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不同立場定位之跨性別女性語言風格：

言談及聲調分析

Transgender Woman Speech Style in Different Stance

Positioning: A Discourse and Acoustic Analysis



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摘要

本論文研究跨性別女性社群中的共通話題和言語風格，並分析作為跨性別者的立場和自我定位與音調範圍及平均音調之間的關係。研究中除了探討跨性別女性在社群中的共通話題、言語風格、跨性別潛規則和隱藏跨性別身份行為之間的潛在關係之外，在「誰能夠算是跨性別？」的這個問題上，也研究考察了跨性別女性的身分如何影響角色在不同對話中的說話風格。

本研究從台灣的網路論壇 Dcard（跨性別版）和 Discord 上的台灣跨性別交流區中招募了18名跨性別女性。實驗數據收集包含了點餐社交實驗及一對一面談的兩階段過程。點餐社交實驗提供聲學分析方面的研究數據，而一對一面談中探討到不同主題，提供言談分析方面的研究數據。聲學分析著重在音調變化，而言談分析則深入研究有關跨性別者對於跨性別議題的表達及溝通方式。受試者年齡在21到40歲之間，提供本論文有關跨性別者的聲音材料和社交互動的訪談資料。

本研究揭示了跨性別女性獨特的聲調及言談特色。在聲調分析中顯示跨性別族群音調範圍的寬廣特點。受試者被分為高（H）和低（L）音調組，並在其中分析並討論跨性別者在遇到相關問題時的表達方式和使用規避詞等情況。訪談中探討了各種跨性別概念，且表現了不同的跨性別定義和判斷標準的嚴格程度差異。儘管存在一些研究侷限性，本研究提供了有關跨性別聲音、聲音訓練、言語風格和跨性別轉變過程的寶貴見解，對臨床實踐和社會語言學有深遠影響。

關鍵詞：社會語言學、跨性別、話語、音調、立場、言語風格

ABSTRACT

This research aims to collect common topics and speech styles within trans woman communities, comparing participants' pitch values based on their stances and self-positions. It explores potential connections between common topics, speech styles, transgender norms, and the concealment of transgender identity. In addressing the question: "Who counts as trans?" This study places a specific focus on the stances of trans women, exploring whether these stances might have a relative influence on the speech styles of speakers in different conversational roles.

18 trans women were recruited from popular online forums in Taipei, Taiwan—Dcard (Trans Board) and the Taiwanese Transgender Community on Discord. They aged 21 to 40 and provided insights into transgender voices and social interactions. Data collection includes a social interaction experiment (ordering scenario) and one-on-one interviews covering various topics. Acoustic analysis mainly focused on pitch variations, while discourse analysis focused on the expressions of transgender toward transgender issues.

The finding explores the unique acoustic features of trans women, revealing distinct voices within the community. Acoustic analysis highlights trans voice pitch values, categorizing participants into high (H) and low (L) pitch groups with an obvious voice pitch gap between 159Hz and 172Hz. The result uncovers trans women's cautious expressions and the use of hedging in discussing trans-related issues. The definition discussion also explores transgender concepts, highlighting definitions and strictness levels in different aspects. Despite limitations, the research contributes valuable insights into transgender voices, voice training, speech styles, and the complexities of transitioning, with implications for clinical practices and sociolinguistics.

Keywords: sociolinguistic, transgender, discourse, pitch, stance, speech style

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This sociolinguistic research aims to investigate speech styles of Taiwanese transgender women, specifically focusing on their mean pitch values and stances toward prevalent transgender-related topics. These linguistic features are analyzed in relation to their self-identities and interlocutors. While gender is a common topic in sociolinguistics, studies combining transgender women's self-identity and speech styles are relatively scarce in Taiwan. This research holds significance for future inquiries into voice therapy for transgender women and offers insights into their perspectives on gender self-identification from an insider's viewpoint.

Research Overview

The motivation for this research is inspired by my personal experience. As a trans woman undergoing hormone replacement treatment (HRT) for four years, voice is always a gender traitor. Neither Estradiol Valerate (Estrade) nor Spironolactone (Spirotone), two medications that are applied for increasing estrogen and decreasing androgen in HRT, causes any change in vocal folds. Thus my voice pitch is incongruent with my appearance. However, I practiced raising my voice pitch to speak in a more feminine way to correlate my gender expression with my gender identity. I fit myself in different roles by shifting my speech styles to avoid unnecessary coming out. Namely, I speak in a higher voice pitch when I am having a conversation with interlocutors who are not acquainted with me or those who have less consciousness of my assigned sex. However, I would lower my voice pitch if my interlocutor is one of my family members or friends or someone I need to frequently interact with. Because of these experiences, I hypothesized that speakers' speech styles can shift to fit specific roles. Moreover, I have also noticed that my pitch is lowered when my conversation

gets longer and is raised if my outfit is feminine or neutral, so the length of the conversation and the outfits would also be taken into consideration.

The research background is relevant to two recent transgender issues: trans women's identity concealment and gender self-identification. Voice is one of the most influential factors for people to judge whether a person is a male or female; thus trans women are struggling with their unfeminine voices. Voice incongruity is one of the reasons that causes trans women to conceal their identity, causing speakers to have less confidence to interact with others and bringing mental problems due to the concern of being denied their identity. Trans women's identity concealment is highly related to the concept of passing. "Passing" is a term used in the trans community to describe individuals who are generally perceived as their identified gender without needing to explain or disclose their transgender identity. It signifies the ability of trans people to be recognized by others as their gender identity without overt identification. If trans people are passed enough, they can make less effort to integrate into society; on the other hand, if they are not able to pass, they would possibly suffer from social stigma or rather stay closed. Although medical treatments such as voice feminization therapy (VFT) or voice feminization surgery (VFS) are both provided, most trans women choose to receive the less effective treatment, VFT, instead of VFS due to its high risk to the receiver's vocal folds.

Another essential trans issue is trans women's gender self-identification (免術換證) policy. Nowadays, transgender people are required to undergo sex reassignment surgery (SRS), so-called transexual surgery, to reassign their legal gender. However, the population of trans who have reached the requirement is few because of its high surgery price and potential surgery risks. Due to this limitation, trans women do not have the accessibility to change their legal gender because of their incomplete surgery requirement, while this limitation seemed to

be loosened in Taiwan in 2021, September. Taipei High Administrative Court allowed a trans woman, who had not completed the sex reassignment surgery, to enter all of the female-only facilities (e.g. women's lavatories, dressing rooms, and hot spring facilities). This judgment triggered a heated debate about gender self-identification policy. Gender self-identification policy holds the concept that a person's legal gender should be determined by their gender identity, yet this proposed policy had been opposed due to the concern of the safety of female-only spaces. Hence, people who have this concern proposed to set certain criteria to distinguish people who have or do not have the qualification to get gender self-identification to prevent the potential risk from people who abuse the policy.

To discover trans women's perspectives on the question "Who counts as trans?" and explore the speech styles of trans women, this research focuses on the following three questions: (1) Does pitch differ in conversations with distinct interlocutors, and does it show differences among trans women? (2) How do trans women talk about and take stances on issues related to transgender topics? (3) How do they linguistically and discursively construct the boundary between being a trans or not being a trans?

This research recruited 18 trans women to participate in experiments and interviews. The experiment includes a beverage-ordering situation, and the interview includes sets of brief questions about personal experience and trans issues. Data analysis includes an acoustic analysis and a discourse analysis. Pitch analysis includes checking participants' mean pitch values, comparing pitch values from each of the participants, and observing the pitch differences between different conversations with different interlocutors. On the other hand, discourse analysis includes finding trans common topics, getting information about participants' self-positioning, and collecting participants' opinions toward trans issues.

This research holds significance in two aspects. Firstly, by exploring the analysis of pitch among trans women and its association with voice feminization treatment, it provides valuable evidence showing that trans women can simulate a feminized trans voice. This aligns with the objectives of voice feminization treatment, and the findings of this research can serve as crucial data for understanding the specific areas of focus within such treatments. The findings from this research can help improve voice feminization interventions, making them more attuned to the specific needs and nuances of the trans women community. Secondly, social interactions of trans women are displayed, investigating how their transgender identity influences their speech patterns. This research not only uncovers different ways trans women change their voices but also shows how they deal with transgender-related issues. By looking at how voice and social interactions connect, the research helps us understand trans women's experiences and how they navigate conversations in the broader transgender context. In simple terms, it adds a new layer to our understanding of the many aspects of transgender identity and how it comes across in communication.

Transgender Definition and Phases of Gender Transition Procedure

This section discusses the definition of transgender within the context of this study and provides an overview of each phase in the gender transition process. According to the American Psychological Association (2013), transgender people are defined as individuals whose gender identity or expression doesn't align with the sex assigned to them at birth. The term includes a diverse range of identities, such as trans women, trans men, non-binary individuals, and those identifying as genderqueer. Additionally, the transgender community is inclusive of cross-dressers (CD), transvestites (TV), drag queens, drag kings, and individuals questioning their genders. On top of that, transgender stands in contrast to cisgender,

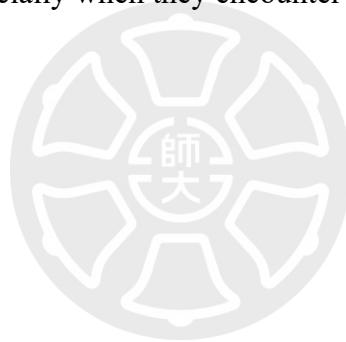
referring to those whose gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth. While transgender people fall under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, it's crucial to distinguish gender identity from sexual orientation. Trans women pursuing medical surgeries may also be identified as transgender; however, they are often more closely associated with the definition of transsexual. Sometimes, trans women getting surgeries might not feel strongly connected to the trans community, especially since they can change the legal sex on their ID.

The gender transition procedure includes several crucial phases, each playing a distinct role in the journey of individuals aligning their gender identity with their affirmed gender. These key phases include Cross-dressing (CD), Real Life Experience (RLE), Gender Identity Disorder (GID), Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), and Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS).

Cross-dressing (CD), while not universally synonymous with being transgender, is a prevalent exploration during the gender questioning period. It serves as an initial step for many individuals in understanding and expressing their gender identity. Following this, the Real Life Experience (RLE) becomes a pivotal phase, whereby individuals immerse themselves in living authentically in their affirmed gender. RLE is a diagnostic criterion for gender disorder or incongruence, with psychiatrists issuing Gender Identity Disorder (GID) certification after the patient successfully completes a specified period of RLE and passes a series of examinations. GID certification holds significant implications for accessing subsequent phases of the transition process. It empowers transgender individuals to obtain hormone treatments, including pills, gels, or injections, from obstetricians specializing in transsexual medical treatment. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) follows, with patients typically undergoing this treatment for two to three years before considering the next phase: Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). To proceed with SRS, individuals must acquire two GID

certifications from different psychiatrists, demonstrating a sustained commitment to their affirmed gender identity.

