

## **GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE USE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Language plays a significant role in shaping communication, identity, and social interaction in academic environments. This study investigates gender differences in language use among university students, focusing on communication styles, politeness strategies, emotional expression, classroom interaction, and digital communication practices. The research employed a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students. The findings revealed that female students generally used more collaborative, polite, and emotionally expressive language, while male students tended to prefer direct, assertive, and competitive communication styles. The study also found that both male and female students modified their language according to context, audience, and online environments.*

**Keywords:** *Gender differences, Language use, Sociolinguistics, Communication styles, Gender identity, Digital communication, Classroom interaction, Politeness strategies, Discourse analysis.*

## **UNIVERSITET TALABALARI O‘RTASIDA TIL QO‘LLANISHIDAGI GENDER FARQLARI**

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### **ANNOTATSIYA**

*Til akademik muhitda muloqot, identitet va ijtimoiy o‘zaro ta’sirni shakllantirishda muhim rol o‘ynaydi. Ushbu tadqiqot universitet talabalari orasida til qo‘llanilishidagi gender farqlarini o‘rganadi hamda muloqot uslublari, xushmuomalalik strategiyalari, emotsional ifoda, auditoriya ichidagi o‘zaro munosabat va raqamli kommunikatsiya amaliyotlariga e’tibor qaratadi. Tadqiqotda aralash metodologik yondashuvdan foydalanildi va unda so‘rovnomalar, auditoriya kuzatuvlari hamda bakalavr bosqichi talabalari bilan yarim tuzilgan intervyular o‘tkazildi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatdiki, talaba qizlar ko‘proq hamkorlikka asoslangan,*

*xushmuomala va emotsional jihatdan ifodali til birliklaridan foydalanadilar, talaba yigitlar esa ko'proq to'g'ridan-to'g'ri, qat'iy va raqobatga yo'naltirilgan kommunikativ uslublarni afzal ko'radilar. Tadqiqot shuningdek, har ikkala jins vakillari ham o'z nutqini kommunikativ vaziyat, auditoriya va onlayn muhitga mos ravishda o'zgartirishini aniqladi.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *Gender farqlari, til qo'llanilishi, sotsiolingvistika, kommunikatsiya uslublari, gender identifikatsiyasi, raqamli kommunikatsiya, auditoriya interaksiyasi, xushmuomalalik strategiyalari, diskurs tahlili.*

## **ГЕНДЕРНЫЕ РАЗЛИЧИЯ В ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИИ ЯЗЫКА СРЕДИ СТУДЕНТОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТА**

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### **АННОТАЦИЯ**

*Язык играет важную роль в формировании коммуникации, идентичности и социального взаимодействия в академической среде. Данное исследование рассматривает гендерные различия в использовании языка среди студентов университетов, уделяя особое внимание стилям общения, стратегиям вежливости, эмоциональной экспрессии, взаимодействию в аудитории и практике цифровой коммуникации. В исследовании использовался смешанный методологический подход, включающий анкетирование, наблюдение за учебными занятиями и полу структурированные интервью со студентами бакалавриата. Результаты показали, что студентки чаще используют кооперативный, вежливый и эмоционально-выразительный язык, тогда как студенты мужского пола предпочитают более прямой, уверенный и конкурентный стиль общения. Исследование также выявило, что представители обоих полов изменяют свою речь в зависимости от контекста, аудитории и онлайн-среды.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Гендерные различия, использование языка, социолингвистика, стили коммуникации, гендерная идентичность, цифровая коммуникация, взаимодействие в аудитории, стратегии вежливости, дискурс-анализ.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language is one of the most important tools of human communication and social interaction. It not only conveys information but also reflects identity, culture, social relationships, and power structures. Among the many sociolinguistic factors influencing language use, gender has received considerable scholarly attention over the past several decades. Researchers have explored how males and females differ in vocabulary choice, conversational style, politeness strategies, emotional expression, and communication purposes.

In contemporary society, gender differences in language use are increasingly visible in educational settings, especially among university students. Academic environments provide opportunities for interaction through classroom discussions, presentations, group projects, and digital communication platforms. These interactions often reveal differences in linguistic behavior between male and female students. Recent sociolinguistic research argues that gendered communication is socially constructed and influenced by cultural expectations, institutional norms, and digital environments rather than biological differences alone (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013).

The rapid development of technology and social media has also transformed communication practices among young adults. University students frequently interact through online platforms where language use becomes more flexible, informal, and identity-oriented. As a result, traditional gendered communication patterns are continuously changing in response to digital culture and globalization.

Despite extensive international research on language and gender, studies focusing specifically on university students in multilingual and educational contexts remain limited. Moreover, modern university communication involves both face-to-face and online interaction, creating new dimensions of gendered language practices that require further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to examine gender differences in language use among university students by analyzing communication styles, politeness strategies, classroom interaction, emotional expression, and digital communication behavior.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Gender differences in language use have become an important area of research in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and communication studies. Modern scholars argue that language not only functions as a communication tool but also reflects identity, social roles, power relations, and cultural expectations. Recent studies after 2010 have increasingly focused on how gender influences communication styles among university students in both face-to-face and digital environments.

Contemporary sociolinguistic theory emphasizes that gendered language behavior is socially constructed rather than biologically determined. According to Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (2013), language and gender are closely connected to identity performance and social interaction. They argue that linguistic choices depend on context, community practices, and institutional expectations rather than fixed male or female speech patterns.

