

“Take Over Take Over / You are Teachers / Take Over”: Disagreements and the Construction of Power among Women

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Abstract—Disagreement as a face threatening act is dispreferred because of violating social solidarity in talk. From gendered sociolinguistics perspective, men are attached to disagreement whereas women to agreement. This study, however, examines the strategies in which women disagree with one another as an interactional approach to convey their intended meanings. This paper draws on data from transcribed audio recorded face to face conversation of 4 groups of Iranian female friends in informal settings. The analysis of the data shows that the female participants express their disagreement boldly and explicitly, disregarding face threatening elements, just like men. It is also found that they care about maintaining their own faces more than the others' faces in the process of responding to disagreements. In addition, they exhibit a powerful style to criticize, challenge and contradict. It is finally argued that socio-cultural changes in the context of Iranian society had an impact on the females' interactive attitude.

Index Terms—Disagreements, face and power, Iranian women, society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Disagreement occurs when a person expresses a point of view that is in conflict with another person's view or statement. Early works on conversation analysis (CA), concentrating on the social construction of talk, consider disagreement as a 'dispreferred' second [1] since it violates the social solidarity of an interaction [2]. Disagreement can be either strong or soft. Strong disagreements are usually direct, bold, rude and offensive whereas soft disagreements are accompanied by hedges or indirect statements. However, soft or weak disagreements are preferred to strong disagreements in an interaction [3].

Disagreements are more than just some utterances that are projected to express opposing ideas. According to [4], disagreements can be inter or intra culturally bonded. Reference [4] shows that in the process of disagreement, the interactants' history and their personal characteristics influence their disagreement. As such, it is very crude to look at the way the interactants disagree without considering their sociocultural identities.

Besides culture and the interactants' social background, gender of the interlocutors can influence disagreement [4] and the strategies which are employed. Drawing upon the adopted version of analysis of disagreement among men [5],

this study aims to look at the way female friends disagree with one another in single sex groups in an informal setting. The participants' gender and their socio-cultural background are taken into account in order to make a comprehensive interpretation of the analysis of the strategies they employ to disagree. Moreover, the purpose of their disagreement is considered in this study. According to Holmes [6], it is essential to focus back on women in the domain of language and gender. Therefore, the analysis will assist in viewing women's language in a broader perspective with respect to the way they disagree.

II. DISAGREEMENT AND FACE

Disagreements are regarded as positive face threatening acts because the person who disagrees does not pay attention to the face of his addressees and tries to prove that their ideas are wrong and unreasonable [7]. Reference [7] also suggests that people use two strategies in order to avoid disagreement. The first one is 'seek agreement' and the other is 'avoid disagreement'. These two strategies may seem alike because when a person tries to avoid disagreement, agreement is automatically achieved. But indeed these two strategies are different in their application regardless of the fact that they both result in preserving the interactants' positive face. For instance, when a person is seeking agreement, he tries to talk about safe topics that do not trigger any conflicts. Whereas avoiding disagreement, deals with hedging, white lies and even fake agreements. Reference [8], however, argues that some strategies that interactants use to avoid disagreements, such as keeping silent or changing the topic can be offensive if they are not handled tactfully. Therefore, avoiding disagreements may create face threatening situations as well. This reinforces the 'multidirectional' and 'multifunctional' aspects of disagreements, as in [4] because they can influence the faces of the speakers and the addressees' either or both positively or negatively. According to [4], disagreements are also 'multifunctional' because they have different functions among the interlocutors.

According to [7], disagreements threaten the positive face of the speakers and the addressees. Nevertheless disagreements are not the only elements that threaten interlocutors' face. Agreements can be self face threatening acts as well [9]. If a person cannot express his own ideas freely and is obliged to agree with the others' statements while he believes the opposite, this can be considered an act of self face-threatening.