Upon successfully undergoing SRS, individuals have the opportunity to legally reassign their gender, reflecting the alignment of their gender identity with their legal documentation. Interestingly, some individuals who have completed this transition and legally reassigned their gender still identify as transgender, underscoring the ongoing importance of this term in reflecting their unique experiences. Even though the transition process covers many steps, some people still face challenges getting hormone therapy (HRT) and surgery (SRS) because of money or health issues. This highlights how important it is for individuals to recognize and affirm their gender identity, especially when they encounter obstacles during different parts of their transition.



CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes a comprehensive exploration of sociolinguistic and transgender background knowledge relevant to this research. In sections §2.1 to §2.3, we explore a variety of studies in sociolinguistics that look into identity, speech style, and stancetaking. These studies shed light on how individuals express their identities and perspectives through different speech styles. In sections §2.4 and §2.5, we narrow our focus to examine studies specifically related to the interaction between language and gender. These comprehensive reviews establish a strong foundation for the subsequent analysis in this research, highlighting the relationship between linguistic features and the formation of gendered identities and perspectives.

Identity in Sociolinguistics

In this research, the term "identity" takes on a distinct meaning compared to its everyday usage. One of the most well-known concepts about "identity" is proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005). In their conclusion, identity in sociolinguistics is viewed as a socially and discursively constructed phenomenon that is related to contextual factors, linguistic practices, and the dynamics of social interaction, that is, our language choices are not just utilized for communication, but also for expressing who we are and connecting with others based on shared identities. Their research further encourages people to not only consider identity as a general and sociological category, but also as a specific concept which is ethnographic and interactional. We use discourse to express who we are or what we believe, including labels, implied meanings, attitudes, styles, and even dialects. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) also reminded that identity is not a fixed concept and continuously shaped through individuals' interaction and other social environments.

We have discussed that people's social group is related to their discourse, but we still need to know how people perform their identity with discourse. John Langshaw Austin (1962) introduces the concept of performative acts to explain who people use words to show their identity or the changes of the identity. He proposes the notion of performative acts to highlight instances where the word itself is used to perform action or changes. For example, the wedding vow- "I do" is not just reporting a state of mind but the act of entering into marriage. Plus, the performative acts are only successful when the speaker is sincere, appropriate, or recognized by the audience, and the condition is called "felicity conditions." The performative acts represent a significant development in the philosophy of language, and the work laid the foundation for further development in speech act theory in pragmatics.

Judith Butler's (1988) concept of performativity, particularly as outlined in her influential work "Gender Trouble," expands upon Austin's (1962) theory of performative acts within the context of gender and identity. Butler's performative model challenges traditional notions of gender as a fixed characteristic, instead proposing that gender identity is constructed and performed through repeated social actions and behaviors. According to Judith Butler's speech on the talk on Big Think- "Your Behavior Creates Your Gender," when we say gender is performed, we usually mean that we are acting or have taken a role. Being a woman or being a man is actually not an internal reality but a phenomenon that is produced all the time, so if we say that gender is performative, we do not really have a gender from the start. Judith Butler (1988) shows how several performative acts relate to gender identity. Since performative acts suggest that identity, including gender identity is not something fixed or inherent but a continuous and repetitive performance or behavior, gender identity is actually repeatedly constructed based on specific social norm or the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. The performance of gender identity can be constituted through stylized repetitive

acts, gestures, clothes, tones, or activities. Over time, these performances solidify into what appears as a stable gender identity. The performative model also challenges the idea that gender identity is a fixed biological or psychological attribute. She argues that gender is a dynamic and contingent phenomenon which is shaped by cultural and social forces. Overall, Judith Butler's (1988) performative model of gender emphasizes the performative aspects of gender, and also redefines the emergence of gender identity.

Speech Style and Style-shifting

William Labov (1972) explores intra-speaker variation, also known as stylistic variation, and sees style as related to the attention paid to speech. This model suggests that speakers use different speech styles based on how much attention they pay to their own speech, with a focus on the speaker's awareness of the situation and the formality of the context. Labov's (1972) study, which examined the rhotic /r/ sound in New York City, showed that speakers modified their pronunciation depending on whether they were in a casual or formal setting. Greater formality in the setting led to increased attention to speech, resulting in a more standardized form of pronunciation. As speakers became more aware of being observed, they tended to produce more careful speech. Labov's findings helped establish the concept of Attention to Speech as a central element in understanding stylistic variation. The model emphasized that linguistic behavior could not solely be attributed to social factors, but also consider the speaker's consciousness of their speech in different settings.

The study from William Labov we had mentioned is based on speaker-centered models, which focus on the speaker, emphasizing the speaker's role. The speaker-centered model usually examines speech styles and how they impact the audience. On the contrary, audience-centered models focus on the audience, emphasizing the process of understanding

and interpreting information. One of the research that represents the audience-centered model is the research from Bell (1984). By applying the audience design model, Bell (1984) proposed that speakers adjust their speech in order to express solidarity and intimacy with the audience. The research mainly focused on the speech of radio news broadcasters in New Zealand. By investigating how newsreaders adjust their speech based on the audience of the radio station, Bell (1984) examined the frequency of postvocalic [t] to see if the patterns matched what their audiences preferred. In the findings, Bell (1984) highlighted the role of audience characteristics in influencing speech patterns, providing insights into how speakers adjust their language use based on the sociocultural expectations of their listeners.

Eckert (1989) also investigated the interaction between speech styles and identity construction, her research was conducted in a high school in the Detroit area, known as “Jocks and Burnouts.” Jocks are the students who are heavily involved in sport activities, while burnouts are the students who reject mainstream school culture and sometimes show rebellious behaviors. Eckert (1989) found that these two groups used distinct linguistic features, such as pronunciation (vowel variation), to align themselves with their group’s values. Jocks tend to use more standard linguistic features, while Burnouts tend to use more non-standard linguistic features. For instance, Jocks often avoid dropping “r” sound in words like “car” or “hard,” while Burnouts often omit the “r” sound in their pronunciation. The differences in pronunciation is found to be linked with their construction of their social identities. Jocks have standard and neutral pronunciation, expressing a mainstream or a middle-class identity, while Burnouts have more non-standard and marked pronunciation, reflecting a countercultural and rebellious identity.

Barbara Johnstone (1999) also conducted research about how individual speakers are connected with language in certain cultural contexts. She argues that language use is central to constructing individual identity, and her study mainly focused on how women in Texas pronounce “Southern-sounding” speech features. Several southern speech features such as “y’all,” “r” dropping, or double modals are shown in the study, and the use of these features indexes the speaker’s regional identities. Johnstone’s (1999) work highlights how individuals use certain speech styles to express authenticity or to navigate social expectations.

According to these studies above, speech style is described as a tool which can be strategically shifted to align the speakers themselves to a certain cultural or social group. The study from Eckert is the closest matched type of speech style usage with this research, since trans women often use high pitch voice to express their feminine identity, while the group they want to align with is female instead of trans. Bell’s study also highlights the external reason why trans women have a potential possibility to switch their voice pitch in different circumstances, which is the influence of a certain audience.

Stancetaking and Self-positioning

Stance is the way in which speakers position themselves in relation to ongoing interaction, in terms of evaluation or intentionality (Jaffe, 2009; Du Bois, 2007), and stancetaking refers to the process of taking a position or expressing an opinion on a particular topic or issue. In sociolinguistics, stance-taking can be explicit or implicit. Explicit stance-taking is openly expressed positions or opinions on an issue from speakers; on the other hand, implicit stance-taking is the implicature or indirect expression conveyed by speakers through their voice tone, facial expression, or body language. Jaffe (2009) mentioned that stances index not only social identities but also “core” selves. Although a speaker may not straightforwardly

point out the level of certainty or positioning on an issue, stances can be regarded as evidence of them. Since speech styles project speakers' social identities and stances, looking into language variance in speech styles helps us to deeply understand how speakers express their viewpoints and establish their identities within conversations.

Kiesling (2015) discussed the recognition of stance and stancetaking as crucial elements in linguistics. Kiesling mentioned that the three main components of stance outlined by White (2005) include attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude includes meaning that assigns intersubjective value or assessment to participants and processes, categorized into affect (emotion), judgment (moral evaluation), and appreciation (evaluation of non-human objects). Engagement involves the positioning of textual or authorial voice in relation to the proposition or proposal. Graduation relates to values that provide grading or scaling, involving interpersonal force and the preciseness or sharpness of focus. These three components became the basic elements for Kiesling's investigation. Kiesling (2015) explored the concept of stance, particularly focusing on assessment, affective or interpersonal stance, alignment, and epistemic stance. Assessments are evaluations of individuals and events within the speech, including segments, signals, actions, and the broader activity. They also emphasized that assessments reveal not just neutral objects but alignments taken up toward phenomena by specific actors (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987). Affective stance (or interpersonal stance) involves emotional expressions, liking or disliking discourse figures, and signaling authority or solidarity. Alignment is cooperative engagement in conversation, not necessarily denoting agreement on content but indicating a shared effort to move the interaction forward. As for the concept of alignment in stance, it is achieved if the interlocutors are cooperative in interaction and it requires continuous maintenance. It does not require speakers to agree with each other, but they should engage on the same level to make the conversation move forward.

Kiesling (2015) looked into the meanings of epistemic stance, showing that epistemic stance signals a speaker's relationship to the talk they produce, often conveyed through modality or certainty markers. In Mandarin, epistemic modal verbs are applied in discourses with several purposes. According to Lo (2010), in Mandarin, the purposes of applying modal verbs (e.g. *kě néng* (可能)('maybe'), *yīng gāi* (應該)('might'))¹ include indicating uncertainty and expressing politeness. Additionally, Lo (2010) also reveals that lexical hedges constitute a significant portion of hedging devices, with adverbs being the most frequently used, followed by auxiliaries and verbs. While hedges indicate uncertainty in both academic and spoken discourses, the motivation behind their usage may differ, with politeness playing a more significant role in spoken language and the need to avoid negation being crucial in academic texts. In this research, the implicature of transition markers such as *dàn shì* (但是)('but') and *hái shì* (還是)('still') are also worth to be investigated. Huang (2016) and Lewis (2019) respectively presented a clear comprehension of the implicature of *dàn shì* (但是)('but') and the English lexeme *still*. Lewis (2019) revealed that *still* has the counterexpectational, concessive-connective, and discoursing-marking use in discourse, on the other hand, Huang (2016) presented the contrast, concessive, challenge, and topic change interpretation of *dàn shì* (但是)('but') in Taiwanese Mandarin. Huang (2016) showed how *dàn shì* (但是)('but') plays a crucial role in conveying concessive relations. It negates the implicature of the former clause in order to convey the extended implicature of the latter clause.

