

# A STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF URDU DISCOURSE MARKERS

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to determine how gender affects the use of Urdu discourse markers. Taxonomy of Discourse Markers by Fraser (2009) has been used as theoretical frame work. 12 Urdu newspaper articles written by male and female writers have been purposively selected to identify the gender differences in the use of Urdu discourse markers. 06 articles were taken from male writers and 06 articles were from female writers. The newspaper articles have been taken from daily Urdu newspaper 'The Jung' and 'The Express'. The mixed method research design was used to analyze the data. To achieve above stated objective, the use of Urdu discourse markers were explored and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The results of the article show a significant gender difference in the use of Urdu discourse markers. Urdu male writers use DMs more frequently. This accounts that Urdu male speakers might depend upon argumentative use of language, while female speakers are inclined towards more cooperative and compromising attitude in the use of language. Furthermore, it can be suggested that on the basis of the themes of the articles, there might be a gender variation in the use of DMs. So, to make the generalizations more reliable and authentic, a large scale study should be done.*

**Keywords:** Discourse Markers (DMs), gender differences, taxonomy, distribution, purposive sampling

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse Markers (DMs) play a crucial role in helping socially situated language that can fulfill its communicative aims in both written and spoken discourse. DMs are communicative tools that help to organize and assess ideas in a discourse; thus, these linguistic features are employed to connect the text's communicative aim.

A lot of work with different perspective has been done on DMs in the last few decades. The role and distribution of discourse markers across genres has been the subject of numerous researches. These studies focused on the use of conjunctive discourse markers in textbooks and scientific research articles (Verikait, 2005), as well as the use of discourse markers in telephone conversations and television interviews (Verdonik, et al., 2008), and discourse markers in essays (Verdonik, et al.,

2008); inferential discourse markers (Feng, 2010) in psychology research articles in English and Persian (Kaveifard & Allami, 2011; Sharndama & Yakubu, 2013). Although discourse markers have been studied in other genres, the media discourse of opinion articles in Urdu has received comparatively less attention. The distribution and roles of discourse markers used by Urdu male and female writers is the subject of this study.

Conversation markers are commonly used in written and spoken discourse to attain communicative goals in the social use of language. The objective of discourse markers across the borders of sentences, according to Kohlani (2010), is to connect above-sentence textual units and aid in the interpretation of text-receiver material in accordance with the producer of text-goals. Despite their importance in text production, discourse markers are regarded grammatically optional and semantically empty. Though they are often dismissed as useless and aesthetic, Brinton (1996) claims that discourse markers have pragmatic tasks on two levels of the conversation: textual and interpersonal. Although discourse markers have limitations in written and spoken conversation, they appear to fulfill the textual role of discourse as a turn-taker in speaking and a marker for an episode in writing.

Discourse markers (DMs) are communicative devices that systematize and express the speaker and writer's point of view to the listener/reader, as well as maintain an interpersonal link between the reader and writer. Indeed, discourse markers evaluate the discourse's concepts; therefore, these language markers are important.

### **1.1 OBJECTIVES**

For achieving the goal of study, the subsequent objectives were set:

- To find out the gender differences in the use of Urdu discourse markers
- To analyze the frequency and distribution of Urdu discourse markers used by male and female writers.

### **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Following research questions are to be sought:

1. Do Urdu male and female writers use different types of discourse markers?
2. What is the frequency and distribution of Urdu discourse markers used by male and female writers?

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

DMs play a significant part in the successful perception and production of an effective text and discourse. Discourse markers are required in a pragmatic sense, although they are optional in terms of semantics and syntax. Misuse of discourse markers in text produces communication breakdowns, makes writing or conversation weird, and affects acceptance. The importance of discourse markers as a component in maintaining the acceptability, effectiveness, and naturalness of any language's content cannot be overstated. While the above-mentioned aspects are regarded fundamental in general text studies across languages, because every language has its unique method for using discourse markers in terms of kind, frequency, and distribution in text.

