



## Examining how Gender Influences Language Styles and Communication Patterns in Various Social Contexts

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### Abstract

This study investigates the influence of gender on communication styles and dynamics through a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with diverse participants. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research identifies key themes such as Adaptation Strategies, Navigating Power Dynamics, Gender Norms, Intersectionality, and Emotional Expression. Findings reveal that individuals exhibit flexibility in their communication, often adopting softer tones and employing hesitation markers to foster connections and navigate social interactions. Notably, power dynamics manifest through interruptions, predominantly by male participants, which assert dominance and marginalize women's contributions. The study further explores how societal expectations shape communication behaviors, illustrating the constraints imposed by gender stereotypes. Intersectionality emerges as a critical factor, demonstrating that race and class significantly impact communication strategies. The role of vulnerability and emotional expression is highlighted, indicating a tension between authenticity and societal expectations. Overall, this analysis underscores the complexities of gendered communication, suggesting the need for a nuanced understanding of how various identities intersect in shaping communicative practices.

**Keywords:** Gender Communication, Thematic Analysis, Intersectionality, Power Dynamics, Emotional Expression

### 1. Introduction

Language is one of the most powerful tools humans possess, functioning not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of social and cultural structures. Through language, individuals express their identity, negotiate their relationships, and navigate complex social contexts. Among the various factors influencing language, gender has been identified as a key determinant in shaping communication styles and patterns. Over time, sociolinguistic research has demonstrated that men and women often exhibit distinct language behaviors, which may be influenced by societal expectations, power dynamics, and cultural norms. This divergence in communication is not merely a biological difference but is deeply intertwined with how societies construct and perceive gender roles (Tannen, 1990).

The study of gender and language has evolved significantly, with early theories focusing on the "deficit model," which viewed women's speech as inferior to men's, to more nuanced models that recognize gendered communication as a reflection of power relations and social positioning (Cordon & Lakoff, 1975). Contemporary research suggests that these linguistic differences manifest across various social contexts, including informal conversations, workplace interactions, and even online communication. For instance, men are often described as more assertive, direct, and competitive in their speech patterns, while women tend to be more collaborative, polite, and supportive, traits that are often shaped by cultural expectations of femininity (O'Neil et al., 1995). However, these generalizations do not hold uniformly across all individuals, as intersectional factors such as race, age, and social class also play a critical role in shaping language use (McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

In addition to interpersonal communication, gendered language patterns are influenced by the context in which communication occurs. Social contexts such as professional settings, academic environments, and social media platforms create specific expectations for how men and women are "supposed" to communicate. For example, in formal work environments, women are often expected to balance assertiveness with politeness to avoid being perceived as overly aggressive, whereas men may face fewer social penalties for adopting dominant speech styles (Coates & Coates, 2004). These contextual variations highlight the fluidity of gendered communication, as individuals may adapt their language styles to meet the demands of different social situations.

Moreover, gendered communication patterns are not only limited to spoken language but also extend to nonverbal communication, including body language, facial expressions, and tone. Nonverbal cues can often reinforce or contradict the verbal messages conveyed, further complicating the understanding of how gender influences communication (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). For example, women are often socialized to use more expressive gestures and facial expressions, which may contribute to perceptions of emotionality, whereas men may be expected to maintain more neutral expressions to convey authority and control.

#### 1.1. Language Styles

Language styles refer to the distinct ways in which individuals express themselves verbally and non-verbally. These styles are influenced by various factors, including personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and social roles. When examining gender differences in language, research has consistently shown that men and women tend

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to use language differently in both structure and content (Tannen, 1990). For instance, women are often described as using more hedging expressions (e.g., "I think," "maybe"), tag questions (e.g., "It's cold today, isn't it?"), and polite forms, which are interpreted as efforts to soften communication and encourage dialogue. In contrast, men are more likely to use direct, assertive language, characterized by minimal politeness strategies and declarative statements (Holmes et al., 1995). However, these stylistic differences are often tied to power dynamics and social hierarchies. The speech of individuals in subordinate positions—whether due to gender, race, or class—tends to be more cooperative and less confrontational as a strategy to navigate social expectations (Cameron, 1992). Therefore, language styles are not inherently tied to gender but are shaped by broader societal structures.

