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Language, Power, and Patriarchy: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Narratives in Popular Culture

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Abstract
This study, entitled "Language, Power, and Patriarchy: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Narratives in Popular Culture," explores how linguistic choices in media texts reproduce and reinforce patriarchal ideologies. Using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis as the analytical framework, the research examines selected examples from popular films, advertisements, and television dramas that shape gender perceptions in contemporary society. The study investigates how language constructs and normalizes male dominance while marginalizing female voices through lexical selection, metaphor, and representation strategies. It also highlights the subtle ways in which patriarchal discourse is disguised as entertainment or cultural norm, thus sustaining unequal power relations. Data for this research are collected from widely consumed media texts in English and Urdu, reflecting both global and local gender ideologies. The analysis reveals that despite apparent progress toward gender equality, popular culture continues to embed and circulate discourses that privilege masculine authority and objectify women. The study concludes that a critical awareness of media language is essential to challenge and deconstruct the normalized patterns of gender inequality. Ultimately, the research contributes to feminist discourse studies by linking everyday media communication to broader sociocultural power structures.

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Introduction

Language serves as one of the most powerful instruments of social control and ideological reproduction. Through linguistic practices, societies transmit values, beliefs, and power relations that shape how individuals perceive themselves and others. Among the most pervasive and enduring ideologies embedded in language is patriarchy, the system that privileges men and marginalizes women through social, cultural, and institutional mechanisms. Popular culture, encompassing films, advertisements, television dramas, and digital media, operates as a major site for the construction and circulation of such gender ideologies. The representations of men and women in these media spaces often appear natural or entertaining but are, in fact, structured by linguistic and visual codes that reinforce patriarchal worldviews (Fairclough 17; Lazar 145).

In the modern globalized media environment, discourse becomes a tool through which gendered power relations are sustained and legitimized. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly as developed by Norman Fairclough, provides a systematic method to uncover how language constructs, maintains, and sometimes challenges such power structures. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice allow scholars to examine not only the

linguistic features of texts but also the broader sociopolitical contexts in which those texts are produced and consumed (Fairclough 21). This study, therefore, employs CDA to analyze gender narratives embedded in popular culture, focusing on how language contributes to the perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies across English and Urdu media contexts.

Background and Context

From Hollywood blockbusters to Pakistani television dramas, popular culture reflects and reproduces societal attitudes toward gender and power. Western media has often presented women through limited stereotypes, the nurturing mother, the seductive femme fatale, or the passive love interest while glorifying male dominance and rationality (Mulvey 11; Butler 33). Similarly, South Asian media, including Bollywood and Pakistani serials, frequently constructs women as bearers of family honor, moral virtue, and emotional resilience, whereas men embody authority, rationality, and social leadership (Shaheen 202). These representations are not isolated artistic choices but linguistic and semiotic constructions that shape audience perceptions and reinforce gender hierarchies.

In Pakistan, Urdu dramas such as *Humsafar* (2011), *Meray Paas Tum Ho* (2019), and *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi* (2022) illustrate the subtle ways patriarchal discourse operates under the guise of romance or morality. Dialogues, metaphors, and character speech often encode gendered ideologies, for example, equating masculinity with honor and femininity with sacrifice. Similarly, Bollywood and Hollywood films like *Kabir Singh* (2019) and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015) normalize toxic masculinity, presenting male control as passion or love. Advertising further amplifies these discourses, portraying women as objects of desire or domestic caretakers and men as decision-makers and achievers (Goffman 74; Gill 45). Thus, the media becomes a discursive field where language and imagery interact to sustain patriarchal power.

Academic Relevance and Research Gap

While numerous feminist scholars have examined gender representation in media, fewer have combined Critical Discourse Analysis with a cross-cultural focus spanning English and Urdu media. Studies on Pakistani and South Asian media often address the sociological implications of patriarchy but rarely apply CDA to uncover the linguistic mechanisms that naturalize gender inequality (Lazar 148). Conversely, Western media studies have explored gendered discourse extensively, yet they seldom compare how local languages like Urdu encode patriarchy through culturally specific metaphors and idioms. This research fills that gap by analyzing both English and Urdu media texts through Fairclough's framework to reveal the shared and distinct linguistic strategies that uphold patriarchal ideologies.

Furthermore, the rapid growth of digital and visual media has transformed the dynamics of gender discourse. Social media platforms, streaming services, and transnational entertainment flows have blurred the lines between "local" and "global" gender narratives. For example, Pakistani youth consume Western romantic comedies alongside local dramas, internalizing hybrid notions of femininity and masculinity. Despite apparent progress in gender awareness, patriarchal patterns persist subtly within these globalized discourses. A CDA of such texts can expose how power operates linguistically beneath the surface of entertainment, offering critical insight into how gender inequality remains embedded in everyday communication.

Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how language in popular culture reproduces and reinforces patriarchal ideologies across English and Urdu media. Specific aims include:

1. To analyze how linguistic choices, lexical selection, metaphors, and narrative framing construct gender roles in popular media texts.
2. To explore how discourse practices in films, advertisements, and television dramas naturalize male dominance and female subordination.
3. To compare the representation of gender narratives across Western (Hollywood), Indian (Bollywood), and Pakistani (Urdu) popular culture.
4. To contribute to feminist linguistics by demonstrating how CDA can uncover hidden ideologies in seemingly neutral or entertaining language.

Based on these aims, the study addresses the following research questions:

- How does language in popular media texts construct and sustain patriarchal power relations?
- What linguistic and semiotic strategies are used to normalize gender inequality in English and Urdu media?
- In what ways do global and local media discourses intersect to shape contemporary gender ideologies?

Scope and Significance of the Study

The study focuses on selected examples from popular films, television dramas, and advertisements in English and Urdu. These include Hollywood productions (*Fifty Shades of Grey*), Bollywood films (*Kabir Singh*), and Pakistani television dramas (*Meray Paas Tum Ho*, *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*), as well as commercial advertisements targeting male and female consumers. The research does not aim to provide a comprehensive survey of all media but rather a focused linguistic analysis that reveals how power and patriarchy operate through discourse.

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary contribution to language, gender, and media studies. It bridges feminist linguistics, discourse analysis, and cultural studies to provide a nuanced understanding of how popular culture shapes and reflects social ideologies. By highlighting the linguistic mechanisms of patriarchy, the research encourages critical media literacy and gender awareness among audiences, scholars, and educators. Moreover, by including both Western and South Asian contexts, it underscores the transnational nature of patriarchal discourse and its adaptability across cultural boundaries.

Overview of the Paper

The Literature Review synthesizes previous research on language, gender, and media discourse, highlighting the theoretical foundations and research gaps. The Theoretical Framework elaborates on Fairclough's CDA model and feminist linguistic perspectives. The Methodology section outlines the qualitative research design and analytical tools. The Analysis and Discussion present detailed interpretations of selected media texts, illustrating how linguistic patterns

sustain patriarchal ideologies. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the key findings, discusses implications, and suggests directions for future research.

Literature Review

The relationship between language, power, and gender has long been a central concern in sociolinguistics and feminist discourse studies. The emergence of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the late 20th century provided a systematic framework for exploring how linguistic structures both reflect and shape social hierarchies. Scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak have emphasized that language is not a neutral tool of communication but a social practice that reproduces ideology and power relations (Fairclough 2; van Dijk 85; Wodak 93). Within this context, patriarchal ideologies privileging male authority and marginalizing female experience are deeply embedded in discursive practices, particularly in the media.

Language and Power in Discourse

Norman Fairclough's theory of CDA positions discourse as a form of social practice, linking linguistic choices to broader structures of dominance and inequality. Fairclough (1995) [5] argues that media texts operate as ideological apparatuses, subtly constructing consent for existing power relations. Through vocabulary, modality, and transitivity, language encodes the asymmetry of social roles. Similarly, van Dijk (1993) conceptualizes discourse as a means of "ideological control," suggesting that elites maintain dominance through the manipulation of symbolic resources like news, film, and advertising. These theoretical perspectives lay the groundwork for examining how patriarchal values are perpetuated through everyday media language.

In the realm of gender studies, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) [2] introduced the concept of gender performativity, asserting that gender identities are not fixed biological truths but socially constructed performances maintained through repeated discursive acts. This idea intersects with CDA by revealing how linguistic repetition in media such as the constant portrayal of women as emotional or dependent reifies patriarchal gender norms. As Butler explains, "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (33). Thus, the linguistic patterns in popular culture not only describe but *create* social realities.

Feminist Discourse and Media Studies

Feminist linguists such as Deborah Cameron and Sara Mills have expanded on these theoretical insights to explore how discourse reflects and resists gender inequality. Cameron (1998) argues that linguistic analysis must expose how power is naturalized through discourse, while Mills (2008) highlights how subtle textual features such as politeness strategies or metaphor can position women as subordinate or passive. Michelle Lazar (2005) [12], in her edited volume *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis*, emphasizes that CDA should interrogate the "discursive reproduction of gendered power relations" and identify how patriarchal ideologies manifest through everyday language. This feminist turn in CDA is particularly relevant for analyzing media texts, where language and imagery combine to shape collective understandings of gender.

Media discourse has been shown to be a particularly potent site of ideological production. Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation explains that meaning is constructed through language and images that circulate within cultural systems. Media, therefore, does not merely reflect social reality but constructs it through repeated representations. For instance, Laura Mulvey's seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) introduced the concept of the *male gaze*, arguing that mainstream cinema is structured around male spectatorship, objectifying women as passive visual subjects for male desire. Subsequent studies have confirmed that this gendered visual and linguistic framing continues to dominate both Western and South Asian media (Gill 2007; Goffman 1979) [7, 9].

