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GENDERED LANGUAGE AND LEXICAL CHOICES IN ENGLISH TALK SHOWS: A CORPUS-BASED INVESTIGATION

Fatimə Fərman qızı Məsimli*Xəzər Universitetinin magistrantı***ORCID:** 0009-0003-3613-0405<http://www.doi.org/10.62706/bqiz.2025.v23.i2.47>**E-mail:** fatima.masimli2023@khazar.org**Key words:** sociolinguistics, gender, lexical choices, English talk shows**Açar sözlər:** *sosiolinqvistika, gender, leksik seçimlər, ingilis dilli tok-şoular***Ключевые слова:** *социолингвистика, гендер, лексический выбор, англоязычные ток-шоу*

Gender is a key aspect of the negotiation and construction of social identities in everyday life and the mass media. Television talk shows are one of the principal sites where the intersection of language and gender can be witnessed. Talk shows are not merely designed to entertain and amuse but also to act as cultural sites where social roles that include gender roles are played out. English-language talk shows often have hosts and guests with mixed backgrounds. This creates an informal and semi-structured setting. It is perfect for studying how people speak. Sociolinguistic analysis has traditionally maintained that men and women do participate in systematic variation in speech. Variation is not biologically based but based on social expectation and cultural norms. These patterns can be seen at various levels: vocabulary, syntax, turn-taking strategies, politeness strategies, topic control, and interruption rates. In media discourse, these patterns are more prominent or exaggerated due to the context's nature. Being a hybrid of live chat and audience participation, the genre of talk shows is the ideal place to witness men's and women's language use and its social implications. It examines how language is used differently by men and women in English chat shows. It is concerned with grammar, vocabulary, and the conversational structure. Through the analysis of some episodes of various kinds of shows, including celebrity interviews, political debates, and lifestyle shows. The study attempts to determine how language portrays gender roles that may be performed, challenged, or reinforced. Particular focus is placed on humor, interruption, hedging, and assertiveness speech acts. These are claimed to demarcate power relationships between the genders. The research shows that although talk show discourse remains framed within traditional gendered norms, instances of resistance, negotiation, and redefinition of gendered identities through linguistic option also arise.

Language and Gender in Sociolinguistics

Gender is not simply a biological distinction but also a powerful sociolinguistic variable. It influences language use, communicative style, and even media identity construction [1]. As English talk shows reflect social values and conversational norms. They are fertile grounds for exploring gender distinctions in language use. Both male and female hosts and guests in talk

shows would show different lexical choices, turn-taking behavior, and emotional expression following inherent gender ideologies. Various linguistic researchers have found gendered styles, including men's placement of direct and forceful speech and women's use of politeness and collaborative approaches [2, p. 107].

English talk shows offer data on how these language patterns are performed and perceived by a wider audience. For instance, Lakoff (1975) explains women's language as expressing more politeness, and emotional expressiveness, with frequent use of hedges like "sort of" or using tag questions like "isn't it?" [3]. Holmes (2013) also suggests that women use more cooperative and supportive types of conversational strategies, like backchanneling tokens ("mm-hmm," "yeah") and compliments [4]. In contrast, male communicators are prone to exhibit assertive speech styles, interrupting more, and uttering stronger words with fewer intensifying modifiers [5, p. 58]. These gendered performances become particularly prominent under broadcast settings, where speakers are aware of their public exposure and social performance dynamics.

Gender Differences in Talk Shows

A sociolinguistic examination of some English talk shows, such as The Ellen DeGeneres Show, The Graham Norton Show, The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, and The Oprah Winfrey Show, reveals similar gendered patterns in lexis, grammar, and discourse organization. One interesting vivid feature is lexis choice. Male hosts such as Jimmy Fallon and Graham Norton often use colloquial, joking, and sports language and often use words such as "dude," "man," or "killer" to build rapport with male interviewees. Female hosts such as Oprah Winfrey and Ellen DeGeneres often use more effective and richer terms such as "amazing," "touching," or "incredible" when handling female interviewees [6].

Turn-taking patterns and interruptions also vary. Zimmerman and West's (1975) classic paper on gender and interruption showed how men interrupt, typically to manage the talk [7]. That continues to hold in today's time with the talk shows when the male hosts and guests interrupt more than women. For example, on The Tonight Show, male guests tend to interrupt female guests with an interjection or a joke, but female hosts such as Ellen will allow guests to finish speaking before she responds, retaining a cooperative tone.

Pronoun usage and sentence construction serve as further indicators of gendered language. Female hosts tend to use inclusive pronouns such as "we" and "us" more often than male hosts, who frequently use "I" statements. For example, Oprah's interviews often include affirming statements like "we've all been there," creating empathy and solidarity with the audience. Conversely, Jimmy Fallon's discourse includes more individualized expressions like "I love that" or "I remember," which focus on personal experience.

