RE-EXAMINING FEMININITY - THE VOICES OF LEADERSHIP IN MANAGERIAL MEETING DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This paper contends that some of the communicative strategies employed by Malay women academic administrators are the antithesis of expected gendered speech patterns that could be triggered by the demands of leadership as well as an expression of individuality. Their observed communicative patterns contradict gender expectations and breach normative female communicative behavior. This paper chronicles the voices of 3 women academic administrators – as they project their individuality and construct their gender identities that defy gender stereotypes – and from new understandings reexamines the theory of language and gender within the context of managerial meeting discourse. Apart from understanding individual communicative styles of Malay women academic administrators, what this paper aims to demonstrate is the variation in communicative styles that exists within one gender of the same ethnic group, to re-examine the standard dichotic gender paradigm used in language and gender studies and consequently to reaffirm the concept of multiple femininities.

Biodata

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter chronicles the voices of 3 women academic administrators – as they project their individuality and construct their gender identities that defy gender stereotypes – and from new understandings reexamines the theory of language and gender within the context of managerial meeting discourse. Apart from understanding individual communicative styles of Malay women academic administrators, what this chapter aims to demonstrate is the variation in communicative styles that exists within one gender of the same ethnic group, to re-examine the standard dichotic gender paradigm used in language and gender studies and consequently to reaffirm the concept of multiple femininities.

My contention is that some of the communicative strategies employed by my subjects - three Malay women academic administrators - are the antithesis of expected gendered speech patterns that could be triggered by the demands of leadership as well as an expression of individuality. Their observed communicative patterns contradict gender expectations and breach normative female communicative behavior. This may be due to the fact that styles of communication are influenced not only by gender, socio-cultural and organizational expectations of the Malay ethnic culture, but also by the personality of the individual. Due to the ambivalent nature of their communicative behaviour, their styles are not easily described and positioned within the existing gendered language theories. The binary gender system, the foundation on which most gender theories are based, creates several representation problems for this paper. First of all, it does not and cannot accurately describe the array of multiple gendered traits that individuals exhibit (Epstein, 1999; Bem, 1993). And secondly, by denying the existence of a continuum of gender practices, it ostracizes and discriminates those who do not fall neatly into male or female categories and further perpetuate the misconception that men and women belong to 2 homogenous groups of individuals.

My findings will be explained via Butler's gender performativity theory which understands gender not as a simple duality of feminine and masculine roles, but rather as a fluid concept resulting from and materializing through repetitive discursive actions that

are based on cultural norms of femininity and masculinity. Gender is therefore perceived in this chapter as a subjective, but continuous and persistent discursive performance of ourselves as male or female, influenced by our social surroundings and expectations. Rethinking gender as performative allows one to look at the various, sometimes contradictory ways in which a person presents gender. It also accounts for a wider array of gender construction and gender production that reflects, recreates and flouts binary gender categories.

It is first important to briefly examine the development of gender theories in order to better understand Butler's gender performativity theory. Traditionally, the division of human beings into two genders based on the biological differences between males and females has been viewed as one of the most natural, common-sense categories of identity. Thus a biologically sexed male is assumed to be innately masculine, with appropriately masculine appearance, character traits, and behaviors, while females will display appropriately feminine appearance, character traits, behaviours. Communication wise, this creates the illusion and reinforces the belief that men and women innately possess and use different gender-specific communicative features conveyed through their verbal behaviour. By positing an irreducible difference between male and female genders, this polarized binary system however helps us to easily understand and explain the reason behind the misunderstandings and miscommunications between men and women.

Until the 1990s, whilst agreeing on gendered ways of speaking, research on gender and communicative styles, has resulted in the dichotomisation of two approaches known as the Dominance vs Difference Models. Polarisation of gender-linked differences has created a narrow picture of the whole language and gender scenario, assuming that male behavior and male norms are prototypical and women's are substandard, while characterization of men and women as belonging to two different cultures has failed to acknowledge the existence of variation or subcultures within the female and male gender and the diversity of styles existing within each gender grouping.

The 90s however saw a broadening of theorization, favoring anti-essentialist views of gender which not only challenge the definitions of the concept of gender, but has proven flawed the correlation of personal attributes (i.e., gender) with specific forms of speech behavior. Gender-language relation is then understood as culturally constituted and context-dependent and consequently research has started to consider that conversational contexts, linguistic resources, topics and genres do in fact contribute to differences in conversational strategies within and between the two genders.

While agreeing on the idea that gender behaviour is a learned cultural behaviour, Butler questions the notion of natural, biological or true gender identity, and persuasively argues that there is no such thing as a natural gender identity. She contends that culture requires gender to be demonstrated and acted as a natural part of being a man or woman. Through a prescribed system of gendered signs and internalization, gendered bodies are created. She states that "gender is a matter of doing and its effects rather than an inherent attribute, an intrinsic feature." (Butler cited in Allen 1998) This leads to the idea that gender identity, rather than being a stable categorization, is a shifting and fluid concept that comes into being only by virtue of and during our performance. Gender identity therefore comes about as a result of habitually 'doing' socially-prescribed discursive routine or a methodical repetition of communicative acts (Butler in Bahiyah 2003). It is a space where different acts can be performed and enacted to satisfy certain social expectations, freely explored and adopted and adapted according to specific social situation.

Butler's non-essentialist conception of gender puts the naturalness of the physical body in question and offers an entirely new theoretical framework for thinking about gender and identity, namely as ritualized repetition. If gender is indeed performative, then one could potentially "perform" one's gender differently and thereby challenges and deconstructs the binary social construction of gender roles and patterns. Nevertheless, our gender performances are most of the time enacted as a response to our social setting, practice and expectations, which vary according to time, and due to this, gender identities are constantly in a process of adaptation (Claes 1999; Peters 2002). Femininity and masculinity therefore should be seen as concepts that are 'not static but historically and

spatially situated and evolving' (Kenway cited in Peters 2002). This consequently leads to the mutually overlapping constructs of multiple masculinities and multiple femininities

Analysis of the women administrators' linguistic behaviours displays a variety of discursive performances that challenges stereotypical gender traits. They shift between supposedly feminine (cooperative, affiliative, rapport-building) and masculine (competitive, assertive, independent) norms to fulfill managerial needs, to seek consensus, to assert control over length members' turns and to achieve specific meeting objectives. It becomes impossible to fit their communicative styles into the universal feminine mould and to justify their behaviour using the difference, dominance or two-culture models. Gender performativity theory accurately explains how these women administrators "voice" themselves as "gendered" persons by, in essence, performing gender in discursive interaction, that is, in and through language-mediated managerial meeting events.