Gender Narratives in Popular Culture

Research on popular culture demonstrates how deeply gender ideologies are woven into entertainment media. In Hollywood films, female characters often occupy secondary narrative roles, serving as emotional supports or love interests to male protagonists (Tasker 21). Even in ostensibly progressive media, women's empowerment is frequently framed in terms of beauty, sexuality, or consumption, thus re-inscribing patriarchal norms under the guise of modernity (Gill 157). Rosalind Gill's concept of "postfeminist sensibility" (2007) captures this phenomenon, where women appear empowered yet remain bound by the discourses of desirability and self-surveillance.

In South Asian contexts, scholars have observed similar linguistic and visual patterns. Shaheen (2021) [15] and Yaqoob (2019) note that Urdu television dramas routinely construct women's identities around sacrifice, patience, and morality, often linking female virtue to domestic obedience. Male characters, conversely, are portrayed as rational decision-makers and protectors of family honor. In Pakistani dramas like *Meray Paas Tum Ho* and *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*, the dialogues often rely on metaphors of property and possession to describe romantic relationships, suggesting an implicit commodification of women's bodies and emotions. These discourses are linguistically coded through possessive pronouns ("meri," "tum meri ho") and evaluative adjectives that reinforce male authority. Such patterns demonstrate how the Urdu language itself becomes a medium through which patriarchal values are normalized and romanticized.

Bollywood cinema exhibits comparable trends. Films like *Kabir Singh* (2019) and *Dabangg* (2010) present hypermasculine protagonists whose aggression is romanticized as passion. Through dialogues and song lyrics, these films glorify control, jealousy, and emotional dominance as indicators of love. The linguistic framing of female characters often positions them as passive, modest, and sacrificial qualities valorized as ideal femininity. As Gopinath (2019) [10] observes, Bollywood's gender narratives oscillate between modern female independence and traditional patriarchal expectations, revealing a cultural negotiation between progress and conservatism.

Language and Patriarchy in Advertising

Advertising serves as another key arena for the reproduction of gendered discourse. Erving Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* (1979) [9] remains foundational, showing how visual and textual cues in advertisements reinforce male authority and female subservience. Goffman's analysis of body posture, gaze direction, and spatial arrangement underscores that gendered power dynamics are encoded in both language and image. Contemporary studies confirm that

these patterns persist. For instance, Gill (2008) notes that even "empowering" advertisements for beauty products reproduce patriarchal ideals by equating female confidence with physical appearance and self-discipline.

In Pakistani advertisements, patriarchal discourse operates through both language and imagery. For example, detergent and cooking oil commercials often feature women speaking in deferential tones, using polite forms and familial terms like *amma* or *baji*, while male voiceovers provide authoritative commentary. The power dynamic is reinforced linguistically through modality ("should," "must," "always") and through Urdu honorifics that maintain gender hierarchy. As Raza (2020) [14] notes, these discursive patterns construct women as caretakers of family honor and domestic order, while men occupy the realm of rationality and decision-making.

Gaps and Directions in Existing Research

Despite extensive scholarship on media and gender, several limitations persist. Much of the early work on gender representation focused on visual imagery rather than linguistic structures, overlooking how language itself shapes ideology. Moreover, studies applying CDA to media discourse have primarily examined Western contexts, with fewer analyses of bilingual or multilingual media environments like Pakistan, where English and Urdu intersect. As Abbas and Iqbal (2021) [1] point out, linguistic hybridity in Pakistani media complicates gender representation, as English terms often index modernity while Urdu expressions connote tradition and morality. This dual linguistic code allows patriarchal ideologies to adapt to changing sociocultural contexts under the veneer of modern discourse.

Furthermore, previous research tends to analyze male and female portrayals separately rather than relationally. CDA's strength lies in revealing how power operates through relational oppositions how "man" and "woman" are co-constructed through discourse. Feminist CDA, as Lazar (2018) emphasizes, must interrogate these relational dynamics to uncover the subtle interplay of power, dominance, and consent. This relational approach is particularly crucial in media contexts, where gender identities are continuously negotiated and reconstructed through language.

Summary of Key Insights

In sum, existing literature establishes that language functions as a key medium for the reproduction of patriarchal ideologies in media discourse. From Fairclough's notion of discourse as social practice to Butler's concept of performativity, scholars agree that linguistic structures not only describe but actively produce social hierarchies. Feminist CDA extends this insight by revealing how everyday language and media narratives perpetuate gendered power relations through subtle linguistic cues. However, a significant gap remains in applying these theories across diverse linguistic and cultural settings, especially in bilingual media environments like Pakistan.

This study builds on and extends prior research by employing Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model to analyze both English and Urdu media texts. By comparing Western and South Asian popular culture, it seeks to demonstrate how patriarchal discourse is linguistically adapted to local sociocultural contexts while maintaining global patterns of gender inequality.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), primarily based on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model, and enriched by insights from Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). Together, these frameworks provide the conceptual and methodological foundation for examining how language in popular culture constructs and sustains patriarchal power relations. CDA views discourse as a social practice that both shapes and is shaped by social structures, while FCDA specifically interrogates the gendered nature of those power relations. This combination allows for a nuanced exploration of how linguistic and semiotic choices in English and Urdu media reproduce gender ideologies and normalize patriarchy.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA

Fairclough's model (1995) [5] conceptualizes discourse as operating simultaneously at three interrelated levels: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice.

