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## Deciphering Gender Dynamics and Discrimination in Turkish Marriage through Speech Patterns

*Türk Evliliğinde Dilsel Örüntülerle Kadına Yönelik Ayrımcılığın İncelenmesi*

### Abstract

This research embarks on a complicated journey to uncover the gender within the institution of Turkish marriage, focusing on the linguistic manifestations of discrimination against women. Through critical analysis of conversations between married individuals, the study seeks to illuminate how marital dialogs not only share everyday experiences, but also uphold, challenge, or change deeply rooted social norms and prejudices. Participants were tasked with delineating perceived gender roles within marital boundaries. Their responses, juxtaposed with the recorded conversations of 10 married couples — all from the researcher's immediate circle — offer a multi-layered insight into the implicit biases and potential microaggressions inherent in everyday interactions. This methodological choice was anchored in the belief that genuine dialogs from familiar contexts would reveal both overt and covert forms of gender discrimination.

By analyzing these recordings, the study aims to identify overarching characteristics and differences in the conversational styles of men and women. Preliminary findings suggest that linguistic markers may unintentionally perpetuate traditional gender roles and biases, underscoring subtle but persistent mechanisms of discrimination against women in Turkish society. Through this research, we aim to shed light on the deeper linguistic structures at play and their implications for broader social change.

**Keywords:** Turkish marriage institution, Discrimination against women, Marital dialogs, Gender roles

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## Özet

Bu çalışma, Türk evlilik kurumunda kadına yönelik dilsel ayrımcılığın ve toplumsal cinsiyetin karmaşık boyutlarını aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, evli bireylerin arasındaki diyalogları derinlemesine inceleyerek, bu konuşmaların sadece günlük yaşam deneyimlerini paylaşma biçimile kalmayıp, aynı zamanda yerleşik toplumsal normlar ve önyargıları nasıl yansittığını, ya da bu normlara nasıl meydan okuduğunu keşfetmeyi hedeflemektedir. Katılımcılar, evlilikte cinsiyet rollerinin algıları üzerine değerlendirmelerde bulundular. Araştırmacıının yakın çevresinden seçilen 10 evli çiftin konuşmaları, günlük etkileşimlerde yerleşik önyargıların ve cinsiyet temelli mikro saldırlılarının ne kadar yaygın olduğuna dair detaylı bilgi sunmaktadır. Bu yöntemle, tanıdık bir çevreden gelen doğal diyalogların, cinsiyet ayrımcılığının hem açıkça hem de dolaylı olarak nasıl ifade edildiğini ortaya koyması amaçlanmıştır.

Bu kaydedilen diyalogların analizi, konuşma biçimlerindeki cinsiyetlere özgü özelliklerin ve farklılıkların anlaşılmasını sağlamaktadır. İlk bulgular, dilin, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini ve önyargılarını nasıl sürekli kılabilir olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu araştırma, toplumsal cinsiyetin ve ayrımcılığın dilsel yansımalarına dair derinlemesine bir anlayış sunarak, Türk toplumundaki cinsiyet dinamiklerinin daha geniş bir bağlamda nasıl ele alınması gerekiğine dair önemli bilgiler sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türk evlilik kurumu, Kadına yönelik ayrımcılık, Evlilik diyalogları, Cinsiyet rolleri

## Introduction

Throughout history, there is ample evidence of what society expects of women's behavior and communication. The famous philosopher Sophocles is often quoted as saying that "silence gives women proper grace," thus summarizing the ideal of a virtuous woman as a silent woman<sup>1</sup>. Such a notion is also echoed in the old English proverb that states, "Silence is a woman's best adornment" This ideology is pervasive in early literature. The link between gender and language often reveals underlying social conditions and tensions. Academics emphasize the social construction of gender roles and point to differences that go beyond purely biological differences. This underscores the idea that societal norms and values for men and women are constructed by society. With the acknowledgment of gender and its associated discrimination, an essential question arises: Why is the discrimination predominantly towards women? Contemporary researchers studying the interplay between gender and language have shifted their focus from stereotypical questions such as 'how do women speak?' or 'how do men speak?' to the linguistic devices that individuals employ to embody gender roles. They also examine the linguistic practices that undergird and sustain particular gender ideologies. The internal dynamics of male and female conversations are significantly influenced by societal pressures placed on women Robin Lakoff, a seminal

1 Cora Kaplan (1976). "Language and Gender" in, Papers on Patriarchy, Women's Publishing Collective, 1976, p. 28.

figure in the field, highlights the relationship between gender and language in her work, *Language and the Women's Place*. She emphasizes the dual linguistic challenges women face: both in terms of their learned linguistic behavior and their representation in language. Early in her study, she points to the different socialization processes that distinguish boys from girls.

