Analyzing Gendered Speech Styles and Power Negotiation in Professional and Casual Face-to-Face and Digital Interactions: An Interactional Sociolinguistic Study of Politeness Strategies and Identity Construction

Barira Ibraheem
Elementary School Teacher, Govt Girls High School, Bhikhi, Sheikhupura, Pakistan
PhD English Scholar, Imperial College of Business Studies, Lahore, Pakistan,
barira2ibraheem@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Siddique
Head of English Department at Imperial College of Business Studies, Lahore,
ms3007763003@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines how gendered speech style is used as an interactional resource in negotiation of power and construction of identity in the workplace and non-work settings of both personal and online communication. The frame of the research is based on the modern sociolinguistic studies which develop the concept of gender as socially constructed and performed phenomenon, and specific to the institutional conventions and communicative contexts. The main aim of the research will be to investigate the use of politeness strategies, turn-taking, directives, modality, stance-taking, and multimodal cues as strategic methods to negotiate the authority and social relations by speakers. The study has a mixed-methods design, with a qualitative predominant approach on an interpretivist research paradigm methodologically. Using purposive sampling so that data are balanced in gender and can be compared contextually, data are gathered through natural interactions that occur in the workplace, such as professional meetings, casual conversation, WhatsApp messages, and Zoom interactions. The theory is based on the Interactional Sociolinguistics, Politeness Theory, and social constructionist approaches to gender and identity. The interactional discourse analysis is used to analyze the data with the assistance of the thematic coding and partial quantitative frequency analysis. The conclusions demonstrate that gendered speech styles are contextual and being tactical. Female interactional and emotional labor is carried out more by mitigation and alignment than by direct and authoritative forms, which are more common between men (especially in professional face-to-face environments). There is no evidence of the end of gendered power asymmetries in digital communication, which instead reconfigures them. On the whole, the analysis shows that gender alone does not predetermine power and identity, but it is the everyday interaction that does.

Introduction

The gendered speech styles are not male or female language but rather an interactional resource that individuals utilize in achieving talk goals -e.g., obtaining cooperation, appearing professional, developing solidarity, opposing control, or enacting authority. In modern sociolinguistics, gender has been commonly conceptualized as an act and a negotiated aspect of interaction, as opposed to being predetermined character trait that intrinsically dictates the speech of the person. It implies that the same speaker can sound more assertive, polite, softened or authoritative in relation to the location of speaking (professional and casual), the mode of speaking (face to face and digital), and the relationship and power statuses of the participants. As of lately, it has been demonstrated that power relationships in interaction are dynamic and may undergo change throughout the same conversation with the help of stance-taking, turn management, and strategic selections of politeness (Li, Liu, and Liu, 2022).

Language itself, in the workplace, is one of the primary instruments of implementing institutional identities, e.g., manager, team head, junior employee or client, as well as the upholding of workplace practices such as respect, efficiency and responsibility. Studies of workplace interaction demonstrate that negotiators negotiate power in the form of directives, interruptions, turn management, mitigation and the framing of disagreement. Simultaneously, gendered expectations could influence the judgment of such moves: an authoritative command may be interpreted as confidence in leadership when delivered by one interlocutor but as impolite or violent when delivered by another one based on gendered ideologies and corporate culture. The benefits of women workplace talk of this strategic balancing, which demonstrates the competence and power of such talk along with managing the social risk of directness, are also emphasized in Pakistani and South Asian studies (Sajjad, Shah, and Khan, 2025). On the same note, studies on professional worlds also show that gendered language practices tend to be institutionalized and lack of equal distribution of authority instead of merely a personal disposition towards speaking choices (Nazli, 2025).

In addition to talk in the workplace, casual interaction (with friends, classmates, or family) offers another social logic: bonding, humor, intimacy, and shared identity performance can be the main goals. Such politeness in informal settings tends to take the form of solidarity plans, teasing, joking, affiliative backchannels, and friendly softeners. But informal conversation is not powerless. Negotiation of dominance even among friends involves control of the topic of conversation, right to speak and even specifying what will be regarded as acceptable speech. Such negotiations are especially eminent when there is a misunderstanding, storytelling and banter time when face issues and identity assertions are under constant management.

This is enhanced by the emergence of digital communication. The communication platforms of WhatsApp, email, Zoom, Instagram DMs, and workplace messaging platforms have broadened the face-to-face communication and have also introduced new tools, including emojis, reaction options, message times, silence/seen status, and screenshot-functionality. Politeness and power are done through these platform affordances: e.g. a brief response, a delayed response can be read as disinterest, hierarchy, and disapproval; an emoji can soften a command; formal greetings can indicate distance and institutional factors. Research into computer-mediated communication reveals that politeness approaches in online communication tend to combine

formality with conversational informality particularly in interactions between students and their teachers, supervisors and subordinates (Abaya, Lilian, and Ongarora, 2023). Researchers also discover the systematic application of positive and negative politeness strategies to save face when giving out instructions and requests in digitally mediated classroom talk (Valdellon & Cuarte, 2024).

There is also a critical evidence of identity acting through interactional practices such as turn allocation, mitigation, stance and self-positioning which are afforded by digital media settings. As an example, the Pakistani digital talk-show conversation has been revealed to participate in the strategies of politeness and turn-taking that assist the participants in controlling both authority and social identity simultaneously (Ishfaq, Sultan, and Healy, 2025). This type of findings is important to gender research as it indicates that the process of identity construction can be seen in the smallest of details of talk, in how speakers take a turn, how they make a claim more mellow, how they frame an opposition, or how they convey agreement with an audience (Ishfaq, Sultan, and Healy, 2025).

