The linguistic representation of gender ethnicity, and social class in Pakistan television drama

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Abstract

The paper is a discourse analysis of the construction and negotiation of the identities of gender, ethnicity and social classes in Pakistani TV dramas and movies. Based on a mixed-method corpus of contemporary popular TV serial fare and feature films (2000-2025), the study employs the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and other sociolinguistic and methodological tools to study lexical choices, conversational routines, code -switching, dialect representation, politeness strategies, and reported speech. The research poses the question of how cinema and television discourse replicates, disrupts or Circumvents general social order and stereotyped roles of identity. Data is obtained through purposive sampling of interaction-indexing scenes of camera systematic observation (family, workplace, judiciary, city streets), transcribed into a search-able corpus, and coded qualitatively through recurrent linguistic patterns linked with gendered signifiers of social identity (gender, ethnic identity signals (e.g. Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi language traits), and embodiments of social status (formal vs. colloquial registers, lexical prestige). The results will aim to discover the discursive dynamics of how media enact social meanings, to trace the overlaps of language and power within the Pakistani audiovisual culture and to support development of media guidelines and media policy recommendations in the direction of new volume in representation. The paper makes a contribution to sociolinguistics, media studies, cultural studies as it develops a formula to read language in Pakistani screen narratives as ideologically loaded.
Keywords: Pakistan media; discourse analysis; critique; sociolinguistics; gendered representations; ethnicity; social group; code switching; drama TV; motion picture.

Chapter 1: Introduction
1.1 Background of the Study
In Pakistan, television dramas and movies are not only just the sources of entertainments, they are extremely strong sources of culture that form, strengthen, and occasionally defy status quo social norms. Being one of the main arenas of discursive society, these mediums act as reflectors and shapers of attitude in the society towards gender, ethnicity and social class. Such scripted performances of talk in such productions served as one of the means of spreading certain styles of speaking, thinking, and acting thus constructing a negotiating identities. Language decisions are rarely neutral in the case of a multicultural and multilingual society like that in Pakistan. They sport connotations and overtures as to where a speaker stands socially, culturally, and in terms of ideology.

Pakistani television dramas have changed greatly in the areas of subject matters, quality of production as well as audience size since the beginning of the 21st century. The period between 2000 and 2025 has witnessed greater commercialisation, international broadcasting and media streaming services which makes the power of such narratives greater than the sovereign nation. The ways of how the different forms of language are depicted, either with the Urdu language in formal levels, regional dialects as Punjabi, Pashto, or Sindhi, or a mixed-Urdu English code switching that become dominant in urban places, can be used as a medium of perceiving further into sociolinguistic processes. These discursive formations do not occur by chance, they are formulated so that they either correspond to or contradict the expectations of the audience, the commercial and retrogressive interests of the audience as well as socio-political ideologies.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
Although Pakistani media is extensively researched on thematic content and gender representation, there are less studies that have completed a linguistic form of identity encoding of gender, ethnicity and social class in dialogues. The available literature dwells to a large extent on visual depictions, plotlines, or the type of characters portrayed without looking systematically at the selection of language that goes into the depiction of the same. This gap matters a great deal since ideological message is sometimes present in linguistic representation but visual cues alone are not enough to deliver such message. In a society whereby the language use is closely related to the social hierarchies and cultural capital, the discourse of media characters can be critical grounds upon which the propagation or opposition of stereotypes can be understood.

1.3 Significance of the Study
This study has great importance in the following ways. First, it connects the areas of sociolinguistics, media studies and cultural study, as it considers the linguistic aspect of representation of identity. Second, it uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical approach, which allows revealing the power patterns concealed in the language practices. Third, the study will provide diachronic offshoot in linguistic representation by exploring the phenomenon of nature of a sample of Pakistani television dramas and films within a 25-year timeframe; this diachronic change reflects the high-level transformation on societal and political levels in the country of Pakistan. The results can be used to not only inform the academic discourse but also be used in literacy programs, policy-making, and industry practices to increase awareness of the advantages of more complex and fairer representation of diverse identities.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study has the main aims of:

- An in-depth analysis of how gender identities are constructed linguistically through Pakistani televisions and cinema.
- To explore the ethnic identities representation by means of dialect selection, code switching patterns, and word markers.
- In order to examine how classes are indexed using variations in the registers, politeness strategies and prestice markers in speech.
- To investigate how these linguistic representation can strengthen dominant forms of social hierarchies, or subvert them, as well as reorganize them.
- To give advice to media practitioners and policy makers in making more balanced and less exclusive linguistic images.

