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Relational Practice in Multilingual Peer Discourse: Talk as a Marker of Gender Identity

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History: Accepted 14 March 2021 Available Online March 2021	<p><i>This paper examines relational practice in multilingual peer discourse to inspect the distinct identity patterns of the male and the female participants involved in gender dynamics. There is a growing impetus of discourse studies as an emerging area of sociolinguistic and ethno methodological research. In this paper, talk as a marker of gender identity is explored in the light of the theoretical framework suggested by Holmes (2006) who studies the different relational strategies of male and female interlocutors in workplace environment. In the current study, conversations of six male and female postgraduate students of English language at Sargodha University, Pakistan are recorded and transcribed to see how the participants create team as a relational practice using gender specific norms via talk. The study has found that the males create team through humor in discourse while females tilt towards small talk and frequent verbal gestures of approval. Moreover, masculinities and femininities of the peers are manifested in their style and function of the conversations. The study is significant because it is going to lay a foundation for the study and exploration of gender integrated conversations in multilingual context in Pakistani English and other varieties spoken in casual talk in Pakistan.</i></p>
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1. Introduction

Talk in the recent years has assumed a significant status in sociolinguistic and discourse researches because of its action nature, that is, talk does more than simply being an utterance. It is this interest in talk and surrounding contexts that provides ample evidences for sociolinguists to see

patterns of conversations to draw conclusions and to make generalizations about people's behavior and to associate them with certain regional, ethnic, cultural or national norms. While involving in conversation process with others, people not only establish relationships with one another but they also create and exhibit their identity and social reality (Wardaugh & Fuller, 2015).

Conversations, however casual and unplanned they may be, always exhibit some pattern, which can reveal important characteristics of those who are involved in the exchange process. The context and formality are always kept in mind in casual conversations and one is never at liberty to say what he wishes to say without keeping in view the context and the receiver of that conversation. For instance, the discussion with a peer or a close friend on any topic is quite different from the conversation on the same topic with parents and teachers. Similarly, the choice of words, sentences, style one adopts while talking to grandparents is not the same as when one is addressing his or her children.

The recent orientation of research in feminist studies and gender differences have given impetus to sociolinguistic studies centering on the exploration and investigation of discourse, both text and talk, from gender perspective. The concept of androcentricity, difference and dominance, folk linguistics, gendered talk and many more enter the research premises with the vindication of the rights of women in the modern era. This has resulted in and resulted from the publication of ideas in the field of psychology such as *Men are from Mars, Women from Venus* (1992) and *The Essential Difference: Men, Women and the Extreme Male Brain* (2004). The new status bestowed upon women led to a very different orientation of attitude and practice in the study of discourse at home and workplace (Coates, 2015).

Talk is not merely a proposition, but it conveys an array of information as well as the wide range of ways in which information is transmitted and received among the interlocutors. One interesting aspect of conversations is how people show solidarity and empathy through relational practices in discourse. Holmes (2006) worked on gendered relational practices in discourse derived from Fletcher (1999). According to her study, exhibiting relational behavior was previously considered gendered, that is feminine, but the study of workplace discourse by Holmes suggests that the talk in workplace is not absolutely gendered in nature but in actual both men and women involve in relational practices through discourse, although differing in style and function and that is why talk can be said to be a marker of gender identity when studied from sociolinguistic or ethnomethodological perspective.

There is limited work on conversations and talk as marker of gender identity in Pakistani context. Therefore, the current study is concentrated on the same aspect of human communication, that is, relational practice in discourse, delimited to a group of participants involved in academic and casual discussion, and the unconscious relational proposition embedded within their conversation. It significantly tells the differences among the genders in the use of verbal medium to show solidarity and construct identity through multilingual peer discourse. The study is carried out in Sargodha University, Pakistan and the English post graduate students formed the participants of the study. The study of their recorded conversations reveal that men and women involve in relational practices with one another and reveal their distinct gender identity through talk.