These are the stance components that Kiesling (2015) identified in several empirical studies. However, he presented some potential components of stance in his own study, a primary

¹ In Lo (2010), 'should' is the translation of '應該' (*yīng gāi*), while in this research, '應該' is considered more suitable for expressing epistemic evaluation rather than obligation. Therefore, the suggested translation for it in this context is 'maybe'.

focus of discourse analysis in this research. Kiesling established various axes with different aspects to precisely define stance in discourse, proposing three main components: affect, investment, and alignment. Firstly, affect captures the speaker's evaluation of a topic, reflecting the speaker's assessment. Secondly, investment gauges the speaker's certainty regarding the utterance, framed in Kiesling's (2015) words as whether speakers can defend their claims and opinions to the death. Lastly, alignment delineates the interaction between interlocutors, indicating whether they are aligned or misaligned. To show the independence and analysis usage of these three stance components, Kiesling (2015) took the claimed stance with the term *dude* as an example, which is termed "cool solidarity." In this context, "affect" refers to the emotional tone or evaluation associated with the use of the term "dude." Using *dude* conveys positive feelings and a sense of solidarity. "Investment" here represents the speaker's commitment to using the term. The speaker explains that "investment" in this context embodies the "cool" aspect of using *dude*. It doesn't create distance but rather tones down enthusiasm. In this example, the use of *dude* clearly "aligns" the speakers, indicating a shared understanding. As demonstrated in this example, these axes appear to be independent, meaning that one aspect can change without necessarily affecting the others.

Language and Gender

Gender among languages is a common topic in sociolinguistic research. A well known study is Lakoff's (1975) framework about women's language. Being a pioneer of language and gender studies, she proposed features in women's language and became one of the most influential studies in this research field. According to the study, women's language tends to be more indirect and less assertive than men's, such as tag questions, which is used to invite agreement. Women's language is also used to soften statements or requests to addressees with hedges and polite phrases like "I think," "sort of," "could you please..." instead of direct

demands which reflect dominance or authorities. Moreover, women's language tends to express personal emotions and empathy by using empty adjectives, such as sweet, adorable, and nice, as well as intensifiers like very and really. Lakoff argues that women use language in an unique way because of their gender roles, and these gender roles are shaped with gender stereotypes and social expectations.

As for other features in language and gender, many researchers come up with different theories to explain the differences between women's and men's language. Holmes (1988) proposed a sex-preferential politeness strategy, mentioning that women tend to give more compliments to others than men. The findings about women's language are similar to the findings from Lakoff (1975), women are found to be likely to use more positive, intensified, and affectionate words in their compliments; on the other hand, men are likely to use more objective and neutral words in their compliments. Although women and men are socialized to use different forms of language that reflect their gender roles, these languages are not biologically determined but are shaped by social context and power dynamics. This argument shows that women and men both have a possibility to use either women or men's language under certain circumstances as long as there is an unequal power dynamic or cultural expectation between speakers.

Tannen's (1994) work focuses on different language use between genders, proposing the Difference Model. She argues that men and women develop different conversational styles due to cultural expectations. She mentioned that men and women communicate in different ways because they are socialized into distinct cultural norms and values, which differs from the unequal power dynamic. That is, gendered communication is different instead of unequal. Tannen's main contribution in this field is the distinct conversational styles, rapport and

report talk, between women and men. In her research, women tend to engage in rapport talk, mainly used to create connections and build relationships between speakers. On the other hand, men are more likely to use report talk, mainly used to provide information or inform something. The focus is more on problem-solving and fact-based communication.

Zimmerman and West (1996) proposed the Dominance Theory which indicates that men are more likely to interrupt than women in a mixed-sex conversation in the 1970s. In a conversation, women tend to be the audience and sometimes support their interlocutors by producing minimal responses like “um hmm” or nodding their heads as positive reinforcements. The study emphasized male dominance in communication, which is similar to the gender differences argument from Tannen’s (1994) work, while focusing on the power dynamic. The study heavily relies on the Difference Model of gender and language, and it shows that language is a tool used to assert power. The disruption of turn-taking shows that men’s speech often positions the speaker as the primary speakers, while women are more often forced into passive roles.

The Dominance Theory (Zimmerman and West, 1996) and the Difference Model (Tannen, 1994) offer contrasting views on gender and language. The Difference Model emphasizes that men and women have different, equally valid communication styles, shaped by socialization. In contrast, the Dominance Theory focuses on the unequal power relations between men and women in communication, suggesting that men use language to assert control and dominate conversations, often marginalizing women’s voices. These two models provide distinct perspectives, with the Difference Model highlighting socialized communication styles and the Dominance Theory focusing on power dynamics in language use.

Since this research is heavily focused on transgender communities, Lal Zimman's (2017) study about transmasculine voice shows its importance in discovering transgender people's speech style. The study challenges the idea that voices are strictly categorized into male or female, as these aspects can vary independently. The term "stylistic bricolage" is introduced in this research as a language choice process of the combination of biological markers and a variety of stylistic choices. A high-pitched /s/ sound, which typically indexes a heteronormative femininity, and can also come to represent a gay or queer male identity when combined with a lower-pitched voice. Although male-sounding voice is one the most prevalent reasons for trans men to pursue testosterone therapy, there is less necessity of having a prototypically masculine voice. This study emphasizes that the way gender is expressed through voice is fluid and flexible within transmasculine communities, where voice is regarded as a personal expression.

Transgender Concealment and Transnormativity

As the transgender communities become visibly publicized these years, more and more discussions and debates focus on the legitimacy of claiming oneself as a trans. These issues aroused a new ideological concept called "transnormativity". According to Johnson's (2016) studies, transnormativity is a set of standard narratives that dominated representations of trans identity. Due to the concept that transgender people are "people who are born in the wrong body", transnormativity emphasizes transexual medical treatments (e.g., HRT, SRS), secondary sex characteristics (e.g., voice pitch, body hair, fat distribution), and gender dysphoria (e.g., GID) (Jacobson, 2022) and narrows down the scope of transgender communities to only transsexuals. Since transnormativity pressures transgender people to act like their assigned cisgender people, transgender people are forced to endure potential mental problems such as passing, identity concealment, and voice incongruence.

Identity Concealment is a reaction to societal stigma against gender and sexual minority identities (Rood, et.al., 2017). Some transgender people choose to be perceived as cisgender by not disclosing their gender identity in order to avoid social rejection if they self-perceive that their gender transitioning results (including appearances, behaviors, and voices) are not “pass” enough. Under the pressure of transnormativity, transgender people are confronting the dilemma between passing and concealing identities. “Passing” is a term widely used in the transgender community, denoting someone who is perceived as the person’s gender identity (Billard, 2019). However, some transgender people are not confident about their appearances, behaviors, or voices, especially for voices. Voice serves as a significant gender indicator, but it becomes a gender betrayer in transgender individuals' lifetimes. It's worth mentioning that anti-androgens and estrogens in trans women's hormone replacement therapy (HRT) have no effect on the vocal folds. Therefore, voice incongruence becomes one of the crucial reasons for not passing. Voice Incongruence is a communication dissatisfaction in transgender due to inconsistent voices with their gender identity (Medeiros & Junior, 2020).

According to Watson (2019), the average pitch range of an adult man is from 85 to 155 Hz, and the average pitch range of an adult woman is from 165 to 255 Hz. The Adam’s apple is one of the secondary sexual characteristics that trans women alter to align with their gender identity. Some trans women choose to receive voice feminization therapy (VFT) or voice feminization surgery (VFS) to reach a higher voice pitch or nasal resonance (Leon-Gambetta et.al., 2019). The risk of VFS includes vocal cord dysfunction, therefore most transgender people tend to receive VFT to improve voice incongruence.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This research recruited 18 Taiwanese trans women from two online trans community forums. One of these forums is Dcard (Trans Board) [Dcard (跨性別版)], a public forum primarily used by college and graduated students. The other is the Taiwanese Transgender Community [台灣跨性別交流區], a private chat forum on the social platform, Discord. These forums were selected based on their popularity, community size, and the age of their users. Although it is challenging to verify the exact number of users on Dcard (Trans Board), the main forum, Dcard, is widely utilized by Taiwanese college and graduate students, reaching eight million registrations and 20 million monthly visitors in 2022. The Taiwanese Transgender Community on Discord has about 400 members, with a majority being transgender individuals. This chapter includes participant criteria, the procedure of data collection, data processing, and data analysis.

Research Setting and Participants

A Google Form questionnaire is designed for selecting participants, collecting participants' personal information (e.g., pseudonyms and contact information), and negotiating places to meet in person. The criteria for participant selection are: (a) The participant should self-perceive herself as trans woman, woman, or non-binary person; (b) The participant should have at least one of the experiences from the following: SRS, HRT, GD, RLE, and CD; (c) The participant should live in Taipei or Xinpei city. These criteria have been established to select the specific transgender community, with careful consideration given to affordability and accessibility. Participants will be notified to attend an interview at a Louisa Coffee shop. This location is selected to create a more comfortable environment for participants, instead of the usual choice of a laboratory setting.

Based on the collected participant information, ages range from 21 to 40, with the majority being Taiwanese (17 Taiwanese and 1 Malaysian). Some participants identified themselves as women or trans women, while others described their gender as something different, like demi-girls. Table 3.1 provides details on participants' ages, gender identifications, and medical treatment conditions. As for their medical conditions, most participants had GD and were undergoing HRT. Only one participant (X.X.) had undergone SRS. Participants Y.R. and X.Z. did not undergo any medical treatments or clinical experiences. Y.R. mentioned that her religious family prohibits any transition or cross-dressing, and X.Z. shared her experience with RLE. Unlike hormone treatments and gender dysphoria prescriptions, few participants had experienced voice feminization techniques such as VFT and VFS.

Participant	Age	Gender Identity	SRS	GD	HRT	VFT	VFS
A.C.	24	trans woman (跨女 [kuà nǚ])		v	v		
A.X.	29	female (女性 [nǚ xìng])		v	v		
Y.R.	21	girl (女孩子 [nǚ hái zǐ])					
X.Q.	33	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])		v	v		
B.J.	27	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])		v	v		
C.X.	21	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])		v	v		
X.Z.	27	MtF (男跨女[nán kuà nǚ])					
Y.D.	28	female (女性 [nǚ xìng])		v	v	v	
Y.T.	24	MtF (MtF)		v			
B.B.	23	demigirl (demigirl)		v	v	v	
N.N.	29	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])		v	v	v	v
X.X.	28	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])	v	v	v		
X.T.	32	female (女性 [nǚ xìng])		v	v		
M.N.	26	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])		v	v		
C.K.	40	-		v	v	v	
Y.X.	24	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])		v	v	v	
S.J.	22	-		v	v		
L.D.	28	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])			v		

Table 3.1 Participant information²

² Since participants Y.X. and S.J. did not mention their self-identification in the interview directly, their gender identities were not labeled. The exact answer of gender identity is shown in the parenthesis.

Procedure of Data Collection

The data collection procedure of this research includes two distinct stages: recording and audio file processing. The framework of the recording stage is organized into two main sections: a social interaction experiment and a one-on-one interview. During the social interaction experiment, participants engage in a beverage-ordering conversation at Louisa Coffee, while the one-on-one interview provides a more in-depth exploration of various topics. The choices of the clerk and the interview aim to analyze trans women's voice pitch in the careful and casual speech style. The processing of audio files in this stage serves as crucial material for the later analysis and interpretation within the research.

