions that vary across cultures, reflecting broader societal values and norms (Gumperz, 1982; Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, in high-context cultures, such as those in the Middle East and Asia, turn-taking is often characterized by frequent interruptions, overlapping speech, and rapid responses, reflecting a preference for participatory and dynamic interaction (Hall, 1976; Nakamura, 2010). In contrast, low-context cultures, such as those in the United States and Western Europe, tend to prioritize longer, uninterrupted turns and structured turn allocation, reflecting a focus on individual expression and clarity (Tannen, 1984; Lim & Bowers, 1991).

The cultural variability of turn-taking conventions has been the subject of extensive research in the fields of sociolinguistics and conversation analysis. Early studies by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) laid the foundation for understanding turn-taking as a systematic process governed by implicit rules. Their work highlighted the importance of transition relevance places (TRPs), where speakers signal the end of their turn and allow others to take the floor. Subsequent research has expanded on these foundational theories, emphasizing the role of cultural context in shaping turn-taking behaviors (Levinson, 2013; Kendrick et al., 2017). For instance, Levinson (2013) proposed a model of turn-taking that integrates cognitive, social, and linguistic factors, highlighting the importance of cultural expectations and social roles in determining conversational norms.

Recent studies have further explored the sociocultural influences on turn-taking, with a particular focus on the role of gender and age. For example, Coates (2004) found that men tend to dominate conversations through frequent interruptions and longer turns, while women adopt more cooperative turn-taking styles, characterized by shorter turns and supportive backchannels. Similarly, age has been shown to influence conversational participation, with younger speakers often deferring to elders in hierarchical societies (Tannen, 1984; Giles et al., 2003). These findings suggest that turn-taking is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a social practice that reflects and reinforces broader cultural norms and power dynamics.

Despite the growing body of research on turn-taking, comprehensive analyses accounting for demographic attributes such as gender and age remain limited, particularly in non-Western contexts. Most studies have focused on Western languages, such as English, French, and German, leaving a significant gap in the understanding of conversational norms in other linguistic and cultural settings (Al-Marrani & Sazalie, 2010; Al-Fatlawi, 2017). This gap is particularly evident in the case of Iraqi Arabic, a variety of Arabic spoken in Iraq that has unique phonological, morphological, and syntactic features distinguishing it from other Arabic dialects (Holes, 2004). The lack of empirical research on turn-taking in Iraqi Arabic represents a significant gap in the literature, particularly in relation to the intersecting influences of gender and age.

This study aimed to address this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations, focusing on the influence of gender

and age on conversational participation and power dynamics. By examining naturally occurring conversations in both cultural contexts, the study seeks to uncover the underlying rules and perceptions governing turn-taking and to identify both shared human interactional attributes and differences derived from distinct cultural-linguistic environments. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of turn-taking metrics, such as average turn length, interruptions, and response rates, with qualitative examination of social norms and power dynamics related to gender and age.

The findings of this study have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they contribute to the ongoing debates on the cultural variability of conversational structure and the role of social hierarchies in shaping interactional norms. Practically, the findings can inform intercultural communication training programs, helping individuals navigate conversational differences in diverse cultural contexts. For example, understanding the cultural norms governing turn-taking can help avoid misunderstandings in professional or personal exchanges across Iraqi Arabic and North American contexts. Additionally, the study has relevance for educators and policymakers, as incorporating research findings into foreign language curricula and cultural training programs could strengthen intercultural awareness and pragmatic appropriateness.

Finally, conversation is a fundamental aspect of human interaction that varies significantly across cultures, reflecting broader sociocultural norms, values, and power dynamics. Turn-taking, as a central phenomenon in conversation analysis, is particularly sensitive to these cultural differences. While initial cross-cultural studies have compared conversational structures between select language groups, comprehensive analyses accounting for demographic attributes such as gender and age remain limited. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations, focusing on the intersecting influences of gender and age. By doing so, the study contributes to the understanding of how cultural norms and social hierarchies shape conversational structures and offers practical implications for intercultural communication.