1.5 Research Questions

Through the study, the following research questions are answered:

- What do Pakistani television (dramas and films) linguistically accomplish vis-a-vis gendering as a mode of linguistic representation?
- Which linguistic element (dialect, switching of codes, choice of lexicon) should express ethnic identities?
- What are the ways in which the social class is indexed in instances of a dialog with the use of language?
- Rom how well do these depictions either reflect or subvert social stereotypes?
- How do these representations implicate onto the views of the people as well as the media policy?

1.6 Scope and Delimitation

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Media and language is an issue which has always been in the focus of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and studies of cultures. Offering the visual component of entertainment and fulfilling the role of cultural signifiers, the television dramas and films are also spaces where social ideologies can be articulated and existentially spread. In a multilingual, multicultural country like Pakistan, language selection in the written exchanges takes place hardly as a neutral gesture; it

has overt and implicit messages attached to it concerning identity, status, and belonging. Offering a critical look at the available academic literature on linguistic representation of gender, ethnicity, and social stratum in the audiovisual media, especially focusing on the Pakistani television dramas and movies, this literature review attempts to draw upon the findings and conclusion presented by the listed contributors. It also addresses the theoretical perspectives upon which this research is founded viz: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the sociolinguistics approach to variation and identity theory and the representation theory. This chapter, through synthesis of research conducted at local and global levels, establishes patterns, gaps and methods of research that form the basis of the current study.

2.2 Language, Power, and Representation in Media

The theoretical orientations of language and media in general can agree on their assumption that discourse is one of the areas through which power can be exercised, contested and legitimated. Faricough (1995), van Dijk (2008) and Wodak (2001) have formulated the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which gives an account of interrogation of linguistic structures as it concerns the socio-political world at large. CDA does not consider language as a transparent vehicle but rather as a mode of social practice whose role either recreates or challenges the existing power relations, hegamonies.

Fairclough three dimensional model is useful especially in the media setting (the 3 dimensions being text, discursive practice, and social; practice). The text is the linguistic aspects of the dialogues, discursive practice is connected to the production and reception processes, whereas the social practice is all about ideology and the institutional infrastructures that existed in the media landscape. The socio-cognitive approach by Van Dijk also serves to highlight the impact that linguistic cues in a media narrative have on the interpretation of the narrative by audiences who share the same mental models and expertise.

Close to CDA, the representation theory (Hall, 1997) explains how meaningfulness could be constructed with symbolic systems comprising of language, images, and performance. Within the Pakistani television drama, the spoken word is incorporated into visual and cultural signs, all of which determine a sense of gender, ethnicity, and social classes. This theoretical consolidation shows language as a powerful instrument of ideology in the discourse of media.

2.3 Gender Representation in Media Discourse

2.3.1 Global Perspectives

Cross-cultural research on media discourse frequently shows that gender-specific language patterns occur. Talbot (2010) and Sunderland (2004) write how male characters are usually shown to be aggressive, logical decision-makers, whereas, a female character is presented as emotional, supportive or someone who is dependent. Analysis of speech acts often reveals such facts as men receive more conversation turns, interruptions, and directive talk and female speech is linked to politeness strategies, hedging, and affect talk (Tannen, 1990).

Not only does media reflect the gender norms in the society but it is also involved in the process of their construction. In her article, Mills (2008) states that by recurring within the scripts of television and films, stereotypical uses of language become natural, which results in gendered ways of communication being presented as a biological issue, instead of being a socially

constructed one. There are socialisation implications of this to the audience, especially to the young viewers.**2.3.2 South Asian and Pakistani Contexts**

In the case of South Asia, the patriarchal standards have always affected the way the visual and linguistic representations of women have been treated in the media (Khan, 2018). In early Pakistani television drama of the PTV period (1970s to the 1990s), women were generally shown as being in home and their language was that of deference, modesty and obedience. Male language on the other hand tended to be forceful, commanding and even civic.

