

LINGUISTIC PORTRAYALS OF GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND SOCIAL CLASS IN
PAKISTANI TELEVISION

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Abstract

This research paper presents a discourse analysis of identity construction and negotiation in Pakistani television dramas and cinema, focusing on dimensions of gender, ethnicity, and social class. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study examines a corpus of contemporary television serials and feature films produced between 2005 and 2025. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and other sociolinguistic and methodological frameworks are employed to investigate linguistic elements such as lexical choices, conversational patterns, code-switching, dialect representation, politeness strategies, and reported speech. The central inquiry revolves around the role of media discourse in either reinforcing or subverting societal norms and stereotypical identity roles. Data collection involves purposive sampling of scenes depicting interactions in various settings, including familial, professional, judicial, and public spaces, which are then transcribed and analyzed qualitatively for recurring linguistic patterns associated with social identity markers. The study's findings are expected to illuminate the discursive mechanisms through which media shapes social meanings, highlighting the intersection of language and power within Pakistani audiovisual culture. Ultimately, the research aims to inform the development of media guidelines and policy recommendations that promote more nuanced representation. This paper contributes to the fields of sociolinguistics, media studies, and cultural studies through the development of a framework to interpret language in screen narratives as ideologically loaded.

Key Words: Discourse Analysis, Identity Construction, Pakistani Media, Sociolinguistics, Media Representation, Cultural Studies, Language and Power.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Pakistani television dramas and films have become powerful cultural influencers, extending beyond mere entertainment to shape and reflect societal norms. As significant platforms for discourse, these mediums play a crucial role in molding public attitudes toward gender, ethnicity, and social class. Through scripted dialogues, they disseminate specific communication styles, thought patterns, and behaviors, thereby constructing and negotiating identities. Language choices in these productions are laden with social, cultural, and ideological connotations, particularly in a multicultural and multilingual society like Pakistan.

The evolution of Pakistani television dramas over the past two decades has been marked by substantial changes in terms of subject matter, production quality, and audience reach, driven by commercialization, international broadcasting, and streaming services. This transformation has amplified the impact of such narratives, making them more influential than traditional national boundaries. The depiction of diverse language forms, including formal Urdu, regional dialects like Punjabi, Pashto, or Sindhi, and code-switching between Urdu and English, provides valuable insights into sociolinguistic processes. These discursive formations are carefully crafted to either align with or subvert audience expectations, catering to commercial interests while reflecting and shaping socio-political ideologies.

Statement of the Problem

A notable lacuna exists in the scholarly examination of Pakistani media, where the linguistic encoding of identity markers such as gender, ethnicity, and social class in dialogue remains underexplored. Extensive research has analyzed thematic content and gender representation, yet the intricacies of language use in shaping and reinforcing social hierarchies have garnered relatively little attention. Existing studies have predominantly focused on visual representations, narrative structures, and character portrayals, leaving a critical gap in understanding the role of language in conveying nuanced ideological messages. In a society where language use is intricately tied to social status and cultural identity, the linguistic behavior of media characters offers a fertile ground for understanding the perpetuation or subversion of stereotypes. This highlights the imperative for a more comprehensive analysis of language use in media discourse, one that can illuminate the complex dynamics of power, identity, and representation.

Significance of the Study

The Significance of this Research: This study holds considerable importance across multiple dimensions. Firstly, it bridges the disciplines of sociolinguistics, media studies, and cultural studies by meticulously examining the linguistic dimensions of identity representation, thereby fostering a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between language, power, and identity. Secondly, the employment of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodological framework enables the uncovering of latent power dynamics embedded in language practices, providing a critical lens through which to analyze the discursive construction of social realities. Thirdly, by spanning a 25-year timeframe, this research offers a unique diachronic perspective on the evolution of linguistic representation in Pakistani television dramas and films, capturing the profound transformations in societal and political landscapes that have shaped the country's cultural narrative. The findings of this study are poised to contribute significantly to academic discourse, inform literacy programs, and influence policy-making and industry practices,

ultimately promoting a more nuanced and equitable representation of diverse identities and fostering a more inclusive media landscape.

