

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the topics, speech patterns and styles of young Malaysian metrosexuals involved in this study with reference to contemporary literature in language and gender and Communities of Practice. It includes the findings on themes, topics and men's gossip demonstrated by the six subjects (Bambam, Dato', Eriq, Fifi, Kuntum and Tobey) in their conversations. It also entails the findings on speech patterns and styles of metrosexuals, followed by discussion on the production of themes, speech patterns and styles of metrosexual's language through the exploitation of deficit, dominance, difference and gender performativity frameworks. Then, the discussion continues with the findings on the non-linguistic practices employed by the metrosexual subjects in their talks. The findings from the survey on the contributing factors that influence the language used by the metrosexuals is also discussed. Further, this chapter describes the construction of linguistic and non-linguistic practices of metrosexual based on the principles outlined in Communities of Practice Framework by Wenger (2006) and concludes the findings in this study.

5.1 Themes, Topics and Men's Gossip

From the analysis, it was found that there were four areas or themes which were normally discussed by the subjects: (i) gossip; (ii) hobbies and interests; (iii) work-related issues; and (iv) miscellaneous topics (daily activity plans, what to eat, the weather and others). A notable finding about the most talk-about topic among the metrosexual subjects is gossip. Based on Jones' original definition of the social function

of women's gossip as the maintenance of 'unity, moral and values of women as a social group' (1980, p. 193), this study has demonstrated that this premise is equally applied to metrosexuals. A study by Johnson and Finlay entitled '*Do Men Gossip?*' (1997, p. 130) revealed that men too, participate in gossip through a football talk on television. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that the setting (gossip through a football talk on television) is 'superficial', as the hosts and participants of such talk were involved in a national television broadcast which restricted them to reveal their true nature while gossiping. Studies by Jones (ibid.) as well as Johnson and Finlay (ibid.) also support this finding that gossip is a 'tool' for men to create solidarity within their own gender group.

In contrast, the present study was carried out in a natural setting (i.e: conversations), where the metrosexual subjects did not feel 'threatened' to reveal their true behaviours while gossiping. The subjects used very similar discursive strategies to women's in order to establish their identity and solidarity as a metrosexual group. This can be seen from two instances available from the observation. In the first instance (see Excerpt 4.4 under Section 4.1.1), when Dato', Kuntum and Tobey were discussing about the stranger whom they thought as '*pooyo*' (vain), they apparently exchanged mutual information, and a pool of common schema becomes available which can both be relived and supplemented by the three of them. In this instance, the subjects distinguished themselves from the stranger in terms of having a better 'taste' in 'what to wear and what not to wear', by indirectly connotating that they had a better fashion sense than the stranger. This example indicates that the more censorious aspect of gossip relates well to the narrowly defined function of gossip as "talk which involves the pejorative judgment of an absent other" given by Eggin and Slade (1997). This sort of pejorative gossip obviously contributes to the reinforcement of normative values and construction of group identity. Meanwhile, in the second example (see Excerpt 4.3

under Section 4.1.1), when Eriq, Kuntum and Tobey were ‘bitching’ about Dato’ as being a ‘sexual moron’, they actually made a pejorative remark and their intention was clear not to label Dato’ as somebody they disliked, but the purpose was more of ‘filling-in the gap’ and to ridicule him. As stated by Johnson and Finlay (1997), a world of characters is accessed, whose lives and behaviour can be commented upon, criticized and sanctioned (p. 141).

Through social talk, these subjects demonstrated solidarity within their group members especially when it comes to gossip. Interestingly, the finding in this study is similar to what Johnson and Finlay (*ibid.*) found on “the subjective of concerns of the private sphere are countered by the transferal of emotions to a reified world, in this case, the world of sport” (p. 141). Since the subjects talked about a variety of themes in their conversations, they were comfortable to talk about private matters of other people without any qualms. In fact, they gossiped like women as they ‘bitched’ about personal and private sphere of other people too.

The use of gossip in a conversation is a means of affirming group solidarity and an unofficial channel for information transfer within individuals, especially in a community of practice. In this study, the subjects used gossip as a channel to strengthen solidarity that they had developed as a metrosexual group. Eggins and Slade (1997) defined gossip as “a form of talk which interactants can construct solidarity as they explore shared normative judgments about culturally significant behavioural domains” (p. 273). This emphasis on the normative function of gossip as a tool of reinforcing the values of the group relates well to the importance of “[binding] gossipers together in an imagined community of shared values” (White, 1979). In other words, gossip is a ‘device’ in strengthening the cohesion of the social group.

Nevertheless, there is one aspect of metrosexual men's talk that differs radically from previous findings on 'rapport talk' and 'report talk' (Holmes, 2008; Jariah Mohd. Jan, 1999). Most sociolinguists in the area of gender difference such as Holmes and Mohd Jan (ibid.) agreed that women maintain rapport talk, while men normally used report talk when interacting within their own gender group. In addition, the sphere of private and personal experience is normally thought to be the focus of women's gossip, while in men's gossip, those issues will be totally marginalized. According to Holmes (ibid.):

The male equivalent of women's gossip is difficult to identify. In parallel situations the topics men discuss tend to focus on things and activities, rather than personal experiences and feelings. Topics like sports, cars and possessions turn up regularly. The focus is on information and facts rather than on feelings and reactions. (p. 311)

However, this study revealed that the subjects maintained rapport talk and discussed private and personal experiences among them too, but only to a certain extent before abandoning them eventually. In two different examples, Tobey, Eriq, Bambam and Fifi were deeply immersed with emotional and personal feelings when discussing their frustration and anger towards their subjects. It was noted that when they thought the topic had reached the 'red line' of their emotional proximity, they abruptly 'cut' or abandoned the topic totally. Although there was a discrete appearance of concern for the lives of other people and a conception of intimacy in their talk, this was ultimately revealed as embarrassing and tarnishing their egos as men, should the details probe into further discussion. The findings in my study however do not tally with Holmes (ibid.) theory that, "...the topics men discuss tend to focus on things and activities, rather than personal experiences and feelings" (p. 311). In fact, the frequency of gossip on 'personal experiences' and 'feelings' seemed to recur throughout the conversations of the metrosexuals in this study. Even though the subjects did discuss topics on

hobbies and interests (E.g.: sports, women and gadgets), this other aspect of gossip was the main theme of discussion among them.

In addition, subjects reported that other topics like hobbies and interests (e.g. photography, sports, gym, physical grooming, traveling, shopping and gadgets) were discussed mainly for the purpose of sharing common interests, exchanging ideas about physical grooming and activities. Since all of them are metrosexuals, topics on physical grooming were brought up to ensure that they received up-to-date information on beauty products, healthcare and latest events in town. Therefore, discussion on physical grooming and beauty products were also pertinent and available in most of their conversations. All of the subjects showed high interest when discussing consumption of products or services that can enhance their physical appearance as a metrosexual and professional, satisfying their sophisticated needs such as travelling and ‘posh’ wine-dine experience. No matter how much the costs are, they indulge themselves with conspicuous consumption behaviour (conspicuous consumption theory, Veblen, 1899). This is supported by Denk (2009) who found that conspicuous consumption habit among metrosexuals is the result of changing gender roles in society and due to their high disposable income factor. Based on the transcriptions and researcher’s observations, they provided evidence on one quality that most metrosexuals possess – a trendsetter, who spends time and money on appearance and shopping (Flocker, 2003) or interest to maintain good physical appearance as described by Simpson (1994) in his definition about metrosexual.