GENDER AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Women represent less than 10% of those in managerial positions vis-à-vis men and due to this, the issue of whether there are gender differences or whether gender does affect the ability to manage and communicate effectively has become an important concern (Powell cited in Korabik 2000). Gender has become a salient factor when it comes to explaining and justifying different styles of leadership and communication in organizational management which are generally based on social and cultural expectations with regard to gendered behaviour. Some studies have supported the long-standing assumption, based on cultural stereotypes, that women have a more cooperative orientation than men and that men are more competitive than women (Rubin & Brown, 1975). When interacting women are expected to communicate in ways that stress cooperation, collaboration and sensitivity to others' feelings, while men in ways that exert control, establish status and maintain independence. A woman who properly fits into this gender-specific role is appreciated for her ability to be 'feminine' but, should she challenge any of these stereotypical expectations, she is criticized and considered to be too 'masculine' and

hence, dubbed 'the iron lady'. Where there are differences in communicative performance and actions thus creating a clash between what is expected of a woman and what is demanded of management, they are greatly emphasized and the women subjected to gender scrutiny. As a result, their behaviour deemed them deviant.

Research have found that we are evaluated less favorably by people around us when we behave in ways that are incongruent with our gender roles than when we behave in a gender-congruent manner (Korabik, Baril & Wilson, 1993). Butler sees these gender moulds as an illusion; something that does not exist in any universal form. There are so many variations when it comes to identity that it becomes impossible to fit into one particular gender i.e. being either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. While we do come across characters who appear to fit into the prescribed traditional roles, majority reveal otherwise; our behaviour, influenced by social setting and communicative tasks, have demonstrated that absolute 'femininity' or 'masculinity' are just not possible. In the context of performing gender – constructing gender through repetitive pre-conceived discursive actions - most women and many men have at their disposal a variety of conversational and speech skills, any one of which they may draw upon, depending on the the situational context, their purposes and the roles they are playing. Thus, communicative differences are context-specific and when differences are socially created, they also may be socially altered. As a result, there is enormous diversity in communication style and practices within each gender group, each distinguishing and producing different gender identity while deconstructing and undermining the dominant values of culturally prescribed gender roles. Butler's view is supported by research that highlight the existence of multiple strategies associated with both masculine and feminine concepts in the speech repertoire of their subject, ranging from engineering students to decision makers in both public and private institutions (Bem 1993; Bergvall 1996; Cameron 1996; Peters 2002; Kirschmeyer 2002; Bahiyah 2003). The manipulation of masculine and feminine communication traits is not solely influenced by the gender of the speaker, but rather is used as a means for establishing authority, solidarity and a tool for accomplishing specific situational tasks such as finding solutions, closing a topic, regulating turns and controlling floor length.

It is important for us to be aware of the privileging of behaviours associated with the masculine and the devaluing of behaviours associated with the feminine. While this heightens the polarization of gender roles, it also denies the overlaps, similarities and the great variation in communicative practices and that exists within gender grouping. It is time that masculine and feminine be perceived not as socially constructed gendered values, but as a variety of communicative and behavioral traits that are gender neutral and can be utilized and manipulated to satisfy different needs at different times and with different people.

Gender and organizational expectations have given rise to multiple role demands that do conflict and challenge prescribed gendered behaviour and because of this, the complex linguistic behaviours of the women administrators provide an important site for the investigation of the role of language in the demystification of gender role stereotypes and the enactment of gender identity.

The next section defines masculinity and femininity within the context of communication and describes the traits that are normally associated with each concept.

MASCULINITY and FEMININITY

It is important to differentiate between the biological and psychological traits of gender. Biologically, Hoftede uses the terms male and female; for the social, culturally determined roles, masculine and feminine. The latter terms are relative and not absolute: a man can behave in a feminine way and a woman in a 'masculine' way' (Hofstede 1991: 80). There is a common worldwide trend with regards the distribution of gender roles. Men are expected to be assertive, competitive and tough while women more concerned with nurturing roles, people, relationships and the living environment (Hofstede 1991: 81). Masculinity can therefore be associated with assertiveness and competition and femininity with nurturance, a concern for relationships and the environment.

An individual who displays cognitive masculine characteristics tend to be assertive with a strong sense of independence, is more concerned with expressing individual traits (Kim 1995: 155) and has the ability to make independent decisions. This independence correlates with Hoftede's (1991) individualism-collectivism dimension in which an individualist is classified not by group membership but by his or her distinct individual characteristics. An independent individual hence, focuses more on being unique and promoting one's own goal (Marcus and Kitayama in Kim, 1995). The interest of that particular individual towers over the interest of any group (e.g. family, colleagues etc.) due to weak power relations between the members. Therefore there is always the urge to stand out and to dominate social surroundings. Individualist perceives passive and inhibited behavior as a weakness.

Individuals who display cognitive feminine traits tend to be more group oriented and are very much focused on preserving and promoting harmony in relationships. They are more concerned with the feelings, needs, wishes and preference of others than their own. The interest of the majority prevails over the interest of an individual in which the principle components of the self are one's relationships to others. This interdependency is labeled as collectivist by Hoftede (1991) who perceives being assertive and self-centred as a weakness. There is a strong desire to avoid loss of face and to be accepted by not imposing and by avoiding hurting the other's feelings.

