A Functional Perspective on Gender Associated Patterns in Kurdish EFL University Students' Conversational Performance

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Abstract: The current study focuses on gender associated communication styles that male and female Kurdish EFL senior university students have while using English face-to-face in academic contexts. It hypothesizes that both male and female EFL students have their own style of language with some similarities and differences. The differences might be due to male/female misunderstanding of each other while having face-to-face interaction. Moreover, the differences could not be noticed in academic communication of all Kurdish EFL university students unless the situational influences of each style are evaluated. The study concludes that social and cultural variations affect the language style used by Kurdish EFL university students. This study could be helpful for the university lecturers to have a better understanding of how the process of learning should be enhanced and made more effective and successful.

Keywords: Gender, Gender-exclusive and Gender-preferential speech features, Communication styles

Introduction

Analyzing language with reference to certain sociolinguistic aspects (gender, ethnicity, social meaning, style, etc.) has become the main interest of sociolinguistics since 1960s (Hazen, 2014). Asking questions about women and men language has emerged with the women's movements in the 1970s; it has been investigated in different fields such as psychology, linguistics, speech communication, anthropology, etc. (Crawford, 1995).

The current study, theoretically speaking, goes with Lakoff (1975) who explores and focuses on women's language in general. However, this study is distinct in that it tries to compare and contrast the language of female with that of men building on the fact that males and females do not communicate in the same exact way like each other in any society (cf. Holmes, 2008). It should be noted that in the present study language of female (LoF) and language of male (LoM) will be used instead of woman language and man language respectively since the word "female" refers to all non-male human beings. Moreover, since gender is a social property that is acquired or constructed through an individual's adherence to certain cultural norms as well as to one's relationships with others (Meyerhoff 2011), the current study tries to explain the role of gender in the use of English by Kurdish EFL university students and whether male and female EFL university use the target language differently.

The present study is believed to be of value for English language teachers since it raises their awareness of the idea of language and gender in the process of teaching in general and adequate act of communication in particular.

Gender: An Overview

Curzan (2003) states that the concept 'gender' is not well defined. Levy (1989: 306, cited in Halpern, 2012) refers to it as the social categorizing of individuals based on social standards and ascriptions. Wood (2009), on the other hand, points out that "gender grows out of cultural ideas that stipulate the social meaning and expectation of each sex" (p. 24). The basic distinction between gender and sex could be related to society, culture, history, etc. as regards the former and biological categories of human being related to the latter (cf.

Shields, 2002; Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Penhallurick, 2010; Van Herk, 2012). However, the difference could be no more than a terminological issue (Meyerhoff 2011; Butler 2007; among many others). In brief, "labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 3).

Interest in language and gender research becomes more popular and it can be considered as the most dynamic fields. Different gender uses different language and this, of course, influences the content and the style of language use; this phenomenon is called gender varieties or genderlects which mainly refer to studying the linguistic features of male and female communication ways. Predictably then, following this argument may lead one to confirm the fact that the idea of genderlect is to accomplish mutual understanding between the two gender and highly respect and regard other gender (cf. Owens, 2012; Becker & Bieswanger, 2006).

Tannen (1990) who coins the concept of "genderlect" to show the fact that conversation style of males and females are different raises some other points about the possibility of teaching genderlect and changing the people's conversational styles by themselves. These two obvious possibilities, to an extent, can be achieved and people can do them if they want to. Furthermore, understanding genderlect gives an opportunity to speak differently when someone intends to. Besides, "understanding genderlect improves relationships."

Gender-exclusive vs. Gender-preferential Speech Features

According to Meyerhoff (2011), exclusive features refer to the features used by a particular user or to a particular sex speaker. For example, the term of "grandson" and "niece" can be referred to male and female, while "cousin" may refer to a male or female. However, when a feature is circulated among some speakers or a certain group members it is called to be preferential, especially, when it is used over and over by some members than others.

Similarly, Coates (2004, p. 33) claim that the "differences between women's and men's usage where certain linguistic forms were reserved exclusively for the use of one gender or the other." can be regarded as gender exclusive. Meanwhile when it comes to explaining gender-preferential, one should be aware of the fact that LoF is different from LoM and "there are no forms associated exclusively with one gender; rather there is a tendency for women or men to prefer a certain form." For example, in British community, females use more Standard English forms while males do not (cf. Hall, 2003; Holmes, 2008).

