# GENDERED VOICES IN CLASSROOM

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**Abstract**
*This study investigates gender-based differences in classroom discourse practices among university lecturers in Pakistan, with a specific focus on English-medium instruction at the tertiary level. The data was collected from 14 recorded and transcribed lecture sessions (delivered by seven male and seven female lecturers). This research employs a mixed-method approach. It combines thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with corpus-assisted quantitative techniques using AntConc (Version 4.3.1) developed by Anthony (2024). Four key themes emerged: instructional clarity and explanation strategies, authority and classroom control, student engagement and questioning styles, and politeness, hedging, and interpersonal alignment. The findings reveal that male lecturers favored authoritative, content-heavy discourse characterized by imperatives and display questions. While female lecturers adopted more relational, inclusive, and dialogic discourse, frequently uses metaphors, referential questions, hedging, and inclusive pronouns. Quantitative frequency analysis supported these thematic patterns, demonstrating gendered preferences in discourse features. The study highlights pedagogical value of reflective discourse awareness and recommends integrating discourse training into teacher education to develop inclusive and student-centered TESOL instruction. This research contributes to gender-sensitive pedagogical discourse studies in underrepresented South Asian contexts.*

*Keywords*: classroom discourse, gender-based analysis, thematic analysis, corpus-assisted study, TEFL, TESOL

## Introduction

Discourse practices in classroom settings refer to the structured patterns of spoken interaction between teachers and students. Spoken interaction includes; how knowledge is delivered, how questions are asked, and how power and participation are distributed. In tertiary (university-level) classrooms, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, these practices significantly shape the learning environment, pedagogical effectiveness, and students' academic success (Walsh, 2006). Among the various factors influencing classroom discourse, gender stands out as a socially and linguistically constructed element that can affect both the delivery and reception of instructional communication (Sauntson, 2012).

Scholars have long recognized that gender is not merely a biological distinction but a social identity that is enacted, negotiated, and sometimes contested through language use (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996). Within educational discourse, language choices made by teachers often reflect broader ideological patterns, including power hierarchies, cultural expectations, and institutional norms (Myrick, 2019). As such, gendered talk in the classroom of higher education discipline is more than a linguistic question because it represents social practices and institutional arrangements that may ease or aggravate fair student participation (Rudhumbu, 2022).

Several non-Western and post-colonial settings of educational establishments such as Pakistan, interrelationship between English-medium topics, masculine roles, and teacher power affairs designate a distinctive sphere to investigate the impact of gender on classroom discourse.

Existing research findings in Africa (Issa Mohamed & Banda, 2008; Webb & Mkongo, 2013) have shown the effects of gendered discourse strategies on classroom interactions and space distribution, engagement and access to learning opportunities. Nevertheless, a slight research gap in a specific study that explores the gender distinctions in the teacher discourse practice at the university levels in South Asian EFL contexts can be noticed.

This paper offers the thematic patterns in the discourse of male and female lecturers of universities in Pakistan. In order to analyse, to what extent gender determines the visualisation in the delivery of lecture, questioning styles, classroom management, and shaping of interpersonal contact with students. Although Rudhumbu (2022) states that interactions in the classroom that are gendered may contribute to a significant effect on the academic performance of students. This research adds to it by highlighting teacher talk which is relatively understudied in tertiary classrooms in Pakistan.

This research can be explained by the fact that, in the sphere of TESOL, there is an increased awareness of sociolinguistics of teacher talk, particularly the way language is used to strengthen or challenge gender norms in classrooms (Sauntson, 2012). As gender roles are well engrained within cultural and educational systems of a society. As honor is the priority, gender lens approach to the study of spoken discourse can serve as the source to make teaching practices more equitable in higher education.

This study aims at determining and identifying discourse strategies used by male and female lectures within Pakistani universities with respect to their ability to construct authority, invite participation, control and manage silence, frame questions, and explanations. In this manner, the study intends to make contribution to knowledge about the underlying origins of gendered patterns of communication and its impact on educational experience of the students in the EFL classrooms.