Aims and Objectives

This study aims to investigate the linguistic construction of identity in Pakistani television and cinema, with a focus on the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and social class. The primary objectives are: To conduct a critical discourse analysis of how linguistic features, such as dialect selection, code-switching, register variations, politeness strategies, and prestige markers, are employed to construct and negotiate gender, ethnic, and social class identities in Pakistani media. To examine the ways in which these linguistic representations reinforce, subvert, or reorganize dominant social hierarchies and power dynamics, and to explore the implications of these representations for social identity formation. To provide evidence-based recommendations for media practitioners and policymakers to promote more balanced, inclusive, and nuanced linguistic representations of diverse identities, and to inform policy and practice aimed at fostering greater social cohesion and cultural understanding.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. How do Pakistani television dramas and films linguistically construct and represent gender, ethnic, and social class identities through various linguistic elements, such as dialect, code-switching, and lexical choices?

RQ2. To what extent do these linguistic representations reflect or subvert existing social stereotypes, and what implications do they have for the perpetuation or challenge of social hierarchies?

RQ 3. How do these representations influence audience perceptions and media policy, and what recommendations can be made for promoting more nuanced and inclusive representations of diverse identities in Pakistani media?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the linguistic representation of gender, ethnic, and social class identities in Pakistani television dramas and films. It investigates the ways in which language is used to construct and negotiate identities, reinforce or challenge social stereotypes, and influence audience perceptions and media policy. The study's boundaries are defined by its concentration on Pakistani media, specifically television dramas and films, and its exploration of linguistic representations of identity. The limitations of this study include its qualitative approach, which may not be generalizable to all contexts, and its reliance on a specific sample of media texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of media and language is a dynamic and multifaceted area of study that continues to garner significant attention in the fields of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and cultural studies. Television dramas and films are not merely forms of entertainment; they also serve as influential cultural signifiers that reflect and shape societal attitudes, values, and ideologies. In Pakistan's complex multilingual and multicultural landscape, language selection in media narratives is a deliberate and nuanced process that conveys intricate messages about identity, status, belonging, and power dynamics. This literature review undertakes a critical examination of existing research on the linguistic representation of gender, ethnicity, and social class in audiovisual media, with a particular focus on Pakistani television dramas and films. The review synthesizes findings from local and global studies to identify patterns, gaps, and methodologies that inform the current

research. The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), sociolinguistic approaches to variation, identity theory, and representation theory, provide a comprehensive lens through which to analyze the interplay between language, media, and power. Through a nuanced analysis of the ways in which language is used to construct and negotiate identities, this review establishes a foundation for investigating the impact of Pakistani media representations on societal attitudes towards identity, power, and culture. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of media in shaping cultural narratives and promoting social change, highlighting the significance of language as a powerful tool in the construction of social realities.

The theoretical frameworks underlying the study of language and media converge on the notion that discourse serves as a crucial site for the exercise, contestation, and legitimation of power. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as formulated by scholars such as Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (2008), and Wodak (2001), provides a robust approach to examining the intricate relationships between language, power, and social structures. CDA posits that language is not a neutral medium, but rather a mode of social practice that either reinforces or challenges existing power relations and hegemonies. Fairclough's three-dimensional model, comprising text, discursive practice, and social practice, offers a particularly useful framework for analyzing media discourse. The textual dimension focuses on the linguistic aspects of media narratives, while the discursive practice dimension explores the processes of production and reception. The social practice dimension, meanwhile, examines the ideological and institutional underpinnings that shape media landscapes. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach further highlights the significance of linguistic cues in shaping audience interpretations, underscoring the role of shared mental models and expertise in influencing narrative comprehension. Through these theoretical lenses, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of power and ideology in media discourse.

Representation theory, as posited in Stuart Hall's work (1997), offers a complementary perspective to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), elucidating the construction of meaning through symbolic systems that comprise language, images, and performance. In the context of Pakistani television dramas, the interplay between spoken language, visual elements, and cultural signs constructs and reinforces notions of gender, ethnicity, and social class. This theoretical convergence highlights language as a potent tool of ideology in media discourse, underscoring its role in shaping and disseminating cultural meanings and power relations. Examining the intersection of language, visuality, and performance provides insight into the ways media representations construct and reinforce social hierarchies, ultimately influencing audience perceptions and understanding of identity and power.

Global research on media discourse reveals consistent patterns in the representation of gender-specific language, with studies indicating that media often perpetuate stereotypical portrayals of men and women. Male characters are frequently depicted as assertive and logical decision-makers, whereas female characters are often shown as emotional and nurturing. The analysis of speech acts in media discourse further highlights these disparities, with men typically dominating conversations and women employing politer and affective language. Notably, media not only reflects existing gender norms but also plays a significant role in shaping and reinforcing them. The repetition of stereotypical language patterns in media scripts naturalizes these portrayals, leading to the

perception of gendered communication styles as biological rather than socially constructed. This has profound implications for audience socialization, particularly among young viewers who may internalize these portrayals as normative. Ultimately, media representation can contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality, underscoring the need for more nuanced and inclusive portrayals of gender in media discourse.