These general cultural differences in self-concept have implications for cross-cultural preferences in conversational styles. Kim (1995) suggests that due to concern for not hurting the hearer's feelings and for minimizing imposition, an interdependent individual tends to use language which could create and maintain harmony and closeness in relationships. Conversely, an independent self chooses to focus on the clarity of messages due to importance placed on the quality of being clear, unambiguous and concise in interaction. The language therefore is informative, brief and straight to the point.

Nevertheless, since the nature of human behaviour is complicated and varies from situation to situation, it is common for a person to find herself adopting the independent

self in one situation and the interdependent self in a few others. Many researchers (Colwill & Townsend 1999; Gill 1999; Koshal, Gupta & Koshal 1998; Kim 1995) have realized the advantages of being able to adapt one's style to both the feminine and masculine traits of communication. These notions of masculinity and femininity are not to be seen as contradictory but complementary to each other. In communication, balance is crucial but flexibility is even more important. One may be able to survive using just one mode of communication, but to succeed one has to have the ability to switch appropriately (Gill 1999) – to have the skills of shifting or even combining different modes of interaction depending on to whom, why and when one communicates.

Table 1 Masculine and Feminine traits which influence Communication Styles

Masculine traits	Feminine Traits
Independent Self	**Interdependent Self**
Emphasis on the 'I'	Emphasis on the 'we'
Decisive and assertive, ambitious and tough	Consultative and team-oriented
	Nurturing and concerned with relationships
Achievement-oriented and competitive	
Need For Dominance	**Need For Approval**
Control and dominate social situations	Concerned about other's opinions
Works with aims to fulfil personal objectives	Works with aims to please institutional objectives
Task-Oriented focus	**Social-relational Focus**
Concerned with getting one's way (clarity)	Concerned with face support, interpersonal relations
	Needs of others, and of one's relationship

	with them
	(Concern for not hurting the hearer's feelings, concern for minimising imposition)
	Seeks agreement and tries to respond to everyone's needs
Resolves conflict by fighting them out	**Resolves Conflict by Compromise and Negotiation**
Frames conflict in terms of individual rights that must be respected in the relationship	Assumes connection between the self and others and frames conflict resolution in terms of the relationship
Steps back from the situation and appeals to a rule or reason from a principle, to resolve conflict, valuing logic, rationality and control and often losing sight of the needs of others	Show tolerance of, compassion for and responsiveness to others
	Emphasises understanding and communication through listening and speaking and speaking and hearing and being heard

(Hofstede 1991; Kim Min Sun 1995 cited in Gill 1999)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MEETINGS IN ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

The reason behind the choice of meetings as the context in which discourse will be analyzed comes from the fact that academic administrators spend the second largest proportion of their time in scheduled and unscheduled meetings, making it the second

most frequent activity after deskwork (Titus Oshagbemi; 1998, pg 73-76). This finding was based on an empirical study in which the data, comprising a joint questionnaire and diary method, was collected from a total of 285 randomly selected academic administrators from Nigerian and British universities. On average, academic administrators work for the total of 41-43 hours a week, including the time spent on official functions, working at home and with other organizations. 44% of that time is spent of deskwork alone (paperwork including reading, writing, grading assignments, and figure work) followed by 25-29% spent on scheduled (planned) meetings and 7-11% on unscheduled (unplanned) meetings. The remaining time (16-24%) is spent on telephoning, travelling, computing and other miscellaneous events. Roughly the time spent on meetings comes to a total of 32-40% per week.

THE STRUCTURE OF MEETINGS

David Kieffer (1988) wrote that 'there are few visible bases on which to make judgements regarding leadership and managerial skills, and the ability to manage meetings is as accurate a reflections of such skills as one can find' (pg. 20). How one handles meetings will be a direct reflection of one's ability and skills in dealing with the requirements and expectations of being a leader. Judgements will be made by peers and members on an individual's ability to handle people and problems in a meeting that would consequently form the basis of judgement for any future advancement. Meetings therefore become an important window through which the strength and the abilities of the leader will be interpreted as signs of competence, confidence, authority and success or otherwise (Kieffer, 1988). And with so much judgements and evaluations being made about a person at a meeting, a systematic assessment of effective meeting strategies, skills and conduct with regard to communication has to be made in order to ensure the success and effectiveness of every meeting carried out.

A meeting is defined as 'a gathering and assembly of persons convened for the purpose of conducting a business in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions'

(Surjit Singh, 2001). Meetings are also 'the forum where current issues and ways forward are aired and clarified, namely processes that are effective precursors to positive decision-making and implementation" (Kakabadse and Kakabadse 1999). There is always a two-fold agenda in any meeting. The first is to address the actual content or 'intellectual' agenda. This includes accomplishing the objectives of the meeting, creating opportunities, devising strategies, formulating positive changes and reaching decisions. The second is to satisfy the emotional agenda, i.e. the attitudes, feelings, motives and expectations of the participants (Brown, 1996). There has to be an even balance between these two agendas in order for a meeting to be successful, intellectually and emotionally. For this a leader has to learn to conduct herself with a degree of linguistic flexibility, to achieve objectives while taking into consideration the feelings of the other participants.

ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

In this study, the term 'academic administrators/leaders' refer to academicians who hold formal administrative and management positions within the higher education organizational system (Oshagbemi, 1988). The positions include heads of departments, deans, deputy deans, directors and vice-chancellors. Being an academic administrator also means that she or he is directly in charge of some of the academic and administrative staff within her or his department. The nature of the academic administrator's job involves carrying out a great amount of administrative and management tasks such as presenting proposals to Senate, preparing budget and interviewing prospective lecturers, attending scheduled and unscheduled meetings, teaching, doing research and consultation work (Oshagbemi, 1988). Academic decision-makers have been observed to possess (i) personal attributes such as intelligence, vision and integrity, (ii) interpersonal abilities such as empathy, being cooperative and open and (iii) technical management skills such as problem-solving, the achievement of institutional aims, making decisions and resolving conflicts (Kaplowitz, 1986).