Literature Review
Theoretical Background

Turn-taking is a fundamental aspect of human communication, reflecting cultural norms, social hierarchies, and individual identities. Early work by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) laid the foundation for understanding turn-taking as a systematic process governed by implicit rules. Their seminal model proposed that turn-taking is a universal feature of human interaction, characterized by mechanisms such as transition-relevance places (TRPs), where speaker change can occur. Subsequent research has highlighted the sociocultural variability of turn-taking conventions, with some cultures favoring frequent interruptions and rapid responses, while others prioritize longer, uninterrupted turns (Stivers et al., 2009; Tannen, 2012). Theories of cross-cultural communication, such as Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context cultures, provide a framework for understanding how cultural norms shape conversational behaviors. High-context cultures, such as those in the Middle East and East Asia, often rely on implicit cues and shared knowledge, leading to more fluid and overlapping turn-taking, whereas low-context cultures, such as the United States and Germany, prioritize explicit communication and clear turn boundaries (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 2011).

Recent studies have expanded on these foundational theories, emphasizing the role of power dynamics and social hierarchies in shaping turn-taking behaviors. For instance, Levinson (2013) proposed a model of turn-taking that integrates cognitive, social, and linguistic factors, highlighting the importance of cultural context in determining conversational norms. His model suggests that turn-taking is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a social practice influenced

by participants' roles and relationships. Similarly, Kendrick et al. (2017) used computational modeling to demonstrate that turn-taking is a probabilistic process influenced by cultural expectations and social roles. Their findings indicate that conversational participants continuously predict and adapt to each other's behaviors based on shared cultural scripts and power dynamics.

Empirical Background

Empirical studies have demonstrated that gender and age significantly impact conversational dynamics. For instance, Coates (2004) found that men tend to dominate conversations through frequent interruptions, while women adopt more cooperative turn-taking styles. This pattern has been observed across various contexts, including workplace meetings, classroom discussions, and casual conversations (Holmes, 2006; Kitzinger, 2008). Similarly, age has been shown to influence conversational participation, with younger speakers often deferring to elders in hierarchical societies (Aronsson, 2011; Blum-Kulka, 1997). However, most of these studies have focused on Western languages, leaving a gap in the understanding of conversational norms in non-Western contexts, such as Iraqi Arabic.

Recent research has begun to address this gap. For example, Almakrob and Al-Ahdal (2020) explored the dynamics of conversational turn-taking in Saudi Arabia, highlighting how cultural values such as respect and politeness influence turn allocation. Their findings suggest that hierarchical social structures in Arabic cultures shape conversational behaviors, with younger speakers and women often adopting more deferential styles. Similarly, Hoffmann (2021) compared gender dynamics in family dinner conversations across cultures, finding that mixed-gender interactions in Arabic-speaking households often reflect patriarchal norms, with men dominating the conversation. These studies underscore the importance of considering cultural and social factors when analyzing turn-taking patterns.

Gap in the Literature

Despite the growing body of research on turn-taking, few studies have explored the intersection of gender and age in shaping conversational dynamics, particularly in non-Western cultures. The majority of existing studies have focused on Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) societies, which limits the generalizability of their findings (Henrich et al., 2010). For example, while studies have examined gender differences in turn-taking in English-speaking contexts (Herring, 2010; Leaper & Ayres, 2007), there is a dearth of research on how these dynamics play out in Arabic-speaking societies, where gender roles and age hierarchies are often more pronounced (Al-Khatib, 2018; Sadiqi, 2014). Additionally, while some studies have explored age-related differences in conversational participation (Coupland et al., 1991; Giles et al., 2003), they have rarely considered how these differences interact with gender in non-Western contexts.

The current study addresses this gap by examining turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations, with a focus on how gender and age influence conversational participation and power dynamics. By comparing these two culturally distinct contexts, the study aims to shed light on the universality and variability of turn-taking norms and their underlying social and cultural determinants.

The lack of empirical research on turn-taking in Iraqi Arabic, particularly in relation to gender and age, represents a significant gap in the literature. While studies have explored turn-taking in other Arabic dialects, such as Egyptian and Levantine Arabic (Al-Batal, 2002; Al-Masri, 2015), Iraqi Arabic remains understudied. This gap is particularly concerning given the unique sociolinguistic features of Iraqi Arabic, which is influenced by the country's complex history, diverse ethnic groups, and hierarchical social structures (Al-Wer, 2013; Holes, 2018). Moreover,

the intersection of gender and age in shaping conversational dynamics has received limited attention in the broader literature on turn-taking, despite evidence suggesting that these factors play a crucial role in determining conversational participation and power dynamics (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013; Goodwin, 2006). This study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations, focusing on the influence of gender and age on conversational participation and power dynamics. By examining these factors in two culturally distinct contexts, the study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how social and cultural variables shape conversational behaviors. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How do gender and age influence turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations?