The present research seeks to explore the following questions:

- Do men talk differently from women in a peer discourse?
- How do male and female interlocutors talk in a relational exchange?

- What strategies of creating team as relational practice characterize male and female talk?

The present research is significant since it is unique aspect not previously researched in context of Pakistani discourse. It is going to lay a foundation brick in the novel research projects on multilingual discourse in Pakistani English and other languages spoken in Pakistan. The current paper significantly throws light on the embedded relational practices in discourse that are off – record and unconscious on the part of the speakers. They often go unnoticed as compared with the mainstream proposition in the conversation. So, an effort is made to foreground the ways the people empathize and create team with each other during group tasks in work place or any other social context. In doing so, they are revealing aspects of their identity as the male or the female through talk. This is what makes the research at hand interesting and fascinating.

2. Literature Review

Research in conversation analysis has remained a significant area of interest for researchers since it throws ample evidential light on the talk patterns and how people actually use language in a communicative event. Derived from ethnomethodology in the discipline of sociolinguistics, conversation analysis is a fascinating area to study the communicative and social competence and to see how people fit in to use the language in context appropriately (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015).

Sacks, Schegloff and Jafferson (1974) have done exhaustive studies on everyday interaction and their research serves as a theoretical and methodological basis for the study of conversations as highly organized and systematic processes. They are directly linked with more remote names in conversation analysis like Goffman and Garfinkel. Goffman writes in Introduction to Interaction Ritual:

“I assume that the proper study of interaction is not an individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another” (Goffman, 1965: 2)

Conversation analysis also demonstrates how participants involved in talk show an awareness of the context in which the interaction takes place. In this connection, CA is a sound approach to reveal relevance of the institutions in any society. It informs us how, for example, teacher and student, doctor and patient, or lawyers and witnesses conduct their business in their institutional settings through talk (Wooffitt, 2005).

Conversation practices unfold psychological as well as sociological features of not only individual speech but the interaction of groups as well. Psycho-social factors significantly contribute to a proposition and an analysis of talk or how people exchange turns in a communicative event gives sufficient evidences of the underlying emotional and social phenomenon. Talk, when studied scientifically, can be a vital and a pervasive structural feature in everyday life. Interaction through talk is a fascinating material of scientific research in the field of Ethnography of communication within sociolinguistics. (Albert et. Al, 2018)

A study on conversation analysis in TV talk shows conducted by Carnel (2012) demonstrates how host and guest involve in turn taking strategies and relates the significance of adjacency pairs and story-telling during conversation. Similarly, Ali (2018) conducts a comparative study of two talk shows, The Doctors and Shabab Wbanat. He analyses the structural units of interaction and from his

findings, he concludes via contrast how cultural context of the two talk shows contributes for distinct turn taking strategies, overlaps, and response tokens.

The study of gender in relation to language has remained an area of much clamor among the researchers. Conversation analysis and gender is no exception in this context. A bulk of studies investigate how gender is constructed, acted and conveyed through discursive practices (e.g. Fishman 1983, Tanen 1989, , Itakura & Tsui 2004, Jefferson 2004, Holmes 2006 and Craig, 2016). The study and analysis of feminine discourse resulted from *Language and Woman's Place* (Lakoff, 1975). According to her:

"The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken" (Lakoff, 1973: 45)

Gender is not a concept in isolation but it is codified through cultural norms and manifested in the linguistic choices and the conversation practices of a speech community. Pakzadian and Tootkaboni (2018) conducted their research on Persian EFL learners to see the gender differences in informal conversations. The study reveals that male conversation practices like interruption, topic shifting, raising questions and topics allow them to enjoy conversational dominance over females. Difference and Dominance studies on gender and language reveal how socioeconomic status influences the dominance relations among genders (Cameron, 1997). On the other hand, female speech and discourse practices reveal a greater tilt towards connection and intimacy (Tannen, 1990). Research on inquiring statements show women use questions that are "other-oriented" for conversational maintenance (Coates, 1996). Male speakers use longer statements in order to dominate the exchange. It is sequential dominance that underlines a speaker's tendency to govern the entire interaction through allocation and response strategies (Itakura, 2001).