Recent studies indicate that female students generally employ more cooperative and interaction-oriented communication strategies. Research conducted by Al-Otaibi and Hussain (2024) on Saudi university students demonstrated that female learners used more interactional meta discourse markers in academic writing, showing stronger tendencies toward reader engagement and interpersonal communication. Male students, in contrast, demonstrated more direct and information-centered discourse patterns.

Digital communication has further transformed gendered language use among university students. Studies show that social media platforms, online learning systems, and instant messaging applications encourage informal and identity-based communication. According to Herring (2013), women tend to produce more supportive and emotionally expressive online communication, while men frequently use assertive and humor-oriented expressions.

Recent discourse studies also reveal gender differences in classroom participation. Holmes (2013) found that male students often dominate argumentative discussions and interruptions, whereas female students demonstrate more collaborative conversational behavior. Female students frequently use politeness markers, hedges, and supportive responses to maintain interpersonal harmony.

Another important development in recent literature is the increasing focus on gender-inclusive language. Yang and Zhang (2024) observed that university students are becoming more aware of gender-neutral linguistic forms such as singular “they” and inclusive vocabulary in academic communication. This shift reflects broader global discussions concerning equality, identity, and representation in language.

Furthermore, multilingualism and globalization have influenced gendered communication practices. Modern university students often adapt their language according to audience, social context, and digital platforms. Researchers argue that communication styles are becoming more fluid and flexible in contemporary educational environments. Although many international studies have explored language and gender, limited research has investigated these issues specifically among university students in multilingual educational contexts. Therefore, further

research is needed to understand how gender influences communication styles, classroom interaction, and digital discourse among modern university learners.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate gender differences in language use among university students. The study involved 80 undergraduate students from a university English department: 40 male students and 40 female students. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old and represented multilingual backgrounds.

### ***Research Instruments***

Three research instruments were used for data collection.

#### **1. Questionnaire**

A structured questionnaire containing 25 Likert-scale items was administered to participants. The questionnaire focused on:

- communication preferences;
- politeness strategies;
- emotional language use;
- classroom participation;
- slang and informal expressions;
- online communication habits.

#### **2. Classroom Observation**

Classroom discussions and group activities were observed over four weeks. The observation focused on:

- interruption frequency;
- turn-taking patterns;
- conversational dominance;
- politeness markers;
- supportive responses.

#### **3. Semi-Structured Interviews**

Twelve students participated in interviews discussing:

- communication behavior;
- language preferences;
- digital communication;
- perceptions of gender and language use.

### ***Data Analysis***

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and percentage distributions. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were

analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring linguistic patterns and communication behaviors.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

All participants provided informed consent before participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings revealed several significant gender differences in language use among university students.

### ***Classroom Interaction***

Observation data showed that male students interrupted speakers more frequently during classroom discussions. They also demonstrated greater dominance in argumentative and competitive conversations. Female students, however, displayed more collaborative communication styles and frequently used supportive expressions such as agreement markers and clarification requests.

These findings support Holmes' (2013) argument that women generally prioritize interpersonal communication and cooperation, whereas men tend to use language to demonstrate authority and status.

### ***Politeness Strategies***

Questionnaire results indicated that female students used politeness markers, hedges, and empathetic expressions more frequently than male students. Expressions such as: "I think," "maybe," "could you explain," "I agree with your opinion" were more common among female participants.

Male students preferred shorter and more direct sentence structures. This finding corresponds with recent metadiscourse studies demonstrating that female learners tend to focus more on interpersonal engagement in communication.

### ***Digital Communication***

The study also revealed gender differences in online interaction. Male students demonstrated higher use of slang, abbreviations, and humorous expressions in social media communication. Female students showed greater concern for emotional tone, clarity, and audience reaction.

However, both groups reported adjusting their communication styles according to platform and audience. This suggests that gendered language behavior is highly context-dependent in modern digital environments.

### ***Identity Construction***

Interview findings showed that students consciously modified their language to fit social expectations and peer-group norms. Some female participants reported

avoiding overly assertive language to prevent negative social judgments, while male students expressed pressure to appear confident and dominant in discussions.

These findings support contemporary sociolinguistic theories that view gender as a social performance shaped through language and interaction.

### ***Gender-Inclusive Language***

Several participants demonstrated awareness of gender-neutral language practices in academic writing and online communication. Some students preferred inclusive vocabulary and singular “they” to avoid gender bias.

This reflects modern linguistic trends toward inclusivity and equality in communication practices.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined gender differences in language use among university students in academic and digital contexts. The findings demonstrated that female students generally employed more collaborative, polite, and emotionally expressive communication styles, whereas male students preferred more direct, assertive, and informal language patterns.

The research also showed that modern communication practices are increasingly shaped by social media, online interaction, and evolving understandings of gender identity. Students actively adapt their language according to audience, social expectations, and communicative context.

Importantly, the study confirms that gendered language use is socially and culturally influenced rather than biologically fixed. Contemporary university students display flexible and dynamic communication practices that reflect identity construction, peer-group interaction, and digital culture.

The study contributes to sociolinguistic and discourse research by providing insights into modern gendered communication among university learners. The findings may also help educators create more inclusive and balanced classroom interaction environments.

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