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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**Voicing Gender: Lexical Choices and Identity Construction in Pakistani Political Discourse****Rai Mahnoor Sultan**

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naveed.nawaz@uos.edu.pk**Abstract**

In the Pakistani sociopolitical context, language serves as a key resource for projecting identity, authority, and interpersonal stance. This study investigates gender-based lexical variation in the political discourse of Pakistani politicians. A corpus of 40 political speeches—20 delivered by female politicians and 20 by male politicians between 2019 and 2024—was compiled from televised talk shows, parliamentary sessions (Senate and National Assembly), and formal public addresses. Using AntConc for keyword extraction, frequency counts, and lexical profiling, complemented by analytical support from large language models (LLMs) for pattern interpretation, the study identifies systematic differences in lexical choices across genders. Findings indicate that male politicians tend to employ a more authoritative and assertive register, whereas female politicians frequently draw on softer, more polite, and relational vocabulary. These patterns demonstrate that gendered linguistic styles continue to shape political communication in Pakistan, with lexical choices reflecting broader sociocultural expectations and identity performances.

Keywords: *Corpus linguistics, AntConc, critical discourse analysis, lexical profiling*

Introduction

Language is a strong medium to promote political doctrine and agendas. It plays a critical role in political dialogue. Such dialogues can lead to creation of a diplomatic identity. In political discourse, it is investigated that how linguistic choices reveal and reproduce existing power relations in society. One important area of such

discourse is gender. Almost all the research in the areas of political linguistics and gender studies have revealed that male and female politicians have different way of communication, specifically in their vocabularies and rhetorical style. Female speaks more about relationships and emotional side of the story while males do not usually bring emotive speech, it is more about facts and figures. At global level studies shows that the language used by female politicians is comprehensive, empathetic and socially oriented. On the other hand, male politicians provide assertive, authoritative and political expression. These patterns are way more than simple language or communication habits; they emerge from deeper gender beliefs, cultural conventions, and political stances.

Research in Western contexts, including the United States, United Kingdom, and parts of Europe, has explored these patterns extensively (Holmes, 1995; Koller, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2005). Recent studies have shown the increased rate of political participation in South Asia. Starting from Pakistan, we have many female politicians, Fatima Jinah, Benazir Bhutto and many others. Political figures like Benazir Bhutto, Indira Ghandhi, Sheikh Hasina, Roopa Bakshi, Chandrika Kumaratunga ruled in politics. However, the linguistic studies of female politicians in South Asian contexts—particularly Pakistan—has received far less scholarly attention. In Pakistan due to culture specifics gender roles, and patriarchal society, a gendered analysis of political speeches is a must. There is a significant gap in literature when it comes to gendered and political based-linguistic studies in Pakistan. In Pakistan, less studies have been done to depict that how male and female politicians use language to depict their authority and credibility. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a crucial gap by examining vocabulary choices in the Pakistani political speeches of male and female politicians. This study highlights gendered speech differences, difference in tone, themes, lexical selection and responses to questions.

Research Objectives

This study aims to conduct a comparative corpus-based analysis of lexical choices in the political speeches of male and female Pakistani politicians. The specific objectives are:

1. to identify and compare the most frequently used content words by male and female politicians, including analysis of **keywords, concordances, and collocations**
2. to categorize these lexical items into **dominant thematic groups**
3. to examine how these themes reflect **gendered communication patterns** and sociolinguistic differences in political discourse.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the key differences in vocabulary usage between male and female politicians in Pakistan?
2. How do these lexical differences reflect **gendered communication styles** in political discourse?
3. In what ways do sociocultural factors influence these differences, and how do they challenge or reinforce prevailing gender norms and ideologies in Pakistan's political and cultural context?

This research is based on the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Gender and Language Studies. CDA views language as a form of social practice, deeply embedded in power relations and ideological structures (Fairclough, 1995). Language and gender studies gives an idea that difference of communication style among

