Faculty of Language and Communication

Gendered Language Features in Facebook Communication among Millennials in Malaysia

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Gendered Language Features in Facebook in Communication among Millennials in Malaysia

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out with the aim of to analyse gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials. This scope of this study is confined to analysing Facebook comments and participants were selected among Malaysian millennials group. Gendered language features from Facebook comments that were written by Malaysian millennials were analysed using a framework of analysis of gendered language features. Subsequently, an online questionnaire participated by 60 participants was also carried out as part of data triangulation. From the 260 comments collected, it was revealed that most comments had male language features. The analysis of the online questionnaires provided several reasons when identifying a commenter's gender. A comparison between the analysis of the Facebook comments and answers from the questionnaire was carried out to investigate whether or not language features found online reflect normal face-to-face communication. The findings reveal that gender language patterns have differed from the conventional norms, especially when some comments were reported to have cross gender language patterns. The also implies that gender language patterns used among the Malaysian millennial age group have blurred, thus changing how conventional language norms are used when interacting online.

Keywords: Gendered language features, computer-mediated communication, millennials, Malaysia

Ciri-ciri Bahasa Berdasarkan Jantina dalam Facebook Golongan Milenial di Malaysia

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti ciri-ciri bahasa berdasarkan jantina yang digunakan oleh golongan milenial di Malaysia semasa berinteraksi melalui komen-komen Facebook. Skop kajian dihadkan kepada komen-komen Facebook dan para peserta yang merupakan golongan milenial yang berwarganegara Malaysia. Ciri-ciri bahasa berdasarkan jantina daripada komen-komen Facebook yang ditulis oleh para pengguna Facebook yang merupakan golongan milenial Malaysia telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan sebuah rangka kerja analisis berdasarkan ciri-ciri bahasa berdasarkan jantina. Seterusnya, sebuah kaji selidik dalam talian juga dihasil dan diedarkan kepada 60 orang peserta untuk mencapai triangulasi data. Daripada 260 komen yang dikumpul, kebanyakkannya mengandungi sifat bahasa kelakian. Dapatan daripada kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa corak bahasa yang terdapat turut mengalami perubahan daripada norma yang lazim, terutamanya komen-komen yang mengandungi sifat-sifat bahasa daripada kedua-dua jantina. Ini juga menyifatkan bahawa corak bahasa jantina dalam kalangan milenial di Malaysia sedang menjadi semakin kabur, maka juga mengubah cara bahasa jantina digunakan dalam talian.

Kata kunci: *Perbezaan jantina, komunikasi melalui komputer, milenial, Malaysia*

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CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CMDA	Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents an introduction of this study. Subsequently, this chapter also includes the introduction to the current study, the purpose of the study, the significance of this study, the scope of this study, operational definition of key terms and followed by a summary of this chapter.

1.2 Introduction

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site" (p. 211). Currently, Facebook is the most popular social network site with an accumulated following of 1.2 billion users. In Malaysia, it was reported that 97.3% of the population owned a Facebook account and it remains as the most favoured social networking platform of Malaysians (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2018). Two primary purposes of using Facebook are to fulfil the need of belonging and self-representation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Malaysians within the millennial age gap make up the largest demographic age group of Internet users (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2018). Facebook users can produce three primary types of textual data on Facebook, namely posts, comments and messages, which can be accompanied by other forms of media such as images, videos

and emoticons (Franz et al., 2019). Therefore, communication in social network sites is primarily textual and other forms of media are supplementary. Social network sites such as Facebook have textual data which holds a large potential for research purposes due to its number of active users (Franz et al., 2019). In the field of linguistics, textual data from social network sites can help study different linguistic aspects which include gendered language features (Herring, 1994; Tannen, 1994). Communication in social network sites is referred to as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC is defined as a process where humans are involved in engaging in particular contexts through computer communication and aims to form media for a number of reasons (December, 1997).

The interaction that takes place in CMC occurs through the written medium because users of social network sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have to type their opinions and responses into the platform. They may use informal words and even abbreviations (Stapa & Shaari, 2012). They may also use neologisms involving different spellings of words from the written communication (Nazman et al., 2020; Yeo & Ting, 2017). Besides these characteristics of CMC, the users have more space to express themselves in CMC (Herring, 2015). This is because they can choose to keep their identity anonymous or to adopt a different identity, which allows them the freedom of expression without being judged. This is also explained by Danet (1998) who mentioned that the paradoxical combination of anonymity and intimacy when users interact with each other in CMC allows people to be released from their usual inhibitions and pretend to be someone other than themselves. Graddol and Swann (1989) emphasised that the extent of anonymity makes the online communicator's gender invisible or irrelevant allows genders of both parties to participate equally in discussions. However, researchers studying CMC have found that there are indicators which give away the gender identity of social media users such as the usage of

intensifiers (Dalampan, 2006; Guiller & Durndell, 2007), pronouns (Dalampan, 2006), expressions of aggressiveness and supportiveness (Rossetti, 1998) among others.

The connection between gender and language use is a critical characteristic of studies relating to gender and CMC (Guiller & Durndell, 2006). There are various labels that are used to indicate gendered language features in CMC studies such as "gender-preferential language style" (Murugaboopathy et al., 2013; Thomson et al., 2001), "gendered linguistic variables" (Guiller & Durndell, 2007), "gendered communication styles" (Merchant, 2012), "gendered patterns of communication" (Morris, 2013), "gender discursive styles" (Nevala, 2015), "gendered discourse patterns" (Hayat et al., 2017) among others. Despite different names, the common factor is they all aim to scrutinize the gender aspects of language found through utterances and linguistic features of discourse. For this study, "gendered language features" will be used to indicate these said features or styles that are found in Facebook comments.

With regards to online communication, gender stereotypes are patterns of studied behaviours that can be transferred from offline social contexts to online interactions (Herring, 1993, 1994, 2001; Yates, 1997). At this point, literature on gender differences in language and communication are brought in as reference. Since Lakoff (1975) drew attention to the "powerlessness" of women's language, subsequent studies confirmed these patterns (Tannen, 1995). For example, women use rapport talk to establish relationships whereas men use report talk to give information (Tannen, 1994). Typical gender stereotypes in speech include men using "assertive speech" to achieve goals whereas women use "affiliate speech" to connect with others (Basow, 2008). Gender differences in CMC commonly conform to gender stereotypes (Haferkamp et al., 2012; Kapidzic & Herring, 2011). According to

Ellemers (2018), the purpose of stereotypes is to "reflect general expectations about members of particular social groups" (p. 276), therefore gender stereotypes mirror a common perception attached towards the actions of men with performing tasks and women with social relationships. Gender stereotypes have familiar characteristics and are recognisable by most people by collective characteristics that depict men and women (Kite et al., 2008). Studies show that gender stereotypes and roles are not only socially constructed but also biologically influenced (Goldhill, 2018). Gender stereotypes start in childhood as several research has shown that children around age four can understand appropriate characteristics of their gender roles (Eddleston et al., 2006) and these stereotypes have been verified to be existent among preschool children (Hutson-Comeaux & Kelly, 2002). Gender stereotypes in communication can be detected from various indicators ranging from choice of words to usage of pronouns. Close scrutiny towards CMC still showed linguistic aspects that would still provide information of a person's identity (Child & Petronio, 2011). CMC offers great potential for analysis of linguistic variability amongst social identities on the Internet (Androutsopoulos, 2011, 2014); social identities include gender identities.

Previous studies have shown that there are differences of gender-driven stylistic and linguistic markers in CMC (Herring & Paolillo; Parkins, 2012). For instance, Herring (1993, 1994) suggests male users tend to use strong assertions, insults and put-downs whereas female users would be attenuative, supportive and interpersonally oriented. As for word choices, female users tend to use more polite and expressive words (Basow & Rubenfeld, 2003) whereas men would likely use profanities and insults in their discourse (Herring, 1994; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Therefore, the correlation between gender and language use is a crucial component for studies of gender and CMC since linguistics is the only available cue in textual communication (Guiller & Durndell, 2006). Other studies also discuss the

orientation of communication of both genders, with men being task and information oriented whereas females were interpersonally oriented (Guadagno et al., 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006). From a study conducted by Amir et al. (2012), gendered language features concluded that several language features such as hedges, emoticon usage and tag questions were used more frequently by females than males in Malaysian blogs. It is important to study gender differences in CMC to find out if there are changes over time and in different social network sites.

Gendered linguistic features online are similar in many aspects to face-to-face public contexts which include verbosity, assertiveness, use of profanity, politeness and rudeness, typed representations of facial expressions such as smiling as well as a degree of interaction. (Coates, 2015). Furthermore, some studies have stated that gendered differences from face-to-face communication are carried into online settings (Herring, 1993, 1994, 2001; Yates, 1997) which would result in the presence of gendered language features in online discourse. However, there are studies that argue about whether or not gender differences between face-to-face communication and online communication are similar or different. On one hand, findings from Guadagno et al. (2011), Huffaker and Calvert (2005), Kapidzic and Herring (2011), and Morris (2013) concluded that there are minimal differences between gendered communication patterns on Facebook and face-to-face communication. On the contrary, studies that have concluded that gender distinctiveness has lessened in CMC such as those carried out by Guiller and Durndell (2007) and Nevala (2015) concluded that their findings were not consistent with traditional findings and gendered language features from online communication did not reflect face-to-face interactions. Therefore, a re-evaluation of gendered language features between offline and online communication can be conducted in

research can give an updated comparison between the interactions of the two mediums and to identify which features have shifted.

Another aspect to take in consideration of is the different contexts found in different communities. Findings for a certain CMC context does not necessarily reflect the findings of other CMC contexts (Savicki et al., 1996). In other words, findings from different geological contexts could vary from one another due to cultural differences. Linguistic research which focuses on textual data from Facebook have uncovered many findings relating to gendered language (Joiner et al., 2014; Morris, 2013; Nevala, 2015). However, these studies are based on CMC involving online communities of other countries. Currently, little is known about gender differences in CMC involving Malaysians. This is because studies on textual discourse in Malaysia have focused more on code-mixing, code-switching, spelling alterations and emoticons in Facebook (Hashim et al., 2017; Stapa & Shaari, 2012; Yeo & Ting, 2019). These studies indicate the usage and reasoning for Malaysian users to utilize these language features when they communicate on social network sites. However, there are some Malaysian studies on gendered language features. Kasuma (2017) examined how gender influences the usage of Facebook as a generic social platform itself in a study to examine participants on their perspective towards English Language Learning via Facebook based on their gender and race. Amir et al. (2012) examined the differences of language use such as hedging, intensifiers, tag questions, empty adjectives and adverbs between male and female bloggers. Their findings concluded that the use of certain language features was primarily attributed to gender. Linguistic features in CMC may reflect the gender identities of users as those that have been described in face-to face-interaction (Coates, 2015; Herring, 2001). Gendered language features are important to the study of sociolinguistics, especially at a time when digital anonymity is always “online” (Baron, 2010).

There is a gap of knowledge on linguistic features, especially within Malaysia. Previously, studies involving texts from social network site are focused on other linguistic aspects (e.g., code-switching, spelling alterations, usage of particles) which are not relevant to gendered language features. On the contrary, studies that do focus on gendered language differences (e.g., Amir et al., 2012) extracted data from blogs instead of social media sites. Blogs and social network sites are uniquely different in terms of how its content is shared and read by the public. As described by Swenson (2017), blog posts can be more time-consuming to produce because they are written in more detail and blog readers do not comment as often as Facebook users, which indicates there is not much depth of communication between bloggers and readers. On the contrary, Facebook content can be less intensive as blogs because status updates, posts with links or shared content can be uploaded within a short time and the platform offers more interactions with users because of its social nature (Swenson, 2017). Gusiff (2019) mentions that social media sites engage with people about content whereas blogging creates content that is displayed on a personal website instead. Therefore, there is a difference when comparing data that are collected from blogs and social network sites due to the social nature and outreach of each platform.

As social media allows users to post comments, they become rich sources of information to analyse and provide insights for user behaviour (Trinh et al., 2016). It is important to study CMC on Facebook because it is the most popular social network site with the largest number of active users (Franz et al., 2019). The popularity of Facebook as the most popular social network site is contributed by its large number of active users (Franz et al., 2019). Facebook also has a number of features that are made available to users which include friend requests, “tagging” others”, posting comments, posting pictures and creating status updates which are mainly features to facilitate interactions between a user and their

community of friends (Davenport et al., 2014). This shows that Facebook has different features for users to utilise when interacting on the platform. For instance, a Facebook post on a user's wall can either be a post that is authored by the user or a friend post which is created by a friend of that user (Devineni et al., 2017). Facebook posts can also be posts which are linked from news articles and links to other pages. On the other hand, a Facebook comment is a response to a post which appears below a post and is categorised by Facebook (Devineni et al., 2017) and is one of the primary features which users use to engage in Facebook communication (Kim & Yang, 2017). In Andersson's (2016) study to examine the purpose of liking and comment on Facebook, users were shown to comment on posts to show their appreciation towards posts that entertained them, strengthen relationships, to give comments to informative posts and to get more likes and comments from others. Therefore, a notable difference between a Facebook wall post and a comment is that the former is authored by users whereas the latter is a textual component which shows engagement between users. The frequent social interactions in communities on Facebook would be a suitable data source to examine the phenomena of gendered language features made by Malaysian millennials.

The study by Amir et al. (2012) did not focus on Facebook comments. Therefore, there is a difference when comparing data that are collected from blogs and social network sites. As social media allows users to post comments, they subsequently become rich sources of information to analyse and provide insights for user behaviour (Trinh et al., 2016). Furthermore, comments on public Facebook pages are publicly viewable and contain interactions by other users as opposed to wall posts which are authored by users or are contain links to other sources. Therefore, the social interaction in comments from Facebook

pages would allow for researchers to collect and view these comments to be extracted as data.

Considering the lack of studies that focuses on gendered language features in Facebook comments in the Malaysian context, it is important to study gender differences in CMC to find out if there are changes over time and in different social network sites.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This section will include the purpose of this study which include the aim of this study, research objectives and the research questions.

1.3.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyse gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives for the study are as follows:

1. To analyse the gendered language features in Facebook among Malaysian millennials.
2. To identify the reasons of using various gender language features between male and female users in Facebook.
3. To investigate if online gendered language features reflect face-to-face communication features.

1.3.3 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the study aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the types of communication styles, specifically language features, used in CMC between male and female Malaysian millennials?
2. What are the reasons for Malaysian millennials to use certain gendered language features in CMC?
3. To what extent do online gender language features reflect face-to-face communication features as seen from the gender language features?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Studies on gendered language patterns in CMC can contribute to knowledge on stereotypes of female and male language use. As it relates to gender stereotypes online, it can contribute to online identity construction (Zhao et al., 2008). Since gender-linked patterns in language use stem from societal relations (Coates, 2015), it may also provide ethnographic insights towards human and communal connections. Despite the difference in medium, the shared element of gender language features that occurs in both online and offline communication is what will help give a better understanding of human nature, specifically about the concept of gender and its stereotypes, through the perspective of language. Additionally, it can be noteworthy to view gender as a component worth studying in digital discourse as socioemotional content of CMC is potentially influenced by gender (Guiller & Durndell, 2006). Understanding gender differences is important to help in the success of any communicative approach (Kripotich & Changorok, 2017). Findings on current trends relating to gendered language features can give an updated comprehension of patterns of gendered language patterns.

Additionally, organisations interested in millennial behavioural or communicative studies can also benefit from this study as it focuses on digital discourse found in the

comments of these individuals. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to gender language studies and benefit those who are interested in millennial research within social network sites, specifically Facebook comments. gender communication reflects normal face-to-face communication.

Identifying gender is important in gender classification which are used in for various purposes. For instance, gender classification is crucial in text mining for commercial applications because the knowledge of the user's gender is important to companies who want to promote products of services to customers' preferences based on their gender (Simaki et al., 2015). As gender linguistic differences can be detected in texts because of the distinct linguistic choices made by men and women from different linguistic levels, which range from phonetics to pragmatics, this helps companies in identifying popular products or services that are talked among men and women (Simaki et al., 2015). Anonymity is a central theme which relates to gender and CMC research (Herring & Stoerger, 2014), which makes gender deception in the occurrence of identity scams occur. Gender imitation or misrepresentation is a significant aspect of online deception as physical cues which allows us to discern an individual's identity are absent. (Ho & Hollister, 2014). The growth of the Internet encourages various kinds of misuses, therefore identifying features that are significant indicators of gender such as word-based features, function words and structural features for author identification in online communication could help in solving this problem (Cheng et al., 2011). The importance of studying patterns of gender features rather than individual features can provide CMC users some confidence about predicting the gender of their communicants (Hills, 2000). This agrees with the importance of why identifying gender in CMC is important as it helps in identifying the gender identities for several motives such as classifying customer preferences for business or author identification.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is confined to the CMC done through Facebook comments and participants were selected among Malaysian millennials group. Their responses or comments on Facebook postings were analysed based on the gender language features. Hence, although some features may be universally compared, the findings from this study should be examined based on the scope as stated and not generalised for the millennial groups in other contexts either geographically or culturally.

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Computer Mediated Communication

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is defined as human communication which occurs via the instrumentality of computers (Herring, 1996). In this study, it refers to the communication which takes place in a digital platform.

1.6.2 Reasons for using Various Gender Language Features

In this study, it refers to the descriptions of gendered language features given by the questionnaire participants when identifying Facebook users as either male or female based on the sample texts of Facebook comments.

1.6.3 Face-to-face Communication

Face-to-face communication is defined as communication which takes place in a context of co-presence and in which the participants of the interaction are immediately present with one another (Crowley, 1994). In this study, face-to-face communication refers to communication which happens in real life and when interacting with each other face to face. The term offline communication can be replaced with face-to-face communication.

1.6.4 Millennials

Millennials, or otherwise known as Generation Y, are defined as the generation born after the 1980s until the 2000s (Gibson & Sodemon, 2014). In this study, the millennials are identified through their birth year as determined by Gibson and Sodemon (2014). In this study, millennials are Facebook users who were born from 1980 to 1999. The birth years displayed publicly in users' profiles will indicate whether or not users are born within the millennial age gap, hence identifying them as millennials.

1.6.5 Facebook Comments

Facebook comments are similar to face-to-face interactions and writing one takes more activity (Zell & Moeller, 2017). Facebook comments are also potential sources of data for qualitative research and are identified as a feedback to a Facebook post or a reply to another comment itself. (Franz et al., 2019). In this study, Facebook comments refer to comments from specific wall posts from specific pages produced by millennial aged users. Furthermore, certain comments were taken from certain Facebook pages, therefore it will be difficult to replicate this study with the same set of data.

1.6.6 Gendered Language Features

Gendered language features are features of language that are easily related to gender stereotypes (Newman et al., 2008). Gendered language features are also language uses of phrases, words or stylistics which are commonly linked with a certain gender due to its frequent and typical use among a gender category. Gendered language features are utterances, language use, phrases, words or stylistics that indicate a feature used by a certain gender. The categorisation of gendered language features will be based on the findings of past literature. In this study, gendered language refers to features such as opposed orientation

for males and aligned orientation (Guadagno et al., 2011; Morris, 2013), use of polite and expressive words (Basow & Rubenfeld, 2003), insults and profanities (Thomson & Murachver, 2001), hedges (Holmes, 1995; Lakoff, 1975), and others.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides some background information of this study. Additionally, it also presents the research problem which leads to the aim and objectives of the study. The scope and significance of carrying out this study is also presented followed by the operational definition of terms.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a review of past findings from literature that relate to the current study. The main topics include millennials and their language use in social media use, characteristics of CMC, gender differences in offline language use, gender differences in online language use, online gender difference in language use, and comparison of features of Online and Offline Communication. Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis as well as the different theoretical approaches to study language and gender are also described in this chapter.

2.2 Millennials and Language Use in Social Media Use

Millennials are regarded as the generation often associated with tech-savviness (Brack & Kelly, 2012) due to their early exposure towards technology, which they are also labelled as "digital natives" because of this fact (Prensky, 2001). Millennials are often studied in relation to various academic aspects such as behavioural patterns, identity construction as such due to their heavy influence and usage of technology.

A Pew Research study carried out by Lenhart et al. (2010) reported that the use of social networking sites among millennials have risen significantly whereas the use of blogging was dropping in younger millennials while simultaneously rising among the older millennial. The reason for this change could be a change in preference of the tools and technology of social networking sites which emphasises more on "micro-blogging" with status updates instead of "macro-blogging" which are normally done in blogs.

A comparative study between Facebook and Twitter on the role of narcissism and the motives of using different social media platforms was carried out by Davenport et al. (2014). A number of 521 participants were asked if they had a Facebook or Twitter account. A number of 509 participants responded that they had a Facebook account whereas 220 of them responded that they had a Twitter account, while those who did not have an account in either platform was excluded from the study. Hence, only 515 participants were selected as the final sample. Six measures were examined in this study which included narcissism, active usage, reasons for updates, number of friends or followers on their social networking sites, attracting friends or followers and social networking admiration. Neither sample was related to narcissism which may indicate that users had a pervasive use of social networking sites to keep each other updated. A post hoc examination of the correlation and regression results revealed that narcissism was a better predictor of reasons for using social media which include a desire to attract a lot of friends or followers or having other admire them. This led to active usage of social media platforms among millennials. Notably, the post hoc model results showed that narcissism was both directly and indirectly related to be active among older generations. Davenport et al. (2014) suggested that this was because millennials grew up using Facebook in their daily lives as a means of millennials have been using Facebook when they were growing up in order to communicate with others and this was not relevant in the case of previous generations. The findings suggested that there were some notable differences which varied across generations when using social media platforms.

Brailovskaia et al. (2020) investigated the reasons for using social media among 485 individuals who were current or former students at a university in Germany. The data was collected by using an online survey. The main categories for social media usage were assessed by an inductive qualitative analysis and the responses from the survey were used to

form subcategories and a total of five categories were identified which were “Search for Information and Inspiration”, “Search for Social Interaction”, “Beat of Boredom and Pastimes”, “Escape from Negative emotions”, and “Search for Positive Emotions”. Participants were free to give their reasons to explain their social media usage. Participants stated that social networking sites offered users various kinds of contents and one of the respondents described that these platforms provided unfiltered information which discusses a specific topic from different perspectives and regarded social media as an important source of inspiration. This was put into the category “Search for Information and Inspiration”. For participants whose responses were put into category “Search for Social Interaction”, the participants often engaged in intensive social media use to stay in contact with family and communicate with friends. Participants whose responses were included in the category “Beat of Boredom and Pastimes” were found to often engage in online activities to pass time. For the category “Escape from Negative Emotions”, participants expressed that they wished to forget their problems which causes them to use social media as a means of relieving their negative moods. Participants whose responses were included in “Search for Positive Emotions” stated that their use of social media was to be entertained by funny content that are uploaded by other users for the purpose of relaxing and gaining positive emotions. The findings of this study contributed to the reasons for using social media.

There are also studies that have been done from a Malaysian perspective which examine social media use among millennials. For instance, Omar et al. (2016) studied the usage of social media and to show the outcomes of using social media in a campus environment among 185 students aged 18 to 30. This study used a structured survey method which was self-developed and convenience sampling technique was used for this study. The data analysis was done by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences and included

descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage among the respondents. The top five reasons for social media usage among respondents were to do research work, communicate, get news updates, find communities and carry out online learning. This study shows that millennials and their involvement with social media are inseparable.

Ismail et al. (2019) reported that Malaysian youths were dependent on social media because they could receive news updates and information instantly. A total of 399 respondents aged 18 to 34 participated in a written survey. Ismail et al. (2019) concluded that the participants depended on news and information from social media sites during the occurrences of natural disasters due to the immediacy of news updates as well as their trust and accuracy towards social media creators. Therefore, this not only shows their dependency towards social network sites, but also ascertains their attitude in receiving information and news updates as the soonest possible time.

Yusop and Sumari (2013) carried out a survey that was distributed to 379 participants aged 20 to 24 across six faculties of a public Malaysian university to scrutinise online activities of Malaysian millennials on social network sites. The findings showed that the participants engaged themselves in online activities such as searching for information, reading, sharing information and online shopping. Participants were also engaged in social media activities such as clicking "likes" on posts, social sharing, discussing political and social issues, and sharing opinions and were comfortable in using technology to learn and to find information to complete assignments.

Due to the nature of social media being primarily textual, examining corpus from social network sites is a crucial factor to help understand more about various sociolinguistic aspects that occur within CMC of participants. As millennials make up the largest

demographic among Internet users in Malaysia (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2018), it is likely that researchers may prefer to observe digital discourse written by them for their research. Numerous studies focusing on text collected from social network sites have also been carried out within a Malaysian context. The review provides findings on Facebook analysis first, followed by other social media platforms such as Twitter, blogs and online discussion forums.

For instance, Hassan and Hashim (2009) analysed a corpus of 2 million words from blogs, instant messages, emails and text messages to highlight significant features of Malaysian English as well as examine the language use of these users. Their findings show that many features in spoken English were found in their data, which included code-switching and code-mixing, abbreviations and acronyms, discourse particles, borrowings, affixation, coinage and blending and have been localised into Malaysian's digital discourses. The findings partially reflect the participants' adaptation of their language to meet globalisation and make use of new media for creative and self-expressing purposes.

Language use with localised Malaysian characteristics were also reflected in a study carried out by Stapa and Shaari (2012) who analysed a year's worth of Facebook conversations to find new patterns of online communicative language among 120 young Malaysians. The data were collected from conversations on Facebook for 12 months. The Facebook conversations were analysed using content analysis to examine features and patterns made by the participants. Their study concluded that participants have localised many features, mostly corresponding with "informalisation", that include spelling innovations and modifications, combination words with combination of letter and number homophone, reduction or omission of vowels, replacement of "s" with "z", using one letter

to represent a word, use of playful jargons and use of emoticons. The participants were shown to localise their use of English in their online discourse. Some examples of localised features were words such as “snr” for senior (omission of vowels) and “soz” for sorry and jargons such as “lepaking” (a Malay word with an English suffix) or “Grrr!” (to show anger). Stapa and Shaari (2012) noted that the participants were making new patterns of localised language in their discourse because the findings show distinctive features that are not commonly found among English native speakers in Western countries. In addition, the researchers also noted that some features were used often by one particular gender or ethnic group.

Similar features of word modifications and spelling were found in Hashim et al.’s (2017) study to report the linguistic features found in online communicative language used by youths in an academic setting. Using virtual ethnography and content analysis, the researchers analysed written responses of 41 students from English Language Studies in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia from an online Facebook group. Data was collected by collecting snippets of the conversation in the form of screen captures and content analysis was used to investigate the occurrences of languages which are related to occurrences of code-mixing, code-switching and borrowings of certain words from first and second languages. The findings indicated that participants used a combination of informal and formal language with different linguistic features when interacting with one another. The language features included code switching, code-mixing, fillers, emoticons, modified spellings of words, foreign language word choices as well as colloquial Malaysian English.

Kadir et al. (2012) examined the linguistic features found in online discussion forums among e-learning students from Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia. A total of 110

messages were collected in a span of nearly three months and were subsequently divided into four categories of posting which were Malay posting, English posting, code-switching and others. The language features that were found in the data include letters or number homophones, eccentric spelling, use of capital letters, written out laughter, emoticons, clippings and code-switching. The purpose for using code-switching was also analysed with more detail. The purpose of using code-switching was for greetings, switching to show respect, to mark a specific terminology or to emphasize or clarify a message. Their study showed creative ways the participants communicate online by using code-switching of three languages (Arabic, Malay and English), non-conventional spellings, homophones of letters and numbers, accentuated spelling, capitalised letters, emoticons and other paralinguistic features.

A Malaysian study on discourse particles was carried out by Tay et al. (2016). They collected 200 Facebook conversations from 20 Chinese Malaysian users over a period of two weeks. They analysed discourse particles and pragmatic functions of the Facebook users. Tay et al. (2016) employed past descriptions of the function of discourse particles in Malaysian and Singaporean as a guideline for carrying out an inductive data analysis. Due to the geographical proximity of Singapore and Malaysia, this study's guidelines were suitable to be used to examine discourse particles found in Malaysian contexts. These particles were used to deliver "attitudinal meanings". A crucial feature of this study was the proposed categorisation according to the superordinate functions of the particles, which were either used to reduce or increase social distance. From the findings, it concluded that particles that reduced social distance were commonly used compared to particles that increase social distance.

Yeo and Ting (2017) examined digital characteristics of texts from Facebook status posts of 23 Malaysian university students who were also active Facebook users during the time of the study. A framework from Crystal (2004) was utilised for the data analysis. A few additions were added into the said framework as these netspeak features were not found in the original framework which include the dropping of vowels, homophone, negation, code switching, the use of "2" for repeated words and spacing. A total of 917 netspeak features were identified in Facebook status posts. Notably, netspeak features such as dropping of vowels, punctuation adaption and slang were the three most recurrent features. Their findings concluded that netspeak on Facebook was similar to spoken language and indicated that communication on social media has changed how people communicate.