THE SUBJECTS

This study concerns Malay women academic administrators in the domain of higher education in Malaysia. The question is why focus on Malay women? Apart from reducing the ethnic variables, Malay women appeared to occupy more decision-making positions in public institutions of higher education compared to women of other ethnic groups in Malaysia. Therefore, their complex linguistic behaviours provide a rich source of data for the investigation of the role of language in the demystification of gender role stereotypes and the enactment of gender identity. What this study also aims to demonstrate is the variation in communicative styles that exists within one gender of the same ethnic group and hence to reaffirm the concept of multiple femininities.

The three Malay women administrators work in different faculties at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The reason for selecting a single institution was for the purpose of reducing the variable of differing values and beliefs of the organizational culture. Although Malays in general are thought to observe a common set of values and practices, there will nevertheless be differences when it comes to the values and practices of individuals.

TABLE 3.1 Profiles of the Three Malay Women Academic Administrators

	Age	Education background	Years in current leadership position	Size of department
A 1	49	AMK, GSM, MBBS, MHPEd, AM (Overseas qualification)	6	7 academic and 3 admin staff
A 2	43	SmSa (UKMalaysia), MA, PhD (Overseas qualification	3	9 academic and 1 admin staff

A 3	43	BEc, MBA, PhD (Overseas qualification)	3	10 academic and 1 admin staff

THE DATA

The data for this research consists of the transcriptions of six meeting interactions that were recorded without any intervention by the researcher. The transcription is produced according to a set of conventions (Schiffrin, 1995) in an attempt to reproduce the in situ interaction upon which the analysis will be carried out. The time, the date and the number of participants in the meetings will be specified in the table below. Permission to observe the meetings was given on the condition that absolute confidentiality is maintained. Due to this issue of confidentiality, the topics covered in the agenda will not be explicitly revealed. The meetings averaged a total of two and a-half-hours each and were observed over a period of three months. The time lapse between the two meetings for each of the administrators is about one to two months.

TABLE 3.2 The Details of the Six Meetings

	Date	Time	Number of participants
A 1			
Meeting 1	22nd May 2001	8.30 a.m.	8
Meeting 2	6th July 2001	8.30 a.m.	10
A 2			
Meeting 1	18th May 2001	9.30 a.m.	11
Meeting 2	17th August 1001	10 a.m.	10
A 3			

| Meeting 1 | 30th May 2001 | 9 a.m. | 2 |
| Meeting 2 | 13th July 2001 | 2.30 a.m. | 11 |

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The method of analysis for this research focuses on the detailed process of describing and interpreting the communicative strategies present in the speech of the three Malay women administrators.

The method of analysis takes the form of:

a. Selecting utterances and classifying them according to the six language functions of a meeting. The act of selecting and focusing on six of the most common language functions in a meeting are for the purpose of analyzing the ways in which these are used by the women administrators (1) to achieve meeting objectives and (2) as a means of conversational management and control.

   The six language functions and forms in the context of a meeting include:

   1. Starting a meeting
   2. Presenting and supporting opinions
   3. Making suggestions
   4. Agreeing and disagreeing
   5. Questioning
   6. Compromising

b. Analyzing the communicative strategies with reference to their conformity to or deviation from expected gender behaviour. The linguistic configurations of utterances will be interpreted against the communicative norms and expected gender roles. The findings would consequently confirm or debunk the contention of this study.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE CONVERSATIONAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND THE COMMUNICATIVE STYLES OF THE THREE ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

Below is an overview of the findings in relation to how the six language functions are linguistically carried out by the three administrators.

Start of meeting

In all the six meetings it was observed that asymmetrical relationships between the administrators and the other members were initially established during the 'starting of meeting phase' through the formalization of the roles of the chairperson vis-à-vis the other members, the act of verifying the agenda, of allocating talking turns to the members, of determining the sequence of reporting and of directing the next course of action.

The differences however lie in the level of formality of their opening utterances. Administrator 1 (A1) has the tendency to be informal in her opening via utterances such as 'shall we start?' and abrupt in her act of allocating turns 'okay, we skip of odit and kualiti'. Administrator 2 (A2) however appeared more formal in both of her openings, which were made in accordance to the Islamic and the Malay ways (*Assalamualaikum and Selamat datang ke mesyuarat JBMC yg ke 28*) [Asalamualaikum and welcome to the 28th JBMC meeting). Administrator 3 (A3) on the other hand was informal in her first meeting but formal in the second. The informality was however largely due to the absence of the majority of the members and the presence of only one member which turned the meeting into an informal discussion. The differences in the formality level had nevertheless no negative impact on the asymmetrical relationship between the administrators and their members.

Questioning

Questions appeared to be an effective stategy in establishing and maintaining authority and were most commonly used by the three leaders in accomplishing the tasks of (1) starting the meeting e.g shall we start? (2) initiating a topic e.g. 'seminar sehari, macamana pengerusi?' [what about the one-day seminar] (3) closing a topic e.g. 'this one is done eh? (4) initiating and terminating a turn e.g,', 'ada apa-apa lagi masalah?' [is there any more problem?] (5) obtaining information e.g. 'untuk apa ini?' [what is this for?] by initiating the first part of a question-answer adjacency pairs (6) managing and monitoring the progress of a topic by controlling and guiding speakers to the meeting's objectives (7) addressing and fulfilling the intellectual agenda of the meeting which include devising strategies, restating the objectives of programs and reaching decisions.

The differences in questioning however can be seen in the way questions were imposed in the form of interruptions. Most instances of interruptive questions can be found in the data of A1. Questions were quickly inserted into the turn of the current speaker before he/she could manage to complete his/her turn or utterance. This usually terminated the turn of the current speaker and gained A1 the floor. Content is observed to have priority over the right of the speaker and her authority and knowledge appeared to justify the intrusions or interruptions. A2 was seen to have imposed several interruptive questions for the purpose of clarifying information. Although the interruptions were made in the middle of the current speaker's turn they did not however impose a change of topic. No interruption was observed in the data of A3. She was observed to speak only after the current speaker had completed his/her turn in both formal and informal meetings.