The social interaction experiment involves a short beverage-ordering conversation at Louisa Coffee. Participants were instructed to order a medium ice-free Honey & Rooibos Latte [紅蜜鮮奶茶 (*hóng mì xiānnǎichá*)] from a clerk and informed that their orders would be recorded. The recorded ordering conversations served as the material for acoustic analysis, with further details provided in the next section. It is worth noting that the reason for choosing a fixed specific beverage name is to include all the possible Taiwanese Mandarin tones except the neutral tone in a word to reduce pitch influence from the tones. The instrument for recording is the built-in audio recorder in iPhone 12. The recorded audio files have a duration of approximately one minute, with the focus on participants' voices in this research. Although these files are about one minute, the duration of each target chunk is around 1 to 2 seconds.

After the experiment, participants were rewarded with a beverage and then moved on to the one-on-one interview stage. This interview entails a casual conversation covering several prepared topics. It is worth to note that the interviewer in this research is also a transgender

woman, emphasizing feminine outfits and a high-pitched voice as two key features. These characteristics are utilized to establish a connection between the interviewer and interviewees, expressing the intention of being perceived as an insider within the transgender community.

The interview questions are divided into two main topics: non-trans topic and trans topic (refer to Appendix B). Trans topics expected to pull out more feelings and opinions from participants. Non-trans topic questions include age, occupations, hobbies, dressing styles, and family interaction conditions. Topics such as dressing styles and family interaction have a chance to lead participants to reveal their gender identities and their social lives without bringing up trans topics. These non-trans-topic questions precede trans-topic questions, providing a buffer before digging into more sensitive areas. On the contrary, trans topics predominantly explore participants' gender transitions or transgender issues. They cover aspects like trans medical/non-medical treatments, passing, voice self-perception, gender identity, self-gender identification, gender identity concealment, other difficulties, and trans definitions. Discourses from topics related to medical/non-medical treatments and gender identity illuminate participants' transition procedures and self-positioning. Topics such as passing, voice self-perception, and gender identity concealment offer insights into participants' self-evaluation. The two most crucial topics are self-gender identification and transgender definition. These shed light on how transgender communities define the term 'transgender' and reveal the stances of these transgender individuals toward self-gender identification. The interviews, lasting approximately 30 minutes to an hour, are fully recorded as participants were informed.

Each section in the research process serves the purpose of collecting specific language materials. The social interaction experiment focuses on obtaining audio files capturing

ordering conversations for subsequent acoustic analysis. In contrast, the interview stage aims to gather transcriptions of the entire interview for discourse analysis, along with two audio files extracted from discussions on age and transgender definition for additional acoustic analysis. These two topics were chosen because they have a propensity for eliciting answers with similar sentence patterns from all participants (e.g., 'I'm __ years old.' / 'In my mind, transgender is a term to describe __.'), and they contain all four Mandarin tones (except for the neutral tone). They are positioned respectively at the beginning and end of the interview, allowing us to explore whether conversation length has any impact on participants' voices.

As for the audio files processing procedure, it can be simply divided into two sections: acoustic analysis materials and discourse analysis materials. The process for acoustic analysis materials begins by extracting specific chunks from three audio files for each participant, labeled as follows: (a) clerk (ordering conversations); (b) interview_initial (introduction of participants' ages); (c) interview_final (transgender definition). The specific chunks include (a) Honey & Rooibos Latte [紅蜜鮮奶茶 (*hóng mì xiānnǎichá*)] (clerk); (b) Age introduction [我今年 (number omitted) 歲 (*wǒ jīnnián_sui*)]; (c) Transgender definition [我心中的跨性別 (*wǒ xīnzhōng de kuàxìngbié*)]. The reason why choosing only one chunk from each sentence is to make target words identical from each of the participants without overly interrupting participants.

Due to the difficulty to have identical word chunks from several experiments and interviews, the target words are shortened and fixed by requesting participants to speak in the same sentence pattern. These audio files will be analyzed with Praat. Worth to note that the script combined with several answers such as age, or their responses, in order to extract the identical part from each participants' scripts, these answers are removed.

Moving to discourse analysis materials, transcriptions are noted for the following topics: (a) passing; (b) voice self-perception; (c) gender self-identification; (d) transgender definition; (e) trans/non-trans differentiation. These transcriptions are broken down into sentences and analyzed, and the detailed analysis procedure of this will be presented in the next section. Additionally, linguistic features traditionally associated with women's language, such as hedging and politeness, are incorporated into the discourse analysis. Emphasis is placed on the topics of gender self-identification and transgender definition. These topics offer insights into how transgender individuals define insiders and outsiders of the trans community and assess which gender communities may have the best opportunity to benefit from gender self-identification.

Procedure of Data Analysis

The data analysis procedure consists of two main components: acoustic analysis and discourse analysis. Acoustic analysis focuses on the three audio files—ordering conversations, introduction of participants' ages, and transgender definitions. On the other hand, Discourse analysis focuses on the transcriptions of several trans topics.

In this research, the average pitch values from three audio files—ordering conversations, introduction of participants' ages, and transgender definitions (refer to audio file processing in Section 3.2)—are recorded and compared with the mean pitch values of men and women in order to show overall pitch differences. Furthermore, the analysis is divided into two main parts based on the comparison focuses: the comparison of different scenarios and different gender positionings. In the former, each participant's recorded pitch values in three different scenarios will be compared to each other. On the contrary, in the latter, three pitch values

from each participant will be measured and compared to pitch values from other participants.

The goal of this analysis is to discover different voice pitch groups in the trans community.

As for the discourse analysis, the collected interview transcriptions include selected topics such as passing, voice self-perception, gender self-identification, transgender definition, and trans/non-trans differentiation. These transcriptions of different topics contain stances from each participant, providing a closer look at trans women's speech and their opinions on issues. This examination is conducted utilizing Kiesling's stance components (2015, p.5):

Affect: the polarity of the stance, showing how a speaker assesses the topic

Investment: the strength of the stance, showing how certain their opinions or claims

Alignment: how a speaker aligns or not aligns with an interlocutor

To provide clarity on these stance components, positive affect signifies that the speaker holds a positive sentiment or favorable evaluation of the topic. That is, a positive affect in the stance of a topic indicates that the speaker supports the idea or anticipates a positive outcome in their responses. On the other hand, a negative affect in the stance of a topic suggests that the speaker is opposed to the idea or expects a negative outcome in their answers. These affective stances offer insights into the speaker's emotional orientation and attitude toward the discussed subject matter. In this research, affect is mostly identified by checking the presence of negation in predicates within utterances. High investment indicates that the speaker is confident and holds strong belief regarding their claims or answers. On the other hand, low investment suggests that the speaker is uncertain about their response or delivers ambiguous statements. In contrast to the extremes of high and low investment, mid investment signals that the speaker lacks strong certainty in their responses but also does not lack confidence in

their speech. Investment is mainly identified by examining the presence of epistemic modal verbs in utterances.

Lexical choice plays the crucial roles in judging affect and investment in participants' stances. Affect can be positive or negative, it depends on evaluative words and emotions in the stance. For instance, words like *bù mǎnyì* (不滿意)('unsatisfied'), *bù xǐhuān* (不喜歡)('dislike'), *fǎn duì* (反對)('oppose'), or *bù jígé* (不及格)('failed') reflect negative affects to their self-perception or stance; on the contrary, words like *hége* (合格)('passed') or *zhī chí* (支持)('support') reflect positive effects. Investment of stance can be high, mid, or low, it depends on the modal verbs and certainties in the stance. For example, words like *yīnggāi* (應該)('should'), *bú quèdìng* (不確定)('not sure') show low investments; on the other hand, *dāngrán* (當然)('of course') or *yídìng* (一定)('must') show high investments. Those stances that do not have these high or low investment lexical choices, were labeled as mid investment. Sometimes judging the polarity of the affect in participants' utterances could be difficult by just adjective and verb choices. Transition words also helped us in the labeling process. Words like *dànshì* (但是)('however') or *qíshíshì* (其實是)('actually') help us to locate the final stance focus in sentences; words such as *jiùshì* (就是)('precisely') or *háishì* (還是)('still') provide an inevitable expression to an irreversible situation. By labeling the stances, trans women's opinions and stances can be organized. Another process in discourse analysis was taking the transcriptions and analyzing whether there were any women's speech features in them, such as hedging, politeness, intensifier, or empty adjectives. This process aims to find the similarities and differences between women's speech and trans women's speech, and investigate the intention of using specific women's speech features in stances.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result and discussion section is separated with two main analyses: acoustic analysis and discourse analysis. Acoustic analysis focuses on the experiment result from three recorded conversations, including clerk, interview-initial, and interview-final. Discourse analysis displays the affect and investment stances axes on each of the focused titles, including passing, voice perception, gender self-identification issue, and trans or non-trans issues. By looking into the interview transcription, more details from their discourses can be found, such as lexical choices, hedging languages, and stance focuses. Plus, the definition of the term transgender in the interview transcriptions will also be discussed in several aspects.

Acoustic Analysis

Overall Pitch Differences

According to Watson (2019), the minimum pitch and maximum pitch for women are 165 Hz and 255 Hz, while for men, they are 85 and 155 Hz. Table 4.1 shows mean pitch values from each of the participants in three separate scenarios and their overall average pitch. Roughly half of the participants reached the minimum women's pitch (165 Hz). Some participants (A.C., A.X., X.T., and L.D.) maintained high voice pitch values consistently, while some of them (B.J., C.X., X.Z., Y.T., B.B., and Y.X.) maintained low voice pitch values consistently.

NAME	CL	INT-INI	INT-FI	AVERAGE	NAME	CL	INT-INI	INT-FI	AVERAGE
A.C.	215.23	212.34	219.42	215.66	B.B.	117.85	159.41	125.6	134.29
A.X.	244.18	197.18	226.99	222.78	N.N.	182.78	172.74	161.98	172.50
Y.R.	140.69	117.65	174.1	144.15	X.X.	180.62	182.39	153.39	172.13
X.Q.	143.6	162.87	170.48	158.98	X.T.	198.35	195.22	175.73	189.77
B.J.	135.86	129.92	152.15	139.31	M.N.	171.21	140.94	117.8	143.32
C.X.	147.9	138.84	157.91	148.22	C.K.	155.01	136.7	168.29	153.33
X.Z.	104.74	103.87	106.61	105.07	Y.X.	124.16	137.12	118.84	126.71
Y.D.	252.02	112.22	211.57	191.94	S.J.	157.9	246.05	193.06	199.00
Y.T.	102.69	143.38	126.22	124.10	L.D.	190.09	178.52	209.85	192.82

Table 4.1. Pitch in Different Scenario and their Average Pitch (H group is colored) (Hz)

As for those who have demonstrated pitch-shifting across situations, some of the shiftings happen between the clerk and interview section, while some of them happen between the initial interview and the final interview. Only one participant (Y.D.) switched her voice pitch between both the clerk and the interview section and between the initial and the final interview.

