

## Language and its Relationship with Gender: A Study on Sociolinguistics Perspectives

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*Abstract: In all known societies, gender is a key construct, involving binary distinctions such as man–woman, male–female, masculine–feminine, and in all known societies language plays a crucial role in constructing and maintaining these distinctions. Women's and men's language usage has been found to vary in terms of grammar and pronunciation as well as in terms of conversational strategies such as hedging and turn-taking. There are many different—and conflicting—explanations for gender differentiation in language and the sociolinguistic understanding of gender has changed greatly in the last 20 years. Next, in the 1970s and 1980s, came a period which recognized the cultural construction of categories such as gender. During this period, more qualitative, ethnographic approaches predominated. In recent research, a more dynamic social constructionist approach has emerged which makes possible the combination of quantitative and qualitative research. It is also observed that any Influence of gender roles in language choice has become a very regular issue in day to day conversation. When we speak in a conversation, differences are created automatically between men and women. Now a days, a variation in using a language is seen mostly among the young people of Bangladesh.. Gender variation in language use has become a very common issue in everyday discourses of our life. This paper examines the differences and reasons behind difference of language use among the students of private universities of Dhaka city in Bangladesh. Questionnaires were given to twenty students of two private universities of Dhaka to conduct the survey. It was found that there are differences in case of language use between the two genders- male and female and their way of expressing any feeling through a language is also dissimilar.*

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**Key words:** *Language, Gender, conversational strategies, Gender variation, Formal and Informal Language.*

### **Introduction**

The research is going to focus on the relationship between gender and language and way of using language in male and female to find out the common difference on their conversation which reflects gender difference. Moreover, the aim is to find out the contrastive analysis between male and female on different context in private universities in Bangladesh.

Communication process by using language is one of the main differences between animal and human beings. Human beings use words to express their feelings, emotion etc. As time goes on changes occur in languages. Changing and moderation of language depends on time. New words new vocabularies, new expression have been added and someone have been replaced. No living language is simply one set of words which can be used the same way in all situations. [1] The nature of language is such that there are in infinite variety of different ways to arrange its elements. What this means is that there are many ways to say the same thing, depending on where person is, who person is talking to, and how person feel. When we use language frequently, we generally make differences from each other. The differences mainly occur among male and female. The use of language is different between men and women in case of vocabulary, in voice and tone, in syntactic structure and style and in conversational style. In each of the single part gender differs in a great extent. There is a number of close relationships between Gender and language. [2] Another word, men's way of using language and women's way of using language is different. It is because of structure of the language, norm of the society or people of the society who use the language. In the following passages, I will give some arguments in favour of my statements.

**Research Questions:** The areas which we are going to focus on:

1. Do male students and female students use language differently at the tertiary level?
2. How do they speak differently like formal, informal and casual in different situation?
3. What are the most common differences among them?

**Methodology:** This research deals with a small-scale, quantitative survey on the impact of gender variation in language use.

The research was administered in the two private universities of Bangladesh. The researcher took permission from the authorities of the universities. Then the survey questionnaires were distributed among the randomly selected students of different departments. The researchers collected data from private universities and took interview of the students and asked them relevant questions for analyzing use of formal and informal language in their everyday life. The researchers prepared set of questions and ask them to fill it up. The age range of the participants is 18-22 years.

A detailed discussion on the objective of the research, the significance of the study, instruments, participants, and process of analysis has been included here. Questionnaire consisting of multiple-choice items was distributed to the students of different private universities. The research was based on open ended questions and face to face interview.

**Literature Review:** Some well-known linguists like Lakoff, Taneen, Cameron explore the reflect of gender differences in pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary and discourse style from the perspective of sociolinguistics research, and analyze the latest reasons of these differences and development and changes. (Wenjing, 2012). Lakoff (1975) found that female is seen using more intensifiers in their regular conversation than male, such as “so”, “awfully”, “pretty”, “terribly”, “quite” and so on. [3] Labov (1966), Levine & Crockett (1966) and Trudgil (1972) have theorized that men use more slang expressions than women. According to Wenjing (2012), women pay more attention to language elegance. The expressions like Shit! /damn weather! / The hell with him! - are usually avoided by women. They don't use abusive words or language in their formal conversation. According to Lakoff (1975), “women use more tag questions than men and also they use more hedges in their conversation than men as well. Gender is also a fact that we cannot avoid; it is part of the way in which societies are formed around us.” (Wardhaugh ,2010) .