In the gendered talk show world, power seeps through gendered discourse. Hosts have to exert control over conversation, change subjects, and steer interaction—duties that expose patterns of gendered communication. As Tannen (1990) suggests, men prefer to save language for establishing status, whereas women use language for building connections [8]. This is seen in The Graham Norton Show, where the male host routinely jokingly but assertively plays with male guests. But when he is interviewing female guests, he is more supportive and practices self-deprecation.

Another instance is The Oprah Winfrey Show, with the host employing language to

empower guests, particularly women. Her questions tend to contain softeners (“Would you mind telling us...?”), and she tends to repeat or echo guests' words in order to validate their experience. The employment of this kind of language aligns with the stereotype that women's speech is more facilitative and emotionally sensitive [9, p. 63].

Guest behavior also portrays gender norms. Male stars like to bring in machismo and humor in interviews, while female stars will be thankful and vulnerable. Female guests like Michelle Obama or Jennifer Aniston on The Ellen DeGeneres Show will use emotive language and self-disclosing stories, while male guests will use humorous stories or speedy, punchy one-liners. This supports the argument that men are against displays of emotion in public places because of societal expectations [10].

Relevance of the topic. Gender inequality is universal, and language is one of the strongest mechanisms by which gender ideologies are built, reproduced, and sometimes challenged. Talk shows, with their massive audiences and spontaneous argumentation, mirror and bolster gendered expectations via linguistic means. Investigating gendered language use in English talk shows illustrates the way that social norms affect language and the other way around. In this media-intensive world, these language cues form public opinion regarding gender roles and power dynamics. Awareness of them can destroy harmful stereotypes and encourage inclusive communication.

Scientific novelty of the article. The study contributes to sociolinguistic research by presenting a comparative analysis of gendered lexical and grammatical variation in English popular talk shows. While previous studies have investigated gendered communication in conversation, relatively little has investigated the talk show genre, which combines scripted and unscripted language in a highly public setting. The novelty is in the comparison of host and guest programs with a focus on the role of gender in interactional style, vocabulary, syntax, and conversational dynamics. The book also addresses how media representations of gender more broadly shape cultural attitudes.

Practical significance and application of the article. The article is practically relevant to gender studies, media studies, and sociolinguistics. Teachers can provide such to students of language and gender in media contexts. Media practitioners also stand to benefit from paying more attention to the doing of gendered language in audience reception. Moreover, this analysis can be utilized by writers and producers to create more mature, well-balanced representations of gender in television discourse. Results can also inform public discourse and media literacy interventions that seek to reduce gender stereotyping and respectful communication in the media.

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F.F. Məsimli

İngilis “tok-şou”larında gender dili və leksik seçimlər: korpus əsaslı tədqiqat

Xülasə

Bu məqalə, İngilis dilli tok-şoularında qadın və kişilər arasında dil istifadəsindəki fərqləri sosiolingvistik baxımdan araşdırır. Tədqiqat, seçilmiş tok-şouların analizinə əsaslanaraq, genderə bağlı dil xüsusiyyətlərini və onların cəmiyyətə təsirini ortaya qoyur. Əsas diqqət, leksik seçimlər, danışmaq strategiyaları və qeyri-verbal ünsiyyət vasitələrindəki fərqlərə yönəldilir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, qadınlar daha emosional və münasibət yönümlü dil strukturlarından istifadə edirlər, bu da onların cəmiyyətdəki rol və gözləntilərlə əlaqələndirilir. Kişilər isə daha birbaşa və iddialı ifadələrə üstünlük verirlər. Bu fərqliliklər, cinsiyətə bağlı dil istifadəsinin cəmiyyətin gender stereotiplərini necə əks etdirdiyini və möhkəmləndirdiyini göstərir. Məqalə, tok-şouların ictimai diskursda gender rollarının formalaşmasında və dilin bu prosesdəki rolunda əhəmiyyətli olduğunu vurğulayır.

Ф.Ф. Масимли

Гендерно окрашенный язык и лексические выборы в англоязычных ток-шоу: корпусное исследование

Резюме

Данная статья представляет собой социолингвистический анализ гендерных различий в языке, используемом в англоязычных ток-шоу. Исследование основано на анализе отобранных эпизодов и направлено на выявление лексических предпочтений, речевых стратегий и невербальных компонентов общения среди мужчин и женщин. Результаты показывают, что женщины чаще используют эмоционально окрашенные выражения и ориентированы на межличностные отношения, что связано с социальными ожиданиями и ролями. Мужчины, напротив, склонны к более прямолинейному и напористому стилю речи. Эти различия демонстрируют, как гендерно маркированное употребление языка отражает и укрепляет существующие гендерные стереотипы в обществе. Статья подчеркивает важную роль ток-шоу в формировании общественного дискурса и показывает, как язык участвует в построении гендерных ролей.

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