A study by Komarovsky (1967) on blue-collar families in the 60s discovered that both sexes acknowledged the fact that men prefer to discuss sports, among other things like work, automobiles and local politics. Likewise, the subjects in this study also

discussed topic on sports and fitness activities such as tennis, scuba-diving, swimming and going to the gym. Coad (2008) shows how gender roles for men are undergoing a revolutionary change in his book, *'The Metrosexual Gender, Sexuality and Sport'*. Coad (ibid) explains that the emergence of metrosexual is also portrayed via celebrity athletes' endorsement such as David Beckham, Ian Thorpe (a famous Australian swimmer) and Dennis Rodman (a retired NBA player). From Coad's explanation, it provides a clear indication of the involvement of metrosexuals in sports activities.

However, another interesting finding from the interview reveals that the subjects' involvement in sports was not mainly for healthy living purposes. According to Eriq (personal communication, December 17, 2010) "I don't go to the gym to stay healthy. I go there to work my body so that I look good". Likewise, Tobey (personal communication, December 17, 2010) further added that "Once you're in a 3-series club (being in the 30s), more effort is needed to reduce your body fat especially around your tummy area". Meanwhile, Kuntum admitted that his main objective of playing tennis at least three times a week is to maintain his body weight. In short, all of the subjects agreed that their involvement in sports activities was mainly for the reason to maintain good physical figure and weight. Their obsession of being in a good shape rather than staying healthy is what Simpson (ibid.) describes as "he (metrosexual) has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure" (p. 1). Apart from that, it was observed that social expectation is pressuring the subjects as contemporary men to want to look better and stay vibrant and this finding is similar to Cheng, Ooi and Ting's (2010).

Another common topic that was brought into discussion is work-related issues. From the observation, all subjects tend to 'brag' about how great their jobs were and their achievement in executing their duties and how much they earned from the job they

did. This can be related to masculinity theory by Connell (1995) that men's prime intention in establishing connection with their surrounding are through the application of male dominance and power as well as by showing how influential they are in certain field. Likewise, Jariah Mohd. Jan (1999) also states that "The theme of using power to negotiate status by males ... is consistently played out throughout adulthood and repeated in the social and linguistic communicative styles" (p. 403). Similarly, topic on work is closely related to business and money. Previous studies on the subject matter or topic by Moore (1922) and Landis and Burt (1924) found that in the 1920s, men tended to talk mostly about business and money which indirectly showed male dominance and power. Then, studies in the area of subject matter were abandoned, as most studies after Landis (1927) focused on the form of utterances (Haas, 1979).

Later in the 1960s, a study on subject matter was resumed and conducted by Komarovsky (1967), followed by Langer, (1970a, 1970b) who reported that men discussed politics among themselves. Meanwhile, Klein (1971) found that men mainly talk about their work and secondly about sport in his study among working class in England. Other studies such as Mulcaby (1973), Kramer (1974b) and Sause (1976) revealed similar stereotypes about how different the scope of topics between men and women. However, being men in this modern era, the metrosexuals prioritize issues such as gossip, fashion, grooming, hobbies, social and leisure interests more than work and money. Anderson (2008, p. 3) explains that during his existence, metrosexual embraces four distinct areas of commodification namely fashion, food and beverage, grooming and culture (social and leisure interests), which justifies the selection of topics in the conversations of the metrosexual subjects in this study. Although the topic on work and money did not appear as the main topic in their discussions, the subjects revealed that it

is still one of the main themes which were worth to be discussed especially within the people that they were close with.

From the interview session with the metrosexual subjects, all of the subjects agreed that they liked to gossip and discuss about personal matters of other people. They attributed this to the fact that all of them are single men and young, i.e in their mid 20's and late 30's. When it comes to gossiping, they reported that they normally talked about their friends or people that they know of and to catch-up on things that happened among their friends. Male gossip is not only about dishing; it is mostly about catching up on things (Dato', personal communication, December 17, 2010). This can be related to what Dunbar (1994) meant by the purpose of male talk as a social grooming 'outlet'.

To conclude, the topics discussed by the subjects in this study also conformed to the findings discussed by Haas (1979) in his article 'Male and Female Spoken Language Differences: Stereotypes and Evidence'. Komarovsky (1967) through his study found that both men and women agreed that men prefer to talk about cars, sports, motorcycles, work and local politics. This has been further substantiated by Klein (1971) that men talk mainly about sports, works and mutual interests and never about their homes and families. Nevertheless, with the ever-changing modernization in today's world, the shift in patterns of conversational topics among men is inevitable, and yet observable based from past until present studies discussed above. As quoted by Haas (ibid.), "Knowledge of conversational topics is limited. Times have been changing!" (p. 620). All in all, topics discussed among the metrosexuals were mainly for social grooming, to maintain network and social bonding (Dunbar, 1994). Through these themes discussed by the subjects, they indirectly formed their own domain (metrosexual) and thus established their own group solidarity as metrosexuals.

5.2 Speech Patterns and Styles of Metrosexual's Language

The most significant finding on speech patterns and styles of the metrosexual subjects is on interruptions and overlap in speech. According to Coates (1997) "It has been assumed until recently that all conversation followed the one-at-a-time turn-taking model described in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson model (also known as SSJ model, 1974)" (p. 108). The SSJ model of turn-taking suggests that one speaker speaks at a time, and that "participants in talk cooperate in the orderly transition of turns from current speaker to next speaker" (Coates, *ibid.*, p. 111), observing closely the rules of 'No gap, no overlap' (Moerman and Sacks, 1971). 'No gap' asserts that speakers in a talk infer syntactic, semantic and prosodic clues so accurately to guess the end of current speaker's turn, leaving no evident gap between the end of one turn and the beginning of the next. Meanwhile, the latter ('no overlap' rule) is a complement set for 'no gap', "asserting that participants in conversation predict the end of current speaker's turn so accurately that they start to speak just when current speaker stops and not before" (Coates, *ibid.*, p. 111). In contrast with SSJ model, the construction of a conversational floor in subjects' conversations were rather 'messy' and could be quite confusing at times, should one not pay thorough attention to the topics brought up in their conversation. In Excerpt 5.1, we can see that overlap and interruption occurred and most importantly, it shows a supportive response.

Excerpt 5.1: [T1]

-
1. B: *Kelakar la cerita tu..* →
[Hillarious that story]
 2. F: =*[Tengok cerita tu, gelak daripada... tak pernah tak ada part yang tak gelak,*
[Watching that movie, laugh from... never has a part that doesn't laugh,
kan?] →
isn't it?]