The present study is significant to know about the nature of Urdu discourse markers. Moreover, it is important to identify the gender difference in the use of language. Newspaper articles were chosen as the study's primary written genre because of their prominence in print media. Journalists influence readers' thinking and also describe society's thoughts, culture, and ideology. Even if news is definitely one aspect of journalistic discourse, a newspaper is more than its news department. A newspaper's philosophy is moulded by its departments, particularly the non-news section. As a result, journalism as an integrated conversation should be prioritized. The findings of this study are expected to be valuable for the students of journalism and to serve as a guide for Urdu newspaper article writers. The importance of Urdu DMs in creating the effect of text on readers will be explained in this study.

#### **1.4 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This article is delimited to only written discourse, and its focus is on gender differences. Only 12 Urdu newspaper articles have been selected as sample. The articles have been taken from only two Urdu newspapers daily The Jung and The Express.

#### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

To define discourse markers in a clear and absolute manner is considered to be a difficult task. However, discourse markers are generally taken as expressions that are used to connect sentences in order to make sense of the text and to indicate the writer's and speaker's attitude toward what they wish to communicate. According to Ghil'ad (2009), the words and phrases that were measured as discourse markers were traditionally described as "fillers" or "expletives," and those words had no function in the past; however, they are now analyzed at various levels of analysis such as discourse planning and reformulation. These functions are divided into three categories: relationships among utterances, relationships between the message and the speaker, and relationships between the speaker and the hearer. Because it is difficult to structurally delimit such entities that stem from different word classes, discourse markers have been described in terms of their function. Defining discourse markers by their function, however, has also proven to be problematic, as suggested by Fischer (1998) that because such definition has to account for very different functions. Previous research on these expressions i.e. DMs has revealed that they are a group of items having a variety of discourse functions, according to Lenk (1998). Different definitions of discourse markers presented by distinct research highlight different features of the various functions that these items fulfill in conversation. Regardless of the fact that Schiffirin (1987) recognizes the global function of discourse markers, she only studies and specifies markers that indicate how immediately adjacent segments of text are connected.

Discourse markers' function is a popular and important field for researchers, and numerous ways have been developed because of its importance. Halliday and Hasan (1973) developed Systemic functional grammar (SFG) that is one of the approaches. The great deal of research on DM functional domains is based on Halliday's (1973) language functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Brinton (1996), Ajimer (2002), Hyland and Tse (2004), and Muller (2005), for example, divide DMs into two types: interpersonal and textual.

Fraser proposes another perspective on discourse markers (1996). The concept that discourse segments encode two forms of information: “content information” and “pragmatic information” underpins Fraser’s (1996) examination of discourse markers. Pragmatic markers, of which discourse markers are one sort, express the latter.

According to Fraser (1996), these markers are indicators of “the various forms of non-propositional statements a sentence can express.” Diverse approaches to the examination of discourse markers result in different explanations of the functions supplied by these items. Most of the studies have been done with reference to textual and interpersonal functions of discourse markers using model of Brinton (1996).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 APPROACH**

The present work is mainly descriptive in nature; as its aim is to describe the gender differences in the use of Urdu Discourse Markers. Mix Method research design is used for the present study. The major goal of employing a mixed-method approach is to broaden the scope of the research. It was attempted to eliminate the shortcomings of one approach, namely quantitative and qualitative approaches, in order to acquire a more in-depth understanding. So, one main target is to obtain the accuracy that can be achieved through mix method research design. This accuracy is the prime indicator of high level of achieved triangulation.

#### **3.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

The sample of the study was 12 Urdu newspaper articles. 12 Urdu newspaper articles written by male and female writers have been purposively selected to identify the gender differences in the use of Urdu discourse markers. 12 articles were taken from male writers and 12 articles were from female writers. The newspaper articles have been taken from daily Urdu newspaper The Jung and The Express. The articles have been selected from 1st December, 2018 to 16th December 2018. The mixed method research design is used in this study to analyze the data.

#### **3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Fraser’s (2009) taxonomy of three functional classes of discourse markers with the addition of temporal DMs is used to identify and classify Urdu DMs. Following four types are given by Fraser (2009).