If a little girl 'talks rough' like a boy, she will normally be ostracized, scolded or made fun of. In this way society, in the form of a child's parents and friends, keeps her in line, in her place. This socialization process is, in most of its aspects, harmless and often necessary, but in this particular instance- the teaching of a special linguistic uses to little girls-it raises serious problems, though the teachers may well be unaware of this<sup>2</sup>

Lakoff claims that social expectations shape the way language is internalized and externalized by different genders. Girls are conditioned from an early age to adopt a "lady's language" that is characterized by its decorum and does not contain coarse language. In contrast, boys are not subject to the same social pressures and often use unfiltered language. Equally important to the discourse on gendered language, however, is not only how women speak, but also how language represents and addresses them.

Through her careful observation and analysis of conversations, particularly among educated, middle-class white Americans, Lakoff has identified distinctive linguistic patterns that are used predominantly or to a significant degree by women. These patterns, Lakoff argues, reveal elements of implied insecurity, perceived fragility, and heightened politeness—a lexicon characteristic of women. She emphasizes that women are guided and shaped from an early age to use a particular set of linguistic tools to ensure that their speech conforms to societal expectations of "ladylike" behavior. Consequently, societal expectations play a crucial role for both women and men in shaping their linguistic responses.

As children women are encouraged to be little ladies. Little ladies don't scream as vociferously as little boys, and they are chastised more severely for throwing tantrums or showing temper: "high spirits" are expected and therefore tolerated in little boys; docility and resignation are the corresponding traits expected of little girls. Now, we tend to excuse a show of temper by a man where we would not excuse an identical tirade from a woman: women are allowed to fuss and complain, but only a man can bellow in rage<sup>3</sup>.

Lakoff argues that women's lexical choices are limited, reflecting broader social constraints. Their language does not fit the public spheres and power dynamics traditionally associated with men. As a result, women's language is often perceived as an expression of vulnerability rather than authority. Furthermore, Lakoff highlights the inherent sexism in language through the differential use of identical words when referring to men versus women. Such usage not only reveals a bias, but also changes the underlying connotation of the word depending on the gender to which it is attributed.

Dale Spender proposes that male control over the construction of truth gives men authority over meaning and the ongoing development of language. Spender emphasizes

2 Robin Lakoff: *Language and The Women's Place*, New York, Harper Colophon Books, 1975, p.5.

3 Ibid, p. 11.

that men created a reality in which they put themselves first and manipulate language to advance their own goals and interests.

To suggest that English is a man's language is frequently to arouse the indignation of some people who feel secure in stating the obvious; that is, because women use the language it cannot therefore be the property of males. But it is perfectly feasible to suggest that women have been obliged to use a language which is not their own making.<sup>4</sup>

Spender proposes that male-centered language narrates events through a lens that privileges the male perspective and pushes aside the values of women. One important issue she addresses is the silencing of women in language. To illustrate, Spender cites the term "work" In conventional definitions, "work" is often focused on male-oriented tasks, rendering women's contributions invisible. This erasure of women's work is emblematic of their general marginalization and oppression in linguistic constructs.

It can be seen that those who have the power to name the world are in a position to influence reality. Again, if more than one set of names available, users of language could elect to use those names which best reflected their interests; they could choose whether to call males field independent or context blind and the existence of such a choice would minimize the falseness which is inherent in but one or other of the terms. But because it has been males who have named the world, no such choice exists and the falseness of partial names they have supplied goes unchecked (Spender, 165).

