

*Are Men really Challenging in Conversation? Exploring Gender Stereotype in
Everyday Talk*

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Abstract

Past studies of gender talk (for instance, Holmes, 2006) have mostly found that women tend to be collaborative while men tend to be challenging in everyday communication. This picture of gender stereotypes suggests that people hold strong views about gender behavior and which can have negative influences in the interactions if these stereotypes are not representative of the actual linguistic behavior of men and women. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the reliability of those stereotypes by investigating the actual use of collaborative strategies by men in particular.

The data was collected in Australian and all participants are young male native speakers of English. This study adopts both qualitative and quantitative analysis. It particularly focuses on examining three collaborative features in conversation: one utterance construction (Lerner, 2004), one utterance expansion (Lerner, 1991) and repetition (Tannen, 2007).

For the quantitative analysis, male participants of this study showed the total of 52 cases of the three collaborative features in 12 conversations. This result suggests an indication of a possible trend, providing evidence for the possibility of the three collaborative features in conversation by men. For the qualitative analysis, Discourse Analysis is used to discuss how men deliver collaborative features in conversation. The results of the qualitative approach show that men in this study delivered several types of the three collaborative features in their talk.

Keywords: gender talk, gender stereotype, Discourse Analysis

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Introduction

Past studies of gender talk (for instance, Holmes, 2006) have mostly found that women tend to be collaborative while men tend to be challenging in everyday communication such as below.

| Masculine | Feminine |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| direct | indirect |
| aggressive | conciliatory |
| competitive | facilitative |
| autonomous | collaborative |
| dominates talking time | talks less than men |
| interrupts aggressively | has difficulty getting a turn |
| task-oriented | person-oriented |
| referentially oriented | affectively oriented |

This summary suggests that people still hold the beliefs that men adopt aggressive, dominating roles in conversations while women show collaborative and facilitative behavior. This picture of gender stereotypes suggests that people hold strong views about gender behavior which can have negative influences in the interactions if these stereotypes are not representative of the actual linguistic behavior of men and women. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the reliability of those stereotypes by investigating the actual use of collaborative strategies by men in everyday talk. In particular, this study focuses on looking at the three collaborative features in everyday talk such as one utterance construction (OUC), one utterance expansion (OUE) and repetition. There are two research questions in this study. Firstly, it examines whether men show the three collaborative features in their everyday talk. Secondly, it examines how men deliver those collaborative features in their talk. The data for this study was collected in Australia and it is analyzed in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the qualitative approach, Discourse Analysis is used in order to see how male participants deliver the three collaborative features in their talk. This study offers a contribution of the data and analysis to the field of gender talk. Most of the past studies investigating collaborative features on examining gender talk were undertaken in United States or the United Kingdom. Very little work has been undertaken in the Australian context.

Literature review

Gender stereotype

A number of sociolinguists have investigated gender stereotypes in talk. For example, men swear and use slang more than women do. Men tell jokes and women do not often tell jokes. Women can smooth over difficult social situations while men find this more difficult. Men tend to talk about competition, sports, and doing things. They also tease more and are more aggressive than women. Women tend to talk about themselves, feelings, affiliation with others, home and family (Lakoff, 1975, Poynton, 1989, Tannen, 1993, and Wardhaugh, 1992). Women were commonly described as adorable, charming, sweet, lovely and divine (Lakoff, 1975), heated,

According to Learner (2004), Ken provides an in-progress utterance which gives an opportunity for the next speaker, Louise to complete Ken's in-progress utterance. Louise then delivers "wanna glass milk?" which syntactically completes Ken's in-progress utterance. Thus one syntactically complete discourse unit was collaboratively made by both Ken and Louise.

OUE

OUE is a feature in which the original speaker provides a syntactically complete sentence and the next speaker expands the original speaker's discourse unit with some kind of expansion device such as 'and'. Thus the previous speaker's utterance can stand alone and need not be developed, but the next speaker develops it anyway (Learner, 1991). For instance,

Louise: first of all they hit rain then they hit hail
Roger: n then they hit snow.

(Learner, 1991, p. 448)

Learner (1991) explains that the first speaker, Louise delivers a syntactically complete discourse unit which can stand alone. However, the next speaker, Roger expands the first speaker's utterance using an increment initiator 'and'. Thus one syntactically complete discourse unit was collaboratively expanded by more than two speakers.