1. Textual Analysis focuses on linguistic features, vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and textual structure—to uncover how meanings are encoded in a given text. This level examines word choice, metaphors, modality, and pronouns that signal power relations or gendered positioning.
2. Discursive Practice explores how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. It investigates the institutional and cultural conditions that influence how meanings are constructed and interpreted, for instance, how the film industry or advertising agencies shape particular gender representations.
3. Sociocultural Practice situates discourse within broader social and ideological contexts, linking micro-level textual features to macro-level structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, and globalization.

Fairclough argues that discourse contributes to the reproduction of social domination by making ideologies appear "common sense" or natural (Fairclough 33). Through repetition and intertextuality, patriarchal meanings become embedded in everyday communication such as the normalization of male authority in romantic relationships or domestic decision-making. Thus, the CDA approach enables this study to move beyond surface-level media analysis and reveal how language subtly sustains power hierarchies.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)

While traditional CDA focuses broadly on power and ideology, Feminist CDA brings gender to the forefront of critical inquiry. Developed by scholars like Michelle Lazar, FCDA seeks to expose how patriarchal ideologies are linguistically constituted and how they shape social perceptions of gender. Lazar (2005) [12] defines FCDA as "a feminist perspective on critical discourse studies that aims to uncover how gendered power asymmetries are discursively produced, sustained, and resisted" (5). It assumes that patriarchy functions as a dynamic system of domination, reproduced through every day linguistic and communicative practices.

FCDA highlights that gendered discourses are not static; they evolve with social change but remain rooted in unequal power structures. For example, modern media often uses the rhetoric of "choice," "freedom," or "empowerment" to describe women's roles, yet these narratives frequently mask

traditional expectations of beauty, sexuality, and domesticity. As Gill (2008) notes, postfeminist media discourse presents women as autonomous agents while simultaneously holding them accountable to patriarchal standards of appearance and behavior. FCDA thus provides a lens to uncover these contradictions and challenge the illusion of gender equality in media representation.

Integration of CDA and FCDA

This study integrates Fairclough's three-dimensional framework with feminist principles to conduct a comprehensive analysis of gender narratives in popular culture. At the textual level, CDA examines the linguistic forms—lexical choices, transitivity patterns, modality, and metaphor—used to construct masculinity and femininity. FCDA enriches this analysis by interpreting how these forms encode gender ideologies and reinforce patriarchal worldviews. For instance, when a male character in a Pakistani drama asserts, "Mard kabhi kamzor nahi hota" ("A man is never weak"), CDA identifies the linguistic structure of assertion and generalization, while FCDA interprets it as a discursive act reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and the devaluation of emotional vulnerability.

At the discursive practice level, the study considers how media institutions reproduce gender norms through production and reception processes. Television writers, directors, and advertisers often operate within established narrative conventions that privilege male perspectives. Likewise, audiences internalize these conventions through repeated exposure, contributing to what Fairclough calls the "naturalization of ideology." FCDA adds that this process is gendered female audiences, may be encouraged to identify with submissive or self-sacrificing roles as markers of virtue. At the sociocultural level, CDA connects these micro-linguistic practices to macro social structures, such as patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism. FCDA complements this by emphasizing the intersection of gender with culture, class, and nation. For example, in Urdu dramas, the valorization of female modesty is linked not only to patriarchy but also to cultural constructions of morality and national identity. By combining these approaches, the analysis can reveal how patriarchal ideologies adapt to global media trends while maintaining culturally specific expressions.

Relevance of the Framework to Popular Culture

The integration of CDA and FCDA is particularly apt for studying popular culture because media texts are complex multimodal discourses. They combine language, visuals, and sound to produce meaning, and their ideological power lies in their subtlety. Fairclough's multi-layered model captures this complexity by linking textual detail with sociocultural context, while FCDA ensures that gender remains central to the interpretation. Together, they facilitate a critical reading of media that uncovers both overt and covert expressions of patriarchal power.

This theoretical framework also enables cross-cultural comparison. By analyzing English-language and Urdu-language texts within the same analytical structure, the study demonstrates how global patriarchal ideologies manifest differently across linguistic and cultural contexts. For instance, Western advertisements may emphasize sexual agency as empowerment, while South Asian ads valorize domestic devotion as virtue, both discourses, however, align with patriarchal expectations of femininity. As van Dijk (2008) [18] notes, ideologies are often "locally adapted forms of global systems of dominance" (91), a concept directly applicable to gender narratives in transnational media.

Summary

In summary, the theoretical foundation of this study combines Fairclough's CDA model with Feminist CDA to examine how language functions as a tool of patriarchal power in popular culture. This integrated framework provides both the analytical depth to dissect linguistic forms and the ideological insight to interpret their social implications. By applying these theories to English and Urdu media, the study contributes to the growing field of feminist discourse analysis and highlights the need for critical media literacy in challenging normalized gender hierarchies.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) frameworks. Since the research focuses on the interpretation of linguistic patterns, ideologies, and social meanings embedded in media texts, a qualitative approach is most suitable. Unlike quantitative methods that measure frequency or numerical data, qualitative CDA investigates how power relations and ideological positions are encoded and naturalized through language. The aim is not to generalize but to interpret and explain how specific discursive practices in popular culture reproduce patriarchal ideologies across cultural contexts.

