

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

This case study attempted to examine the styles of language and patterns of speech among young Malaysian metrosexuals between the ages of mid-twenties to late thirties who live and work in Kuala Lumpur and its surrounding urban areas. The subjects involved in this study were randomly selected using the definition of ‘metrosexual’ by Simpson (1994). As there have been no studies on the language of metrosexuals, this study is the first to be carried out in the context of Malaysian men. In order to analyse the subjects’ styles of language and patterns of speech, the researcher employed and combined theories in language and gender (*deficit* by Lakoff, 1975; *dominance* by Litosseliti, 2006; Spender, 1980; and West and Zimmerman, 1983; *difference* by Coates, 1996; Holmes, 1995; and Tannen, 1990; and *gender performativity* by Butler, 1999; and Cameron, 1997), and used Communities of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998) to describe the phenomena of linguistic practices by this group of metrosexuals.

The results revealed that there are four areas or themes which were normally discussed by the subjects: gossip, hobbies and interests, work-related issues and miscellaneous topic (daily activity plans, family and others) (see Section 4.1). Meanwhile, the analysis on styles of language revealed that there are seven prominent speech patterns employed by the subjects in their conversations (see Section 4.2). Additional finding also showed that the subjects used effective nonverbal gestures to assist their speech. Further, results from survey indicated that perception, societal

expectation and self-image were the factors that influence the use of these linguistic practices of the metrosexuals in their discussions.

This study has demonstrated that men are experiencing paradigm shift on gender stereotypes in relation to language studies through the emergence of metrosexual. Although the subjects retained certain aspects of masculinity in their spoken discourse such as the use of vernacular forms and sexist language, the subjects reported that this phenomenon happens as a result of social background, cultural upbringing and individual perception about the term 'gender' itself. In addition, Connell's (1995) theory has exemplified masculinity behaviour as a 'social' construct of men (the theory of *hegemonic masculinity* refers to the belief in the existence of a culturally normative ideal of male behaviour). In every society, boys and girls or men and women are expected to behave accordingly to their sex (Holmes, 2008). Men are normally associated with dominance (Connell, *ibid.*) and strong behavioural characteristics. Hence, the aspect of performing masculinity was portrayed by the metrosexual subjects through their acts, gestures and speech. However, it was found that the subjects adopted certain features of women's linguistic forms into their speech. The subjects employed and 'altered' the functions of these features in the discussions within their own gender group as men. This is what Butler (1999) means by gender performativity where men and women continuously negotiate their gender roles and therefore are capable of challenging them.

On the other hand, this study has proven that certain aspects of linguistic features which are normally associated with a particular gender are gradually changing and perhaps merging into becoming shared features between men and women. Gossip for instance, which used to be viewed as women's tool to create bond and identity

among themselves (Jones, 1980) is found in the language of the metrosexuals (see Section 4.1.1). It seems to be a tool for the metrosexuals too in establishing group identity and social bond with other metrosexuals in their discussion. In addition to that, rapport talk, the use of tag questions, rising intonation on declarative, standard form and politeness are some other women's linguistic devices used by the male subjects in their conversations in this study. There is a clear-cut evidence that men, particularly the metrosexuals nowadays experience linguistic change in terms of their language use by manipulating certain linguistic features normally used by women to fit the purpose of their talks (e.g: the use of tag question to 'boost-up' critical comments instead of its real purpose to 'soften' critical comments by women, Holmes, 2008) and to communicate effectively with others (e.g: the use of standard form and politeness when dealing with strangers and new acquaintances).

To sum up, the metrosexual's identity has evolved as time goes by due to the rapid changes and development in our world today. In terms of language usage, metrosexuals have a rather unique style of language and speech patterns, particularly through their spoken discourse as demonstrated by the subjects involved in this study. As this study is the first to be carried out in the context of Malaysian men, the results and findings serve as a novel contribution in the field of sociolinguistics.

6.1 Implications

The notions of deficit (Lakoff, 1975), dominance (Connell, 1985; and Spender, 1980), difference (Coates, 1997; and Holmes, 2008) and gender performativity (Butler, 1999; and Cameron, 1997) have been vastly used by theorists in the field of Sociolinguistics to describe how men and women use language as a tool to function in a society. However, as stated in Chapter One, studies on men's language are relatively scarce compared to

studies on women's language. The results and findings in this study indicate that further research on men's language needs to be carried out rigorously to provide a better understanding on the linguistic changes and development demonstrated by modern men today. Metrosexuals are indeed a community that surpasses the gender issues and stereotypes posed by both men and women in language and gender studies. With the emergence of metrosexuals in our own society, this study has shown that modern men are experiencing 'paradigm shift' in terms of linguistic use and practices.