3. B: ..*Tapi yang I asyik* ↑*TERGE:LAK aje, time kat jetty yang diorang melekat*
[But I always laugh only, at the jetty when they got stuck]
tu... →
 4. E: [=Hahahaha..]
 5. B: →*I asyik gelak aje.. →*
[alway laugh only]
 6. F: =*Dia macam...I tak pernah tengok cerita yang I gelak, from the start sampai*
[It's like... I never watched a movie that I laugh] [till]
finish.. I macam ↑*GE:LAK aje..*
[like laugh only]
-

From Excerpt 5.1, it can be seen that the subjects were involved in collaborative talk, as proposed by collaborative model (Chafe, 1994, 1995; Coates, 1989, 1991, 1994; Edelsky, 1981; Falk, 1980). This means that the collaborative floor typically involves both the co-construction of utterances and overlapping speech where several voices contribute to talk at the same time (Coates, *ibid.*, p. 109). As a result, some researchers also define this effect of simultaneous overlapping speech as ‘polyphonic’ talk, a type of talk used by speakers in a collaborative talk where there are “separate voices articulating different melodies at once” (Chafe, 1995, p. 4).

In a study conducted by Coates (1997) on a group of men, she found that overlap and interruptions are infrequent in all-male talk. However, Coates did agree that “Although overlap is infrequent in all-male talk, where it occurs, much of it is clearly supportive” (p. 115). In this study on metrosexuals, ‘male dominance’ is portrayed through interruption made by the speakers, and the use of interruption is tolerated and does not jeopardize friendship as long as it is a ‘supportive’ interruption. In addition, it should be noted that interruptions and overlap play a very important role for the subjects as a mean to ‘survive’ in a conversation.

In analysing the subjects' speech patterns and style, it was found that they complied with the stereotypes of men's language through their use of vernacular forms and sexist language. As stated by Holmes (2008), the existence of vernacular form or non-standard language is prevalent in informal conversations, especially among the immediate surrounding members such as family and close friends. In this context however, the researcher discovered that since subjects' conversations took place mostly in informal settings, they conversed among themselves using vernacular language, and subjects concentrated on the use of non-standard language which carries macho connotation (Holmes, 2008) as opposed to standard language. The main principle of masculinity as defined by Connell (1995) is that men portray their masculinity through physical characteristics and acts. In linguistics, the discrimination between men's and women's language does exist too. As stated by Holmes (ibid.) vernacular forms express machismo (p.167). Despite the fact that some of the subjects were gay (whereby the masses tend to generalize gay men as 'softies' or normally imitate women's demeneour while talking), it was found that sexual orientation did not impede them to perform their masculinity through the use of vernacular forms just like the the rest of heterosexual subjects in this study.

The subjects in this study portrayed their masculinity through their usage of swearing forms (see Section 4.2.2). It is also vital to understand the different functions of this form when it was used in conversations. The purpose of rather 'assertive' taboo form is to 'swear'/'curse', to create pejorative remarks about others (e.g.: "virgin my ass!", "*Statement nak kena ↑bantai!*"= ["Are you asking me to beat you literally by giving that statement?"]), and to express frustration and anger (e.g: "*buat I naik hantu!*"= ["..driving me up the wall!"], "*kuli batak*" =[a Hobo slave]). In another example by Tobey, ("*Tapi jangan la sampai cerca I ni orang bodoh!* I'm not that

stupid, man↑!) = [“But don’t scrutinize me being a stupid person!”], the harsh intonation and macho connotation made by him expressed disagreement pertaining to Dato’s statement about comparing him with a figurative ‘trolley-dolly’ term. This finding supports Lakoff’ (1975) statement that men prefer strong swearing forms, and further supports Holmes’ (2008) claim that men use vernacular and coarse language because they carry macho connotations of masculinity and toughness (p. 167).

On the other hand, the use of swearing forms between the subjects is also intertwined with another pattern of speech which is the use of sexist language. It is an interesting fact that these subjects use sexist language to insult and to make pejorative remarks even among themselves, not exclusively for women only. However, further observation in the interview found that the subjects were stuck in a rut of male-dominance paradigm as defined by Spender (1980). To them, using sexist language is considered as a norm to either insult or to make a pejorative remark to others. This finding is consistent with that of Spender’s (ibid.) paradigm of ‘men made language’, whereby the subjects strongly felt that “Men have always been the dominant group because they (men) have created many things in this world, developed the categories, invented sexism and its justification and developed a language trap which caters their interest” (Spender, ibid., p. 142).

As this paradigm was instilled in the subjects’ schema at a very early age, they ‘unconsciously’ perceived women as their subordinate group, which consequently made the subjects feel that using language that carries negative and sexist connotation (e.g: ‘*pelacur*’ = [hooker/prostitute], bitch, and ‘*sundal*’ =slut) is the ‘proper’ way to make a pejorative remark, curse and express their disgust or even opinions. From their use of this pattern, they indirectly made their own definitions of behaviours or acts which are

immoral or unethical from their set of eyes and apparently associated these acts with sexist language. This is what Spender meant by “meaning has been defined by men, and men’s language has been seen as the norm” (1980, p. 142).

In addition, sexist language is seen to be given a ‘covert’ deep sense of satisfaction to the subjects in expressing their thoughts and disgust when it is used; whereas for the ‘victims’, sexist language was either seen as a ‘cheap’ connotation to express disgust, insult or merely a plain profanity to them since the commonly used words were associated to women. As stated by Wodak (1997, p. 7), sexism is ‘discrimination within a social system on the basis of sexual membership’. It also indicates a historically hierarchical system of inequality where women and sometimes men are discriminated against, exploited and constrained in certain ways or other on the basis of their sex. The subjects confessed that as a man, they did not feel ‘guilty’ at all while using this pattern of speech to insult or to make a pejorative remark about others. Again, words which can be related to feminine or female such as ‘bitch’, ‘trolley-dolly’, ‘whore’ and ‘*pundek* and ‘*pantat*’ were frequently used by the subjects, where the usage here clearly shows negative connotation about women. However, despite the explanation above, it should be noted that unlike women, men established and maintained their social bond with their close encounters, especially close friends by using vernacular forms and in this case, sexist language too.

On the contrary, the findings revealed that the subjects also employed some features of women’s language in their conversations. The use of standard forms and politeness by the subjects served as a mechanism to communicate effectively mostly with acquaintances, strangers and even among themselves. According to Holmes (2008), standard language is a dialect of those who are politically powerful and socially

prestigious (p.78). Being metrosexuals, the subjects portrayed themselves as a socially prestigious group, where they knew how to use standard language with people of different backgrounds and known-level. In the following two excerpts, they provide some evidence of the use of standard forms and politeness by all of the speakers involved in the conversations.