Repetition

Although there are two types of repetition such as one which is produced by the other speaker and one which is produced by the same speaker (Tannen, 2005), this study focuses on looking at the first type repetition produced by the other speaker. It can be either a repetition of part of the previous speaker's production or it can be a repetition of the full utterance. For instance,

A: Where are you staying.
B: Pacific Pallisades.
A: Oh. Pacific Pallisades.

(Sacks, 1992, v2, p 141)

Sacks (1992) explains that B's utterance '*Pacific Pallisades*' is repeated by A. A's repetition '*Pacific Pallisades*' shows A's understanding of B's utterance.

In short, this study uses these three collaborative features which are explained above as model cases for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. As for quantitative analysis in this study, coding numbers of these three collaborative features in conversations are based on examples which are explained above. As for qualitative analysis, two examples of OUC, OUE, and repetitions are selected and are examined.

Methodology

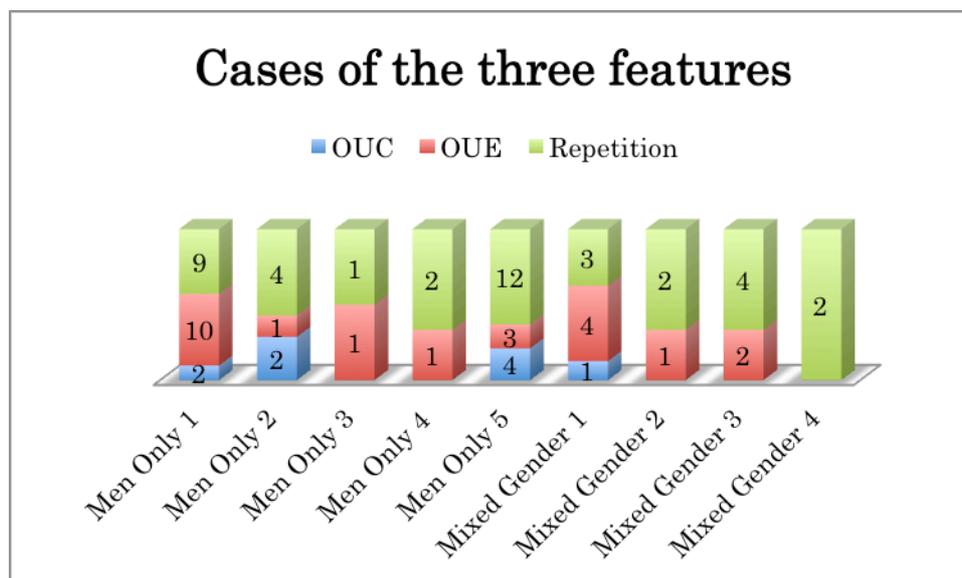
Participants in this study are young Australian men aged in between mid twenties and thirties. All of them are native speakers of Australian English. The total of nine conversations were reordered: five men only conversations and four gender mixed

conversations. The length of each conversation varies since they were not given any topic to talk. Because this study aims to explore everyday talk, all participants in this study were invited to talk freely while their conversations were recorded (Speer, 2002). In order to avoid the researcher's influence, the author of this study relied on participants to record their conversations (Cameron, 2001). After the participants finished recording their conversations, their recordings were given to the author of this study and he transcribed the conversations. All transcriptions of the data used for the analysis were then double checked by two native speakers of English. Participants were engaged in everyday situations during the recordings including the following:

- Participants having dinner, lunch, snacks with tea or coffee in participant's place.
- Participants having a break or having lunch (including dinner when they were working late) at work and talking.
- Participants having a party in participants' place.

Results

The total of 71 cases of the three collaborative features were observed in this study. 9 instances of OUC were observed, 23 cases of OUE were observed and 39 cases of repetition were seen.



The quantitative results suggest that men tend to use collaborative conversational features. However, it is hard to conclude that men use collaborative conversational features since Schegloff (1993) points out coding numbers of cases does not support any generalizing of trends of the feature examined. For instance, people might laugh all the time but others might not laugh at all through the whole conversation. This is because each person is unique when they talk. Thus numerical data as evidence for the studies of conversation is not reliable for the analysis. However, Perakyla (2004, p. 297) supports the notion of the possibility of using a quantitative approach in the study of conversation. She explains that various practices can be considered

generalizable even if the practices are not actualized in similar ways across different settings. Thus the quantitative results of this study can be used as a possible trend, providing the three collaborative features among male participants in this study.

Discussions

This part shows qualitative analysis of the three collaborative features in conversations: OUC, OUE and repetition. Two cases of each collaborative feature are examined. Participants in this section are listed below.