The study has implications in various areas which includes teacher education programs. The linguistic aspect of gender analysis can teach more about the topic; in TESOL research where South Asian findings would be welcome; and in pedagogy where the research may be used to detect possible biases or imbalances of classroom interaction. It can also impact the language policy makers and curriculum designers who intend to develop equitable learning conditions in the English-medium institutions.

Despite the critical role of spoken discourse in the transmission of knowledge and in student engagement, there remains a lack of empirical research on how male and female lecturers differ in their classroom language use at the university level in Pakistan. This leads to the problem statement: *To what extent do discourse practices differ between male and female lecturers in tertiary classrooms in Pakistan, and how might these differences impact the classroom learning environment in EFL contexts?*

The current study contributes to ongoing discussions in applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and TESOL about how gender ideologies are enacted, resisted, or reinforced through spoken academic discourse.

**Literature review**

The role of classroom discourse in shaping student learning and teacher effectiveness has long been central to applied linguistics and educational research. Defined as the structured, goal-oriented verbal and non-verbal communication that takes place between teachers and students, classroom discourse in higher education settings carries particular significance. It does not only enhance the process of academia communication, it also reveals a larger ideology of pedagogy and norms of institutions. According to O'Connor and Snow (2017), one of the important sites through which the teaching and the learning process can be comprehended (both cognitively and socially) is via the classroom discourse. This realization is all the more pertinent to English

as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment like Pakistan. A classroom not only serves as a location to learn a language but also represents a social location for social functions; power distributions as well as language identities are enacted and reproduced.

The nature of academic discourse at tertiary level, according to Heller and Morek (2015), it can be conceptualized as a situated practice since different types of academic discourse are distributed across context, discipline, and the roles of speakers. This is because in numerous university contexts, particularly in postcolonial and multilingual nations, classroom discourse carries two-fold role: informing their learners as well as negotiating their identities. Pakistan is a country, where English is frequently used as the language of instruction yet neither the teacher nor students speak it as their native language. The local research evidence, including the work by Habib and Saleem (2016) indicates that academic discourse cannot be ideologically neutral since it bears the storylines of national, cultural, and religious identity. Moreover, the studies by Saleem, Abbas, and Khan (2023) and Saleem, Khan, and Zaman (2018) indicate that syntactic functions in the teacher talk, including head movement, null subject structures, and WH-movement, are employed variant in contexts, both comprising linguistic inclination and pedagogical intentions.

Other than the structural features the interactive and multimodal aspects of discourse has received the attention in the last years. Saeed and Shaikh (2024), as an example, demonstrate that oral presentations in the tertiary level have a high dependency on multimodal resources to co-construct the meaning in the form of gesture, tone and spatial arrangements. Communicative devices are not used indifferently, and the way in which they are used depends upon the individual style of a speaker, the context or the institutional background, and the social locations of a speaker. Henderson and Hirst (2007) focus on drawing an attention to the fact that students new to dominant discourse practices may not be able to make full contribution in classroom interactions and there is necessity to try how various teaching styles which may be gender-differentiated influence access to learning. Walsh (2006) points out, as well, to the significance of the so-called interactional space and to the fact that communication in a classroom setting can be successful in case a teacher is ready to control the process of turn-taking, to produce the requests and to adjust the strategies of discourse. These aspects are especially important in relating men and women lecturers, since, the selection of questions, tone, humor and directive styles can vary a lot and influence the interest of students.

Gender aspect of classroom discourse has become a burning issue of concern. At this, Sauntson (2012) anchors his argument, that, gender is not just portrayed in terms of discourse but it is actually constructed and reproduced through discourse. Literature produced in empirical studies, like that of Bergvall and Remlinger (1996), reveals that gendered language practice either legitimize an institutional power structure or it may question it. One can assume that there are some hypotheses in the sphere of higher education in Pakistan where the gender roles are traditionally culturally grounded, so a different style can be used between the male lecturers and female ones. Siddiquei, Sarfraz, and Khan (2024) support this hypothesis in their research that shows huge gender-related disparities in learning styles among university students and implies that perhaps the discourse strategies of the instructors can also be gendered. On the same note Shahzad et al. (2024) mention that male academic leaders in medical and dental practices President tend to represent assertive and authoritative principles of discourse that sideline gentler or rather cooperative forms of communication habits of female educators. These variations between discourse practices may affect classroom interaction and student engagement and perceptions of teaching performance.