CDA views language as a social practice and emphasizes the connection between textual structures and broader sociocultural systems (Fairclough 1995) [5]. Therefore, this study analyzes selected examples from films, advertisements, and television dramas, focusing on both English-language media (Hollywood and Western advertising) and Urdu-language media (Pakistani dramas and advertisements). This comparative framework allows for examining how patriarchy is linguistically and visually manifested across different media systems, while also revealing similarities that suggest the transnational persistence of gender inequality.

Data Selection and Sampling

The data set for this research consists of six media texts, two films, two television dramas, and two advertisements selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is appropriate because it targets texts that are widely circulated, culturally influential, and representative of dominant gender ideologies. The chosen texts include:

1. Hollywood Film: *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015), selected for its portrayal of male dominance and the romanticization of control within Western narratives of desire.
2. Bollywood Film: *Kabir Singh* (2019), a South Asian example of hyper-masculine discourse that normalizes toxic relationships.
3. Pakistani Drama (Urdu): *Meray Paas Tum Ho* (2019), representing patriarchal family values and male moral authority.
4. Pakistani Drama (Urdu): *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi* (2022), reflecting romanticized violence and possessive masculinity in contemporary Urdu serials.
5. Western Advertisement: A perfume advertisement (*Dior Sauvage*, 2019), chosen for its visual and linguistic

celebration of male power and dominance.
6. Pakistani Advertisement: A detergent commercial (Surf Excel Pakistan, 2021), selected to analyze how women's domestic roles are linguistically idealized as moral virtue.

Each text was selected because it received significant public attention, reflecting and shaping collective gender attitudes. The inclusion of both entertainment and commercial media broadens the scope of analysis and highlights how patriarchal ideologies persist across genres.

Data Collection

The data were collected from publicly available online sources such as official YouTube channels, streaming platforms (Netflix, ARY Digital, Hum TV), and corporate websites. For textual analysis, dialogues, scripts, and slogans were transcribed, and accompanying visuals were described to contextualize the linguistic features. English and Urdu texts were analyzed in their original languages to preserve cultural nuances and idiomatic expressions. Urdu dialogues were transliterated and translated for consistency, with careful attention to maintaining their connotative meanings.

Analytical Approach

The analysis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, focusing on textual, discursive, and sociocultural dimensions.

1. **Textual Analysis:** Each text is examined for lexical choices, metaphors, pronouns, modality, transitivity, and evaluative language that construct gendered meanings. For instance, the repeated use of possessive pronouns ("my woman," "meri biwi") and imperatives ("obey," "stay home") are interpreted as linguistic markers of control and ownership.
2. **Discursive Practice Analysis:** This level investigates how the selected texts were produced and circulated. It explores how film directors, advertisers, and production houses reproduce certain gender ideologies through narrative conventions, character tropes, and visual symbolism. Audience reception, including online comments and reviews, is also briefly referenced to show how these ideologies are accepted, resisted, or debated.
3. **Sociocultural Analysis:** The third level situates the discourses within broader cultural contexts, Western neoliberal consumerism and South Asian patriarchy. This step connects micro-level linguistic patterns to macro-level power structures, showing how media narratives support gender hierarchies that align with dominant sociopolitical values.

To integrate a feminist perspective, the analysis also follows Lazar's (2005) [12] guidelines for FCDA by asking critical questions such as:

- How do linguistic patterns construct gendered subject positions?
- What discursive strategies are used to naturalize patriarchy?
- How are power, agency, and emotion distributed between male and female speakers?

By combining CDA and FCDA, the methodology ensures that the analysis remains both linguistically precise and ideologically critical.

Validity and Trustworthiness

In qualitative discourse analysis, validity is ensured through transparency and reflexivity rather than statistical reliability. Each analytical claim is supported by direct textual evidence, quotations, examples, or scene descriptions interpreted in light of theoretical concepts. The researcher maintains reflexivity by acknowledging interpretive bias and recognizing how personal awareness of gender and culture influences the reading of texts. Triangulation is achieved by comparing multiple genres (film, drama, advertisement) and languages (English and Urdu) to identify consistent patterns of patriarchal discourse.

Ethical Considerations

Since the study analyzes publicly available media texts, there are no direct ethical risks related to participants. However, ethical responsibility is maintained through accurate citation, respect for cultural contexts, and avoidance of sensational or derogatory interpretation. The analysis critiques discourse structures rather than individuals or creators, focusing on ideological patterns rather than personal intent. Additionally, translations of Urdu dialogues are rendered sensitively to prevent distortion of meaning or cultural bias.