##### **1. Contrastive discourse markers**

According to Fraser (2009), contrastive markers indicate that the utterance is in contrast to the propositional meaning of the previous utterance. Following are some important contrastive DMs:

*but, however, still, yet, rather, regardless, though, whereas although, despite (this/that), however; even so, in comparison, in contrast, alternatively, instead, nonetheless, in spite of, nevertheless, contrary to expectations, notwithstanding, on the other hand, on the contrary, conversely.*

## 2. Elaborative discourse markers

These discourse markers operate as a refinement of the preceding discourse in some way. For instance following elaborative DMs are found in English:

*and, above all, also, in other words, in fact, moreover, besides, after all, or, alternatively, by the correspondingly, same token, for example, equally, for instance, further (more), in particular; in addition, likewise, more accurately, more precisely, in other words, more importantly, moreover; on that basis, on top of it all, otherwise, rather; that is to say, more to the point, similarly.*

## 3. Inferential discourse markers

Inferential discourse markers indicate that the utterance's force is a conclusion drawn from the preceding discourse. Following is the list of inferential DMs.

*After all, so, therefore, thus, so, as a conclusion, consequently, as a result (of this/that), for this/ that reason, hence, it follows that, accordingly, in this/that/any case, because (of this/that), as a consequence (of this/that), on this/that condition, on these/those grounds, then, therefore, thus, all things considered.*

## 4. Temporal discourse markers

This type of DMs serves the function of signaling the time reference in the utterance or text. They are useful in organizing the structure written discourse. Following temporal DMs are found in English:

*firstly, finally, when, after, then, eventually, before, afterwards, meantime, as soon as, immediately, subsequently originally, meanwhile, secondly.*

## 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Newspaper articles were collected over a period of half of a month (from Dec 01, 2018 to Dec 16, 2018). The themes of the newspaper articles focus on political, social, economic and religious issues. Two renowned male writers and two female writers were purposively selected. Male columnists are Dr. Safdar Mehmood and Dr. Mujahid Kamran. The female columnists are Kishwar Naheed and Zahida Hina. Zahida Hina belongs to daily *Express*, rest of the writers are attached with daily *Jung*. Dr. Safdar Mehmood's columns are selected from the dates of December 07, 09 and 11, 2018. Respectively their topics are: *talimi inhetat - bara almiya* (Educational Demise - a great Tragedy), second column is also entitled with *talimi inhetat- bara almiya* (Educational Demise - a great Tragedy). His third column is titled with *December ka mahina aur tarikh ka ibrat kadah* (The month of December and Lesson of History). The social and political issues are discussed in these articles. The topics of Dr. Mujahid Kamran are: *Media aur Pak Fauj* (Media and Pak Army), *Media aur Taraqi* (Media and Development) and *Neiy Pakistan ke liye Good Governance ke chand nuskhe* (Some Prescriptions of Good Governance for new Pakistan).

Columnist Zahida Hina wrote on these topics: *Aag Christian hai ya Musalman* (Is Fire a Christian or Muslim), *Faisal Abad mien Adab ka Jashan* (Literary Conference in Faisal Abad) and *Shandar Shahr, Shandar Laug* (Elegant City, Elegant People).

Kishwar Naheed wrote these articles: *Kotwal ko Lalkarti Fehmida Riaz* (Fehmida Riaz calling a Policeman), *Bhek Mangna Qaumi aur Inferadi Shoaar Hai* (Begging is a national and Individual Custom) and *Mehkama Auqaf-Mazaroon Pe Kia Hota Hai?* (Department of What Happens on Shrines?)

#### 4.1 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF URDU DISCOURSE MARKERS

Newspaper articles are a type of written media. Because their language and structure are argumentative, newspaper articles are classified by the categories of summary, evaluation, and conclusion. A newspaper is, in fact, a type of persuasive and logical journalistic article. Discourse markers can be used to summarize, finish, or indicate an attitude, all of which can be valuable while writing a newspaper story. Additionally, logical markers can be used to move from one discourse unit to the next, and interactional discourse markers can be used to involve the reader in the discussion.

Following discourse markers were found in the opinion articles of Urdu male and female writers.

##### 1. Contrastive DMs

Following important contrastive markers, as described by Fraser (2009) are used by male and female writers:

*laikin / magar* (but), *is kebawajood* (despite), *hata k* (still), *bharhaal* (nevertheless) *k barukas* (contrary to), *balke* (even so), *warna* (otherwise).