Disagreements do not always serve as threatening face acts;

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in fact they can save faces in some situations and contexts. For instance, in order for the interlocutors to show their knowledge and ability to discuss various matters, they should not agree with whatever is proposed by others. They need to disagree so as to enhance their own face [4] because agreements may sometimes indicate that the person is not capable of defending his own ideas. As a result, disagreements in this case can save people's faces.

Reference [10] divides disagreements into two dimensions of 'marked' and 'unmarked'. Marked disagreements refer to the situations where the opposing ideas are considered inappropriate in a specific context and the interactants show reaction to the disagreements. This type of disagreement is destructive to the process of interaction. On the other hand, unmarked disagreements refer to the situations where the opposing ideas have both elements of being appropriate and constructive in a context. It is clear that context and the kind of disagreement influence how disagreements are interpreted.

III. DISAGREEMENT, POWER AND GENDER

Reference [11] shows that disagreements can entail power and also believes that "the exercise of power involves a latent conflict and clash of interests, which can be obscured because of society's ideologies" [11]. According to [12], People desire to attain power through disagreements. Reference [13]; however, goes a step further and suggests that disagreements can show either power, solidarity or both. Attaining power is mainly associated with men's language [5], [14]. They try to maintain the power they possess in society in an interactional level, and when they are against someone's idea, they tend to impose their points of view and exert power over the other speaker. As such; it is expected to see men involve in disagreements more than women. Men's interaction is affluent with opposing ideas and disagreements. They show their disagreement bluntly without any trials to alleviate assertiveness or decrease any negative connotations it may express [5].

Women on the other hand, try to avoid disagreement or any kinds of contradiction since they favor cooperation [15], [5]. Even though when women disagree, they prefer to use hedges, tag questions or mitigating devices such as apology to make their ideas less aggressive and direct [16], [17]. According to [15], the reason lies in the fact that "men pursue a style of interaction based on power, while women pursue a style based on solidarity and support". Moreover, social stereotypical norms which exist among the members of the society expect women to be more polite than men [18]-[20].

Women would usually use irony, indirect statements, and rhetorical questions in order to emphatically disagree or contradict with the others. It shows that women use politeness strategies even if they are not very polite [21]. Women, due to their attention to the other people's feelings, do not oppose or disagree bluntly. Therefore, they are considered more polite in that sense and fit to the politeness theory suggested by [7]. Some scholars believe that disagreement does not necessarily imply impoliteness. On the other hand, disagreements can bring the interactants closer to each other [23], [24]. In addition, [5] demonstrates

that disagreement and direct confrontation is a sign of solidarity in men's interaction but not in women's. Reference [5] rationalizes that men look at "... abusive behavior as a positive thing and polite behavior as something negative". It shows that in men's linguistic style, politeness should be avoided.

Nevertheless, in a task based study on Iranian women [22], where the context forced them to express disagreement, the female interactants employ conflictives when and where the addressee is a female which ultimately implies impoliteness. However, [22] does not argue why in an Iranian culture and society, where men are more dominant and powerful according to their own research, Iranian women follow a pattern which deviates from politeness theory and can resonate masculine style of talk. They only rationalize that men and women interact differently in same sex and cross sex conversations. In this regard, [20] argues that if women use masculine style of talk, this style is considered impolite and inappropriate though it is appropriate in a masculine domain. Reference [22] also argues that gender norms which are prominent in society are responsible for this gendered judgmental attitude and professional women are exposed to gendered judgments more than the other women due to the verbal style they employ to assert their ideas.

