

DISCOURSE STRATEGIES
IN MIXED-GENDER CONVERSATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the different discourse strategies used by male and female tertiary students of UCSI University. Since the language used in the conversation reflects the cultural and social background of the speakers. The discourse strategies reveal not only the gender of the speakers but also their relationships as they engage in the conversations. The study is based on a corpus of mixed-gender conversation transcripts. All subjects composed of three pairs are asked to discuss a topic for fifteen minutes. Their speech is Mp3-recorded and then analyzed and compared. In addition, a questionnaire is distributed for thirty participants whose answers provide a general view on male-female contrasts in spoken discourse. The analysis of discourse strategies mainly focuses on the amount of utterances, interruptions and overlaps, hedges and minimal responses, and questions and answers. The findings of the study show that males and females use discourse strategy differently. Women use more hedges and minimal responses to show support and politeness to the current speaker. They also have less interruption than men in conversation. Moreover, women use more overlap speeches in a positive way because they are more involved in the interaction.

On the other hand, men use interruptions more than women do. Men have also tendency to use hedges, take over the floor to play the expert, and fewer minimal responses to acknowledge the current speaker.