At the secondary level, Aziz, Quraishi, and Kazi (2018) noted that male and female teachers were using different language patterns more common in male and female, respectively: the former ones focused on the use of more control-oriented, authoritative language, whereas the

latter ones were more receptive to the use of nurturing and inclusive language. This study was done in school settings but the finding of this study suggests more general trends of gendered discourse that could remain in university settings. According to Grace, it is easy to start a discourse in terms of institutional discourse without paying some critical attention to these dynamics of privilege and subordination and ending up giving a dominant (usually masculine) norm a voice at the expense of other communicative practices (Grace, 1997). Such an issue becomes especially pressing when it comes to such places as Pakistan, where the educational context is not only male-female mismatched most of the time but also shaped in a way benefiting the patriarchal vision of the world and, therefore, leading to certain situations where the classroom discourse becomes shaped by the woman-related values in the unconscious way. Academic discourse patterns (including linguistic and syntactic patterns) have also been investigated in a number of studies. The article by Saleem, Zahra, and Khan (2022) studies the possibilities of the complexity of minimalist syntactic structures in student writing and draws implications of such phenomena on speech processing. The results have application in the study of construction of academic speech by instructors, especially where the comparison is made between discourse patterns of male and female lecturers. Further, Pecorari et al. (2012) note the absence of connection between student reading habits and language use in the classroom, which suggests the significance of the manner in which the information is verbalized and the language impacts on students. If male and female lecturers differ significantly in their delivery styles, lexical choices, or syntactic complexity, this could have meaningful implications for student comprehension and academic success.

Despite the breadth of research on classroom discourse and gender in education, there remains a conspicuous gap in the literature on how male and female university lecturers in Pakistan differ in their discourse practices—particularly in real-time, naturally occurring classroom interactions. Much of the existing research either focuses on school settings, student discourse, or gendered learning styles without a specific emphasis on teacher talk in higher education. While studies have explored syntactic and pedagogical features separately, there is a lack of integrated analysis that compares male and female lecturers' actual language use in university classrooms.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing a corpus of transcribed lectures from twenty university teachers (ten male and ten female) in Pakistan, focusing on patterns of explanation, questioning, turn-taking, syntactic complexity, and engagement strategies. The problem this study investigates is: *How do discourse practices differ between male and female university lecturers in English-medium classrooms in Pakistan, and what implications do these differences have for student interaction and learning in EFL contexts?* By examining these differences, the research aims to provide empirical insight into gendered patterns of spoken academic discourse and to inform more equitable and reflective teaching practices in tertiary education.

**Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research design enriched with corpus-assisted discourse analysis and descriptive quantitative techniques to explore gendered patterns in university classroom discourse. The aim is to examine how male and female lecturers differ in their use of language, with particular attention to instructional strategies, authority, engagement, and interpersonal interaction.

**Data Collection**

The dataset comprised 14 recorded lecture sessions delivered by 14 university lecturers—7 male and 7 female—at various public-sector universities in Pakistan. Each lecture was

conducted in English and ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length. The subjects varied across linguistics, literature, and applied English language studies, providing a rich representation of tertiary-level English-medium instruction. All lectures were recorded with informed consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim using standardized transcription conventions.

**Thematic Analysis Procedure**

To analyze the data qualitatively, the study followed the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) data familiarization, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. During the coding process, all 14 transcripts were read multiple times to identify initial patterns. Using an inductive approach, the researcher manually coded excerpts of teacher talk based on recurring discourse behaviors. These codes were then organized into larger conceptual themes through constant comparison and iterative refinement. The final four themes—(1) Instructional Clarity and Explanation Strategies, (2) Authority and Classroom Control, (3) Student Engagement and Questioning Styles, and (4) Politeness, Hedging, and Interpersonal Alignment—emerged from the convergence of multiple codes and were consistently traceable across both male and female discourse samples.