RQ2. What role do power dynamics and social hierarchies play in shaping turn-taking behaviors in these two contexts?

RQ3. How do cultural norms and values, such as respect for elders and gender roles, influence conversational participation in Iraqi Arabic and American English?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide new insights into the sociocultural dimensions of turn-taking and contribute to the broader literature on cross-cultural communication. The findings will have implications for fields such as sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, and language education, as well as practical applications in areas such as conflict resolution, workplace communication, and cross-cultural training.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

--To quantitatively analyze and compare turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations.

--To qualitatively examine the social norms and power dynamics related to gender and age in turn allocation and interruptions.

--To determine if levels of participation and influence within conversations differ between male and female speakers across age groups and between languages.

Significance of the Study

This study has important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the ongoing debates on the cultural variability of conversational structure and the role of social hierarchies in shaping interactional norms. By comparing turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English, the study provides empirical evidence for the universality and variability of conversational norms, as proposed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) and further developed by Levinson (2013) and Kendrick et al. (2017). The findings challenge the assumption that turn-taking is a purely linguistic phenomenon, highlighting instead its embeddedness in social and cultural contexts (Goodwin, 2006; Stivers et al., 2009). For instance, the study may reveal that hierarchical social structures in Iraqi Arabic cultures lead to more pronounced deference to elders and male speakers, whereas American English conversations may reflect more egalitarian norms, albeit with subtle gender and power dynamics (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 2006). These insights contribute to theories of cross-cultural communication, such as Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context cultures, by demonstrating how cultural values and social hierarchies manifest in conversational behaviors.

Practically, the findings can inform intercultural communication training programs, helping individuals navigate conversational differences in diverse cultural contexts. For example, understanding the role of interruptions and overlaps in Iraqi Arabic conversations can help American professionals working in the Middle East avoid misinterpreting these behaviors as rude

or aggressive (Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020; Tannen, 2012). Similarly, awareness of the deferential turn-taking styles adopted by younger speakers and women in hierarchical societies can enhance cross-cultural sensitivity and reduce communication breakdowns (Hoffmann, 2021; Sadiqi, 2014). The study's findings can also be applied to language education, particularly in teaching Arabic and English as second languages, by incorporating sociocultural aspects of turn-taking into curricula (Al-Batal, 2002; Al-Masri, 2015). Furthermore, the study has implications for conflict resolution and mediation, as understanding conversational norms can facilitate more effective communication in high-stakes settings (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 2011).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. The mixed-methods approach is particularly suited to this study, as it allows for a comprehensive analysis of both the structural and sociocultural dimensions of turn-taking (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative analysis focuses on turn-taking metrics such as average turn length, interruptions, and response rates, which provide objective measures of conversational dynamics (Levinson, 2013; Kendrick et al., 2017). The qualitative analysis examines the social norms and power dynamics related to gender and age, offering deeper insights into the cultural and contextual factors that shape turn-taking behaviors (Goodwin, 2006; Tannen, 2012).

Corpus of the Study

The corpus comprises two datasets: the Iraqi Arabic Dataset and the American English Dataset. The Iraqi Arabic Dataset includes recordings from popular Iraqi talk shows and casual student discussions at Karbala University. These sources were chosen to capture a range of conversational contexts, from formal media interactions to informal peer discussions, reflecting the diversity of turn-taking norms in Iraqi society (Al-Wer, 2013; Holes, 2018). The American English Dataset consists of recordings from nationally broadcast TV shows such as *The Tonight Show* and *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, which provide examples of conversational interactions in a Western, media-saturated context (Herring, 2010; Leaper & Ayres, 2007). The inclusion of both formal and informal contexts in both datasets ensures a more nuanced understanding of turn-taking patterns across different settings.

Instruments

The study uses ELAN software for transcription and annotation of conversational data. ELAN is a widely used tool in conversation analysis, allowing for precise segmentation of speaker turns and annotation of non-verbal elements such as pauses, overlaps, and gestures (Kendrick et al., 2017; Stivers et al., 2009). SPSS is used for statistical analysis of turn-taking metrics, enabling the comparison of quantitative data across the two datasets. The use of these tools ensures rigorous and replicable analysis of conversational data.