Politeness theory has been the focal point of gendered interaction research since politeness is not just about being nice it is a social process of face management, hierarchy, distance and group membership. Recent research still uncovers gender-related patterning in politeness decisions, although significant contextual and relationship differences are present. As an illustration, one study on Pakistani university contexts also indicates gender variation in the application of politeness norms by the faculty members (Ayesha, 2022), whereas another study on social media platforms indicates that online settings may be used to enhance the use of affiliative strategies and identity performance via positive politeness and facework (Farooq, Khan, and Alphonce, 2024). The cross-cultural negotiation studies have further added that gender differences become particularly apparent in the areas of high-stakes interactional genres such as bargaining and decision-making, where hedging, directness and mitigation are quantifiably valuable as a strategic tool (Hoang, 2023). In the context of Pakistan, language is also negotiated in visible areas such as political and leadership discourse, which speakers use rhetorical and stylistic options to create legitimacy in gendered social structures (Tahir and Ahmad, 2025).

Although growing research has been conducted, a major gap could be found: most researchers discuss either workplace or casual talk, either face-to-face or through digital communication, or a specific platform/genre. Even less are studies which systematically compare the same broad gendered speech resources (directness, mitigation, politeness strategies, turn-taking control) to work across (1) between professional and casual and (2) between face-to-face and digital contexts, and explicitly related the pattern of these practices to the negotiation of power and identity in an interactional sociolinguistic context. Thus, the current research explores the ways of gendered speech styles embodied in terms of setting and mode, the ways of how gendered speech styles create social identities (e.g., competent professional, supportive colleague, respectful junior, confident peer), as well as the ways of how gendered speech styles negotiate power relations using evident discourse practices.

Research Questions

1. What are the patterns in the application of politeness strategies (positive, negative, bald-on-record, off-record) to employ gendered speech styles in professional and informal interactions in face-to-face and online communication?

2. How does taking over practices (e.g. interruptions, overlaps, topic control), and directive form (request, command, suggestion) serve as a negotiation strategy of power, and how are these patterned by sex and situation?
3. In what ways do social identities (professional authority, solidarity, expertise, deference) develop and emerge through gendered interactional decisions in both face-to-face and digital communication?

Objectives

- To determine and compare gendered patterns of politeness strategies and mitigation in professional and casual conversations in face-to-face and online communication.
- To examine the ways speakers negotiate power via interactional control (turn-taking, directives, stance, and alignment) and how such practices vary in contexts and modes.
- To explore the role of gendered speech styles in identity construction (e.g. leadership, competence, solidarity, and respectability) in an interactional sociolinguistic structure.

Literature Review

The study of language and gender has tended to abandon the fixed and stable styles of male and female speech and understand gender as performed and negotiated in interaction, and as shaped by context, roles in participation and institutional norms. The recent syntheses reiterate the importance of gendered linguistic patterns being actualized with locally located practices, including stance-taking and alignment, and identity work, as opposed to core biological differences (Angouri and Baxter, 2021). The gendered forms of speech in professional contexts can overlap with institutional inequalities, role performance, and workplace cultures to generate a variety of judgments about the same communicative act e.g. directness can be viewed as an expression of efficient leadership or a sign of abrasiveness, depending on the gender of the speaker and the norms of the institution (Nazli, 2025; Zoon and Ashfaq, 2021).

The flagellation and inference of meaning by contextualization cues (e.g., tone, pacing, mitigation, and discourse markers) is a core topic of interest in interactional sociolinguistics, along with the indexing of identities and social relations by these cues. There is a focus on the methodology in which micro-level analysis may relate micro-levels to macro-levels, especially where institutional power and social identity are relevant (Dippold, 2020; Toomaneejinda, 2022). This kind of work is in particular pertinent when one is researching gendered speech styles, as gender is made observable in the interactional work that speakers engage in to look competent, respectful, collaborative, or authoritative. This is in line with leadership and meeting talk research indicating that leaders distribute the right to participate, control the agenda, and take accountability using directive moves, topic control moves, and turn allocation moves, which may be gendered by ideologies at workplace (Zoon and Ashfaq, 2021; Waqar, 2024).

Politeness strategies are considered one of the important studies used to examine power negotiation within the framework of professional interactions. Modern historiography is more and more adamant that politeness can never be without status and power, particularly when hierarchies are institutionalized (Suparno, 2023). Communication can serve to keep a distance, to impose a role or to safeguard dissent, whereas a strategic informality can create a base of solidarity and achieve power distribution more covertly. This is despite the apparent politeness of communication. Academic and institutional research indicates that negative politeness (deference, hedging, indirect requests) and positive politeness (solidarity-building, inclusive pronouns, compliments) might be both a relationship and a power-managing instrument, and

patterns might be gendered, role-specific, and situation-specific (Banat, 2024; Ahmed, 2024; Jones, 2025).

The operationalization of gendered speech style is often done based on such features as directness/indirectness, hedging, mitigation, directives, and conflict management. Current research indicates that hedging as a tool of negotiating the epistemic stance and interpersonal risk is still of interest to negotiate, not only in the spoken interaction, but also in the academic and institutional discourse (Leláková, 2024; Alhuqbani, 2025). Hedging may index carefulness and politeness, but may index less entitlement to make claim, an essential connection to power negotiation. Disagreement work proposes that power and gender can inform face attention, such that speakers can frame counter-claims, make challenges less confrontational, or not confrontational at all (Ahmed, 2024). In the meantime, literature on women in the workplace still indicates that the voice of women and their involvement is determined by cultural and organizational circumstances affecting the listening, credibility, and authority of the talk of women (Adisa, 2024).

During informal communication, studies usually tend to discover that identifying and power remain but are negotiated under various norms: humor, teasing, narrative positioning, and even affiliative moves tend to be front and center. In informal conversation power could be played in terms of who decides the subject matter, who receives attention as well as who could define just joking and what is offensive. Despite the fact that most of the traditional arguments on the gendered conversational style were initially established using face to face information, current academic studies focus on cross contextual comparisons and the necessity to study the way in which practices are transported across environments. Such comparative point of view is essential since speech styles gendered be stronger in one case (e.g., professional meetings) and less grounded in another case (e.g., chat groups of friends), where norms of solidarity and play enable alternative performances of identity (Angouri and Baxter, 2021, Hamzah, 2025).