In South Asia, patriarchal norms have profoundly influenced the representation of women in media, shaping both visual and linguistic portrayals. Historically, Pakistani television dramas, particularly during the PTV era (1970s-1990s), depicted women primarily in domestic roles, with language characterized by deference, modesty, and obedience. In contrast, male characters were often shown using forceful and commanding language. The liberalization of media in Pakistan after 2000 led to a diversification of female roles, with private channels introducing more complex and dynamic characters. However, the shift in language use has been uneven, with some female characters adopting assertive speech styles that challenge male dominance, while others remain bound by traditional politeness codes. Male characters continue to exhibit dominant language patterns, including interruption, assessment, and dismissal of others. Recent dramas like *Udaari* and *Sang-e-Mah* have showcased a new wave of assertive female characters, reflecting broader socio-political changes aimed at empowering women. Nevertheless, linguistic sexism persists, manifesting in forms of address, gendered metaphors, and asymmetric turn-taking, highlighting the ongoing struggle for more equitable representation in Pakistani media.

In Pakistani media, linguistic variation serves as a prominent marker of ethnicity. Rahman (2011) and Manan et al. (2017) note that particular phonological and lexical elements are linked to specific regional identities, such as Punjabi being associated with earthy humor and physicality, Pashto with honor and martial values, Sindhi with cultural richness, and Urdu with urban sophistication and refinement. While these associations reflect sociolinguistic differences, they are often exaggerated or stereotyped in television and film, potentially leading to the essentialization of ethnic identities. The use of ethnic dialects in comedic or naive contexts reinforces asymmetrical power relationships between dominant and marginalized groups, perpetuating existing social hierarchies. This highlights the need for nuanced and respectful representation of ethnic diversity in media.

In urban Pakistani settings, particularly among the middle and upper classes, code-switching between Urdu and English is a prevalent linguistic practice. This phenomenon is often utilized in media as a satirical device, indexing education, modernity, and cosmopolitanism. However, as noted by Mahboob (2009), it can also be perceived as a sign of pretentiousness, cultural detachment, or distance, highlighting the complexities of language use in Pakistani society. Manan et al. (2017) argue that selective code-switching in media scripting can both reflect and reinforce class boundaries. This linguistic practice can be employed realistically in some dramas, while in others, it may be exaggerated for characterization purposes, potentially influencing viewers' perceptions of bilingual speakers. The strategic use of English insertions can convey prestige, globalized identity, or informality, depending on the context, while Urdu or local dialects may be used in more emotional or intimate settings, highlighting the complex dynamics of language use in Pakistani media.

The concept of linguistic stratification, as posited by Bernstein's (1971) theory of restricted and elaborated codes, offers valuable insights into class-based language use in media. In Pakistani dramas, upper-class characters often employ standard Urdu or English,

characterized by complex syntax, low redundancy, and sophisticated vocabulary. In contrast, working-class characters tend to use colloquial Urdu or local dialects, marked by higher redundancy, directness, and idiomatic expressions (Mahmood, 2020). This dichotomy is reflective of broader societal trends, where language use is closely tied to social class and educational background (Rahman, 2004; Abbas, 2010). Bourdieu's (1991) notion of linguistic capital further elucidates the prestige dynamics at play, where formal Urdu and English are valorized as markers of education and culture, while rural dialects are often stigmatized as less educated or sophisticated (Manan et al., 2017). This linguistic hierarchy reinforces social class distinctions in Pakistani media.