Nazman et al. (2020) analysed neologisms on Twitter posts to identify the types of words with morphological distortions which are not found from dictionaries. Textual analytics using AntConc software and knowledge of corpus linguistics were employed as the main methodology of this study. A total of 1,000 tweets written in either English or Bahasa Melayu from 50 active Twitter users from Malaysia were collected. Subsequently semi-structured interview with 30 participants was carried out to ask their opinions on the usage of abbreviations and coined words. As a result, the five most recurring words were categorised as words that had partial deletion. Vowel deletion and consonant changing were also part of the morphological distortions recorded in the data. For the findings of the semi-structured interviews, participants repeatedly mentioned two factors which contributed to the usage of these types of words, namely because they were time-saving and the character limitations of the platform itself. Half of the participants noted that they were simpler and sounded trendy, which concludes that the communication style of this platform was more open and informal in which neologisms are often formed and are typically accepted as well

as used among users. Mustafa et al.'s study (2015) aimed to find common word formation processes from Facebook status updates of five Malaysian participants. The study aimed to find the common word formation process in "status" on Facebook among Malaysian Malay young adults. The texts were analysed with content analysis and subsequently categorised into three common word formations processes and were simultaneously discussed along with semi structured interviews that were distributed online with the objective of finding the reasons for the occurrences of these word formation processes in the data. The results indicate that abbreviation, blending and the use of emoticons occurred the most. The reasons users used these features was to save time, fill the communicative gap among users and to show group membership as well as emotions through communicating online. The usage of these features proved that Malaysian users communicate in a nature of informality on Facebook in their digital discourse.

In a Malaysian study carried out by Amir et al. (2012) on language use of male and female bloggers from Malaysian public universities, gendered differences in language features were found. Their results showed that the use of lexical hedges, intensifiers, and empty adjectives happened more frequently among female bloggers compared to Malaysian male bloggers. Amir et al. (2012) analysed blog posts of four bloggers from BlogMalaysia.com, a Malaysian Bloggers Directory. Character and Word Counter with Frequency Statistics Calculator was used to calculate the frequency of occurrences of the characteristics in all blog posts. A checklist with language characteristics from past relevant research was used to identify the occurrence of these language characteristics and any additional findings were noted. In relation to notable gender differences in language use, hedging, tag questions, empty adjectives and intensifiers were frequently used by female bloggers, which related women's language features as depicted in past research. The

researchers cited societal and cultural influences as a factor for these gendered linguistic features in the social media discourse.

Based on the review of the studies above, various language aspects have been studied by using data that was collected from various social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Some studies have chosen to focus on different linguistic aspects such as code-switching (Yeo & Ting, 2017, 2019), spelling alterations (Nazman et al., 2020), emoticons (Kadir et al., 2012), and word formations (Mustafa et al., 2015; Yeo & Ting, 2017). Nonetheless, these studies are not focusing on the gender language aspects of online discourse. Thus far, only Amir et al. (2012) analysed differences in language use between male and female bloggers from Malaysian public universities and found gender differences in the use of lexical hedges, intensifiers, empty adjectives, and tag questions.

2.3 Characteristics of CMC

This section on Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is included as a background to the study of gendered language features in social media communication because CMC has certain characteristics which affect how communication takes place such as the absence of physical cues, uninterrupted typing of messages, and anonymity. In this section, the characteristics of CMC are explained.

CMC is human communication that takes place through the instrumentality of computers (Herring, 1996). CMC addresses the communication that happens in the digital spectrum of the internet and has been defined as a process whereby humans are responsible for taking part in specific contexts via communications in computers in order to achieve and shape media for various purposes (December, 1997; Hancock et al., 2020).

There are also various names that labels CMC across various studies such as "netlingo" (Jansen & James, 2002) or "netspeak" (Crystal, 2001; Jurida, 2007; Yeo & Ting, 2017) but it is generally known as "computer mediated communication" since the communication covers more than just "Internet language" (Crystal, 2011). According to Kern et al. (2016), CMC is primarily categorised into two types: asynchronous and synchronous. Synchronous CMC refers to real time communication (instant-messaging, voice chats, web conferencing), whereas asynchronous CMC happens in postponed time and is highly text-based (emails, forums, discussion boards). Regardless of which mode is being used, both modes have their respective modalities and universally understood abbreviations (Crystal, 2011). Furthermore, CMC is generally classified as a multimodal mode of communication which can include videos, graphics, audios and texts (Herring, 2015; Herring & Stoerger, 2014).

In linguistics itself, CMC is categorised under the applied study of sociolinguistics as it provides fresh, academic data for sociolinguists to study and analyse linguistic variability amongst social identities on the Internet (Androutsopoulos, 2011, 2014). Language is the crucial point to CMC as it focuses on how language is creatively applied and innovatively exploited at a rapid pace of linguistic change to meet the challenges of technology (Locher, 2010). The shift from "language of CMC" towards computer-mediated discourse (Herring, 2004) has provided significant implications for theories and methodologies of CMC research from a sociolinguistic perspective which include the effectiveness of online communities in theorising social contexts and the need to utilise sociolinguistic methods within CMC (Androtopolous, 2006). Thurlow, Lengel, and Tomic (2004) CMC has attracted scholarly attention since the mid-1990s due to its rapid growing popularity and ubiquity among personal computers. CMC is interactive as it produces

interpersonal communication which will be interpreted by the involving persons and are transferred through technology. Nonetheless, the interactivity of CMC is only communicative if all parties have access to communicate in it (Lowry et al., 2009).

Following the transition to web 2.0, the growth of new technologies has increased the interest to study CMC from various sources in different platforms, such as online discussion forums or boards and social networking sites. This is because language in contemporary Web 2.0 appears more relevantly in a coordinated set of visual elements and context is heavily dependent on semiotics as well as reciprocity in language (Androutsopoulos, 2011). Social features in computer mediated discourse, that is, digital discourse is made by the ongoing shift to digitisation of society (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). Averianova (2012) describes digital discourse as a means of communication that mainly comprises creative abbreviations, emoticons, numerated words and so on which are ever present in informal communication exchanges such as text chats. These aspects of digital discourse are purposely typed in erred and unconventional ways in order to minimise effort from typing, or to imitate spoken forms of language in which, however full of intentional spelling errors and incomprehensible words, seem to be able to be coherent (Herring, 2001). Nowadays, the most common use of CMC is found normally in social networking sites where a platform is readily available for those who wish to publish personalised content, such as images, messages and video files (Rosen, Barnett, & Kim, 2011). This has led researchers to study various language aspects that are found in CMC which subsequently led to findings relating to human behaviours, especially online.

Communication technology has led to the dissolution of traditional rule-based context because of its influence on identity construction. (Riva & Galimberti, 1998). In other

words, CMC has led individuals to become increasingly remote from the reality and this affects one's social construction, whether it be online or offline. This is also because of the lack of physical cues that are present in CMC which causes users to act on textual cues. Hence, the reason why it is crucial to observe digital discourse as the contrast between online and offline communication has become increasingly undistinguishable as users are "always on" (Baron, 2010). Community and identity are crucial in language-focused research within CMC as they are important in theorising CMC within media studies (Androutsopoulos, 2006).

Although CMC has been initially looked upon as a gender-free environment for discussion due to the lack of physical cues which contributes to the anonymity factor. However, some studies have proven that this was not the case as there were features which gave away gender identities of users which were proven by the analysis of their online discourse (Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994) gender is generally visible online when it is based on an individual's discourse style and features that they themselves may not be consciously aware of. Thus, surmising that text alone can give away information about their gender during interactions, Gender is one of the socio-demographic variables that explain individual differences on the Internet and is found to be one of the most salience predictors for differences in Internet usage (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014). The Internet has presented many forms of communication which have benefited both men and women to participate in CMC which had led the Internet and CMC to reproduce the larger societal gender status quo (Herring & Stoerger, 2014). Studies claim that traditional gender differences found in discourse style and patterns are carried into CMC (Herring, 1993, 1994; Savicki et al., 1999; Thomson & Murachver, 2001; Yates, 1997). A possible explanation for men and women to maintain their traditional gendered behaviours in CMC could result from

rational self-interest and the convenience of these arrangements which are advantageous to them (Herring, 2003). Another reason for this could be to avoid uneasiness in a gender-free environment where familiar social skills and categorisations are unreliable (O'Brien, 1999). Additionally, Christopherson (2007) surmised that the use of anonymity is not only to manipulate social dynamics in groups but also for self-protection of users' identity.

As online gender language differences are transferred from face-to-face interactions, looking at studies that have observed gender differences from face-to-face communication can show what are the basis of gendered language features based on the genders. The next section will describe gender differences in offline interactions.

2.4 Gender Differences in Offline Language Use

According to Gamble (2004) communications reflect both our personal identities as well as cultural views as male and females which indicates that communication has a crucial part as an analytical tool to analyse gender stereotypes. Therefore, looking at studies which focus on face-to-face communication can provide some insight towards gendered language patterns. The dominance approach proposed by Lakoff (1973) indicates that women used linguistic features that put them into submissive roles compared to their male counterparts. This would indicate an existing power imbalance through the perspective of spoken language. This resulted in a subsequent study of Lakoff (1975) which focused more on the language of differently men and women spoke English. At a young age, girls were taught to speak in a passive way whereas boys should speak in a "rough" manner. Furthermore, women frequently used empty adjectives, intensifiers, quantifiers, tag questions, hedges and polite forms in their speech whereas males were more associated with an assertive and aggressive style of speaking.

Tannen (1990) describes that children learn different ways of communication which she labels as “genderlects” which consequently becomes “rapport-talk” for females and “report talk” for men. “Rapport talk” is described as a communication style to promote social affiliation and emotional connection and “report talk” as a communication style to deliver information without much emotional import. The same article states the importance of women talking about their problems while men talk to maintain their position of power and to negotiate. Aside from that, this presents a general view of women aiming to be intimate with others when talking (otherwise also known as being interpersonally oriented), whereas men talk to achieve their own agendas and gaining information (being task and information oriented).

Basow (2008) studied the speeches of men and women in the workplace. From the study, men were more likely to use assertive speech which refers to the usage of words with the intention of achieving a goal, whereas women use affiliate speech to connect with others. Men were more likely to use assertive speech style when talking about non-personal topics or with strangers. In contrast, women used affiliate speech to appear more likeable and sociable. Socialisation and contextual factors contribute to the attribution of gendered patterns in communication. In the case of socialization, boys and girls were taught to communicate what was considered appropriate for their gender. Whereas for contextual factors emphasises the fact that gendered behaviour depends on certain social situations. This has become a stereotypical expectation when men and women converse in the workplace. Basow and Rubenfeld (2003) examined the effects of gender and gender-typing on communication styles among 172 participants who were asked to rate the possibility of giving certain advice to a friend’s problem and the likelihood of feeling certain emotions when a friend give them advice or sympathy when talking about their own problems. The

results show that gender is linked to communication styles as men gave responses that reduced interpersonal intimacy whereas women did the opposite and gave responses that increased interpersonal intimacy. Men and women also differ in their communication style as women tend to be more expressive, tentative, polite, and social whereas men are generally more assertive and dominant when it comes to communication style (Basow & Rubenfeld, 2003, as cited in Merchant, 2012, p. 22). Overall, the findings indicated that women were generally more expressive, tentative, and polite in conversation, while men are more assertive, and power-hungry.

John Gray's (1992) book about gender differences entitled Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus: A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in a Relationship (1992) has become a significant point of reference in American literature. The book is long but the explicit title implies that men and women are as different as they are from the two planets (namely Mars and Venus), in terms of life goals, necessities and moral values in their way of communication (Gray, 1992). Many of Gray's written examples and explanations on the subject have been used as guidelines on modern gender stereotypes. One of such is the contrastive behaviour of women's talk and men's withdrawal on things that cause them to stress (Gray, 1992). Ahmad and Rethinam (2010) carried out a study to test Gray's (1992) conjectures on gender differences in communication. Ahmad and Rethinam's (2010) questionnaire data were from 300 employees from the Malaysian Postal Services Company headquarters. The results showed that out of the 23 statements made by Gray, only eight were supported whereas 10 were not and five were the opposite of what was suggested in Gray's work. Male respondents preferred to do things individually and are concerned with achieving the bottom line whereas women admit having trouble communicating with those from the opposite sex and are sensitive towards rejection. On the

contrary, findings that were the opposite of what was reflected in Gray's (1992) work include men being careful not to let personal issues interfere with their work, talking to those who have issues, feeling grateful for having reassurance, feeling uneasy with unresolved conflicts and seeking advice or assistance when needed. Therefore, this study may give some insight on the conversational needs and aims that are communicated by Malaysian employees.

Previous studies have agreed that there are differences in gender-specific apology behaviour, therefore portraying women being more apologetic. For instance, Holmes (1989) examined apologies in her corpus study of New Zealand women and men. The corpus was 183 remedial interchanges consisting of apologies and apology responses from university students. The students were asked to note down the exact words of 20 apologies they had heard with context. She found that 75% of apologies were offered by women. Holmes (1995) also suggests that apologies have different functions when utilised by both genders. For women, it shows solidarity and concern whereas men regarded apologies as a sign of weakness and failure. A study by Ogiermann (2008) examined responses towards offensive situations in identical contextual situations by British and Russian students to compare gender and culture specific use of apologies. The discourse completion test produced for the purpose of this study consisted of eight scenarios which depict several offensive situations and two distractors. Participants were asked to imagine themselves in each situation and write their spontaneous reactions using direct speech. The tests were distributed to three British and two Russian universities, respectively. A total of 1,600 responses were obtained from groups with comparable populations. Ogiermann's (2008) results support the idea that women are more apologetic as it showed that British and Russian women do tend to apologise slightly more often than their male counterparts. This purpose of focusing on this speech act was due to its social function in restoring and maintaining relationships.

Schumann and Ross (2010) suggest some reasons for apologetic behaviour may stem from different initiations when facing offensive behaviours. One possibility is that women are focused on maintaining relationships and therefore might apologise to keep the relationship intact whereas men might have a higher threshold towards social forms of pain. This is similar in regard to Tannen's study (1996) which also states that women apologise for the sake of reinforcing connections whereas men avoid doing so as it symbolises loss.

Hedging is more commonly used by women (Lakoff, 1973). The purpose of using hedges is to "weaken or reduce force of an utterance" (Holmes, 1995) and were "attenuators or mitigators of the strength of a speech act" (Holmes, 1984). Holmes (1990) examined tag questions, hedges and intensifiers in the speech of native English speaker by using a distribution analysis of pragmatic particles in women's and men's speech from a corpus of 60,000 words that covered a range of contexts which included informal speeches, semi-formal private interviews and formal public broadcast interview data. Holmes (1990) states that different particles have different functions just as tag questions have variety of forms and functions which can be categorised into four types which are epistemic modal, facilitative, softening and challenging. Women used more facilitative tags than men whereas men use tags to request for confirmation. Men also used "of course" as an intensifier or booster whereas women used it as a formality and for social distance. Engström (2018) examined the British National Corpus 2014 to investigate how the hedges "I think" and "I'm sure" are used among men and women and to test Lakoff's (1973) claim about women using more hedges than men. Additionally, a secondary in-depth study of reasons for using hedges were divided into two separate senses as described in Aijmer (1997) which suggested "I think" could be used to express belief or opinion. The corpus of 11 million words of transcribed speech from 2012 to 2016. The findings show both hedges were frequently used

by females compared to males, which agrees with Lakoff's study and because female speakers want to keep away "the appearance of playing the expert" (Coates, 2003). The division of the senses indicated that "I think" was used to soften utterances and to express opinion, however more males used "I'm sure" to express opinion whereas females used it as a belief marker and is used to seek confirmation about whether a statement is correct.

Rhetorical questions are described as a question asked for the sake of effects or to emphasize a point. Normally, the answer to these questions is already known to the person asking it, which does not necessarily require a response (Rhetorical Question - Examples and Definition, 2018). Larner (2009) states that rhetorical questions are posed for the effect of persuasion, which subsequently encourages listeners to prompt a response. Rhetorical questions are associated with male language features. For instance, Mulac et al. (1990) studied impromptu essays written by 96 primary and secondary school students. One of the analysis of this study was to determine whether the coding of language features could give an accurate determination of a writer's gender. A total of 19 language variables were coded which included mean length sentence, rhetorical questions, adverbials, relative clauses, oppositions, judgmental phrases, action verbs, uncertainty verbs, progressive verbs, hedges, intensive adverbs, justifiers, coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, references to emotion, references to quantity or place, grammatical errors, fillers and contractions. The results showed that males used more active verbs, judgemental phrases, rhetorical questions and wrote more informally whereas females were found to use words with emotion more often, used more relative clauses, hedges and sentence initial adverbs. Mulac et al. (1990) concluded that the results were consistent with sex role stereotypes.

Studies of language and gender have generally shown that gender identities are constructed through the reproduction of stereotypes and ideologies that are specific to their respective gender stereotypes (Jones, 2016). Baker (2014) expressed that a useful concept in the field of gender and language is the idea of gendered discourses which concurs with Sunderland's (2004) suggestion of identifying it through the analysis of traces in language use. From the review of studies above, it can be surmised that there are several gendered differences in language features found in face-to-face communication.

The communication styles between males and females were shown to be different as they communicated for different purposes. Females would use "rapport-talk" to promote social affiliation and emotional connection whereas men used "report talk" to deliver information without much emotional attachment (Tannen, 1990). This was also shown in Basow's (2008) study about how men used assertive speech which refers to the usage of words with the intention of achieving a goal, whereas women use affiliate speech to connect with others. Apologetic behaviour also relates more to women than men (Holmes, 1989; Ogiermann, 2008).

Word choice was also a language feature that showed gendered differences as females tend to use more polite and expressive words while also giving much attention to conversations (Basow & Rubenfeld, 2003). This also reflects Lakoff's (1975) findings that shows the use of tag questions, adjectives, intensifiers, quantifiers, hedges and polite forms in their speech whereas males were more associated with an assertive and aggressive style of speaking. Additionally, males were found to use more rhetorical questions (Mulac et al., 1990) whereas women asked more questions (Basow, 2008).

Aside from looking at gradual changes in offline interactions, online communication may be able to give new insights to the shifting gender of language paradigms. The next section will describe gendered language features which are found in online communication.

2.5 Gender Differences in Online Language Use

This section will describe studies that show gender language differences found in online communication.

Yates (2001) stated that like face-to-face communication, CMC is based on existing social structures and perceptions. Hence, language could be an important part in building and support gendered power differentials in society and CMC could magnify instead of moderate gender differences that are found in face-to-face communicative research (Guiller & Durndell, 2007). Gender studies in the field of CMC took place in the 1980s which coincided with the expansion of the World Wide Web. Thus, it was predicted that the internet would provide a neutral medium for communication because CMC interactions lacked many physical social cues, such as visual cue, which were normally present in face-to-face communications. On the contrary around the 1990s, the discourse styles found in public online discussion forums and chat rooms at the time indicated notable gender differences which concluded males to be more assertive, insulting, sarcastic and profane whereas females were shown to be more accommodating, supportive, affectionate and upbeat. Herring (1996) states that gender differences on the Internet are not randomly distributed among individuals but follow systematic distribution patterns which result in males learning towards adversarial behaviour and females having more attenuated and supportive behaviours. It was also around this time that studies of gender and CMC began to appear in larger quantities (Herring, 1993).

In relation to the motives behind Internet usage, both genders were found to use Internet communication for specific purposes. Jackson et al. (2001) examined gender differences in Internet use and the factors responsible. A number of 630 participants completed a survey which contained questions about email and web use as well as the potential effectiveness and cognitive mediators of use. Path analysis was used to identify mediators of gender difference in Internet usage. Females were found to use the Internet communication tools for social interaction and relationship maintenance whereas males use the Internet for information and financial purposes (cited in Morris, 2013 p.9).

Herring (1994) detailed the observations of various computer-mediated discussion lists since 1991 which led to the making of an anonymous survey which was posted to LINGUIST-L, a discussion list, and asked subscribers what they thought of the discussions and their reasons for not contributing to them. and attenuation. The main reasons given by both men and women for not participating in the discussion was due to the "intimidation" but both genders reacted differently towards feeling intimidated. Men accepted such behaviour as normal in an academic setting whereas women responded with aversion to intimidation. For participants who did participate in the discussion, the different styles of online communication styles were described as men using adversarial characteristics which included put-downs, strong and often contention assertions, lengthy posts, self-promotions and sarcasms whereas females showed supportiveness. Herring (1994) also expresses the different communication ethics between male and female which was derived from the phenomenon of flaming which defined as a by-product of the anonymous nature of CMC which leads its users to a state of "disinhibition" which leads them to forget that they are interacting with a human being at the receiving end of an individual's emotional outbursts (Kiesler et al., 1984, Kim & Raja, 1990, Shapiro & Anderson, 1985). Herring (2003, 2004)

added on in later studies that women tend to be more polite, supportive, emotionally expressive, and less verbose than men in online public forums. On the contrary, men are more likely to insult, challenge, express sarcasm, use profanity, and send long messages in online discourse.

A study carried out by Rossetti (1998) to examine the use of gender difference on language use in email in discussion groups. A total of 82 email messages were randomly collected from various email groups. The analysis of the data was based on Herring's (1994) findings whereby expressions of aggressiveness were related to males and supportiveness to females. The findings show that there was an obvious difference in the online language use between male and females. A majority of aggressive expressions such as personal attacks, put-downs and references to "taboo" body parts were written by male. On the contrary, women used expressions that strengthen relationships, offered support, appreciation and thanks. As a result, men reflected an "authoritative" contribution to the discussions whereas women frequently offered less direct expressions and showed interests in the contributions of the discussion.

Guiller and Durndell (2007) examined the gendered patterns in language use and interaction styles in asynchronous computer mediated discussion groups of 197 students in formal and educational context. For the methodology, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used according to the methodological framework of qualitative content analysis. A coding system developed using Atlas.ti 4.2 was used to code 699 postings by students. It was found that the use of individual linguistic variables, except for intensifiers which were used more frequently by females than males, were similar. However, 11 out of 16 stylistic variables produced noteworthy results. Contributions by female students

contained empathic utterances, personal experiences, self-disclosure as well as references to their own emotions and feelings. On the contrary, males sent more postings than females which constrained controversial statements, humour, strong assertions and presuppositions. Hence, females were more likely to have aligned agreements and make more personal as well as emotional contributions than males whereas males were likely to use authoritative language and negative responses in their interactions. They concluded that their results showed that CMC does not guarantee an environment which is "gender-free" as cues to gender were found to be recurrent in the CMC of participants.

An article by Postmes and Spears (2002) examined the equalisation hypothesis of 2 studies which shows that gender differences do occur in online interactions. Overall, both studies examined dominance and self-stereotyping in groups that had both sexes who participated in online discussions. In the first study, they explored the types of differences that are expected to be used by 56 men and women in online settings. Eight participants were individually placed in an isolated cubicle and were allocated to groups which had two of each gender and the genders of all participants were unknown to each other. All groups discussed a preferable solution to a choice-dilemma (Kogan & Wallach, 1967) that had been altered to be stereotypically consistent towards the expertise and interest of men. The study showed that men contributed more to the discussion. For this study, Postmes and Spears (2002) concluded that gender differences can be indicated in online discussions whereby an individual's gender is identified but they are anonymous to one another. The second study examined the hypothesis that gender differences are more obvious in anonymous settings when gender stereotypes are accessible. This study involved 138 participants whose gender identity was not exposed and were required to discuss two topics that were stereotypically masculine and feminine. Participants were put into groups with others without knowing each

other's gender and discussed the two topics through a similar CMC as mentioned in the first study. The results of the second study showed that gender stereotypical behaviours were evident when individuals were depersonalised, i.e., anonymous and unindividuated. In other words, when gender stereotypes were activated before discussion, men were more likely to dominate the group discussion and asked fewer questions when the topic was masculine whereas the females were likely to lead in topic discussion when its discussions were about a feminine topic. From this study, gender stereotypes were accentuated depending on what the group task was, that is, the masculine or feminine topic. This would also indicate that the findings disagree that anonymity would lead to equalization between genders.

Kapidzic and Herring (2011) empirically evaluate the claim of recent gender and CMC that expressions of gender distinctness among teens in online environments are becoming less recurrent and traditional. Five sites for analysis were chosen based on their user frequency and individual visits per month. A sample of the first 200 messages from the same date were selected for analysis and were subsequently coded for the demographic gender variable. Kapidzic and Herring (2011) used discourse and content analysis methods to examine gender preferences in linguistic features and communication style found in synchronous chat messages in five popular teenage chat sites after identifying its popularity using a website rank page. The data were analysed on four communicative levels, namely, micro linguistic, discourse-pragmatic, stylistic and visual features. The findings indicated that some gender differences were weaker upon observation whereas other which were obvious were consistent with findings from previous research. Additionally, boys of the study also adopted flirtatious and overtly sexual stylistics whereas stylistics from girls were friendlier and less sexual. As a result, the overall findings of this study indicated that they were consistent with traditional findings which agree that females presented themselves as

emotional, friendly, good listeners, whereas males appeared more assertive, manipulative, initiating and appeared dominant (Magnuson & Dundes, 2008).

Newman, Groom, Handelman, and Pennebaker (2008) studied gender differences in language use by analysing 14,000 texts files from 70 separate studies using Linguistic Enquire and word Count. The study found that women used more social words which were related to psychological processes (e.g., mad, uneasy, remember, nervous), social processes (e.g., sister, friends), verbs and negations whereas men discussed various concerns, used longer articles and swore more often. The findings of this study mirrored previous works. For instance, men used more intensive adverbs (Mulac et al., 2000) and refer to positive feelings as well as negative emotions (Mulac et al., 1990; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Men's language included a frequent use of articles, long words, and swearing. At the sentence level of analysis, women were found to use "rapport" style to discuss social topics and express internal thoughts and feelings more often whereas men used "report" style to describe the quantity and location of objects (Herring, 1993; Tannen, 1990). The overall data from this study supports findings from previous research and suggests that word-count strategies are viable and highly efficient to linguistic analysis based on human coders.

Thomson and Murachver (2001) examined gender-preferential language style in emails in three separate studies. The first study required participants to send messages to a designated "netpal" and the analysis showed that it was possible to classify the participants' gender with high accuracy. In the next two experiments, the researchers wanted to test whether participants who read the emails could accurately identify the gender of the author. In the second study, participants were given a selection of 16 messages from the first study and were asked to identify the author's gender. The results from this study showed the

author's gender identity from 14 out of 16 messages was predicted correctly. In the third study, a subset of variables that were identified in the first study were used to create female and male versions of messages. Participants of this study were asked to identify whether a female or male wrote these messages. Overall, the results showed gender-preferential language is present in digital discourse and individuals are able to identify an author's gender using these gendered language differences. The results showed that females used more emotive words and men used more self-promotion, sarcasm, insults, and strong assertions (Thomson & Murachver, 2001 as cited in Morris, 2013, p.10).

Hills (2000) conducted a study to examine whether males and females can effectively convey a false gender identity in CMC and what language aspects have changed from gender-preferential linguistic features. Data from 31 participants were used as control condition whereas another 52 participants were recruited for the experimental conditions. Participants from both the control and experimental condition were paired with a netpal of the same sex whom they were not acquainted with and were tasked with sending five messages to one another in a span of two weeks. Notably, participants in the experimental condition were asked to convey themselves as the opposite gender without using any gender specific information. Subsequently, the experimental condition participants were asked to rate which gender they thought their netpal was and the effectiveness of their gender deception towards their netpals. Each message from both conditions was coded for topics of discussion, which were coded as male, female or neutral and 12 linguistic variables which include references to emotion, provision of personal information, opinions, self-derogatory comments, insults, compliments, apologies, subordinating conjunctions, modals, intensive adverbs, and adjectives. The analysis of the 12 linguistic variables showed that females made more references to emotion, gave more personal information, made more self-derogatory

comments and used more modals and intensive adverbs which agreed with previous studies (Mulac et al., 1990; Thomson & Muracvher, 2001) and males were found to insult their netpals more than females (Herring, 1994; Thomson & Murachver, 2001) and used more adjectives (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Overall, many of the gender differences found in the control condition supported findings of previous research. For the topics of discussion, participants used gender-typical topics to portray false gender identity which led to conclude that the linguistic features used in their "pretend" gender identities were more "extreme", and this led to participants to conclude that participants were often not deceived by their netpals because of their "extreme" use of gender-typical topics. This also shows that participants would retain many aspects of their own gender-preferential language even while adopting a false gender identity. Participants could only use their personal exposures of gender language features to deduce their netpal's gender identities in the absence of context cues such as names and gender-specific information. Hills (2000) stressed the importance of patterns of gender features rather than individual features which would provide CMC users some confidence about predicting the gender of their communicants.

Guiller and Durndell (2007) examined the gendered patterns in language use and interaction styles in asynchronous computer mediated discussion groups of 197 students in formal and educational context. For the methodology, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used according to the methodological framework of qualitative content analysis. A coding system developed using Atlas.ti 4.2 was used to code 699 postings by students. It was found that the use of individual linguistic variables, except for intensifiers which were used more frequently by females than males, were similar. However, 11 out of 16 stylistic variables produced noteworthy results. Contributions by female students contained empathic utterances, personal experiences, self-disclosure as well as references to

their own emotions and feelings. On the contrary, males sent more postings than females which constrained controversial statements, humour, strong assertions and presuppositions. Hence, females were more likely to have aligned agreements and make more personal as well as emotional contributions than males whereas males were likely to use authoritative language and negative responses in their interactions. They concluded that their results showed that CMC does not guarantee an environment which is "gender-free" as cues to gender were found to be recurrent in the CMC of participants.