In the present study, women's disagreement is taken into account based upon Pilkington's work on men's disagreement [5]. Reference [5] has found that women are into agreeing with each other whereas men use "...frequent, direct, and repeated expression of disagreement or hostility". She also identifies that men make challenging comments to show their disagreements with the proposition expressed by the speaker. They also make statements that are in direct conflict with their friends' points of view. Men also use sharp and strong criticism to show their disagreements. There are some cases when men even add force into their disagreement to make it more assertive. However, men do not remain silent against disagreement. Indeed, they would disagree with their friends' comments to defend their own ideas. On the other hand, women in Pilkington's study [5] try to avoid disagreement and prefer to agree in order to establish their solidarity and men appear to have no problem with disagreement even though it gets hostile and abusive. Reference [5] uses the concept of 'male masculine culture' proposed by [25] in order to describe men's normative style "... masculine mateship culture ... requires displays of masculine fearlessness and power. These displays commonly manifest themselves in the form of abuse and challenges" [5]. This study looks at women's disagreement, adopting the strategies that Pilkington has found in men's disagreement [5] in order to re-examine and challenge disagreement in women's world. In doing so, our understandings about women's culture would be elevated.

IV. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data of this study are taken from audio recorded face to face conversations of 4 groups of Iranian female friends. Each group consists of four participants. The participants are all educated working women in Iran. Their educational background varies from Bachelor's degree to Doctoral. The

participants in each group know each other and they usually get together every week to do the catching up. Their meeting took place in participants' living rooms in turns. They were asked to record their conversations whenever they get together to communicate. The data of this paper are extracted from 240 minutes of their recorded conversation. The data were then transcribed according to a transcription convention [26] which is adopted and modified to fit the purpose of this study.

Anonymity of the participants and the information they share are crucial in this study. Therefore, new names were randomly chosen for proper names. The participants are identified by the letter 'F' standing for female, followed by a number such as F1, F2, and so on.

The examples presented are taken from the participants' face to face conversation and are kept intact to preserve the authenticity of the material. The excerpts are taken in order to demonstrate the strategies the interactants employ to disagree. They also show the purpose of their disagreement. This qualitative analysis takes the sociolinguistic approach to analyze the utterances. This study utilizes and adopts the strategies that [5] has noticed and elaborated in men's face to face conversation.

V. ANALYSIS

In face to face interaction, people use different strategies to disagree. According to [5], the strategies that men use are direct and blunt. They challenge each other's comments by questioning or negating the speakers' statements to show their disagreement. Some men prefer contradicting one another's points of view by a statement which is conflicting with the current speakers' statements. They also make direct, specific criticism to show that their ideas are not in line with the speakers' ideas. In this study, the participants are female friends in a friendly informal environment, talking about various topics. The strategies used in this study are adopted from [5] and are labeled as follows: (1) Criticism, (2) Challenge and (3) Contradiction. Dividing disagreement into these 3 categories would help us observe how disagreement is conducted and viewed by female interactants.

A. Strategy 1: Criticism

Criticism occurs when participants want to disapprove each other's ideas, actions or behavior. In order to show their dissatisfaction and disagreement, they try to find faults and criticize. This is exemplified in excerpt (1.1) where F14 criticize directly her friend's style of resume writing.

(1.1)

Context: Reviewing one of the participants' resume

- 1: F14: what is this resume? / I can't make sense out of it
 2: F15: what? / What do you mean?
 3: F14: it's all over the place / I don't know [which section is which]
 4: F15: [I have organized it] according to the international guidelines
 5: F14: I don't know about that but here is different / didn't you go through my resume as a sample?

6: F15: I did but I didn't like it

7: F14 but that's the way it should be here

In line 1, F14 criticizes F15 directly and harshly without any mitigating devices. It seems that F14 neither pays attention to F15's face nor her own face in case her criticism is not accepted by her friend. When F15 wants F14 to explain more she criticizes openly again and adds force to it *it's all over the place / I don't know which section is which* (line 3). F15, however, does not remain silent and in order to protect her face she confidently says *I have organized it according to the international guideless*. Further down, when F14 asks F15 to set her resume as a sample, F15 retaliates and returns the criticism back at her by saying that she did not like her resume (F15). It shows the participants in this excerpt, do not pay attention to each other's faces and they try to preserve their own faces. Neither of them wants to appear weak by giving up to their friend's criticism. F14 and F15 have shown powerful strategies to disagree with one another. Another instance of direct criticism is demonstrated in excerpt (1.2).

