

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

One view of language is that it shapes the way we see things, rather than reflects what we see (Beard, 1998). Media is a form of language which plays an influential role in creating images of women and men as it has the ability to construct and contextualize values and attitudes of societies towards gender. Sage (1998:4) suggests that the media organize “the ways in which society knows and understands gender relations, as they construct the overall consensus of what is male and female.”

Sport media, as a powerful social institution, portray the images of male dominance and inequality between the sexes. The media tends to support traditional attitudes on gender by highlighting negative images of women, while men are depicted as positive role portrayals. Numerous studies have shown how women are portrayed in various types of mass media in comparison with men, specifically in sport media (Bernstein, 2002; Billings et al., 2005; Duncan et al., 2005; King, 2007).

Consistently, most of the previous studies have shown underrepresentation of female athletes in comparison with male athletes as well as women’s sports compared to men’s in newspaper (Lee, 1992; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Vincent et al., 2002; King, 2007). For example, the study conducted by King (2007) investigated the coverage of male and female athletes by a British national newspaper during the Olympic Games since 1948. The results showed that, the newspaper provided considerably less coverage to female athletes than to male athletes until the 2004 Athens Games.

Recently, the online version of newspaper, have been widely investigated. For example, Grappendorf et al. (2009) examined the presentation of male and female athletes from the *foxsports* website (*foxsports.com*) during the 2007 NCAA division I basketball tournament.

Therefore, it is worth studying how a local online newspaper portrays male and female athletes at the 2008 Olympic Games and if female athletes get equal media coverage in the event.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The underrepresentation of female athletes in sport media coverage supports the traditional attitude that sport is a male-dominated institution. In recent years, women have increasingly participated and advanced in sporting events. However, Grappendorf et al. (2009) found that although participation of women in sports has increased in recent years, the coverage on them is far from equitable when compared to the coverage of their male counterparts.

Sports media continue to show gender discrimination as they focus on traditional images of gender inequality between the sexes. Bernstein (2002) reports that researches on media and sport found that during the 1980s and 1990s, the media continued to cover mainly male athletes. Consequently, women become a minority and practically invisible in most of sports coverage. The style of language used in broadcast, online, and print media have shaped the society's view of female and their sports as being invisible. Even though the participation rate of women in sports is increasing, it does not reflect any change of social attitude on female athletes in the media (Kane, 1988; Duncan, 2005).

Due to King's (2007) study on newspaper coverage of the athletes in the Olympic Games from 1948 to 2004, participating female athletes have received newspaper better representation recently. He suggested that "to fully conclude that female athletes have received equality in terms of media coverage would require an examination of the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games" (2007:197). Following this, the researcher became interested in the 2008 Olympic sports events since it was current news reports on international sport events by both male and female athletes at the time this study began.

Importantly, according to Capranica et al. (2005:214), they view the Olympic Games as "a path-breaking event for newspaper coverage of women's sport". However, the researcher notes that there has been limited analysis on the coverage of male and female athletes in the online version. Such the lack of this type of media, it is the intention of the researcher to focus on the representation of male and female athletes by the online media.

Based on past researches on gender studies in sports news, both qualitative and quantitative research (Murrell & Jackson, 1999; Vincent et al., 2002; King, 2007) news reporting on Olympic games were the most popular to investigate as Olympics is an international multi-sport events held every four years.

The researcher will focus on the articles of selected female-appropriate sports as classified by Vincent et al. (2002) based on Metheny (1965) and Kane (1988) (See section 3.3.2). These sports were chosen as the corpus since it would be interesting to examine whether female athletes competing in 'female-appropriate' sports will get equal coverage. The aim of the present study is to investigate how male and female

athletes are represented in the 2008 Olympic Games using data collected from a local online newspaper.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

In this present study, this researcher will focus on gender representation in the sport media. For this purpose a Malaysian online newspaper will be examined, namely, *the Star online*. The researcher will focus on language and visual images portrayed in the selected corpus. The main objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the representation of Olympic male and female athletes in a local online newspaper in terms of language used and presentation of visual images.
2. To compare the portrayal of the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the objectives mentioned above, this study will answer the following research questions:

1. How are the Olympic male and female athletes quantitatively represented in the identified Malaysian online newspaper?
2. How are Olympic male and female athletes represented in the identified Malaysian online newspaper in terms of language used and visual images?
3. In what ways are the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year comparatively portrayed by the identified Malaysian online newspaper?

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study aims to investigate gender representation in the language and visual images by the local media specifically in sports news. It attempts to reveal the specific language used to portray male and female athletes in the sports commentaries section of the *The Star online*. The overall study would provide an insight of how male and female athletes are represented in an international sports event, namely, the 2008 Olympic Games as Lee (1992) states that:

The modern Olympic Games, as a quadrennial international event with a unique format, can be viewed as the major international sporting event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Olympic Games can also be viewed as a microcosm of society, reflecting past, present, and foreseeable societal and cultural changes. (p.198)

It is hoped that this study will be able to see how the local online newspaper represents both genders during the 2008 Olympic Games. In addition, Grappendorf et al. (2009) maintains that despite the increase in participation of female athletes in recent years, the media has not reported on them equally when compared to their male counterparts.

Thus, it would be worth investigating how genders are represented in the Olympic sports news by the local online newspaper to the Malaysian audience. Although Malaysia may not be represented in all games, the Malaysian audience are still avid audience of the Games, and since this study was based in Malaysia, it would be interesting to investigate how a Malaysian online newspaper reports on the selected female appropriate sports.

## 1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study will focus on representation of male and female athletes in the 2008 Olympic sports news with the following limitations:

1. The source of data will be from *The Star online* collected throughout August 2008 as this international event was held during this month. This will include data two weeks before and after the games.
2. Only selected 'female appropriate' sports will be examined as the basic assumption is that in 'female appropriate' sports female athletes will get equal coverage like their male counter parts.
3. Only the news covering the Olympic Games in the identified local online version will be included, while other reports by other online newspapers will not be included.
4. The gender of reporters will not be part of the analysis. The focus is rather on what they said about the different genders of the athletes.
5. The selection of the sports commentaries will be based on the selection criteria listed in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This study aims to analyze the language and visual images used in the representation of male and female athletes in the 2008 Olympic sports commentaries in a Malaysian online newspaper.

The chapter will first discuss the various definitions of discourse and approaches to discourse analysis. Then the concepts of gender and framework on gender and language from different perspectives will be explored. This will include gender stereotyping and an overview of sexist language in the English language with a discussion on the use of gender free language. These will be followed by gender in the mass media, including the way men and women are portrayed in sports media with reference from previous studies.

#### **2.1 Discourse**

Discourse is a term which has become increasingly common in both academic and non-academic contexts. Discourse can be defined from different perspectives. Cook (1989:156) views discourse as “stretches of language perceived to be meaningful unified and purposive”. Similarly, Kress (1985:7) defines discourse as “systematically organized sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution”, while Nunan (1993:5) maintains that discourse is “a stretch of language consisting of several sentences which are perceived as related in some way”.

Likewise, Phillips & Hardy (2002:3) view discourse as “interrelated set of texts, and the practice of their production, dissemination, and reception, that bring an option into being”.

### **2.1.1 Text and Context in Discourse**

Schiffrin (1994:378-9) refers to text as “the linguistic contents: the stable semantic meanings of words, expressions, and sentences.” However, they are not inferred from the contexts in which those elements of language are used. In contrast, Nunan (1993:6) views text as “any written record of a communicative event” which is distinct from discourse that refers to “the interpretation of the communicative event in context”. Further, text can be in various forms, such as spoken word, written text, visual images, symbols, artifacts, and so forth (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). In accordance with Fairclough (1995) the word text is for both spoken and written language, for instance; a newspaper article, a transcription of a broadcast, visual images and sound effects of television.

However, texts cannot stand independently because they are made meaningful through their connection to other texts. This is to say that texts would not be clearly understood without its context. Phillips and Brown (1993) point out that the processes through which the texts are made meaningful will be explored by discourse analysis which involves the context of social reality. Likewise, Fairclough and Wodak (1997:277) argue: “discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into consideration”. Meanwhile, Brown and Yule (1983:6) see discourse as language in use, and refer to “instrument of communication in context”, they viewed text as a technical term which means “the verbal record of a communicative act”.



Context, according to Schiffrin (1994:362), is “a word filled with people producing utterance.” People here refer to those with “social, cultural, and personal identities, knowledge, beliefs, goals and wants, and who interact with one another in various socially and culturally defined situations.”

From these aspects above, discourse is very much related to contexts. However, the clear distinction between structural and functional approaches is their view of text in relation to context. Structural definitions focus upon text while functional definitions put emphasis on context. Van Dijk (1985:4) claims that structural view “disregards the functions relation with the context of which discourse is a part.” Basically, the two approaches make different assumptions about the nature of language and linguistic goals.

To distinguish descriptions between decontextualised data and contextualised data, Widdowson suggests several pairs of terms, for example, usage/use, sentence/ utterance, and text/discourse, be analysed together. Grammarians focus on rules of usage which are exemplified in sentences while discourse analysts describe how utterances perform social acts (1973, in Coulthard, 1977). Consistently, Bilmes (1986:127) claims that “the meaning of an utterance is determined in large part by how it responds and how it is responded to, by its place in an interactional sequence”.

In summary, discourse analysis deals with the study of the language in relation to the contexts of use. Analysis of discourse context has to be in relation to its context in order to understand the intended meaning by the language user.

### **2.1.2 Spoken and Written Discourse**

The difference between spoken and written discourse is primarily referred to a mode or channel of communication as spoken discourse uses sound or “the transmitting medium of phonic substance” and written discourse is visual with “graphic substance” (Crystal, 1995:5). Speaking and writing involve different psychological processes and becomes more complex when they are distinguished in terms of linguistic or discoursal features. They are grammatically, lexically, structurally and even functionally different.

Spoken discourse is regarded as typically transient and time-bound that has to be understood immediately. It happens in time and it must be “produced and processed on line” (Cook, 1989:115). There is no going back and changing or restructuring our words like writing as it is permanent and retrievable. Meanwhile, Coulthard (1977:6) asserts that there are at least four main levels to organize any spoken text; phonology, grammar, discourse and non-linguistic.

Brown and Yule (1983) maintain that we use speech primarily for interaction in order to establish and maintain our human relationships, whereas written language is used to work out and transfer information or for transactional purpose. Hence, these two modes of discourse can serve different purposes.

### **2.2 Approaches to Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is a broad and complex interdisciplinary field as Brown and Yule (1983) explain that the term is focused on different aspects for different disciplines.

According to Schiffrin (1994:1), discourse analysis is "a rapidly growing and evolving field" and is vast, but also one of the least defined in the areas in linguistics. Fairclough (1995) has distinguished discourse into two primary senses; "discourse as social action and interaction" (language studies), and "discourse as a social construction of reality" (post- structuralism social theory) (p.18).

Broadly defined, discourse analysis tends to concern with the linguistic analysis of spoken or written language that occurs naturally. Three approaches to discourse analysis will be identified and illustrated in the following subtopics.

### **2.2.1. Structural Based Approach**

Structuralists (or formalists) view discourse as a particular unit of language. It is "language above the sentence or above the clause" (Stubbs, 1983:1). Basically, in structural approaches, discourse is recognized as "a level of structure higher than the sentence or higher than another unit of text". In accordance with McCarthy (1991:42), discourse analysis is "a vast area within linguistics, encompassing as it does the analysis of spoken and written language over and above concerns such as the structure of the clause or sentence."

Discourse analysis is interested in ascertaining the constructive effects of discourse through its structure and refers to a systematic study of texts (Hardy, 2001 in Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Harris, the first linguist using the term discourse analysis, views discourse as "the next level in a hierarchy of morphemes, clauses and sentences." (1951, cited in Schiffrin, 1994)

### **2.2.2 Functional Based Approach**

Functionalists define discourse study as “the study of any aspect of language use” (Fasold, 1990:65). This is consistent with Brown and Yule (1983) who suggest that it refers to analysis of language in use which cannot be separated purposes and functions of language in human life. Their major concern is to examine how any language produced by humans is used to communicate for a particular purpose in context which can turn out into a more general and broader analysis of language functions.

Coulthard (1977:7) argues that “discourse does not consist simply of grammatically well-formed utterances or sentences.” This view is supported by Labov (1972), claiming that discourse analysis must concern with the functional use of language

### **2.2.3 Utterance Based Approach**

The utterance based approach to discourse analysis was proposed by Schiffrin (1994). She views discourse as “utterance” which was defined as “units of language production (whether spoken or written) which are inherently contextualized” (p.41). This approach is the combination between two paradigms; structural and functional. Schiffrin (1994:42) asserts that “actual analysis of discourse reveal interdependence between structure and function”. Though, an analysis of language tend to be theoretically oriented toward either one of them, it practically ends up with both views.

This is consistent with Sadock (1984) who claims that the appropriate approach to discourse analysis is “to examine structure in the light of functional requirement and function in the light of structural requirement” (cited in Schiffrin, 1994:361). She also

claims that the combination of the two aspects of analyses may balance the drawbacks of one mode of analysis with the advantages of the other.

Similarly, Malinowski (1923) affirms that an utterance has no meaning except in a context of situation. Thus, to understand the meaning of utterance, we have to understand “the socio-cultural context in which it is embedded” (p.307). In accordance with this approach, the study of discourse concerns with the analysis of language structures higher than the clause and also language use in social context such as conversation or written texts.

Hence, defining discourse as utterance seems to be balance both the functional emphasis on how language is used in context and the formal emphasis on extended patterns of use (Schiffrin, 1994).

### **2.3 Gender and Language**

Gender is a “term used to describe socially constructed categories based on sex. Most societies operate in terms of two genders: masculine and feminine” (Coates, 1999:3). Gender, therefore, be viewed as how society organizes to understand sexual differences. According to Shaw and Lee (2004), it involves how society creates patterns and in turn rewards how we understand femininity and masculinity.

Ivy and Backlund (1994) explain that gender includes aspects as personality traits that includes psychological makeup, beliefs, sexual orientation and gender-role identity. Thorne et al. (1983:16) claim that “gender is not a unitary, or ‘natural’ fact, but takes shape in concrete, historically changing social relationships”

argues that gender is regarded by Connell (2005) as an individual's attribute and a structure that legitimizes patriarchy which influence practices and discourses. It is not to simply say that gender refers to individual male or female as it is a socially constructed term and also associated with opportunity to be male or female.

Therefore, gender establishes a society's expectation of being a woman or a man. Most societies maintain inequalities and differences between men and women in their roles, activities, as well as decision-making opportunities.

In Humm's (1995:64) *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, gender is defined as "a culturally shaped group of attributes given to the female or male." According to Humm (1995), the 'cultural shaping' is ongoing, lifelong process which means that basically gender is unstable and multiple or 'non-unitary'. It takes place primarily through different discourses such as the discourse of male superiority, and of gender equity. It is considered a changing product of a given context, and as playing a role in constituting the social practices of that context. Gender study is not regarded as a new discipline of academic exploration and it has always been focused on feminist theories as discussed in the following section.

### **2.3.1 Feminist Theory**

Showalter (1988) asserted that feminist theories developed in phases and that the first emerged as early as 1792 and was called "feminist critique". She calls the second phase "gynocritics" which is related to linguistics focusing on the problem of feminine language. The last phase is "gender theory" where the concepts of sex and gender distinction are explored and looks at gender inequality in everyday language use.

Feminism seemed to be a movement to stop women's inequality and subjugation in almost every sphere throughout the world. Many feminists have viewed 'woman' differently as a gender term that depends on social and cultural factors. Furthermore, Feminist theorists have addressed that the use of gendered language specific on male may not serve to "accommodate the literary understanding of women's lives", for example, the generic pronouns *he*, *him* and *God* were addressed as a *He*. Feminists attempt to redefine women through restructuring language. For instance, they used the term *womyn* instead of *women* and some feminists suggested the use of gender free terms such as titles of jobs such as chairperson, and police officer.

According to feminist linguists, there are three main gender theories on language. These three frameworks included Deficit, Dominance and Difference theories.

### **2.3.1.1 Deficit Framework**

Lakoff's (1975) publication of *Language and Woman's Place* in 1975 is recognized as the first feminist theoretical model on language and gender. She argued that language is fundamental to gender inequality by pointing out the asymmetries of language used about women and men.

She emphasizes the negative aspects of women's speech is deficient, uncertain and powerless while men language is referred to as the positive norm. She mentions that most women who manage to go to college learn to switch from women's language to neutral language under appropriate situations such as in class, talking to professors and at job interview. This fact suggests that there is some pressure on women to use men's language sometimes depending on the circumstance. Lakoff (1975) accepts that men's

language is superior and takes it as the norm and any difference on the part of women is marked as deviation.