The accelerated move toward the digital realm of communication has heightened the focus on the dynamics of performing politeness and identity with the reduction of nonverbal cues and the introduction of new meaning-making resources by platforms. Digital discourse research claims that the online offline divide is no longer such a simple line but the researcher should analyze the points of entry into digital interaction and how platform affordances restructure participation and social norms (Bolander, 2020). Power-relevant cues in messaging and social media can be the time of reply, length of message, punctuations, and seen notifications. Multimodality also facilitates digital politeness: emojis, GIFs, reaction and stickers can be used to soften requests, clarify position, show alignment, or express relative warmth in a manner that partially replaces face-to-face prosody and gesture (Escouflaire, 2021; Zappavigna and Logi, 2021).

Emoji scholarship specifically has expanded at a fast pace due to the fact that emojis are pragmatic coping mechanisms of controlling tones, signaling stance and alignment with others. One of them is typological work demonstrating the fact that emojis may serve various purposes, such as expressive, interpretive, referential, and relational, one of which is the particular role of negotiating politeness and interpersonal positioning (Escouflaire, 2021). Corpus and discourse-analytic studies demonstrate that the application of emojis helps to create meaning in the discourse of social media in general, and work-related topics such as working at home where emojis are involved in constructing a shared experience and alignment (Zappavigna and Logi, 2021). The systematic variations in the frequency of emoji usage by gender and type of

relations have also been reported in quantitative psychological researches and indicate that emoji practices are socially context- and identity-related practices (Dubé et al., 2024). In South Asia, recent research also records gendered difference in emojis preferences and use patterns but most of them require more interactional research than survey and frequency counts (Iftikhar, 2024; Tariq, 2025).

Several articles analyze the strategies of politeness in WhatsApp and other messaging services, and they usually employ the categories introduced by Brown and Levinson to categorize positive/negative politeness and levels of directness. Research is generally able to confirm that even informal platforms have high standards of politeness based on the sensitivity of the topic and group dynamic, as well as the level of power (Junita, 2022; Ismail, 2023; Sabir, 2025). This is what leads to argue that digital communication does not abolish hierarchy, on the contrary, it transforms it, and in some cases power is more ambiguous since cues are now spread across multimodal signs, time and platform conventions. Essential work in digital communication underscores the evolution of politeness and impoliteness practices to the so-called digital age, where the visibility of messages, their circulation, and permanence increase the risks of the face (Suparno, 2023; Rahmani, 2025).

In general, the current literature contributes to three main arguments that drive the given research. To start with, gendered speech styles cannot be considered as fixed traits but contingent interactional practices (Angouri and Baxter, 2021). Second, politeness strategies are closely intertwined with power negotiation, particularly in institutional and digital contexts in which positions and norms organize who can talk, how, and what the outcomes will be (Adisa, 2024; Suparno, 2023). Third, digital interaction presents the multimodal resources and platform limitation that reconfigure the practices of identity construction and power exhibits, necessitating comparative, interaction-based analysis between professional and casual contexts, as well as face-to-face and online contexts (Bolander, 2020; Zappavigna & Logi, 2021).

Methodology

The paper follows the approach of a qualitative dominant mixed-method research based on interactional sociolinguistics since the main objective is to investigate the performance, interpretation, and negotiation of gendered speech styles in actual interaction. Interactional sociolinguistics is especially appropriate since it is concerned with sense-making in discourse contextualization where contextualization cues are given priority, including turn-taking, mitigation, politeness markers, stance, and alignment. Although the analysis is qualitative and interpretive in nature, quantification of the frequency of the chosen linguistic features (e.g., directives, hedges, politeness strategies) is provided by quantitative methods in order to justify patterns and cross-context comparison. The research is conducted in the comparative design systematically contrasting (a) professional and informal interactions and (b) face-to-face and online interactions, which enables obtaining cross-contextual knowledge of the interaction of gender, power, and identity.

The theoretical framework combines Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz), Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson) and social constructionist concept of gender and identity. Interactional sociolinguistics offers means to examine the micro-level interactionalities like turn control, repair and contextualization cues. The polite theory is used to classify and explain positive and negative politeness, bald-on-record and off-record strategies especially in power discrepancies. It is also assumed that gender is an interactionally achieved and constructed social phenomenon, not a variable, which can be analyzed in terms of the strategic adoption or

violation of gendered expectations by speakers. The philosophical underpinning of the study is an interpretivist research paradigm, which presupposes that the construction of social reality is an effect of interaction and that the meaning of politeness, authority, and identity is created as a result of the orientations of the participants in the particular context instead of being determined by the universal rules.

Both in-person and online interactions are used to gather data and represent the modern communicative practices. Data that are face-to-face are natural conversations that have been recorded in a professional (e.g., in an office, during an academic discussion) or non-professional (e.g., during a peer conversation) environment. The digital data will consist of text-based and audio-visual communication that has been used on WhatsApp, Zoom, and workplace messaging systems, which have been chosen as the most frequently used digital platforms in communication, both professional and non-professional. Every subject has signed informed consent and the ethical aspects like anonymity, confidentiality and safety of data are strictly followed. The corpus consists of interactions between genders with mixed-gender interaction so that the gendered speech practices can be compared. Transcription adheres to simplified conversation-analytic principles which include entrapment of overlaps, pauses, emphasis, and important pragmatic markers in negotiation of politeness and power.

The research will use purposive sampling as the sample will include individuals who frequently participate in professional and non-professional communication in both online and offline communication. The sample size will include adults; these participants are similar in terms of their level of education and the knowledge of the language to reduce the extraneous variation. To provide an analytical comparability of the sample, the sample is well balanced in terms of gender and interactional role (e.g., peers, supervisors, subordinates). The analysis of data will be conducted in two phases: initially, the linguistic features that may include directives, hedging, modal verbs, interruptions, and politeness strategies, will be coded; subsequently, such features will be understood in terms of the power negotiation process and identity construction in particular interactional instances. Quantitative summaries do not supersede qualitative interpretations, but support them. Such a combination of methodology allows a subtle insight into the functioning of gendered speech styles in various situations and in different styles, which are directly related to the purpose and theoretical direction of the study.