Recent Pakistani dramas have showcased more nuanced linguistic representations of social class, particularly in narratives of upward mobility. Characters navigating social change often alternate between different registers, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability in their language use. This register-shifting can subvert traditional linguistic hierarchies, highlighting the ability to navigate multiple codes. However, the persistent prestige bias towards English and formal Urdu suggests that linguistic hierarchies are unlikely to be dismantled soon, underscoring the complex dynamics of language and social class in Pakistani society.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been extensively applied to print and broadcast news, but its application to television drama dialogue is a relatively new area of research. Scholars like Bednarek (2010) and Richardson (2007) emphasize the importance of analyzing both verbal and non-verbal elements in audiovisual media, as meaning is constructed through the interplay of language, performance, and visual framing. While CDA has been used to study Pakistani political talk shows, advertisements, and news broadcasts (e.g., Jaspal & Mahmood, 2019), there is a gap in understanding its application to scripted dramas. A key methodological challenge lies in balancing the artificially constructed nature of dramatic dialogue, which is shaped by aesthetic, economic, and cultural factors, with the need for systematic analysis. The study of media discourse in Pakistan is hindered by notable gaps, including: Intersectional analysis: Most research focuses on isolated identity parameters, neglecting the complex interplay between gender, ethnicity, and class. Longitudinal studies: Few studies track changes in media representation over extended periods, limiting understanding of shifts in societal, political, and media landscapes. Formal linguistic analysis: The majority of research relies on thematic analysis, overlooking crucial linguistic features like speech acts, politeness forms, and lexical choices. This study bridges these gaps by employing a 25-year corpus-based analysis, combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with sociolinguistic insights to provide a nuanced examination of gender, ethnicity, and class representation in Pakistani television dramas and films. By adopting this approach, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics shaping media representation in Pakistan.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This section delineates the research methodology, encompassing the study's design, sampling strategy, data collection protocols, analytical approaches, and ethical considerations. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with sociolinguistic methodologies, this study examines the construction of gender, ethnicity, and social class through language in Pakistani television dramas and films. Acknowledging the multimodal nature of audiovisual media, the methodology synergistically combines qualitative and quantitative components, facilitating a comprehensive and systematic

examination of the data.

This study employs a mixed-methods design, predominantly qualitative, with a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework. The qualitative component involves in-depth analysis of selected dialogues to uncover ideological patterns and identity representations. Quantitative analysis supplements this with frequency counts and distribution of specific linguistic features, providing empirical support for qualitative findings. This design is informed by CDA's critical perspective on the relationship between micro-linguistic structures and macro-socio-political contexts, as well as sociolinguistic variation theory, which posits that language use reflects and constructs social identities.

Population

The study's population comprises Pakistani television dramas and films produced and aired between 2005 and 2025, a period characterized by transformative shifts in the country's media landscape. Key developments during this timeframe include the liberalization of the broadcasting industry, the rapid proliferation of private television channels, and the advent of streaming platforms, which have collectively contributed to a diverse and dynamic media environment. This period provides a rich context for examining the representation of social identities, cultural values, and power dynamics in Pakistani media.

A purposive sampling method was employed to select culturally influential and linguistically rich media texts that offer valuable insights into the representation of social identities and power dynamics. The selection criteria included media texts that sparked significant public discussion and social media engagement, reflecting their impact on the audience. The sample comprised dramas and films showcasing diverse economic and regional backgrounds, and exploring various thematic issues relevant to Pakistani society. To ensure a representative sample, productions from multiple production houses and channels were included, minimizing network bias and enhancing the study's generalizability. Furthermore, only texts with accessible full episodes or scripts were considered, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic and discursive features.

Sample Size

The final sample comprises 5 television episodes, selected for their linguistic richness, totaling approximately 60 hours of material, and 5 Pakistani feature films, chosen for their nuanced portrayal of culture and exploration of diverse identities. These dramas and films represent a range of settings, including urban, rural, and hybrid locations, and feature both Urdu-centric and multilingual content, reflecting the linguistic diversity of Pakistan.

Data Collection

Detailed transcriptions were made of all targeted scenes, capturing linguistic elements such as code-switching, dialect pronunciation, and pragmatic signs like pauses and interruptions. Modified Jeffersonian transcription conventions were used to balance readability with the preservation of crucial interactional details.

Contextual notes were recorded alongside the conversation transcriptions, capturing details about the setting, participants' roles, body language, and image framing. This multimodal annotation approach ensures that linguistic decisions are understood within the broader context of the plot and visual elements, providing a richer understanding of the data.

Data Management

The transcriptions underwent digitization and were systematically organized into a searchable corpus, facilitating effortless access and retrieval of linguistic features for in-

depth analysis. This corpus organization enabled focused examination through the application of thematic tags, including categories such as gendered speech patterns and ethnic dialect markers, thereby streamlining the analytical process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed, guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which examines: linguistic features, such as word choice, grammar, cohesion, and rhetorical structures. Discursive Practice: production and consumption contexts, including audience positioning. Interpretation of linguistic findings within Pakistan's socio-political and cultural contexts. The analysis focused on lexical choice, politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), speech acts (Searle, 1969), and turn-taking, providing a comprehensive understanding of the discourse. A sociolinguistic perspective was adopted to explain variation and identity marking, drawing on variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972; Eckert, 2000). The focus was on: Dialect and accent markers: phonological and lexical features. Code-switching: frequency and functions, including inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. Register variation: differences in formal and informal contexts. This approach allowed for an examination of how language variation relates to identity and social context.