Excerpt 5.2: [T3] (D, K, T met J and Ka)

-
1. D: ((Turn over)) *Mana?* (3.0) Hey... ((Shake hands)) How are you?
[Where?]
 2. J: Fine... am good. →You?
 3. D: *Sorang aje ke?*
[Are you alone?]
 4. J: No... →=
 5. K: =[Hello Jai... ((shake hands)) .. owh you bring Katrina too?]
 6. J: →Yeah...
 7. D: Jai, this is Tobey...
 8. T: Hello, Jai... ((shake hands))
 9. J: Hi, Tobey... ((shake hands))
 10. K: Tobey... This is Katrina.
 11. Ka: Hello... ((Shake hands with Tobey))
 12. T: Tobey... Nice to meet you.
-

In Excerpt 5.2, Tobey was introduced to Jai and Katrina (new acquaintances) who were friends of Dato' and Kuntum. Here, we can see that the all of the speakers used standard form for greetings (“Hello”; “How are you?” and “Nice to meet you”). Meanwhile in Excerpt 5.3, the standard language was used by Dato' and Kuntum in a request form while talking to the waitress at the café. Simultaneously, politeness form

was embedded in their requests (“Excuse me”; “can I”; “Could you please”; and “Thank you”).

Excerpt 5.3: [T6]

-
1. K: *Boleh saja.* ((smiling)) ... Ehmmm... Hello... Excuse me... Miss... ((Waving [Can only] hand at the waitress)) (10.0)...
 2. W: *Ye encik.*
[Yes, Mr]
 3. K: ((Looking at the menu, 3.0)) Ermmm... Can I have one *Teh-O panas?* ... Less sugar yeah. [Hot tea]
 4. W: *Hmmm ok.* ((nodding))
 5. D: Ermmm *dik!* I *nak*... One warm water, yeah. Thanks.
[Miss, I want]
 6. W: One warm water ...
 7. K: And *dik*... Could you please clear these? ((pointing to some glasses on the [Miss] table))
 8. W: *Ok!*
 9. K: Thank you. ((Smiling))
-

Hence, we can see that the use of standard forms and politeness signaled the subjects' competence to adjust their style of language based on the level of social distance with other speakers such as the new acquaintance and strangers. Simultaneously, the use of standard forms and politeness by the subjects is a portrayal of their adeptness of using proper etiquette when dealing with other people of different social distance levels. Anderson (2008) claims that metrosexuals are capable of "... using proper etiquette to create and maintain relationships with women as well as impress business associates" (p. i). Bloom and Lahey (1978) further confirmed this phenomenon by stating that "language use consists of the socially and cognitively

determined selection of behaviours according to the goal of the speaker and the context of the situation” (p. 201). The subjects knew their purpose (i.e: to introduce oneself and to make a request) and used standard forms and politeness effectively to fit in the context of the situations; in both cases, when dealing with new acquaintances and strangers.

The other two forms which are commonly associated with women is the use of tag questions and rising intonation on declaratives as stated by Lakoff (1975). Nevertheless, Lakoff’s claim has been argued by a number of studies (i.e: Cameron *et al.*, 1988; Coates, 1996; and Toolan, 1996) and in this study, the researcher discovered that the subjects also used tag questions quite consistently while interacting with one another. In most instances, the subjects used tag question as a syntactic device to express different functions such as to agree with other’s opinions, to enhance critical comments and as confrontational or coercive devices. In Excerpt 5.4, notice that Kuntum used tag question (as in ‘*kan*’) to agree with Dato’s statement about the congestion and on the matter pertaining to valet parking.

Excerpt 5.4: [T3]

-
1. D: Ermmm.. (3.0) ((Looking at the phone)) He said he’ll be here within 10 minutes. *Jalan* jammed. →
[Road]
 2. K: ←Thank god we arrived early. Otherwise, we’d get stuck in the jammed too, *kan*?
[wouldn’t we?]
 3. D: This place is packed on Friday night. *Tadi I nak parking kat valet depan tu*
[Just now] [want][at] [in
pun they didn’t accept.
front also]
 4. K: *Kannn*? You *yang* single digit plate number *pun* they don’t want to valet-ed
[Isn’t it?] [which] [also]
you.
-

In contrast to Holmes' finding that women use tag question to soften critical comments (1998, p. 302), the subjects in this study used tag question to boost up critical comments. In Excerpt 5.5, it provides this evidence when Tobey said "*Keji, kan?*" as an intensifier in his critical comment about what he would do to the salesman if his 'dream' car was not up to his expectation and standard.

Excerpt 5.5: [T8]

-
1. D: If you *dah suka*... I mean – just try *la*. You go and test drive first. Then after
 [like already]
 that you decide *la*. *Tapi bila dah* test drive *dan* you *rasa kereta tu laha*,
 [But when already] [and] [feel the car sucks, no
takyah la beli!
 need to buy!]

 2. T: ***Kan???*** *Kalau macam lahanat aku langgar* salesman *dia tu*. ***APE NI???***
 [Right??? If like damned, I hit the salesman] [WHAT IS THIS???
KERETA YOU ALL MACAM LAHANAT NI?! HAHAHA! KEJI, KAN?
 [YOUR CAR IS LIKE SUCKS?!] [DESPICABLE, RIGHT?]
 ((everyone's laughing))
-

Meanwhile, Excerpt 5.6 also shows another function of tag question as a 'booster' to intensify a critical comment. Again, Tobey used tag question as a coercive device to elicit information from Dato'.

Excerpt 5.6: [T4]

-
1. D: ((Giggling)) I *tak boleh* imagine how Hanz *main dengan dia dulu*. *Mesti*
 [cannot] [have sex with her before. Surely]
 Hanz *macam...* ((horny face)) *tak hengat punya*.
 [like...] [can't forget]

 2. T: *Siot je Dato'!* *Macam la* you *tak pernah*, ***ka↑;n?*** →
 [You pesky, Dato'! Like you never did, right?]

 3. D: Hey! I'm a virgin ok?

 4. T: Virgin *sangat la???* Virgin my ass!
 [very]

This finding is also quite similar to what Holmes (1998) stated in her book that women use tag questions as confrontational and coercive devices (p. 301-303). However, it was found that the subjects' use of tag question does not really serve as a politeness device, and contradicts with the idea of women using tag question as a facilitative positive politeness device (p. 303).

Similarly, previous studies by Holmes (2008) and Lakoff (1975) have shown that women would normally use rising intonations on declarative in their speech. In this study, however, the researcher found out that these subjects also employed this pattern in their speech interaction. As a metrosexual group, the subjects adapted themselves with this speech pattern by constantly using it with tag questions. In addition, it is noted that this style of speech was normally used especially to express anger and frustration, hilarity and sarcasm. However, it should be noted that when the subjects used this form, they exercised 'assertive' utterance to exemplify how they felt. In the following excerpt, the rising intonation on declarative performed by Fifi showed his anger towards the contractor in an assertive manner.