##### 2. Elaborative DMs

These discourse markers serve as a refinement of the previous discourse. It means that they are the amplification or interpretation of some previous discourse. For instance following elaborative DMs are found in English:

*aur* (and), *ilawa* (besides), *misaa lketaurpe / maslan* (for example), *bhi* (also)

##### 3. Inferential discourse markers

Following is the list of inferential DMs:

*natijatan* (Consequently), *kiyun k / isliye* (because of), *is soorat mien* (in this case), *Chunke / chanachw* (Since)

##### 4. Temporal discourse markers

Temporal DMs are used to mention the time in the discourse. Following temporal DMs are found in Urdu newspaper articles:

*awlan* (firstly), *ab* (now) *doam* (secondly), *tab / phir* (then), *jab / kab* (when), *baad azan* (later on).

All the categories of Fraser's (2009) taxonomy were found in Urdu writing of both sexes. On the basis of data, it can be assumed that Urdu male and female writers use and rely upon the discourse markers. Furthermore, a variety of discourse markers are opted by Urdu columnists.

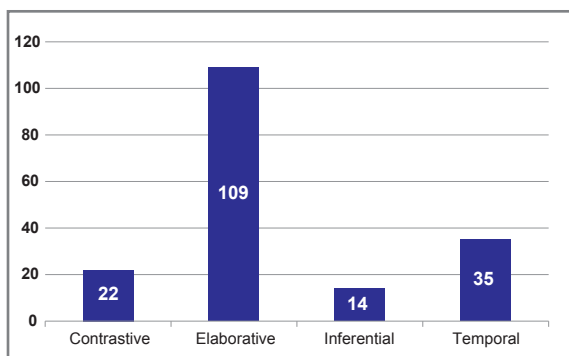
### 4.2 Quantitative Analysis of Urdu DMs used by Male and Female writers

Discourse markers investigated are analyzed quantitatively by using simple statistical operations of counting and percentage. Tables and figures are also used to evaluate data briefly.

**Table 4.1 Overall Distribution of Frequency of DMs in Male & Female Writing**

DM Type	Total	%
1. Contrastive	22	12.2%
2. Elaborative	109	60.6%
3. Inferential	14	7.7%
4. Temporal	35	19.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4.1 indicates that contrastive total contrastive are used by both sexes are 22 with a percentage value of 12.2%. The total frequency of Elaborative discourse markers is 109 with a percentage of 60.6 % that is too high value as compare to the least occurred discourse markers inferential DMs (7.7%). Temporal DMs are used 35 times by male and female (with a value of 19.5%). Now, the data show that use of DMs in Urdu is varied by types of DMs. To have a short glimpse Figure 4.1 can be observed.



*Figure 4.1 Division of Frequency of Urdu DMs*

### 4.3 Gender Differences in the Use of DMs

Following data are presented to study the gender variation with reference to the use of DMs.

**Table 4.2 Overall Distribution of Frequency of DMs**

	Frequency in Male	Frequency in Female	Total
5. Contrastive	17	05	22
6. Elaborative	52	57	109
7. Inferential	12	02	14
8. Temporal	14	21	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>180</b>

Table 4.2 shows that Urdu male speakers use DMs more frequently than the female speakers. The frequency of DMs in male speakers is 95, whereas it is 85 in female speakers. This accounts for Urdu male speakers might depend upon argumentative use of language, while female speakers are inclined towards more cooperative and compromising attitude. All the four types of Urdu DMs are found in the articles of male and female writers, it denotes that all the types of Fraser’s (2009) DMs are used by Urdu male and female writers. The value of elaborative DM is far greater than any other type mentioned in the taxonomy. It can be assumed that Urdu writers rely mostly on elaborative language in opinion writing. A graphic picture of gender differences can be observed in Figure 4.2.

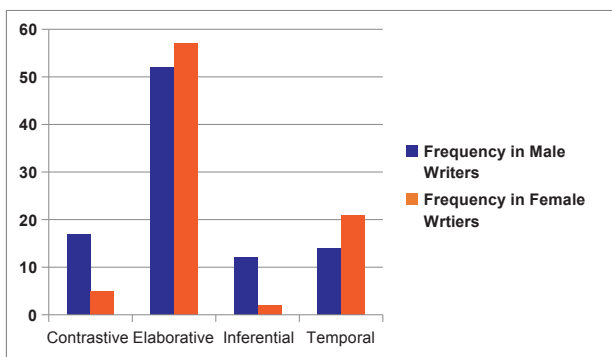


Figure 4.2 Overall Distribution of Frequency of DMs

Table 4.3 reveals that male columnists are inclined to use more discourse markers as compared to female. *Laikin/magar* (but) is used more frequently, furthermore some DMs are used by only one gender. *warna* (otherwise) is used by female writer, and *bharhaal* (nevertheless) occurred in male articles.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Frequency of the Contrastive Markers