(1.2)

Context: Talking about appearances

- 1: F5: CHANGE YOUR SANDALS BUY NEW ONES / [WHAT ARE THESE?]
 2: F6: [YEAH / YOU ARE A] LECTURER
 3: F7: THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH THEM / I like them
 4: F5: BUT IT'S like those people we always make fun of / the ones who wear nice clothes but their shoes are crappy
 5: F6: yeah / there are many nice sandals you //
 6: F7: // I have foot problem so I have to wear special sandals
 7: F5: ok but [you can]
 8: F7: [they are] perfect and I am not going to change them
 9: F6: It's like //
 10: F7:// they are kind of cool/ [none of your] business
 11: F5: [yea:::h]

In excerpt (1.2), F5 and F6 both criticize F7 directly and even F5 adds the force by mockingly asking *WHAT ARE THESE?* (line 1). F7 cannot stand her friends' criticism and raises her voice and defends herself (line 3). However, F5 and F6 do not give up and show their disagreement by criticizing her more. F7, on the other hand, in order to preserve her face, does not accept their criticism and finally coarsely says *none of your business* (line 10). F5 and F6 do not use any mitigating linguistic devices such as hedging or modal verb to soften the force of their criticism. They even increase the force at some parts. It shows that F5 and F6 do not pay attention to F7's face when they keep on criticizing their friend directly. F7, who is the aim of their criticism, protects her face and uses bold and direct statements, disregarding the others' faces. It is observed that the participants in this excerpt play power when they disagree with one another.

Criticism can also be used to disagree with people's

behavior and convey expectation from them as exemplified in the following excerpt (1.3)

(1.3)

Context: Talking about the time when one of the participants was sick

1: F2: do you ever notice people? / F1 do you really //

2: F1: // of course I do / why do you think SO?

F2 believes that F1 constantly neglects other people. She does not approve this and find it annoying. Therefore, she criticizes F1 by asking a direct sarcastic question *do you ever notice people? F1 do you really* (line 1). F2 criticizes F1's behavior in order to show her dissatisfaction. She also uses *ever* and *really* to dramatize the situation and indicate that F1 always neglects other people. The question is very direct without any mitigating elements to decrease its assertiveness. F2 also addresses F1 by her name in order to add more force into her criticism [5]. F1, whose face is threatened, gets surprised and in order to disagree and defend her face against the harsh criticism says, *of course I do / why do you think SO?* (line 2). In this line, F1 raises her voice and intonation to make her statement more effective. F1's reaction to F2's criticism is very defensive. They both make bold direct questions to disagree and criticize one another. This is an indication of power display where both interactants' statements are harsh and hostile.

As demonstrated above, there is no evidence of softening devices or mitigating features to decrease the assertiveness of criticism. Moreover, the immediate defensive reaction of the interactant who has been criticized demonstrates that preserving a self positive face is important for females. Women in this study tend to protect their face against criticism by showing instant direct reactions against criticism. Meanwhile, they simultaneously create and retain power.

B. Strategy 2: Challenge

The second strategy that female participants use in this study to disagree is challenging. Challenges are the instances where someone's ability or knowledge has been questioned and sometimes put into a test because they are not agreeable to the others. The following excerpt is taken from a part of the conversation where the participants discuss different kinds of music and share their likes and dislikes.

(2.1)

Context: Exchanging ideas about music, specifically classical music

1: F2: ... there are the tapes in the shop you can buy them / of Pavarotti and friends / one Pavarotti / you know the sequel / two three four

2: F3: haven't [heard]

3: F4: [haven't] heard

4: F2: what [HAVE you heard?]

5: F1: [but I think] it's not pure

6: F2: what is pure?

7: F1: when it's JUST opera / some kind of pure music //

8: F2: // can you really listen to opera for an

hour?