Excerpt 5.7: [T1]

-
1. E: Have you tried ermmm.. Calling the contractor?
 2. F: Well there's no point, seriously.
 3. B: But *tadi dia dah sampaila dalam sepuluh lebih.*
[just now he has arrived around ten]
 4. E: I think, *dia taknak* call you *sebab banyak gile kot tak siap.* *Dia* just, you
[he didn't want] [because maybe alot is not finished. He]
know, *tampal-tampal kat sini ke...* whatever.. but you know, =
[paste-paste here...]
 5. F: ←It's ↑**TOO LATE!**
-

The phrase “It’s TOO LATE!” uttered by Fifi signaled his assertive intonation on declarative. This can be related to Kramer’s (1974b, p. 16) explanation in her study of cartoon captions that assertiveness is a part of male stereotype.

5.3 The Production of Themes, Speech Patterns and Styles of Metrosexual’s Language through the Exploitation of *Deficit, Dominance, Difference and Gender Performativity Frameworks*

From the discussions so far, the existence of *deficit* (Lakoff, 1975), *dominance* (Litosseliti, 2006; Spender, 1980; and West and Zimmerman, 1983), *difference* (Coates, 1996; Holmes, 1995; and Tannen, 1990) and *gender performativity* (Butler, 1999; and Cameron, 1997) theories are observable through the subjects’ talks and discussions. The analysis discovered that stereotypes concerning women’s linguistic features (*deficit* theory by Lakoff, 1975) are considered no longer applicable as certain features such as tag questions and rising intonation on declarative were available throughout the analysis on the subjects’ talks and conversations. Cameron *et al.* (1988) found that tag questions and other hedges serve as facilitative functions rather than indexing insecurity as they can keep the conversation to flow smoothly. In addition, this study also discovered that tag questions and rising intonation on declarative serve as facilitative functions and ‘booster’ for critical comments, in contrast with Lakoff’s (ibid.) claim that tag questions and other hedges used by women serve to indexing ‘insecurity’.

Meanwhile, the subjects have also demonstrated their *dominance* through discussions on certain topics such as work-related issues and hobbies (i.e: cars, automobiles, and gadgets). In this context, the researcher discovered that as much as the femininity aspect of metrosexual (a metrosexual is a man who is willing to embrace his feminine side, spend time and money on appearance and shopping – Flocker, 2003, p.

1) has shifted the subjects' lifestyle, practices and perceptions from the normal mediocre men, the dominance aspect of metrosexuals remained intact. The subjects remained themselves as a dominant group and portrayed their masculinity via using interruption, vernacular forms and sexist language widely in their conversations. As stated by Spender (1980), "Men have always been the dominant group because they (men) have created many things in this world, developed the categories, invented sexism and its justification and developed a language trap which caters their interest" (1980, p. 142). Further, Litosseliti's (2006, p. 16 -17) checklist symbolizes women in a stereotypical way, as in 'redhead', 'female pilot' or 'mistress'; and explicit derogatory terms for women such as 'whore', 'bitch' or 'slut'. This aspect of dominance is indeed vital to be preserved by the subjects as their male traits or (hegemonic) masculinity is an indicator of proper 'social' construct of men, which guarantees "the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 77) in the eyes of society.

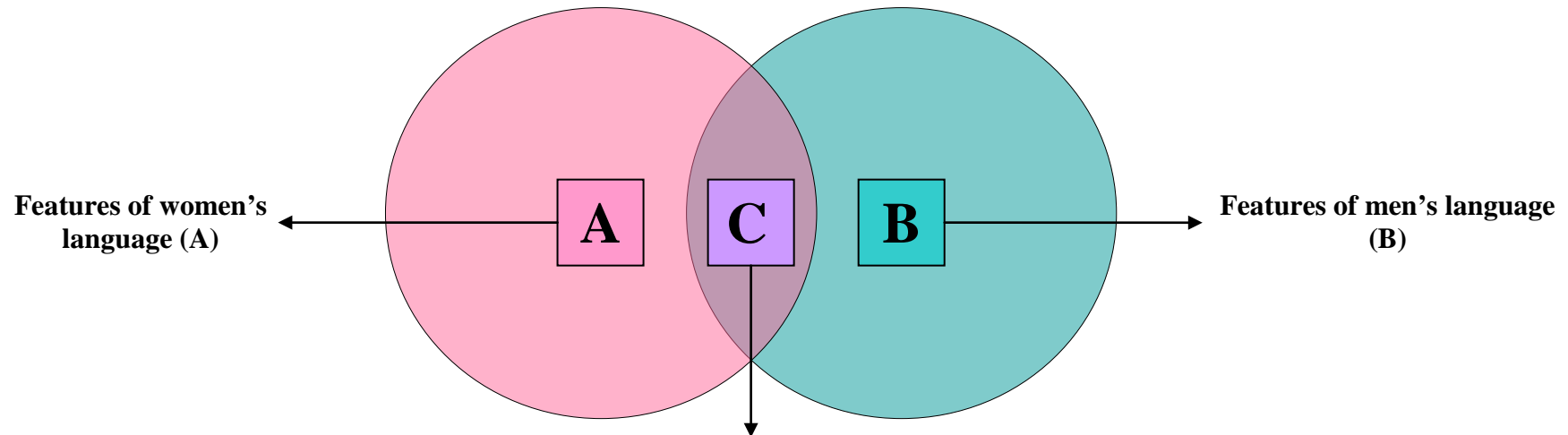
The findings in this study on difference issue revealed that some linguistic aspects of gender *difference* have merged and have been adopted by the subjects. This can be observed from the construction of theme on male gossips whereby the subjects adopted female discursive strategy of gossip as a 'tool' to create solidarity within their own gender group (Jones, 1980). The subjects have used very similar discursive strategies to women's in order to establish their identity and solidarity as a metrosexual group. In addition, the availability of 'rapport talk' (Holmes, 2008; Jariah Mohd Jan, 1999) and 'collaborative-floor talk' (Coates, 1997) which used to be women's linguistic styles in their discussions have further demonstrated that a new paradigm of gender *equivalence* has emerged from this *difference* theory.

Finally, the subjects exhibited their *gender performativity* (Butler, 1999) through their actions and speech. According to Butler (ibid.), “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a ‘natural’ kind of being” (p. 33). Butler (1999) further states that the premise of gender performativity is men and women continuously negotiate their gender roles and therefore are capable to challenge them. Meanwhile Cameron (1997) adopts Butler’s definition and relates it to language studies by stating that speech is a “repeated stylization of the body; the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ styles of talking identified by researchers might be thought of as the ‘congealed’ result of repeated acts by social actors who are striving to constitute themselves as ‘proper’ men” (p. 49).