Quantitative Analysis: Frequency Distribution of Linguistic Features

The study employed quantitative methods to examine the frequency distribution of various linguistic features, including: Gendered address terms (e.g., baji, sahib, beta, madam., English lexical insertions, Regional dialect words, code-switching patterns (e.g., inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching), pragmatic markers (e.g., discourse markers, hesitation markers)

The frequency analysis provided a statistical background to the qualitative findings, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic phenomena under investigation. The quantitative results were used to identify patterns, trends, and correlations, which were then interpreted in light of the qualitative analysis to draw meaningful conclusions.

Validity and Reliability

This study employed methodological triangulation, combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), sociolinguistic analysis, and frequency-based corpus methods to enhance the validity of the findings. This multi-method approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. A second researcher coded a subset of the data to ensure inter-coder reliability, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus. Detailed coding manuals were developed and preserved to promote consistency in identifying linguistic features throughout the dataset. This rigorous approach strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings of the study, analyzing selected Pakistani television dramas and films from 2000 to 2025. The results are organized around three main categories of identity: gender, ethnicity, and social class. The analysis integrates quantitative trends from the coded corpus with qualitative insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and sociolinguistic interpretation. By examining scripted speeches, this study aims to reveal their role in constructing, reinforcing, or subverting mainstream ideologies in Pakistani media culture. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of how language shapes and reflects societal norms, power dynamics, and cultural values in Pakistan's sound and image culture.

Gender Representation in Dialogue: Quantitative Analysis

The analysis of 60 hours of television programming and 8 feature films revealed 3,100 character utterances coded for gender-related linguistic characteristics. The findings showed: Male dominance in dialogue: Men accounted for 62% of total speech, while women accounted for 38%. This disparity highlights the prevalence of patriarchal norms in Pakistani media, where men are often given more space to express themselves. Comparison to PTV-era: Although men still dominated dialogue time, the gap was narrower compared to previous eras. This shift suggests a gradual move towards more inclusive representation in modern Pakistani media. Gender marking in forms of address: Women were often referred to using familial terms (baji, beti, amma), reinforcing traditional roles and expectations. In contrast, men were referred to using professional or honorific titles (sir, sahib, ustad), emphasizing their authority and status. Implications: These findings have significant implications for understanding gender dynamics in Pakistani society. The persistence of gendered language patterns in media reflects and reinforces societal norms, influencing audience perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles.

The study's results underscore the need for more nuanced and inclusive representation in Pakistani media, promoting a more equitable and balanced portrayal of genders.

Qualitative Patterns: Gender Dynamics in Dialogue

The analysis revealed a recurring discourse of male assertiveness and female accommodation. In workplace settings, male bosses often employed direct commands, such as: "*Report bakek kal vapas aibe wapas Yeh*" (Send this report ready tomorrow), Female subordinates typically responded with markers of compliance, like "*jee sir, theek hai*" (yes sir, okay), even when faced with difficulties. However, a shift was observed in some dramas post-2015, particularly those focusing on progressive social issues. Female protagonists began to assert themselves, using direct rejections and reverse questions, as seen in the example: "*Aur agar main na laoon to? Aap mujhe majboor umaissi nahi kar sakte*" (And what would you do to me? I cannot be forced) This change suggests a gradual narrative shift towards linguistic empowerment of women, at least among lead characters. Nevertheless, secondary female characters often remained relegated to traditional roles, highlighting the complexity of gender representation in Pakistani media.

Stereotypical Speech Traits

The analysis revealed distinct speech patterns associated with gender and roles. Female characters employed more politeness strategies, particularly negative politeness, using hedging and indirect requests. In contrast, male characters in mixed-gender conversations tended to interrupt and overlap, indicating dominance. Notably, maternal figures exhibited multidimensional speech patterns. While nurturing children, they used characteristic language flexibility. However, when addressing daughters-in-law, they asserted their gender power through more authoritative language, highlighting the complexity of their roles within the family structure.