Dunbar (2015) investigates the gender relations in discourse on the scale of emotion. He finds out that a less emotional participant is considered to lead and conclude conversations. There is also the role of non-verbal features in determining gender-based discourse practices. Finlay (2015) used video mediated communication to conclude how men dominate in interaction and women assume subordinate roles although they use more verbal signs as compared with the males.

Another dimension in the study of gender conversation is the study of relational practices within conversations. Holmes (2006), to see how people use conversations in workplace settings to relate themselves with others, used the Wellington Language in Workplace Project (LWP) database source. Her research shows the different patterns, gender-oriented, to see how such practices are created and conveyed through conversations. Her findings include that relational practice that is "feminized" is actually questionable when actual data of various workplace contexts is explored.

The present research aims to investigate how relational practices in multilingual peer discourse provide evidence of the clearly demarcated identities of male and female participants. The study is significant since this area of investigation is little explored in Pakistani context.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Janet Holmes and Workplace Interaction

The present paper examines talk as a marker of gender identity in a multilingual peer discourse. The transcribed conversations in the research at hand are analyzed in the light of

Fletcher's findings on relational practices (1999) and Holmes (2006) findings on workplace discourse. Holmes studies gendered talk in relation to four relational practices suggested by Fletcher, which include, preserving, creating team, mutual empowerment and self-achieving. The research uses the transcriptions to see how male and female conversations show marked differences or similarities and if relational practice is an exclusively female discourse commodity or not. Based on the models of Fletcher and Holmes, where conversations are either reported speeches or talks in workplace environment, the present research focuses on the actual recorded conversations of the participants associated with a common task of semester promotion or academic accomplishment through successful completion of assigned projects and tasks by the course tutor. The group discussions of these participants, revolving around academic topics, show how they do relational practice, supporting and helping each other to attain the common goal. The data is analyzed to see if relational practice is a gendered behavior, both in function and in style (Holmes, 2006). In the present research, only one aspect of relational practice, that is, creating team is extracted from Holmes to study the nature of male and female discourse in a relational context. For this purpose, the data is studied and seen how it fits gendered relational practice in the light of the following key team creating strategies suggested by Holmes (2006):

- Creating team and small talk
- Creating team and humor
- Creating team and giving approval

For Holmes, these are masculine ways of doing relational practices. The current paper investigates through actual data if they are really masculine ways or both male and female adopt these strategies in their own style to achieve a specific function in talk. The findings are solely based on the recorded data in academic context.

3.2 Research Participants and Data Collection

In order to study talk as a marker of gender identity in multilingual peer discourse, the data for the research is collected from a peer group consisting of 6 post graduate students of English language (3 males and 3 females) at Sargodha University, Pakistan. The data comprises of 6 talk sessions of these participants, each session, 30-minute length. The participants were informed about the nature of research and that their conversations were recorded solely for research purpose ensuring privacy of their identities. Hence, for the sake of this research, the three male participants are named as M1, M2 and M3. Similarly, the three female participants are called F1, F2 and F3. The conversations followed a natural flow and each participant took part in the activity. They discussed course topics and during discussion, naturally and unconsciously, did relational practice. The recorded conversations were then transcribed using transcription conventions adapted from Schiffrin (1987) and Tannen (1989) as cited by Fasold and Connor-Linton (2006). For the ease of the readers, the chunks of language other than English are translated and stated below the actual line in braces. The transcribed examples from the talk are studied to see how the participants create team through talk and findings suggest different relational practices of male and female interlocutors which can be associated with their identities as distinct genders.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The relationship of discourse, gender identity and relational practice is explored through the recorded sample conversations of six students in the university. According to Fletcher (1999), there are four key aspects of relational practice, which are, preserving, creating team, mutual

empowerment and self-achieving. For each of the given ends, relational practices are employed revealing their gendered nature. Moreover, the traditional attribution of relational practices to females is critically analyzed in the current paper to reveal that both genders do relational practices, though their styles may show difference and variation from one another. This paper limits itself to only one key aspect, that is, creating team through relational practices.