To ensure credibility, a subset of the data was double-coded by an independent researcher familiar with discourse analysis. Differences in interpretation were discussed, and a consensus-based revision of themes was conducted.

**Corpus-Assisted Analysis**

In order to triangulate and validate the qualitative findings, a corpus-assisted analysis was conducted using AntConc (Version 4.3.1), a concordance and keyword analysis tool. Each transcript was saved in plain text format and divided into two sub-corpora based on gender (male and female lecturers). The software was used to extract:

- Word and phrase frequencies (e.g., you must, let's, maybe)
- Collocation patterns (e.g., question stems, hedging combinations)
- Concordance lines for contextual usage analysis

The frequency of thematic indicators (e.g., display vs. referential questions, hedging expressions, imperatives, inclusive pronouns) was calculated by identifying representative linguistic markers under each theme and counting their occurrences across all transcripts using AntConc (Anthony, 2024 ). These included:

For Instructional Style: use of metaphor, real-life examples, technical definitions

- Power: modal verbs, imperative, mitigated imperative
- Engagement: types of questions (what is...?, why do you think that...)
- Interpersonal Alignment: hedges (I think, perhaps), tag questions, inclusive pronouns (we, lets)

The data were then tabulated in Microsoft Excel whereby the frequencies were averaged with each lecturer in evaluation of equal comparison in gender groups. It was not to be applied as a statistic, but these frequencies were descriptive and so provided empirical support to the interpretation of discourse behavior and patterns.

The rationale of employing frequency-based indicators is that the comparison of communicative tendencies by male and female lecturers should be achieved objectively. The research used a systematic estimate of the occurrence of some of the discourse features- e.g., hedging, directive language, or types of questions; by the numbers he obtained by quantifying the recurrence of those features, to measure the extent of thematic dominance and its variation.

By doing this, the qualitative themes could be measured with linguistic evidence, thus raising the reliability and clarity of the analysis.

Particularly the combination of thematically and quantitative information was useful in responding not only to what differences can be made in gendered discourse, but also how frequently such pattern emerges and to what extent. The triangulated methodology enhances the credibility of results which is essential in the applied linguistic research that aims to guide pedagogy.

**Ethical Consideration**

All the participating lecturers signed an informed consent before the recording. Institutional identities and anonymization of transcriptions were ensured in order to sustain values of confidentiality.

**Analysis**

The content of this section is a thematic and quantitative analysis of classroom-delivered discourse of 14 university lecturers all of whom are male and females and whom they recorded in 14 sessions of English-medium lectures in Pakistan. Braun and Clarke (2006) in their six step framework of thematic analysis were used to analyze the theme and AntConc (Version 4.3.1) was used to supplement the thematic information with descriptive data of the corpus. These four themes that emerged were (1) Instructional Clarity and Explanatory Strategies, (2) Authority and Classroom Control, (3) Student Engagement and Questioning Styles and (4) Politeness and hedging and Interpersonal Alignment.

1. **Clarity Instructional Clarity and Explanatory Strategies**

The initial message theme underlines the profound discrepancies in patterns of male and female lecturers building an interpretation and presenting academic material. The form which was used on the part of the men lecturers was declarative, formal and resembled academic writing. To give an example, Male Lecturer 1, when defining semantics, said:

Semantics is the science of meaning. It includes the lexical, sentence and the discourse semantics. We may start with lexical semantics, more precisely, with sense relations."

The linear, information-heavy delivery style was common among male lecturers. In contrast, female lecturers showed a consistent pattern of relational and student-oriented explanation strategies. Female Lecturer 4, teaching the same topic, said:

*"So, semantics is basically about meaning—how we understand words and sentences. Think about synonyms—words that mean the same, like 'big' and 'large.' Can you think of anymore?"*

This approach draws students into the learning process through examples and direct involvement. Female Lecturer 6 used a metaphor:

*"You can think of a morpheme as a Lego block. Each block has a function, and when we put them together, they build something bigger, like a word."*

Such metaphoric scaffolding made abstract linguistic concepts accessible and engaging.