Summary

This qualitative CDA-based methodology enables a critical investigation of how patriarchal ideologies are reproduced through language in popular culture. By combining textual, discursive, and sociocultural analysis with feminist interpretation, the research provides a comprehensive view of how power operates within linguistic structures across diverse media landscapes. The use of both English and Urdu sources not only expands the cross-cultural scope but also highlights the adaptability of patriarchy across languages, genres, and societies.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Representations of Masculine Authority and Female Submission

Across both English and Urdu media, masculinity is consistently positioned as dominant, assertive, and controlling. In *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015), Christian Grey's language reveals an ideology of control disguised as affection. His statements such as *"I exercise control in all things, Miss Steele"* and *"You will obey me"* demonstrate how linguistic imperatives reinforce dominance. Through CDA, these utterances show how language structures encode hierarchy—verbs of command, declaratives, and possessive pronouns situate Grey as the subject of power and Anastasia as the object of submission.

Similarly, in *Kabir Singh* (2019), patriarchal discourse is intensified through aggressive vernacular. Kabir frequently uses imperatives like *"Don't talk to other boys"* or *"You're mine"*, linguistically erasing the female subject's autonomy. Such directives employ transitivity patterns that construct women as passive receivers of male action. The normalization of physical violence under the guise of passion reproduces what Connell (2005) [3] calls "hegemonic masculinity", a system that justifies aggression as a marker of male identity.

In Urdu dramas like *Meray Paas Tum Ho* and *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*, linguistic patterns continue this trajectory. Danish

(in *Meray Paas Tum Ho*) uses emotional blackmail and moral superiority to assert control: *"Main tum se mohabbat karta hoon, tum mere liye sab kuch ho"* ("I love you; you are everything to me"). The surface affection conceals possessiveness. The modal verb *"ho"* expresses existential ownership, while the repetition of "mere liye" emphasizes relational dependency. In *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*, the male protagonist Shamsher uses a commanding tone: *"Main ne keh diya na, tum meri ho"* ("I told you, you're mine"). The repetition of "meri" (my) not only marks possession but also reinforces patriarchal entitlement as natural speech.

In both languages, linguistic features such as imperatives, possessive pronouns, and modality reflect a shared global discourse: male dominance is expressed as romantic devotion. CDA reveals that these textual structures, while culturally distinct, converge ideologically in naturalizing male power and female submission.

2. Romanticizing Control: Love as Obedience

The blurring of love and submission is central to patriarchal discourse in both Western and South Asian narratives. In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Anastasia's silence and hesitations serve as textual indicators of consent being linguistically coerced. Her utterance *"I'll try"* repeatedly appears in response to Christian's demands, representing what Lazar (2005) [12] identifies as "compulsory compliance", a linguistic strategy that frames subservience as voluntary choice.

Similarly, *Kabir Singh* transforms coercion into passion. Kabir's slap scene, followed by the heroine's forgiveness, linguistically and visually transforms violence into affection. The repetition of romantic background music during acts of aggression contributes to the multimodal discourse that justifies male dominance as emotionally acceptable. This is reinforced through evaluative adjectives like *"junooni"* (passionate) and *"deewana"* (madly in love), which linguistically glorify the man's control as a sign of devotion.

In *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*, Shamsher's obsession is described through the metaphor of fate: *"Yeh taqdeer ka likha hai"* ("It is written by destiny"). Here, patriarchal behavior is justified through religious fatalism, a sociocultural discursive strategy typical in Urdu dramas. The phrase eliminates personal accountability by shifting agency to divine will. CDA thus exposes how religious and emotional vocabularies merge to sustain patriarchal logic, transforming abuse into destiny and silencing female resistance under moral obligation.

3. Women as Moral or Material Symbols

In both Pakistani and Western texts, women are represented not as autonomous beings but as symbols, either moral or material. *Meray Paas Tum Ho* constructs Mehwish as the embodiment of material greed, described repeatedly as *"lalchi aurat"* ("a greedy woman"). The linguistic labeling reduces her identity to a moral judgment, echoing what van Dijk (1998) [17] calls the "ideological square", a strategy where discourse magnifies the faults of women while minimizing those of men. Danish's line *"Aurat ke liye sabse badi daulat uska mard hota hai"* ("A woman's greatest wealth is her man") is a textbook case of discursive patriarchy: the metaphor equates women's value with relational possession.

In contrast, Western advertisements like *Dior Sauvage* deploy women symbolically through visual absence. The ad centers male freedom, Johnny Depp in the desert, framed against vast landscapes with no female presence. The omission itself is ideological. CDA interprets absence as silence: the woman is unnecessary, rendered invisible in a discourse that equates masculinity with autonomy. The lexical field of the advertisement, *"wild," "untamed," "savage"* invokes primal masculinity, aligning male identity with dominance over nature and, implicitly, over women.

Meanwhile, Pakistani advertisements such as *Surf Excel's "Neki" campaign* employ the opposite trope: women as moral caretakers. Phrases like *"Daag ache hain"* ("Stains are good") reframe domestic labor as moral virtue. The linguistic structure pairs cleanliness with spirituality, subtly positioning women's domestic role as their sacred duty. Through CDA, this discourse naturalizes gendered labor division by embedding it in moral language.