Hayat et al. (2017) examined gendered discourse patterns using social network analysis on TheMarkerCafe, an online social network. A number of 21,413 members were picked as the final sample because these members disclosed their gender, had at least one friendship connection and have posted at least one comment on the platform. The researchers used the Mann-Whitney U test to test significant gender differences based on the number of posts written, number of comments written, and posts rankings. The results showed that men wrote more posts whereas women commented more on other's posts. In addition, female posts received higher ranking than males and a possible factor for this could be the supportiveness that female messages show in the platform. The researchers agreed that the findings of their study strengthened evidence of men's assertive and dominant discourse style and women's cooperative and supportive roles that are presented in previous studies.

On the platform of Twitter, Ott (2016) did a corpus study of gendered language and found significant differences in terms of word usage and topics discussed. This study used a large corpus of tweets and utilised the Naive Bayes algorithm to train the classifier to use data marked for the gender of the author of each tweet. Features included in the classifiers included words, parts of speech, engrams of both words and parts of speech and pairs of

syntactically dependent words. Aside from this, a binomial logistic regression using word categorisation by Linguistics Inquiry and Word Count was carried out to confirm the likelihood of a tweet being authored by a certain gender. The results indicated that words such as “home” and “family” were prone to be used by females who often updated their profiles with daily activities and familial life. Males on the other hand tweeted more about topics regarding the news, technology, sex and even anger issues. An overview of this study shows that men tend to type in longer sentences and contain more words belonging to auxiliary verb classes and articles. For the length of their tweets, women’s tweets were shorter and used abbreviations and non-fluencies whereas men’s tweets were longer and used more articles as well as auxiliary verbs.

The literature reviewed in this section shows that gendered differences in language use among males and females. Several key studies have also reported that females were more likely to respond positively to participants online by agreeing and in contrast, a high proportion of males tend to contradict or express disagreements (Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994). Similarly, because of their disagreeing statements, it further influences males to make strong assertions which contrast to the attenuative and supportiveness shown by female users online (Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994). In relation to assertive and attenuative behaviour, both characteristics were found in Herring’s (1994) observation and belonged to males and females respectively. Males are more likely to be assertive in their discourse due to their nature to confront when participating in agnostic debate whereas females show supportiveness and attenuation by the desire not to be imposed upon. A study by Hayat et al. (2017) concurred with previous studies which showed evidence of men’s assertive and dominant discourse as well as women’s cooperative and supportive roles.

Other past studies have also aligned findings that showed males as being more information oriented whereas females tend to show supportiveness as well as being interpersonally connected when interacting (Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Jackson et al., 2001; Morris, 2013). As women prioritize the personal connections with one another, this leads to them being attenuative (Herring, 1994). Herring (1996) states that a subject discussed predominantly by females (even though there are males present in that particular discussion) would be composed majorly of discourse with feminine communication aspects and vice versa (females in discussion forums which are male oriented). This reveals that certain topics are often debated majorly by certain genders and are subjective to each genders interest. Some studies examined the differences of communication topics between females, who were found to talk more about social topics, and males, who discussed information-oriented topics such as the news more frequently (Newman et al., 2008; Ott, 2016).

Herring (2003, 2004) finds that females were more polite, supportive, emotionally expressive, and less verbose than men in online public forums whereas men were more likely to insult, challenge, express sarcasm, use profanity, and send long messages in online discourse. Men were also found to lean towards a more authoritative role in conversation (Postmes & Spears, 2002) and are also likely to implicate profanities and insults into their discourse (Herring, 1994; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Ott's (2016) study shows that words relating to familial life were prone to be used by females whereas males used more words relating to topics about the news, technology, sex and even anger issues. Reflecting on the habit of apologizing in real life, some studies have found that females are likely to apologise when online as well, thus mirroring the characteristics of their offline stereotypes. (Herring, 2003; Thomson et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies have revealed that males tend

to ask more rhetorical questions whereas females often asked questions to elicit a response from others (Herring, 1993).

However, there are also notable studies which indicate that the distinctiveness of gender differences in online communication is not always present. In the rest of this section, the findings of studies which shows flexibility of gender differences or gender indistinctiveness found in language use when using CMC.

2.5.1 Indistinctiveness of Gender Differences in Language use in CMC

Research has indicated that the distinctiveness of gender differences in CMC is not always present. For instance, Savicki et al. (1996) carried out a study that focused on group gender compositions that hypothetically relate to gender roles and group process functions on the Internet. The data sample of the study was drawn from 27 online discussion groups that were randomly selected from the Internet and from commercial information services. A total of 26,922 valid messages were coded for language content which relates to gender roles as mentioned in previous research. Content analysing using ProjectH Codebook was used to code the coding categories. The results showed there was a large ambiguity of gender in the dataset because a surprising number of messages could not be categorised as being sent by either a male or female. Therefore, this study indicates a mixed results of language choice in CMC context by both genders.

In comparison, Huffaker and Calvert (2005) carried out a study examining gender similarities and difference in online identity and language use in teenage blogs. For the collection of blogs, they were randomly retrieved by using search terms such as “teens”, “teen blogs”, and ‘teenagers” from LiveJournal and Blogspot which are two of the oldest and most popular blog hosting sites at the time. A total of 184 blogs (63 blogs by teenage

males and 121 blogs by teenage females) were used for the study. DICTION 5.0, a content analysis software package which evaluates word count, content type and language tone in documents was employed to create language scores for tone and semantic features. They found out that male language in these blogs were more aggressive and active with resolute and inflexibility which reflected findings of Susan Herring in CMC (Herring, 1993, 2000, 2001) but females did not use more passive or cooperative language as suggested in Lakoff's work (1975). In addition, males used more emoticons than females, which was contrasting from previous studies (Lee, 2003; Witmer & Katzman, 1997; Wolf, 2000). The results also agree that the use of blogs has allowed this generation of Internet users to become more androgynous in online interaction. This is shown as males frequently used emoticons more than females whereas females did not use passive, accommodating or cooperative language as mentioned in previous studies (Herring, 2000; Savicki et al., 1996). This study also supports the idea that the language use in CMC shifts with the participants of a community.

Nevala (2015) scrutinised whether current gendered patterns of communication on Facebook could be parallel to previous studies of CMC and gender. A number of 154 comments were collected from the Facebook page of Humans of New York as the data for this study. Qualitative Content Analysis was used to categorise the collected comments four categories of female style, male style, mixed style and neutral style. The categorisation of comments was done according to the gendered features that appeared in each comment and the basis of this categorisation was according to the typical gendered features that were reported in previous research. Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis was also used to gain a thorough understanding of gender communication differences. The findings show that half of comments made by female users were categorised under female style as they showed forms of appreciation, support, politeness and personal orientation whereas the other half

contained more masculine features such as authoritative orientation and assertive language, which was different from stereotypical women online communication. For comments made by male users, only 30 comments were categorised under male style which featured authoritative tone but lacked an adversarial side. This challenges the findings of previous studies (Herring, 1993, 1996, 2003). The remaining comments made by males had female features such as personal orientation to feelings and appreciation. The results show that gender communication styles are fluid and flexible and are produced according to different communicative situations.

Thomson et al. (2001) designed three studies to examine gender-preferential language styles within electronic discourse. For the first experiment, 22 participants had to send digital messages to two designated 'netpal' who was actually one of the researchers. Each netpal had female labels who used female-style language and a male label who used male-style language. These gender preferential language styles were previously identified in email messages from a previous study (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Participants were asked to send at least five messages to their netpals in a period of two weeks. The word count of messages were calculated and subsequently coded into 13 language features including references to emotion, requests for information, answering or referring to netpal's previous message, giving opinions, self-derogatory comments, insults, compliments to the netpal, apologies, subordinating conjunctions, modals and hedges, intensive adverbs, adjectives, and personal information. Participants used more intensive adverbs, subordinating conjunctions, compliments, modals and hedges, questions, self-derogatory comments, references to emotions, providing personal information and referring their netpal's message when writing to a female style netpal whereas adjectives, opinions and insults were used more frequently when writing to their male-style netpals. This suggests that the language

style of participants will change according to which netpal they are writing to. In order to determine whether the participants accommodated gender labels rather than the linguistic styles of their netpals, the researchers manipulated the styles and labels of the netpals in the second experiment. A number of 65 participants joined the second study and none of the participants from the previous experiment took part. Each participant was paired with one netpal who either used male-preferential or female-preferential language styles with either a male or female label which did not necessarily follow their respective gendered language styles. The previously mentioned 13 features were coded for this study as well. The findings showed female participants made more self-derogatory participants whereas male participants gave more opinions. When converting with netpals who used a female style, both male and female participants made more intensive adverbs and modals, self-derogatory comments, references to emotion, gave more personal information, references to emotion and netpal's messages. On the contrary, opinions were more frequently used by participants when conversing with a netpal using male style. Gendered language styles had more influence over participants' language compared to their netpals' gender labels. The overall findings showed that participants accommodated more to netpals whose gender labels and styles matched compared with netpals whose labels and styles showed inconsistency.

Dalampan (2006) carried out an exploratory study on linguistic qualifiers and intensifiers found in Web Course Tools. The participants consisted of 19 students who were tasked with analysing two transcripts of postings that are separated by gender from 589 students from Web Course Tools. Each transcript was coded for linguistic qualifiers and intensifiers as recorded by Fahy (2002) using the Find and Replace function in Microsoft Word. The findings contradicted the initial hypothesis that females use more qualifiers than men as the results about using different qualifiers by both genders were mixed. Males did

tend to use some qualifiers more often than females, but females used certain qualifiers with a higher frequency than males. For intensifiers, females frequently used intensifiers than males with a mere significance. On the contrary, pronouns were used more frequently by males than females whereas this was the opposite for hedges whereby females used them more often. This may have been influenced by the setting of an academic discussion where both genders may use different qualifiers to mark their assertions to become tentative in order to continue the discussion and reduce disagreements. The results contradicted the initial hypothesis which surmised that females use qualifiers and personal pronouns more frequently than males. Nonetheless, the differences between the usage were not significant and attributes a similar academic background as a possible factor of minimal differences between the two genders as the participants were likely to share experiences and learn from one another. Another possible influence for the results may stem from the asynchronous mode of CMC whereby participants tend to post longer messages and use more polite words (Herring, 2000). This surmises that the mode of CMC may be a factor to the shifting gender language features used by users.

The studies in this section showed that gender language features are flexible and can be used by users of different genders. Some studies showed that gendered language feature may shift depending on the mode of CMC (Dalampan, 2006) whereas some mentioned that gender communication styles are fluid and flexible and are formulated according to communicative situations (Nevala, 2015). Some studies also support the idea that gendered language use is influence by the participants of the interaction instead of being consistent with their respective gendered language styles (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Thomson et al., 2001). The large ambiguity of gender in Savicki et al.'s (1996) dataset indicates that users are implementing cross gendered language features in their online discourse.

Aside from studying gender language features of gendered language features, some researchers have carried out studies which compare features of online and offline communication. The next section will discuss studies that have compared language features of online communication with face-to-face interactions.

2.6 Comparison of Features of Online and Offline Communication

This section presents findings of studies that compare CMC communication and offline communication. Studies have shown that certain features of language found in offline communication are carried into online discourse.

A study on code-switching was carried out by Yeo and Ting (2019). The objective of the study was to examine languages used in Facebook wall posts by Malaysian. Gumperz's (1982) model of communication on conversational code-switching was used for the analysis. Facebook wall posts of 24 students were analysed to examine how they used other languages to engage in conversational exchanges. Malaysian university students tend to use the language they wrote best, and English was used as their base language or code-switching language. The function of code-switching is the use of more than one code of language in a single speech event (Gumperz, 1982) and was primarily used due to the informal nature of Facebook. As shown in this study, some functions of code-switching were not applicable with Gumperz's (1982) model because of Facebook's digital nature. This included the typing of words on keyboards as social media communication is a written medium and eliminates certain functions of code-switching which are mostly relevant in face-to-face communication. Overall, the near-absence of reiteration, addressee specification and referential functions suggests that this is the point where code-switching functions differs between digital communication and face-to-face verbal interactions in

which Gumperz's (1982) model was originally constructed to explain. This study also concluded that the nature of online communication does not entirely reflect spoken interactions.

Haferkamp et al. (2012) examined gender differences in self-presentations on StudiVZ, a German social networking site. This study used an online survey and content analysis of 106 publicly accessible profiles. The results surmised that men were more likely to look for friends and collect information whereas, women's motives are driven by hedonistic perspectives of personal enjoyment and self-presentation. Haferkamp et al. (2012) pointed out that it is possible to assume that some gender differences that have been identified in face-to-face communication are likely to be replicated on social networking sites.

Subrahmanyan et al. (2006) examined adolescents' construction and presentation of their identity and sexuality in online chat rooms. Developing sexuality is also reflected in the dynamics of gendered communication, therefore the relationship of declared gender to sexual communication, obscene language and sexualised nicknames were also explored in this study. A sample of 38 chat sessions collected within two months were used to code utterances and nicknames. The data was analysed at two levels, namely the level of the entire chat room environment and the level of individual nicknames. The results showed that older males made more explicit sexual comments and used obscene language.

Some studies have also compared language features between online and face-to-face communication. For instance, Guadagno et al. (2011) scrutinised gender differences which occur on an online setting named Second life. The participants of this study were 352 users who reported their activities and experiences while using the platform. Their findings

revealed that both genders reciprocate their gender roles as they do in real life. It was discovered that men were involved in "agentic" activities whereas women participated more towards interpersonally oriented tasks. Overall, the results of the study supported that individuals behaved consistently with traditional gender role expectations.

Morris (2013) carried out a study on gender differences in Facebook communication behaviours to examine whether gendered face-to-face communication are maintained or transformed into online communication. Surveys and content analysis of data were carried out as the methods of this study. A total of 96 participants responded to the online questionnaire posted through SurveyMonkey that was posted on the researcher's personal Facebook wall. Survey participants were tasked with answering seven questions that were related to their experiences using Facebook such as the number of Facebook friends they had, typical duration for using Facebook on a weekly basis, and motivations for using the platform. For the content analysis phase, the researcher analysed Facebook posts that appeared on their personal Facebook newsfeed over a period of 10 days. A total of 400 Facebook posts were collected for each gender. The findings of the content analysis found that women posted more about emotions and feelings whereas men posted more straightforward facts and statements which agreed with the findings of face-to-face communication. Additionally, men promoted autonomy whereas women promoted solidarity in the data found as well. In general, the results of this study showed that women were more interpersonally oriented whereas men were task and individually oriented in their communication behaviours found in Facebook. Overall, the data from this study find that there are minimal differences between communication on Facebook and face-to-face communication.

The presence of gendered language features in online discourse concurs with the studies which have previously stated that gendered differences from face-to-face communication are carried into online settings (Herring, 1993, 1994; Savicki et al., 1999; Thomson & Murachver, 2001; Yates, 1997). The studies of this section indicated that online gender communication styles do not contrast greatly with patterns from face-to-face interactions. Both genders were found to have different motives when conversing online (Guadagno et al., 2011; Morris, 2013) which reflects findings of studies that only focus on language features in online communication (Jackson et al., 2001; Newman et al., 2008). Females are known to build a positive image on SNS whereas males did not invest much effort into this aspect and surmised that normal (Haferkamp et al., 2012). Smith and Kollock (1999) summarize this phenomenon well instead of creating a whole new identity, users of CMC utilize their offline identities to shape their online interactions and activities. It should also be noted that there is a lack of comparative studies that analyse gendered language features between online and offline communication.

Following the shift of Internet communication from basic texts to multimodalities (Herring & Stoerger, 2014), a new mode of analysing online content known as Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis was introduced by Herring (2004). The next section will describe this method of analysis in CMC.

2.7 Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis

Herring (2004) proposed Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) as a new methodology for analysing content that exceed the limitations of traditional mode of analysis. Herring (2004) describes the basic methodology of CMDA as “language focused content analysis which is supplemented by discourse analysis methods which are adapted

from the study of spoken conversation and written text analysis. In general, any analysis of online mannerism found through textual observations is part of CMDA (Herring, 2004). Goffman (1959) further stipulated that a speaker may be oblivious to what is done in the process, and therefore direct observations have the potential to process a valid and general concept of that person's behaviour.

The traditional view of content analysis faces is challenged by the growing number of web studies which analyses different types of content such as textual conversations and hyperlinks, which are different from those that are usually studied in conversation analysis (Herring, 2009). Although these components can be excluded in favour of using content analysis, it would be advisable to integrate different methods when analysing the content of a multimodal website instead of limiting the analysis to where content analysis methods leave off (Herring, 2009). Therefore, CMDA would be suitable for textual studies of CMC.

CMDA can use both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods in CMDA do resemble traditional content analysis, but with an addition of broader spectrum of approaches. Herring (2004) introduces six sampling techniques which are by theme, by time, by phenomenon, by individual or group, convenience and random sampling. This research applies Herring's (2004) sampling technique by phenomenon, which would be the language features found in the data.

Besides that, carrying out a "coding and counting"' approach is also a part of CMDA. One of the two approaches to coding was explained in Shanthi et al. (2017) whereby the researcher can choose to code by emergent codings found in the data or by a predetermined list of coding categories as mentioned from previous research from the same field or existing theories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For the first approach, research categories will gradually

emerge from the data collection. On the contrary, the second approach will require the researcher to code according to the predetermined categories. Saldaña (2013) defines a code as "summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" that could range from a single word, a phrase or even a full paragraph. The interpretation of all the coded utterances should be read several times according to the context it originates to properly analyse to their intended meanings (Shanthi et al., 2017). The relevance of using CMDA can be used to study Internet discourse to uncover findings about language variety and speech meanings (Saifullah, 2018). Gender styles are classified as the most resistant to technological reshaping, most likely because they have a high level of abstraction and their expressions are not restricted to a specific communicative modality (Herring, 2013). Therefore, using CMDA to identify gender styles found in Web 2.0 is appropriate as this is the kind of phenomenon that this paradigm was constructed for (Herring, 2013).

The next section will discuss about different theoretical approaches to study language and gender that have been used in previous studies.

2.8 Theoretical Approaches of Language and Gender

Linguistic features which represent masculinity and femininity proves that there are discourse styles which reflect gendered characteristics (Cameron, 2010). Since the publication of Lakoff's work, other linguists such as Tannen and Cameron have contributed to sociolinguistic research that focuses on language and gender based on different theoretical approaches. These theoretical approaches are used to critically evaluate gender and language. There are four primary theoretical approaches to study language and gender which are "Deficit", "Dominance", 'Difference", and "Dynamic" approach. These approaches have

been widely used by researchers to examine linguistic features (Akhter, 2014; Coates, 2015; Nevala, 2015). Nevala (2015) states that more than one approach can be applied at the same time as they do not have any rigid boundaries. This section will briefly describe these approaches as well as point out the advantage and disadvantages that have been mentioned in previous literature.

2.8.1 Deficit Approach

The deficit approach was described as the earliest work in the field of gender and language which came from Lakoff (1975). This approach established that Women's Language is characterised by certain linguistics forms such as mild expletives, exaggerated politeness, use of coloured vocabulary, hedges, "empty" adjectives, intensifiers, and phrasing questions as statements, use of tag questions. Lakoff (1973) argued that these features reflected insecurities or lack of confidence in opinions which were linked to women's subordinate status. Cameron (2010) describes the "deficit approach" in which women's behaviours are compared against the explicit or implicit male standard. In other words, this approach interpreted men's language as the norm and women's language as deviant (Coates, 2018).

The criticism towards this approach was that it implied that there was something intrinsically wrong with women's language and urged women to learn to speak like men in order to be taken seriously (Coates, 2015).

2.8.2 Dominance Approach

The dominance approach was developed by Zimmerman and West (1975) who realised that men's powerful position in society is reflected in mixed-sex interactions, especially in interruption and floor apportionment. This approach primarily views women as

an oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences from the perspective of male dominance and women subordination (Coates, 2015). Lakoff (1975) suggested that the Dominance approach shows the men were naturally more dominant than women through speech patterns or behaviour. This approach was criticised as "manifestations of a patriarchal social order" (Talbot, 1998 p. 132 cited in Akhter, 2014 p. 5). The Dominance approach explains that men and women live in the same cultural and linguistic world but power and status are distributed unequally, as shown in men's speech which reflect male dominance over women to keep the subordination status of women (Gyamera, 2019).

2.8.3 Difference Approach

Studies of gender and language experienced new ways of examining gendered differences in language through the Difference approach in the 1980s. This approach was also called "two-cultures" model because of it emphasises that women and men are from different subcultures. One of the most prominent studies to use this approach is Tannen's (1990) study which argued that "rapport talk" that women used was effective in strengthening relationships whereas men used "report talk". This shows that both genders communicate differently due to the different cultures. This approach was also what inspired Gray's book (1992) on gender differences and viewed the gender subculture as the two planets Mars and Venus. Studies that use the difference approach such as Maltz and Borker (1982) argued that children from same-sex groups lead to gender-differentiated language practice and drew on Gumperz's (1982) work on miscommunication of ethnically diverse cultures to argue that men and women interacted differently due to their socialisation into distinct gender subcultures. This approach allowed researchers to show the strengths of linguistics strategies used by women (Coates, 2015).

The advantage of using this approach for analysis allowed researchers to examine language and gender without concern for oppression or powerlessness, as shown in previous approaches, and focus on the strength of linguistic strategies used by females.

2.8.4 Dynamic Approach

The most recent approach to analysing language and gender is known as the "dynamic approach", "discursive approach" or the "social constructionist perspective". This approach views gender identity as a social construct rather than a "given" social category (Coates, 2015). Lemish (2008) describes gender as "an ongoing process of learned sets of behaviours, expectations, perceptions, and subjectivities that define what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man". Socio-cultural approaches treat power relations between men and women in each community as potentially an important influence on their linguistic behaviour (Cameron, 2009). This approach views gender as an ongoing accomplishment through repeated actions instead of something that is acquired at an early stage of life (Cameron, 2005). In other words, speakers are "doing gender" instead of "being" a particular gender which consequently leads to studying gender differences from a performativity perspective (Coates, 2015). Performativity is based on a repetition of acts that re-enact a set of socially established gendered meanings (Butler, 1990 p. 140). The term "performativity" was taken from Austin (1962) who identified the word as a "class of utterance which do not simply describe pre-existing state of affairs but actually bring states of affairs into being". The concept of this approach has been welcomed into the research of language and gender as a corrective to past approaches of gender analysis (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999). Cameron (2009) states that social-cultural approaches treated power relations between men and women from a community as important to their linguistic behaviour.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This second chapter has summarised past literature that are relevant to this study which include studies on millennials and social media use, offline gender language features, online gender language features, the indistinctiveness of gender differences in language use in CMC, computer mediated discourse analysis as well as theoretical approaches of gender and language.

Studies focusing on various language aspects including code-switching (Yeo & Ting, 2017, 2019), spelling alterations (Nazman et al., 2020), emoticons (Kadir et al., 2012) and word formations (Mustafa et al., 2015; Yeo & Ting, 2017) have been previously investigated within a Malaysian context. However, a gap of knowledge concerning gendered language features found in online communication has only been done by Amir et al. (2012) so far, whose study was analysed gendered differences in language use between male and female Malaysian bloggers.

Studies focusing on gendered language features found in face-to-face communication have noted different use of various features from both genders. For instance, men and women are known to communicate differently and for different purposes. (Basow, 2008; Tannen, 1990). Some significant language features such as apologues (Holmes, 1989; Ogiermann, 2008), use of polite and expressive words (Basow & Rubenfeld, 2003), tag questions, adjectives, intensifiers, quantifiers, hedges and polite forms in speech (Engström, 2018; Holmes, 1990; Lakoff, 1975) were previously categorised as feminine language features. Additionally, males were found to use more active verbs, judgemental phrases, and rhetorical questions (Mulac et al.,1990), as well as being more assertive and dominant in their communication style (Basow & Rubenfeld, 2003). Additionally, the communication

styles between males and females were different as males communicate to deliver information (Tannen, 1990) whereas females communicate to build and maintain relationships (Basow, 2008).

Some of the gendered language behaviours and linguistic patterns found in face-to-face communication were also reflected in online communication. Herring (1996) proved that gender differences in online discourse are not randomly distributed but followed a systematic pattern of distribution. For instance, males tend to express disagreements which lead to strong assertions whereas females show attenuative features and supportiveness (Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994). Studies have also showed that males were more information oriented because they frequently discuss information-oriented topics such as the news more frequently (Newman et al., 2008; Ott, 2016) whereas females were interpersonally oriented (Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Jackson et al., 2001; Morris, 2013) because females prioritize the personal connections with one another and talk about social topics this leads to them being attenuative (Herring, 1994). Females were also known to be more polite, supportive, emotionally expressive, and less verbose than men in online public forums whereas men were more likely to insult, challenge, express sarcasm, use profanity, and send long messages in online discourse (Herring, 2003, 2004). Males were shown to be more self-promoting in their discourse (Herring, 2003; Thomson & Murachver, 2001) and talk more explicitly about sexual references conducted in online teen chat rooms by (Subrahmanyan et al., 2006). Studies have found that females are likely to apologise when online as well, thus mirroring the characteristics of their offline stereotypes (Herring, 2003; Thomson et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies have revealed that males tend to ask more rhetorical questions whereas females often asked questions to elicit a response from others (Herring, 1993). These studies reflected studies that focused on offline communication

(Holmes, 1990; Mulac et al., 1990). Findings from studies based on online and offline interactions surmised that there are certain features which are used more often either by females or males which has led to stereotypical categorisation of certain gendered language features according to a person's gender.

However, this does not mean that all users will use their respective gendered language features in online discourse as some studies have reported that the users were flexible in their usage of gendered language features. Herring (2000) describes that some behaviours correlate more in female CMC and some may correlate in male CMC. For instance, users may use choose to use different online gendered language features according to the mode of CMC (Dalampan, 2006), communicative situations (Nevala, 2015) or when users want to accommodate to their communicant's gender language styles (Hills, 2000). Therefore, it can be surmised that online gendered language features are not as consistently used as reported from previous studies and are indistinct.

In order to analyse CMC texts, the CMDA approach by Herring (2004) was constructed to help with the analysis of CMC. Many researchers have carried out their studies with the use of CMDA especially within social networking sites such as Facebook (Jeon & Mauney, 2014; Nevala, 2015). The help of CMDA within linguistic research have helped in uncovering findings relating to gender and language (Nevala, 2015).

Different approaches that study language and gender have also described in this chapter. As gender and language studies have only started around the 1970s, theoretical approaches have gone through many changes that fit in the time frame it was constructed. The first three approaches, "Deficit", "Dominance", and "Difference" look at gender variances which are expressed through the physical genders. However, the most recent

approach, which is the “Dynamic approach”, looks at gender as a social construct based on performativity rather than someone acting according to their gender. These approaches have been utilized in previous studies to achieve findings that are shown in studies of gender and language. The data from the current study will use the dynamic approach to analyse the findings as this theoretical approach it has been known to be a corrective method to pass approaches of gender and language analysis (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999) and have been used in current research which focuses on gendered language features taken from texts of social network sites (Nevala, 2015).

According to the review of studies from this chapter, linguistic studies have previously been done on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs. However, most of the Malaysian studies that focused on texts collected from social network sites were focused on other language aspects instead of gendered language features. With the exception of Amir et al.’s (2012) study, which analysed differences in language use but from texts found in blogs, there is a gap of knowledge concerning studies which are focused on gendered language features found in online discourse from social network sites. On the contrary, studies outside Malaysia that have previously investigated gendered language features from social network sites have contributed mixed findings. Some have argued that gendered language features were similar to offline communication (Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Herring, 2003, 2004; Jackson et al., 2001; Morris, 2013; Newman et al., 2008; Ott, 2016; Thomson et al., 2001) whereas other studies have contradicted this by concluding that the usage of gendered language features are flexible among users and are contributed by certain factors (Dalampan, 2006; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Nevala, 2015; Thomson et al., 2001). As studies which focus on gendered language features in the discourse of social network sites are lacking within a Malaysian context, the current study aims to analyse

gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials by using CMDA as a means of analysing gendered language features alongside the dynamic approach as the theoretical approach.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the research design of the study, the participants and texts analysed, and the instruments used in this study. The data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, as well as the limitation of this study are also described in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive study was conducted to analyse gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials. The present study focuses on the various language features used when Malaysian millennials interact on Facebook as its primary source of data because of several reasons. Firstly, Facebook was chosen because of its popularity (Wilson et al., 2012), and the publicly available data (Franz et al., 2019). Aside from that, Facebook comments are also a mode of synchronous communication which means more than one person can exchange information in real time ("Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Communication," 2020), which therefore describes the continuity of the platform's interactions.

A descriptive research design is suitable to examine gendered language features found in Facebook because it allows accurate and systematic description of the phenomenon of gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials. Dulock (1993) defines an accurate and systematic description of "something" (which can be an event, phenomena or characteristics) or "someone" (which can be an individual, group or community) as the foundation of a descriptive research design. The analysis of the Facebook

comments using Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) can answer what, where, when and how questions. A descriptive study cannot answer the why question hence, a questionnaire was conducted to find the reasons Malaysian millennials' use various gendered language features in CMC. Additionally, a cross comparison of another objective of this study is to find out whether these features aligned with the traditional gender stereotypes found in face-to-face communication.