Lakoff's work is on the basis that women's speech style is worse than men's. She claims some negative characteristics of women's speech patterns as these following examples.

- Hedging                    e.g. kind of , it seems, I think
- Tag questions            e.g. aren't you?, is it?, right?
- Empty adjectives        e.g. divine, lovely, sweet

The use of tag question is the best illustration which expresses uncertainty and tentativeness of women. Such notions emphasize the superiority of men over women in social status and also prevent women to be treated equally. This framework accepts men's language as the norm that reflects women's subordinated status.

### **2.3.1.2 Dominance Framework**

Spender (1980:143), who proposed a gender theory of language, posits that "males, as the dominant group, have produced language thought and reality". Following Sapir-Whorf's linguistic determinism that the language determines the way one sees the world, Spender asserts that English is a man-made language since it reflects and contribute to gender inequality, male dominance and female subordination, and expresses structures that focus on male power.

Spender (1980:142) asserts that "it has been the dominant group - in the case, males, who have created the world, invented the categories, construed sexism and its justification, and developed a language trap which is in their interest". Work within this



paradigm, the work of Zimmerman and West (1975) also support male dominance and Spender's idea of patriarchal order.

Mario Pei (1967, cited in Henley & Kramarae, 1991) states in *The Story of the English Language* that "the English language is the result of a long series of accidents". He observes that at least one constant has been operating: men have made the language. In addition, Thorne and Hanley (1975:15) maintain that it is within the culture of English speakers that men are regarded more highly than women as "the male is associated with universal, the general, the subsuming; the female is more often excluded or is the special case."

### **2.3.1.3 Difference Framework**

The fundamental view of this framework is originally from the sociolinguistic work of Gumperz (1982). He explains the 'cross-cultural phenomenon' that girls and boys grow up in 'gender-specific subcultures' with different social organizations. Thus, they acquired different communicative goals and styles.

This framework was then postulated by Tannen (1990). She discusses this theory by contrasting men's and women's language in six characters. She advises women to adapt their speech styles in order to improve their relationships with their male counterparts.

During the 1980s this model of language and gender became popular and gained ground over other models. Many theoretical works have focused on gender difference. Henley and Kramarae (1991) argued that "the recent interest of so many researchers in studying male-female 'miscommunication' is a retreat from issues to do with power, and

therefore represents a watering down of feminism.” Variations on cultural ‘difference’ can be found in several studies. According to Coates (2004: preface), she notes:

Linguistic differences are merely a reflection of social differences. And as long as a society views men and women as different and – unequal – then differences in the language of men and women will persist.

Coates (1988) claims that research on gender and language can be mainly divided into studies that focus on dominance and studies that focus on difference. This present study will investigate if the language used by the media to portray male and female athletes has any gender bias or unequal treatment of any genders.

## **2.4 Gender Stereotyping**

Basow (1992:141) states that “language plays a major role in defining and maintaining male power over women.” This refers to the use of sexism and one form of sexism is stereotyping. When someone is stereotyped, his or her personality, behavior or attitude are interpreted and is applied to the same group. One crucial point is that the attributions are over generalized; even when they are not absolutely false, they are only partially true (Coates & Cameron, 1988). Consistently, Judd and Park (1993:110) define stereotyping as “an individual’s set of beliefs about characteristics or attributes of group. In general, stereotypic characteristics distinguish a particular group from other groups.” Stereotypes of femininity play an important role in informing our beliefs about women, men and language.

Dunnigan’s (1982:3) definition of stereotype is “a rigid impersonal model on the basis of which images or behavior are automatically reproduced”. She adds that “it is easy to see how the same concept can be used not only as a noun and an adjective, to qualify an

image, attitude or type of behavior, but also as a verb, signifying the very act of creating a stereotype.”

According to Lakoff (1987:77), “stereotypes gain power and credibility through wide use in everyday talk and texts as a result of the fact that they are well-understood or easy-to-perceive.” Women’s language is inferior to men’s language since they are weak and uncertain speakers as revealed by their frequently use of tag questions. Lakoff (1987, cited in Thorne and Henley, 1975:11) claims that male speech is stronger and more forceful than female speech as it does not seem capable of holding power. This encourages the men’s powerful position in the world.

A stereotype strictly proves the belief that a person is supposed to behave or perform the roles according to expectation of the society. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between stereotyping and traditional beliefs about male and female roles in a particular society. It could also discourage men to involve in women's roles as in cooking, gardening and child care. It limits women to choose certain types of jobs or tasks that are "traditionally male" (such as pilot, engineering and athlete).

## **2.5 Sexist Language**

Many feminists have agreed that “our languages are sexist: that is, they represent or ‘name’ the world from a masculine viewpoint and in accordance with stereotyped beliefs about the sexes” (Cameron, 1990:12).

Miller and Swift (1972:291) view sexist language as “any language that express stereotyped attitudes and expectations or assumes the inherent superiority of one sex

over the other”. This would simply say that sexism refers to the trivialization of one sex and the overvaluing of the other.

Language forms preserve old attitudes that expose men’s superiority and women’s inferiority. Spender (1980:141) argues that “when there are a sexist language and sexist theories culturally available, the observation of reality is also likely to be sexist.” She then writes that “out of nowhere we invented sexism” as we created the belief of male as superiority and female as inferiority. Cameron (1990) claims:

Sexist language cannot be regarded as simply the naming of the world from one, masculist perspective; it is better conceptualized as a multifaceted phenomenon occurring in a number of quite complex systems of representation, all with their places in historical traditions. (p.14)

Hence, there appear to be many forms of sexist language that reveal gender stereotyping in the media. Various forms of sexist language and the proposition of gender-neutral language are elaborated below.

### **2.5.1 Forms of Sexist Language**

Sexist stereotypes of males and female tend to deny the salience of women and over emphasize the important of men. In accordance with Michel (1986:15), male and female characters are stereotyped to such extend that “the glorification of men inevitably implies the degradation of women.” Moreover, many forms of language uses in the presentation of males and females are obviously different.

### **(i) Generic Terms**

“One of the most familiar instances of sexism in English is the way that *man*, pronominalized as *he*, has been represented as synonymous with humanity.” (Cameron, 1990:15) It is one of subtle ways in which females are represented as a derivative or sub-set of the male. The generic terms here refer mainly to a noun *man* and a pronoun *he*. A generic *man* is often used to refer to humanity; it is not sex-specific term as in this sentence ‘Men need power’. *Men* here refer to all human beings. Similarly, generic *he* is used traditionally to refer to persons in general, including both male and female.

Although this terminology should operate as a generic, many feminists and linguists regard them as gender-specific terms (Mills, 1995; Spender, 1980; Cameron, 1985). Spender (1980:153) suggests that when we use *man* term in reference to both sexes “...it is clear that the visibility and primacy of males is supported.” Consistently, Mills (1995) argues that the term *man* is commonly used as a gender-specific term rather than a true generic. She observes that when the generic pronoun *he* is used, people tend to think of male participants.

Miller and Swift (1976:55) claim that “given the male norm, it become natural to think of women as an auxiliary and subordinate class.” Hence, Feminists have concluded that *man* only means male.

### **(ii) Address Terms**

There are various ways to address people which are commonly different between males and females. These included personal title, first and last names and reference to relationship.

- **Personal Titles:** The English personal titles, until recently, consisted of three terms: *Miss* and *Mrs.* for women and *Mr.* for men. These addressing terms are obviously lack of parallel for men and women in terms of practices. Women's titles convey whether they are single or married while the only men's title, *Mr.*, does not reflect their marital status.

A new terms *Ms.* was introduces for women in order to erase this asymmetry which would parallel *Mr.* a few decade ago. Talbot (1998) observes that this practice has succeeded in United State, but less succeeded in British.

- **First and Last Names:** Lakoff (1973) discusses in *Language and Woman's Place* that language is a clue to social inequities as there is a general tendency at work, e.g. business, university, and in media commentary to address women sooner by their first names, even where women are equal to men. Miller and Swift (1976) refer to many evidences that women were often called by their first names while men's last names were uttered. They suggested that the news media frequently reflect this view. One of many instances they observed was about a new elected Governor Ella Grasso of Connecticut. Her respond to a reporter's question about the name she wanted to be called was that "People usually call me Ella." (p.25). This incident suggests that even women of high social status are normally called by their first names.

- **Reference to Relationship:** One of different ways to mention male and female is that while males are identified purely in terms of gender, females are introduced based on their relationship to a male. For example, daughters take their father's surname or as wife of another as in *Sara, John's wife*, but not *John, Sara's husband*.

The findings of Rasiah's (1999) study on "Gender bias in newspaper" supports this notion. The analysis at the word level showed a vast difference in the frequency counts between both sexes. The word *wife* occurs more frequently than *husband* as he gave the reason according to the sexist practices that "women are often looked upon as attachments to, or possession of their husbands, the men."

### **(iii) Masculine Terms**

Masculine terms or what Ivy and Backlund (1994:19) call "man-linked terminology" refer to words or phrases that contain the word 'man' in them, but are not gender-specific. Ivy and Backlund (1994:79) show that there appear to be many forms of such terms. Many of them tend to be suffix '-man', most of which refer to occupational names, such as *postman*, *businessman*, *chairman*, and *gunman*. 'Man' is also used as a prefix as in *mankind*, *man-power* and *man-hours*; moreover, this term includes expression like *man the phones*.

Besides, the words with 'man' attached or embedded like *manager*, *manipulate* *emancipate* and *menstruation* are not sexist (Maggio, 1988, in Ivy and Backlund, 1994:79). Moreover, Poynton (1989) examines the terms used for men and women in two reference sources; the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Macquarie Dictionary*, he found in both sources, the ratio of man words to woman words is nearly 3:1. This can be considered relatively biased towards words for men.

#### **(iv) Feminine Marked Terms**

There are many words that are considered gender neutral terms, commonly used for both male and female. The term *professional* is one of gender-unmarked adjectives which obviously has different connotation when apply to women (Lakoff, 1975; Cameron, 1990; Romaine, 2000). When we heard the sentence ‘he is a professional’, we automatically think of an occupation that the man is fluent. In contrast, when it becomes ‘she is a professional’, most people tend to assume that she is a prostitute. This phenomenon can be explained according to Lakoff (1975:30), “a man is defined in a serious world by what he does, a woman by her sexuality....”

Furthermore, Talbot (1998) includes some gender unmarked nouns of occupational names such as doctor, driver and writer. She suggests that people tend to assume those jobs to be men so that the term *lady* or *woman* is used to precede those terms in order to be clear that they are women as in *lady doctor*. As Lakoff (1975:23) claims that “since in the professions the male is unmarked, we never have man (male) doctor.” She asserts that the term *lady* tends to make the subject matter trivial. Moreover, Rasiah’s (1999) study shows that the use of marked forms when referring to women and unmarked terms for men are a clear indication of gender bias making women as deviant and men as norm.

#### **(v) Gender Specific Terms**

This form of sexist language contains different terms for male and female. Such suffixes like –ess, -ette, -enne, or -trix was attached to the male terms to form female versions as in *actress*, *bachelorette*, *comediienne* and *adventuress*.



Maggio (1988:178) in Ivy and Backlund (1994:80) states that feminine suffixes “perpetuate the notion that the male is the norm and the female is a subset, a deviation, a secondary classification...” This sexist form of language implies that terms left unmarked refer to male only.

Mills (1995) compares pairs of gender-contrastive terms that are male-specific and female-specific. She found that the male terms have retained their original meaning while most of female terms convey sexual connotation. As these following pair terms:

Male	Female
Lord	Lady
Master	Mistress
Courtier	Courtesan
Adventurer	Adventuress

The pair *master* and *mistress* obviously have diverged meaning. While *master* refers to “a man who has acquired consummate ability in some field”, *mistress* is “restricted to its sexual sense of paramour” (Lakoff, 1975:29). One of the most prevalent word pairs are *bachelor* and *spinster*. When a woman is called *spinster*, she seems to be insulted like an old maid. On the other hand, the term *bachelor* is perceived to have positive connotations of freedom and independent.

#### **(vi) Ordering Terms**

Generally, when pair terms appear in both spoken and written forms, it's a male terms that comes first and followed by a female term; for example, *husband and wife*, *brother and sister*, *king and queen*. Ivy and Backlund (1994) suggest that male terms are almost always precede female terms except in these three cases:

- 1) Traditional greeting ; “*ladies and gentlemen*”
- 2) Reference to the bride and groom
- 3) Reference to someone’s mother and father; “*How are your mom and dad doing?*”

(p.86-87)

The way of the terms ordering in English can be seen that a preceding term is more important as Miller and Swift (1976) state that using such an order of words carry the implication that men are the priority.

### **(vii) Derogatory Terms**

Derogatory terms basically refer to one sex rather than the other which provide “a revealing index of the social construction of femininity and masculinity and constitute powerful collective sanctions against behavior that violates gender roles” (James, 1998:399). Language associated with men is more likely to reveal positive connotation which supports the notions of power and superiority. Female terms, on the other hand, are often negative since they convey weakness and inferiority.

Practically, there are more derogatory terms for women and those terms are more negative than those for men. Mills (1995) questions why certain endearment terms or ‘terms of affection’ as called by Talbot (1998) can also be used to diminish them such as *dear*, *honey* and *sweetheart*. However, she added that the meaning of these terms depend on both relationship of the persons and contexts of communication.

Miller and Swift (1976) give an example of a female term *bitch*. They have claimed that when a woman is called a *bitch*, the intent is to derogate her since the term technically refers to a female dog.

### **(viii) Metaphor**

Ivy and Backlund (1994) claim that labeling terms for men and women such as food, plant and animal terms can be understood as demeaning of sexist. Similarly, Lakoff (1975) observes that when people are referred to metaphorically by animal names, they always convey sexual reference when apply to women. In analyzing vocabulary, Nilsen (1977) found that women were portrayed in a passive metaphor by various types of food and plants, e.g. *cheesecake*, *sugar*, and *wallflower*. Moreover, negative connotations like animal words were also used to describe women. On the other hand, the animal terms for men were related to strength, such as *buck* and *wolf*.

The used of metaphor will also be applied in this study in the analysis of the language used to portray male and female athletes in the corpus.

It could be summed up that sexist language serve to justify and trivialize women as being dependent, emotional that show inequality in society.

### **2.5.2 Gender Neutral Language**

Gender neutral language was introduced by feminists to replace the use of language that refer to one sex or gender-specific terms. The followings are the types of gender neutral terms with examples.

#### **(i) Addressed Terms**

Many researchers such as Miller and Swift (1976) and Mills (1995) have the same opinion that instead of using first names for women and last names for men, it is better

to address women with both her first and last names. Moreover, they suggest avoiding using the three titles *Mr/ Mrs/ Miss* that reveal marital status of women. Alternative titles would be the use of *Mr/ Ms*.

### **(ii) Generic Pronoun ‘he’**

Miller and Swift (1976) suggests the use of plural form *they* instead of using the generic pronoun *he* to refer to both male and female. They add that this form had been in use as singular pronoun for hundreds of years. Besides, Cameron (1990) suggests the use of *she* as a generic pronoun as Mills (1995:73) claims that “she can be seen to contain he within it. It can also foreground the effect of other so-called generic use.” Mills (1995), thus, suggests to change the generic *he* to *s/he* or *she or he*. Another alternative is converting the form of sentences into passive in order to avoid the use of the third-person pronoun.

### **(iii) Generic Noun ‘man’**

The avoidance of using the generic noun ‘man’ is suggested by many researchers. Miller and Smith offers some guidelines to solve this problem that are using neutral alternatives such as *human* or *human being*, whereas Mills (1995:100) suggests the term *humanity*, *human* or *people*. Other neutral alternatives she suggests are *firefighters* and *reporters* instead of using *firemen* and *newsmen*.

However, there were positive changes in some of printed media to eliminate sexist words. In the 1982 edition of *Roget’s Thesaurus*, for example, the word *mankind* has changed to *humankind*. In the same year, the use of nonsexist language was mandated

by *the American Psychological Association* in its journals and conference presentation (Michel, 1986).

#### **(iv) Feminine Marked Terms**

There have been suggestions to avoid the use of feminine markers such as the suffix ‘-ess’, unless it is relevant to state the person’s sex (Miller and Swift, 1976). They also claim that jobs open to both sexes should be of neutral terms as they suggest rephrasing the word *congressmen* with *members of congress*. Moreover, Mills (1995) suggests eliminating the terms *lady* or *female* in occupations as in *lady doctor* and *female scientist*.