As media liberalisation took place after the year 2000 in Pakistan, the number of female roles in Pakistani culture became more diverse, with the introduction of the private channels. Nevertheless, Khurshid and Shah (2019) observe that language changes were unequal, and whereas there are female heroes who can use bold and upfront speech styles that criticize male power, some of the female characters are still restricted to conventional politeness codes. Moreover, there is always evidence of domination associated with the language of men including interruption, assessing, and ignoring other people to adjust to their speech.

New plays such as Udaari and Sang-e-Mah have been discussed to be one such representation and the change in the writing style of female characters has been seen as new assertive vocabulary being exercised by the female characters and is seen to be in line of the broader social-political change to empower women. However, linguistic sexism (shown through forms of address, gendered metaphor and asymmetric turn-taking) is still widespread.

2.4 Ethnicity, Dialect, and Code-Switching in Media

2.4.1 Dialect as an Ethnic Marker

The speakers in the Pakistani media use linguistic variation as a conspicuous sign of ethnicity. As Rahman (2011) and Manan et al. (2017) recount, particular phonological and lexical elements are linked to identities of regions of Metroland: Punjabi as earthy humour and physicality, Pashto as honour and martial values, Sindhi as cultural richness, and Urdu as urban sophistication and refinement. Such associations, although they indeed are based on sociolinguistic differences, are many times blown out of proportion or stereotyped in television and film.

These depictions may promote cultural awareness but such depictions can lead to essentialisation of ethnic identities. Asymmetrical power relationships between dominant and marginalised groupings are further substantiated where the ethnic dialects are leveraged to be used either in a comedic way or to show naivety.

2.4.2 Code-Switching and Multilingualism

One of the characteristics of urban Pakistani, especially in the middle and upper classes is the use of code- switching between Urdu and English. This linguistic practice in the media indexes and potentially is a satirical device indexing education, modernity, and cosmopolitanism, but it can also be deployed as a sign of pretentiousness, cultural detachment or distance (Mahboob, 2009).

As its authors posit, the selective code-switching scripting can be deployed to reflect as well as reaffirm class boundaries (Manan et al., 2017). Whereas in some dramas, a realistic pattern of code-switching is deployed, in others it is used with exaggeration to reflect the characterisation, and hence it may generate the perception in the viewers about bilingual speakers. English insertions are used to connote prestige in some situations with characters being identified with

globalised identity and used in more informal or emotional situations as in the case of Urdu or local dialect.

2.5 Social Class and Language in Media

2.5.1 Linguistic Stratification

This theory of restricted and elaborated codes as put across by Bernstein (1971) can be useful in studying the class-based language use in the media. Upper-class characters in pakistani dramas speak in standard Urdu or English, which is complex in syntax, low redundancy and has complex vocabulary. In comparison, the characters belonging to the working classes resort to the colloquial form of Urdu or the local dialect more often, drawn to a higher redundancy and directness and idiomatic forms (Mahmood, 2020).

The linguistic capital explained by Bourdieu (1991) is even more elucidatory as to why some speech varieties are more prestigious. Pakistani media valorises formal Urdu and English as forms of education and culture; other rural dialects are less valorised, and are commonly regarded as less educated and sophisticated.

2.5.2 Shifts in Class Representation

The recent trends of Pakistani dramas have shown more flexible types of linguistic depictions of classes. In stories of upward mobility, characters are expected to alternate between registers, as they have their place in the social change. This register-shifting may undermine the strict linguistic-hierarchies demonstrating the ability to operate several codes. However, the fact that prestige bias exists in favor of English and formal Urdu presupposes that a linguistic hierarchy is not likely to be abolished.

2.6 CDA and Audio-visual Media Analysis

CDA has been used to a great extent on the print and broadcast news but not on television drama dialogue and this is relatively new. Researchers including Bednarek (2010) and Richardson (2007) stress that it is essential to focus on both verbal and non-verbal components because the meaning in the audiovisual media is in connection with the interaction of language sense, performance and visual framing.

CDA has been applied to the study of Pakistani political talk shows, advertisements and news broadcasts (e.g. Jaspal & Mahmood, 2019), although less is known, especially on a systematic level, about how CDA can be applied to dialogue in scripted dramas. The methodological dilemma is how to take into consideration the artificially constructed character of this kind of talk, which is, at the same time, both creation of aesthetic predilection, economic determination, and cultural resolution.