Data Analysis

Gendered Politeness Strategies in Face-to-Face and Digital Professional and Casual Interactions.

This section examines the politeness strategies as the main linguistic process on the basis of which gendered speech styles are practiced and power relations are discussed. Based on the politeness framework and the interactional sociolinguistics developed by Brown and Levinson, the analysis will compare the use of positive politeness, negative politeness, and bald-on-record and off-record strategies by the male and female speakers in the context of:

- Professional vs. Casual situations.
- Face-to-face vs. Digital modes

The analysis does not just define politeness but the strategic work of interaction, which is bound to authority, face management, and identity performance.

Table 1: Distribution of Politeness Strategies by Gender, Context, and Interaction Mode

Politeness Strategy	Professional Face-to-Face	Professional Digital	Casual Face-to-Face	Casual Digital	Interactional Interpretation
Positive Politeness (Solidarity, Inclusion, Compliments)	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Very High Males: High	Used to build rapport and soften hierarchy; more frequent in casual and digital contexts
Negative Politeness (Hedging, Deference, Indirectness)	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: Moderate	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: High Males: Low	Signals awareness of power distance; dominant in professional and digital discourse
Bald-on-Record (Direct Commands, Unmitigated Requests)	Males: High Females: Low	Males: Moderate Females: Low	Males: Moderate Females: Low	Males: Low Females: Very Low	Functions as authority display; gendered evaluation affects interpretation
Off-Record (Hints, Implicatures)	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: High Males: Low	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: Moderate	Allows face protection and plausible deniability, especially for women

Interpretive Analysis

1. Politeness as a Gendered interactional Resource.

The table shows that politeness strategies are not balanced in the contexts and genders. Women speakers are always more strategic in their range especially in professional and digital communication. This does not imply language impairment, but merely indicates an increased level of interactional awareness in situations where power and judgment are on the line.

Women prefer negative politeness in professional face to face environment, including the use of hedges, indirect questions and deferential forms (e.g., perhaps we could consider, would it be possible, etc.). In an interactional sociolinguistic sense, these forms serve as contextualization cues which recognize institutional hierarchy but nevertheless insist on participation. Men on the other hand use bald-on-record strategies which index entitlement and institutional authority.

2. Power Negotiation in the Occupation.

Power is bargained in the professional interactions on who is capable of giving directions without softening them. The heavy application of bald-on-record strategies by male speakers (e.g. Send me the report by tomorrow) indicates perceived authority legitimacy. In cases where female speakers make the same forms, they tend to be socially re-read as being harsh or uncooperative and this makes most women tend to use indirect form.

Negative politeness therefore is a form of defence among women- entry into the process with face threats being managed. This is in line with the sociolinguistic interactional claims that power is not merely possessed but rather ratified through interaction. The politeness options among women indicate that they are in a process of negotiation and not powerlessness.

3. Online communication and Politeness on steroids.

There is a significant enhancement in polite talk in digital interaction between professionals, especially in the case of female speakers. Orders are often accompanied with emojis, softeners, greetings, and signs of gratitude (e.g., Hi sir ☺ just wanted to check if...). Such factors serve as paralinguistic alternatives to facial expression and tone that adjust the decontextualization of such aspects.

Regarding interactional view, digital spaces increase the vulnerability of faces because of permanence of messages and delay feedbacks. As a result, women use off-record and negative politeness to a greater extent to minimize interpretive risk. Men though more direct than women demonstrate a decline in the use of bald-on-record in digital platforms indicating that the digital media poses limitations in the exhibition of authority.

4. Light interaction, Construction of Solidarity.

Within the context of face-to-face, both sexes prefer positive politeness, and women are still more frequent and complex. Favorable remarks, the use of inclusive pronouns, laughing tokens, and expressions of sympathy are some of the solidarity-building tools. Nevertheless, power does not vanish, it turns out to be relational instead of institutional.

The fact that men when using bald-on-record strategies in informal contexts (e.g. teasing commands, interruption) exhibit covert dominance practices, which is typically approved of as humor. The off-record strategies enable women to fight or derail without being confrontational and therefore preserving social harmony but sparing face.

5. Gendered Assessment of the same Linguistic Actions.

One of the interactional findings is that the same politeness strategies are rated differently when it comes to gender. In men, being straight forward is equated to being confident; in women, it subjects one to being socially judged negatively. On the other hand, women talking indirectly is an acceptable behavior whereas when a man does it, it could be interpreted as authority. This imbalance proves that politeness is not just a linguistic option but a socially controlled procedure, which is rooted in gender ideologies. Interactional sociolinguistics enables such considerations to be tracked on the micro-level of talk and not presumed in the abstract.

6. Construction of Identity by being polite.

Politeness strategies are what lead to identity construction. Most of the time female speakers construct identities like collaborative professional, supportive colleague, and respectful subordinate, and male speakers index more often authoritative leader or decisive peer. These identities are not predetermined, and they are produced in the form of repetitive patterns of interaction. Therefore, politeness is a performative mechanism, which allows speakers to either conform to or challenge a gendered performance as speakers negotiate the power dynamics of interaction.

Turn-Taking, Interruption and Interaction Control as Power Negotiation Resources

Whereas politeness strategies show how speakers go about face and relational harmony, turn taking practices show how speakers go about exercising, contesting and legitimizing power in the interaction. Regarding interactional sociolinguistic point of view, power is never merely reflected in institutional roles but is actively constructed in the process of conversational organization and includes:

1. Determination of turn distribution.
2. Number of interruptions and time of interruption.
3. Introduction and conclusion of the topic.
4. Overlaps and silences management.