### **2.6 Media Discourse**

Cotter (2001) asserts that “the discourse of the news media encapsulates two key components: the news story, or spoken or written text; and the process involved in producing the texts”. This statement shows that media discourse can be examined in terms of the texts itself, and also the process which involved in texts production. She views the text as the main focus of most media researchers, specifically when it encodes values and ideologies which effect on the larger world. She clarifies that the process, the second dimension, includes “the norms and routines of the community of news practitioners” (cited in Schiffrin, 2003:416).

Accordingly, Fairclough’s (1995:16) view on the language analysis of media is that “we need to analyze media language as discourse, and the linguistic analysis of media should be part of the discourse analysis of media.” He affirms that discourse analysis is

concerned with both texts and practices. Fairclough (1995) explains the meaning of discourse practices as how texts are produced by the media; received by audiences; and socially distributed. His view of texts, in accordance with Cotter (2001), includes both spoken and written language. Further, three basic approaches are suggested by Cotter in order to study media discourse. These include “1) discourse analytic, 2) sociolinguistic, and 3) nonlinguistic” (cited in Schiffrin, 2003).

Bell (1991) has argued that over the next decade or so the decline of the print media will continue as more people turn to the internet for news and journalism. She mentions, “it is clear to me that the future of written journalism lies more in electronic distribution than it does with the print page” (p.45). One of the challenges she stresses is how newspaper adapt to the migration of the readers going online in order to search for the news. It is confirmed that sport news will continue to be an important point of this news online. Generally, sport pieces written for the web appear to be shorter in length than those found in newspaper. We can also see a lot of sport-related material and fans websites generating amounts of information, content and comment.

### **2.6.1 Gender Portrayals in the Mass Media**

Mass media, not refer only to television, radio, and the press, but also literature, textbooks, films, and advertising, is considered a primary channel to study gender representations in our society. Numerous works of gender research have indicated that the mass media have portrayed men and women differently. They tend to support traditional attitudes by highlighting negative images of women, while men are depicted as positive role portrayals.

Kramarae (1981:99) asserts, “women are low in economic and social status, and their language is not considered the medium of technology, business, politics, or science. Women have little representation at decision-making levels of state, business, and cultural institutions.” This is consistent with UNESCO’s (1994) study on employment and decision making influence of women in the media showing that very few women are employed in the decision making post of the mass media industry and their portrayal is limited to a few dominant roles.

It has been unanimously agreed that the women images depicted by the media constitute difficulties to eradicating discrimination against women and “a main factor in preserving traditional sexist attitude towards them” (Unesco, 1980:52). The following deals with the media’s portrayal of women in general and specifically the newspaper’s portrayal of women.

Davidson and Gordon's (1979) study shows that women were underrepresented by the media, as they points out:

Activities in which males are engaged embrace a wide range, including activities that are stereotypically masculine and those that are not linked to gender. Females are shown in a narrow range of settings and activities; they are restricted basically to activity stereotyped as uniquely feminine and do little that is not sex typed. (p.165)

Textbook and dictionary are types of media that present a world in which most people are male. Miller and Swift (1976) and DeShazer (1981) agree that many recent studies investigating dictionaries and textbooks show that male language is views as the norm, and female language as subordination. The researchers usually argue that these presentations “both reflect and strengthen the day-to-day evaluation men made of women” (cited in Kramarae, 1981:100).

As Ong (1999) carries out a study in order to examine gender representation in the current Singapore primary English coursebooks. The analysis showed that females were underrepresented compared to males in terms of characteristics, speakers and protagonists. This finding can be supported by Michel (1986), proposing that the positive heroes of children and adults alike are more often men than women. Accordingly, a study carried out by Baker and Raner (2007) investigated the portrayals of female and male superheroes in children's cartoon. They revealed that a trend toward defining superheroes is traditional masculine terms.

Another instance from literary work was found in "*Gender bias and stereotyping in K.S. Maniam's short stories*" by Menon (2006). The analysis found that there were more gender biased statements made against female characters than male. These findings enhance male's superior and female's inferior roles.

### **2.6.2 Gender Stereotyping in the Media**

Besides discrimination in the social, economic and political field, women are also negatively portrayed in the media. The mass media tend to support traditional attitudes on gender and portray demeaning and derogative images of women that reflects unchanging attitudes in our society.

Stereotyping is seen everywhere in the mass media. According to Suseela (1998:13), "gender stereotyping occurs in a range of areas; careers, male and female intellectual abilities, personality, characteristics, physical appearance, social status and domestic roles". For decades, stereotyping against women has existed in most societies in the world. Women are meant to take responsibilities in the houses like taking care of the



house and the children while the husband works to make the money. In some countries, there are some laws that take away women rights such as a law which does not allow women to work.

Gender stereotypes do appear in both visual and print media such as films, television, books, magazines, and newspapers. Men and women are portrayed differently in behavior and status. Females are typically conveyed as passive, inferior and negative while males are well represented as active, important and aggressive. For instance, when women are portrayed in newspaper either in texts or photographs, they are more likely to include personal appearance, marital status. On the other hand, men are often depicted in professional or athletic roles.

### **2.6.3 Sexist Language in the Media**

Miller and Swift (1972) suggest that the media use language in a sexist way. For example, the headlines of newspapers tend to identify the sex of doers if they are women or girls. According to Gallagher (2001), women appear to be consistently presented in a few dominant images and are underrepresented and occupy less important roles than men by mass media all over the world. Moreover, Michel (1986:17) states that in “textbooks and children literatures: women are represented and valued only in their emotional, maternal and domestic roles”

Some instances of the press media that clearly showed in terms of numbers are from two reference sources, namely, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Macquarie Dictionary*. The interesting findings found in both sources are that the numbers of terms for men were three times more than those for women (Pynton, 1985).

Nair (1999) conducted a study of sexism in two English magazines in Malaysia. The findings showed that there were more sexist terms for women than those for men and the terms used for women were identified to have a negative connotation. The analysis also indicated that men and women are portrayed along stereotypical lines.

Moreover, Rasiah (1999) looked at women as portrayed in all English publication of the *New Straits Times* newspaper for the first four months of the year 1998, focusing on the sexist elements of gender bias at both word and sentence levels. The analysis showed similar results to the first mentioned research that women were less frequently and negatively portrayed compared to men in the media.

Nilsen (1977) found that women tend to be valued by their body, physical characteristic and age while men are valued by their mind and activities are. Moreover, language used shows passivity of women's roles. For example, females are identified with pets (as *pony tails* and *dress in halters*) with some referring to terms that show relation to men (as *husbands, fathers* and *brothers*), or even the passivity of female's name with foods (as *honey, peach* and *Ivy*).

In addition, adjectives are also used to convey females and males in sexist ways. There was also an obvious difference between the adjectives used to describe both sexes. In analyzing the adjectives for stereotyping females and males, Porreca (1984) reports that in the course book she looked at, in describing women, the categories of physical appearance seem to excessively associate women with attractiveness. This choice of attributes to describe female and male implies that males are associated with power.

#### **2.6.4 Gender and Sport Media**

Mass media seem to shape and reflect the attitudes and perception of our society. Indeed, Kane (1988:88) states that “the mass media have become one of the most powerful institutional forces for shaping values and attitudes in modern culture.” Women involved in sports influences the way female athletes are perceived and reflect the status of women in the society.

Many studies, both quantitative and qualitative, have been conducted to examine how women are portrayed in various types of mass media in comparison with men, specifically in sport media. Many studies have explored media coverage of female athletes in television, radio, magazines and newspapers (Lee, 1992; Bernstein, 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Billings et al., 2005; King, 2007). All of these studies show underrepresentation of sportswomen compared to the male counterparts.

The absence of female athletes in sport media coverage supports the traditional attitude that sport is a male-dominated institution. In recent years, women have increasingly participated and advanced in sporting events and more female athletes have been represented through newspapers, magazines, television and other media. A clear example has been showed in the Olympic Games for women’s increasing numbers in sports that changes attitudes towards them.

Nevertheless, at the same time, male athletes continue to receive more coverage than females in almost around the world. Bernstein (2002:417) reports that between the 1980s and the 1990s “the media persisted in covering mainly male athletes”. Consequently, women become minority and practically invisible in most of sports

coverage as the style of language used in broadcast, online, and print media shape the society's view of women's sports or athletes in general.

A study conducted by Duncan and Messner (1990) examined gender in televised sports in Los Angeles television sports news during summer 1989. The findings indicate that female athletes received less airtime during the period of their study compared to the male counterparts. In addition, the analysis of their 2004 study (Duncan & Messner, 2005) shows that while male athletes received 91.4% of the air time, only 6.3% was devoted to women's sports. These numbers reveal a decline in women's sports coverage since 1999, when they got 8.7% of the airtime. In summary, these findings indicate that female athletes and women's sports were underreported in televised sports news without revealing any significant change over times.

One of related research looked at gender differences in televised golf focuses on how men and women are depicted and referred to in sport media. The researchers, Billings, et al. (2005) became interested to investigate this type of sport since there has been no research examining on a televised announcing of male and female golfers. Golf is "the only professional sports that men and women can play in the same group at the same time" (p.155). However, they found that female golfers were differently portrayed compared to male counterparts. Female golfers were tent to be portrayed the reasons of their success and fail, while men's power, personality and athletic skills were likely to be described.

During the last two decades, plenty numbers of studies have investigated gender in sports media. Those studies have constantly revealed that "media coverage of female athletes have failed to mirror their athletic achievements". Therefore, this study will be

based on these reports that female athletic achievement in their sports are combined with marginalization and are frequently portrayed with culturally stereotyping about their feminine attractiveness rather than their athletic ability and performance (Eastman & Billings, 2000; Bernstein, 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Messner, 2002).

### **2.6.5 Sexism in Sport Media**

An existence of sexism in sport coverage becomes a huge issue in our society. It is known that most of the female athletes even in professional sports have not been fully supported, not only in terms of finance but also psychology. Consequently, they have attempted to make themselves recognized in some way that will attract media attention; that is, by their attractive appearances and dressing to make them more appealing to the public's eyes. This is consistent with Gallagher (2001:24), pointing out that "women have always been a big selling point for the commercial media around the world" which produces both positive and negative sides to this.

For example, Duncan (2005) reveals in her study "Gender in Televised Sports" that commentators use different language to report on male and female athletes. While men are referred to using positive terms as *strong*, *brilliant*, and *aggressive*, women are more often described negatively as *weary*, *frustrated*, and *choking*. Moreover, they are likely to call the male athletes by their last names, and to call females by first names only.

Another analysis reveals gender bias through the way that female athletes were portrayed by the daily printed media (Huggins, 2007). An Australian newspaper *The Age*, on 26 March, 2007, reported on the success of a female swimmer at the World Swimming Championships by printing the headline "It is so fantastic! Girls beat the

world to grab first gold”. Even though the female athletes in that report were in adult ages, they were still referred to by the word *girls*. The portrayal of women in such a sexist way has encouraged notions of women’s inferiority.

One of the studies on sexist practice used by sport media was conducted by Messner et al. (1990, cited in Messner, 2002) on athletes’ names in tennis commentary. They found that female players were referred to by first names (52.7%) more often than referring to male players (7.8%). This finding is in accordance with Pfister’s (1989) study of “the coverage of the Olympics by German newspapers.” (cited in Bernstein, 2002) He reveals that women were likely to be addressed by their first names, nicknames or fantasy names, whereas surnames were used to introduce men. This phenomenon is perceived to display ‘hierarchy of naming’ that reinforces the persistent gender bias.

Besides, image or photograph is an obvious element, other than the printed texts, in conveying sexist idea in the sport media. In particular, when female athletes are the focus of media attention, the images often become sexualized and their sport achievements become marginalized. One distinctive study that can be clear evidence to this issue is the case of Anna Kournikova, who is one of the most photographed sport celebrity in the world.

Bernstein (2002) and Harris and Clayton (2002) both concur on their analysis of Kournikova’s sport coverage that the female tennis player has often been framed on attractive appearance rather than her games and athletic abilities. The studies do confirm that the female athletes were more likely to portray as sex objects rather than serious sport performers.

Women's under-representation combined with stereotypical depictions in sport media tend to construct and maintain gender bias and inequality. These clearly confirm the persistence of sexism in the media and social communication in our social reality.

#### **2.6.5.1 Women Participation in Olympic Games**

The Olympic Games can be seen as the main international sports event of the twentieth century. The Olympic Games reflect past, present, and future changes including the changing status and roles of women in society (Lee, 1992). According to the report by International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2004), in the first 100 years of athletes' participation in the Olympic Games, women's participation increased from 1.6% in 1900 to 40.6% in 2004. Due to King's (2007) study of newspaper coverage of the Olympic athletes since 1948 to 2004, participating female athletes have received larger newspaper coverage in recent years. He suggested that "to fully conclude that female athletes have received equality in terms of media coverage would require an examination of the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games." Accordingly, the researcher became interested in the 2008 Olympic sports events since it is current news reporting on international sport events by both male and female athletes. Importantly, the Olympic Games "function as a path-breaking event for newspaper coverage of women's sport" (Capranica et al., 2005:214).

Based on many previous researches, it is the intention of this study to investigate how male and female athletes were portrayed in the Olympic sports news using data collected from the local online newspaper.

### 2.6.5.2 Gender appropriate sports

Feminists view sports as a sexist institution that preserve the traditional beliefs in which men are superior and preserve masculine orientation. Gender participation in sports is divided according to what is considered to be appropriate for women, men or both based upon gender differences and characteristics of each sport. This study will follow Vincent et al. (2002), based on the combination of Metheny's (1965) sport typology and Kane's (1988) sport classification for women.

Metheny (1965, cited in Koivula, 2001) was the first to come up with the definition of what sports can be term to be masculine. He postulates that a sport is considered to be masculine if it involves these four characteristics:

- 1) attempts to physically overpower the opponent(s) by bodily contact;
- 2) a direct use of bodily force to a heavy object;
- 3) a projection of the body into or through space over distance; and
- 4) face-to-face competition in situations in which bodily contact may occur.

(p.378)

These characteristics of sports are conceptualized to be appropriate for men as they express masculine attributes such as power and aggressiveness. In contrast, the sports of this type are believed to be inappropriate for women. Metheny (1965) and Kane (1988) then labeled several sports as "female-appropriate" that are "sports that allow women participants to remain true to the stereotyped expectations of femininity" such as being nonaggressive and that have an emphasis on beauty and aesthetic grace (cited in Koivula, 2001:378).

According to Vincent et al. (2002), 'female-appropriate' sports refer to the following games: archery, diving, equestrian, fencing, gymnastics, swimming, synchronized



swimming, table tennis, tennis, and volleyball. They found that women competing at the 1996 Summer Olympics in several selected individual ‘female-appropriate’ sports, namely, swimming, gymnastics, tennis, and diving were highly represented in articles and especially photographs in newspaper.

### **2.6.5.3 Visual images in the media**

Photographs of athletes represented in the news articles are another crucial element that portray sexism in the media. There have been many studies conducted to compare between male and female athletes representation in photographs.

According to Lee’s (1992) study, the images of female swimmers, gymnasts, and tennis players were more highly represented. Grappendorf et al. (2009) studied the media representation of male and female athletes from the online sport website, namely, foxsports.com during the 2007 NCAA Division 1 Basketball Tournament. She analyzed photographs using the coding process from Shifflett and Revelle’s (1994). The finding showed that male athletes had more paragraphs written on them.

## **2.7 Summary**

In this chapter, the definitions of the basic approaches and concepts that will be used as frameworks in the analysis of this study were explained and illustrated. These included discourse analysis, gender theories, forms of sexist language, gender and media and other relevant issues. In addition, many studies that related to each concept were discussed specifically in the field of media discourse focusing on sport media.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate how genders are portrayed in the sports news commentary of an online local newspaper. This chapter deals with the theoretical framework employed in the study. The research design and the selection criteria of the corpus will be discussed. This is followed by the data analysis procedures of the corpus.

#### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

The framework of this research will be based on discourse analysis as the overall framework for the study. According to Fairclough's (1995:16) view on the language analysis of media, "we need to analyze media language as *discourse*, and the linguistic analysis of media should be part of the discourse analysis of media."

A framework on language and gender is also taken into account since the focus of the study is on gender portrayals by the media. This present study will be based on a gender theory of language which was created by Spender's (1980) dominance theory. Her fundamental view is that language reflects and perpetuates gender inequality, men's dominance and women's subordination through structures that emphasize male power. This refers to the use of sexism as Spender (1980:141) states that "out of nowhere we invented sexism" due to creating categories that set males as norm and females as deviant.