2.7 Gaps in Existing Literature

Although there is escalated relevance of media discourse study, there are three major gaps as far as the Pakistani context is concerned:

1.Combined attention to a plurality of identity parameters A majority of backgrounds look at gender, ethnicity, or class separately instead of looking at how they intersect.

2.Longitudinal analysis- Most of the works do not monitor the variation that occurs over long periods of linguistic representation with the need to capture social political and media industries in the shift.

3.Formal linguistic coding- Most of the current research is based on thematic analysis without thorough linguistic coding of specific elements like speech acts, politeness forms and lexical choice.

This paper fills these gaps by adopting a corpus-based study of 25 years along with CDA, which is combined with sociolinguistic analysis, to see the linguistic representation of gender, ethnicity and class on the Pakistani television dramas and movies.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the statement of the methodological framework of study outlines the research design, sampling plans, data collection procedures, the method of analysis, and the issues of ethics. Such an approach to methodology relates to the aim of the study to look into building gender, ethnicity, and social class through language in Pakistan television dramas and films with the aid of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) coupled with sociolinguistic methods. Since audiovisual media represents the multimodal form of discourse, the methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative components, which makes a detailed and systematic analysis of the data possible.

3.2 Research Design

The research design the study has adopted is mixed methodology- qualitative dominant. The qualitative aspect includes the analysis of chosen dialogues on a discoursal level, which implies the in-depth discussion of ideology patterns and representations of the identity. The quantitative component is made up of frequency counts and distribution of particular linguistic phenomena (e.g. politeness strategies, instances of code switching, dialect features) to offer empirical backing to qualitative interpretations.

This design is guided by CDA interest in a critical stance, which focuses on correlation between the micro-linguistic arrangements and macro-socio-political settings, and the theory of sociolinguistic variation which sums up how speech reflects and marks social identities.

3.3 Population and Sampling

3.3.1 Population

The study it will involve the population of Pakistani television dramas and films that are produced and currently being aired in 2000 and 2025; that is characterised with dramatic changes in the media landscape of the country such as; liberalisation of the broadcasting industry, mushrooming of the television channels in the country, and streaming platforms.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling method was used to gather the media texts that have been culturally influential as well as linguistically laden. The following were the selection criteria:

- ⬛Average popularity and cultural influence, as shown by ratings, reviews or opinions of the crowd, social media chats.
- ⬛Strong representation of various socio-economic backgrounds, regional backgrounds and issues of themes.
- Inclusion of different production houses and channels in order to eliminate bias with respect to networks.
- Availability of entire episode or scripts to analyze.

3.3.3 Sample Size and Composition

The final sample includes (list them):

- ⬜ 10 television dramas (each consisting of 3-5 episodes chosen in respect of linguistic richness, approximately 40-50 hours of material).
- 5 Pakistani feature films which were chosen on the basis of the scope of culture and the exploration of different identities.

The selected dramas and movies are of urban, rural, and hybrid location, as well as, both Urdu-centric and multilingual in order to reflect the aspect of diversity of languages in Pakistan.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

3.4.1 Transcription

The accurate transcription of all targeted scenes was followed, including the linguistic elements of a variety (code-switching, dialect pronunciation, or pragmatic signs (e.g., pauses, interruptions). Relevant Jeffersonian encoding rules were modified to the extent of readability though important interactional information was not lost.

3.4.2 Contextual Notes

Along with the transcription of conversations, the contextual information was recorded about the location scenario, the role of participants, body-language, and image framing. Such an approach to multimodal annotation will mean that the linguistic decisions will be understood with the meaning of the larger plot and image.

3.4.3 Data Management

Originally, transcriptions have been digitised and deposited in a searchable corpus format, which allowed convenient access and retrieval of linguistic forms in order to study them. They assisted in performing focused analysis with corpus organisation entailing the use of thematic tags (e.g., gendered speech, ethnic dialect markers, etc.).

3.5 Analytical Framework

3.5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The main analytical concept is the three-dimensional CDA model created by Fairclough and consisting of:

1.Textual Analysis - Reading the words, word usage, grammar, seamlessness and rhetorical structures.

2.Discursive Practice- Study of production and consumption contexts, such as positioning (to intended audience).

3.Social Practice -Understanding of linguistic results with respect to social-political as well as cultural frameworks in Pakistan.

Lexical choice, polite tactics (Brown & Levinson, 1987), speech acts (Searle, 1969) and turn-taking were especially focused on.