	Frequency in Male	Frequency in Female
1. <i>laikin/magar</i> (but)	09	02
2. <i>is kebawajood</i> (despite)	01	00
3. <i>hata k</i> (still)	01	00
4. <i>bharhaal</i> (nevertheless)	02	00
5. <i>ke barukas</i> (contrary to)	02	00
6. <i>balke</i> (even so)	02	02
7. <i>warna</i> (otherwise)	00	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>05</b>

Table 4.4 Distribution of Frequency of Elaborative Marker



	Frequency in Male	Frequency in Female
1. <i>aur</i> (and)	49	57
2. <i>ilawa</i> (besides)	01	00
3. <i>misaal ke taur pe/maslan</i> (for example)	02	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>57</b>

As these DMs are generally used to introduce or signal initiality, their occurrence is high in both attributes of the gender. The variety of elaborative DM is somewhat limited, but they got highest score in the data. It indicates that Urdu writers intend to persuade the readers.

As previously stated *aur* (and) is the most frequently used DM in the article by both male and female authors. In these articles, DM *aur* (and) is used to indicate elaborative links between speech stretches. In other words, *aur* (and) serves as an elaborative marker. This signal, also known as an additive or elaborative marker, signifies that the next utterance adds to the information provided by the previous one. At the same time, *aur* (and) is used to indicate the writer's continuation of the topic.

**Table 4.5 Distribution of Frequency of Inferential Markers**

	Frequency in Male	Frequency in Female
1. <i>natijatan</i> (Consequently)	03	00
2. <i>kiyun k/isliye</i> (because of)	02	02
<i>is soorat mien</i> (in this case)	01	00
3. <i>chunke/chanachw</i> (Since)	05	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>02</b>

Table 4.5 indicates that inferential DMs signal a relationship of inference between discourse segments. In Urdu articles, inferential discourse markers are used in a very low amount both by male and female writers. By taking a gender view, results show that male writers opted inferences DMs more frequently. The writers or speakers use inferences using reasoning and justification. It may possible that the themes of male writers demand to make more justification of their argument. So, it can be a matter of argument to prefer inferential discourse markers rather than any other variable.

**Table 4.6 Distribution of Frequency of the Temporal Markers**

	Frequency in Male	Frequency in Female
1. <i>awlan</i> (firstly)	05	00
2. <i>ab</i> (now)	03	08
3. <i>doam</i> (secondly)	01	00
4. <i>tab/phir</i> (then)	01	09
5. <i>jab/kab</i> (when)	03	04
6. <i>baad azan</i> (later on)	01	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>

Table 4.6 shows that female writers intended to employ more temporal DMs. The themes and topic of their articles are related to chronological matters, so they use more DMs in this category as compare to male columnists. Temporal Markers ab (now) is used most frequently (value occurrence=08).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The study has aimed at identifying gender differences in the use of DMs. The analysis of the study reveals that Urdu male writers use DMs more frequently. This accounts that Urdu male writers might depend upon argumentative use of language, while female writers are inclined towards more cooperative and compromising attitude in the use of language. The elaborative discourse markers are more common than any other DM in terms of their functions. The findings reveal a considerable gender disparity in discourse marker usage. So, the results confirm the assumption of Victor, at el (2014) that there is a significant difference in the usage of DMs. It might be a matter of power, dominance, authority, uncertainty and theme that form the choice of using a discourse marker. On the whole, the findings of the study suggest that gender has an impact on the frequency of DMs in messages and their functions. Because DMs are used by both men and women, they could be used to determine gender differences. In other words, gender can govern the use of discourse markers. However, it can also be posited that the writers are generally aware of the patterns of language use. So, discourse markers are used by speakers or writers systematically. Furthermore, it can be suggested that on the basis of the theme/subject of the articles there might be a gender variation in the use of DMs. Moreover, before any further generalization, a large scale data study can indicate more valid gender variation in term of usage of DMs.

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