“Creating the background conditions in which group life [can] flourish” (Fletcher, 1999: 74)

Creating team includes all the discursive strategies employed to create harmony, solidarity and empathy among the members. Such relational practices are done distinctly by male and female members in exclusively mixed gender communicative events. Following is the data analysis according to the purposively selected talks from the peer discourse collected specifically for this research. The data collected reveals variation in such practices across gender that can be analyzed under three headings borrowed from Holmes (2006):

4.1 Creating Team and Small Talk

The data reveals that small talk during academic discussion among peers is exclusively female business directed towards relational status of such talk. The following example reveals that during the first recorded session, the initial five minutes were utilized by female participants to talk about weather, family conditions and the troubles they are facing in successful completion of the assigned research projects. Their talk mainly revolves around the discussion of family issues, personal problems along side academic barriers to accomplishments. While doing so, they are unconsciously supporting one another to complete the task with mutual discussion and help.

Example 1

- F1: Aoa, kesay ho bhai, kuch study kya?
 {Greetings, how are you, did you study anything?}
 Mera to koi haal nhe, flu nay [tang kya hua!
 {Not really, flu created trouble}
- F2: [O oo
- F1: What about you, read the assigned chapter?
- F2: Not really, SO many guests at home=
- F1: [hmm, hmm]
- F2: =Was unable to concentrate!
- F3: Maine kuch perha [h,=
 {I have read a bit}
- F1: [Thank god!
- F3: =ap log fiker na kren [mil k ker letay hen!
 {don't worry, we will do it together}
- F2: [hmmm.
- F3: [Alright.

The above instance shows a typical feminine style of doing relational practice through small talk. The conversation starts from the business at hand, that is, studies, and expands towards social talk where interactional strategies attributed to female are used to discuss domestic issues finally

taking the conversation back to studies. Such an exchange reveals how small talk among ladies is a relational practice which not only helps them to empathize with each other but also preserve the common goal as indicated in the words of F3 that the task would be accomplished through mutual help and contribution. So talk reveals the female behavior of creating team through small talk.

It is interesting to note, that when females were involved in greeting and sharing issues, the three male participants were silent and gazing at their cell phones. It suggests that the male participants do not generally share domestic issues and complain of troubles that come along their way to achieve any work place/ academic goal.

Example 2

The above conversation is further extended and the three male members are also involved.

F1: Sir, what about you? Kya position h?

{Sir, what about you? What's the position?}

M2: Allah will save me, done nothing!

M1: hhh {laughs}

M3: {silent} ... {smiles}

F1: Allah to bacha Len Gay

but ap khud be to kuch kren,

{Allah will definitely save you,

but you should also do something yourself!}

F3: YEAH, right!

F1: I have an idea!

F2: Idea: please share, [you're always saving us.

M1: [hhh, in{name of F1}say tips len. Kaam aen ge.

hhh {laughs! Take some useful tips from Ms F1}

F1: F3 has read {tells the topic},

I mean, [she may discuss and we may listen.

F3: [Yeah, before teacher comes,,, er , n

we may all share an' take down notes.

F2: [YESSS!

In the above speech situation, it may be noted that the relational practice is again a feminine behavior during small talk. Men engage less in gossip, even that upon invitation and the response of M1 and M3 reveals least participation in this exchange. The relational behavior is reflected by females in this context with the use of softer as well as hedging devices e.g 'may' in the given extract. Moreover, women are using agreement terms or back channels like hmmm, yeah, as compared to men as shown in the above extracts. Females also show facilitative behavior through discourse. Instead of keeping silent like men do, women carry forward the discussion among peers through the addition of mitigation expressions in their talk and keep on trying to maintain friendly compassionate relations through frequent consolatory remarks. On the other hand, the laughter and smile responses by the male participants show their dominance through silence or very little response. Even though they are appreciating a female participant (F1), they do not extend appreciation and shower praise on females explicitly or openly, rather, doing implicit relational practice is characteristic of male style. But they are generous in praising and supporting their male peers. The following example demonstrates the same idea. The context is a book assigned by teacher

is to be discussed in group and the male participants invite one of their male fellows to teach them instead of requesting any female for the purpose.