A: a man in early thirties, born in New Zealand but holds Australian citizenship

B: a man in early thirties, born in Scotland but holds Australian citizenship

K: a man in late twenties, born in Australia, L's young brother

J: a man in early thirties, born in Australia

L: a man in early thirties, born in Australia

G: a man in late twenties, born in Australia, J's friend

Examples of OUC

Two examples of OUC are qualitatively examined in this section. Example 1 contains the case which is the basic model of OUC which was explained by Lerner (2004) earlier in this study. Example 2 shows the complicated version of OUC but it shows a highly collaborative case by male speakers.

Example 1

The example below is a part of the conversation which is a multiple party conversation. All participants are men. B is telling his story to other participants and OUC is seen in lines 23 and 24.

15. B: and he would make us all cocktails like squash [rocks 'n' stuff] like that?
16. K: [uh::::]
17. A: [oh yu::m]
18. K: [ah nice]
19. B: so squash rocks was ah (.) midori there was a dot just <brown (.) green (.)
20. red>
21. (1.0)
22. A: ni:ce=
23. → B: = and he would used to just make up (.) just like [random shot]
24. → J: [random shit]
25. B: random stuff like that.
26. K: yep

B's utterance in line 23 '*and he would used to just make up (.) just like [random shot]*' can, syntactically, be an independent and complete discourse unit. B's '*random shot*' in line 23 is, however, overlapped by J's '*random shit*' in line 25 which is an affiliating utterance that completes the previous speaker's utterance. J's '*random shit*' in line 24 fits perfectly with B's '*random shot*', both semantically and syntactically, which suggests that J's '*random shit*' is an example of successful

collaborative completion. J's 'random shit' is then accepted by B in his next turn in line 25, in which he rephrases his own 'random shot' into 'random stuff'. Thus in this example B and J collaboratively deliver one discourse unit: 'he would used to just make up (.) just like random shot [random shit]'.

Example 2

The example below is a part of the conversation which is a multiple party conversation. All participants are men. They are talking about L's story that he was in charge of doing DJ for a wedding. L is explaining a CD for his DJ session at the wedding.

240. L: and it's like normally (.) if (.) I tell like a bride and groom or something to
241. bring along a CD. (0.7) if you're worried? Whether they'll actually bring
242. it along?=
243. J: =yeah
244. B: and whether or not [they just] ((unclear)) you to find it ↑ any ↓ way.
245. L: [nono]
246. → L: yeah but if it's ah marine guys say just like o:[:h]
247. → K: [o:]h it's gonna [wo::rk]
248. L: [>it's<] it's
249. gonna work they'll have four coipes of it (.) just in case >the first one<
250. doesn't [work until] I get
251. B: [ye:ahhhh]

In line 246, L delivers 'yeah but if it's ah marine guys say just like o:[:h]'. It contains an extended 'o::h' at the end which provides an opportunity for the next speaker to complete his L's utterance. At the same time, L goes on to expand his utterance after his extended 'o:[:h]'. At this point, any participant in this conversation can take this opportunity to speak but K in line 247 delivers his '[o:]h it's gonna [wo::rk.]'. Therefore, one syntactically discourse unit "yeah but if it's ah marine guys say just like oh it's gonna work" has just collaboratively formed by both L and K.

This case of OUC includes a feature of overlap which can be treated as either the case of interruption (Sacks, 1992, v2) or enthusiastic participation into talk (Tannen, 1993). The overlap feature in this case could be treated as speaker's enthusiastic participation. Sacks (1992, v2) explains that when the original speaker sees that he/she is being interrupted by the next speaker, the original speaker often displays his/her anger in utterances such as 'you always interrupt me'. In the example in this study above, the original speaker L did not deliver utterances such as displaying his anger towards the next speaker K. Instead, L in line 248 delivers a repetition of K's utterance '[>it's<] it's gonna' which accepts K's contribution and suggests that K's overlapping '[o:]h' in line 247 is being treated as Tannen's type of 'interruption', in that the next speaker is showing his enthusiastic desire to participate and to talk. In the end, both speakers in this example collaboratively formed one discourse unit.

Examples of One Utterance Expansion (OUE)

There are two examples of OUE which are qualitatively examined. Example 3 includes the case that both speakers use not only the case of OUE but also both speakers use playful talk strategies within OUE. Example 4 shows both speakers expand the original speaker's utterance not only once but three times.

Example 3

The example below is a part of the conversation between two men: A and J. They are talking about J's DVD collection looking at his DVDs. A case of OUE is seen in lines 5 and 6.