This research also highlights the diversity of trans voice pitch values, revealing two distinct pitch groups. Participants whose mean pitch value is higher than 165 Hz are labeled as the "H group" (high voice pitch group), and participants whose mean pitch value is lower than 165 Hz are labeled as the "L group" (low voice pitch group). Compared to the given female voice's mean pitch ($(165+255)/2 = 210$ Hz), the mean pitch of the H group (197 Hz) is lower than it. In contrast, compared to the given male voice mean pitch ($(85+155)/2 = 120$ Hz), the mean pitch of the L group (132 Hz) is higher than it.

Figure 4.1 is a visualized minimum, mean, and maximum voice pitch for male, female, trans in H group, and trans in L group. It shows that trans voices' pitch is observably lower than female voice pitch but higher than male voice pitch. Interestingly, although most of the trans people in L group mentioned that they had never trained their voice before, they managed to keep their voice pitch high. Another finding is that the gap between 159 and 172 Hz shows that the voice pitch differences between H group and L group are quite recognizable, which shows that human ears may recognize the difference between H group and L group.

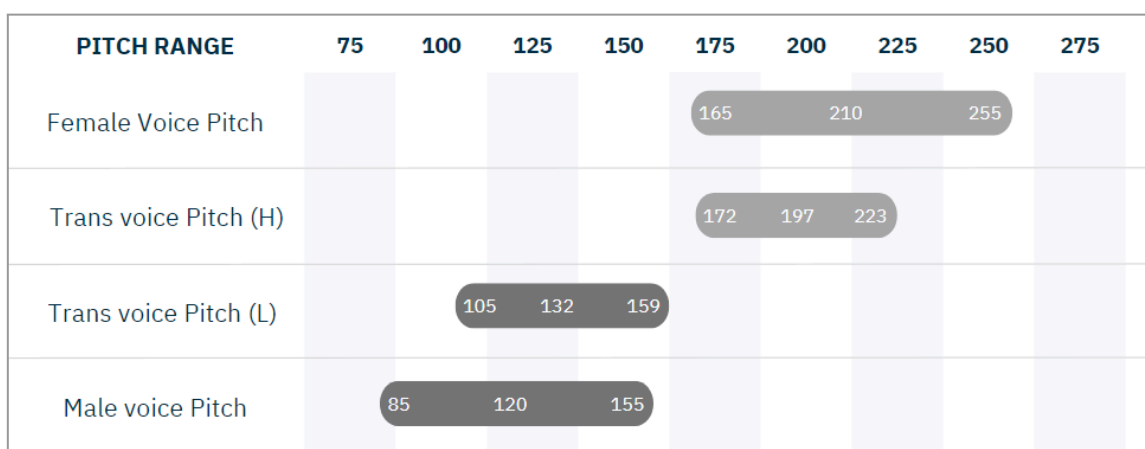


Figure 4.1. Male, Female, and Trans Minimum Pitch, Mean Pitch, and Maximum Pitch (male and female voice pitch are based on the given pitch range from Watson (2019))

Based on discussions with participants during interviews, such as in example 1a, one participant mentioned that if a trans woman is incapable or has difficulty speaking in a high pitch, she will likely continue using her lower pitch voice and compromise in various situations. This reluctance can be attributed to fear and anxiety. As seen in example 1b, trans women express apprehension about contacting people, such as placing orders, making phone calls, or engaging in conversations with others, as they fear being caught or judged.

In categorizing the voice pitch of trans women, it can be divided into two groups: a high voice pitch group ranging from 172 to 223 Hz and a low voice pitch group ranging from 105 Hz to 159 Hz. The differences are recognizable with human ears. Almost all the trans women in this case express a strong desire to have a voice similar to cisgender women, as it brings advantages in terms of passing and social acceptance. The assumption that all the speakers see a normative feminine voice pitch as their stylistic goal is based on the voice perception part in discourse analysis (see from p.35 to p.38).

(Example 1)

- a. 因為我聲音還沒練好，我是覺得我聲音如果是處於中間值那樣會覺得很奇怪，

倒不如練好了再用。 (X.Z.)

(Because my voice is not fully trained and I feel awkward when my voice pitch is a hybrid of male and female voice, I would rather use it when it is fully trained.)

- b. 就是很害怕點餐阿，很害怕跟人接觸，因為一講話就破功，對。 (M.N.)

(I'm afraid to order food and contact people because I will be caught once I talk.)

Voice Pitch and Gender Identity

In this part, average voice pitch values are shown with gender identities. In Table 4.2, the colored brackets are in the H group, and the uncolored brackets are in the L group. From the table, we can observe that most participants in the H group claimed themselves as a woman, a female, or a trans woman, while a portion of participants in the L group claimed themselves as a MtF (Male-to-Female) or a demigirl. The lexical choice differences between *trans women* and *MtF* are worth highlighting. The lexical choice, *kuà nǚ* (跨女)('trans women'), is less related to the concept of male or man than *nán kuà nǚ* (男跨女)('MtF'). The different lexical choices between *nǚ shēng* (女生)('woman') and *nǚ xìng* (女生)('female') are also interesting, in Mandarin, the word *nǚ xìng* (女生)('female') is more formal, while *nǚ shēng* (女生)('woman') is more casual.

Participants	Ave. Pitch	Gender Identity	Participants	Ave. Pitch	Gender Identity
A.C.	215.66	trans woman (跨女 [kuà nǚ])	B.B.	134.29	demigirl (demigirl)
A.X.	222.78	female (女性 [nǚ xìng])	N.N.	172.50	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])
Y.R.	144.15	girl (女孩子 [nǚ hái zi])	X.X.	172.13	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])
X.Q.	158.98	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])	X.T.	189.77	female (女性 [nǚ xìng])
B.J.	139.31	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])	M.N.	143.32	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])
C.X.	148.22	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])	C.K.	153.33	-
X.Z.	105.07	MtF (男跨女[nán kuà nǚ])	Y.X.	126.71	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])
Y.D.	191.94	female (女性 [nǚ xìng])	S.J.	199.00	-
Y.T.	124.10	MtF (MtF)	L.D.	192.82	woman (女生 [nǚ shēng])

Table 4.2. Participant Average Pitch and Gender Identity

Pitch Influences in Other Aspects

Producing a perfect trans woman's voice in daily routine poses a huge challenge. Trans voice problems can further impact the professionalism of trans women educators or individuals in positions requiring frequent speaking. Referring to the list of participant occupations listed in Table 4.3, it is observed that most of the participants are mostly students or engaged in less voice related occupations, such as engineers or programmers, which do not demand frequent verbal communication.

Participant	Age	Occupation	Participant	Age	Occupation
A.C.	24	between jobs	B.B.	23	student
A.X.	29	freelancer	N.N.	29	between jobs
Y.R.	21	student	X.X.	28	student
X.Q.	33	photographer	X.T.	32	between jobs
B.J.	27	programmer	M.N.	26	video editor
C.X.	21	student	C.K.	40	teacher
X.Z.	27	stagehand	Y.X.	24	engineer
Y.D.	28	engineer	S.J.	22	student
Y.T.	24	teacher	L.D.	28	graphic designer

Table 4.3. Participant Age and Occupations

Upon asking the details of their working experience, all of the trans women teachers said that they do not employ trans voices during teaching, even though this decision may risk failing transgender concealments due to voice incongruence. One reason is the instability and short duration of their trans voices, and the other reason is that many participants hide their transgender identity in their workplace.

Discourse Analysis

In the discourse analysis, we'll organize transcriptions from the interview into sections based on their topics. Each section will include the interview question and the major responses from participants. Linguistic features, like stance components, presuppositions, and lexical choices will be focused on. Then these features will be interpreted to understand why people use specific linguistic features in their expressions.

Passing

"Passing" is a prevalent concern in the trans community, and all participants were familiar with this concept. The questions focusing on this topic are: "Have you heard the term 'pass' in the trans community? (請問您有聽過跨圈中 pass 一詞嗎?)" and "What, in your opinion, is the biggest difference between 'passing' and not passing? (請問您覺得 pass 與不 pass 的最大差異點為何?)" When defining passing, the majority of responses highlighted the need to invest effort in altering appearances, outfits, or showing specific characteristics to convey one's gender identity. Although participants are very familiar with the term, the majority of participants mentioned that they are not satisfied with their passing conditions. Over half of the participants exhibit negative affects (5 positive; 8 negative; 5 unmentioned). On top of that, most of them showed a mid-level of investment (1 low; 7 mid; 0 high), that is, being certain about their dissatisfaction.

On the other hand, the five participants with positive affects exhibited low investment (4 low; 1 mid; 0 high). This suggests that despite their efforts to enhance their passing condition, they lack confidence in achieving a passing appearance. In Examples 2a, 2b, and 2c, participants showing positive affects were observed to decrease their investment, employing the common modal verb *yīng gāi* (應該)('might'). In contrast, in Examples 2d and 2e, participants expressed certainty regarding their dissatisfaction by omitting modal verbs and instead using the concessive particle *hái shì* (還是)('still').

(Example 2)

- a. 如果以路人觀感來講我覺得應該算合格吧@@?

(*I might pass under a bystander's perspective.*) (positive) (low) (X.Q.)

- b. 我應該算是(pass)...但暫時沒有想要改的意思，很麻煩。(positive) (low) (C.X.)

(*I might (pass)... but I am not willing to change right now. It needs lots of work.*)

- c. 我應該給個八到九分吧，因為我身高這麼矮。(positive) (low) (L.D.)

(*I might give myself eight or nine out of ten because I am short.*)

- d. 其實還蠻不滿意的，就是像我有喉結，然後還有鬍子，然後沒辦法蓄長髮。

(*Actually, I am still quite dissatisfied with my appearance, such as my Adam's apple, mustache, and the restriction of keeping my hair long.*) (negative) (mid) (Y.R.)

- e. 還是不及格狀態，因為我長得太高了，身高跟身型我覺得我還是沒辦法，然後就是沒有辦法改變，所以永遠無法改變。

(*I still fail in passing because I am too tall. The height and body shape are still unchangeable, forever.*) (negative) (mid) (C.K.)

According to interview transcriptions, trans women express dissatisfaction mostly with aspects of their appearance such as height, prominent bone structure, low voice pitch, and masculine body features like body hair, Adam’s apple, and genitalia. Many participants bear anxiety about being discovered by others and fear failing to conceal their transgender identity. Look into their discourses, the combination of anxiety and a lack of confidence may contribute to the display of low investment in positive stances. However, the use of the modal verb *yīng gāi* has an interpretation—it can convey politeness but also uncertainty, given that passing or not is not a subjective but an objective opinion (as seen in example 2a). Plus, in example 2a, saying “*under a bystander’s perspective*” (以路人觀感來講) as evidence of underscoring that her judgement is based on others instead of hers, this assessment . On the other hand, the concessive particle *hái shì* which frequently occurred in negative stances implies that trans women have attempted to achieve passability but compromised on certain aspects through surgeries or training, such as the Adam’s apple, bone structure, or genital region. The concessive use of *hái shì* also presupposes alternative scenarios where trans women could change their appearance to attain satisfaction, but some either fail or choose not to do so due to physical constraints. As for the investment of those negative stances, normally they do not use low investment modal verbs such as *yīng gāi*, instead, they use modal verbs like *mán* (蠻)('quite (negative expression)') with a follow-up explanation that is related to male stereotype such as being tall or having a mustache. Interestingly, in example 2c, which is a positive stance, is also attached with a follow-up explanation, while it is about being short since there is a female stereotype that females are mostly short.