On the other hand, masculinity and femininity is a construct, an identity that ‘has to be reaffirmed constantly and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing acts in accordance to with social norm’ (Cameron, ibid., p. 49). Again, through repeated masculine actions and styles of talking, the subjects perform their gender via the use of masculine non-linguistic gestures, harsh intonations, vernacular forms and sexist language to curse or make pejorative remarks each other. This can be observed consistently throughout the subjects’ conversations, especially when they were angry, upset, frustrated and disgusted. Although two of the subjects in this study identified themselves as gay (which compromised the performativity of heterosexuals), their sexual orientation do not impede them to perform their masculinity via the use of above-mentioned forms and discussions on certain topics as well as performing speech acts according with social norm most of the time.

It is intriguing to know the fact that the deficit, dominance, difference and gender performativity frameworks have shown to us that metrosexuals are indeed a community that surpasses the gender stereotypes posed by both men and women in language and gender studies. From the combination of the aforementioned multiple theoretical frameworks, this study has managed to provide a holistic description of the phenomenon of language use by the metrosexual subjects. Through the ‘exploitation’ of deficit, dominance, difference and gender performativity frameworks, they have effectively described the productions of themes, speech patterns and styles of metrosexual’s language. A Venn diagram in Figure 5.1 shows the overlap between men’s and women’s language as a result of the combination of four theoretical frameworks in language and gender. From the figure, the intersection between A (women’s language) and B (men’s language) consists of five linguistic features (gossip, standard form and politeness, tag questions, rising intonation on declarative and rapport talk) which mark the merge of men’s and women’s language as a result of the analysis on production of speech patterns and styles of metrosexuals.

The overlap between features of women's and men's language



Features of Metrosexual's language (C)

1. Gossip
2. Standard forms and politeness
3. Tag questions
4. Rising intonation on declarative
5. Rapport talk (Holmes, 2008; Lakoff, 1975)

Figure 5.1

The production of themes, styles and patterns of speech of metrosexuals through the exploitation of theoretical frameworks in deficit, dominance, difference and gender performativity

5.4 The Non-linguistic Practices/ Non-verbal Communication of Metrosexuals

From the field notes and transcriptions, the researcher also found additional findings on non-linguistic or non-verbal practices produced by the subjects to assist their interactions. All of the subjects were proficient users of both Malay and English. Apart from being verbally proficient, the subjects also had no trouble expressing themselves through their use of non-linguistic cues. According to Mehrabian (1981), seven percent of social meaning in face-to-face communication is delivered through verbal messages while the remaining 93 percent of social meaning is carried through non-verbal communication channels. Meanwhile, Birdwhistell (1970) estimates that non-verbal cues convey 65 percent of the meaning in our conversation. Stewart *et al.* (2003) states that nonverbal communication includes all communication except that which is coded through words. This includes facial expression, eye contact, gestures, posture, physical appearance and clothing (p. 63).

Field notes for Transcript 5 (see Appendix D) revealed that the conversation between Eriq, Kuntum and Tobey consists of dramatic use of ‘affect displays’ and body gestures, especially in gossiping. According to Stewart *et al.* (*ibid.*), affect displays are facial expressions that convey our emotions (p. 72). Eriq and Tobey displayed ‘irritated’ facial expressions which showed their annoyance towards Dato’ while Kuntum showed his ‘nosy’ attitude through his ‘surprised’ look and eyes wide-open while discussing Dato’s behaviour (see Section 4.2.2, Excerpt 4.1). Meanwhile in Transcript 3 (see Section 4.1.1, Excerpt 4.4), Dato’ and Tobey displayed ‘nasty’ facial expressions which showed their annoyance towards the stranger while Kuntum showed his ‘nonchalance’ attitude through his ‘sour’ smirk while gossiping about the stranger. Stewart *et al.* (*ibid.*) conformed this by stating that males may be more comfortable with the nonverbal cues of independence and distance often associated with disliking (p. 78).

Even though non-linguistic gestures are not considered one of the entities in spoken discourse, they play an important role in linguistic study as they function to extend or elaborate the meaning of spoken language. Like an accessory to verbal language, non-verbal language carries similar weight in delivering messages or meanings to others. Peterson (1976) stated that while gestures are used by both men and women to illustrate and supplement the verbal message, men generally use more gestures than women. Further, men use or display more dominant gestures such as pointing, sweeping gestures and the closed fist. These can be observed throughout the talks by the metrosexual subjects in this study whereby such gestures play an important role to assist the delivery of messages between the interactants in this group.

5.5 Factors That Influence the Use of Language of Metrosexuals

From the survey results, the data revealed that perception, societal expectation and self-image displayed a frequency value of 58.50%, 55.71% and 54.23% respectively scored above the median level of 50%, while leisure and interest as well as consumption scored a frequency value of 48% and 42.50%, below the median level (see Section 2.62). It was found that perception, societal expectation and self-image were the controlling factors which influenced the choice of linguistic forms and features used by metrosexuals in their informal spoken discourse. In related studies by Conseur (1994) and Cheng, Ooi and Ting (2010), the researchers' objectives were to find a correlation between perception, societal expectation, self-image and consumption behaviour as the factors that contribute towards metrosexual domain and practices.

From the interview sessions with the subjects (Bambam, Dato', Eriq, Fifi, Kuntum and Tobey), they agreed with the fact that perception, societal expectation and self-image are the three controlling factors that govern the production of their linguistic

practices and varieties. The responses from the subjects are discussed in thematic order below.

In terms of perception, some people perceived that metrosexuals are fashion-style sensitive, mirror-obsessed, and also pamper and moisturizes themselves through the consumption of grooming products (Donna, 2004, Brune, 2004). Others view metrosexuals as urban men who have a high income and spend a great deal of time on their appearance and lifestyle, and engaging with their feminine side (Donoghue, 2005). On the other extreme, people simply refer metrosexuals as gay men (Warren, 2003). The various perceptions have therefore contributed towards the subjects' understanding about the domain of interest which represents the identity of the group (Wenger, 2006), or what is referred to as the 'definition' of metrosexual. This perception is a time-consuming process in which the subjects learned about the domain of metrosexual from their surroundings. The subjects agreed that the perceptions mentioned above have contributed towards their (the subjects) whole understanding and background knowledge about 'metrosexuality' and therefore, these perceptions have driven them to construct their own style of linguistic and non-linguistic practices as analysed in the preceding chapter.

Secondly, perception served as a moderating factor that governed the other two factors – societal expectation as well as self-image (Cheng *et al.*, 2010). The subjects affirmed Nickel's (2004) hypothesis that societal expectation is pressuring them to look better and stay vibrant being urban men. In addition, Anderson (2008) also states that the society expects the metrosexual to be an expert in the area of culture commodification, claiming that metrosexual has basic etiquette, has learned romantic relationship and interpersonal skills. However, the subjects reported that this pressure

has also resulted in positive impact (the subjects perceived the pressure as a reversed negative motivation) on their behaviours to develop a 'flexible', or 'adjustable' set of linguistic repertoire (the use of standard form and non-standard form) in dealing with different members in society accordingly to their different background and social status. According to the subjects, as metrosexuals, they had to project a linguistically competent image as this would 'distinguish' them from the typical men. This also shows that the subjects are prone to be 'vain' when it comes to 'differentiating' themselves from other men and to let others recognize their social status in a society. This can be related to the concept of social status theory by Holmes (2008), where women use more standard forms to show their social status in a society.