Women's communication is designed to promote closeness with other women and to emphasize shared experiences and understanding. This tendency to emphasize commonalities in personal interactions also permeates women's discourse in public and shows a consistent pattern in their communicative approach. Tannen posits that for many men, communication serves primarily as a means to assert autonomy and establish hierarchy. They often showcase their verbal prowess in situations that involve humor or information dissemination. Hence, men typically do not adjust their speech based on the intimacy of the conversation and often lean towards sharing news or information. Tannen observes that in American society, women tend to be more conversational at home, while men may remain reserved, often engrossed in activities like reading the newspaper. This behavior can be attributed to underlying differences in communication patterns. "Because men and women are regarding the landscape from contrasting vantage points, the same scene can appear very different to them, and they often have opposite interpretations of the same action"<sup>5</sup>

The discourse on language and gender can be broadly categorized into two primary approaches: the domination-power perspective and the difference-cultural diversity approach. The domination theory posits that the inherent variations in language usage between men and women can be primarily ascribed to power dynamics. A recurring theme in this approach is the notion that male language is perceived as the norm, compelling women to conform to it. A seminal work that sparked discussions on this topic is Robin Lakoff's "Language and Woman's Place". Lakoff delved into issues of linguistic sexism and

4 Dale Spender: *Man Made Language*, London, Pandora, 1990, p. 165, p.12.

5 Deborah Tannen: *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, New York: William Morrow, 2013, p. 38.

bias. Adopting an unconventional methodology, she contended that women inadvertently reinforce their subordinate status through specific speech characteristics, such as hedges and tag questions. However, her work faced criticism due to a perceived lack of empirical support. Nonetheless, Lakoff firmly maintained that there exists a distinct ‘female language’, divergent from the language used by men.

The theory of domination in the realm of language and gender cannot be discussed without referring to Dale Spender and her influential work *Man Made Language*. At the heart of Spender’s argument is the notion that women’s linguistic expression is limited because the language they use is created and dominated by men. In her book, Spender addresses three central problems: the shaping of language by male meanings, the silencing of women’s voices, and the pervasive sexism in language. Spender contends that men have created a linguistic reality in which they center themselves and manipulate language to further their own goals and perspectives.

The theory of domination, which assumes that men oppress and systematically silence women through language, is contrasted with the theory of cultural difference. The latter assumes that women and men emerge from different subcultures, undergo different socialization processes, and subsequently interact based on these different cultural foundations. Central to the development of cultural difference theory was the challenge to the narrative of domination that characterized “women’s speech” as hesitant, passive, and unassertive, and portrayed women as perpetually disadvantaged and victimized.

In contrast to the dominance perspective, which views men as the standard, the theory of cultural difference assumes that women and men are equal, albeit different. Daniel N. Maltz and Ruth A. Borker, who study communication problems between the sexes, postulate that they arise because men and women have different cultural backgrounds. Their theory is rooted in the idea of interethnic communication. Similarly, Deborah Tannen claims that men and women are socialized in different cultural spheres and each learn different languages. Thus, when they communicate with the opposite sex, they inadvertently use their culturally embedded language patterns, which can lead to misunderstandings.

Language, often a reflection of societal norms, can sometimes act as a tool of exclusion, particularly towards women. By placing men as the standard, many languages inherently marginalize women, relegating them to secondary status and confining their experiences and expressions. Such biases in language can perpetuate stereotypes, stigmatizing women and limiting their spheres of influence. In subsequent sections of this study, we’ll delve deeper into these linguistic nuances, examining gendered language across participants from a range of socio-cultural and economic backgrounds using the conversation analysis technique. This approach aims to illuminate the pervasive ways gender discrimination manifests in everyday discourse and how it varies across different segments of society.

### Aim of the Study

Gender’s influence on societal roles and expectations is deeply ingrained, manifesting both in daily interactions and language. This influence is evident across various cultures, each offering its unique linguistic reflection of gender norms. For instance, while some languages like Spanish clearly delineate gender through nouns and adjectives, Turkish

incorporates gender distinctions more subtly, using particular expressions, word choices, or idioms. Despite Turkish grammar's lack of explicit gender differentiation, its language exhibits distinct gender-specific nuances, revealing underlying societal biases. This treatment of gender within language underscores its omnipresent nature in societies. Scholars have extensively debated this intricate interplay between language and gender, recognizing language as not just a means of communication but also as a mirror reflecting societal hierarchies and gender roles. This research seeks to decipher the subtle linguistic cues that perpetuate gender discrimination. Using a complex mix of participants' perceptions and actual marital interactions, this research is intended to understand the complex dynamics that shape gendered perceptions in everyday marriage discourse. This study was inspired by my doctoral thesis. In order to reveal the perspective of women within the scope of the study, married male and female participants from different socio-economic and socio-cultural classes were selected and their conversation records were examined. These conversations were analyzed from two perspectives: first, by examining the distinct linguistic styles of men and women, and second, by exploring the language specifically directed towards women.