3.3 Texts Analysed and Participants

3.3.1 Texts Analysed

The data for this research were taken from Facebook, a social online platform. Although the issue of user's privacy may surface, it can be argued that the data were taken from a public website which is available for the viewing of anyone with internet access. This concurs with Kosinski et al. (2015) who argued that Facebook profile data may be used without asking for consent from users as the data has already been made public by the users themselves. Townsend and Wallace (2016) also mentioned that users of social media were informed about how their data will be accessed by third parties, which includes researchers, when they agreed to the terms and conditions of the website during the sign-up process. Additionally, Moreno et al. (2013) have cited that in Facebook's private policy, published content with the "everyone" setting would allow anyone on or off Facebook to access information posted by users. Therefore, users who post comments voluntarily on the site did so with the awareness that they were open to public access.

In this study, the names of the commenters and participants is kept confidential and not revealed to maintain anonymity. Only the researcher knows the identities of both the commenters and the participants. Additionally, all names and profile photos were omitted in

the reporting of this research to avoid any leak of personal privacy towards the original commenters, leaving only the textual verbatim of comments and answers from the questionnaires to be subsequently analysed for research purposes. This is in line with Kosinski et al. (2015) who suggest that researchers should anonymise the data as to not reveal any information of the users when publishing the study and refrain from communicating with the individuals in the sample.

In this study, the texts analysed were Facebook comments. The comments section of the platform allows others to give comments on the contents of posts via Facebook accounts (Comments plugin, n.d.). The data were taken from comments that have been published in a comment thread that was shown under posts of Facebook pages and not about the posts itself. The main difference between comments and posts is that comments show interaction between users by whereas posts are the source of user's discussion which are found in the comments. While this provides a seemingly infinite number of data to choose from (seeing as new comments are always written everyday), there are also certain criteria that need to be met when selecting appropriate data to observe and analyse.

The selection criteria to obtain the Facebook comments for analysis in this study include: (1) social news pages on common issues and topics that are not gender-specific (e.g., cosmetics or pregnancy pages tend to have more female followers, and extreme sports and car racing pages tend to have more male followers); (2) issues within Malaysia; and (3) time-frame of 2017 and 2018. Only Facebook comments written by Malaysian millennials in Bahasa Malaysia or English were selected, as these languages are generally understood by Malaysian citizens.

Some exclusion criteria were applied in the selection. Facebook comments that consisted of only emoticons were excluded. Commenters that were not in the millennial age and from other countries were not included. The age of the commenters could be checked from their profile page. The researcher checked their place of births and birthday years to properly identify their nationality and age group respectively. This was done to ascertain that the commenters were Malaysian citizens born in the millennial age gap as an index of measurement, as this research's sampling group emphasises this particular generation. The selection of millennials as participants for this research would prove useful because of their expertise and exposure towards SNS especially Facebook (Farrell & Hurt, 2014; Fry et al., 2018; Monaco & Martin, 2007). Another factor for choosing millennials to be the sample group of this research is also because they make up a large portion of Malaysia's active Internet users (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2018).

A total of 11 Facebook posts from several Facebook pages which are predominantly followed by Malaysians were selected for analysing the gendered language features in CMC among Malaysian millennials. Refer to Appendix A for the links to the Facebook posts to obtain the context of the posts. These links only take viewers to the Facebook posts but they are not able to identify which specific comments were taken for analysis. In this way, the anonymity of the commenters is still preserved. From the 11 Facebook posts, there were 260 Facebook comments authored by 227 Malaysia millennials which were analysed in the study for the first research objective and used as data samples for gender identification to achieve the second research objective. The total word count collected from the comments is 6,169 words.

3.3.2 Participants

This section gives a description of the 60 participants (30 males and 30 females) who participated in the online questionnaire were Malaysian millennials. A table showing the background information of the 60 participants which was collected from the first part of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix B. The background information provided were the participant number, their gender, Malaysian state of origin and birth year.

A total of 60 participants participated in the online questionnaire. The participants were selected through virtual snowball sampling. This sampling method was based on referrals and could go on until enough data are received to be analysed. Initially, only 50 responses were received in the first two weeks after sharing the questionnaire link for the first time. Moreover, there was an imbalance of participants by gender, so the researcher sent the questionnaire link for the second time to obtain an equal number of responses from male and female participants, that is, 30 each.

This sampling method was used because the study required responses from Malaysian millennials only. Therefore, the participants had to be chosen according to this criterion. In addition, the questionnaire link was also sent with a message informing that this study was limited to Malaysian millennials only, therefore referrals or groups of Malaysian millennials were informed to share the link with others who they knew were of this criterion. As this was a qualitative research focused on understanding gendered language features made by Malaysian millennials in Facebook comments in depth, therefore the sampling of participants could not be done randomly.

3.4 Instrument

Two instruments were used in this study, namely, a questionnaire on gendered language features and an analysis framework for gendered language features in Facebook comments.

The first instrument used in this study was a questionnaire on gendered language features with the objectives of: (1) finding out whether participants of the study could identify the gender of Facebook commenters, and (2) examining their reasons for using certain gendered language features in their Facebook comments. This questionnaire elicited "real-life" feedback regarding their views on the usage of gender language features found in CMC, based on their personal opinions and experiences. Furthermore, participant's answers could shed some empirical light on the perspectives of the public instead of solely relying on the findings from the data alone through a researcher's point of view, making the data more authentic and relatable to real-life scenarios and phenomena.

The first section of the online questionnaire required the participants to fill in their personal details which include gender, Malaysian state of origin, birth year (only 1980-1989 or 1990-1999 were given as options to choose from). In addition to the background information, the participants were also asked to report the frequency of Facebook access and the frequency of commenting on Facebook. The questionnaire was self-constructed because the information required is only background information about their Facebook usage. The questions posed to the participants in the first section were as follows:

1. What is your gender?
2. Which Malaysian state are you from?
3. What year were you born in?

4. How often do you access Facebook?
5. How often do you comment on Facebook?

The three background questions were given options (male/female, states of origin in Malaysia, years of birth). The other two questions on Facebook usage were formulated using a Likert scale ranging from never too often (0 and 5 respectively). Closed-ended questions were used instead of open-ended questions to ensure more consistency in responses because participants could report their frequency of use in different ways.

When asked about how often the participants accessed Facebook (in the scale of 0 being none while 5 as very frequent), 27 participants (or 45%) have reported to access it often whereas only 5% stated that they have never done so (as shown in Figure 3.1). As a whole, 97% of the participants reported that they have been exposed to the site before, despite varying degree of frequencies. This was asked to find out if the participants have previously accessed the platform, which gives them familiarity towards the site.

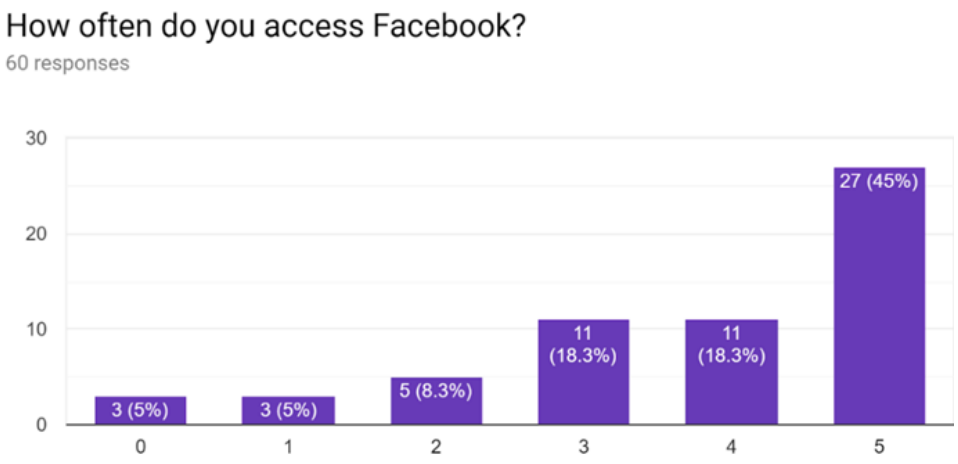

Figure 3.1: Frequency of Accessing Facebook

The last question of the first section asked about how often the participants commented on Facebook (in the Likert scale of 0 being never while 5 as often). As seen from Figure 3.2, only two participants reported that they comment very frequently on Facebook whereas most of the participants rarely do so.

Although the participants do not prefer to comment on posts habitually, this factor will not affect the participants' feedback of this questionnaire.

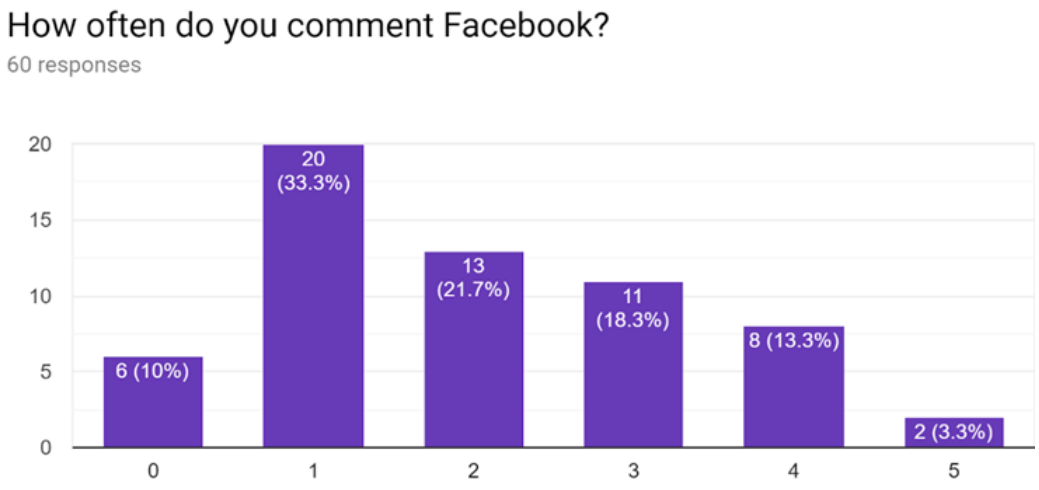

Figure 3.2: Frequency of Commenting on Facebook Posts

The second part of the questionnaire on gendered language features consisted of 14 samples of Facebook comments. From this, data on the reasons of using various gender language features between male and female users in CMC were obtained. Following each comment, there was a binary question requiring them to identify the gender of Facebook commenters. Two answer options (male or female) were given. Each participant was tasked to identify the gender of each commenter who produced the comments according to the textual cues given and no personal information such as name and gender identity of the commenter was shown in the questionnaire. This was followed by an optional space for

open-ended responses for the participants to justify their answer on whether the Facebook commenter is male or female. For example, they could talk about word choices which prompted them to decide whether the Facebook comment was written by a female or male where they can give their reasons to justify their answer on whether the Facebook commenter is male or female. A complete set of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix C. The information about the participants' demographic and frequency of using and commenting on Facebook is reported here to show that the participants who participated in the online questionnaire are Malaysian millennials who are active users of Facebook. This information is not part of the results of the study.

The selection of 14 Facebook comments was done by purposive sampling. The selection criteria were as follows: (1) Facebook comment samples that showed obvious gendered language features were selected; and (2) the samples selected did not require much context to understand so that participants could use their judgement when identifying the commenters' gender identity based on textual verbatim alone.

The second instrument in this study was an analysis framework on common gender language features to ensure reliability during the analysis. The reliability of the framework lies within the existing theories in related fields and acts as a "blueprint" or guide in research (Osanloo & Grant, 2016). The analysis framework for this study was constructed by putting together language features that have been previously analysed in 10 previous studies (Amir et al., 2012; Guadagno et al., 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Postmes & Spears, 2002).

Notably, the framework of this study was influenced by Herring's (1993) description of gendered language features which was also used by Nevala (2015). However, the

researcher decided not to solely rely on Herring (1993) because there were other gendered language features that were not included in her early framework which was later expanded by other researchers. For instance, Herring (1993) did not include hedges and tag questions, which are notable language features proposed by Lakoff (1975) but were included in Amir et al.'s (2012) study of Malaysian blogs. Moreover, Guadagno et al. (2011) included the orientations of both genders for using CMC which could be reflected in their discourse. Herring (1993) did not offer definitions of the gendered language features but Guiller and Durndell (2007) provided definitions for Herring's (1993) for some of the gendered language features. Postmes and Spears (2002) found new gendered language features that were not present in Herring (1993) such as autonomous statements. Therefore, the researcher decided to formulate a new analysis framework to cover more gendered language features by including definitions given by other researchers, shown by superscripts in the note for Table 3.1. The analysis framework used in this study for gendered language features is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Framework of Analysis for Gendered Language Features

Gendered Language Feature		**Definition**	**Studies Showing Presence of Gendered Language Features**
M1	Information Oriented	[1]Engage in informative activities	Bond (2009) Cameron (2010) Guadagno et al. (2011) Jackson et al. (2001) Morris (2013)

Table 3.1 continued

M2	Self-promotion	[2]Focus attention on themselves	Herring (1993) Thomson & Murachver (2001)
M3	Sexual References	Mention sexual themes	Herring (1996) Subrahmanyan et al. (2006)
M4	Insults/ Profanities (Word choice)	[3]Use crude language	Herring (2000) Thomson & Murachver (2001)
M5	Directive/ Autonomous	[4]State explicit and unambiguous statement of the opinion of the sender, or when it was forceful, independent, directive, or explicitly reactive	Postmes & Spears (2002)
M6	Rhetorical Questions	[5]Use assertive question not meant to be taken literally	Guiller & Durndell (2006) Herring (1993)
M7	Opposed Orientation	[5]Make explicit statement of disagreement	Coates (2015) Guiller & Durndell (2006) Herring (2003)
M8	Strong Assertions	[5]Use absolute and exceptionless adverbials	Guiller & Durndell (2006) Herring (1994)
F1	Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness	[1]Engage in more communal activities / [2]Express appreciation, thanking, and community-building activities that make other participants feel accepted and welcome.	Guadagno et al. (2011) Guiller & Durndell (2006) Herring (1994) Morris (2013)

Table 3.1 continued

F2	Hedges	[6]Express doubt or soften speaker's utterance	Amir et al. (2012) Bonvillian (2000) Herring (1993) Walker (2008)
F3	Apologise	Apologizing	Herring (2003) Walker (2008)
F4	Polite and emotionally expressive words (word choice)	[7]Use expressive, tentative, and polite language	Basow & Rubenfeld (2003)
F5	Questions (to illicit response)	Phrasing statements as questions	Herring (1993) Cameron (2010)
F6	Tag Questions	[6]Make a statement followed by an interrogative clause	Amir et al. (2012) Cameron (2010) Lakoff (1975)
F7	Aligned Orientation	[5]Make explicit statement of agreement; respond positively	Coates (2015) Guiller & Durndell (2007) Herring (2003)
F8	Attenuation/ Sharing Experience	[8]Contribute ideas in the form of suggestions; [5]Refers to speaker's own experience	Guiller & Durndell (2007) Herring (1994)

Note: [1]Guadagno et al. (2011), [2]Herring (1993), [3]Herring (2000), [4]Postmes & Spears (2002), [5]Guiller & Durndell (2006), [6]Amir et al. (2012), [7]Basow & Rubenfeld (2003). [8]Herring (1994)

The first column of Table 3.1 shows the male and female language features. M1 to M8 for the codes of male language features and F1 to F8 for the codes of female language features. The second column lists the 16 gendered language features (8 male, 8 female). The third column shows the definitions. The fourth column shows the references for the gendered language features. The superscript indicates the sources of the definitions. This is done to show the validity of the framework for analysing gendered language features in Facebook comments by millennials.

Some researchers did not explicitly mention the definitions of certain language features in their studies even though the analysis of these said features were carried out. In Table 3.1, there were three gendered language features which were not defined by other researchers because the meaning is clear. For these language features, no superscripts were shown in the table. Therefore, the researcher gave her own definitions based on the meaning of the features to ensure consistency in the coding. Nonetheless, some of the features are self-explanatory, such as “apologizing” and “Questions (to elicit response)” (F5 and F7). Interpersonally oriented and supportiveness were put together as one language feature because both had themes of maintaining social relationships and are interrelated.

According to Herring (1993), attenuation includes hedges and apologies, but these were extracted from the umbrella term of attenuation and were put into a separate category in order to code these features individually. Therefore, the form of attenuation from this analysis framework will be described as contributing ideas in the form of suggestions instead.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

For the purpose of the study, the data collection process was divided into two main phases: collection of Facebook comments for analysis (Phase 1) and online questionnaire (Phase 2). The collection of Facebook comments for analysis addresses the first objective of the study which is to analyse the gendered language features in CMC among Malaysian millennials. The online questionnaire collects data for the second objective of the study, which is to identify the reasons of using various gender language features between male and female users in CMC.

3.5.1 Collection of Facebook Comments for Analysis

The first phase of the study involves the collection of Facebook comments for the purpose of analysing gendered language features in CMC among Malaysian millennials. The researcher searched for social news pages and went through the some of the pages shown as the top search result. The researcher also looked at wall posts of others who have shared public posts from other public pages which were not from Facebook social news pages, but were pages that were associated with Malaysians as well (e.g., Sabah Library Facebook Page). Besides that, the researcher tried to look in Facebook pages of millennial creators or public figures such as comic artists, politicians and personalities as these pages were created and moderated by people of the same millennial age group.

When a suitable page or post was found, Facebook wall posts with over 100 comments were analysed first as they had a higher chance of retrieving suitable data. In order to ascertain whether a comment was eligible to be taken as data, the researcher ensured that the collected comments aligned with the selection criteria. Comments from the same post were put into the same word file for analysis.

The issue of "how" the comments were written are greatly emphasised rather than "what" the comments were about as this study focused on the language features found in digital discourse rather than the context and verbatim as a whole. In other words, the topics discussed in the comments were not the main concern of the study, but rather, how commenters used certain language features in their comments towards various Facebook posts was what this study aimed to scrutinise. It should also be emphasised that this research investigates the language features of the textual discourse more than what the context of their responses are. Therefore, the contents of a commenter's reply is not as important as analysing the types of language features that are adapted into their verbatim in order to achieve this research's first objective.

A total of 260 comments were collected in a span of 11 Facebook posts. Figure 3.3 shows an example of collected comments for analysis.

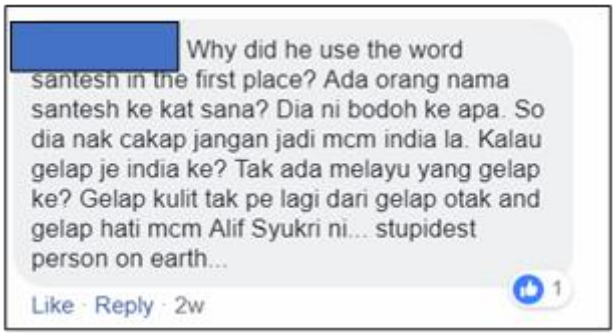

Figure 3.3: An example of a Facebook comment collected for analysis

3.5.2 Procedures for Conducting Online Questionnaire

The next phase of the study involves conducting the online questionnaire, which was done through Google Forms. The aim for using online questionnaire was for the purpose of collecting responses from Malaysian millennials to identify the reasons of using various gender language features between male and female users in CMC. The researcher sent out

the link to the online questionnaire through social media messaging and WhatsApp groups that were populated by Malaysian millennials. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a notice informing participants of the purpose of this study was shown and a disclaimer informing participants that their responses were for academic purposes and their personal information will be kept under confidential. Those who consented to participate in the online questionnaire continued to the next part.

As the research is founded in millennial studies, it should be clear that the research sampling frame of this online questionnaire should be distributed solely among Malaysian millennials only. Participants were also informed that the questionnaire was only open to Malaysians born in the millennial age gap. This notice not only helped to describe how the collected information would be used, it also indicated the age group that was vital to the participation of this questionnaire. This would ensure that participants who were likely to participate in the study were Malaysians and were from different states of the country rather than gathering responses from participants who were from the same state.

They were given the task of identifying the gender of the commenters through the textual verbatim without showing any context, names and profile pictures. Through this procedure, participants of the questionnaire were able to give their perspectives and focus on the texts. Each participant was recruited through virtual snowball sampling. When enough responses were received, the researcher closed the questionnaire link to stop accepting responses. The responses were collected from July until October 2019.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

This section describes the data analysis procedure of the Facebook comments collected for the first phase and the questionnaire data for the second phase. A comparison

of the results from the analysis of Facebook comments and the analysis of the online questionnaire will be carried out to achieve the third objective, which is to investigate if online gendered language features reflect face-to-face communication features.

3.6.1 Analysis of Facebook Comments

For the analysis of Facebook comments, the framework on gendered language features was referred to. After collecting suitable comments from posts, each comment was then examined and classified with an analysis framework that consists of stereotypical language features of male and female discursive styles found in academic literature that have studied certain gender language features found online. As mentioned in the section of CMDA (Chapter 2, Section 2.7), coding is a vital part of the approach as it helps to analyse and compare distinct online occurrences and uncover structured characteristics in discourse (Herring, 2004). This study applies the second type of approach of coding a predetermined list of coding categories, according Shanthi et al.'s study (2017). The predetermined categories for this study include male, female, combined and neutral styles and were adapted from Nevala's (2015) study, which also focused on gendered language features on a Facebook page.

The researcher thematically identified the notable gendered language features and coded these occurrences according to Table 3.1. For instance, if a comment possesses male language features, then it will be assigned to the "Male Language Feature" category. The analysis framework provided a guideline to identify the language features and one of the four categories each comment should be assigned to. The categories are male language features, female language features, combined language features (for comments that contain both male and female language features), and neutral language features (for comments that

do not fit into any of the three categories). These categories were adapted from Nevala's (2015) study in which gendered language features in Facebook were studied as well. The categorisation during this data collection phase was to ensure the data analysis process later could be conducted more systematically. Close reference to the analysis framework also ensures reliability in the analysis.

3.6.2 Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The summary of the responses from 60 participants (30 male, 30 female) were automatically tabulated into tables and pie charts by Google Forms after the researcher had closed the access of the questionnaire link. The responses from the questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics in which frequency count and percentage were used. Participants information regarding their background (gender, Malaysian state of origin and birth years) were tabulated in order to ensure participants were Malaysian millennials, which fit the requirement of the questionnaire. Subsequently, the data on their Facebook usage was also reported using frequency count and percentage.

For open-ended questions, the participants' feedback was read and thematically coded according to salient themes or topics. The researcher went through all the written responses of the participants to find reasons for the gender selection of commenters from the Excel sheet. Since the written responses are open ended and optional, not all participants gave responses to their reasoning whereas some participants only gave their responses to specific comments where they felt like they could give some input on their reasoning. The researcher analysed all the responses given to participants and listed the reasons for their choice according to the genders they had selected. The answers given by participants were copied without any editing to maintain the original verbatim provided in the questionnaire

and the researcher summarised it according to the salient reasons. The researcher used dynamic approach to analyse the participants' responses.

Thematic analysis is often used in qualitative research in attempts to reveal primary consistencies and meanings from a text by identifying and analysing the themes which are abstract but are meaningful (Buetow, 2010). Thematic analysis regarding the answers given by participants of the online questionnaire was carried out to identify the salient themes and subthemes. For instance, in the same comment, one participant wrote "advice tone" for their reason for identifying a commenter as a female whereas another participant wrote "Females tend to be more cautious, so an advice on being cautious with your words, I think would be an advice from a female. Higher probability" as their reason. Although their answers were typed differently, both participants mentioned the word "advice", which meant that the participants thought that comment sounded like a female giving advice.

Participants may not have a wide knowledge of linguistic terms that label the gender differences that they are trying to explain and are giving their responses based on their personal experiences and wordings, therefore the researcher had to go through all the responses to see if there were any participants who explained their reasoning that related to gendered language features which are related or have been reported in past studies.

Therefore, participants may use different terms when giving their reasoning although it could be categorised under the same salient theme which can be paired with other participants' answers. For instance, Participant 5 answered "style" to the same comment (Comment 1). This participant's answer did not specify how the "style" of the sentence is written. This was resolved by analysing the comment sample and rereading the participant's answer, since the context of the answer came from the comment itself. The researcher

analysed the kind of style the particular comment was written in. Due to the lack of rude words and in the nuance of an advising manner, it could be categorised as being written in a way of giving advice. Therefore, this answer was categorised with the theme of "giving advice" for the reasons of writing female language features.

However, not all the participants' answers could be grouped into a particular theme because of the ambiguity of their answers. Although some gave one-word answers without further elaboration (e.g., participant wrote "rude" as an answer, which could infer that the commenter sounded rude in their discourse), others could not be identified as a theme (e.g., participant wrote "no" as an answer), which lacked an explanation for giving such answer. Therefore, answers that were ambiguous could not categorised into any theme and were invalid for the analysis of results.

In this study, two types of data were analysed to understand gendered language features of Facebook comments by millennials, namely, actual Facebook comments, and commenters' identification of the gender of the writer of the Facebook comment. For actual Facebook comments, the identification of the gendered language features was done by the researcher using an analysis framework. For the Facebook comment samples, the identification of the gendered language features was done by the participants who are Facebook users themselves. By using two types of data, this study offers different perspectives on the presence of gender influence in CMC – from the researcher's computer-mediated discourse analysis and the perspectives of the public, making the data more relatable to real-life phenomena.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

When carrying out research of any kind, there are certain limitations and constraints that cannot be controlled under any circumstances. However, it is with these limitations that only further research can continue to strive in the future to further understand the research phenomenon.

Firstly, this research limited itself to only Malaysian millennials. In a cultural and geographical sense, this is only a study focusing on one particular age group that have their national culture as a common trait. This also limits the studying of other social groups from the same country. Elements from other groups that differ in social or cultural contexts may provide a different set of findings. Although there is no denying that millennials are the largest group of Internet users, nowadays there are also new emerging groups of users who come from different age groups such as the post-millennial generation Z and the older generation of people who seem to pick up the trend of using and commenting on Facebook. A continual study of different groups, whether in terms of age or social background, can provide new insight into studies of the related fields.

During the course of this study, there were also other factors which slightly hindered and complicated the data collection process. For instance, there was difficulty in filtering the data as the researcher had to go through each comment that could be taken as data. In addition, there were many instances when the researcher came across comments that had interesting use of language features that could be analysed, however the anonymity of the users (when they did not give enough information about their birth country or birth years) was a main factor of why these comments could not be collected as data for this research. This meant that even if there were instances of textual verbatim that could potentially

contribute significant findings, the absence of personal information does not permit the researcher to collect it as data. As Facebook users are not obliged to disclose all their personal details publicly on their profiles (due to personal preference of privacy) then this proves itself to be a factor that lengthens the time to collect suitable data. Filtering all profiles for information is necessary in ensuring the authenticity towards the research sampling is maintained but requires a longer period of time to collect.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methodology that is crucial for accomplishing the objectives addressed in the study and the formulated research hypotheses. In sum, this study quantitatively collected the primary data through a cross-sectional survey and the questionnaire was pre-tested within the same group of people in the oil and gas industry to ensure its validity.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the results from the first and second phase of the data analysis procedures and this is followed by a comparison of these two phases to achieve the third objective, which is to investigate if online gendered language features reflect face-to-face communication features. The order of the results was reported based on the numeric order of the research objectives. A discussion of the findings based is also presented in this chapter.

4.2 Gendered Language Features in Facebook Comments

The first phase of the study was to analyse the gendered language features in CMC among Malaysian millennials. Therefore, Facebook comments were collected to analyse these features. The comments were collected from Facebook pages which reported social news and were commented by Malaysian millennials. A total number of 260 comments were collected from 11 public posts on Facebook. All comments were verified to be written by Malaysian millennials before collecting them as part of the data sample. A total of 260 comments made by 227 commenters were selected as data for analysis with 96 commenters who identified as female while the remaining 131 commenters were identified as male.

4.2.1 Gendered Language Features in Facebook Comments by Malaysian Millennials

To address the first objective of this study, which is to analyse gendered language features in Facebook comments by Malaysian millennials, the results from the analysis of 260 comments are reported. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the four categories and their total occurrences. Table 4.1 shows that 161 (or 61.9%) comments had male language features

whereas 57 (or 21.9%) comments were found to have notable female language features. A number of 34 (or 13.1%) comments had combined language features whereas the remaining eight (3.1%) were categorised under the neutral category because these comments did not have any of the language features specified in the analysis framework shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Comments by Gender Communicating Styles

Gender Communicating Style	Number of Comments	Percentage (%)
Male Language Features	161	61.9
Female Language Features	57	21.9
Combined Language Features	34	13.1
Neutral Language Features	8	3.1
Total Comments	**260**	**100**

A point to note when interpreting Table 4.1 is that the male language features and female language features of Facebook comments are not necessarily written by male and female commenters respectively. Moreover, one comment can potentially contain more than one type of language feature found in a different gender category, and this was classified as combined language features. The language features classified as neutral were those that were not found in the existing analysis framework or in other studies on gendered language features. The significance and implications of neutral language features will be described later.

Overall, it can be surmised that comments with male language features occurred more frequently compared to the other categories. The existence of gender languages is still relevant among Malaysian millennials, therefore making the stereotypical traits in the

framework relevant. As the objective of this study was to analyse the language features that were used by Malaysian millennials when responding to the posts or replying to other users during the interaction in the comments section, questions of prevalence regarding gender stereotypical language features may arise.