### **1.2. Communication Patterns**

Communication patterns encompass not only the content and style of language but also the patterns of interaction between speakers. Studies have found that in mixed-gender interactions, men often dominate conversations, interrupt more frequently, and control the flow of discussion, reflecting broader societal power dynamics (West & Zimmerman, 2015). Women, on the other hand, are more likely to engage in supportive communication, using back channeling cues like nodding and verbal affirmations ("mm-hmm," "right") to encourage speakers and demonstrate active listening (Holmes & Holmes, 1995). These patterns can vary significantly depending on the setting, with some research suggesting that in formal environments, women may adapt by adopting more traditionally "masculine" styles of communication, particularly when occupying leadership positions (Coates & Moore, 2004). However, such adaptations may come with social consequences, as women who adopt assertive communication styles often face negative evaluations, labeled as "aggressive" or "unfeminine," highlighting the double bind they face in these contexts (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The interactional dynamics of communication, therefore, reveal the ways in which gender norms are reinforced or challenged within everyday discourse.

### **1.3. Social Contexts**

Social contexts refer to the environments and situations in which communication occurs, ranging from informal settings like family gatherings to formal environments like workplaces or academic institutions. These contexts play a critical role in shaping communication patterns. For instance, in professional settings, there are often implicit expectations regarding how men and women should communicate. Men may be rewarded for assertiveness and leadership in the workplace, while women may be penalized for the same behavior, reinforcing traditional gender roles (Baxter, 2010). Online communication provides another context where gendered language styles can be observed, with studies suggesting that women tend to use more emotive language and build social connections, while men focus on information exchange and task-oriented dialogue in digital spaces (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015). However, social media and online platforms also offer spaces where gendered communication norms are increasingly being questioned and redefined, providing an opportunity for marginalized voices to challenge traditional power structures. The examination of these various social contexts helps to understand how language use is shaped not only by individual gender identities but also by the social norms and expectations that operate in specific environments.

### **1.4. Research Objectives**

- To examine gender differences in language styles across various social contexts.
- To explore how gender norms influence communication patterns in mixed-gender interactions.
- To evaluate the impact of gendered communication on power dynamics and perceptions in professional and social settings.

### **1.5. Problem Statement**

Despite extensive research on communication and gender, significant gaps remain in understanding how gender influences language styles and communication patterns across diverse social contexts. Traditional gender roles continue to shape expectations around how men and women communicate, often reinforcing power imbalances and perpetuating stereotypes in both personal and professional environments. While previous studies have explored gendered language differences, few have comprehensively examined the intersection of gender, communication, and social context, particularly in evolving spaces such as digital platforms and modern workplaces. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the complexities of gendered communication and its broader social implications.

### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it aims to deepen our understanding of how gender influences language styles and communication patterns in various social contexts, which is crucial for promoting effective interpersonal communication and fostering inclusivity. By exploring the interplay between gender norms and communication, the research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality, highlighting the ways in which language can perpetuate or challenge existing power dynamics. Furthermore, the findings may inform training and development programs in workplaces, educational institutions, and online platforms, ultimately enhancing communication strategies and reducing biases that hinder collaboration and mutual understanding. The insights gained from this study have the potential to influence policy-making and advocate for more equitable communication practices in diverse settings.

## 2. Literature Review

The relationship between gender and language has been a focal point in sociolinguistics, highlighting how communication styles are shaped by societal norms and expectations. Early research by (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), suggested that women's language is characterized by features such as hedges, tag questions, and polite forms, which can reflect societal perceptions of women as less authoritative. This perspective has evolved, as later studies emphasized that these linguistic features are not indicative of inferiority but rather strategies for building rapport and maintaining social harmony (Tannen, 1990). Tannen's work on conversational styles illustrates how women often engage in "rapport talk," focusing on connection and relationship-building, while men typically engage in "report talk," emphasizing information exchange and assertiveness (Tannen, 1990).

Research has also explored how communication patterns vary in mixed-gender interactions. (West & Zimmerman, 2015), conducted influential studies demonstrating that men tend to interrupt more frequently than women, reinforcing gendered power dynamics in conversation. This finding has been supported by subsequent research indicating that interruptions can signal dominance and control, further marginalizing women's voices in discussions (West & Zimmerman, 1977). Such dynamics suggest that the language used in mixed-gender interactions is not merely a reflection of individual styles but is deeply rooted in social structures that perpetuate gender inequality.