According to Crawford (1995, p.1), „men and women...are fated to misunderstand each other

unless they recognize their deeply socialized differences“. Crawford describes how the „fundamental differences between women and men shape the way they talk“. [4] The main emphasis on this approach is on the way in which men and women develop themselves in different subcultures. Moreover, Lakoff (1975) found that female use more intensifiers than male, such as “so”, “awfully”, “pretty”, “terribly”, “quite” and so on. Labov (1966), Levine & Crockett (1966) and

[5] Trudgil (1972) have speculated that men use more slang expressions than women. According to Wenjing (2012), women pay more attention to language elegance. The expression like Shit! / The damned weather! / The hell with him! These are avoided by women. They don't use abusive words in conversation. According to Lakoff (1975), women use more tag questions than men. Women use more hedges than men do.

Some recent studies have failed to replicate these findings. Thomson and Murachver's (2001) study of e-mail communication found that men and women were equally likely to ask questions; offer compliments, apologies, and opinions; and to hurl insults at their "net pal." [6] Other studies have reported significant differences in the opposite direction. In a comparison of 36 female and 50 male managers giving professional criticism in a role play, it was the men who used significantly more negations and asked more questions, and the women who used more directives (Mulac, Seibold, & Farris, 2000). [9] However, the study did confirm that men used more words overall, whereas women used longer sentences. One possible explanation for these contradictory reports is that the different contexts in which the language samples were generated which influenced the size and direction of the gender differences. [10]

**Findings:** From my survey I have found out the gender difference in language use among the participants in private university of Bangladesh.

This chapter contains the findings of all participants' multiple-choice questions and the analytical explanation of the answers. The survey was conducted among twenty students from different departments of five private universities in Dhaka city. Among them 10 were male and the rest 10 were female students. Here, the findings will be discussed with tables and short descriptions.

**Table 1: Formal and Informal**

Options	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
<b>Formal</b>	<b>4(40%)</b>	<b>8(60%)</b>	<b>12(60%)</b>
<b>Informal</b>	<b>6(75%)</b>	<b>2(25%)</b>	<b>8(40%)</b>

In table 1, we can see that 12 percent of the total participants use formal language with others. Among them boys are 40 percent and girls are 60 percent. On the other hand, we can see that 40 percent of the total participants use informal language with others. Among them boys are 75 percent and girls are 25 percent. The result of the table shows that the extensive use of formal and informal language among the private university's students in Bangladesh.

**Table 2: Using tag questions**

Options	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Yes	5(36%)	9(64%)	14(70%)
No	4(67%)	2(33%)	6(30%)

In table 2, we can see that 70 percent of the total participants use tag questions while using language. Among them boys are 36 percent and girls are 64 percent. On the other hand, we can see that 30 percent of the total participants do not use tag questions. Among them, boys are 67 percent and girls are 33 percent. The result of the table shows that the extensive use of tag questions among the private universities of Bangladesh

**Table 3: Tone of talk**

Options	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Loudly	8(60%)	4(40%)	12(60%)
Softly	3(37%)	5(63%)	8(40%)

In table 3, we can see that 60 percent of the total participants talk loudly. Among them boys are 60 percent and girls are 40 percent. On the other hand, 40 percent of the total participants talk softly. Among them boys are 37 percent and girls are 63 percent. The result of the table shows that the extensive use of talking loudly among the private universities of Bangladesh.