1. A: star wars (2.0) ↓ always.
2. (4.0)
3. J: no they just sort of fall out.
4. (1.0)
5. → J: it's a shitty bloody case.
6. → A: but it does the trick.
7. J: cost me ten ↑ bucks so of course it does the trick.
8. A: bargain.

In line 5, J says '*it's a shitty bloody case.*', probably describing the DVD case from which DVDs '*just sort of fall out.*' (line 3). Then in line 6, A delivers '*but it does the trick*' which expands J's '*it's a shitty bloody case.*' in line 5. Thus one discourse unit '*it's a shitty bloody case but it does the trick*' is collaboratively formed by both J and A. This case follows Lerner's basic model of one sentence expansion and contains an increment initiator '*but*'.

In addition, A's utterance in line 6 '*but it does the trick.*' also prompts the original speaker J to engage in some humorous talk. J in line 7 responds to A's utterance '*but it does the trick*' with a story about buying the DVD for ten dollars. J implies, with his emphasis on '*bucks*', that ten dollars is a substantial amount, so must buy a functioning DVD case. J in line 7 delivers '*... of course it does the trick.*', playing on the words delivered by Aa in line 6 '*... it does the trick.*'. However, both participants know that ten dollars is in fact cheap, and J's playful talk in line 7 is understood by Aa in line 8 when he says '*bargain*'. In the end, both male speakers J and A collaboratively formed the case of OUE.

Example 4

The example below is a part of the conversation between two men: J and L. They are talking about an old story of one of their holidays in the past. A case of OUE is seen in lines 31 to 33.

28. J: hehehe and he goes (0.5) ↑ fuck's my door shut. and we're like eh?
29. anyway cause he went to go an in there and he didn't come back around
30. us, .hhh and he walks in, and the heat wave that came through-
31. → L: cause he saw the heat wave coming out of his fucking room

32. → J: and it was ju- we're both like ↑ ye:::ah,
 33. → L: because it was beautiful because he was all cold in ours, and then he
 34. walked into the next room was a sauna.

J's utterance in line 30 '*walks in, and the heat wave that came through-*' is cut off by the next speaker L. L in line 32 then delivers '*cause he saw the heat wave coming out of his fucking room*'. J in line 30 talks about the 'heat wave'.

The next speaker L expands L's talk to provide details of where the heat wave was coming from, and how it was seen by their friend. Therefore, J's utterance in line 30 '*walks in, and the heat wave that came through-*' is interrupted and, at the same time, expanded by the next speaker L in line 31. L's expansion component in line 31 '*cause he saw the heat wave was coming out of his fucking room*' contains 'cause' as an increment initiator. L's expansion in line 31 does not end J's story. It is further expanded by the original speaker J in line 32. J in line 32 delivers '*and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*' which contains an increment initiator 'and'. J's utterance describes both J and L's reactions to their friend's having been a victim of their practical joke. Thus, so far, a discourse unit is collaboratively formed by both J and L: '*he walks in and the heat wave that came through cause he saw the heat wave was coming out of his fucking room and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*'.

J's expansion in line 32 '*and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*' is then expanded by L in lines 33 and 34 by delivering '*because it was beautiful because he was all cold in ours, and then he walked into the next room was a sauna.*'. L's expansion contains two uses of the increment initiator 'because'. The first 'because' by L is used to expand the previous speaker, J's utterance in line 32 '*and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*'. The second 'because' by L expands his first component '*because it was beautiful*'. In this example, both speakers collaboratively expand their utterances. This example showed that the original speaker's utterance was not only expanded once but it was expanded three times.

Repetitions

There are two examples of repetition. Example 5 contains the case of repetition which is used as a prompt of developing a story between J and G. Example 6 has the case of repetition which is used as an expansion of their conversation.

Example 5

J is telling his story of his trip in the past and G is listening J's story. In this example, a case of repetition is seen in lines 31 and 32.

30. J: every guinness:: that you buy (0.3) you get in a gui[ness::]
 31. → G: [in a] proper glass.
 32. → J: [you get] it in a proper glass. so I actually brought home with me (.) seven
 33. G: [yeah.]
 34. J: glasses of guinness?
 35. G: see I-
 36. J: and I I ay a:h ↓ two of them got cracked in the car on the way home.
 37. G: yep

G in line 31 tries to complete J's in-progress utterance in line 31 '*you get in a guin[ness::]*'. However, G's completing utterance '*[in a] proper glass.=*' is launched before J's utterance is finished. Then J in line 32 repeats G's utterance in line 31 as '*[you get] it in a proper glass.*'. J's repetition is used to acknowledge and accept G's attempt to complete J's prior talk '*[in a] proper glass.=*' (Lerner, 1991), as well as to provide the basis for further expansion of his story.