Example 3

M2: I think we should start from M1, as he has profound know[ledge in this regard.
 F3: {repeats}[PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE!!!
 F1: Yeah, you can teach us, I haven't opened the book
 and done anything except shopping clothes!!
 F2: [Me too!!
 M3: [Maine {book} dekhi zroor h atleast,,,
 { I have, atleast, taken a glance of the book,, }
 M2: It is such a wonderful book- you keep reading=
 F1: [Hmmm.
 M2: =and apply it in practical life...
 M1: [Now is the right time to apply...
 hhh {F1 and F2 laugh}

The above situation also shows that the male participants support and praise one another during small talk. On the other hand, the female area of discourse gets tilted towards personal and domestic issues which seem to be absent from male side.

Thus, it can be concluded that relational practice through small talk is feminine affair and males doing the relational practice are found to be more tilted towards male peers as compared to the females. The domestic affairs and personal issues are less highlighted by male participants as compared with the females. So small talk and discussing personal issues is a feminine business during discourse through which they empathize and create team, whereas, males are focused on the matter at hand and often participate through silence during gossip and off record discussions.

4.2 Creating team and humor

Humor is essentially off-record and extraneous element in workplace, but it serves as a means of relational practice in creating team through discourse (Holmes, 2006). In the context of the present research, the data reveals that both male and female participants employed humor as a relational tool to create solidarity among the members, but the humor throws light on the distinct identity of the male and female participants. On the one hand, the females use humor in an interactional way the purpose of which is just to lighten the burden of the stressful situation, while, on the other hand, the humor of the male participants was aimed at mentoring and instruction in an implicit manner. It was observed that humor effectively conveys what seems difficult in a peer conversation otherwise. It is aimed to tell someone not to be over-efficient and stay with the pace of the team members. It is also used in the context of this research to deflate a peer. Look at the following example:

Example 1

M1: The book which was assigned for reading was very interesting.
 [I have consulted even two more books.
 F3: [My god!!! Even two more books, Hmmmm!

M2:]And IF you are gonna tell the TEACHER that you have read so and so book,
we all are going to KILL you!

F1: Yes, [tu dassi zra, tay fir wekh laeen!

{Yes, you tell [the teacher] and then see what we will do with you}

M1: [NOOO, No, No!!!

Whatever we- I mean, share is the talk of the fellows,

OBVIOUSLY not going to discuss

any of such stuff anywhere.

Its class fellows' [talk.

M3: [Not class fellows, but, SCHOLARS.

M1:]Whether say scholars or collars.

[hhh {laughs}

The study of humor in peer discourse reveals male and female identity. The males pass humorous comments that are open, sarcastic and gibberish too with a face threatening value. On the other hand, the recorded conversation reveals that such a humor is unintelligible for the females who are part of the same speech event. Such a speech contribution from male participants reveals that this kind of humor is not meant to discourage or despoil a fellow of respect but to create an informal context to communicate the shared goal of the team to the others. This is male way of doing relational practice via jokes to threat a fellow if he shows over smart behavior to outclass others. On the other hand, females are shown to bridge the gap and atone for any ill feeling that is created via male humor through positive and healing comments in such a situation. The humor of females is very limited in the company of the males. The ethnographic justification for such identity representation of male and female participants is that in a traditional Pakistani context, the formality requires less humorous comments towards the females by the males as it is taken to be a sort of disrespect for the females. In a similar way, the informal exchange of witty comments, jokes and humor among the males show their close proximity and their way to support each other as a team where all are equal to one another. The given excerpt demonstrates the findings shared above.