9: F1: not every opera / and [I – I – I may] be

10: F2:

11: F1: selective [about] EVEN Pavarotti's operas

12: F2: [but]

13: F1: not all of them

14: F2: whatever / can you listen to it (xxx)?

In this excerpt, one of the participants, F2, informs the other participants that there is a CD sequel of Pavarotti and other singers in the market. Another participant, F1, who does not agree with these kinds of music, shows her disagreement by reasoning that (line 5) *but I think it's not pure*. F1's use of the epistemic modal phrase 'I think' can have two linguistic roles with respect to disagreement. It can be either an indication of preserving her face in case her statement is not accepted by the others or evidence that she has her own individual opinion though contradictory. But after this, F2 immediately challenges F1's statement *what is pure?* (line 6). F2's challenge continues (line 8) *can you really listen to opera for an hour?* It appears that F2 does not want to stop challenging her friend because she moves on, disregarding her friend's face, *whatever / can you listen to it (xxx)?* (line 14). F2 in this line even uses the word *whatever* to emphasize that she does not care about her friend's idea whereas her own challenging question is of more importance.

Excerpt (2.1) illustrates that F2 constantly and directly challenges her friends because her ideas are not in line with theirs. There is no evidence to show that F2 tries to soften the force of her challenge. It proves that she wants to show her control and power while disagreeing through challenging questions.

(2.2)

Context: Talking about securities in condominiums

1: F9: our condo's security is very tight

2: F12: then how come they broke into your [house]?

3: F9: [no I] mean recently

4: F10: you mean there has been no incidents recently?

5: F9: I don't know

In this excerpt, when F9 claims that they have strict guards in their condominiums, F12 shows her direct disagreement by a challenging question *how come they broke into your house?* (line 2). At this point, F9 tries to defend her statement and preserve her face (line3). Nonetheless, another speaker, F10, challenges her again *you mean there has been no incident recently?* (line 4). Finally, F9 replies that she does not know. It shows that F12 and F10 do not pay attention to F9's face when they disagree and challenge her openly. In this case, their faces and their friends are at risk but they opt to create the challenge.

The following excerpt is a unique example which illustrates the extent in which women in this study are able to challenge each other without considering each other's faces. It also shows how they take and respond to the challenges imposed on them.

(2.3)

Context: One of the participants is not satisfied with her friend dominating the conversation.

- 1: F1: we should always have problem with you?
 ...
 2: F2: you don't talk
 3: F4: nothing to worry about
 4: F1: [YOU DON'T LET / YOU DON'T LET]
 5: F2: [TAKE OVER / TAKE OVER] YOU ARE TEACHERS / TAKE OVER
 6: F1: WITH HER LOUD VOICE //
 7: F4: // tell me
 8: F1: she doesn't / let anyone talk

In this part of the conversation F1 figuratively shows her dissatisfaction towards F2 (line 1) because according to her, she is dominating the conversation. F2, in order to disagree with F1 and also to preserve her face against this criticism, accuses her that she does not talk (line 2). F1 disagrees with her and raises her voice to boldly disagree (line 4). At this stage F2 raises her voice too and makes a sharp and direct provocative challenge *TAKE OVER / TAKE OVER YOU ARE TEACHERS / TAKE OVER* (line 5). According to her, teachers are supposed to be able to dominate the others in conversations due to their powerful role in classroom [27]. Therefore, she not only challenges her friends but also their expertise as teacher colleagues. At this point, F1 does not pay attention to this provocative challenge and continues criticizing F2 (lines 6 and 8). Despite the disagreement, F2 proceeds (line 16).

Through challenging one another, the interactants show their power without using any mitigating linguistic elements to reduce the force of their challenge. They disregard their friends' faces to be openly threatened. What is important in the process of challenging disagreement is not to lose the verbal challenge and defend their faces.