In addition, J in line 30 says, '*every guinness:: that you buy, (0.3) you get in a guin[ness::]*' which is overlapped by G in line 31 '*[in a]*'. G's '*[in a] proper glass.=*' in line 31 overlaps J's '*... guin[ness::]*' in line 30. This overlap feature does not seem to be problematic (Liddicoat, 2007) and is used similarly as seen in the case in Example 2. It shows the next speaker G's enthusiastic participation into J's story (Tannen, 1993). Also the original speaker J does not display any anger by saying something like '*you always interrupt me*' (Sacks, 1992, v2). This suggests that this overlap does not cause any problem between the original speaker and the next speaker. In this example, the case of repetition was used as a prompt of developing a story. In addition, the case contained an overlap feature which showed that the speaker's enthusiastic participation of the story. Thus both speakers in this example collaboratively tried to develop the story with a case of repetition.

Example 6

A case of repetition is seen in lines 79. Unlike the previous example, the case of repetition did not occur straight after the previous speaker's utterance. It is, however, used as a developing the conversation between two speakers.

75. J: is that mediterranean or (0.8) pasta in
 76. E: (I went) the pota- the potato and the garden salad actually ζ
 77. J: oh right okay.
 78. E: ye:::s.
 79. → J: potato and garden.
 80. E: ye:::s.

J in line 75 asks the question '*is that Mediterranean or (0.8) pasta in*' and then E in line 76 answers with '*(I went) the pota- the potato and the garden salad actually ζ* '. J in line 77 delivers '*oh right okay.*' which suggests that J accepts E's answer. After E's '*ye:::s.*' in line 78, J delivers a repetition '*potato and garden.*', which was a part of E's utterance in line 76. E in line 80 then delivers another '*ye:::s.*' which acknowledges and confirms the content of J's repetition.

Instead, J's repetition '*potato and garden.*' appears to be used as a prompt for an expansion of the conversation (Tannen, 2007). Tannen (2007, P. 73) explains that repetition can be used as a prompt to expand a part of the conversation, as shown below.

- | | |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| 1: Deborah | Do you read? |
| 2: Peter | Do I read? |
| 3: | Do you read things just for fun? |
| 4: Peter: | Yeah. |

- 5: Right now I'm reading
6: Norma Jean the Terminate Queen

Tannen explains that in line 2, Peter repeats Deborah's '*Do you read?*' as '*Do I read?*' which prompts Deborah's second, expanded question in line 3. Then Peter himself, from line 4, starts expanding this part of the conversation by answering the question. J's repetition '*potato and garden.*' in line 79 below is used similarly to Tannen's repetition example above. In short, both speakers in this example collaboratively used a case of repetition to make this part of conversation collaboratively.

Conclusion

This study examined one of gender stereotypes that women tend to be collaborative while men tend to be challenging in everyday communication. Therefore, it aimed to investigate the reliability of those stereotypes by investigating the actual use of collaborative strategies by men in everyday talk. In particular, this study focused on looking at the three collaborative features in everyday talk such as OUC, OUE and repetition.

There were two research questions in this study: 1) whether men show the three collaborative features in their everyday talk. 2) how men deliver those collaborative features in their talk. In order to answer the first question, the quantitative results of this study shows that men in this study used the three collaborative features in their conversation. Thus the results can be used as a possible trend, providing the three collaborative features among male participants in this study.

As for the second question, qualitative analysis of the three collaborative features explain the answers. First of all, both example 1 and 2 showed that men delivered OUC which are followed the basic model of OUC explained by Leaner (2004). Both examples contain an overlap feature which also supports the notion of collaborative feature as well as OUC. Secondly, both example 3 and 4 showed two cases of OUE. Example 3 included a playful talk by both speakers on the top of OUE which supports collaborative feature in conversation. Example 4 included the original speaker's utterance was developed not only once but it was expanded twice which suggests both speakers were highly collaborative in their part of conversation. Thirdly, the cases of repetition were used as a prompt of developing a story and an expansion of conversation.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis of this study showed men's collaborative features in conversations. Based on the results of this study, it is possible to say that men also deliver collaborative features in their conversation. Thus it is possible to say that collaborative feature is one of men's stereotypes.

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