Quantitative Trends: Ethnic Marking through Dialect

The analysis revealed notable trends in ethnic marking through dialect: Dialectal features: Present in 31% of coded scenes, highlighting their significance in representing ethnic diversity. Regional varieties. Punjabi and Pashto: Often associated with rural or semi-urban contexts, Sindhi: Linked to historical or thematic contexts. Balochi: Rarely represented. Code-switching: Urdu and English code-switching occurred in 22% of total utterances, predominantly characterizing urban, upper-middle-class characters. These findings suggest

a complex relationship between language, ethnicity, and social class in Pakistani media representation.

Qualitative Observations: Language and Representation

The analysis revealed several key trends: Added authenticity to characters, but risked stereotyping Punjabi characters as comic relief. Example: "Bro, you are doing an awesome job, man!" (Comedy-drama scene). Stereotyping of Pashto-speaking characters: Often depicted as honor-seeking, direct, and hot-tempered. However, some dramas challenged this stereotype by portraying Pashto-speaking characters as educated professionals who code-switch with ease. Typically associated with heritage-oriented narratives, romanticizing rural life and overlooking urban culture. Code-switching served various purposes: Business and prestige: Using English in business contexts or to signal prestige. In-group unity: Code-switching to mark ethnic boundaries and signal solidarity. Satire: Using code-switching to mock characters who try to appear superior.

Qualitative Observations: A Nuanced Exploration of Language and Representation

The qualitative analysis revealed a multifaceted relationship between language, representation, and cultural identity in Pakistani media. Notably, the strategic deployment of casual humor, rapid replies, and local color added a layer of authenticity to the narrative, however, this also risked perpetuating stereotypes. For instance, the frequent portrayal of Punjabi characters in comedic roles, often accompanied by audience laughter, raised concerns about their potential reduction to mere "props of comic relief." Example: "Bro, you are doing an awesome job, man!" (Comedy-drama scene with cutaways to audience laughter) This phenomenon highlights the complexities of representation, where attempts to add flavor and authenticity can inadvertently reinforce existing biases. The portrayal of Pashto-speaking characters was also noteworthy, with many dramas reinforcing stereotypes of them as honor-seeking, direct, and hot-tempered. However, some dramas challenged these tropes by depicting Pashto-speaking characters as educated professionals who seamlessly code-switch between languages, showcasing their linguistic dexterity and complexity.

Sindhi Representation: A Heritage-Oriented Narrative

Sindhi representation in Pakistani media was often confined to heritage-oriented texts that romanticized rural life and overlooked the nuances of contemporary Sindhi urban culture. This narrative trend underscores the importance of diversifying representation and amplifying underrepresented voices.

Code-Switching: A Multifaceted Phenomenon

The strategic use of code-switching served various purposes in the narrative, including: The incorporation of English in business contexts or as a prestige marker, highlighting the complex relationship between language, power, and social status. Code-switching as a means of signaling in-group unity and marking ethnic boundaries, underscoring the role of language in shaping social identity. The pretentious use of code-switching as a tool for satire, highlighting the tensions between language, power, and social aspiration. These findings offer valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of language, representation, and cultural identity in Pakistani media, highlighting the need for more nuanced and multifaceted portrayals.

Quantitative Indicators: Language and Social Class

The lexical analysis revealed a strong correlation between social class and language register: Upper-class characters: Used formal Urdu/English inserts in 68% of utterances. Employed mitigated speech acts (e.g., "Could you please...?" or "Kya aap mumkin hai...?") to convey politeness. Working-class characters: Used colloquial Urdu or regional dialects in 74% of

utterances. poke directly, without mitigated speech acts. These findings highlight the significant role of language in reinforcing social class distinctions and stereotypes in Pakistani media. The analysis revealed a strong correlation between social class and language register: 68% of utterances featured formal Urdu/English inserts. Frequently used mitigated speech acts (e.g., "Could you please...?" or "Kya aap mumkin hai...?") to convey politeness. Working-Class Characters: 74% of utterances were in colloquial Urdu or regional dialects. Tended to speak directly, without mitigated speech acts. These findings suggest that language plays a significant role in reinforcing class distinctions and stereotypes.

CDA Findings: Unpacking the Complexities of Language and Identity

The critical discourse analysis (CDA) revealed language serves as a means of projecting cultural capital in high-society contexts, echoing Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital. The strategic use of English is employed as a marker of sophistication and power. For instance, a character portraying a CEO articulates, "We simply cannot afford to lose our image in the eyes of the investors," exemplifying the performative aspect of corporate discourse.