Model of the Study

The study adopts a comparative case study design, analyzing turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. The comparative approach allows for the identification of similarities and differences in turn-taking

norms across the two cultural contexts, shedding light on the universality and variability of conversational structures (Levinson, 2013; Stivers et al., 2009). The case study design is particularly appropriate for this study, as it enables an in-depth exploration of the sociocultural factors that shape turn-taking behaviors (Yin, 2018).

Data Collection Procedures

Conversational data were collected from Iraqi Arabic and American English sources, including TV shows and university discussions. Recordings were segmented by speaker turns and annotated with timestamps for non-verbal elements using ELAN software. The inclusion of non-verbal elements in the analysis is crucial, as they play a significant role in coordinating turn-taking and conveying social meanings (Kendrick et al., 2017; Goodwin, 2006). The data collection process adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative analysis involves computing turn-taking metrics using ELAN and comparing them statistically using SPSS. Key metrics include average turn length, frequency of interruptions, and response rates, which provide objective measures of conversational dynamics (Levinson, 2013; Kendrick et al., 2017). Statistical comparisons between the Iraqi Arabic and American English datasets are conducted to identify significant differences in turn-taking patterns. Qualitative analysis employs a conversational analytic approach to examine turn allocation, interruptions, and social norms related to gender and age. This approach involves close examination of conversational transcripts to identify patterns and themes related to power dynamics and cultural norms (Goodwin, 2006; Tannen, 2012). The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a comprehensive understanding of turn-taking behaviors in the two cultural contexts.

Results
Statistical Results of the First Research Question

The first research question examined differences in turn-taking patterns between Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. The quantitative analysis revealed significant differences in key metrics, including average turn length and frequency of interruptions. Table 1 summarizes these findings.

Table 1
Comparison of Turn-Taking Metrics in Iraqi Arabic and American English Conversations

Metric	Iraqi Arabic (Mean)	American English (Mean)	t-value	p-value
Average Turn Length (s)	4.82	6.91	5.67	<0.001
Interruptions (per 60m)	23	15	3.89	0.002

Iraqi Arabic conversations had significantly shorter average turn lengths (4.82 seconds) compared to American English conversations (6.91 seconds), with a t-value of 5.67 and a p-value of less than 0.001. This suggests that Iraqi Arabic speakers tend to take shorter turns, possibly reflecting a preference for rapid exchanges and overlapping speech, which aligns with findings from Almakrob and Al-Ahdal (2020) and Tannen (2012).

Iraqi Arabic conversations featured more frequent interruptions (23 instances in 60 minutes) compared to American English conversations (15 instances), with a t-value of 3.89 and a p-value of 0.002. This finding supports the notion that interruptions in Arabic cultures may serve

as a sign of engagement rather than rudeness, as noted in studies on high-context communication (Hall, 1976; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Statistical Results of the Second Research Question
The second research question explored the influence of age on turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 2
Influence of Age on Turn-Taking Patterns

Age Group	Iraqi Arabic (Response Time in s)	American English (Response Time in s)	t-value	p-value
Younger Speakers	2.34	1.98	1.23	0.221
Elder Speakers	1.12	1.95	4.56	<0.001

Younger speakers exhibited significantly longer response times (2.34 seconds) compared to elder speakers (1.12 seconds), with a t-value of 4.56 and a p-value of less than 0.001. This indicates that younger speakers in Iraqi Arabic contexts often defer to elders, reflecting hierarchical social norms and cultural values of respect (Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020; Hoffmann, 2021).

No significant differences were observed between younger and elder speakers in response times (1.98 seconds vs. 1.95 seconds), with a t-value of 1.23 and a p-value of 0.221. This suggests that age does not play a significant role in shaping turn-taking patterns in American English conversations, consistent with the more egalitarian norms observed in low-context cultures (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2011).

Statistical Results of the Third Research Question
The third research question investigated the role of gender in shaping turn-taking patterns in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

Table 3
Influence of Gender on Turn-Taking Patterns

Gender	Iraqi Arabic (Turns per 10m)	American English (Turns per 10m)	t-value	p-value
Male Speakers	12.5	10.3	2.34	0.021
Female Speakers	8.2	10.1	1.89	0.061

Male speakers took significantly more turns per 10 minutes (12.5) compared to female speakers (8.2), with a t-value of 2.34 and a p-value of 0.021. This finding aligns with studies highlighting patriarchal norms in Arabic-speaking societies, where men often dominate mixed-gender conversations (Sadiqi, 2014; Hoffmann, 2021).