Thus, both cultural contexts—Western consumerism and South Asian moralism—operate within different but convergent frameworks of patriarchy: women are either objects of desire or symbols of morality, while agency remains confined within linguistic limits defined by male-centered ideologies.

4. Silence, Guilt, and Emotional Conditioning

A striking feature of patriarchal discourse across all texts is the silencing of women through guilt and emotional dependency. In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Anastasia's hesitations marked by ellipses, fragmented sentences, and interrogatives create a syntactic structure of submission. Her frequent use of interrogatives (*"Is this what you want?"*) contrasts with Christian's declaratives, highlighting asymmetrical agency.

In Urdu dramas, silence is even more pronounced. In *Meray Paas Tum Ho*, Mehwish's guilt is linguistically reinforced through the male voice. Danish's dialogue *"Tum ne mujhe bech diya"* ("You sold me") turns her into a commodity and moral transgressor. This metaphor of transaction not only dehumanizes her but also invokes cultural shame. The emotional weight of guilt silences female characters, aligning with Fairclough's notion of "ideological interpellation", where individuals internalize social hierarchies through repeated discursive conditioning.

In *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*, Mehak's passivity functions as moral decorum. Her silence is equated with modesty, as shown in dialogues like *"Larkiyan chup rehti hain, izzat banti hai"* ("Girls remain silent; it makes them honorable"). This statement reveals the sociolinguistic ideology that ties speech to morality. Silence becomes a linguistic form of virtue, and obedience becomes cultural capital. Feminist CDA reveals this as a gendered mechanism of control: language disciplines not only behavior but emotion and self-perception.

5. Visual and Linguistic Interplay in Advertisements

Both the *Dior Sauvage* and *Surf Excel* advertisements employ multimodal discourses where visuals reinforce textual meanings. In *Dior Sauvage*, the semiotics of open space and desolation symbolize male independence. The absence of domestic imagery (home, family, caregiving) constructs masculinity through separation from dependency. The word "sauvage," meaning "wild," linguistically celebrates rebellion and domination. The combination of rugged landscape and deep male voice-over constitutes what Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) call "visual grammar of power."

In *Surf Excel's* Urdu commercial, the opposite structure emerges: domestic interiors, children, and emotional voice-overs. The mother's line *"Maa ke liye har daag nek hai"*

("Every stain is good for a mother") employs evaluative and moralistic discourse. The adjective "nek" (righteous) spiritualizes domestic labor, transforming work into moral fulfillment. Here, CDA exposes how the intersection of language and imagery sanctifies female servitude.

Both examples illustrate how advertisements serve as ideological tools, different in tone but similar in outcome. Whether through freedom (*Dior*) or duty (*Surf Excel*), gender hierarchies are linguistically reinforced.

6. Cultural Convergence: Global and Local Patriarchies

Despite linguistic and cultural differences, a remarkable convergence emerges between Western and South Asian media. *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Kabir Singh* both frame male control as passion; *Meray Paas Tum Ho* and *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi* moralize female submission; *Dior Sauvage* and *Surf Excel* commodify gender roles.

CDA reveals that patriarchy transcends linguistic boundaries, adapting to cultural expectations but preserving structural asymmetry. Western media justifies control through desire and individualism, while South Asian media does so through morality and religion. The ideological effect is similar: women's bodies and emotions remain sites of regulation.

Moreover, both traditions use interdiscursivity, the blending of romantic, moral, and religious narratives to stabilize gender hierarchies. For instance, Christian's dominance in *Fifty Shades* is romanticized through modern consumer culture, while Shamsher's dominance in *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi* is justified through fate. The discursive mechanisms differ, but both produce compliance through emotional persuasion.

7. Resistance and Emerging Counter-Voices

While patriarchal ideologies dominate, some textual elements subtly resist them. Anastasia's occasional assertive utterances, such as *"I want more,"* signal attempts at reclaiming agency. Similarly, in *Meray Paas Tum Ho*, Mehwish's decision to leave Danish, though morally condemned, can be read as an act of defiance within a restrictive cultural script. These moments, though linguistically minor, challenge the discursive hegemony by inserting alternative subject positions.

In Urdu advertisements, recent shifts also suggest emerging awareness. Later *Surf Excel* campaigns include male participation in domestic tasks, though still framed as "helping" rather than sharing responsibility. Such incremental linguistic shifts "madad karna" (to help) hint at changing discourses, even if the ideological foundation remains patriarchal.

These resistances exemplify what Foucault (1980) [6] describes as the "microphysics of power," where resistance always exists within the structure of power, not outside it. Through CDA, these linguistic ruptures become sites for feminist reinterpretation and pedagogical intervention.

8. Ideological Implications

The linguistic and visual strategies observed across these texts reveal how media reproduces patriarchal ideology under different guises: love, morality, religion, and freedom. CDA exposes these mechanisms as cultural technologies that shape perception and normalize inequality.

- Lexical Choices like "mine," "obedient," "nek," and "wild" encode dominance or virtue within gender binaries.
- Transitivity Patterns depict men as agents and women as recipients of action.
- Modality ("will," "must," "should") frames male decisions as universal truths.
- Metaphors and Moral Labels turn social control into emotional duty.