### Theoretical Framework

The intricate relationship between gender and language has spurred myriad discussions within the realm of sociolinguistics. Notably, it wasn't until the 1970s that research on this intersection really took the spotlight, mirroring the period when women were beginning to gain visibility in literary domains. However, the roots of this academic exploration can be traced back to the 1920s. Otto Jespersen ignited the debate by positing male language as the benchmark, relegating female language as subordinate. Challenging this perspective, Robin Lakoff introduced the "deficit model." Lakoff postulated that societal pressures rendered women's speech as seemingly powerless, consequently relegating them to a more passive role in conversations. As Cameron (2018: 76) articulates, "Given the pressure towards social conformity, it's logical for women to showcase these characteristics in their speech, mirroring their broader societal roles."<sup>6</sup>

Robin Lakoff's seminal work on language and gender introduced concepts that would reshape the discourse of sociolinguistics. Central to her thesis is the notion that language inherently marginalizes women, shackling their means of articulating their perspectives and, in effect, their identities. By defaulting to a male-centric norm, language effectively renders women invisible, imposing a reality where the male perspective is the overarching standard.

Delving deeper, Lakoff identifies a dual pronged linguistic discrimination against women: firstly, in the manner women are conditioned to utilize language, and secondly, in how language is employed when referring to women. Her pivotal article, "Language and Woman's Place," delves into this dichotomy, highlighting distinct linguistic patterns associated with women. Crucially, Lakoff posits that language isn't a neutral entity; rather, it is an instrument of oppression, as cited in Eckert and McConnell's 2003 work.

Lakoff's insights urge readers to recognize the insidiousness of gender bias in language.

It's so deeply entrenched, it often goes unnoticed, masquerading as the natural order. She contends that these gender-specific linguistic variations are not merely observational but carry weighty evaluative consequences. The nuances that characterize women's speech, as identified by Lakoff, are enumerated in the following list:

1. Lexical hedges or fillers, e.g. you know, sort of, well, actually
2. Tag questions, e.g. she's very nice, isn't she?
3. Rising intonation on declaratives, e.g. it's really good?
4. Empty adjectives, e.g. wonderful, lovely, charming, cute, nice
5. Precise colour terms, e.g. magenta, aquamarine, mauve, taupe
6. Intensifiers such as really, so, totally, e.g. 'It was so nice to meet you'
7. Mitigating expressions: just, sort of, perhaps, maybe, kind of, like
8. Hypercorrect grammar, e.g. consistent use of standard verb forms
9. Super-polite forms, e.g. indirect requests
10. Euphemisms and understatement
11. Avoidance of strong swear words, e.g. bother, my goodness
12. Emphatic stress, e.g. 'It was a BRILLIANT performance.'
13. Apologies: e.g. I'm so sorry that... <sup>7</sup>

Feminist linguists have long been intrigued by the divergent patterns in male and female speech. One observable trait is the gentle, almost cautious tone that typifies women's speech, reflecting societal expectations that mandate them to be delicate and meticulous in both word and deed. Women's discourse tends to be more introspective and emotive, echoing their relegated roles to the domestic sphere, away from the more public arenas conventionally dominated by men.

A pervasive stereotype that has often been wielded against women is the claim that 'women talk too much'. This assertion, which many feminist linguists dismiss as a mere exaggeration, appears to be a tool devised by men to suppress women's voices. By perpetuating such generalizations, women's efforts to express themselves and carve out space in a male-dominated society are belittled. Consequently, women find themselves compelled to mold their linguistic expressions, ensuring they remain under the overarching shadow of male influence.

### **Method of the study**

This part of the study addresses the dialogs between married men and women, characterizing them as conversations inherent in the marital dynamic. Moreover, these conversations are dissected from both male and female perspectives. For married couples, their interactive dialog is a fundamental platform. The intention is to point out and highlight certain linguistic features used by women and men. Participants were asked to

describe the roles assigned to both genders in the context of marriage. In order to decipher the overarching features that define male and female conversations, the recorded dialogs are closely examined. The methodology used for this linguistic analysis provides insight into the initiation signs and patterns that couples use at the beginning of a conversation. Jennifer Coates' seminal work, "Women, Men and Everyday Talk," was integrated into the analytical framework as a foundational reference.