At the word level of analysis terms used by reporters to describe and refer to athletes will be first investigated by focusing on the use of adjectives and nouns as terms of references. This is in accordance with Basow (1992) who indicated that adjectives and nouns may convey positive, negative or neutral meanings when referring to male and female athletes. Further, consistent with Brown and Yule (1983), the aim is to describe regularities in the language used to convey meaning and intention. The frequency of various male and female terms will also be counted using the corpus analysis software, antconc3.2.2.1w, an open source software from [http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc\\_index.html](http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html).

Furthermore, language used at sentence level will be investigated focusing on language that portray negative connotation in describing male and female athletes. The analysis of metaphors will focus on war metaphor as proposed by Beard (1998). The styles of language in reporting games and victory of male and female athletes will be compared. This level of analysis will allow the researcher to look at sexist language used to portray male and female athletes which reveal gender bias and stereotyping in the corpus.

Another crucial part is how athletes are represented in photograph. Although the focus of this study is language use, other elements such as the photographs that appear in the articles seem necessary to investigate. For this present study, the coding process will follow that of Shifflett and Revelle (1994). The categories of the visual images will be coded as:

- (a) competing athlete,
- (b) athlete in competitive context but not competing,
- (c) head shot of the athlete(s) or coach(es),
- (d) head shot of others,
- (e) group photographs of others and
- (f) others (photographs other than categories (a) to (e))

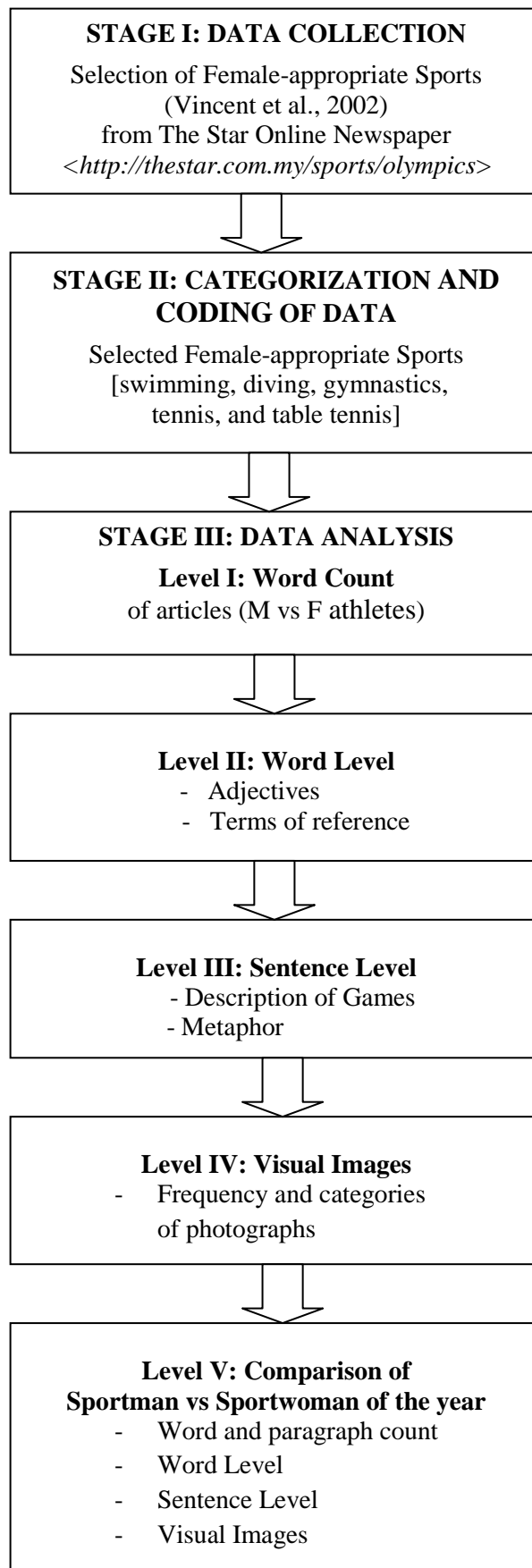
The final level of analysis will be the comparison between the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year. All aspects of language and visual analysis will be applied to this level. This is guided by Nair's (1999) study that found articles on female celebrities were much shorter than those of male counterparts and they were more likely to be portrayed in photographs than the male celebrities.

In addition, a paragraph is another unit of analysis at this stage based on the categories proposed by Shifflett and Revelle's (1994) study. Each paragraph in the articles on both male and female athletes will be coded as:

- (a) factual information related to athletes,
- (b) factual information not related to athletics,
- (c) personal information related to athletics,
- (d) personal information not related to athletics and
- (e) others (paragraphs other than categories (a) to (d))

The styles of news reporting on the victory of the two athletes will also be compared. Buysse and Embser-Herbert (2004) found that the depiction of male and female athletes was different since female athletes were often emphasized on their physical appearance over their athletic performance.

### 3.2 Research Design



**Figure 3.1: Research Design**

### **3.3 STAGE I: Data Collection**

This section will be discussed in two parts; source of data collection and corpus or data selection.

#### **3.3.1 Source of Data Collection**

Firstly, the data of this study was searched by using *http://thestar.com.my/sports/olympics*. A Malaysian online newspaper was selected as a source to gain the primary data. The online form was chosen as the focus of this study because it was convenient to collect since the researcher did not have to go through a substantial number of newspapers manually to search for data. As the readers are able to notice, printed newspapers normally tend to report the results of outstanding events or athletes of the sports. As a result, the other form, online newspaper, was selected as a corpus since their reports covered daily all games competing during the 2008 Olympics.

Before deciding on which source of sports news to study, the researcher conducted a small survey to select an appropriate source of data. After surveying each of English language online newspapers, namely *The New Strait Times*, *The Malay Mail* and *The Star*, it was found that the online webpages allocated for the Olympic news in *The Star* online newspaper were well organized compared to the other two online newspapers. To search for the articles, one needs to go to the link “Olympics 2008” under the “SPORT” icon. There was no specific link to Olympic sports news in the other two online sources. The keywords required in order to get the data were either “2008 Olympics” or “Olympics Beijing”. Thus, access to data was time saving.

In addition, *The Star* was selected because it is known as the first tabloid in Malaysia that claims to have reached its biggest milestones in 1995 when it was the first to launch a world wide web featuring interactive contents. *The Star* has also the most readership compared to other newspapers at the time of this study. The news articles in *The Star* online newspaper were systematically grouped into dates that help to be immediately linked, such as *11-Aug-2008*, *30-Aug-2008*. Therefore, *the Star* will be selected as a corpus of the study for those reasons given.

### **3.3.2 Data Selection (Corpus)**

The data sourced from this online version covered a complete one-month period, from 01.08.08 until the last day of the month 31.08.08. This involved a period during two-week competition from 08.10.08 to 24.08.08 and also one week before and one week after the events. The reason for the stretch of one-month period is that it was deemed adequate for a study at this level.

The data of this study were guided by the classification of the previous research on female appropriate sports by Vincent et al. (2002) based on categories proposed by Metheny (1965) and Kane (1988). The sports coverage that will be selected as corpus will be ‘female-appropriate’ sports. This is consistent with the study by Vincent et al. (2002) to investigate whether female athletes in ‘female appropriate’ sports were given equal coverage. The games listed as female-appropriate sports are “archery, diving, equestrian, fencing, gymnastics, swimming, synchronized swimming, table tennis, tennis and volleyball” (Vincent et al., 2002).

Table 3.1 shows the number of articles and word count of these sports for male and female athletes.

**Table 3.1: Female-Appropriate Sports in *The Star* Online**

Sports	Male			Female			Total
	Article	Word	%	Article	Word	%	
Swimming	37	13721	62.61	32	8092	37.39	<b>21813</b>
Gymnastics	9	2999	42.32	9	4087	57.68	<b>7086</b>
Diving	6	2307	47.3	9	2550	52.7	<b>4857</b>
Tennis	8	2522	59.24	3	1735	40.76	<b>4257</b>
Archery	8	2896	85.23	3	502	14.77	<b>3398</b>
Table Tennis	5	1732	58.29	3	1127	41.71	<b>2859</b>
Sync. Swimming	0	0	0	2	1006	100	<b>1006</b>
Fencing	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Equestrian	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>26177</b>	<b>57.82</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>19099</b>	<b>42.18</b>	<b>45276</b>

Key: % - Percentage

The selection criteria of the articles to be analyzed in the study are as follows:

- (1) Each article to be analyzed in this study must contain more than 50 words to report on athletes and the sports events. They have to contain enough information that represents gender portrayal of male and female athletes by the media. As seen in table 3.1, the articles from this particular online daily on *fencing* and *equestrian* were irregular and insufficient. Moreover, *synchronized swimming* was an event for female athletes only and only two articles found on *synchronized swimming* will not suffice for analysis. Thus, these three sports will be excluded from the corpus as no comparison can be made between two genders.



(2) Team sports will be excluded as one of the related studies reported that “the most appropriate sports for women are individual rather than team sports” (DeBacy, et al., 1970, cited in Alley & Hicks, 2005). As a result, *volleyball* will be eliminated from the corpus.

(3) In order to compare the portrayal between male and female athletes, the total number of word count between both should not be too despairing. Thus, the researcher set the percentage of word count of each sport to be more than 30% of each gender. The table reveals that archery contains only 14.77% of word counts for women while male athletes received as high as 85.27%. Therefore, *archery* will not be included in the corpus.

In summary, the articles selected to be corpus of this study will be for five games, namely, *diving*, *gymnastics*, *swimming*, *table tennis* and *tennis*. The following table presents the number of articles and word count for the corpus of the study.

**Table 3.2: Selected Female-Appropriate Sports as Corpus**

Sports	Male		Female		Total	
	Articles	Words	Articles	Words	Articles	words
Swimming	37	13721	32	8092	<b>69</b>	<b>21813</b>
Gymnastics	9	2999	9	4087	<b>18</b>	<b>7086</b>
Diving	6	2307	9	2550	<b>15</b>	<b>4857</b>
Tennis	8	2522	3	1735	<b>11</b>	<b>4257</b>
Table Tennis	5	1732	3	1127	<b>8</b>	<b>2859</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b> <i>53.72%</i>	<b>23281</b> <i>56.96%</i>	<b>56</b> <i>46.28%</i>	<b>17591</b> <i>43.04%</i>	<b>121</b> <i>100%</i>	<b>40872</b> <i>100%</i>

Table 3.2 shows that the corpus consists of 121 articles with a total of 40872 words.

Of the total number of words, 56.96% (n =23281) were from articles on male athletes and 43.04% (n =17591) were from articles on female athletes.

In the following table, the total number of events for each of the selected sports is presented.

**Table 3.3: Total Count of Events of Selected Female-Appropriate Sports**

<b>Sports</b>	<b>Men's events</b>	<b>Women's events</b>	<b>Total</b>
Swimming	17	17	<b>34</b>
Gymnastics	9	9	<b>18</b>
Diving	4	4	<b>8</b>
Tennis	2	2	<b>4</b>
Table tennis	2	2	<b>4</b>

Table 3.3 show that each of five selected sports contains equal number of men's and women's events as shown in the following table. The lists of each sports event were presented in the table in appendices (see Appendix A).

### **3.4 Stage II: Categorization and Coding of Data**

These selected articles were first categorized according to the different games and then coded by the first letters of sport types and the gender of the athletes: *F* for female and *M* for male. For example, *SM* was coded for articles on male swimmers and *GF* was coded for those of female gymnasts. This is followed by the number according to the chronological order ending with the date of news' commentary. However, the articles that contained both male and female were coded according to the headlines and leads of that news since lead stories are significant because they show up-front what is considered to be the most important part of the story. Table 3.4 shows an example of article counts to be coded for swimming.

**Table 3.4: Numbers of Articles on Swimming after Coding**

Articles	SM		SF	
	M	Both	F	Both
No. of articles	28	9	28	4
Total	37		32	

Key: SM - Articles on male swimmers, SF - Articles on female swimmers

As Table 3.4 reveals, there were 13 articles that reported on both male and female athletes. However, nine (9) articles had topics and lead stories on men's sport. The other four (4) articles on both male and female began with women's events. This occurrence may indicate that the media give more attention to men's sports than women's. The next section will be the discussion on data analysis divided into levels.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

To analyze the portrayal of male and female athletes in the selected sports articles, the analysis will be divided into five main levels according to the research design.

#### **3.5.1 Level I: Word Count**

The first stage of analysis will be based on word count as it seems significant to investigate the media's attention given to the athletes being discussed whether male or female. Articles of each sport will be counted by word count of Microsoft Word and tabulated. The purpose is to find out if there is any difference between the portrayal of male and female athletes in the length of articles in terms of word count.

### 3.5.2 Level II: Word Level

This section will present the analysis of various terms used to describe and refer to athletes. The researcher will first collect the terminology such as adjectives and nouns as terms of reference. This unit of analysis can reveal if the texts tend to stereotype any particular gender in the news articles.

At this level of analysis, the terms will be selected based on their contexts, that is, they must be terms that were used by the reporters to describe or refer to athletes. Thus, all terms found in quotations of direct speech by athletes or coaches will not be taken into account.

The frequency of various male and female terms will also be investigated using the corpus analysis software, antconc3.2.2.1w, an open source software which was downloaded from [http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc\\_index.html](http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html). This concordance software allows the researcher to see how words used as keywords are used in the corpus.

Once keywords are put in the 'search term' box, it will churn out the frequency and reference of file name at the right column. Figure 3.2 shows the language patterns for the adjective 'greatest' found in the articles on male athletes.

#### Figure 3.2: Search Results from Keyword 'Greatest' Describing Male Athletes

```
tion of being the greatest gymnast of his generation when 1  
sition as Asian's greatest ever swimmer. It was another woefu 2  
ug out one of the greatest relay anchor legs in Olympic hist 3  
t thinking, 'Wow, greatest Olympian of all time.' It's a prêt 4  
Phelps became the greatest Olympian in history yesterday, cap 5  
saying to myself 'greatest Olympian of all time' over and ov 6  
led even with the greatest of Olympic records, matching Mark 7  
has witnessed the greatest Olympian of all time - Michael Phe 8  
win, the world's greatest swimmer just wants to give his mot 9  
tle of history's greatest ever swimmer. But "confident"' su 10
```

As mentioned above, the analysis will focus only on the adjectives used to describe athletes by reporters. For the analysis of the term ‘greatest’, two instances of the term found in the selected articles were not in accordance with the criteria used for analysis; the fourth and sixth were from the quotations by the athletes himself, as the context of both were as follow.

Phelps said. "I just kept thinking, 'Wow, **greatest** Olympian of all time.' It's a pretty cool title."

[SM19 (14.08.08)]

"I am at a loss for words right now. I just keep saying to myself '**greatest** Olympian of all time' over and over."

[SM20 (14.08.08)]

The term in both contexts will not be included in the count. As a result, the frequency for the term ‘greatest’ to describe male athletes was 8 times.

All selected adjective will be categorized into 5 groups. These consisted of Physical description, emotional state, personality, accolades and description as athletes. Frequency of each category will be calculated in terms of number and percentage in order to compare which type of adjective tends to highly describe male or female athletes. At the word level of analysis, terms will be categorized as positive, or negative in terms of its connotation and based on its context.

### **3.5.3 Level III: Sentence Level**

The next level of data analysis is at sentence level. This stage will include the analysis of language used by the reporters and quotes of direct speech from athletes and coaches. Metaphors found in the corpus will be highlighted and compared between the articles reporting on male and female athletes. Those terms will be discussed whether they

portray positive or negative connotation. This will focus on the use of war metaphor in sport reports of the athletes as Beard (1998) explains that sport language tends to use metaphorical terms in describing “sport contest, tactic and skills”. He suggests that war metaphor is an obvious reference for sports.

Importantly, the styles of news reporting on the athletes’ games and victory will also be compared because they are likely to be different as Buysse and Embser-Herbert (2004) found gender differentiation of female and male athletes in their study that the feminine attractiveness is often highlighted over their athletic achievements.

#### **3.5.4 Level IV: Visual Images**

The purpose is to find out if there is any difference between the portrayal of male and female athletes in terms of visual images, that is, photographs of athletes in the news articles.