Quantitative corpus analysis revealed that female lecturers used illustrative examples and comparisons approximately 3 times more than male lecturers. They also used relational metaphors and real-world analogies (e.g., "like a Lego," "as in your daily speech") with greater frequency. Male lecturers, by contrast, showed a higher frequency of technical definitions and disciplinary jargon, emphasizing content mastery over communicative scaffolding (see table 1).

**Table 1**
*Average Frequency of Discourse Features Used by Male and Female Lecturers*

| Feature | Male (avg) | Female (avg) |
|---|---|---|
| Academic Definitions | 15 | 8 |
| Everyday Examples | 6 | 18 |
| Metaphors/Analogies | 4 | 11 |
| Content-Focused Sentences | 22 | 13 |

This statistical trend reinforces the thematic interpretation: female lecturers favor clarity through relatable expression, while male lecturers emphasize authoritative content delivery.

## 2. Authority and Classroom Control

A second major theme centers on how lecturers establish authority and regulate classroom behavior. Male lecturers were more likely to assert control through directives and imperatives, often employing a formal, top-down tone. For example, Male Lecturer 3 instructed:

*"This is important, so you must write it down. It will be in the exam, and you should not ignore it."*

Similarly, Male Lecturer 2 said:

*"You, at the back—are you listening or not? Pay attention. I'm not repeating it again."*

This assertive and sometimes confrontational style constructed authority through discipline and command.

In contrast, female lecturers constructed authority through empathy and relational strategies. Female Lecturer 1, noticing student fatigue, offered:

*"Let's take a moment to stretch and then continue. I know it's a dense topic, but we'll go through it slowly."*

And Female Lecturer 5 used indirect suggestions:

*"You might want to highlight this rule in your notes. It'll help you remember when we practice later."*

These utterances reflect a more facilitative leadership style, rooted in emotional attunement and learner autonomy.

Corpus-assisted analysis showed (in table 2) a clear gender-based pattern in directive language. Male lecturers used strong imperatives (e.g., "must," "don't," "write it down") nearly twice as often as female lecturers, who preferred modalized suggestions (e.g., "might," "could," "let's").

**Table 2**
*Average Frequency of Discourse Features Used by Male and Female Lecturers*

| Directive Type | Male (avg) | Female (avg) |
|---|---|---|
| Strong Imperatives | 22 | 10 |
| Modalized Suggestions | 7 | 12 |
| Indirect Instructions | 4 | 9 |

In table 2, these findings reinforce the notion that female lecturers negotiate control, whereas male lecturers assert it, aligning with previous scholarship on gendered educational discourse (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996; Rudhumbu, 2022).

## 3. Student Engagement and Questioning Styles

This theme highlights gendered differences in how lecturers employ questions to structure discourse and engage learners. Male lecturers predominantly used display questions, often

followed by immediate answers, indicating a monologic (see figure 1), teacher-centered approach. Male Lecturer 4 asked:

*"What is pragmatics? Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context. That's all you need to remember."*

Female lecturers, on the other hand, favored referential questions that encouraged thinking, exploration, and dialogue. For example, Female Lecturer 3 asked:

*"Why do you think some people find it difficult to learn pronunciation?"*

Female Lecturer 2 invited personal input:

*"Think about when you watch a film in English—do the subtitles help or confuse you? Take a moment."*

These questions extended beyond content recall, fostering interaction and student-centered learning.

Quantitative data confirmed this divergence. Female lecturers asked more referential questions, while male lecturers relied heavily on display questions (see table 3).

**Table 3**
*Average Frequency of Discourse Features Used by Male and Female Lecturers*

| Question Type | Male (avg per session) | Female (avg per session) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Display Questions | 18 | 10 |
| Referential Questions | 9 | 21 |
| Rhetorical Questions | 6 | 5 |
| Total Questions | 33 | 36 |

In table 3, these figures demonstrate that female lecturers fostered more dialogue and higher-order thinking, a finding that aligns with learner-centered pedagogies advocated in TESOL practice (O'Connor & Snow, 2017).