In this research Coates' transcription markers were used. However, some of these methods have been adjusted because it is the same person who analyzes records and takes notes. Taken from Coates, the transcription markers used in this research are:

1. a slash (/) indicates the end of a tone group or chunk of talk.
2. a question mark indicates the end of a chunk of talk.
3. a hyphen indicates an incomplete word or utterance.
4. pauses are indicated by a full stop
5. a horizontal line marks the beginning of a stave and indicates that the lines enclosed by the lines are to be read simultaneously.
6. an extended square bracket indicates the start of overlap between utterances
7. an equals sign at the end of one speaker's utterance and at the start of the next utterance indicates the absence of a discernible gap
8. double round parentheses indicate that there is doubt about the accuracy of the transcription
9. where material is impossible to make out, it is represented as follows, ((xx)), e.g.:you're ((xx)) – you're prejudiced/
10. angled brackets give clarificatory information about underlined material.
11. capital letters are used for words/syllables uttered with emphasis:
12. the symbol % encloses words or phrases that are spoken very quietly,
13. the symbol. hh indicates that the speaker takes a sharp intake of breath:
14. the symbol [...] indicates that material has been omitted<sup>8</sup>

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8 Jennifer Coates : Women, Men and Everyday Talk. New York, PalgraveMacmillan, 2016, p. Xiii.

### Group Information

Group Number	Name	Age	Job	The way the group comes together
1.group	Ayşe Kemal Yasemin Aykut	44 48 43 45	Housewife Teacher Housewife Bank employer	Friendship
2.group	Zeynep Tolga Burcu Fatih	35 36 34 37	Housewife Teacher Secretary Teacher	Friendship
3.group	Pınar Selçuk Arzu Orhan	33 33 41 45	Teacher Engineer Company employee Company employee	Friendship
4.group	Şadiye Osman Ülkü Halil	51 55 49 51	Housewife Shopkeeper Housewife Shopkeeper	Kinship
5.group	İlker Seda Abdullah Sema	35 33 30 28	Company employee Housewife Company employee Teacher	Kinship

These conversations, which took place in the cozy atmosphere of afternoon gatherings over tea and coffee, played a crucial role in capturing candid expressions and genuine conversations. The goal was to immerse participants in their most familiar surroundings in order to elicit authentic responses and avoid any influence of a formal setting. The conversations, which lasted about an hour on average, were conducted in living rooms to create a relaxed home-like atmosphere. This allowed participants to engage freely and encouraged an organic dialog. Meticulous observation notes were taken after each session to record new insights and reflections and to ensure that no nuance or detail faded over time. The total data included 540 minutes of conversations between five different couples. However, for the core of the language analysis, only 45 minutes of these conversations were transcribed verbatim. The remaining discourse provided a broader context that shed light on how themes crossed over and how gender dynamics manifested subtly through linguistic cues.

## Findings of the Study

Misogyny, a deeply rooted prejudice against women, is evident in many forms of communication and often reinforces patriarchal views and perpetuates negative stereotypes. This not only demonstrates a distorted portrayal of women, but also reflects the social structures that have historically favored men. The prevalence of language that excludes women or demeans their value is not only a linguistic problem, but also a sociological one. From everyday conversations to representations in the media, language often reflects the deep-rooted prejudices of a male-dominated society. Recognizing and addressing these biases is essential for more equitable and inclusive dialog.

In this research, the conversation recordings revealed a disturbing prevalence of misogynistic language directed towards women. This not only highlights the implicit biases held by the speakers but also underscores the societal norms that enable such discriminatory discourse. The findings suggest that these linguistic behaviors are not isolated incidents but rather are reflective of deeper, entrenched beliefs about gender roles and the value of women in society. Addressing these language patterns is crucial not just for the sake of equitable communication but also to challenge and change the underlying prejudices that perpetuate them.

### (Group 1, on the roles of husband and wife in marriage)

**The Speaker:** What do you think about the role of men and women in marriage?

**Ayşe:** Women have much more responsibilities in marriage=

**Kemal:** WOMEN...hh...make everything COMPLICATED

**Ayşe:** Dear % you're exaggerating% I THINK our capabilities are different-DIFFERENT

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**Kemal:** TO PUT IT SIMPLY A WOMAN'S PLACE AT HOME

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**Yasemin:** Yes but!!! Is it possible in these ...hh...hard times...?

Kemal: Ladies, you're not working, but our conditions are very good. I don't think that women need to work!!!

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**Aykut:** A woman should not neglect HER housework even if she works. There are some suitable jobs for women. A woman should work in jobs that don't make herself tired.

**Ayşe:** MY MOTHER IN LAW always said if a woman gets a minimum wage and becomes like a SERVANT outside, she should stay at home

and become the SERVANT of her home. She is right to a certain extent.