male and female is because of social determinants and strategic adoption to various roles (Tannen, 1990; Lakoff, 1975). When applied to political speeches, these frameworks clearly show that gender-based identities are structured by language. A study analyses speeches of 2019 to 2024 which is a period of major political shift in Pakistan that had political riots, elections and military interference. For data collection, a mixed method approach is being used which includes observational study, newspaper analyses, political speeches and television statements. Quantitative analysis is being done using corpus tool (AntConc), it is used to examine word recurrence and lexical disparities. Qualitative discourse shows how gender-based identities are formed through language with assessment qualities such as personal pronouns, modal verbs, metaphors. This research is critical not just for its empirical findings but also for its practical and theoretical relevancy. Theoretically, it highlights how gender shapes political discourse within South Asia's distinctive cultural setting. It points towards insights on gender based political communication in Pakistan. In conclusion, this study examines how vocabulary use varies in political speeches of male and female politicians in Pakistan, the importance of these differences, and how they shape public opinion and reflects broader socio-political power relations. These differences are really crucial in assessing the way politicians speak or communicate and the way it has an effect on gender in political debate of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Language is powerful tool. It is a tool used by politicians in disseminating narratives. Every word matters. Political speeches are not merely statements because they do not merely exist as words but they constitute identities. Political rhetoric is well elaborated and each word has a semantic value. Audiences are convinced and plead to vote through the choice of words, vocabulary, tone and style. In this regard, it will be very important to be cognizant of how the politicians talk of issues, particularly when contrasting the male and the female style of communication. The dominance and difference models bestow theoretical framework. The dominance model devise language variation as a reflection of societal power, suggests that women language is more tentative to avoid assertiveness. It also states that women language is subordinate and men language is dominant. (Lakoff, 1975)

It has been found out that male and female politicians tend to vary in their use of language. Women prefer to be inclusive, emotive, polite, social and community-oriented. On the contrary, men are more inclined to be assertive and exclusive in the way they use language and focus on the national issues and matters, including leadership, power and economy. These differences depend on the disparities in culture, and the positions of the politicians within the society. Like in Pakistan, where patriarchy rules, male politicians are considered reliable and strong if they show no emotions, tend to be straightforward and strong in decisions. People support male politician more than female politician in Pakistan because female politicians are more emotive. Most cultures such as those in Pakistan have predictable expectations with regard to how women should communicate with empathy whereas men are expected to communicate with authority and decisiveness. These expectations influence the issues that politicians discuss as well as what they communicate.

Female Pakistani politicians usually draw focus on such social issues like health, education, children wellness and society development. They often use inclusive pronouns like we and our in their language establishing a

feeling of shared responsibility and duty with the citizens. The personal anecdotes and emotional language are also popular in order to address the audiences and to make the political message relatable. Benazir Bhutto can be mentioned as a rather interesting illustration. She also made references to children, families and social welfare despite the fact that she was addressing issues facing the country including democracy, governance and economic development. Bhutto used to make her speeches more personal by using short personal stories, tale about her life. This policy seems appealing to people, voters find her competent and compassionate, she connected well with the people by sharing personal tales and emotions. This method showed a striking balance, the necessity to demonstrate power and the need to share emotions to fit the requirements of the society expectations about a competent female leader.

This is not the case with a different rhetorical style taken by male politicians in Pakistan including Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif. They talk about the country priorities in relation to the economic growth, security, leadership, and development. They are more inclined to employ assertive verbs and modal verbs such as must and will to indicate the certainty and the control. Personal pronouns like I, my, etc., bring out leader-centred identity and support leadership. There are less emotional or anecdotal language, the key tone is rather formal, assertive and policy-oriented. Such style is based on cultural demands according to which the male politicians are expected to be strong, decisive and to master the issues of national interest.

Those differences in vocabulary and style of communication do not come in as mere personal decisions. They are also directly related to the political positions of men and women. In Pakistan, women have portfolios associated with social welfare, education, or health where portfolios in relation and community languages are highly appreciated. Men are often assigned to roles that require national position, governance or security where aggressive and commanding communication is demanded. Inclusive and emotive language is hence the method that is adopted by female politicians to earn legitimacy and strength by assertive language by male politicians. There are less researches on the study about vocabulary choice of politicians and importance of language in conveying political messages, especially corpus study on this topic in Pakistani context. And large language models like ChatGPT or chatbots is not used for data analysis in this regard.

To conclude, the study and examples of Pakistani politics tend to show that gender moderates both the choice of vocabulary and the tone in the conversation, as well as style. Women politicians employ people and emotion-driven language that emphasizes social and human problems, compared with male politicians who employ assertive and exclusive language, which involves leadership, power, and national interests. These trends indicate the importance of language in developing the political messages, the way people perceive things and negotiation of gendered identities in Pakistan politics.

Methodology

To examine the variation in the language of politicians and also to examine how female and male politicians vary in using different words in their language, the research design applied in this study is the corpus-based research. A corpus refers to a huge amount of texts that are utilized in the inspection of linguistics. It should be organized in a manner that makes it scrutinized. This is the way to enable quantitative identification of language patterns. This study was designed on a specific corpus. It was a collection of around 200,000 words. The

information is gathered on the basis of talk shows, speech of politician in National Assembly, Senate, and international forums. Moreover, the information is gathered on politician media discussions (2019-2024).