Theoretical Approaches to Gender

It would be helpful to be alert to the fact that what has been mentioned by Lakoff who points out that this difference starts from word level to syntactic level, i.e., the words and the syntactic structures used by females could be different from males. Rowe and Levine (2015) state that being male or female is related to cultural expectations of behaviour; from the beginning, human beings behave as boy and girls then as men and women and they learn how to behave and use language appropriately. Moreover, there are languages in which formal rules are excited for males and females and this could be at the level of pronoun using, verb conjugations, pronunciation, etc.

Undoubtedly, having different ways of using language with regard to the socially constructed category of gender can be examined. For Weatherall (2002, p. 102), gender refers not only to the "natural and inevitable consequence of one's sex" but has a direct connection to the one's everyday social interaction. Many, if not most, scholars (e.g., Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990; Holmes, 2008; Johnston, 2008) do believe that the language used by men in their everyday communication is different from the one used by women. This idea proposes the notion of 'women language' and 'men language' (or LoF and LoM). Surprisingly, each language has its own characteristics which help scholars differentiating between the two languages. Cameron (1995, cited in Lund, 2003) believes that LoF is disadvantaged and lacking of some certain features which are used by males can be mentioned as a reason behind this deficiency.

One should be alert to four different ways of describing, explaining, and predicting relationships of gender and language. The ways are called 'theoretical approaches to gender'. These theories might be used to guide one's attitudes, actions, and behaviour. To be more specific, the theories could develop gendered identities since each single theory attempts to explain different aspects of gender. So, the theories of developing gender and behaviour are divided into "biological bases of gender concentration", "gender interpersonal origins", "gender development and influences of cultural", and "critical perspectives on gender (Wood, 2009, pp. 40-63). For

Leibenluft (1996: 163, cited in Halpern, 2012), gender is not an easy variable; it is complex since males and females are different not at the level of biology only but their life style and experience are different too and this of course affect their use of language. Meanwhile, Ochs (1992, cited in Cameron & Kulick, 2003) states that "the relationship between language and gender is almost always indirect, mediated by something else. Ways of speaking are associated in the first instance with particular roles, activities and personality traits, and to the extent that these roles, activities and traits are culturally coded as gendered, the ways of speaking associated with them become indices of gender" (p. 57).

Gender Associated Communication Styles

As a very important process in humankind's daily life, communication can be defined as a "dynamic, systemic process in which two levels of meanings are created and reflected in human interaction with symbols" (Wood, 2009, p. 32). In more recent studies, it is claimed that males and females speak differently. Building on some observations done by experts, the socio-cultural behaviour of both males and females shows that the features of LoM are different from female's. So, for Tannen (1995), the concept of "communication" does not simple refer to "saying what you mean. How you say what you mean is crucial, and differs from one person to the next, because using language is a learned behavior: how we talk and listen are deeply influenced by cultural expectations" (p. 138).

Historically speaking, Rochefort (1665: 449, cited in Jesperson, 1922) states that "the men have a great many expressions peculiar to them, which women understand but never pronounce themselves. On the other hand, the women have words and phrases which the men never use, or they would be laughed to scorn. Thus it happens that in their conversations it often seems as if the women had another language than the men" (p. 237).

Building on the Separate Worlds Hypothesis (SWH), as Maltz and Broker (1983, cited in Cook-Gumperz & Kyratzis, 2003, p. 603) claim, "as a result of gender segregation in childhood, with girls playing predominantly with other girls and boys playing predominantly with other boys, girls and boys evolve quite different goals for social interaction and distinct communicative style" (cf. Yule, 2006). According to Holmes (2008), the LoF is more polite than LoM; the degree of formality and politeness are more prominent in the LoF. More generally in the society, as Lakoff (1975, cited in Paltridge, 2008) states, females use polite linguistic forms and tag questions. Furthermore, the LoF is known as having the raise of intonation in declarative forms and using hedges and mitigating devices. Most commonly, females depend on using diminutives and indirectness; this leads experts to openly claim that the LoF includes more indirect forms and does not include expletives. Holmes (2008) states that when females communicate, unlike males, they tend to use more standard linguistic forms. On the other hand, most of the male used forms are vernacular. The main reason of this claim might be attributed to the fact that females are more conscious about their status while males are less status-conscious. So, one can easily claim that females use a standard language to declare that they belong to high social status. Wood (2009) states that "the theories you hold consciously or unconsciously influence how you see yourself as a woman or man, what you expect of women and men generally, and what possibilities you see as open to each sex" (p. 40).