This section explores the manifestation of gendered speech styles in terms of turn-taking in a professional/casual and face-to-face/online communication. The analysis does not consider turn-taking as sequencing, but social action, where authority, dominance and identity are negotiated on a moment-by-moment basis.

Table 2: Gendered Turn-Taking and Interactional Control across Contexts and Modes

Interactional Feature	Professional Face-to-Face	Professional Digital	Casual Face-to-Face	Casual Digital	Interactional Significance
Turn Initiation Frequency	Males: High Females: Moderate	Males: Moderate Females: Moderate	Males: High Females: Moderate	Males: Moderate Females: High	Turn initiation indexes entitlement to speak
Interruptions (Intrusive)	Males: High Females: Low	Males: Low Females: Very Low	Males: Moderate Females: Low	Rare for both	Intrusive interruptions signal dominance
Supportive Overlaps	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Very High Males: High	Build solidarity and alignment
Topic Control (Shifting/Closing)	Males: High Females: Moderate	Males: Moderate Females: Moderate	Males: Moderate Females: Moderate	Females: High Males: Moderate	Topic control reflects agenda-setting power
Silence Management	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: Moderate	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: High Males: Moderate	Managing silence mitigates interactional risk

Interpretive Analysis

1. Turn-Taking as a Power Index.

According to the table, turn initiation frequency is one of the most significant indicators of power especially when it comes to professional face-to-face interactions. Male talkers take the initiative of turns particularly at transition relevance locations which indicates interactional entitlement. This conforms to interactional sociolinguistic assertions that turn initiation frequently establishes speakers as agenda-setters as opposed to passive participants.

Although women speakers are less likely to be turn initiators in the workplace, they can use good timing and usually come into the floor via supportive overlaps or following pauses. Such actions are indicative of the interactional sensitivity, which enables one to participate without being too confrontational to the existing hierarchies of power. This trend reveals a non-silent mode of engagement instead of silence, so it is neither driven by a lack of awareness of the institutional and gendered expectations.

2. Breaching and Gendered Dominance.

Intrusive interruptions- interruptions that interrupt a speakers turn to talk about something- are disproportionately generated by men speakers in professional face to face situations. These interruptions serve the purpose of asserting dominance in conversation so that men can shape the flow of conversation and indicate power.

On the other hand, female speakers seldom employ intrusive interruptions particularly when in a work environment. When they do interrupt it is more supportive or affiliative like completing the sentence of another one or agreeing. This disparity shows how interruptions are gendered in both production and interpretation: male interruptions are normalized as being part of leadership behavior, and female interruptions are viewed as potentially being judged negatively.

Structurally, interruption in online professional interactions is limited by platform affordances. Turn-taking is asynchronous, so it decreases open blockage, but at the expense of new control mechanisms, including message sequences and time of reaction.

3. Nurturing Overlaps and Solidarity Building.

The characteristic of female interactional style is the supportive overlaps that involve interaction in any setting, but mostly in informal in-person and online communications. These overlaps are used as signs of attentiveness, agreement, and emotional congruence (e.g., yes, right, laughter).

Interactional sociolinguistics takes these overlaps to be cooperative and not competitive challenging the deficit based interpretations of women talk. Rather than indicating deference, supportive overlaps allow women to generate meaning collaboratively and sustain the flow of interaction, particularly at the environment where the blatant dominance might be socially punished.

The supportive overlaps are also used by men, especially in informal situations but when solidarity and not authority is the focus of the interaction, they become more frequent. This change advocates that gender speech styles are relative to context instead of absolute.

4. Agenda Management and Topic Control.

Topic control has become an issue of soft power in negotiating power. Professional face to face, male speakers are more prone to introducing new topics or redirecting or closing discussions, which confirms the fact that they are the interactional leaders.

Conversely, female speakers during informal online communications are more topic controlled, will keep threads alive, rekindle conversation lulls or change subjects using relational signs (e.g., inquisitive, experiences). This implies that topic control is not necessarily masculine, but also relies upon the interactional ecology and communicative motives.

Interactional sociolinguistic view of topic management helps to index a contextualization cue who is authorized to specify relevance. Gendered topic control therefore indicate negotiated social norms and not language capacity.

5. The Strategy of Silence as an Interaction.

Silence is not the lack of communication, but an important interactional resource. Women speakers are more engaged to manage silence especially in work and internet environments. To alleviate interactional tension, they tend to fill the silences with watered-down answers, concessions or subsequent inquiries.

Men, on the other hand, find it easier to survive in face-to-face interaction in the workplace with silence that can be used to index authority or power. However, in the digital world, the sustained silence of men in some cases is received as a sign of interest or dominance by other users, which is how the rules of platforms redefine silence interpretation.

Silence management is then made a gendered approach associated to face protection and relational maintenance particularly in such settings where misinterpretation poses a social risk.

6. Turn-Taking Construction of Identity.

One of the ways is through turn-taking which helps in identity creation. The high rate of interruptions and topic control index by the male speakers define identities of male speakers as decisive leaders or dominating participants. The supportive overlaps and silence management index of female speakers in the group identify themselves as collaborative professional, engaged peer, or interactional facilitator.

Notably, these identities do not stand still. In informal occasions, women can also use more assertive turn-taking styles whereas men can use affiliative styles. This fluidity helps to establish the argument of sociolinguistic interaction of identity as emergent, negotiated, and context-bound.

7. Interactional Inequality and Gender Ideologies.

The data show that it is not the difference in the levels of linguistic competence that leads to interactional inequality but the gendered norms of the appropriate interactional behavior. Men are accorded the freedom to interrupt to regulate topics without any form of sanction as opposed to women who are obliged to ensure harmony in a conversation.

Such imbalance supports larger powers of inequality, making male dominance in professional talk natural and interactional labor of women as supportive instead of authoritative. The ideologies can be revealed in interactional sociolinguistics when the structure of conversation is finely analyzed.