Female politician corpus group and male politician corpus group. It contains around 100,000 words in each group. It is the AntConc software (3.5.9). This software has aided in the identification of keywords, as well as, in making a keyword analysis. Besides it, it has also assisted in determining the high frequency words that male and female politicians use in their speeches. Moreover, it has assisted in making comparative analysis of both corpora and assisted in organizing the words based on the prevailing themes. This quantitative approach has shown that there exists lexical difference in speeches of politicians. Male politicians apply more commanding language in the way they are talking to the people, they are sure and direct.

Their discourse is centered on such themes as economy improvement, policy making and solution. They discuss the need to protect the country and have improved relations with the countries in the neighbourhood. Their speeches are based on empowering foreign policy. Female politician tone, on the other hand, is not as assertive. Their tone is soft and polite. They discuss people welfare, developing a good community and mostly about social problems. In Pakistan and particularly, the politics of the women leaders are concerned with women rights and welfare. Their speeches are based on education and health. Qualitative investigation is also featured in this study, it also entails the analysis of the critical discourse analysis (CDA) in order to make political discourse analysis. To investigate the role of political language in expressing difference in female and male political language. To examine the use of various words by politicians as prudent words, to establish narratives by their speech. The above mention arguments have numerous theories to back up. Such patterns are found in studies in various political states. Shaw (2002) discovered in the UK that the female MPs were more likely to mention education, health and children. The study is anchored on the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Gender and Language Studies. CDA considers language as a kind of a social practice, which is entrenched in power relations and ideological orders (Fairclough, 1995). In the same way, we are told in language studies that, the difference in communication is not entirely based on the biological factors. It entails other issues like social factors, societal norms and expectation. While, Deborah Tanner (1990) says that gendered differences are coming up due to cultural differences and not power, Robin Lakoff (1975) argues that gendered communication is a product of power relations. In Pakistan these variations of speech can be directly seen.

Findings and Discussion

This study used critical discourse analysis and corpus analysis to reveal differences in vocabulary choices made by female and male politicians in their political oration.

Lexical and Keyword Analysis Tables

1. Lexical Patterns

Linguistic Feature	Female Politicians	Male Politicians
Dominant Themes	Equality, children, well-being	Defence, authority, finance
Modal Verbs	"ought to"	"shall"
Pronoun Use	"we", "our", "you"	"I", "my", "they"

Lexical Diversity (TTR)	Higher (Avg. 0.67)	Lower (Avg. 0.59)
Emotional Language	High (hope, peace, suffering, unity)	Low (fact-based, assertive)

Tone and Style

- Female Speech Tone: Cooperative, empathetic, community-oriented
- Male Speech Tone: Assertive, competitive, nationalistic

2. Most Frequent Words (AntConc)

Male Politicians (Top 10 Words)

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	Nation	120
2	Leadership	110
3	Economy	100
4	Power	90
5	Security	80
6	Must	70
7	I	73
8	Progress	65
9	Fight	65
10	Development	70

Female Politicians (Top 10 Words)

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	People	132
2	support	116
3	community	105
4	Care	90
5	Health	93
6	We	90
7	Children	85
8	Education	83
9	Should	80
10	Future	75

3. Keyword Difference (Keyword List Tool)

Keywords Frequent in Female Politicians

Keyword	Log-likelihood	Freq (Female)	Freq (Male)
care	12.5	84	11
children	9.1	79	4
community	8.7	93	23
support	7.2	99	25
education	6.5	77	20

Keywords Frequent in Male Politicians

Keyword	Log-likelihood	Freq (Male)	Freq (Female)
nation	20.1	125	34
leadership	18.9	107	13
economy	15.3	92	19
fight	13.4	63	7
must	12.8	74	22