Table 4.2 shows the frequency of gendered language features that appeared in the data of Facebook comments.

The three most frequently used male language feature in the Facebook comment data are Insults/ Profanities (M4) which occurred 81 times, followed by Directive/Autonomous (M5) which occurred 60 times and Strong Assertions (M8) which occurred 39 times in the Facebook comments. Rhetorical Questions (M6) were found to occur 26 times in the data whereas Information Oriented (M1) occurred 18 times. Sexual references (M3), Opposed orientations and Self-promotion occurred less than 10 times in the Facebook comments with seven, five and three occurrences, respectively.

For comments that were reported to have female language features, the three most recurring language features were Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8) which occurred 27 times, followed by Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness which occurred 23 times and Questions (to elicit responses) F5 which occurred 15 times. Aligned Orientation (F7) occurred 14 times whereas Polite and Emotionally expressive words (word choice) (F4) occurred 13 times. Apologise (F3) occurred six times whereas both Hedges (f2) and Tag Questions (F6) occurred four times in the Facebook comments.

Table 4.2: Frequency of Language Features by Gender (N=344)

Language Features	Frequency of male commenters	Frequency of female commenters	Total
M1- Information Oriented	8	10	18
M2- Self-Promotion	2	1	3
M3-Sexual Reference	7	2	9
M4- Insults/ Profanities (word choice)	59	22	81
M5- Directive/ Autonomous	44	16	60
M6- Rhetorical Questions	18	9	27
M7- Opposed Orientations	4	1	5
M8- Strong Assertions	23	16	39
F1- Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness	6	17	23
F2 -Hedges	0	4	4
F3 -Apologize	5	1	6
F4 -Polite and Emotionally expressive words (word choice)	2	11	13
F5 -Questions (to elicit response)	4	10	14
F6 -Tag Questions	3	1	4
F7 -Aligned Orientation	12	2	14
F8- Attenuation/ Sharing Experience	9	15	24
Total Instances	206	138	344

According to Table 4.2, almost all the features from the analysis framework have occurred at least once among both genders (with the exclusion of F2-Hedges because there were no occurrences made from male commenters). Both males and females have been

found to use cross gendered language features. Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 show the distribution of language features categorised by the commenters gender.

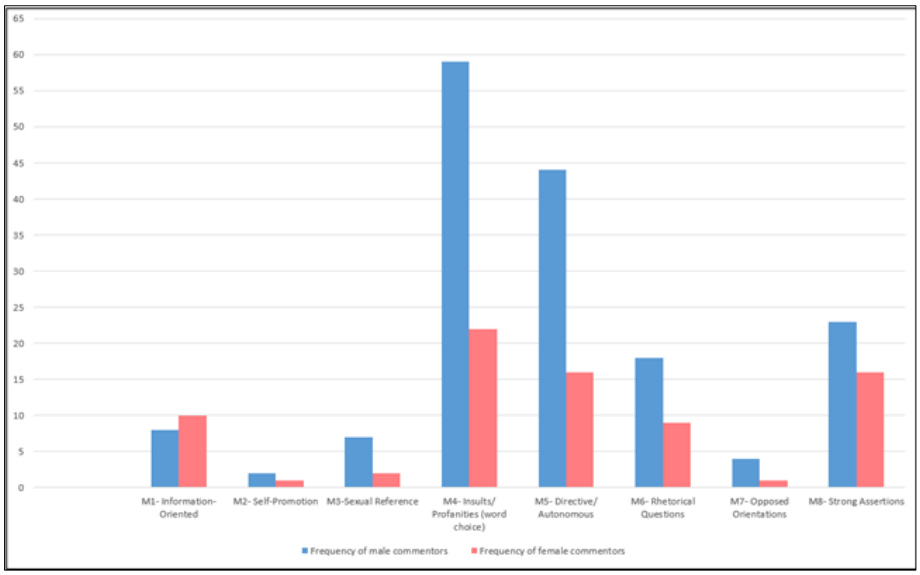

Figure 4.1: Distribution of Male Language Features by the Gender of Commenter

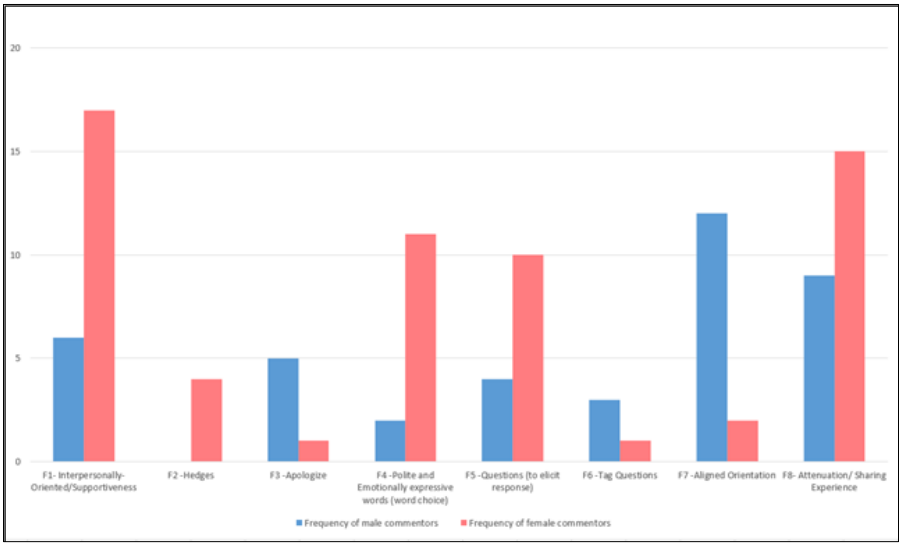

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Female Language Features by the Gender of Commenter

In addition, the gender ratios in some features have a significant gap (e.g., M4, M5, F1, F8), while others have a nearly balanced ratio (e.g., M1, M2). It is also interesting to note that most of the commenters would follow their stereotypical language features, according to their respective genders. However, there were also instances where commenters do not follow their respective stereotypical language features. For instance, M1 (Information Oriented) was used more often by females despite being a male language feature whereas F3 (Apologising), F5 (Tag Questions), and F7 (Aligned Orientation) were used more by males despite being female language features. This is because major factors such as context plays a vital role in what language features commenters will respond with, thus making them apply the use of certain gendered language features.

The most recurring language feature in the data pool is Insults/ Profanities (word choice) (M4) whereas Sexual Reference (M3) occurs the least. Coincidentally, both features also belong to the same gender category in the framework.

4.2.1.1 Male Language Features in Facebook Comments by Malaysian Millennials

This section describes the results for male language features in Facebook comments by Malaysian millennials as shown in Table 4.3, beginning with the most frequently used male language feature. Examples from the Facebook comments are given illustrate the eight male language features: M1 – Information Oriented, M2 – Self-Promotion, M3 – Sexual Reference, M4 – Insults/Profanities, M5 – Directive/Autonomous, M6 – Rhetorical Questions, M7 – Opposed Orientations, and M8 – Strong Assertions.

Table 4.3 shows that Insults/ Profanities (M4) was the most frequently used in the Facebook comments accounting for 81 (or 33.47 %) out of 242 total male language features. Although insults/profanities have been classified as a male language feature by researchers

(Herring, 2000; Thomson & Murachver, 2001), Table 4.3 shows that female Facebook commenters also used insults/profanities. Out of 81 insults/profanities identified, 59 were produced by male commenters and 22 by female commenters. The example of Insults/ Profanities (M4) shown in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 are localised examples to reflect the usage of the Malaysian millennials in Facebook comments.

Table 4.3: Frequency of Male Language Features by Commenters

Language Features	Frequency of male commenters	Frequency of female commenters	Total
M1- Information Oriented	8	10	18
M2- Self-Promotion	2	1	3
M3-Sexual Reference	7	2	9
M4- Insults/ Profanities (word choice)	59	22	81
M5- Directive/ Autonomous	44	16	60
M6- Rhetorical Questions	18	9	27
M7- Opposed Orientations	4	1	5
M8- Strong Assertions	23	16	39
Total Instances			**242**

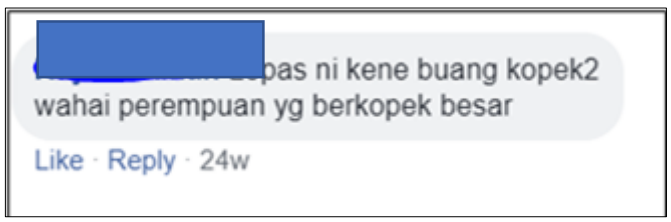

Figure 4.3: Comment with M4 – Insults and Profanities 1

The word *"kopek"* from Figure 4.3 is not used with its original meaning, which means "*membuang kulit buah-buahan"* (to peel off the skin of a fruit). However, according to the meaning of the slang word, it refers to a woman's breast. The meaning "kopek" may not be comprehensive to the general public as they are slang words. Moreover, there are variations of the meaning of the word which vary across the geographical communities in Malaysian states. The word is associated with wallets or coin pouches in Northern regions (comprising Perak, Penang, Kedah and Perlis) whereas the former meaning in which the negative connotation originates from the East coast (Rusli, 2012). Although there is no indication of whether this word holds any negative connotation or if it is just a form of euphemism to disguise itself, nevertheless, the usage of it in the specific comment does hint sexual references and a tone of directiveness of carrying out something.

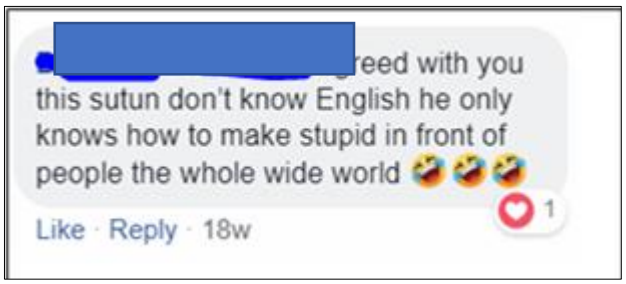

Figure 4.4: Comment with M4 – Insults and Profanities 2

Another example of the localised insults shown in Figure 4.4 is the word "sutun", which comes from the word "sotong" (meaning squid). The word has been adopted by certain groups who have given it a new meaning, which is to describe someone who is soft spoken or has "fluid" movements, which imitates the aquatic animal. Although their behaviours are more feminine in contrast to traditional masculine standards, they do not usually identify as homosexuals. Generally, they are only classified as feminine by behaviours but are typically attracted to the opposite sex. The commenter who wrote the

comment in Figure 4.4 also uses the word “stupid” which is a more obvious use of insult towards the subject of the topic.

Additionally, Directive and Autonomous (M5) was the second most frequently used in the Facebook comments accounting for 60 (or 24.79 %) out of 242 total male language features. Although this language feature was reportedly used 44 times by male commenters, Table 4.3 shows that there were 16 instances of this feature made by female Facebook commenters. Examples of comments with Directive and Autonomous (M5) features are shown in Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6.

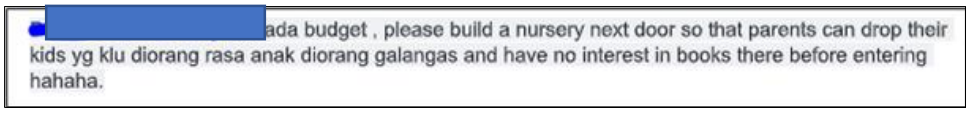

Figure 4.5: Comment with M5 – Directive/Autonomous 1

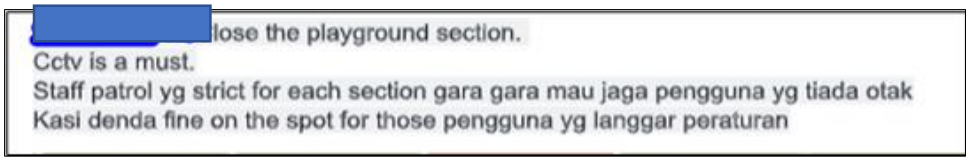

Figure 4.6: Comment with M5 – Directive/Autonomous 2

Both comments show in Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6 were written by females on the same subject. The comments indicated a directive speech act that advises building extra facilities for the convenience of other patrons in the public library or impose strict action around the playground area. When comparing the two comments, the comment in Figure 4.6 seems to be written with the intention of being autonomous (by looking at the first two imperative sentences of the whole comment) which is also accompanied by an insult (indicated by the word “*tiada otak*”, meaning having no brains).

The third most frequently used male language feature found in the Facebook comments is Strong Assertions (M8) which occurred 39 (or 16.12 %) out 242 times. The use of this feature by male commenters accounted for 23 out of 39 times whereas females were found to use this feature 16 out of 39 times. The slight differences of this feature's usage indicates that females do use this feature almost as often as males. An example of Strong Assertions (M8) in a comment is shown in Figure 4.7.

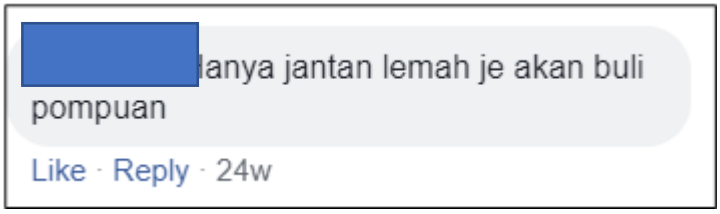

Figure 4.7: Comment **w**ith M8 – Strong Assertions

Figure 4.7 shows a comment that has the male language feature of Strong Assertions (M8). In Figure 4.7, the commenter uses the Malay word *"hanya"* which translates to *"only"* to indicate strong assertions as strong assertions are words that indicate the use of absolute and exceptionless adverbials (Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Herring, 1994). The commenter in Figure 4.7 is a male who stated that an action of a person would not be enough to please everyone whereas the commenter in Figure 4.8 is a female who expresses that only weak men (or *"jantan lemah"*) bullied girls.

The fourth most frequently used language feature found in the Facebook comments is Rhetorical Questions (M6) with an occurrence of 27 (11.16 %) out of 242 times. Male commenters were found to use this feature more frequently, which accounted for 18 out of 27 times compared to females who only used this feature nine out of 27 times. An example of a comment using this feature is shown in Figure 4.8.

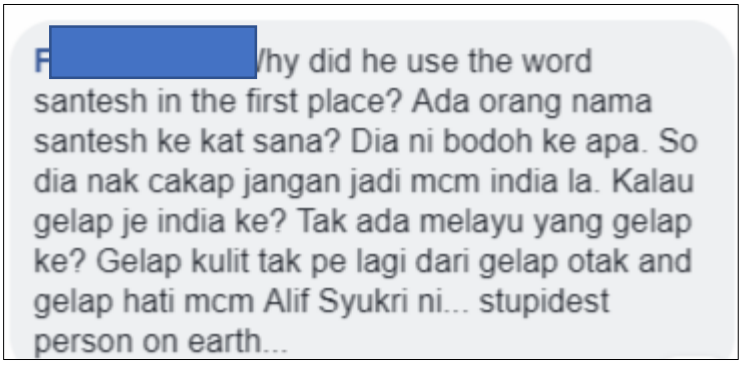

Figure 4.8: Comment **w**ith M6 – Rhetorical Questions

The commenter in Figure 4.8 is asked a few rhetorical questions that were not intended to be answered. The commenter asked the first rhetorical question when asking why the host of a talk show mentioned in the post was using the word *"santesh"* and whether a person with that name was in the audience. Another rhetorical question asked by the commenter was in the phrase *"kalau gelap je india ke?"* (only people with dark skin are Indians) and *"tak ada melayu yang gelap ke?"* (aren't there Malays who are dark skinned?) As the definition of this gendered language feature was using assertive questions not meant to be taken literally (Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Herring, 1994), the commenter in Figure 4.8 was asking these questions in a rhetorical manner and was not intending for these questions to be answered by others as a means of explaining something that they didn't understand.

The fifth most frequently used male language feature found in the Facebook comments is Information Oriented (M1) with an occurrence of 18 (or 7.44 %) out of 242 times. Unexpectedly, more females were found to use slightly more Information Oriented (M1) features in their comments, which occurred 10 out of 18 times, as compared to males, who only used this feature eight out of 10 times. An example of a comment with this feature is shown in Figure 4.9.

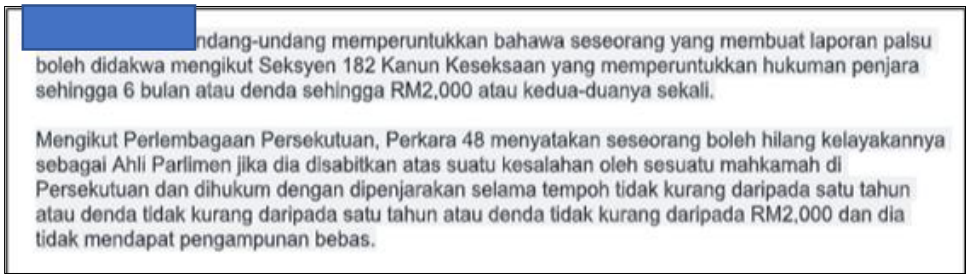

Figure 4.9: Comment with M1 – Information Oriented

The commenter in Figure 4.9 informed other commenters about the consequences of submitting a false report and also used law jargon in their comment.

The sixth most commonly used language feature in the Facebook comments is Sexual References (M3) which accounted for nine (or 3.72 %) out of 242 times. Males used this feature seven out of nine times whereas females used this feature two out of nine times. An example of a comment with this feature is shown in Figure 4.10 where the commenter says "pen" implying penis.

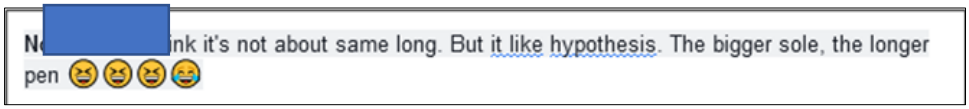

Figure 4.10: Comment **w**ith M3 – Sexual References

Figure 4.10 shows a female commenter talking about how the measurement of one's sole would substitute for the measurements of a male's genitals. The manner of how this comment was typed would indicate that females were open to mention Sexual References (M3) even though it is known as a male language feature (Herring, 1996; Subrahmanyan et al., 2006).

Comments with Opposed Orientations (M7) occurred five (or 2.07 %) out of 242 times in the Facebook comments. Male commenters were found using this feature four out

of five times whereas only a female commenter used this feature once out of five times. An example of a comment with this feature is shown in Figure 4.11.

Figure 4.11: Comment **w**ith M7 – Opposed Orientations

The comment in Figure 4.11 shows a commenter showing disagreement by expressing that the problem of Malaysians working overseas was a problem for the government and not the civilians.

Lastly, the male language feature which occurred the least in the Facebook comment was Self Promotion (M2) which occurred three (or 1.24 %) out of 242 times. Male commenters were found to use this feature twice whereas female commenters only used this once. An example of a comment with Self Promotion (M2) is shown in Figure 4.12.

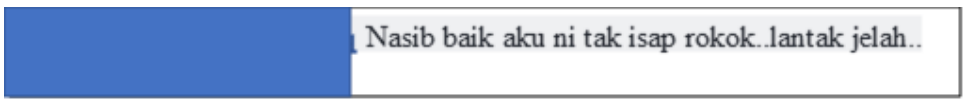

Figure 4.12: Comment with M2 – Self Promotion

The commenter in Figure 4.12 expresses that he ah never smoked before, indicating a feature of Self Promotion (M2) about his non-smoking habits towards other commenters who are discussing the topic of imposing a smoking fine in restaurants.

Overall, the data from the Facebook comments showed that male language features were dominant and commonly used by commenters from both genders. Insults/Profanities (Word choice) (M4) was the most frequently used male language feature as it occurred 81

out of 242 times in the data and was used frequently by both genders. Commenters used this feature in both English and Malay, up to the extent of using localised slang words and these words can be considered as unique for the Malaysian community Among the eight male language features, Self-Promotion (M2) was the least occurred male language feature as it only occurred three out of 242 times.

Although these eight language features were identified at characterising male language use, Information Oriented (M1) was actually used more often by females than males, which accounted for 18 out of 242 times. This may indicate that female commenters were also prone to give factual details and statements when there is an opportunity. There were also instances which inferred that female commenters were open to use male language features in their online discourse, as shown in the female commenter's usage of all male language features –except that the frequency of female usage is lower than that of male usage for seven of the male language features.

The next section will describe the female language features found in the Facebook comments.

4.2.1.2 Female Language Features in Facebook Comments by Malaysian Millennials

This section describes the results for female language features in Facebook comments by Malaysian millennials as shown in Table 4.4, beginning with the most frequently used female language feature. Examples from the Facebook comments are given illustrate the eight female language features: F1 – Interpersonally Oriented, F2 – Self-Promotion, F3 – Apologise, F4 – Polite/Emotionally Expressive (Word Choice), F5 – Questions (to elicit response), F6 – Tag Questions, M7 – Aligned Orientation, and F8 – Attenuation/ Sharing Experience.

Table 4.4: Frequency of Female Language Features by Commenters

Language Features	Frequency of male commenters	Frequency of female commenters	Total
F1-Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness	6	17	23
F2-Hedges	0	4	4
F3-Apologise	5	1	6
F4-Polite and Emotionally expressive words (word choice)	2	11	13
F5-Questions (to elicit response)	4	10	14
F6-Tag Questions	3	1	4
F7-Aligned Orientation	12	2	14
F8- Attenuation/ Sharing Experience	9	15	24
Total Instances			**102**

Table 4.4 shows most female language features were frequently used by females with the exception of three female language features, namely Apologies (F3), Tag Questions (F6) and Aligned Orientation (F7), which were used more by males than females. Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8) was the most frequently used in the Facebook comments accounting for 24 (or 23.53%) out of 102 total female language features. Examples of comment Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8) is shown in Figure 4.13 and Figure 4.14.

Figure 4.13: Comment with F8 – Attenuation/ Sharing Experiences 1

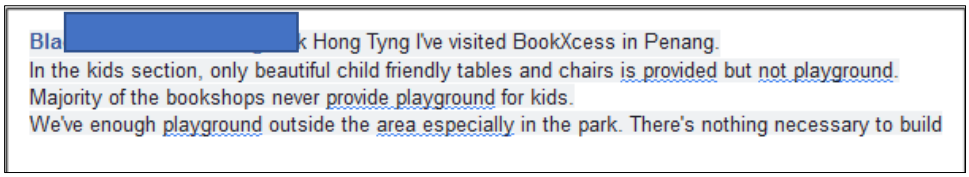

Figure 4.14: Comment with F8 – Attenuation/ Sharing Experiences 2

Both of the commenters from Figure 4.13 and 4.14 were shown to share their experiences regarding different topics in their comments. The commenter in Figure 4.13 was sharing their personal experiences towards other commenters about not preferring any public exposure due to previous negative experiences of being "condemned". This commenter was trying to show her empathy to the subject of the Facebook post who was talking about how a television host seemingly criticised a member of the audience for her darker skin tone. In Figure 4.14, the commenter was sharing his experience of visiting a book store in Penang and describes the condition of the kids' section. The commenter also provides a suggestion saying that it was not necessary to build a playground for children inside a library.

The second most frequently used female language feature in the Facebook comment is Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1) accounting for 23 (or 22.55%) out of 102 times. Female commenters used this feature 17 out of 23 times whereas males used this feature six out of 23 times. Example of a comment with this feature is shown in Figure 4.15 and Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.15: Comment with F1 – Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness 1

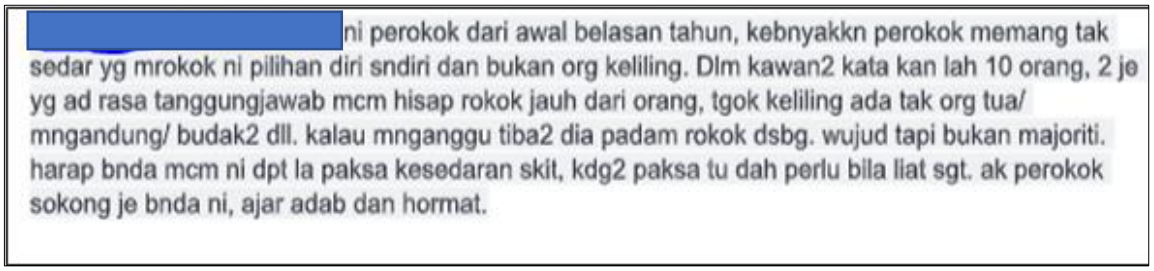

Figure 4.16: Comment with F1 – Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness 2

As shown in Figure 4.15, the commenter gave emotional support by complementing another commenter's physical appearances. From the writing style of the comment, the commenter was trying to support the other person with encouragement and supportiveness while trying to make the other feel accepted. On the other hand, Figure 4.16 shows the commenter sharing his personal history in the hope of teaching smokers proper etiquette when being around other non-smokers. In addition, the commenter wrote this comment in an advising way for others instead of being directive and autonomous.

Comments with Questions (To Elicit Response) (F5) accounted for 14 (or 13.73%) out of 102 times. Female commenters used this feature 10 out of 14 times whereas males only used this feature four out of 14 times. Figure 4.17 shows a comment with Questions (To Elicit Response) (F5).

Figure 4.17: Comment with F5 – Questions (To Elicit Response)

The comment in Figure 4.17 shows a female commenter asking a question on where adults who accompany their children to the library should sit. Commenters were shown to outwardly ask questions when they wanted more information about something related to the topic of discussion. Females asked more questions than males did, which shows that asking questions is still very much a female language feature.

Aligned Orientation (F7) has been classified as a female language feature by researchers (Coates, 2015; Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Herring, 2003). However, 12 out of the 14 comments were made by males whereas two out of 14 comments were made by females. Comments with Aligned Orientation (F7) accounted for 14 (or 13.73 %) out of 102 times and shared the same number of occurrences with Questions (To Elicit Response) (F5). It is interesting that male commenters used Aligned Orientation (F7) more frequently than female commenters in their Facebook comments. An example of a comment with Aligned Orientation (F7) is shown in Figure 4.18.

Figure 4.18: Comment with F7 – Aligned Orientation

As an example, the commenter in Figure 4.18 agreed that the song that from the video of the particular Facebook post was "catchy" and suggested for a cover of the song as well.

The fifth most frequently used female language feature is Polite and Emotionally Expressive Words (Word Choice) (F4) and accounted for 13 (or 12.75%) out of 102 times. This feature was used 11 out of 13 times by female commenters and only two out of 13 times by male commenters. An example of a comment with Polite and Emotionally Expressive Words (Word Choice) (F4) is shown in Figure 4.19.

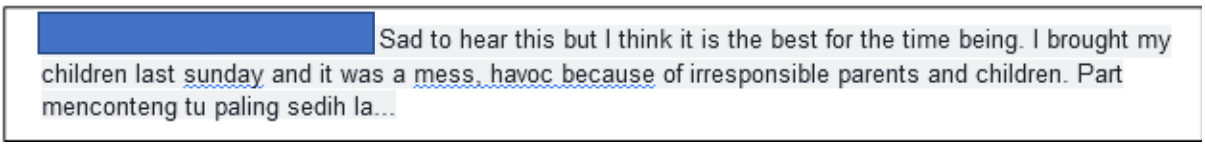

Figure 4.19: Comment with F4 – Polite and Emotionally Expressive Words (Word Choice)

The commenter in Figure 4.19 used words such as "sad" and *"sedih"* to express their experience and disappointment upon seeing the poor condition of a library in their visit.

Apologise (F3) accounted for six (or 5.88%) out of 102 times. Although apologies have been classified as female language features by researchers (Herring, 2003; Walker, 2008). Table 4.4 shows that males used this feature five out of six times, which was more

than females who were only found to use Apologise (F3) once out of six times. An example of a comment with Apologise (F3) is shown in Figure 4.20.

Figure 4.20: Comment with F3 – Apologise

Based on the comment Figure 4.20, the commenter apologised for not watching a certain show on television (and by observing his spelling of it, it seemed that he did not care much for it either), hence informing others that he did not have any notion about what the show was about. Even after apologising for his lack of awareness for the contents of the show, the commenter was still able to express the need for "the girl" to take legal action against the television host. This indicates that commenters may admit that they do not know the context to a situation and are not afraid of apologising for it before giving their opinion through the comments.

Lastly, both Hedges (F2) and Tag Questions (F6) were female language features with the lowest frequency in the Facebook comments. Comments with Hedges (F2) were used four (or 3.92%) out of 102 times and were only exclusively used by female commenters. An example of a comment with feature is shown in Figure 4.21.

Figure 4.21: Comment with F2 – Hedges

The words “assume” and “might” provides the assumption of the commenter, subtly indicating that they do not have confirmation of whether the mentioned person in the comment will find the post enjoyable. Hedges are used to modify certain speech acts as well as to express uncertainty while softening the utterances (Holmes, 2008; Mohamad, 2014). Due to the small number of occurrences, it is clear that hedges do not occur often in the dataset. In fact, multiple screenings of the data showed that hedges were not widely used in comments as compared to long written posts. The results show that hedging is still very much a female language feature because none of the males used hedging in their Facebook comments.

For the case of comments that have hedges (F2), there were more Malay words that could have been hedges but it was hard to identify whether it could be considered as a hedge word when past literature has yet to identify hedges in the Malay language. However, the requirements that make a hedge were taken into consideration when trying to identify one. Direct translations of the word were most likely to be considered as a hedge (e.g., *mungkin* for maybe), however, the researcher took careful consideration before assigning comments that had Malay words that could potentially have Hedges (F2).