**Table 4: Use of taboo words and slang**

Options	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Yes	11(69%)	5(31%)	16(80%)
No	1(25%)	3(75%)	4(20%)

In table 5, we can see that 80 percent of the total participants use taboo words and slang while using language. Among them boys are 69 percent and girls are 31 percent. On the other hand, we can see that 20 percent of the total participants do not use taboo words and slang. Among them boys are 25 percent and girls are 75 percent. The result of the table shows that the extensive use of taboo words and slang among the private universities in Bangladesh.

**Table 5: Using adjectives**

Options	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Yes	4(27%)	11(73%)	15(75%)
No	3(60%)	2(40%)	5(25%)

In table 5, we can see that 75 percent of the total participants use adjectives while speaking. Among them 27 percent are male and 73 percent are female. On the other hand, 25 percent of the total participants do not use those adjectives. Among them male are 60 percent and female are 73 percent. The result of the table depicts the extensive use of adjectives among the private university students in Dhaka city. It can be interpreted from the data of this table that female use more adjectives in a conversation than male do

Apart from five multiple choice questions, there was one open ended question for the participants to answer. The question was- “*Suppose, you are going to a tour from your department in Khagrachhari and sajek valley . How will you share your excitement and feeling with your family members?*” In answer to this question male are found to use informal Bangla language more than female. Almost all the answers from the females were in English. Some of them used indirect speech but none of the male participants used indirect speech in their answer. Female were expressive than male and the length of the answer was short in male participants; answers.

**Limitations:** The study was conducted among only the students of two private universities in Dhaka city. There are also other private universities inside and outside Dhaka. But it was not possible to make contact with the students of those universities because of time. Also this research was only done on a limited number of participants and the explanations that are given are also limited. The researcher wished to survey on more participants for her research. But shortage of time has concluded the research with six people only. Moreover, as students were not interested to answer open ended questions and were comfortable with multiple choice items, it was not possible to take interview of students.

### **Recommendation**

We are affected by Formal and informal language every day. To some people, the differences are very subtle, and the need to use a more formal style or vocabulary is non-existent. [7]As a society, the type of language that is used, whether it is formal or informal, is directly dependent on the culture and custom that are the most widespread. In the age of Television and the internet, the need to communicate to the audience at its level has degraded the level of formality needed in order to speak. From research study, it is clear that the extensive use of formal and informal language among the private university students in Bangladesh and using formal and informal language vary from male to female . During the observation it was noticed that the students of

private universities sector , most of the students used casual language with each other and they tried to talk in formal language when they conversation with their teacher. But it is not properly formal language. After the research it is understood that before entering university level students (boys and girls) should learn from school and college about the appropriate language usage in different situations. Last of all I would like to recommend other researchers to reach the level of effect of gender and language relationship in different situations where I could not reach properly.[8]

### Conclusion

There can be no difference in any language itself. But language can be used by people to achieve a particular purpose which reflects the personal or social values. Restriction of the use of language because of the social environment creates gender difference mostly. From the research study it is clear that male and female languages are quite different. This difference occurs mostly in vocabulary use, voice and tone, syntactic structure and style of using language. Moreover, there are some common differences and some common similarities in using language. The research study shows that in recent time the youth are practicing these differences in a large extent. While uttering a language their different ways of using language reflects the gender difference. The using of language differently also creates many variations in communication[11]. Finally it should be pointed out that the way is still endless for researchers to disclose more and more detailed difference between male and female language. To conclude, it should be remembered that the differences are still endless for researchers to find out more explicit and detailed differences between male and female in their way of using language.

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## **Appendix**

### **Survey Questionnaire**

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender: Male/ Female**  
**Institution's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Level of Study:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Educational Background:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. In a conversation, what type of language do you use?
  - a) Formal language
  - b) Informal Language
2. While in a conversation, do you use tag questions like "...isn't it?", "...don't you?", "...right?"
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
3. In a conversation, how do you talk?
  - a) Talk loudly
  - b) Talk softly
4. Do you use taboo words and slang like "Shit", "Damn", "Hell" in your daily conversation?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
5. Do you prefer using adjective in describing anything?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
6. *Suppose, you are going to a tour from your department in Khagrachhari and sajek valley . How will you share your excitement and feeling with your family members?*