This results in substantial differences in language practices of men and women politicians in Pakistan, but these differences are to be handled with carefulness and put in the context of a larger sociopolitical and institutional environment. Although the role of gender appears to be a major factor when it comes to the decision-making in rhetoric, the data show that the linguistic dynamics are not determined exclusively by the gender identity, but also by the political roles, cultural presuppositions, and power relations in which these politicians operate. An exclusively gender approach would therefore not be able to capture the complexity of the political communication in Pakistan. Women politicians have always highlighted on community welfare, social development, health, education and the daily challenges of the citizens. Their frequent occurrence of such words as care, support, community, children, and education can be seen as the discourse style that can be termed as relational, people-oriented, and aimed at social improvement. The repetitive usage of the inclusive pronouns, i.e. we and our, emphasizes the sense of group and collaborative identity, common responsibility and solidarity. Such a rhetoric makes the speaker an extension of the community and not an authoritative figure who is far away. The emotional language and the use of personal anecdotes makes a woman politician appear more empathetic and immediate and enables such politicians to create rapport and moral authority with people. Their lexical diversity is rather high, which implies that they can use diverse strategies in narrating to express social issues and reflect various groups of the population. Male politicians on the contrary have a very different profile of lexical and rhetorical. Their discussions are filled with allusions to national matters which include economic stability, leadership, development, security and governance. Verbs like must, will, fight, win, implement, and build have strong and action-oriented words, which lead to an expression of authority, determination, and decisiveness. The higher level of pronouns like I and my is applied, which emphasizes

individualism and leadership, boosts hierarchical organizations and imparts condensed political authority. In contrast to the more emotional expressions of women, male politicians are overly dependent on fact and assertive as well as policy-driven utterances. This mode of rhetoric is in line with the established cultural norms in Pakistan that privilege masculinity with power, power, and leadership in the country.

Although these language use gendered patterns are evident, it is necessary to note that they can also be due to the kind of political positions that men and women normally hold. In Pakistan, women are also given soft ministries like social welfare, education or health in which relational and community-based communication is institutionally supported. Men, by their very job titles, which are associated with finance, national security and executive decision-making, naturally use words suggesting control, strategy and government. Thus, it can be viewed that the linguistic styles that are found in the corpus are the results of the political setting instead of natural gender distinctions. The empathy of female politicians towards community issues and the use of inclusive language can also be evaluated by the necessity to work with the political system where their power is often doubted. Empathetic and inclusive communication may become one of the methods of obtaining legitimacy in a male-dominated field..

These observations are supported by the key word analysis that reveals that there are drastic differences in lexical differences between the two groups. Words related closely to care and community are more pronounced in female speeches and the words that are related to nation and leadership are more common in male speeches. These findings provide quantitative validation of the theme patterns found in the corpus. Nevertheless, the analysis of keywords is limited. It quantifies frequency but does not take into consideration rhetorical role and contextual sensitivity. Indicatively, a similar word like fight could be applied both metaphorically and literally and another word like care or community might have different meanings based on the context in which it is applied. The interpretive power of key word data is limited without the analysis of collocations, semantic prosody, and larger narrative formats.

The results are to be considered in the framework of greater sociocultural factors. Pakistan is a society with clearly defined gender roles, which plays out in the way it shapes the political identity of men and women. Women are also expected to exhibit caring, moral, and community oriented attributes and this may influence their rhetorical choices. The Vice versa is true in the case of men, who are supposed to demonstrate authority, decisiveness, and visionary leadership. Such social pressures apply not only to the manner in which politicians speak but also to the manner in which the politicians are viewed and understood during the delivery of their speeches. Thus, linguistic practices are enactments of socially legitimate political subjects as opposed to manifesting gendered behaviour. According to the research, gender has a tremendous impact on the political language in Pakistan, but this is conditioned by the structural, cultural and institutional factors. The speech patterns reveal that there is some interaction between gender norms, political responsibility, and the power dynamics in the political sphere. In order to understand these dynamics fully, a holistic approach is required, the approach that considers both the quantitative data of linguistics and the sociopolitical context in which political discourse is being carried out.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study was intended to expose the statistically important dissimilarity in the vocabulary use by both groups. Both groups, consisting of female politician and male politicians use language differently. Their choice of words is different. Female politician lexicon is related to public welfare, education, children, food, hospitals, and society. Male political leaders use words which shows themes related to infrastructure, policies and defence. In CDA, it is showed how language is used to exercise power. Politicians use words to express their agenda explicitly. Male politicians use words which show them as strong leader and authoritative. On the contrary, female politicians use words which connects to the people, such words which leave a good impression on people heart. This research is a mingling of the language, politics and gender. In Pakistani context, these political speeches expose how words are used to set a narrative and play mind games to gain supporters. The declamation shows how authority is exercised, shared and how language is used to promote ideologies. The corpus study shows variation in tone, style and lexical patterns. This study has some implications. Sociolinguistics implication in the way, that it shows Pakistani context, which is used for studying how social norms impact lexicon. Secondly, political implication; women are directed to stand up for social issues only. Lastly, these patterns can change public perception. It can help public to recognize partiality and can help people to critically understand these political messages. This study is limited by its focus on vocabulary. Future researchers can dive deeper, by analysing metaphors, syntactic structure or intervention in political debates.

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