The counting of photographs will be done first to find out the total numbers of male and female photographs found in the selected articles. Further, the quality of those images will also be taken into account in order to interpret and compare the way athletes of both genders were portrayed. The categories of the photograph content will follow Shifflett and Revelle’s (1994) study (see Section 3.1, p.43). However, this study eliminated the categories (*d*), (*e*) and (*f*) as there found to be no images in the corpus using these three categories. Thus, photographs in this study will be coded as:

- (a) competing athlete,
- (b) athlete in competitive context but not competing,
- (c) head shot of the athlete(s) or coach(es)

However, in the present study, how photographs are located seems inappropriate to be applied in this online corpus since the data of the previous studies were gathered from printed media. This is consistent with the studies conducted by Grappendorf et al. (2007) that did not include the analysis of photo location in their studies. Frequency and percentage of the images will be tabulated.

### **3.5.5 Level V: Comparison of Sportsman VS Sportswoman of the Year**

The third level of analysis will deal with the articles on the male and female athletes who were selected as the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the year in the 2008 Olympics. All units of analysis used for all articles will be applied in order to compare between the two athletes.

The male athlete who got most medals was an American swimmer, Michael Phelps, with 8 gold medals at the games was voted as the Sportsman of the Year while Nastia Liukin, an American female gymnast who won a total of five medals, was selected as the Sportswoman of the Year.

A paragraph for this study can be one sentence or more than one. The researcher will follow the categories proposed by Shifflett and Revelle (1994). (see Section 3.1, p.44). However, this study eliminated the category (*e*) *others* since no paragraph in the corpus found to be this category. Therefore, each paragraph in this study will be coded as:

- (a) factual information related to athletics,
- (b) factual information not related to athletics,
- (c) personal information related to athletics, and
- (d) personal information not related to athletics.

Personality traits of the two best athletes will also be analyzed and compared. Personality traits can be conveyed through the use of language by reporters and the quotes of direct speech in the articles. Frequency of each personality type will be counted and discussed as having positive or negative connotation.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter presented the theoretical frameworks employed in the study. The research design was presented in three main stages. It also discussed on the procedure of both data collection and analysis. Data analysis was explained stages by stages in detail in five levels.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the results of the analysis on the language used to portray male and female athletes by a Malaysian online newspaper during the 2008 Olympic Games. The selected female-appropriate sports for this study are swimming, gymnastics, diving, tennis and table tennis. The analysis attempts to answer the research questions of this study. Thus, the findings will be divided and discussed according to the five levels of analysis conducted.

For the discussion of examples, words or parts of the sentences being discussed will either be in bold or italics depending on necessity. Examples will be coded by the first letters of sport types as follow:

**S** refers to swimming  
**G** refers to gymnastics  
**D** refers to diving  
**T** refers to tennis  
**TT** refers to table tennis

Articles on male athletes are coded as M and on female athletes as F. For example, the articles on male swimmers are coded as *SM* and *GF* are coded for the articles reporting on female gymnasts. Other information included in the labeling of the examples is numbered and the date of the news consequently (see Section 3.4). The examples will be presented as follows.

- (1) She beat eight-time Grand Slam **champion** Serena Williams in the quarterfinals.  
[TF2(17.08.08)]

- (2) Canada's Alexandre Despatie, world **champion** in 2005, claimed his second successive Olympic springboard silver, compiling 536.65 points.  
[DM4(20.08.08)]

Both examples illustrated above show the contexts of the term 'champion'. Example (1) is taken from the second article on a female tennis player reported on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Meanwhile, Example (2) is from the fourth article on male divers reported on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

#### 4.1 Level I: Portrayal of Male and Female Athletes Based on Word Count

Some striking differences in this study were the number of articles and the length of the articles in terms of word count that were written about male and female athletes. The number of articles and the word count for the articles for each sport are tabulated in Table 4.1. The percentages are also presented in brackets.

**Table 4.1: Article and Word Count of the Five Selected Sports**

<b>Sports</b>	<b>Articles</b>	<b>Words (%)</b>
Swimming	69	21813 (53.37)
Gymnastics	18	7086 (17.34)
Diving	15	4857 (11.88)
Tennis	11	4257 (10.42)
Table Tennis	8	2859 (7.00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>40872 (100)</b>

Key: % - Percentages

Table 4.1 shows that a total of 121 articles totaling up to 40,872 words were written on the selected female-appropriate sports for this study. When each type of sports was compared, articles on swimming were the longest (n=21,813, 53.37%). This is due to the fact that swimming contained many events such as freestyle, butterfly, breaststroke,

backstroke and medley. In the 2008 Olympics, there were a total of 34 events for swimming in which 17 events for men and 17 events for women (See Appendix A). Meanwhile, the shortest articles were on table tennis (n=2859, 7%) since the sport contained only four (4) events, that is only two events for men and two for women. Similarly, tennis contained four (4) events as well, but articles were longer than table tennis (2,859 words of table tennis and 4,257 words of tennis). This is probably because one of the tennis competitors in the games was the French Open and Wimbledon champion, Rafael Nadal of Spain. Thus, the media had more articles on him playing in the Olympics.

Next, articles on each sport will be divided into those written on male and female athletes. Table 4.2 compares articles and word count of male and female athletes in the five selected sports.

**Table 4.2: Article and Word Count of Male and Female Athletes Portrayal**

Sports	Male athletes		Female athletes		Total of words	%
	Articles	Words (%)	Articles	Words (%)		
Swimming	37	13721 (62.90)	32	8092 (37.10)	<b>21813</b>	<b>100</b>
Gymnastics	9	2999 (42.32)	9	4087 (57.68)	<b>7086</b>	<b>100</b>
Diving	6	2307 (47.50)	9	2550 (52.50)	<b>4857</b>	<b>100</b>
Tennis	8	2522 (59.24)	3	1735 (40.76)	<b>4257</b>	<b>100</b>
Table Tennis	5	1732 (60.58)	3	1127 (39.42)	<b>2859</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>23281(56.96)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>17591(43.04)</b>	<b>40872</b>	<b>100</b>

Key: n - Number of words, % - Percentages

Table 4.2 indicates that the articles on male athletes were longer than the length of articles on female counterparts in which the total word count written on male athletes were 23,281 words (56.96%), while that of female athletes were 17,591 words (43.04%). Nevertheless, female athletes were represented more than male athletes in two (2)

sports, namely, gymnastics and diving. In gymnastics, female gymnasts received 4,087 words (57.68%) while male gymnasts received only 2,999 words (42.32%). There were 2,550 words (52.50%) for female divers and 2,307 words (47.50%) for their male counterparts. This finding is in accordance with previous studies by Lee (1992) and Vincent et al. (2002).

The next section will be the discussion of language used to portray male and female athletes at word level.

## **4.2 Level II: Portrayal of Male and Female Athletes: Word Level**

In this section, for the analysis of language used at word level, the researcher includes both adjectives and nouns as terms of references to athletes. The frequency of those terms for male and female athletes was compared.

### **4.2.1. Adjectives for Male and Female Athletes**

Adjectives found in articles on both male and female athletes focused on the adjectives used to describe athletes by the media (See section 3.5.2). Firstly, all the terms were listed separately for male athletes and female athletes to find out the frequency of occurrence by using the antconc3.2.2.1w software.

The following table presents the comparison of the adjectives with positive connotations used to describe both male and female athletes. For the purpose of this study, the terms were identified as positive based on their original context. Frequency of the terms was counted using the concordance software as they tend to be important indicators of gender representation.

**Table 4.3: Adjectives Used to Describe Male and Female Athletes**

No.	Terms	M	F
1	great(er/est)	13	3
2	golden	6	2
3	top-ranked	5	3
4	confident	4	1
5	successful	4	2
6	sensational	4	3
7	perfect	4	4
8	good/better/best	3	3
9	young(er/est)	3	7
10	blistering	3	2
11	successive	3	1
12	decorated	2	1
13	favored	2	1
14	oldest	2	3
15	remarkable	2	1
16	unbeatable	1	1
17	elegant	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>39</b>

Key: M - Male athletes, F - Female athletes

The findings in Table 4.3 show that there were 17 adjectives with positive connotation used to describe both male and female athletes. Of these 17 adjectives, in terms of frequency, 62 times were used to describe male athletes while 39 times were used to describe female athletes. The term *oldest* appeared twice in male articles and three times in female articles. Although this term may seem to be negative, in this context were used to give a positive connotation as can be seen in these contexts below.

- (3) Lezak, at 32 the **oldest** man on the US team's swimming roster, churned out an incredible closing swim of 46.06 to reel in French world record-holder Alain Bernard and *finger touch the Americans to a world-record victory* in the 4x100m freestyle.

[SM13 (12.08.08)]

- (4) Torres, whose silver in the 4x100m freestyle in Beijing had already made her the **oldest** Olympic swimming medalist, *added another silver* by the narrowest of margins, posting an American record of 24.07.

[SF31 (18.08.08)]

In the above, the term oldest tend to compliment both athletes complimentary since the report tends to praise the athletes' achievements to earn their teams medals despite their ages.

From the frequency of occurrence, the term used most for male athletes was *great(er/est)* that occurred 13 times while only 3 times were used for female athletes.

- (5) "The Beijing Olympics has witnessed the **greatest** Olympian of all time - Michael Phelps of the USA," the announcer said as Phelps posed on the deck with his teammates, yet another gold around his neck. [SM32 (17.08.08)]

Meanwhile, the most term used for female athletes was 'young(er/est)' (n=7).

- (6) Fifteen-year-old Pandelega Rinong, the **youngest** in the women's competition, will make her debut in the 10m platform individual on Wednesday. [DF7(16.08.08)]

It appears that five (5) out of seven (7) times, the adjective *young(er/est)* was found to describe the same female diver, Pandelega Rinong. It reveals that the media seem to emphasize her age to imply her lack of experience in the field. On the other hand, the adjective *great(er/est)* which occurred as high as 13 times for male athletes tend to reveal the notion of power and superiority.

Furthermore, there were other adjectives that were different in describing male and female athletes. Table 4.4 lists the positive adjectives which were used to refer to male and female athletes that were specific to the different genders.

**Table 4.4: Positive Adjectives Used to Describe Male and Female Athletes**

No.	Male	F	Female	F
1	red-hot	3	daring	2
2	big(er/est)	3	defensive	2
3	impressive	3	lethal	2
4	capable	2	celebrated	1
5	experienced	2	composed	1
6	unforgettable	2	elegant	1
7	grand(est)	2	graceful	1
8	lanky	2	hot	1
9	accomplished	1	keen	1
10	best-known	1	legendary	1
11	bullish	1	lucky	1
12	clear	1	nice	1
13	elegant	1	poised	1
14	emphatic	1	powerful	1
15	famous	1	power-packed	1
16	fierce	1	tough	1
17	formidable	1	undisputed	1
18	magnificent	1		
19	massive	1		
20	masterful	1		
21	most prolific	1		
22	muscular	1		
23	nimble	1		
24	offensive	1		
25	overwhelming	1		
26	pint-sized	1		
27	positive	1		
28	professional	1		
29	star-spangled	1		
30	true	1		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

Key: F - frequency

Results from Table 4.4 reveal that more positive adjectives were found in describing male athletes than female counterparts. Of these, 30 adjectives were used to describe male athletes and 17 adjectives were used to describe female athletes. In terms of frequency, 41 times were used for positive terms for male athletes and 20 times for female athletes. The three most used terms with positive connotation for male athletes was *red-hot*, *big(er/est)*, and *impressive* as can be found in these sentences.

(7) Asia's most decorated swimmer is the **red-hot** favourite to take gold in the 200m after American rival Brendan Hansen failed to qualify for the event.

[SM4 (08.08.08)]

(8) And no one is a **bigger** star than Yang.

[GM4(14.08.08)]

(9) As **impressive** as Yang's show was, Chen's was even better.

[GM2(12.08.08)]

From the contexts of these terms, male athletes are likely to be described positively using adjectives that relate to their reputation or skills. Furthermore, adjectives which portray negative connotation were listed in Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5: Negative Adjectives Used to Describe Male and Female Athletes**

No.	Males	F	No.	Females	F
1	difficult	1	1	pin-up	3
2	reserved	1	2	glamor(ous)	3
3	ruthless	1	3	baby-faced	1
4	sheepish	1	4	desperate	1
			5	doomed	1
			6	elusive	1
			7	frustrated	1
			8	newly-minted	1
			9	shell-shocked	1
			10	tiny	1
			11	unflashy	1
			12	unfancied	1
	<b>Total</b>	4		<b>Total</b>	16

Key: F - frequency

As can be seen from Table 4.5, there were only four (4) negative adjectives describing male athletes while female athletes were portrayed by using 12 negative adjectives. Frequency for negative terms were higher for female athletes (n=16) compared to male athletes (n=4). This is evident since the total number of negative terms is higher for females than male athletes.



The most terms used for female athletes were *pin-up* and *glamor(ous)* with the same frequency of occurrence (n=3). These are some examples of the terms in context.

- (10) Rice is the **pin-up** girl of Australian swimming and created headlines just before the Games.

[SF4 (11.08.08)]

- (11) The **glamorous** Rice, wearing big green earrings that matched her country's colors, added to her victory in the 400 IM.

[in SM16 (13.08.08)]

The terms *pin-up* and *glamor(ous)* for female athletes reveal negative connotations. According to *Collins English Dictionary* (2003), *pin-up* means “a picture of a sexually attractive person, especially when partially or totally undressed”, and *glamour* means “charm and allure; fascination”. Moreover, beside the adjective *glamorous* in Example (11), her fashion sense and appearance were described (*wearing big green earrings that matched her country's colors*) although this information was not related to her victory or athletic ability.

From the use of language above, it is evident that there is a tendency for female athletes to be described by their physical appearances. The use of this kind of language borders with showing the image of women as sex objects. Feminists view sexual objectification as gender inequality. In this context, the local media has represented the female athletes with a bias towards female athletes as pin up girls who are expected to look glamorous. This finding is consistent with Bernstein’s (2002) study claiming that female athletes were “often framed within stereotypes which emphasize appearance and attractiveness rather than athletic skill”. (p.421)

The following table reveals the summary of connotations of those adjectives used to describe male and female athletes found in the corpus.

**Table 4.6: Positive and Negative Connotation of Adjectives Used**

Adjectives	Male		Female	
	F	%	F	%
Positive	103	96.26	59	78.67
Negative	4	3.74	16	21.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

Key: F - frequency, % - Percentages

The findings in Table 4.6 indicate that more adjectives were used to describe male than female athletes, 107 terms for male athletes and 75 terms for female athletes. However, only 4 out of 107 terms (3.74%) conveyed negative connotation in describing male athletes, while 16 out of 75 terms (21.33%) were found to be negative for female athletes. This result reveals a stark difference in these choices of negative terms used for female athletes which tends to stereotype the female gender and trivialize women in the media.

These adjectives can be categorized into five groups: *physical description*, *emotional state*, *characteristics*, *accolades* and *description as sports personality*. Frequency of each category will be calculated in terms of number and percentage in order to compare which types of adjectives are more likely to describe male or female athletes. Table 4.7 presents types of adjectives found to describe male athletes.

**Table 4.7: Types of Adjectives Used to Describe Male Athletes**

No	Types of adjectives	Male	
		F	%
1	Accolades	62	53.45
2	Description as sports personality	27	23.28
3	Physical description	12	10.34
4	Emotional state	8	6.90
5	Characteristics	7	6.03
	<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>100</b>

Key: F - frequency, % - Percentages

Table 4.7 reveals that the highest type of adjectives found to describe male athletes was ‘accolades’ (n=62; 53.45%), such as *great* and *golden* followed by ‘description as sports personality’ (n=27; 23.28%). The top five terms of these two types of adjectives used for male athletes were listed in the following table.

**Table 4.8: Top Five Terms of *Accolades* and *Description as Sports personality* for Male Athletes**

No	Accolades	F	Description as Sports personality	F
1	great(er/est)	13	top-ranked	5
2	golden	6	blistering	3
3	perfect	4	capable	2
4	successful	4	experienced	2
5	sensational	4	decorated	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

Key: F - frequency

From Table 4.8, the most ‘accolades’ used for male athletes is *great(er/est)* (n=13) while the most ‘description as sports personality’ used is *top-ranked* (n=5). These are the examples of both terms.

(12) Yang Wei finally lived up to his reputation of being the **greatest** gymnast of his generation when he scooped the gold medal with a total of 94.575.

[GM5(15.08.08)]

(13) The **top-ranked** Chinese are favored to advance.

[TTM2(16.08.08)]

Male athletes were also portrayed by other types of adjectives and the least appeared to be ‘Characteristics’ (n=7; 6.03%). Next, the types of adjective found to describe female athletes show in Table 4.9 below.