Conversely, the data also show a higher frequency of males using Tag Questions (F6) although it is a female language feature (Amir et al., 2012; Cameron, 2010; Lakoff, 1975) which accounted for four (or 3.92%) out of 102 times. Males were found to use this feature three out of 102 times whereas females only used this feature once out of 102 times.

Similar to Hedges (F2), tag questions in Malay were not easy to identify as compared to those in English. This is because tag questions in Malay are not normally written with a sentence that is followed by a question that emphasises on the previous sentence. As mentioned by Aris (2011), *"kan"* is used in tag questions and is uniquely used in the Malay language. It is typically similar to the negative or positive question which follows by the sentence before it. An example from the data is shown in Figure 4.22.

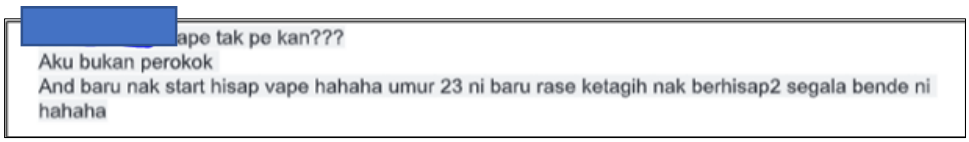

Figure 4.22: Comment with F6 – Tag Questions

Overall, the data from the Facebook comments showed that female language features were still used and by both genders (with the exception of hedges, which was only used by females). The data suggests that Malaysian millennials do retain their respective gender language patterns, however there were noteworthy instances of male commenters using female language features in their comments. The female language features that were found to be used by males more than females which include Apologies (F3), Tag Questions (F6) and Aligned Orientation (F7). The use of these female language features show that males do not mind apologising when necessary, use tag questions and agree with other commenters in their comments. It can be inferred that more male commenters are adopting the use of

female language features in their online interactions and the use of gendered language features can be flexible.

The next section will describe comments that were categorised into the Combined Language Feature category.

4.2.1.3 Combined Language Features in Facebook Comments by Malaysian Millennials

This section will describe some examples of Facebook comments written by Malaysian Millennials that have gendered language features from both male and female. The category of Combined Language Features are comments that contain both male and female language features. A total of 34 out of 260 comments were categorised in the Combined Language Feature category. An example of such a comment is shown in Figure 4.23.

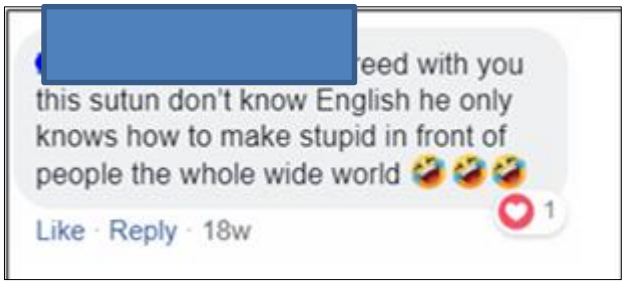

Figure 4.23: Comment with Combined Language Features 1

Although the commenter was agreeing the original poster's commentary (and therefore indicating the use of Aligned Orientation(F1), this commenter still showed stereotypical male language features by using insults (M4) with the word "*sutun*" comes from the word "*sotong*", which is an insult for gender fluid people as well as using the word "stupid" as an insult towards the subject of the topic. Therefore, this comment has both male and female language features.

Figure 4.24: Comment with Combined Language Features 2

Another example of a comment with combined language features is shown in Figure 4.24. The commenter here uses a combination of Polite and Emotional (Word Choice) (F4), which is labelled as a female language feature in the framework, as well as Insults and Profanities (M4) and Rhetoric Questions (F6). The use of Polite and Emotional (Word Choice) (F4) is shown in the words *"manis"* and *"cantik"* as they said that girls with darker skin are sweet and beautiful. The commenter used these words to highlight positive traits of a person with a darker skin tone. In addition, Insults and Profanities (M4) was used in the word *"biadap"* which means rude and was included in a rhetorical question towards the impolite behavior of the person in discussion.

Since there were 34 out of 260 comments with combined language features, this indicates that Malaysian millennials do use a combination of their respective gender's language features with their counterpart's. It can be inferred that the choice of using various gendered language features is not limited to one's respective gender and may vary in the context it is written in.

The next section will discuss comments with neutral language features found in the Facebook comments.

4.2.1.4 Neutral Language Features in Facebook Comments by Malaysian Millennials

Nevertheless, the neutral category exists to classify comments that do not seem to fit into any one of the typical language features from both of the genders. The reason for this could be that these language features have not been previously identified or are not present in the analysis framework. A total of eight comments that were categorised as Neutral Language Features were found in the Facebook Comments.

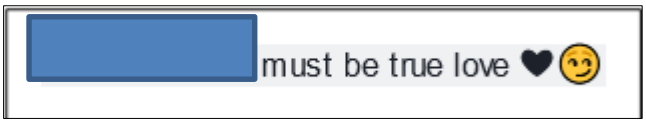

Figure 4.25: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 1

The comment shown in Figure 4.25 is about a woman's disappointment with her husband after finding out that he withheld some information about himself after they getting married. The commenter is showing sarcasm in his comment by typing "it must be true love" despite the woman's disappointment towards her marriage.

Figure 4.26: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 2

The comment shown in Figure 4.26 is a commenter typing laughing emotions although expressed that they should not be laughing at the misfortune of others. This shows a sarcastic feature. Coincidentally, the comment from Figure 4.25 is in the same thread as this comment.

Figure 4.27: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 3

The commenter in Figure 4.27 mentioned "Brother Winston" which refers to a cigarette brand and asked that other commenters not to forget about it as a smoking fine is imposed on restaurant. The comment mimics a statement said on the deathbed of a deceased and in this case, the cigarette brand.

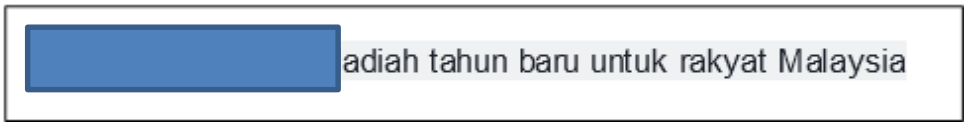

Figure 4.28: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 4

The commenter in Figure 4.28 also typed a comment with sarcastic features as what they are saying referred to the smoking fine (as described in Figure 4.27) as a new year present (with the words *"hadiah tahun baru"*) for Malaysians.

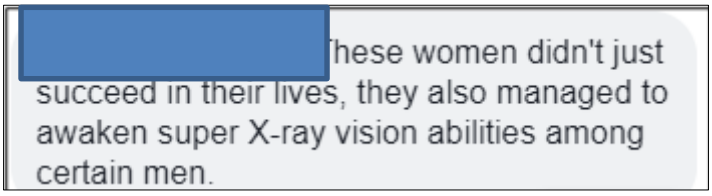

Figure 4.29: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 5

The comment in Figure 4.29 was written in a comic from Facebook post talking about some men who were focusing more about the breasts of some Muslim women rather than their success and were criticising one of them for not wearing a headscarf. The commenter

was being sarcastic as he mentioned that these women had awoken X-ray vision abilities among these men.

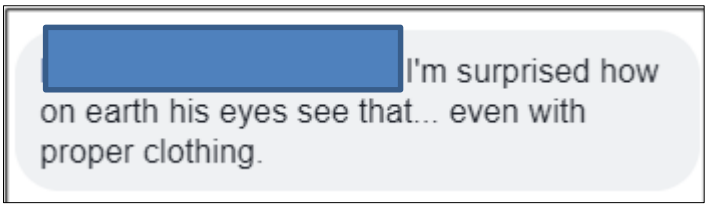

Figure 4.30: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 6

Relating to the comment in Figure 4.29, another commenter as shown in Figure 4.30 gave a similar sarcastic remark about how a man could see the breasts of some Muslim women despite them being properly clothed.

Six of the comments in the neutral category show sarcasm. Nonetheless, there were two comments that could not be classified or had unidentifiable features. These comments are shown in Figure 4.31 and Figure 4.32.

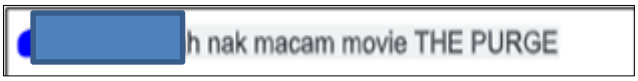

Figure 4.31: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 7

The comment in Figure 4.31 shows a commenter making a reference to a movie when talking about the smoking ban in restaurants. However, the researcher was unsure what it should be categorised as due to the lack of context. Gendered language features could not be interpreted from this comment, thus putting it in the neutral category.

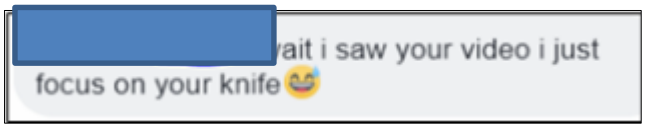

Figure 4.32: Comment with Neutral Language Feature 8

The comment in Figure 4.32 is about the commenter saying that they are focusing on the knife that the person is holding in a video of the Facebook post. This comment could not be categorised into any gendered language features, therefore it was placed in the neutral category.

Based on the comments shown in this subsection, all of them do not seem to have any features which match any of the language features to further categorised under male, female or combined styles. However, the researcher found that comments shown in Figure 4.25, Figure 4.26, Figure 4.27, Figure 4.28, Figure 4.29, and Figure 4.30 gave sarcastic remarks which could be categorised under a "sarcasm" category. On the contrary, comments shown in Figure 4.31 and Figure 4.32 were unclassifiable as either male or female language feature.

Based on the results of this study, sarcasm could also be included as a language feature worth including in the Framework of Analysis for Gendered Language Features (Table 3.1). Based on the literature, sarcasm is a male language feature (Herring, 1994) but the results of this study showed that sarcasm is probably a gender-neutral language feature because four male commenters and two female commenters used this. However, the results need to be verified in future research.

4.3 Reasons for Using Various Gendered Language Features

To address the second objective of this study, which is to identify the millennial Facebook users' reasons for using various gendered language features, an online questionnaire was used. The questionnaire consisted of two parts which firstly required the participants to fill in their personal details and how often they accessed and commented on Facebook. The second part of the questionnaire contained 14 Facebook comments that were extracted from the data sample and participants were asked to guess each commenter's gender based on the textual verbatim alone. Participants were also given an option to justify their response.

Table 4.5 shows the results on participants' identification of the commenters' gender. The first column of Table 4.5 shows the number of the comment samples. The second column lists the gendered language features that were identified in each comment. The third column lists the actual gender of the commenters. The fourth column shows the number of participants who guessed that the commenter was a male and the fifth column shows the number of participants who guessed that the commenter was a female. The sixth column shows the majority choice of the participants for each comment sample. The asterisk * sign shows the correct guess of the Facebook commenter's gender.

Table 4.5: Participants' Identification of the Gender of the Commenters

Comment No.	Gendered Language Features Identified	Actual Gender of Commenter	Male (%)	Female (%)	Majority Choice
1	Directive/ Autonomous (M5)	Female	16 (26.7%)	44 (73.3%)	Female*
2	Insults/Profanities (Word choice) (M4)	Male	54 (90%)	6 (10%)	Male*
3	Insults/Profanities (Word choice) (M4) Rhetorical Questions (M6) Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1)	Male	34 (56.7%)	26 (43.3%)	Male*
4	Insults/Profanities (Word choice) (M4) Apologise (F3) Questions (to elicit response) (F5)	Male	32 (53.3%)	28 (46.7%)	Male*
5	Information Oriented (M1) Strong Assertions (M8)	Female	18 (31.7%)	42 (68.3%)	Female*
6	Directive/ Autonomous (M5)	Male	41 (68.3%)	19 (31.7%)	Male*
7	Directive/ Autonomous (M5) Strong Assertions (M8) Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8)	Male	25 (41.7%)	35 (58.3%)	Female
8	Strong Assertions (M8 Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1)	Female	33 (55%)	27 (45%)	Male

Table 4.5 continued

9	Sexual References (M3)	Male	26 (43.3%)	34 (56.7%)	Female
10	Insults/Profanities (Word choice) (M4) Directive/ Autonomous (M5)	Female	51 (85%)	9 (15%)	Male
11	Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1) Polite and Emotionally Expressive words (word choice) (F4)	Female	35 (41.7%)	24 (58.3%)	Female*
12	Insults/Profanities (Word choice) (M4) Polite and Emotionally Expressive words (word choice) (F4) Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8)	Female	47 (78.3%)	13 (21.7 %)	Female*
13	Polite and Emotionally Expressive words (word choice) (F4) Attenuation/Sharing Experience (F8)	Female	43 (71.7%)	17 (28.3%)	Female*
14	Hedges (F2) Polite and Emotionally Expressive words (word choice) (F4) Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8)	Female	48 (80%)	12 (20%)	Female*

Note: The asterisk * sign shows the correct guess of the Facebook commenter's gender.

Based on Table 4.5, 10 out of the 14 commenter's genders were guessed correctly by a majority of the participants. Comment 2 had the biggest majority of correct guesses in which 54 (or 90%) out of 60 participants guessed the male commenter's gender correctly. Nine other comments that were guessed correctly included Comment 1, Comment 3, Comment 4, Comment 5, Comment 6, Comment 11, Comment 12, Comment 13, and Comment 14.

In contrast, Comment 10 had the biggest majority of wrong guesses in which only nine (or 15%) out of 60 participants guessed the female commenter's gender correctly. Four comments that were guessed incorrectly included Comment 1, Comment 7, Comment 8, and Comment 9. Comments with incorrect guesses indicate that participants could not completely identify the commenter's genders solely based on the language features in the comments. Gender identity was not easily distinguishable and may suggest that online gender language does not completely reflect what the traditional gender stereotypes.

Comment 11, Comment 12, Comment 13 and Comment 14. Comment 12, were Comments with Polite and Emotionally Expressive words (word choice) (F4) features and were written by female commenters. Unexpectedly, participants managed to correctly identify the commenters' gender for these five comments. This suggests that the presence of Polite and Emotionally Expressive words (word choice) (F4) in comments was an obvious feature which led participants to identify a commenter as female.

The next section of this chapter describes participants' reasons for identifying the Facebook commenters as female or male.

4.3.1 Reasons for Male Language Features

In this section, an overview of the reasons for identifying the Facebook commenters as male will be described. The main markers of male language features were harsh language, straightforward and shorter comment length, certain topics of discussions, word choice, and social role, as shown in Figure 4.33.

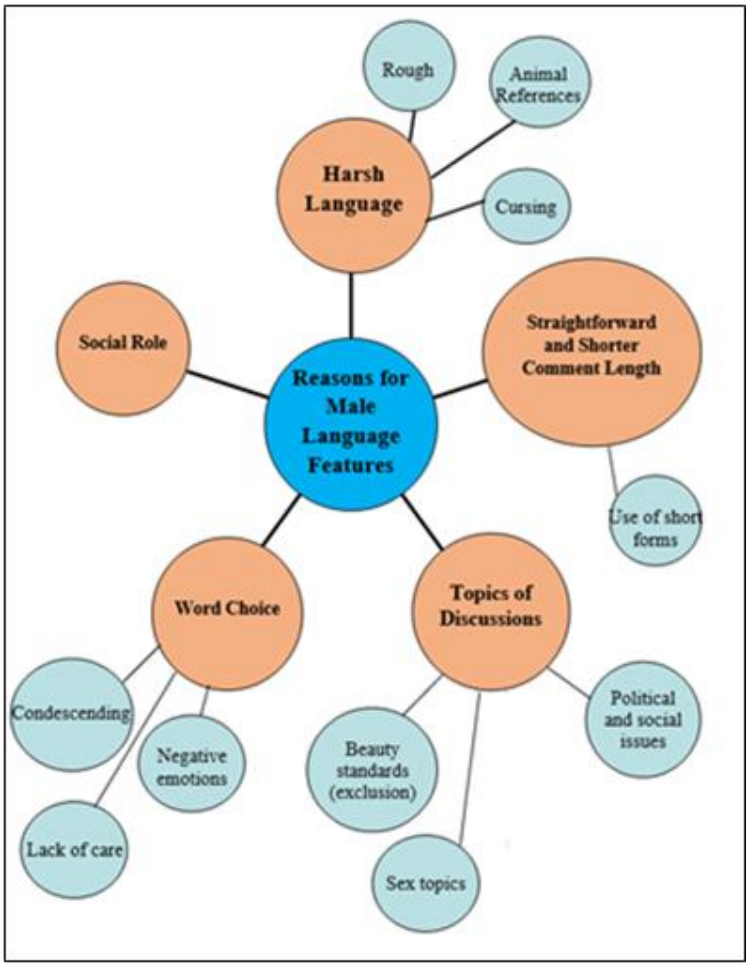

Figure 4.33: Reasons for Identifying Facebook Commenters as Male

Note: Beauty standards are an exclusion from topics of discussions of the reasons for male language features.

The first salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as male is harsh language which consists of three sub-themes, namely, rough, animal references, and cursing. Participants have mentioned that male commenters tend to speak “dirty words” as mentioned in (1). This is similar to participants who mentioned that that the commenter sounded rough in (2) and harsh in (3), (4) and (5).

(1) Male tends to speak dirty words (Participant 3)

(2) Sounds rough (Participant 8)

(3) Quite a harsh comment, could be from male user (Participant 13)

(4) Male uses harsh words more (Participant 28)

(5) harsh word comes from male, i assume (Participant 58)

A participant also mentioned in (6) that males were more likely to curse others whereas another participant mentioned in (7) that it was normal for males to openly type out cuss words.

(6) man are more likely to curse people (Participant 25)

(7) Normally males would openly type out cuss words (Participant 10)

Another participant in (8) also stated that males were more willing to use expressions of animal references in public as compared to their female counterparts. This statement can be further supported by both participants from (9) and (10) who also concurred that the word “anjing” (meaning dog in Malay) was often used among males. Thus, these participants agreed that cursing remains as something often done by males in their online discourse and the manner of using profanities were often associated with animal terms.

(8) Males are more open in using animal references as an expression in comparison to females. (Participant 24)

(9) Males tend to use the word ‘anjing’ more than females (Participant 47)

(10) Males seem to use the word “anjing” more (Participant 55)

The second salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as male is comments that were found to sound straightforward and shorter comment length, which consists of one sub-theme which was the use of short forms. Some participants have mentioned that males typed in a straightforward manner and in a shorter comment length were common characteristics of male discourse, as expressed in (11) and (12).

(11) Short and straightforward are most male's properties (Participant 10)

(12) Straightforward & short statement (Participant 19)

Another participant mentioned in (13) that harsh and short utterances were typical male characteristics. Previously, harsh language was identified as one of the reasons for male language in the first main feature of male language feature. The participant’s answer not only mentions “harsh” features in (13) but also that the comment was short. The participant further elaborated that it was normal for males to type with both of these features.

(13) Harsh and short, seems like a normal utterance by a guy. Male spoke short & straightforward (Participant 15)

A participant mentioned in (14) that males do not usually type long comments, which inferred that comments with a shorter length are typically written by male. Thus, some participants were able to identify a commenter’s gender as a male whenever they find the comments to be written in a shorter length. However, the shortness in comment length was

not specifically described by any of the participants. Participant 56 mentioned in (15) the mind of a male is simple, which may be reflected in male comments that are brief and curt.

(14) Guys don't usually type long comments (Participant 55)

(15) Short and simple like the male's mind (Participant 56)

Another participant noted in (16) that the usage of short forms is related to male online discourse and gave this as a reason for identifying a commenter's gender as male.

(16) Just feel like a male typing it with all the short form (Participant 55)

The third main feature for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as male are certain topics of discussion which consisted of four sub-themes which are topics of political and social issues, sex topics and did not include the topics of beauty standards. A participant explained in (17) that the commenter was discussing more on politics, which influenced them to identify the commenter as male. Another participant in (18) eliminated the possibility of a female writing the comment because they assumed that females seldom talked about politics.

(17) More on politics (Participant 28)

(18) Female seldom talks about politics (Participant 19)

Another participant eliminated the possibility of a male commenter complaining about beauty standards as mentioned in (19). This would suggest that comments about beauty standards was a topic that was rarely discussed among male commenters, which led Participant 10 to eliminate the possibility of it being written by a male commenter.

(19) Guys rarely complain about beauty standards (Participant 10)

Topics about sex were highly likely to be written by males. This is because Participant 44 in (20) eliminated the possibility of a comment being written by a female if it was talking about sex before marriage because the participant considered that females would not talk about such topics so publicly as it was not in their nature.

(20) I don't thing girls will say that. It is not their nature (Participant 44)

The fourth salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as male is word choice which consisted of negative emotions, lack or care and condescending manner of writing. Participants have mentioned certain words that prompted their choice of choosing a commenter as male. For instance, a participant in (21) mentioned that the word “nerd” was used often by males to describe other males and the use of the word “fella” in (22) prompted them to select the commenter as male.

(21) A clean but simple sentence could hinted that this is from male user, and most of the time male often describe other males as nerd. (Participant 13)

(22) The use of the word 'fella'. (Participant 24)

Other participants have also stated that word choice that have negative emotions were part of male language features. For instance, a participant in (23) mentioned that the presence of negativity and unforgiving words used in the comment was what prompted them to identify a commenter as male. Participant 22 also stated in (24) that males would show their temper easily, which suggests that the display of negative emotions such as anger was mentioned as a reason for identifying a commenter as male. In addition, Participant 55 mentioned in (25) that males tend to show their aggressiveness in the comments.

(23) Negativity and unforgiving word (Participant 41)

(24) Male will show their temper easily. (Participant 22)

(25) Males tend to be more aggressive in regarding receiving bad business experience men would dare to speak on this issue (Participant 55)

Moreover, some participants have mentioned that a lack of emotions in comments that led them to identify commenters as males. As mentioned by Participant 56 in (26) who said males won't care about these things, which referred to a commenter talking about the messy condition of the library space. Another participant in (27) pointed out that the comment they were referring to was too caring to be written by a male. This inferred that participants believed that comments written by males would have a lack of concern.

(26) Male won't care about these things (Participant 56)

(27) Too caring to be a man (Participant 43)

Another participant has also mentioned the condescending way of writing as another reason on why they identified a commenter as a male. Participant 47 stated in (28) that a condescending manner of writing led them to select a commenter for being male, which suggests that this kind of behaviour was typically associated with male language features.

(28) the condescending way the sentence was written (Participant 47)

The fifth salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as male is social roles. Participants have mentioned viewing male commenters as people with social roles when reading their comments. Participants may have identified them as male instead of female because of the majority of males who hold these positions within Malaysian society. For instance, a participant in (29) said that they could imagine an "ustaz" or religious

Islamic teacher writing this particular comment and proceeded to identify them as a male commenter.

(29) I can imagine an ustaz talking about this (Participant 15)

Another instance is shown in (30) where a participant mentioned that the commenter sounded like a politician. In Malaysia, most politicians are males, which would lead the participant to believe that the commenter sounded like a person with high authority, such as a politician. In addition, the participant believed that the autonomous language features and use of rhetorical questions in the comment made the participant believe it was written by a male with an authoritative social role, which eventually led them to identify this commenter as a male. Another participant in (31) stated that the comment (Comment 1) was written as if it was made by a father talking to their kids. The gendered language features identified in this comment consists of Directive/Autonomous (M5) features although it was written by a female commenter.

(30) Like politician (Participant 27)

(31) Like father talk to kids (Participant 28)

From the analysis, the participants gave several reasons for identifying commenters as males which included harsh language, straightforward and shorter comment length, the topics of discussions, word choice, and social role. Overall, participants have repeatedly mentioned that harsh language was often used by male commenters and this was the same for comments that sounded straightforward and had a shorter length. Participants also observed that comments discussing about political and social issues were highly likely to be written by male commenters which led them to write their comment in an opinionated manner to express their views. In contrast, participants eliminated the possibility of a

comment being written by a male if it discussed about beauty standards. Participants have also mentioned that certain words would only be used by male commenters such as “fella” and “nerd”. In addition, participants also eliminated the possibility of a comment being written by a male if it sounded too caring because of the lack of care that males would outwardly show in their online discourse. Participants also suggested that male commenters wrote comments which reflected someone with a social position in Malaysia such as a religious leader or politician.

4.3.2 Reasons for Female Language Features

In this section, an overview of the reasons for identifying the Facebook commenters as female will be described. The main markers of female language features were giving positive advice, length comments, presence of emotions, supportiveness, soft spoken, word choice and topics of discussion, as shown in Figure 4.34.

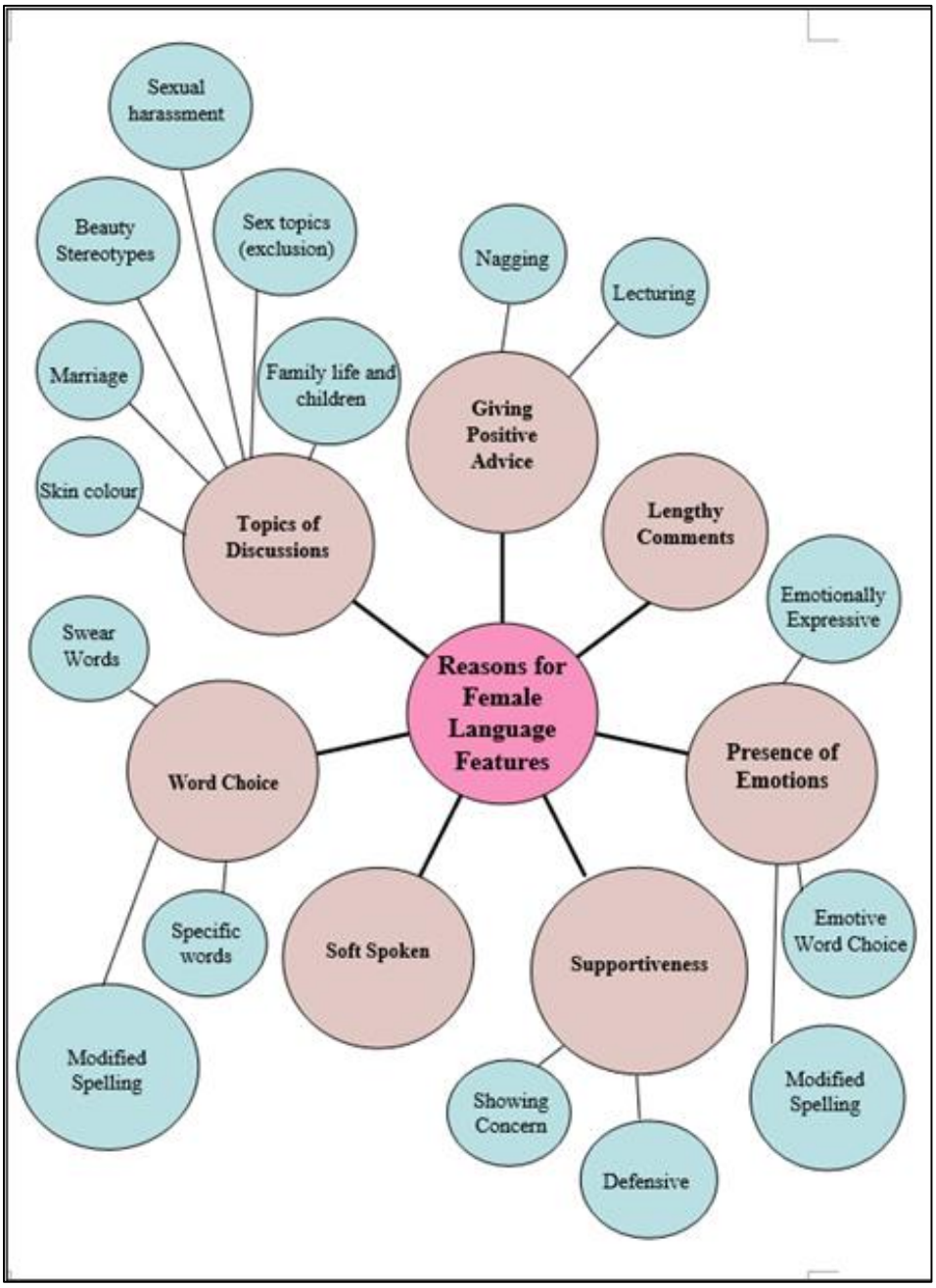

Figure 4.34: Reasons for Identifying Facebook Commenters as Female

Note: Sex topics are an exclusion from topics of discussions from the reasons for female language features.

The first salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as female is giving positive advice which also consists of nagging and lecturing. Participant 3 mentioned in (32) that typing comments with an advice tone was considered normal for females. Another participant in (33) mentioned that the comment could be a female giving advice to another female. In addition, Participant 23 noted in (34) that their reason for identifying a commenter as a female was because of the presence of giving advice in the comment itself. Participant 24 elaborated in (35) that a female commenter was inclined to be more cautious with their words which subsequently prompts this female commenter to advise others to be cautious with how they speak as well. This inferred that participants assumed that giving advice was a female language feature.

(32) Advice tone which is normally said by female (Participant 3)

(33) Female giving advice to a female? (Participant 15)

(34) Giving advice (Participant 23)

(35) Females tend to be more cautious, so an advice on being cautious with your words, I think would be an advice from a female. Higher probability. (Participant 24)

Participant 13 mentioned in (36) the user seemed like they were nagging and the use of the word “je” was an obvious sign that the commenter was a female. Another participant mentioned in (37) that the commenter sounded like a lecturing female, which influenced them the participant identify this commenter as a female.