Language Authority and resistance: Linguistic Resources of Directives, Modality, and Mitigation.

Analytical Focus

The key linguistic processes of exercising authority, controlling face, and resisting or yielding to power are directives (commands, requests, suggestions), modality (must, should, might, could), and mitigation (hedges, softeners, justifications). These features are viewed as a part of social action in interactional sociolinguistics, to the extent that they are not just grammatical options but social actions associated with institutional roles, gender ideologies and interactional objectives.

In this section, the analysis of the way gendered speech styles are achieved through directive forms and modal expressions in professional and in casual and face-to-face and online interactions is to be conducted. It is analyzed that speakers, through the strategic use of strength of obligation, degree of imposition and interactional risk, negotiate power and, at the same time, create social identities.

Table 3: Gendered Use of Directives, Modality, and Mitigation across Contexts and Modes

Linguistic Feature	Professional Face-to-Face	Professional Digital	Casual Face-to-Face	Casual Digital	Interactional Function
Direct Imperatives (e.g., "Do this," "Send it today")	Males: High Females: Low	Males: Moderate Females: Very Low	Males: Moderate Females: Low	Rare for both	Index authority and entitlement
Modalized Directives (should, need to)	Males: High Females: Moderate	Males: Moderate Females: High	Males: Moderate Females: Moderate	Females: High Males: Moderate	Balance authority and politeness
Tentative Modals (could, might, maybe)	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: Moderate	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Reduce imposition and face threat
Mitigators / Softeners (just, a bit, if possible)	Females: Very High	Females: Very High	Females: High	Females: Very High	Protect face and manage power

	Males: Moderate	Males: High	Males: Moderate	Males: High	asymmetry
Justifications / Explanations	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: High Males: Moderate	Legitimize directives and reduce resistance

Interpretive Analysis

1. Instructions as Overt Power Exhibitions.

The statistics show that the direct commands are mostly common in professional face-to-face communication, especially when male speakers are involved. These orders are usually not mitigated (i.e. complete this by the end of the day today), which is an institutional claim and projected authority. In the interaction sociolinguistic approach, these forms are seen to serve as contextualization of cues that make the speaker dominate and the addressee accountable.

Direct imperatives are not common among female speakers at the workplace. This is avoidance, rather than absence of authority, and is an anticipation of adverse social criticism. Even in institutional settings when women are in senior positions, they tend to still want to receive modalized or mitigated instructions which depict the genderized expectations to limit linguistic options despite the presence of institutional power.

2. Directives and the Authority that is negotiated and Modalized.

The modal auxiliaries like should and need to act as intermediate forms in that the user of the modal auxiliaries have a chance to exercise authority but in a polite manner. The male speakers take advantage of these models in the professional context to strike a balance between decisiveness and collaboration.

The modalized directives are also essential in the speech of females, especially in the online professional life. These expressions enable women to project task requirements and reduce face threat, which adheres to the expectations of interactional norms according to which women are expected to look cooperative, as opposed to demanding. Therefore, it makes modality a negotiation tool, which mediates between institutional authority and gendered politeness demands.

3. Tentative Modality: as a Strategy of Resistance and Alignment.

Female speakers use tentative modals (could, might, maybe) disproportionately in all social situations, particularly in online communication. Such forms open up space of negotiation, which proposes response as opposed to imposing. Such tentative modality in a professional context enables women to question decisions indirectly, which is a subtle way of resistance (e.g. We could do things differently).

Notably, interactional sociolinguistics does not understand tentative modality as a sign of weakness but as strategic ambiguity so that speakers can test ideas without necessarily confronting each other. Tentative modals are also more common in casual and online contexts between men, which suggests that the use of modal forms is contextual and not necessarily gender-based.

4. Face Management and Mitigation.

Just, a little, if possible, mitigators are the most commonly used female speech in all situations. These aspects lessen the perceived imposition and safeguard both, the face of the speaker and the addressee. Mitigation enables the women to make orders in professional interactions without having to lose relational harmony and yet not being accused of aggressiveness.

Mitigation is heightened in the digital world since messages do not have prosodic and non-verbal messages. Women tend to use mitigation and emojis or greetings (e.g., Just checking ☺ if you could…), as a precaution by an offender against misunderstanding. Men also have the tendency to mitigate digitally, although to a lesser degree, yet another manifestation of persisting gendered asymmetry in facework responsibility.

5. Justifications Legitimation Practices.

Speakers of the female gender often proceed with commands and provide clear explanations to a command, citing reasons, limitations or advantages (e.g., Because the deadline has changed...). These reasons serve in the area of legitimization, making directives sound like sensible and not dictatorial.

Justifications are found to have unequal interactional burden in the perspective of sociolinguistics interactional perspective, in which women are expected to justify authority whilst the authority of men is regularly assumed. When justifications are taken in casual situations, overall reduction is seen, although the proportion of women who use justifications is higher than that of men, which demonstrates internalized standards of responsibility and supportive relations.

6. Gendered Performance of Power.

One of the most important findings is that the same forms of the directives are rated differently according to the gender of the speaker. When men apply the direct imperatives, they are perceived to be effective or confident; when women apply the same, they run the risk of being seen as rude. This unequal distribution of power strengthens gendered power relations by defining what linguistic practices can be considered socially safe.

Consequently, women are more dependent on modalization and mitigation, which, at the same time, makes it possible to participate and recreates the structural inequality. Interactional sociolinguistics assists in revealing the ways in which these inequalities are practiced at the micro-level of talk as opposed to presumptions at an abstract level.

7. Directive Practices: Identity Construction.

Directive choices are a direct contribution to identification building. The unrelenting instructions of male speakers create identities of decisive leader or authority figure. Directives that are mitigated by female speakers contribute to building of the identity of collaboration in professional undertakings, responsible team member, or thoughtful peer.

These identities are not predetermined but are interactionally created, which change depending on situations. Women can also use stronger directive varieties in more casual contexts, whereas men can use less directive ones, which proves that gendered speech style is changeable and depending on the circumstances.