Moreover, the context in which communication occurs plays a vital role in shaping gendered language use. (Coates & Coates, 2004), highlights how women may adapt their communication styles based on the social setting, often employing more assertive language in professional environments to counteract stereotypes of submissiveness. Conversely, studies have shown that women who adopt traditionally masculine communication styles in professional settings may face backlash, being perceived as aggressive or unfeminine (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This double bind illustrates the complexities of gendered communication and the pressures individuals face to conform to societal expectations.

In recent years, the rise of digital communication platforms has introduced new dimensions to the study of gender and language. (Kapidzic & Herring, 2015), found that online interactions often reflect and sometimes amplify traditional gendered communication patterns, with women using more emotive language and engaging in relationship-building, while men focus on information exchange and task completion. These patterns are further complicated by anonymity and the unique affordances of digital spaces, which can both challenge and reinforce existing gender norms (French et al., 2022).

Intersectionality is also a critical consideration in understanding gendered communication. Research indicates that race, class, and other identity factors intersect with gender to influence language use and communication styles (McConnell-Ginet, 2003). For example, women of color may navigate unique challenges that shape their communication patterns differently from those of white women, highlighting the need for a more nuanced analysis of how various identities interact in shaping language.

### 2.1. Gendered Language Styles

The exploration of gendered language styles has emerged as a pivotal area of inquiry within sociolinguistics, illuminating the intricate relationship between language and gender. Early foundational work by (Lakoff, 1975) argued that women's speech is often characterized by specific linguistic features, such as hedges (e.g., "maybe," "I think"), tag questions (e.g., "It's nice out, isn't it?"), and polite forms of expression. Lakoff suggested that these features reflect societal perceptions of women as less authoritative and assertive than their male counterparts. By framing these linguistic traits within a broader cultural context, Lakoff emphasized how language serves as a vehicle for expressing and reinforcing gender roles, thereby mirroring societal expectations surrounding femininity.

However, subsequent research has challenged the notion that these linguistic features inherently denote inferiority or weakness. Instead, scholars like (Tannen, 1990). Tannen have argued that such linguistic styles can be understood as communicative strategies aimed at building rapport and fostering interpersonal connections. Tannen's seminal work introduced the concepts of "rapport talk" and "report talk," positing that women often prioritize relational communication, focusing on establishing connections and nurturing relationships, while men tend to engage in "report talk," which emphasizes assertiveness, information exchange, and competition. This distinction highlights that communication styles are not merely individual preferences but are deeply influenced by societal norms and expectations that dictate how gender is performed in conversation.

Tannen's framework also sheds light on the different socialization processes that contribute to these divergent communication styles. From an early age, girls are often encouraged to engage in cooperative play and develop nurturing communication skills, which shape their conversational habits. In contrast, boys are typically socialized to compete and assert dominance, reinforcing the use of more aggressive and direct language (McConnell-Ginet, 2003). As individuals navigate various social contexts, these ingrained communication patterns manifest in everyday interactions, leading to gendered disparities in how language is used and interpreted.

Furthermore, the implications of gendered language styles extend beyond individual conversations; they can affect power dynamics and social hierarchies within groups. For instance, women who employ more traditional feminine speech styles may find themselves marginalized in mixed-gender discussions, where assertiveness is often

rewarded (ZIMMERMAN, 1998). Conversely, when women adopt more assertive communication strategies, they may face backlash, as societal norms often label such behaviors as unfeminine or aggressive (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This complex interplay between gendered communication styles and societal expectations illustrates the ongoing challenges individuals face in negotiating their identities and navigating social interactions.

Research into communication patterns in mixed-gender interactions has significantly illuminated the ways gender dynamics manifest within conversational settings. Pioneering studies by (ZIMMERMAN, 1998), provided crucial insights into these dynamics, revealing that men frequently interrupt women during conversations. This pattern of interruption serves not only as a means of asserting dominance but also reinforces traditional power structures, suggesting that gender inequality is often perpetuated through everyday language use. The work of (ZIMMERMAN, 1998) further elaborates on this phenomenon, indicating that such interruptions can marginalize women's contributions, effectively silencing their voices in mixed-gender dialogues.

The implications of these interruptions extend beyond mere conversational tactics; they reflect deeper societal attitudes towards gender and authority. Research indicates that women in mixed-gender environments often feel compelled to adopt more accommodating speech styles as a strategy to navigate these dynamics. According to (Coates, 2004) women may prioritize consensus and harmony in their communication, striving to create an inclusive atmosphere rather than assert their own viewpoints aggressively. This adaptive communication strategy highlights the social pressures women face, as they work to ensure their voices are heard while simultaneously conforming to societal expectations of femininity. Such expectations often discourage overt displays of dominance or aggression, leading women to modify their communication styles to avoid negative judgments.