The cumulative effect is ideological conditioning what Fairclough terms the "naturalization of power." Through repetition across genres, audiences internalize these linguistic hierarchies as normal emotional behavior.

9. Summary of Findings

The cross-cultural CDA demonstrates that:

1. Language operates as a tool of ideological reinforcement, shaping gendered realities.
2. Patriarchal narratives persist across both English and Urdu media, though encoded differently.
3. Love and morality function as discursive disguises for control, transforming domination into devotion.
4. Silence, guilt, and religious metaphors are central strategies of female subjugation.
5. Emerging resistances though limited, indicate growing awareness and the potential for change in media discourse.

In both Western and South Asian contexts, patriarchal discourse remains embedded in linguistic form, visual imagery, and cultural symbolism. However, by identifying these mechanisms through CDA and FCDA, this research underscores the transformative power of critical literacy, an awareness that can challenge and reshape media narratives.

Conclusion

The analysis of linguistic and visual discourses in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Kabir Singh*, *Meray Paas Tum Ho*, *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi*, and selected advertisements reveals that patriarchal ideology remains deeply embedded in popular culture, regardless of cultural or linguistic context. Through Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it becomes evident that the power dynamics encoded in language not only shape representation but also sustain ideological hierarchies that privilege masculinity and marginalize femininity. The findings confirm that discourse is not neutral; it is a mechanism of social control that constructs, legitimizes, and perpetuates gender inequality.

The study demonstrates that media narratives whether expressed through English or Urdu share similar linguistic and ideological structures. In both Western and South Asian contexts, male characters are consistently positioned as agents of action, while female characters are rendered passive, emotional, or morally bound. These portrayals rely on specific linguistic features such as imperatives, possessive pronouns, and metaphors of ownership that naturalize male dominance. Similarly, advertisements and films deploy multimodal strategies through imagery, tone, and dialogue to strengthen the perception of gendered roles. The male voice is authoritative and self-assured, while the female voice is emotional, nurturing, or silent. This convergence of textual and visual codes constructs patriarchy as a global discourse that transcends geographical and linguistic boundaries.

A critical insight emerging from this research is the

transformation of control into affection. In *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *Kabir Singh*, dominance is represented as passion, and submission as love. The linguistic patterns of command and obedience *"You're mine," "You will obey me"or"Tum meri ho"*—function as romanticized expressions of possession. In contrast, Urdu dramas like *Meray Paas Tum Ho* and *Kaisi Teri Khudgarzi* moralize the same power structure by framing female silence as virtue and obedience as faith. The cultural lexicon of "izzat" (honor) and "taqdeer" (fate) masks patriarchal control in moral or religious discourses; demonstrating how patriarchy adapts to sociocultural environments while maintaining its structural essence.

These findings affirm van Dijk's (1998) [17] argument that discourse is both a reflection and reproduction of social cognition. Language does not merely describe gender relations; it constructs and reinforces them. By repeatedly representing women as dependent, emotional, or morally bound, media texts condition audiences to accept such portrayals as natural. Fairclough (2010) [4] calls this "ideological naturalization," where power relations become invisible through habitual linguistic repetition. The subtlety of such reproduction particularly, when disguised as entertainment makes it more pervasive and resistant to critique.

However, the study also identifies emerging ruptures within these narratives. Small acts of resistance, Anastasia's assertion of boundaries, Mehwish's choice to leave her husband, or newer advertisements depicting shared domestic responsibility signal the beginnings of discursive transformation. Although these shifts remain limited and often reabsorbed into patriarchal norms, they reflect the potential for alternative representations. Such changes illustrate Foucault's (1980) [6] notion that resistance is inherent within every structure of power. By recognizing these linguistic fissures, scholars and educators can foster critical awareness that challenges hegemonic ideologies from within cultural production itself.

The implications of this study extend beyond linguistic analysis. First, it highlights the role of media literacy as a tool for social transformation. Educators and audiences must learn to decode the hidden ideologies embedded in everyday language and imagery. Second, it calls for gender-sensitive media production that transcends token equality to create genuine narrative balance. Writers, producers, and advertisers bear ethical responsibility in shaping discourses that influence public consciousness. Finally, this study contributes to the field of feminist discourse analysis by integrating cross-cultural perspectives, demonstrating that patriarchy functions as a translingual ideology sustained through adaptable discursive strategies.

In conclusion, language in popular culture is not merely a medium of expression but a site of ideological struggle. The recurring linguistic and visual patterns identified in this research reveal how patriarchy operates through normalization, emotional manipulation, and symbolic representation. Yet, within the same texts lie the seeds of resistance, moments where silence turns into speech and subordination into agency. Recognizing and amplifying these moments through critical discourse awareness is vital for deconstructing the myths of gendered power and moving toward more equitable narratives. Ultimately, this study affirms that changing discourse is not only an academic exercise but a necessary cultural act, an act that reimagines power, language, and identity in pursuit of social justice.

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