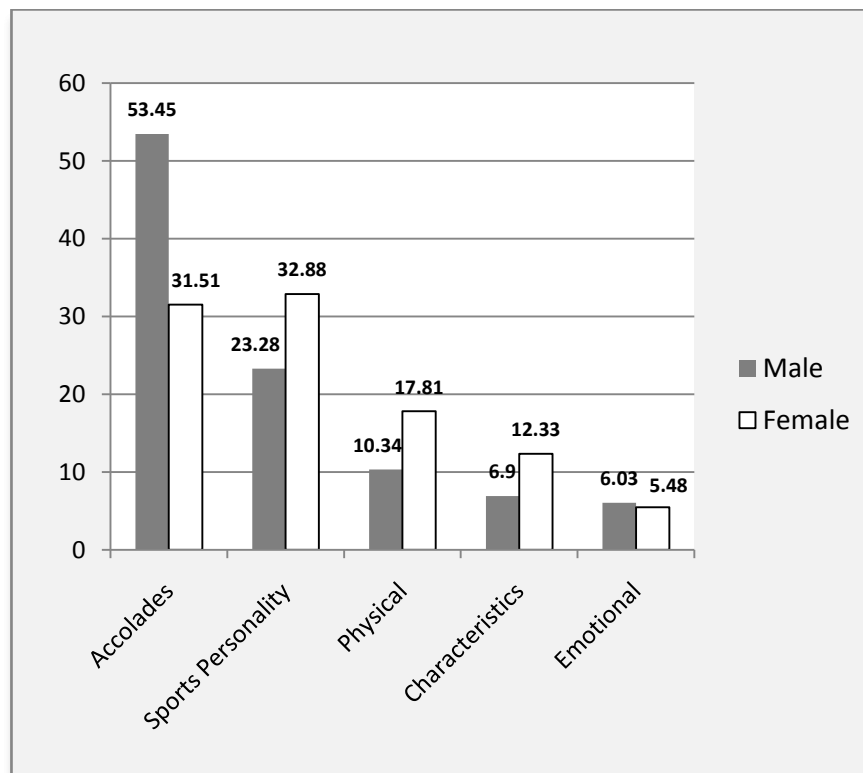
**Table 4.9: Types of Adjectives Used to Describe Female Athletes**

No	Type of Adjectives	Female	
		F	%
1	Description as sports personality	24	32.88
2	Accolades	23	31.51
3	Physical description	13	17.81
4	Characteristics	9	12.33
5	Emotional state	4	5.48
	<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

Key: F - frequency, % - Percentages

Table 4.9 reveals that most of adjectives found to describe female athletes was ‘description as sports personality’ (n=24, 32.88%) such as *lethal* and *powerful*, followed by ‘accolades’ (n=23, 31.51%). The other types of adjectives found to describe female athletes were ‘physical description’, ‘characteristics’ and ‘emotional state’ respectively.

Figure 4.1 gives a graphic representation of these findings in terms of percentages.



**Figure 4.1: Types of Adjectives Used to Describe Male and Female Athletes**

Figure 4.1 compared five types of adjectives used to describe between male and female athletes. ‘Description as sports personality’ was the category used most for female athletes (32.88%) which is slightly higher than the used of ‘accolades’ (31.51%), while the most type used for men was ‘accolades’(53.45%) which is much lower for the female athletes (31.51%). This point suggests that male athletes were more likely to be positively portrayed since ‘accolades’ refer to “an expression of approval or praise” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2009). On the other hand, the other two types of adjectives, ‘physical description’ (17.81%) and ‘characteristics’ (12.33%), were used more to describe female athletes.

Surprisingly, however, the type of ‘emotional state’ is slightly higher for men than female athletes. Perhaps, this too was for the advantage of male athletes as it would demonstrate the high fighting spirit of male over female athletes as words such as ‘furious’ and ‘jubilant’ were used to describe two male tennis players as follows.

(14) US number one Blake was **furious** at the Chilean after their semi-final, claiming he touched a ball which went out at a crucial moment in the deciding set.

[TM6(17.08.08)]

(15) He rose and threw a **jubilant** fist, leaving behind a spot in the concrete damp with his sweat.

[TM4(11.08.08)]

These findings of adjectives used indicate that the local online newspaper tends to highlight physical and attractive qualities of female athletes over their athletic skills. Unlike the male athletes, the focus tends to be their professional reputation and athletic skills.

#### 4.2.2 Terms of Reference for Male and Female Athletes

Terms of reference used for male and female athletes found in the corpus are based on Nair's (1999) study on sexism as this study also aims at examining sexist language which represents gender bias and inequality in the media. The following table compares the terms of reference found for both male and female athletes.

**Table 4.10: Terms of Reference for Male and Female Athletes**

No	Male	F	Female	F
1	man/men	36	woman/women	20
2	boy(s)	3	girl(s)	10
3	male	3	Female	5
4	teenager(s)	2	teenager(s)	4
5	guys	1	Lady	1
6	Son	1	Daughter	5
7			Child	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>

Key: F - frequency

Based on Table 4.10, some interesting terms on what have been documented as sexist by feminists are observed in this study's corpus. Feminists such as Lakoff (1975) and Miller and Swift (1988) contend that the term *girl* and *lady* are euphemisms that bring to mind frivolity and immaturity. The clear example from this table is the term *girl(s)* which appears 10 times to refer to female athletes while the term *boy(s)* is used only 3 times. These are examples of these terms.

(16) The contrast between the raging bull that is Nadal on court and the almost sheepish **boy** next door still surprises those who do not follow Nadal regularly.

[TM8(19.08.08)]

(17) The 20-year-old glamour **girl** went out hard and was almost four seconds under the world record at the halfway split before staving off a last-lap surge from Zimbabwe's Kirsty Coventry.

[SF4(11.08.08)]

This finding is in accordance with Duncan, et al. (1990), reporting that in sport commentary, terms such as *girls* or *young ladies* were frequently used, while the term *men* was used instead of *boys* or *young men*. As can be seen from Table 4.10, the terms *man/men* are frequently used than *woman/women* in reference to the athletes. Moreover, the terms referring to relationship are more likely to be used for female athletes. For example, the terms *daughter* and *child* appear 7 times altogether to refer to female athletes while only a term *son* is used for a male athlete in this following sentence:

- (18) Rising **son**: Japan's Kosuke Kitajima en route to winning his second gold in the 200m breaststroke event yesterday.

[SM23(15.08.08)]

The sentence in this example was placed in the article to describe a photograph of the male swimmer. The term *son* seems unlikely to present such a term of reference to relationship but he tends to be praised as a winner in his sport as the term ‘Rising Son’ is used synonymous with the term ‘Rising Sun’ that usually refers to Japan. Unlike those terms used for female athletes, it is illustrated in Example (21) below.

- (19) As the **daughter** of Olympic and world champion gymnasts, it is little wonder Nastia Liukin mastered the art of performing flips and somersaults **before she was barely out of nappies**.

[GF1(07.08.08)]

This example reveals that the female gymnast is portrayed as a daughter whose achievement is attached to her coach father. Similarly, the comment made that *she was barely out of nappies* may sound positive to say that she acquired it at a very young but it is demeaning to mention about nappies for a medalist.

It can be concluded from these findings that the language used at word level in representation of male and female athletes is different. Males are referred to or described using positive adjectives that tend to be glorified by the reporters. As for the female athletes, most terms used to describe them are likely to convey negative connotation that displays gender bias in the media.

### **4.3 Level III: Portrayal of Male and Female Athletes at Sentence Level**

The next level of analysis which seems to be more interesting and complicated for the study is at the sentence level. This section presents findings on the use of metaphors, description of games and photograph categories.

#### **4.3.1 The Use of Metaphors to Describe Male versus Female Athletes**

The analysis found that metaphors are used more in the articles on male athletes to convey positive meaning. Many of them refer to athletes or their achievement such as these sentences.

(20) It was **a sweet taste of success** for often denied Lezak. [SF13 (12.08.08)]

(21) The **curtain rose** on the Michael Phelps show yesterday. [SM19 (14.08.08)]

Moreover, many metaphors show the athletes in action that applaud their achievement, for example,

(22) Kitajima **stamped his authority** on tense final with swift, powerful strokes, **cementing his position** as Asian's greatest ever swimmer. [SM11 (12.08.08)]

(23) Michael Phelps **swam into Olympic history** with a magnificent finish Saturday. [SM27 (16.08.08)]



However, in the articles on female athletes, metaphor was frequently used to portray negative meaning as in this sentence.

- (24) It failed to inspire Malaysians Siow Yi Ting **to chalk personal milestones** in their respective events.

[SF7 (12.08.08)]

In addition, there appear to be the use of martial or war metaphors to portray the sports. This kind of metaphor is more likely to describe male rather than female athletes. This concurs with Beard (1998) who looked at war metaphors in sports news. Table 4.11 shows the terms found to be war metaphor in the corpus.

**Table 4.11: War Metaphors Used for Male and Female Athletes**

No	War Metaphors	Male	Female
1	rival(s)	18	4
2	opponent(s)	8	2
3	fight/fought	6	2
4	battle	4	4
5	hero	4	0
6	opposition	3	0
7	volley	2	0
8	offensive	1	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>12</b>

It can be clearly seen from Table 4.11 that terms related to war metaphor have a higher number of occurrences on male athletes (n=46) than those for their female counterparts (n=12). The highest term used for both male (n=18) and female athletes (n=4) was *rival(s)*. The following sentences show the term in contexts.

- (25) It was another woeful Olympics performance by Hansen, the fourth-placed finisher, who graciously accepted defeat by his accomplished **rival**.

[SM11(12.08.08)]

- (26) Never mind that **rival** Chellsie Memmel had piped her for the all-round crown by .001 of a point.

[GF1(07.08.08)]

Interestingly, the term *battle* is used equally (n=4) to describe men's and women's game, as can be seen in the Examples (27) and (28).

- (27) Rice had another stroke-for-stroke **battle** with Coventry as she did in the 400m medley final before out-touching her at the wall.

[SF16 (14.08.08)]

- (28) Nadal beat Federer in an epic 4-hour, 48-minute **battle** of wills, becoming the first man since 1927 to come from two sets down to win.

[TM1(04.08.08)]

Additionally, the term “volley”, as suggested by Beard (1998), refers to an aggressive shot in football and tennis. This term can be found in the following example.

- (29) Nadal was red hot in the first set but got lucky in the second when Gonzalez, who stood toe-to-toe with the 22-year-old, fluffed an easy backhand **volley** on set point.

[TM7(18.08.08)]

This sentence describes the tennis match between Nadal and Gonzalez, but the term *volley* was never used for female tennis players. As for the findings for this level of analysis, it is likely to reinforce the masculine power to show male superiority of male athletes and support the notion of men as norm and women as deviant.

### 4.3.2 Reporting Games of Male versus Female Athletes

Each sport performed by male and female athletes tends to be reported differently. In reporting the games of female tennis players, they were described in the way that might create negative images toward them, for example,

- (30) Dementieva has been **plagued** for much of her career **by serving yips**, but it was **a frustrated Safina** who struggled to put the ball in play. [TF2(17.08.08)]

Both of the female players in this example, Dementieva and Safina, are portrayed to be in a difficult situation by using the terms *plague* and *frustrated*. Moreover, the use of a term *yips* to refer to the voice made by the athlete during competition, tends to create negative images towards the athlete. This kind of terms is also found to report female games even in opposite atmosphere, for example,

- (31) The sisters **celebrated with shrieks**, then shared a hug. [TF2(17.08.08)]

This statement expresses the moment of joy when the Williams won the tennis match but the use of the term *shrieks* that usually describe teenagers tend to marginalize their achievement. Since both terms *shrieks* and *yips* in Examples (30) and (31) refer a negative meaning that is “to produce sharp, high-pitched sound” and even refer to barking (like a dog) for the term *yips* (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2003). The use of these terms present very offensive images toward women. Other emotional words were used in the same article to report on Safina’s game as illustrated below:

- (32) After double-faults she **flung her racket, broke it and smacked a ball into the stands**, but the **tantrums** failed to help.

Safina **banged her racket against the concrete** when she double-faulted three times to lose serve and fall behind 3-1 in the final set.

[TF2(17.08.08)]

These two paragraphs of the same event, when the female tennis player made double-faults, were emphasized twice in the same article. All the verbs such as *flung*, *broke*, *smacked* and *banged* convey strong actions based on emotions unlike of a sporting athlete who would be a graceful loser. The term *tantrum* which means “an outburst of bad temper” (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2003) was used to negatively describe the athlete’s behavior like a young child who could not get what she wanted.

On the other hand, male tennis players were not portrayed as being emotional or spoilt as those female counterparts in similar situations. These sentences illustrate this:

- (33) Nadal struggled on the backhand side for most of his match, and **shook his head or rolled his eyes** when usually reliable strokes misfired. [TM4(11.08.08)]

Example (33) shows that when the male tennis player made mistakes during the game, he was able to control his emotion and expressed his disappointment in not a drastic manner and rather mild when *shook his head or rolled his eyes*.

- (34) Blake, 28, **collapsed to his knees and roared with delight** as he celebrated the win, which he described as a career highlight. [TM5(15.08.08)]

Also, Example (34), shows how the other male player celebrated his win. The actions describe him falling to his knees pictures him as being surprisingly pleased with his victory and the word *roared* made it sound manly, strong and powerful like a lion. In contrast, female athletes are found in the corpus to express their feeling in a different way as these sentences.

- (35) Singapore's Li Jia Wei who **was in tears** at failing to clinch Singapore's second medal at these Games. [TTF3(23.08.08)]

- (36) After her 4-3 win over Kim, the world's top defensive player, Wang **collapsed to her knees next to the table and cried into her towel.** [TTF1(21.08.08)]

These examples show female athletes in different emotions such as sad in Example (35) and happy in Example (36). However, the news reported them similarly in a negative way. The one who won in Example (36) displayed the same emotions as the one who lost in Example (35). Female athletes are reduced to emotional individuals as expected of the stereotyped gender.

Besides, in describing female athletes, the reporter tends to present them as dependent on men such as their male coaches. This example is taken from articles on female divers.

- (37) The teenagers have their daily scheduled planned meticulously by **coaches who have drilled them to treat every competition the same** – even an Olympics.  
“**This is all decided by our coaches**, we were told we shouldn't give too much focus on the Olympics, just treat it like any other competition and be relaxed.” [DF6(13.08.08)]

- (38) “I was very nervous before each dive, and tried hard to do well in every attempt. I am very **grateful to my coach Zhong Shaozhen, who stood side-by-side with me for years.**” [DF8(18.08.08)]

Both Examples (37) and (38) above clearly demonstrate the female divers as physically and spiritually dependent of their male coaches. This style of language used for female athletes is referred to as ‘reference to relationship’ which is one form of sexist language (See section 2.5.1(2)). This is in contrast to their male counterparts as the examples on male divers as follows:

- (39) He was **only 14 years old then** and **came within a whisker** of making the semi-finals in the 10m platform. He finished in 19th spot.

After the Athens experience, he went on to become **the first Malaysian junior** to win the 3m springboard event of the World Junior Championships in Belem, Brazil.

He then **grew from strength to strength**, proving to be **the country's darling in diving**.

He became **the first Malaysian** to qualify for Beijing with a good performance in the World Aquatic Championships in Melbourne last year.

[DM1(01.08.08)]

Reading through Example (39), the reporter has tried to portray the male diver positively by giving a chronological order of events illustrating his growth *from strength to strength* until he was labeled as *the country's darling in diving*. Despite the negative connotation of the term *darling* based on feminism, this term in context seems to create a positive view toward the male athlete. Female athletes, however, are presented as follows:

- (40) "I made full preparation before the final. I didn't look at the score after each dive, and just ***tried to do well*** all of my movements," said **the Chinese glamour girl** as tears welled in her eyes.

[DF8(18.08.08)]

- (41) ***The 1.48m tall diver*** felt that **she stood a good chance** to get into the semi-finals if she could hold her consistency in the preliminary round.

[DF2(08.08.08)]

In both examples the female athletes were not totally portrayed positively. As can be seen in Example (40), the reporter referred to the female diver as *the Chinese glamour girl*. It was discussed earlier in this chapter (p.65) that calling someone a glamour girl, they tend to be offensive and sexist. Moreover, the other female diver in Example (41) was referred to by her physical appearance (*1.48m tall diver*) which is unrelated to her achievement. This kind of language used was found more in other articles on female athletes. For example, this article reported on a youngest pair of female divers:

- (42) With **short haircuts and baby-faced features**, the two **schoolgirls look barely old enough to be allowed out unaccompanied** in China's capital city, let alone able to dominate an Olympic diving event.

But when the pair were asked by a Chinese journalist about **their matching boy-like haircuts**, Wang Xin swiftly clarified their appearance for him.