3.5.2 Sociolinguistic Analysis

The approach adopted toward explaining variation and marking identity includes the use of variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972; Eckert, 2000). Of main interest are the following features:

1. okenmarkers of dialect and accent (phonological and lexical).

2. The frequency and functions of code-switching (inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag-switching).
3. The variation in register of formal and informal context.

3.5.3 Quantitative Support

The occurrence frequencies of some selected features (e.g.):

◆ Gendered address (baji, sahib, beta, madam).
◆ English lexical insertions used.
◆ Occurrence of regional words in the dialects.

Such quantitative findings give a statistical background to the qualitative ones.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

In order to increase validity of the findings:

A combination of the CDA, sociolinguistic analysis, and frequency-based corpus methods was used in order to attain triangulation.

The reliability between coding was taken care of by having a second researcher to code a small sample of the data with the differences being resolved by discussing until consensus was agreed upon.

Such consistency on the linguistic features identified throughout the dataset was further promoted by the reliance on detailed coding manuals which were preserved.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Although the data used is publicly available media content, ethical standards were held through the following ways:

◆ Specific performers were also only referred to in context of their fiction characters and no personal remarks were made.
◆ Copyright rules were not broken because only short quotes were used as examples when sharing in the academic world.
◆ Analysis had been made keeping in view of cultural sensitivities especially when speaking about gender and ethnic stereotypes.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

The chapter reproduces the findings of the study concerning the analysis of the selected Pakistani television dramas and films between 2000 and 2025. Based on the structure (Chapter 3), the results are structured around three main categories of identity namely gender, ethnicity, and social class. Both quantitative trends developed on the basis of the coded corpus and the qualitative insights produced by the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and sociolinguistics interpretation are integrated into the corresponding sections. The objective is to unveil the role of scripted speeches serving as a medium of constructing, reinforcing, or subverting the mainstream ideologies in the Pakistani sound and image culture.

4.2 Gender Representation in Dialogue

4.2.1 Quantitative Overview

The entire 45 hours of television programming and 5 feature films that were analysed we found 2,347-character utterances that were coded according to gender-related linguistic characteristics. The share of characters according to gender in turn of speech showed that men

characters made 57 percent of the total speech followed by women characters which made 43 percent. This is still a smaller gap than in works of the PTV-era, where men commanded more of the dialogue time (generally), but male characters still had more average time to speak per episode.

Gender marking was high in the forms of address. Women were commonly referred by familial terms (baji, beti, amma) where as men were commonly referred by professional or honorific (sir, sahib, ustad).

4.2.2 Qualitative Patterns

One of the repeated discourses as met by the gender was the gender difference of male assertiveness and female accommodation. As revealed by scenes portraying the workplace, male bosses also employed commands:

Report bakek kal vapas aibe wapas Yeh (Send this report ready tomorrow) [Drama: Urban based in offices]Even when they complained of difficulty, female subordinates often used the marker of compliance (jee sir, theek hai).Nevertheless, in some playwrights after 2015, especially in the works focused on progressive social issues, direct rejections and reverse questions were used by the female protagonists:Aur agar main na laoon to? Aap mujhe majboor umaissi nahi kar sakte" (And what would you do to me? I can not be forced) — [The drama: Rural-urban social problem narrative]

These examples are illustrated as hinting at a slowing shift of narrative to linguistic empowerment of women, at least in the case of lead characters as opposed to secondary female characters.

4.2.3 Stereotypical Speech Traits

More politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) were observed in female characters speech with emphasis being placed on negative politeness (hedging, indirect requests). When male was the speaker in a mixed-gender conversation, there were more interruptions and overlaps in communication which is an indicator of dominance in the conversation.

Surprisingly, maternal functions turned out to be multidimensional in their linguistic nature: in spite of the fact that mothers had their very specific speech patterns of nurturing children, which were rather typical due to their languagnostic flexibility, they were able to be much more authoritative when addressing the daughters-in-law to assert their gender power in the family system.

4.3 Ethnic Identity and Dialect Representation

4.3.1 Quantitative Trends

Dialectal features as a method of ethnic marking were present in 31 percent of the total amount of coded scenes. The most commonly represented regional varieties were Punjabi, Pashto and Sindhi and Balochi was rare. Punjabi and Pashto tended to be approached in conjunction with rural or semi-urban contexts whereas Sindhi tended to be more associated with historical or thematic textual arrays.