The results indicate that the trans women community encompasses individuals who feel passable after making certain changes to themselves, but it also includes a substantial number who have attempted such changes without feeling passable. This highlights how

transnormativity may lead trans women to undertake more than necessary. Furthermore, some participants expressed a preference not for feminization but for neutralizing their appearance to conceal their gender identities in society. Cultural male and female stereotypes are also revealed in these examples, since negative stance toward passing is often linked with male stereotypes, while positive one is often linked with female stereotypes.

Voice Perception

Exploring the reasons behind why some trans women feel unpassable, we discovered that the voice is a particularly prominent feature causing anxiety among them. The question focusing on this topic is: "Do you have any thoughts about your voice? (請問您目前對於自己的聲音有甚麼想法嗎?)" In response to this interview question, the majority of participants expressed dissatisfaction with their voices. Many participants express negative affects (3 positive; 12 negative; 3 unmentioned) when it comes to their voice perceptions, and all voice perception stances do not indicate high investment (1 low (1 positive); 14 mid (2 positive; 12 negative); 0 high). Lexical choices like *bù mǎnyì* (不滿意)('dissatisfied'), *dī* (低)('low'), or *bù wěndìng* (不穩定)('unstable') highlight various voice features contributing to trans women's concerns about voice incongruence and fear of public speaking. Additionally, an aspect observed in the transcriptions is the transition within negative affect.

In examples 3a, 3b, and 3c, the transitions from the dissatisfaction to the concession suggest that speakers may reluctantly accept their remaining voices despite dissatisfaction. Example 3a illustrates that the participant is dissatisfied with her voice, while the additional transition of inserting the clause with the transitional word *dàn shì* (但是)('but') presupposes that she still desires a feminine voice. It provides the contrast of not being satisfied and being reluctantly concessive. Similar interpretation can also be found in example 3b; the participant

mentioned that she has a low-pitched voice, and also added the transition word *dàn shì* (但是) ('but') that presupposes that the participant had given up her voice training but she is still eager to have a feminine voice, even though it is challenging to acquire. This thought can be reflected from the adverb *hái shì* (還是) ('still'), it shows the continuity of the clause after it, which is the time period that the speaker's voice pitch is quite low. Example 3c provides insight by illustrating that trans women have their standards when it comes to feminization of the voice. The presupposition in example 3c indicates that she knows what kind of voice she wants and has a standard on her trans voice.

In example 3d, for positive affect stances, the participant initially describes her voice as neutral but later asserts that her speaking style is more like a girl. This could be interpreted as an explanation for why she considered her voice neutral or as setting a lower bar. In example 3e, the marked gradable adverb *hái suàn* (還算) ('fairly') presupposes that the participant does not regard her current voice as her ideal voice.

(Example 3)

- a. 不是很滿意，但也就這樣吧，[...] 手術的話是不考慮。

(*Not satisfied, but that's it. [...] VFS is not considered.*) (negative) (mid) (A.C.)

- b. 就還是比較低沉一點。手術沒有，但訓練有自己嘗試訓練過，但放棄了。

(*My voice pitch is **still** quite low. I had not undergone VFS. I had tried voice training before, but I gave up.*) (negative) (mid) (C.X.)

- c. 有(受過聲音訓練)，但是 (聲音) 很不穩定。[...] 有人說是比較偏中性。

(*Yes, (I had voice training.) but (my voice) is unstable, some people described it as a neutral voice.*) (negative) (mid) (X.X.)

- d. 我就覺得很中性這樣子，可能就是語氣部分就比較像女生這樣。

(I feel that my voice is neutral, maybe the way I speak is more like a girl's.)

(positive) (low) (N.N.)

- e. 目前還算滿意，因為生活上沒有遇到甚麼問題。

(I am fairly satisfied so far because (my voice) does not cause any problems in my life.)

(positive) (mid) (A.X.)

Taking a broad perspective on the interviews, all participants express a strong desire to attain a feminine voice or a higher voice pitch. The evidence supporting this phenomenon is evident when participants express dissatisfaction, primarily showing concerns about the low pitch of their voices. For example, in example 3a, a participant mentions, "VFS is not considered." VFS refers to surgery that feminizes the voice by raising its pitch, providing a potential solution to the dissatisfaction she articulated, even if she did not choose to undergo the procedure. Consequently, we can establish a connection between dissatisfaction and the participant's low voice pitch. Other examples also express similar thoughts even if they did not straightforwardly say that they want to have a higher voice pitch. In examples 3c and 3d, both participants describe their voices as *zhōng xìng* (中性) ('neutral'), with the former sentence expressing a negative affect and the latter one expressing a positive affect. In example 3c, the participant characterizes her voice as "unstable," conveying a negative affect. In contrast, in example 3d, the participant refrains from using negative terms to describe her voice, leading to the difference in affect labels. Back to the evidence indicating a desire for a higher voice pitch among trans women, example 3d links *zhōng xìng* (中性) ('neutral') with the additional context, "the way I speak is more like a girl's" (可能就是語氣部分就比較像女生這樣). On the other hand, in example 3c, *hōng xìng* (中性) ('neutral') presents an objective viewpoint as a self-presentation modification, balancing the negative description of

her voice as "unstable." Through these association, *zhōng xìng* (中性) ('neutral') conveys the meaning of speaking like a woman in this context, not only indicating trans women's desire for a stable and high-pitched voice but also presupposing a stereotype that associates women or non-binary individuals with higher-pitched voices compared to men. Regarding other examples of voice perception responses with positive affects, example 3e shows that despite the speaker's ability to speak in a high-pitched voice, she expresses dissatisfaction. Through her statement, the inclusion of the word *hái suàn* (還算) ('fairly') decreases the evaluation of her own voice, indicating that the speaker holds higher expectations or remains unsatisfied.

While some participants can use a high-pitched or neutralized voice, others find it challenging, opting to maintain a lower voice pitch. A certain number of people in the latter group also responded that they are afraid to contact people in conversations such as ordering meals. They felt stressed when the clerk asked them to repeat what they had said. When it comes to the details of how they feel about using a high-pitched voice, they said that it is hard to keep a high pitch in situations such as being in a workplace or speaking in foreign languages. One of the participants mentioned that she felt distracted when she needed to maintain a decent voice and focus on the topic at the same time.

Gender Self-identification

In this part of the interview, the question related to gender self-identification has the most diverse response. The interview question for this issue is: "What is your opinion on the current policy of gender self-identification? (請問您對於目前的免術換證政策有何看法?)"

Although the responses can be categorized into two groups—the positive side and the negative side—both groups propose different solutions to the issue of gender self-identification. Returning to the main point of the gender self-identification issue, the

positive side suggests that trans women have the right to change their gender on their identification cards to align their legal gender with their gender identity. In contrast, the negative side argues that trans women should not have the right to change their legal gender unless they have undergone sexual reassignment surgery.

In this section, most responses about gender self-identification are stances, so the focus will be on whether the participant supports or opposes the issue. Positive and negative affect will be the indicators of the participant's stance on the matter. Based on the result, over half of the affects are positive (11 positive, 5 negative, 2 unmentioned). Participants labeled "unmentioned" stated that they did not have a clear preference between these two sides. As for the investment, none of the respondents showed low investment (3 high (3 positive); 13 mid (8 positive; 5 negative); 0 low), and all high investments are positive.

(Example 4)

- a. 所以我當然是支持免術換證的，但是不代表無條件換證。(positive) (high) (C.K.)

(Therefore I of course support gender self-identification, but it doesn't mean to support unconditional gender self-identification.)

- b. 免術換證的話，我是支持，但是如果是那種無條件換證的話，就反對這樣子。

(I support gender self-identification, but I oppose to the unconditional gender self-identification) (positive) (mid) (Y.D.)

- c. 就是...目前來說我覺得我的立場是可以直接通過沒有條件的免術換證，但是就是衡量現實的狀況，可能也還是會需要一些門檻。(positive) (mid) (B.B.)

(Umm..., as far as I can tell, I feel that my stance is that trans women can straightforwardly and unconditionally change their gender identification; however, in reality, there should still be some criteria.)

- d. 這個話題太爭議了，我不確定我是否適合給出一個... 說不定我們的看法不一樣。嚴格來說，我很需要，但我反對。 (negative) (mid) (A.X.)

*(This topic is too controversial to me, and I am not sure how to appropriately give a ... Maybe our opinions are different. Technically, I need it a lot, **but I oppose it.**)*

Although there are more positive stances than negative stances on this topic, some of the positive stances come before a transition. In example 4a, the participant supports gender self-identification. Furthermore, she adds the phrase *dāng rán* (當然)('of course') to strongly express agreement. However, after this strong agreement, a clarification follows. The clarification introduces the modal verb *dàn shì* (但是)('but') to signal a transition, indicating that the previous statement requires a certain condition. This condition specifies that gender self-identification needs to be conditional rather than unconditional. Similarly, in example 4b, the utterance includes a clarification. In this example, the participant not only uses the transitional modal verb *dàn shì* (但是)('but') but also uses the antonym of *zhī chí* (支持) ('support'), namely *fǎn duì* (反對)('oppose'), to emphasize the contrast. In both examples, through clarification, the utterances imply that the speaker wishes to distance themselves from those who support unconditional gender self-identification.

Another type of clarification with transition can be seen in example 4c, where the speaker introduces her opinion first within a specific context: "I feel that my stance is..." (我覺得我的立場是...), and subsequently cancels or revises the preceding statement to achieve a similar effect of reducing conflicts. Unlike examples 4a and 4b, the opinion in the initial statement of example 4c is not altered by the addition of the transitional modal verb *dàn shì* (但是)('but'). The use of the modal verb *dàn shì* (但是)('but') in this example serves the purpose of

presenting another alternative stance, primarily for the sake of gaining acceptance from the public. This suggests that the speaker can uphold her ideal stance while simultaneously proposing a new solution to the issue in practice.

Gender self-identification (免術換證) (*miǎn shù huàn zhèng*) in Mandarin literally means changing identification without surgery. Therefore, people may not be able to determine whether there should or should not be other criteria for gender self-identification. Stance focus helps speakers specify the topics of their stances. In examples 4a and 4b, speakers differentiate between conditional gender self-identification and unconditional gender self-identification, adding transitions to explain their positions. In all positive stances, the focus is on conditional gender self-identification, even though some participants express an idealized support for the unconditional option.