In sum, there are differences in human beings' daily conversation according to their gender. Sociologically speaking, the language used by females is characterized by a number of features such as hedges, filters, tag-questions, etc. Moreover, females tend not to use strong swear words and interruptions; they use a more standard and polite forms. Meanwhile the language of males in one way or another is different. O'Loughlin (2000, p. 2) confirms the fact that "male and female conversational styles are quite distinct".

Charachteristics of Male/Female Language

Freeman and McElhinny (1996) summarize the differences stated by many scholars (Labov, 1972b; Holmes, 1984; Guy et al. 1986; McLemore, 1991, among many others) about male and female use of language. Building on what has been mentioned by these scholars, Freeman and McElhinny (1996) demonstrate the differences LoF and LoM as it is shown below (cf. Whitney, 1991).

Table 1. LoF main characteristics

Features of LoF
Weaker expletives are reserved
More polite
Trivial or unimportant topics are discussed
"Empty" adjectives are used
Tag questions are more used
Uncertain (question intonation in statements is used to show uncertainty)
Speak in "italics" (intensifies are more used)
Hedges are more used
Correct (hyper-) grammar is used
No jokes

Table 2. LoM main characteristics

Features of LoM
Stronger expletives are reserved
Less polite
Tag questions are less used
Certainity
Intensifies are less used
Hedges are less used
Correct grammar is not mainly focused on
Jokes are usually told

Holmes (2006) shows the most widely cited features of males and females styles of interaction. These features are listed depending on studies and researches in different community and social context over the last three decades. The following table manifests these universal features:

Table 3. General features of feminine/masculine interactional styles (adapted from Holmes 2000a, cited in Holmes, 2006: 6)

Feminine	**Masculine**
Facilitative	competitive
supportive feedback	aggressive interruptions
conciliatory	confrontational
indirect	direct
collaborative	autonomous
minor contribution (in public)	dominates (public) talking time
person/process-oriented	task/outcome-oriented
affectively oriented	referentially oriented

Becker and Bieswanger (2006) point out that the linguists' suggestions on different aspects of LoF and LoM can be summarized in four possible points:

- "societies seem to expect a higher level of adherence to social norms from women than from men",
- "women are a subordinate group in society and thus have to speak more carefully and more politely in order to avoid offending men",
- "women use more standard forms than men because they are more status-conscious than men and try to signal higher social status by the way they speak", and
- "inverts the question and asks why men do not use more standard forms than they do." (p. 197).

Furthermore, Maltz, and Borker (1982) offers explanations for the male/female communicative style features which basically depend on and highlight the personalities of male and/or female and the differences existed in social power. In this regard, they show different aspects of the explanation building on what has been presented by some scholars; for example, Zimmerman and West (1975; 1977) present the idea of social-political system in which males have power and are dominant in the society, so they enjoy being dominant in conversation too and displaying power as well.

Conversational Performance

Carroll (2008) points out that the concept of conversation refers to an oral discourse form that has no explicit rules; it is controlled and ruled by a number of implicit conventions (turn taking and/or topic change, for example) with reference to the language social use. Similarly, Tannen (1990) claims that "conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from other's attempt to put down and push them around" (p. 24). However, one may state that almost for all conversations, people think of their ways of communicating in terms of appropriateness and this could include gendered ways. At the same time, people's expect comes from their experience of different meanings of the use of language in a certain context. Gender can be regarded as one of the most particular kinds of meaning and/or social identity which can be delivered via special linguistics choices. Moreover, people usually assess others behaviour in terms of its appropriateness in the context with regard to norms of gender. From this point, one can show evidence of how males and female should behave (Holmes, 2006).

Proceudre and Data Collection

In order to investigate gender associated language features of Kurdish EFL university students, three different sessions of conversation are videotaped. For collecting data for the present study, 10 (5 males and 5 females) Kurdish EFL university senior students at the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Sulaimani are randomly selected to have academic debate about "marriage in our society" which is a very close related issue to the students real life situation. All the students voluntarily agreed to participate in the conversations. The students are of different ages between 24 to 29 and only 4 of them are married as illustrated in the figure below. They are asked to argue against/for the 10 given points about marriage and its tradition in Kurdish community; the points are highlighted and shown on the white screen of the data show inside the classroom. The researcher intentionally chooses 10 points which are taken from two articles focused on Kurdish families and marriage patterns. Moreover, the students are asked to freely talk about these points. Furthermore, the senior students are divided into 2 groups so as to have 3 face-to-face settings. In each session, the students are given 30 minutes to communicate and have debate about the above mentioned points. In other words, there are three sessions: male-female, male-male, female-female, and each for session the students are allowed to communicate for half an hour. The students are totally free to use the style they while communicating. The researcher does not comment on their speech, but he only informs them about how start and gives them some instructions. Moreover, the reason of having a face-to-face conversation of the students can be supported by what has been mentioned by Fillmore (1974) as cited in Tannen (2005, p. 11) who states that "the language of face-to-face conversation is the basic and primary use of language, all others being best described in terms of their manner of deviation from that base."