### 4. Politeness, Hedging, and Interpersonal Alignment

The final theme explores how lecturers construct interpersonal relationships through hedging, politeness strategies, and inclusive language. Female lecturers frequently employed epistemic hedging (e.g., "I think," "maybe"), inclusive pronouns, and tag questions, as seen in Female Lecturer 6:

*"I think this might be a bit tricky, but don't worry—we'll work through it together."*

Female Lecturer 5 added:

*"This rule is quite useful, isn't it? Let's remember it when we do exercises."*

These markers created a supportive, non-threatening learning space. Conversely, male lecturers were more declarative and direct. Male Lecturer 2 stated:

*"This is the rule. No exceptions. Memorize it."*

Such statements signaled epistemic certainty, reducing dialogic (see figure 1) negotiation.

The frequency of politeness and hedging devices showed clear gender-based variation.

**Table 4**
*Average Frequency of Discourse Features Used by Male and Female Lecturers*

| Feature | Male (avg) | Female (avg) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hedges (I think, maybe) | 11 | 29 |
| Tag Questions | 4 | 15 |
| Inclusive Pronouns (we, us) | 8 | 21 |
| Interactional Markers (okay?) | 16 | 38 |

In table 4, these patterns support the thematic observation that female lecturers align more closely with supportive and collaborative classroom discourse norms, promoting learner comfort and engagement (Sauntson, 2012; Walsh, 2006).

**Discussion**

This study set out to explore gender-based variations in the classroom discourse of university lecturers in Pakistan. Drawing upon Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, and supported by corpus-assisted quantitative tools, the findings reveal clear discursive distinctions between male and female lecturers in terms of instructional delivery, classroom authority, engagement strategies, and interpersonal alignment. These findings are consistent with earlier research (Sauntson, 2012; Rudhumbu, 2022; Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996), yet they provide novel evidence from a Pakistani TESOL context, which has been underrepresented in prior discourse studies.

One of the most salient findings of this study was the contrast between content-heavy, linear explanations by male lecturers and scaffold, example-driven instruction by female lecturers. Male lecturers demonstrated a preference for abstract definitions and a formal, lecture-based style—reinforcing traditional hierarchical roles. This echoes findings by Heller and Morek (2015), who noted that academic discourse often, retains a monologic tone (figure 1) in male-dominated settings.

In contrast, female lecturers emphasized metaphors, analogies, and relatable examples, aligning with constructivist pedagogical approaches where meaning-making is co-constructed with learners. The frequent use of metaphor (e.g., morphemes as "Lego blocks") is particularly significant in TESOL, where conceptual clarity depends on connecting abstract concepts to lived experience. This strategy supports O'Connor and Snow's (2017) argument that effective classroom discourse should scaffold learning through interaction and context-sensitive language.

The higher frequency of such features among female lecturers in this study reinforces the idea that gender can influence communicative sensitivity in instructional settings. However, this is not to essentialize female teachers as inherently better communicators, but rather to highlight stylistic tendencies that may stem from socially constructed gender roles and expectations.

A second major discussion point relates to the construction of authority in classroom discourse. Male lecturers frequently employed strong imperatives ("you must," "don't ignore"), top-down evaluation, and disciplinary language. These findings are consistent with Issa Mohamed and Banda (2008), who observed a prevalence of authoritarian discourse in male-dominated academic spaces in East Africa. The use of such language may be culturally embedded, reflecting a banking model of education (Freire, 1970) where the teacher deposits knowledge and expects obedience.

Female lecturers, on the other hand, exhibited facilitative control, using suggestions, empathy, and soft imperatives to maintain classroom order. Their use of "let's," "maybe," and "you might want to" indicates a relational orientation to authority, one that fosters psychological safety and co-learning. This aligns with Sauntson's (2012) findings that female teachers often use language to establish collaborative space and mutual respect rather than asserting dominance.

These gendered discourse styles have implications for student participation. Classrooms where authority is exercised through fear or power may stifle curiosity and reduce engagement—especially in second language contexts where confidence and psychological comfort are crucial to learning. Therefore, fostering balanced authority—assertive yet respectful—is key to effective TESOL teaching.