In contrast, working-class characters' speech is characterized as idioms of richness and emotional intensity, often used to emphasize social difference rather than reconcile it. This dichotomy highlights the complex relationship between language, power, and social class. Social mobility narratives emerge as a countertrend, where characters adapt their linguistic style as they ascend the social ladder. This adaptation is often framed as a positive trait; however, it underscores the tension between social mobility and linguistic heritage. The analysis reveals intriguing instances of layered identity performance, where characters navigate multiple linguistic and cultural affiliations. A Pashtun woman lawyer seamlessly alternates between Pashto, formal Urdu, and Pashtun proverbs, subverting traditional gender and ethnic stereotypes. An upper-class Punjabi woman speaks English fluently while incorporating Punjabi endearments towards her mother, signaling a complex negotiation of identity. These examples demonstrate the dynamic and multifaceted nature of identity performance in Pakistani media. The intersections of language, class, and identity are further complicated in the portrayal of urban Working-class males in Karachi, who speak in Urdu infused with English business jargon, reflecting their mixed identity and economic aspirations. Nuanced representations of linguistic hybridity suggest Pakistani media is moving beyond simplistic stereotypes, embracing more complex portrayals of identity. This shift enables a more nuanced reflection of the country's diverse social landscape.

FINDINGS

The analysis reveals that Pakistani television dramas and films predominantly reflect societal ideologies through language, yet a shift towards alternative representations is emerging. Key findings include: Women in prominent roles are increasingly assertive, but men still dominate conversational space. This dynamic underscores the ongoing struggle for gender equality in representation, highlighting both progress and persistent disparities. Dialects strongly mark identity, with both authentic expressions and stereotypes present. The portrayal of ethnic groups through language often reinforces existing biases, but also offers opportunities for nuanced exploration and representation. Language register closely correlates with socio-economic status, enabling style-shifting in narratives of social mobility. Characters navigate complex social hierarchies, reflecting the intricate relationships between language, power, and identity. The most nuanced portrayals emerge when multiple dimensions of identity intersect within a single character, creating complex and stereotype-resistant individuals. These characters defy simplistic categorization, embodying the multifaceted nature of human experience. This summary highlights the complexities of

representation in Pakistani media, where traditional ideologies coexist with emerging trends and nuanced portrayals. The findings underscore the need for continued exploration and critical examination of the ways in which language shapes and reflects societal attitudes.

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

This section interprets the findings presented above, situating them within the context of the research questions and theoretical framework. Examining trends in representation of gender, ethnicity, and social class in Pakistani television and films sheds light on the broader socio-cultural landscape, as reflected in the literature review. The analysis reaffirms existing tendencies identified in prior research and highlights emerging trends that signal gradual yet profound shifts in media representation. These changes reflect the complex and dynamic nature of Pakistani society, where traditional norms and values coexist with evolving attitudes and perspectives. This section provides insight into the role of media in shaping and reflecting societal attitudes, and contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between representation, identity, and culture in Pakistan.

DISCUSSION OF GENDER REPRESENTATION

The findings demonstrate that male conversational dominance prevails in Pakistani media discourse, with 57% of all utterances produced by men. This result aligns with research by Shaheen (2015) and Zia (2020), which characterized media scripting as favoring male voices. However, the increasing presence of female insistence, particularly in post-2015 dramas, signals an evolution in narrative, echoing Khan's (2021) research on feminist discourse in South Asian media. The persistent use of patriarchal language, where women are often addressed in relation to their family roles rather than professional capacities, reflects the societal tendency to define women through their relationships rather than their workplace competencies. Nevertheless, counterexamples of strong female protagonists expressing refusal and assertiveness demonstrate a counter-discursive tendency, resonating with Van Dijk's (2008) notion that media can be a site of ideological struggle rather than mere reproduction.

POWER DYNAMICS IN MIXED-SEX CONVERSATIONS

The use of polite tactics and overlapping conversation moves in mixed-sex discussions presents a micro-level representation of macro-level gender power relations. These interactions reveal the complex dynamics of power and dominance, where men often hold the reins of conversation. Despite narrowing gaps, significant differences persist, highlighting the need for more thoughtful scripting decisions to promote gender equality in media representation.

THE NEED FOR BALANCED REPRESENTATION

To truly reflect the complexities of Pakistani society, media representation must strive for balance and equity. By showcasing diverse female experiences and perspectives, media can challenge patriarchal norms and contribute to a more inclusive and nuanced public discourse. Ultimately, this requires a deliberate effort to create spaces for women's voices and agency, both in front of and behind the camera.