Example 2

M1: Practice makes EVEN a WOMAN [perfect!

M2: [EVEN WOMAN?

What do you mean, EVEN WOMAN=

F1: Even womEn...

M2: =Three ladies sitting in front of you, n/?/ you have MARGINALIZED them in a moment!=

F1: Hmmm

M2: =Ma'am {name} will know and then [your degree will be at stake...

hhh {Laughter...}

M3: [AAA- ALL of us will suffer.

and OUR DEGREE will be in danger!

{Everybody Laughs}

Such instances show how the peers create team through laughter. In these instances, males are dominant in conversation as compared with the females. The humor too is relational as can be seen by the use of 'all of us' by M3. This reveals that whereas small talk and personal life is important means of female relational practice, men do so through humor, both sarcastic and open.

While females here are passive recipients of humor.

4.3 Creating team and giving approval

The essential relational practice among peers through discourse is the way the team spirit and solidarity is retained in the group. For this purpose, the interlocutors employ a number of strategies, though unconsciously, so that the friendly relations are strengthened along with the accomplishment of the assigned task. The conversations of the participants in the current research are recorded to see how they create team through the strategy of giving approval and whether it is the male way of doing relational practice or that of the females. The data reveals that one of the ways male and female differ in their gender roles during peer conversations is their quite different ways of acknowledgement, approval and appreciation. According to Fletcher (1999), these factors contribute to create team among the members. Doing relational practice through approval significantly draws a boundary between male and female and their gender practices through talk can be identified and elaborated.

Example 1

M3: What are we discussing right now?
 F3: [ERROR.
 F2: [Error.
 F1: [Hmmm,,, /?/
 M1: [Sir!
 M3: Should I explain error and mistake again?
 F3: Jesay ap ki merzi /?/
 {As you wish!}
 M2: NO, carry on with the next topic=
 M1: {M2 Name} He is right.
 M2: =WE ALL have some idea of the difference.
 M3: Ok!

Example 2

M1: Before critical thinking- comes THINKING.
 F1: [Exactly.
 F2: [Hmmm
 M1: An act of reflection /?/ thinking. Right?
 F2: [Hmmm
 F3: [Hmmm
 M1: And CRITICAL THINKING- you challenge,,, assumptions=
 M2: We Challenge...
 M1: =Yeah- And WE consider both sides of picture.
 Ye us nay term use kee h, or [wo further kehta h k..
 {he has used this term, he further says that...}
 M2: [acha,,, ye "WO" kon h?
 {Alright,,, who is this 'HE'?}
 Hhh {laughter}
 M1: Corter or [KORDER...

- M2: [You mean the name of the author?
 F1: [EXACTLY, its always- whether it is 'he' or 'she'...
 F2: [RIGHT, even some other names of English authors also create confusion!

In the light of the conversations, females use affirmative expressions like '*exactly, hmmm, right and yes*' more frequently than males. They sometimes even interrupt or hinder conversation to pass on a comment of approval or affirmation. On the other hand, males try to create a consensus on a matter through interruption and repetition strategy. So interruption is a gender marker as it differentiates males and females, the former employing it to stress on a point of significance and achieving consensus, while the later use it as a tool of affirmation and establishing their identities as empathizers and followers.

Example 3

- F1: M2 {name} is a blessing as a CLASS FELLOW.
 He guides us how to behave!
 He has made us CUNNING!
 F2: [Exactly!
 F3: [Right.
 hh {laughter}
 M2: Look now!!! "Blessing and cunning"!!!
 F1: SORRY, that was just a slip of tongue. REALLY SORRY!
 M2: {SMILES}

Example 4

- M1: If you have a solid argument- then you can present,,, a counter argument=
 F1: Hmmm
 M1: =Weighing up the opposing arguments- being able to read be[tween the lines...
 F1: [between the lines, hmmm...
 F2: OK!
 M1: It is a method rather than a personality trait /?/
 F1: hmmm,,,
 F2: Sorry, please repeat!
 M2: {to M1} Can you- the slow pace will help all of us to grasp- understand you.