Making suggestions

The language function of suggestion was observed to be utilized by A1 and A2 as a strategy for topic closure. Both of them concluded the topic in progress by suggesting

some activity or tasks that could be carried out in the future. This act also functioned as a response to what had been discussed and consequently signalled the closing of the topic in progress. The act of projecting some future activities to be undertaken by the other members clearly established the leaders as the person with the authority within the meeting.

The difference between A1 and A2 however, lies in the structure of their suggestions. A1's suggestions were normally made in an imperative manner, whereas A2 would use phrase such as 'ada rasanya lebih baik' which if translated will read as 'would'nt it be better if'. A2's tentative suggestion implies flexibility, is less dogmatic and leaves room for further improvements. The results of both styles are observed to produce different types of responses. A1's suggestions were usually straight away followed by a preferred agreement while A2's were firstly followed by suggestions from other members and then only by a consensual agreement. The structure of A3's suggestions was similar to A2's. The difference between the two leaders could be seen through the response. A3 is observed to have received the dispreferred (unexpected) response in several instances. Refusals were made by the other members in an indirect manner which resulted in several lengthy and prolonged discussions. The fact that the refusals were made in a tactful and discreet way indicated the respect that the members have for A3, as to be frank and direct in expressing negative responses is to be disrespectful and impolite to the addressee in the Malay culture.

Presenting opinions

The long length of turns and monologues in presenting opinions are very much linked to the demonstration of authority. It appeared that the approach that the leaders used in asserting opinions or ideas contributed to the length of turn they used and the frequency of monologues in the meetings. A1's deductive approach to discourse demonstrated a direct introduction of an opinion/idea followed by supporting details for the argument. The reason the idea was introduced at the start of an utterance was so that it will be clear what the relevance of the following facts, information and anecdotes are. Apart from that,

the approach also aimed at including and generating participation from members in the decision-making process. There seemed to be a direct correlation between A1's individual control of ideas and topic and her presence as an authority figure with her deductive discourses and the frequent occurrence of monologues in her meetings.

Although A2 and A3's presentation of ideas and opinions followed the deductive approach, their utterances were always interspersed with suggestions or questions from the other members of the department. Their ways of giving opinion placed emphasis on the group's contribution, turning the discourse into a negotiatian process and a discussion rather than an imposition of ideas. This finding appears to support the idea that feminine style of communication tend to build on each other's contribution with the preference for continuity rather that discontinuity (Maltz and Borker, 1982) resulting therefore in a lengthy discussion (Aries, 1976). Collaborative interaction based on reasons and appropriateness in relationship gradually led to mutual decisions in both of A2 and A3's meetings.

Agreeing and Disagreeing

Next, the functions of agreeing and disagreeing play significant roles in maintaining and asserting authority. It was found that A1 had a greater tendency to use strong agreement and disagreement e.g. *'that's right, more systematic'* and *'don't come with penceramah (speaker) first'* in her communication with the other members. A2 on the other hand, appeared to be more balanced in her usage of strong disagreements employing them in response to unreasonable demands only. Unlike A1, A2's disagreements are often based on group consensus rather than on her own individual opinion. It is also interesting to note the following suggestions following her disagreements. They worked as a compromise that lessened the impact of the disagreement.

A3's agreements and disagreements were always diplomatically and tentatively expressed, implying flexibility to changes and other member's opinions. In addition, they were always backed up by solid reasoning. The final decisions nevertheless, were usually

based on group consensus and considerations despite her position as the person with authority. The constant emphasis on 'we' pointed to a consultative and team-oriented approach to decision making.

Compromising

The act of compromising was observed in all the six meetings. Two opposing views would be put forward, each followed by corresponding reasoning. Negotiation based on appropriateness, suitability and past experiences would take place between the leaders and the other members, ending with a compromise between the two ideas. While the ideas may or may not come from the leaders, the act of compromising was always carried out by the leaders. Consensus might have formed the basis for the decision, but the final call was seen to reside with the three leaders. This particular act together with the act of compromising further reinforced their authority within the meetings.

THE INFLUENCE OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY TRAITS ON THE COMMUNICATIVE STYLES OF THE THREE ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

The six communicative strategies are next analyzed within the context of masculinity and femininity. Firstly, the communicative styles of the three leaders differ with regard to their feminine and masculine traits of communication and consequently, these traits were observed to have a lot of influence on the way each language function was carried out. A1's frequent display of masculine characteristics was demonstrated through her open and goal-oriented interaction with her members. This includes the usage of 'no' in disagreements, her use of interruptions and latchings as strategies for turn-taking and topic control and her strategy of questioning which controls the development of the topic in progress. The act of logical reasoning and reaching decisions appeared to tower over the concern for harmony. This, as a result, led to conversational dominance, which was sustained via her deductive approach in opinion-giving. This also contributed to the unequal distribution of turns and floor lengths between her and the other members. In

addition, her frequent monologues strongly implied the presence of an independent and self-reliant decision-maker. While A1's communicative style may slant towards masculinity, there were nevertheless instances of rapport-building traits. Nurturing features were present in several light-hearted moments that included the act of bantering and exchanging private jokes between her and several of the members at the meeting. These did not only create breaks in between discussions, but they also strengthened existing interpersonal relationships.

A2's communicative style was observed to have contained both the cognitive masculine and feminine features of communication. Masculine features that emphasized control and dominance were demonstrated through several direct head-on disagreements and interruptions that terminated the turn of the current speaker, while feminine features that stressed on interpersonal relationship and team-orientedness could be seen through her consultative method of decision making, the unanimous decisions and the evenly regulated turns and floor occupation. Monologues were rarely observed, interactions were rather frequently alternated with elicitations and direct nominations of members for participation and feedback.