Wenger (2006) states that Communities of Practice framework focuses on the analysis of the way communities engage in meaning-making within its members. This may include analyses on both linguistic practices such as phonology, gestures, use of slang or sexist terms and non-linguistic practices such as lifestyle affiliation. As mentioned in Chapter One, metrosexuals lead the metrosexual's lifestyle - a sophisticated lifestyle practice among men who are very much concerned with their appearance and lifestyle in keeping up with the latest trends and fads including fashion, music, entertainment, physical fitness and beauty. A metrosexual tends to pay more attention to these areas compared to the ordinary man in defining his own sense of personal style. The findings from the study confirmed that the metrosexual's lifestyle has indirectly affected the choice of linguistic styles and practices among the subjects involved in this study. Their perceptions, combined with societal expectation and self-image have given a significant impact to the development of their linguistic changes and practices.

Again, through the 'exploitation' of four key theoretical frameworks in language and gender (*deficit, dominance, difference* and *gender performativity*), they have provided a holistic description of the productions of themes, styles and patterns of the language of

metrosexuals. Even though each framework offers a different perspective from each other, academic researchers cannot deny the fact that there are always two sides of a coin. This study has also raised a new perspective in language and gender studies; with the changes and development experienced by men nowadays, it is vital for sociolinguists and theorists to concentrate on the possible similarities of language styles, speech patterns as well as the linguistic features between men and women. In summary, this pioneering study on language styles and linguistic features of metrosexuals in a Malaysian context has indeed contributed towards the enrichment of literature on men's language.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Results of this study suggest that metrosexuals have developed a rather unique style of language and speech patterns through their adaptation of certain women's linguistic features in their spoken discourse. As previously stated in Section 6.1, future research in language and gender field should be geared up on analysing the possible similarities of certain linguistic features shared by men and women. Findings in this study revealed that gossip, rapport talk and some features of women's linguistic devices were found in metrosexual's talks. In relation to this, the researcher would strongly recommend future studies to be conducted in discovering the similarities on linguistic practices between heterosexual men and women.

Secondly, future research on language and masculinity can also concentrate on the use of standard form as an overt prestige 'tool' to exemplify social status or identity among metrosexuals when dealing with people of different social class. Previous studies have shown that women employ standard form more than men to demonstrate their social status in a society (Holmes, 2008). Several instances in this study found out that

Dato', Kuntum and Tobey displayed their competent use of standard form, combined with impeccable English accent in expressing their dissatisfaction when talking to the waiters and manager of poor services they received during their visit to some posh restaurants. As noted before, metrosexuals are very much particular of maintaining their sophisticated, 'classy' lifestyle and this is closely related to social status explanation theory stated by Holmes (2008). However, because of time constraint and other limitations faced during the observation process, this aspect is negligible and therefore could not be discussed further in details. Thus, more studies can be carried out in the analysis of standard form as an overt prestige tool for metrosexuals to show their social status in a society.

Thirdly, more studies need to be done to find out the factors that determine the linguistic choice of spoken language among metrosexuals. In this study, the factors that affected the linguistic choice among metrosexuals relied on two other studies conducted in sociology and business fields. In order to increase the reliability and validity of the research instrument, particularly the survey, more pilot studies on other factors such as consumption behaviour as well as leisure and interests which may affect the choice of linguistic patterns and styles of metrosexuals need to be carried out in the future.

Lastly, the following research questions serve as a springboard for future research in the area of metrosexual's language:

1. Do sexual orientations influence the choice of speech patterns and styles of language among the metrosexuals?
2. What are the non-linguistic features used by the metrosexuals in their discussions?
3. Are there any similarities of linguistic features used by both men and women in their discussions?

4. What forms of language used by the metrosexuals in order to show their social status in Malaysian society context?
5. Does consumption behaviours factor contribute towards the choice of language among the metrosexuals?
6. Does leisure and interests factor affect the choice of language among the metrosexuals?

6.3 Reflections

Throughout my experience conducting this study, there were many challenges and obstacles that I faced starting with the review of literature on metrosexual's subject. Even though there were many existing studies pertaining to metrosexuals in other fields such as sociology, business and consumerism and gender studies, I found that there was no previous attempt to describe the language of metrosexuals. This was my biggest challenge as I had to bridge the gap between the available literature on metrosexuals from other fields and the existing literature on language and gender studies. Besides that, I encountered a hard time collecting the data with the participants involved in this study, especially during the time when they were having relationship conflicts among themselves. It decelerated my progress in collecting the data because I had to wait for some time for them to be more at ease with each other before I could resume the research again. Finally, the process of transcribing the subjects' conversations took longer than I thought. As a result, it hampered my progress in completing this dissertation according to my study plan. Nevertheless, I am truly glad that I am making a contribution in a field close to my heart.