Gendered Interaction Stance-Taking, Evaluation and Identity Construction

Analytical Focus

Along with turn taking and directive practices, stance-taking and evaluation are also significant factors in the position of speakers, others and the activity being discussed. In the sociolinguistic perspective of interaction, stance is defined as the positioning of speakers involving affections, epistemics and evaluative positioning by use of lexical choices, modal verbs, intensifiers, hedges and alignment moves. The core of identity construction is stance-taking since it enables speakers to express competence, authority, involvement, or solidarity.

In this section, the analysis of gendered speech styles is conducted in terms of stance-taking and evaluative language in professional and casual as well as face-to-face and online

communication. It is concerned with the way speakers create identities like expert, leader, and supportive colleague or engaged peer in negotiating power relations implicitly as opposed to directives.

Table 4: Gendered Patterns of Stance-Taking and Evaluation across Contexts and Modes

Stance Feature	Professional Face-to-Face	Professional Digital	Casual Face-to-Face	Casual Digital	Interactional Meaning
Epistemic Certainty (definitive claims, facts)	Males: High Females: Moderate	Males: Moderate Females: Moderate	Males: Moderate Females: Moderate	Males: Low Females: Low	Indexes authority and expertise
Epistemic Mitigation (I think, maybe, seems)	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: Very High Males: High	Protects face, opens negotiation
Affective Stance (empathy, concern)	Females: High Males: Low	Females: Very High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Very High Males: High	Builds relational identity
Evaluative Intensifiers (very, really, absolutely)	Males: Moderate Females: Moderate	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: High Males: High	Females: Very High Males: High	Signals involvement and alignment
Alignment Moves (agreement, validation)	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Very High Males: High	Constructs solidarity and rapport

Interpretive Analysis
1. Stance-Taking as Identity Work.
According to the table, one of the main ways of construction of identity during the interaction is by taking a stance. Male speakers are more likely to use epistemically certain attitudes in professional face-to-face conversations and present their opinion as facts and reduce cues of doubt. These positions index identities like expert or decision-maker, which asserts the power of institutions.

The female speakers are also equally knowledgeable but make contributions with an epistemic mitigation since they use phrases like I think, it seems, or in my point of view. To interactional sociolinguistics, this is not lack of confidence but strategic positioning, enabling the ability to participate without pitting hierarchical norms in the open.

2. Evaluation and Power Gendered.
Assessment- how speakers declare ideas, actions, or individuals is directly connected with power. The judgments of male speakers in workplaces are often unqualified (i.e. this method will not work) and this makes them the arbiters of value. The evaluation of female speakers is more contextualised or toned down and can often include justification or alignment (e.g., "I am not sure that this could work because I can say so).

This contrast is a tighter expression of the ideologies of gender that give men a more interactional power to judge without social reproach. The evaluative care taken by women

serves to show how power imbalances not only condition the speaker, but the judgment speaker.

3. Emotional Position and Interpersonal Power.

Affective stance- showings of sympathy, care, support, or affective consistency- are significantly greater in female speech in all situations. Women also often show concern about workload or emotions of the team members (e.g. I know this is a lot, but...), which builds identities as a supportive leader or a compassionate co-worker in professional settings.

In terms of interactional sociolinguistic perspective, affective stance is relational authority, which allows one to influence by trust and solidarity instead of command. It can be argued that men are progressively assuming an affective position in professional online interactions, which is why online communication etiquettes promote relationship interactions irrespective of gender.

4. Online Communication and Stance Marking.

Online communication presents both genders with increased stance marking especially by evaluative intensifiers and alignment moves. The use of emojis, exclamation marks, and repetition (e.g., that is really great!!!), as the markers of stance, are used to compensate the lack of non-verbal communication.

Female speakers access these resources more, particularly in informal online communications, creating identities of interested participant and emotional networker. Digital intensifier use is also more common among men, which means that platform affordances reconfigure gendered practices, though gendered variations still exist in frequency and combination.

5. Power Negotiation: Alignment.

Alignment moves, agreement, validation, and echoing are the minor power negotiation tools. Female speakers often match the contributions of others prior to sharing their other opinions, which minimizes face danger and helps to generate meaning together.

Alignment is also used by male speakers especially in informal places but in a professional place, alignment is usually tactical and is applied to seek agreement on their own suggestions. This proves that alignment is not necessarily collaborative or even submissive and that alignment is a strategic interactional action that is determined by the situation and the objectives of the speaker.

6. Construction of Identity within a Context.

In various contexts, gendered stance-taking patterns help to construct different identities. Male speakers are more likely to index these identities like expert, authority figure, or decisive contributor. The indexes of female speakers more frequently include collaborative professional, empathic leader or relational facilitator.

These identities are however fluid and situational. During informal communication, women can express powerful evaluative positions, whereas men can focus on affective congruency. It is this fluidity which helps to affirm that gendered styles of speech are not determined but constructed in the process of interaction.

7. Invisible Labor and Interactional Inequality.

An important lesson learnt in this analysis is that interactional labor is unevenly distributed. It is female speakers who continuously carry out more readjustment, detraction, and emotional labor in order to maintain the harmony of interaction. Although these practices do help in positive functioning of groups, they are mostly undervalued and unrecognized, which supports gendered inequalities.

It is possible to identify and analyze this labor using interactional sociolinguistics, seeing the way that micro-level stance-taking practices can reproduce macro-level gender hierarchies.

The contextual Shifts, Multimodality, and Integrated Power Negotiations in the context of interactional settings

Analytical Focus

Interactional sociolinguistics focuses on the fact that meaning is not present in the form of isolated linguistic forms but rather emerges as a result of the interaction of cues; lexical choices, sequencing, modality, timing, silence and multimodal characteristics. This section thus examines how contextual changes (professional vs. casual), and communicative patterns (face-to-face vs. digital) transform the gendered acts of authority, solidarity, and resistance.