A3's communicative style is the opposite of A1's. Analysis revealed frequent display of the cognitive feminine traits that could be seen through a very consistent pattern of collaborative interactions. Consensus formed the basis of every decision and the normal pattern of discussions consisted of repeated cycles of suggestions, disagreements and reasonings. Discussions therefore tended to be lengthy, but productive nonetheless, and geared toward fulfilling institutional goals and pleasing others' needs. Her communicative demeanor was always accommodating, supportive and cooperative but never competitive. Suggestions were always considered while disagreements always came in the form of compromise and logical reasonings. Exchange of gossip were observed and at one point encouraging suggestions and adjustments were made for one member whose article was rejected. This interdependent communicative behavior by A3 emphasized more on maintaining rapport and appropriateness in relationship rather than

on satisfying her own individual goal and it seemed to have influenced the others to reciprocate in the same way towards her.

PERFORMING GENDER THROUGH MANAGERIAL MEETING DISCOURSE

Academic Manager 1 (A1)

A1 tended to predominantly **display a lot of traits associated with masculinity** in her linguistic behavior. Her language was always geared toward accuracy and clarity in discussing matters.

The goal of achieving systematic and practical results appeared to result in a clear and open interaction between her and her members e.g. *(1) Um, just take the main one and then they can divide lah underneath it. Kalau tidak nampak macam kita tak organize [if not we would appear disorganized] (2) So what do we need to do, okay what area. Lets select an area.and then we collect data on that area. Limited lah dulu, jangan banyak sgt [limit the area, not too many]. What, do you want to do academic staff? Then we can do everything under academic staff, including penerbitan, you can compare academic staff like that. You benchmark.(3) so I think we try to do this by explaining to the science faculty dulu[first] what is required and so on and then we bring them together, how about that?.*

Disagreements were always made in an outspoken and assertive manner e.g. *Jangan! [Don't] You CALL the meeting. You are the chairman what.. chairman ada kuasa [chairman has the power].*

A direct 'no' will be used in response to something which she did not agree to e.g. *No..no I think we should see the paper I think we should somehow see the paper together with Dr S first before dibawa ke MP [..before they are brought to MP].*

This act would immediately be backed up by a reason e.g. *(1) Tak, we have to minute. Besok susah kita tak tahu kan. So I think what we'll do. Because you have looked at it, you ask the perunding to kemas-kemas. [no, we have to minute. If not, it will be difficult for us..you ask the consultant to tidy it up] (2) . Okey this again eh I want to see systematic planning eh Z..ah this one ah because ah straight away we call people and*

and tell them them ah diorang terkejut tau [because straight away we call people and tell them and they will be taken aback].

The way in which disagreements were made was systematic. It provided the other members with a clear direction to her thoughts and objectives. A1 knew what she wanted from each of her demands and so time was not wasted with ambiguity or doubtfulness. Reasons on the other hand were always justified by an insight into a situation that appeared to have come from her contact with people, the meetings she attended and from her general experience of being a leader.

Information and anecdotes were conveyed to her members as a way of garnering their support and agreement for a certain proposal or suggestion made by her. A1 would always come up with a new idea pertaining to a matter that was being reported by members e.g. *Saya punya, my mission is I want UKM to be the example pada other universities. Pasal masa saya bentangkan, semua org tengok, what is it, how is it you know, but I told them how it would be done you know. cara the external & the internal. How do they work together to maintain the quality, but dalaman pun not everybody have a system. They may have somebody assign eh tapi universiti buat mungkin dia takde. So I think we should try and show we have PPA [My mission is I want UKM to be the example to other universities. Because when I proposed, everyone paid attention, what is it, how is it you know, but I told them how it would be done you know. The internal and external ways. How do they work together to maintain the quality, but internally not everybody has a system. They may have somebody assigned eh but most likely them don't have it at university level. So I think we should try and show we have PPA].*

The objective of any interaction between A1 and the other members was always result oriented. Clarity of information and systematic planning towered over the concern for feelings and for imposition. Her strong reaction to matters was almost always immediately displayed following the end of somebody's turn. A1 latched on to the previous turn and wasted no time in voicing her opinion regarding a particular matter. Control/maintenance of topic and topic initiation was almost always held by A1. Zimmerman and West (1975) claimed that it is men who tend to use more mechanism for controlling topics of conversation and topic initiation that would usually lead to

conversational dominance. A1's linguistic characteristic reflected this aspect of communication and she did end up dominating the floor in the first half of the meeting. Her authority was very evident from the way she directed the outcome of a topic towards what she thought would be a good and systematic idea or plan. Conversational dominance was also displayed through the unequal distribution of turns and floor lengths between A1 and the other members in the meetings.

A1's achievement-oriented approach in discussion was also demonstrated through her frequent interruptions, her wh-questions (e.g. Why did you go to langkawi for? Where do they get the input? Whose group was it that did it?) and her proposals were always substantiated by her personal experience and contact with people.

Nearly all of her opinions were preceded by 'I think' that was spoken in a firm and decisive manner. All presentation of ideas was followed by a reason or justification and ended with a personal evaluation e.g. (1) *yes,, yg dulu tu I know, tapi sekarang kita dah suruh lantik official. Dulu kita train aja diorang pegi fakulti. Buat apalah nak buat kan in terms of fakulti, but now we are more structured. Kita dah suruh diorang namakan. This is the people we should train. More people but the people yg diorang namakan. I- I think it should be like that [yes, I am aware of the previous one, but now we have directed them to officially appoint. Before we trained them at faculty. Why should we do it in terms of faculty? But now we are more structured. We have asked them to name the people. These are the people we should train. More people but those who have been selected. I- I think it should be like that] (2) Ini [this is] really intellectual work you know. It's not – I've not seen this anywhere else. Okay.*

A1 tended to control the direction of the meeting by her explicit display of disagreement, approval, and opening and closing of topics. At times, A1 will ask her members of their opinions but most of the time, decisions made were based on her judgment and experience. She could be said to work with the aim of fulfilling a set of personal objectives that was thought to fulfill the individual project's aims and users' needs.