There is an invisible workload in women's life!!! I AM the worrier, organizer, rememberer, and attention-payer!!! A WIFE IS SEEN A SERVANT IN THE MARRIAGE

**Yasemin:** As your mother in law said <smile>

**Ayşe:** anyway Kemal THINKS SO

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**Aykut:** Let's get back to the subject and answer to Ms. Gökçen's question.

**Ayşe:** Oh BEA!!! WHAT A NICE CHAT we have. It is so nice to speak with you/

**Kemal:** Anyway your job is to chat

**Aykut:** Women never stop talking<sup>9</sup>

Misogyny is evident in the above section of the conversation. The opposition to women working outside the home, expressed by both men and older family members, indicates a deeply held belief in traditional gender roles. It is implicitly suggested that a woman's primary duty should be the household and that her tasks should revolve exclusively around domestic duties. Furthermore, the male participants' apparent intolerance of women expressing their opinions or simply talking demonstrates an attempt to suppress female voices. Such interactions not only marginalize women, but also reinforce harmful stereotypes that hinder their advancement in both their personal and professional lives. This pervasive attitude underscores the urgency of challenging and correcting such deep-seated prejudices in social discourse.

#### (Group 4, on Ülkü's daughter)

The Speaker: Does your daughter study or work?

**Ülkü:** She- Nurgül graduated from HIGH SCHOOL/ but %did not want% to go to university. Actually I am AGAINST to women's working outside. I think she should %find a husband% and MARRY =

**Sadiye:** = Being a teacher is a good job for LADIES but Nurgül didn't go to university /As her aunt, I support her MARRIAGE <smile>

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**Halil:** My daughter didn't want to go to university, so we didn't insist/ Everyone doesn't have to go to university anyway. My daughter has always been A GOOD GIRL, and when she gets married, she will become a good wife LIKE HER MOTHER <smile> In fact, I don't approve of her working outside. If she works, she will be among a lot of men,

and men will look at her. I think “if a woman’s hand gets in the purse, luck will leave”

**Osman:** IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO BRING HOME THE BACON- Women should not work.

**Ülkü:** MAY GOD BE PLEASED WITH YOU!!! Our husbands are good men  
<laughter>

.....

I was 21 when I gave birth to my son. I always helped my mother-in-law at home during this period<smile> I always got up before my husband and prepared the breakfast for him.

**Halil:** You are a very DILIGENT woman. Nurgül is also very diligent <smile>like her mother. NO GOOD CAN COME FROM THE MILLET SAWED AFTER AUGUST OR THE WOMAN WHO WAKES UP AFTER HER HUSBAND

**Sadiye:** Nurgül’s friends always go out ‘alone as a girl’ . Nurgül never goes out after 6 pm.

.....<sup>10</sup>

In the provided excerpt, we can discern several instances of gender biases and prejudicial beliefs. Nurgül’s commendation for her domestic contributions and her decision to not socialize extensively is rooted in traditional gender expectations. The phrase “alone as a girl” isn’t just a reflection of protective sentiments; it carries with it an inherent belief that women are more vulnerable and thus require safeguarding, predominantly from male figures. Such a notion, while it might stem from concern, also inadvertently boxes women into roles of dependency and limitation.

Furthermore, Halil’s statement, “If a woman’s hand gets in the purse, luck will leave,” is not only overtly misogynistic but also perpetuates the stereotype that women are financially irresponsible or that their involvement in financial matters is inauspicious. Such beliefs can have tangible negative impacts, discouraging women from taking active roles in financial decision-making or pursuing careers.

The consistent use of negative language or sentiments towards women, as highlighted in the conversation, underscores the depth of gender biases that persist in some societal contexts. Recognizing and challenging these biases is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment.

### (Group 1 on pregnancy)

**Ayşe:** I couldn’t go to my father’s house after six months of PREGNANCY. I was so ashamed. I hid my belly in loose-fitting dresses before 6 months. It was as if my father and brothers found out that I was pregnant, he’d feel like I was doing something wrong to them. I felt the same thing in all of my three pregnancies.

**Kemal:** There was a sense of EMBARRASSMENT in the past, but the girls are very

comfortable. It's not a good thing that they behave in a relaxed manner.

**Aykut:** It's because of the mothers. BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE AUTHORITY OVER THEIR DAUGHTER/They release their daughters too much because they were raised under pressure.