No significant differences were observed between male and female speakers in the number of turns taken per 10 minutes (10.3 vs. 10.1), with a t-value of 1.89 and a p-value of 0.061. This suggests that gender does not significantly influence turn-taking patterns in American English conversations, reflecting the more egalitarian gender dynamics observed in Western cultures (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 2006).

Discussion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the cultural variability of turn-taking norms and the role of social hierarchies in shaping conversational behaviors. The shorter average turn lengths and higher frequency of interruptions in Iraqi Arabic conversations reflect the high-context communication style prevalent in Arabic cultures, where overlapping speech and rapid exchanges are often seen as signs of engagement and rapport (Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020; Tannen, 2012). In contrast, the longer turns and fewer interruptions in American English conversations align with the low-context communication style, where clarity and explicitness are prioritized (Hall, 1976; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

The influence of age and gender on turn-taking patterns further underscores the importance of sociocultural factors in shaping conversational dynamics. In Iraqi Arabic conversations, younger speakers' deference to elders and male speakers' dominance in mixed-gender discussions reflect the hierarchical and patriarchal norms of Arabic-speaking societies (Hoffmann, 2021; Sadiqi, 2014). In contrast, the absence of significant age- and gender-related differences in American English conversations highlights the more egalitarian norms of Western cultures (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 2006).

These findings have important implications for intercultural communication, language education, and workplace interactions. By understanding the cultural and social factors that shape turn-taking behaviors, individuals can navigate cross-cultural conversations more effectively and avoid misunderstandings. For example, American professionals working in the Middle East can benefit from recognizing that frequent interruptions in Arabic conversations are not necessarily a sign of rudeness but rather a cultural norm (Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020; Tannen, 2012). Similarly, language educators can incorporate sociocultural aspects of turn-taking into their curricula to help learners develop communicative competence in diverse cultural contexts (Al-Batal, 2002; Al-Masri, 2015).

Discussion Related to the First Research Question

The findings of this study align with previous research on cross-cultural differences in turn-taking. For example, Lim and Bowers (1991) found that collectivist cultures, such as Iraqi Arabic, tend to have shorter turns and more frequent interruptions, reflecting a preference for participatory equity. This participatory style is often seen as a way to maintain group cohesion and ensure that all voices are heard, even if it involves overlapping speech (Tannen, 2012; Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020). In contrast, individualistic cultures, such as American English, prioritize longer, uninterrupted turns, reflecting a focus on individual expression and clarity (Hall, 1976; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). These differences highlight the role of cultural values in shaping conversational norms, with collectivist cultures emphasizing group harmony and individualistic cultures prioritizing personal autonomy.

Discussion Related to the Second Research Question

The influence of age on turn-taking in Iraqi Arabic conversations is consistent with gerontocratic cultural norms, where elders are accorded higher status and deference. This finding resonates with Tannen's (1984) observation that age hierarchies shape conversational dynamics in hierarchical societies. In such contexts, younger speakers often adopt deferential behaviors, such as longer response times and fewer interruptions, to show respect for their elders (Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020; Hoffmann, 2021). This contrasts with American English conversations, where age does not significantly influence turn-taking patterns, reflecting the more egalitarian norms of Western societies (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 2006). These findings underscore the importance of considering

cultural context when analyzing conversational behaviors, as social hierarchies play a crucial role in shaping interactional norms.

Discussion Related to the Third Research Question

The gender-based differences in Iraqi Arabic conversations reflect patriarchal cultural norms, where male speakers dominate mixed-gender discussions. This aligns with Coates' (2004) findings on gender and conversational dominance, which suggest that men often use interruptions and longer turns to assert their authority in mixed-gender interactions. In contrast, the lack of gender-based differences in American English conversations reflects a more egalitarian approach to conversational participation, where both men and women are equally likely to take turns and contribute to the discussion (Holmes, 2006; Herring, 2010). These findings highlight the role of cultural norms in shaping gender dynamics in conversation, with patriarchal societies favoring male dominance and egalitarian societies promoting gender equality.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the cross-cultural differences in turn-taking patterns between Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. The findings highlight the significant influence of gender and age on conversational dynamics in Iraqi Arabic, while American English conversations are less influenced by these factors. The study contributes to the understanding of how cultural norms and social hierarchies shape conversational structures and offers practical implications for intercultural communication. By comparing these two culturally distinct contexts, the study sheds light on the universality and variability of turn-taking norms and their underlying social and cultural determinants.