To have an accurate videotaped data, the students are asked to perform naturally and paying no attention to the process of videotaping.
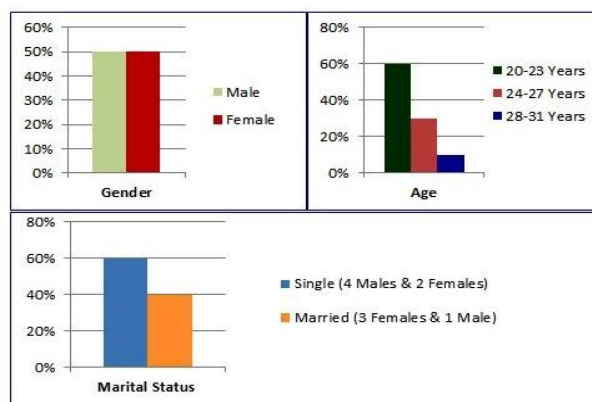

Figure (1) Collected Data Descriptive Statistics

Data Analysis and Discussion

The 10 extracts discussed by the EFL students about marriage are the following:
- Topic 1 (T1): "marriage is one of the most important events for establishing alliances and creating social hierarchies within and between tribes".
- Topic 2 (T2): "in Kurdistan, a widowed woman stays with her husband's family".

- Topic 3 (T3): "circumcision is an important rite of passage in a man's life. Most boys are circumcised between the ages of six and ten".
- Topic 4 (T4): "female circumcision"
- Topic 5 (T5): "marriage is about trust. It is not like buying a car".
- Topic 6 (T6): "nowadays, marriages in our society become a sales industry".
- Topic 7 (T7): "some families ask to a meeting between the boy and the girl so as to know each other".
- Topic 8 (T8): "expensive wedding dress, great hall, big amount of gold, then congratulation happens!"
- Topic 9 (T9): "we must be honest with each other to reduce the divorce rate".
- Topic 10 (T10): "most Kurdish marriages are monogamous marriages. However, according to Islam a man may have up to four wives provided he can support them all and spends equal time with each; however, few men can afford even two wives". ("Kurdish Families - Kurdish Marriage Patterns", 2016; "Kurds - Marriage and Family", 2016)

Throughout the video-taped sessions, it is noticed that Kurdish EFL university students have different styles of communication according to their gender. None of these styles, whether male's or female's is better than the other. Different styles give opportunities to claim that females in general intend to use more standard forms so as to show prestige or to claim that they do belong to high status family rank and this cannot be found in male's communication style.

Male-Female Setting

- The use of LoM as a concept could not be normal since the Kurdish society is governed by the male dominance. This affects the language used by lecturers and students of different gender and makes the male's language and behaviour dominant, meanwhile females become subordinate in this community and culture. Despite, males are dominant, female students talk and communicate most of the time in different group communication session. Moreover, the use of LoF could attract more attention. So, this leads one to claim that males are generally extrovert in terms of language use. To prove this, a male student starts a conversation and asked other students questions about marriage. A female student who spent most of her life in a western community takes the turn and attempts expressing her ideas and she is interrupted by a male student. So, males interrupt others even in academic context while female students tries to softly take turns and male students sometimes become silent so as to take turn and this is used a sort of strategy by male students. The overall results could be illustrated in table (4).

- Most of the female students speak more carefully and avoid using slangs and taboo words. This makes them look more polite than the males and one may state that female students tend to be more conservative comparing with male students. The reason of this might be referred to the fact that because of the nature of Kurdish community, males are able to offend females if they want to. Surprisingly, a concept like "circumcision" is ignored by both male and female students, i.e., the idea of male and/or female circumcision has not been part of the students' academic conversation. The reason behind this could be attributed to the fact that in some Kurdish families the term "circumcision" is openly used in front of kids and this affects their idea and perspective when the kids become older. Moreover, neither males nor females talk about sexual terms; the internal structure of Kurdish families could be mentioned a reason behind this.