A cross-linguation in Urdu and English took place in 22 percent of the total utterances and the most of these belonged to characteristics that were urban, upper-middle class.

4.3.2 Qualitative Observations

The argument was often based on casual humour, rapid reply, and local colouring. As much as this brought authenticity, there was a danger of designating Punjabi characters as props of comic relief. For example:

Bro, you are doing an awesome job, man! [Comedy-drama scene] - with cutaways to the audience laughing -

The Pashto speaking people were stereotyped in Pakistani popular culture as honour-seeking, direct and at times hot-tempered. These depictions were questioned by some other dramas displaying Pashto-speaking characters in the form of educated professionals who could switch between code with ease into Urdu and English.

Sindhi representation was most often visible in heritage-oriented texts, which romanticised life in the villages and de-emphasised current Sindhi urban culture.

A number of purposes were fulfilled by code-switching:

➢ Business; prestige marker (Business Englishisms within Urdu).
➢ Border delineator in ethnic interethnic scenes, to indicate in-group unity.
➢ Satirical device when pretentiously used by the characters trying to seem grand.

4.4 Social Class and Register Variation

4.4.1 Quantitative Indicators

The correlation of the portrayal of classes and the register in language was so clear in the lexical analysis. The upper-class characters made formal Urdu/English inserts in most utterances (68 percent) whereas 74 percent of the utterances used by the working-class characters were based on colloquial Urdu or regional dialects.

These signs of politeness differed too: upper-class speech was commonly inclined to the use of mitigated speech acts (Could you please…? in English or kya aap mumkin hai…? in Urdu), whereas a working-class person would speak quite directly.

4.4.2 CDA Findings

Language became the means of projecting cultural capital in the context of the high-society (Bourdieu, 1991) whereas the use of English was used as a means of symbolic sharpness. For instance:

Said in a pure English by a character acting as CEO: "We simply cannot afford to lose our image in the eyes of the investors".

On the contrary, the speech of working-class characters used more idioms of richness and emotional intensity that may be considered authentic but was also adopted by writers to emphasise social difference instead of reconciling it.

A distinctive countertrend was the use of such ideas as social mobility in which characters change their linguistic style as they change classes that were often cited as adaptability but was also seen to highlight the loss of heritage in language.

One of the most interesting findings was where categories of identity were overlapped. For example:

One of the lawyers was a Pashtun woman who spoke Pashto; she alternated more formal Urdu and Pashtun proverbs and bent gender and ethnic stereotypes.

Layered identity performance was signalled by a woman of the upper strata of the Punjab population, who spoke English freely but still kept Punjabi endearments toward her mother.

Urban male characters of the working class in Karachi were written talking in Urdu with many words of English business jargon, and the mixed identity of economic aspiration.

These intersections show that although media uses stereotypes a lot, it has been witnessed that there are rising cases of subtle linguistic hybridity.

4.6 Summary of Findings

On the whole, the analysis indicates that the ideologies prevalent in the Pakistani society are still being represented linguistically in the Pakistani television dramas and films, yet, a niche is emerging through which alternate representations are possible:

Gender: Women are getting more aggressive talk in prominent roles but conversational space is still dominated by men.

Ethnicity: Dialects are still strong markers of identity, a combination of genuine expression and crudely stereotypic.

Class: Register variation is so indexed to socio-economic status, that narratives of mobility permit style-shifting.

Intersectionality: The most really rich portrayals are when the dimensions of identity intersect within a single person creating the most stereotype immune characters.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is an interpretation of the findings portrayed in Chapter 4 with regard to the research questions and the theoretical framework provided above. It attempts to relate the trends in the representation of gender, ethnicity, and the social class in Pakistani television then films to the general socio-cultural discussions as shown in the literature part. Not only does the analysis reaffirm various tendencies, which have been established in prior research, it also points out the new trends that indicate the slow, but turbulent, changes in the media representation.

5.2 Discussion of Gender Representation

The findings demonstrate that the male conversational dominance dominates in the same way in the Pakistani media discourse. The result that 57 percent of all utterances were produced by men is along the lines of research conducted by Shaheen (2015) and Zia (2020), who characterized the media scripting as favoring male voices. Nevertheless, the rise in female insistence, especially in the post-2015 dramas, is an example of an evolution in the narrative following the one described by Khan (2021) in the research on feminist discourse in South Asian media.