**Ayşe:** Taking the child on the lap was considered disrespectful. We couldn't hold our child near our father-in-law or father, and even if the child cried, we could not breast-feed.

**Yasemin:** I think this is a very EXTREME and OPPRESSIVE expectation/ We %women% give birth and keep the family name alive. This should be considered a source of pride

**Aykut:** Ladies, we mention about the RESPECT<sup>11</sup>

The dialogue segment offered highlights several sociocultural dynamics, particularly in relation to traditional gender roles and expectations. The recurring emphasis on the concept of “respect” sheds light on the deeply rooted social norms that dictate acceptable behavior for women. The woman’s act of concealing her pregnancy seems to be understood and appreciated by the male characters as a form of modesty and adherence to societal norms. It is portrayed as an embodiment of ‘respectful’ femininity, where the woman’s body and its changes are kept private. While it is important to acknowledge and respect individual choices, it becomes problematic when such actions are turned into societal expectations that force all women to conform.

The other male participant’s praise, juxtaposed with his complaint about modern women’s deviation from such “expressions of respect,” underscores a nostalgic sense of traditional roles. His interruption and subsequent criticism of his wife, who presumably does not embody these conservative norms to his satisfaction, underscores the power dynamic in their relationship.

Ayşe’s narrative thus reflects a social pattern for femininity that emphasizes respect for societal expectations, modesty, and submissiveness. It is a poignant reminder of the expectations women often face. They are often judged on whether they adhere to or deviate from these societal norms.

### (Group 2, on the roles of men and women in marriage)

**Zeynep:** The roles of men and women should be equal. The woman has a lot of duties, which is very unfair. It is the woman who takes care of the child, who cooks and who works. Women make money like men.

**Tolga:** If women can manage to KEEEP QUIET and TALK LESS men can do anything <laughter>

**Burcu:** Our baby, Ada, woke up the other night at 3.00 a.m. Fatih did not care and continued to sleep. For God’s sake, GET UP for once AND play with Ada. I’m sick of going to work every day without sleep.

**Fatih:** Being a mother is difficult <smile>

**Tolga:** <smile> There is something I don't understand, girls, why are you complaining about everything?

**Fatih:** Because they like TALKING!!!

**Burcu:** <laughter>

**Tolga:** Women like grumbling

### (Group 1)

**Aykut:** Here we go!!!LADIES first (smiling)

**Yasemin:** OH!!! Respect is very important. The spouses must be respectful to each other

**Aykut:** the roles of WOMEN and MEN are DIFFERENT in marriage <smile> because they are different. They are created differently. Men should bring home the bacon. Women should OBEY their husbands. A HUSBAND must be a leader of his home

**Kemal:** OBEY, this is the keyword/ God created ADAM FIRST and then Eve=

**Ayşe:** =WHAT IS THE CONNECTION  
<smile>

Spouses must respect to each other men and women have different duties

**Aykut:** There won't be a problem if the women don't NAG at us

**Yasemin:** NAG? if men fulfill their responsibilities women do not have to talk too much

**Aykut:** So you accept that you are nagging?

**Ayşe:** Ah... HONEY...WE are NOT nagging...hh.... %you don't understand us%

**Yasemin:** YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND US

**Aykut:** WOMEN <smile> are DIFFICULT to understand

**Yasemin:** <smile><sup>12</sup>

The observation made in the given dialogue segment highlights a prevalent gender stereotype and power dynamic often found in patriarchal societies. Terms like "nagging" or "grumbling" is used when referring to women's complaints or concerns. This can be seen as a method of trivializing or dismissing their feelings and perspectives. By labeling them this way, men can diminish the legitimacy of the issues raised by women, making it easier to overlook or negate them.

The frequent call for women to "not nag" is not just a plea for them to be silent but can also be seen as an attempt to maintain a dominant position in the relationship. By suppressing women's voices or concerns, men can continue to control narratives and maintain the status quo. This form of silencing often perpetuates the power imbalance in

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12 This conversation excerpt is sourced from my doctoral dissertation

relationships and is a manifestation of deeper societal structures that prioritize male voices over female ones.

It's essential to approach such dialogues with a critical lens, understanding the broader societal implications they carry. Recognizing these patterns can be the first step towards creating more equitable and understanding interpersonal dynamics.