Implications of the Study

The findings have important implications for intercultural communication training programs, helping individuals navigate conversational differences in diverse cultural contexts. For example, understanding the role of interruptions and overlapping speech in Iraqi Arabic conversations can help American professionals working in the Middle East avoid misinterpreting these behaviors as rude or aggressive (Almakrob & Al-Ahdal, 2020; Tannen, 2012). Similarly, awareness of the deferential turn-taking styles adopted by younger speakers and women in hierarchical societies can enhance cross-cultural sensitivity and reduce communication breakdowns (Hoffmann, 2021; Sadiqi, 2014). The study's findings can also be applied to language education, particularly in teaching Arabic and English as second languages, by incorporating sociocultural aspects of turn-taking into curricula (Al-Batal, 2002; Al-Masri, 2015). Furthermore, the study has implications for conflict resolution and mediation, as understanding conversational norms can facilitate more effective communication in high-stakes settings (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 2011).

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by its reliance on televised talk shows and university discussions, which may not fully represent natural conversational settings. While these sources provide valuable insights into turn-taking patterns, they may not capture the full range of conversational behaviors that occur in everyday interactions. Additionally, the sample size of 120 minutes per language may limit the generalizability of the findings. A larger and more diverse corpus would provide a more comprehensive understanding of turn-taking norms in Iraqi Arabic and American English conversations. Finally, the study focuses on turn-taking patterns and does not explore other aspects

of conversational structure, such as topic management or nonverbal communication, which could provide additional insights into cross-cultural differences.

Suggestions for Further Research
Future research could expand the corpus to include more languages and informal interactional settings. For example, including data from other Arabic dialects, such as Egyptian or Levantine Arabic, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of turn-taking norms in Arabic-speaking societies (Al-Batal, 2002; Al-Masri, 2015). Similarly, incorporating data from informal settings, such as family dinners or workplace meetings, would provide a more nuanced understanding of how turn-taking patterns vary across different contexts (Hoffmann, 2021; Goodwin, 2006). Additionally, participant interviews could provide emic perspectives on conversational norms, offering insights into how speakers perceive and interpret turn-taking behaviors in their own cultural contexts (Tannen, 2012; Sadiqi, 2014). Finally, experimental designs could test causal relationships between cultural models and interactional behaviors, providing a deeper understanding of how cultural norms shape conversational dynamics (Levinson, 2013; Kendrick et al., 2017).

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Biodata

Hind Mohammed Sami Aljanabi is an assistant lecturer in the college of Applied Medical Science / Clinical Laborites Department**,** Karbala University. She received her B.A from Karbala

university, and earned her M.A in linguistics from Baghdad university. Her main research areas of interest are issues in general Linguistics such as pragmatics, critical discourse analysis. She has been teaching undergraduate studies for 4 years
E-mail: *hind.mohammed@uokerbala.edu.iq*

Parivash Esmaeili is an Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature in English Department, Islamic Azad University, Najafabad Branch, Najafabad, Iran. She has been teaching different courses in the field of TEFL and English Literature and her studies mainly focus on cognitive linguistics and cognitive poetics, with a keen interest in metaphor identification and cognitive grammar.
E-mail: *g.parivash@gmail.com*

Ghanim Jwaid Idan is an assistant professor of Linguistics/ pragmatics in the College of Education for Humanities, Kerbala University. He received his B.A. English language from Baghdad university, and earned his M.A and Ph. D in general Linguistics from Baghdad university. His main research areas of interest are issues in general Linguistics such as semantics, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis and phonetics. He has been teaching undergraduate studies as well as postgraduate studies for more than 25 years in different universities.
E-mail: *ghanim.j@uokerbala.edu.iq*

Bahram Hadian teaches in the Department of English, Islamic Azad University of Isfahan, Isfahan Branch, Isfahan, Iran. Bahran Hadain is an Assistant Professor of Linguistics and has taught courses of variegated character, including linguistics and translation courses. He has published a good number of articles on discourse, pragmatics and translation in local and international journals. His research interests include discourse analysis, translation, the metaphor city of language, and critical discourse analysis.
E-mail: *bah.hadian@khuisf.ac.ir*