- Generally, as it is observed, the students' conversation shows that in an academic context both males and females tend to use more standard forms. In other words, in a formal context such as university, most of the students attempt to be more polite and use highly selected expressions. Furthermore, because of their similarities in age and educational background, the male and female students use almost similar vocabulary and grammatical structure.

- Because of having two different styles in the male-female setting, there is a kind of misunderstanding when the students debated on trust in marriage and how marriage becomes a sort of industry in the society. From this point, it is claimed that males have their own conversational style and females have their own particular language or communication styles, and this creates misunderstanding between the two different genders.

- On one hand, it would be helpful to shed light on sentence intonation which is highly used by female students and this is not found in males' style. On the hand, the majority of male students

attempt to create a funny atmosphere to as to tell some certain jokes and use some joyful vocabularies and expressions. More generally, in the different gender group communication, the use of tag questions by female students can be mentioned as one of the most prominent features of female's conversational style. Further, one might be aware of the fact that female students use "fillers" (e.g., um, you know, well, actually, etc.) in most of their conversation even in a formal setting.

- One can claim that in a male-female academic communication setting, it is obvious that male students' linguistic performance confirms the idea that they are more assertive, meanwhile females students usually connect their thoughts and ideas with emotion. It means that female university students' utterance is more emotional and they unconsciously provide support and assistance, i.e., more supportive. Moreover, sine English is the students' mother tongue most of them attempt to use their body language so as to support what they want to share and sometimes they used some certain Kurdish vocabularies in order to make their ideas clear and not maneuver around the intended expression.

Table 4. Overall results of male–female setting

		Dominance	Interruption	Slang and Taboo Words	Standard Forms	Intonation	Jokes	Tag Questions and Fillers	Assertive
T 1	LoM	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
	LoF	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	-
T 2	LoM	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
	LoF	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+
T 3	LoM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	LoF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T 4	LoM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	LoF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T 5	LoM	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
	LoF	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+
T 6	LoM	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
	LoF	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	-
T 7	LoM	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
	LoF	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
T 8	LoM	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+
	LoF	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-
T 9	LoM	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
	LoF	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
T 10	LoM	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-
	LoF	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
%	LoM	80%	70%	40%	60%	10%	20%	20%	70%
	LoF	40%	30%	10%	80%	70%	0%	70%	30%

Female-Female Setting

- In the same sex-group and during the permitted time, females feel that they have more freedom to interact with each other. For instance, While talking about the process of marriage, female students give details about each aspect of it supporting their ideas with similar examples, though the students are asked to focus on the ideas mentioned above; that is, each female student tries to give an example about the same situation so as to explicit her opinion. So, giving example(s) for the same event or similar situation can be done by all female students and this might be considered as one of the characteristics of female communication style. Moreover, most of their examples are

full of tag questions especially "isn't it?, don't they?, wouldn't you?, etc." as if they were attempting a sort of agreement while discussing marriage issues.

- So as to keep interaction on, female students do their best to support the speaker via non-verbal behavior (e.g. nodding the head, interjections like Uhh. Umm, yeah, etc.). This, however, is not noticed in male-male interaction group. Females do intend to show their linguistic behaviour in a way that all of them are cooperative to have a soft turn taking without having direct interruption. Tough, in academic context, there is a sort of interruption among female students themselves. At the same time, none of them performed any example of swearing; this could be done intentionally since swearing words (e.g., "by God") are frequent in daily women interactions.

- When one explains the forms of female students in a Kurdish academic context, one should pay attention to the fact that almost all the students use polite forms, meanwhile female students tend to claim that they use more standard linguistic forms than males. Moreover, the female students seem to be less direct, trying to cope with politeness principle of tact and non-threatening towards their group mate (e.g., May I start first?, Would you mean that?, I am terribly sorry for this situation, pardon, etc.).

- Intensifying adverbs such as "very" and "so" are heavily used by this group of student. The female students might intend to have an effective conversational style, they uttered examples such as "She was very beautiful when she got married, My mom was very very helpful concerning marriage, I am so glad today, etc." Most of the female students look very serious as if they express their ideas from their hearts and this makes them very emotional.