There were rarely any explicit displays of either disagreement or agreement from the members of the department. Agreements to A1 suggestions and ideas however were usually indicated by the other members through (1) a repetition of ideas (line 103-107 '*kita cairkan semua dan adakan perlantikan ketua penjaminan. Ni kalau boleh kita structure ni dan kita terangkan, dan kita guna mereka ni*' *[we dissolve everything and elect a head for certification. If possible we structure and explain and we utilize them]*; line 201 '*oh maknanya perlantikan sampai persaraan*' *[oh it means appointment until retirement]*; line 1820 '*Research in teaching. Why not?*'; line 1982 '*Okay promosi.. pengambilan pelajar*' *[okay, promotion..student intake]* ; line 2146 '*Yeah, very aggressive*') (2) direct support or agreement and evaluation (line 356 '*Okay*' ; line 558 '*I will work*' ; line 559 '*Yes, for both, cause the idea is good- the idea is good*' ; line 184 '*Okay, boleh*'. *[okay, it is possible])* (3) simplification of idea (line 157 '*Ikut tanggungjawab*' *[according to responsibilities]*) (4) minimal response such as 'uhuh', 'ah' and 'uhm' and (5) tentative and silent acceptance of ideas and tasks.

Due to her task-oriented approach to matters, language used in discussion was focused on the purpose of conveying information and presenting and supporting her opinions in the most clear and precise manner possible. There was therefore a strong display by A1 on her need to be perceived as an independent, self reliant and rational decision-maker.

There appeared to be very little concern for maintaining harmony or appropriateness in relationship as well as on what others may think of her actions and decisions. The emotional agenda of the meeting i.e. satisfying the attitude and feelings of the other members were only addressed when the expectations or interpretation of the members matched up with hers. Otherwise, the act of logical reasoning and reaching decisions was given more priority than the act of satisfying emotional needs. A1's thoughts were always clearly articulated and therefore less time was spent on interpreting the others' minds and intentions.

Academic Administrator 2 (A2)

Interestingly, there are linguistic evidence that show A2 to be clearly **shifting between feminine and masculine communicative features** when she was chairing the meeting. It is found that whenever any disagreement was made, it was made with an unmistakable assertiveness supported by certain considerations for the other members in mind. Several disagreements were made with two of the members in order to arrive at a more balanced result and to be fair to the other existing members of the department. Here, a member's requests were rejected in favour of a more logical arrangement that would benefit several people at the same time and serve the situation better (line 541 *Z: tapi ada satu kumpulan. Boleh kita co-teach ke?[but there is only one group. Can we co-teach instead?] S: Ah tak payahlah kalau satu kumpulan sahaja* [if there is only one group, then there is no need to co-teach]; line 548 *Z: I minat macam sastera, terjemahan boleh lah [I am interested in literature, translation] S: Tak apa. I mean, you should be able to teach [It is okay. I mean, you should be able to teach]*). It appeared the interest of the majority prevails over the interest of any one individual. Here, she appeared to be more focused on fulfilling the needs of a situation in which there was an uneven distribution of the workload to the members. Her decisions were therefore based on an arrangement that served the needs of the majority with the least imposition on each member as possible. Her interest in preserving the balance between work and relationship between each and every member gives the impression of a group oriented leadership e.g. (*Kita lihat pada beban tugas pada semester pertama. Saya cuba utk menyelesaikan masalah beban tugas ni , tapi saya rasa sangat susah eh, sebab saya pun pertama kali mengendalikan beban tugas jabatan ini. Jadi saya ingin mendapatkan feedback dpd ahli2 lah untk menentukan beban tugas masing-masing. [Lets look at the workload for the first semester. I have tried to solve the problem of workload but I found it difficult because this is my first time handling this department. So I want to get your feedback from all of you to determineyour individual workload]*).

A2's decisions also seemed to be founded on the principles of fairness and efficiency. She was not afraid to assert her displeasure and disagreement whenever she

thought that a member was being unreasonable with his/her question/demand. This was demonstrated in lines 253-262 '*Sorry to interrupt ye, tapi saya rasa masalah ini dibincangkan sebelum. Disini bukan tempat utk membincangkan lagi tentang ah tapi saya rasa terpulang pd Pn K pun. Dalam su ..kertas kerja apa surat tu ada menyatakan dia punya band kan*'[Sorry to interrupt, but I think this problem has been discussed earlier. This is not the place to still discuss the issue ah but I think it is up to Mrs K. In the working paper er letter it did state the band, right?] . Her concern at that moment was with accomplishing other important agenda and not to regress to discussing resolved matters. Face-saving hence appeared to be the last thing on her mind at that particular instance. The language employed was one that was blunt and straight to the point. Loss of face could have happened but was not shown by the receiver. The importance of not wasting precious time was stressed and Z was referred to the person in charge of the placement test. Basically, whenever there was a demand that threatened the overall balance of the meeting and group's outcome, language used was one that was geared toward restoring balance and creating practical results.

What can be said about A2 was that, while priority was placed on the harmonious balance of the time, agenda and members' needs, she would not hesitate to assert her authority whenever there was a situation that called for it. Most of the time decisions were made based on a discussion among members, for example during the distribution of courses and workload. A2 admitted that she found the task difficult and asked for the help of the members in distributing the courses and classes. Decisions made were based on equal distribution of classes and compromise between members and situations. Language was clear and focused on the clarity of the message most of the time. Whenever there was ambiguity in information, most of it appeared to have originated from the uncertainty of the members of the department and not from A2. The final decisions were usually articulated by A2 after some sort of agreement had been achieved between the members and her.

There was an emphasis on the 'we' in the meeting displayed through her consultative and team-oriented approach to decision-making. But on the other hand, there

was also strong evidence of a decisive, assertive and achievement-oriented style of communicating demonstrated by A2. There wasn't any strong display of floor domination from A2 in any on-going discussion. Instead she let her members be the judge of each situation. Decisions on the last word however resided with her but only based on what had been discussed and deliberated by the members. While she may be attentive to the needs and opinions of her members, A2's linguistic behavior also revealed an individual who decided and solved problems based on logic, previous experiences and rationality.