[DF6(13.08.08)]

The description of the pair of Chinese divers was demeaning as age and their schoolgirl-like appearance such as *short haircuts and baby-faced features* seem to be the yardstick of their performance. Even more so by mentioning that they *look barely old enough to be allowed out unaccompanied*. Even though this kind of information has nothing to do with the sports, it is frequently used by the reporter in the sports news specifically in describing female athletes.

These examples tend to reflect trivialization of female achievement in sports media by focusing on their physical attributes and personal life. This surely encourages the practice of using sexist language when reporting about female athletes. This point can be supported by feminist view of language that sexism plays an important role in gender inequality.

#### **4.4 Level IV: Visual Portrayal of Male and Female Athletes**

This section presents the findings on how male and female athletes were presented visually in the sports news by the online Malaysian daily. Then, analysis of photograph categories will be discussed with visual illustrations of each category.

#### 4.4.1 Photographs Count

The finding of photographs count will be firstly presented. Table 4.12 shows the frequency of photographs found in the corpus.

**Table 4.12: Photographs of Male and Female Athletes**

No	Sports	Male		Female		Total
		N	%	N	%	N
1	Swimming	23	67.65	11	32.35	<b>36</b>
2	Gymnastics	4	57.15	3	42.86	<b>7</b>
3	Diving	2	50.0	2	50.0	<b>4</b>
4	Tennis	3	60.0	2	40.0	<b>5</b>
5	Table Tennis	1	50.0	1	50.0	<b>2</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>63.46</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36.54</b>	<b>52</b>

Key: F - frequency, % - Percentages

As Table 4.12 display, a total of 52 photographs were collected and examined. Of these, most feature male athletes ( $n = 33$ ; 63.46%) than female athletes ( $n = 19$ ; 36.54%). The results show that most of the photographs represent the images of swimmers. The table reveals that 67.65% ( $n=23$ ) of the images featured male swimmers while only a third (32.35%,  $n=11$ ) featured the female swimmers. Each sport was put in table according to the number of photographs in descending order. On gymnastics and tennis articles, there were more photographs of male than female athletes. However, male and female athletes received equal photographs in diving and table tennis. This is in contrast to Lee's (1992) study that showed high representation of female gymnasts, swimmers, and tennis players in photographs when compared to male athletes in those sports during the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games.

This indicates that there were more images that represented male than female athletes since visual images of male athletes appeared almost twice more compared to the female counterparts.



#### 4.4.2 Photograph Categories

Next, photograph content of male and female athletes will be analyzed and compared.

Consistent with Shifflett and Revelle (1994), each photograph was coded as:

- (a) competing athlete
- (b) athlete in competitive context but not competing
- (c) head shot of the athlete

These photographs are some examples of each category.



(a) *Competing athlete*



(b) *Athlete in competitive context but not competing*



(c) *Head shot of the athlete(s)*



**Figure 4.2: Visual Images of Three Photographs Categories**

Table 4.13 presents the frequency of photograph categories of male and female athletes in all five sports.

**Table 4.13: Photograph Categories of Male and Female Athletes**

Photograph Categories	Swimming		Gymnast.		Diving		Tennis		Table tn.	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
(a) Competing Athlete	7	1	3	3	1	2	3	1	1	0
	30.43%	9.09%	75%	100%	50%	100%	100%	50%	100%	0%
(b) Athlete in competitive context but not competing	11	7	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	47.83%	63.64%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	100%
(d) Head shot of Athlete	5	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	21.74%	27.27%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

Key: M - male athletes, F - female athletes

From this table, most of the photographs featured images of male and female swimmers. On swimming articles, it appeared that most photographs represented male and female swimmers as (b) *athletes in competitive context but not competing*, that is, 47.83% (n=11) of male and 63.64% (n=7) of female athletes. Those photographs were images of the athletes' victory when they were celebrating winning the gold medals for the swimming which express their crucial and emotional moments as shown in Figure 4.3.



(a)



(b)

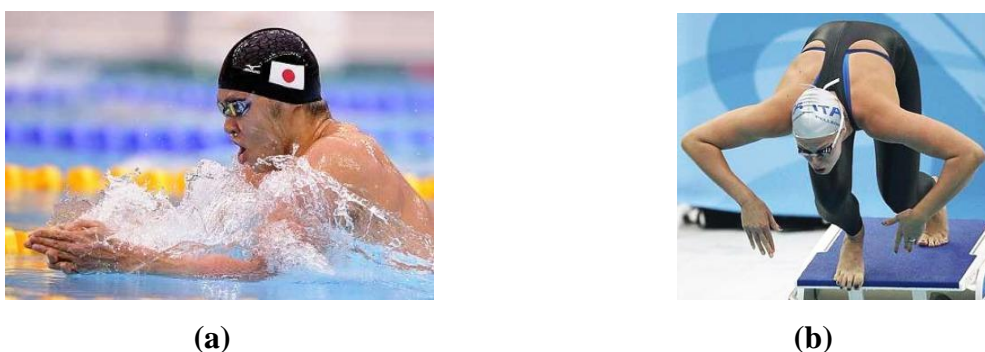
**Figure 4.3: Visual Images of Male and Female Swimmers in the Category of Athletes in Competitive Context but not Competing**

In addition for male athletes, two images of them were featured before the competition to show their readiness that did not appear for female images as seen in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: Visual Images of Male Swimmers in the Category of Athletes in Competitive Context but Not Competing**

Male swimmers received the higher number of photographs, 30.43% (n=7), in the category of (a) *competing athlete* (Figure 4.5a), while only one photograph represented a female swimmer (Figure 4.5a) in this category as can be seen in Figure 4.5 below.



**Figure 4.5: Visual Images of Male and Female Swimmers in the Category of Competing Athlete**

In Figure 4.5, the photographs featured the female swimmer (Figure 4.5b) at the start of competition, not even swimming in the pool. This tends to show competitive image of male athletes over female counterparts. Moreover, a few images show the athletes in the category of (c) *head shot of athlete* that is 21.74% (n=5) of male swimmer and 27.27% (n=3) of the female counterparts.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 4.6: Visual Images of Male and Female Gymnasts in the Category of *Competing Athlete***

In Gymnastics, as shown in Figure 4.6, both male and female gymnasts were mostly featured in the category of *(a) competing athletes*, but one out of four male athletes' photographs (25%) was presented as *(b) athlete in competitive context but not competing*. In tennis, both male and female players were all featured as *(a) competing athletes*.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 4.7: Visual Images of Male and Female Tennis Players in the Category of *Competing Athlete***

In Figure 4.7, the photographs of male and female tennis players were featured in totally different atmospheres. The male player, Rafael Nadal (Figure 4.7a), was featured while celebrating his victory in the men's singles gold medal in the final match. In contrast, Serena Williams (Figure 4.7b) was featured after her loss with a caption "Sad exit: in dejected mood after losing to Elena Dementieva yesterday." It was the only photograph of female tennis player that was found in the corpus.

The findings show that male athletes were more likely to be featured as a competitive athlete than their female counterparts in this corpus. Although, in gymnastics and diving, all female athletes were featured in the category of *competing athletes*, it was found that the frequency was low for both of these sports (n=7 for gymnastics and n=4 for diving).

#### 4.5 A Summary of Findings

Below is a table summarizing the main findings of analysis compared between male and female athletes.

**Table 4.14: Comparison of Male and Female Athletes Portrayal**

No	Item	Male	Female
1	Number of articles	65	56
2	Word count	23,281	17,591
3	Adjectives	116	73
4	Terms of reference	46	47
5	War metaphor	46	12
6	Photograph count	33	19

Table 4.14 shows that in terms of frequency it is higher for male athletes for all categories except for terms of reference. In terms of adjectives used for male athletes, it is nearly doubled (n=116). Terms of war metaphor were also used highly in articles on male athletes (n=46) while only 12 occurred for female athletes. Further, most photographs featured male athletes than female counterparts. These results quantitatively show the unequal representation that male athletes were overrepresented compared to female athletes in the selected corpus.

## **4.6 Level V: Comparison of Sportsman versus Sportswoman of the Year**

This level of analysis will deal with the corpus consisting of articles on the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year during the 2008 Olympic Games. The athlete who was named the Sportsman of the Year was the American swimmer, Michael Phelps, who won 8 gold medals at the games. Nastia Liukin, the American female gymnast, was named the Sportswoman of the Year. She won a total of five medals, one gold for all-around athlete, 3 silvers for team, balance beam and uneven bars and 1 bronze for floor exercise.

The findings will be presented in four parts. Firstly, it will be based on word count, secondly at the word level looking at the terms of references used to refer to these two athletes. This is followed by the analysis at the sentence level that looks at personality traits, paragraphs categories, and reporting games and victory. Finally, the visual portrayal of both athletes will be discussed.

### **4.6.1 I: Word and Paragraph Count**

In analyzing the articles at this level, the length of each article is not only considered in terms of word count, but also the number of paragraphs as a unit of analysis. This is an example of paragraph count from a part of an article on the Sportsman of the Year.

(43) With world records falling all around him, Michael Phelps stood tall twice – on the top of the Olympic medal podium Wednesday.

The American swimmer won his fourth and fifth gold medals of the Beijing Games, setting two world records along the way.

That brought his career total to a record 11 golds with three more events to go for him to become the first to win eight gold medals at a single games.

“There is still something left in the tank,” Phelps said.

[SM15 (13.08.08)]

The example above contains four (4) paragraphs. The results show that there are more articles on the Sportsman of the Year compared to the Sportswoman of the Year as shown in the following table.

**Table 4.15: Article and Word Count of the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year**

<b>Athlete</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Articles</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Paragraphs</b>
Michael Phelps	Male	19 (86.36%)	7339 (81.42%)	238 (78.55%)
Nastia Liukin	Female	3 (13.64%)	1675 (18.58%)	65 (21.45%)
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>22</b>	<b>9014</b>	<b>303</b>

Table 4.15 shows that the Sportsman was portrayed in more articles than the Sportswoman. Michael Phelps was reported in 19 articles while Nastia Liukin was found in 3 articles. Although Liukin won a total of five medals in the games, she was reported in only 3 articles in the corpus. Perhaps, in terms of the type of medal won, Phelps success was comparatively more outstanding than Liukin. Phelps successfully achieved all eight gold medals whereas Liukin won five medals including only one gold. In addition, the Sportsman holds the record for the most gold medals won in a single Olympics. Therefore, this may also contribute to the reason why more articles were written about Phelps compared to Liukin.

The findings also reveal that the articles on the Sportsman were much longer than those of the Sportswoman in terms of word and paragraph counts. The articles on the Sportsman of the Year appear to be four times longer than the articles on the Sportswoman of the Year; that is, a total 7,339 words (81.42%) on Michael Phelps and only 1,675 words(18.58%) on Nastia Liukin. These appear in 238 paragraphs on the Sportsman and 65 paragraphs of the Sportswoman. Clearly, these results show that the



Sportsman of the Year was overrepresented compared to the Sportswoman of the Year article and word counts.

#### 4.6.2 II: Word Level

This analysis will compare the terms used to refer to the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year. Table 4.16 presents the terms of references found in the corpus.

**Table 4.16: Terms of References for the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year**

No	Sportsman	F	Sportswoman	F
1	swimmer	6	athlete	2
2	Olympian	6	gymnast	2
3	man	5	champion	1
4	athlete	4	female	1
5	star	4	medalist	1
6	phenomenon	3	winner	1
7	superstar	3		
8	boy	2		
9	bonanza	1		
10	champion	1		
11	competitor	1		
12	marvel	1		
13	medalist	1		
14	record holder	1		
15	winner	1		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>

Key: F - frequency

The results presented in Table 4.16 reveals that more terms were used to refer to the Sportsman compared to the Sportswoman due to the word count of their articles. It is found that all of the 15 terms that refer to the Sportsman are positive. Meanwhile, most of the terms for Liukin are also used for Phelps, except the terms *gymnast* and *female*, which seem to be factual. Interestingly, some of the terms used for Phelps such as



*phenomenon, superstar, bonanza* and *marvel* had positive connotation that the media used to glorify the athlete. However, these kinds of terms were not found in articles on the Sportswoman of the Year.

In addition, terms of reference to male and female athletes can be viewed in terms of first and last names as Lakoff (1973) argued that there is a general tendency in media commentary to address women sooner by their first names, even where women are equal to men.

This part of analysis will show the finding of the use of first name and/or last name in addressing or referring to the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year. The findings of the analysis using the concordance software is shown in this table.

**Table 4.17: First Name and Last Name Used to Refer to the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year**

<b>Male</b>	<b>F(%)</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>F(%)</b>
Michael	6 (2.71)	Nastia	6 (14.29)
Phelps	176 (79.64)	Liukin	31 (73.81)
Michael Phelps	39 (17.65)	Nastia Liukin	5 (11.90)
<b>Total</b>	<b>221 (100)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>42 (100)</b>

Key: F – frequency, % - percentages

Table 4.17 reveals that both the Sportsman and Sportswoman are mostly addressed and referred to in the corpus by their last name, Phelps (79.64%) and Liukin (73.81%). It is obvious that the sportswoman is referred to by her first name, *Nastia*, in total of 14.29% (n=6 out of 42) while the first name, *Michael*, was used only 2.71% (n=6 out of 221). Interestingly, the use of both first and last name for the sportswoman, Nastia Liukin (n=5, 11.90%), appeared to be less than the use of Michael Phelps (n=39, 17.65%).

This part demonstrates that the sportswoman is more likely to be addressed and referred to by her first name than that of the Sportsman. This is in accordance with a study conducted by Messner et al. (1990). They found that female tennis players were referred to by their first names (52.7%) more often than referring to the male players (7.8%). This notion can also be supported by feminists such as Miller and Swift (1976) who claimed that the news media frequently address women by their first names while men's last names were uttered. The choice of addressing women by their first names implies the inferiority and marginalization of the women by the language of the media.

#### **4.6.3 III: Sentence Level**

The portrayal of the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year at sentence level include the finding of personality traits, paragraph categories and reporting victory.

##### **(i) Personality Traits**

Personality traits of athletes can be conveyed through the use of language by reporters and the selection of quotes of what athletes said. The analysis of this part shows many types of personality traits that were either positive or negative. Each personality trait will be counted as frequency of occurrences at the sentence level. This will be shown in the following tables that compare the Sportsman and the Sportswoman of the Year.

**Table 4.18: Personality Traits of the Sportsman of the Year**

No.	Positive	F	Negative	F
1	determination	8	sensitive	2
2	contented	6		
3	easy going	6		
4	ambitious	5		
5	looking forward	5		
6	confident	4		
7	proud of oneself	4		
8	humble	3		
9	friendly	2		
10	sense of humor	2		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b> <i>(95.74%)</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b> <i>(4.26%)</i>

Key: F – frequency

From Table 4.18, 45 out of 47 (95.74%) of personality traits found to represent Michael Phelps reveal to be positive. Only one type of personality, *sensitive*, (n=2, 4.26%) portray him negatively. The personality traits that appeared the most for Phelps is *determination* (n=8). These are sentences showing this trait.

- (44) “I’m just going through doing what I have to do to prepare myself the best that I can to be as fast as I can. **That’s my goal** and that’s what I’m going to stick with.”  
[SM2 (07.08.08)]
- (45) “I didn’t think I’d swim that fast in the preliminaries. I saw the first few heats go out, and I kind of **wanted to be the top seed for tomorrow**, that is all I went out to do.”  
[SM6 (10.08.08)]
- (46) "I wanted to go 1:45, and if it weren't for that messed-up finish I would have done it," Phelps said, hustling off to **get ready for the big race**.  
[SM10(11.08.08)]

From Examples (44), (45) and (46) above, Phelps’s direct speech was quoted as setting his goal to win and all set for the competition. These show positive traits that relates men to power and strength. The next table shows personality traits of the Sportswoman of the Year.

**Table 4.19: Personality Traits of the Sportswoman of the Year**

No.	Positive	F	Negative	F
1	confident	3	dependent	4
2	contented	3	sensitive	1
3	looking forward	2		
4	determination	1		
5	hopeful	1		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b> <b>(66.67%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b> <b>(33.33%)</b>

Key: F – frequency

Comparatively, Table 4.19 shows that five (5) out of 15 (33.33%) found to negatively present Nastia Liukin. The term *dependent* is a personality trait which occurs most frequently in the corpus (n=4) on Liukin such as the following example.