This study found striking gender-based differences in questioning styles. Male lecturers favored display questions—aimed at checking knowledge or comprehension—while female lecturers asked more referential and open-ended questions. This confirms previous studies (Aziz et al., 2018; Saeed & Shaikh, 2024) showing that female teachers tend to design discourse that promotes dialogic (see figure 1) interaction, cognitive autonomy, and reflective thinking. Such findings carry pedagogical weight in EFL/ESL classrooms, where questioning is not merely a tool of assessment but a key driver of language acquisition and critical thinking. Referential questions, which encourage learners to connect concepts to their experiences or opinions, activate deeper cognitive processing and promote student voice.

Moreover, the female lecturers' consistent use of wait time, follow-up prompts, and confirmation checks ("Can someone give an example?", "Take your time, think about it") demonstrated sensitivity to student learning rhythms. This is particularly valuable in multilingual classrooms, where learners may require additional processing time. These strategies resonate with interactional frameworks in TESOL that emphasize scaffolding and negotiation of meaning.

The impactful finding is the difference in interpersonal discourse markers. Female lecturers used significantly more hedging devices, inclusive pronouns, and tag questions, which functioned as tools of relational discourse—facilitating inclusivity, psychological safety, and rapport. This mirrors findings by Grace (1997) and Sauntson (2012), who note that women often construct shared learning spaces through language that invites participation and diffuses hierarchical boundaries.

The frequent use of expressions such as "I think this might be tricky," "Let's work through this," and "This is useful, isn't it?" helped construct a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where teacher and learners are co-participants. This aligns with research by Henderson and Hirst (2007), which argued for reframing academic discourse as socially embedded rather than purely content-driven.

In comparison, the epistemic certainty was inclined more strongly in male lecturers, who employed less interpersonal markers. Such a behavior can be seen as the confidence and command over the subject matter, but at the same time, it can lead to the alienation of the students who feel either threatened or unaffected by this environment. Interpersonal discourse features are particularly important in the use of TESOL contexts, particularly in cases where the learners might already be linguistically insecure.

**Figure 1**
*Proportion of Dialogic vs. Monologic Features*
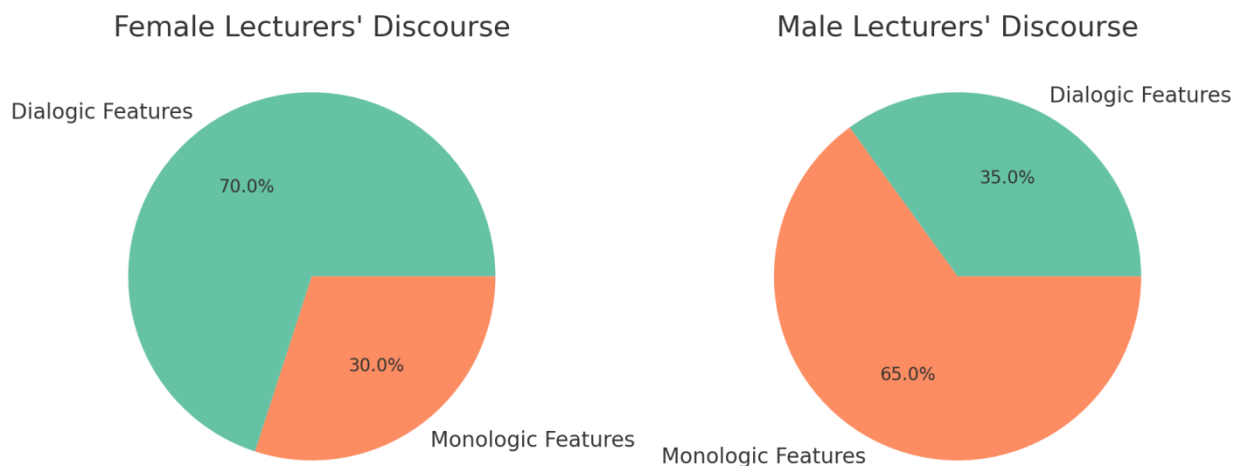
The pie chart (figure 1) visually represents the contrasting discourse orientations between male and female university lecturers in the Pakistani EFL context. Dialogic features such as referential questions, hedges, and inclusive pronouns were notably more frequent in female lecturers' talk, suggesting a more interactive and student-centered discourse style. In contrast, male lecturers demonstrated a higher proportion of monologic features, including imperatives and display questions, indicating a more authoritative and content-driven mode of delivery. These proportions, derived through corpus-assisted frequency analysis, reflect how gendered discourse patterns shape classroom interaction, with implications for language learning engagement and inclusivity in EFL instruction.