(36) It looks like the user is nagging, and the user used 'je' which could be an obvious sign (Participant 13)

(37) Lecturing female (Participant 43)

The second salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as female is lengthy comments. Participants have repeatedly mentioned “lengthy” comments as being written by females as shown in (38) and (39). A participant mentioned in (40) that a female commenter not only was typed a longer sentence, but in detail as well. This concurred with the excerpt in (41) whereby participants stated that females gave more detailed statements (41) and facts in (42). A participant expressed in (43) that the comment was too long, which prompted them to select the commenter’s gender as female. This was agreed by another participant in (44) who said that a long comment must be written by a female commenter. This feature is a contrast to the short length of comments that participants identified as a male language feature as explained in Section 4.3.2

(38) Lengthy comment (Participant 10)

(39) Lengthy statements (Participant 19)

(40) Girls type a more detailed and usually longer sentence, I think. (Participant 54)

(41) Statement given is more detailed (Participant 19)

(42) Female have more facts (Participant 43)

(43) Too long (Participant 42)

(44) Long must be a lady (Participant 57)

The third salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as female is presence of emotions which consists of emotionally expressive, emotive word choice and modified spelling. Participants eliminated the possibility of a commenter being female when there was an absence of emotive words in a comment as mentioned in (45). This implies that the presence of emotive words or emotionally written discourse were categorised as female language features by participants. Another participant in (46) mentioned that the comment

was typed “emotionally”, which led them to identify this commenter as a female and another participant in (47) said that the comment sounded “emotional”. This agreed with a reason given by another commenter in (48) who noted that females feel more emotionally easily, which would mean that they type their comments with the presence of emotions. Participant 22 also noted that females would feel concern for people in (49) and could understand peoples emotive states more easily in (50).

(45) The user didn’t use many emotive words could be a hint that it is a male user. (Participant 13)

(46) Type more emotionally (Participant 49)

(47) Emotional

(48) Female easily feel sedih (Participant 49)

(49) Because I think that girl will more concern people feeling than boy nowadays. (Participant 22)

(50) Female understand people hearts easily. (Participant 22)

Participant 15 mentioned in (51) that the use of exclamation points was also what prompted them to identify a commenter as female. It should be noted that the exclamation point mentioned by the commenter does not refer to the use of punctuation (exclamation marks), but the modified spelling to express an exclamation of emotion instead. (The spelling of the word “asshole” was written with more “s” as shown in Comment 4) The commenter’s overuse of the letter “s” would suggest that this was an emphasis of emotion in the form of modified spelling that is shown in a word. As online discourse lacks physical cues, commenters may overuse letters in spelling of words to express an emotion whereby the communicant would interpret that some emphasis was given to a specific word.

(51) The use of exclamation point and emphasize on the emotion (Participant 15)

The fourth salient reason for identifying a Facebook commenter as female is supportiveness which consist of being defensive and showing concern. Participants have also observed the purpose for writing comments which influenced them to identify a commenter's gender as female. For instance, a participant noted in (52) that the inclusion of appreciation in a particular comment and indicated that showing appreciation in discourse was likely to be a female language feature. Another participant in (53) also notes that the commenter was praising another individual for their achievements although there was difficulty in giving a definite answer for their reasoning, nonetheless the participant identified the commenter as a female because of the presence of praising another individual. Participant 15 mentioned in (54) that encouraging others was a female characteristic which led them to identify the commenter's gender as female. This inferred that showing appreciation, praise and encouragement were also female language features.

(52) Including appreciation (Participant 50)

(53) It is very difficult to decide for this comment, but most probably a female user because the character in the post could be a female also, as the user praises that the character was an engineer. (Participant 13)

(54) Encouraging others online is female attribute (Participant 15)

Another participant pointed out that females outwardly showed their concern (55) and could also be defensive towards others (56). This could infer that female commenters were found to be defensive instead of tentative like traditional gender stereotypes (Lakoff, 1975).

(55) Inside comment, a girl is being humiliated. So most probably a female user voiced such concern. (Participant 13)

(56) Very biased and defensive of the girl mentioned in the comment (Participant 24)

The fifth salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as female is soft spokenness. A participant mentioned in (60) about the "soft-spoken" nature of females which was present in a comment (Comment 1). Another participant mentioned in (61) that the words in the comment (Comment 7) are "projected softly". The soft-spoken nature found in the reason for identifying a commenter as female contrasts the harsh and roughness of male language feature mentioned by participants in 4.3.2.

(57) Female more soft-spoken (Participant 19)

(58) The words are projected softly, I think. (Participant 24)

The sixth salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as female is word choice which consist of the use of specific words, modified spellings and swear words. Participants have mentioned the certain words were more likely to be used by females rather than males. For instance, participants have agreed that the use of the word "whatever" found in Comment 4 prompted them to identify a commenter as female as shown in (59) and (60). This could infer that specific words were more often used by females that by males.

(59) Whateverrrrr used more often by female (Participant 19)

(60) No guy will say whatever (Participant 56)

Another participant noted in (61) that a word was spelt with modified spellings. This suggests that females would likely use additional letters to the modification of a word's spelling (in this case, it was the overuse of the letter "s" in the word asshole). It should be

noted that modified spelling is present in two themes, namely presence of emotions and word choice. This implies that the choice of words used by female commenters would also have modified spellings. Likewise, modified spellings were also used to show the presence of emotion.

(61) I think girls would more likely use sssssss ? (Participant 55)

Some participants have mentioned that females were not excluded from using swear words (62) and showing aggression (63) as well. However, Participant 43 reasoned that the comment they were referring to was written by a male and no further explanation was given for this reasoning. Therefore, this suggests that some comments with swear words and aggressive behaviour could also be written by females. However, the participant did not elaborate more on these points. This contrasts with the "soft" qualities of female language features that were mentioned earlier by other participants.

(62) Female can use swear words too (Participant 15)

(63) *Perempuan boleh aggressive macam ini tapi buat waktu kini lelaki yang nampak menyerlah (*Participant 43)

The seventh salient reason for identifying a particular Facebook commenter as female are topics of discussion which consists of topics about skin colour, marriage, beauty stereotypes, sensitive issues such as sexual harassment and family life. Participants have noted that sex topics were not likely to be discussed openly by females. Feminine topics about skin colour as mentioned in (64), marriage, (65), beauty stereotypes (66) and emotional issues such as sexual harassment (67) influenced participants' decision in identifying a commenter as a female.

(64) It is about skin colour, most probably voiced by a female user. (Participant 13)

(65) This is an issue about marriage that often females take regard of. And the user addressed well by using 'Dear ladies', a good hint that this is a female user. (Participant 13)

(66) Usually female like to talk about beauty stereotype (Participant 15)

(67) More emotional issues as it touches sexual harassment (Participant 28)

A participant in (68) mentioned that a topic about sex was something that females would not talk about publicly, especially in the presence of males, which led them to eliminate the possibility of that comment being written by a female. This would suggest that comments on topics about sex were unlikely to be written by females and would be an exclusion from the topics commonly discussed by female commenters.

(68) Because Female will shy to talk about sex topic in front of Male (Participant 22)

Some participants agreed that comments with topics about family life and children led them to identify a commenter as a female. For instance, a participant stated in (69) that females would share their family life on social media which led them to identify a commenter as a female. This concurred with another reason given by Participant 23 in (70) who mentioned that the commenter mentioned spending more time with their children and this led the participant to identify this commenter as a female. This was also similar to an answered mentioned by Participant 25 in (71) in which the participant mentioned the females were more concerned about how their children were doing in school which also prompted them to identify this commenter as a female.

(69) Very often, only female users would share about their family life in social media (Participant 14)

(70) Girl will more concern what their kids done at school and outside because they care about their kids moral value in front of everyone (Participant 23)

(71) Spending time with children (Participant 25)

From the analysis, the participants gave several reasons for choosing commenters as females which included giving positive advice, lengthy comments that can also be factual and detailed, presence of emotions, supportiveness, soft spoken, word choice, and topic of discussion. Overall, participants have frequently mentioned the presence of advice giving and the long length of comments as gendered language features that were often used by female commenters. Participants also observed how comments were written with the presence of emotions, which includes writing in an emotionally expressive manner, the use of emotive word choice and modified spelling of words. In addition, participants also noted the show of supportiveness such as being defensive and showing concern, were likely to be written by females instead of males. Participants also stated that soft spoken features found in comments were likely to be written by female commenters instead of males. This indicated that participants still associated soft spokenness with the female stereotypes as portrayed in the Deficit Approach from the early stages of gender and language theoretical approaches (Lakoff, 1975). Similarly, participants have mentioned word choices of specific words, modified spellings and swear words as another reason for identifying a commenter as a female. Although this contrasted with the previous salient reason of soft spokenness, participants have mentioned that female commenters were just as likely to use swear words in their comments. It should also be noted that modified spellings appeared twice in the salient reason of word choice and the presence of emotions. This suggests that modified spellings are both existent within the word choices used by female participants and during times where they want to put emphasis on emotions found in their textual discourse.

Participants have also observed that comments discussing topics about skin colour, marriage, beauty stereotypes, sexual harassment and family life and children were highly likely to be from female commenters. In contrast, participants eliminated the possibility of a comment being written by a male if it discussed about sexual topics because they felt that females were not open to talk about this kind of subject in public.

In contrast, some participants have stated that comments with swear words, aggressive and defensive behaviours could be written by female commenters. This could indicate a change from Lakoff's (1975) work in which tentative speech was primarily used by females.

4.4 Comparison of Gendered Language Features in Facebook Comments from CMDA and Participants' Descriptions of Gendered Language Features

This section will compare gendered language features in Facebook comments and participants' descriptions of gendered language features. This was done to achieve the third research objective, which is to investigate if online gendered language features reflect face-to-face communication features.

The comparison from the analysis of the Facebook comments and questionnaire would suggest that there is an ongoing shift happening with the use of gendered language features used by Malaysian millennials. This suggests that online gendered language features do not completely reflect face-to-face communication features and are shifting towards new gendered language patterns. The extent of how much online gendered language features reflect face-to-face communication features will be elaborated by showing the comparison of male language features found in the Facebook comments and male language features as

described by participants followed by female language features found in the Facebook comments and female language features as described by participants.

Table 4.6 shows a comparison of male language features from the framework of analysis with the male language features described by participants. The first column shows the male language features listed from the Framework of Analysis for Gendered Language Features. The second column shows the total frequency of the use of a gendered language feature by commenters. The third column shows male language features described by participants in the questionnaire.

Table 4.6: Male Language Features from Framework with Male Language Features Given by Participants

Male Language Features	Total	Male Language Features Described by Participants
M1- Information Oriented	18	
M2- Self-Promotion	3	
M3-Sexual Reference	9	Topic of discussion (sex)
M4- Insults/ Profanities (word choice)	81	Harsh Language Word choice
M5- Directive/ Autonomous	60	Straightforward and Short comments
M6- Rhetorical Questions	27	
M7- Opposed Orientation	5	
M8- Strong Assertions	39	
		Social role

Note: Female commenters used Information Oriented (M1) features more than males in the Facebook comments.

From the analysis of the Facebook comments, the most frequently used male language feature found in the Facebook comment is Insults/ Profanities (word choice) (M4) which accounted for 81 (or 33.47 %) out of 242 times. In contrast, Self-Promotion (M3) occurred the least and only accounted for 3 out of 242 times.

Information Oriented (M1) was used more by female commenters even though it has been categorised as a male language feature in the framework of analysis for gendered language features. Information orientation of the female commenters' writing was noticed by the participants who mentioned that they identified certain Facebook commenters as female because the comments were lengthy.

From the responses given by participants, the five reasons for identifying Facebook commenters as males were topics of discussion, harsh language, straightforward and short comments, and social role. Some of these reasons were paired with gendered language features from the framework of analysis. Harsh language and word choice, which were given as identifiers of male Facebook commenters, are grouped together as one language feature in the analysis framework, namely (Insults/Profanities (word choice). Topics of discussion, specifically about sex, is paired with Sexual Reference (M3). Directive/Autonomous (M5) is paired with straightforward and short comments.

Firstly, Insults/Profanities (word choice) (M4) from the analysis framework is reflected in two features of male Facebook commenters given by the participants, that is, harsh language and word choice. The participants pointed out the harsh language used by male commenters, which is reflected in the use of animal references and curses, and generally roughness in expression. Words showing roughness are like "nerd" and negative and unforgiving words, which clearly identify the commenters as male. In addition, Insults/

Profanities (word choice) (M4) from the framework of analysis is the most frequently used male language feature. Therefore, this could suggest that insults and strong language are a strong indication of male language feature.

Secondly, topics of discussion, especially topics about sex, coincided with Sexual Reference (M3) from the framework of analysis. Participants mentioned that because females did not talk about sex, this would imply that males were more likely to talk about this topic instead. Talking about sex is a clear identifier for male commenters.

Thirdly, Directive/Autonomous (M5), a male language feature from the framework of analysis, coincided with straightforward and short comments. Directive/Autonomous means that the Facebook commenters state something explicitly and do not make ambiguous statements. In this study, the participants described male commenters as sounding straightforward in their comments. Straightforward comments also mean that the comments are short and curt, as pointed out by some other participants.

Lastly, social role was a language feature indicating male language use that was not found in the framework of analysis on male language features. Social role means that when participants were reading the comment texts, some "sounded" like they were authored by an authoritative figure, particularly politicians, father and religious leaders. These are often males in the society. Therefore, participants associated the authoritative comments to male commenters, using social roles frequently held by men in the society.

Table 4.7 shows a comparison of female language features from the framework of analysis with the female language features described by participants. The first column shows the female language features listed from the framework of analysis for gendered language features. The second column shows the total frequency of the use of a gendered language

feature by commenters. The third column shows female language features described by participants in the questionnaire.

Table 4.7: Female Language Features from Framework with Female Language Features Given by Participants

Female Language Features	Total	Female Language Features Described by Participants
F1- Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness	23	Supportiveness
F2 -Hedges	4	
F3 -Apologise	6	
F4 -Polite and Emotionally expressive words (word choice)	13	Emotional expressive (Presence of emotions) Soft-spoken
F5 -Questions (to elicit response)	14	
F6 -Tag Questions	4	
F7 -Aligned Orientation	14	
F8- Attenuation/ Sharing Experience	24	Giving Advice Personally-oriented topics of discussion (family, beauty)
		Lengthy comments
		Word choice

Note: Male commenters used Apologies (F3), Tag Questions (F6) and Aligned Orientation (F7) features more than females in the Facebook comments.

From the analysis of the Facebook comments, the most frequently used female language feature found in the Facebook comment is Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8) which accounted for 24 (or 23.53%) out of 102 total female language features. In contrast, Hedges (F2) and Tag Questions (F6) occurred the least and both of these features only accounted for four (or 3.92%) out of 102 times. Hedges was the only female language feature to be exclusively used by female commenters. Unexpectedly, three female language features, namely Apologies (F3), Tag Questions (F6) and Aligned Orientation (F7), were used more by males than females. The use of apologies by males more than females would suggest that males are also adopting more female language features in their online discourse. The findings from the analysis of Facebook comments have indicated that the frequent use of Apologies (F3), Tag Questions (F6), and Aligned Orientation (F7) by males than females have proven that not all female language features from the Framework of Analysis of Gendered Language Features were frequently used among female commenters as compared to male commenters.

From the responses given by participants, there were seven reasons for identifying Facebook commenters as females, namely, supportiveness, presence of emotions, soft-spoken, giving advice, topics of discussions, lengthy comments and word choice. Some of these reasons were paired with gendered language features from the framework of analysis. Supportiveness, which was given as an identifier of female Facebook commenters, is grouped together with one of the female language features from the analysis framework, namely Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1). Presence of emotions and soft spoken are grouped together as descriptors of female language use in the analysis framework, which is Polite and Emotionally expressive words (word choice) (F4). Giving positive advice and

topic of discussion are grouped together as descriptors of the female language feature, Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8).

Firstly, the salient reason of supportiveness as mentioned by the participants was paired with Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1) from the framework of analysis. Past researchers (Guadagno et al, 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Herring, 1994; Morris, 2013) have reported that Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1) features were frequently used by females in online discourse. On the other hand, participants have also stated that female commenters were more likely to show supportiveness in their comments compared to males. Participants have mentioned that the expression of supportiveness may appear in the form of showing concern and defending someone else who is harassed. Both the findings by previous researchers (Guadagno et al., 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006; Herring, 1994; Morris, 2013) and the descriptions given by participants as their reasons for identifying a female commenter seemed to agree that supportiveness could be identified as a feminine-like language feature.

Secondly, Polite and Emotionally expressive words (word choice) (F4) from the framework of analysis was paired with presence of emotion. A sub-theme of presence of emotion is “emotionally expressive” which the participants used to identify female commenters. In addition, participants also associated soft-spoken demeanour in giving comments as a feature of female writing.

Thirdly, Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8) in the analysis framework coincides with giving advice and topics of discussion. Many of the commenters shared their personal experiences which are related to some of the topics of discussion that are normally discussed by females. Female commenters share their experiences based on the topics that would

interest other female commenters while simultaneously giving them advice or making suggestions through the retelling of their experiences.

Lastly, among the seven reasons for identifying Facebook commenters as females, two reasons could not be paired with any of the female language features from the framework of analysis, that is, lengthy comments and word choice. Lengthy comments are possibly a female language feature that needs to be added to analysis of framework on female language features. This is because the participants have repeatedly mentioned that lengthy comments were contributed by female commenters. This is the direct opposite of a male language feature, which is straightforward and short comments, referred to as Directive/Autonomous (M5) in the framework of analysis.

In addition, word choice which consists of specific words, modified spellings and swear words were mentioned by participants to be descriptions of female language features. Participants have mentioned specific words such as "whatever" to be used more often by females, although no reason for this was given. Another word *"je"* for *"saja"* (Malay word for "only") was also mentioned as a word identifying the Facebook commenter as female. In the analysis framework, male word choice was referred to as Insults/Profanities (word choice) (M4) (which the participants describe as harsh language). However, no equivalent descriptor of word choice was given for female language features. The results on certain word choice characterising female commenters suggest that feminine word choice should be added to the analysis framework on female language feature.

The above description of results showed that only five male language features and seven female language features were brought up by the participants as characteristics which helped them to identify the Facebook commenter as male or female. In fact, many of the

male and female language features in the analysis framework were not highlighted by the participants.

Although Hedges (F2), Apologies (F3), Questions (to elicit response) (F5), and Tag Questions (F6) were previously identified as female language features by other researchers (Amir et al., 2012; Bonvillian, 2000; Cameron, 2010; Herring, 1993, 2003; Lakoff, 1975; Walker, 2008), none of these features were brought up by participants when identifying the gender of the commenters in the questionnaire. This suggests that these language features were not inherently used by females as participants did not mention any of these features in the descriptions.

From the analysis of Facebook comments, hedges were only used by females. Therefore, this would suggest that females are still actively using hedges in their online discourse. Nonetheless, it can be argued that only English hedge words were identified in the Facebook comment analysis as the researcher could not accurately determine which words were considered as hedges in Malay. Therefore, the small frequency of hedges may be influenced by the factor of insufficient studies of Malay hedge words and more studies can be done to give a better and more comprehensive coverage of Malay hedge words that exist.

Features of Apologies (F3) was previously identified as a female language feature in studies (Herring, 2003; Walker, 2008). However, male commenters used it more than female commenters in the current study, which suggests that males were more eager to apologise to other in public.

Although analysis of the Facebook comments showed that gendered language patterns leaned towards male language traits found in stereotypical male language, this did

not mean that male commenters solely used male language. Three female language features, namely, Apologies (F3), Tag Questions (F6), and Aligned Orientation (F7) were used often by males than females. This suggests that cross gendered language usage was apparent in the Facebook comments written by Malaysian millennials. This would suggest that male commenters are adapting to female language features into their online discourse whereas females are doing the same in their online discourse by adapting male language features. This phenomenon of cross-gendered use of language features is not new, but it is something that has become increasingly common as opposed to keeping gender norms strictly practiced among one category of gender. In this study, gendered language features from both male and female were simultaneously used, which sometimes prompts some commenters to produce comments with a variety of combined language features.

This potentially produces a new set of patterns, in which not all male commenters would exclusively use male language features and not all female commenters would exclusively use female language features. An example of this can be seen in the participants' description when they mentioned that being defensive and showing aggressiveness were also reasons on why they identified a commenter as female. This challenges past findings that mentioned how aggressiveness are shown to be male features (Herring, 1994, 2000). Moreover, aggressiveness was not included in the framework of analysis for neither male nor female language features. This suggests that features of aggressiveness could be categorised as a feature shared by both males and females. In addition, this also points out that participants are aware that females are changing from traditional language stereotypes of females being "soft-spoken" to become more outspoken and assertive, which is known to be a male language feature as previously mentioned in past findings (Lakoff, 1975).

A majority of the participants' reasons coincided with the gendered language features from the Framework of Analysis for Gendered Language Features. For the participants' reasons given for identifying the gender of Facebook commenters, some participants listed several descriptions of gendered language features that led them to identify commenters as males, namely, harsh language, straightforward and shorter comment length, the topics of discussions, word choice, and social role.

For reasons that led participants to select a commenter as female, the salient reasons that were identified included giving positive advice, lengthy comments that can also be factual and detailed, presence of emotions, supportiveness, soft spoken, word choice, and topic of discussions which include skin colour, marriage, beauty stereotypes, sexual harassment and family life and children. However, sex topics were an exclusion from the topics that would be likely discussed by females.

With the exception of lengthy comments and word choice, all the other salient reasons identified were able to be paired with a female language feature from the framework of analysis.

From the comparisons done between the g**e**ndered language features in Facebook comments from CMDA and participants' descriptions of gendered language features, many implications and findings were uncovered that revealed many new discoveries of the current state of gendered language features used among Malaysian millennials. The next section will discuss the inferences indicated in the overall findings of the current study.

4.5 Discussion

The aim of this study is to analyse gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials. Two findings are worthy of a discussion, and that is, the blurred distinction in gendered language features found among the discourse of Malaysian millennials and the redefinition of gendered language features found in Facebook comments of Malaysian millennials.

The first point of discussion is the blurred distinction in gendered language features. Interestingly, the analysis revealed that there were comments in which both female and male language features were used. For instance, there were comments that have both male and female language features (e.g., Figure 4.23 and Figure 4.24). Commenters would use whatever gendered language feature that they felt could best express their intended meanings in their comments. This also indicates the flexibility of the use of gendered language features as commenters would not only use one language feature of one specific gender, but also include the usage of language features from their respective counterparts. The total of 36 comments with combined language features suggests that an emerging pattern of gendered language features are present as commenters would assimilate both male and female language features in their discourse. The results of this study have suggested that conventional gendered language features used by Malaysian millennials are gradually transitioning into blurred categories of gendered language features when used in online discourse. In other words, it is no longer considered taboo or strange when a female commenter uses profanities in their comments or when a male commenter shares their personal experience to anyone reading their comments, sometimes in an attempt to give personal advice. This could be related to changes over time because traditional stereotypical

gendered language patterns are no longer limited to the use of a respective gender when it comes to online discourse.

This was shown in the findings from Nevala's (2015) study, which challenges the findings of previous studies (Herring, 1993, 1996, 2003) as it was reported that gender communication styles are fluid and flexible and are produced according to different communicative situations in Facebook. This is similar to Savicki, Lingenfelter, and Kelley's (1996) study which showed that there was a large ambiguity of gender from their findings because a number of messages could not be categorised as being sent by either a male or female. Thomson, Murachver, and Green (2001) found that users accommodated each other's gendered language styles towards other users whose gender labels and styles matched consistently. Although it was not explicitly mentioned by the participants or Facebook commenters, commenters may have been indirectly influenced by their communicant's communication style when interacting with each other. These studies indicate that users are not limited to using their respective stereotypical gendered language features as they are adapting more cross-gendered language use into their online discourse.

Another evidence for the blurred distinction in gendered language features from this study is the occurrence of cross-gendered language use which seems to be frequent, that is, female commenters using male language features and male commenters using female language features. Female commenters were found to use Information Oriented (M1) features more frequently than males. On the contrary, male commenters were found to use Apologies (F3), Tag Questions (F6), and Aligned Orientation (F7) features more frequently than females. Information Oriented (M1) was found to be a male language feature from previous studies (Bond, 2009; Cameron, 2010; Guadagno et al., 2011; Jackson et al., 2001;

Morris, 2013) and was subsequently categorised as a male language feature in the framework of analysis for gendered language features of this study. However, the analysis of Facebook comments showed that females were found to have used this feature more than male commenters did. From the participants' description of female language features, participants also noted that females were more factual and detailed as well. This would imply that being information oriented could be categorised a female language feature instead of a male language feature.

In contrast, male commenters were found to use three female language features from the analysis of Facebook comments which are Apologise (F3), Tag questions (F6), and Aligned (F7) more than females. Previous studies have identified apologise as a female language feature (Herring, 2003; Walker, 2008). However, male commenters were found to apologise more than female commenters did. This may infer that males were open to apologise if they were in the wrong or were unaware of something. As for tag questions, previous studies have stated that is used often by females (Amir et al., 2012; Cameron, 2010, Lakoff, 1975). However, male commenters were found to use these features, sometimes to express doubt or ask for confirmation on something. Previous studies have also suggested the aligned orientation or showing agreement was a female language feature (Coates, 2015; Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Herring, 2003). The analysis of Facebook comments showed that male commenters were willing to outwardly show agreement with someone else's opinion on something.

It should be noted that these three female language features which were used more often by males were not mentioned by the participants. This could suggest that although features were still relevant as strong indications of gendered language features (such as harsh

language for males and lengthy comments for females) whereas some were not as relevant anymore to be used as indications (such as hedges, apologies and aligned orientation).

The switch of using certain gendered language features by the opposite gender such as the usage of tag questions by males and the informative style of writing by females would indicate that the flexibility of gendered language features is present. Previous studies which showed the flexibility of gendered language features mentioned several factors which influence this phenomenon to happen, which include the platform for interaction, or in this case, CMC (Dalampan, 2006), communicative situations (Nevala, 2015), and the influence of communicants that are interacted with (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Thomson et al., 2001). It can be agreed that all these factors have involuntarily influenced the flexibility of the use of gendered language features by the Facebook commenters.

The cause of the blurred distinctions of gendered language features used by Malaysian millennials may stem from the anonymous nature of the Internet. Due to anonymity of the Internet, users may feel unobligated to speak in their respective gender stereotypical manners and prefer using gendered language features which best suit their intended meaning in their discourse. Moreover, the lack of physical cues allows digital users to hide their identities when they are interacting online, even more so if something controversial is said. As seen from a linguistic perspective, digital footprints from online chats gives linguistic researchers raw textual verbatim for analysis.

Yates (1997) stated that CMC technologies allowed users to create gender identities that may differ from offline realities. In addition, Matheson and Zanna (1990) have previously suggested that with the anonymity nature of CMC, males and females were not obligated to project their socially expected qualities of gendered stereotypes which would

lead them to “be” different from the gender stereotype that was socially accepted. The anonymity of CMC does not only allow social dynamics in groups to be manipulated but also protects the users’ identity (Christopherson, 2007). This would lead users to use various kinds of gendered language features which do not necessarily reflect their own gender identity in real life and subsequently leads to the construction of new identities in their online personas.

However, although there is blurring in the distinction of gendered language features found in Facebook comments, this phenomenon is not extensive.

From the perspective of the dynamic approach, gender identity is viewed as a social construct rather than a “given” social category and speakers are “doing gender” instead of “being” a particular gender, which consequently leads to studying gender differences from a performativity perspective (Coates, 2015). The analysis of the Facebook comments reflects the description as described in the dynamic approach as the usage of gendered language features are flexibly used by both male and female commenters. This suggests that gendered language features are no longer as distinct and are being blurred. These blurred distinctions may be a result of changes over time. In addition, the gendered language features which make up of the framework of analysis were also based on older studies (Amir et al., 2012; Guadagno et al., 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Postmes & Spears, 2002). It can be argued that this has resulted in the ambiguity of gendered language features and could possibly lead to the blurred distinctions of gendered language patterns as a whole.

The second point of discussion is the redefinition of gendered language features. The framework of analysis for gendered language features of this study was formulated based on

10 previous findings on gendered language use (Amir et al., 2012; Guadagno et al., 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Postmes & Spears, 2002). The framework listed Information Oriented, Self-promotion, Sexual References, Insults/ Profanities (Word choice), Directive/Autonomous, Rhetorical Questions, Opposed Orientation, and Strong Assertions as male language features and Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness, Hedges, Apologise, Polite and emotionally expressive words (word choice), Questions (to elicit response), Tag Questions, Aligned Orientation, and Attenuation/ Sharing Experience as female language features. A redefinition of gendered language features is needed in view of results on certain language features becoming gender-neutral, and the emergence of new features.

The language features previously identified as either female or male language features but not shown to be clearly gender-specific in the millennial Facebook comments are aggressiveness, insults and profanities, information-oriented features, and aligned orientation. This listing includes features which occurred in low frequency, new features, and recategorization of female and male language features as gender-neutral features.