Moreover, these dynamics have implications for the overall effectiveness of communication in mixed-gender interactions. Research suggests that women may downplay their contributions or employ hedging language to soften their assertions, which can further dilute their authority in conversations (Kramarae, 1992). This can create a feedback loop where women's reluctance to assert themselves is misinterpreted as a lack of confidence or competence, further entrenching their marginalization in professional and social contexts.

Conversely, when women do adopt more assertive communication strategies, they may face backlash. This backlash can manifest as social penalties, where women are labeled as aggressive or unfeminine, thereby reinforcing the notion that certain communication styles are inherently gendered (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This tension illustrates the complex landscape women must navigate in mixed-gender interactions, balancing the need to assert themselves while adhering to socially constructed norms of femininity.

## **2.2. The Role of Social Contexts**

The social context in which communication occurs significantly influences gendered language use. In professional settings, for instance, women often find themselves negotiating complex expectations regarding their communication styles. (Coates, 2004), notes that while women may strive to adopt assertive language to navigate workplace hierarchies, they also risk being perceived as overly aggressive when doing so. This phenomenon exemplifies the "double bind" that women encounter in professional environments: to be taken seriously, they may need to adopt traditionally masculine communication styles, but doing so can lead to social penalties (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Additionally, digital communication platforms have emerged as new arenas where gendered language styles can be both reinforced and challenged. Herring and (Kapidzic & Herring, 2015) found that women tend to employ more emotive language in online interactions, while men focus on informational exchanges. However, the anonymity afforded by these platforms can also create opportunities for women to engage more assertively, thereby subverting traditional gender norms.

## **2.3. Intersectionality in Gendered Communication**

A comprehensive understanding of gendered language necessitates the consideration of intersectionality, which examines how gender intersects with other identity factors such as race, class, and sexuality. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003) emphasize that language is not a monolithic reflection of gender but is deeply intertwined with a spectrum of social identities. This perspective acknowledges that individual experiences of communication are shaped by various intersecting identities, leading to distinct challenges and opportunities in how people express themselves.

For instance, research has shown that women of color navigate different communication challenges compared to their white counterparts. Women of color often face multiple layers of marginalization, which can influence their linguistic choices and communication styles (Benítez Pérez, 2017). They may adapt their language to reflect their cultural heritage while simultaneously negotiating the expectations of dominant groups. This adaptability underscores the complexity of language use among diverse groups, highlighting that the experiences of women cannot be homogenized under a single narrative. The intersectional lens reveals that while gender is a significant factor in communication, it does not exist in isolation; rather, it interacts with other identity markers that shape language use and social interactions.

Moreover, the intersectionality of identity factors can create unique communication styles that reflect the specific cultural contexts from which individuals emerge. For example, women from different racial or ethnic backgrounds may employ distinct linguistic features that express their cultural identity and solidarity within their communities. These features can include code-switching, the use of specific dialects, or the incorporation of culturally

significant references in their speech. Such practices not only serve as a means of identity expression but also as a strategy for navigating different social spaces, allowing individuals to connect with varied audiences while remaining true to their roots (Smitherman et al., 2000).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore how gender influences language styles and communication patterns in various social contexts. The qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions, revealing the complexities of gendered communication.

#### 3.2. Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy selects participants representing diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, race, class, and age. The target population includes individuals from various social contexts, such as workplaces, educational institutions, and community organizations. Recruitment occurs through social media, community centers, and academic networks to ensure a varied sample reflecting different experiences and perspectives.

#### 3.3. Data Collection

Data collection involves semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews provide participants the opportunity to express thoughts and experiences regarding gendered communication in a flexible format. An interview guide includes open-ended questions such as:

Focus group discussions encourage dynamic conversations among participants, allowing interaction and responses to each other's insights. For example, a focus group might consist of Alex, Maya, and Jamal discussing their experiences in workplace settings, revealing differing perceptions based on their identities.