This was a long discussion on the topic but the conclusion to be drawn from the above example is that females use more agreement expressions as compared with the males where verbal and non-verbal agreement is deficit. In the study of the examples, it is also observed, that females use more formal style of apologizing in contrast to males. Moreover, during conversation, some males take more time to speak that is one way of taking approval and admiration from others as well as attention. While F3 in these discussions, occupy the minimum speaking time. Relational practice through approval is a feminine aspect but males also do this in their own distinct ways through interruptions for the benefit of all and through maximum participation in a topic oriented discussion to win the positive claim for themselves. The recorded conversations show that male ideas and knowledge about the topics under discussion are welcomed as more authentic and accepted unchallenged by all, including other males and females. This is in line with the conventional prestige

attached with the speech, ideologies and actions of males, although the current paper only tries to establish differences without claiming the style of either one gender as superior and that of the other, as inferior.

Another interesting aspect about gender identity through relational practice in talk emerges through the examples cited above. Men use logical and contesting remarks during interactions sometimes taken literally by women (being less witty) and they get apologetic to males, or other listeners, for their words. This can be one reason why they speak less, being very conscious of the fact that their words are listened carefully and may incur face threat to anyone or may be taken to be offensive.

It can, therefore, be inferred that females are demonstrating frequent behavior of approval through their verbal and non verbal means, while men are occasionally extending verbal approval, that too, for the male peers and quite reserved to openly praise and approve ladies (examples already given in the previous section). This is a situation-based conclusion about the way men and women use politeness strategies of face saving and positive face. In other contexts, the results might be different since it is a complex affair to draw conclusions and make generalizations with a limited set of data in context. Holmes (2006, 1) calls it *contextual sensitivity*, that is, both male and female exhibit and negotiate gender identities embedded in conversations of different interactional contexts.

5. Conclusion

The research paper explored the difference of genders exhibited through relational practices in talk. For the said purpose, the conversational data of 6 peers in academic setting was recorded and transcribed. It was studied in the light of relational practices suggested by Fletcher and applied by Holmes in workplace conversations. The relational aspect was studied with three key team creating strategies in order to see how male and female participants showed different identities through the use of these strategies in talk.

The research answers the three research questions. Firstly, the male and female interlocutors do relational practice in discourse. The style of male while creating team spirit is that of a mentor, while a female is a facilitator and empathizer in this context. Secondly, male talk in which relational practice is embedded is less personal and more logical and business like. The women, in contrast, connect business matters and the personal life and this style is a typically feminine way. Men are reserved and silent in the very personal and domestic matters and females quite often discuss personal problems and hindrances in the successful achievement of academic goals in case of current research and other set targets in other contexts. Thirdly, to create team, male and female speakers employ different strategies or use same strategy in contrastive styles. Men create and preserve team through logical reasoning while women do so with affective verbal and non-verbal signs and personal matters often jump in their discussions reflexively. Men use humor openly, and pass jokes and witty remarks on fellows, while women are less efficient in humorous exchanges and even are found not to understand the pun or the humor intended in a communicative event. Women give approval more often than men, while, men interrupt more than women do but it is meant for the mutual benefit, not meant to disparage any peer, atleast in the context of relational practice.

Thus, it can be concluded that talk is a marker of gender identity in peer discourse. Gender based talk patterns do differentiate men and women. Even, relational practice previously thought to be feminine business was considered secondary and of inferior value but the above discussion proves it

to be both masculine and feminine behavior with the distinct style across gender. There are differences of styles among the genders, because they are different from each other, they do things differently. Mutual respect and regard can only come through the understanding and acceptance of differences. The current paper is an effort to establish the distinct nature of male and female identity in discourse without regard to inferiority and superiority. The future researches may debate on the issue of hegemony and dominance relations embedded in conversations of the male and the female speakers and other areas yet to be explored in the context of Pakistani conversations.

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