Thirdly, Conseur (1994) as well as Cheng *et al.* (2010) also found that the self-image factor is one of the variables involved in the development and emergence of metrosexual. Although the effect of self-esteem had previously concentrated on women (Garner *et al.*, 1980) the current uncertainty in male/female sex roles has affected factors determining self-esteem (Mishkind *et al.*, 1986). For example, Mishkind *et al.* (*ibid.*) found that most men are increasingly concerned with their appearance. They attribute this to the changing attitude towards men in society. Similarly, Grogan and Richards (2002) found that men attributed looking good to positive feeling about themselves. This is further supported by Martin and Kennedy (1994), who found that physical attractiveness and appearance are especially important in shaping self-esteem levels in males. Mishkin *et al.* (1986) also found out that men are increasingly concerned with their appearance. In relation to this study, the subjects described that this self-image was indeed an applicable factor that influences their use of certain linguistic features in their talks and discussions. According to them, good proficiency in language and communication skills represents a part of their self-image as metrosexuals.

By possessing such skills, it also marked their identity as being a highly-educated group.

It should be noted that there is limited literature on metrosexual's language and therefore, these findings were heavily relied on the two studies which have been carried out in the field of sociology (as in Conseur, 1994) and business (as in Cheng *et al.*, 2010). However, as spoken discourse is part of observable human behaviours (Fromkin, 1998), these findings are comparatively sufficient to support the researcher's attempts to explore how the variables (perception, societal expectation and self-image) serve as the controlling factors that influence the production and construction of linguistic practices of these metrosexuals.

5.6 CofP (Communities of Practice) and the Construction of Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Practices of Metrosexuals

In this study, the CofP framework was used for the method of analyzing the linguistic and non-linguistic practices of the metrosexual subjects. As earlier mentioned in Section 2.8, the data analysis retrieved from the observation found that the three core entities that encapsulate CofP (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire) served as a perimeter that scaffolds the construction of topics, linguistic and non-linguistic practices of these metrosexuals.

Firstly, the existence of mutual engagement among the subjects as a group is clear and observable. The subjects met up at least once a week for a weekly social gathering, normally over the weekends as well as impromptu meetings such as over dinner, movies, or karaoke sessions during weekdays. All of them also communicated regularly via other communication tools, such as mobile phone, social networks such as

Facebook and Twitter, emails and Blackberry Messenger (BBM) chat. In addition, the subjects also set-up a group chat via Blackberry Messenger which enables them to get up-to-date information about their whereabouts, plans and activities. From the variety of communication tools in this modern world, the subjects made full use of these tools to interact with one another, thus resulting into the emergence or initiation of various topics. From these topics, they developed shared knowledge and schemata which enabled them to relate themselves in the course of interactions.

From these common topics, the subjects fulfilled their part to get involved in a serious mutual engagement. As stated by Wenger (1998), members of the group communicate on regular basis among them, where no restrictions are placed on the means of communication. Members may communicate face-to-face, by telephone or online. It can be seen that through their active participation in the metrosexual community, face-to-face or via communication tools, the subjects established norms and built collaborative relationships with one another. Eventually, these relationships are the ties that bind them together as a social entity.

Secondly, through regular interactions, the subjects became close and naturally developed a shared understanding among them; in this context, establishing their understanding and *identity* as a metrosexual group. Therefore, 'metrosexual' is the *domain* that binds the subjects together with one another. As 'metrosexual' practitioners, they share similar interests, and this was proven by the common topics shared among them whenever they communicated with each other. According to Wenger (1998), this is termed as the joint enterprise. This premise (joint enterprise) is (re)negotiated by its members and is sometimes referred to as the 'domain' of the community (p. 72-73). Domain of knowledge creates common ground, inspires

members to participate, guides their 'learning' about the common topics and gives meaning to their actions. As a result of consistent interactions between the group members, they construct their own preferred linguistic choice and thus, they naturally form their own styles of linguistic and non-linguistic practices based on the common ground and topics shared among them.

Holmes (2008) discussed the social dimensions in sociolinguistics, particularly on the social distance scale. This scale is useful in emphasizing that how well we know someone is a relevant factor in linguistic choice (p. 10). In this context, the subjects performed high solidarity within their group members by 'demonstrating' their own 'set' of linguistic and non-linguistic practices in their course of interactions based on the 'established' common topics such as when they gossip. Eggins and Slade (1997) defined gossip as "a form of talk which interactants can construct solidarity as they explore shared normative judgments about culturally significant behavioural domains" (p. 273). This emphasis on the normative function of gossip as a tool of reinforcing the values of the group relates well to the importance of "[binding] gossipers together in an imagined community of shared values" (White, 1979). In other words, gossip is a 'device' in strengthening the cohesion of the social group of these metrosexuals. Again, they similarly form what Wenger (1998) terms as *joint enterprise*, creating a shared understanding of what binds them together. As a result, the subjects' social bond between one another is 'enforced' and they interact freely almost without restrictions and limitations based from the common topics.

Finally, as part of its practice, members of the community produces a set of communal resources, which is termed as *shared repertoire* (Wenger, *ibid.*) this is used in the pursuit of their joint enterprise and can include both literal and symbolic

meanings. This can be observed from the productions of styles of language and patterns of speech throughout their course of interaction among them (refer to Section 4.3). An interesting finding derived from this study is that the subjects developed a set of vocabulary repertoire (see Section 4.2.6), meant to be understood mainly by the group members only. Although some vocabulary (e.g. *nyah*, *'mak'*, *'akak-akak'*, *'kekwat'*) used are mostly brought in by the gay subjects, the heterosexual subjects in this study also used the vocabulary in the discussions. This finding is similar to Baker's (2002) Polari glossary of gay men. According to Baker (2002), the Polari words are used by:

mainly gay men, although also lesbians, female impersonators, theatre people, prostitutes and sea-queens (gay men in the merchant navy). It was not limited to gay men, however. Straight people who were connected to the theatre also used it, and there are numerous cases of gay men teaching it to their straight friends (p. 1).

Further observation found that all of the subjects have reached the full 'membership' level thus enabling them to immediately pick-up any new 'creation' of vocabulary introduced by any members within the group. Another notable finding from the observation showed frequent use of tag questions by the subjects (E.g: "You're not kidding, are you?" / "It would be difficult, wouldn't it?"). By contrast, Lakoff (1975) claimed that only women use a lot of this speech pattern, and this has proven that metrosexuals also 'share' this feature in their speech. In addition, even though subjects used vernacular forms and sexist language in their speech, it was found that three subjects (Dato', Eriq, Kuntum) showed high competency in vocabulary. With their wider vocabulary, they managed to use accurate words to describe an object, concept or person (E.g: Dude.. It's not love.. It's called '*infatuation*'.. / Stop being an '*obnoxious*' prick, dude!).