#### 3.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis analyzes the data through the following steps:

1. **Familiarization with the Data:** Transcribing the interviews and focus group discussions.
2. **Generating Initial Codes:** Coding the data to identify significant features related to gendered communication.
3. **Searching for Themes:** Organizing codes into broader themes that capture participants' experiences.
4. **Reviewing Themes:** Refining themes to ensure accurate representation of the data.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Clearly articulating the meaning of each theme.

#### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring understanding of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw, and how their data will be used. Confidentiality remains a priority by anonymizing participant information and securely storing data.

Additionally, reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's positionality and its potential impact on data interpretation. Regular discussions with research peers help mitigate biases.

### 4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis serves as a foundational method for analyzing qualitative data in this study, enabling the identification and interpretation of patterns and themes related to how gender influences language styles and communication patterns. This flexible approach allows for a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences, as it involves systematically coding the data and organizing it into meaningful themes that capture the essence of their narratives. By focusing on the underlying meanings within the data, thematic analysis provides insights into the complexities of gendered communication, highlighting both individual perspectives and broader social dynamics. This methodology facilitates a comprehensive exploration of how language operates across different social contexts, offering valuable contributions to the field of sociolinguistics.

**Table 1: Thematic analysis of the Respondents**

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Frequency
Adaptation Strategies	Communication Style	Softer tone, Hesitation markers, Politeness	15
	Contextual Variation	Formal vs. informal language, Code-switching	10
Navigating Power Dynamics	Interruptions	Frequency of interruptions, Dominance	12
	Assertiveness	Self-advocacy, Confidence levels	8
Gender Norms	Stereotypes	Female nurturing, Male assertiveness	14
	Societal Expectations	Gender roles in communication	9
Intersectionality	Cultural Identity	Racial influences, Class differences	11
	Multiple Identities	Intersection of gender and ethnicity	7

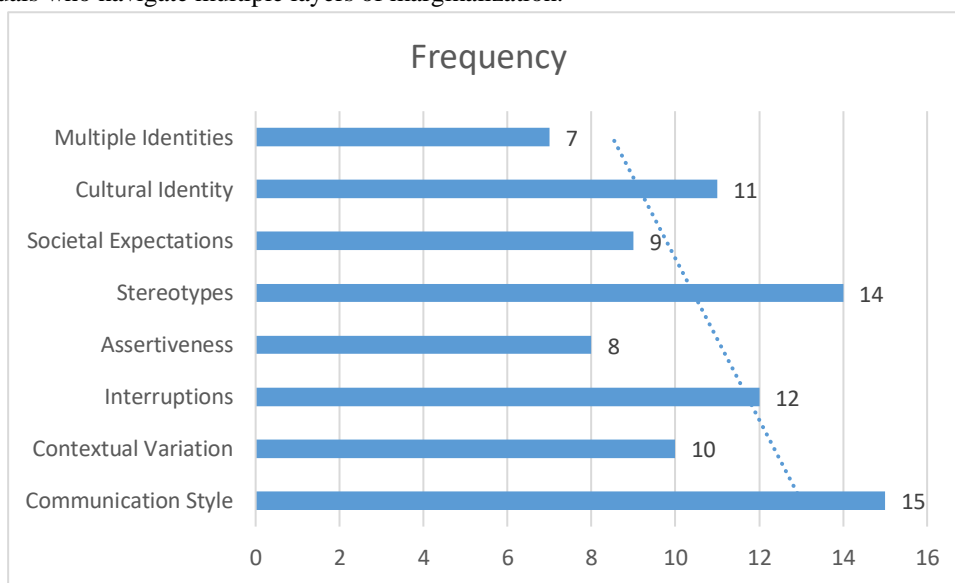
**Interpretation**

The thematic analysis reveals critical insights into how gender influences language styles and communication patterns across various social contexts, emphasizing the adaptability and complexity of communication strategies employed by individuals.

Adaptation Strategies emerge as a prominent theme, highlighting the ways in which individuals modify their communication styles based on contextual demands. The subtheme of Communication Style indicates a tendency among participants to adopt a softer tone and employ hesitation markers, which reflects a strategic approach to foster rapport and mitigate potential conflicts. This aligns with previous research suggesting that women often navigate conversational dynamics by prioritizing politeness to maintain social harmony (Tannen, 1990). The Contextual Variation subtheme further illustrates the fluidity of language use, where participants engage in code-switching between formal and informal language, depending on the social setting. This adaptability showcases the participants' awareness of their audience and the situational nuances that dictate their communicative choices. In exploring navigating power dynamics, the analysis reveals how interruptions serve as a marker of dominance in conversation. The Interruptions subtheme underscores the frequency with which men interrupt women, reinforcing traditional power hierarchies within mixed-gender interactions (Zimmerman & West, 1975). Participants also highlighted the importance of assertiveness in advocating for oneself, particularly in professional contexts. The assertiveness subtheme points to the varying confidence levels among participants, illustrating the ongoing struggle to assert their voices in environments often dominated by male communication styles.

