

## CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

In the present study, the differences between male and female speech in TV talk shows in Taiwan were examined. The major findings of the present study will be summarized in Section 5.1. Next, in Section 5.2, implications of the study will be presented. Afterwards, limitations and suggestions for further research will be stated in Section 5.3. Last, the summary of this chapter will be addressed in Section 5.4.

### 5.1 Summary of the Major Findings

The present study investigates gender differences in language in TV talk shows in Taiwan. Eight linguistic units have been examined in the present study to compare males' and females' linguistic patterns: (1) hedges/fillers (*wojuede* “我覺得”, *worenwei* “我認爲”, *woxiang* “我想”, *nizhidao* “你知道”, *youdian* “有點”, and *youyidian* “有一點”); (2) tag questions (*duibudui* “對不對”, *shibushi* “是不是”, *houbuhou* “好不好”, *youmeiyou* “有沒有”, *bushima* “不是嗎”, *keyima* “可以嗎”, *bukeyima* “不可以嗎”, *haoma* “好嗎”, *shima* “是嗎”, and *youma* “有嗎”); (3) intensifiers (*ruci* “如此”, *zheme* “這麼”, and *name* “那麼”); (4) joke-telling and humorous expressions; (5) polite forms (*qing* “請”, *nikebukeyi* “你可不可以”, *ninengbuneng* “你能不能”, and *nijiebujiyei* “你介不介意”); (6) empty adjectives (*keaide* “可愛的”, *xiyinrende* “吸引人的”, *mirende* “迷人的”, *youmeilide* “有魅力的”, *tianmeide* “甜美的”, *lingrenyukuaide* “令人愉快的”, *jiband* “極棒的”, and *feifande* “非凡的”); (7) amount of talk (total characters of speaking); and (8) Southern Min Dialect (Taiwanese).

The results of this study indicate that men and women are found to be different in some linguistic patterns. First, although it is generally believed that women are

wordier than men, the result of the present study contradicts with such a stereotype. On the average, men produce 1.3 times the amount of women's speech. Besides, on the average men are found to use 1.6 times more tag questions, tell twice more humorous expressions and use 3 times more polite forms than women do. Still, compared with women, men use more intensifiers and speak a greater amount of vernacular forms in public contexts. Third, women in the present study generally use more hedges than men do (8.44:7.82) and use more standard dialect. Fourth, men and women use empty adjectives almost equally (0.11: 0.10). Some of the findings mentioned above agree with Lakoff's (1975) observation. For example, men tell more jokes but women use more hedges.

However, in spite of the fact that the present study is based on Lakoff's (1975) proposal, some of the findings of the present study are quite contrary to her proposal as well as the findings of some previous studies (Bolinger, 1980; Kramarae, 1981; Tannen, 1986, 1990; Holmes, 1992a; Nordenstam, 1992; Coates, 1993; Farris, 2000). For instance, Lakoff (1975) and the previous studies suggest that women use more "women's linguistic features" such as tag questions, intensifiers, and polite forms. Yet, in the present study men are found to use more of those features than women.

In addition, context and addressee have also been discussed in the present study to compare males' and females' ways of speaking in different types of programs and with different interlocutors. Both men and women are found to adapt their speech patterns according to different types of programs. Besides, their linguistic behavior is also different when their interlocutors consist of uneven number of genders. For example, contradictory to the average speech pattern, in the present study women are found to talk more, speak Southern Min more often and use fewer tag questions in socio-political talk shows, which are considered "man's programs." Likewise, male speakers talk less in amount and speak less Southern Min in soft talk shows than in

socio-political ones, which is different from men's average linguistic pattern. Both conditions explain that people tend to adjust their speech styles according to different circumstances and addressees in order to create a positive image and obtain approval from the listeners.

## **5.2 Implications of the Study**

The results of the corpus data analysis suggest that males and females are different in language use, and several of the findings confirm the observation of the previous studies. First, as Tannen (1990) and Nordenstam (1992) have proposed, men talk more than women in public domains. Second, women use more hedges, just as Lakoff (1975) has observed. Third, as Lakoff (1975), Mitchell (1985), Holmes (1992a), Kuo, (1995), and Hudson (1996) suggest, men speak more vernacular language and tell more jokes. However, some results of the present study contradict the findings of the previous studies. For example, although Lakoff (1975) claims that tag questions, intensifiers, polite forms and empty adjectives are categorized as “women's language”, the present study has observed that males use those features more often than women do.

The present study is different from the previous studies with respect to the contexts and languages. First, the present study explores gender differences in language in the public domain while many of the previous studies examine gender and language in the private contexts. Second, the present study investigates Mandarin Chinese whereas most of the previous studies focused on other Eastern and Western languages. Kou (1995) also studies male-female differences in conversational style in Taiwan, however, the context in her study is private and all her speakers are students from the same university. Besides, Kuo (2002) also examines Taiwanese female politician's talk in public contexts, but her study is a case study.

However, the data in the present study are collected from 12 TV programs in various TV stations in Taiwan and display gender differences in public domains. In short, the present study is the first study that contributes to the understanding of male-female speech patterns in the public domain in Taiwan Mandarin.

In addition, the present study has found that males and females vary their linguistic patterns as the contexts and interlocutors change. When in soft talk shows, males use more “women’s linguistic features” to fit the context. Likewise, women speak in a more masculine way to compete with men in socio-political talk shows. What’s more, when their interlocutors are composed of a different proportion of sex, males and females also change their linguistic behavior to be more like each other’s. By adjusting linguistic patterns, the participants wish to be positively valued by their peers.

### **5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

The present study adapts Lakoff’s (1975) framework to examine males’ and females’ linguistic behavior. Yet, there are some limitations and several aspects are left for further investigation.

First, due to the limited size of the corpus, the number of occurrences of tag questions, humorous expressions, polite forms, and empty adjectives is not large enough to yield generalizations. It is suggested that a larger-scale study may be conducted to obtain more understanding of male-female general linguistic patterns in these areas of study. Second, due to the limitation of time, the present study has explored the verbal parts of the speakers’ speech, and has disregarded nonverbal behavior such as facial expressions and body languages. Thus, the further study of nonverbal behavior is also encouraged. Third, because time is limited, the present study simply focuses on the speech of the guest speakers. Future studies may take

other factors such as speakers' background, personality, ideology and the influence of the host into consideration. Fourth, the amount of talk and Southern Min use in the present study are counted by characters. Character counting may not be the best way to compare those two categories, "character" is used for convenience and consistence since Chinese "word" and "sentence" are hard to define. Fifth, the major methodology in the present study is frequency count. Whether the differences are significant or not is not confirmed. It is thus suggested that chi-square be computed in order to figure out whether the difference is significant or not. Besides, the corpus data in the present study are collected from TV talk shows. Thus, the findings of the present study can only be generalized to the linguistic patterns of males and females on TV. It is suggested that other aspects of speech patterns on an empirical basis should also be investigated.

#### **5.4 Summary of Chapter Five**

The present study examines gender differences in language use. The findings suggest that women and men are different in many aspects in language use, such as the amount of talk, the use of hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, Southern Min, humorous expressions and polite forms. Besides, people are found to vary their linguistic patterns according to program types and their interlocutors. It shows the unique speech styles of men and women in the public domains in Taiwan.