From the observation too, the researcher managed to draw some other conclusions as part of their shared repertoire or shared non-linguistic practices. Subjects

maintained fairly high masculinity demeanour, and occasionally imitated women's expressions while talking with each other. It was portrayed through their facial expressions and physical gestures (non-linguistic/body language), mimicking women's manners and thus making them to appear a bit 'effeminate'. From the interview, subjects were fully aware of 'adopting' some female expressions by their physical gestures, facial expressions and voice intonation. However, they agreed that performing femininity act was acceptable only to a certain extent and not to 'overdo' it. They reported that the impersonation of feminine styles of speech and acts were employed in a conversation to add hilarity or to spice-up the excitement of the discussion. Here, we can see that the subjects have developed their own distinctive ways of speaking than other men. This phenomenon is supported by Eckert and McConnell Ginet (2003) who stated that some communities of practice may develop more distinctive ways of speaking than others.

In this study, it was found that the domain or *joint enterprise* (metrosexual) has greatly influenced the productions of topics/themes and the styles of language and speech patterns among these subjects. Figure 5.2 shows a diagram that describes the reciprocal effect of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire in the production of topics/themes and speech patterns and styles of the metrosexual subjects. As noted by Wenger (2006), a domain (*joint enterprise*) is the heart of a community of practice and it is established after a series of sustained interactions (*mutual engagement*) take place and maintained by the members of the group. As a result of the interaction between the domain (*joint enterprise*) and sustained interactions (*mutual engagement*) between the group members, it produces the themes/topics (gossips, hobbies and interests, work-related issues and miscellaneous issues) of their discussions. Meanwhile, when the domain (*joint enterprise*) as well as the *mutual engagement* is combined with

shared repertoire, these three premises of CofP form/produce the speech patterns and styles and also non-linguistic practices of a community of practice, as demonstrated by this group of young Malaysian metrosexuals who were involved in this study.

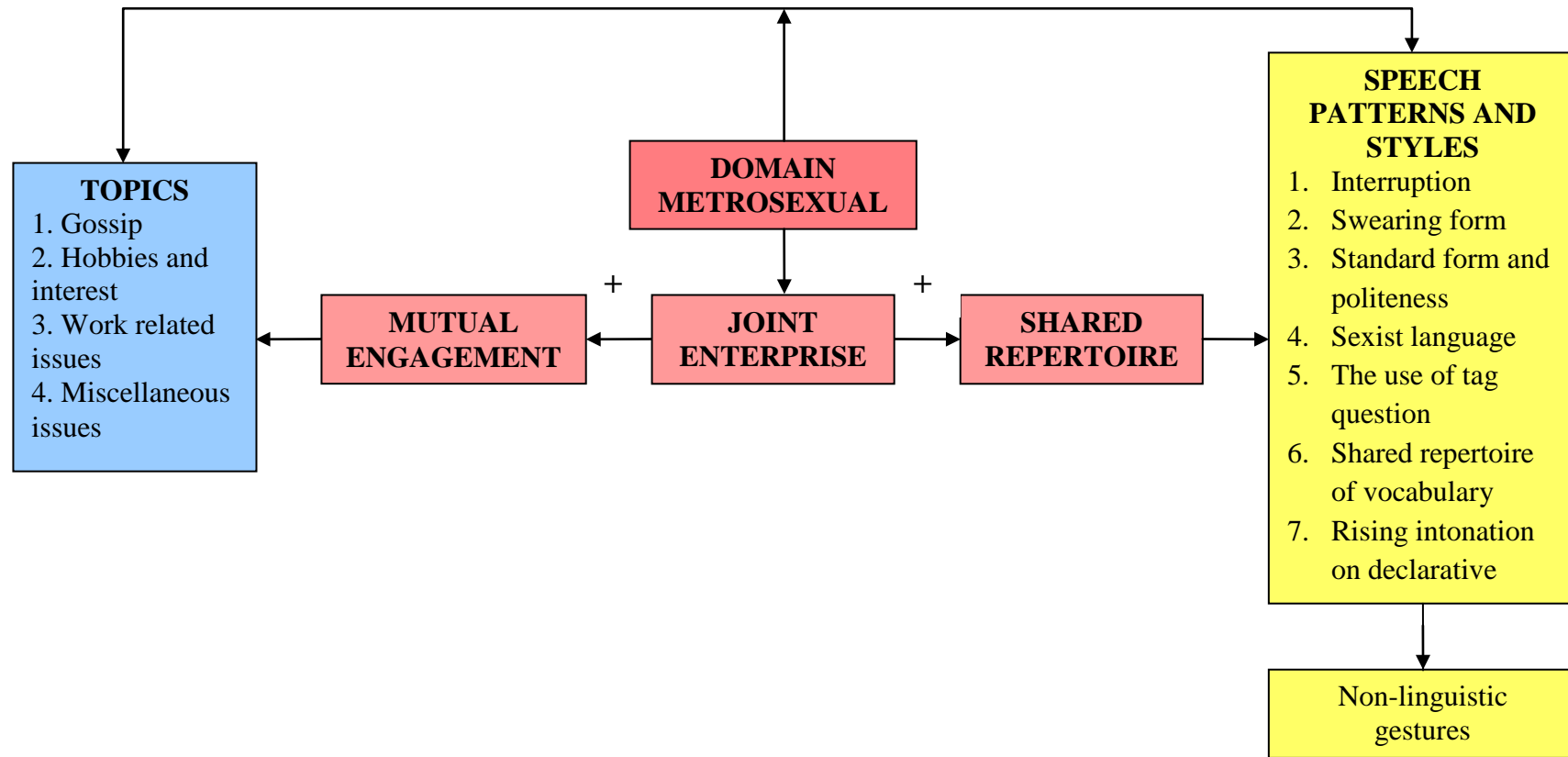


Figure 5.2
The reciprocal effect of Mutual Engagement, Joint Enterprise and Shared Repertoire in the production of topics/themes and speech patterns and styles of metrosexual's language

5.7 Summary

The researcher employed theoretical frameworks in *deficit*, *dominance*, *difference* and *gender performativity* to describe the productions of themes, speech patterns and styles of metrosexual's language in this study. As a result, the researcher managed to describe the metrosexual's language using the aforementioned frameworks and a Venn diagram (see Figure 5.1) was developed to provide the summary of the linguistic features available in metrosexual's conversations. In this study, it was found that there are five linguistic features (gossip, standard form and politeness, tag questions, rising intonation on declarative and rapport talk) used by the metrosexual subjects in their discussions which are similar to women's linguistic features. Further, it was also found that the subjects used non-linguistic practices such as facial expressions and body gestures throughout their talks. Meanwhile, the subjects reported that perception, societal expectations and self-image are the three contributing factors which had influenced the choice of language in their discussions. On the other hand, Communities of Practice framework (Wenger, 2006) employed in this study has effectively explained the construction of linguistic and non-linguistic practices of these metrosexual subjects in their talks.