Table 5: Integrated Gendered Interactional Practices across Contexts and Modes

Interactional Dimension	Professional Face-to-Face	Professional Digital	Casual Face-to-Face	Casual Digital	Integrated Interpretation
Power Display Style	Males: Overt Females: Mitigated	Males: Moderated Females: Highly Mitigated	Males: Covert Females: Relational	Males: Diffused Females: Relational	Power shifts from explicit to implicit across modes
Dominant Linguistic Resources	Directives, interruptions	Modality, mitigation, timing	Humor, overlap, teasing	Emojis, alignment, response timing	Resources adapt to interactional ecology
Face Management Load	Females: High Males: Moderate	Females: Very High Males: High	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: Very High Males: High	Women carry disproportionate facework
Identity Performance	Authority vs. Cooperation	Professional competence + politeness	Peer dominance vs. solidarity	Emotional engagement, accessibility	Identities are fluid and context-bound
Risk of Negative Evaluation	Females: High Males: Low	Females: Very High Males: Moderate	Females: Moderate Males: Low	Females: High Males: Moderate	Gendered asymmetry persists across settings

Interpretive Analysis

1. Relocating Contexts and Reconfiguring Power.

This table indicates that power is neither a fixed possession nor a static phenomenon, but is a phenomenon that is negotiated in a context. Male speakers in professional face-to-face communication would be more overtly powerful, exhibiting directives, interruptions and epistemic certainty. Even institutionally powerful female speakers tend to use a mitigated power, such as, politeness, modality, and justification.

With the change in interaction to digital professional environments, overt dominance is no longer acceptable among both sexes. The reconfigurations of power are based on timing messages, markers of politeness, mitigation, and multimodal messages, which demonstrates that platforms limit conventional displays of authority. However, women speakers, in their turn, accentuate facework and mitigation, pointing at continued gendered expectations.

2. Multimodality and Sexed Meaning-Making.

Online communication brings third media resources, such as emojis, punctuation, formatting, reaction symbols, as they serve as contextualization signs. These cues are essential to female

speakers as they help to control tone and soften requests and exhibit alignment. Emojis replace prosody and facial expression, and there is a lesser risk of being taken as rude or dismissive.

Multimodal cues are also used by male speakers, especially during informal online communication, yet not systematically. This implies that multimodality redresses but does not equalize interactional labor. Women are still more accountable to making interpretive clarity and relational harmony.

3. Interactional Resources Integration.

One of the key contributions of this section is its ability to show how several linguistic resources can be active at the same time. As an illustration, the professional digital message of a female speaker can consist of:

- Could (tentative modality)
- Mitigation (just, a bit)
- Justification (due to a change in the deadline)
- Emoji or greeting

A combination of these resources creates an image of a competent, but submissive professionalism that enables one to be engaged without breaking the gender norms. According to interactional sociolinguistics, such bundling is not a sign of communicative weakness, but of an interactional intelligence.

4. Informal situations and Covert Authority.

Power is more subtle and interpersonal in the informal face-to-face settings. Dominion by male speakers is commonly done using humor and teasing, and topic control, which are social norms that are not easily questioned. Women negotiate power with the relational authority by alignment, affective stance and conversational facilitation.

Women tend to become interactional anchors in informal digital environments; they keep up dialogue in terms of inquiring, responding, and being empathetic. Although this gives them power, it further enhances the demands that should be upheld by women to remain socially attached.

5. Interactional Inequality and Gendered Facework.

In every setting and every mode, the load of face management is always heavier among the female speakers. They expect misunderstandings, cushion possible confrontation, and engage in emotional work to make interaction. Male speakers enjoy more leeway with directness and silence particularly in the workplace.

This unequal practice of interactional work recreates an aspect of structural gender inequality on the micro-level. Interactional sociolinguistics shows the normalization of these inequalities through everyday talk and make them look natural instead of socially constructed.

6. Fluidity and Constraint of Identity.

Despite the fact that identities are fluid and change depending on the context, they are also limited by gender ideologies. Women are able to exercise authority although in most cases, they have to wrap it in politeness and compassion. Men are able to practice solidarity, only to have the choice of returning to blatant authority without being socially punished.

This imbalance highlights the fact that gendered speech styles are not voluntary but constrained performances, which are controlled by the requirements regarding the appropriate style, likeability and professionalism.

7. Development to Interactional Sociolinguistics.

This study conveys the analytic power of interactional sociolinguistics since it combines politeness, turn taking, directives, stance and multimodality to portray power as emergent and negotiated. The results are a challenge to deficit-based models of women language but rather they promote strategic competence and adaptive expertise.

The comparative design through contexts and modes also adds to sociolinguistic research because it demonstrates that digital communication restructures but does not eliminate gendered power relations.

Conclusion

This study investigates how gendered speech styles function as dynamic resources for negotiating power and constructing identity across professional and non-professional contexts, as well as face-to-face and digital interactions, using an interactional sociolinguistic framework. The findings demonstrate that gendered language practices are not biologically predetermined but are context-dependent, socially regulated, and strategically employed under the influence of institutional norms, platform affordances, and prevailing gender ideologies. Politeness strategies emerge as central to power negotiation, with women consistently employing more complex forms of mitigation, negative politeness, and justificatory discourse to manage authority while avoiding social sanctions, whereas men more freely use direct and authoritative forms, particularly in face-to-face professional settings. Analysis of turn-taking, directives, modality, stance-taking, and multimodality further reveals that power operates through micro-level interactional practices that are reshaped but not eliminated by digital communication. Women disproportionately shoulder relational and emotional labor, especially in online settings, contributing to interactional success while remaining undervalued. Overall, the study challenges essentialist views of gendered language, supports a social constructionist perspective of gender as fluid and negotiable, and highlights the need for greater institutional awareness of how communicative styles are differentially judged, with important implications for workplace communication, leadership training, and equitable interactional norms.

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