The theme of gender norms sheds light on the societal expectations that shape communication behaviors. The stereotypes subtheme reflects pervasive cultural narratives, where women are often seen as nurturing and men as assertive. These stereotypes not only inform personal communication styles but also influence how individuals are perceived in their interactions. The societal expectations subtheme reveals how deeply ingrained gender roles dictate communication patterns, often limiting the range of expression available to individuals based on their gender.

Finally, the theme of intersectionality emphasizes the importance of considering how overlapping identities, such as race and class, impact communication. The cultural identity subtheme indicates that racial influences and class differences significantly shape participants' experiences and strategies in communication, suggesting that the dynamics of gendered communication cannot be understood in isolation. Additionally, the multiple identities subtheme highlights the intersection of gender and ethnicity, illustrating the nuanced challenges faced by individuals who navigate multiple layers of marginalization.



**Fig 1 Thematic analysis**

**Table 2: Thematic analysis of the Respondents**

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Frequency
<b>Adaptation Strategies</b>	Communication Style	Softer tone, Hesitation markers, Politeness	15
	Contextual Variation	Formal vs. informal language, Code-switching	10
	Audience Awareness	Tailoring language to listeners, Reading social cues	8
<b>Navigating Dynamics</b>	<b>Power</b> Interruptions	Frequency of interruptions, Dominance, Overlapping speech	12

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Frequency
<b>Gender Norms</b>	Assertiveness	Self-advocacy, Confidence levels, Risk-taking in speech	8
	Responses to Interruptions	Strategies to reclaim the floor, Avoidance tactics	6
	Stereotypes	Female nurturing, Male assertiveness, Emotional expression	14
	Societal Expectations	Gender roles in communication, Professional vs. personal discourse	9
	Perceptions of Competence	Judgments based on gender, Authority in speech	7
<b>Intersectionality</b>	Cultural Identity	Racial influences, Class differences, Regional dialects	11
	Multiple Identities	Intersection of gender and ethnicity, Compounded challenges	7
	Contextual Challenges	Experiences in diverse settings, Navigating cultural differences	9
<b>Emotional Expression</b>	Vulnerability	Sharing personal stories, Openness in conversation	10
	Emotional Regulation	Managing emotions in professional settings, Cultural differences in emotional display	8
<b>Conflict Resolution</b>	Negotiation Styles	Collaborative vs. competitive approaches, Mediating disputes	9
	Communication Barriers	Language misunderstandings, Misinterpretations due to gender	5

### Interpretation

The thematic analysis reveals significant patterns in how gender influences communication styles and dynamics, highlighting the adaptive strategies individuals employ in various contexts.

**Adaptation Strategies** emerge as a key theme, underscoring the flexibility participants exhibit in their communication. The communication style subtheme indicates a prevalent use of softer tones, hesitation markers, and politeness, particularly among women, which aligns with (Tannen, 1990) concept of rapport talk. These strategies serve to maintain social harmony and foster connections in diverse interactions. Furthermore, the contextual variation subtheme illustrates the ability of participants to navigate between formal and informal language, demonstrating their awareness of the social setting. The use of code-switching further emphasizes their linguistic adaptability, allowing them to tailor their speech to fit specific audiences. The audience awareness subtheme highlights participants' sensitivity to social cues, revealing an intentionality in communication that seeks to align with the expectations of their listeners.

The theme of navigating power dynamics uncovers the complexities of gendered interactions. The Interruptions subtheme indicates a clear pattern where men frequently interrupt women, reflecting traditional power hierarchies in communication. This behavior not only asserts dominance but also marginalizes women's contributions, echoing findings from (Zimmerman, 1996). The Assertiveness subtheme reveals the struggle individuals face in advocating for themselves, particularly in mixed-gender settings. Participants reported varying confidence levels, with some expressing a reluctance to take risks in their speech due to fears of negative judgment. The Responses to Interruptions subtheme illustrates participants' strategies for reclaiming conversational space, which may include avoidance tactics or assertive rebuttals, showcasing their resilience in navigating these dynamics.