The results should also be referred back to the socio-cultural and educational setting of Pakistan where higher education is also defined by the traditional levels of hierarchy and the growing number of gender diversities. The cultural prescriptions imposed on male lecturers tend more to emphasize command, authority and discipline whereas female lecturers might be expected to be supportive and co-operative expectations which were found in the discussion patterns (although not necessarily consistently) in the cases examined.

However, as this paper demonstrates, the way that we use gendered language is also a structural, institutional and cultural process, rather than a matter of personality or preference. To TESOL professionals in Pakistan, this implies understanding the role of language use, which affects learning demands, as well as how a course in instruction can be designed in a gender-conscious manner depending on the requirements of the teaching subject.

In addition, the study provides some practical implications to the teacher training programs. Discourse awareness ought to be part of language teacher education, which would be asking the teaching practitioner to question about his or her communicative styles and the effects they have on student participation and learning, as well as within classroom settings. Male lecturers especially can be benefited by training which raises awareness of interactional flexibility, strategies of relation discourse as well as the importance of dialogic (see figure 1) pedagogy.

**Conclusion**

This research study aimed to analyse the gendered interaction within the discourse in classroom teaching in tertiary education using taped and transcribed lectures of female and male tertiary lecturers in Pakistan. Combining thematic analysis and quantitative methods enabled by the corpus, the study has exposed fine but also consistent differences in which male and female teachers scaffold the construction of knowledge, instruct students, command authority and coordinate interaction during English-medium instruction.

Quantitative analysis demonstrated that men lecturers preferred content oriented lectures, strong imperative statements and direct speech, closed interrogation modes, which reflected the traditional hierarchies in higher education. Female lecturers, in turn, were practicing a more relational, inclusive, and interactive language usage, as they frequently employed metaphors, referential questions, hedging techniques, inclusive pronouns to enhance the learning and rapport. These patterns were not anecdotal but were demonstrated systematically by the corpus tools like AntConc which gave the frequency of the discourse features found on the transcribed dataset.

Although this investigation does not imply the existence of a better teaching style belonging to one or the other gender, it still points out to the pedagogical importance of discursive choices. In TESOL in particular, classes are built around student confidence, interaction and exposure to language, and this is where the logic of discourse strategies which promote learners to feel included, empathize and actively engage in the room works agriculture to produce impressive classroom results.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered for TESOL practitioners, curriculum developers, and teacher educators:

- Language teacher education programs should include components on classroom discourse analysis, enabling teachers to critically examine how their linguistic choices affect classroom dynamics. Reflecting on tone, questioning patterns, and directive language can empower both male and female educators to adopt more responsive and learner-friendly styles.
- TESOL instructors should be encouraged to integrate referential questions, real-life examples, and inclusive discourse strategies into their teaching. These elements support language development by increasing learner talk time, cognitive engagement, and contextualized understanding.
- Maintaining classroom control need not come at the expense of student comfort. Teachers—especially in multilingual and EFL settings—should strive for a balance between assertive instruction and relational alignment, using hedging, tag questions, and inclusive pronouns to build rapport while guiding learning.
- Institutions should create opportunities for teachers to observe and reflect on their own discourse practices. Peer observation, discourse transcription tasks, and feedback sessions can help lecturers become more mindful of how their gendered and cultural identities shape their teaching language.
- While this study focused on Pakistani university lecturers, similar investigations across diverse cultural, institutional, and linguistic settings could provide deeper insights into how gender, discourse, and pedagogy interact. Future research might also consider student perceptions of teacher discourse and its impact on language learning efficacy.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of work at the intersection of language, gender, and education, particularly within underexplored South Asian TESOL contexts. By bringing empirical clarity to discourse patterns in male and female-led classrooms, it not only fills a research gap but also informs practical, equitable, and reflective teaching in English language education.

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