The features that occurred in low frequency were Self-Promotion (M3), Opposed Orientations (M7), Hedges (F2), and Tag Questions (M6). These features occurred less than six times out of 344 total language features identified in the millennials' Facebook comments. include Self-Promotion (M3, three times), Opposed Orientations (M7, four times), Hedges (F2, four times), and Tag Questions (M6, four times). Due to the infrequent use of these male and female language features, it is possible that present-day millennial Facebook commenters are not using these features as frequently as before. Both Apologies (F3) and Tag Questions (F6) have also been previously identified as female language

features (Amir et al., 2012; Cameron, 2010; Herring, 2003; Lakoff, 1975; Walker, 2008). However, male commenters were found to use these features more than females. Notably, these features were not identified in any of the participants' reasons for identifying commenters as a certain gender. This suggests that these features are not strong determining factors that helped in identifying a commenter's gender.

The new features that can possibly be included in future frameworks for analysing gendered languages in Facebook comments are social role, length of comments, and word choice. Firstly, social role was an indication for commenters to identify a commenter as male but it is not included in the framework of analysis for gendered language features. However, participants used social roles as a reason identifying a commenter as male which would suggest that this was also a determining factor when identifying a commenter's gender solely based on textual verbatim alone. However, participants did not elaborate more about what features or characteristics were included in a specific social role. Social roles that could pinpoint the gender as female are nurses, mothers and beauticians. The second new feature is length of a comment which influenced the participants to decide a commenter's gender. Males tend towards shorter straightforward comments whereas females write longer comments. The third new language feature that can possibly be included in future frameworks for analysing gendered languages in Facebook comments is word choice. Participants have also mentioned that specific word choice such as the word "whatever" and modified spelling of words was used more frequently by females. Researchers like Basow and Rubenfeld (2003) have stated that females tend to use more polite and expressive words, but this description may not be applicable to the millennial Facebook context. Although many participants have referred to the word choice as emotionally driven, it should be noted that none of them mentioned feature of politeness when explaining how word choice led

them to identify commenters as females. Moreover, this indicates that emotionally expressive word choices were a stronger determining factor for identifying female commenters as compared to the presence of polite word choice.

As for recategorization of female and male language features as gender-neutral features, these are the features: aggressiveness, insults and profanities, information-oriented features, aligned orientation and sarcasm. Firstly, both aggressiveness and insults and profanities were previously identified as male language features but the results indicate that they could possibly be categorised as gender-neutral features. Previously, Herring's (1994) findings identified expressions of aggressiveness were related to males and features of supportiveness to females. While the features of supportiveness from Herring's (1994) findings do agree with the participants' description of supportiveness being attributed by female commenters, it does not agree with Herring's (1994) findings of aggressiveness being related to males as participants have also mentioned that females could be aggressive and even use swear words. This also indicates that aggressiveness could be a feature used by both genders whereas supportiveness could still be regarded as a female language feature. Past findings have shown that insults and profanities were male language features (Herring, 2000; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). However, the results of the Facebook comments and participants' reasons showed that insults and profanities is no longer restricted to male usage, and also reflects female language usage.

Secondly, information orientation previously identified as a male language feature but the results indicate that they could possibly be categorised as gender-neutral features. Information orientation was previously identified as a male language feature (Bond, 2009; Cameron, 2010; Guadagno et al., 2011; Jackson et al., 2001; Morris, 2013). However, the

frequency reported in Table 4.2 shows that females used this feature more than males did. Moreover, participants have mentioned that female commenters tend to be more detailed and factual when writing comments, which contributes to the longer length of the comments. It appears that information orientation should be categorised as a gender-neutral feature in Facebook comments.

Thirdly, aligned orientation previously identified as female language features (Coates, 2015; Guiller & Durndell, 2007; Herring, 2003) but the results indicate that they could possibly be categorised as gender-neutral features. Female commenters did not really express agreement with opinions as frequently as expected. Instead, it was the male commenters who used this feature more frequently (as shown in Table 4.2). It seems that aligned orientation has emerged as a gender-neutral feature in the Facebook comments.

Lastly, the use of sarcasm was not included into the framework of analysis but occurred six out of 344 times in the Facebook comments. Out of the six instances of sarcasm, four were used by male commenters and two by female commenters. Sarcasm was previously identified as a male language feature (Herring, 1994), but the results of this study showed that sarcasm is probably a gender-neutral language feature.

Based on the results on features which occurred in low frequency, new features, and recategorization of female and male language features as gender-neutral features, there seems to be an ongoing transition from traditional language features into new patterns which are used in the discourse of Malaysian millennials. The changes over time may have contributed to the changes of these patterns. In other words, the lines isolating male and female language features are gradually becoming more blurred and, in the meantime, a new patterns of language features are replacing them. Malaysian millennials are evidently

shifting their use of gendered language features as opposed to the 10 previous findings that make up the framework of analysis (Amir et al., 2012; Guadagno et al., 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Postmes & Spears, 2002). The findings of this study suggests that Malaysian millennials do not inherently follow the traditional gender stereotypes when interacting online.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the summary of findings of the current study. The implications of the study are also presented. Subsequently, the recommendation for future research is also described. The last part of this chapter will present the conclusion of this study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The aim of the current study is to analyse gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials. The first objective of the study is to analyse the gendered language features in CMC among Malaysian millennials. The second objective is to identify the reasons behind the usage of these discovered language features. The third objective is to investigate if online gendered language features reflect face-to-face communication features.

The first objective was on analysing the language features found among Malaysian millennials in their usage of CMC. In order to achieve this research objective, the researcher first constructed a framework of analysis of gendered language features by putting together language features that have been previously analysed in 10 previous studies (Amir et al., 2012; Guadagno et al., 2011; Guiller & Durndell, 2006, 2007; Herring, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Postmes & Spears, 2002). The framework of analysis of gendered language features consists a total of 16 gendered language features (8 male, 8 female).

After that, the researcher looked for Facebook comments from various Facebook pages and analysed a total of 260 comments using the framework of analysis of gendered language features. From the analysis of the Facebook comments, all the commenters whose comments were selected and analysed for this study were from Malaysians born within the millennial age gap (1980 to 1999).

From the categorisation of comments, a total of 161 (or 61.9%)) out of 260 comments were comments which consisted of male language features and were categorised under the Male Language Feature category. Comments with female language features came in second with a total of 57 (or 21.9%) out of 260 comments. On the other hand, combined comments consist of a total of 34 (or 13.1%) out of 260 comments whereas neutral comments had only eight (or 3.1%) out of 260 comments.

The most frequently used gendered language feature in the Facebook comments was Insults/Profanities (M4), which accounted for 81 out of 344 total gendered language features. On the contrary, the least frequently used gendered language feature in the Facebook comments was Self-Promotion (M3), which accounted for three out of 344 total gendered language features. Both males and females have been found to use cross gendered language features. In addition, almost all the features from the analysis framework have occurred at least once among both genders, with the exclusion of Hedges (F2) which was exclusively used by female commenters.

The analysis of the Facebook comments reported that certain language features were used more commonly by the opposite gender. This was shown when female commenters were found to use Information Oriented (M1) features more often than males. On the contrary, male commenters were found to use Apologies (F3), Tag questions (F6), and

Aligned Orientation (F7) more than females. This indicates that these gendered language features may not be applicable to the Malaysian millennials.

The second research objective of this study is to identify the reasons behind the usage of these discovered language features. A total of 60 participants (30 males, 30 females) who were millennials, responded to the online questionnaire. In the online questionnaire, participants were asked to identify the gender of commenters from 14 comment texts and they were not given any information on the commenter's identity. Additionally, participants have also contributed to some reasons as to why these features are closely linked to a certain gender's language features. Their responses were thematically analysed to find salient reasons which led them to identify certain commenters as female or male.

When identifying the commenters' genders from the 14 comment texts, a majority of the participants managed to correctly identify 10 out of the 14 commenter's genders Notably, comments with Polite and Emotionally Expressive words (word choice) (F4) features were guessed correctly. This could indicate that the presence of Polite and Emotionally Expressive Words (word choice) (F4) features was a strong determining factor for commenters to identify female commenters.

After the analysis of gender identification was done, the researcher proceeded to thematically analyse the participants' descriptions of gendered language features as their reasons for identifying the Facebook commenters as female or male. For male language features, harsh language, straightforward and shorter comment length, the topics of discussions (including political, social and sexual issues but excluding topics of beauty standards), word choice, and social role were identified as reasons for participants to identify Facebook commenters as males. In contrast, giving positive advice, lengthy comments that

were factual and detailed, presence of emotions, supportiveness, soft spoken, word choice, and topic of discussion were identified as reasons for participants to identify Facebook commenters as females.

The third objective of this research is to determine whether or not language features found online reflect normal face-to-face features in everyday conversation. A comparison of the findings from the Facebook comments and the participants' answers from the questionnaire was done. The researcher found that the participants' descriptions of gendered language features from the questionnaire coincided with the six gendered language features from the framework of analysis for gendered language features. For male language features, the topics of discussion (especially topics about sex) coincided with Sexual Reference (M3) from the framework of analysis. Directive/ Autonomous (M5) coincided with straightforward and short comments. Also, Insults/Profanities (Word choice) (M4) coincided with the use of harsh language, which included roughness, animal references, and cursing as well as word choice. Social role was the only salient reason that could not be paired with any of the male language features from the framework of analysis. For female language features, the salient reason of supportiveness, as mentioned by the participants, was paired with Interpersonally Oriented/ Supportiveness (F1) from the framework of analysis. Polite and Emotionally expressive words (word choice) (F4) coincided with emotionally expressive, which was identified from the salient reason of presence of emotions. Attenuation/ Sharing Experience (F8) coincides with two salient reasons, namely giving advice and topics of discussion. Lengthy comments and word choice were the only two salient reasons that could not be paired with any of the female language features from the framework of analysis. The results from the comparison indicated that there while some of the participants' descriptions of gendered language features could be paired up with

gendered language features from the framework of analysis, there were three features that could not. This suggests that these were new gendered language features which could help in determining the gender identities of commenters.

The findings of the current study indicates that there are blurred distinctions of gendered language features, which would mean that there are Malaysian millennials use language features that are not as traditional stereotypical gendered patterns of language. Meanwhile, new patterns of gendered language features have also surfaced as identified in the analysis of the participants' descriptions which include sarcasm, social roles, lengthy comments, and word choice.

The results of this study also agree with the dynamic approach, which is a recent addition to the theoretical approaches of gender and language that views gender identity as a social construct rather than a "given" social category (Coates, 2015). As seen from the use of cross gendered language features by both male and female commenters, they are no longer limiting their use of gendered language features to their respective gender.

5.3 Implications of the Study

Previous studies on gender difference in CMC that were carried out within a Malaysian context focused more on blogs (Amir et al., 2012). The focus of this study was to analyse gendered language features found in Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials. Gendered language features on Facebook comments have not been as thoroughly studied as other researchers focussed on code-switching (Yeo & Ting, 2019) or other linguistic features such as word modifications and spelling (Hashim et al., 2017; Kadir et al., 2012; Stapa & Shaari, 2012; Nazman et al., 2020). Therefore, this study has addressed

the gap in previous studies by providing new findings about the current state of gendered differences used among Malaysian millennials in writing their Facebook comments.

The current study showed that distinctive gendered language features found in Facebook comments are blurring. A framework of analysis of gendered language features was constructed to help identify the presence of the gendered language features found in the Facebook comments. From the analysis of Facebook comments, the majority of language features are still consistent with the stereotypical genders, as shown in other gendered language features that are dominantly used by their respective genders. For instance, a majority of female commenters still used Interpersonally Oriented (F1) features and Hedges (F2) in their comments whereas a majority of males still use Autonomous/Directive (M5) and Self-Promotion (M3) in their comments. Notably, the findings indicate that there are blurred distinctions of gendered language features which would lead to the subsequent redefinition of gendered language features. The first proof of evidence can be observed in comments with male language features which occurred the most as compared to comments with female language features, combined language features, and neutral language features. This would suggest that more commenters, especially female commenters, are adapting male language features into their online discourse. The second proof of the phenomenon of blurred distinctions in gendered language features were evident in comments which consists of both female and male language features. This would indicate the flexibility of the use of gendered language features in which commenters would not only use language features from their respective gender but also include the usage of language features from their respective counterparts. This suggests that users are assimilating both male and female language features into their online discourse which gradually transitions into blurred categories. The

ambiguity of gendered language features was indicated in previous studies as well (Nevala, 2015; Savicki et al., 1996).

In relation to the blurred distinction in gendered language features, the findings of the study also shows that the need to redefine certain language features is also present. Previously, some features were identified as either male or female language features. However, these features were not shown to be clearly gender-specific in the Facebook comments written by Malaysian millennials. These features include aggressiveness, insults and profanities, information-oriented features, aligned orientation, and sarcasm. The findings from the Facebook comments showed that these features were frequently used by both male and female commenters in a high frequency. This suggests that these gendered language features may no longer be categorised as a certain gender's language feature, but could possibly become a gender-neutral feature. In addition, features that were used infrequently, such as self-promotion, opposed orientations, hedges, and tag questions, would suggest that present-day Malaysian millennials are not using these features as commonly as before in their online discourse. Moreover, participants do not view certain features, such as apologies and tag questions, as features that help them in identifying a commenter's gender, as they were not mentioned in the participants' description of gendered language features when identifying the commenters' gender This suggests that these features are not strong determiners of gendered language features.

Therefore, the findings of the current study have added to the field of Sociolinguistics by identifying the gendered language features that are still relevant in online discourse whilst identifying language features which are no longer distinctively male or female. The findings have not only given an understanding of the current state of gendered language features used

by Malaysian millennials in Facebook comments but also gives more insight to improve future framework of analysis of gendered language features. In addition, the findings of the current study add to the knowledge of gendered language features that are used by Malaysian millennials in Facebook comments which not been widely explored in previous studies.

This study has also contributed to the related body of research through the formulation of the analysis framework. It has applied more than one method in order to analyse its findings, which fulfils one of the basic requirements of Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis in which this research's methodological approach is based on. Aside from that, this study not only focuses on the data that is collected on SNS comments, but also feedback of Malaysian millennials in order to further validate its findings. Thus, the findings would give insights not only from what is found in the data, but these opinions also serve as a reflection of the public's perspective towards the usage of gender language features used online.

A practical application of the findings on language features used by Malaysian millennials is in forensic linguistics which deal with Internet fraud. The findings from this study could provide a foundation in aiding the field of forensic linguists in pinpointing culprits who take advantage of manipulating online discourse for the purpose of committing identity fraud (especially in terms of gender).

Internet users are hidden in anonymity (Zheng et al., 2003) which consequently encourages many kinds of misuses, which includes identity theft. Hence, it has become crucial to further comprehend identifying features, especially gendered language features, as these studies are important to help with author identification to prevent identity fraud. For instance, Cheng et al.'s (2011) study to investigate author gender identification was

motivated by the rising number of impersonations of by adults who targeted children who were using social network sites. Due to the growing number of cases, these cases subsequently led to legislations and these cases has implications for text-based gender identification techniques. The complexity of identifying gender from Internet texts is because gender identification involves a higher level of abstraction (Cheng et al., 2011). This concurs with Herring (2013) who stated that gender styles are categorised as the most resistant to technological reshaping, likely because they have a high level of abstraction and their expressions are not restricted to a specific communicative modality. When viewing gender from the perspective of the Dynamic approach, gender is an abstract and socially-constructed collective of gendered characteristics that may not be arbitrary according to a person's biological sex. This makes it even more difficult to decipher a person's gender identity just by looking at their biological sex as it is flexible among different individuals. This emphasises on the importance of studying gender features in language, which is a complex area of knowledge.

There is no denying that research about CMC can be associated with the field of linguistics as CMC is greatly supported by textual discourse in relaying messages, despite the absence of visual cues.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The present study analysed gendered language features found in Facebook comments. Subsequent studies that aim to explore more of the changes going on in online gendered language features can be done among other social network platforms, such as Reddit, Twitter, or centralised messaging applications such as WhatsApp. The mode of

communication found in these different platforms may differ because people use them for different reasons such as having discussions or merely sharing social updates.

Participants have also mentioned social roles such as, politicians and mothers, as a determiner for the commenter's gender identity. However, none of the participants have elaborated further on the exact characteristics or language features that make up these social roles. Therefore, future studies could investigate what type of characteristics make up a certain social just by analysing and observing textual verbatim alone. The findings from studies such as these would indirectly contribute to the addition of new gendered language features or even characteristics which have not been previously studied or added into existing frameworks.

Another potential direction of carrying out future research would be to study other generations. The present study found that gendered language features are no longer distinctive and users have been subsequently using male and female gendered language features simultaneously, which leads to the need to redefine some of the gendered language features. The current study only focused on Malaysians from the millennial age group, but it is uncertain whether similar findings on language features would be found from studies on social media language of older users. It would be interesting to also see what gendered language features the older generation exhibit. Making a comparison between the older generations, who have limited exposure to technology, and younger people, especially generation Z would contribute to a better understanding of gender language patterns.

Research on gendered language features has thus far focused on female and male language features. Another group that future studies can focus on is the LGBTQ community. The interest towards this group has been growing in recent years as Malaysian researchers

are focusing on studying many aspects of this group, especially studies focusing on social media usage (Tuah & Mazlan, 2020). Therefore, findings from studies focusing on the language patterns with the inclusion of this community would give new insights into the language phenomenon as a whole in Malaysia as they identify with different spectrums between the two binary gender categories of male and female. Studies like these should also provide new and interesting findings and can contribute to the "queer theory", which is the field of exploring issues regarding sexuality, power, and marginalised groups.

5.5 Conclusion

There is a gap of knowledge on linguistic features involving gendered language features found in social media studies. Previously, studies involving texts from social network site focused on other linguistic aspects such as code-switching (Yeo & Ting, 2019) or other linguistic features such as word modifications and spelling (Hashim et al., 2017; Kadir et al., 2012; Nazman et al. , 2020; Stapa & Shaari, 2012). On the contrary, studies that do focus on gendered language features (e.g., Amir et al., 2012) collected data from blog sites instead of social media network sites, such as Facebook. This indicates the lack of studies that focus on gendered language features found in social media sites within the Malaysian context. The present study has aimed to analyse gendered language features found in Facebook comments. In addition, the group that was focused on were from the millennial age group who make up the highest population of digital users in the country (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2018).

There is also a difference on what online platform is chosen for a study to collect data from. The difference between blog sites and social network sites is that blogging creates content that is displayed on a personal website whereas social network sites engage with

people about content instead (Gusiff, 2019) and offers more interactions with other users because of its social nature (Swenson, 2017). Therefore, there is a difference when comparing data that are collected from blogs and social network sites due to the social nature and outreach of each platform. By studying social network sites like Facebook, researchers will be able to find more insight on gender and language by focusing on the gendered language features found in the interactions between users. Interactions from social networking sites can provide more comprehensive insights as researchers will be able to investigate online discourse that are authored from different individuals who interacted in the form Facebook comments. The analysis that has been done in Facebook comments are equivalent to researchers who have done studies in real life communities. The only difference lies within the platforms where the research is carried out, with different methodologies, but nonetheless, with people in general.

Danet (1998) mentioned that the paradoxical combination of anonymity and intimacy of user interactions within CMC will cause them to act differently from their usual selves in reality. This is because users may not feel obligated to act in a manner which is not normally socially acceptable. This was proven in previous studies that indicate that users did not act according to their respective gender stereotypes and proved that the use of gendered language features were flexible (Dalampan, 2006; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Nevala, 2015; Savicki et al., 1996).

Gender has been identified as an abstract concept which have not been as thoroughly explored. This is observed by the formulation of the different theoretical approaches that have been developed since the initial study of gender and language that was established with the publication of Lakoff's (1973) work. This questions whether humans reveal true selves

in a setting where visual cues are absent or is this part of their persona which switches from offline to online interactions and vice versa. Therefore, studies focusing on gender aspects of language will not only provide a better understanding of how gendered stereotypes have shifted over time, it can also give implications on underlying changes that are undetected physically and are connected to the subconscious of human nature.

Language plays a vital role in the understanding of human nature (Newman et al., 2008). Studies on language and gender not only focuses on the complexity of a language but also the social identities of those living in a certain language community. It is evident to see that a certain way of speaking can evoke power dynamics that influence others to follow suit if they wish for the same degree of authority shown. This suggests why more females are adapting to male language features in order to be viewed as a dominant figure among society compared to the submissive traditional female roles. The same goes for males who apologise and show supportiveness to other commenters.

Most people would look at gender language patterns as something that will eventually be acquired by the community an individual grows up in. However, a country like Malaysia, whose community practices segregated and obvious traditional gender roles, has proven that even the most common of practices does not necessarily mean that all of its people will be moulded from it. There is no denying that influences from the World Wide Web may provide some exposure to different cultures. Nevertheless, if this was the main factor for the change in gender language patterns then the data would have indicated an arbitrary change towards the same direction, which was not the case for this study.

In relation to this study, Mcelhinny (2003) poses the right question to ask, which is not “what are the gender differences?” anymore, but rather “why are gender language

features constructed as they are now?" (p. 24). The analysis of 260 Facebook comments made by Malaysian millennials along with the responses from the online questionnaires that were answered by 60 Malaysian millennial participants shows that the line separating gender languages of each binary category is blurring, so much so that it potentially redefines what gender languages are and are not supposed to be anymore. Hence, a redefinition of gendered language features is needed in view of results on certain language features becoming gender-neutral, and the emergence of new features as shown in the results of this study. Previous studies have mentioned several factors that have influenced this change which includes the platform for interaction, or in this case, CMC (Dalampan, 2006), communicative situations (Nevala, 2015) and the influence of communicants that are interacted with (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Thomson et al., 2001). Aside from these factors, the anonymity factor of CMC may be a possible factor for this change, which agrees with Yates (1997).

The findings of this study concur with the Dynamic Approach, whereby gender is a social construct and is developed through performativity as shown through the usage of various gendered language features by users from both genders. Malaysian millennials are gradually adapting to gender language features which suit their intended meanings in their online discourse, which means that they are no longer using features that are socially acceptable to their respective genders.

As reflected in Thomson et al.'s study (2001), gender is regarded as a socially constructed category as well as a feature of a certain scenario. When comparing this statement to this study's conclusions, it could explain the reasons for the shifts in gender language features found in the data of this research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

List of Facebook Post Links

1. https://www.facebook.com/vulpineninja/photos/a.449885075106708/1634581313303739/?type=3&theater
2. https://www.facebook.com/mymgag/photos/a.905978252807935/2288989904506756/?type=3&theater
3. https://www.facebook.com/aforarwind/videos/367430020466904/
4. https://www.facebook.com/thesiakapkeli/posts/2494372737252399
5. https://www.facebook.com/worldofbuzz/posts/1338967259616303
6. https://www.facebook.com/aforarwind/videos/525026997924761/
7. https://www.facebook.com/aforarwind/videos/1092979617551052/
8. https://www.facebook.com/TheStarOnline/posts/10155462773682255
9. https://www.facebook.com/1130669147012110/videos/2075873472491869
10. https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1229044233930414&id=100004745471512
11. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1708993512461232&external_log_id=c17faa8317e0131cec025c0fa4340ef3&q=Arwind%20Kumar%20rape

APPENDIX B

Background Information of 60 Participants from Online Questionnaire

Table A: Background Information of 60 Participants from Online Questionnaire

Participant No.	**Gender**	**Malaysian State of origin**	**Birth year**
1.	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
2.	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
3.	Female	Selangor	1990-1999
4.	Female	Johor	1980-1989
5.	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
6.	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
7.	Male	Perak	1990-1999
8.	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
9.	Male	Selangor	1990-1999
10.	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
11.	Male	Johor	1990-1999
12.	Female	Pahang	1990-1999
13.	Male	Sarawak	1990-1999

Table A continued

14.	Male	Sarawak	1990-1999
15.	Male	Federal Territory (KL, Labuan, Putrajaya)	1990-1999
16.	Male	Sabah	1980-1989
17.	Female	Sabah	1980-1989
18.	Female	Malacca	1990-1999
19.	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
20.	Female	Sabah	1980-1989
21.	Male	Selangor	1990-1999
22.	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
23.	Male	Sarawak	1990-1999
24	Female	Negeri Sembilan	1990-1999
25	Male	Perak	1990-1999
26	Female	Selangor	1990-1999
27	Male	Kedah	1990-1999
28	Female	Sabah	1980-1989
29	Male	Sabah	1990-1999

Table A continued

30	Female	Perak	1990-1999
31	Female	Sarawak	1990-1999
32	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
33	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
34	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
35	Male	Perak	1990-1999
36	Female	Pahang	1990-1999
37	Female	Federal Territory (KL, Labuan, Putrajaya)	1990-1999
38	Female	Penang	1990-1999
39	Male	Selangor	1990-1999
40	Male	Sarawak	1990-1999
41	Male	Johor	1990-1999
42	Male	Selangor	1990-1999
43	Male	Sarawak	1990-1999
44	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
45	Female	Kedah	1990-1999

Table A continued

46	Female	Penang	1990-1999
47	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
48	Male	Malacca	1990-1999
49	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
50	Female	Kelantan	1990-1999
51	Female	Sabah	1980-1989
52	Female	Penang	1990-1999
53	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
54	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
55	Male	Sabah	1990-1999
56	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
57	Female	Sabah	1980-1989
58	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
59	Female	Sabah	1990-1999
60	Male	Sabah	1990-1999

APPENDIX C

Complete Set of Online Questionnaire

Gender Comment Identity Survey For Malaysian Millennials

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this two-section survey about the study of gender language features found in Facebook comments. Before reading the rest of this introduction, I would like to inform you that this survey is only open to Malaysians born in the millennial age gap (from year 1980-1999). The aim of this survey is to investigate and identify the reasons for using various gender language features among the Malaysian millennial group. Please spare some time to participate in this short but helpful survey.

Be assured that all your answers will be used purely for academic purposes and your personal information will be kept under strict confidentiality. Thank you, your authentic responses are very much appreciated.

* Required

1. **What is your gender?** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

2. **Which Malaysian state are you from?** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Federal Territory (KL,Labuan, Putrajaya)
- ◯ Johor
- ◯ Kedah
- ◯ Kelantan
- ◯ Malacca
- ◯ Negeri Sembilan
- ◯ Pahang
- ◯ Perak
- ◯ Perlis
- ◯ Penang
- ◯ Sabah
- ◯ Sarawak
- ◯ Selangor
- ◯ Terengganu

3. **What year were you born in?** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ 1980-1989
- ◯ 1990-1999

4. **How often do you access Facebook?** *
Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Often

5. **How often do you comment Facebook?** *
Mark only one oval.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Often

Gender Commentor Identity Survey

Based on your own opinion, please state the gender identities of the commenters from ALL the comments below

6. **1. "belajar berkata benda baik2... blajar sebut perkataan positif.. Puasa sebut perkataan negatif.. atur tiap kata sebelum berkata-kata.. tapis perkataan2 yg nk digunakan.. tak boleh main hembur je.."** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

7. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. **2. "anjing pun xmcm dorg Jan"** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

9. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. **3. "Beginikah imej yang ditunjukkan oleh pihak yang melaungkan perjuangan utk ummah? Malu..Seharusnya menjadi pengajaran pada pru-14 supaya ubah sikap kepada lebih baik.Tak hairan lah kalau ini puak2 yang makan minun hasil yang syubhah sebab terbukti dari imej yang dibawa"** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

11. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. **4. "Asssssshole! WTF i just watched? Sorry, i don't watch gegarwhatever. He really did that? I hope any lawyer can approach the girl and provide free service to saman malu to aliffwhatever...."** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

13. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. **5. "Masalah org Malaysia dan negara2 jiran (asia la senang cerita). Definisi cantik tu mestilah putih cerah kurus mantop tinggi. Menyampah dgn mentaliti mcmni. "** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

15. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. **6. "Bodohlah cara market macam tu aibkan org.... Org mcm ni yg aku nak tengok dia jatuh miskin..."** *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female

17. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

18. **7. "Deepest condolence to the family... What i can say is the govt need to imposed very high penalties and punishment to whoever drunk n drive and also taking drugs and drive.. When the govt fix very high punishment then only we can stop this kinda of issue. No matter who but end of the day the other get the impact I, such not fair at all..."** *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female

19. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. **8. "Rest In Peace Moey. I will pray you for the justice. My deep condolence to your family. Although the fella come for apologize already useless. He can't return a son for the family."** *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female

21. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. **9. "Dear ladies, you know what happen when your bf agrees to have sex after marriage."** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

23. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

24. **10. "kau p lepak masjid la kalau macam ni PON tak boleh. Boooo. Nerdnerdnerdnerd"** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

25. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

26. **11. "Oh my god! From your profile, I can see that you have worked for good companies. and you are an engineer. That is something to be proud of. Takpe lah, kulit tanned ke apa. Janji duit gaji masuk banyak! Kudos to u!"** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

27. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

28. **12. "We were happy for the bean bags but then I see some roughing them up until contents spilled all over the place. Would be really sad if library decided to remove them because of a small group of uncivic-minded people."** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

29. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

30. **13. "Would be nice that only teenagers and adults accompanying children are allowed in for safety reasons."** *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female

31. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**

32. **14. "Sad to hear this but I think it is the best for the time being. I brought my children last sunday and it was a mess, havoc because of irresponsible parents and children. Part menconteng tu paling sedih la..."** *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female

33. **Based on the sentence you read, was there any reason for your choice?**