- (47) “**Having my dad as my coach**, that helps as he's been there and he's done that. He knows me personally better than anyone will ever know me,”

Liukin also believes **she could not have achieved so much success if it had not been for her father's training instincts.**

[GF1 (07.08.08)]

Example (47) demonstrates that the article presents the Sportswoman of the Year as very dependent on her father for her success. First, she was quoted to acknowledge the role her father played as her coach, and then the reporter adds that it was “her father’s instincts” that made a success today. Obviously, this portrayal is opposite that of the Sportsman of the Year who was viewed to be independent and determined to win. As can be seen from Table 4.18, Phelps is portrayed by almost all positive personality traits (10 out of 11). On the other hand, Table 4.19 reveals that some of Liukin’s personality was negatively portrayed (2 out of 7) such as ‘dependent’ (n=4) which appear to be the most trait to describe her.

## (ii) Paragraph Categories

Paragraph is another unit of text analysis at sentence level. According to Shifflett and Revelle (1994), the categories of the paragraph for this study are:

- (a) *factual information related to athletics*
- (b) *factual information not related to athletics*
- (c) *personal information related to athletics*
- (d) *personal information not related to athletics*

The following table shows the frequency distribution of paragraph category types on articles of the Sportsman and the Sportswoman of the Year.

**Table 4.20: Paragraph Categories of the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year**

Categories of Paragraphs	Phelps		Liukin	
	F	%	F	%
(a) Factual information related to athletics	99	41.60	13	20
(b) Factual information not related to athletics	5	2.10	0	0
(c) Personal information related to athletics	110	46.22	52	80
(d) Personal information not related to athletics	24	10.08	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

Key: F - frequency, % - Percentages

From Table 4.20, within all swimming articles reported on Michael Phelps and Nastia Liukin, the category (a) *factual information related to athletics*, Phelps received an overall percentage of 41.60% (n = 99), while the Sportswoman, Liukin, received 20 % (n = 13) overall of this type. For the category (c) *personal information related to athletics*, the Sportsman's individual percentage overall is 46.22% (n = 110) total

paragraphs. The female received an overall percentage of 80% (n=52) total paragraphs. Within the remaining two categories, (b) *factual information not related to athletics* and (d) *Personal information not related to athletics*, Phelps received 2.10%(N=5) and 10.08%(n=24) respectively. However, Liukin received no paragraphs in both categories.

The analysis reveals that the Sportswoman received the highest number of the paragraphs coded as (c) *personal information related to athletics*. The overall percentage as high as 80% (n= 52) while the Sportsman received 46.22% (n =110). These are examples of paragraph in the category of (c) *personal information related to athletics*.

- (48) So when she won gold medals on the balance beam and asymmetric bars on her world championships debut in 2005, **many predicted the American had taken the first step towards achieving Olympic immortality.**

Liukin also **believes she could not have achieved so much success if it had not been for her father's training instincts.**

[GF1 (01.08.08)]

- (49) With female fans, curious onlookers and a media scrum waiting for the man of the moment to arrive, **the lanky 23-year-old Baltimore native preferred a quieter entry to a Game he threatens to dominate.**

**Even if he wins just half of them, Phelps will still become the most prolific gold medallist of all time**, surpassing the record career tallies of nine shared by Spitz, US athlete Carl Lewis, Finnish athlete Paavo Nurmi and Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina.

[SM1 (05.08.08)]

Example (48) and (49) contain two paragraphs on Liukin and two paragraphs on Phelps. All paragraphs reveal the category of (c) *personal information related to athletics*, since there appeared to have personal opinion whether from the athletes, coaches, or reporters in reporting information of the athletes. However, the report on the Sportswoman, Liukin, was likely to be more negative compared to the paragraphs on Phelps. As in Example (48), Liukin's achievement was viewed to be attached to her coach father instead of her skills.

Further, the Sportsman is reported by *(a) factual information related to athletics* by 41.60% (n=99) meanwhile the female's paragraphs are coded as this category by only 20% (n=13). The following paragraphs show examples of this category.

(50) **Nastia Liukin edged U.S. teammate Shawn Johnson for the all-around gold in women's gymnastics Friday** in an intense matchup at the Beijing Olympics.  
[GF1 (15.08.08)]

(51) Michael Phelps en route to **setting a new world record in the men's 400m individual medley yesterday**.  
[SM8 (11.08.08)]

As a result, when compared to the Sportsman, the Sportswoman, Liukin, was more likely to be reported by *(c) personal information related to athletics* and less likely to be reported by *(a) factual information related to athletics*. Most paragraphs on Liukin focused on her background referring to her father as the coach and his achievement in the past. Since the articles report more of her personal information, there was less focus on her athletic attainments as revealed by high percentage of the articles containing the category (c), that is, *personal information related to athletics*.

Interestingly, Liukin received no paragraphs attributed to the categories of *(b) factual information not related to athletics* and *(d) personal information not related to athletics*, while Phelps is presented in these two categories. This paragraph below reveals *(d) personal information not related to athletics* on Phelps's article.

(52) **"The first thing I'd like to do to my mum is just hug her.** I've literally seen her for about 30 seconds this whole time," said Phelps, whose weepy mother Debbie has been a fixture in the stands as he racked up medals this week.  
  
"She just said congratulations. And then she started crying, and I started crying and then my sister started crying. **We haven't really had too much time together,**" Phelps said.

[SM34 (18.08.08)]

These paragraphs appeared in most of the last article reporting on the Olympic Games. In this article, Phelps was presented with his family after become the winner of most medals in the games. Although this competition already ended, the media still found other aspects to report on him. He was reported not only on his sport performance but also on other information not related to his profession. This is contrary to Liukin since she was reported in three articles which only appeared during the competition. This clearly demonstrates that the media gave more attention to the Sportsman than the Sportswoman.

To conclude, articles on Phelps attributed to all four categories while Liukin's articles received only two categories that related only to her sport. This style of reporting could potentially trivialize the interest factor of women's sport. As a result, an ability to generate reader and promote the women's game become limited or misleading.

### **(iii) Reporting Games and Victory**

In describing the victory of sport events, there appear to be obviously different between the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year. Phelps, won eight gold medals in the event, was represented in 13 of 19 articles reporting all of his gold achievements. In contrast to Liukin who won a total of five medals with one gold, she was reported in only 2 of 3 articles describing on her gold without any information of other medal achievements.

The style of language reporting about their victories seems to be different as well. The analysis found that the reporter used positive terms to describe and glorify the Sportsman's victory while victories of the Sportswoman were reported in terms of



factual descriptions. Interestingly, in describing Liukin's victory, the reporter tends to relate her achievement to her coach father as the examples below.

- (53) As Nastia Liukin won the Olympic individual all-around gold medal for the United States yesterday, **her father Valeri flashed back 20 years to when he was competing for the Soviet Union at the Seoul Games.**  
[GF6(16.08.08)]

This sentence is a report of *Liukin's* win but it is overshadowed by the father's flashback of his own win 20 years ago. Similarly, in the following example, Liukin was compared to her mother who was a former world champion:

- (54) Long and lean, Liukin has **the elegance and classic lines of her mother**, a former world champion in rhythmic gymnastics, and she uses it to perfection.  
[GF5(15.08.08)]

The Sportswoman of the Year was presented as graceful:

- (55) Standing at **1.60m tall**, **the gymnast is the perfect blend of grace** and athleticism.  
[GF1(07.08.08)]

She also seemed to command attention of the audience:

- (56) Liukin puts on a performance. **Every wave of her arm and brush of her fingertips oozes emotion**, making it easy to forget about those tough tricks she was doing.  
[GF5(15.08.08)]

All three examples above obviously show that the reports focused on Liukin's attractiveness both in describing her action in sport (Example 56) and her physical appearance (Example 54 and 55). These sentences seem to highlight more on her feminine attractiveness than her achievement in sport.

On the other hand, Phelps's achievements were presented differently as in the following examples.

(57) Michael Phelps **became the greatest Olympian in history yesterday**, capturing the 10th and 11th gold medals of his Games career and **lighting the fuse for an explosion of world records** at the Water Cube. [SM20 (14.08.08)]

(58) Phelps is **already the most successful athlete in Olympic history** with 12 career golds, but **his sights are on eight in the Beijing games**. [SM24 (15.08.08)]

In both Examples, Phelps was described independently using positive terms to praise his success. The report even presented his goal that "his sights are on eight in the Beijing games." In contrast, this rarely occurs to describe the female counterpart. By using more positive terms within those sentences to represent men's victory and made women's victory invisible, it seems to suggest that there is nothing noteworthy of women rather than their body attractiveness. This finding is consistent with Bernstein's (2002) study of Kournikova's sport coverage since the female tennis player has often been framed on attractive appearance rather than her games and athletic abilities.

#### **4.6.4 IV: Visual Images**

Visual images of the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year will be counted and also coded for their content. In accordance with Shifflett and Revelle's (1994) study, each photograph was coded as "(a) *competing athlete*, (b) *athlete in competitive context but not competing*, or (c) *head shot of the athlete*." The results of different photograph categories are compared in Table 4.21 below.

**Table 4.21: Photograph Categories of the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year**

Photograph Categories	Phelps		Liukin		Total
	N	%	N	%	
(a) Competing Athlete	5	41.67	3	100	8
(b) Athlete in competitive context but not competing	4	33.33	0	0	4
(c) Head shot of athlete	3	25.00	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>

Key: F - frequency, % - Percentages

As can be clearly seen from Table 4.21, the Sportsman was mostly featured in the category of (a) *competing athletes* (41.67%) while one third (33.33%) of his photos was presented as (b) *athlete in competitive context but not competing*. This shows that the news tends to present the Sportsman of the Year as a competitive individual in the Olympics.



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Figure 4.8:** Visual Images of Phelps in the category of (a) *competing athlete*, (b) *athlete in competitive context but not competing* and (c) *head shot of athlete*

Moreover, three photographs of Phelps (25%) were presented as (c) *head shot of athlete*. Interestingly, the images of Liukin (n=3) were all featured as (a) *competing athletes*. These are photographs that were found in her articles.



**Figure 4.9:** Visual Images of Nastia Liukin in the category of *Competing athlete*

The images of Liukin (n=3) found in the corpus were all featured as *(a) competing athletes*. A possible reason for this might be due to the amount of articles of each athlete. Since Liukin was presented in three (3) articles, three (3) photographs, each article had a visual of her that must be representative of her performing at the particular sport she was in. So that her images while competing in the sport were selected over other types possible.

To sum up, the news commentary presented more visuals of the male sportsperson of the year compared to the female sportsperson of the year. There was also more variety in the types of shots taken of the male athlete although ‘competing athlete’ was the preferred choice for both athletes.

#### **4.7 Summary**

From the findings of each unit of analysis of male and female athletes in the five selected sports, there appeared to be unequal representation of the two genders. The women’s coverage in the online newspaper was less than men’s in terms of word counts, number of visual images and lists of linguistic terms used to refer to them.

Although women participated in the so-called ‘female-appropriate sports and their achievements deserved equal attention, this particular online newspaper tend to focus more on their attractiveness and femininity instead of their athletic performance and success. In contrast, male athletes were positively portrayed in terms of both length of articles, choice of terms and visual images. This reveals existence of gender bias and inequality in the sport media as found by this study on this set of corpus.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter will discuss the answers to the research questions mentioned in the chapter one. These are the main objectives of this study.

- (1) To investigate the representation of Olympic male and female athletes in a local online newspaper in terms of language used and visual images.
- (2) To compare the portrayal of the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year

#### 5.1 Research Questions Revisited

It was the aim of the present study to determine how a local online newspaper, *The Star* online, portrays male and female athletes at the 2008 Olympic Games. The main objective of this study is to investigate and compare the language and visual images used to portray male and female athletes in selected sports by the sports media. Three research questions were set out in order to determine this. These research questions will be given again in the following subsections to discuss the answers.

In analyzing the data, the results found that the five levels of analysis (as discussed in Chapter Three) answered the research questions of this study. Therefore, the answers to the three research questions will be summarized separately in the following section.

### **Research Question 1:**

How are the Olympic male and female athletes quantitatively represented in the identified Malaysian online newspaper?

The present study revealed that male athletes tend to be represented in more articles than the female counterparts. The articles on male athletes were longer than those of female athletes in terms of word count. It was found that 65 articles (23,281 words, 56.96%) represented the male athletes while female included 56 articles (17,591 words, 43.04%). Nevertheless, women were overrepresented in only two out of five sports, namely, gymnastics and diving although these were considered as female-appropriate sports.

Another element of athletes representation that was investigated was the visual images in terms of photographs. Most of the photographs found in the corpus featured male athletes (n=33; 63.46%) than female athletes (n=19; 36.54%).

In addition, these sports must be examined in terms of how they were presented. This can be seen through the answers of the next research questions which will focus on both language and photographs found in the corpus.

### **Research Question 2:**

How are Olympic male and female athletes represented in the identified Malaysian online newspaper in terms of language used and visual images?

The study found that the Olympic male and female athletes were differently represented in terms of language and visual images used. There were more positive terms used for male athletes than there were for female athletes in each sport. This is supported by the findings of the analysis at both word and sentence level.

There were more terms that negatively portrayed female athletes than those for male athletes. From a list of adjectives describing athletes, 16 out of 75 adjectives (21.33%) for female athletes were identified as having a negative connotation as opposed to only 4 out of 107 terms (3.74%) for male athletes. This can be supported by the differences of adjectives used in describing the athletes.

The most frequently used category of adjective used to describe male athletes was ‘accolades’ (53.45%) that showed expression of approval or praise such as the term *great(er/est)* which occurred as high as 13 times while only once was used for female athletes. Meanwhile, two types of adjectives that were more often found to describe female athletes were ‘physical description’ and ‘characteristics’ such as *pin-up*, *glamorous* and *baby-faced*. Most of them portray negative connotations. Thus, the terms used for women reinforced their images as non-athletic sex objects in the media reported by feminists (Mills, 1995; Talbot, 1998).

Another interesting finding was the portrayal of male and female athletes at the sentence level. The analysis of metaphors showed a more positive portrayal for male than female athletes as there appear to be the use of war metaphors on articles of male athletes than those of female counterparts. These are likely to reinforce the masculine power of male athletes.



Photograph content is another element that represented male and female athletes visually by the sports media. Most of the photographs found in the corpus featured more male athletes (n=33) than female athletes (n=19). Furthermore, photograph content of male and female athletes were featured differently. Male athletes received a higher number of photographs, 45.45% (n = 15 out of 33), in the category of (a) *competing athlete*, while female athletes were mostly featured as (b) *athlete in competitive context but not competing*, 47.37% (n=9 out of 19). This finding indicates that male athletes were more likely to be featured as a competitive athlete than female counterparts. This reveals that although female athletes competed in the female appropriate sports, they were still underrepresented and trivialized by the local sport media.

### **Research Question 3:**

In what ways are the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year comparatively portrayed by the identified Malaysian online newspaper?

To answer this question, we have to look at the third level of data analysis, This was a comparison between Sportsman and Sportswoman of the year that appear to be a male swimmer, Michael Phelps and a female gymnast, Nastia Liukin.

When articles on the Sportsman than the Sportswoman were compared, it was found that the way they were portrayed was totally different in terms of word count, visual presentation and language used. The results show that there were more articles on the Sportsman than the Sportswoman. There were 19 articles (7339 words) written about Michael Phelps while only 3 articles (1675 words) portray the female counterpart, Nastia Liukin. These were conveyed through 238 paragraphs of the Sportsman and 65

paragraphs of the Sportswoman. This clearly shows a big difference in terms of word count between the two Sportspersons of the Year based on their gender.

The analysis of the Sportsman and the Sportswoman revealed that they were portrayed along stereotypical lines as the analysis of personality traits showed that the Sportswoman was viewed as being 'dependent' on their coach as the reporter presented her achievement to be attached to her coach father instead of her skills. Whereas, almost all personality of the Sportsman assists positive traits such as 'confident', 'determination' and 'easy going'.

There appeared to be less media coverage of women's sports. The women's coverage in the online daily was less than men's although their achievements surely deserved equal attention. Female athletes were widely ignored even when a female athlete won medals in this international sports event, the newspaper was likely to devote only a small coverage to the athletic achievement of female athletes, even the Sportswoman of the Year, Liukin.

## **5.2 Summary**

This study has met the main objectives set to investigate how male and female athletes were portrayed by a Malaysian online newspaper during the 2008 Olympics. This chapter reviewed the main findings for each research question. The fact that female athletes were under-represented and combined with stereotypical depictions it tends to support that the local online news commentary constructs and maintains gender bias and inequality in sports media. Based on the findings of this study, there is the existence of sexism in the sports media and unequal representation of female athletes by the local

newspaper. It is hoped that this study is able to contribute to research on the local media in particular sports news.