Table 5. Overall results of female–female setting

	Tag Questions	Non-verbal Behavior	Interruption	Swearing Words	Standard Forms	Principle of Tact	Intensifying Adverbs
T 1	-	+	+	-	+	+	+
T 2	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
T 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T 5	-	-	-	-	+	+	+
T 6	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
T 7	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
T 8	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
T 9	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
T 10	+	-	-	-	+	+	+
%	60%	50%	10%	0%	70%	80%	80%

Male-Male Setting

- Linguistically speaking, having differences in male and female conversation styles is natural because language can be considered as a social phenomenon and each single gender performs in a way that satisfies different social attitudes. This goes with Trudgill's (2000) statement that male and females are not different in terms of physiology rather they have differences in their social roles and this makes them speak and think differently.

- Generally speaking, when the students are aware of the gender differences in their conversation outside and/or inside university, they become more competent and know how they argue different life related issues in English. It means that being aware of male/female communication style differences can be regarded as a good point so as to enhance one's communicative abilities.

- In this session, as it is videotaped, the male students do not focus on using more standard language, though they pay attention to the degree of formality. Surprisingly, the male students do not encourage each other in order to make the conversation continues and they interrupt each other very often unlike what they do in male-female setting.

- Because of sociolinguistic and psychological factors, males and females act differently. Their differences affect their communication styles, i.e., the stylistic differences of male and female university students' conversation styles could be influenced by some socio-cultural factors and psychological status of language users. Building on this claim, one can notice that the male students' linguistic performance in some aspects is quite different from the female students' conversational styles. For example the males usually dispute more frequently and are more direct and explicit than female students and this may show their performance less polite. Meanwhile, their view towards the discussion topic is more rational.

- Most commonly, in this group of students, male-male conversational setting, most of the male students attempt to send message and, to some extent, ignore their group mates' views. This means that most of the male students do not ask extra questions so as to elaborate on the main topic and do not encourage their group mates via focusing on their notes.

- Although the male (and females in previous sessions) students tend to perform formally, they sometimes could not control themselves to unintentionally use expressions such as "bloody, damn, goddamn, etc."; these words are considered to be socially offensive, meanwhile in this context are not. Building on this, one may claim that the male's conversation style may have the quality of being profane.

- In the male-male session, almost all the students do their best to provide amusement, though they perform in an academic context. So, this gives an opportunity to state that male students have tendency to jokes and their sense of humor is different from female students. Moreover, laughing is not noticed in the two previous settings. Meanwhile, the male students provide comic examples after a very short period of time. Furthermore, even when they tell jokes (sometimes, in Kurdish), they interrupt each other without taking permission.

- Finally, as is has been notices, male students at the university level and in an academic context use more tag questions.

Table 6. Overall result of male–male setting

	Standard Language	Formality	Interruption	Directness and Explicitly	Sense of Humor	Tag Questions
T 1	+	+	+	+	+	-
T 2	-	+	+	+	+	+
T 3	-	-	-	-	-	-
T 4	-	-	-	-	-	-
T 5	-	-	+	+	+	-
T 6	-	+	+	+	+	+
T 7	-	-	+	+	-	+
T 8	+	+	+	+	+	-
T 9	-	+	+	+	+	+
T 10	+	+	+	-	-	+
%	30%	60%	80%	70%	60%	50%

Conclusions

The present study was intended to have a functional view on how language is used by undergraduates in an academic context. Building on the analyzed data, the present study has come up with a number of conclusions:
1. The social expectations affect the use of language by male and female. This leads one to claim that different perception and/or expectation about communication styles of different genders influences male-female role and behaviour in the society. Moreover, in Kurdish community, it is expected that males can be more active in almost all social activities including the use of language in a male-female context.
2. The social and cultural variation affects the language used by Kurdish EFL university students. Since the students have different ways of thinking, they use different forms of language.

3. Differences in gender create male/female language at the level of content and the conversational style as well since the early years of childhood. This, in turn, affects their style and the content of their utterances in social settings.

4. Some socio-cultural and psychological differences between males and females affect their communication style. According to this claim, one might state that since both male and female undergraduates have different perspective and intention while having a conversation, and this, consequently, creates different conversational styles.

5. Because of having different subgroups of friendship of males and females, undergraduates showed different styles of communication.

6. Despite the fact that investigating the university students' communication styles in terms of gender difference might not give a complete image, the current study attempts to make male and female university lecturers more aware of having differences in male and female students' communication so as to focus on this phenomenon while teaching English and inform the students about conversation styles and gendered discourse.

7. Investigating differences in male/female communication styles could be helpful for the university lecturers to have a better understanding about how their students use English inside the classroom. Consequently, this enhances the process of learning and makes it more effective and successful.

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