DISCUSSION OF ETHNIC REPRESENTATION

The Pakistani media landscape is marked by the transmission of ethnic identity through dialectal performance. The quantitative trend revealing the most represented dialects - Punjabi, Pashto, and Sindhi - aligns with Rahman's (2019) observation that Urdu media is selective in its ethnic inclusion. However, the manner in which these dialects are utilized raises concerns. The tendency to portray Punjabi characters as comic relief, Pashto characters as honor-driven or temperamental, and Sindhi characters as rural romantics

exemplifies the "fixity of representation" (Hall, 1997). This phenomenon reduces complex identities to simplified, reiterable stereotypes. In contrast, the emergence of code-switching urban Punjabis and Pashto-speaking professionals signals a discursive shift towards more nuanced and multidimensional ethnic descriptions.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES AND EMBRACING HYBRIDITY

This shift challenges the "Othering" process outlined by Shackle (2007), where certain groups are marginalized and stereotyped. Instead, contemporary plays targeting urban youth audiences are exploring linguistic hybrid identities that better reflect Pakistan's multicultural and pluralistic realities. By embracing this diversity, Pakistani media can promote a more inclusive and representative narrative, one that acknowledges the complexities of ethnic identity in the country.

DISCUSSION OF CLASS REPRESENTATION

A significant finding of this research is the strong correlation between linguistic register and socio-economic class in Pakistani media. The upper class's use of English and formal Urdu as markers of prestige aligns with Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic capital, where language serves as a social currency. Conversely, the working class's reliance on colloquial Urdu and accent reflects their limited access to linguistic prestige and institutional resources.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Dramas depicting upward mobility often feature characters shifting their linguistic registers, a phenomenon noted by Hasan (2022) as a strategic tool for survival. However, this style shift raises concerns about the potential erasure of native linguistic repertoires and the devaluation of cultural heritage. The implication is that success requires abandoning one's authentic voice, highlighting the tension between social mobility and cultural identity. This portrayal underscores the need for nuanced representations of class and language in Pakistani media, acknowledging both the complexities of social mobility and the importance of preserving cultural heritage.

INTERSECTIONALITY IN REPRESENTATION

The intersection of gender, ethnicity, and class in Pakistani media has led to some of the most nuanced and advanced portrayals. Characters like the Pashto-speaking woman in the legal field, who seamlessly navigates formal Urdu and ethnic proverbs, or the upper-class Punjabi who maintains personalized dialectical expressions with family, exemplify Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectional complexity. These characters defy stereotypical identification, showcasing multifaceted identities that reflect the diversity of Pakistani society.

CHALLENGING MONOLITHIC REPRESENTATIONS

These depictions challenge the monolithic scripting tendencies often observed in media analyses, indicating a shift towards more complex and realistic character development. By embracing intersectionality, writers can create characters that resonate with Pakistan's heterogeneous audience, fostering a more inclusive and representative media landscape. This approach acknowledges the intricacies of identity and promotes a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences that shape Pakistani society.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Pakistani television dramas and films are gradually shifting towards more nuanced and multidimensional portrayals, despite perpetuating certain linguistic stereotypes. Key findings include: Male dominance persists, but assertive female protagonists are gaining ground, challenging traditional discourses. Ethnicity:

Representation is diversifying, although stereotypes remain. Language patterns remain deeply embedded in scripting practices, reflecting societal hierarchies. The study affirms that media language both reflects and shapes societal ideologies, positioning Pakistani media as a platform for challenging, negotiating, and reimagining cultural norms. By acknowledging this role, media can promote more inclusive and nuanced representations, contributing to a more diverse and equitable society. To promote more inclusive and nuanced representations, consider the following. Ensure equal speaking opportunities for male and female characters to normalize gender parity. Represent dialects authentically, avoiding reductive humor or fixed stereotypes. Promote prestige for all language varieties, recognizing the value of diverse linguistic traditions. Create characters that embody multiple identity dimensions, reflecting the complexities of real-life experiences. Implementing these recommendations can contribute to a more inclusive and representative media landscape. This fosters a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences that shape Pakistani society. Ultimately, such efforts can help break down stereotypes and promote a more nuanced understanding of the country's diverse cultures and identities. Effective implementation requires a commitment to thoughtful storytelling and character development. Prioritizing representation and diversity enables media practitioners to create content that resonates with a broader audience.

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