While discussing this topic, some of the participants were cautious when they expressed their stances. Perhaps because they did not know the interviewer's stance, participants tended to add hedgings before they expressed their stances on this topic. In linguistic terms, hedging is applied before a speaker's utterance to reduce the potential conflict or harm. In example 4d, the participant knew that the topic is controversial, and she used hedging in her statement. Firstly, the speaker explained the reason for making a hedge such as “This topic was too controversial.” (這個話題太爭議了。), showing the arguable nature of the topic. Secondly, the speaker expressed concerns about potential conflict by incorporating pauses into her statement and leaving the sentence incomplete, providing room for other people's opinions with sentences like “I am not sure how to appropriately give a ...” (我不確定我是否適合給出一個...). Lastly, the speaker emphasized her necessity of supporting the issue, followed by an opposing idea. From this example, we found that trans women usually become more

cautious when they are discussing controversial gender topics with people who do not show their stances. Applying hedging in example 4d can reflect the fact that a number of trans people are pursuing gender self-identification because the participant can foresee that her statement would have the possibility to cause a conflict against the mainstream.

Medical and Gender Terminology

Observations from the interviews reveal that several terms are frequently used in trans community conversations, such as medical and gender-related terminology. These terminologies become registers which encompass lexical terms used to discuss transgender issues. The purpose of investigating the frequently used medical and gender terminology is to show that there is certain knowledge used to index people who are involved in the trans community. It is important to note that these terminologies are all mentioned in Taiwanese Mandarin (except for abbreviations and some words that do not have proper Mandarin translation, which are mentioned in English). Medical terms are mostly related to gender reassignment treatments or mental disorders. Terms of gender reassignment treatments include *pass* ('passing'), *wěi yīn* (偽音) ('trans voice'), *shēng yīn xùn liàn* (聲音訓練) ('voice treatment'), *shēng dài shǒu shù* (聲帶手術) ('vocal fold surgery'), and treatment abbreviations such as GD, RLE, HRT, and SRS. Recorded audio files from the interviews also contain information about doctors, clinics, hospitals, medical associations, psychiatrists, and hormone tablets like *āndékǎ* (安德卡) ('Androcur'), *sūlātōng* (蘇拉通) ('Spironolactone'), and *yìsīdé* (益斯得) ('Estrade').

Gender terms are primarily associated with gender or gender self-identification, covering concepts like *shēng lǐ xìng bié* (生理性別) ('biological sex'), *xìng bié qì zhì* (性別氣質) ('gender expression'), *xìng bié rèn tóng* (性別認同) ('gender identity'), *xìng qīng xiàng* (性傾

向)(sexual orientation'), *biàn xìng zhě* (變性者)(transsexual)(sometimes abbreviated as TS), *shuāng xìng liàn* (雙性戀)(bisexual'), *demigirl* ('demigirl'), *kù ér* (酷兒)(queer'), *wú xìng bié* (無性別)(agender'), *fēi èr yuán* (非二元)(non-binary'), *xìng bié liú dòng* (性別流動)(gender fluid'), *wèi niáng* (偽娘)(cross-dresser)(often abbreviated as CD), and *biàn zhuāng yù zhě* (變裝慾者)(transvestism'). While these terms are not explicitly explained during the interviews, trans individuals already possess background knowledge. Consequently, despite varying stances on gender issues, trans people are willing to share medical and gender information within the community to support each other.

Transgender Definition Discussion

In this section, we dig into the definition of trans in three distinct aspects: the general trans definition, the trans definition within the context of gender self-identification, and the trans definition applied for distinguishing between trans and non-trans individuals. A detailed examination of the interview transcriptions suggests variations across these aspects. The primary goal of this section is to find out the criteria that determine one's transgender identity, guided by the standards established within the transgender community.

Trans Definition

From the discussion above, it seems that the main focus of dividing conditional and unconditional gender self-identification is the definition of trans, especially the trans who fits the criteria of gender self-identification. According to the answer to the question: "What is your definition of transgender? (請問您心中對於跨性別的定義是?)", all participants provided a similar answer, which is organized and shown in example 5a. Although the answer may not be universally agreed upon, it is the most well-known and general definition of the

term *transgender*, which is also the definition from American Psychological Association in 2013. In examples 5b and 5c, the participant used different ways to define transgender people. In example 5b, after a statement of a general transgender definition, the speaker added a clause with the conjunction *zhǐ yào* (只要)('if) to alter and loosen the former transgender definition criterion. The added clause helps to expand the inclusivity of the transgender community by acknowledging that individuals not conforming to the gender binary are more numerous than those whose biological sex does not correspond to their gender identity. In example 5c, the participant added a new criterion after the general transgender definition with the conjunction *bìng qiě* (並且)('and') to set other criteria to narrow down people who can be called trans. Differing from example 5b, which suggests that individuals who cannot be categorized by the gender binary can be part of the transgender community, example 5c defines transgender people as those with a strong desire to change their gender or actively making efforts to transition. This definition excludes individuals who do not take any actions to transition, even if their biological sex does not correspond to their gender identity. By these two examples, a range of transgender criteria can be found, and this is necessary to be investigated to discover the boundary between being trans or not being trans and show that additional criteria can vary in strictness depending on individuals.

(Example 5)

- a. 跨性別指自身的(原生性別/生理性別/出生指派性別)與(心理性別/性別認同/性別氣質)不一致。

(Transgender is a term to describe people whose sex, biological sex, or assigned sex does not correspond with their gender, gender identity, or gender expression.)

- b. 我心中的跨性別是心目中對自己認定的性別跟原生性別不一致的人，只要不是在二元的框架下，他就是跨性別。

(Transgender is a term to describe people whose gender does not correspond with sex. If they do not fit in the gender binary, they can be called transgender.)

(A.X.)

- c. 我心中的跨性別是生理心理性別不一致，**並且有強烈想要改變成與生理性別不同的人。**

(Transgender is a term to describe people whose biological sex does not correspond with their gender identity, and who have a strong desire to change into a person who is different from their biological sex.)

(X.X.)

Trans or Non-trans?

To find out the boundaries between trans and non-trans, the following interview question was delivered: "What is your definition of transgender? For example, does it include non-binary individuals, CD, or other groups? (請問您覺得跨性別包含哪些群體呢? 比如是否包含非二元、CD 或其他群體?)" Defining the term *transgender* is controversial, not to mention defining a person as a trans or non-trans. According to the umbrella term transgender people had provided, CD and non-binary should also be part of the transgender community, while transgender people want to set a borderline between cross-dressers, non-binaries, and them (7 agree; 9 disagree; 1 neutral). In this part, the criteria of who counts as trans are discussed. When it comes to the criteria of who counts as trans, most of the participants made their decisions based on the person's gender identity, which is the same as their transgender definition mentioned above.

In example 6a, the participant expressed the belief that self-identifying is the most persuasive criterion for being considered trans. This stance is evident by examining the use of expressions such as *cái suàn* (才算)('only...count as') and *bù suàn* (不算)('not count as'). The

use of the expression accurately distinguishes individuals who self-identify as trans from those who do not, indicating that the speaker prefers a clear and unambiguous boundary. In examples 6b and 6c, some participants provided stricter criteria such as RLE or HRT, while there are differences between their expressions. Example 6b shows mildness in expressing the additional criteria of being trans. In contrast, example 6c shows strictness in expressing the criteria. This distinction can be seen in their discourses. Example 6b contains features such as hedging and politeness with phrase like *wǒ jué de* (我覺得)('in my opinion') and pausing. The incorporation of these features serves the purpose of presenting the speaker's opinion without outright rejecting alternative perspectives, thereby mitigating the potential risk of face-threatening acts toward others.

Some participants do not set criteria to exclude individuals from the community. In example 6d, the participant claimed that trans mostly refers to trans people under the narrow definition, which is the trans who self-identified themselves as their gender identity. In contrast, people who do not do so but have different gender expressions still can be categorized as trans under the broad definition if they want to. The usage of the narrow and broad trans definitions serves to acknowledge diverse experiences of gender dysphoria and transitioning processes without excluding any possibilities for transgender individuals. While defining 'trans' may seemingly hinge on self-identification and specific criteria, the results indicate that interpretations of trans definitions can vary based on the context. It is noteworthy that the usages of *jiǎndān lái jiǎng* (簡單來講)('simply') and *yībān lái jiǎng* (一般來講)('generally') in example 6c and 6d express how the speakers show the complexity toward the categorization, and the epistemic access of setting standards.

(Example 6)

- a. 自己有同意那個性別的人才算跨性別，他不算的話就是CD跟偽娘這一種，或是易裝癖。

*(Only when people self-identify as another gender **can be counted as trans** and if people do not do so, then this kind of person should be called crossdressers or transvestism.)* (N.N.)

- b. 我覺得至少...我們為了要確認一個人能不能作為一個跨性別的話，我覺得需要RLE，我覺得是必要的。

*(I think at least... the person should have RLE to be identified as a trans. **In my opinion**, having RLE is required.)* (C.K.)

- c. 簡單來講，沒有用藥我覺得就不算(跨性別)了，因為沒有用藥你就沒有跨這個東西，你就不是想要改變阿。

(Simply, people who do not undergo HRT can not be identified as trans. If you do not have any medical transition, you are not willing to change.) (X.X.)

- d. 一般來講社會上泛指跨性別都是**狹義的跨性別**。非二元也算**狹義的跨性別**。易裝者與變裝慾者，硬要講的話算是**廣義**。

*(Generally, the transgender community mostly represents the trans under **the narrow definition**, non-binary is also included. If I must say, crossdressers and transvestism are also trans, but are under **the broad definition**.)* (C.X.)

Three Aspects of Trans Definition

From the discussions above, we had defined trans in three aspects: definition, gender self-identification, and trans or non-trans division. In each aspect, trans is defined by different criteria. Table 4.4 shows and visualizes the criteria of three aspects applied.

First of all, most participants have the same and aligned criterion for trans definition, showing a social consensus towards the term. Although two of the participants claimed that trans people should have experienced transitions including medical or non-medical treatments, most of the responses showed that the key to defining the term is the difference between biological sex and gender identity/gender expression. Although some personal criteria were added, the main concept is clear and simple.

Trans DEF	GSI	Trans (narrow)				Trans (broad)		Non-Trans	
BIO ≠ ID	C	TG						CD	TV
BIO ≠ ID	SRS	TG				CD			
BIO ≠ ID	SRS	TG	NB	QR	BI	CD			
BIO ≠ ID	HRT / GD	TG						CD	TV
BIO ≠ ID	GD	TG	NB						TV
BIO ≠ ID / GE	HRT + GD	TG	NB			CD	TV		
BIO ≠ ID	GD	TG	NB					CD	
BIO ≠ ID	GD	TG	NB					CD	TV
BIO ≠ ID / GE	N	TG							
BIO ≠ ID / GE	C	People who claims that they are trans							
BIO ≠ ID	SRS	TG						CD	TV
BIO ≠ ID	HRT + GD	TG						CD	TV
TRANSITION	SRS	TG						CD	TV
TRANSITION	SRS	TG	NB	QR	BI	CD			
BIO ≠ ID	GD (C)	TG				CD	TV		
BIO ≠ ID	GD	TG				CD	TV		
BIO ≠ ID	HRT	Not labelling people with gender							
BIO ≠ ID	HRT / GD	TG						CD	TV

Table 4.4. Trans in Three Different Aspects

The next subject, gender self-identification, shows that the criteria of trans people are becoming stricter and more diverse when identity recognition is related to law. Considering the consequences of regarding trans women as legitimate women, it is predictable that people will set a higher standard than the transgender definition. In Table 4.4, with the exception of those opposing gender self-identification by upholding sexual reassignment surgery (SRS) as

the sole criterion, other trans individuals propose three potential criteria for transgender recognition: hormone replacement treatment (HRT), gender dysphoria prescription (GD), and accreditation from the committee on transgender and gender diversity (C).