Academic Administrator 3 (A3)

A3 displayed a lot of characteristics that were in tandem with **femininity**. If we look at the way decisions were made and the way discussions were conducted, a very consistent pattern of collaborative behavior emerged. Decisions were usually based upon an amalgamation of reasons and arguments that culminated in a consensus rather than based on one single authority. A clear example would be when they were deciding on cutting down on the number of reviewers (lines 427-574. See Appendix 1). Here, the topic was introduced by A3 followed by suggestions, rejections, logic reasoning and finally ending with a general agreement. Responses to suggestions were always tactfully made by A3 and the others to protect the face of the speakers. For example when someone put forward a suggestion, evaluation would be made and feasibility assessed. The suggestions would be accepted, even though sometimes there were strong reasons for rejection, but with a certain condition to be fulfilled. She would always take into consideration the speaker's proposals and preference, while at times sacrificing hers (lines 5-95. See Appendix 2).

This interdependent communicative behavior by A3 emphasized more on maintaining rapport and appropriateness in relationship rather than on satisfying her own individual goal. Her style was consultative and team oriented, formulating decisions on carefully deliberated evidence and arguments. She is also a person who is concerned about the opinion of others regarding her actions. Her communicative behavior portrayed her as someone who decides based on the appropriateness of action on the emotion, status and present situation. The outcome of any topic was geared toward fulfilling institutional

goals and pleasing others' needs. Her communicative demeanor therefore was always accommodating, supportive and cooperative but never competitive. This behavior seemed to have influenced the other members to reciprocate in the same way with her. When A3 recommended an arrangement of articles, J strongly agreed using words that praised and commended A3 on her idea (line 169 '*it's a good arrangement also, because yg the first few semua finance kan.. more or less*'; line 174 '*I think it's a good arrangement*'). Another example occurred when A3 informed F on her decision to nominate J's article for the award. A3 gave her personal opinion on both articles and F immediately agreed with her decision (line 940 '*Okay lah J, J lah*'; line 950 '*A: i though hers has more in that scope. F: Okay boleh boleh' [okay, sure]*). When this happened it reinforced the existing relationship between the three of them.

The proof of close relationship was evident in the gossip and anecdotes they had, usually a side sequence of a topic, about a person (lines 255-258 '*I know his PhD class is conducted so vigorously you heard about that um? The students seem to want to be rid of him*', 263-266 '*I was impressed with him lah. Oh all marketing people are good at impression management. Beware of them hahaha*'). Another came when F received a poor review from one of their reviewers on her article. Both A3 and J tried to find ways to support F by suggesting that (1) she review her paper again (2) she read the comments to see if she disagrees with it (3) they send the paper to another reviewer to be assessed and (4) they nominate another reviewer (5) the reviewer had committed some sort of error when the second reviewer came back with minor revision. Here a situation existed where A3 and J were helping F deal with negative feelings in various supportive and encouraging ways. Both were protective of F's self-esteem.

Although A3 demonstrated many feminine characteristics of communication, she did portray herself as an individual with rational opinions and thoughts. This is evident in her deductive approach to topic introduction in which topics were introduced without delay, followed immediately by a proposal and rationale. Other speakers may have opposing ideas, but A3 never failed to stand by her opinion although in the end decisions were always based on carefully examined thoughts and suggestions.

CONCLUSION

In the course of examining the linguistic behaviours of the three women administrators, 3 different communication styles emerged and it becomes apparent that, despite belonging to the same gender and ethnic group, these women each displayed different combination of communicative behaviour that flout as well as conform to gender roles and expectations. What this reaffirms is the concept of varying feminine identities – multiple femininities; discrete identities that come into being by virtue of these women's linguistic behaviour which are seen to vary across context. Ultimately, what the findings deny is the overly simplistic binary concepts of homogenous male and female.

Consistent with my contention, these women administrators manipulate linguistic expectations of femininity and masculinity, albeit in varying degrees, in their attempt to accommodate to managerial demands i.e. accomplish meeting objectives, to establish authority, and maintain harmony among group members while fulfilling social expectations that others hold against them. Communicative strategies traditionally associated with men and women are observed to be utilized according to needs as well as being a reflection of individual personality. They are assertive and dominant through their interruptions, employing questioning as a turn-taking and topic control strategy, showing direct disagreements and manipulating logic to reach decisions. They also display collaborative efforts in their final decision-making stage through a consultative method of decision making, the unanimous decisions and the evenly regulated turns and floor occupation.

Language that gives priority to the feelings of the members, i.e. consultative and team oriented, were exhibited the most in the communicative behavior of A2 and A3, but the least in A1. On the other hand, language that emphasizes on clarity and achievements (e.g. through interruptions, abrupt topic shifting/ending etc.) could be found to be the most frequent in the communicative behaviour of A1. With A2, bold and commanding language was used only in compromising situations. What is clear is that all three

appeared to have demonstrated the capability to shift between the masculine and the feminine modes of communication. The difference nevertheless lies in the frequency of shifting by the each of the administrators. A1 was found to use achievement oriented language more dominantly than the other two leaders. A3 on the other hand was more inclined towards the consultative type of language, even though there were significant instances of brief, decisive and assertive language features. A2 was however the most balanced of all three. Assertive language features were always complemented with the need to seek overall agreement.

This study strongly suggests that looking at gender as a bipolar system neglects the variety of gender identity constructions that exists within one gender group. Although some gender performances by the administrators conform to binary gender categories, others challenge them. The above analysis of the language functions has shown us how gender is expressed in multiple and contradictory ways. To reiterate the view of Fredrick & Atkinson (1977), Butler (1990) Cameron (1996), Bergvall (1996), Rodino (2002) Bahiyah (2003) reconceptualizing gender as a continuous form of discursive performances helps us see the concept of gender as shifting and mutable whereby one can more accurately explain and represent the many ways in which gender is experienced and constructed without being bound to limiting male and female dichotomy. The ability to consider such diversity, which is an integral part of women's construction of their gendered selves, is lost if expressions are described in ways that perpetuate gender disparity. Furthermore, basing descriptions of gender identity on a binary conceptualization of gender oversimplifies explanations of the ways in which discursive performances operate within, are manipulated, flouted and adapted according to social setting and societal expectations.

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