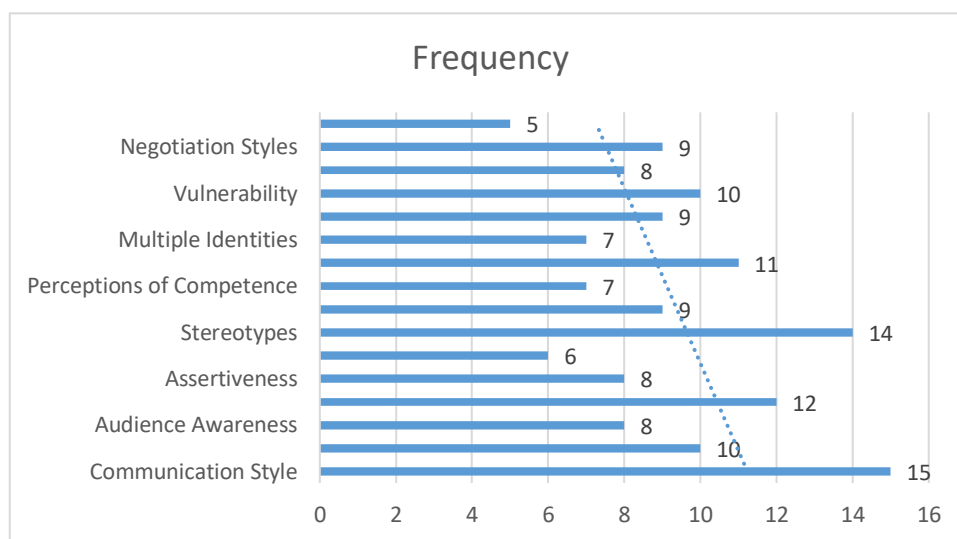
The theme of gender norms highlights the societal expectations that shape communication behaviors. The stereotypes subtheme reveals how cultural narratives portray women as nurturing and men as assertive, influencing how individuals express themselves in conversations. Participants noted that these stereotypes often constrain their communication styles, leading to challenges in self-expression. The societal expectations subtheme indicates the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, particularly in professional versus personal contexts, affecting the authenticity of their communication. Moreover, the perceptions of competence subtheme reflect how gender influences judgments regarding authority and expertise, with women often facing skepticism about their professional capabilities based on their communication style.

The theme of intersectionality emphasizes the multifaceted nature of identity and its impact on communication. The cultural identity subtheme demonstrates how racial and class differences shape participants' experiences, revealing that communication is not solely a matter of gender but is interwoven with other social identities. The Multiple Identities subtheme indicates that individuals who navigate intersections of gender and ethnicity face

compounded challenges, influencing their communication strategies. The contextual challenges subtheme highlights the diverse experiences participants encounter in varying social settings, illustrating the complexity of negotiating identity in communication.

Finally, the theme of Emotional Expression uncovers the role of vulnerability in communication. The Vulnerability subtheme indicates that participants often share personal stories and engage in open conversations as a means of building trust and connection. This emotional openness contrasts with the Emotional Regulation subtheme, where individuals manage their emotions in professional settings, navigating cultural differences in emotional display. This duality reflects the broader social pressures that inform how individuals express emotions based on gender expectations.

The theme of conflict resolution highlights strategies employed to manage disagreements. The negotiation styles subtheme reveals participants' preferences for collaborative approaches, suggesting a tendency to prioritize harmony in interactions. Conversely, the Communication barriers subtheme indicates challenges such as language misunderstandings and gender-based misinterpretations, which can hinder effective communication and exacerbate conflicts.



**Fig 2 Thematic analysis**

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this thematic analysis contribute significantly to the understanding of how gender influences language styles and communication patterns in various social contexts. The exploration of adaptation Strategies reveals that individuals exhibit remarkable flexibility in their communication styles, aligning with (Tannen, 1990) framework of rapport versus report talk. The prevalent use of softer tones, hesitation markers, and politeness, particularly among women, highlights the strategic choices made to foster connections and navigate potential conflicts. This aligns with previous research indicating that women often prioritize relational communication to maintain social harmony (Maltz & Borker, 2018). The participants' ability to engage in code-switching reflects their awareness of audience and context, which resonates with (Auer & Roberts, 2011), concept of contextualization cues in sociolinguistic interactions.