Examples 7 and 8 presented statements representing the stance of the opposing group and the supporting group respectively. It is worth mentioning that the expression in example 7a, emphasizing that opposing gender self-identification is cruel for the transgender community, served to moderate the speaker's stance. Another feature is shown in example 7b, which is the expression of *qí shí* (其實)('actually'). The word *qí shí* brings out the contrast signal, indicating that the speaker's statement has the potential to differ from the mainstream transgender community opinion. This adjustment was made in recognition of the understanding that her statement might be perceived as contrary to the views of other transgender individuals who support gender self-identification.

(Example 7)

- a. 不支持(免術換證)，恩...我覺得太危險了，對。[...] 我們的睪固酮它就是有一直在產生，[...] 睪固酮很高的話它會提升性慾，所以我覺得蠻危險的。雖然好像很殘酷，但是...對。

(I oppose it (gender self-identification). Umm, I feel that is too risky, yeah. [...] Our testosterone is still producing and it will arouse sexual desire, so I feel that this is quite dangerous. Although it seems cruel, ..., yeah.) (SRS) (M.N.)

- b. 其實我個人是比較不支持(免術換證)，不希望自己這麼辛苦變過去，就不想術的就說自己是女生這樣子，我就覺得那我是不是白做了。

(Actually, I personally do not support it (gender self-identification). I feel like my hard work of transitioning would be in vain if those people who do not want to undergo SRS called themselves women.) (SRS) (N.N.)

(Example 8)

- a. 如果是不到 SRS 這個階段的話，**我覺得** HRT 是比較有效的，可能 HRT 一年。

(If they are not in the process of undergoing SRS, I think having undergone HRT is more persuasive, maybe having the treatment for a year is acceptable.)(HRT) (S.J.)

- b. 因為做 HRT 之後她的性功能可能會有影響，她還有很多像是比較傷身的疑慮，那她也有資格說她不想做這個事情，所以說**我覺得**用精神科當證明是比較合適的。

(Because undergoing HRT may cause sexual dysfunction and other concerns about health, she has the right to refuse to do it. Therefore I think having GD as the criterion is more appropriate.) (GD) (B.J.)

- c. 例如像是參加審查的委員會，精神科醫師，心理師，社工師，還有性別專家組成的委員會，審查她個人生活的狀況，就很多相關的專業來去判斷這件事。

(For example, examining her personal lifestyle by the committee which is composed of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and gender experts. There will be more experts to judge the case.) (C) (B.B.)

Regarding the statements that support gender self-identification, examples 8a and 8b utilize the phrase *wǒ jué de* (我覺得)('in my opinion') to express politeness and consideration for others' opinions, which is also one of the features of women languages. Using the phrase acts

as a way to show that the statement is based on personal views and allows room for diverse perspectives. Additionally, some participants chose not to make personal judgments but instead suggested relying on individuals with the authority to determine transgender identities such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or gender experts. These strategies not only help in avoiding potential conflicts within the community but also emphasizes the importance of informed and inclusive decision-making.

The last aspect of trans definition is the division of trans and non-trans. Although it is more diverse than the two aspects above, most of the controversy focused on CD and TV. One group refuses to recognize CD and TV as trans, and the other group recognizes them as trans under a broad definition. None of the trans women recognize CD and TV as trans under a narrow definition. Based on the transcription, many participants are struggling with assuming the gender identity of CD and TV. Following the basic transgender term definition, CD and TV can be called trans if they recognize themselves as a different gender from their biological sex. According to example 6a, if CD and TV are defined as people who do not recognize themselves as the different gender from their biological sex and only want to have the freedom of dressing, they will not be included in the trans community.

To sum up, three aspects of the transgender definition display different levels of strictness. The lowest level is the basic term definition, which includes all people whose biological sex is different from their gender identity. The middle level is the trans or non-trans division. This level excludes people who do not have gender dysphoria from the transgender community. The highest level is the transgender definition for conditional gender self-identification, which mostly excludes people who do not undergo certain medical transitions or have a gender dysphoria diagnosis.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS

This research explores the acoustic features of trans women and provides insights into how they express their perspectives on various trans-related issues. The findings affirm the presence of distinct trans voices within the trans community, contributing a conclusive interpretation of how trans women approach different topics in their discourse.

In acoustic analysis, trans women exhibit a wide voice pitch range, allowing for division into H and L groups based on mean pitch. Some participants' voice pitch values seem to display variations across different conversations with distinct interlocutors, and some of them constantly remain either a high voice pitch or a low voice pitch. The H group is characterized by a pitch range comparable to women's voices, while the L group maintains a lower pitch comparable to men's voices.

As for the discourse analysis, trans women tend to convey less confidence concerning aspects like passing or voice perception, presented through the use of epistemic modal verbs such as *yīng gāi* or concessive particles like *hái shì*. On the contrary, they exhibit firm stances on issues related to gender self-identification with the use of *dāng rán*. Interestingly, trans women in the conversation tend to use hedging as a way to soften the impact when discussing different viewpoints on these topics. Another interesting observation is that, through their choice of words, members of the trans community commonly use various terms related to medical transitions and genders. These features can be shown as the constituents of trans women speech style. The interviews reveal a clear understanding of transgender concepts, where the definition shows varying levels of strictness in different aspects, aiming to categorize individuals into specific groups. The community includes all individuals whose biological sex does not correspond with their gender identity. However, certain cases such as

gender self-identification exclude individuals who have not undergone specific medical transitions, lack a gender dysphoria diagnosis, or do not engage in any effort toward the transitioning process.

Back to the introduction section, we had stated three research questions: (1) Does pitch differ in conversations with distinct interlocutors, or does it show differences among trans women? (2) How do trans women talk about and take stances on issues related to transgender topics? (3) How do they linguistically and discursively construct the boundary between being a trans or not being a trans?

The first question “Does pitch differ in conversations with distinct interlocutors, or does it show differences among trans women?” aims to see if there is any difference of pitch when trans people having conversation with different interlocutors. As a result, some participants perform various pitch values in different conversations, and some of them retain their voice pitch constantly. The difference between the pitch values in the H group and L group is observable. The next research question, “How do trans women talk about and take stances on issues related to transgender topics?”, is mostly the main purpose of applying discourse analysis in this research. From the discourse analysis, concerning their interlocutor’s stance, trans women tend to previously understand others' stance before they convey their thoughts, especially in the discussion of transgender topics. Plus, they would also apply hedging in their speech to avoid conflicts. The last question is “How do they linguistically and discursively construct the boundary between being a trans or not being a trans?” In the discussion of transgender definition, three aspects of trans definitions were organized. Transgender definition varies in strictness levels. The basic term includes anyone with a different gender identity from their biological sex. The trans or non-trans level excludes those

without gender dysphoria. The highest level requires medical transitions or a gender dysphoria diagnosis for self-identification.

One of the limitations of this research is that it focuses solely on transgender individuals in Taipei, Taiwan. Asian cultural background should also be taken into consideration when it comes to discussing politeness and hesitation of this certain regional group, the trans community with other regional backgrounds may have various features. To enhance the study, it could include participants from different regions to explore potential variations in transgender voice perceptions. While the research involves 18 transgender participants, having a larger and more diverse sample size would make the findings more reliable. The methodology could be improved by simulating a broader range of scenarios during data collection to capture additional dimensions of transgender voice perception. For a more comprehensive understanding of acoustic aspects, a deeper analysis of formants and resonance in pitch analysis would be beneficial. Additionally, broadening discourse analysis to include non-verbal cues like pauses, facial expressions, body gestures, and attire can provide a more holistic view of transgender interactions, offering insights into the overall communication context.

As for the contribution, this research pioneers by offering insider perspectives on transgender interactions. It highlights trans women's capability to train voices, which is crucial for voice feminization therapies. The speech style identified—polite, considerate, and cautious—contributes to recognizing a unique social speech community. The exploration of stance expression adds details into how transgender individuals convey perspectives. Despite limitations, this research significantly advances our understanding of transgender voices and interactions, with implications for clinical practices and sociolinguistics.

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APPENDIX A: ABBREVIATION

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
BI	bisexual
BIO	biological sex
C	committee (for gender recognition)
CD	crossdresser
CL	clerk (ordering conversation)
GD	gender dysphoria
GE	gender expression
HRT	hormone replacement surgery
ID	gender identity
INT-FI	interview (final) (trans definition)
INT-INI	interview (initial) (introduction of participants' ages)
MAX	maximum (voice pitch)
MIN	minimum (voice pitch)
NB	non-binary
QR	queer
SRS	sex reassignment surgery
TG	transgender
TS	transexual
TV	transvestism
VFS	voice feminization surgery
VFT	voice feminization treatment

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Non-trans topic questions)

1. 請問您今年的年齡為何？（請以我今年幾歲作為開頭回答）
(Could you please share your age?) (Please begin with “I am ___ years old.”)
2. 請問您能簡單描述您的職業或是興趣嗎？
(Could you briefly describe your occupation or hobbies?)
3. 請問你可以簡單描述您的家庭成員與相處情況嗎？
(Could you provide a brief description of your family members and your interactions with them?)
4. 請問您目前的社交狀況如何？
(How is your current social life?)
5. 請問您能簡單描述您平時的裝扮風格嗎？
(Could you briefly describe your typical dressing style?)
6. 請問您能簡單描述您平時說話的語氣嗎？
(Could you briefly describe your usual speaking tone?)

(Trans topic questions)

1. 請問您目前有接受過什麼有關於跨性別的醫用療程？
(Have you undergone any transgender-related medical treatments?)
2. 請問您有聽過跨圈中 pass 一詞嗎？請問您覺得 pass 與不 pass 的最大差異點為何？
(Have you heard the term "pass" in the trans community?)
(What, in your opinion, is the biggest difference between passing and not passing?)
3. 請問您目前對於自己的聲音有甚麼想法嗎？
(Do you have any thoughts about your voice?)

4. 請問您通常如何向人解釋您的性別認同?
(How do you usually explain your gender identity to others?)
5. 請問您對於目前的免術換證政策有何看法?
(What is your opinion on the current policy of gender self-identification?)
6. 請問您是否有過隱藏自己跨性別身分的經驗?
(Have you ever experienced hiding your transgender identity?)
7. 請問您在生活中還有遇到甚麼樣的困擾嗎?
(Do you encounter any other difficulties in your daily life?)
8. 請問您心中對於跨性別的定義是? (請以我心中的跨性別作為開頭回答)
(What is your definition of transgender? Please start with “In my mind, transgender is ___”)
9. 請問您覺得跨性別包含哪些群體呢? 比如是否包含非二元, CD, 或其他群體?
(Which groups do you think are included in the transgender community? For example, does it include non-binary individuals, CD, or other groups?)