Teaching women to be addressed as family members, even professionally, is a reflection on the fact that society still clings to a patriarchic wording system in which women are required to be seen as subjects whose personalities are their relationships as opposed to their workplace competency. However, counterexamples, including the female protagonists making the express refusals prove the counter-discursive tendency. These examples resonate with Van Dijk (2008) when the author mentioned that media can be a place of ideological struggle instead of the mere reproduction.

In the light of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), polite tactics and overlapping conversation move seen in mixed-sex discussions present miniature-level representations of macro-level gender power relations. The difference is still wide despite narrowing down and therefore, there is a need to be more careful in scripting decision so as to equate the men and women.

5.3 Discussion of Ethnic Representation

The Pakistani media is characterized by transduction of ethnic identity by means of dialectal performance. The quantitative trend that depicts the most presented dialects, i.e., Punjabi, Pashto, and Sindhi, concurs with the observation of Rahman (2019) that the Urdu media is selective when it comes to ethnic inclusion. There are however serious questions about this way in which these dialects are deployed.

The tendency to regard Punjabi as comic relief characters, Pashto as honour-driven or temperamental characters, and Sindhi as rural romantics denotes what Hall (1997) refers to as the fixity of representation i.e. pigeonholing of multifaceted identities to simplified and reiterable stereotypes.

With hopefulness, the emergence of code switching urban Punjabis and Pashto-speaking professionals marks a discursive transformation into the three dimensional ethnic descriptions. This is a cri de couer to the Othering process outlined by Shackle (2007) and indicates that contemporary plays, especially targeting the youthful urban audiences are trying the linguistic hybrid identities that better fits the realities of Pakistan which are multicultural and pluralistic.

5.4 Discussion of Class Representation

One of the strongest results of the research is the connection between linguistic register and socio-economic class. Prestige language attitudes employed by the upper class where English and formal Urdu are taken into use is echoed in the linguistic capital theory developed by Bourdieu (1991) where language is perceived as a social currency. On the other hand, inversion of the reliance of the working class on colloquial Urdu and accent is a similar symptom of a lack of access to linguistic prestige institutionalised.

Nonetheless, upward mobility dramas tend to show the process of shifting their registers, a process that received attention in Hasan (2022), who states that register shifting is commonly viewed by Pakistani media as a resourceful tool and a process that ensures survival. The danger, however, lies in the fact that such a style shift may presuppose that one attains success by giving up his or her native linguistic repertoire involuntarily downgrading the values of cultural heritage.

5.5 Intersectionality: The Richest Portrayals

Intersection between gender, ethnicity and class are some of the most advanced portrayals. A Pashto speaking woman in the legal field and the capability of speaking both formal Urdu, and ethnic proverbs or an upper-class Punjabi who can maintain personalized dialectical expressions with family can be an example of what Crenshaw (1989) defines as an intersectional complexity, which is a kind of identity projection that does not allow stereotypical identification.

These depictions undermine the monolithic scripting inclinations observed in previous analyses of media and indicate that writers in the process of adopting complexity are capable of producing characters that are more realistic to the heterogeneous Pakistan audience.

5.6 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that while Pakistani television dramas and films continue to perpetuate certain **linguistic stereotypes**, there is a slow but visible trend toward more **nuanced, multidimensional portrayals**. Gender remains a contested discursive site, with male dominance in speaking time and authority still prevalent, yet counter-discourses are gaining ground through assertive female protagonists. Ethnic representation is diversifying, although old stereotypes persist, and class-based language patterns remain deeply embedded in scripting practices.

The findings affirm CDA's central premise that media language both reflects and shapes societal ideologies. In the Pakistani context, media is not merely a mirror of existing cultural norms; it is also a stage where those norms can be challenged, negotiated, and reimagined.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Media Practices

1. **Balanced Dialogue Allocation** – Equal speaking opportunities for male and female characters to normalise gender parity.
2. **Authentic Ethnic Portrayals** – Avoiding reductive humour or fixed stereotypes when representing dialects.
3. **Valuing Linguistic Diversity** – Encouraging prestige for all language varieties, not just English or formal Urdu.
4. **Intersectional Storytelling** – Creating characters that embody multiple identity dimensions simultaneously.

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