C. Strategy 3: Contradiction

The third strategy that the female participants use to disagree is labeled contradiction. Contradiction occurs when the interactants do not agree with an idea or a statement and show their disagreement by making a comment that conflicts with what is being said.

(3.1)

Context: Talking about birds in nature

- 1: F6: There are lots of eagles in the city
 2: F5: no there [aren't]
 3: F6: [YES] THERE ARE
 4: F7: how do you *know* they are eagles?
 5: F8: they don't flap [much]
 6: F7: [come] o:::n / they do / then how //
 7: F5: // YEAH but once they are in the sky they don't flap much / they glide

In this extract, when F6 says that there are eagles in the city, F5 shows her disagreement by contradicting her *no there aren't* (line 2). In order to respond F6 raises her voice to defend her statement by another contradiction *YES THERE ARE* (line 3). In doing so, F6 wants to guard her face against

F5's disagreement. There is another instance of disagreement when F8 claims that eagles do not flap much (line 5) and F7 contradicts her and says that they do (line 7). This example demonstrates how the participants disagree and argue over a point and they do not pay attention to each others' faces and disagree openly. The contradictions are direct and to the point and in order to add force they may raise their voices and emphasize. It illustrates that the interactants intend to show their power when they insist on their opposing ideas and no one plans to be surrender.

The following excerpt is taken from a part of the conversation where the participants compare modern music to classical music and discuss the reasons why most people prefer the latter one.

(3.2)

Context: Talking about the reasons people like different music genres

- 1: F4: it can be related to the memory too...
 2: F1: no it has nothing to do with memory / it's the characteristics of classical / classical is classical because at any time people would like it...
 3: F2: IT'S LIKE decoration / a lot of people always love modern furniture
 4: F3: not necessarily / [I hate some] modern furniture
 5: F1: [no DECORATION is different]

F4 proposes that people like classical music because it makes a connection to people's memory (line 1). F1, in order to show her disagreement, directly contradicts F4 *no it has nothing to do with memory* (line 2). F1 makes use of two negative forms *no* and *nothing* to make a powerful contradiction with F4's idea.

There is also another instance of contradiction in this excerpt. F2 says *a lot of people always love modern furniture* (line 3) and F3 immediately contradicts her *not necessarily / I hate some modern furniture* (line 4). The participants express their points of view directly even though they are contradictory to their friends' ideas. Instead of modality or mitigating devices, they boldly contradict to show their disagreement. This also signifies an act of power when the interactants do not give in and try to defend their ideas through disagreements.

The participants also opt to face threatening acts since their contradictions are very direct and defined. This is also demonstrated in the following excerpt.

(3.3)

Context: Talking about a TV comedy series

- 1: F14: they gave him a gun / [and] he reassembled it to a telephone
 2: F15: [uhum]
 3: F16: no / he reassembled it to an urn
 4: F14: It was a telephone I – I //
 5: F16: // I have watched it a thousand times I am sure [it was an urn]
 6: F14: [and then he] ...

In this excerpt, F14 and F16 are telling the other

participants about a TV comedy and while describing a scene of an episode they find a conflicting point. F14 intends to explain that in the series, they disband a gun and ask one of the characters to reassemble it but he reassembles it to something different than a gun. In order to convey that, she says (line 1) *he reassembled it to a telephone* and F16 immediately contradicts without respecting her friend's face *no / he reassembled it to an urn* (line 3). F16 not only contradicts her but also increases the force of her contradiction by the direct negation *no*. In reply, F14 insists that *it was a telephone* (line 4) and F16 once again contradicts and disagrees her *I am sure it was an urn* (line 5). Her contradiction is very confident since she emphasizes that she has watched it a thousand times and she is sure about it. These assertive opposing statements exchanged between the participants indicate that the female interlocutors in this study do not care about supporting each other's faces through agreements or modality. Instead, they opt to protect their own faces when their statements are openly disagreed. Moreover, this excerpt demonstrates that there is a power play between the participants because nobody intends to give in.