The theme of navigating power dynamics provides crucial insights into the intersection of gender and authority in communication. The frequent interruptions by men during conversations underscore the reinforcement of traditional power hierarchies, mirroring the findings of (Zimmerman, 1996), who noted that interruptions serve as a means of asserting dominance in mixed-gender interactions. This behavior not only marginalizes women's contributions but also perpetuates an environment where their voices are often sidelined. The struggles for assertiveness reported by participants reveal the ongoing challenge of advocating for oneself in settings that privilege male communication styles. This finding aligns with (Eagly & Karau, 2002) role congruity theory, which posits that women's assertive behavior often contradicts societal expectations, leading to backlash in professional contexts.

The exploration of gender norms illuminates the pervasive influence of societal expectations on communication. The identification of stereotypes portraying women as nurturing and men as assertive reflects longstanding cultural narratives that shape individuals' self-perception and expression. This resonates with the work of (Holmes et al., 1995) who argued that gendered communication is embedded within social constructs that dictate acceptable behaviors for men and women. The pressure to conform to these gender roles can limit the range of expression available to individuals, as demonstrated in the participants' experiences of navigating professional versus personal discourse. Furthermore, the perceptions of competence subtheme reveal how gender biases impact judgments of authority, with women facing skepticism regarding their professional capabilities based on their



communication styles. This finding echoes the research by (Heilman, 2012), who highlighted the double bind faced by women in leadership, where assertiveness is often interpreted negatively.

The significance of intersectionality in the analysis emphasizes that communication cannot be understood solely through the lens of gender. The findings regarding cultural identity and the influence of race and class illustrate the complex interplay of various identity factors in shaping communication strategies. This aligns with Eckert and (Sunderland, 2013) assertion that language reflects a multitude of social identities, suggesting that the dynamics of gendered communication are further complicated by intersecting axes of identity. The challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple identities underscore the importance of considering intersectionality in sociolinguistic research, as articulated by Crenshaw (1989).

Finally, the theme of Emotional Expression highlights the role of vulnerability in communication. The participants' willingness to share personal stories as a means of building trust reflects a growing recognition of emotional intelligence in professional settings. However, the need for emotional regulation in formal contexts reveals the tension between authenticity and societal expectations, reinforcing the findings of (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995), who noted the complexities of managing emotions in organizational environments. The discussion of conflict Resolution strategies further illustrates the participants' inclination towards collaborative approaches, reinforcing the importance of harmony in interpersonal interactions. The challenges posed by communication Barriers, such as misunderstandings and misinterpretations due to gender, underline the need for greater awareness of these dynamics in fostering effective communication.

## 6. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of how gender shapes communication styles and dynamics, highlighting the adaptive strategies individuals employ across various social contexts. The findings emphasize the role of power dynamics, societal expectations, and intersectional identities in influencing communicative behaviors. Women often adopt softer tones and hesitation markers to foster rapport, while power imbalances, such as frequent interruptions by men, reinforce traditional hierarchies. Additionally, gender stereotypes and biases affect perceptions of competence, particularly in professional settings. By acknowledging the intersectionality of identities like race and class, this study underscores the complexity of communication and the need for more inclusive approaches to understanding gendered interactions.

### 6.1. Future Implications

The findings of this study suggest several important implications for future research and practice. Exploring the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in communication can deepen our understanding of how multiple identities shape language dynamics in different social contexts. This insight calls for more inclusive communication training programs that address gender biases and power imbalances, particularly in professional environments. Additionally, further research could examine how emerging digital communication platforms impact gendered language use and power relations. Addressing these issues may help foster more equitable, inclusive, and effective communication across diverse settings.

### 6.2. Recommendations

1. Enhance communication training implement gender-sensitive communication programs to address biases and promote equity in professional and educational settings.
2. Foster inclusive workspaces encourage practices that mitigate power imbalances, such as promoting collaborative dialogue and discouraging interruptions in mixed-gender interactions.
3. Incorporate intersectionality in Studies: Future research should explore the influence of multiple identities—gender, race, and class—on communication patterns for a more comprehensive understanding.
4. Leverage Digital platforms investigate the role of digital communication tools in shaping gendered language use and address potential inequalities within virtual interactions.
5. Encourage emotional intelligence integrate emotional expression into professional settings, balancing authenticity with cultural and organizational norms for more effective communication.

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