#### **(On gender roles in marriage group 5)**

**Seda:** A woman should be a good mother. She should take good care of her children.

**Sema:** You're right, honey. Your brother's wife doesn't care for her children, does she?

**Seda:** Yeah, she leaves the kids to us and sleeps till the evening. She pretends as if she were sick.

**Sema:** What does your brother say?

**Seda:** He's upset about it, poor man.

**Abdullah:** your job is gossip

**İlker:** Yeah, but really

(on another woman Şadiye and Ülkü)

**Ülkü:** / The newly married couple on the 4th floor is getting divorced.

**Şadiye:** himmm

**Ülkü:** The woman was jealous. They're divorcing because of her jealousy. /

**Şadiye:** she cannot be a good wife, a good mother. =

**Ülkü:** = The man is doing well by divorcing him.

**Şadiye:** poor man/<sup>13</sup>

A significant aspect of conversations among women is the discussions centered on other women. In many traditional cultures, including Turkish society, women often grapple with societal pressures, making adherence to societal norms paramount in their lives. It's not uncommon for women to discuss peers who might not conform to these expected social roles. In the mentioned conversation, it's evident that while criticizing another woman, two participants elevate themselves. This act of discussing and sometimes critiquing other women emerges as a distinct feature in female dialogues.

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13 This conversation excerpt is sourced from my doctoral dissertation

In the aforementioned conversation, it's evident that two women elevate their own status while critiquing another. This tendency to discuss and sometimes critique other women is a notable feature in female dialogues.

### Conclusion

Language not only reflects our views on issues and ideas, it actively influences and shapes those perceptions. The traditional notion that language is merely a tool for exchanging information is being refuted by many forward-thinking linguists. They believe that language emerges from social processes and ideologies, and that through its study we can uncover deeply held social beliefs. These linguists also see language as a tool for manipulating and controlling society. From this perspective, language plays a role in creating and maintaining social structures and beliefs, including patriarchal systems. Patriarchal narratives that place women in an unequal position are both shaped and reinforced through language. Therefore, feminist stylistics looks in depth at language and seeks to highlight and challenge any oppressive gender ideologies it conveys.

My goal is to examine gender-specific linguistic differences in the conversational interactions of married men and women. Rather than merely analyzing isolated phenomena, I wanted to examine these linguistic differences in greater depth and place them in the broader context of societal implications. This research was designed to delve deep into the understated gender biases that permeate in language. These biases, though not always overtly expressed, emerge through the nuanced connotations and subtle undertones in our everyday communication. The decision to spotlight married couples as the primary subjects of this study was driven by the hypothesis that the institution of marriage often serves as a microcosm where gender roles and inequalities are magnified. Within the intimate dynamics of marital relationships, traditional roles, expectations, and cultural norms often play out more explicitly. By examining these interactions, the study aimed to shed light on the broader societal constructs of gender and the ways in which language subtly reinforces them.

Delving deeper into the results of this study, we find that language, often seen as a mere medium of communication, can be subject to strong biases. These prejudices are not limited to a particular section of society but run through different socio-cultural spheres. The consistent appearance of such prejudices in language shows how deeply rooted these sentiments are in our collective psyche.

Proverbs, which have always been seen as carriers of wisdom and shared social values, play a crucial role in reinforcing gender differences. Their continued use, even in contemporary conversations, is indicative of their deep roots and influence in shaping social attitudes. The fact that these proverbs, with their inherent biases, are still in circulation raises concerns about the persistence of outdated and harmful stereotypes.

Even more concerning is the manifestation of internalized misogyny. The observation that women themselves use such derogatory terms shows how deep the problem runs. When members of the marginalized group participate in their own exclusion, it indicates deep-seated social conditioning that goes beyond individual experience.

The diverse sociocultural backgrounds of the participants further underscore the

pervasiveness of this problem. Regardless of upbringing, education, or social status, derogatory language toward women seems to be a common thread. This universality suggests that the problem is not just isolated incidents or individual beliefs but is in fact a systematic problem.

Based on data from my dissertation, this study shows that Turkish language contains sexist nuances. Especially in the marital context, language serves as a tool for perpetuating gender stereotypes. In all groups studied, pronounced misogyny is evident in language directed at women. In addition, women often show less linguistic confidence compared to men. This finding underscores the idea that language development is continually influenced by prevailing social norms. It is important to understand that gender is not fixed. It is an ongoing achievement rather than an intrinsic characteristic. It is not synonymous with biological sex. Instead, our gender identity is in constant flux and is shaped by our social position and the complex matrix of our social interactions. Ultimately, gender has a significant impact on language.

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