VI. DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that women use three strategies to express their disagreement. The strategies are criticism, challenge and contradiction. These strategies are rarely observed in women's conversation since they prefer supporting one another's ideas [5], [15].

All these three strategies that female participants use are face-threatening acts to both parties who are involved in the process of disagreement [7], [16], [28]. In this study both parties risk their own faces by disagreeing each other. A significant issue in this study is that the interactants do not try to avoid direct disagreement to preserve their faces; they do not have any fears to expose their faces to be threatened. However, female participants in this study react differently to disagreements compared to men. Reference [5] asserts that disagreement is considered as a masculine strategy to absorb friendship. In this study, however, there is no sign of strengthening friendship bonds between women when they disagree with one another. It can be due to the fact that according to [29], female friends are expected to listen to each other non-critically in order to show their support. In this study, although the participants disagree, they still regard it as something to be avoided. This is well demonstrated in the immediate defensive responses of the participants against their friends' disagreement. It can be concluded that although all these strategies that they use are face threatening acts, the female participants in this study are willing to take it. However, when their faces are threatened by their friends, they show instant reactions against the disagreements so as to protect their own individual faces.

In terms of the function of disagreement, [5] argues that these strategies as masculine styles can show men's solidarity and mateship. For instance, rapid exchange of arguments among men is an enjoyable act which strengthens their solidarity [5], [15]. However, in this study it is different. These strategies do not play the same function for the female participants because disagreement is usually avoided or

modified by women [16]. Yet, the question still remains on the reason why the female interactants in this study use disagreements in their conversation. It seems that the participants aim to show their power and domination. They criticize, challenge and contradict in order to emphasize that they are right and in some cases more knowledgeable. Power struggle is also observed between the female participants who disagree and the participants who do not intend to surrender to their friends' disagreement. Moreover, arguments are not accompanied by laughter as in men's conversation [5] because women take disagreements seriously and do not consider it an enjoyable activity. This is evident in all the excerpts extracted where laughter is not observed.

VII. CONCLUSION

There are some stereotypical features which are attached to both genders in the domain of language. There are many studies that suggest that women and men follow some linguistic patterns. However, this study has challenged the stereotypical features and found that these linguistic features cannot be so typical and may vary based on a range of factors that the interactants face in the context of society. In this study, it is observed that Iranian women are as capable as men to disagree with each other directly. They criticize, challenge and contradict their friends' statements bluntly. It is argued that the social behaviour of people in an interaction can reveal the kind of society that they have come from. For instance, in Iranian society women constantly fight to be free from patriarchal dominant shelter of men [30], [31]. In order to achieve this goal, for many decades Iranian women had to enter into the masculine domains such as economy, politics and so on in order to show their abilities. Their struggle for equal rights in society has made them more vocal and granted them a kind of power which may have influenced their linguistic character and reflected in their encounters [32]. Therefore, the female interactants in this study adopt masculine linguistic behaviour to show their disagreements. Exerting power is so important for the Iranian female participants that preserving one another's face, as a feminine supportive act, loses its significance. However, this finding requires more research to be conducted in Iranian society and also within the societies where women are still in struggle for equal rights. The stereotypical features which are attached to women and their speech should be re-evaluated in different social settings and cultures in order to find out how these features are practiced and how they deviate from the norms.

To conclude, I suggest that based on the linguistic behavior of women in this study the concept of power is not limited to men and is expanded to women's interactions though in a different manner. Therefore, power is an issue that cannot be disregarded while examining language of both women and men.

APPENDIX

Transcription conventions:

- ? Questions or rising intonation
- / A short pause of up to one second

// Interruptions of utterances before they are complete
 CAPITALS Raised voice
 Bold Emphasis
 [] Simultaneous speech
 (xxx) untranscribable utterances
 – Cut-off utterances
 ... Section of transcript omitted
 ::: Vowel or diphthong stretch

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